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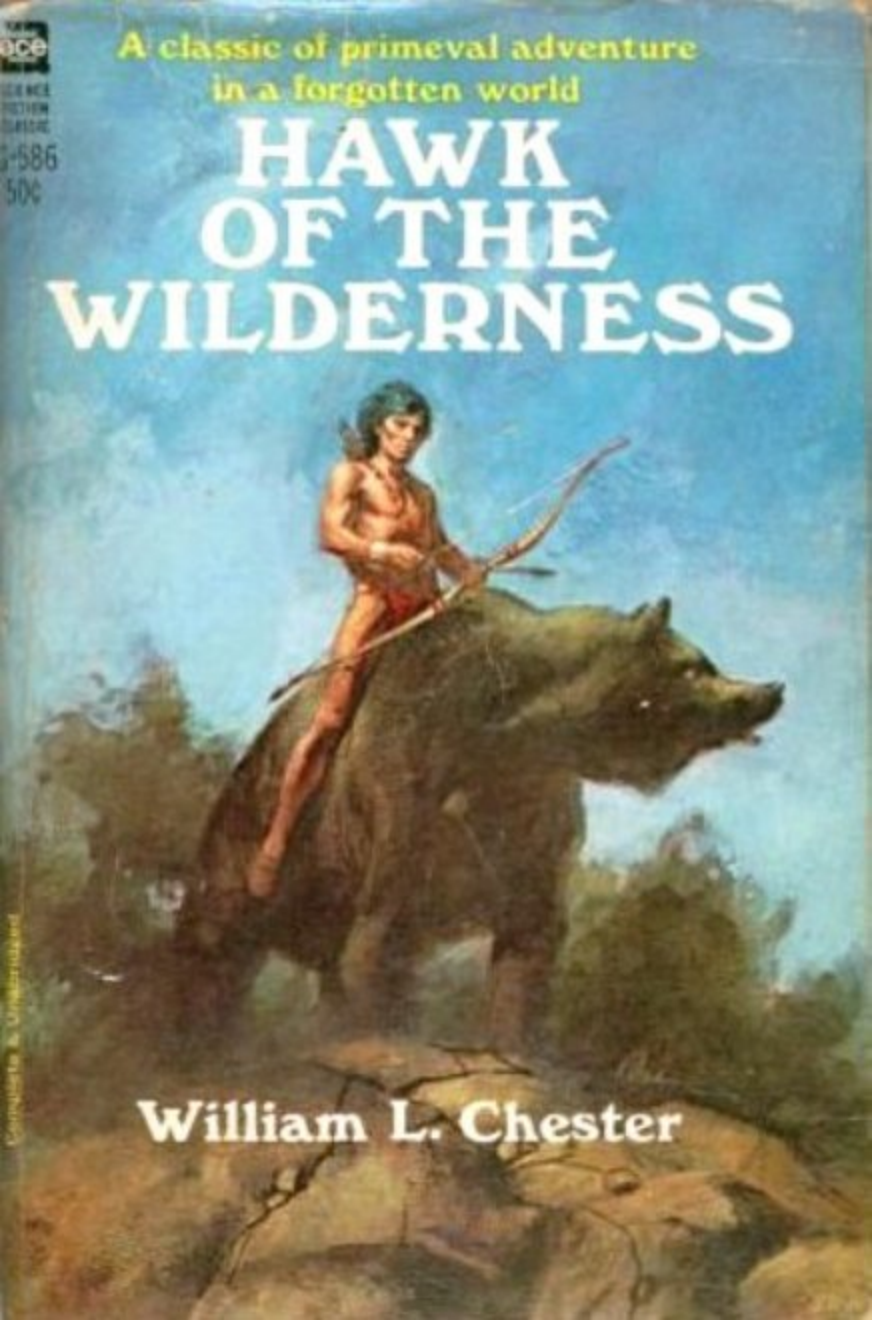
in a forgotten world

HAWK OF THE WILDERNESS



William L. Chester

IN THE LOST LAND

Deep in the densely wooded hills of Tsusgina-i, Kioga the Snow Hawk came upon a strange and thrilling sight: the Concourse of the Bear-People. The forest floor was a living, shaggy, moving rug of mingled weaving bears: grizzlies with dried mud from the swamps of Gate-gwa upon their paws and hanging manes; huge brown bears from the cliff-caves of Utawa-gunta; black, rough-coated brutes from the forests of Wala-sihi.

No man knew what instinct brought the normally solitary bears of Nato'wa together at irregular intervals and places somehow known to all; it was a mystery to rank with that of the elephant's final resting-place. But this much Kioga knew: when they chose to be, the bears were the savage rulers of the forest.

Tensing his magnificent muscles and swinging lithely through the trees down into the valley, Kioga set himself upon the path of becoming the ruler of the bears.

HAWK OF THE WILDERNESS

by

WILLIAM L. CHESTER

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To Irene Lang Chester
Whose Patience is
Incredible

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PROLOGUE

IN RELATING the Tale of the Log and the Skin, I am also telling the story of James Munro, the famed anthropologist and Amerindian enthusiast, whose collection of American Indian historical objects is perhaps the largest extant in private hands—the result of more than three decades of collecting here, in South America, and on the islands between. My own part in the tale is small, but highly fascinating. I am a kind of curator of this private museum, the guardian, so to speak, of treasures turned up by the man in the field—Munro himself.

Munro's passion for his chosen work took him endlessly to the far fringes of civilization. Indeed, only twice in the ten years preceding his last visit had I the honor of his company at my board. Those rare visits will live undimmed in my memory. Sitting smoking his pipe in the glow of the fireplace, he talked as only a man can talk who is steeped in aboriginal lore, of that most enigmatic and much-argued of puzzles—the origin and pre-Columbian history of those true Americans, the Indians. We discussed these straight-bodied, copper-skinned, warlike people, debated the Asiatic theory and dissected the others, even that far-fetched one asserting their migration from the lost continent of Atlantis. Far into the stillnesses of the night we recreated between us the powerful Aztec civilization of Montezuma, the barbarian king; the golden riches of the Inca Princes of the Sun; the mighty unity of the savage Iroquois, and the absorbing and pictur-

esque plains cultures of the Sioux, the Cheyenne and the Apache—all, alas, swept away like chaff before the invasion of the Europeans. . . .

A several years' absence had ensued after Munro's previous visit, during which I had kept rather close check on his wanderings by noting whence were sent his various shipments to our museum. Then one day a traveling-bag was received, shortly followed by a letter advising me of his probable arrival within a day or two.

Supposing that the bag contained more arrow-heads, stone celts and similar odds and ends peculiar to the study of ancient cultures, I proceeded to examine and catalogue them, preparatory to storing them safely away. I began this operation at about nine o'clock in the morning on one of those gloomy, lowering days so conducive to study; but within a few moments, time ceased to have any meaning or importance.

The first object I took from the bag was the tanned skin of a large animal, tied at its corners into a bag. Opening this out, I saw at once that the smoother side of the skin was crowded with what I took to be tiny Indian picture-drawings, hieroglyphics and symbols of various kinds. A packet of freshly developed photographs, through which I quickly thumbed, contained among others some extraordinary pictures of big-game animals and many unusual panoramic scenes of great beauty and grandeur. In a little skin belt-pouch, such as Indians once used to hold small sacred objects—or so-called "medicine,"—I found, to my utter astonishment, a small quantity of precious stones of undoubted value, of which a ruby and a diamond of antique cut were among the largest and most perfect I ever had beheld.

In mummy-like wrappings was another object which proved to be a rather small flat book, in which I judged, with rejoicing, that Munro had kept notes of his journeys and discoveries, since I observed dates and closely crowded annotations. Other objects of an unusual nature also came into view, but all were suddenly wiped from my mind as upon the picture-skin, which lay beneath my hand, I chanced to notice in small, compact perfect characters, words written in English.

Now, there exist many such picture-records painted upon buffalo-hides, by Indians long-dead, containing stories of battles, hunts, journeys and scrimmages with enemies. But it was altogether an unprecedented thing to find upon such a hide the familiar outlines of civilized script. Moreover I now saw that the little book before mentioned was written in several handwritings—none of them Munro's. One, however, was identical with the writing on the buffalo-hide; and thoroughly aroused by this remarkable fact, I opened the little volume, and by later references to the picture-skin, and the photographs, pieced together part of an extraordinary and startling story. . . .

Munro arrived later that night, and greeted me in his usual way, as perfunctorily as if only hours instead of years had intervened since last we had met. Almost his first words referred to the subject of the book and the skin.

"I see you've read it too." From his tone I realized that the matter gripped his imagination beyond any discovery he had ever made before.

"Science," he observed reflectively, "knows much—but not all."

"Then you think," I began, tapping the picture-skin, "that there are grounds for believing this?"

"Between us two—I am sure of it," he answered with a positiveness which I knew must be grounded in facts; then he drew a notebook of his own from his pocket, and handed it to me, continuing:

"Scientifically, it remains to be proved. I can't rest until I am absolutely certain. It is possible, very possible, that I won't return. Time is too short to explain everything, but my diary here will complete the story up to the present. If you do not hear from me in three years, do what you will with it." After a few further words, he departed—and I have not set eyes on him since.

Not so much as a word has ever come out of the North, whither Munro went on his strangest expedition, to attest either its success or its failure. Myself, I finished the story that same night. I shall not comment further on its right to credence, but set down the facts as revealed or suggested in the log-book, the picture-skin and Munro's own diary:

I

LOST IN NORTHERN SEAS

THE earliest threads of the narrative go back, roughly, to the turn of the century. In unraveling them we find ourselves almost at once aboard a stanch little vessel, the *Cherokee,* cruising, according to latitudes given in her log, in the mild waters of the North Pacific Ocean, near the Aleutian Islands, south of the Bering Sea.

The *Cherokee* was no ordinary vessel, for though of small tonnage, she was built of oak, carried triple-sewn canvas, and was in all ways designed to withstand the angriest storms. Her owner and navigator, Doctor Lincoln Rand, had equipped the *Cherokee* as a kind of floating infirmary in which he hoped to accomplish for humanity something of what another knight of medicine has done in Labrador on the Atlantic side.

An extraordinary man, young Lincoln Rand, the last of a mighty breed that had served with distinction in America's wars, and in each generation since the *Mayflower* had won success in both material and spiritual ways.

Sharing his father's enthusiasm for rough outdoor expeditions, tutoring privately between long trips, living with and learning the different dialects of many Indian tribes, young Lincoln's boyhood had been an active and arduous one. Manhood found him a splendid specimen and example of clean living, over six feet tall and straight as a pine.

Trips and stays at the Indian reservation had resulted in the formation of a strong friendship with the polished and educated Indian whose name was Woodman Running-Wolf —or, as Rand called him by his Indian name, Mokuyi. This

dark, lean and stalwart full-blood was the second member of the little party aboard the *Cherokee.*

Rand's lovely and cultured wife Helena was the third. For a long time she had held Rand at arms'-length, vainly hoping that time would release him from his craving for the life of another and forever vanished day. But being herself derived from bold pioneers and settlers of the West, she understood his discontent with the soft life of his modern age.

But the crew of the *Cherokee* might have consisted of three men instead of two, had it not been for an unfortunate estrangement between Rand and his friend James Munro, then but a young man, just beginning the researches that were to make him famous. This estrangement arose out of their mutual love for the same woman—certainly the only circumstance that could have impaired their lifelong friendship . . . .

Noble in purpose and aspect, the trim vessel nosed her graceful way through shipping in San Francisco Harbor one autumn day and slipped out into the open sea on what was to be one of the strangest voyages in all marine annals. She was last sighted and spoken by a whaler, rounding the island of Unimak and standing north into the Bering Sea, where she was swallowed up in a dense fog—and never again seen by the eye of civilized man. . . .

Not many years afterward came the earthquake which rocked the west coast of America and gutted San Francisco. Had the Doctor and his party returned they would have found themselves homeless and virtually penniless. The Marsh family, Helena's kin, regrettably perished in the ensuing fire. Only James Munro, absent on a mission to the Blackfeet reservation, survived, and spent all of his time and most of a private fortune in the attempt to learn the fate of his friends and the woman he had loved. But the *Cherokee* had vanished utterly.

The storm which crippled her was one of those which sweep up from tropic waters to make the Pacific belie its gentle name. The soft regular hiss of the passing sea deepened to a boiling snarl, and the *Cherokee* began to pitch ominously as the barometer fell. A sullen greenish sea rolled

aboard, the first during this voyage. Two hours later the first of many mishaps overtook the *Cherokee* when a tremendous sea washed aft and tore out the stout Oregon pine mast, carrying canvas and rigging, which snapped like thread, far astern into the blackness. Almost instantly thereafter the full force of the hurricane struck. Time and again the three souls aboard despaired of the *Cherokee's* ability to weather through; but always, like a living thing, she struggled from beneath the weight of the waters, shook them from her straining decks and rose wearily to the surface, the winds moaning in her little remaining rigging.

When the storm had somewhat abated, the two men cleared the deck of its wreckage and between them they rigged up a jury mast.

Steady watch was kept for that sail or smudge of smoke in the distance which would mean rescue: but the limitless horizon played tricks upon their weary eyes, and even that was blotted out on the sixteenth day, when another but colder storm charged down upon them like a great black bull, tearing away the makeshift mast and straining the oaken heart of the ship almost to the breaking point.

In following days of northerly drift, the storm wore itself out; they awoke one morning to find themselves in the sheltering lee of a small melting iceberg, which gleamed like a polished blue-green castle in the rising sun. At this point in the log-book, Rand's fears that they were adrift in the vast Arctic Sea were first expressed, and quickly confirmed by the continual presence of fog-banks and occasional ice-cakes.

There was no want of life around them. They sighted a vast herd of sea-lions swimming rapidly northward under dense, low-hanging storm-clouds, through a gale-swept ocean. Sea-otters came fearlessly alongside, rearing vertically from their beds of floating kelp to watch them drift past. Now and then herds of walrus passed at a distance. But life only accentuated the terrible solitude of the sea, and of land they caught no glimpse.

It grew increasingly cold. And they now saw the miracle of the Arctic night begin. The moon in the south was transformed from a red-gold shield into a huge pale silver

bubble encircled by a yellow ring. The blue-violet, pink-tinged shadows on the ice near the boat began to reflect the magic glory of the kindling sky, which was alternately veiled in glowing silver, yellow, green and clearest red, which spread billowing across the dome and then melted into the clear brilliance of the moonlight, only to begin anew the dazzling display.

That night, by the moon's light, Rand and Mokuyi killed a large seal at the edge of a floe, and thus added to their diminishing food-supply. But thereafter fog again shut down like a great smothering blanket, and the ice-pressure upon the *Cherokee*'s hull increased alarmingly. For many days they floated thus, blindly, in their groaning, creaking craft.

One aspect of the situation puzzled both men, however. The long-expected complete freeze-up did not appear to be materializing. The *Cherokee* actually began shaking off her weight of ice, and floated freely once more. Then one day they saw a branch drift past, with leaves still green upon it. Finally Mokuyi, ever alert to nature's signs, pointed out a great flock containing thousands of murres, flying high overhead, as evidence that land must be somewhere near.

They were no less astonished and pleased when the severe cold gave place to a bracing, invigorating atmosphere, wine-clear, and of a mildness, Rand thought, attributable to some unrecorded warm ocean current. The ice was unmistakably diminished now, and their continuous northward drift appeared to have ceased. Then they began to observe water-logged hulks in the sea about them, mere half-submerged, slime-coated wrecks for the most part.

"Sargasso seas—areas of calm—exist in both hemispheres," Rand declared, "and no doubt in the Arctic. If so, then we've added something to man's knowledge of the sea."

From one of these ancient wrecks they salvaged a short mast, seated it firmly, and by the use of their last spare canvas, again found themselves in case to make slow headway.

"It would be foolish to return as we came," suggested the Indian. "Let's go on, and hope to find some little island to winter on. Then, with the return of warmer weather

and the break-up of the ice, we'll be able to make our way southward again." This they did, to such purpose that within two days of northerly sailing they came in sight of shoals; and dimly through the hanging mists they detected a distant headland.

As they approached, their anticipation turned to dismay, and it appeared to both Mokuyi and Rand that upon this serrated bank their journey must come forever to an end, with the *Cherokee* pounding to matchwood like those other derelicts on every hand ahead.

By what benevolence of the Almighty they never knew, the ship passed somehow through the roaring invisible maelstrom of the combers. Times without number the *Cherokee* scraped and pounded her sides upon the rocks. Hour after hour and mile after mile this torture continued, and the three appalled humans expected momentary shipwreck.

When during that endless Arctic night, that terrible ordeal of waiting, they finally and unmistakably grounded, all believed the end had come. But early dawn of a day which would last but an hour or two revealed instead that most beautiful sight of all to sea-weary eyes—land!

Like the shoals, the cliffs extended into the distance grim and forbidding; and behind them the waves, breaking upon the reefs through which they had so miraculously come, churned, seethed and foamed, as if gnashing their watery jaws at the *Cherokee*'s safe passage.

This shore air was filled with bird-life. Arctic terns curved overhead or dived swiftly. Sand-pipers fed in little pools. Black-bellied and golden plover swirled in large flocks. Bands of pintail floated up from the grasses about the salt-lagoons, while high above, rough-legged hawks circled slowly. From the cliffs came the *kok-a-row* of red-throated loons, or the mournful screams of great black-backed gulls; and the far-reaching calls of ravens echoed in the spray-drenched coves.

The entry for that day in the *Cherokee*'s log expresses Rand's wonder that they had contrived to reach the mainland through the deadly miles-wide barrier formed by the reefs. The vessel, it appears, had picked a way along a

course of her own choosing—or of God's choosing, as Rand put it—and had grounded in a bay scarcely a hundred yards wide.

II

THE VANISHED RACE

WORKING swiftly, the two men and the woman transferred all of value to the battered decks of the *Cherokee*, being especially careful to keep dry their single rifle and revolver, their only means of defense against whatever perils might beset them upon this strange strand. They salvaged Rand's instrument-kit, the log-book, and a few other things.

A difference of opinion existed between the two men. Rand believed they had floated in an easterly direction, grounding on the northern coast of Canada, in the neighborhood of Mackenzie Bay. Mokuyi contended that this land was either an island north of the Asiatic coast, or more probably the coast of Siberia itself. They reached an agreement in a startling manner.

Lack of water had made finding a spring vital; and while Helena stood guard over their belongings, Rand and Mokuyi discovered water a little way down the shore, filled their containers and turned to retrace their steps—then stood suddenly rooted to earth:

Poised in statuesque beauty upon a ledge, mighty power and grace in every line of its form, stood a magnificent long-haired tigress. Scarcely a hundred feet away, they could discern every stripe, every ring in the long thick tail, even the cruel glint of her glowing eyes. Between the massive jaws she held a freshly killed seal, limp in death. As they watched, she executed an elastic spring, attained a higher ledge and vanished behind a bend in the cliff, soundless as a phantom and leaving the two men momentarily spellbound.

"Good God!" ejaculated Rand.

"Lucky she made her kill before we came along," said the Indian. "The gods seem to be on our side, Lincoln."

"You know what this means?"

Mokuyi nodded grimly in answer. "It upsets your theory. That animal locates us beyond all further doubt. It's Asia, not America."

They spent that night aboard the vessel, thoroughly convinced that careened though she was, she offered a safer haven than any spot ashore; and as the tide rose, righting her, they were tolerably comfortable.

Frequently during that sleepless vigil Rand directed the beam of his lantern shoreward. First revealed in the luminous circle was a handsome thick-coated puma, which seemed to the silent watchers as large as a lioness, before it screamed and slid into the blackness. Soon a huge brownish-black bear reared up in surprise at the brightness of their light. Mokuyi knew he had never seen another so large.

Toward dawn a heavy bass moaning roar brought the light shoreward again, and now they saw another tiger, heavier and more massive than she who had startled them the day before, and with fur so thick that it hung halfway to the animal's knees. Continuously, until the southern sky was again alight, came the echoes of the cries and calls of savage animals from somewhere inland, audible testimony to the teeming numbers of the predatory beasts.

At daylight—of which there would be but little—the three set out as had their forefathers before them, to erect a temporary dwelling as protection from both elements and savage beasts, until they could determine their whereabouts and effect their escape from this inhospitable shore. The two men had already laid the four corners of a proposed rock house, and Helena was industriously spreading their salvaged apparel to dry.

Darkness was now falling. Rand and the Indian bent under the weight of a great slab of stone. Suddenly they heard Helena utter a startled cry of warning, and following the direction of her eyes, saw a band of some twenty paint-streaked and almost naked men closing stealthily in upon them from three sides, with weapons in hand and gleaming in that lowering dusk.

To Rand the thought of armed and hostile attack by Indians in this year of the twentieth century was all but

incredible, and astonishment robbed him for the moment of his usual poise. Snatching up his rifle, he fired.

A devilish yelping cry rose from the throats of the remaining warriors as they closed like wolves upon the unfortunate little party. Mokuyi was shouting something in an Indian dialect. Too late Rand realized the meaning of the words, having already reversed his empty rifle and clubbed another savage to earth. Nor did he remember the look of intense astonishment which crossed the grotesque features of their assailants at Mokuyi's cry, for something fell with stunning force upon his skull.

Rand returned slowly to the consciousness of a throbbing ache in his head.

And presently he heard a vaguely familiar musical tongue. He felt a hand under his head, cool water at his lips, and drank greedily. Slowly opening his eyes, he realized that he lay upon a bed of leaves, covered with soft skins, and that the bark covering overhead was the roof of an Indian lodge.

An aged crone, seamed, wrinkled and shrunken by age, but garbed in fresh new buckskin, held a brimming vessel to his lips, and her eyes seemed like bright black beads imbedded in a leathery skin the color of roasted coffee. Behind her a fire threw its warm glow upon the walls, where Rand discerned a fishing-net, several pairs of moccasins, a war-club, a quiver full of arrows, and sundry other implements of war and the chase, all lying or hanging about as if their owner had but a moment before put them aside to prepare for his coming.

Sounds from without, the subdued voices of women and children, the deeper gruff tones of mature men, reached his ears. Now and then he caught a word or two which he could understand, in a tongue more sonorous and pure than he knew it, or had ever heard it spoken, but Indian words none the less. One voice in particular rose with authority:

"The white prisoner—where have you put him?"

"Inside this lodge," came a child's eager voice; and a hanging skin which curtained the doorway was parted. Several tall and muscular warriors filed in. The leader of the party spoke.

"Sawamic commands presence of prisoner with white skin.

Cut his bonds." Producing a wicked-looking knife, the old crone cackled and obeyed. Slowly and with great effort Rand arose.

"Who," he demanded, as nearly as possible in the dialect they were using, "who is Sawamic, and what village is this?" His tone had at once the dignity and his bearing the haughty impressiveness of their own.

"To far corners of mountain-land, all men know Sawamic, king of the Shoni. This is village of Hopeka, wherein all men are accountable to him before whom we are ordered to bring you."

Bewildered and still half-dazed from the blow he had sustained, Rand answered: "Let us go, then, and at once. I would protest at being thus attacked and separated from my wife and brother."

The spokesman of Sawamic raised a hand. "They are safe. They would be dead, had not the one you call brother spoken to us in our language."

"Is it the way of the Shoni," demanded Rand in some heat, "to fall upon and kill those to whom they are bound by solemn treaties?"

For a moment a blank stare greeted these words. The Indian leader drew himself up angrily; then he seized Rand by the arm, and with his knife's point held at the captive's throat, pulled him through the door, into the open, passing between watching lanes of staring women and naked brown children, to an assembly lodge.

Within the bark walls the smoke from many pipes lay in streaks upon the close atmosphere. Tall warriors, chiefs and head-men squatted, sat and stood row back of row to the outermost dark edges of the interior, where only the whites of their eyes gleamed in their fierce and haughty faces—truly a sight to stir the blood of any American familiar with the history and decline of the Red race.

They were costumed in handsome robes, splendid plumed headdresses and gorgeous colored tunics. They wore ornaments of bone, bear-claws and eagle-talons and shells. They were wrapped in brilliant sashes of deer-skin threaded with scintillating bits of colored bone and dyed moose-hair. Many boasted richly decorated head-bands, and quill-embroidered

war-shirts upon which the firelight at the center of the lodge glowed yellow and orange-red. All carried arms—bows, painted quivers stuffed with arrows, war-clubs of strange design, evil-looking lances with copper blades. These things Rand observed as he passed through their ranks, which opened before him with many marks of respect.

He was bidden to squat upon a thick *pukkwi* mat at the side of the fire. A hawk-nosed chieftain proffered him a choice cut of boiled meat from a steaming cooking vessel. After he had accepted, all others in the first row, the ranking Indian leaders, were served in their turn. During this ceremony not a word was spoken, until at last the aged chief, whose features were so like those of a bird of prey, handed him a lighted pipe. When he had smoked, the old man took it back, himself puffed, blowing smoke to the earth, to the sky and thrice toward the south. So the pipe went the rounds, and all smoked in the same deliberate manner that proclaimed them sun-worshipers.

When the pipe returned, the old chieftain (Sawamic, as Rand was to learn) rose and faced him with stately bearing.

"To our white brothers we have given greeting. Together we have smoked the pipe. Let there be no blood between us for the battle of yesterday. Let there be only friendship."

"Friendship!" answered Rand bitterly. "Yet when we came here in need of succor, not peace but the war-club did we receive. Is it the way of the proud Shoni to slay those who stand helpless before them?" he demanded again.

"My warriors are quick to fight, quicker to right a wrong," was Sawamic's answer. "They will bring gifts to prove their regret, in due time. But speak—tell us how it is that white man speaks language of Shoni."

"I learned the tongue from your Canadian brethren," replied Rand, "—in whose lodges I spent many happy days of my boyhood."

A look of surprise greeted this statement, and eye went to eye in puzzled fashion.

"Of our Canadian brethren you speak," at last pursued Sawamic. "Who are these? We know them not, nor meaning of this strange name."

It was Rand's turn to be amazed.

"Canada is a dominion under the rule of the Great Father, King Edward the VII," he explained. "Many members of the Indian nations live there in return for aid given the English king against the Americans during the Indian wars. Do you not know these who speak your own tongue?"

After long thought the old chief shook his head, an expression of bafflment upon his weathered features.

"There is but one Great Father—He is above," he answered with reverence. "We call Him Na-Tose, the Sun. We call our land after His name—Nato'wa—Sun Land. We do not know this strange king, nor land called Ca-na-da. We acknowledge no strange king. We are a mighty people, and a free people. What are Americans? When were these wars? Give us your answers to these things. Our ears are open to receive your words."

Far into that to him incredible night, Rand addressed his replies to attentive questioners. He told of the coming of the white men to the New World, of the gradual destruction of the Indian nations, of the extension of white dominion over the broad empires once ruled by the Red men. He spoke of the white man's railroads, his mighty engineering works, tunnels, skyscrapers.

Frequent guttural ejaculations greeted his words, upon which that barbaric assembly hung as if hypnotized. Once there was a moment of low laughter, without intended discourtesy, as he described ships of heavy metal which could yet float upon the waters, bearing armies of men within their steel walls.

When in the early hours of the morning they had quite finished with him, Rand knew not whether privately they hailed him as a teller of wonderful strange tales, or as a liar without peer.

One again escorted by his fierce bodyguard, he was returned to the lodge, where he found Mokuyi and Helena unharmed and awaiting him with open arms. A mutual exchange of experiences convinced Rand that they must be in the power of some hitherto unstudied tribe of the far Northwest.

Mokuyi, however, was curiously silent as to this theory. When later they were provided with all things necessary to

their comfort on a rude scale, and given the freedom of the village, the Indian immediately circulated among the natives, with whom he soon seemed at perfect ease. . . .

True to the assurances of the venerable Sawamic, a feast and dance were given in their honor by the warriors responsible for their capture, to placate them for indignities they had suffered.

Around the great fire sat the copper-colored musicians; one beat the head of a great cylindrical drum, producing a rich heavy vibration which mingled with the gay squeal of reed flutes and the intermittent blowing of conch-shells in a strange pulsating cadence. The glistening naked bodies of the dancers leaped, postured and sidled to the rhythmic beat of the drum, or stiffened at the frequent overtone caused by the shaking of snake-skin rattles.

To three fascinated strangers watching and listening, it seemed almost as if time had been turned back a thousand years to a day when the free Indian nations roamed the deep forests and broad prairies of an undiscovered continent.

III

A LAND UNKNOWN

RAND and his wife were not unhappy in their enforced exile. The picturesque life of the Indian village awoke memories of the colorful past of their own land. Naked dark-eyed children, playing in the fortified village, hunters returning from the looming wilderness laden with wild game taken with the bow and arrow, ceremonial drums throbbing, lodge-fires glowing at dusk—all these fascinated both.

From that other side of savage existence, grimly eloquent of violence and death, Rand carefully shielded his young wife, taking care that she did not see those blood-stained trophies—enemy scalps, brought in on poles and dried before the lodges of the warriors; and there were ceremonies whose existence he tried to keep from her knowledge—scalp-dances and the occasional torture-rites incident to the capture of an enemy.

Helena soon learned the Indian tongue and many of their simple arts; and her ready smile dissipated the reserve of the native women.

It was Mokuyi who learned most about the land into which the tides had carried them. He in turn related it to Rand, who recorded it in the log-book:

Many days' travel beyond the Atali-Gwa, or Great Mountains, to their west, lay a great plain. On it lived the Red People, famed for horsemanship and the pursuit of war. On a plateau farther north dwelt the Apu-Tosupi, or People of the Cold. These resembled, by description, the ancient Blackfeet tribes of the old American Northwest. Of other nations Mokuyi spoke at great length—of the P'Saroki, the P'koni, the L'cota, the 'Sapwo—in all of which Rand fancied he could trace a resemblance to some American Indian nation. He was also forced to admit that this land was vastly larger than he had at first supposed, and in this Helena also concurred.

"It is not Nato'wa that seems strange now," she said to him one day. "But trains, telephones, great lighted cities—they seem so remote from us here."

Listening to the bass cough of some prowling animal beyond the palisade, the answering defiance of the wolves, Rand could not but agree.

Hopeka was a village of several hundred lodges, housing in all perhaps three thousand souls, of whom at least a quarter were continually absent on the hunt, or journeying by canoe between the various tribes. The Indian capital was situated upon the junction of two rivers, and by intelligent use of the skein of waterways which linked his mountain kingdom, Sawamic, the reigning ruler, had maintained a peace of several seasons. This, however, did not exclude frequent minor brushes on the rivers, between prestige-hungry young warriors of one tribe and malcontents of another.

The long-houses were all set in a great circle close to the palisade, facing the southeast—whence first rose the sun after the long winters. Thus, at the center of the village, as at the hub of a wheel, there was a spacious clearing on which were held dances, tribal celebrations and other more

barbaric ceremonies, in monument to which a grim scaffolding had been erected by the witch-doctors, upon which dangled countless scalps torn from the skulls of the foe.

The people called themselves Shoni, a shortened form of their original name, meaning League of the Kindred Tribes. This league was formed of seven tribes known as the Wanaki, Wacipi, Ionta, Tawiki, Tugari, Mioka and Otumi. Roughly translated, these became the People-of-the-Plumes, the River-People, the Pipe-smokers, the People-with-Their-Ears-Pierced, the War-makers, the Canoe-builders and the Cliff-People.

Boy-children, naturally, displayed an early aptitude in the use of the weapons upon which survival depended, and were severely disciplined in their use almost from the cradle. Even the Indian women fought boldly beside their lords in times of crisis, wielding the weapons of war with skill and dispatch. Hunting through the summertime provided meat for the long dark winters; and during the sunless winter night no one left the village except in an emergency; while all winter long the perpetual undertone of the drums was to be heard, keeping the Shoni in contact with the holy Sun until he should look once more upon his people over the rim of the southern horizon.

And when the savages returned successful from battle or hunt, the rivers would quiver to their blended voices raised in chant triumphant—the most stirring music Rand had ever heard, resounding in deep harmonious chords along the waterways.

Ancient and changeless, the life of the Shoni retained in a state of native wildness all the brilliant pattern of Indian existence. The natives addressed worshiped mountains in sonorous tones, talked with the stars before retiring, chanted to the hunter's moon a prayer for success in the chase, and daily the drums beat out their prayer messages to the Great Mysteries.

With the paddles stealthily dipping before and behind him, Rand experienced that same gripping fascination with the red men's way of life felt by the earliest explorers.

The feel of the stout bow at his back and the barbed arrows in his hand—which had replaced his exhausted am-

munition—discouraged any lingering doubt as to the reality of it all and keyed him to the pitch of the new life. He sensed the pagan beauty of it, and without being blinded to its cruelties, was caught up in its savage measure. So, in a sense, he became a part of a new Stone Age.

Naturally, all of this life, so unexpected and different from anything their wildest imaginings could have conjured up, alternately amazed and startled the white witnesses of it. All of it remarkably resembled the customs and ways discovered among the aborigines in America by the first white men, and strengthened Rand's growing belief that both were sprung from a common root.

At last he recorded his startling conclusion; legends of the Shoni origin, as he had it from them, spoke of a great continent lost beneath the sea which he had first associated with the lost continent of Atlantis, but later with North America. At any rate, he was now convinced that the Indian had not originated in Asia as was believed by some, but that the redskinned races found by Columbus had originated in this unmapped and mysteriously warmed land of Nato'wa far to the north, and migrated not across the Bering Strait from Asia, but southward from Nato'wa, via some land-bridge now destroyed.

If to Rand this theory may at first have seemed dubious, Mokuyi wasted no time in speculation, but slipped back easily into a life from which all the education in the world could never have wholly divorced him. To the white man also, this was life as he craved it.

Hunting, fishing, or traveling along the forest-darkened rivers of the interior, Rand observed a wilderness of amazing complexity, startlingly reminiscent of the gloomy equatorial jungles in South America. All along the rivers enmeshing riatas of wild vines cast their strangling clasp about the towering walls of the great trees. Sometimes, along the narrower streams, the Indians had to hew a way through the overhanging leafage, or go another way. Rich mosses grew over fallen trees and rocks like green tapestry; and travel was almost solely by water-craft, since the forests were all but impassable—treacherous with the rotting, spongy, yielding mold of centuries of decay. Very rarely, near a village, a

sagging vine-rope bridge spanned a stream for the convenience of the infrequent forest runners.

Of these journeys Rand kept a written record which rivals anything left by those early pathfinders of the New World, whom he must have resembled no little in his new attire of hunting-shirt, fringed leggings and cap of lynx-fur, and surrounded by the silent red Shoni paddlers, gliding along amid the oppressive quietude of those moist, cool humid forests.

He found cause to marvel at the grandeur of the countless waterfalls, the rushing rivers, and the smoking vents of volcanoes whose internal heat seemed to warm the ground beneath his feet.

If his reasoning be correct, Nato'wa had evaded the glacial ages which made life intolerable on the North American continent, repulsing the Indians time and again ere they could obtain a foothold. He credited the moderate climate and the dense vegetation to the protection of a northern mountain-barrier—from all accounts loftier than the Himalayas—to the wonderful influence of the summer sun, which did not set for months on end; to the pervading volcanic heat which, together with that unrecorded warm ocean current, tempered the atmosphere.

An accomplished naturalist, he was awed by the abounding wild life which quickened the forests. The Indians dreaded the giant brown bear as the Stone-Age Europeans once feared the cave-bears. Wolves, more fierce than those which once ravaged the outlying areas of the Old World, preyed on the defenceless, haunting the villages in winter—and woe to the lone and unwary hunter!

He was not astonished to find pumas in the new land, knowing that no other animal on earth has a range equal to this adaptable cat's; nor did reports of buffalo on the plains and in the forest to the west surprise Rand, as a scientist having knowledge that all bison are descended from a circumpolar species.

But other features of the new land were highly challenging to his imagination. Strange rumors reached him of ivory tusks, possessed by northern tribes, measuring twice the length of a man. Were the tusks from some such elephant-like monsters as were found in the asphalt pits of California?

An old Indian told him of a bird of prey, found only in the highest altitudes, capable of carrying off a yearling bear-cub. Could this be the Thunder-bird of old American Indian mythology? And the wolf of Nato'wa was of a giant species unknown to the naturalists of his day. Was it a relative of the Dire Wolf of antiquity?

The presence here of certain animals peculiar to Asia—notably the great blue-horned wild ox, the long-haired Siberian tiger and the snow-leopard of the upper mountains—led him to conclude that Nato'wa was the fecund, teeming nursery of the animal species which had once so abundantly populated the entire Northern Hemisphere.

Deer, elk and woodland caribou also throve nearer home, amid a hunter's paradise of fur-bearing animals; yet lacking canoes and the stout palisades which protected the villages, life for man must have been intolerable in those somber game-thronged wilds, for the preying animals, to whom firearms were unknown, had no fear of his other weapons.

The appalling toll of human life taken by wild beasts exceeded the worst reports he had ever heard concerning any land, not excluding tropic India at its worst. Tigers accounted for the greatest number of deaths, though bears maimed and disfigured many. Depredations by tigers or snow-leopards sometimes caused the evacuation of entire villages. Such man-eaters so dominated the lives of the people that often they scarce dared speak of a beast which personified the cruelty of the mighty forests round about them. Children were never left alone by the women, lest the dread cry "Guna! Guna! *Guna!*" herald the snatching of another life by one of the flame-eyed devils.

Rand's consideration for Helena, even more than the limitations imposed by the rigors of winter, put a limit to overlong journeys by foot or canoe; but painstakingly he recorded his thoughts on the probable latitudes in which he found himself; on the glories of the winter skies, filled with the fire of the aurora borealis; on the sonorous purity of the Indian tongues. Through all his writings runs his exultant, almost fierce gladness to find that the Red race was not approaching extinction, but endured in the land of its be-

ginnings in the old semi-barbaric way, unspoiled by the ways of more civilized men.

"Munro would revel in all this!" Rand exclaimed to his wife one day, while writing in his log-book diary.

"Poor Munro!" she murmured softly, with a trace of tenderness. "How he will be turning things upside down to find us! If only we could send him some reassuring message that we are safe!"

How rightly she read the absent man, who had loved her, just as Rand did, if less successfully—a man who for many years was to persist in the endless search for his lost love, only at long last to give up in despair, and then, by a remarkable turn of events, to gain knowledge of the accident to the *Cherokee*. . . .

I have said that Rand won the respect of his new and savage friends, the Shoni tribesmen. One there was, however, to whom the coming of the white doctor was a bitter pill.

This was Yellow Weasel, a young and ambitious savage but recently inducted into the office of witch-doctor. A wooden skewer pierced the septum of his nose, overbold in a face marked as cruel by close-set brooding eyes, which were framed between long dangling strands of uncombed black hair. A double row of tattoo-marks was imprinted upon his either cheek and etched in wavy lines across a receding forehead, while his thin lips made up in fierce disdain what they lacked in beauty.

Black-magic, necromancy and demonology constituted Yellow Weasel's strong points. His arms and limbs were horribly scarred by self-inflicted cuts, while one ear was perpetually unhealed of wounds given by his own hand to propitiate the evil spirits with whom he boasted communion. A dried human hand hung by a cord upon his breast, which was girdled by a string of human scalps. But of all the decorations which made him revoltingly hideous, none was more horrible than the thin and poisonous viper which formed a live necklace about his sinewy throat, its glittering eyes simulating a relationship to those of Yellow Weasel which he quickly turned to account, claiming the snake as his brother.

A strange and terrible figure, he looked at first with amazed

resentment upon the superior efficacy of Rand's medicines over his own charms, amulets, incantations, and the other superstitious adjuncts of his dark idolatry. Later on he came to hate all the newcomers with the implacable and rankling hatred of the aboriginal religious fanatic. His malignity was the more violent because the arrival of the *Cherokee* had interfered with his well-laid plans for recruiting new members into the secret Long-Knife Society, of which he was the leader, and through which he aspired eventually to replace and overthrow Sawamic by guile where he dared not employ force.

Of this enmity Rand had no suspicion; he had too much else on his mind.

Though the Indians were too polite to show outward curiosity, he knew that they wondered why a man should sit for hours bent over two squares of white paper, making endless marks with a curious colored stick; and again he experienced that sensation of unreality concerning this barbaric Indian culture.

Mokuyi, however, answered the voice of a thousand plumed and painted ancestors. Toward the end of the first winter the Indian responded to the call of his blood, taking to wife an Indian maiden, a handsome girl named Awena, daughter of an Indian chief Two Owls.

"I have found myself. This is my life, the old Indian way. These are my people. What should I want with civilization, when I can choose this life?" he asked calmly; and Rand knew that the words came from one in whom ancestry had completely dominated training.

His answer was the perfect expression of their unquestioning friendship:

"That is good, I think. Let's smoke a pipe on it."

Spring came before the first cloud fell upon the happiness of Rand and his young wife. Stunned by the knowledge that she was to become a mother, and with his arms protectingly about her, she told him of her fears, while tears trembled in her lovely eyes.

"A daughter of pioneers oughtn't fear pioneering on her own account. But oh, Lincoln, I pray it won't be a girl!" Choking momentarily, she continued: "Think of it—the wife

of a savage Indian hunter! Or if a boy, to grow up a naked savage, always in peril of a violent end under the teeth of wild beast or the tomahawk of an enemy—what a prospect! I love our Indian friends, but I dare not believe this child of ours shall be denied the rights and blessings of civilization, of our glorious America. I dare not!"

As best he could Rand comforted her; but he felt a foreboding of disaster seize upon him for an instant—a feeling of impending misfortune which he could not shake off.

IV

A RAID IN THE NIGHT

ALTHOUGH Rand would gladly have allayed his wife's fears for her unborn, twice within a month enemy warriors had fallen upon the canoe-men of Hopeka, killing several; and the mourning wails from various parts of the village were driving Helena into despair.

Nor was that all. Earlier in the week wolves had pulled down a small hunting party near by, and a panther had boldly entered the palisades village, seized a child near the wall and escaped with its unlucky victim. Then finally open warfare broke out in the northerly mountains; and exhausted runners, braving the dangers of the open forests, came fainting into Hopeka with the news that massacre raged up and down the mountain frontiers.

To the fatalistic Indians, such things were but a matter of course. Long habit had inured them to it all. But to a woman of Helena's sensitive refinement, they were highly exhausting to nervous and physical strength. More in order to comfort her than from any confidence in ultimate success, Rand and Mokuyi turned their hands to the building of a little ship in which, so they told her cheerfully, they would make their escape to civilization—though her husband often wondered how a safe passage could be made through the uncharted reefs, even were his little vessel completed.

Precisely how far he progressed with this project, the

records do not reveal. But his log for November 20th shows the following entry:

"Savage warfare continues to the west of here. Daily the canoes bring news that the snows are red with the blood of innocents. Though I doubt Hopeka will be imperiled, I am keeping Helena in ignorance of the facts until her hour of trial has passed. Mokuyi has not been here for days. The village is an armed camp, as if some unseen hand were stirring a hell's-broth of uncertainty and suspicion. I go now to get whatever news there may be, though I dare not leave Helena long in this approaching crisis."

On inquiry Rand found, however, that a measure of peace had descended upon the wilderness. This he conceived due to the strategy of old Sawamic, for which he gave fervent thanks. Little did he know that not twenty miles to the north the war-drums were in full beat, set to throbbing by Yellow Weasel's provocative haranguing that this was the moment for a trial of strength.

The wild wolves of the high hills, who had learned to follow the throb of the tom-toms, were gathering in hungry packs, waiting. The vultures wheeled in vast circles far overhead.

Into a world thus filled with the threat of bloodshed there was born into the drama of savage existence a little white boy-child, and for a month the happy parents rejoiced. Even though Helena's misgivings diminished for her the joys of motherhood, it came to Lincoln Rand that there were worse fates for a boy than to be reared an Indian. He pictured his son grown tall and stalwart and garbed like himself in buckskin, shod in deer-hide—but not by the wildest stretch of imagination could he have foreseen the strange future already beginning to spread out before their first-born.

In the most approved civilized manner Rand drew up and executed a certificate of birth; in the best civilized style the wee infant was swaddled, attended and baptized Lincoln Rand, Jr., while the interested Indians stood about in waving plumes and blankets, looked for the first time upon

a white infant, and found it, to their surprise, not unlike their own.

By the imperfect light of the village fires Rand took many photographs of his wife and baby, in order to preserve these happy hours for all time. But when he found time to develop them, he discovered to his regret that nothing remained of his photographic supplies necessary to this process. Accordingly he laid them carefully away in a light-proof steel box, locked and wrapped in deer-skin along with the birth-certificate, against the time when they should make good their plans of escape.

When the child was six weeks old, a great feast was prepared in the family's honor by Mokuyi, and over the little mite's head and smiling face resounded the chant of the Warrior's Song, reserved for men-children alone; while in sonorous, ceremonious tones, a medicine-man christened him Kioga, the Snow Hawk. This name was chosen for two reasons; his skin was pale, and one of those fierce white birds of prey had hovered over the village that morning. . . . The name was to prove more apt than they knew.

Scarce had that name been uttered amid these natal festivities, when high into the black heavens rose a pitiless, ululating scream, containing all that the human voice can express of murderous hatred. At the same instant two sentries near the stockade fell dead, arrowed to the heart. Then the stout gate crashed inward before the log battering-ram of the enemy, and a swarm of hideously painted warriors swept suddenly down upon the startled village, hurling themselves like naked devils upon the surprised Shoni, and voicing savage yells.

It was several seconds before the Shoni could reach their weapons; in that space of time dozens of their foremost men-of-arms fell to rise no more, while flames already licked at the near-by lodges, into which the raiders had thrown brands from the village fires.

Before the eyes of his wife, Rand fell with an arrow in his breast, and dragged himself to his feet and to the defense of his little family only to receive the crushing weight of a stone war-club full upon his skull.

Like the pioneer forbears to whom she was a worthy suc-

cessor, Helena rose to the occasion. As her husband's murderer bent to run a sharp knife about and rip away the coveted scalp, she put aside her tiny human burden. Seizing the club which the Indian had momentarily dropped, she raised it high and brought it down upon the base of the Indian's head. The savage fell dead across the body of the white man.

Then, sick with horror, Helena dropped to Rand's side and took the poor mutilated body to her breast. She had but a moment of heartbreak ere a naked painted form paused above her, and with a brutal deliberateness which was nevertheless a mercy, struck her down.

Meanwhile the Shoni were recovering their wits. The overwhelming wave of attack was beginning to break upon their fierce resistance. Under the leadership of Mokuyi, several score of villagers struck as one man, cut down all who stood in their way and rallied the other defenders with an ear-shocking battle-yell.

Suddenly the attack wavered, crumbled. The raiders fled as swiftly as they had come, and as they ran, were pursued and knocked down without quarter. All hell let loose upon the little clearing could not have produced the diabolical clamor resultant from the successful counter-attack.

When, an hour after the raiders had been repulsed, it came time to count the dead, scarce a family but had lost one of its circle. Warriors, women, and most pitiable of all, little infant children had shared a common fate. Of these the small son of Mokuyi was one, and the young Indian mother Awena bent moaning over the body of her lost baby.

At a glance, stricken Mokuyi knew the worst; but with no more than a word of sympathy, threaded his way stoically through the dead, identifying all he could, and composing the ghastly features. It was here he came upon the bodies of his friends, and read the tragic story of their end.

His eyes darted about, seeking the mutilated form of their little son. Perceiving it at last, he knelt beside it for the final visual assurance that it too was dead. But by some miracle the child lay unharmed and smiling amid that red and smoking saturnalia of death. Tenderly Mokuyi lifted it up in his arms and carried it to Awena, who took it to her heart

with that sad resignation of the Indian mother, to whom any child is better than no child at all.

Then back to the scene of his friends' death went Mokuyi, and stood awhile beside the mortal remains of those he had loved.

Deep, silent, noble Mokuyi, fine product of a dying race, a scholar in his own right! How short a time separated him from a life filled with the promise of the success which civilized men covet; yet how unerringly straight had been his reversion to the ways of his barbaric ancestors; for now, as he laid his friends to rest side by side, he added Rand's rifle to a quantity of food which he placed in the double grave, and, highest sacrifice of all, his own good bow and arrows.

Was not the long journey to the Sunrise full of hazard, and must not the souls of the departed be propitiated and and put at ease in their new Life?

None will ever know what other thoughts inhabited that alert brain as he covered the bodies with earth; but that they had to do with the log-book is certain, for when he returned to the village, he went to Rand's lodge and wrapped the book and sundry other articles in a skin. These he carried away and hid safely in his own lodge.

The village dead were separated from the enemy dead, whose bodies were loaded into canoes, taken down-river a few miles and consigned, with appropriate rites, to the water-gods.

The wolves came too late, and were driven off by the Indians with firebrands hard-hurled from the top of the palisade. But their howls in the surrounding wilderness and the occasional vociferous clamor incident to their capture of some straggling warrior, left behind by the canoes of the raiders, made the night hideous for hours.

Later still there was heard the rasping growl of a tigress padding stealthily over a fresh grave just outside the wall —such a grave as Rand would have chosen for himself, but never for the brave and lovely Helena.

V

THE PARIAH

THE little white stranger did not at once take kindly to his new life, and uttered vocal protests that astounded the mothers of the solid little Indian children.

"Who among your babes can cry so loudly?" demanded faithful Awena when her neighbors protested this ceaseless shrieking. "Already he has lungs of a three-summer child. Great camp-crier and orator he will be, one day."

"A strange one," they warned, "even to his eyes, color of new spring leaves."

"Such eyes has the panther," returned Awena. "And like Tagu, he will be a great hunter."

"Such an appetite!"

"Great Ones Above wish him to become of giant stature, greatest warrior in all Seven Tribes."

"When night-birds cry down on lodge, then he is quiet."

"Already he knows tongue of wild things," retorted Awena, undaunted. Yet between lullabies, "*Ai-i-i,*" she would whisper, "my pretty one, what *do* the owls say, what strange things tell thee?"

Old medicine-men, aware of the notoriety surrounding Mokuyi's adopted, and spurred on by Yellow Weasel, visited Awena, ostensibly on friendly calls, but really to verify strange rumors that were current as to the child's occult gifts.

A secret medicine-dance was held, whereat the evil spirits were exorcised from the absent child by burning a bit of his stolen clothing, or a hair plucked slyly from his head. At the instigation of Yellow Weasel, who had transferred his hatred of Rand to the shoulders of Rand's little son, it was decided to do away with the child, on the ground that its wailing would betray the village to an enemy.

Hearing of this just in time, Awena slipped from the village in the dead of night with her precious little bundle, and appropriating a ready canoe, fled for miles with wildly beat-

ing heart along the dark animal-haunted streams, to live with relatives in a distant village.

Returning by canoe from the north, Mokuyi learned of this, and went with unerring judgment straight to the lodge of Yellow Weasel.

"The adopted son of Mokuyi," he said calmly, "sees with eyes of his mother's restless spirit, which cries through his mouth for vengeance. He will live to punish those who wrong him." Then, drawing his robe about him, Mokuyi turned aside, having in his own peculiar way implied that Yellow Weasel's treachery was known. This threw the shaman into a fever of uncertainty as to the full extent of his knowledge—which was, in fact, not knowledge at all, but only distrust, and therefore suspicion.

Two weeks later Awena and her beloved returned, on a safe-conduct guaranteed by Sawamic himself, and for a time they were disturbed no more by the medicine-men.

Now Kioga, the little Snow Hawk, became abruptly silent, and Awena worried because he no longer wailed, for this is the way of mothers, red or white. Hour after hour he would hang vertically from the limb of a village tree, or from a peg hammered into the palisade, snug in his cradle-board, solemnly watching her go about her duties. But when the lodge-fires glowed warmly in the dusk, his large intent eyes always turned toward the mysterious forest beyond, and those eyes were plainly luminous, as with some strange sapphire's glow. This was the characteristic which first marked Snow Hawk as one apart and set the stamp of mystery on his pale little brow.

Scarce had he taken his first toddling step when the other children were warned away from him; and this was but the beginning of a long series of petty persecutions, all traceable to the artful Yellow Weasel, who carefully sowed the seeds of superstition which were to sprout and throw their shadows over the white child's entire boyhood.

Daily Mokuyi dipped little Snow Hawk into the cold waters of the Hiwasi. Beginning with his fifteenth month, he was compelled to sleep well away from the fire, for it is not seemly that a brave-to-be think too much of physical comfort. Later on, Mokuyi would let a white-hot pine-needle char

to ash on his own bare knee; nor was it long before the little Snow Hawk could endure the stinging pain as stoically as his foster-father. Often, while his son still slept, Mokuyi would voice the deep war-whoop of an enemy tribe. If the boy was not afoot, knife in hand in a second, he felt his father's keenest displeasure until he reacted to that dread signal instantaneously.

So Mokuyi hardened his foster son, teaching him to bear discomfort, pain and hardship uncomplainingly, as befits a warrior—and constantly to be ready for attack from any quarter by enemy tribesmen.

But as Snow Hawk grew, he asked a question that Mokuyi always avoided:

"Why do other children shun me, my father?"

"One day all will respect Snow Hawk, great warrior, mighty hunter. Await that day with patience."

Nevertheless the matter gave his foster parents much worry.

The Indian boys wrestled in teams, ten or more on a side. There were spirited foot-races in which all participated. There was the arrow-game, mock scalp-dances, the playing of medicine-man, mimic deer-hunts and the spinning of tops whipped with thongs of buckskin—but Snow Hawk played ever alone.

When he appeared among them, their various little cliques broke up to drift elsewhere, and reunite and continue their play where they had left off. As yet undismayed by something he did not understand, at first Kioga followed hopefully, hungry for the companionship of children his own age. But gradually he gave it up. A curious little droop came into his fine lips. He crept off by himself, a pathetic lonely figure, friendless but for the companionship of a little redskin named Kias.

Kias was always silent because he was deaf, having lost his hearing as a result of some early injury from which he was very slowly recovering. Kias and Kioga between them took the boyish oath of blood-brotherhood—not in spoken words, for Kias could not talk, but in sign language, their only means of communication.

But a time came when Kias and his parents moved to a

far village. When their canoe vanished round a bend in the river, in it, waving sad farewell to one whose name he had never so much as heard, went Kias, little Snow Hawk's one friend. Now he had only the crows near the palisade, with whom he exchanged calls and shared his corn-cake. These, together with an occasional hawk, fox-cub or lynx-kitten brought in by Mokuyi, were his companions.

From the beginning he displayed a remarkable vitality. He had walked at seven months, and run at fifteen. At three years of age he was a blur of active enthusiasm; at four he sped like the deer, bounding ethereal and light from winged feet into the air.

Physically he far outstripped others of his age. His arrows soared farthest and hit the target oftener. On one occasion he humiliated two of the other boys, defeating both at once by applying several baffling *jiu-jitsu* holds which Mokuyi had taught him. But all this only implanted deeper their hatred of him. Thereafter they were ever seeking to provoke a quarrel—but always *en masse,* like a flock of crows harrying a lone outcast in their midst.

When, on the advice of Mokuyi, he ignored this, they mistook forbearance for fear, and took to waylaying him in pairs and finally singly. One after another forced him to defend himself; and then, crying that he had given first offense, with the help of the rest thrashed him unmercifully. He took it all in silence.

Things went from bad to worse. Life became hell on earth for proud little Snow Hawk, for it was pride alone which stayed his hand, pride in Mokuyi's confidence in his patience, and in the fact that he, the lone outcast, had more moral courage than his hostile little darker brothers all put together.

Night after night he came home with bloody nose and bruised lips, constant reminders of unprovoked attacks upon him by the others. But Mokuyi was always there to reward him with lessons in shooting the arrow and throwing knife and tomahawk, in all of which the apt child speedily excelled.

To distract the boy's mind from his troubles, whenever possible Mokuyi also instructed him in the language and

social etiquette of his white fathers; and upon the walls of the Indian long-house the boy scrawled his earliest letters as he learned the fundamentals of the spoken and written word.

At first he hated this strange hissing tongue called English. He could not see why he, of all children, should be compelled to make these foolish black marks upon the wall, or learn rules of conduct foreign to the Indian way. But once he had grasped the wonderful and unsuspected utility of reading and writing, he learned very rapidly. Between his various escapades this teaching continued. So diligently did he apply himself that at the age of ten summers, without the aid of grammar or text-book, he could print any word he could speak, and his command of the English tongue was really remarkable.

One summer day the other boys were playing spear-the-hoop, with Snow Hawk, as usual, hugging himself with suppressed excitement on the sidelines. The hoop—made of withes fashioned into a circle and criss-crossed with strips of hide—chanced to roll far toward the other end of the village. Seven boys, one after another, cast their weapons, but missed the moving target.

Now Kioga, like the rest, had a beautiful spear, slender and true-cut, made for him by Mokuyi, and placed in his hands almost before he could walk. With it he had been wont to practice in secret. His skill was considerable.

Excitement broke the bonds of long habit. Seeing the hoop rolling past boy after boy, he drew back his arm and sped his spear away. A second later the rolling hoop lay transfixed through its center, pinned tightly to the ground. It had been a beautiful cast, worthy of a lad many years Snow Hawk's senior. For a moment there was a tense astonished silence as the others stared open-mouthed at the proof of his skill.

Suddenly, with an exclamation of outraged pride and indignation, another boy who had missed the target ran forward, drew out the spear, broke it over his knee and tossed the pieces far out into the forest.

Kioga was stunned by this calamity. All the accumulated resentment of months of undeserved ostracism burst into

flame. With lightning quickness he threw himself upon the one who had committed this outrage, and bore his opponent to the ground.

Now, fighting among Indian children, as among all lusty boys, was nothing new. But jealousy was an element present in this instance. So where under normal circumstances Snow Hawk would have been vindicated by his quick victory, he was soon squirming and battling as if for his life against the whole gang of them. Easily equal to his single older opponent, seven quickly overwhelmed the lone boy and beat him pitilessly to the ground, continuing their blows until he lay half unconscious.

Then they seized his quivering form between them and tied him to a tree well away from the village proper, but within the walls, half sick from swallowing his own blood, heart-broken at the loss of his prized spear. There they held a mock scalp-dance over him, kicked, struck and pricked the little prisoner with sharp pine-needles, threw stinging pebbles into his face and spat upon him, one after the other. Finally they crammed his mouth with earth and grass and departed, yelling derisively:

"White-skin! Owl-talker! *Ena! Ena!* Shame, shame! Hereafter play with the girls!"

And there he hung when Mokuyi returned from the hunt —uncomplaining, caked with dried blood, yet with a look of dull pain in his eyes which stabbed Mokuyi to the heart. When the cords were cut away, Kioga fell from limbs blackened and numbed by the prolonged constriction of his bonds.

But that Spartan training had not been in vain. Never a tear, a cry, or an expression of pain had his tormentors wrung from the little Snow Hawk. Shamed by their part in the affair, several of the boys made friendly overtures; but to none did he vouchsafe so much as a glance; he had been too deeply hurt, not only in spirit but in body.

As a result of the fight something had happened to one leg, leaving it all but useless. Despite every effort made by Mokuyi and Awena to effect a cure, it began to look as if he would be permanently paralyzed. In pitiable contrast to his former quick and active stride, he now hobbled about painfully and feebly.

To ease the burden of his disablement, one day Mokuyi brought a tiny bear-cub home from the chase. No longer did the society of the other boys interest Kioga as he crept away with his new pet, and played with it by the hour, alone.

At sundown the frantic mother-bear, bold and fierce, could often be heard raging outside the solid walls of the palisade. This continued for several months. And then one dark night in late autumn she succeeded in tearing a hole in a rotting log with her great claws, and recaptured her lost one, killing an Indian sentry, who would have interfered, with one raking blow of her huge paw.

Discovery of his loss left Snow Hawk disconsolate; for Aki, the cub, had been to him what a dog is to a lonely civilized boy. Of Aki he saw nothing for the duration of that long winter. But one day the following spring, as he lay in the shadow of the great wall, whittling a stick with his little knife of sharp flint, he heard a faint scratching and a low whine outside. Instantly he jerked to attention and applied his eye to a hole in the stockade near the ground.

Without stood Aki, once a tiny cub, now already grown to a sturdy two-hundred-pound yearling bear. At Kioga's low cry of welcome Aki reared, bearlike, and thrust a moist nose into a waiting friendly palm.

What passed between the little outcast and the eager creature of the wilderness depths remains forever unknown. But when Awena sought the pride of her heart, she found only the spot pressed into the new grass by his body—that and a hole in the palisade quite large enough for him to have wriggled through.

Two shadows had vanished together into the purple gloom of the forest.

VI

WILD BEGINNINGS

Deep in the thickets, boy and cub had a romp as of old before Aki led off on a trail which took them ever farther from the village. Soon again they paused to play, and in

the midst of a friendly tussling match Kioga felt the cub stiffen suddenly. A moment later a vast ink-black form reared to giant height in the undergrowth ahead.

It was a magnificent she-bear, a full nine feet tall as she stood erect, fiercely eying the little combatants. Long curved claws armed her ponderous paws, and her sharp dog-teeth gleamed big and yellow against the velvet of her lolling tongue. Behind her stood two other cubs about the size of Aki, their small eyes filled with curiosity.

Snow Hawk saw that armory of crushing teeth lengthen into the cavern of her mouth as the she-bear's lips twitched back. Aki scuttled toward the other cubs, bleating with fear of punishment.

Quick as Aki was, the she-bear, for all her monstrous bulk, was quicker still. She dropped to all fours. Her heavy paw caught him a blow across the quarter that sent him sprawling. Then, with her enormous head swinging close to the ground, her tusks bared menacingly, her great shoulder-joints rolling beneath her pelt, she advanced upon Kioga in a deliberate, ominous shuffle.

An ordinary child might have been stiff with fear. But Snow Hawk was nothing if not individual. He could never have escaped her by taking to his heels—he still limped too badly for that. Therefore he moved as quickly as he could, not away from the bear, nor to one side, but straight at her, uttering the while a shrill yell, doubtless calculated to frighten Yanu into a retreat.

Certainly more from astonishment than from fear, the shaggy beast drew back an inch before striking this absurdly bold little atom a light side-swiping blow which hurled him into the midst of her cubs. The irrepressible Aki promptly pounced upon him, starting a rough-house in which the other cubs instantly joined.

Had Kioga remained prone and suffered the brute to approach, she would have crushed his skull like eggshell, and there had been an end to him once and for all—for the Bear People have no love for humankind. But by his spirited temerity, the boy had turned that murderous determination into an uncertainty which merged into puzzled amazement when she saw that he brought no harm to her cubs.

Slowly she advanced upon the tangle of soft fur and brown skin. With a sweep of her paw and a warning rumble, she dashed the cubs aside and nosed Kioga over and over upon the ground, until thoroughly satisfied as to his apparent harmlessness. Finally with a gruff growl she sat down doglike upon her haunches, and with a dig of one paw unearthed a fat mouse for the strange little creature, and probably marveled at his stupid failure to seize and devour it.

Then she turned away with simulated indifference, to tear out the side of a huge log, licking up the insects she thus exposed. But occasionally she threw a puzzled glance his way as he renewed the interrupted game with the cubs.

That night, curled up against the warm arch of Yanu's mighty body, weary little Kioga slept the soundest of them all, secure beneath the menace of the great bear's guardian jaws.

When he would have gone back to his village on awaking, the bulk of the she-bear blocked his path. It was as if Yanu had decided that so long as he was in her care, no harm should befall him.

That Snow Hawk was a trial and a worry, there can be no doubt. He was forever stumbling into trouble. Too often she had to defend the little cripple with her fighting fangs from the prowling hunters of their joint domain, when he failed to slip into a protecting thicket on her growled order. At such times she punished him as she would one of her own. The blow of a mother-bear is no gentle reminder; he quickly learned to accord her the most perfect obedience.

Ordinarily, though, when she left her charges alone, she herded them up into a tree, out of harm's way. The cubs could climb the largest trees like cats, aided by their sharp curved claws. Kioga had to be carried aloft, hanging to Yanu's shaggy fur, and for a time clung to his branch so tenaciously that every muscle in him was cramped on her return. But the sight of the cubs pursuing one another all over the tree finally proved too much. Warily he commenced venturing out along his limb to join in the play of his furry companions.

To his satisfaction, taking his weight off the injured leg greatly relieved the ache. Moving about in the branches by

swinging hand over hand proved to be a means of locomotion that favored the painful member, which profited by the rest and commenced gradually to regain its strength. So began his arboreal apprenticeship, and it was not long before he surpassed the bears in climbing skill

Yanu and her kind led a restless gypsy life. In spring they visited the shallow streams to pounce upon the fat leaping shiny salmon. In summer they sought the wooded river-banks in search of berries. In autumn the nut-tree ranges on the sunny slopes lured them.

Ofttimes they climbed far up the timbered mountains to seek the perfectly preserved ice-killed elk and goat along the glacier-lines or the snow-slides, then back to the lower jungle again, rarely sleeping twice in the same neighborhood.

Such activity must have been severely arduous even for a boy with the full use of both limbs. But at the first sign of pain in his thigh, Kioga mounted upon the broad back of Yanu and rode on these far jaunts. So he came to learn the nooks, crannies, caves and hideaways within a radius of many miles—a knowledge that was one day to be the ransom of his life.

Yanu's knowledge of the wilderness was exhaustive. Much of it she had already imparted to her own young. With Kioga she had to begin anew, but soon he knew more than they. He lived as Yanu and her cubs lived, ate what they ate—nuts, plums, roots, herbs, mushrooms and flesh uncooked. But he drew the line at crawly things which the bears clawed from under dead stumps and licked up or devoured alive.

Example, repetition and a heavy paw were Yanu's means of instructing her human cub. Instinct, imitation and the deductions of an alert brain were the faculties enabling him to learn from her.

Toward the middle of summer Yanu escorted her cubs and Snow Hawk to a hidden little lake for instruction of another kind. Taking them one at a time upon her back, she swam out into deep water and rolled over without ceremony. Thus the cubs had their swimming lessons. The boy held back, but after a buffet or two he submitted to the ordeal though with very ill grace.

One day the wandering bears came to a stream in which otter were at play, swimming and sliding down a muddy bank into the water.

With wondrous grace and ease the seal-like animals sent their long and agile bodies through the water, while poised upon a rock overlooking their playground sat the sentry-otter, alertness personified. Slipping from Yanu's shaggy back, Kioga crept forward to watch them, followed by the cubs, every whit as curious and cautious as himself. Then an amazing thing happened.

With a startling suddenness a huge lynx bounded out of nowhere, to land heavily upon the great dog-otter; and for a moment it seemed that his vigilance had been slumbering. But now there occurred something both startling and instructive.

Scarce had the big cat's claws sunk in, when the otter retaliated with a vicious lunge that closed its own jaws upon the lynx's throat. With a thrashing twist the otter took hold and then, writhing, dragged its enemy over the bank into the water, which closed over the heads of both.

Twice the fascinated watchers saw the battle churn and seethe beneath the surface. Then, in remarkable contrast to its former arrogance, a bedraggled, screeching and frantic lynx tore itself from the clutches of the otter and fled ignominiously.

Other eyes—yellow, incalculably cruel, the eyes of a sinister jungle felon—had seen the lynx beat him to the spring. They were about to turn away, when Kioga's movements in the rushes brought them to a focus. Then, snarling ravenously, a wolf bounded from concealment, terrible in his gaunt ferocity, and a giant of his kind.

The snarl, vibrant with menace, together with the dog-otter's example still fresh in mind, sent Kioga leaping out over the water. In that fraction of a second the wolf detected Kioga's companions and snapped twice, in passing, before being carried into the stream by the momentum of his bound.

Meanwhile Yanu, hearing the cubs scamper to safety and the double splash that followed, came crashing through the willows to where, in a moment of carelessness, she had left

Kioga to his own devices. She saw the huge wolf break the surface, floundering and howling as if in the toils of death, but nothing was to be seen of Kioga. Yet beneath the water his keen little brain was at work, and had formed a cunning scheme by means of which to outwit T'yone until Yanu should arrive. Emboldened by the feel of the creek-bottom under foot, he gulped a breath of air each time the animal struggled to the surface, and then promptly sank, dragging his enemy down with him.

Caught unawares by this strategy, the raging beast's fury had already turned to panic. Snapping and biting fiercely, his jaws closed upon nothing more palpable than water, of which he had more than enough already. For the first time his wits were unequal to the combat. Ever weaker grew the struggles of T'yone; ever tighter became the grip of that relentless brown hand upon his tail.

By now Yanu had divined the situation, and plunging into the shallow stream, she seized the wolf's head between her mighty jaws and with a bite reduced it to jelly. To her surprise the animal was already all but dead. Growling, she turned to survey Kioga, who was scrambling up the bank. He bore not a scratch.

Between them the bears tore T'yone's body to shreds while Snow Hawk watched. His victory meant little to him, because it was overwhelmed in the thrill of discovery: water, which until that moment he had hated and feared, was something friendly, which not only slaked one's thirst and hid one's trail, but also preserved one from one's enemies. . . . When they had wrought their vengeance upon what was once T'yone, the bears faded into the forest with Kioga triumphantly astride Yanu's broad back once more.

Such was the story Mokuyi and his band found imprinted upon the soft mud beside the stream. Perceiving blood everywhere, and finding no little human footprints leaving the scene, the heartbroken Indian gave up the search. Slowly the canoe drifted away, carrying tragic news home to waiting Awena.

Never again did Yanu have trouble getting the boy into the water. He had learned another vital lesson, and thereafter perfected himself in the art of swimming upon the surface

and below, until he could plunge with scarce a splash or submerge almost as smoothly as a seal. In the summer when savage Suggema, the mosquito, became too fierce, he like the bears learned to lie deep in the woodland pools, with only the tip of his nose protruding; and he would follow Yanu across miles of streams or lakes in their long journey through her territory, without hesitation.

Nothing could have been more beneficial than swimming, in which his lame leg was exercised without strain. His recovery was now well advanced.

Occasionally mighty Yanu would bash in the head of a woodland buffalo with a blow of her terrible paw, for she was at heart a killer, feeling the lust for slaughter periodically; and of all his strange experiences, this made the deepest mark upon the boy's impressionable mind, implanting deep within him the desire to kill as she did with the weapons nature had given him.

All summer long the sun had not set, and life had been one long round of adventure and travel. But now the endless day was waning, as each hour the sun sank lower. The southern skies darkened from light orange to a warm blood red, grim harbinger of the sterner season to come. The forests became gloomier, the shadows deeper and longer. For the first time in moons Snow Hawk yearned to hear the sound of a human voice.

Yanu did not hibernate, but forging into the trackless mazes of the interior, paused only at the sunken forested valleys perpetually warmed by the hot springs—a place where the rigors of winter touched but lightly. Here the awed little Kioga steeped his leg daily in the steaming springs and like beasts of the forest, found surcease from pain, and eventually complete, permanent relief. Food was plentiful; but to get his fair share of it, Kioga had to pit his growing young muscles against those of the heavier cubs. Due to this, and the active, exhilarating life in the open, his growth received its first greater impetus, and he grew straighter and stronger and taller by far than when he had stolen from the village the previous summer.

Kioga's early ineptitude at climbing had disturbed the old she-bear. But now, with the return of his leg to normal,

he frisked through the branches with all the masterful certainty of a monkey, and calculated distances and other facts of the case with rare accuracy. He could drop from branch to branch with greatest ease, and habitually progressed from tree to tree, a thing the cubs seldom attempted for fear of Yanu's punitive paw. He dared dangerous horizontal leaps, and learned to judge the catapult action of a branch, to aid him in spanning ever-longer distances in a single leap.

Of course he sustained frequent falls, but wise Yanu invariably chose thickly foliaged trees with many branches in which to hide her cubs. On one occasion he missed every intervening limb during a fall, and only saved himself serious injury by grasping the top of a sapling in the descent, which bent and cushioned his fall, so that he touched the ground with little or no shock. Thus he chanced upon a trick which was often to save him injury in the future.

Thus the colder season sped by with little discomfort for those who knew the secret of the hot-spring valleys. Summer found Yanu ranging back once more toward the coast; and with the coming of another autumn, Snow Hawk discovered himself again in familiar territory, and amid scenes which called up memories of his loved ones.

He awoke suddenly to the realization that even Yanu could no longer prevent his return to Hopeka, for he could easily outdistance her by traveling along the lower branches of the trees.

Then, like a flash, he was gone, sometimes bounding along the animal trails he now knew intimately, sometimes hastening along the arboreal midway for miles at a stretch. It was not many hours before he came into view of the familiar stockade. Once so tall, it now seemed to him to have shrunk. His new strength enabled him to scale it with comparative ease. He dropped lightly from its apex into a group of startled villagers.

Then, followed by a string of the curious, he went straight as an arrow to Awena, who burst into tears of happiness at seeing him wholly sound again and so big and strong besides.

That night Mokuyi gave a great thanksgiving-feast; at it there was singing and dancing and telling of tribal tales,

than which none were stranger than Snow Hawk's—for he was required to recount his experiences in detail.

Wise old men nodded sagely, concealing their disbelief out of respect for Mokuyi, and because the meat was good. Among themselves they scoffed:

"The boy was with some other tribe. His tale is an invention."

"Hu! He has heard stories of Bear People too often. He has dreamed all this, while fasting to obtain medicine-vision."

But Yellow Weasel, who had made a special trip to verify those reported child's tracks beside those vaster prints of the bears in the mud near the stream—Yellow Weasel was silent. And his hatred of the little upstart deepened as he sought to plan his destruction.

VII

THE PRICE OF SURVIVAL

KIOGA knew that Yellow Weasel hated him—had always hated him—without understanding why. Puzzled, he began to haunt the shaman's lodge by night, and spy upon his doings from the smoke-hole. And he learned to reciprocate the witch-doctor's feeling cordially.

A master of primitive magic, the crafty Yellow Weasel would sometimes, to the wonder of the Indians, let himself be pierced with a spear, and command his wounds to heal without bleeding—which they apparently did.

One day, shortly after such an exhibition of magic power, Yellow Weasel heard roars of laughter proceeding from one corner of the village. By nature curious and suspicious, he made his way through a crowd of women and children who surrounded a small figure seated cross-legged on the ground. It was Kioga, the youthful magician.

A too-large cap of painted feathers sat precariously upon his head. One by one, to the delight of everybody, he imitated Yellow Weasel's sleight-of-hand tricks. At last, not omitting a single gesture, he sent the women into hysterics by solemnly duplicating the shaman's pet feat with the

spear, the while he muttered the appropriate mumbo-jumbo accompaniment, for theatrical effect. At sight of the furious medicine-man, he scampered off, leaving behind the prepared spear, thus exposing Yellow Weasel for the trickster and imposter he was.

So Kioga took up village life again, and thanks to his vastly increased strength, he soon won anew a healthy respect for himself, as well as a growing number of friends among those who once had avoided him, and also, in particular, among the older warriors.

Once Mokuyi found him banging away at a piece of copper, with a round stone. This metal, in small quantities of almost pure ore, found its way into Hopeka from the northerly mountains, to be laboriously cold-hammered and hand-fashioned into ornaments, knives and weapon points by the Shoni. Hawk was attempting to work it in imitation of a brave he had watched. But the process was crude. He hit his fingers as often as he did the copper; as is the nature of copper, it grew harder and less malleable as he hammered; and the resulting creation defied description.

"What do you make, my son?" asked Mokuyi.

"An arrowhead," replied Hawk, showing his handiwork with pride.

"Ah, a fine one too!" exclaimed Mokuyi, with never a smile. "But there is a better way." Whereupon he showed him how to heat the metal from time to time to make it more malleable, a method unknown to the Shoni. As Mokuyi beat it into a serviceable point, he also spoke of iron, and dropped a few casual remarks as to its hardness and manufacture by civilized men.

"He whose weapons were tipped with iron would be the most envied warrior in the Seven Tribes," he said in conclusion. He would have added more, but he did not wish to burden the boy's mind with useless information or create in it desires for things little Snow Hawk could never hope to possess. But that little seed of knowledge fell on fertile soil. Hawk smiled with an inward sense of superiority when he saw grown warriors beating copper in the old way.

And there came a time, long afterward, when Hawk's arrowheads were observed to be better made than those

of practiced men-at-arms. But much to Mokuyi's amusement, he guarded his secret knowledge so jealously that no inducement could wheedle it out of him.

Despite Snow Hawk's good resolution to remain at home, the wilderness was in his blood. The naked freedom of the village, which to a civilized boy would have seemed the ultimate in liberty, no longer satisfied him. By contrast with the life he had led, with the bears, the village seemed a cage. He would never be quite the same again.

Yanu had retired to hibernate, as she did only when she was to bring forth young. The cubs still roamed the nearby forest, self-supporting in their third year. Kioga divided his time between village and wilderness; and before he knew it, it was almost winter again.

Only a fierce flush remained of the sun in the southern skies. Up rose the red-yellow moon, ringed by an enormous golden circle, to flood the wilds with a brilliant pallor; and then the moon also waned, sinking its pointed crescent into the sun's vanishing refulgent path. It was a moon strange as only the Arctic moon is strange; for on touching the horizon, a bright field of light formed at its point, about which faint rainbows arched. As if this were not bewildering enough, mock moons appeared on either side, lending an eerie supernaturalness to a sky already weirdly beautiful in its mantle of vivid colors.

Then at last, came the wondrous Arctic night. The silver banners of the northern lights waved across the vault. Masses of living fire hung from the zenith, and snakes of writhing colors twisted across a sky ablaze with vivid light. As winter set in, this color play increased; multiplied tongues of crystalline flame darted across the heavens—and all in the dead, unspeakable stillness of a land gripped as by an enchantment.

It was the season of *Wani-tula,* of famine and the long dark, when children heard tales of evil *Yei,* bloodthirsty *Tchindis,* and bloodless *Weendigoes,* evil spirits said to hunger for human flesh. Now a warm fire and a comfortable lodge were welcome, as was the plenteous store of food laid by during the summer hunts of the previous year. Companionship, conversation with other human beings, soft-

ened the overpowering physical isolation which came on the land with the going of the sun; but when winter grew long, the Indians prayed for that vast red glare on the horizon, the blood-red band of light which heralded the return of their solar deity.

Out in the wilderness fierce beasts grew fiercer, killing in closer to human habitation. Spectral wolf-packs tore ravening along the warm blood-trail which must be held to the bitter end. Survival itself depended upon surpassing vigor in attack and lightning quickness in escape.

The young Kioga was a part of all this, and well deserved his name of Snow Hawk. He sensed the quickening savagery of the creatures of the wild, heard distant stags fighting with clashing antlers, and from a distant swamp a continuous fusillade, as of troops in battle—the cracking of the mud, riven by the bursting action of the frost.

Impatiently he had awaited the snowfall. When it came, he was gone into the wilds again on winged webbed feet—shod in the snow-shoes Mokuyi had made for him and taught him how to use.

Big for his age, he was dwarfed beside the powerful Aki, who was ever at his heels. But he was scarcely less shaggy, for he wore a suit of white fox-furs, and when he drew close about his face the fur cap attached to his collar, he became almost as well concealed by art as the animals were by nature.

Wandering in the snow with Aki was a fascinating pastime. Far ahead of him that wraith, which seemed pure fancy, was a white wolf vanishing over a hillock. That ghostly, almost invisible presence was a lynx, seeking prey invisible as itself. That voice without a body was a white owl speaking into the silence, and those two small red sparks glowing upon a treetrunk became, on straining the gaze, the eyes of a hungry weasel, also white—for many of the killers had changed into their winter coats, to go unseen in the snow.

Fresh from a writing-lesson beside the warm fire of Mokuyi's lodge, the young lad translated the most ancient writing in the world, a script imprinted by the feet of wild creatures long before man even inhabited the earth, a con-

nected writing that told of fierce battles and swift pursuits, ending in bold escapes or quick and merciless death.

The rug of the snow was interwoven with a thousand such tales; and unraveling the warp and the weft of wild life often led him many miles from the village. If his wanderings took him too far to return in time, he slept when Aki did, close against the bear's warm body. When he was not with this stanch companion, he sought some hidden thicket or cave, dug into the snow, rolled up in his furs and dreamed of the hunt.

He had learned much forest lore in his life with the bears during the summers; but he mastered the reading of trail in the book of snows. Here the broad pillows of a lynx's furry feet had supported it atop the soft snow in which a fox's paws would have sunk deeply. In and out among the thickets the cat had prowled, quartering every spot which held promise of a feast—and as always, a bloodstain in the snow and bits of scattered rabbit-fur told of its success.

Suddenly the tracks came to an end. Could the lynx have vanished into thin air? Precisely, for two widely spaced grooves in the snow meant that some giant bird of prey, perhaps the Thunder Bird itself, had swooped and borne off the struggling lynx to its own death—and another trail was ended.

There the broad pads of a prowling panther reached out in a long stride beside the old twelve-foot bounds of a white-tailed deer. Farther along the deer had paused, gone back to confuse its trail and darted on again. Suddenly the even, regular stride of the panther-tracks stretched out, the hind prints falling into those made by the fore. The stalk had begun.

A few seconds later the boy froze in his tracks as, from a windswept rock, the long gray shape of the killer suddenly soared out and down upon a deer crouching in the snow. Then Tagu, the cougar, buried his fangs in the spine, wrenched once, and it was all over.

Later that night Snow Hawk saw what he thought were more cougar tracks, but knew he was wrong when a second pair joined them in the deep snow—for Tagu hunts usually alone. They belonged instead to T'yone the wolf and his

hungry mate, and along the border of a stream Kioga verified this by detecting the claw-marks which are always absent in feline prints.

Blood in the wolf-tracks aroused his curiosity, and by back-trailing he read the story; the two wolves had attacked an elk-herd, and had been repelled by the sharp antlers of the mighty bulls.

Peculiarities of arrangement and spacing told the little trailer much about the marauder which had passed this way. If the forepaws lay parallel, the animal was probably a tree-climber—might even be above him, waiting to spring. If placed one behind the other, it was probably a beast confined to the ground. In the bounding creatures the hind-feet always tracked ahead of the forefeet; and Saki the otter often left the print of his entire body for all to see.

Here, again, are other tracks—mere deep holes in the snow, partially filled in. Whose? Perhaps a wolf's—but no: no wolf could make such a mighty leap as appears here; therefore a puma has but recently passed. Again Kioga sees what appear to be wolf-tracks, but which on closer examination prove to be the flatter, heavier sole-marks of a wolverine—identified by the fifth inner-toe mark, shorter stride, and a side-trip into a tree.

Was this mark made by coyote or fox? Both nearly of a size—but in the fox the tail-touch occurs regularly, in the coyote infrequently, in the wolf's trail never. Further, if an animal were trotting, the track would be in perfect register, the hind-foot falling exactly upon the fore-print; but if galloping, the tracks would be bunched together.

So the Snow Hawk learned the vital statistics of the wilds. These and a thousand other details he must master if he were later to be a successful reader of the trail, able to follow the chain of tracks, link by link, to meat.

Kioga lived these stories in the snow, oftentimes saw them enacted, and so learned more about stalking and killing than would otherwise have been possible. Moreover, he himself was one of the hunted and legitimate prey for anything which ate flesh—and those who trail, must expect to be trailed.

He looked down a thousand times into the hungry yellow eyes of T'yone and his bristling pack-mates, heard the long

sharp fangs click, saw the red tongues lolling, watched the panting breath rising in foggy jets from dripping jaws, and breathed in the dread smell of the killers. But old Yanu's teachings had endured. He never roamed far from cliff or from evergreen whose ledges or branches afforded greater safety.

And so he survived, learning as he grew. Despite these many other activities, Mokuyi continued his instruction in the language and manners of a race from which he was almost as remote as in one pole from another. So the long winters passed rapidly by.

Experience had not yet taught him to judge the age of a set of tracks, when one spring day he was following close upon the pugs of Guna, through a thicketed ravine. Several times he sprang to safety on some projecting rock to let pass T'yone or Tagu or others who would willingly have laid him low, and now in a tree overhanging the deep gorge, Jidamo the squirrel scolded him whose agile jumps all but equaled his own.

None of the wild folk pay much heed to the squirrels ordinarily; and little Snow Hawk, preoccupied with his trail-reading, paid even less. But when of a sudden Jidamo shrieked a warning, so attuned were the boy's senses to every note of danger that he never paused to look behind, but flung himself up and away to a farther ledge, with a quickness that proved him master of the finesse of balance and control. He was not a second too soon.

Beneath him came the hollow chop of clashing jaws, and a snarl, mingling bafflement with anger and disappointment. The great tiger whose trail he had been following too closely had charged, missed him by an inch and bounded past, a streak of orange and black.

Taut of nerve and quivering with excitement, the boy gazed down upon the animal now prowling beneath his ledge, enveloped in a cloud of vapor generated by those deep lungs, and with a growl snoring in that dark red gullet.

Now fear, with Kioga, was not all-pervading. Though it had been one of the first things taught him, his life was a constant series of alarms which but roused every nerve and fiber to escape, or to meet and repel danger if escape were

cut off. Thus he feared Guna, but had not been terrified by the tiger's charge; he was excited, but not panic-stricken by the sudden attack; he reacted not with the timorous shrinking fright of a deer, but rather with the prudent respect and wise caution which are the due of superiorly armed foes. Unfailingly he returned to examine the source of his alarm. Now, true to form, as the great long-hair paced furiously below, the lad pelted him with sharp stones.

Fuming, Guna leaped twice toward that ledge, but was met, each time, with a hail of well-timed missiles. So, snarling in impotent fury, he padded away to seek other and less elusive prey.

Snow Hawk did not at once descend from his rocky barbican. He owed his closest escape from extinction as much to good luck as to a comprehension of the warning of Jidamo. He was well aware of that. But the experience at once reopened in his mind the question: How did others in his forests make their miraculous escapes?

Skento the deer could evade peril long before it came upon him. Without having seen the tiger, a hunted buffalo would often gallop off before Guna was yet within half a mile of charging distance. Again T'yone might stalk an elk one day and never get near the prey; and the next day, by some caprice of chance, would hamstring the fat stag and bring him down. Kioga, watching the wolf at his bloody business, would wonder why the elk had not escaped this time, as he had a hundred times before.

Quite by accident the answer came to him this day as he made his way out of the ravine. He had almost grasped it, when he thought of the wolves whom he had evaded; and now the pungent odor of a skunk sent him circling far to one side.

Then, presto, he had stumbled on the wonder of scent!

To us, of course, there is nothing startling in the knowledge that animals are nose-keen. Little Snow Hawk, however, was but a child when he discovered it. Quick as any other wild thing in matters concerning survival, he realized that mastery of his sense of smell would double his chances of continued existence. And so the little savage began to strive to sharpen his nostrils.

It was no feat to know the penetrant reek of a skunk; but with this as a starting point he soon mastered others, beginning with the strongest scents of all, those of the flesh-eaters. More elusive were the delicate odors of the deer-family; most undetectable were the high-flung smells of the squirrels and the hunters who prowled the upper branches. But he could soon sniff and recognize them all, whether hours old or newly passed this way.

Many moons passed ere he could distinguish the fear-taint sent forth by frightened elk herds or beaver bands; but once having learned to do this, he had gone as far as human nostrils may go. Not even the wild animals seem to recognize the fear-taint of any species but their own.

From Yanu, whose nose was of a wonderful keenness, Snow Hawk learned how to wait at the higher end of ravines where the air-currents carried up the scent of man or beast below. Thus times without number the boy's highly evolved sense of smell saved him from danger which he could not see.

No longer did he wander the tangled trails aimlessly, as of old, relying on Yanu to grunt of peril. The direction of the breeze played an ever-increasing part in all his movements, as day by day the fine primeval adjustment of his nose developed.

So was added another factor to those which heretofore had enabled him to preserve his sleek hide against the grim forces of nature round about him. From now on he was on more equal terms with the creatures of the wild.

Game was abundant; and Snow Hawk fed well as a rule, for his hunting skill was now great. But frequently he fasted, starving his body weak and his brain into a feverish disorder, the better to obtain the medicine-dream or vision by which primitive man often regulated his every-day life.

In one such dream a white falcon—his namesake—appeared before him and talked, assuring him of its aid in the hunt. When he awoke, a hawk was winging its way up into the blue—a white hawk from whose wing a feather fell. Hawk carried that feather in his pouch for years as a talisman of good fortune. It was his lucky piece.

Sometimes obedience to these visions led him to do strange

things. He might abstain from eating off a new kill. Or again, he would seem to court death by taking risks with the animals of his forests which ordinarily he would have avoided. Thus, apparently without cause he often multiplied his perils to test the power of his "medicine"—his guiding spirit. Luck, and a cool audacious nerve in an emergency, preserved him. How much of this he owed to the confidence thus derived from outside of himself, remains unknown.

For a time he worshiped the heavenly bodies, and the elements. He painted himself carefully, and prayed with outreaching arms from some high bluff:

"Hear me, O Holy Sun, hear my prayer! Make me brave. Make me strong. Make me tall. Protect me. It is Kioga the Snow Hawk who asks this—Kioga, son of Mokuyi. I dwell at Hopeka, in the fourth lodge, in the second section off the dance-ground." Repeating his name to make certain the deity would know who prayed, he concluded: "Rain, water me. Earth-mother, feed me. Moon, light my way. Behold my scars! By them ye may know me. It is Kioga who asks it—Kioga, son of Mokuyi. Hear me. Hear me!"

Poor little pagan! It was thus he first groped toward an understanding of the Mystery of Whom the Indians spoke so reverently. In time he came to feel that these lesser gods were not all, but merely evidences of a greater Power. We know it as the Almighty, and approach through love and faith. He knew it only as the Mystery, and approached through sacrifice and self-denial.

VIII

IN THE CAMP OF THE ENEMY

No happier boy than Kioga the Snow Hawk ever ran wild amid the tangled windfalls of down-timber and the labyrinths of lairs, run-ways and ambushes that choked the forest floor near Hopeka.

Nature was doing her best to give him the stature Awena had predicted for him. Already at eleven he was a strong young animal, with sinews of rawhide and wire beneath that

sleek brown hide, already scarred in twenty places by the fangs and talons of his enemies. He had the quick strength of a jaguar. His jumping powers were a study in elevation and altitude. In cliff or tree he was as keen-sensed and acrobatic as any lynx, flitting from perch to perch like a body without weight.

Rarely did he now follow the bears along the trail. He preferred to swing rapidly along by the strength of hand and wrist, just under the overhang above the streams, where he could glance down and see his reflection in the water. Thus, long ago, he had learned to avoid the grim underworld of the thickets, and the assassins who inhabited it.

No doubt it had at first seemed fitting to Yanu that her strange cub should become a perching animal, like the bears. But now, like a bewildered hen that has hatched a strange egg, she watched him uneasily. It was long ere she could accustom herself to seeing a resilient limb bend almost double beneath his weight and hurl him bodily several yards through space to another perch. Climbing was one thing—flying was another!

The boy had an owl's hearing, the nose of a wolf, a fox's cunning; he combined the streak-like agility of a mink with the noiseless tread of Tagu himself. A tireless runner and climber, the lad had made a place for himself amid the animal legions, had joined the renders of flesh, and his life was packed with thrills and excitement. The shaggy bears tolerated him with more patience than he deserved. But they were not above snapping viciously an inch from his throat when he tweaked an ear or yanked their fur once too often. Even Yanu was no exception to this.

But over Aki he exercised a tyrant's sway. No act of his was wrong to Aki, no other allurement so pressing that the giant bear would not yield to the boy's wishes, worshipfully submissive, yet never abject. Aki could walk upright like a man, and all but think like one. He was an animal of many characters:

King of the wilds, yet slave of a boy; a swashbuckling hooligan ever in search of diversion and fun, but a murderous fighter if need arose; regal and dignified one minute, carefree and clowning the next, but in loyalty constant as the

sun—a fit companion and defender for the little man-cub. In his company Kioga waxed ever bolder.

He had slain his second wolf, and an old panther from a cliff-ledge over a well-traveled trail. Of late he wearied an aging tiger in a near-by ravine with his futile efforts to impale the huge beast upon his little spear from some lofty vantage point. In his seventh year he had seen his first bear concourse, whereat all the bears for miles around gathered. Many a hunter's skin had crawled when peals of treble childish laughter, or the sweet plaintive piping of his little flute echoed eerily from some wild dark glen, mingled with the hoarse snarling of the Bear People.

Ordinarily the boy was seldom beyond striking distance of the Indian village; rarely was he absent more than a week at a time. But there came a time when Yanu, tired of her present territory, craved a change. At the head of her little family she forged through stream, lake and swamp, nor paused until she saw the open prairies stretching out before her.

After some indecision Kioga had followed the bears, and finding himself in the vicinity, decided to have a look at the Great Plain. He had always felt a keen desire to look upon the dreaded plains warriors who sometimes raided and pillaged the villages of his people.

The old bear immediately set about stalking a bison; and the cubs accompanied her, all anticipation. But Kioga, having fed to repletion on the nuts and fruits he found, left the bears and climbed to a commanding ridge overlooking the plains.

Here for hours he lay at ease, his blood athrill to innumerable herds of buffalo that moved in the hazy distance. A pair of hunting eagles circled high above, no more wild, free and questing than this naked brown boy whose vivid eyes swept every hollow and bluff for a sight of the hated Wa-Kanek. At last, far in the distance, he saw what looked like smoke. He set out toward it, and in two hours he was close enough to that smudge to look down upon a Wa-Kanek horse-hunting camp.

It consisted of several semi-transparent tents of new white buffalo-hide already beginning to glow red from the fires within. A small band of horses were tethered at one side of

the tents, within a wall of high-piled thorny brush. Horizontal pole-racks were heavy laden with strips of buffalo-meat drying in the autumn sun, already beginning to lower behind the southern mountains. From time to time one or another of the Indians would turn the dry meat.

Before the largest tent stood a rack upon which a battle-shield hung, reflecting the dying light of the setting sun; and on the tall pole near by dangled a dozen human scalps, grim trophies of a battle and a killing, perhaps a few hours before.

Bloodthirsty savages? Perhaps. But the wars of the Indians were little more than a series of skirmishes and individual encounters—a savage game conducted almost solely for glory and prestige. Eighteen or twenty warriors had died under tomahawk and scalp-knife in this battle, that their names and deeds might become glorified in song and in tribal story.

On the other side of the earth that same night, uncounted thousands of men lay dying in agony beyond description on the battlefield that was France, as poison-gas and chemical devoured flesh and bone. Numberless women, children and aged perished under missiles hurled from engines high up in God's sky, by so-called Christian men; and unnumbered others were torn into shocking, grisly things destined to haunt the earth and the eyes of men until they died—and to be all but forgotten afterward. Such were the works of Kioga's own race—civilized men. . . .

Over the Wa-Kanek camp hung the haze of the campfire smoke, lending a disarming, sleepy air to the scene. But suddenly one of the Indians spoke to a companion, and pointed to a faint whirl of dust out on the plain, which soon enlarged to a great moving cloud.

Snow Hawk had not long to wait after that before the scourges of the plains swept into view—a band of forty mounted warriors, hot on the trail of a galloping herd of wild horses. The Indians of the camp leaped into the saddles, and yelling and waving their gaudy blankets, dashed out to head the herd off.

These were such mounts as might have borne the Indians of America had not the parent species become extinct long before they had evolved to the size of their surviving rela-

tives, or the Spaniards had brought these relatives to graze upon the plains of a New World. They were a breed differing from any horse known to modern natural science. In shagginess of coat they seemed akin to the wild Tarpans of Tartary; but no Mongolian wild horse had ever the flowing mane, nor the splendid height and temper of these swift coursers of Nato'wa, bounding along lightly as deer, as if unconscious of ground under hoof.

The small heads, widely flaring nostrils and sharp ears lent them a closer resemblance to the Barb, or the noble Arabian. Short-backed, long-haunched, deep and powerful in the shoulders, with tails carried high as plumes when in motion, they raced with high-stepping strides behind their regal stallion leader.

And now, fast behind them, with lazily spinning lariats, came the Indian horse-hunters. Between these and the blanket-wavers, the herd was quickly ringed and tied down by the relentless hunters on fresh mounts. After this selected animals were roped out, hobbled, blindfolded and then broken to the uses of barbaric men. . . .

All that day and the next, the fascinated Kioga watched these proceedings from his eyrie high above the plain. Most of all he marveled at the amazing feats performed by the Indians with those snaking ropes, into which their lean hands seemed to put intelligence. He noticed that some of the ropes were taken into a certain tent, and when darkness approached again, he had made up his mind to rearrange matters of ownership so that one of those remarkable weapons should become his own.

The sun would remain below the horizon for but a few hours, three at most. He had, then, two hours of dusk, and about an hour of semi-darkness in which to work. Descending to the plain, he slipped without mishap into the camp, wiggling on his belly like a snake, and keeping in the shadow cast by the brush wall wherever possible.

His heart came up into his throat when a horse nickered, but the sound gave no alarm to the weary hunters cooking their meat over the fire not fifty steps away. He had another bad scare when a warrior came near; but he escaped discovery by slipping beneath a long shield that lay where it

had fallen from the saddle-hook. The Indian picked up a rope within reach of Kioga's own arm and returned with it to the fire.

Thereafter, if that shield moved very slowly toward the tent where much of the hunting-gear was kept, no one noticed its extraordinary animation. In a little while Kioga had worked his way to a point where the tent was between him and the fire, hiding him from view of the diners.

A moment he listened to the heavy snoring of some exhausted Wa-Kanek within, then lifted one side of the tent and slipped under and in. Suddenly he stiffened as the sleeper moved and ceased snoring. Though the man did not wake, he had turned facing the alarmed intruder; and thus for another precious half-hour they lay, the Wa-Kanek at rest, Kioga tense as drawn wire and with hatchet raised, ready to deal death if the need arose. At last the sleeper turned once more and was soon snoring; and the boy drew a deep breath of relief.

Quick as lightning now, he grabbed up two hair ropes and a leather one; then another object came under his seeking hand, and he seized that too. Casting a sharp glance at the sleeper, he now withdrew as he had entered, and began inching his way back to safety beneath the shield, with one anxious eye ever on the figures around the fire.

He caught a whiff of savory broiling meat, and realized suddenly that he was famished. Only a slight change of course brought him near the meat-racks. Awaiting a favorable moment, he reached up, snatched one of the hanging buffalo strips, and in the wink of an eye was back under the shield and taking his first nourishment for more than twenty-four hours.

As he edged toward the brush wall, he could hear the hunters laughing as they ate; another minute or two would have seen him safe and away. But at that moment the Indian who had passed before returned to hang up the rope which he had knotted into a sort of hackamore—when his glance chanced to fall upon the long shield, which on his previous visit had lain twenty feet nearer the wall.

Amid the perils of nomad life, no man can afford to overlook the slightest departure from the commonplace. Doubt-

less the shield had been moved by the sleeper in the tent; but already the savage's eyes had narrowed, his hand gone to his tomahawk.

Kioga, watching with beating heart from under the shield's rim, knew that discovery was now unavoidable; but though dismayed, he retained his presence of mind. As the Indian drew nearer, he tossed a stick some distance beyond him, and at the noise of its fall the warrior wheeled in swift alarm.

Kioga was up like a cat; twice he had plunged his flint knife deep into the enemy's body, before the warrior realized he was attacked. Then, tripping upon the falling man, Kioga hurled himself headlong over the barrier of brush and was gone. Behind him he heard the yells of his victim, and then pandemonium as the knifed brave was discovered, with other evidences of Snow Hawk's lone raid.

With early dawn, Kioga found himself beyond immediate pursuit—and the owner of three ropes, two of light horsehair and a heavier one of leather, strong enough to stop a wild stallion in full gallop.

His first thought was to vitalize the noose and keep it spinning after it had expanded into a loop, just as the Indians had done. Knowing nothing of centrifugal force, and even less of the principles of roping, he found this difficult. But he persisted day after day in his practice, until he could cast a noose with some accuracy over a dead stump.

The other object he had acquired was a plaited leather pony-whip, some six feet long, with a stout leather stock. For this he could perceive little use unless one owned a horse; he tucked it into his quiver as a trophy of his raid, to be shown to Mokuyi on his return.

Having acquired a certain dexterity with the rope, he finally decided to try his skill, and waited on the ledge over a trail until a deer appeared. By good luck he had roped it successfully, but in his excitement forgot to retain hold of the free end of the lariat. With a wild bound Skento cleared a six-foot fallen tree-trunk and vanished, taking the rope with him.

Snow Hawk was after him in a hurry, but he had not yet reached the point where he could match strides with Skento. Chagrined and disappointed, he returned to where

he had hung the other two ropes, and tucking these under his belt, returned to the Shedo-wa, determined to capture a horse to go with the pony whip, and mayhap even a buffalo. But though he crept upon the herds for hours, the fickle plains breezes always betrayed him to the buffalo, and they galloped off.

On his return, he did succeed in ambushing a calf on its way out of the hills, and dropped the noose over its head. Now his victim would not so easily escape, for he had tied the other end to his waist.

One long moment the calf shook its head, reared and kicked at the strand that threatened its liberty, and then pounded bawling away. Confidently Kioga braced himself against the shock as the rope paid out. But he had overestimated his own strength. He was jerked from his feet with a suddenness that almost cut him in two, then dragged a hundred feet before he could free himself of the strand tied about his waist. Bruised and bleeding, he returned disconsolate into the forest minus his second rope, the longest of the three.

When Snow Hawk located Yanu and the cubs again, they were in favor of eating the remaining lariat, for a bear loves to worry at anything tough, and sharpen its teeth upon leather like a dog with an old shoe; but this Kioga would not allow. He had grander schemes in which the rope was to play a vital part. One of them was to rope from his canoe and drown Yellow Weasel at the edge of the river some dark night.

And so he returned to the village, bearing the trophies of his raid to parade before Mokuyi and Awena, and to flaunt before the envious eyes of the other boys who belittled his unquestionable feat by asking one another:

"Why, if he overpowered a Wa-Kanek warrior and raided enemy's camp, did he not bring home scalp in proof? What good is rope?"

"Think you that with scalp I could stop enemy—thus?" demanded Kioga, as he deftly looped his noose about the ankle of a running boy and brought him crashing to the ground. "Or stripe him like Guna, thus!"—applying the lash with whistling force upon the shoulders of some one-time per-

secutor. "*Hoh!* Scalps for ye, my brown children! But know ye not that I am no man-child? *Kyi,* I am of the Bear People, and we of forest leave scalps for children of village—and for vultures!"

Such words struck awe into the hearts of his younger listeners. They were beginning to believe the strange tales that were told concerning Snow Hawk around the lodge-fires at night, to believe that he was bewitched and half-animal, half-man, as the day is part light and part darkness. He must have the power to change his character, once in the forest—else how account for the rumors about him and the bears? So they ascribed to witchcraft what they could not otherwise understand.

Nevertheless, what with his new possessions, Kioga became a more welcome playmate.

"Come, run and shoot with us," urged the older boys, one eye on his rope and lash; while those younger than himself, to whom he now was something of a hero, pressed him: "Be on our side! Be on our side!"

Kioga read the minds of the former, and for a time basked in the warmth of his new popularity among the latter, allowing his heart to expand to the influences of friendship among the other children; but even this novel and delightful status soon palled, and ere long he heard the voice of the forest, with all its denizens, calling again to him.

IX

MIKA

Too long among humans, Kioga the Snow Hawk now wended his way toward the palisade. When no one was near, he sprang like a cat into the branches of a tall tree near by, and with a single swing was over and gone. Dropping lightly to the ground outside, he headed toward a spot where he had watched a spider construct its web a week earlier.

As he went, he played with his rope, tossing it over every stump or boulder within reach of its forty-foot strand.

In a dark and forbidding grotto, surrounded by protecting

thorns, he found the web, and for an hour lay belly down, watching the spider's every move, pondering the strange ways of a world which equipped a mere spider so well, but left man at the mercy of his own carelessness.

"Like Su'kashe," he mused aloud, "I am also great climber. But when I fall—*ai!*—I fall! When he falls, his thread catches him, and he climbs back to spot he fell from. I scrape my bones. Su'kashe is not even hurt."

Suddenly the handsome lips ceased moving. A curious intentness came into the fine eyes, and a furrow of concentration appeared between the black brows; his thoughts were darting from the premise to the conclusion of an arresting thought.

Never had he moved in the tanglewood, thought Kioga, without his being followed by something. Even now a squirrel peered down from overhead, scolding; in yonder thicket a fox spied with bright eyes, and he knew that there were many others he did not see.

Hoh! It would be different now, for he had had an idea. With a toss, he managed to get a small noose up over a dead branch. Then he swarmed up the strand, hand over hand, disappearing in the enveloping foliage.

Now, like Su'kashe, he would fall, and by holding tight to his rope, reach the ground unhurt. But he reckoned without friction; and after the first slide his hands were burned raw, precluding further experiment for the time. But he was soon at it again, having provided himself with little leather pads which enabled him to break his swift slide downward, and alight without jar.

In the process of this new game he learned that an initial push would set him swinging back and forth, an exhilarating experience which he quickly made more so by increasing the arc of his swing. Slowly he mastered the laws of swinging and falling bodies. Before the month was old, he could toss the noose from cliff to limb, swing, and alight high up among the branches of some other tree beyond.

Once, while playing near the top of a cañon, he threw the loop from his ledge clear over the stump of a stunted tree forty feet to one side. It was a fine cast, of which he was instantly proud—so much so that he never noticed a beautiful

marbled shape that came slinking around a trail and froze to rigidity at sight of him. It was a great female snow-leopard, glowering up at him with fierce cruel eyes above fangs long and sharp as daggers, a killer to be dreaded little less than the tiger himself.

Ordinarily she would not have assailed one who was known to travel among the bears; but here he was alone, a welcome dainty ripe for her talons. Gently the muscles glided under the perfect black-rosetted hide, as the heavy hindquarters edged up under her like compressing springs. In two jumps she would be at his throat.

Then, quick as the flash of lighted gunpowder, she sprang.

Kioga glimpsed her as she launched into the second and decisive bound. A quarter of a mile lay sheer between him and the bottom of the cañon; it was eighty feet to the nearest hand-hold—and the leopard was streaking up the very trail he had used. But in his hand was the rope, in his mind instant decision. As she flashed up over one end of the ledge, Kioga took flight from the other, described a sickening giant swing under the stunted tree to which his rope was still fastened, and dropped, scared but safe, upon the distant shelf. He still clutched the rope, and was no less astonished than the big leopard who had counted him easy prey, only to see him slip from her clutch like some wild bird.

This almost miraculous escape seared into his mind the conclusion that a rope had many possibilities, and focused his attention upon it with new interest. Throwing a noose upward was always a difficult feat. Moreover, any loop was more suited to horizontal throwing in open spaces than in the tree-crowded forest or from a narrow ledge. Already his noose was wearing thin, and might one day drop him unexpectedly to earth.

But he could not abandon the idea of soaring in great gyres, like a wingless bird; and at last he devised something superior—a three-pronged hook, made of horn bound with deer tendons, reinforced with stout hickory and curved like the claws of a tree-sloth. This was affixed to a handle, one

end of which carried a stout bone eyelet, through which he passed the rope, tying it securely.

When he tossed this grapnel-like object up into a tree, the rope followed like the line behind a hurled harpoon. No amount of tugging would release it from the branch into which it bit, so long as the rope remained taut; but by sending an undulation along the slack, the bone points could be made to release their hold and the hook to fall at his feet.

This grapnel gave him independence of dead or rotting limbs, and made every branch or ledge an anchorage under which to make long dizzy swings to neighboring ledges or trees, either from the ground or from other starting-points. It was, he soon found, a thrilling sport, but entailing certain hazards.

He who would climb must learn to fall, and Kioga had early acquired the knack of twisting in midair to roll out of a dangerous fall, as a gymnast does—though no gymnast could lay claim to the agility of this supple brown boy.

The rope now vastly enlarged the sphere of his activities; and he learned to coil it as he climbed, in order to have it all ready for another throw. The grapnel hung at his belt when not in use, a formidable substitute for a war-club.

Great accomplishments often have lowly beginnings. It is unlikely that man ever before put a piece of rope to such manifold uses as did this Ariel of the forest midway. From the spider he had taken the original idea. Now, adding the ingenuity of a keen imagination, he found himself owner of a device whose uses multiplied with practice.

Up his new creation he could mount into tall trees which hitherto had defied climbing. He could swing silently across lofty space between the forest giants like some adept on the flying-trapeze. Scarce a cliff upon whose face the grapnel could not find some hold, enabling him to perform hitherto impossible feats of scaling. In time he learned to place as much reliance upon grapnel and leather as the Alpine mountain-climber does upon alpenstock and rope.

Much later he discovered another sport. Over a deep pool of which he knew, a great branch thrust out at a good

height. From this he often suspended the rope, allowing its end to touch the surface of the water below. Between swims he climbed the rope to varying heights and then dropped off into the pool. He picked up other tricks. Best of these was to take the hanging end of the rope to a high rock bordering the pool, swing away out, and at the top of the swing let go, entering the water head- or feet-first. So he learned many an athletic feat of dexterity and agility—which civilized boys learn at the community gym and swimming-pool; and some besides which they never learn.

Soon he plaited another and longer rope to match his growing skill in the giant swing. The bears never knew when he would plummet suddenly into their midst out of nowhere, or swoop shouting past overhead and as suddenly vanish; and in Snow Hawk's terrific velocity inhered another possibility which, unsuspected at this time, was to be a mighty fighting asset in years to come.

When not with the bears he spent much of his time far from the forest floor. True, even in the cliffs he was exposed to a certain peril, for leopards and pumas are good climbers, and the dread wolverine is a fearful antagonist. But he distanced them all when he climbed to the remote heights of the giant redwoods, where, four hundred feet above the forest cellars, he was comparatively secure. The interlacing tops of the giants formed a swaying billowing canopy over the lower levels, offering haven at all hours.

Much to Kioga's regret, Aki, with his growth, showed less inclination to climb, though he was always to be found near where the boy had left the ground, and always responded to a whistled summons.

But for a discovery which Kioga made in the high cliffs, his sojourns up there must have been lonely ones. In a deep cañon he came upon the body of an old female puma. Frequent contact with dead creatures had schooled him in an uncommon knowledge of wilderness necrology. To his practiced eye it was plain that she was dead of a long fall. He also noted with interest that she had not long ago suckled cubs.

He was some time locating the high den from which she had fallen, but he reached it finally by lowering himself

down his rope from a jutting rock along the face of the cliff bordering the cañon. Entering the den all caution, he found a cub newly dead, probably from starvation, for bones littered the den, gnawed clean and white. But all was not death in that rocky cave: from its dark recesses life, hatred, fear and unconquerable savagery burned forth out of a pair of circular greenish orbs that never left his own, while a muttering snarl purred up a high unbroken challenge. And as his eyes accustomed themselves to the gloomy interior, he saw the bared needle-like teeth of a cub, which was emaciated by hunger, lean as a rail and too weak even to sink its fangs into his hand.

Moved to pity by this spectacle of impotent ferocity, the boy went out, returning with a rabbit he killed with an arrow. Piece by piece he allayed that ravenous bundle of hunger, and soon the little cat showed gratitude by biting and clawing at his wrist.

Twenty pounds of unwilling young panther was not to be forcibly borne up a rope at an altitude which had made the slight misstep of its mother fatal. Nor could he let the creature starve to death. So he brought it meat, and in a few days the little demon received him with a sullenness that was cordiality itself compared to that first reception.

After two weeks it tolerated a handstroke, and in a month it showed a grudging affection, actually purring over a kill he brought in. Thereafter the successful wooing of Mika the puma-cub was assured; and soon it rolled gamboling about the cave, all lithe kittenish grace.

Daily its weight and strength increased. Foreseeing greater trouble if he waited longer, Kioga made a cage of branches lashed together with thongs, lured Mika into it with a piece of fresh meat, and hoisted cage and cub to the top of a cliff.

About Mika's neck he put a woven collar to which, after the cat had bitten through a rope leash, he attached a wooden handle as long as a walking stick. These precautions were hardly necessary, for the cub was still dependent on him for food, which it had not yet learned to kill.

This ignorance remedied itself after Kioga slipped him free at a rabbit which the young puma crushed with a pounce.

Thereafter the boy unleashed him daily, and Mika got his girth on the fruits of his own killing.

But a habit had been formed. He followed Kioga everywhere with the extraordinary tireless vigor of his kind, a welcome companion—but not to the bears, who repulsed him regularly. Gone now was Mika's pitiful thinness. His forequarters developed the thick and massive muscularity necessary to all climbing hunters. The dusky body-spots and dark tail-bars of cubhood gave way to a rare and richly beautiful coat of silver-gray, pure white on the under parts. His tail thickened to a restless cylindrical club; later indeed, at full maturity, he was to weigh nearly two hundred pounds, at a length of ten feet.

One glimpse of the laughing black-haired boy striding into the village, braced back against the straining, ferocious panther, threw Hopeka into a wild excitement. But the Council forbade Kioga to bring his savage pet in again, a command whose emphatic terms left no room for appeal. He obeyed.

Unlike the more docile Aki, the panther-cub answered only to a hiss or the broken screaming cry so like its own, by which Kioga learned to summon it. Of all the various wild pets he had during those eventful years, the inscrutable self-contained puma showed him the least affection, once its inherently feral nature had gained the ascendancy. But deep-buried in the enigmatic dark soul of that wilderness sphinx, far back in the brain behind the molten glimmer of those fiery pupils, there was something—who can say what?—which recognized the boy's kinship to itself, and ringed him in the magic circle of feline attachment.

Mika was naturally a hunter by vision and stealth; and by observing the panther, Kioga earned his own letter in hunt-craft. When Mika stalked a doe in the thickets, he followed well overhead. He remembered the hunted creature's every stratagem, shifty trick and subterfuge in distancing her foe. He noted each cunning wile by which Mika came at last to a meal.

And then one night, by the chameleon flicker of the aurora, an exciting and dramatic scene was enacted upon a mountainside near Hopeka. A terrified and bewildered stag, hard-driven by a big collared puma, impaled itself upon the sharp

spear of a shadowy human figure which rose as from out of the ground in the path before it. Thus the oddly assorted two combined forces to hunt in unison, to the advantage of both. Thereafter no animal was proof against this deadly alliance of man and beast.

There were other pets too: A fierce wild falcon Kioga had taught to harry wild ducks and had cast at many an unfortunate hare, and who perched on his shoulder between chases. A young wolf that he had often slipped at big deer, until one day in a reversion to savagery the animal made a treacherous snap at him that would have chopped his hand off—whereafter he had to get rid of him.

Then there had been Seela, a moose-calf whom he had loved for all its gangling ungainliness, but which had become unmanageable at the mating season and gone trumpeting away, never to return. And Ikwala, a skunk-kitten—but not for very long! And Kakko, an albino crow whose cursing was something to hear, but whose thieving ways had earned its banishment from the village. These, and others, many more, were the wild friends of his boyhood.

Between hunts, Kioga formed the habit of taking journeys of exploration above the myriad streams in his territory. Along their banks, wherever the branchy overhang was thick, he could outrace a fast canoe by swinging hand over hand from limb to limb. Higher up, in the midway, more open spaces and widely separated limbs made possible long consecutive swings at rope's end—a thrilling sport in which he indulged often.

He learned by sad experience the narrow margin between safety and disaster, inherent in the use of the flying-rope. Once as he entrusted his weight to it in what was to be a long, low swing, the limb to which the grapnel was affixed suddenly cracked, giving way beneath the multiplied strain. Down went Kioga, like a stone, fifty feet through space, to crash upon the overhang and tumble into the river below. The branches somewhat broke his fall, and he entered the water a spinning ball, like a diver in a somersault dive. Nevertheless the contact was stunning, numbing every nerve and muscle; and for weeks he was sore all over.

Had he been over solid earth, he knew he would now lie

crushed and broken in the thickets, waiting for some prowling beast to finish him off. Thereafter he used the rope mainly as an avenue into the canopy or as a method of lowering himself from far above whenever he wished to spy on his jungle enemies.

Would you too live in an environment cut by ravines, slashed by fissures, gouged deep by bottomless crevasse and rocky gorge, overlaid by fallen timber choked with brush, and frowned upon by precipitous cliff and rocky peak? Then you too must become the combination of gibbon and leopard which Kioga was.

Danger and peril drove him back to the cliffs and trees from which earliest man descended in the dawn of history, to walk where he had once climbed, to run upright where once he had bounded on all fours from crag to crag. And in this reversion to the primitive, hunger also played a major rôle. Would you eat where the spoils fall to the most powerful, the great animals of the lower jungle? Then you too must climb for tree-mushrooms, honey and fruit as the young Kioga did; for the human stomach will tolerate but little of the carrion leavings of the greater beasts on which lesser animals thrive and sustain life.

Climbing and scaling continually, by the time Kioga was thirteen he was indisputably lord of the high canopy and familiar with nearly every hand- and foothold on all the cliffs in his range. So, in his limited way, he conquered space. His familiar active form became known to wilderness denizens from the Painted Cliffs of Ga-Hu-Ti to the Swamp-Lands of Unega, and from the borders of the Great Plain to the salt-marshes of the Northern Ocean.

X

WITH ROPE AND LASH

Occasionally the wanderings of Yanu and Aki and Kioga carried them northward toward a stretch of desolate and mountainous country into which neither of the bears would ever venture. That Yanu the bold should know fear or un-

certainty challenged the boy's imagination, rousing his curiosity as to the source of her fears; and some moons later he returned by himself, and scaled several naked and forbidding acclivities to a certain peak beyond which he descended only a little way.

Within the range of his vision lay a scene of awful desolation, yet awe-inspiring in its colorful beauty. He stood on the lip of an inactive volcano whose slumbers were interrupted by an occasional rumble from the bowels of the earth, producing tremors of the ground which had warned Yanu and Aki away.

The entire sloping area on his side of the crater was pitted and scarred as by some terrific bombardment of Martian shell-fire. At its base, glimpsed only occasionally through an overhanging sulphurous haze, was a smoking cone, glowing fiery red within its molten belly, whence black and bubbling ejecta welled up to run slowly down its sides as liquid lava.

Waves of hardened mud in layers of chocolate brown, red, blue and pale green seemed arrested in full flow toward the bottom of the crater. North of the cone lay a boiling blue-green lake patched by great spots of bright yellow sulphur. About the edges of the bubbling lake jets of steam roared up, one of which, a thick snowy plume, rose half a mile high.

Chilled by exposure on the heights, Kioga tried warming his body at the fumaroles steaming on every side about him, but was finally driven off by the foulness of their vapors—like rotting eggs mingled with the stench of organic decay—resulting from the exhalation of sulphur dioxide and hydrogen sulphide.

Stricken mute by the unworldly atmosphere of the crater, the boy retraced his steps, suffering a violent illness that left him sick and weak, probably from inhaling some asphyxiating gas rising from the countless fumaroles.

So he returned as from a visit to the infernal regions into the singing paradise of his home wilderness, having looked upon one of the deadly elements which by strange paradox helped make his world habitable by diffusing heat from the earth's blazing interior which lies everywhere so near the surface crust.

But Kioga swiftly learned that Yanu and her mighty offspring feared nothing in all the wilderness, other than these craters. . . .

One day, resentful of a puma's persistent stalking, he lured the hungry animal straight into Yanu's clutches. The quicker cat avoided that savage assault by an undignified whirl. For a time Kioga hovered over her, shrieking down scurrilities which, no doubt, he had learned direct from those masters of revilement, the jays. Thereafter he prepared many a grim surprise for T'yone and Tagu, who all too often pursued him for food, and were themselves eaten. Ah, what sport to call for aid and then watch that magnificent she-bear smash an enemy into a bloody pulp!

When not in the company of his huge protectors, Kioga kept to the branches or the cliffs, for every other level was too thick with hunters. Hawk, eagle and owl were ever on the wing; lynx, wolf and snow-leopard constantly sought their prey. Guna the merciless, a striped gold-and-black symphony of animal power, patrolled alone a regular beat and threw the world of hunted things into a vast panic of apprehension and terror with every roar; Tagu lay draped upon a limb with deceptively drooping paws and swinging round tail, only the cruel moon-like eyes betraying his savage nature.

A host of lesser killers was everywhere. Weasels raided birds' nests and slew squirrels in the tree-tops. The dextrous marten scattered swift death in the rabbit-warrens and in turn was pursued and slain by his own implacable enemy, the ferocious pekan. Life was of paltry value, death frequent and sudden.

By close observation, Kioga the Snow Hawk learned, lesson by lesson, the craft of the wild creatures about him. Alert vigilance personified, he never disdained the eternal wariness which was the price of his own existence. For well aware was Kioga, little jungle realist, of the treachery lurking everywhere about him, the endless warfare under the green roof which sheltered him.

None knew better than he the codeless perfidy of a hungry snow-leopard who takes every advantage; the insidious wile of the rock-serpent who lurks and strikes without warning; the astounding metamorphosis of Skento the deer, who be-

comes overnight a murderer of his own doe—even the deceitful affection of vegetable things, for does not the tree-vine first caress and later drag down the mighty monarch of the forest?

Because he knew how frequent were the victories of treachery and wile, he continued to live, adding constantly to his knowledge of the stalk, the attack, most of all the escape. In concentrating on the last, he neglected neither of the former. Daily he lay in wait for his own prey above the trail, or hidden among the ferny fronds like some keen little animal couchant, with a sharp barb waiting against a taut string.

Strangely enough, spying on the larger killers brought with it sharp discontent. Kioga was becoming sadly disappointed with his own growth. Compared to the cubs' growth, it was exasperatingly slow.

True, he was splendidly muscled for one of his age, perhaps almost as strong as a young warrior. True, the desire to emulate Yanu had long burned in his breast—mighty, irresistible Yanu, whose blow of the paw was death. But it seemed that he never would.

He was brooding over this one time, as he lay stretched on his back along a high ledge, basking in the sun. Lulled by the warmth and the profound quiet in the valley below, he fell asleep. For a time he slept lightly, before he became aware subconsciously of a sound, like the wind before a storm. His sleepy eyes opened.

It had grown darker. A cloud must have covered the sun. But what was that? He had glimpsed a swirl of whiteness eddying down the cliffs. Snow—in this warm valley, in midsummer? It could not be. A few flakes fell near. He saw they were not snow, but feathers. Wide-awake now, he looked aloft.

The sun was fairly eclipsed by incalculable millions of birds, pouring in dense flocks over the cliffs, to settle upon the trees in the lower valley. The air was drumming to the beat of countless wings, black with birds. Hour after hour the arrival continued. Now, up from the valley came a soft sighing sound—the unbroken cooing of the feathery hordes.

In the *Cherokee*'s log-book there is a reference to a flock

of birds which passed above the Indian village. Beside the reference are these words: *"Pass. Pigeon? Impossible. Extinct."*

But had Rand been standing beside his son Snow Hawk, he would have seen repeated a thrilling phenomenon which America knows no more—La Nuée, the Swarm of the old historians, a migration of passenger pigeons.

Like many other species slaughtered to extinction by greedy man, of the countless billions of these birds who once blackened American skies, not one lone survivor exists here today. But by the providence of nature they are perpetuated in that last natural game-and bird-preserve, the unknown landmass of Nato'wa, at the top of the world.

To Hawk this was merely an unusual sight, interesting as such.

Now came something more interesting. On the tails of the pigeons came a swarm of natural enemies; the red-eyed goshawks, the pale-eyed rough-legs, the black gyrfalcons. For a while Kioga watched the slaughter as the broad-winged killers swept in with clutching talons, killing almost under his nose, whizzing past in dazzling pursuit, or dropping on his ledge to devour the prey struggling under beating pinions.

Hitherto he had often watched that feathered tyrant Pita the eagle strike from above like a spearhead and heave upward with the prey. He had seen Neetka the marsh-hawk pitch downward on a duck twice its size, and marveled at the swift effiency of the killing blow.

All the best killers, he noticed, struck from on high, overcoming the prey aided by some force which pulled them so swiftly earthward. If they missed, they wheeled up to try anew.

One day accident and circumstance combined to teach Kioga how he too might attack and kill, or if his strike fell short, miss and escape to tell of it.

He had been idly swinging on his rope some twenty feet above a game-trail. Suddenly, out of the shadow of the forest dashed a fat wapiti, its massive branching antlers dripping blood. The rush of the elk happened to coincide with the arc of Kioga's swing, so that his speed matched the animal's. Thus, for a second, like some sharp-taloned hunter of the air, he hung soaring directly above the heaving brown bar-

rel. In a flash the instinct to strike flared full-born in his wild little heart. Down he dropped through the intervening space like a bronze thunderbolt, to land squarely and heavily upon the animal's withers. Before the startled elk could scrape back with those deadly antlers, or rise from the knees to which the attack had crushed him, the man-cub struck again.

Reaching swiftly round and under the elk's long muzzle, he seized the off-horn. With a mighty surge, utilizing the last ounce of his powers, he snapped the vertebra as he had seen Mika do it, dozens of times. Wildly exultant, he felt the great animal crumple beneath him.

In that exciting moment he learned why Yanu loved to kill, having himself tasted the primeval thrill of bodily contact with the prey as it fell helpless beneath the inertia of his pounce.

So he learned to take his quarry running. All in an instant he had discovered an advantage which was to advance him to the front rank of wilderness killers; and the rope dangling just above his head was the agency responsible.

His discovery came near ending in tragedy, however, for the blood on the elk's horns was that of one of a pair of wolves in hot pursuit of their royal quarry. They came upon him at speed.

Only Kioga's dazzling quickness enabled him to spring, seize his hanging rope and get his feet high, before a double snap echoed below and a hot breath fanned his flanks. Climbing like a spider, he did not look back until well above the leaping-range of any forest hunter. Then he glanced over his shoulder.

A pair of gaunt gray wolves, one badly wounded, were burying fangs into the choice meat which they had chased for miles only to see it fall victim to the hated man-cub.

Gladly would Kioga have sped a few arrows at the thieves, but in all the excitement he had dropped his bow. A tomahawk blow was out of the question. There remained only the horse-whip which, when he snapped it downward, proved too short by several feet. The wolves departed at their own good pleasure, appetites sated.

Had the lash been but a trifle longer, Kioga thought an-

grily, the wolves would have paid dearly for that theft. Suddenly he noticed that the lash was braided in the same manner as his leather rope. It proved simple to add a piece of the rope to the lash. The first experiment, however, was not successful, for the resulting longer thong did not taper properly, but it did present possibilities he was quick to exploit. After a while he made a lash closely resembling an Eskimo dog-whip, only heavier. It was about a dozen feet long, had a stout handle of resilient bone, and a thong to pass over his wrist.

His first stroke with it brought the lash recoiling against his cheek, and many were the severe cuts about legs and loins he sustained before acquiring any definite mastery over this fascinating new implement. But soon he could hit any object larger than an acorn with the stinging tip; and knocking fruit from the stem was no feat for his growing skill.

Best of all was the gratifying loud report—like a beaver's tail on pond-water—that echoed through the glades when he cracked. Now let T'yone dispute possession of another kill!

Fortune favored his vengeance. For some time later Kioga came upon the very wolves against whom he nursed his grievance; one of them with its savage head buried in the body of a great wild bull that lay wedged in a narrow gorge, tearing out the tender inner organs.

The wolf had its first intimation of Kioga's presence when a thunder-clap exploded between his back-laid ears.

Ten feet up, on the lip of the gorge, stood the Snow Hawk. Seven of those feet T'yone covered in one savage jump, only to have that educated lash twine about his throat and upset him into a thicket of lacerating devil's-club.

Then Kioga had his revenge. Again and again the searing lash bit and cut into T'yone as he rolled madly about, snapping ineffectually. The boy plied the lash until his arm was weary before the raging, ravening animal gave up the futile fight, and with a murderous snarl at his grinning brown foe, slunk into the thickets.

From then on the Snow Hawk played a new game, ever lurking over the trails and fairly lifting wolf or puma out of its skin with a sweep of the ready lash. Many small ani-

mals fell to this quick-striking thong. Even cruel, ruthless Guna the tiger came to know its bitter bite. So Hawk's life gained a new spice, for the beasts which had once hunted him for his flesh alone, now pursued him in hatred.

Hitherto the tigers, aware of the bears' might, had shunned their territory. But one day, with the fresh wheals of Hawk's darting lash a burning agony on flanks and sides, a pair of the striped killers forgot caution and pursued him straight to Yanu's lair.

Alone the savage mother pitted her grand and supple strength against odds which she would never have braved voluntarily. Her deafening roar thundered through the cave, muffling as her huge jaws closed upon Guna's muscular neck. Then, in the dark confinement of that stuffy cave, began a struggle of wilderness Titans, never to be forgotten by the man-child, flattened against the wall behind the shaggy bruin. Again and again Yanu might have gained advantage by charging her savage foes, but to do so would have left Hawk uncovered.

Biting, snapping and rending whatever her jaws closed upon, she repulsed the great male tiger with smashes of her vast forepaws. But the tigress, if smaller, was more cunning, and waited her chance. When Yanu's heavy neck arched in fending off the male's repeated assaults, the tigress suddenly sprang. Her fangs went in deep and locked by the massive jaw-muscles in the unbreakable throat-hold.

In the frenzy of desperation Yanu dealt the male a crippling blow which hurled him sprawling out of the cave. Then she concentrated upon the snarling fury whose churning, doubled-up hind legs were clawing her to shreds. Twice she raked the tigress, half desemboweling her with each stroke, but almost in the moment of victory those dreadful fangs cut into Yanu's jugular. Great spouts of blood spattered Hawk, whose spear had at last found the tigress' heart—too late, however, to save Yanu, who with glazed eyes was already breathing her last.

So passed Yanu, faithful to the end to one who had unwittingly brought her doom in with him. Hawk wept unashamed tears upon that silent shaggy form, tears of a lonely boy who had lost a beloved friend. Then, unable to spring

the dead tigress' jaws from their grip, he cut off her claws. Finally, that none might violate the remains of Yanu, he piled great stones across the cave's entrance and set out upon the bloody trail of the male tiger.

Hawk was no fool. He realized that his puny strength was unequal to subduing a beast which could strike down a buffalo with one blow. Climbing a tree through the trees above Guna, whom he found licking his wounds in a gully, he loosed his small store of barbs down upon the great beast. But these, along with the spear which he hurled after them, were only pin-pricks to the tiger. This further incensed Hawk, impotent to do more than send back glare for glare and shrill yell for hoarse roar. But in that moment was born the determination never to rest until by hook or crook he had pulled down that killing-machine.

The power in those thickly muscled shoulders, the strength in the cable-like thews disguised beneath the soft gorgeous coat, the terrible quickness of Guna's catlike spring, the rending power of those shearing jaws and lacerating white teeth —that entire organism, capable of exploding into action like chain-lightning incarnate—all were to be a constant challenge to the boy, leading him to cherish an ambition which otherwise must have seemed all but impossible of fulfillment.

Hawk had not come scatheless through the battle in the closeness of the cave. One shoulder-blade was exposed, and he was covered with blood when he reached Hopeka with the tigress' claws dangling in one hand, a spectacle to startle and awe more than one full-grown warrior.

Proudly Mokuyi boasted of his son's courage and prowess to the other chiefs and head-men. Tenderly Awena pressed the torn flesh into place and laid upon it healing poultices. New respect for the former pariah became evident when for the first time he wore about his neck the strung claws of the conquered foe.

All of which, being undeserved, made him the more anxious to lay Guna by the heels at the earliest opportunity.

XI

THE HULK

WOUNDS heal quickly in a healthy body. The little roaming Bedouin was soon abroad again, more self-confident than ever, and beginning to feel himself a match for many of the beasts who once had so awed him.

The old pastime of watching the game-trails still remained one of his chiefest delights. Having summoned Mika, who was seldom far afield, he sought, one day, an overhanging ledge, whence he could listen to the quickening of life about him as the hunters began to foray forth.

The dense thickets, seemingly so silent, were full of the whisper of life and hidden activity. Oguku the owl floated past on velvet wings, intent on possible prey below. Two wolves, eyes corn-yellow in the dusk, met a squat bearlike creature and broke ground before it—for none cares to cross Musta, the fiendish wolverine. Incessantly the parade of wild creatures continued, the pulsing of the forest accented now and then by the hoot of Oguku making a capture, or by the violent squalling of an angry lynx in a neighboring tree.

But suddenly all sound died away. The procession ceased, and silence reigned. Then below him, lean, puissant, head swinging low, and baleful incandescent eyes aflame, came a tigress with slow strolling gait, hunting on behalf of her new cubs on vast but soundless paws. Ah, the sinister beauty of that great beast with her handsome gold and sable markings, and her huge tail ringed with black, emerging ghost-like from the dusk!

Hawk had little eye for her beauty. His mind was full of the memory of Yanu, who had died beneath such fangs as glistened beneath him when the tigress yawned. And so the tigress received the shock of her life as the Snow Hawk's speeding shadow came rocketing past overhead like some fierce swooping falcon.

A quick movement of the wrist sent the whip stinging against the silken flank. When the animal ripped out a throaty

snarl and struck at the air in her surprise, a boyish yell of triumph rang through the silenced glades and brought the burning red eyes aloft to the shelf on which he hung, muttering dire threats through set teeth.

Yet when she leaped, fast as thought for all her majestic bulk, her killing paw struck only the warm spot on which her brown-skinned tormentor had rested. For Hawk was already swinging back to his starting-point, whence he described a swinging half-circle to still another ledge. Thus for a moment back and forth leaped the tigress, like some great cat pursuing an erratic shuttlecock. But at last she clawed her way back to earth, and after a few more ear-splitting roars went on her way.

And as she went, for the hundredth time the boy eyed with envy the glistening glossy pelt of his enemy and swore a vow which he had repeated daily since the death of faithful old Yanu.

"I will yet sleep on thy flat pelt, O Painted-Sides," vowed Kioga with a final defiant crack of the long whip.

He might have pursued to torment her further, but now, mingled with the fearsome snarling of the animal and the crisp clear reports of the lash, came the distant growl of thunder. Suspense filled the thickening air. The tigress felt it, and slunk away to her home lair, foaming at the jaws. Every living thing hid away to escape the torrent that was already moaning down the mountain. Even Mika, after waiting in vain for Hawk to seek shelter, denned up for the storm.

Kioga, however, hung at the length of his rope, thinking thoughts of revenge—strange little primitive creature, into whom neither wild beast nor wilder elements could stamp the mark of terror. And Mokuyi, miles away, smoked his sacred pipe and wondered what unfathomable instinct led his foster-son to remain at large at such times as these.

Under the somber bulk of the gathering storm-clouds an occasional flicker of lightning illumined the lower forest vaguely. At last Hawk descended to seek shelter, but found all his favorite hide-aways occupied by others whose bared fangs and wrinkling snouts warned him savagely away.

When next an electric flash flooded the wilderness with lurid pallor, it played upon the leaping figure of a boy racing

headlong at breakneck speed down the slopes, in a mad exhilarating effort to outrun the storm. At the hiss of the oncoming rain, he accelerated his pace with such a wild zest as primitive man must have known when the earth was still young, his brown muscular body already glistening with the first great splashing drops.

Now swinging hand over hand along some ravine-spanning grape-vine, now plummeting thirty feet into blackness, to check swaying upon a madly waving limb, only to spring away again like a thing of Indian rubber; now teetering along a slanting broken limb between two prone forest giants, adroitly swerving to dodge a falling branch ere racing onward and downward; dropping and catching, leaping and seizing, slipping but recovering and flying on, ever on, like a wind-blown leaf—this is activity carried to the point of wizardry, breath triumphant over weight.

From a rocky shelf down into a tottering tree he falls, agile as an Arabian tumbler, hears it groan and creak beneath his feet and is safely out of it and speeding away before it crashes into the ravines that scar the lower forest. Then again rope and grapnel come into play, and the wind sings past his ears as he floats a hundred feet as if they were but one, alighting upon a ledge as a feather falls.

But swift as was this arrowy flight, the storm came faster still, and like a great black cat pounced heavily. It was a drenched and shivering Hawk who, hours later, crept into a shelter he had long ago constructed for himself and forgotten with the passing moons. Here, hungry and weary, he spent the night, falling asleep at last upon a bed of dry leaves and branches, undisturbed by the booming of thunder and crackling lightning without.

Dawn found him rested and with appetite keen. After a breakfast of wild duck which he killed with the deadly hunting-whip, he swung lazily along through the warm golden sun-rays slanting down into the dripping middle tiers upon his naked back. Refreshed and happy, he was heading toward the seacoast—as he invariably did after a heavy storm, to pick over the storm-drift and rubbish which the angry sea carried in from open water beyond.

Near the channel through which the ill-starred *Cherokee*

had brought his white parents, he observed floating wreckage eddying about the little bay. Closer in, the water-logged half of a broken lifeboat slowly turned. Under a seat a human skull and several loose bones rattled about. Farther out, in deeper water the shapeless form of a nondescript vessel slowly turned turtle, exposing a great hole in her hull from which there issued so nauseating a stench that Hawk abandoned all thought of attempting to go aboard.

But several white-bellied sharks were less fastidious, and having torn a hole in the rotting planking, entered, where he could hear them ravenously consuming what lay lifeless within. Hawk turned away, but he glanced back time and again, speculating as had his father before him on the mystery of the waste which floated into this coastal graveyard on the full tide, and out with the ebb.

For hours he searched about amid the débris for something of value which showed the craft of recent human construction, but everything was coated with inches of that green slime which bespeak years of drifting about at sea. Finally he decided to hunt toward the northward bay, which was deeper and more spacious in every way than this one. If he found nothing there, he would almost cease to believe that there was an outer world, peopled with strange races, of which Mokuyi so often spoke, and he would come here no more.

He sent an arrow in parting at one of the hated sharks, and had the satisfaction of seeing it sink to the feathers into the violently thrashing body. Then he made his way northward.

Kioga had gone two quick steps into the open beyond the cliff wall before he checked in open-mouthed wonder at what he saw in the bay and darted back into the shadow of the cliffs, his heart hammering in excitement. For though he had always hoped to find just some such object in the bay, realization of that hope stunned him momentarily.

To a modern civilized child, the rusty old iron tramp ship which wallowed ponderously with every surge of the sea would have evoked a superior smile. Her superstructure was torn away, her stack broken off short; there were gaping holes in her deck; and in that part of her bottom which had

rolled up out of water yawned a jagged rent which her crew had erroneously supposed her death-blow when they abandoned her in a sinking condition. Matted seaweed hung from her sides in great greenish festoons; and she looked exactly what she was, a bearded old derelict, unwanted by sea or man.

But to Snow Hawk she was beautiful, magnificent, awesome. Greatly impressed, he watched her settle wearily over upon her side. Here at last was concrete evidence of an outer world and of the greatness of civilized man. Dancing excitedly back and forth along the shore, he impatiently awaited the receding of the tide, at the same time drumming up courage enough to board her. For though he feared few things, the presence of this hulk exercised over him an influence akin to fear—fear of the unknown.

When the waters had receded leaving the old ruin careened high and dry upon its side, he came nearer. Step by step, sometimes retreating, sometimes only pretending retreat, but always drawn back by his fascinated curiosity, he soon stood in the shadow of the hulk. Water still spouted from her parted seams, but Kioga could not wait for her to empty.

Throwing his grapnel across her bow and tugging at it to make sure it had taken hold somewhere above, he went hand over hand up her rusty side. Not for many a moon had human foot pressed the sadly crumpled decks of the vessel, and the boy crept from place to place, peering suspiciously down into the black interior through her broken stack and ventilators, peopling her with a thousand imaginary evil *Geebis* and hobgoblins.

At the broken stump of her derrick he paused, marveling that a tree should have grown out of her deck. He stood tense near the twisted ladder leading within the hull, alert to defend himself against the monsters of his fancy which he expected momentarily to burst forth. When nothing happened, he ventured cautiously below, rung by rung, starting at every shadow, yet steadily gaining in boldness.

What part of her cargo—probably wheat—had not been jettisoned, was now a pasty mass of decayed substance. Sneaking back into the daylight, he now roamed the sloping

decks, treading as if on eggs, fingering rusty cables and dangling bits of cordage. Hanging by his rope in order to get near them, he peered squinting into the rows of ports along the side, fruitlessly seeking to fathom the intriguing mystery of that interior blackness.

Finally he arrived at the tightly closed door leading to the master's cabin. He had never seen a doorknob before. It never occurred to him that it turned. Instead he wrenched, with such force that it broke off, which of course only made matters worse, but redoubled his desire to gain entrance.

With a bar of rusty iron he found near some rickety machinery on deck, he attacked the door. Eventually, by hammering and prying, he broke a hinge. This took him a good hour, and time was precious because the swift tides waited for no man. But suddenly the door creaked open before him.

A moment Snow Hawk paused warily, then tiptoed in, his eager sparkling eyes stabbing every corner. He noted with a thrill of pleasure that though the contents of the cabin were in disarray, due to the rolling of the ship, water had not penetrated here.

Suddenly his gaze became fixed, and he went forward to a chair which faced a desk. Between the two he saw the skeleton of a man to which strange garments still clung.

And upon the desk lay an ancient log-book, which on investigation proved to be written in English that Kioga, with some trouble, could read.

Kioga read from the log-book:

"The crew have taken all the food with them and abandoned ship. No sight of land yet. I have not the strength to leave my cabin today. Will God let me die on this forsaken vessel for having returned for my gold?"

There was more, but the words were so indistinctly written as to be illegible. What was gold? Why had this poor dead thing returned for it at the risk of life? Why had the crew taken all the food and left none? Mokuyi would know —yes, Kioga would have to ask Mokuyi. But first—

A little bookcase had disgorged its contents upon the floor. Almost the first thing the boy's glistening eyes fell upon were the printed characters he had learned to know so well. Here were riches he could appreciate.

Some wide and catholic taste must have inspired such a collection of books. There were thin volumes of the classics —Shakespeare, Bacon, Thomas Browne; there were histories, biographies and books upon mathematics and astronomy and navigation, tomes filled with essays by Mill and Carlyle.

For a time the arrangement of the printing baffled Kioga; he would jump from page 3 to page 5, losing the intervening contents; but he quickly discovered his mistake and corrected it. Presently, realizing that he could not hope to read all these volumes in a single day, he bundled them into several heavy packages, tied these together with strips of rawhide and transferred them all to a hiding-place ashore.

Returning, he discovered a sheaf of newspapers, most of them printed in English. The shortened forms of the headlines gave him some trouble at first, and the continuation of front-page news on later pages. Often entire pages were missing. And now the sound of rushing waters far out on the reefs told him he had not much time left to explore the cabin. Rummaging further, he found that the drawers of a desk opened, and spent several minutes delightedly pulling them in and out. At last one fell upon his bare foot, and he desisted, turning to examine the skeleton again.

About its waist he discovered a moldy belt, filled, investigation proved, with gold coins, which he appropriated because the shining metal attracted his eye. In one corner lay a sheath-knife in a leather case. This he recognized at once as superior to his own flint knife, which he had lost somewhere, and took it too. Then, gathering up the newspapers, he went on deck to estimate how much time remained to him in which to continue his explorations.

The tide was at full ebb. He had, then, perhaps a few hours at the outside, since the waters, when once they began to return, would rush in like a tidal wave. Familiarity had eased his apprehensions by now. Quickly he dropped below again to look into a room which he had passed several times indifferently, but which, on his last passing it, had exhaled certain stale but extremely enticing odors.

It was the ship's galley, filled with clattery things among which his inquisitive fingers began a quick play. In one dark corner he uncovered and drew forth a flat stick, beautifully

ornamented, in his opinion, with a coil of wire. This he turned over and over in his hand, curiously.

Suddenly he struck the right combination. There was a sharp snap, and a lusty screech from Kioga as with hair on end he cleared a table in one startled bound and brought up amid a heap of cracking pots and pans knocked over in his surprise. Then, like a monkey that has seized a charged wire and cannot let go, he tried to shake it off, and banged it on the floor and walls—to no avail.

Surprise had momentarily scared the wits out of him, but he was soon the little stoic again, enduring the pain until by spreading wood and metal, he got his hand free of the trap. For a while he eyed it distrustfully. Twice he reached for it and withdrew his hand, nerving himself to touch it again.

At last he picked it up gingerly, and since it snapped no more, reasoned that the danger must all be in the adjustment of the spring. He soon fathomed the secret of the bait-trigger, and conquered his last fear by setting it several times and then springing it by pressing the trigger with a broken arrowshaft.

Then he set it aside, turning his attention to other items of interest in the kitchen.

About the walls were shelves lined with bottles, rusty cans and curious flagons filled with various culinary accessories. Into the nearest box Hawk's fingers dipped inquisitively. When dry snow from it adhered to them, he licked them off instinctively and—*hai!*—it was sweet. A neighboring box contained more white granules of which he took a great handful and poured it into his mouth, anticipating a great treat. To his startled dismay the stuff seared his tongue. To all appearances identical, one box contained sugar, the other salt.

For a long time this wonder held him enthralled, as squatting upon the broad stove before the shelf he tasted first a pinch of one, then a pinch of the others. Now his roving eye fell on a box marked *"Cinnamon."* This too he must sample, and found it quite tasty, but carelessly dropped the box, which disappeared through a hole in the broken flooring and vanished in the depths below.

Never mind, he would taste this other brownish-red stuff

in the unmarked box. He took a generous helping, but the moment his lips had closed on it he knew something was terribly wrong. Frantically he emptied his mouth of what was in fact red pepper, stale but potent still, and seizing the nearest fluid-filled flagon to hand, took a long swig, intending to wash away the burning stuff from his mouth. A moment later, sneezing and wry of face, he was fleeing down the passageway toward the deck with streaming eyes and undignified haste. Behind him, smashed to bits on the floor of the galley, lay the fragments of a bottle whose torn label bore the single word *"Vinegar."*

One more trial awaited the bewildered lad. As he rounded a bend in a corridor, he saw a wild-eyed figure, brandishing a long knife, bearing swiftly down upon him. For a brief instant both hesitated—Hawk, because for the first time those super-keen senses of his had not appraised him of an enemy's presence. Then, concluding that the other's silence and stealth augured no good intentions, he acted according to his training. Voicing his war-whoop, which rang strangely in that ancient hulk—he leaped forward, intent upon getting in the first blow.

Back went the long knife and down it fell—but not upon the breast of an enemy. There was a brittle crash as Hawk brought up with stunning force against something hard. A few seconds later he was picking himself up from a little pile of broken glass. He was cut and bruised, but more scared than hurt. He had run full tilt into a tall mirror—something entirely new in his experience.

Of course water was a reflector, but water lay flat, and the mirror had stood upright. For some moments Kioga sat grimacing at himself in a piece of the glass which had not fallen. Then he began to admire his own appearance, the fine loin-cloth, the glossy black braid. He danced a measure of an Indian war-dance to get the effect, which pleased him beyond words.

What wonderful people were those who created objects filled with such magic properties!

Suddenly he stiffened, listening. The distant roar of the incoming tides reached his ears. Hastily he put a piece of the mirror down in his quiver, as a souvenir and good-luck

fetich, left an offering of a pretty feather before the remaining glass, and darted out on deck.

Then, confused and subdued by his hectic adventures in galley and corridor, he clutched his newspapers, slid down the side of the wreck, released his grapnel, coiled his rope and dashed for the shore in water already up to his knees. He had not been a minute too soon, for with the tide the sharks also came.

Now he took time to examine his fine new long knife. Then he looked at the money-belt. Curious and pretty yellow disks, were these valuable coins; a man had paid with his life for having returned to save them. Awhile Snow Hawk examined the effigies on their face and back. Then, experimentally, he scaled one out across the water, watching the yellow glint as the rays of the setting sun fell on the skipping, leaping coin; then, retaining but a few, he spent ten minutes scattering the others after the first. Everything civilized men did, he thought, was done with an eye to perfection, even to these things which skipped across the waves better than the best of flat shells.

But Guna and the wolves would soon be abroad. He would return to his ship tomorrow. When last he saw her, the tidal waters had already lifted her bow.

But alas, on the morrow the wreck had been carried out and probably battered to bits on the far reefs. Save for his burning tongue and the objects he had salvaged, Kioga had nothing to show for that hair-raising adventure on the hulk, yet he would never forget it. It had been the most wonderful experience of all his life.

XII

TREACHERY AND REBELLION

Before his lodge-fire in the village of Hopeka, Mokuyi the Wolf sat cross-legged upon a mat, writing in the old log-book of the *Cherokee*. It was a strange occupation for one bearing every mark of aboriginal barbarism about his apparel, weapons and surroundings; but what Mokuyi had

begun as a whim he now continued as a habit. Upon the exhaustion of Rand's writing-materials, his own ingenuity had furnished him with an eagle-quill pen, and ink made from the diluted juices of wild berries.

He wrote now of matters pertinent to Sawamic's Indian kingdom, and of events which filled his mind at the moment.

Mokuyi's own rapid rise in the councils of the Shoni had not blinded him to the knowledge that a powerful but concealed element had continually opposed his growing influence in tribal affairs. He had long sensed Yellow Weasel's hostility; but unaware of the witch-doctor's leadership of the secret Long-Knife Society, he did not realize the subtle savage's real strength, and accordingly did not attribute this opposition to him.

For twelve years Mokuyi had sought the opportunity to avenge the deaths of his white friends, yet never had he learned for certain who led that fatal raid of years ago, nor whose hand had struck the cruel blow which robbed his adopted son of his white mother. Thus, though he believed Yellow Weasel was capable of treachery and hatred toward himself, and strongly suspected the shaman of complicity in those old crimes, he never dreamed that the Indian contemplated treason to his chief Sawamic.

One night, however, Mokuyi accidentally surprised a clandestine meeting of several members of the Long-Knife Society. His unexpected presence immediately reduced them to an embarrassed, guilty silence, but not before he had overheard just enough to send a hundred alarming thoughts through his head, and to assure him of their enmity toward the present Indian government.

The incompleteness of his information restrained him from denouncing the plotters to Sawamic at once; and since he believed the traitors to be unaware that he had fathomed their intentions, he determined to obtain further evidence before revealing what he already knew, thinking thus the more completely to wreck their designs.

He kept his silence at the risk of his life; for one day, while hunting alone in the forest near the village, a hard-driven arrow, intended for his heart, transfixed only the thick muscle beneath his left arm.

Scarce had he dropped to his face behind a fallen tree when a second shaft vibrated in the tree against which he had stood. From its angle of entry he determined the direction whence the missile had flown. But though he crawled the length of the log, thinking to surprise his ambusher, he saw no one. Nor could he identify the arrows, which were new and bore no marks of ownership.

Carefully and warily Mokuyi made his way back to his canoe and thence to the village. He determined to make known his suspicions to a meeting of the Council of Sachems, which was to be held the following night, lest a second attempt on his life be more successful.

These events transpired at about the time when Snow Hawk discovered the loss of his ship, and much disappointed, turned his nose inland, determined always to come here after storms and seek hulks aboard which he might find other interesting objects from another world.

The boy was hurrying home to acquaint Mokuyi with his discoveries. That civilization of which his Indian father so often spoke had now changed in his mind from a hazy and nebulous conception into a vital sharp picture, suggestive of a thousand questions he was eager to put to Mokuyi. . . . Poor little dispatriated citizen of a distant race, what a pitiless disappointment now awaited him!

He came at last to the village, scaled the tall wall and entered, slipping quietly from the shadow of one lodge to another, careful to wake no one, nor to disturb the sentries who guarded the village by night.

Softly he attained his own lodge, moved a secret section of bark and slid in unannounced, as he always did. All was quiet inside. The figure of Mokuyi lay next the dying fire's embers upon a sleeping-mat. The form of Awena, as usual, reclined upon the bunk at one side of the lodge.

Kioga waited, listening, to determine whether his return had been heard by anyone. As he stood keenly alert, he detected an ominous strangeness which baffled him momentarily. With sickening suddenness he knew what was wrong—he missed the steady regular breathing of the two sleepers.

Darting to Mokuyi's side, he bent over him, dared to touch that quiet hand—and found it cold. He stirred the fire's

embers to get light by which to see Mokuyi's face. The Indian's eyes were half open, but vacant and dull. The lips were parted, but not in a smile.

Life was gone. Mokuyi—good father, loyal friend, too long the bearer of the Long-Knives' deadly secret—was dead.

With stiffening lips and creeping flesh the boy fled to Awena's side, softly calling her name in broken tones. There was no response. With trembling fingers he removed the soft pelt which covered the quiet figure, looked once upon the ghastly tortured features of her he had loved, and then recoiled in horror. The handle of a knife protuded from the still breast—and that knife was his own!

Afraid, terrified, pale and quivering, he crouched there alone in the presence of violent death, which so cruelly incriminated him. Twice he stretched forth his hand to remove the killing flint, then revolted from the grisly task. Then with his eyes drawn back in terrible fascination to the features of Mokuyi, he started away, and in another moment was fleeing stealthily the length of the long-house.

By the time he reached the entrance, action had restored him to some extent, and he returned part way to peer into the various family sections, seeking some sign of him who had done this thing. No one was awake when again his fingers fell upon the skin that covered the lodge entrance.

He paused another second to listen, with lowered head. Then, suddenly, his dark thatch snapped sharply erect. From the door-flap under his hand came the faintest of scents, which only a nose like his could have detected, unpleasantly reminiscent of one he knew and hated: Yellow Weasel the witch-doctor, his mortal enemy, had come in the dead of night, and on soft feet had departed.

Hawk had shed no tear as yet; it was not the time. Nor was there fear in his eyes as he retraced his steps. With infinite tenderness he gathered up into his strong young arms all that was mortal of Awena and bore her out into the stillness of the forest. Returning, he did as much for that other body, possessed in this extremity of an almost superhuman nervous strength.

When an hour later he returned to Hopeka, it was to seek out and slay the workers of this terrible crime.

Creeping to Yellow Weasel's handsome lodge, and hiding in its shadow, he drew the long knife he had found aboard the ship, consumed by the lust to avenge, but rendered cautious by the presence of two guards near the entrance to the big lodge.

Of a sudden he paused alertly. From within came the sound of low voices. As he had often done before, he swung lightly to the apex of the structure from a convenient tree-limb and peered in.

The interior was crowded with Indian members of the Long-Knife Society whom Yellow Weasel was addressing in an almost inaudible voice.

"Twelve snows ago we, the Long-Knives, destroyed the accursed white medicine-man. With this hand I slew his long-haired woman in the long ago. Both were workers of great evil magic. Today it came time again to kill. You, my brothers, passed sentence upon two among our race who knew our plans. Again my hand executed sentence. Both have died, and the child which brought the evil-eye to our midst will be stoned for their deaths. I have so contrived it.

"As with Mokuyi and his woman, so with all others who oppose us!" Yellow Weasel glared about him with the eyes of a tiger at the conclusion of this speech, his tattooed features a grimace of hatred upon which the scars of self-torture showed livid and terrible.

A low chorus of approving grunts rose to the listening ears above. With a memory trained to the observation of detail, the young Snow Hawk catalogued every face in his mind, as again he listened to Yellow Weasel.

"So—tomorrow," hissed the medicine-man, "in the confusion that follows the finding of the bodies, the boy will be hunted through forest. While men are on his trail, Sawamic will be alone in his lodge. Then—" The shaman made an eloquent stabbing gesture with his right hand. Again approval rumbled forth, and savage eyes glittered as the ringleader of the Indian rebellion pre-enacted the cowardly deed.

Stimulated to something like a frenzy by the consciousness of his own power, Yellow Weasel turned his gaze upward as if to invoke the power of the fates. As luck would have it, he looked straight through the smoke-hole down which

Hawk's eyes could dimly be seen peering, and into the shadowy face of his worst and youngest enemy.

For one instant the witch-doctor stood petrified, his mouth dropping open, his eyes staring. Slowly all eyes followed his own, and saw what he saw—two flaming spots of green in a face as dark as any of their own. Then the spots winked out, there was a faint rustle and finally silence.

When an instant later the plotters darted out to seize the listener, the Snow Hawk had vanished into thin air.

It would have been fatal to all their plans to pursue him and so cause a hue and cry which must inevitably lead to an inquiry into activities which assembled so many fighting-men at the medicine-man's lodge, unknown to their chieftain.

It was, therefore, an uneasy and silent band which separated and went their various ways. Of them all not one but would have unhesitatingly buried his tomahawk in Hawk's brain—not one but vowed he would yet do so. Well they knew that though they had done away with one menace to their safety and slain a helpless witness to the first crime, their perilous secret had but changed its place of repository from the brain of Mokuyi to that of his son, from which only death could expunge it. . . .

Already well into the blackness of the forest, Kioga was careless as he had never been before, his mind filled with an agony of doubt, sorrow and revenge by the disclosure of treachery he had just heard. He knew nothing of the bloody primitive intrigue involved in these deeds of violence. He was not yet old enough to realize that he held the lives of every man in Yellow Weasel's lodge in the hollow of his hard little hand, or that a word from him would have betrayed them all to swift execution. He thought only of a personal revenge, to be visited individually upon each and every one he had seen in Yellow Weasel's company that night.

A band of wolves caught his scent and swerved as a hungry tiger also converged upon his warm trail. But both marauding elements backed off, threatening one another, as if deciding that some prey larger than an Indian boy should be the bone of contention over which they fought so dangerous an antagonist. For the time, at least, the Snow Hawk went in safety, as do those upon whom the wilderness spirits have

set their protecting seal, or for whom they have decreed greater deeds.

In the later gloom of this tragic night a tall pillar of fire rose into the sky from a mountain-side across the valley. When it died down, a dark figure approached the funeral pyre and stirred the ashes of the dead with the sharp points of his various weapons. Thus Hawk consecrated them to a revenge adequate to the four-fold grievance which he now held against Yellow Weasel and the Long-Knife Society. Then he cut his long hair in token of mourning, and sobbing brokenly, melted into the wilderness.

XIII

OUTLAWED

IF THE powers of the wilderness allowed the bereaved Kioga to pass in safety, other malignant forces conspired to encompass his destruction.

Confounded and awed by the disappearance of the grim evidence of murder which he had hoped to use as prima-facie evidence by which to convict Kioga of his own crime, Yellow Weasel, though disconcerted momentarily, quickly recovered his wits. Coincident to the boy's recent absence there had occurred a series of paralyzing raids by the plains Indians upon several Shoni villages to the north. Quick to see in this situation an opportunity of involving Kioga, the witch-doctor made the most of it in an address to the council.

"The son of Mokuyi is in league with our enemies. While he was away, Wa-Kanek came to raid our villages. There is blood upon the hearthstone of Mokuyi, our beloved councilor," continued the hypocritical medicine-man. "Where are these who loved the Snow Hawk?" The malevolent certainty with which Yellow Weasel answered his own question convinced more than one of his listeners that the boy was better slain at sight than allowed to menace the Shoni. "They are dead, O Councilors, and their spirits will roam abroad to haunt us until we sprinkle the blood of Kioga upon

their fireplace and fasten his scalp upon their doorpost. Only thus can we appease their anger."

Knowing Snow Hawk's superlative skill in woodcraft, and foreseeing in him a mighty warrior at no distant date, wiser heads among the war-chiefs had demurred at pronouncing his death-sentence. But Yellow Weasel's words had at least the weight of plausibility; and his fanatic eloquence in arguing the case against the absent boy fanned the smoldering embers of suspicion into a flame of superstitious certainty.

As a result, twenty armed warriors, all of them selected by the crafty Yellow Weasel from among his own henchmen, set out on the trail which Kioga had made no effort to conceal. At their head slunk the witch-doctor himself, laden with the hideous charms and fetiches of his pagan mummery. Not content with having betrayed his enemy to his death, like a jackal he must also be in at the kill.

It was not long before they came upon the Snow Hawk, walking slowly and with heavy heart. With a signal to his followers, Yellow Weasel moved upon him as they gradually closed in upon the boy from all sides.

Where were those keen ears when a twig snapped under Yellow Weasel's foot despite his care? Where was the piercing power of those lynx eyes that they did not on glancing to one side see the skulking shadows of several naked warriors on murder bent? Where the sixth sense, the intuition that had warned him of peril a thousand times before this? They slept under the narcosis of overwhelming sorrow—and not ten yards behind him now came the shaman, tomahawk tightly gripped in one hand, a cold implacability in his glittering eyes.

But in the protecting armory of Hawk's senses there was one which never rested. The merest eddy of a breeze brought to that highly evolved nose the message unperceived by his other faculties. That Yellow Weasel followed close behind, he knew in an instant: and that no good could come of that surveillance he was certain. Awake at last to his peril, he saw others of the band, but gave no sign.

He cut gradually to one side, so that his trail might bring him above a ravine through which flowed a muddy racing

stream whose every sinuosity and varying depth he knew with the intimacy of many swims and plunges there.

Gone were all thoughts of sorrow as the first instinct of survival came into play. Deliberately, as if debating which trail to pursue, he paused, nothing in his attitude revealing his alert wariness.

Ever nearer crept Yellow Weasel in a stalk of which a panther might have been proud. But the now awakened microphonic ears of the Snow Hawk heard sounds beyond the register of ordinary ears. Without turning his head, he sensed when his enemy gathered his muscles. In the instant that the witch-doctor sprang with upraised tomahawk, Kioga whirled, side-stepped with the quickness of thought, and seized the falling tomahawk arm of his assailant. His other hand shot to the shaman's corded throat, fastening there with the tenacious grip of a boa's fangs. The blow which would have cleft his skull to the ears but scratched him.

Then for the second time a human being, more devil than human, tasted of the deadly force within those young muscles as the Snow Hawk grappled his would-be assassin to the ravine's edge.

A moment they hung there tight-locked, vengeance versus malignity, the grisly medicine-man in frightful contrast to the fine-featured, clean-skinned youth, strained body to body in the fevered embrace of mortal combat.

The Snow Hawk fought with cunning holds, muscle-racking devices and leverages strange to the witch-doctor. The strength upon which Yellow Weasel had counted availed but little against this slippery fury, twining about him like a constricting anaconda which crushes while strangling. Upon his tomahawk arm Kioga worked some agonizing twist of Oriental torture. As the ax fell from his numbed fingers, Yellow Weasel writhed and struck with his free hand, clawing beast-like with his nails, gouging for the eye, but ever more blindly as those clenching fingers sealed out his air-supply. Aware of the imminence of retribution, the whole frame of the witch-doctor shuddered. Then suddenly he was within a hair's-breadth of escaping as for a moment Kioga relaxed his throat-hold, and the shaman released in one fearful high-

pitched yell the terror which had been struggling for utterance.

But Kioga had loosened one grip only to jerk Yellow Weasel's belt-knife from its sheath. He had no consciousness of their long drop toward the water, nor of the wiry fingers choking at his own neck, no thought of aught but to empty the shaman's treacherous heart of the venom which it forced through his veins in lieu of blood. As they fell through space with flailing limbs, he sent the blade plunging into the bony breast, twice for Awena, twice for Mokuyi; then stabbing and stabbing again on his own account ere the convulsive fingers of the shaman released him and fell away under the water.

Then Kioga sought the surface to breathe air clean at last of the taint of his parents' murderer—and instantly plunged anew to avoid being seen by Yellow Weasel's cohorts.

The rushing waters had scarce closed over his head again when the other Long-Knives, too late to prevent his *coup*, rushed to a point in the stream where it shallowed and widened. Here with straining bows and ready arrows trained upon the water, they waited for the struggling combatants to reappear.

But it was an hour before a tall savage stumbled over something, and reaching into the depths drew up the body of Yellow Weasel. Lax in death, his own knife buried in his breast, he had paid the penalty for all earthly crimes. Of Kioga there was not the least trace. He too must be dead, drowned in the yellow waters of the rushing stream.

To make assurance doubly sure, for hours the braves probed the waters and searched the shallows for his body, to no avail, discussing the affair meanwhile without attempting secrecy. And beneath a water-mined bank thickly hung with lush grasses, a pair of blazing eyes watched their every move, and keen ears heard their every word.

When in their progress the searchers neared this spot an invisible form shot out beneath the muddied surface and was swiftly caught downstream in the current. One warrior's glance focused momentarily on a swirl that appeared at the surface, but when nothing of the underwater swimmer ap-

peared, concluded that it had been no more than an otter or a mink.

But a fox, digging for mice among the roots of a tree that overhung the stream, leaped in sudden alarm, as a grapnel-like object hurtled upward and caught over a limb high above, carrying with it a length of wet but still serviceable rope. Fear turned to astonishment when a moment later a nimble brown-skinned human figure went rapidly up the rope to disappear in the foliage.

Perhaps the fox recognized a fellow-outlaw in the vanished figure, for after a moment of watching he continued his digging; while Snow Hawk, once merely an outcast but now a refugee with a price on his head, was gone, leaving no trace by which his enemies might track him. He had also this advantage: he knew the intentions of his enemies toward himself, while they believed him dead along with Yellow Weasel.

That night, recalling the plot to assassinate Sawamic, he doubled back to the village. From a vantage-point outside the palisade he maintained steady watch on the chieftain's lodge. And when a stealthy shadow emerged from the darkness and raised the skin before the door, Hawk loosed a war-arrow through the marauder's heart, and he fell without a sound, lying still.

Next morning when the sachem saw a human body, a knife gripped in its dead hand, arrowed upon his very doorstep, it put him on guard. Never was he to know to whom he owed gratitude for the assassination's failure; but his roused suspicions had the effect of putting an end, temporarily, to the treasonous activities of the now thoroughly alarmed Long-Knife Society.

Two days later the young outlaw learned beyond all further doubt what fate awaited should he ever fall into the power of his enemies.

It so happened that Two-Scalp, brother of Yellow Weasel, was not entirely satisfied with the general belief as to Hawk's death. Alone, he set forth to verify certain suspicions he held regarding the reported killing of his brother, and the drowning of Snow Hawk.

Careful examination of the ground evidenced no sign of

error on the part of the other Indians, however; and Two-Scalp had turned back toward his hidden canoe, intending to return to Hopeka, when the telltale clack of antler on branch evidenced to this skilled woodsman the approach of a deer forced by hard running out of its ordinary stealthy silence. In an instant he had an arrow at the cord.

On a ridge across from his own there was a quick commotion caused by a buck which took to the air in a soaring bound, only to be pierced in mid-leap by a flashing arrow, shot from a point beyond the view of Two-Scalp.

Then in another moment, unsuspecting, Kioga came out after his kill, and all Two-Scalp's suspicions were confirmed. With a hiss of vengeful satisfaction, he loosened the waiting shaft across the narrow ravine at almost point-blank range.

With the twang of Two-Scalp's bow, Snow Hawk leaped back, but not quickly enough to evade the arrow whistling over the gorge, which pierced and crippled his left arm—the bow-arm. He could hear the savage, forgetful of all caution in his excitement, rushing down through the thickets in the trough of the gully, and up the trail by which alone he could reach Kioga's exposed position.

For one short minute he was beyond view. With difficulty Snow Hawk managed to get his grapnel fast to a crevice on his own side of the ravine. Then like a pendulum he swung free. Halfway through the flight the grapnel gave sickeningly, and in catching hold again all but snapped him from the rope. But as the exultant Two-Scalp, with scalp-knife drawn, came charging out upon the ledge where last Snow Hawk had been seen, the boy seized and threw himself flat upon a ledge nearly a hundred feet away.

Here, almost at eye-level with the astounded Two-Scalp, he saw the Indian's glance darting rapidly about, seeking to fathom the mystery of his disappearance, and scanning the cliff below and to either side. Nothing without wings could have attained the nearest hand-hold—and like an anxious ferret he went back and returned baffled, to search anew. But no trace of Hawk was discoverable, nor—remarkable fact—was there any sign of blood, though Two-Scalp knew that a miss at such range was out of the question.

It was this which gave rein to his savage imagination.

He had often heard of Hawk's suspected "medicine" powers; and to his mind, bewildered by the inexplicable, that explained all. Either his arrow had been bewitched, or he had seen the ghost of the Snow Hawk; and now he fancied menace behind every tree, and crouching under every thicket. Alone and unnerved, his desire for vengeance gave way to his fears of the supernatural. Finally, overcome by them, he threw vengeance to the winds and hastened to his canoe.

Once well away from the point of danger, much of his courage returned. He realized belatedly that ghosts have never been known to leave visible signs of their comings and goings; and though he would not have dared to go back alone, in an hour he was in the village, assembling a party to be led upon the outlaw's trail.

Thus, out of a carelessness that sprang from fancied immunity, Snow Hawk lost all his gains and received an ugly though not serious wound. When Two-Scalp had gone, he broke the arrow and removed its ends from his arm, then took time to descend and cleanse it thoroughly at a spring.

Meanwhile thirty expert marksmen quartered every inch of terrain near where Hawk had last been seen. They were no more successful than Two-Scalp had been, until one of them, bent to drink at a spring, uttered an exclamation, and held forth his cupped hand carefully.

"Blood!" he whispered fiercely. "Somewhere along the brook he has bathed the wound Two-Scalp inflicted on him. If we follow upstream quietly, we shall kill him easily."

But he reckoned without the nose of the outlaw, who, on divining the course of events when their scent struck him, took to the cliffs again, and aided by his rope, left but one foot-print in the mud of the bank—which the Indians presently came upon.

The Long-Knives held a conference under the cliff where he was hiding. That he could have mounted so sheer a slope was so improbable that they did not even consider it; having no idea of the uses to which he put his rope, they concluded that he had waded upstream, thinking by this ancient trick to confuse them.

Accordingly they hastened off in that direction as Hawk

had hoped they would do; and this gave him time to reflect upon his situation. He found it far from pleasant.

Bereft of the wise council of Mokuyi and the defending voice of Awena, he had not a friend in the world excepting only the wild beasts with whom he had spent so much of his boyhood. Mika was here, but the yellow-eyed panther could give him no counsel; nor could the bears, of whom he had seen nothing for several weeks. Doubtless the latter were deep in the distant jungle-like forest, or at some periodical ursine concourse, or wallowing in the sulphur-springs far up the mountain-sides.

His own cunning and shrewdness in escaping the Indian trackers had but whetted their desire to capture and put an end to him. By the reasoning of savage men, his scalp at any one of their belts would miraculously endow his conqueror with all the skill which he, in life, had possessed. The members of the Long-Knife Society, moreover, had a double reason for desiring his extermination.

It was to be war to the knife. Another might have fled the territory rather than face the hopeless odds confronting this lone boy with every man's hand against him. Not Kioga! He claimed these wilds as his own—swamp, forest and mountain. If die he must, he would perish here. So now, he patrolled countless places of retreat, defense or undisturbed rest, memorizing every place of concealment, of possible ambush, ever plotting in advance how he could put them to use. Like a general with a kingdom at stake, each vista unfolding before him became a problem in defense tactics.

In order that not even the hum of a bowstring should betray him to an enemy, he bound strips of weasel-fur about each end of the string, near the horn, to absorb the twang. This was no ordinary weapon, but the product of a hundred trials and rejections, a deadly hunting-bow, capable of driving an arrow through an elk at anything under two hundred yards; while to lesser beasts its arrows were dangerous at any distance within the limits of their flight.

That the flashing barbs might not warn the prey, he stained them a dull green harmonizing with the pinewood forest round about; while two knots on the bow-cord enabled

him to nock and release a bolt day or night with equal ease, by touch.

Ofttimes he painted his own body, as protection against cold or snow, with powdered white clay, mixed with fat and rubbed into his skin. In summer he sometimes fared forth brilliant with color, smeared on in whatever hue and design best suited his whim of the moment—a bizarre, striking and often terrible little figure, whom not even his own mother could have recognized.

But daily he washed off these decorations, bathing at the hot springs, coming forth clean as a hound's tooth and refreshed by the vapors, to roll in the snow or plunge into some cold mountain pool.

Born of a creative race, Snow Hawk possessed one instinct inherited from generations of trained hand-craftsmen and tool-users. I refer to his skill at whittling, carving, and that gift for inventive experiment which had provided him with the climbing rope. Now his creative impulse found another outlet:

He had immediately recognized pieces of iron and steel, salvaged from the occasional wreckage washed ashore, as of the same precious metal as his knife. These he unfailingly broke off and carried inland, to be heated and hammered into spear- and arrow-heads, rude curved swords and heavy war-axes such as he saw illustrated or read about in his books, or patterned after the designs of Indian weapons.

XIV

HUNTERS ON THE HEIGHTS

LIKE any other hunted creature, the Snow Hawk sought and found a suitable hide-away which he could use during the long black winter moons. It was a deep cavern, ideally situated midway between the base and summit of a sheer cliff rising some hundreds of feet up the side of a forested cañon. Inaccessible except by a narrow and all but impassable trail, it had two other virtues—a running spring trickling from some subterranean fissure, and a way of entrance via the almost solid wall of dense evergreens which screened it

at all seasons. This was to be his lair, his wilderness sanctuary from weather, beast and man—but chiefly from the last, for of them all, his own kind were to prove his direst enemies.

Into this rude but satisfactory domicile, he transported a supply of hardwood, and constructed a stone fireplace to receive it. Hither he brought his few possessions, among them his precious books and newspapers, the *Cherokee's* log-book, and certain other objects contained in Mokuyi's personal chest. The latter had been rescued only at the cost of a stealthy foray into the village of Hopeka in the dead of night. During this visit he had also seized the opportunity of rifling the medicine-lodge once belonging to Yellow Weasel. Emerging with several objects rolled into a compact bundle, he melted, unobserved, back into the forest.

As was to be expected, he sought out the bear-cubs, trailing them from the salmon spawning-beds in the upper creek country to the glacier-lines far up the mountain-side, where insects, killed by the colder winds, collected in frozen clots to be garnered by the omnivorous beasts.

He visited a hundred inaccessible mountain-top refuges, passed the fumaroles of Old-Man-Smoking-Mountain and the sweltering neighborhood of the acrid sulphur-baths, meeting with many bears, but not those of his own band. He found them at last near the calm end of a little mountain lake, feeding on the dead grasshoppers blown ashore by the mild breeze.

Thus he took up his wild ways anew, ways from which for several years there was to be no turning back. Though outlawed and pursued by his own kind, he would have little time for bitterness. The myriad excitements of his life would demand the attention of every trained faculty.

The cubs, now great thick-muscled, heavy-coated brutes with long gleaming canines, and power enough in either forepaw to stun a buffalo, followed the lithe and supple youth like tame dogs. Commonly they were happy-go-lucky adventurers, possessed of vigorous enterprise and great sagacity. Idling was not to their taste. Ingenuity, curiosity and enjoyment of recreation kept them on the go. Every grassy slope was an invitation to roll end over end to the bottom. They

spied on the otters at their mud-slides, and occasionally joined in the game, to the consternation of the earlier players. They spent many hours watching beavers building huts and damming streams, and were in turn watched by other animals.

Influenced by Kioga's directing intelligence, a change was taking place among the bears. Hitherto they had had no need for the added security gained by union with others of their own kind. A mature bear was usually a law unto himself, the most powerful creature in his neighborhood. Except for family groups of mother and young, or younger cubs from the same litter, or the rare great concourses, theirs were but random meetings—haphazard and unpredictable consociation as easily broken as formed, and having no permanent unity.

But thanks to Snow Hawk's hunting craft, his bears were better fed than most, for whereas he had once hunted only for his sustenance, he now killed for the mouths of all. Thus the usual strife over the possession of meat was conspicuous by its absence among his bears—a factor which attracted others to the band. As a result, he was soon hard-pressed to pull down enough meat for them all.

Ever heavier became the demands upon his skill; ever larger the brutes who fell beneath his knife and spear.

Something must be done; so one day he led them from their remoter mountain haunts down into the rich wooded valleys where the buffalo-herds fed. There he concentrated upon a small group of the fierce wild cattle—whose guardian bulls presented a solid front as soon as they caught the scent of the intruding bruins.

As usual the bears circled, vainly seeking a weak spot in that horny wall, a defense they had never yet been able to carry by storm. But under Snow Hawk, it was to be different.

Perceiving that the bears had surrounded the herd, and that in at last one place the trees grew thick enough for his purpose, he climbed high, made his way among the branches to a spot almost over a great bull, and swung out above the huge red-eyed animal. Then, with all the fire and dash of a preying bird, he dropped heavily upon the beast's quarter.

Bellowing, the bull reared, but too late. With a body-weight lurch, Snow Hawk swung himself beneath the bearded jaw,

wrenching at one horn. Down came that burly animal in a twisting fall that shook the ground, its own weight combining with the quick velocity of the man's initial strike to break the thick spine.

Taking swift advantage of the confusion incident to this unexpected attack from on high, the bears came in, crushing down the younger bulls with heavy smashing blows, their deep snarls mingling with the bellowing of the herd. In all over twenty animals fell, while but two bears showed more than a few horn-marks received in the mêlée.

So Kioga taught them to hunt in unison, a dangerous business but efficient. Despite their intelligence, this would probably never have occurred to the bears, though daily they saw the wolves achieving their ends in the same way.

Himself the product of his wild life, Snow Hawk had now become also the master of his environment, adding strength upon strength to that with which nature had equipped him. He hunted as did the creatures about him, combining the best of their methods with others suggested by his own superior intelligence to attain a deadly surety of attack.

As self-appointed custodian of the cubs, he toughened back and thigh by rolling aside huge logs and slabs of rock to uncover for them the mice and insects beneath. Day-long journeys through the midway, along the upper canopy or below the river overhang, or amid the loftiest cliff pinnacles; unending wrestling with the heavier bears; countless encounters aground and aloft—all these had thewed him as with steel and endowed him with a tireless endurance.

He had not the strength of a full-grown bear; but he could hold his own among them by adding to strength that eel-like agility which, far from diminishing with his growth, had increased away beyond what is usually considered the attainable limit of human tissues. The miracle of his leap carried him from one cliff-ledge to another a dozen feet above with the ease of a chamois, and his climbing skill and feats aloft might have startled a gibbon.

Heretofore his prowess had been chiefly in the arts of escape—the darting run, the long high spring, the breath-taking climb into the lofty crags, or the swift drop toward

the dark ravines—all of which evidenced his wondrous co-ordination of nerve and sinew. But early maturity brought him a new force and drive that made him daily more nearly invincible.

None knew this better than the savage gangs of narrow-eyed wolves who lurked in the tamarack swamps or the black hemlock forests. Boldly now, Kioga entered their haunts to entice them forth on his trail by whipping them off their fresh kills, as once they had driven him from his.

Your marathon racer runs twenty-five miles and breasts the tape in a state of near-collapse. Kioga once lured the lower valley pack for twice that distance over a mountainous route, frequently letting the drooling leaders come within whip's length before acquainting them with the stinging torture of that hissing thong. At the end of the run he took his position on a high rock, inducing them to attack by mouthing down on them an insulting mimicry of their own howls.

With dripping jaws clinking, and blood-infused eyes rolling in their own fire, the pack hesitated. Now and then one jumped and snapped, but in this old feud between Kioga and themselves the animals had learned prudence. They timed their leaps with noticeable care, for several mighty jaws were lost to the pack of late when that long glistening fang at Snow Hawk's thigh drank the heart's blood of one who leaped too high!

And now again a great gaunt male sprang up with flashing teeth. A hand with the grip of ice-tongs clamped upon the neck under his upraised mane just behind the ears. A flash of light darted to the bristling chest. The knife came away red; the wolf fell coughing, to be shredded and rended by his pitiless fellows on the instant.

Not even the imperial might of the largest bears justified their attacking these killers when the wolves reinforced one another in numbers. But therein lay the world of difference between their human associate and his wild-animal allies. For while the bears ambled peaceably along unless attacked or infuriated, Snow Hawk and excitement were synonymous terms. Man-like, he must go out of his way to make things unpleasant for his foes. This the bears never completely un-

derstood, though they were always ready to hurry to the scene of action and join in the battles that ensued.

But not all of Snow Hawk's surplus energy was expended in hunting and looking for excitement. One place in the wilderness drew him irresistibly and received his frequent visits. This was known among the Indian witch-doctors as the Unti-Guhi, or the Haunted Whirlpool, and was universally shunned as a very sink of peril. But not by Kioga.

At best, his ideas of a spirit-life after the body's death were hazy. He believed few of the superstitions inculcated in the native youths by the wily shamans. He distrusted the medicine-men, but did not fear their incantations. Accordingly, the place of their most dread predictions lured him oftenest. Never for a moment relaxing his grip upon the rope which bound him to shelf or rock, he had fathomed many of the secrets of the Haunted Whirlpool by cautious exploration. He had found channels unknown to the Indians where a craft might pass or hide in safety, and regularly paddled thence in his light canoe, racing thorugh the flumelike cañon into the rapids, and riding their foaming crests into the mists that hung just above the Great Falls. Beyond that he never went; nor did he ever see another human being there—nor anything resembling a ghost.

The great silver-gray puma often rode with him. Posed tense in the bow, with back-laid ears and eyes glowing like fireballs, Mika resembled some ancient worshiped animal-carving, rigid on its base at the portals of a pagan temple. Once or twice they were dimly glimpsed by the canoemen of Hopeka when the river-mists were crimsoned by the weird reflected flare of the northerly volcanoes. But they were not molested.

In one other particular also, Kioga violated the Indian customs. Once having cut his lustrous black hair in token of mourning, he had never let it grow long again, for fear the trailing braid might one day catch in some high limb, leaving him dangling in torture. But like the savage Shoni warriors, at the first appearance of the soft young beard of manhood, he began to shave dry-faced, with a bit of sharp obsidian; for among the tribes of Nato-wa, as mong the tribes of America long ago, the beard is an abomination. . . .

Hawk's band of bears had by now grown to a considerable size by the addition of three more cubs by an old female, several rusty-black climbing bears, and others. Of these the greatest was Club-foot, a huge cinnamon whose morose and vicious nature grew more intolerable daily, and threatened to destroy the armed neutrality of Kioga's wilderness society. Inevitably the two clashed.

Hanging, as was his occasional custom, from the end of his rope, halfway between branch and ground, Hawk was being amused by the antics of his wild fellows several yards below. With pride he watched the big cinnamon toss aside a log thicker than his chest, as if it weighed no more than a twig, all unaware that in but a few moments he must pit his own bone, sinew and cunning against that terrific brawn.

Now a mother-bear, playing and roughing it with her newest set of cubs, rolled one of them over with a flip of her paw. As luck would have it, the cub came to rest in the path of the great brown bully as he emerged surlily from a thicket, clanking his paws ominously.

The ill-tempered beast chopped savagely at the tiny cub, and in an instant the mother was flying at his throat—but not before he had countered, with a swiftness that belied his giant size, and locked jaws upon her head and neck.

From beginning to end Kioga had seen it all. Instinctively he increased the speed of his swing, sensing a crisis. He had always sought to avoid such encounters with the bears in their evil hours; but it was a question of life and death this time, and his decision was instantaneous.

As he hurtled back and forth across the clearing, like a human pendulum gathering velocity with every swing, there had occurred to him in an instant the only method by which he might hope to overcome the giant cinnamon.

Now the great animal reared to his full height in striving to increase his advantage over the smaller female. He weighed probably fifteen hundred pounds. Claws six inches long armed all four vast paws, and his curved yellow incisors had protruded an inch below his black lips before he sank them into the old she's flesh. Hawk did not weigh a seventh as much, but his mighty thews and rapidity of movement were the endowment of a competitive existence like that of pre-

historic days, when the price of man's life was measured in terms of his ability to evade or overpower his enemies. He knew to an ounce the limit of his strength, and had, besides, a great equalizer in his long knife.

At the height of a swing he saw the cinnamon rear again. Letting slip a length of rope between his fingers, he gauged his swing so that it would bring him just above the snarling combatants. Then, as he began the downward swoop, hanging by one hand, with the other he whipped his knife from the scabbard. A fraction of a second he hung poised, then launched himself downward like some sharp-taloned peregrine, full and fair upon the barrellike back of the cinnamon, the while he plunged the knife to its hilt in the shaggy side. The enormous force of his long swinging fall dealt both Kioga and Club-foot a stunning blow. The old she-bear rolled free.

Surprise gave a momentary advantage to Snow Hawk. Shaking his head to clear it, he hurled himself upon his hulking antagonist. But for his flashing speed, his skull would have been crushed like paper under the vicious blow of the hooked paw which the bear dealt on recovering. The youth, however, was too quickly under and inside that massive arm, fighting tooth and nail to overpower his opponent by force of attack before the bear could gather its scattered senses.

Like a wolverine, Hawk wrapped an arm and both legs about the enormous barrel, while with one free hand he recovered his knife and fleshed it again and again, ever seeking to pierce the heart which beat like a great drum against his own.

Crazed by the bite of the plunging red steel, the bear raked him with its forepaw. But proximity was his greatest advantage, and buried as he was in the long fur of the animal, flattened against its breast, he was partly protected.

A moment more, and Kioga's ribs and spine had been torn to splinters. But at that instant the knife found the great pulmonary artery, flooding the beast's lungs with the strangling blood. As suddenly as it had begun, the battle was at an end. The great hulk rolled over on its side, the

mighty muscles slackened. The cinnamon was beyond all further bullying.

Now the old mother-bear had only to lick her wounds, while the cubs ripped at the dead bear with fang and claw . . . . From that day forward none challenged the authority of the lad who led them. Peace and harmony reigned, at least temporarily; and the addition of several more black bears swelled the number of the little band to about thirty all told.

Following the bears' wise example, Kioga repaired to the sulphur springs to steep himself in the curative, steaming-hot fluids and relieve the discomfort of that quadruple furrow which had exposed every sinew in his back. The fine scars were to be the lasting reminder of a rake which, prolonged but an instant more, must have pulled out his spine.

He emerged from the springs refreshed and invigorated, to continue the eventful tenor of a life to which he had maintained his right once again by the strength of arm and nerve.

Once Kioga and Aki trailed a wolf into a wet, dismal valley west of the crater country. As boy and bear moved down its slope, a haze was rising from the earth. Through the creeping mists the aurora, dull and lowering, gave them their only light, and they traveled more by nose than by eye. From far eastward came the threatening undertone of the volcanoes. The air was weighted down with a trace of the sulphur smell, and somewhere a storm brewed. It was an hour of unease and foreboding. The boy's nerves were jumping; for even with Aki by his side, he felt alone in the immensity of his wilderness world tonight.

Then suddenly they stood quivering, arrested in mid-stride, nostrils distended to an unknown scent—a scent which made the Snow Hawk's every cell vibrate and tingle, raising the hair on his neck. He clutched at Aki and found him rigid as granite, and rumbling a low unbroken growl through bared fangs. Staring into that dark with expanded pupils, Kioga—who knew so little of fear—was struck with awe and apprehension. The voice of instinct, which links every man to his unknown primordial past, was clanging a bell in his

brain, warning him against some awful danger out there in the dungeon gloom of the forest.

As he took a cautious step forward, a hole yawned before him, two feet deep and three in diameter, into which he fell before he could save himself. He brought up on hands and knees. Something jagged ran into his wrist, with a quick stab of pain. The sudden reek of blood—a wolf's blood—had drowned that other strange scent. He must have just missed one of those wilderness combats he so enjoyed witnessing. Somewhere near, T'yone would be licking his wounds.

Climbing up, he pulled out the splinter which had run into his wrist. He noticed with a start that it was not of wood, nor stone, but something else. As the mists parted, he had a glimpse into the pit.

Hawk had seen death many times in the wilderness. Yet now it revolted him more than on any other occasion. At last he knew why. For what he saw was but half a wolf, the hindquarters, mangled and ground into a shapeless lining for that hole. It was a piece of broken spine that had pierced his hand.

Again came a whiff of that thrilling unknown scent. Moving against it, he came to another pit in the soft earth. There he saw the wolf's forequarters—also crushed. At the center of the macerated mass was the grisly caricature of the animal's head. The jaws must have been gaped to slash or bite when death came. But they were flattened open now, beyond the spread of any living wolf's jaws, crushed into that wide gape forever. What awful fate had overtaken T'yone?

Realization came to Kioga slowly. These holes in the ground were not natural to the area, nor meteor-pits, as he had at first suspected. They were foot-marks, the spoor left by some monstrous thing—a thing which had literally torn a great wolf in halves, and trampled the pieces underfoot in separate steps eight feet apart.

Never had young Snow Hawk followed a trail with such a strange admixture of curiosity, eagerness and deep cold fear. Down into the valley it passed, in giant strides. Through a dense thicket that must have stopped any other creature,

it broke a tunnel along which even Aki could have walked erect, with headroom to spare. Never, thought Kioga, could their lesser strides overtake the maker of these.

Then they heard a splintering crack in the night, followed by a heavy crash and the snap of breaking branches. They came upon a fallen tree of good size, snapped off at its base as by a giant unworldly force. Following along its prone bole, they saw the vast tracks down on one side. The scent was much stronger. Drops of dew and soil fell into the tracks. The thing could not be far away now; yet it moved with uncanny silence. Then came the sound of suction, as of some heavy body heaving through the swampy mire. A last footprint, fresher, deeper than the others in the cold mud, and filling with the bluish oily waters.

Suddenly Kioga quivered, as his remotest ancestor had done beside the tar-pools of antiquity. For on a ridge across the swamp, not ten arrows away, he saw a monstrous form. Above its somber bulk rose a pillar of steam. The enormous peaked head was almost as great in bulk as Aki's body. It was weighted down by a pair of tremendously thick tusks, extending far out in front like the blades of curved sabers, and gleaming reddish-white through the swamp mud which encrusted them. A huge tapering muscular trunk, covered with wiry hairs curled and relaxed, stuffing masses of foliage into the long-lipped maw. Hawk could hear the grind of mighty molars above the internal rumblings of its digestive organs.

The thing's eyes were no bigger than Kioga's own, but red and wicked as coals of fire. From time to time it uttered a heavy hoarse grunt, the basso-profundo of animal sound. However big that majestically armed head with its flapping fanlike ears, it was dwarfed by the ponderous body. Fifteen feet at the shoulder it stood, upon four pillars that more resembled tree-trunks than legs. From back to belly it was clothed in a thick mat of heavy hair, and a thin tail flicked across its massive flanks.

What was this uncouth, forbidding beast, blowing now like some volcanic fumarole, through its long proboscis? From what dark retreat had it emerged to strike terror into the

heart of man and animal alike? Where did it go? Were there others like it?

Swaying with deceptive slowness, the great beast was moving in complete silence with amazing speed. For a while they kept behind, at a respectful distance. Then, tragically, rain began to fall, filling and washing away those barrel tracks. And they gave up the pursuit to seek sanctuary against the storm, never to locate that trail again.

Kioga had but one word by which to name the animal he had seen: It could be—it must be—Gu-ne-ba, the Giant Death—that monster of whom the oldest medicine-men spoke, when relating legends of ancient times.

But the amazingly detailed likeness of the beast, which the Snow Hawk drew upon facing pages of Rand's battered log-book, is beyond doubt that of *Elephas Imperialis*—the gigantic elephant which roamed the American western plain in the Cenozoic period. Until now its existence has been deduced purely from fossil data dug from the age-old earth.

A boy's drawing in a log-book is the only extant portrait from life of a monster believed extinct by the keenest authorities of modern times! Like a solitary beacon it flashes out a challenge to old conclusions, and indicates that on a vast unknown land-mass at the earth's top, a wondrous faunal life of changeless antiquity may still evolve, awaiting discovery by crusaders for science. . . .

When not with the bears, or on one of his occasional forays with the puma, Kioga returned to the privacy of his cave to read from the fascinating volumes which treated of the outer world; and doubtless the complicated ways of the civilization about which he read seemed no less curious to him than did the solemn deliberations of the Indian councils to those first explorers who discovered the Americas. . . .

Three years passed thus. Save for the occasional cautious passage of a silent trading-canoe from the far reaches of the forest lands, none violated the gloomy sanctity of the territory which Kioga shared with the bears, and with Mika.

Occasionally the puma lurked in the depths of the cave, to which it attained by a dangerous leap impossible even to most of its agile kind. But as a rule the great animal exercised its insatiable instinct to hunt, roaming far and wide, sometimes

not turning up for weeks on end. Then one night Kioga would wake to the sound of claws on wood, and know that Mika was at the door. All attempts to accustom the bears to Mika's presence were vain, however. They were capable of recognizing this puma from others—that glorious silver coat would have been distinctive anywhere. Yet too great a gap yawned between the two species, of which the mothers of tender tooth-some cubs were especially conscious. So only at intervals did man and mountain-lion come together, to hunt awhile as of old.

Repeatedly, during these years, Hawk might have returned to carry out his oath of vengeance upon the Long Knives, but injuries which Aki had sustained in defending him against the treacherous attack of two strange bears detained him for several moons. Then too, he was loath to yield up a mastery over the bears which it had cost him so much effort to gain.

Finally, drawn by one of their periodic migratory urges, a combination of time and circumstance resulted in the presence of the ursine band at a spot within a few days' journey of the Indian capital. Confident that he would be able to find them on his return, Kioga set out to visit the village, his long absence from which had made rumors of his death an accepted fact.

XV

THE SPIRIT OF THE WATERWAYS

THREE years had seen few changes in the village of Hopeka; but the membership of the secret Long Knife Society had become greater, and arrogant almost to the point of open insurrection.

In duty bound, Kioga felt, to begin at once the long-neglected fulfillment of an oath taken years before, he lay in wait above a well-traveled stream, devising ways and means by which he was unwittingly to upset the general conclusions as to his fate.

Several canoes passed unmolested beneath him, but at last came one bearing a single savage whose features had a

niche in that gallery of murderers' faces burned into the Snow Hawk's memory on the night of his greatest bereavement.

Down along the rope he slid, with great caution, like some silent, giant insect above its unsuspecting prey. The canoe sagged suddenly beneath an added weight. A hand at the windpipe, the quick wielding of a sharp knife, a moment's desperate struggle—and the savage lay lifeless in the bottom of his own canoe. Tying the rope about a thwart to prevent drifting, Kioga proceeded swiftly to the business in hand.

From his quiver, where he had long carried it, he drew the carefully rolled and distinctive headdress which he had abstracted from the lodge of Yellow Weasel three snows past. Propping the dead savage upright by means of a branch fixed to a thwart, he removed the original identifying feather and headband. In its place he set the medicine-bonnet known to every shaman in the Seven Tribes.

A few cunning smears of paint gave the hideous death-mask some resemblance to that of Yellow Weasel. A moment Kioga eyed his work grimly. Then, unfastening the rope, he climbed lightly up it, leaving the craft to continue its interrupted journey. His movements masked by the overhanging leafage, he immediately followed downstream.

As was usual, many canoes had congregated near the entrance to Hopeka. Some were loaded with scouts and hunters, about whom projected the antlers of their deer. Others were deep with tribute or trade stuffs from the more northerly tribal confines, awaiting exchange for the fine skins and basketry for which Hopeka was justly renowned.

Loud greetings passed back and forth as friends long separated met again. From time to time other canoes came upon the scene, gunwales almost awash with their heavy burden, to receive a vociferous welcome. At last, after a short interval, there appeared about the bend in the river a craft bearing a single occupant, but one well calculated to arouse the excitement and wonder of the Indians.

There was a sudden startled hush as all eyes focused upon one who was, to all appearances, the reincarnation of the famous shaman. Like wildfire the word flew through the village that Yellow Weasel had risen from the dead. Soon the

river-front was swarming with the curious—women, children, aged warriors—all eager to look upon this miracle.

Slowly the drifting craft bore down upon the spellbound savages, convinced to a man that they were witnessing a supernatural wonder wrought by the death-effacing medicine of the deceased witch-doctor. The illusion was the more powerfully realized by that gaudy roach of feathers waving gently above the immobile painted face, a headdress famed for generations as the badge of office of the incumbent witch-doctor.

Now that grimly laden canoe came to rest against the bank, its silent occupant steadily facing the assembly. For a time the Indians stood riveted to their places, before some of the less credulous among them began to suspect that all was not as it appeared. Even then fear kept them at a distance until at last, since the figure in the canoe had not once moved, several warriors advanced warily to pay their respects to the risen dead.

Two of these had made courteous flowery speech in the figurative language of the Shoni when a third, struck by the unbendingly immobile aspect of the unearthly visitor, suddenly took his courage in both hands and came close enough to see that they were all the victims of a wild hoax.

He reached forward to tear away the headdress and expose the perpetrator of this irreverent trickery. Scarce had he moved, when the grisly thing in the canoe, deprived of its supports by the gentle rocking of the craft, suddenly pitched forward with the horrible limp ungainliness of the dead.

The warrior drew back as if stung by a poisonous snake; a near-by squaw sent up a scream of sudden terror. As if this were the match touched to the fuse of their superstitious fears, the congregated hundreds suddenly fell over one another in their efforts to put distance between themselves and the object of their unreasoning fright. In a moment the river-front was deserted.

Kioga, watching this comedy from the shore near by, completed the rout by imitating the harsh, discordant, lunatic laughter of the whisky-jay, giving additional spur to the horror that had overcome the native boldness of the scattering Indians. Then, knowing that discovery of the deception

would soon be a reality, he fell back to await the consequences.

An hour passed before a handful of warriors returned to the scene, their fears at last conquered by curiosity. A fierce cry summoned others. Soon the entire populace had again gathered about the corpse. Children stared morbidly; women turned away; warriors forgot their recent panic in calling down maledictions upon the perpetrator of this outrage.

But many members of the Long Knife Society felt the chill breath of fear along with their anger, for the dead man had ranked high in their councils: the returned headdress, suspected to have been stolen by the almost forgotten Snow Hawk, lent weight to two conclusions arrived at in secret conclave; first, that the incident had been directed especially against themselves; second, that Kioga had returned to harry them.

Sensible of his grievances against them, more sensible still of his ability to betray their treason if he so desired, it was decided to send out twenty picked warriors, who were to terminate the existence of this menace. So it was that Kioga, waiting expectantly on the cliffs, saw the stealthy approach upriver of a war-canoe filled with a score of painted Indians, silent as specters and bristling with arms. Had they been ordinary Shoni warriors, he would have withdrawn to let them pass, for he had no quarrel with Indians as such. But when he perceived the insignia of the Society upon quiver and canoe, he but faded back a little way to watch and wait. For he was the avowed enemy of every man below, whom one by one he identified as participants in the crimes which had transformed him from a happy care-free boy into a warrior sworn to vengeance.

For several miles he swung silently along behind the long-boat, until they perceived the trail he had purposely left as a lure, and disembarked upon the bank, drawing their canoe well into the brush. Leaving a single warrior to guard the craft, they filed silently into the dim aisles of the forest.

In but a few moments the hunting-dogs were already at fault. The spoor ended abruptly and unaccountably where the quarry had left the ground. With a hiss one of the fore-

most warriors discovered it again farther along, and after a hurried colloquy in bated tones the savage band scattered and took up the chase.

Here the trail became so hot that they knew he could scarce be an arrow-shot distant. Like enraged but voiceless bloodhounds they sped forward, again to be checked at the base of a cliff, which by no means at their disposal could they negotiate.

It was no guileless boy they now pursued, but an outlaw of unsurpassed resource, to whom the intricacies of the neighboring timber were as familiar as the crossed lines in his own palm. A well-thought-out plan determined every seemingly erratic twist he gave to his trail, which alternately dulled and sharpened anew the eagerness of the pursuit. Skillfully he played upon the confidence of the peerless Shoni trackers in their ability to run down game. Like cunning ferrets, inflamed and obsessed by the scent of warm-blooded prey, they unraveled every snarl in the spoor.

Sundown found them close upon his moist footprints where they crossed a newly fallen tree sprawled across a stream. Then again, checkmate on the wet sands beyond, and a baffled return. What they found gave them sudden pause, damping at last the hot ardor of the chase. The Snow Hawk had clung beneath that rude bridge, counted them as they passed by, watching their reflections in the streaked mirror of a smooth waterfall a few yards beyond, then swung himself up to double back in the direction whence he had come.

Nightfall compelled a camp in the wilderness, and throwing up a barricade of logs as protection against wild beasts, the Shoni posted a guard for the night and sought a few hours of much-needed sleep. Red Moon, the sentry at the hooded fire, gazed out into the clusters of shining disks which were the eyes of the night-watchers. Overwarmed by the fire, he shrugged the robe from his brawny shoulders and relaxed. Behind him in various attitudes lay the weary Long-Knives, many sleeping with their backs against the cliff-wall. With eyes only for the outer forest, Red Moon sensed nothing of the peril lowering down upon him from above.

But thrown by the firelight into gigantic outline upon the

rock wall, an ominous black shadow had taken form. Inch by inch, in a descent scarce perceptible, it moved downward. As the sentry stirred, it was motionless. Then again, slower than before, the shadow fell.

From the moment he had begun the descent, the Snow Hawk had exercised every caution to avoid alarming sleepers or sentry. His rope was adjusted securely above, hanging free from a high ledge in such manner that nowhere would he brush against the cliff's face and thus loosen betraying particles of stone. Without sound he had come down almost to within ten feet of the sentry's head, and now hung motionless as an eagle on spread pinions.

But with all his caution, he had overlooked one thing—the fact that a solid casts a shadow.

It was this, his shadow on the cliff wall, which first apprised the savage that danger impended. His suddenly slitted eyes went from fire to wall in momentary puzzlement. In response to a sudden sense of apprehension he made an involuntary movement of alarm.

That twitch of the muscles, instantly checked though it was by the subtle Indian, did not escape the watchful eye of the Snow Hawk. Knowing instantly that he was all but discovered, he dropped straight down, landing lightly on his feet behind the sentry. Before the surprised brave could voice his quick alarm, Hawk smothered his outcry in the discarded blanket, and dispatched him swiftly, with a dextrous thrust of the long knife deep into the chest cavity.

He had intended only to reconnoiter. It had not seriously entered his head actually to go amid his enemies. But his hand had been forced; and now, while assuring himself that the sentry was dead, he glanced quickly and anxiously at each of the sleepers in turn. None had thus far been disturbed.

Working swiftly, he appropriated the sentry's blanket, throwing it over his shoulders. Examining the dead face a moment, he rolled the corpse on its side, back to the fire, adjusting it in an attitude of sleep. With paint from its belt-pouch he smeared upon his own face an approximation of the design adorning the sentry's. He also transferred the dead man's feather to his own hair.

Though but seventeen, Hawk had fully the height and breadth of the dead warrior. What with the paint, feather and the blanket drawn close about his eyes, his disguise was not easily to be penetrated in the dim light of the hooded fire. He completed it not a moment too soon.

A warrior rose on one elbow, stretched, yawned and moved nearer the fire, not three feet behind the new sentry. To a word of greeting Kioga answered in a voice muffled by the blanket. But the warrior was disposed to be talkative, addressing the sentry thus:

"Dreams of Bull Horn predict the scalping of Snow Hawk tomorrow. What thinks Red Moon of this dream?"

"*Ha-o!*" was the grunted response. "Red Moon is already dead. For him there will be no tomorrow!"

Bull Horn started, then relaxed again, laughing shortly and grimly at the gloomy frame of mind in which he found his fellow-conspirator. Then he rose, approached the dead body of Red Moon, touching it with the toe of his moccasin. Kioga also got up as if to stretch.

"Weariness is the enemy of courage," said Bull Horn. Addressing the prone figure by the fire: "Wake, warrior—thy turn to watch," he said. Then, "*Ah-ko!* He slumbers deep," he added, bending over Red Moon.

"Even as a dead man," came the voice from the blanket.

At Bull Horn's touch, Red Moon's arm fell limp. The body rolled slowly over, facing the sky. A moment the Indian crouched rigid, staring at that red wet wound, before Snow Hawk's words had any meaning for him. Then, hissing on his indrawn breath, he wheeled and was about to utter the yell of warning, when a ring of steel shrank about his throat. A single word—"*Awena!*"—was uttered in his ear, almost, it seemed, with a sob. Firelight gleamed on a falling ax, and Bull Horn fell twitching, to dream no more.

Leaving the body where it sank, Nemesis moved among the snoring Indians, tomahawk bare under the blanket. By every canon of Indian warfare, wherein stealth and secrecy rank equal with flaunting valor, it was now Kioga's right to destroy them, one by one, as they lay there unconscious.

With this intent, he paused above a sleeping brave. Up rose the war-ax, then lowered slowly. The brave was mut-

tering something in his sleep. In that moment the Snow Hawk knew that he could not bring himself to kill in cold blood—a concession to that white breeding of his which dominated him more than he knew.

Instead his hand fell on the savage's shoulder. The Indian roused with the suddenness of the light sleeper.

"Dreams of the warrior are troubled," whispered a voice at his ear. "Does he too hear ghost of Awena whistling over camp?"

The startled Indian saw in the dark form only a sentry going to rest after a watch. His answer contained a trace of sarcasm and impatience at being thus disturbed.

"Red Moon talks like woman! Would that this hand had struck Awena dead," he grunted with a low brutal laugh. "Then her braid would hang at this belt, and the bow-cord of Mokuyi also!"

"Great ones above grant all just wishes," muttered the blanketed figure, holding something forth in the fire-glow. The better to see it, the savage rose on one arm.

Quick as a flash, a thin noose fell about his neck, and was jerked taut. It was Mokuyi's bowstring, sealing the cruel laughter in that swelling throat.

As the Indian writhed in the death-struggle, silent as a decapitated viper, he struck blindly with drawn knife, stabbing Kioga twice through the muscle beside the neck close to the jugular. The thrashing legs kicked out, awakening two other savages, whose yells aroused the whole camp into a fever of wildest confusion.

Still at advantage by reason of blanket and paint, Kioga sped toward the fire, above which dangled his only means of escape. A brave who had stirred the embers to a blaze and looked upon the dead face of Red Moon, turned and saw the Snow Hawk's bounding approach. In an instant his eye pierced that hasty disguise. Too quickly for accuracy, his ax hurtled at the head of the impostor, missed, and felled a Long Knife beyond.

As he reached for his club, he was enveloped in a whirling blanket and knocked headlong into the fire, plunging the camp into black darkness, under cover of which an active batlike shadow vanished unseen up the face of the cliff.

When again the scattered embers of fire were gathered and blown into flame, the leaders of that punitive party looked into each others' eyes, and found that awe and fear had replaced anger and the grim determination to kill. Four of their warriors lay dead, one by their own tomahawk. A fifth, struggling to cast off the blazing blanket, was too badly burned to count upon in an emergency.

Contrary to all precedent, the fox had turned to slash at the pursuing hounds, invaded the very kennels beneath their jaws, and—most awesome of all—had left no trace, search though they did for one. What but a spirit or a ghost walks the earth leaving no footprint behind?

Not for nothing did Hawk thereafter haunt the riverways, daily risking life and limb. It was to make good his sacred vow, taken at the flaming bier of his beloved Indian parents. To your Indian such a vow means more than life itself, and in his heart Kioga was certainly nine-tenths Indian. If, then, he fulfilled his promise to the letter, it is not as a White that he must be judged, but as a Red man, acting well within the bounds of aboriginal law as practiced by primitive peoples.

The ordinary canoes, laden with travellers, couriers or warriors went unmolested. Hawk's feud was not with all Indians, but only with the Long-Knives. These were no longer safe, aground or afloat, from the pitiless avenger who began taking regular toll among them. Ofttimes the Society remained unaware that one of their number had been claimed until a lifeless body broke the waters before the prows of their canoes or floated past Hopeka, propped erect in its own bark, for all to see. Hardly a week that did not bring with it some evidence of his dread humor. He sent the dead homeward disguised with all the semblance of life and decked with the headfeather of their immediate predecessor in death. This was his way of informing the Long-Knives that these, like Yellow Weasel, had expiated a crime known to them all.

Among the savage traitors it came to be asked in bated tones:

"Who will be next to wear the chaplet of death?"

Terrible though his vengeance was, the quick and painless

end he meted to his enemies was merciful compared with the diabolical tortures which awaited him in the event of his own capture.

Ironically it was Hawk who fought on the side of justice and law against the forces of conspiracy whose existence threatened the present Indian government headed by Sawamic. Yet so carefully had the Society's activities been concealed, none but its own members knew of its existence. As a result, in addition to the Long-Knives, Hawk found himself pitted against practically every able-bodied warrior in Hopeka, with whom he had many brushes.

Now and then it was rumored that he had been taken or killed, and members of the Secret Society breathed easier—until another corpse-laden canoe came floating downstream to spike the report.

Though Kioga thus made game of his enemies, he did not enjoy his notoriety. He was not vindictive nor bloodthirsty by nature. He slew out of a sense of savage ethics, to propitiate the souls of the departed. Weary at last of a vengeance which was not of the heart, Hawk, the marplot of an Indian revolution, glided into the deeper recesses of the gloomy forest and returned to his cave with Mika at heel.

Upon a smooth buffalo-hide, stretched across a wooden frame, he amused himself by recording from time to time, in Indian pigments and paints, the incidents of his amazing dual life. Sometimes he wrote as Mokuyi had taught him to write. But oftener still he drew pictures after the Indian manner; and so he set down much that must otherwise have gone untold.

While Hawk thus squatted before his picture-skin in far Nato'wa, another, thousands of miles away on another continent, was also making notes in his kind of diary; and when James Munro put aside his pen, he had sadly written of the extinction of his cherished hope of tracing the lost *Cherokee* and its little crew of three—among whom had been Helena Rand, the woman he loved.

Notwithstanding the frequent presence of the Snow Hawk near Hopeka, he was seldom seen by the Indians. Indeed, those who came near enough to salute him with an arrow

boasted of the fact. But on one occasion the tribe had reason to think that the luck of the outlaw was turning.

One dusk had found him taking his ease in his canoe, upon one of the smaller lakes draining into the Hiwassee, when, with the quiet of floating things, two canoes materialized several hundred yards to his north. Each bore four warriors, but the little remaining light was in their eyes—which, he knew, made him almost invisible. Therefore he stirred not, lest movement draw attention from keen eyes.

Better for Kioga had he followed his first impulse to lead them a chase, which would at least have given him the advantage of a start. But he did not divine that behind the first two there came a fleet of over a dozen trade-canoes —convoyed by two war-boats, bearing fifteen warriors each.

The scout canoes were within bowshot and ranging inshore between the Snow Hawk and safety before he realized his danger; for now, behind them, the powerfully manned convoy-canoes forged into view. He could not turn ashore without crossing the prows of the first canoes too close for safety; nor could he head for the opposite shore without inviting instant chase by the greyhounds of the rivers—the long-boats. His only recourse was a straightaway dash for the Hiwassee, to the south, a dash upon which he was well embarked before that familiar and expected yell of menace announced his discovery.

Then came the resonant twang of a bow and the quick hiss of an arrow striking the water with a splash ahead. Another bow-cord vibrated, and this time a bright copper triangle darted out from under the skin of Kioga's arm, near the shoulder, stabbing through the flesh and skewering the limb before he realized he was hit.

A quick backward glance showed the long-boats swiftly overhauling him, with several of the warriors taking aim, and a covey of arrows already in flight. In that fractional instant, without panic but with the swiftness of desperation, Snow Hawk took to the river. Arrows hailed about him and riddled the canoe's bottom, though only one found the mark, taking him in the thigh as he sank; but in a moment the spot would be alive with the excited and bloodthirsty Koshoni boatmen, who were already hastily igniting the pitch flam-

beaux by whose light they hoped at last to take the Snow Hawk dead or alive.

Kioga sank with two arrows in him, but with wits unimpaired, and he at once turned under water, swimming in a direction least to be expected by the Koshoni—straight toward his pursuers, by the reflected light of whose bow-torches he could judge their location without coming to the surface.

Luckily the fast war-canoes were over and past him before he had to come up for air, which he took quickly and sank, striking out again toward the trade-canoes. The wooden shaft of one arrow hampered the use of his arm, while the deep-buried point of the other gave him excruciating pain with each movement of the leg; but with bursting lungs he kept on; and now, if ever, he found cause to be thankful for those miles-long, hours-long endurance swims insisted upon by old Yanu years before—swims which had given him the water-presence, almost, of a seal.

Gratefully he saw the vast shadow of one of the trade-canoes and came up under its stern with a stealth that taxed his last ounce of lung-strength. In the clamor being made by the Indians, he breathed freely without fear of discovery.

Where they had ridden down his overturned canoe, the warriors were still probing the depths with lances and poising those river-spears, shaped like boathooks, ready, if possible, to take him alive.

In the respite thus gained, Kioga's first concern was to remove the hampering barb from his arm, breaking it silently beneath the water and drawing out both ends of the shaft. Nothing less than the cold steel of his knife could remove the other point buried in his thigh—steel which was now engaged in an operation of a very different kind.

By this time the Shoni warriors were realizing the futility of further search, and concluding that the outlaw must be on the bottom, riddled with arrows like his canoe. Slowly they returned to their fleet. This was a delusion from which he had no desire to awaken them, so he submerged once more and swam from the shadow of one canoe to the other, locating them by their lights, and pausing at each to draw breath and drag his knife along its bottom before passing on.

He had not reached the last before the first was in difficulty, settling by the stern and rapidly filling through the slash in her birch-bark bottom; and in another moment several others found themselves in like trouble.

The long-boats, in response to the calls for aid, were returning frantically inshore—by the route the Snow Hawk had hoped to use in reaching safety. Accordingly he struck off toward the opposite shore and was soon out of immediate danger, and able to look back and see several of the flaming flambeaux extinguished, as one after another of the canoes foundered before they could be beached. Then, leaving consternation behind him, and intent only on escape, the Snow Hawk dragged himself ashore.

The arrow in his leg was a torment whose removal resulted in further loss of blood, far too much of which had been drained out of him through wounds kept open and flowing by submersion and activity. For once those tireless muscles were compelled to rest, and at every halt he left a spot of blood. That the infuriated Shoni warriors would pick up that red trail, once they learned to whom they owned their disaster, he did not doubt, and well he knew the Indians: Revenge was their first thought.

Sure enough, with the first streaks of dawn the warriors were on the shore and finding ample evidence of Kioga's escape.

For an hour they were checked in the thickets of red sumach to which the resourceful quarry had taken, knowing that the color of his blood would be all but indistinguishable from the crimson of the sumach leaves. He seemed to have vanished under the very knives of his pursuers, in cover scarce dense enough to hide a wolf.

Then came the startling discovery of fresh stains leading straight into a dense thicket of devil's club, near which they found his abandoned weapons. Tracked to his lair at last, the Snow Hawk was at bay, his long race run!

Swiftly, lest the quarry so long sought escape again, several Shoni warriors drew knives and tomahawks and entered the thickets, while four others waited outside, prepared to put arrows through him should he attempt a sudden break for liberty.

Suddenly came a yell of surprise from within the thicket, followed by a terrific clamor and a series of thunderous roars that shook the ground underfoot. Five Indians had entered the devil's club, but only one ever returned, clutching the torn and bleeding remnants of an arm. The savage vowed that Kioga had changed himself into a giant bear and crushed his several pursuers with as many mighty blows. . . .

It had been Aki to whom he had introduced them, Aki whose trail and scent had come to him like reprieve to a condemned man, just as he had been preparing to make a last stand. Now it was Aki who licked his wounds, who stood on guard, who killed and brought in a portion of every kill to the master who had never forgotten him. And at the last it was Aki to whose shaggy shoulders he lashed himself, to be half dragged, half carried to a place of greater safety, where he was weeks recovering his strength.

So it came to be believed that the Snow Hawk could assume at will the form and powers of bird or beast of prey. Braves who dared face odds of ten to one in open combat passed with awe the scenes of these now notorious events. And if they believed they had to do with one who was part animal, part man, in a sense they were right, for Kioga usually bested them with the cunning wiles of the forest creatures.

Occasionally, it is true, a band of rash young warriors would go boldly forth to try the mettle of the mysterious one—and crestfallen return, burning with a mightier desire than ever to acquire Kioga's prestige with his scalp. But it was for prestige, for honor, and not for hatred, that these man-hunts were conducted, albeit a deadly and fruitless game whose ardor was checked by the fatal accuracy of the outlaw's well-known aim.

Around a hundred camp-fires and in the lodges of the mountain tribes his name was one to conjure, with, his adventures the subject of unending conversation by warrior-band and hunt-party; yet he was more feared now than hated, thanks to the repute which he had won by his exploits.

Indeed, there were those among the Indian women who even made prayer-offerings to the holy Sun and Moon to insure his safety; for more than one little child, on wandering from the village, had been returned safely in the stillness of

the night babbling a strange account of rescue from the jaws of some wild beast, and of a dizzy flight through the tree-tops above the river on the way home. And more than one little family party, its canoe marooned by snow and ice in the rivers, could tell of fresh-killed meat found lying near their fortified wikiup when all the near-by game had been driven off by the wolves.

But still another and greater adventure was to add luster to the name of this Indian Robin Hood. Kias, bold young son of Uktena, the Keen-eyed—a powerful sachem—and one of the most persistent pursuers of the Snow Hawk, was to bring tidings of it to Hopeka.

In friendships, as in all else, time works changes. Forgotten perhaps, was that boyhood bond of blood-brotherhood, established in sign-talk between the village pariah and Kias the Deaf, many winters before. Or, possibly, having dwelt so long in a northern village far removed from Hopeka, Kias knew not that in the mighty and renowned Snow-Hawk he trailed the crippled outcast of other days. After all, being then deaf, he had never even heard Kioga's name spoken.

However that may be, Kias was one of the Snow-Hawk's most persistent pursuers. They met again in a roundabout way.

Kioga's reputation among the Indians had its counterpart in the wilderness. Whereas in the beginning the other savage denizens of his hunting-ground had feared him as the man-cub of Yanu, now they had learned to fear him in his own right, and with reason.

He had been seen to evade the lunge of a grizzly's armed forepaw. He could stop a galloping elk dead in its tracks. The solitary wolf now avoided him; and even Tagu, killer of many men, slunk away at the hissing threat of the lash above his satiny flanks.

I have already said that Kioga was no insensate slayer, destructive of life without cause. Yet pride of prowess was a natural attribute of the young savage during these years of his approach to mighty manhood. Instinctive within him was the love of combat and the desire for domination over the wild creatures by which he was surrounded, and acquired

from his Indian training was a craving for the prestige of the victor.

He never lost an opportunity to play the lash upon the great cats. Ever more insultingly deliberate became his reaction to the charge of his yellow-fanged enemies, ever more ferocious their attempts to end their elusive tormentor's career. And now he even began snatching the prey from beneath their very jaws. In this his rope was a wonderful asset, enabling him to swoop, seize and carry his dinner on up into another tree by the force of his original momentum. But once, during the execution of such an act of piracy, the leather strand parted under the strain of its double burden. A huge paw, bristling with curving retractile claws swished downward, dangerously close.

In the fraction of a second required by the growling tiger to kill the still struggling deer, Kioga leaped to safe refuge above, as if propelled by steel springs. There he hung, checkmated, four deep and bleeding gouges along the back of his thigh attesting the narrow margin by which he had escaped the singing blow.

It was Guna's turn to triumph, which he did by devouring most of the deer and forty-odd feet of the broken leather rope to boot, thus adding another injury to the score for which there must one day be a reckoning.

Kioga gazed musingly down upon the tiger's handsome length. How well that beautiful pelt would grace his wilderness cave, how his little world must cower before the conqueror of Guna the tiger!

"I have slain Moka," he thought, "and Moka killed a she-tiger in the ravines. Why, then," reasoned Kioga with unassailable logic, "having slain Moka, who slew a tigress, should I not kill thee, O bloody-clawed robber?"

And presently the glimmerings of a cunning plan began to form in his mind as he repeated his old vow to sleep upon the flat hide of Painted-sides. Then, retrieving his grapnel and the remainder of its rope, he departed coastward. It had come to him that he could no longer trust his weight to a rawhide rope; but how about the skin of a shark, ten times tougher than ox-hide?

Arrived at the coast, Kioga went unerringly to a spot

where he knew he would find sharks, a beach where, some days since, he had seen a small whale washed ashore. The decaying carcass had attracted a horde of the dread scavengers of the sea and like maggots in a cheese the sharks were gouging at the vast carcass.

Above them, on a rocky shelf beside deep water, Kioga took his position, sharp spear in hand; whenever one of the grim beasts came within reach the heavy lance spaded down into the brute brain, and in another moment its brother sharks were tearing it to shreds. And at the first opportunity he attempted to haul one of his victims intact upon shore. At last, by good fortune, he succeeded.

Knowing the tenacity with which sharks clung to life, he carefully avoided the terrific jaws. It was well he did so, for as he attempted to pry them open with the handle of his spear, the weapon was suddenly bitten cleanly in two, shortening it by some three feet. But presently its death-struggle was over; and sharpening his knife, he laboriously stripped the carcass of its valued skin. This he immersed in a pool of brine left by the retreating sea, where he left it. For a week he roamed in the neighborhood; then, returning to the shore, he accomplished the tedious task of tanning the shark-hide and cutting it into strips suitable for plaiting into rope or whip-lash.

The half-healed scrapes given him by Guna still smarted cruelly, but his pride was wounded more than his body by his narrow escape of several days before.

Some hours later Kioga came upon the trail of Guna; presently he drew close to the beast—only to find that it in turn was prowling on a fresh spoor—the spoor of man. Curiosity led him on, and he soon saw that the little party of men the tiger followed had split up. Guna also read the signs and—sage hunter—followed a single trail with long reaching strides. For though he might have destroyed five hunters in as many seconds, the man-eater was not one to increase his own risks.

A grim smile suddenly wreathed the lips of Kioga, for from his vantage-point high aloft he could see a lone Indian fleeing swiftly but without panic along a game-trail, throwing frequent wary glances over one shoulder.

Then Guna, who was rapidly overhauling the lone warrior, realized his proximity and voiced the frightful long moan of his breed, which seemed to rise from the ground about the hunted thing. Instantly the young hunter wheeled—to see the broad head and back-laid ears of the tiger already thrusting out of a thicket, followed by the muscular length of the sinuous body.

With his back to the stout bole of a tree the young Indian began calmly to loose his arrows, pitifully inadequate, against the killer whose hunger-fangs showed bare and menacing. Finally hurling bow and empty quiver at the crouching animal, Kias drew his knife and, chanting his death-song, prepared bravely to meet his Maker.

From his vantage-point high above the Snow-Hawk watched, with grim interest. To let the Indian die was to eliminate one more foe.

But as the warrior threw a last desperate glance about, seeking some road of escape, the silent watcher had his first full view of those features.

In an instant Hawk's detachment fell away. No longer was it just another enemy awaiting death below. Into his mind, with all the fresh clearness of cherished memories, leaped a childhood image.

Two little naked proscribed Indian boys squatted facing each other, wrist against bleeding wrist, mingling their blood and swearing the solemn oath of life-long friendship, in sign-talk. What though this warrior had been hounding him through the wilderness? What though that oath had been forgotten! In the heart of the Snow Hawk through all the years that early friendship had stood forth bright and shining, the one golden memory of his boyhood village life.

As the rippling, sliding muscles of the cat steadied preparatory to launching the charge, a sharp report echoed in the little parklike clearing. Guna, the most single-minded and destructive agent on earth, hesitated at that sound. A moment later a dark shadow floated as by magic out over his head, wielding the punishing lash. Each touch of the thong upon his sable-striped hide was like the sear of hot iron. A dozen times the raging animal leaped—great bounds a full ten feet in the air; but each time its vicious blows

missed the copper giant swinging ever just out of range. Mad with pain and fury, the beast coughed out the deep, rare, full-chested roar that throws jungle-life into quivering panic—the anger-voice of the savage tiger, riving the silence like thunder.

But Kioga showed no panic. Momentarily the increasing arc of his swing brought him closer to the long-hair, while the flaming eyes of the great brute followed, the thick black-ringed tail lashing continually. And then Kias was witness to a spectacle which other human eyes have not seen since man forsook the tree-tops and became an upright animal—a sight that congealed the blood in his veins.

Of a sudden Kioga slid downward on his shark-hide rope. His return swoop brought him into range whence he struck as the eagle strikes the fish-laden osprey. Like lightning the long-bladed spear passed obliquely through the tiger's body as he shot past. The fierce animal sagged beneath the mighty thrust, delivered with all the weight of the man's body and inertia.

Sweeping back to the attack as the stunned tiger snapped at the spear, Kioga crashed with numbing impact upon the half-reared body. Twenty feet they slid from the force of collision, and before it could whirl, the man was fastened to the brute's shoulders and striking for the heart with his knife.

Frenziedly the enormous cat twisted in midair, thrashing from side to side, already claimed by death, yet with the dying vitality of its kind struggling to smash with a blow the iron-thewed thing clamped to its back.

But what the deadly spear had begun, the long glittering knife swiftly concluded. With jets of blood spurting from both nostrils Guna sank beneath the weight of his conqueror, twice quivered, convulsed and lay still. He whose curved fangs had lived on death, lay silent, his fearsome voice forever stilled by one whose brown skin bore the raw furrows of his own bloody talons.

Kias had faced certain death without a visible tremor, but he quaked inwardly before the slayer of this sinister beast. Then at last he found voice.

"My weapons cried for the Snow-Hawk's blood. But now my life belongs to him I hunted." Forth he held the gleam-

ing tomahawk. "Strike hard above the eyes. Tell his people Kias did not flinch."

Summed up in the words were all the regrets permissible to the full-fledged brave, whose code forbade direct apology. Offering his life in atonement for an injury done a magnanimous foeman, Kias stood rigid, staring straight before him, awaiting the death-stroke.

A moment the Snow-Hawk waited. Then,

"Not so, warrior," he answered quietly. "Long will Kias live to hunt meat for lodge of his parents. Kias may have forgotten. But the Snow-Hawk does not forget that blood once ran between him and Kias the Deaf."

Kias started, paling as the meaning of these words dawned upon him. Slow recognition came to the startled brave as he gazed into the immobile face before him. In Kioga's eyes he read no reproach, but only pardon. As their hands met and fell away the Snow-Hawk's face seemed oddly covered, as by a mist. A moment later the thicket assimilated him, as the night swallows flame blown out by a wind. Scarce the movement of a leaf marked his departure. And thus, for the second time the friends were parted.

Over the watch-fires that night the wondering Shoni learned again that their one-time enemy could be a friend in need. Fierce old Uktena vowed solemnly that one day he would repay his debt to the rescuer of his son: and thanks to this circumstance the affair found its way into the music of the Indians, and as you read, is probably being sung into the ears of dusky men-children in that far-away village, to inspire them to deeds of equal hardihood and valor.

XVI

THE HIDDEN CHANNEL

KIOGA'S taste of civilized knowledge had only whetted his desire for greater learning; and the older he grew, the more time he spent near the seacoast, vainly hoping to discover another wreck upon which papers and books might be found.

One day as he returned dejected and empty-handed toward

the sea-cliffs he took a route different than had been his habit theretofore. His steps led past a broad deep ravine some yards beyond high-water mark, and as he was proceeding along its edge, glancing down into its sandy interior, he suddenly stopped short, staring at something which had caught his eye—a long, curved, dark line which seemed at one point to disappear beneath the sandy floor.

Fixing his grapnel securely upon a rock he dropped his rope into the little valley and slid rapidly down the vertical wall to the bottom. Idly he scooped out some sand along the long dark line, exposing the rotted planking of some long-buried vessel, spongy with decay. Hurled up and wedged here by some mighty storm-tide which in receding had left her high and dry, she had slowly sunk beneath the sandy layers which the years and the elements had piled about her.

Having nothing better to do, Kioga continued his excavations until he had laid bare several yards of the interior of the ancient craft. He had about decided that this foolish labor had gone far enough when the bit of driftwood he had been using as a shovel encountered something hard and unyielding. This proved to be one of five bands of rusted metal which in turn enclosed a great chest, the size of a large trunk, secured by what had once been a great padlock, now a huge mass of solidified rust.

Concluding that whatever was so carefully protected must be valuable indeed, with great care the Snow Hawk levered his discovery from its centuries-old base. Heavy as it was, its weight was no challenge to the great muscles of the youth; and he soon had it upon solid ground, where he knelt to examine the fastenings.

Old though these were, they defied the prying powers of his knife-blade; nor could he pierce the thick wall of the chest beyond the depth of an inch, for it was lined with a harder material. He therefore decided to transport it entire to his cave.

This was, of itself, a herculean undertaking through the tangled labyrinth of cañons, forests and streams between the coast and the cave. But in a week he had accomplished it, by gradual stages, and he was ready to batter it open. Swinging a heavy war club, he fractured and then parted the

rusted iron bonds one by one, until finally he was able to raise the cover, beneath which lay a piece of decayed woven stuff which came apart in his hands like spider-web. And then, of a sudden he stood erect, gazing speechless into the open chest.

The top compartment was choked with gems, some in the quaint settings of days long past, but the great majority unset, and in some cases uncut.

There were flashing diamonds from India, emeralds and turquoises from Egypt; rubies red as pigeon's blood from dark Ceylon; rare chrysoberyls, large as robins' eggs, with the opalescent luster found only in the finest stones, glowed raspberry-red in the firelight, but leaf-green by daylight. He saw red Burmese tourmalines, yellow-green Ceylonese peridots; and gold-colored Maturan zircons bright as diamonds rested beside greenish aquamarines and round blue Cashmere sapphires. Velvety, lustrous pearls with rosy sheen, taken from the depths of the Persian Gulf by a long-dead Malabar native diver mingled with soft-glowing violet amethysts dug from the bowels of the earth by some Mexican slave.

Such was the treasure the Snow Hawk took from the centuries-buried hulk. Precisely how long it had lain beneath the sands God and the sea only knew.

Yet the very richness and value of the find offer the single clue to its origin. Only the fabulous hoards of the Indies could have yielded such a princely cargo, and that in the days when corsairs roamed the seas taking tribute from conquering kings who had learned to bleed empires of accumulated riches.

Beneath the compartments containing the gems lay another containing solid layers of gold coins and small heavy oblong ingots. These Kioga hefted and finally piled criss-cross into a little wall against the side of the cave. Over them he tossed a bear-skin, then continued his exploration of the chest.

For hours he sifted the gems between his fingers, watching their brilliant sparkling in the firelight. To the last layer, he had retained the hope of finding something readable; he would have eagerly traded gems, gold, chest and all for twenty printed English volumes.

Despite his disappointment, however, a new idea had come to him; and within the hour he was swinging at a swift pace back toward the coast. . . .

He had followed the coastline for miles in either direction, finding nothing but impassable shoals. Now for the thousandth time he calculated the possible location of the invisible channel through which wreckage of every variety found its way. That the sea-lions entered from afar he knew, but they came straight through the smother of breakers in which no man-made craft could live. Other forms of life also entered here, among them the sharks; but their route lay beneath the surface.

Taking a position above their cut-under lairs he watched several of the slit-mouthed gray monsters come and go like ghouls, then drew from his quiver an arrow.

Making fast a long thin rawhide cord to the arrow, he tied to the other end of the cord a leafy branch. Swift and sure the arrow flew, lodging in the ugly body behind the great dorsal fin. At once the shark sounded the depths, then hurtled seaward—and the branch followed its every underwater turn and twist. In the directions taken by that floating branch, Kioga knew, lay the channel seaward.

He repeated this performance, but used a strong rope attached to a harpoon he had fashioned, and fastened that rope to a raft of logs upon which he himself perched. Then he buried the harpoon in one of the gray monsters, deep enough to hold, but not so deep as to kill.

The beast's sudden rush was abruptly checked. The raft moved, at first slowly, then faster. In a few moments the shore was a hundred yards behind, as the panic-stricken shark, unable to free itself of the weapon, dragged the raft in its wake.

It was a mad, perilous ride, at first. Great seas washed over the raft, yet each ebb found the Snow Hawk clinging atop it. Soon the first swift pace slackened and the raft rode the swells more easily. Now he noted landmarks which would aid his return through the rocky labyrinth which comprised the inner reefs.

Occasionally he saw the broken and battered remains of what had once been a ship pounding to ruin on the rocks.

Many hours passed before he won through the inner reefs into the more open water of the outer shoals. Only now did he sever the rope and give his unwilling benefactor its freedom. On a great rocky island he rested for the duration of the tide, eating of the clams which he dug from between the rocks. Then he pushed on again, observing more and more hulks as he went. From among these, he realized, had come both of his own finds.

For several hours he watched the whales broach clear of the sea, and with streams of water sluicing down their black sides fall thunderously back.

He had done what man had hitherto failed to do, in discovering the exit from reef-bound Nato'wa into the open seas. Returning by the use of pole and paddle and favoring current, and guided by the landmarks previously memorized, he thought long and deeply on the value of his discovery, and determined to come this way again at every opportunity, in order to familiarize himself with the tortuous windings of the channel; for already in the back of his head was the intention to set out some day for the Other World.

Hunting leisurely back toward where he had last seen the bears,—deep in the densely wooded hills of Tsusgina-i,—his mind full of thoughts foreign to his surroundings, it was some time before Kioga's senses informed him of curious events occurring in the forest.

A tiger passed him in the opposite direction without his taking particular notice. Then a band of silent wolves coursed an elk beneath his tree, but slid to a halt upon their haunches, as before a stone wall, at the mouth of the valley into which the prey had vanished. For several minutes the fierce beasts milled with lifted muzzles and strangely lowered brushes, trying the air-currents.

Then, as with one accord, they turned tail and soundlessly disappeared.

Now Kioga knew that in such numbers the wolves were masters of the woods. It was a reversal of one of the wilderness habits for them to turn before accomplishing the kill, an anomaly he could not afford to overlook. Moreover, he suddenly recalled, Tagu and his breed, so common to these dark glades, were curiously absent, and that the streams, usu-

ally bearing the canoes of the Shoni hunters, were oddly empty of hunting craft.

A hush seemed hanging over the entire wilderness as, thoroughly awake to his surroundings now, Kioga advanced cautiously toward the mouth of the valley in which the elk had hesitantly disappeared. Then, in an instant, he received the thrilling knowledge through his nostrils: Not for many years had he caught that powerful odor—the penetrating, exciting and fearsome scent of bears in great numbers—not since the last concourse of the Bear-People.

XVII

THE CONCOURSE OF THE BEARS

KIOGA found the forest floor a living, shaggy, moving rug of mingled weaving bears: grizzlies with dried mud from the swamps of Gate-gwa upon their paws and hanging manes; huge brown bears from the cliff-caves of Utawagunta; black, rough-coated brutes from the forests of Walasihi. There were also smaller glacier bears, roach-backs and silvertips.

It was a magnificent sight to Kioga; and when he caught sight of Aki bulking huge among the other bears, he hurried quietly to his side and was quickly surrounded by his faithful family of giants.

This strange reversion to gregarious habits by animals inclined to be solitary ranks with the mystery of the elephant's final resting-place. No man knows how it happens, nor what instinct brings the bears of Nato'wa together in bands at a place somehow known to all. But this much is certain: they fraternize in temporary amity, during which time they root up the ground searching for rodents, tear apart every dead log for miles looking for insects; they then denude the mushroom-beds and berry-patches and mark every tree high up its trunk with deep scrapes of their claws. So much the Indians know. Evidences of wholesale battle thereafter are common, but the reasons therefor remain a puzzle.

Kioga's observant eyes told him this concourse had pro-

gressed perilously near to the point of general hostilities. Of all the bears comprising the concourse, Kioga dominated but a handful; a huge silvertip and a smaller but equally vicious black had by bluff or force, established themselves masters of the others, subduing all challengers one by one. At any moment these two would be at each other's throats.

Meantime the entire concourse was becoming more restless momentarily. The bears were whining, grunting, coughing and champing their jaws. Kioga, sensing what was to come, took his station on a wide-flung limb well above them. A sudden roar from many score deep throats sustained itself for fully five minutes in an awful volume of sound, as the unrest grew. As if at a signal, the silvertip and the black approached each other warily, each circling the other with menacingly bared fangs, both towering erect upon their hind legs.

Suddenly Urga the silvertip dropped to all fours and with a mighty lunge struck at his adversary. In another moment their excitement would communicate itself to all, and the clearing would become a battle-ground and a death-bed for many of the band.

But Urga had not yet closed with his leaner foe when something black and coiling slithered down from above, opening out with a report like a rifle-shot and exploding full against the silvertip's sensitive snout. Uttering wild howls of pain, he rolled coughing and grunting upon the green, surrounded by the others of his immediate and amazed band.

The enraged black saw in this intervention only a fortuitous offer of assistance, and rushed upon the silvertip, foaming at the jaws.

Aki saw the man-cub accelerate his swing, and recalling Moka the bully, looked for Kioga to mete the same punishment to the black, for already he was hurtling earthward like a cannon-ball down his rope, his legs drawn up. Then, as he would have swung past the snarling, snapping combatants, man and bear collided like two bowling-balls. The black rolled ten feet, and when he recovered the thong was again darting downward.

The affair could have but one ending. A dozen times the bear felt the bitter lash before he retreated, filled with a

mighty respect for this man-cub and his long, black snake-like arm; while among the remainder of the band the man-whelp vastly increased his influence by the example he had made of the two savage belligerents.

His steady oscillation above their heads attracted the attention of the entire gathering who watched, as if fascinated, swaying their huge brute heads back and forth, small blood-shot eyes gleaming. Choosing a moment when the clamor had somewhat subsided, in the blend of growls, gutturals and meaningful sounds pitched below the register of ordinary human ears, Kioga addressed the bears. What he said, we can not know; doubtless it was about food, for when he had finished, the harsh growls had become eager whines, and even Urga had submitted without further struggle.

When the bears chose, they ruled the forest. In making himself master of the bears, Kioga became literally the uncrowned king of the wilds. His scepter, the symbol of his domination, was the punishing fifteen-foot whip. More than one bear soon bore the tell-tale mark of its vicious authority; but not one beast lay dead behind when Kioga led them down the mountain toward the richer valleys below.

The concourse was very nearly scattered by one of those sudden storms peculiar to lofty mountains, which struck them as they descended, without the slightest warning. A tree near by seemed to explode beneath a splintering lightning-bolt. A moment later the toppling giant crashed into the lower jungle, pinning two of the bears to earth, and as the thunder burst with deafening crashes which rolled the whole circle of the firmament, drowning all thought in its reverberations, the bears began to mill round like cattle.

In startling contrast to the shaggy brutes the statuesque and wonderfully muscled man mingled with them, picked out every second or two by lurid flashes of saffron lightning, like some woodland deity placed in charge of the animals of this earth.

Blue sparks crackled into the air from their ear-tips and fur, and each animal wore a purplish electrical halo. The unseen force with which the atmosphere was laden struck in waves; giant muscles convulsed and twitched involuntarily in response. The stench of sulphur reeked away from rocks

struck by the ceaseless blue and yellow lightning now blinding them, and thunder seemed to be bursting right in their midst.

But the worst was now over. The bears shook gaping jaws and half-paralyzed bodies to send the blood coursing freely through their veins again; and finally they lay quiet, drenched, dripping, watching the awesome play of the elements.

As they rested, half choking on each breath of wet air, from above came the ominous creaking roar that warns of landslide. Now, in dim view through the curtain of rain, the slide swept past, bearing on its earthy crest trees, rocks and dead or dying animals it had snatched. A moment of silence as this racing rubble leaped over a cliff into space then a rumble, muted by the thunder, as it destroyed and killed anew in its irresistible search for a level.

Shaking their dripping coats and manes like huge dogs, the bears now ambled toward the edge of the landslide to feed upon the tidbits inevitably found at such a place—the bodies of animals killed in their tracks before they could escape. Here for two days longer they remained while the rain diminished to a warm drizzle and long skeins of floating mist eddied in every cave and lair. . . .

The respect of the bears for the two-legged creature who led them grew daily in proportion as they waxed fat with good eating. For two months he had now held them together, wondering how long such harmony could continue, and suspecting that it would end with the exhaustion of the available food-supply or the coming of the approaching winter, already heralded by the reddening sun.

The berries were all but gone now. There remained only the salmon streams, their bottoms black with fish headed upstream toward the spawning beds.

In that direction Kioga now turned his steps, followed in undisputed obedience by his shaggy companions.

XVIII

THE BATTLE ON THE ACOPI

WHILE Kioga was leading his bears through the jungle of thickets toward food, Four Scars, surviving nephew of Yellow Weasel and heir to his position as shaman to the Long-Knife Society, was leading his band into the wilderness—but for a very different reason.

The uncanny frequency with which Two-Scalp's messengers to outlying tribes fell in with the dread avenger made a warrior's selection for such a mission tantamount to a death-sentence.

This continued surveillance threatened the very foundations of the Secret Society. Two-Scalp, therefore, on seeing this steady sapping of his power, and fearful of being stripped of it altogether, had determined upon a bold stroke which, but for a single defection in his own ranks, might have succeeded.

The same superstitious fear to which Kioga's warfare against the Long-Knives had given birth suggested to one member of the Long-Knife Society a means by which he might cut himself away from it and from all the evil fortune which seemed to plague it. This savage had betrayed to Sawamic the full details of the carefully planned uprising, and the old leader had personally led his stalwarts in a surprise attack upon the plotters. The resulting battle between Four Scars' little army and the loyal forces had raged fierce and hot, until by a desperate assault the defenders had driven the Long-Knives to their canoes.

Two hours later the absent hunters returned to find the village bathed in blood and littered with dead, of whom the most illustrious was Sawamic himself. Had the hunters come in time, the Long-Knives must have been annihilated, but the Shoni determined to set out in pursuit. Twenty canoes were soon coursing on the heels of Four Scars' band.

Knowing that pursuit was inevitable and that sanctuary would likely be denied him among the other tribes, the wily

traitor fled toward the untrodden wilderness of Tsusgina-i, by way of the Acopi.

Only their great extremity could have driven him to seek refuge in the known territory of the bears—this and the hope that the Shoni would not follow into the Ghost Country —a vain hope, as it proved.

Thus it came about that as Kioga led his bears south and eastward to the salmon streams, Four Scars was leading his band north and westward along the shallower and unfamiliar Acopi; while far behind came the Shoni, gaining in proportion as the Long-Knives concluded themselves safe and reduced speed.

From a lofty crag to which he had ascended for a view of the surrounding terrain, Kioga saw and recognized the canoes of Four Scars in the distance and made haste to be on hand when they came to rest in that wide bottle-neck cove concealed by overhanging trees wherein lurked the bears in mighty force.

From the impenetrable foliage he looked down upon a dozen war-canoes filled with crafty warriors rendered doubly cunning, revengeful and ruthless by the peril to which their treachery had exposed them. A sullen fierceness lay upon their swarthy paint-smeared lineaments; Four Scars wore the horrid mask of the raven-god, indicating that this diety's influence possessed him at this moment; to the accompaniment of pantomime and savage emphasis he was haranguing his warriors thus:

"The wolves pursue the cunning quarry. Let them beware, lest it turn to strike; for the blood is not yet all run from the veins of the Long-Knives!" Grunts of savage approval greeted these words, enunciated with an expression of vicious menace. "The quarry must find its lair, whence it must first hunt for its own existence; secondly for its mate, without which its line perishes. The maidens of Hopeka are fair; and the canoes of the Long-Knives swift. Need more be said?" A grim silence answered in the negative.

"Thereafter," continued Four Scars, "a name must be given the village of the Long-Knives. His dream has told Four Scars that it shall be 'Head on a Pole,' and that the head shall be crowned with the scalp of Kioga!"

The shrewd savage had known how to electrify his followers. The look of stoicism which the warriors had assumed dropped away, and ferocious smiles of anticipation darkened their swart faces. Intoxicated by the word-picture he was drawing, Four Scars raised his shining weapons aloft.

"See this ax!" he shouted. "It shall find a sheath in his brain! Behold this knife—thirsty for his blood." So boasted Four Scars to a mutter of applause. "We shall see whose medicine is greater."

In the shadow of the cliff to which Kioga had retreated a bow was straining. Scarce had the inflammatory words left the medicine-man's lips when another voice—the whispering voice of an arrow in swift flight—replied to the challenge. The feather of an arrow appeared suddenly in the painted breast. Then, without uttering another sound, the rebel leader toppled lifeless into the water beside his canoe.

A momentary startled hush was followed by wild confusion in which mingled howls of hate and fear resounded in the supposedly safe retreat. Then the Indians sought frantically to back-paddle out of arrow-range.

Kioga had sped his arrow in heat, knowing, in the light of what Four Scars had said, that he was executing a traitor. But his anger went no further, and soon the invisible archer was engulfed by the foliage and returning toward the bears. As he went, the advance scout-canoes of the Shoni turned the bend of the river.

To their wild whoop of discovery the Long-Knives shrieked back their own dread cries of defiance. As the Shoni avengers bent to their paddles, the quarry, escape cut off, drew several canoes upon the beach, determined to offer battle.

Kioga had not taken ten steps when he caught the notes of triumph and defiance echoed in those war-cries; and returning, he took in the situation at a glance. It was not one which would require his interference; nor was he much concerned about its outcome. Doubtless he would have witnessed the battle with interest, without raising a hand for either side.

But the bears, restless from their extended contact with one another and eager to disband, had caught the scent of the intruders. As the sound of approaching warfare racketed

through the glens, an ominous rumble gathered volume deep in that cove. The forest floor seemed to weave into a rolling sea of shaggy bodies as the great beasts milled, infuriated by the violation of their hitherto hidden and impenetrable territory.

Could they have gained exit by any other route, they would probably have done so. But the only way out was through the cove, and already a mass movement began. Silent as vast phantoms the bears shuffled through the underbrush jungle in a charge no power on earth could check until many miles lay between the animals and the detested presence of man.

With their backs to this menace, the Long-Knives did not realize their predicament. But the Shoni did. An explosive hiss from the leading canoe suddenly arrested the steady paddle-stroke. Following the lean pointing finger of Cipikau, every eye focused upon several lumbering blurs against the background of the cliffs.

"The Ani-tsa-guhil" came the medicine-man's awed whisper. "The Bear People are on the war-road!"

"It is better to go back!" muttered another Indian, a warrior with no desire to test the power of Cipikau's medicine against such opponents as these.

"Agh! Back! Back! Seven generations of medicine-men have not looked upon such a spectacle since the village of Ocowomo was gutted by bears in the sun of the comet! Back, turn back!"

But no man moved. Each remained rooted to his seat as if hypnotized by the fascination of the sight ahead.

Already the maddened bears had run amok, lumbering from the undergrowth like veritable juggernauts, smashing and scattering the drawn-up canoes of the Long-Knives like twigs with their mighty blows, and roaring thickly as they felt their great jaws sinking into unresisting flesh and crumbling bone.

During the brief moment in which their terrifying appearance petrified the Long-Knives with fear, a dozen more bears closed swiftly in, annihilating every man standing ashore, and splashing belly-deep in the agitated stream, in long surprisingly agile bounds, to attack the second row of canoes.

What seemed a solid wall of great beasts poured forth from the underbrush and charged into deeper water, with booming, deep-chested roars voicing their rage. The paralysis of fear fell from the Long-Knives. After their first wild yells of startled alarm they prepared their tardy defense. Lifting their voices in the battle-cry of their clans, they added another note to the frightful din of that bellowing shambles.

With the smell of blood hot in their nostrils, the remainder of the bear horde roared into the fray, blocking off the exit of eight canoes from the trap, rending and tearing the occupants as their weight swamped the craft.

Here and there a heavy canoe loaded with humanity sank at one end under a massive paw and rose high in the air at the other, as the grizzly attackers clawed the warriors out of their barks, like mice out of burrows.

Now and then a bear fell heavily with an arrow through the palate and into the brain. But around him reared others bristling with the feathered shafts, their rugged coats matted and dripping from a dozen wounds, but untouched in a vital part. Moreover, many of the bears knew the weapons of their opponents from past experience, and struck down lance or spear with contemptuous ease, countering with bone-crushing blows of mighty forepaws which, even when they missed a mark, bashed gaping holes in the foundering canoes.

Human flesh and blood could not long avail against the tactics of the bears, who fought with the ferocity induced by long repression and aggravated by the maddening prick of hastily shot arrows.

Raging to destroy and kill, they sometimes attacked even those of their own number who stood in the way. In the wild heat of the battle Aki fell under such a mindless assault, just as he was about to rear beside one of the remaining canoes, which had been forced back under the overhang. And Kioga was drawn into the fight in spite of himself.

The warrior nearest Aki had been poised to leap from the high bow of the craft and now perceived the great bear's plight. He lifted a murderous club, with a ten-inch spike of flint.

Simultaneously fingers that were like tightening coils of

wire fell upon the savage's brawny arm, as from the overhang there dropped a human form that was Nemesis, boarding the last canoe of the Long-Knives. The blow that would have been fatal to Aki never fell, and before the Indian had recovered from Kioga's unexpected check, he had gone to join the other struggling forms in the river round about.

Off balance after his sudden defense of Aki, Kioga would have been easy prey for several of the Long-Knives remaining in the canoe. But Aki, in rearing, rested one great paw upon the long boat, precipitating its other occupants into the river, and was now engaged in smashing feathered and painted skulls under as fast as they appeared on the surface.

At sight of a naked human being, rising erect and alive out of the wildest press of the bloody melée and forcing a way through the crowding bears ashore, who fell back beneath the powerful suasion of the heavy whip, the Shoni could endure no more.

A moment later they were in broken flight toward the Hiwasi, having taken captive the Long-Knives who had survived the slaughter.

XIX

THE WARRIOR CHIEFTAIN

AT THE healing, steaming sulphur springs the bear concourse was coming to an end. Though Kioga had again matched his powers of persuasion against the instinct of the bears to return to their solitude, this time he had lost.

Without farewells, as is their way, the members of the great band drifted off, formed later into smaller natural groups and shuffled away in the direction of their various habitats, silent but for the clicking of their long claws, which soon faded away.

In short time all but a handful had gone, of which a few elected to remain with Kioga and the Seven, swelling his band to a dozen. Kioga himself took up again his old way of life, sometimes lost in the printed lore of another world, sometimes drawn by the lure of the sea toward the cliffs, to

dream and search the distant reefs for sight of some floating thing bearing the imprint of distant civilization.

The unexpected climax to his long years of vengeance left him with a new sense of peace. The struggle between the demands of Indian ethics and the newer ideas of mercy which many of his books extolled as the way of the white race, was at an end. He had not intended so terrible a fate for his enemies as that worked upon them by chance and his bears; but he experienced no regrets. . . . The sacred obligation to the beloved dead was discharged.

Hawk's old dream of rising high in the Indian councils, as had Mokuyi, had long ago faded from his mind. All unsuspecting of the fame his name had acquired, he believed that there was not, nor ever could be, welcome for him among Sawamic's tribes—even though the power of the Long-Knives was destroyed. Ever more often he thought of the great adventure, for he had determined that the new sun should see his departure from Nato'wa. He would pass through the tortuous channels in the reefs, out into waters which he knew must be the Northern Ocean. Thence he would head southward, toward the land of his unknown fathers.

One day, toward spring, with Mika at his side, he set out to find raw materials for his proposed craft—a canoe which he would build, to sail toward the land of his unremembered father. It must be a long, strong canoe, not of framework and bark, but dug out of a solid tree-trunk, as were the war-canoes of some of the northern tribes.

His search led him along the broad Hiwasi, through the jungle of towering underbrush which lined its banks and arched above the river, in some places quite covering it overhead. Twice in an hour he fancied he heard a faint and prolonged sound, muted by distance, but dismissed it as the sigh of the breeze in the forest. Finally, however, he was forced to recognize it as the cry of an Indian herald.

For some moments he listened with tilted head, then melted away through the trees in the direction of the sound, swinging soundlessly along the arches just above the shoreline. In an hour he passed a lone courier, and paused to watch the man cease paddling, call aloud a name and a few sentences, listen intently, then paddle onward.

The name was his own. The sentences invited him to counsel with his people, the Shoni. Could it be, he wondered, some ruse engineered for his capture?

Continuing along the river and taking full advantage of the natural cover, he soon came upon an Indian camp. A host of war-canoes enlivened the waters near that scene, and the shore was covered with craft drawn upon the bank. An abatis had been built upon the landward side, its pointed branches turned toward the forest as protection against wild animals. An air of expectation seemed to pervade the large band of warriors and chiefs whenever the lone courier returned; yet despite this a sense of grimness hung over the gathering.

From the variety of costumes and the number of men, Kioga concluded that something important was afoot. Accordingly he stole toward the meeting-place and from the outer darkness observed the activity within the formidable wall of out-pointed branches.

Tiny fires glowed near the shore, about which sat Indian chiefs muffled in their decorated blankets and with feathers erect in their headdresses. The pipe passed back and forth between them constantly, and few words were exchanged. To one side, but within the faint light offered by the fires, a group of warriors, naked to the loins, half-heartedly threw tomahawk or knife at a mark. Others were engaged in the repair of canoes or straightening arrows and restringing bows.

Now and then a lone scout appeared to announce briefly that his efforts to attract the attention of the Snow Hawk had been vain, and instantly another fresh scout set out to carry on the search. Occasionally a hunter returned silently to camp with game shot somewhere along the shore.

The smell of roasting meat had attracted numerous wild beasts whose eyes glowed in the darkness, but the acrid smoke of the fires dispersed most of them. These eyes were but little fiercer than the eyes of the men about the fires; for despite the peace-pipe, distrustful glances passed to and fro; and beneath the painted blankets each man gripped his most reliable weapon tightly in hand.

All this Kioga noted in a single comprehending glance. Grimly he fitted an arrow to the string. If this were treachery,

he would soon know of it. Drawing until the barb pricked his fingers, he loosed. The sharp whistle of the shaft brought every eye around, and its ringing impact, as it scattered one of the little fires, contained an unmistakable note of warning. For a moment every man in the clearing froze immovable, lest the least move draw another and deadlier missile; they knew that their search was ended.

Into the startled silence which had descended upon the camp there dropped the sonorous syllables of the Indian tongue as if from the air about them.

"Whom seek the chiefs in the forests of Tsusgina-i?"

"We seek Kioga, son of Mokuyi, him who led the Bear-People to war against Long-Knives." This from a chief elected to speak for the others present.

"Search no more. Call in your scouts. I have come."

More than one hand leaped instinctively to hidden arms at sound of that voice, but fell away again as men remembered for what purpose the chiefs had assembled here.

Finally the chieftain spoke again. "A council seat is vacant beside the Shoni fires. Let Kioga enter camp. He sees that we lay aside arms to welcome him."

"*Ahi!* and also he sees many whose arrows have pursued him through forest and mountain these many years past," answered Kioga.

"Come! Eat venison of friends," bade the voice of the spokesman chief. "We are here with peace in hearts. Long warfare with Kioga passes, like waters of Hiwasi, never to return."

Again came the voice of the invisible outlaw.

"I do not hear the voice of Peacemaker."

A silence fell over the Indian camp as old Ukimaws delivered a long and reverent eulogy of the deceased sachem, concluding:—"Sawamic has gone away, wrapped in his blanket. His people mourn. He hunts tonight in land of his ancestors. With his passing evil days are upon Shoni. Great-Ones-Above turn away Their faces. Great Council ends in disagreement. War threatens Seven Tribes, brother against brother. Then Shoni will be easy prey for the Wa-Kanek."

"What do chieftains want of Kioga?"

"Come lead the Council of Warmakers. There is no agreement among us except in this."

There was a long silence. Then,

"Whose voice spoke name of Snow-Hawk?" came the question.

"Uktena, father of Kias," was the instant reply. In this answer Kioga learned the gratitude of the old warrior whose son he had saved from a terrible death beneath the talons and fangs of Guna, moons ago.

A long silence followed, and when Snow Hawk did not answer, a second chieftain arose to address the unseen warrior.

"Muhwase speaks, for the People of the Plume. By this token Muhwase has cast his vote for Kioga son of Mokuyi!" He placed a brightly decorated pipe upon the ground in the semicircular clearing.

"By this token," declared another, "Nakuti speaks for the tribe of the People-with-their-ears-pierced." A bundle of snow-white ermine-skins dropped beside the pipe. "Nakuti's vote goes to Kioga!"

A fourth chieftain rose and laid down a string of cunningly matched eagle-talons. "These," said he, "go with my vote representing the Tugari, who will not be placated by empty promises of union. Pitwaskum has talked!"

"Kinesa came without gifts," uttered a tall and brawny figure with many scars upon head and torso. "But this canoe which bore him is the token by which he votes with his brothers! Through Kinesa the Cliff People have chosen."

One by one, to accompaniment of wide gesture and expressive pantomime, the various chieftains of the Kindred Tribes pledged their fealty to the proposed war-chief; and when it came the turn of Pam'apami, the chosen representative of the Pipe-Smokers, he seized his bow and dramatically broke it across his knee.

"This," said he impressively, "is the Shoni—a broken bow. This string which holds the pieces together is our hope for peace. If Pam'apami binds it about the two pieces, Kioga has accepted. If I cut it thus—so his refusal cuts our hopes, and living men now here will lie dead when the holy sun returns."

Kioga was first amazed, but later impressed by the obvious

sincerity of the assembled leaders. He had had no desire to undertake further responsibilities which would interfere with his long-considered departure. Yet he was, after all, sprung from a great race whose leadership has turned the tide of world history. In the end he capitulated, answering:

"Bind the pieces, O Pam'apami, for, by the broken bow, Kioga accepts!"

Ten braves leaped to open a way in the abatis for his entry. A moment later, with the great waist-high puma padding along in collar and leash, the one-time outlaw strode into the lighted camp. With upraised hand he then awaited the further word of the chiefs.

Faced by the man whom rumor had endowed with the highest qualities of courage and strength, the Indian leaders looked upon a man as tall as any of them but more perfectly and gracefully formed than their best example of manhood. Straight as a lance he stood, erect and proud as an Inca prince of the blood.

However well-guarded by his white-fanged captive, the action of Kioga in thus boldly putting himself within their power consorted well with his reputation for bravery. Many who might have experienced some lingering feelings of hatred toward him succumbed to admiration, and after a moment of dead silence there echoed across the waters from ten score bronzed throats and lungs of leather the spontaneous reverberating thunder of the tribal salute. Distrust, fear of treachery, festering hatreds, all fell away in that sudden wild acclaim.

An hour later, having smoked the calumet with every member of the delegation and accepted the ornate eagle-feather headdress emblematic of his new office, Kioga abandoned his life of outlawry and ostracism and was borne triumphantly downstream in a swift craft which seemed to fly under the powerfully wielded blades of ten brawny braves. Behind him came the armada of all the tribes of the Shoni, touched into wild barbaric splendor by the beams of the smoking torch-lights affixed to the prow of every canoe; while on the still night air the ancient chanted music of the hymn to the warrior-chieftain rose like the swelling notes of a giant organ.

In the village of Hopeka a vociferous clamor welcomed the long-absent one back to the scene of happy and tragic memories. Within the hour the warriors and chieftains met and formed a circle in the village clearing.

Upon the dance arena was then enacted a ritual as old as the Indian race. A hole was made in the ground, into which a hatchet was placed. One by one the members of the council, followed by bands of warriors representing the various tribes, came forward to add a handful of earth to the growing pile which now hid the weapon from view. Soon would begin the dance upon the spot, and already the throb of the tom-toms came whispering forth at the touch of the drum-sticks.

Great words began to be spoken by the various leaders, exhorting all to forget their enmities toward each other for the sake of the common cause. Finally it came time for him to talk whom all most desired to hear. Boldly Kioga then stood forth and in words rich in Oriental metaphor of the Shoni tongue, spoke of his long outlawry, now happily ended; praised the bravery of those who had pursued him these many years; craved the friendship of his enemies in the name of union and peace. Finally, turning to the war councilors he called upon these leaders of the Kindred Tribes for their military support.

"Our enemies, the Wa-Kanek," he concluded, "act as one man in hunting buffalo and in making war. As one tribe the Shoni must unite likewise against cunning foe. To this end, when my brothers return to their tribes, they will carry this word:

"When the Sun shows his face above rim of southern mountains, every warrior will come behind his chief; every chief behind war-chief. By trail and by stream all will meet at Painted Cliffs.

"There Shoni will teach Wa-Kanek what war means; with coming of long dark they shall have learned nevermore to harass United Seven Tribes!"

Fired to frenzy by this talk a brave trod the first measure of the war-dance of his clan. Others leaped into the arena amid the chanting of the singers and the relentless pound of the drums.

In their midst leaped, postured, and sidled the new leader, his mighty torso and limbs glistening with sweat, his deep paean of triumph echoing far above the rest as the Snow Hawk abandoned himself to the whirling frenzy of the war-dance.

When the delirium of the dance had ended, the feasting began, during which the remaining singers intoned the ceremonial songs more and more sleepily, until, at last, quiet descended upon the village, and only the distant howling of the wolves disturbed the deep quiet.

So it came to pass that after many years Kioga the Snow Hawk returned to the association with other men so long denied him by the strange chain of circumstances that followed, after a boy left the palisade in the company of a bear, so long ago.

And chained at the door of his lodge, with beating tail and unsheathed fangs, lay the grinning mountain lion once forbidden the run of the village, but against whose presence there was now none so bold as to protest. . . .

XX

THE TURNING OF THE WA-KANEK

NEWS of Kioga's election, like that of the battle on the Acopi, blazed swiftly along the forest streams by courier-canoe, by inter-tribal runner and drum signal; and under the aegis of this strange personality a new Shoni was being born.

With the first faint flush of the sun after the long winter night, a mighty force wended its way along the forest streams converging toward a common center, but by routes necessarily as winding and serpentine as a Chinese maze.

Surrounded by several hundred fierce and pitiless warriors armed to the teeth, the Snow Hawk awaited the remainder of his Indian bands. He was soon joined by two hundred braves from the plateaus of Wero-moco. Their torsos glistened with red, blue and yellow pigment; their long hair was tied in knots atop their shaven skulls. Dead-white paint

thickly smeared in hideous circles about eyes and lips added a terrific effect of wildness.

Then came ninety picked foot-archers from the lofty crags of Stika-yi, naked to the breech-clouted loins. These wore their hair worked into fantastic shapes and stiffened with war-paint into the semblance of curving horns.

Soon came Itagunahi with his host of spectral warriors bristling with arms and daubed with great bands of ghastly blue and orange; followed by three hundred canoe-men and hand-to-hand fighters from the northernmost reaches of the Shoni realm, their faces horrid decorated masks, their features rendered fearsome by the artistry of wives whom they were here to defend and protect from the Wa-Kanek.

How the Hiwasi blackened with the graceful canoes of the gathering clans, painted with scenes and emblems of recent or ancestral battles! What a scene of savage power these lean and ghostly forces mirrored in the lacquered waters of the river—the bravest of the brave, a sight to quicken the pulse of any leader!

Among them Kioga distributed his considerable store of weapons shaped from his salvaged iron; and thus, armed as never before in all their history, the Shoni awaited the coming of their ancient foe. Despite the presence of that fierce host of warlike men, all was silent as death in the canoes moored upon the shadowy bosom of the river. As fast as reinforcements arrived by foot, they were transferred to the extra canoes, and their spoor eradicated by skilled trail-hiders.

With a small party of ranking chieftains and several scouts, the Snow Hawk took to the forests near the mountain ramparts of the Painted Cliffs bordering upon the Shedowa. Through the black basalt clefts which formed the easiest entrance into the forest territories the party made its way, soon reaching that lofty watch-tower from which the eagle-eyed scouts had brought news of the coming of many warriors across the plains.

Low on one horizon hung the huge, magnified, transparent bubble of the moon, paled by the two-hour dawn which would grow ever longer as summer approached. When this short dawn again faded, the brightening moonlight revealed

a host of mounted Indian warriors—the raiders—advancing rank after irregular rank toward the darker shadows of the cliffs.

The mounts were magnificent, many in the full and shaggy hair of late winter, while others were clipped to display muscular contours rivaling those of the famed bronze horses of Lysippus. Most of them were richly caparisoned in saddles of polished leather, wrought with silver, inlaid with copper and hung with weapons of battle and metal chains and burnished medallions; the headstalls were draped with ermine tails; the reins were of braided horsehair, entwined with dyed snakeskin. But many others carried no saddles at all, but were ridden bareback in the slouching but easy Indian style; these were controlled by hackamores of rawhide or by a single strand of grass rope twisted about the lower jaw, and ridden by the less distinguished members of the raiding bands.

In the forefront paced the fine mounts of the war-chiefs bearing their resplendent riders in full battle regalia. Behind came the main body of warriors, nude to the waist, wearing shorter war-bonnets with pairs of black buffalo horns curving away from temples swathed in buckskin bands ablaze with decoration. Then came a horde of younger warriors burning to take the war-path and return with their own trophies or die on the field of battle—dog-warriors entitled only to the single eagle-feather, but hideous to a man with smeared grease-paint.

Soon the darkness began to throb to the dull, deep *bome-bome-bome* of the war-drums as the raiders fortified their spirits with boastful songs and the enactment of past warlike exploits, to the tune of loud battle-yells and that fierce long whoop of the plains fighters.

For hours this savage preparation continued by the fitful light of huge fires about the encampment. But toward morning the older chiefs brought about a return to sanity, and soon dark silent shadows were slipping deftly from lathered horseback to gather in groups and discuss the forthcoming pillaging expedition to the rich strongholds of the Shoni.

Appalled by the superior numbers of the Wa-Kanek as evidenced by their own eyes, the Shoni chiefs counseled

against engaging the entire force at once; but Kioga waved objections aside and with a delegation of selected headmen met and challenged the vanguard of the Wa-Kanek force near the entrance to the basalt cliffs. A small body of dismounted horsemen came disdainfully forward to parley with the Shoni, pausing at about fifty paces.

Then, in the sign-language, the Snow Hawk gestured:

"You are the Wa-Kanek, come to raid our people. We are the United Seven Tribes of the Shoni. Do not enter our territory."

"You talk with a crooked tongue. The Shoni have never united!" was the curt reply. "Like jackals they bicker among themselves. The Shoni are weak, like women. Go back and tell your chiefs that."

Infuriated by this reply, the chiefs who had previously counseled caution were now in favor of an instant sally to capture the insolent avant-guard of the plainsmen. Again Kioga gestured:

"The Shoni are a mighty people. They offer the Wa-Kanek peace. Here is the pipe with which they would smoke a treaty."

The leader of the plains delegation laughed tauntingly. Again the chieftains at Kioga's side protested further friendly advances, but he only said, "Wait." The plainsman was again signaling:

"We do not smoke the pipe with women who wear nothing above the waist. Go back and tell your chiefs that too. Have you any more to say?" To which the Snow Hawk made answer:

"This! Tell your chiefs that the Shoni have received no scars on the back when running from the enemy, which they must hide under war-shirts. Tell them also, that unless they retire from the Shoni hunting-grounds and bring tribute of five hundred white buffalo-skins, the Shoni will kill all their warriors and return their scalps to their villages upon the ends of their own arrows—will lay waste their villages and level their tepees. Tell that to your chiefs!"

For a moment the Wa-Kanek herald stood dumbfounded with falling jaw, while Kioga's subordinate chiefs chuckled savagely at these great words. But Kioga did not smile. He

had tried to effect an honorable peace by what he considered a white man's code. But as an Indian he was prepared to accept the alternative of pitched battle if it became necessary.

As they turned to melt into the wilds again, an arrow whistled toward the group of forest Indians, piercing one of the chiefs through the arm. The Wa-Kanek thus broke the age-old truce of the parley, and no answer was possible to that affront but war.

Keeping to the rocky cliffs which would show no trail, the Snow Hawk and his band found concealment in an arroyo which afforded a view of their back-trail.

Arrogant from force of habit and confident in their superior medicine and dreams of victory, the plainsmen passed scornfully through the door of the open trap. With glittering eyes the hidden Shoni leaders watched their progress.

When all had gone Kioga and his handful of supporters slipped back upon the darkened plain, stealthy as panthers. Ten minutes later a thousand head of blooded horses stampeded across the plains. The horse-herders who had been caught offguard by the stalking Shoni lay weltering in their own blood. So was struck the answering blow. The battle was joined.

On their return Kioga found the dominating pass leading back upon the plain manned by three hundred of his best warriors, who had separated from the main canoe-band.

Swiftly, in order to reinforce the other ambuscade, he and his party sped into the hills on the fresh trail of the raiders, who had by now split up into parties to carry on their raids independently of each other. The Wa-Kanek were convinced that the threatened resistance was a colossal bluff, for their scouts had found no evidence of an enemy.

But the waiting Shoni disembarked in full force and poured silently into the forested valleys on the trail of the raiders, leaving the canoes anchored and under guard at the river's center. Taken by surprise, the last of the raiding parties fell first, with appalling loss of life, beneath the withering barrage of broad-head arrows which suddenly cut among them. Their shouts and cries of surprise were promptly stilled by the tomahawks and war-hammers of the Shoni.

From a commanding ridge rose the call of a wolf, a deep

rocket of sound with an agreed-upon break in its concluding music. At this signal the dark glades which formed the trap became shudderingly alive as the Shoni warriors fell upon the enemy with the fierceness of demons, replying to the startled yells with their own ululating shouts of battle.

The air was soon full of the twanging of scores of bows, followed by the short flutter and deadly impact of their winged missiles. The ruddy light of the slow dawn flashed upon whirling axes and gleaming knives as these hereditary enemies sought each others' throats like leopards. For a time, amid the indistinguishable mass of tangled forms, friends all too often struck down their own allies in the confusion of close quarters; but soon individual combats, typical of Indian warfare, raged all about.

Everywhere blood-streaked men paused in their fighting to tear away the scalp of a conquered foe and wave it overhead with fierce mockery. Here a mortally wounded Shoni rose in the throes of death to present his skull to the inexorable scalp-knife. There a Wa-Kanek, overwhelmed by his enemies, received from them the salute due his valiant stand, and fell smiling, tomahawked to the brain. A disarmed brave staggered at the impact of a spear transfixing his chest, yet calmly and impassively awaited the knife already plunging toward his breast, confident that his conduct and example would be noted and preserved to the everlasting honor of his name.

Many chieftains fell on both sides, for unlike those who direct the armies of civilization, the highest Indian leaders were ever in the forefront wherever the battle raged hottest. Only thus could they command the continued respect of their savage followers.

Plainsmen against forest dwellers, opposed in all things but the mutual desire to perish in a blaze of glory, these were strange fighters who could pause to mourn an instant over the dead body of a victim but recently killed, or shout, while delivering the finishing stroke: "Die, brave enemy! I kill with regret!" Strange, contradictory and fierce, yet somehow admirable in their submission to the demands of their rude chivalry and savage code.

With deadly effect the Shoni were pitting their new

weapons against the spiked war-clubs, stone axes, copper knives, lances and hide shields of the raiders. Yet in the ravine where the major conflict waxed fiercest, it shortly appeared that despite the advantage of ambuscade, the overwhelming numbers of the Wa-Kanek must prevail.

But the Shoni resistance was soon stiffened by the advent of reinforcements. From the lip of the gorge three score expert archers under Kioga the Snow Hawk rained down their bolts, picking off the plainsmen at close range with deadly consistency. Then, abandoning their bows, they resorted to the weapons of close combat—knives, clubs and tomahawks—and swarmed down into the ravine.

At the head of a dozen men Kioga attacked wherever he saw his own forces hard-pressed, striking unerring blows with his war-ax, which dropped an enemy in his tracks with its every swing. Behind their intrepid leader the little band fought with concentrated fury, and on every hand the Shoni rallied to this infusion of fresh force and new courage. Sensing in him the core of the Shoni attack, a dozen raiders hurled themselves upon him in a body. Despite those astonishing powers of activity, he was hard pressed to hold his own, and was soon slashed in a dozen places by the weapons of his assailants, though as yet not one had succeeded in delivering a full stroke upon that lightly bounding figure—who gave an inch, only to recover a yard behind the flashing circle of his terrible ax. Seeing his chief in sore straits Kias leaped to his aid. Back to back these two were quickly surrounded by the bodies of their assailants.

The superb recklessness of their leader nerved the Shoni to prodigies of desperate courage; and slowly the Wa-Kanek fell back. At the pass by which they had entered the Shoni strongholds, the Wa-Kanek suffered their severest losses, reaped down in scores as orderly retreat became confused rout.

The remaining plainsmen, thinking to mount, dash off and lure the Shoni out upon their trail, to be slaughtered at will, found their horse-herders lifeless and their mounts scattered beyond recall. From their midst there arose such a howl of anger and frustrated fury as rarely assails the ears of the most hardened warriors. For hours the victims of this ruse

dispersed across the plain on foot, while in their ears rang the fierce cries of those left behind to be cut down and scalped by the merciless victors.

When the last blow had been struck and the rout completed, perhaps two hundred raiders found themselves taken alive, and of all their little army, scarce a third escaped to carry home the tale of their defeat, and of the rise of a new and mighty war-chief among the Shoni.

Very few Shoni had escaped being seriously wounded; Kioga himself was borne on a litter of blankets and branches to his war-canoe. The medicine-men were quickly performing their magic medicine-rites over him, and over Kias, nearby, who, sore wounded, had fallen a moment after the Snow Hawk.

It was thus, under the Snow Hawk, that the Seven Tribes met and turned the foe, gaining the upper hand over their ancestral enemies for the first time in many generations. It was a triumphant war-party which rode the homeward rivers, under the reddish beams of the torchlights, bearing home the booty of the battle in seven long canoes loaded to the very gunwales—bows, arrows, lances; many circular battle-shields, war-clubs, *coup*-sticks and hatchets—to make no mention of articles of "medicine" whose magic properties had so signally failed their deceased owners.

Arrayed in captured finery, the savage little argosy descended upon the village of Hopeka. The waiting inhabitants, imagining the worst, sent up cries of lamentation at what appeared to suggest the annihilation of their warriors, and the approach of their own doom. But on perceiving their error, despair turned to wildest joy, and the forest rang to the victory-dance, portent of the bloody climax to come; and in an hour the tortures had begun, their ingenuities multiplied at sight of several canoe-loads of the dead being transferred to dry ground.

Kioga in no way shared the barbaric aftermath of the battle, nor took any part in the acts of cruelty surrounding the stakes. Pleading the seriousness of his wounds, he kept to the lodge in which he had been installed with much ceremony. Pride of race, the consciousness of being sprung from an ancestry to whom such cruelty must seem repugnant,

stayed his hand. Indeed by trading upon his own prestige and authority he was able to save the lives of fifty captives who would otherwise have perished. More than this not even he could do in the hysterical frenzy following this first great victory over the hated Wa-Kanek.

Defeat by overwhelming odds of the Wa-Kanek was not the last victory the Shoni were destined to gain over the plains warriors. Yet among these far-flung tribesmen the stunning defeat was softened by reports of the unprecedented amnesty shown to the released captives of war, whose eulogies of the bravery of the Shoni war-lord won Kioga the esteem, however tempered with hatred, of his enemies.

Recovered from his wounds, Kioga found power, much glory and a certain measure of contentment. The new responsibilities incidental to his assumption of the duties of warrior-chief were anything but arduous. Many of these he wisely delegated to able Kias, whose knowledge of tribal matters was exhaustive, and who set forth at once upon a tour of the far-flung villages by canoe, to consolidate the gains in union already won by the great victory at the Painted Cliffs.

Kioga had cause to regret just one fact. During his absence on the warpath, Mika the puma had refused food from the hands of the Indians. For hours he had raged in his collar, pacing back and forth with eyes ever seeking the gate by which the master had departed. One morning the stake to which he had been tethered was found wedged between the tops of two wall-logs. The leash hung down outside the palisade, and from it dangled the broken collar. Mika had returned to the wilderness. It was reported that a silver puma had been seen running a deer in the swamps far inland; but the animal did not return to the village, and though Hawk mourned the loss of this companion of many hunts, it was not without hope that Mika would some day respond to his call again.

In the peaceful days that followed, many of the Council made bold to suggest overtly that now it was time a warrior took meat and gifts to the lodge of a maiden. Hawk smiled at that, a little scornful. He had awakened but slowly to the appraisal of the many dark-eyed maids of Hopeka who

looked upon the handsome swarthy young war-chief with approval.

One dusk in early autumn, however, he was drifting in his canoe upon the Hiwassee. The river was smooth as a limpid pool. Through the shadows cast upon it by branches far above he could see the pearly shells mirroring back spears of starlight. It was a time for reflection; and Hawk was thinking on the words of the sachems.

In his heart he carried the image of only one woman, Awena the Flower, as he had known her before that terrible hour, years ago, when he had carried her lifeless from the village. For one like Awena he would plunge through volcanic fire, or swim the Caldrons of the Yei. Ah, she had been beautiful as the quarter-moon now rising out of the river, like a goddess from her bath! None could ever compare with her image, thought Kioga sadly.

Suddenly through the silence about the village toward which he moved there floated a strange sound, round and sweet as a quivering chime, followed by a quiet musical chord. And then a woman's voice came across the water, raised in a melody he had never heard before. Its words were in the familiar dialect of the Wacipi—the River People of the northern forests. The song was a lament, and poured from the shadow of the palisade near the river's edge.

As Snow Hawk drifted in, entranced, he could see the faces of the sentries in the moonlight, strangely softened and relaxed from their habitual stern hauteur. From the village came no children's shouts, nor clamor of hunters' games. Hopeka and its people were silent, spellbound, harkening as they had from the beginning when this wild nightingale first sang music more beautiful than their own.

Straining his gaze, Hawk saw her kneeling upon the sands, facing the southeast, and singing with a voice that surely reached the stars. As she saw his canoe drifting in, the song died away and she rose with startled lightness.

Sickle-slim she was, fine-featured as an ivory carving, with the lofty bearing and soft step of a doe. She wore but the light slit skirt of the Shoni maiden. Exquisitely embroidered moccasins, open at the trim ankles, marked her as a young woman of breeding and quality in her tribe. The pure blood

of the best Shoni families warmed her delicate features, reddening her full and handsome mouth, with its white and perfect teeth. Her taut skin had the tint of light-brown wine, the texture of China silk. Behind the shapely head her hair hung in two braided gleaming ebony loops, caught up by the ends and fastened at the slender nape by a polished horn clasp. Her small ears had never been pierced for ornament, but about her neck was a fine-woven cord, holding a carved bone sunburst pendant in the shadow of her breast. Clasping her left arm between elbow and wrist was an open silver bracelet. At her back a thin copper knife touched the flesh. She was otherwise unadorned.

Lifting a small urn to her bare shoulder she moved into the village with all the plastic undulant grace that God can give to woman. And her oblique regard, quickly averted, abided with Snow Hawk.

The next day he looked for and saw her again. She passed him at the gate, head high and aloof, without sound other than the faint rustle of her skirt. In but a moment she had been gone, had not Kioga intercepted her.

"A warrior thirsts," said the Snow Hawk in the clear soft syllables of her own dialect.

Pausing at the sound of his voice, she lowered the urn and proffered it to him. Lost in contemplation of each other, neither spoke. And then, quietly, the girl continued on her way, leaving him in possession of the forgotten water-vessel, its contents untouched by a warrior who thirsted!

It was a little while before he realized the meaning of that act, or the implied invitation it conveyed to return it to her father's lodge. But when he did, he walked forward with lighter step.

That night the sachems pretended not to notice that for the first time his place at the council-fire was vacant. But one of them, a visiting chief, smiled with inward satisfaction. Heladi his daughter had been inconsolable since the untimely death of her mother, and indifferent to the attentions of a dozen eager young men of the village. This new diversion would benefit her.

So began the friendship between the Snow Hawk and the daughter of Menewa, high chief of the Wacipi, at whose

door Kioga became a frequent visitor, more welcome than he knew.

Gifts he brought regularly. A hair ornament of burnished copper one day, a bracelet of matched shells the next; now a golden ear-ring, selected from among his treasure, set with a glowing ruby, strange to the delighted eyes of Heladi; again the perfect skin of some small forest creature, or a wing-shaped fan of feathers, acquired in a distant village. But never did he carry to her uncooked food of any sort, for by the social usages of the Shoni, that would have intimated a desire to take her to wife, and for this he was unprepared.

Yet for Heladi the hours she spent with the Snow Hawk were the happiest of her life. The bereavement song was heard from her lips no more.

Few were so learned as she in the history and highly developed music of her people. None played more cunningly on the Indian *abali*, an instrument of bone, fiber strings and wood, peculiar to that northern tribe and used by no other Indians.

In return for Kioga's gifts she brought his life an interval of peace and poetry after its years of strife and bloodshed. Often she sang for him at the fireside; songs of war and achievement, of peace and plenty: the lilting rondels of holiday-time and the plaintive monodies in which the Shoni music abounds. And from the seven strings of the curious lute-like *abali* in her lap she plucked a magic muted accompaniment. So the time passed, swiftly as never before.

Then, one night, beside the river at evening and out of a full heart, for the first time she sang a song of love, ancient as the music of Solomon:

In eyes that look but do not see, a maiden smiles;
To ears that hark but do not hear, a maiden sings;
O lips that speak but do not seek a maiden's kiss,
There is an empty lodge in which a maiden waits.

Her voice broke a little on those last syllables, and a long silence came between them. Kioga was looking out over the moving waters. Heladi sat with head averted, as if, having gone so far, she were ashamed, hurt at his seeming indiffer-

ence to this delicate encouragement. Finally he answered her.

"I see your heart, Heladi. But we are of two races, you and I."

"What matter?" she asked softly. "If you see my heart, is it not one with yours? Is not Heladi beautiful?"

"More than the moon on yon waters," he said, without answering the question she most wanted answered. "But one day, I will go away, to the Land-Where-the-Sun-Goes."

"I do not understand, this land of which you speak."

"Nor I, Heladi. And that is why, one day, I must go."

"Kioga—you will return?" She was breathless and almost pleading. Then, like one upon whom conviction sinks heavily: "Ah no, you will never return."

"I do not know. Sing to me, Heladi."

"I cannot," she whispered, shivering.

"It grows late and cold. Let us return," he said, and throwing his feather robe about her he escorted her to her father's lodge.

But not all the robes in Hopeka could have comforted her then. It was her heart that was cold as ice.

XXI

CIVILIZED MEN

EXCEPT for sheer accident, the Snow Hawk might have lived out his life as war-chief of the Shoni, until his strange career was checked by another and more savage fate. But whenever other tribal affairs permitted, he renewed his wild life for a day. Often the mere scent of passing game was enough to unleash the yearning for the chase.

On one such occasion the distant bugle of a stag lured him forth. Shedding the vestments of that scarcely less wild life within the village, he vanished from the frenzied circle of a tribal dance and streaked to the hunt.

The elk was swift; but swifter still was the Snow Hawk, who could cut corners, where the beast must follow the thicket paths. Yet it was some time before he came over the animal and drew his knife. The dazzling pace had car-

ried him many miles toward the seacoast; of a sudden his mood changed.

With a last explosive whip-crack upon the prey's sweating quarters he let it go and put down his blade again. He had not been near the reefs in several months.

The sound of the elk's escape had hardly died when Kioga veered off. Pausing a moment in a thicketed cut behind the coast, he picked up a short-bow which he always kept hidden there for practice-shooting at the sharks. Though he had but the two arrows usually stuck in his belt, with these, his knife and the lash, he felt sufficiently armed.

Arrived at the cliffs, he had taken but a single downward glance upon the sea when he drew back dumbfounded—then looked again.

Far below, the handsome shape of a yacht graced the bay. She had but a single funnel, and her hanging rigging mutely evidenced passage through violent storms. A list to starboard betrayed the damage wreaked upon her hull by the jagged reefs.

But wonder of all wonders, upon her deck strode the moving figures of men—of white men: the first he had ever known to enter this ship's graveyard other than as skeletons.

In a flash all Kioga's old yearning to mingle with people of his race returned, multiplied by having been partly forgotten in the excitement of other events. Here at last were those wonderful beings from the outer world! But a peculiar tableau upon the ship's deck checked his enthusiasm.

The scene reminded him of a stag he had once seen brought to bay by wolves. The stag in this case was a tall man of handsome face and stalwart figure, who stood at an entrance to the ship's deck-house. The wolves, even to the expression of savagery upon their faces, were epitomized by a group of men astern, lurking behind a rough barricade. Every pack has its leader. Theirs appeared to be a leering ruffian garbed in the filthy rags of a careless seaman, who faced the clean-cut white man at about ten paces. The answer to the seaman's bold front, as with all who run in packs, lay in the superior weight of numbers behind him.

From the yacht *Alberta*'s log comes the story of happenings up to this hour: Built in the States as a sea-going pleasure-

craft, she had later been equipped by her rich young American owner for a cruise in North Pacific waters about the Aleutians, where he proposed to collect, for an American museum, numerous specimens of the animals known to inhabit the islands about Alaska. On board when she left port were her crew; her owner, Captain Allan Kendle; his fiancée Beth La Salle, of an old American pioneer family; and her brother Daniel, two years her senior.

Arrangements had been made for the ship to proceed to Nome, pick up Beth's father, who had mining interests in Alaska, and return to the Aleutians for the shooting. The elder La Salle, as Kendle knew, had been cool to the idea of Beth's marriage to a son of wealth—an idler, as he had said, with nothing to recommend him but his fortune. Out of that challenge the idea of this expedition had been born. At the very least, the somewhat dangerous plans to be executed during the voyage would enable him to prove that he stood on a par with Beth's own adventurous forebears, much of whose spirit had passed down intact to her and to Dan.

But discordant events were to jangle Kendle's anticipated happiness. Well out to sea, a small sailing craft was sighted, flying a distress-signal. Approaching, they saw an unnavigable, hurricane-torn hulk which was the sport of every passing sea. The men on board proved to be little more than bags of skin and bones, who fought like animals over the provisions which Kendle and young La Salle took over. Other frightful conditions on the vessel convinced Kendle that the men he must rescue were indeed worse than wolves. Some, perhaps all, had kept alive by partaking of the flesh of their dead fellows.

In point of fact these unkempt creatures, rescued ironically in the name of humanity, were members of that dread race of piratical cut-stomachs who perpetuate the human slave and narcotic traffic, carrying on their vicious trade along the Asiatic coast to this day, despite the ships of war of the great powers. Their vessel appeared once to have been a schooner, perhaps of British construction. But she was now rigged after the manner of a Chinese junk, and had been equipped with matting sails, long since ripped

to shreds. Further altered by the addition of a high stern, ornately decorated with a fantastic Phoenix in dirty yellow-green colors, she looked an ill-omened hybrid harridan of the seas from which naught but uncleanness could come and which, in the end, even the impartial deeps would accept with misgivings. Indeed, that craft could have told crueler tales than those which leaped to mind at sight of iron collars affixed by chains to staples in her hold-timbers, and long rows of blackened manacles strung from her beams.

It was with grave anxiety, rooted in consideration for Beth La Salle's safety, that Kendle weighed matters in his mind. Moved by pity he finally took the men aboard his yacht, intending to transfer them to the first eastbound ship that should come along. No vessel appeared, however. Irked by the delay and unwilling to stand by any longer, Captain Kendle finally gave the order to steam ahead, making the best of the polyglot company thrust upon him.

In the original building as in the present operation of the *Alberta*, expense had been no consideration. Her crew was well-paid, loyal and self-disciplined. Space was everywhere ample, far beyond the needs of this expedition. Allan Kendle's guests had been installed aft in the so-called "owner's quarters," which were equipped with beds, baths and wardrobes, flanked by extra unused staterooms and connected by stairway to the deck-saloon. Here all were wont to gather and listen to radio broadcasts received through a modern receiver. In the deck-saloon, also, was the rather old spark-transmitter which had come with the ship, and which only awaited the return of the *Alberta* to her home port to be replaced by more modern sending apparatus.

But this old set was a source of fascination to Dan, who soon struck up a friendship with the electrician and radio-man in order to indulge a natural aptitude for amateur radio-work which he had always enjoyed at home.

Kendle himself occupied the captain's room and study aft of the wheel-house. Officers and men were berthed below, forward of the double guest stateroom, which had been converted into a dining-saloon, accessible to galley and forecastle. An inside passageway ran fore and aft the full length of the vessel.

After consultation with his chief officer, Kendle deemed it wisest to transfer Beth and her brother forward to the double stateroom, and quarter the rescued men temporarily astern, where a watchful eye could be kept upon them. And this he did, providing them with a generous supply of tinned provisions and water.

Such an arrangement, however, nourished not only the bodies of the men but also their innate lawless cupidity. Trouble was quickly brewing in the luxurious staterooms aft, under cover of a disarming quiet. Two nights later mutiny reared its head. With a dispatch arguing previous experience in similar situations, the foreigners rushed the *Alberta*'s crew without warning. In the short and bloody scrimmage Kendle's radio-man was fatally stabbed defending his apparatus, which the mutineers then proceeded to wreck.

Though repulsed in their carefully planned attempt to seize the vessel, the attackers succeeded in a part of their plans. They fouled the ship's propellers with chains and seized two of the high-powered hunting-rifles which Kendle had brought along for shooting big game. They also stole a quantity of reserve provisions—a grave loss to the party. At last they threw up a rude barricade astern and defied Kendle's authority to bring them to terms.

Outnumbered now, and faced with a dangerous crisis, Kendle ordered the passageway leading aft blocked off. All movable furniture was piled against the locked steel doors, in order to prevent any surprise ingress by the mutineers. When these precautions had been taken, the *Alberta* was literally a ship divided—like some great beehive with its cells walled up between the opposing factions. The deck amidships, to either side of the deck-house, was a kind of No Man's Land; aft was the pirate barricade; forward, several spare bottom plates had been pressed into service as shields for Kendle's posted guards.

That night, after a brief funeral service, the gloomy-eyed crew saw the black sea close over the bodies of their two murdered companions.

Recording these events in the log, Kendle heard steps in the passage and looked up to see one of his older hands standing at the door of the pilot-house, cap in fist.

"Come in, Jason," Kendle welcomed him, greeting him by his first name. "What's on your mind?"

"Beggin' your pardon, Cap'n, but the men have been a-talkin' things over, so they have, sir. Two or three of us could slip aft tonight and clean out them yellow rats. We're ready for orders, sir."

Kendle neither smiled nor changed face. But his quiet words were more than gratifying to this old and trusted salt.

"Thank you all, Jason. I won't forget this. But go back to the forecastle and tell them this for me: Two of our men were killed last night. I know their families and children —and yours. And I'll have no more life lost on this ship!

"Those cutthroats aft have two rifles. They'll soon find the ammunitions-boxes locked in the lazarette. We'll wait a bit longer. No man is to expose himself. Those are orders! Understand?"

"*Aye, aye,* sir!" answered the seaman, wringing the hand that was extended him. Then he left the wheelhouse.

So the *Alberta* stood by, and matters remained in a state of suspension.

One misfortune after another overtook the drifting ship in the following days. Storm and fog harried her off the beaten ocean lanes, and into ice-filled seas farther north. Kendle remained adamant in his decision to sacrifice no man of his crew. And the pirates played a waiting game.

But in the end, with supplies dwindling, water running low and Dan La Salle begging to be allowed to crawl back and stir up that vipers' nest with a pistol, Kendle gave in. It was determined that three men chosen by lot should be armed and slip astern at midnight, in an attempt to catch the pirates unawares. The drawing was being held near the crew's hatch, abaft the anchor-winch.

Beth, up from her stateroom for a breath of sea air, was praying that Dan would not be one of those to go. Suddenly, out of the foggy darkness above the sea there came to her ears a sound which she mistook for the approach of another vessel. Her call brought Kendle and Dan running. For a moment Kendle listened, then shouted orders to his men.

"Shoals to starboard! Man the winch!" Swift shadows

leaped to obey, awaiting his next command. "Drop anchor!" The roar of chain through hawse-pipe drowned the splash of the great hook, as the links paid out. But the anchor did not hold, and the ship continued to drift straight into that mounting thunder.

Thus the *Alberta* appears to have been drawn toward the shoals of Nato'wa by the same currents which had carried so many other hulks there—currents as unknown to Kendle as to those who had preceded him by more than twenty years.

Faced by almost certain shipwreck, Kendle himself ran back to within a few yards of the pirate barricade, calling for a truce and warning them of the impending danger.

A savage laugh mocked him, and a hurled wrench crashed through a window of the deck-saloon a foot from his shoulder.

Then came the frightful experience of passing blindly through the wave-washed ridges, all efforts at self-salvation nullified by the menace of that murderous band astern. With the propellers crippled, steerageway was impossible: without steerageway, no ship will answer the helm. To save the chain, the dragging anchor was hauled up. Life-belts were passed out all around, for it seemed that the *Alberta* could never live through the repeated broadside smashes she took from the huge seas.

With every sickening roll her furnishings could be heard banging about. Shrouding her decks were the dense winding sheet mists of Nato'wa twining about and hanging upon her like impalpable strangling tentacles. Now and again came the scream of tearing steel as some jagged rock attacked the double bottom, or the groan of straining partitions as she heaved, like a goaded animal, away from a blow upon her trembling flank. . . .

The grace of God, nothing else, brought the Alberta to haven at gray mid-afternoon of the third day, a haggard shell of her former gleaming beauty. But how—or where—Kendle did not know. Frowning cliffs leaned over the sheltered bay in which she came to rest, and when a sailor heaved the lead and called the astonishing depth, it was fifteen fathoms, ninety feet, ten times the draft of the ship.

Soon thereafter a white rag waved over the stern. The

leader of the mongrel band, one Manuel Salerno, stood forth and spoke.

The Americans, it seemed, were in doubt of their position, and their means of communicating with civilization were destroyed. He, Manuel Salerno, had no such doubts. In consideration of the Americans surrendering their arms, he would navigate the ship to a civilized port. Otherwise they might momentarily expect to be fallen upon and slaughtered by Salerno's confederates, whom he held back with growing difficulty.

Moreover, intimated the man, four vessels similar to the pirates' own habitually cruised these waters. It could only be a matter of time until they sighted the disabled *Alberta.* Then it would be a great advantage to have Manuel Salerno for a friend.

This was the scene upon which Kioga had come in time to overhear a part of this ultimatum, delivered in the foulest conceivable English.

For a moment the man's very insolence impressed Kendle. Then his eye chanced to fall upon the mutineers waiting in the background. It suddenly appeared to him that their attitudes were tenser than was to be expected of men holding the upper hand. In a flash he saw through it all. The ammunition supply in the lazarette had not been discovered. Salerno's threat was a clumsy attempt to play upon his credulity.

"Very well," came his answer, clipped and precise. "You know what island this is. I'll put you ashore with your men. You'll get along well enough until one of your fleet picks you up."

Salerno went pale as he translated Kendle's offer in the bastard tongue of his confederates. The faces of his men mirrored but one single emotion as a storm of protest howled about his head. One, with drawn knife, would have stabbled him through, had not several of the others restrained him by force.

Kendle knew he had made a home shot. These men knew no more of this land than did he. Their bluff had been called. Salerno had bungled the parley and exposed their weakness.

Turning back to Kendle, sullen and crestfallen, his next sentence informed the Captain how thoroughly he had been duped into thinking the pirates dangerously armed.

"You give us food and bullets, eh?"

"No," replied Kendle calmly, knowing full well that to agree would be a worse folly than his original tolerance of them. "All the food you will need—but not a cartridge."

Exasperated at the trap his own guile had led him into, Salerno forgot himself. Anger stained his face and neck deeply.

"*Dios*, no! We no accep'!" he screamed in the arrogance of despair. "Leave us here unarm'? No, goddam!" He was advancing a step upon the other man, working himself into a fury which he now vented in unprintable epithets, ending, "No! You are outnumber' by my men, and—"

But Kendle paid no heed to what followed. His hand had gone to the butt of his revolver. It would be wisest to shoot this insolent fellow and have done with him, a more than justifiable act under the conditions. Yet he let the rare opportunity slip by, and contented himself with cutting Salerno's threats short with sharp words of his own.

"You want bullets, you men? You'll get them—hot out of our rifles! Now stand back, before I blow your damned head off!"

Cowed by the sudden blaze in Kendle's eyes, Salerno stood back and rejoined his men among whom he was in greater disrepute than ever.

Entering the threshold of the deck-house, Kendle came face to face with Beth and Dan, who stood just behind her. The resemblance between them was startling. About twenty-two years old, tall and of good frame, La Salle had in his clear blue eye some of the animated sparkle which enlivened Beth's. Though impulsive, outspoken and quick-tempered, he made up for it in his swift grin and readiness to share the unaccustomed labors and present hardships of the crew.

Two years Dan's inferior in years, remarkable strength resided in Beth's lithe body. Her brother's own boast that she could outswim him in a long heat was no idle one. Kendle himself, while riding at her side, had once seen her subdue a vicious and refractory horse with a hand of iron

and heels that knew what spurs were for. Like Dan, she was willful and headstrong at times; and though less ready with her smile, its occasional appearance redoubled her beauty.

But she was serious now, and composed, though she had witnessed all that transpired.

"Too bad you didn't shoot him," were Dan's first words. "Fair play will never work with his kind."

Astonished to meet with even this mild criticism where he had expected fullest approval, Kendle replied: "I couldn't shoot the man in cold clood."

"I would've!" snorted the other, sending an uneasy glance toward Beth, in recollection of what they had seen on the pirate ship. "If that gang ever breaks loose, armed or unarmed, you'll pay for coddling them, take it from me!"

Kendle concealed his annoyance. His answer was mildly rebuking.

"Wherever we are, Dan, this ship is still a part of American soil, an outpost of the Union, if you want to call it that, and—"

"Hang civilization!" retorted the younger man, ruthlessly realistic and out of patience with Kendle altogether. "What do they know or care about America or its laws?"

As between the two, Beth's sympathies were all with Kendle, whose restraint had already raised him immeasurably high in her esteem. Fearing that Dan's words had hurt him, she softened them in her own way.

"I'll answer that, Dan, in one word—nothing. But life, once taken, can't be given back. You couldn't have done any differently yourself. And it's easy to criticize." Her interruption was well-timed, and Dan calmed. In the generous way natural to him, he managed a grin at Kendle; and out of a genuine liking between them, the smile was returned.

"You're right, Beth. Sorry, Cap'n. I spoke out of turn." With a half-apologetic glance at the girl, he joined the men behind the barricade.

Beth turned to Kendle. "He means it, Allan. And I'm sorry he said what he did. But he was right—if only in part. We're not through with Salerno, I'm afraid."

Kendle chose to misunderstand her. His little remaining irritation fathered his next remark.

"Wouldn't it be better to stay below? The sight of you only makes things worse than they were before."

The words were quickly out of his mouth, and as quickly regretted. He realized that if she felt any fear—which he doubted—it was more for himself, Dan and the crew, than on her own account. But Beth understood what he meant—the leering men of Salerno's group had looked upon her with something more than passing interest, right from the beginning. She threw back her head, giving expression to the careless fiery spirit which twenty years of rigorous training and education had never altogether stamped out of her. Then she laughed, and Kendle accorded her a grudging admiration.

"I'll overlook that, Allan, if you'll forget what Dan said."

Her tone removed the sting from anything that had passed. Her hand on his arm was a definite mark of favor. Indeed, she liked him better in that moment than ever before, for he was himself again, genial, cool and admirable. She felt an impulse to say a little more, and did. "Grandmother made bullets and shot a gun like a man. Dan's a little headstrong, and so am I. We inherit it. But I—we'll both try, to make amends." The words contained a little of apology and the desire to be agreeable, and a definite affection besides, at which Kendle's features softened in response.

"Is that a promise?" he began with shining eyes, but at his eager question she only gave a little laugh, then escaped to her quarters.

Though Kendle had regretted his own lenity with Salerno, politic or not, it had won Beth's approval as no summary act of violence could have done. Impressed as he was by the stark realism of Dan's words, all of which had been completely in agreement with his own sentiments, the native stubbornness aroused by opposition quickly reasserted itself, strengthening him in the belief that he had acted in the best interests of all, Beth included. His eyes followed her until she had disappeared.

Other eyes, much closer now, also admired; for to Kioga, this beautiful white girl with vibrant laughter was strangely stirring. During the course of events he had moved ever nearer, the better to overhear snatches of what was being

said, and to appraise at close range the strange mixture of Oriental half-castes and more-or-less-white cutthroats who comprised Salerno's followers.

He wished now that he were better armed. The thin lash was useless, except for close work, though dangerous then. He regretted that well-filled quiver in his lodge at far-away Hopeka. But this was no time for vain regrets. Concealed upon a ledge, with one of his two arrows fitted to his bow, he had been prepared to kill the first man to make a treacherous move during the parley. For a time the possibility of treachery existed, born of Salerno's blazing anger and frustration. But at sight of the girl behind Kendle, the pirate's contorted features had acquired an expression of cunning calculation, which he instantly masked as he joined his men astern.

Hawk lowered his ready shaft and continued watchful.

XXII

CAPTIVE AND CAPTOR

THE crew were now struggling to get ropes and hawse ashore, but it was soon clear that they dealt with a situation unparalleled in their experience. The drop of the water-level was plainly perceptible and left the cliffs wet and gleaming. When the tidal ebb had ceased, the *Alberta's* keel cleared a stony ridge by less than three feet. She floated in what was now seen to be a rock-girt natural basin resembling the inside of a small crater. She had dropped seventy-odd feet in a few hours, a phenomenal fall.

This sudden ebb of the tidal waters had engaged the attention of all on board, for her expected careening would have resulted in further injury to her damaged hull. The growing darkness added much to Kendle's difficulties, and Beth could hear her brother and a sailor hammering between-decks forward near the chain-locker. They were attempting to repair damage already done the cut-water plates.

The feverish activities, illumined by the indispensable lanterns, were at all times visible to the mutineers, who them-

selves remained outside the circle of illumination. Rendered desperate by the failure of Salerno's bluff, they were now slipping forward in the outer gloom—armed with knives, axes and the sealing harpoons of which they had stripped the after lockers.

Foreseeing possible trouble, Kendle had mounted a guard, but his man already lay silent, his skull laid open by an ax. An instant more of their stealthy progress, and the pirates had been upon the crew in sufficient force to insure a quick victory.

But of a sudden one of Salerno's men yelled in pain, clutched at his breast and toppled to his face in the scuppers. Another who crouched near by, startled by this unexpected happening, groped wildly and collapsed, rolling and choking horribly, before he too lay still.

Checked by these sudden silent blows, it was a moment before the marauders recovered their wits. Then, with their blood-lust aroused, the pirates made their bid for supremacy, and swarmed, a yelling mob, up the slightly tilted deck. Though the forward barricade had been left unguarded, the crew—warned by the outcry—were now hurrying to arms.

Of Allan Kendle, it may truthfully be said that he was a brave and fearless man. But at sight of that murderous band of half-caste, disease-marked thugs, with their grisly weapons upraised, rushing upon him like fiends and led by a man he had openly defied, he hesitated.

Had he emptied his revolver into their faces and thrown himself headlong upon them, he might have repulsed the first of them, for the advantage of position was his. The sailors might then have reached his side in time to reinforce him. But despite his swift reaction after this momentary paralysis, the golden opportunity was forever lost. With his gun half-drawn, an oar fell with crushing force upon his skull. As he dropped, the revolver was wrenched from his hand.

Just behind him, within the deck-house, Beth went to her knees at his side. The first of the sailors had now thrown himself into the battle, and in a moment the deck was slippery with blood and aquiver to the struggles of shouting, cursing men. Kendle stirred with a groan as the mêlée raged past her, and she attempted to drag him to shelter.

An iron hand upon her arm hauled her erect. The triumphant features of Manuel Salerno leered into her face. Before she could lift a finger, she was seized, overpowered and tightly bound.

Several of the crew fought their way up the deck; though they dared not use their guns for fear of wounding Beth, the tide was turning against the pirates. Despite inferior numbers, the desperate courage of the sailors began to tell, aided by that momentary demoralization caused the enemy when two of their number went down as if cloven by an unseen hand.

The crew swiftly regained their barricades, and from this fortress fired aft with their rifles, sending the pirates scurrying for cover.

Salerno, however, was adopting the only course open to him, and for which he had been prepared despite the practical certainty of a victory. Beth felt her captor lurch across the deck and clamber clumsily down the ladder into a waiting boat. She heard the rattle of oarlocks under the strong pull of brawny arms. In but a moment she sensed the grinding of the boat's prow upon the shore, which was close by, beneath the frowning cliffs.

Then she was carried through the darkness until, at about two miles from the landing-point, the pirates paused to kindle a fire and consider the new advantage which capture of the girl had given them.

Almost immediately argument raged between Salerno and his huge lieutenant, one Mendez—a false name, surely, for no white blood ran in the veins of this thick-lipped, yellow-jowled brute. Their dispute was punctuated by the occasional unintelligible gibberish of the others.

The animal-like eyes of Mendez the giant had been sliding over the defiant captive from time to time as he argued, but suddenly Salerno stepped between him and the girl.

"No! No—but you are the great fool! We hold her unharm'. We trade her for guns. With guns we take the ship, and then—"

Mendez interrupted with a muttered obscenity inaudible to Beth. Ruffian though he was, Salerno cursed in a fury at what the man had said. He was reaching for his pistol, when with a sudden lunge the other whipped a long knife

from his belt and drove it upward into the vitals of his leader.

Salerno's pistol exploded harmlessly into the earth. An instant later Mendez's heavy heel was stamping his head and face into the earth. The others looked on with calculating indifference.

For Beth La Salle, the last veil of uncertainty as to her fate was torn aside. Mendez picked up and pocketed the gun. With a last stamp upon the dead thing underfoot, he approached her. She felt a qualm of unspeakable nausea.

Of this scene Kioga had been silent witness. From Beth's first appearance on deck, he had followed the swift march of events. He had watched calmly enough the progress of the battle on the *Alberta*—whose odds he had somewhat evened beforehand with his two arrows. He had marveled at the variety of complexions and features among Salerno's men. But a red mist had curtained his vision when he saw the white girl subjected to violence and carried off in the pirate's arms.

It was no concern of Hawk's if they chose to kill one another—the more food for Ako the vulture! But the girl—that, for some reason, was another matter. Instinctively he recognized her beauty. The blood sang through his veins when she smiled. Her fine courage—not once had she cried out—he admired that. He would see that no harm came to her.

As Mendez approached the captive with drawn knife, Hawk was moving swiftly from behind the tree which concealed him. But Mendez, far from injuring Beth with the blade, merely cut the cords that bound her wrists and ankles. No man was he to take unfair advantage of the helpless woman. His was a tenderer way!

Beth was under no illusion as to his intent. She had long since decided that at the first opportunity she would attempt to escape in the wilderness about her, and try to find her way back to the *Alberta*. But with the thought there suddenly rose the long, blood-chilling spiral of a hungry animal's howl, coming from somewhere along this wild coast.

To a man, the pirates ceased their jabbering and fell

silent, listening. Mendez himself stood arrested in his stride by that terrible heavy note of menace, before he threw off its spell and stepped forward again. But of all who heard, Kioga was most affected by its tones, for he alone recognized it for the meat-signal of the coastal scavenger-wolves, perhaps the most terrible band of all.

Beth had momentarily evaded her brawny attacker, and concluding that to be torn to pieces by wild beasts would be far preferable to what lay before her, she wheeled and darted toward the unknown blackness.

For all his huge size, however, Mendez could move swiftly. Sick with despair, Beth felt his great hand close upon her arm.

Then came an interruption.

As if conjured out of thin air, there appeared at her side a tall brown form of the most striking physical proportions. Decked in the trappings of an Indian, with war-paint smeared over face and body, there was little about Hawk that could have inspired feelings of relief or trust.

But the rude grip upon her arm loosened. The huge Mendez was hurled back a dozen feet by a stunning blow upon the chest, which resounded like a pounded drum.

And then, as Kioga's arms closed for the first time about the yielding form of a woman and he felt the beat of her heart against his own breast, a strange new elemental sensation flamed to life within him—the protective instinct. A moment thus, before Mendez was pointing his gun at this apparition.

Hawk had seen death and that black object go hand in hand—indeed Mokuyi had told him much about the powerful weapons of the white man. Quick as thought, the whip's long coil snaked forth, barked stingingly against Mendez's wrist, knocking the weapon far into the brush and lapping about his hairy forearm. Then Hawk dragged the giant toward him, thrusting the girl to one side.

With a profane snarl of exultation, the pirate drew the knife still wet with the blood of Salerno; and Beth breathed a prayer, not for herself, but for the safety of this creature who dared to face such a murderous pack single-handed. But

she was quickly relieved of any apprehension for the Snow Hawk.

The hoarse cry of triumph had hardly left his lips when Mendez, usurper-chief of this scum of foreign seas, met the fate he had so long evaded and so richly deserved. Fingers that were steel hooks closed upon and throttled the growl in his throat. There was the terrible sound of tearing cartilage, the dull snap of bone breaking beneath flesh. As if he weighed but a pound, Mendez was lifted bodily into the air and hurled full into the midst of the pirates now rushing to his aid.

In an instant Kioga was caught amid the throng of his enemies, slashing with knives, like dholes surrounding a lion and struggling to pull him down. Hawk fought back with the elemental weapons nature had given him—his hands, his brain, but most of all with that unequaled quickness, strength and agility which had carried him through worse encounters than this.

Too late the pirates discovered that they were at grips with no ordinary man. Three had fallen under the weight of that great thrashing body. Now a tall half-caste hurtled aside, his skull crushed by the fierce quarter-stroke, a telling sudden blow Hawk had learned among the bears. Another crumpled in his tracks beneath a terrific blow of the open hand. That sharp crack, followed by a hoarse scream of pain, was the breaking of a knife-arm bone.

Kioga scarce felt the answering blows which rained upon him, in his wild anxiety to shake off his assailants and get the girl to a point of safety with all possible speed.

His lightning attack, that exhibition of suddenly unchained power, sent a rush of admiration surging through Beth's veins, sent her forth beating with futile little fists, to offer some help, however little. But the pirates broke ground; and then it was over, as the remaining few of them sought only escape.

Now he would vent his savage fury upon their prostrate forms in the manner of the aborigine he seemed to be. Beth turned shuddering away. But to her astonishment, a quiet voice, with a cool, curiously foreign accent, startled her, coming incongruously from his hideously vermilioned face.

"Quick!" Before she could answer, great arms lifted her easily. She felt herself ascending the cliffs in powerful effortless bounds, until they came to a pause upon a rocky ledge. Then she fairly choked upon the almost palpable odor which permeated the night.

Glancing downward, she perceived in the firelight a scene which would haunt her memory forever. Silent as stealthy ghouls, several gaunt wolflike beasts had appeared beneath the trees. Their once gray breasts were covered with shreds of the ocean's unwanted dead, which was their steady dietary. In their stench was the advertisement of their function —carrion-wolves, brothers-in-trade of the vultures.

Most of the pirates had scattered in fear at sight of the sinister newcomers. But there were several who lay motionless. One of these now moved, drawing the baleful yellow focus of several pairs of glowing eyes. Deliberately the nearest wolf fleshed his fangs to the gums, tearing out a great piece from the unconscious man's vitals. Soon others, with horrible concentration, approached to worry at the remaining forms. Came the sickening crunch of bone between iron jaws. Then, mercifully, a great mass of pendant foliage shut the scene from Beth's shocked view, as her rescurer bore her up the cliffs toward the deep gloom of the interior.

They were about halfway to the summit when, as out of the mouth of a tortured maniac, there came a shuddering scream, abruptly terminated, in which there was mingled all the horror, realization and despair which the human throat can voice; the unconscious pirate had come back to life, only to meet a fearful death.

The quivering girl knew now why her blood had seemed turned to water when she heard that first ululating howl. . . .

From the moment her rescuer abandoned the cliffs, Beth knew only that they were passing ever deeper into a thick curtain of blackness through which her eyes could not penetrate an inch, but which seemed to offer no barriers to the vision of this savage.

Slowly the roar of the sea faded, giving place to other sounds, the stealthy, fearsome pulsations of a wilderness alive with predatory nocturnal life. Suddenly he paused and bounded up on a log that bridged a gorge. Here they waited

momentarily, as below them the ghostly form of a tigress slid out of a cave and as silently vanished. The carnal reek of the beast was evident even to Beth's untrained nostrils. A little thrill of added terror possessed her now.

Thereafter their way lay through the ravines that were everywhere on the forest floor. In one of these he paused again to grope in a hollow tree-trunk for the rope and grapnel, for which he had had no use at the village. In its place he put the bow, which was useless anyway without arrows. Then he continued on.

Now and again, when they were faced with a chasm which defied even his great leaping powers, the grapnel came into use, and together they swung slowly above the ink-black depths and came to rest on the far side. Several times she felt a movement of his arm, followed by a hiss and a flat report, glimpsing the recoil of yellow eyes and dim lean shapes at that sound. As often, he gave ground to some huge indistinct hulk rearing up in their path, in avoiding other and larger beasts of the lower forests; and as soon as possible he took to the mountains.

The rope which he drew tight under her arms seemed an unnecessary precaution to Beth. Even if free, she would have been as completely lost as a child abandoned in the jungles of the Amazon.

As they ascended steadily, she glimpsed the moon, hanging low over the horizon like a swollen orange, and throwing a path of yellow light upon the tree-tops, which billowed gently, like a vast sea. Soon she could perceive the nature of the cliffs toward which they were mounting. A thousand feet of granite lay sheer between them and the timbered valley whose leafy giants—mere dwarfs seen from this height —were rooted in solid earth four hundred feet lower still. Above, the aspect was even more threatening, for a vertical wall of polished rock extended up, seemingly to infinity.

Surely no trail could exist beyond this stone shoulder; yet beyond it the man found hand- and foothold. Then he vanished, leaving her flattened against the cliff with a feeling of complete isolation, above that unspeakably lonely and desolate wilderness, connected to life only by the strand of rope between him and her.

A jerk on the strand brought her attention to an overhanging ledge thirty feet up and some ten feet to one side. Then she realized why the rope was tied about her. He was beckoning to her to swing out and over space, so that he could draw her up. She essayed it once, before every fiber rebelled against her will to obey. She shut her eyes, holding back.

Suddenly the rope grew taut. She was drawn, unresisting, off and up from the ledge, to swing rigid and shuddering with cold fear, back and forth high above the distant valley. Then he pulled her easily up onto a wide trail where she was a moment regaining her nerve-control.

Thereafter at the ease with which he negotiated these sickening steeps, she forgot her fears in mounting admiration. She began to wonder how long he could maintain this killing pace. Surely he must tire soon; yet despite his extra burden, his wonderful agility continued undiminished. He jumped and climbed with the ease and strength of a mountain-lion, as if he did not feel her added weight.

They skirted the forest until the giant growth gave place to a lesser. The southern sky was reddening before the short day as they descended to the lower levels. As the hour advanced, she caught glimpses of the park-like open forest. That the pall of Arctic darkness could have hidden such natural splendors was a source of wonder to Beth.

They passed amid man-high ferns and thickets of rhododendron, on a rug of pine needles that gave forth no sound. Graceful lomaria shrouded fallen tree-trunks lying across their way. Lacy licorice ferns festooned the branches of living trees, whose enormous boles vaulted upward like the arching pillars of a cathedral.

Hawk went along, thoughtfully. He recalled the happy hours he had spent in the village of Hopeka with the gentle Indian maiden, Heladi. He had believed himself falling under the spell of her music. Yet he had not been sure of himself where she was concerned, nor of his ability to adjust himself forever to village life—even with Heladi.

But now—now he was beginning to know that man does not live for war alone, that the heart can race with something other than the excitement of hunting and combat.

At last he abated his pace, and the tight pressure of his grip upon the girl.

"Wait here," he said shortly. Obeying, Beth saw him vanish almost before her eyes into the thickets. But he soon reappeared with a few long loose clusters of the narrow fruit of the mountain blackberry. Gratefully she thanked him and ate, finding them both spicy and refreshing. But he did not reply, though his eyes never left her face. Perhaps of English he knew only the few words he had already spoken, picked up no doubt from white men with whom he probably traded. Those few words, however, had been reassuring; and when again she surrendered herself to be borne along in his arms, much of her fear had disappeared.

Under the lulling motion of their steady progress her eyelids fell shut in response to the compelling lassitude induced by long hours without sleep. The tension left her muscles. She listened as in a dream to the rustle of piny foliage and the liquid calls and songs of strange wild birds, of which one in particular, a deep and mellow note, oft repeated, became more and more insistent.

Slowly she opened her eyes, to look upon a scene as strange as ever civilized woman awakened to. Deep rich skins cushioned her reclining body. Steady heat from a bed of glowing embers both warmed and illumined the interior. Thick pelts of tiger, bear and puma adorned the walls and covered the floor. Into these her feet sank as she went to the doorway. Beyond, through a crevice, the sky was marbled reddish purple by the sunset and inlaid with the spires of trees.

Pressure showed the stout barrier to be secured from outside. She was prisoner to the strange denizen of this cave!

With growing wonder she returned to look about her, examining the many objects which enriched the cave. It was as if she had intruded upon some mountain ruler's hideaway.

A great stone occupied one corner, worn smooth by the working of many an arrow- and spear-head. About it lay a war club and numerous arrows and spears. Several lengths of rope, in various stages of plaiting, caught her eye. Upon the walls depended instruments and trophies of the chase,

consisting of cunningly strung necklaces of animal-claws, many bows and lances, and numerous other curious objects—many of them Kioga's own handiwork. One of these, a slim-bladed knife in a leather sheath, she concealed in her coat.

On a rude stone shelf were articles at which she gazed unbelievingly: Carefully folded and packaged newspapers of ancient date, yellow and brittle with age. Dozens of volumes of well-thumbed books, worn and battered by use. To one side a skin was stretched taut across a wooden frame and covered with picture-drawings and curious hieroglyphics, and ornamented in colored designs. Upon a smooth part of the wall graceful Roman letters had been formed into words and sentences, then partially rubbed away.

Then the girl started. Neatly piled, one upon another, were numberless little golden ingots, resting upon the chest containing the balance of the treasure Hawk had dug up from under the sands years ago. In the chest she did not attempt to look, wondering instead about the identity of the absent owner.

Was he in fact the savage Indian he seemed, or some wealthy eccentric, preferring barbaric solitude to the comforts of civilization?

Her thoughts reverted to the ship and to her fears concerning the outcome of the mutiny. Kendle, indeed, had shown signs of returning consciousness, and she felt he would revive, for he was of a powerful constitution. But what of Dan? He had been below during that short and bloody action on deck, and though she prayed that he had come up too late to have been injured, she could not be sure. It was this uncertainty concerning her brother which kept her wakeful long after she had thrown herself again upon that couch of thick skins. But in the end, out of sheer exhaustion, troubled slumber again claimed her.

When she awoke, she went to the door, and found it ajar. It was dark outside. On the threshold a woven basket lay filled with fruits. A fresh-killed wild-fowl, resembling a goose, lay beside it. Evidently her captor had returned while she slept. Presumably he intended her no immediate harm, since he elected to supply her with food. She dragged the basket in.

Gazing out at the door, she could see the occasional double flame of an animal's eyes as it prowled past and looked up from far below. In the far distance the strident scream of a panther, terrible as that of a woman in acute pain, awoke echoes amid the ravines. She heard, with a shiver of recollection, the low-registered howl of wolves, gathering on some lonely heath. The hoarse cough of a tiger in a valley near by sounded almost outside the door.

Returning to the fire, and shivering, but not with cold, she laid on wood until the flames rose brightly, then, kneeling before them, listened to the noises of the midnight forests. It had seemed dangerous to be left alone with the strange savage. But it was infinitely worse to be left alone with one's fears and imaginings. The overpowering loneliness was beginning to batter down at last the fine courage which had sustained her thus far.

XXIII

"YOU'RE AN AMERICAN!"

WHEN Captain Kendle returned to the consciousness which had been clubbed out of him during the pirate attack, he found the sailors again in control of the *Alberta*. Dan La Salle was unhurt, but several of the crew had sustained knife-wounds, none of which proved fatal. Three of Salerno's men had been killed by rifle-fire, two by an unknown agency. The bodies had been thrown unceremoniously overboard and been made short work of by the sharks at high tide.

Speculation was rife concerning the strange manner in which the first two pirates had died—those who had fallen beneath the hard-driven bolts from Kioga's bow. But since both arrows had passed completely through the flesh and vanished into the sea, the manner of their killing was unknown. In the stress of those moments the possibility of hostile enemies ashore—other than the pirates—received little consideration. It was finally concluded that they had fallen victims to the ill-aimed knife-thrusts of their own allies.

Several moments passed before Kendle could recall the

events leading up to Beth's abduction. When the terrible plight of his fiancée penetrated to his dazed brain, the shock, more than the whiskey proffered by La Salle, brought about a rapid return of his strength and faculties.

Dan, he noted, was cool as ice, though the rigid, fighting set of his jaw boded ill for Beth's kidnapers; and his pallor evidenced the strain he was under, as well as the difficulty with which he reined in his impatience to be up and doing for her. Quick to act now, Kendle ordered a boat put overside. Dan was the first man into it.

To protests from the mate that it would be wiser to wait for daylight, to avoid possible ambush, Kendle replied that the little daylight would not be of much help, and that he preferred any risk to the dangers of delay.

"There's more than pirates on that shore, sir," volunteered one of the crew. "We seen 'em by lantern-light—panthers big as lions, an' some bear, one of 'em a whopper."

"We're armed for big game," snapped Kendle. "That's what we started out after. Wild animals have learned to steer clear of man nowadays. I'll match my rifle against anything that prowls."

He spoke with the authority of one who had hunted on five continents. His confidence was quickly imparted to his men, five of whom followed him down into the boat. A few quick strokes, and they were ashore.

They had gone scarcely a hundred paces north when a huge shadow loomed up in their path, and a thunderous growl boomed forth into the blackness. Although Kendle instantly fired several steel-jacketed bullets at the thing, his aim was rendered unsteady by the sputtering of Dan's hooded lantern. A deafening roar was the only answer.

"Bear!" shouted La Salle. "Look out—he's coming!"

The mighty animal had dropped to all fours and was charging. Kendle himself, in the forefront of the party, miraculously escaped with being knocked down, trodden upon; and his heavy coat prevented the claws from cutting deep. But when the bear released its first victim, the man was partially dismembered. Another received a crippling smash from a hooked paw, besides being badly bitten in the body. Dan,

just behind Kendle, bled profusely from a severe claw-wound in his side.

The wounded animal charged repeatedly and with diabolical persistence; but its blind attack convinced Kendle that he had destroyed its sight. With greatest difficulty the remainder of the party got their wounded back to the boat. Only then did the enraged animal's assaults desist, though they could hear its savage growls as it ravaged the thickets in search of them.

With new respect for the fierce wild denizens of Nato'wa, Kendle and his men tenderly lifted their injured back aboard. The remainder of the night was spent in making them as comfortable as possible.

Ignoring his own hurts, which were superficial, Kendle stanched the flow of blood from La Salle's side, while he reproached himself for omitting the precautions urged upon him by the others.

"No man could've foreseen this, sir," declared Jason. "Look, now, the bleedin's stopped already. The young gentleman'll be good as new in a couple of days, so 'e will."

Faint from loss of blood but fully rational, Dan interrupted Kendle's expressed intention to make a new start.

"Wait a bit longer, Allan. She'll be better off if you don't crowd those fellows too hard. Never mind me, old man. Let them patch you up. Rest a little—you've earned it!"

It was good counsel. Kendle was grateful for its implied confidence, and submitted to medication and bandaging. But he got no rest.

Later came the terrific wolfish clamor to the north, then a heart-rending outcry—whether of fear or agony they could not tell—which threw Kendle into a frenzy of apprehension for Beth. Dan was spared this—a sedative had put him to sleep.

The grim silence that followed was more ominous by far than the moaning of savage beasts, and at last Kendle could bear it no longer.

"I'm going," he said quietly, turning to the men. "It'll be dawn in an hour. Who'll bear me company?"

Not a man of that little crew but now stood forth, offering to serve in the desperate pursuit. It was like Kendle even

at such a time, to reject several who, he knew, had families or dependents at home. Selecting four, and arming them, he left orders that the propellers be freed of the chains which bound them, and that the engines be kept in readiness for a quick start—though he despaired of ever negotiating those sea-swept shoals.

By lantern-light the rescue-party easily followed the plain trail of the pirates in the sand above high-water mark. With horror Kendle saw other broad, strongly claw-marked tracks converging upon it. That they were the tracks of wolves he knew, though he had never seen any so large or so numerous.

At red dawn, they came abruptly upon a scene of tragedy that fairly made their blood run cold. Beneath the little tongue of forest which here came down almost to the sea, the carnal remains of some grisly midnight feast were scattered all about. As they approached, a host of gaunt malodorous black birds rose heavily in air and perched silently near by. They were ravens, birds of death, the bone-pickers of the wilderness.

A movement in a tree near by caught Kendle's eye. In a state of abject fear four men clung tightly to the bole of the tree part way up its side.

Kendle barked an order from behind his gun. One by one they descended. The story he wrung from the only one of them who had a working knowledge of English was incredible to him; yet it remained unaltered by the direst threats of punishment.

The man told of the girl's abduction by a naked savage, of the arrival of a pack of great wolves, and their departure after having devoured two of the men. The four survivors had escaped by climbing low trees, but one other had made a dash inland, armed with the dead Salerno's stolen revolver.

This recital had the confirmation of the grim evidence scattered beneath the trees. Dispatching one of his men back to the ship, guarding the mutineers, Kendle took up the pursuit, hoping against hope that they had been telling truth, and that somewhere, somehow, they would find Beth.

Toiling up the precipitous cliffs, they plunged into the pathless mazes of the wilderness inland. When, beneath a

great tree, they found the scalped and arrow-riddled body of the remaining pirate, they were compelled at last to believe that primitive men inhabited this unknown shore. . . .

To men fighting a way through unknown jungle, the beauty of the forest went unnoticed. Overhead the interlocking branches of the giant trees shut out all but a faint twilight which but added to the obscurity on the forest floor. Tangles of wild-rose vines and impenetrable thickets of devil's-club made progress all but impossible, while ever and again they met with baffling barriers of sapling undergrowth lashed almost solidly together by grapevine. Dim, ghostly and hanging with pennants of moss were the trees about a swamp in which they were all but engulfed. They lost two valuable hours crossing a gloomy desert of fallen trees carried low by landslide, over which the Snow Hawk and Beth had passed in as many minutes.

Without visible landmarks or horizon the quick nightfall found them hopelessly beleaguered by the wilderness, but determined to push on, cost what it might, when morning came. Thoughtful of their experience the previous night, and at terrible cost to their exhausted strength, they threw up a wall of dead branches and logs before a depression in a cliff. Then, not daring to build a fire, they spent a wretched endless night amid darkness relieved only by the luminous glowing orbs of unseen animals roaring and clawing at the log-barrier in vain endeavor to gain access to the prey scented within it. Sleep was out of the question.

In constant fear of a night attack, Kendle had finally concluded that the native people, whoever they were, had retired. Unfortunately the Indians—canoe-men from Hopeka village—who had come upon the armed pirate who had taken to the forest, had lost two men themselves in the fight before killing and scalping him. And they still lurked in the neighborhood in hopes of further avenging their dead. Of this the white party remained unaware.

Just before dawn something struck deep into a log of their wall with a venomous thud. Reaching forth, Kendle's hand encountered a feathered shaft. Noting whence the arrow had come, he trained his sights in that direction and waited. As it grew lighter, he saw the outline of a human

form, immovable as stone, and his finger closed upon the trigger. When his rifle spoke, a wild yell of mingled astonishment and pain announced a hit. A horribly throaty, long-drawn cry then echoed through the ravines, following by a hissing barrage of arrows from every direction out front.

As the white men strained vainly to glimpse the hidden foe, the savages executed a *coup* from above, dropping to the number of about a dozen upon the little fort. A quick and bloody struggle ensued, in which two of Kendle's men fell mortally wounded, and were scalped before they were dead.

Kendle himself, and Martin, were then easily overcome, bound wrist to wrist and shoved out of the barricade, which the savages leveled. They could not but know that they were in the power of hostile Indians. There was no mistaking the painted lineaments of their captors for those of any other race. The feathered crests, shaven scalps and quill-decorated quivers made identification doubly certain.

Stumbling over ground-vines and protruding roots, the white men were hurried to a waiting canoe between a double row of silent muscular men whose kind they had been taught were almost extinct.

Like two other men and a woman long dead, they too erroneously believed themselves prisoners to undisciplined American Indians of the far northern frontiers. As they forged upstream to they knew not what, their only consolation lay in their hope of ultimate rescue by the Canadian white police.

Dawn came before Beth La Salle moved, startled by a faint sound outside the cave. She approached the door to investigate.

Beyond, in an attitude of watchful guardianship, stood a tall figure, molded in lines which the graver of Praxiteles might have carved. Great drops of morning dew glistened like moonstones on his smooth brown skin and blue-black hair. Naked but for the loincloth and moccasins, he might have just stepped from the pedestal of a bronze statue, a living composite of all the mightiest Ogallala chieftains. Such a warrior might have led the first vanguard of the Indian race into the New World. Stripped of his war-like trappings

and crowned with a leafy chaplet, he would have personified some victorious athlete of ancient Sparta, fresh from the field of glory.

Snow Hawk had removed his paint at the hot springs. For the first time Beth looked upon her rescuer's features as they really were. Could that nobly formed head and those fine features have lent themselves to the horrid grotesquery of that other wild and repellent mask? It seemed unbelievable. And yet there was no mistaking the perfect physique. No amount of war-paint could have concealed that!

It was at this moment that Kioga glanced abruptly up, to find her gaze upon him. It was his eyes which first won her trust—the cool clear blue-green of them, brilliantly alight in the tawny face and regarding her levelly from beneath the black brows. If man's nature be reflected through his eyes, certainly there was neither guile nor dishonorable intent in the glance that now so calmly met her own.

A moment passed before he returned her first greeting. The sight of her, standing there with questioning dilated pupils, was one he would always remember. He took in her pearly clearness of skin, her gracious bearing, and stood spellbound like a devotee before a shrine.

That she was one of his own race he knew instinctively. That he must await her invitation to enter his own rude habitation he sensed without thought.

Coloring faintly under that frank and open admiration, to cover her embarrassment Beth apologized for having been a burden upon him. Then: "Won't you come in," she said tentatively, not certain that he would understand, "and let me thank you for everything?"

"For carrying you off?" was the grave and surprising reply, surprising in that she might with reason have expected a more uncouth response, if any at all.

"You do speak English!" she exclaimed, somewhat taken aback by his simple directness.

His answer was slow and a little halting. "I understand better than I speak."

Beth's thoughts darted anxiously back to the mutiny on the ship. Perhaps he would know what had happened after her seizure. She was about to ask him, when of his own

accord he told her what he had seen in the few moments before he left the ship's vicinity to follow the mutineers up the shore.

Two men had rushed on deck just as the conflict ended in victory for the crew. One of these whom Kioga described, was undoubtedly Dan La Salle. With her fears appeased by this information, the girl's thoughts returned to her surroundings.

She noted that her captor's speech, however hesitant, was all but perfect otherwise, and complimented him on it. His answer astonished her.

"I have not heard spoken English for years—except my own."

"Have you no white friends?"

"I never saw white men before yesterday."

"But isn't this the mainland of America?"

"I have read that there are three Americas," he answered. "I have never read of Nato'wa. I think it is a land unknown to white men."

"But you are certainly a white man," she asserted, scanning his features anew.

He glanced at her, casting about for the right words.

"I am," he began, then paused to reach into a little box on the stone self, taking from it an oblong of silk. "My father was a white-skin. This was his." He held forth the tiny replica of the Stars and Stripes, no larger than a woman's handkerchief. Beth examined it.

"You're an American!" she exclaimed, impulsively extending her hand, and feeling glad without knowing why. "That's the American flag. We're countrymen!"

So Kioga confirmed what he had suspected from reading the log-book. And as he took that slim hand in his, he knew that a great change had come in his life.

The knowledge that they were related by race had greatly eased Beth's apprehensions. When Kioga went to the door and returned, bearing the still-warm and steaming body of a buck, which he laid at her feet, the dangers of her situation seemed infinitely less overwhelming than they had but a short hour ago.

Over the roasting saddle of venison she replied to his

thousand questions concerning the outer world, and its many different peoples. Avidly he drank in all she said, and frequently she was aware that he listened more to the sound of her voice than to the import of her words. This pleased her, somehow, and she looked upon her strange host with increasing wonder.

Here was such a man as the world had never seen: A king would have envied him his natural dignity, and the expressive grace with which, by slow gesture, he amplified his deliberate and often halting words. What on earth was such a man doing in such a place?

As if in answer to that, he told her something of his strange life: of Mokuyi the Wolf; of Awena the Flower, his Indian foster-mother. But of Heladi, the Indian girl toward whom his thoughts had often turned of late, he said nothing, though she was much in his thoughts. He was later to regret the omission.

And listening to him, Beth's past life seemed a remote dream, by comparison with the vital reality of the present, intensified by the rumble of distant thunder, whose reverberations rattled the armaments hanging upon these walls.

And now Kioga looked back upon those dull hours of tuition in the etiquette of civilized men, and was doubly thankful to Mokuyi. That training alone—and the tireless practice of reading aloud, by which he had familiarized himself with his native tongue—put him on an equal footing with this lovely creature.

Never had roast venison tasted better than this prepared by her deft and capable fingers. The deep Indian significance of her making ready his food struck home with sudden meaning. Yet every passing second brought nearer the necessity of facing the problems which had been created the moment he carried her off from the midst of danger.

To take her to the village would be unthinkable. Such a life as he knew there could hardly be acceptable to her. Adjustment, if it were to take place at all, must be all on his side. Already he was intolerant at thought of separation from her, contriving ways and means by which to prolong this new association which already meant so much to him.

In a little while he again went forth to seek the best and

finest delicacies the wilderness afforded. He chanced his life to drive a bear out of a thicket of particularly luscious berries which he thought she would like. He snatched an especially plump wild pigeon from the very jaws of a puma at the risk of being clawed to ribbons. He brought her armloads of wild-flowers and burned scented grasses in the cave. No polished courtier could have displayed more respect and consideration for his queen than this man, raised in the lap of barbarism, lavished upon Beth La Salle.

This sincere, unconscious gallantry, alternately touched and embarrassed her; while the absolute fealty mirrored in his eyes gave her a woman's satisfaction, it also gave rise to certain fears.

He had said nothing of returning her to the ship. The short hours of daylight were passing rapidly, and it would soon be night again. Last night, out of sheer weariness, she had slept, the door of her chamber guarded by this white man who called himself by an Indian's name. Indeed, no harm had come to her, but dared she rest tonight? On the other hand, to betray anxiety, or ask to be returned to the *Alberta* at once, might only impress him with a sense of his complete power over her.

However well she concealed her apprehensions, he noted them, none the less.

"You are afraid?" he said with a little smile.

"Not for myself," she answered quickly, and then, her lips trembling: "But Dan—and the others—oh, I *am* afraid —for them. Take me back!"

Take her back! That he dared not risk as yet. Instead: "I will go to the ship," he told her, "and report to you. A storm is coming. I cannot take you with me; but you will be safe here till I return."

Perforce she acquiesced, and of her fears gave no further sign; but when later, in his absence, she lay down to rest again on his soft couch, she faced the door, and the fingers of one hand were tight-closed about the handle of the knife, which until now she had forgotten.

Gradually the fire burned to a bed of embers. The cave grew dark. The girl was relaxing, when suddenly she felt a fresh current of air and heard the great door creak steal-

thily inward. Through lowered lids she watched, tense in every fiber, conscious of that steel blade hard and cold in the concealment of her forearm. She sensed, rather than saw, a silent shadow move toward her, felt the warmth of another body bending close above her. The beating of her heart thundered in her ears: yet somehow she preserved the even regularity of her breathing. She must give no sign, make no move that would reveal her wakefulness. But with infinite caution, the fraction of an inch at a time, she drew her right hand, gripping its keen weapon, to a position of readiness.

Thus, for perhaps half a minute, she lay with muscles at painful tension, wondering if she could bring herself to strike even did the need arise.

And then, so gently as almost to pass unnoticed, the soft folds of a feather robe fell upon her, light as warm air. The bending shadow at her side uprose, soundlessly moved away. A moment later she heard again that stealthy creak of the great barrier.

With a reaction of horror she went limp at realization of how near she had been to rewarding an act of utmost thoughtfulness with a fatal stab.

Twice again she heard him come in, once to stand quietly beside her, once to replenish the fire with new wood. But after that, though he came again, she heard no more. With her last fears conquered, Beth sank into a dreamless sleep.

XXIV

AN UNSEEN VISITOR

EARLY next morning Kioga set forth by himself toward the shore and the *Alberta.* With Beth safe in the cave and well provided for, he was consumed by curiosity as to the final outcome of the battle he had witnessed on the ship's deck. But it was some hours after Kendle and his sailors had fallen captive to the Shoni tribesmen that Kioga reached the coast.

Climbing down the cliffs a mile south of the ship, he ap-

proached along shore with caution, for as yet he knew not whether his reception would be friendly or hostile. Just after dusk he came within view of the yacht, lying quietly, all lights extinguished, a ghostly blur in the gloom. In the shadows on her deck he could see no one.

Passing from cover to cover, he finally reached the rocky point where her bow-line was attached. Waiting a few minutes, he heard no sound from the *Alberta* save the tap of her dangling antenna against the metal funnel, and the watery drip from her lines as they alternately grew taut or slacked away in response to her movement. She was apparently deserted.

Intrigued by this strange circumstance, and determined to go aboard come what might, he put his knife between his teeth. It was the work of but a moment for his trained sinews to swing him hand over hand along her bow-rope. An instant later he vaulted up over the rail, and dropped soundlessly to his feet beside the forecastle hatch.

Silent and alert as a panther on the prowl, he padded back to the deck-house, and near an entrance listened for any sound of life. Hearing nothing, he stepped into the inner gloom; and finding a stairway, went silently down, to pause again with straining ears on the landing.

His groping hand encountered a door, which he opened, moving in and feeling along the wall, while his eyes noted the opaque circles of the seaward portholes. He was in the dining-saloon, abaft the galley, when unexpectedly there came a blinding flood of light which dazzled him momentarily. His hand had struck against a light-switch! Pausing to experiment, he turned the lights off and on, leaving them aglow to glance swiftly about the room which Beth had occupied after the advent of the mutineers.

A silver link bracelet lay upon a dressing-table. He picked it up to use as evidence by which to assure Beth he had been aboard. Then, lest he be seen, he quickly put out the lights again and entered the galley, into which the early moonlight had begun to pour in two cylindrical yellow beams.

The appetizing odor of newly cooked food met his nostrils. On a table he saw a pile of freshly baked biscuits. In-

stantly he appropriated a handful, knocking as many more onto the floor as he paused munching one before the refrigerator. A few experimental twists of the handle brought its door swinging open, revealing the *Alberta*'s last cold chicken and other edible delicacies.

Hurriedly Kioga fell to, with appetite whetted by his long trip from cave to coast. Ten minutes passed, the while he dined royally upon canned peaches, boiled beets, potatoes and half a fresh custard pudding, not one of which had he ever tasted before. With his hunger thus hastily satisfied, he was picking the last bones of his chicken when he heard a cough. In an instant he had his ear against the door leading to the forecastle. Quietly moving aside the furniture piled against it, he was about to open the door, but changed his mind. Like the Indian he was, he wished to see within the forecastle without himself being seen.

Recalling the hatch, through which earlier he had seen men entering the forward part of the ship, he went up the stairs to the deck again. Listening at the hatch-cover, he heard voices below. The cover was tightly fastened. The forecastle was a prison. Softly he loosened the cover and raised it an inch. A pale line of light escaped. Glancing down, he recognized several of the mutineers, securely bound and handcuffed with pieces of chain. The light within the forecastle had been made invisible to anyone ashore by the use of canvas patches, drawn across the ports. Evidently the white party feared some danger from that quarter.

But where were the crew? Why had the ship been abandoned? Why was it empty of life save for a handful of men chained in the forecastle?

Mystified, he returned to the deck-house. This time he saw, tacked upon the wall-panel, a note. Snatching it away, by the moonlight coming through a window he examined it. It read:

"Allan: Everything is ship-shape on board. We've gone ashore for fresh water—and game, if we can get any.—Dan."

Determined to take advantage of this opportunity to ex-

plore the ship, Kioga next entered the saloon, shut the door behind him and waited, senses alert to detect any sound. There was none. His hand slid along the wall seeking a light-switch. Here was something, cold and metallic, over which his hand played. Then in the darkness he saw a sudden lurid flash—and brought up across the saloon with a crash. His arm had struck a bit of live base wire behind the radio transmitter.

This was no ship's corpse, violated by the sea, such as he had boarded in that exciting crowded hour of years ago, but a thing alive. Its nervous system had shed forth light at his touch. It breathed through ventilators, had the warmth of life, the power to injure. What he now felt, alone upon this modern craft, was certainly not fear, but an apprehension born of the strange circumstances of her abandonment, and heightened by the knowledge that his lightest touch might wake this sleeping giantess anew.

In the passageway he tried the doors leading to all the after staterooms, halting in the pitch-black corridor, awaiting any sound from within. As he reached for the last knob, he felt it move inward as if drawn back by an unseen hand. A stream of moonlight bathed the passage. Flattened against the wall, with drawn knife Kioga waited, yet no one came forth. It was uncanny.

Then something furry and soft was rubbing against his shins. A half-formed superstition died a natural death in his mind, as the ship's cat purred between his feet. He bent to stroke its back, when suddenly he was conscious of furtive movement somewhere behind him—movements akin to the first movements of the killers along the game-trails after the Arctic dusk. Vague and uncertain, it was none the less perceptible to one whose senses were sharp as a deer's.

Instantly his thoughts went to the mutineers in the forecastle. Though he had carefully re-secured the hatch, he had forgotten to move the furniture back against the galley door. In two bounds he was up the ten steps leading to the saloon.

Passing hastily through it, his wrist struck against something, and hearing another click, he waited for the lights to go on; but nothing happened, so far as he could judge. He

went on, unsuspecting that he had all unwittingly set the ship's voice speaking. In the saloon he had just quitted, filaments in a radio-set glowed cherry-red. Human voices held converse. The music of another continent poured softly into the deck-saloon. But he heard nothing through the after door, which had already closed behind him.

Rounding the deck-house, he crept quietly forward, again to lift and peer down the hatch. Strange: the pirates, all of them, slept in various attitudes, nor did he awaken them. Some one else must be on board, moving as stealthily as he moved.

As Kioga lowered the hatch-cover, a door was softly closing behind a form entering the deck-saloon from the inner passageway.

An hour before, Dan La Salle had gone ashore with the rest of the crew on a hunt for meat. Finding his strength impaired by his wound, he had returned to the lifeboat and prepared to come back on board. Glancing at the ship, he had seen the lights go on and off. Instantly suspicious, he rowed quietly out, muffling the oar-locks with strips of a handkerchief, and took the precaution of boarding via the off-shore ladder.

Entering the wheel-house, he picked up a flashlight, armed himself with an automatic from Kendle's desk, and went quietly below via the staircase Kioga had used. With his left hand he directed a quick flash across the dining-saloon. It was empty.

Entering the galley, he trod on a biscuit. A glance showed several scattered about the floor, as well as other untoward things, which he noted with narrowing eyes.

The refrigerator yawned wide. The plump fowl he had seen put in was a skeleton of well-picked bones. Everything else had been either devoured or thoroughly sampled. The furniture which had been set against the forecastle door was moved. He did not move it back, lest he betray his presence. Undoubtedly, some one had been here within a very few minutes.

With pistol held ready, he stole on deck again, checking tense at the deck-saloon door. Voices sounded from within. Advancing his automatic, he pushed the door slowly open.

Then he relaxed a little, realizing that he heard only the radio. Had it been turned on when he left? He was not sure.

Sweeping the room with his light, he next went down into the passage 'tween-decks, opened all the stateroom doors, played the light in each, saw nothing. Then a door closed softly behind him. Wheeling with pistol raised and hair on end, he saw the ship's cat stroll purring into the light of his flash. He laughed quietly at the absurdity of his fears. With light aglow he retraced his steps and mounted to the upper deck, scoffing at his own nervousness.

And as he came out upon the landward deck, a face was visible for a split second in the moon's light aft. Its sly cruel grin revealed broken stump-like teeth in a misshappen, receding jaw which hung loosely below a flat nose and eyes that were like oblique slits in yellow paper. A human figure, wet and dripping, flattened back against the deck-house, blending into the shadows. With the hasty movement, the braided hair, which had been coiled upon the egg-shaped head, fell out behind like a snake, almost touching the deck. The man carried a keen, wicked knife. Of this prowler Dan saw nothing.

But the sharp eyes of another missed not one move of the skulker aft. Returning from the forecastle hatch, Kioga had come upon a wet trail leading astern from the off-shore ladder. Almost at the same moment, he glimpsed Dan by the reflected light of the flash he carried. Watching through the saloon windows, he waited to see by which door he would leave, before pursuing that other trail which rounded the deck-house and disappeared.

Years ago, Mokuyi had told him of the deadliness of civilized weapons. He recalled the destruction he had seen wrought upon the pirates, and knew Dan's pistol to be loaded with danger. Loath to expose himself—a stranger coming out of the dark—to the whiteman's quick-speaking gun, he wished first to disarm him of it and then make himself known as a friend, lest the other shoot first and listen afterward.

If he followed the other trail astern, the opportunity to come upon Dan unexpectedly might be lost. Scorning the ladder leading to the navigating bridge, with a catlike bound he grasped the rail atop the deck-house and swung up over it.

Two steps carried him to the opposite rail. Glancing down, he dimly saw La Salle moving forward. Close behind him, naked to the waist, stole one of the half-castes who had made good his escape from the wolves by seeking cover in the forest. On bare feet the man stole upon Dan, with knife drawn and held point forward, sword-fashion, the better to deliver the eviscerating upward slash. Another step brought him directly below Kioga, watching as a cat watches a mouse. The man paused, gathered himself for the rushing attack from behind. Then forward he sprang, quick as a darting weasel.

But the leap was no more than half executed when an arm writhed downward, muscled like the body of an anaconda. Sinewy brown fingers closed upon the flying queue. The half-caste was jerked up off his feet like a marionette responding to the twitch of a cord. His knife flew clattering into the scuppers.

Wheeling with lifted gun, the startled Dan witnessed, by the light of his flash, a sight bordering on the supernatural. He saw the half-caste, screaming with fear, rise in midair, partially to disappear atop the deck-house. An instant only the thrashing bare heels were visible. There came the sound of a struggle. The cries came to an abrupt end.

Throwing off the spell of amazement which had gripped him, Dan rushed to the ladder and climbed atop the deck-house. Just behind the funnel he saw the still quivering corpse of the half-caste, flat upon its back. Something terrible had happened to the assassin, almost before Dan's eyes; yet a quick glance about assured him that he was alone with that grinning dead thing. Darting to the rail, he scanned the decks fore and aft, but saw no one. He returned.

Though there was no mark of violence upon the tattooed torso, twined about the neck, like a serpent, was the man's own queue. A cold chill of horror ran through Dan's every nerve, as for the first time he perceived that the queue was *knotted.*

What dread unseen hand had perpetrated this grim deed?

It had been the work of an instant for Kioga to jerk the would-be murderer aloft and send him into swift insensibility. He was about to return, drop quickly to the deck, take Dan by surprise, and disarm him, when suddenly, out of the cor-

ner of his eye, he noticed a point of light swinging along the shore.

He knew what that meant. The crew were returning, armed with their deadly rifles. In a moment he must be seen, if he remained in this exposed position. Like a flash he was over the rail and down on deck out of sight.

Before Dan had so much as climbed the opposite ladder, Kioga was reëntering the wheel-house and passing aft by the deck-house to the rear companionway. Down this he went like a bodiless spirit. Entering an after stateroom, whose porthole offered a view of the shore, he watched the approach of the crew toward the point where they had last seen their boat, with Dan on guard.

Above on deck, Dan had also noted the return of the men. He was well aware that the unseen visitor on the *Alberta* had saved his life by killing the pirate who would have knifed him in the back. But that, alone and of itself, was no guarantee that his unseen benefactor was friendly. The act might have been dictated by a wish to avoid discovery. Surely no one with friendly intent would move about in such suspicious secrecy. He must warn the crew to be on guard.

Knowing that Fitzroy understood Morse, he flashed a series of signals with his light, spelling out the word *"Danger"* and repeating it twice. The lantern ashore winked out, as if a cap had been dropped over it. An instant later it blinked an answer:

"What's up?"

Dan was signaling again. *"Someone aboard. Come near to catch boat-rope. Caution. Get it?"*

On shore the lantern blinked back, *"Okay."*

Switching off his light and moving with all caution, Dan went to the off-shore ladder, where he had tied the boat, and hauled it around the stern.

Through the open porthole out which he peered, Kioga watched the curious blinking of the lantern ashore. He saw a figure passing along the moonlit cliff. It caught a coil of rope, cast from somewhere aboard, hauled the boat under the ledge, dropped into it and rowed quietly off in the direction of the lantern, the light of which was presently extinguished.

A moment later the boat hove into view. He could plainly see the moonlight reflected from the rifle-barrels, which were, he noted, trained upon the ship. Could it be his own presence of which they were aware? Could they have seen him on the bridge?

He turned away from the porthole, intending to make his escape. Then he stiffened with quick realization. He was already too late. In covering the ship, the rifles also commanded the ropes leading ashore. Another quick glance showed him that it was the intention of the crew to board from the landward side, making escape that way impossible. If he took to the water on the seaward side, he would be a perfect target in the moonlight. There were also the sharks from whose jaws only a fool's luck had saved the swimming pirate.

At another time he would have dared the sea, sharks and all, at need. But now he could afford to take no chances. If he were killed, no one on this earth would know where to look for the white girl, locked up in his cave. A hundred years might pass before anyone else came upon that well-hidden sanctuary.

For the same reason, he had not exposed himself to Dan. A moment's nervousness, the pressure of a finger, and the girl might perish as slowly of starvation as he would quickly of a bullet-wound.

Could he secrete himself? That too was fraught with risk, for a search would be made as soon as the crew came aboard. Every avenue of escape seemed closed. Already the boat and its armed men were at the ladder.

He thought of the forecastle, then recalled how carefully he had secured its hatch, little thinking that he himself would ever wish to escape by way of the prison-room. A step sounded on the after stair. He moved from the port to the door, like an animal trapped. Was he—the Snow Hawk, survivor of so many close passages with death—to meet his end with clipped pinions in the close confinement of these steel walls?

He did not wish to kill among those attached to the white girl's party. But it must be that or her own life, which hung by a thread, so long as his was imperiled; and he

drew his knife. Doors were opening and closing in the passage, as one of the older hands made the rounds aft. He was grumbling something uncomplimentary about modern youth, starting at shadows, and making extra work for old seamen. He came to the stateroom in which the Indian waited with bared blade.

A few seconds earlier Kioga had dreaded the moment when he must strike. Then his hand rested an instant on the coverlet over the berth. A plan flashed into his mind. His only fear now was that the irritated sailor, out of impatience, would not enter this stateroom.

Still muttering, the man pushed in the door and reached for the wall-switch. But the lights did not flash on, and after a short struggle against something which felt soft and smothering about his head, his thought-processes temporarily ceased.

A minute passed, during which Kioga felt the sailor's struggles diminish and cease. Only then did he switch on the lights and unwind from about his head the coverlet which he had snatched from the berth. He felt the man's heart still beating and swiftly bound a gag across the victim's mouth, against the moment of returning consciousness. Then he transferred the other's capacious greatcoat to his own back. With difficulty he crushed the strange cap down on his own heavy hair. Switching off the lights, he picked up the lantern outside the door and in a moment more was stepping boldly out upon the deck.

Forward the men were assuring themselves that the pirates remained secured. Atop the deck-house he heard voices discussing the strange death of the half-caste. Without haste, but tense with the eagerness to be away, he moved astern, swinging the lantern. He heard a voice call down from above: "Everything ship-shape down there?"

Not daring to answer, lest his voice betray him, Kioga continued on his way. There was a moment's silence, heavy with uncertainty, as he felt eyes focusing upon him. Were the guns also upon him—had he aroused suspicion? Then one of the men spoke: "The old boy's mad clean through." Another laughed, and Kioga breathed again.

He came to the ship's tender. His deliberate movements

became lightning swift, as in its shadow he began sloughing off cap and greatcoat. Five steps away was the stern line, roving ashore. Almost to it, he saw someone rise halfway out of the hatch which gave access to the steering mechanism. A voice challenged him sharply.

Whipping the coat forward, he flung it over the sailor's head, muffling the cry of alarm, and with a rapid movement snapped the hatch-cover down, setting one foot upon it. A last glance over one shoulder assured him he was not yet discovered. Then he dropped over the rail, seized the stern rope in falling, and in two seconds had safely swung along its length to shore, and was mounting the rugged cliffs.

Below, he heard the hatch crash open. A shout echoed in the coves, and men came running aft to gather about the gesticulating sailor emerging from the hatch. In the confusion Kioga could not hear what was said; but soon, sharp and clear came Dan's voice:

"Seeing things, was I? Look here!" The beam of his flashlight threw a yellow ring upon the deck. And within the ring, adhering to the freshly varnished surface of the hatch-cover, was something at which they stared—a moccasin. And in Dan's hand was something else, the greatcoat by means of which Kioga had silenced his challenger.

A moment the men stood at gaze, silent and dumfounded, looking upon the only tangible trace of him who had come, moved among them, and gone with the silence of some broadwinged bird of the night, as if cloaked with invisibility.

Throwing off the spell of amaze, a frenzied search began, the length and breadth of the ship. They found the sailor, struggling in his bonds in the after stateroom. But he could tell them nothing of his attacker. In the wheel-house Dan discovered that his note to Kendle was missing. Belatedly he thought to switch on the searchlight, and flooded the cliffs and shore with beam.

But he was too late. The Snow Hawk had taken wing and flown.

XXV

TWO WHO WAITED

DEEP in the forest Kioga was well on his way back to the cave, bearing safe in his belt-pouch the evidence by which to relieve all of the girl's fears as to her brother's safety. But when yet some distance from the cave, there came to him, echoing ominously among the cliffs, the sound of distant drums. And listening intently, he soon could interpret their strange rhythm: war-drums, telling of captive enemies brought home to Hopeka for sacrifice at the stake.

Forgotten had been Kioga's tribal responsibilities, forgotten the primitive adventurous life he had lived, in the new, thrilling occupation of caring for the white girl. He had gloried in the spending of his matchless strength for her needs, brought in more food than ten people could have eaten. And so when after leaving the ship he had come upon the tracks of a female snow-leopard, he stalked it in the hope of capturing one of the animal's cubs for Beth.

But while he sought a new gift for her, events were transpiring at Hopeka over which in the normal course of events he would have exercised some control, but which, because of Beth, were to cause the first rift in that strong influence by which he commanded the loyalty of his warlike subjects.

Well he knew the meaning of those irregular drum-beats. Their very tempo caused him to drop all else and hasten toward where he had left his people in peace and security exceeding any they had known for generations. That there were prisoners in the village was a certainty. But whence had they come? He knew that his own tribes had been at peace with one another of late.

Then he had a clue. Dan, who was the white girl's brother, had written a note to someone named Kendle. He had that note in his pouch. Could it be that Kendle had been captured by the Indians?

Redoubling his speed, Kioga soon arrived at Hopeka, and

unseen by guard or villager, he raised himself level with the top of the palisade and gazed downward.

A great ceremonial fire burned fitfully in the falling rain. Round about it danced many naked warriors, several of them painted black in token of mourning, and chanting the endless monotone of the death-song. Near by, several yards from the palisade and not far from the gate, were the deep-driven sacrificial stakes, as yet unweighted with the bodies of the prospective victims. Several raw fresh scalps hung before two lodges. Hawk started, on noting that two were yellow as flax.

At the time of the great victory over the Wa-Kanek, it is true, he obtained the release of many captives of war. But under ordinary circumstances he had found it wiser not to interfere. Among the Shoni it is the captor's inalienable right to dispose of prisoners whom he has himself taken.

Often, if a prisoner demonstrates his valor upon the stake by singing his songs of defiance despite the flames which consume him, he is cut down and adopted into the tribe, for valor is dear to the hearts of all red men. Indeed, the ordeal of fire is considered an honor by the victim himself, an opportunity to flaunt his bravery in the very faces of his torturers. Barbaric and paradoxical as it may seem to civilized men, torture is a recognized institution among the Shoni. The greatest shame that can be inflicted upon a prisoner is to dispatch him without these honors at the stake.

All this Hawk knew, and he had decided to return to Beth, letting matters take their course, when curiosity concerning those yellow scalps got the better of him. He decided to have a look at the prisoners first.

He could have walked openly into that village which was his to command, and examine the prisoners at will. He entered, instead, like a prowler of the night, an act which betrayed the gulf between him and the Indians in this matter of torture.

Under cover of dark he slid to the ground within the great wall, slipped into the concealing shadow of the prison lodge, sprang lightly to its roof and applied his eye to the smoke-hole.

Bound and partly stripped of clothing, lay one of the sailors

he had seen aboard the *Alberta;* at the other side, propped up against a lodge-pole, lay the man who had defied the mutineers on her deck, his chest and face caked with dried blood.

To Kioga, the knowledge that these were the people of Beth La Salle put an entirely different face upon the whole matter. And yet—they were the captives of his own people. Dishonor and loss of prestige would result to him did he rob them of their rightful vengeance—for undoubtedly these men had killed one or more of his tribe.

For some time he pondered how he might at once rescue the white men and preserve his own standing. He knew that there was no need for haste. The fatal torture would not begin until the worshiped sun or moon could obtain a full view of it—a thing considered impossible by the Indians while mists shrouded the village.

Moreover, Beth must be transported back to the ship. With a last glance about the village, giving special attention to the location of the torture-posts, he climbed quickly back up his rope and effaced himself as silently and unobtrusively as he had come.

Back in the cave, Beth La Salle anxiously awaited her captor's return, calculating the term of his absence by the number of times she laid fuel upon the hungry fire.

Heretofore, during his absences, her imagination had pictured him torn, wounded, prey to the terrible wolves whose deadly work she had seen, or engaged in fatal encounter with one of those massive long-haired tigers, or ambushed by a party of fierce revengeful warriors of whom he had spoken.

On his return she had wondered what mortal power could overwhelm one so fully the incarnation of vitality and strength. The simple fact of his survival in an environment fuller of peril than the Dark Continent at its darkest, had proved him master of that environment, banishing her fears. But never before had he been absent for so long at one time. The mental barriers she had erected before his imagined enemies began to crumble. Momentarily the sensation of impending danger worked upon her overwrought nerves. At every sound from beyond the great door of the cave she started up in hope that he had come at last.

And in the village of Hopeka, another woman waited for the Snow Hawk. Calm, collected, fatalistic as her Indian forbears, to Heladi, who knew the Snow Hawk best, nothing on earth had power to harm him. He would come back. And when he did, he would find her fearless and smiling, with confidence in his powers justified by his home-coming.

It was while Beth stirred the embers of the dying fire that Kioga returned to the cave, silently as was his way, and stood limned in the portal by the lurid lightning at his back. Then he slipped a great antlered deer from one shoulder, and a brace of grouse from his belt.

Immediately he produced from his pouch her own silver bracelet, and handed over Dan's note to Kendle. Beth read the words and glanced up at him with a look of gratitude which more than compensated him for the risks he had taken. Then her brow clouded again.

"But where could Allan and the others have gone?" she wondered. "Do you suppose— Oh, but there's no use borrowing trouble, is there?"

He knew what was in her mind, and for a moment thought to say nothing of what he had seen at Hopeka, because he did not wish to renew those fears which he had so lately set at rest.

But in the end he told her what he had seen at the village.

Stunned by this news, still shaken by the strange emotion which had been half-formed by his approach, Beth's thoughts leaped from fear to fear. Beyond doubt, Kendle was one of the captives described. The other must be a member of the crew. Death certainly awaited those men if something were not done at once. Nor did Kioga try to deceive her as to that. He was astonished at the intensity of her anxiety for Kendle. For she had never told him what Kendle was to her, and he had not asked, had apparently never given that a thought.

Until this moment, indeed, Kioga had only vaguely attempted to fathom the various relationships of one person to another aboard the *Alberta*. But now her agitation on learning of the white-skin's captivity, her anxiety as to the outcome of events on the ship, began to assume importance.

To that man she must be somehow related. A glimmer of light pierced the uncertainty in his mind, then burst into near realization.

"The man you call Dan—he is your brother," he said. "The one in the village—who is he?"

Beth hesitated, suddenly conscious of what was in his mind —his realization of something overlooked, sudden hostility. If she told him, he might not take the risks involved in rescue. And yet, if he were to chance his life, did he not have the right to know? Without evasion she told him as well as she could, explaining everything that was not immediately clear.

He received the blow like a figure carved in copper. He thought of what he had seen at Hopeka, of how easily he could abandon those men to their fate, allowing a savage destiny to rule, unchecked by any act of his. By all the laws he knew, this woman belonged to him. She had cooked meat he brought in. She had shared his dwelling. These were the ways by which an Indian woman consented.

Another thought occurred to him: If he rescued Kendle, could he not allow the man to spend his energies and perhaps his life in vain efforts to discover a passage to the sea? Was it for him to be the means of Kendle's escape with this woman for whom Kioga would gladly have shed his lifeblood a drop at a time?

What thoughts moved behind that expressionless mask, Beth would never know, but finally the Snow Hawk gave her an answer.

"First I will go to the village and free your people. Then I will return you to the ship." He made no reference to what she had told him about Kendle, because he was occupied with plans for rescue.

Three persons could not easily be spirited through the forest. It would be suicide to attempt a passage near Hopeka on the Hiwassee, by canoe, under the very eyes of the village. Remained only the turbulent and treacherous Caiyuta River, which also flowed toward the Haunted Whirlpools—the Caldrons of the Yei, in which he intended to make their escape. It was the more dangerous way, perhaps, but the only one offering escape from the Shoni.

With Beth in his arms again, he took to the forest, pausing on one of the smaller creek-like tributaries of the Caiyuta. His own light craft, in which so often he had explored the forbidden wonders of the Caldrons, he drew from its hiding-place and lifted Beth into it. From then on, their progress was swift and sure as the quickening current sped them on their way.

Finally he turned the prow into a dark and vine-hung cavern he knew, made it fast, and would have gone. But sick at thought of the risks he must take, aware that depriving the savages of their prisoners might make it impossible for him ever to return to the native village in safety, she softly called his name, and he came back to her side.

Half-pleadingly, she asked:

"When we get to the ship, you'll stay with us, and come away to a better world—to your own country?"

He looked down on her in the half-light. A few hours ago that question would have uplifted him to the clouds. Now he knew it could never mean anything to him, and knowing that, he did not much care where he went.

But he had learned enough from Beth to realize that without his aid the *Alberta* would never reach the sea again whole. Returning to Hopeka afterward might prove impossible, what with the hostility that would be aroused by the rescue of the white men.

"You ask it?"

"For your own sake," she whispered.

He moved a step toward her, almost overpowered by the desire to snatch her into his arms and carry her back to the cave, allowing Kendle and his companion to meet whatever the Indians had in store for them.

Then he wheeled without a word, and left her alone.

His decision was made.

XXVI

THE CALDRONS OF THE YEI

Trussed neck and heel, and flung to his back in the prison-lodge of Hopeka, Kendle had ample time for reflection. Though he lay strained and tense, he was not too far gone in despair to realize wryly that thus far he had done little to win the respect of the La Salles.

But he reflected, with far greater apprehension, that Beth was held somewhere by these same savages, subject perhaps to indignities and hardships. If only he could communicate with the sailor Martin, who had been transferred to another lodge, between them they might devise some means of escape. But his one attempt at calling out put an end to that possibility. An Indian outside the door entered and struck him across the mouth with the flat of his tomahawk.

Beyond, in the village, the increasing beat of the tom-toms and the wild wailing song of death mingled with the shrill cries of children and the wordless plaints of women, bereaved by the guns of the white men. These sounds penetrated the thin wall of the lodge and worked upon Kendle's nerves.

Surely those dull ominous *booms*, the fierce barbarity of those vengeful yells, could not be real. It was all a ghastly nightmare from which in a moment he must wake to find himself secure in his command of the *Alberta*.

Thoughts of impossibilities had scarce entered his mind when of a sudden three hideously painted savages, blood-relatives of the dead, appeared before the lodge and engaged in furious verbal altercation with the guards. Through the lodgedoor he could see the brawny captors strike down the brandishing knives and tomahawks with their light clubs. He needed nothing more to suggest what fate was being reserved for himself and Martin. The very protection accorded them was of itself terribly significant.

Soon the guards entered. The two prisoners were brought together again outside the lodge. Their exit was the signal

for a diabolical clamor of sound. Wrinkled and aged crones, ugly as the witches of *Macbeth*, scratched at their eyes. The younger women and children were armed with long switches of supple dry branches tied together in bundles. These were brought down with lacerating effect upon the naked backs of the prisoners, which soon ran with blood. When the sailor Martin grimaced in pain, the yelling horde concentrated upon him with shouts and cries of scornful derision—dreadful portent of what was yet to come.

At sight of the several upright stakes with firewood piled near to hand, Kendle's mind darted back to the days of the Indian massacres. A cold sweat bathed his temples at sight of the very thing he had put from his thoughts. He knew nothing of the honorable nature of the Indian torture. Nor is it likely that he would have taken from that knowledge any comfort. White men, despite the awful barbarism of their own warfare with chemicals and fire, profess to abhor the infinitely tenderer personal torture and quick death of the Indian way.

Bleeding from the scourging they had just undergone, the captives were now pinioned hand and foot against the palisade, facing their torturers. Then began that practice which so revolted the first white men to reach America. The savages formed a semicircle at a short distance, and began hurling their various missles at the helpless captives.

Occasionally two weapons would touch in midair, their direction changed by the contact, so thickly did the rain of arms continue. Kendle felt such a heavy knife tear through the skin of his arm, pinning it to the palisade. Once the handle of a tomahawk him him in his already bruised and swollen mouth, at which yells of exultant brutal triumph dinned in his ears, eloquent of the pleasure his tormentors derived from the grim sport.

It could only be a matter of moments until one of those misdirected weapons found a living sheath. Kendle fervently hoped that the end would come cleanly and quickly.

Death, however, would arrive later and in more appropriate fashion. The savages did now but vie, one with another, in hurling ax or blade nearest the head or body of the victims, without more than breaking the skin. Before they had

done, the wall behind the prisoners bristled with the vibrating implements.

Then they were cut down and subjected to the excruciating agony of the whipping-bundles, which played havoc with their diminishing stoicism. And now they were made to dodge through lines of ready warriors whose eyes were filled with dark and savage menace. As they ran, the braves struck at them with blunt clubs and heavy leather-wrapped stones on rawhide thongs.

When Kendle came out of this ordeal his shoulders and back had lost all feeling; one eye was slowly closing; the wound inflicted by the bear's claws had been reopened.

Thus far he had submitted to every indignity without a murmur, no longer in condition to give thought to Martin, until an agonized and despairing shriek pierced the air to delight the savages.

Turning to the source of that awful cry, Kendle's hair fairly stood on end. His companion in misery had been bound to a post. At his feet a fire was already kindled. The piercing of his cheeks with a spear and the sight of what he must still endure had caused his overwrought nerves to betray him. The distracted cry induced the unsheathing of a score of knives which were brandished about his head and body in horrible preënactment of the approaching carnival of blood. In another moment his screams were again drowned in the laughter of the Indians.

It seemed impossible that human tissue could so long endure such travail. Kendle prayed for it to end.

As the mutilated thing sank into God-sent unconsciousness, Kendle himself knew the approach of scorching embers, saw and smelled the quick curl of smoke, and felt the lick of hot flame as the brush about his feet kindled. In a few moments more the flesh would be crisping away from the exposed writhing muscles and tendons. It was too fearful to contemplate. He locked his jaws, determined to die before crying out, to perish before adding one jot to the amusement of these fiends. Then he shut his eyes to blot out the sight of those grimaces which were the masked and painted features of his Indian captors.

Thus far had matters progressed when Kioga returned

to look down upon the torture. With narrowing eyes he watched the flames lick up toward Kendle's vitals. He saw Kendle's contorted features and smiled grimly, taking no great pride in this man of his own race, for an Indian would have been singing his defiant war-songs to the very end.

Now, Kendle had proved himself a brave man. But to Hawk, with his background of Spartan training to utmost stoicism, Kendle's facial revelation of physical pain was but added reason why he should not risk his rescue. In one hour the man who stood between himself and Beth would be carrion.

Was not he himself superior to this writhing white-skin? Was it for him to sacrifice Beth, power and his future leadership of the Shoni for such a one? Let Kendle burn!

Then with a last look at the pain-wracked victims, he turned slowly back into the forest.

Tongues of fire had begun to agonize Kendle. With head thrown back and muscles taut, he prepared to meet his end, when through the fiendish clamor braying into his ears, he became aware of a new note. Opening his eyes, he saw approaching a tall and remarkable figure.

In contrast to the savages about him, the newcomer was unpainted. A magnificent crest of tufted and colored eagle-plumes, his badge of office, ran back like a half-moon from forehead to neck, waving gently with every step. A mantle of feathers hung draped across one shoulder, partly concealing the beautiful lines of a body which might have been that of some ancient Aztec god reincarnated.

In response to a sharp command from this figure, the brands which flamed at Kendle's feet were kicked aside, and his burning clothing extinguished. The attentive and respectful hush which prevailed over what had been a scene of wild and savage discord evidenced the man's high standing and influence.

Notwithstanding this temporary respite, it was plain to the captive that the frenzied dancing had inflamed the Indians beyond the bounds of mere reason, inducing a kind of self-hypnosis which demanded blood—his blood. He could only wonder what interest led anyone, however powerful, to intervene on his behalf.

With his back to Kendle, the tall chief was now speaking rapidly in the dialect of the Shoni. A short pause was followed by a sharp vociferous protest, at which he turned to the prisoner.

Kendle was suddenly electrified. No Indian had ever owned eyes the color of these, glinting blue-green in the dark face. Unmistakably they were the eyes of a white man.

A moment the stare held his own intently. Then the chieftain's long knife flashed about his head. Kendle had visions of becoming the plaything in some even more cruel game designed to extract the last possible ounce of pain from him. Then he realized that his arms were free. A hand fell to his shoulder. The tall warrior spoke a few distinct words, audible to every Indian surrounding the fire-stake.

There was another short tense silence, during which the faces of the savages reflected every emotion from astonishment to fury.

One of the brawny savages who had tried to take Kendle from his guards earlier in the day stood near by. With an outraged yell, he leaped forward and struck at Kendle with his club. But the chief at Kendle's side lashed out with his tomahawk and the Indian fell senseless upon the ground.

In the pregnant hush following, Kendle heard directions in English, ordering him to sever the remaining bonds under cover of the warrior's cloak. The blade was in easy reach of his hand, and he quickly obeyed. He was free! And then again despair claimed him. His limbs seemingly dead, his body numbed—escape was bitterly impossible in the very moment of delivery.

Hawk grasped his condition in a quick glance. "Get ready," he said. "I will carry you."

A semicircle of red men hemmed them in on the village side, brandishing their weapons impatiently. At Kendle's back, several feet to the right was the gate. Toward this Kioga suddenly leaped, dragging the white man along and thrusting him outside, the while he continued hurling commands at the savages. Then he followed, slamming the barrier behind him, and snatching Kendle into his arms, raced for the forest.

Only the powerful domination which Kioga had gained

over the Shoni during his incumbency as their warrior chief could have held them even momentarily in check. But there were those among them who would speedily avail themselves of any opportunity to advance their own ambitions at his expense, and exhort the others to overthrow his authority.

Tumult rose in the village, followed by shouts as the Indians manned the walls. A volley of arrows whistled past, and for a moment it seemed to Kendle that their pace faltered. Then the forest swallowed them. . . .

During all the clamor caused by the presence of captives in Hopeka, Heladi had kept to her lodge until the name of Kioga reached her ears. Unbelievingly she heard shouted denunciations and vindictive insult heaped upon him who but a week since had been venerated by the entire village.

Running into the open, she learned, by frantically questioning the village women, of events which had transpired up to the time the Snow Hawk fled the village, pursued by the arrows of the Shoni bowmen. Beyond that, all was confusion and speculation. Some said he had taken the white captive to a canoe, others that he had gone into the forest. A report soon spread like wildfire that both had been killed and scalped a mile downstream.

It was this piece of misinformation which led the frightened girl to think of the Caldrons of the Yei. She dared not believe Hawk dead. She knew his familiarity with the waterways. He had told her about the Caldrons, how often they had been a haven for him. Instinct told her now that he would turn to them again in his dire necessity.

Taking advantage of the confusion, Heladi slipped out to the canoe-racks. A light craft lay on the sand. With a prayer of thanks to her gods, she pushed it into the water, stepped lightly in and paddled to midriver, where the down-current would be swiftest. The village was quickly lost to her view . . . .

Deep in the forest Kendle was amazed at the facility with which his rescuer bore him through the forbidding and tangled terrain, or along the most dangerous precipices, with the surefootedness of a mountain goat. Then he relaxed with exhaustion and shut his eyes.

When Hawk bore him into the cavern where Beth waited

in cold suspense and dread, one glimpse of those tortured and broken features brought the girl to her knees at his side, mute with pity. Remorse quickly followed out of the knowledge that this lifelong friend had been risking his life and spilling his blood in her behalf.

Now, as she held Kendle's mutilated face against her breast, he managed a grin which brought fresh pain to them both as it cracked anew the half-healed cuts which had been inflicted upon him. That brave grimace, marking him for the splendid sportsman she had always known him to be, brought quick tears to her eyes.

But as quickly she was dry-eyed again. For gazing down upon her, expressionless as the Sphinx, stood the man who had performed the miracle of their present salvation. A mighty tide of gratitude and confidence surged through her. Though their perils might yet be multiplied like the trees of this forest, here was one who could hew the way safely through!

Though she choked upon words which would not come, that long look of hers was reward enough for Kioga. And the curious light in his own eyes, could she have but known, was the light of pride—a white man's pride—in a good deed well done.

But their lead over the savages was slight. Realizing that to outrun the Shoni would require a quick start, Kioga lifted Kendle into the canoe, followed with Beth, and pushed out into open water, with haste eloquent of their danger.

For a little time the canoe moved stealthily onward. The junction of the Caiyuta and the Hiwasi rivers was reached without event. But at a sudden cessation of the paddling, Beth looked back.

Hawk's gaze was fastened upon the river-bank about fifty yards to one side. Following his glance, Beth saw a small canoe drawn up on the bank. Beside it stood an Indian woman—Heladi, pausing here to rest a moment in her search for Kioga.

Standing tense, she gazed across the water into the face of the Snow Hawk, her eyes alight with relief and wild happiness at seeing him safe and whole.

Beth's wondering eyes took in all her loveliness at a single glance. She knew that long speaking look to be a wordless

message straight from a woman's soul. Was the girl loved in return? Beth glimpsed Hawk's face over her shoulder, tried to read the answer in its strong outlines, but could not.

And then, as the eyes of the girl ashore met her own, their expression changed. Slow understanding darkened them. The eager smile faded. The slender figers clenched into small palms. Heladi's breast swelled on a deep-drawn breath and her head went up in cold challenge; but her quivering lips betrayed her.

As she turned a flashing glance upon Kioga, he touched a hand to his brow and extended it toward her without a word—a gesture of farewell.

The paddle dipped. The canoe moved forward. And on the bank, its wavelets lapped at knees to which Heladi had sunk like a stricken deer. She knew now where the Snow Hawk had been all these long hours and what had motivated him to destroy all he had so painstakingly built up. She covered her face with her hands, her heart dying.

As Kioga's craft passed from the Caiyuta into the rushing currents of the Hiwassee, a long inhuman whoop reached their ears from somewhere behind. They were not yet seen, but their trail was discovered, and their intentions probably determined by the cunning savages.

For all Kioga's mighty strength, one lone paddler in an overloaded canoe could not long distance twenty blades dipping as one in each war-canoe behind. At a fierce and triumphant cry Beth threw a glance back, to see three longboats momentarily cutting down their lead. Soon the contorted features of the pursuers were visible. A shower of arrows whispered past. One dug into the gunwale, vibrating an inch from her arm. Others clipped into the water round about them.

Behind them came savages more cruel in her eyes than the bloodthirsty red men who with fire and tomahawk ravaged the white settlements of early New England and left smoking death-filled pyres behind wherever they passed. No enemy Mohawk or plains Comanche had ever uttered more savage cries than marked every gain by the forging longboats of the Shoni.

Yet even as she watched, with bated breath, accident

befell the foremost craft. Where the smaller canoe had gone safely, the deeper-draft war-canoe was suddenly ripped from stem to stern by a submerged rock, its occupants hurled struggling into the now rushing river. Of the remaining visible pursuit one canoe avoided a like fate by turning back while yet there was time, to be joined by many other slower craft from upstream. The other, realizing too late the trap into which it had been lured, now fought the mighty current which drew it into the unknown watery areas above the Caldrons. The quarry was forgotten, and Beth could barely hear the Indians' shouts of consternation over the mounting roar of the waters.

Now the black walls of a dark cañon raced past. The stream narrowed to a series of flumes, sweeping past high walls of black rock. The flumes became suddenly one roaring millrace, which drained with terrifying abruptness over a smooth shoulder of water into a tossing wilderness of rock-torn shallows. Amid these jagged upthrust needle-like perils they flew chip-like through the foaming white water, only held to their course by the broad paddle manipulated by the Indian astern.

Following Beth's gaze, Kendle could dimly see the Shoni craft in the toils of the current.

But the worst was not yet. At sight of what lay ahead, Kendle's face drained white. They were looking upon the swirling, boiling Caldrons of the Yei, the dread Untiguhi. Came a sudden rip of the waters, and a heavy leap of the straining canoe. For assurance, the girl looked back again, catching one glimpse of Hawk's face in the spinning mists. No fear was written there and her own melted away. The Shoni canoe had vanished when the Caldrons swallowed them into its maw.

Like an arrow the craft shot through the hell-gate of flying foam and stinging spray that led to the approaches above the Great Falls. Steady thunder filled the air. Every choking gasp in that wet mist was like swallowing a saturated sponge. Then Beth glimpsed the falls directly ahead, and stark terror had returned, striking to her marrow.

Deep-grooved channels of racing water testified to the swiftness with which the torrent poured over into the clouds

of spray toward which they were directly headed. Hawk's paddle bent under his heaviest pressure. The canoe paused, shuddering, before giving a final nerve-racking leap. Then, by contrast the more unnerving, it darted suddenly into one of those by-ways of the main stream, carved into the solid rock by ages of erosion before the river had changed its bed.

They were safe now, but Beth's reaction was not only of relief but of exhaustion. She heard the hammering of her heart in her ears. Her hands were in violent pain from straining at the gunwales of the craft. Ahead, an unearthly flush cast over it by the low-hanging sun, lay the turbulence of a thundering cataract—behind, the tumultuous Caldrons. She wondered what could have happened to the other long-boat. Almost with the thought she caught a last view of it, as it were a ghost-canoe, filled with shades of men, ghastly beneath their paint, yet riding stoically to their doom, aware of the futility of further struggle. For a second it poised at the brink of the abyss, then tilted—and was gone, engulfed.

Beside Beth stood Kioga, looking with gloomy eyes upon the tragedy. He would be reproaching himself, she knew, blaming himself for this catastrophe to his former followers. Her gratitude mingled with a powerful desire to console him. She was about to lay a hand upon his arm when a movement in the water at their feet caught her eye.

Painfully a brown-skinned human being, wearing the bedraggled feathers of a warrior, stretched forth a hand for succor. It was one of the Indians from the overturned canoe which had first met with disaster.

Unhesitatingly Hawk extended his grasp, preparatory to hauling the man to safety. Then the savage's pretended exhaustion fell away. Treacherously and without a word he aimed a mighty knife-blow at his chieftain. But Hawk was the quicker; he fended off the blow without injury, caught the wrist in an iron grip and wrenched away the copper blade.

And then Beth and Allan Kendle were witness to the summary retribution of savage men. Too well Hawk knew the Shoni nature to expect more than further violence from

this inflamed Indian, did he permit him to live. Too much was at stake to permit of the mercy he might otherwise have shown.

Retaining his grip upon the lean throat, quickly and inexorably he passed the blade into the struggling body, left it there and allowed the waters to claim the corpse.

Now bearing Kendle again in his arms, and with Beth on his left, he struck off into the wilderness toward the sea-cliffs, which they attained after several hours without further mishap.

Soon he was roping the injured man down the steep face of the cliffs, and another hour found all safe once more on board the ship—and owing existence itself to this wild Indian chieftain.

For the first time Kendle understood their sudden lurch on leaving the village. As he was helped into his cabin, he saw the Indian pull the broken feather end of an arrow from his side, beneath the shoulder, and toss it into the sea.

Young La Salle, still pale from the effects of his wound, but recovering rapidly, received Beth with open arms and a hundred questions. During their happy reunion, Kioga stood back in silence, until at last Beth turned to him, and spoke to her brother.

"I mentioned Kioga, Dan. That's an Indian name. His real name is Rand—Lincoln Rand—" Thus for the first time Hawk heard himself introduced as a white man and addressed by a civilized name. The features of La Salle were solemn as he gripped Hawk's extended hand, and his voice rang with heart-felt sincerity as he acknowledged the introduction.

"Lincoln Rand may be your name, but we'll always know you as Kioga. What you've done—for my sister and all of us—won't be forgotten by the La Salles."

"We shall be friends," answered Hawk simply, and with conviction. Beth was pleased to see that in this, his first formal contact with a civilized man, he did not suffer by the comparison.

As she went to her stateroom, Dan was making Hawk known to the various members of the crew.

XXVII

THE RIVER HUNT

WITH a few words of explanation to La Salle, the Snow Hawk returned to the forest. He knew it would be useless to go back to the village in the hope of rescuing the sailor. No human aid could avail that poor limp thing which had hung smoking upon the other torture-stake when he had rescued Kendle.

Nor could he bring himself to face Heladi again—Heladi, the depths of whose love had led her forth alone upon the treacherous rivers, to seek him in the wilderness at the risk of her life.

Yesterday he had been the master of this mountain realm which no living monarch would have scorned, his word law, his every command obeyed. How good had been the taste of power and leadership after his long outlawry! Today he was the stag again, defiant of the pursuing wolves, renegade to his people and his office, back at the beginning. And all this for the sake of a slim gray-eyed creature who belonged, by her own words, to the man whom he had at such cost saved from the consequences of his own actions.

Behind him was a life stranger, wilder than ever man has lived before on this earth; before him exile, which would be the more bitter for its contrasts.

But it was that memory of Heladi, her happy eyes suddenly filled with the agony of a woman whose love is rejected, that haunted him, and would forever. What but the hatred he deserved could now abide in her breast! With leaden heart he proceeded on his way.

He knew there was still a method by which he could with one stroke cut the knot he had tied, and still observe the primitive Indian law, or the even harsher wilderness decree that might makes right. In his heart for the first time since he had last killed to avenge his dead, he felt the virus of black hatred at work. He could willingly slit the throat of this handsome Allan Kendle!

Every instinct rebelled at allowing aught to stand between him and the beautiful white girl. Yet at the same time he knew that as a white man he could do nothing which might be justifiable under Indian law. . . .

Arrived at his cave, he forcibly dismissed these thoughts, in order to prepare for his departure. Into a small chest he had built he put a quantity of the gold, covering this with his folded picture-hide. Upon this he heaped double handfuls of precious stones from his great store, which was little diminished thereby. Atop these he laid the *Cherokee's* logbook and the never-opened steel box. Then he shut and secured the bursting chest with a flat strip of rawhide. That he burdened himself with the gold or the gems at all evidences his mental preoccupation, for he had little idea of the value of either.

Now he looked about him for the last time in the cave which had sheltered him for so long—a gloomy place without the presence of her who had graced it these past days. Closing and fastening the barrier securely behind him, he made his way to the nearest stream. Constructing a wide raft, he was presently poling along downstream.

Back from the coast, he came upon the body of the bear which Kent's rifle-fire had wounded. The animal had dragged itself toward water, but died in a deep ravine before reaching it. Scattering the croaking scavengers, he was amazed at the bear's condition. One shot had partially torn away the upper jaw and caused partial blindness. Another bullet had torn a huge hole in the mighty breast, as big as a man's head. He noted this in amazement, before proceeding on his way.

A little later Dan, who awaited his return, heard a hail from the cliffs above, and looked up to see the chest turning slowly in midair as Hawk lowered it by means of his rope. The *Alberta* had drifted closer to the cliffs, and by means of a boathook La Salle grappled the chest over upon the deck. Kioga immediately followed.

During his absence a conference had been held, at which several problems important to their escape had arisen. Of these Dan now informed Snow Hawk:

Though the warmer season had minimized their hardships, the vessel was not sufficiently provisioned to brave a possi-

ble winter locked in the harbor. Meat was an immediate need. Further, the warmest apparel on the ship would not suffice for protection against the low temperatures which they would encounter here or upon the high seas, should they successfully reach open water beyond the shoals.

At another season the problem of meat would have been solved by killing walrus or sea-lion near the shore. But the fall migration had begun, and only a few animals remained, wary and alert, on the far wave-combed rocks. These would be inaccessible in any kind of craft. Time was an element to be considered, and though hunting inland might bring the Indians down upon them, it seemed the only way. In this Kioga concurred, and agreed himself to procure enough meat for many months, as well as furs already made into clothing. He stipulated the single condition that he be permitted to leave his belongings on board the *Alberta.*

Fitzroy, one of the ship's men, who had come up in time to overhear a part of this, answered: "Your things will be taken care of, and any plans you make for hunting will be followed out. Those are our orders from Captain Kendle. Most of us know how to handle a rifle. How many men will you need?"

By preference, Hawk would have hunted alone, unencumbered by men unfamiliar with the terrain. But mindful of the wounds inflicted upon the bear, and thinking with the aid of the powerful guns vastly to increase the bag of game, he chose Fitzroy and another sailor to accompany him. Dan's wound eliminated him, much as he desired to go along.

Followed by the sailors, each bearing a gun, Kioga ascended the cliffs. Then, explaining the impenetrable nature of the neighboring wilderness, he outlined the strategy of the hunt.

The actual killing of game would be child's-play compared with the labor of getting it aboard. They would utilize the raft which he had hidden, as a vantage point from which to shoot upstream further inland, where game was most plentiful. By floating back with a load of meat, they would lessen the distance of the overland carry to the ship. This plan was put into instant execution.

Within the first hour Fitzroy foolishly gave two bullets

to a buck drinking at the stream's edge. By the standard of another world, he had considered the animal huge. In reality it was a comparatively insignificant creature, a paltry catch, taken at the price of startling every animal within sound of the shots. For some time they paid the penalty of Fitzroy's ignorance, seeing no other game, though Snow Hawk repeatedly winded elk or moose but recently vanished.

Impatient at this delay which they could ill afford, he at last took to the bank, and in a few moments was padding along the dark game-trails with roving eye and alert nostrils, keen as a wolf on the scent. In a dewy thicket he started a great stag, felled it from above with the quick efficiency of long practice, and left it where it dropped. Near the edge of an inland marsh a score of wild geese fell prey to the hunting lash, to be strung upon a limb awaiting his return. Two fat wild turkeys, gobbling noisily in the brush, wilted in their tracks, spitted upon his silent arrows.

The white hunters might have sought in vain during this short interval so much as to flush the quarry. Hawk, with his intimate acquaintance with these wilds, knew almost infallibly the haunt of every animal within them. His companions were startled when they saw the geese being lowered from a ridge overhanging the stream. But they could scarce believe their eyes when these were followed by the turkeys and the huge stag, still warm and in full antlers.

These, added to the slain buck, represented a fair catch, yet hardly enough to fill their needs. It was decided, however, to pole the craft to the point of embarkation, cut up the meat, carry it to the ship and return for another hunt.

As they proceeded downstream, Hawk gave a sharp signal to halt. Near the bank he had caught sight of a blue-tipped horn, for whose mate he looked in vain. Cautiously approaching the shore, it was seen to be that of a dead wild bull, lying with one horn buried in the mud. The neck was twisted at an angle which identified it to Hawk's practiced glance as the new kill of a tiger. Here was a stroke of fortune, almost to double their meat at the expense of Guna, doubtless startled off the prey by the rifle's stunning discharges.

Laying aside his pole, he stepped cautiously ashore. A

great rent, running the full length of the belly, had opened the big carcass. With his knife Kioga swiftly completed the skinning already begun by the killer's talons, and emptied the cavity of its viscera, to lighten the load which must be carried. His nostrils were filled with the smell of meat and blood to the exclusion of all else.

He had freed the great skin, rolled the carcass over, and was dragging the hide from under, when he heard the sailors' yells of warning. Wheeling, he saw the bright orange and black streak of a prodigious tigress. At top speed she charged at an angle along the bank. Water dashed into spray about her flanks as she leaped roaring to the lone man standing above her kill. To those on the raft it seemed that she was fairly upon him before he moved.

But Kioga leaped aside quicker than either of his companions had believed a man could leap. Carried forward by her momentum, the enraged animal's forequarters fell across the raft. Two shots reverberated but were ineffectual because of her inconceivably swift and ferocious onslaught. Sailors and guns were hurled headlong into the stream.

Neither would have offered a farthing as the worth of their lives when they regained the surface, clinging to the raft, which rocked to the efforts of the snarling tigress to come aboard.

But in full view behind them there transpired a scene the like of which neither had ever dreamed.

Quick as Kioga would have been to avoid attacking a full-grown tigress without his spear, he now realized what must happen if the powerful beast got into a position favorable to the use of her fangs and talons. With a cunning plan half-formed he gave her a dozen cuts with the whip, the while he shook out the folds of the wild bull's skin.

The terrific roars of the tigress thundered along the stream, as in response to the stinging torment of the whip cracking against her side, she turned to the man ashore. The flat head hung low; the iron muscles of her shoulders and legs ridged up into bulging coils, as she crouched belly-deep in the water. Then she sprang.

Once again the scorching thong caught her, in mid-air, slightly altering the equilibrium of her leap. As she alighted,

Hawk's hand jerked up a wet expanse of raw hide, enveloping her head and shoulders. The curving talons clutched into the first skin they fell upon—but it was that of the dead bull, not of Kioga. A moment she fought blindly in the smothering blanket, striving only to free herself now. But her long hooks, once sunk in, were not easily withdrawn.

As she threw herself splashing about, two hundred pounds of bone and brawn fell upon her. Sinewy fingers felt for the little space between the neck vertebrae. A fang of steel, six times the length of her own, was thrust in to its guard, and came out deep in her throat. A quick excruciating leverage on the hilt completed the severance of the spinal marrow. Then Hawk rolled aside to avoid the final convulsions that accompanied the tigress' end. . . .

Fitzroy had served Allan Kendle on many a hunting expedition. He knew that the black Masai of Africa hunted the lion with spears alone, falling beneath their shields to evade the death-agonies of the prey, and were justly called brave. He had seen a maharajah of India pursue the royal tiger with the aid of hundreds of beaters and a troop of elephants, from whose broad backs the killing shots were fired upon the dreaded quarry.

But surely never before had one lone man dared to bait the mightiest killer on earth with such weapons as a knife and a thin whiplash!

As if mesmerized, the sailors watched silently while the Indian cut away the beast's claws. Without a word they helped him to haul the carcass of the bull aboard, then poled away from the bank, still unable to comprehend that their tall campanion had dispatched, unaided, that striped monster which now lay silently awash in the stream behind them. Loaded to its full capacity, the raft continued downriver.

The good red meat was a welcome sight to the members of the *Alberta*'s crew, and many hands made light work of getting it aboard. Long since, the deck had been cleared of the grisly reminders of the pirate attack, and order had replaced the recent confusion.

Without explanation Kioga again disappeared inland.

Captain Kendle, still weak, but greatly restored by rest and

first-aid treatment, emerged to find two of his officers excitedly expatiating on the remarkable strength and courage of their absent hunter. He learned how Kioga had lured the tigress from them who would have been easy prey, and what had happened afterward.

Meanwhile, the crew were engaged in salting the meat, to preserve it.

Kendle also observed the chest containing Hawk's belongings. On being informed of its ownership, he personally supervised its storing below. Three men strained at the comparatively small chest. This, combined with the fact that the lid was partly sprung, induced him to examine the contents. As captain of the *Alberta,* this was not only a right, but in one sense a duty.

The first objects he saw were the log-book and the steel box. These interested him only an instant, as with a gasp he bent lower over the remaining contents. Scattered to the depth of several inches were countless gems of value, from whose facets played a constant steady, brilliant glow—a kind of heatless iridescent halo hanging like a little rainbow above the exposed compartment. Lifting a corner of the skin partition, he glimpsed the dull gleam of gold, and thus accounted for the weight of the chest.

Whistling softly, he slowly refastened the lid and went on deck, wondering, not unnaturally, how their friendly English-speaking savage had acquired so priceless a hoard. How came he to speak English at all? Whence the battered log-book, the rusted steel box?

Coming into the open, he saw a great bale of skins drop to the deck, skins which Hawk had snatched from a fur-trading canoe, destined for the more northerly tribes. This was followed by the figure of the Indian himself, toward whom Kendle advanced to make him welcome.

It was the first time he had met the other on anything like equal terms. A tall man himself, he found it necessary to look up into the face of Kioga, a face of mahogany brown, uncorrupted by any of the vicious or self-indulgent marks common among civilized men, and stamped with every sign of strong will and keen intellect. The eyes were wide, faintly oblique, startlingly brilliant in the deep orbits beside the

straight bold nose. They lent him an almost predatory appearance, which was denied by the sensitive mobile mouth.

Kendle noted, as one whose gaze was brooked by few, the imperturbable steadiness of those eyes, and the ease with which they engaged his own, which were first to waver. The product of totally different worlds, each recognized in the other one accustomed to command without thought of disobedience.

Kendle was all that an active life, inherited authority and great wealth can make a man—strong, yet considerate of the weak, handsome, polished, educated, a citizen of the world—a man who, under different circumstances, must have been the model after which Kioga would choose to pattern himself.

Hawk, by comparison an untutored savage, contemplated with mixed feelings the man he most detested. Despite an aversion to doing so, he took the hand which Kendle extended.

"We owe our escape to you," Kendle began cordially. "You took a terrible risk on my behalf. I'll never forget the look on those painted faces when you spoke to them. What the devil did you say, anyhow? I thought," he continued with enthusiasm, "that you were about to knife me yourself!"

"The people of my tribe sometimes adopt an enemy to save his life. It was the only way," came the quiet reply.

"And you did that for a total stranger," said Kendle, in amazement. "I don't see why, you know."

Hawk did not reply, an omission which Kendle ascribed to some native disinclination to pursue the matter. Accordingly he did not press for an explanation. Suddenly he had another thought.

"But—I say! You can't very well go back to that village, can you?"

"Not very well," agreed Kioga without expression.

"I see," asserted Kendle. For a moment he walked the deck, silent and thoughtful, then turned back to Kioga. "Look here. You've done so much for us—what can we do for you, in return?"

Hawk's answer came promptly. "I wish to go to America."

"To America!" Kendle's face expressed genuine regret at

appearing to cavil at this first request. "So do we. But it looks pretty hopeless right now. We don't know our own position. How we ever drifted in here is a mystery. And how we're to get out without charts or preliminary soundings, I don't know."

Kioga knew nothing of the language of an ocean vessel, nor of the nautical terms which Kendle used. But Kendle's manner, more than his words, suggested a problem which he himself had once wrestled with and ultimately solved—the location of a channel seaward.

"I have been to the open sea many times," he suggested.

"Then you must know where the mainland lies," Kendle said eagerly.

"No. I know the way to open water. After that—" The broad naked shoulders shrugged.

Kendle was jubilant, however.

"That knowledge may be our salvation. Once at sea, we have only the ice to contend with. Bad as that may be, it's nothing compared to the threat of those reefs. If you help us get through them, the time may yet come when I can make you some return for all you've done for us."

Hawk waved this offer aside. Kendle, determined to prove his gratitude at once, conducted the other to his quarters, where he urged him to select whatever apparel he desired.

At the man's visible unfamiliarity with the strange garments, Kendle assisted as best he could, wondering anew at the mystery of a white man's presence and influence among the fierce unknown inland tribes.

It was not Kioga the Snow Hawk who emerged from Kendle's cabin, but Lincoln Rand, a civilized and undeniably handsome man. Yet days passed before he felt anything but constraint and discomfort in his white man's clothing. . . .

Filled with thoughts of the imminent departure of his ship, —literally a treasure-ship now—Kendle congratulated himself upon having so successfully concluded an adventure so badly begun. The treasure, of course, concerned him not at all. But the prospect of making safe passage through the reefs to the sea again put a period to what had been the most disagreeable fraction of his life.

To the best knowledge of living man, the *Alberta* was the

first vessel ever to find her way to the open sea intact after having once been trapped in the foggy reefs about Nato'wa. Trusting implicitly in the knowledge of Kioga, she put to sea with the Indian signaling the directions by hand in the all too short hours of day, and by lantern-light thereafter, while from the wheel-house, Kendle relayed orders to the engine-room.

Headway was maddeningly slow. Thrice they anchored while the rushing crests of the rising tides went foaming swiftly past. Not until many hours later, when the *Alberta* had conquered the tortuous serpentine channels of the outer labyrinth, did those aboard her draw their first breath of relief.

Though the ship came through the ordeal with several deep skives along her water-line, these were as nothing compared to the damage she had sustained on her way in, many days earlier. But for the keen guiding eye at the prow, disaster must have overtaken her within an hour of leaving the seacliffs.

And on the rail, looking back, Kioga watched the vague headland of Nato'wa drop slowly beneath the bulge of the horizon. There sank all the strange life of which he had been a part. Ahead was the Land-Where-the-Sun-Goes, the world, that mystic place of many marvels, of which he had read in his books and learned much about from Beth during those happy hours beside his fire.

XXVIII

SHIPWRECK

IN HER race with winter the *Alberta* had threaded her way through ever less frequent lanes between the ice-floes which were now closing in on every side about her. Midnight of the fourteenth day found the ship trapped in the pack. A great hummock forced up by the terrific pressure of the closing floes towered over her port side. There seemed no hope

of further progress—and little likelihood that they could survive where they were.

In the deck-saloon, young La Salle had found the commercial radio receiver in good condition, and had been applying his limited knowledge of electricity in an attempt to get the transmitter functioning again. At first glance it had seemed irreparable, as if the mutineers had silenced it forever. A maze of wreckage and disconnected wiring had first greeted his eye. Salt water had also entered here, breaking down the insulation. But days of labor had corrected much of that. While two of the crew strung up a new antenna, Dan reconnected the wiring for the hundredth time and went over the set with a test lamp, seeking a sign of life—a live circuit.

All who could be spared from their posts now gathered aft, hanging upon Dan's every move, awaiting the word that would inform them whether or not their plight could be made known to an anxious outer world. Kioga was one of those who watched the repairs being attempted. Gradually it came to him that he witnessed a marvel greater than any other upon this wonder-craft. Not all her magnificent fittings and throbbing machinery could compare with this complicated contraption of wires and metal before which Dan knelt as before a god, the while, with blundering fingers, he sought to establish the mysterious circuits by which the radio functioned.

An hour ago the ship's machinery had been stopped when ice-conditions made further navigation perilous. Kendle now appeared at the door, a wrinkle of anxiety between his brows. Anticipating his query, Dan wiped sweat and oil from his eyes and shook his head. The growl of the ice-pack closing in around the ship drowned his words as he tried another connection. And suddenly—the test lamp glowed. . . .

When Dan had made his final adjustments, the transmitter gave out a clear note of good quality, indicating that the set was in exact resonance. The *Alberta* had received a heart-stimulant and had come alive, its electrical blood-stream aflow. A last test with the lamp, and Dan straightened up with the welcome news: "Juice in all circuits. Let's go!"

Unable to get an astronomical fix because of fog and

weather conditions, Kendle had calculated their position by dead reckoning as approximately between 68 and 69 deg. N. and 170 deg. W.

Jotting the figures on a slip of paper, he slipped it under Dan's elbow. With a silent prayer, Dan sent out his message: *"SOS SOS SOS Alberta"*—following with the ship's call-letters, thrice repeated, her approximate position as indicated on the slip, and the nature of their distress. Repeating this procedure several times, he listened intently, but caught only the bedlam of several ships somewhere down in the Pacific, communicating back and forth.

Recalling something the ship's operator had told him, he glanced at the clock. It was fourteen minutes past two in the morning. In another minute the entire world of ships, great and small, would be a silent listening-post tuned in on 600 meters—the SOS radio band—and sending no messages. The antenna was radiating, he knew. His signals would be detected then, if ever.

Promptly at 2:15 the signaling ceased; he heard only the peculiar hissing sounds caused by the Northern Lights. Somewhere an operator opened up, only to be assailed by a buzzing chorus: *"Quit sending! Silent period!"*

Redoubling his effort, Dan shot out, *"SOS SOS SOS Alberta"*—repeated it, and listened. There was a moment's pregnant silence. Then suddenly, crisp and sharp, came the high staccato of an answering signal, too fast for his unpracticed ears to decode.

"Send slower," he begged. Again came the signal, slow and distinct, and while a dozen pairs of eyes looked over his shoulder Dan printed out the call-letters of his own ship, thrice repeated, the *DE*, then the call-letters of the acknowledging operator three times followed by the group *RRR* and the signaler's position.

"Cut the jargon," tapped Dan on his own key. *"I'm a greenhorn. Who are you?"*

"Whaler Bearcat," came the answer. *"Coming all speed your aid. Hang on."*

"Hurry," answered the *Alberta*. *"Ice-pressure alarming."*

"Give your position again," came from the *Bearcat*. Dan rapped it out. The *Bearcat* cut in with, *"You're getting*

weak. Is that best you can do?" Once again Dan tapped out his figures.

"Think have it," came the reply. *"Try once more."* And once more Dan tried, but this time felt his generator dying. In another moment it would stop, and the set would be dead. Straining his ears, he heard a last call:

"Hello, Alberta, are you abandoning? Hello, Alberta—"

He began to signal *"So long, Bearcat,"* but discontinued as the generator's humming ended. Removing the headphones, he glanced at Kendle. "That's all. We're finished. Batteries exhausted."

"And you too, old boy," replied Kendle. "Go and get yourself some sleep."

But there was no sleep for Dan this night. Close on the heels of that encouraging contact with the outer world came final disaster. Kendle was issuing orders to be ready on a moment's notice to abandon ship, when the crisis came with devastating suddenness. Under the growing pressure of the ice, the stanch *Alberta*'s straining outer shell gave way with a crash that echoed thunderously through the ship. Sea-water poured through her previously damaged bow-plates, and yells of fear echoed from the forecastle in which the remaining mutineers were imprisoned.

Acting upon Kendle's general commands, Kioga had arranged his possessions convenient to hand, and at sound of the break, leaped from the bunk where he had been resting, fully clothed. Abandoning the heavy gold altogether, he snatched up the skin containing the balance of his treasure—gems, log-book and other belongings, and ran on deck.

One glance assured him that the *Alberta* had received a death-wound. Several sailors worked feverishly at the fastenings supporting the remaining life-boat, which was to be lowered to the ice in the hope of reaching open water later on. Hawk leaped to their aid.

Not so, however, with others aboard the stricken ship. A sailor coming close behind Kioga had glimpsed the gleaming bullion. Having seized a few ingots and coins, he spread the news among the others; and there was a sudden rush for the companionway as several of the crew abandoned their

appointed tasks. The lifeboat smashed to the ice, stoving a huge hole in her bottom.

Kendle knew and cursed the instincts which drove his men, and with drawn pistol blocked their passage.

"Stand back! We're going down!" he thundered. "Stand back!"

But there was no stopping them now. Weary of violence and loath to fire upon his own men, Kendle toppled before their rush and lost his weapon in the scuffle.

All this Kioga noted in amazement as he lowered Beth into the waiting arms of Dan and those of the crew who stood on the ice. The ship was listing sharply. The rumble of the floes was suddenly punctuated by a crash. A great block of solid ice loosed from the overhanging hummock smashed down upon the companionway through which the sailors had entered the ship. Appalled by the fate awaiting his prisoners, Kendle had started for the forecastle-hatch, intending to admit them to the deck and freedom. But now he rolled down the deck like a dead man, struck unconscious by a chunk of flying ice. Kioga handed him to safety as he had Beth.

All was now confusion on the sinking vessel. Already her forecastle was under water, the cries from that quarter stilled. Her stern had lifted higher in air. One propeller, lazily spinning, clanged against a pinnacle of ice astern. From within the doomed hulk came the hoarse yells of the entrapped sailors. Something had gone wrong with the engine-room bell, and it was ringing furiously, muffled by the unbroken wail of the siren. The floe creaked as the *Alberta* shuddered and lurched sickeningly forward, then down—slowly down —one light-port after another sliding into the frigid waters. Her bell and siren were choked off in full voice, creating an overpowering silence. Her visible propeller came to a stop, and for one moment it appeared that the sheer pressure of ice on either side would grip her stern, hold her afloat. Then, with a rush, she sank from view, and behind her the jaws of the fissure clashed grinding together where she had hung. In five minutes the footing over the ship's grave was solid as bedrock.

But for that sudden stampede by the crew in answer to

the lure of gold, ample provision and ammunition would have remained to console the shipwrecked party. As it was they were reduced to a single rifle and a pocketful of cartridges, and a belt-ax. The boat's broken boathook could serve as a weapon when repaired, and under the canvas cover a sealing harpoon was fastened, with its length of rope. The warm fur garments on their backs came from the armload which the Indian had thrown overboard with his own things. Otherwise, to all but one among them, the outlook was hopeless indeed, rendered more so by the gloom of night.

Once again Kioga was faced by civilized man's lack of resource when deprived of his base of supply. But this intrigued him less than the—to him—inexplicable passion which had sent those men to their death, a desire for the yellow stuff he had left behind.

Morning poured over the icy chaos of desolate floes in golden glory, lighting their cold white world with the warmest colors of dawn. Rolling up like a dull red wheel, the sun painted the ice with the softest pastel tints. As it rose yet higher in the blue dome, the ice like a field of dazzling brilliants flashed back the slanting rays. It was a scene which gave the party new courage.

The broken lifeboat offered little promise as a way of escape. But from its remains they fashioned a crude sledge; upon this they laid the wounded Kendle. The canvas cover was carefully folded for later use.

Then, between them, turn and turn about, the handful of men dragged their rude conveyance southward as beasts of burden would haul against the yoke, while Beth alternately trudged alongside or rode with the injured man. Fair progress was made in the short period of daylight.

That greatest boon of northern travelers, fresh water, was found in frequent sparkling pools under a skin of new ice atop the floes; and they did not thirst. Hunger, however, was soon upon them, sharpened by their labors of the day.

So long as the floes remained unbroken, the prospect of securing food was remote. None realized this better than Kioga, for in all the hours since the sinking of the ship, not once had the scent of edible flesh crossed his keen nostrils. Upon all that vast expanse of snow and ice, no other living

thing existed above the surface of the ice. Accordingly he favored pushing on while their strength lasted, in the hope of reaching open water, where a seal or a white bear might be shot. This plan was adopted.

But after the day of unceasing toil, mutterings of dissent rose from among the crew. The sledge was heavy, the added burden of the wounded Kendle more intolerable hourly. Three of the men presented themselves before Kioga and Dan, some little distance from the others. One, electing to speak for the others, stood forward.

"It's no use fooling ourselves," he began. "Either he walks hereafter, or we don't pull on the sledge."

"Aye," came from behind him. "He's been joy-ridin' long enough. Let him walk—or stay behind."

The third sailor, who had remained gloomily silent until now, started and looked up with inflamed unnatural eyes, out of a face rendered haggard and hollow by hunger. "Leave him behind?" he echoed, before suddenly relapsing into moody contemplation of the ice on which he stood.

With a start of horror, Dan realized what was meant. Kioga, also, caught the telltale glance of a famished animal. With narrowed eyes he looked from one to the other of the sailors.

"W'y not?" whispered the first speaker. "We all have to go one way or other." Then, in a wheedling tone, to Dan: "There's the young miss to think of too, and—" But he never finished. Dan knocked him sprawling with a single blow. Without another word the sailors picked up their companion and withdrew, remaining apart from the others. The first rift in the little colony on the ice had formed and was widening.

Neither Dan nor Kioga slept that night. La Salle sat with his back to the shelter they had made for Beth with the tarpaulin. He held Kendle's rifle across his knees and kept watchful eyes upon the group of three who knelt huddled together. Kioga whittled in apparent idleness at a long strip of wood chopped from the sledge, and in a little while with harpoon in hand and ax at belt, he slipped forth into the darkness alone, saying no word of his intentions.

Again he was the hunter, every sense occupied with their bodily needs, impatient of explanations in the need to find

meat. He searched now, as he had done unnumbered times before, in the winter shore-ice about Nato'wa, for a seal's breathing-hole. At every snow-covered spot in the floe he probed with the harpoon, seeking the hollow vertical chamber, gnawed open from the sea below, through which the sleek seal rises for a breath of air. It seemed a slender forlorn hope, and hours passed without rewarding his patience. But at last the harpoon sank deep in spongy ice. Withdrawing it, Kioga felt the blade. It was wet—with salt-water. Into that hole he now inserted his long stick, with its flat wooden disk at one end, in such wise that the top end of the stick must move if the water were disturbed below it. Then he sat down to wait and to watch.

He knew there would be other breathing-holes near by, and he might wait the entire night without luck. But sooner or later the seal would rise to breathe at this hole. Hours passed, dragging slowly, and nothing happened. Rigid as stone, Kioga kept his eyes glued upon the vertical rod. Then of a sudden the indicator trembled. The seal was still some feet from the hole, unseen and unheard. But the wave-motion created by its underwater approach, transmitted motion to the stick, betrayed its coming.

With harpoon vertically poised beside the stick, Kioga stood tense. Beneath the ice the seal rose to press its nostrils to the breathing-hole, forcing the wooden rod upward. Then, with lightning swiftness, the man drove the weapon down.

An invisible, noiseless struggle endured for a moment, as working swiftly he chopped away the spongy ice to enlarge the seal's hole. A moment later he drew it out thrashing upon the ice. The harpoon had gone in beside the jaw, roving deep toward its lungs. He ended its struggles with a blow, and turned back to the camp.

As Kioga approached the shelter, dragging the seal behind him, the three sailors, upon whom young La Salle had kept unbroken watch, were deserting toward the south, staking all on the possibility of rescue in that direction.

Beth had awakened in time to hear of this and to shudder on being told the cause of disagreement between Dan and the men.

"How long has Kioga been gone?" inquired Kendle.

"Hours," answered Dan.

"That means he's cleared out too."

Dan did not answer. He was almost ready to believe Kendle right, that Kioga had at last determined to strike out alone while his strength lasted. Of them all Beth's voice was the only one raised in denial.

"I don't believe it," she said with a spirit which was later to give Kendle cause for thought.

"That doesn't alter the facts. He's gone," insisted he, with the weariness of a man to whom salvation or death no longer greatly matter. "Like the others, he'll try to save himself first."

He had scarce uttered the words when a darker shadow loomed out of the night. It was Kioga, dragging his seal upon the harpoon-rope. Straight before Beth he brought it, as if it were an offering. She could not tell whether he had overheard Kendle's words, but she felt a mighty sense of gladness that she had not lost her faith in him. . . .

Cleaning and quartering the animal, the Indian proffered the raw meat to his companions. The others wasted several precious cartridges in fruitless attempts to ignite wood-shavings cut from the sledge. They wanted their meat cooked. Shrugging, Kioga partook sparingly of the uncooked flesh and renewed his strength. Later on the sailors were glad to eat their meat raw; even Beth steeled herself to taste it, finding it better than no food at all. Stronger in spite of their distaste for the raw meat, the party set out once again for the south.

That night Kioga made a firebow of wood broken from the sledge. And in the flame of their crude lamp—made from an empty food-tin—they cooked the rest of the seal Kioga had harpooned.

With the specter of hunger laid for the time, life on the floes was fairly comfortable. Though the temperature was steadily dropping, their furs defended them from serious suffering. But the approach of winter was heralded by the prolonged sunset hours, when the sun skirted the horizon, painting the floes with rainbow hues. With growing frequency the multi-colored streamers of the flickering aurora took flight

across the northern sky, darting and quivering in every direction, eclipsing stars and paling even the moon's glowing light.

For the girl these were hours of wonder, and Dan shared her awe. The strange natural phenomena had a parallel among the men. The two sailors were nervous and jumpy, growing hourly more irritable. Kendle became increasingly moody, short-tempered with his men.

Kioga kept his habitual calm. Daily he went forth in search of another seal, returning empty-handed without change of expression. This unruffled calm at last got on Kendle's nerves; one day he remarked with the trace of a sneer:

"The mighty hunter's not doing so well these days."

"Give him a chance," answered Dan in swift retort. "Seals don't stand around waiting to be killed."

Conscious that their situation had worked upon Kendle's mind, Beth made an attempt to placate him by reminding him of their debt to Kioga. "Not one of us would be here tonight if it weren't for him," she said. "Who else could have found a living animal in this dead white floe, and brought it in alone?"

This only aggravated Kendle's anger.

"It strikes me you're mighty enthusiastic about this Indian," he said.

She flared up: "Why shouldn't I be?"

"I suppose you have your reasons," he replied sulkily.

La Salle was on his feet at that. "What are you driving at, Allan, anyhow?"

"This isn't your affair," snapped Kendle, curtly menacing. "Stand aside!"

Then, stung by Beth's scorn and Dan's continued defiance, he drew back his fist as if to strike. Whatever his intention, it was suddenly checked by an iron grip upon his elbow that jerked him round as if he had but a child's strength. An instant later he was crushed to his knees, looking up into the white Indian's face. The intent to kill burned fiercely as Kioga's grip tightened on his neck, and Kendle knew the fear of death. The way of the savage with an enemy is short.

Only Beth's sharp cry of protest, her fingers tense on his

arm, halted Kioga. Relaxing his hold a trifle, he looked up. The girl recoiled at the expression in his eyes. "You'd kill him—for a blow that never fell!" she breathed. And then, in swift horror, out of the near-hysteria into which the moment had plunged her, came words which she later was deeply to regret:

"After what I saw once before—I ought to have expected this." She referred to the Indian he sent over the Great Falls near the Caldrons of the Yei.

The full meaning of that would not come to him until later, but he was master of himself again and answered: "I will not forget what you have said."

He turned to Dan with a question.

"Had he reason to strike you?"

"I gave him cause," lied Dan, reluctant to reveal the provocation of their dispute.

Released, Kendle was rising, shaken and humiliated. Equally reluctant, but for different reasons, he made haste to share the blame. "I was most at fault," he said. "I forgot myself."

Thus, for the moment the matter ended. Next morning Kendle approached Beth with apparent humility.

"Forgive me for yesterday," he began. "I should have known better."

Something in the way he said it, some suggestion of lingering disdain for Kioga, irritated her, and she remained silent. And goaded by uncertainty, he then uttered what was in his mind, the worst thing he could have done.

"Or is it possible—that I was right?" he demanded suddenly.

The warm color rose to her face at that, a flush of indignation.

A rush of bitter anger, blind and unreasonable as his mood, ran through him.

"Of all women, you—and that bloody-handed savage!" he exclaimed. "Why, we've seen him kill a man in cold blood! Good God!"

With blazing eyes she faced him, countering fiercely: "Dare you say he did it callously, without good cause?" It was her declaration of faith.

Desperate, Kendle demanded:

"What do you know of Kioga? What is he? Just an ignorant wild man—a nameless nobody. And how about that native woman we saw on the river-bank? Do you know who *she* was?"

The girl went pale at the implication she had hitherto put from her mind. Yet she did not flinch. "I know that she loved him," was her defiant answer.

"No doubt," retorted Kendle dryly, adding: "He has a way with beautiful young women. But I will not let you throw yourself away on your handsome head-hunter."

For a moment she eyed him, between wonder and anger. Then in quieter tones, that overlaid the iron in her character: "The time is past when men 'let' women do things," she said. "This is the twentieth century." She turned away. He heard the brittle ice crush under her feet as she walked back to the camp, leaving him with murder in his heart.

A naked Indian, a barbaric, paint-bedaubed leader of a wild woodland horde, to gain the interest of a woman like Beth La Salle! The incongruity of it was like a blow between the eyes. If Kendle could prevent it, Beth would never give her life into the keeping of such a man.

And now, stripped of normal standards by circumstances that were undeniably cruel, Kendle began to harbor thoughts from which two days since he would have recoiled with horror: His present situation was traceable to misplaced humanity, first in his failure to quell mutiny with bullets, secondly in his too-merciful treatment of the pirates. Was he to permit Beth to ruin her life because of similar scruples? Somewhere along the ice an opportunity might come to be rid of the Indian once and forever.

Now the rigors of their situation began to bear more heavily upon them. They were reduced to cracking open the bones of the seal in search of marrow; and now Beth succumbed to exhaustion and was lashed to the sledge. The men tethered themselves to it for the double purpose of cooperation in the pull, and to avoid separation. In the darkness of night Dan, sensible that his failing strength was retarding the others, cut himself quietly off the trace, thinking by his death to relieve the others of a burden. His absence

was not discovered for an hour. All the crew favored pushing on, lest delay reduce the chances of ultimate rescue. But Kioga returned to find Dan, and presently came back carrying him over his shoulder, and put him on the sledge with Beth.

In a crevasse, that night, they came upon the first hideous evidence of how the deserting sailors were sustaining life. They saw what remained of the man who had wished to leave Kendle behind several days earlier. To Kendle it looked as if dogs had been at the body, before he realized the frightful truth.

Kioga said nothing. But he vainly searched his memory for anything to parallel this among the cruelest tribes of Nato'wa. Not in all the history of winter famine among the Shoni had cannibalism ever been recorded.

Soul-sick and exhausted, they pushed on again, listening to the ominous crack of the floes under their feet. Deep crevasses appeared more frequently. Lifting the sledge over these was a back-breaking labor, requiring the last ounce of the Snow Hawk's superb but diminishing energies.

And then, to bar their slackening progress—open water, with the northern lights setting the sky afire overhead and seeming to purr over them like some vast predatory animal, savoring the struggles of its puny prey.

Black despair claimed those who had entered the North on the *Alberta*. Nor was Kioga oversanguine as to the prospect of their salvation now. But while the others gave way to their weariness, the white Indian prepared. In addition to the harpoon, with its length of line, he appropriated several fathoms of the frayed half-inch hempen rope which had been used to tow the sledge. Through his belt he thrust the broken remnant of the steel-shanked boathook.

Drawing new strength from this display of purposeful calm, Kendle took fresh hold upon himself and helped Kioga build a circular wall of ice, across which they draped their canvas, forming a shelter more adequate than any they had hitherto made. Beneath this they spread their few skins, and upon them Beth was laid, wrapped in the heavy slumber of complete exhaustion. Dan and Kendle considered it possible that a seal might break water off the edge of the

ice near by. With the three cartridges left in his rifle, Kendle would be in a position to kill one if it came near enough.

Kioga, at his own suggestion, was to follow north along open water. With harpoon in hand he went forth again, moving silently and without haste, straight into the wind. For a time he inhaled naught but the salty smell of sea and ice. Pausing frequently to listen, at length he heard a distant hollow bellow, deep as the bay of a mastiff. Every sense tingled at that sound. Then, faint but unmistakable to him who had roamed the coast of Nato'wa at breeding-time, the tale-bearing wind brought news of meat. And what he scented was the lion of the sea, the dread *Awuk* of the Eskimo—walrus!

With weariness forgotten in that moment of excited discovery, Kioga turned from the open water, and taking cover behind hummocks and blocks of ice, came soon to a ridge forced up by the pressure. From atop the ridge he surveyed the field ahead.

A quarter-mile away was a discoloration, a newly frozen area surrounded by older solid ice. As he watched, the discolored section was forced upward from below, and crumbled down about the grim head of a brown male walrus. Breathing with a roar, the animal sank. As it went under, Kioga slipped swiftly from his shelter and ran toward the spot. When the broken ice stirred anew, he was flat on his belly, until the walrus breathed and submerged; then up and sprinting forward, alternately hiding and stalking until but five yards of thin ice lay between him and the brink of the walrus pool.

Again that monster square head lifted above its surrounding ice, exhaling with pent-up force, shaking the seawater from its crest, brandishing thirty-inch tusks which thrust down like bayonets from its upper jaw, masked by heavy quill-like bristles. Its protruding eyes fell upon the tense human figure crouched facing it with poised harpoon aglitter. Breast-high the walrus rose, fascinated for one second by the flash of moonlight on steel.

Back went the white Indian's arm, then shot swiftly forward. The glitter became a streak of pale light. In sudden

alarm the walrus plunged—but with him went the sharp-steeled harpoon, buried deep beneath his right flipper.

Above on the ice, Kioga leaped back from the water's edge, paying out the rope coil by coil. Jabbing the remnant of the boat-hook at an angle into the ice, he took a rapid double-turn about it, checking the sounding prey in mid-plunge.

The taut line vibrated, then relaxed. The beast rose, and broke up through the ice with thrashing tusks. But the hunter had moved back and was fixing iron and rope in solid ice at another point. Once more the harpooned beast fell back. Again Kioga changed position, before the ice burst up about the spot he had just quitted.

Through the bubbling foam and red froth upon its bearded jaws, the walrus broke into its barking roar. With a savage bellow it heaved itself repeatedly high against the ice, striving furiously to reach its enemy, but as often the ice broke under that immense weight. .

Thus for an hour or longer the strange contest continued under the brilliant Arctic moon, seemingly without advantage either to man or to walrus.

Meanwhile Kendle patrolled the water's edge some distance from camp, searching for seal. And luck was with him; for he caught sight of one presently, and killed it instantly with a fine brain shot, so that it could not dive and vanish. He was about to start dragging his prey to camp, when echoes of the combat between Kioga and the walrus reached his ears; and he hastened forward in time to witness the finale.

Plunging in violent circles, the animal strove to jerk out the harpoon planted deep in him. Kioga played him as the fisherman plays a swordfish, giving slack when in danger of losing the quarry. But the danger of losing this animal on which salvation depended was real and imminent, he knew. And for this reason he made ready a noose in the shorter sledge-rope.

The tiring bull rose again, grappling the ice with its tusks in the effort to mount and close with the hunter. Forth floated the dilated loop, then down about the beast's head. A jerk

set it tight beneath the hanging ivory bayonets. Now, with every ounce of his strength, Kioga strained upon the second rope to relieve the pull on the first.

Twice-gripped, the walrus retreated, breathing stertorously in the strangling noose. Too exhausted to plunge, it marshaled its strength for the final effort. Then, with a choked bellow, it was up on the ice, aided as much by Kioga's efforts on the rope as its own. With drawn knife the Snow Hawk stood waiting to leap aside and plunge the blade into its throat as it blundered past.

Buoyed up by the excitement his diminished powers had thus far withstood the drain upon them. But more than an hour of arduous activity had taken its inevitable toll of his weakened body, and panting, he realized how his strength had ebbed with starvation.

At that moment came a shout of encouragement from behind him. With a swift backward glance he glimpsed Kendle. Distrustful of his remaining powers, he swung aside to afford the other an unobstructed opportunity for a killing shot.

As the elephantine beast lumbered forward, Kendle drew a careful bead upon the base of its neck. And then, in the smallest fraction of a second, the thought flashed through his brain: If he missed—who would know how death came to the Indian? A man found dead under the tusks of a walrus—all things are foreordained—an act of God.

Swift revulsion followed, and Kendle ground his damp forehead against the back of his rifle. His finger tightened on the trigger. And then as the scene enacted on the ice leaped back into focus, that drama of life and death drew to its close: Frozen with fascination, Kendle saw the animal's head sweep viciously sidewise, hooking the man upon the underhanging tusks, and bearing down upon him with all its overwhelming weight. He saw the flash of the knife as Kioga plunged it repeatedly into the leathery neck. The last blow fell, convulsively, before the arm which drove it relaxed upon the ice in a pool of blood.

Neither man nor animal moved.

A moment Allan Kendle looked upon death, trembling as

if he himself had sustained the shock of that final attack. Then with a choked cry he turned and half ran, half staggered toward camp.

XXIX

THE INTERCEPTED MESSAGE

WILD excitement, Kendle found, replaced the gloom which had reigned on his departure. The men were shouting and straining their eyes across the mist-covered waters. . . . A word from Dan explained matters: During Kendle's absence a ship's whistle had been heard. The sound had been repeated, apparently nearer each time. Every effort was being made to attract attention to their position on the ice.

Risking everything on the accuracy of this report, Kendle fired his last two shots in the air, and listened intently. Distinctly, came a return fire. . . . Two hours later, out of the mists there appeared the running lights and outline of a ship. A deep voice answered their yells.

"Aho-oy on the floes! Can you hear us?"

"Aye!" shouted one of Kendle's crew out of leather lungs. "Who are you?"

"Whaler *Bearcat!* Who are you?"

"Survivors of the *Albertal*"

To the accompaniment of a faint cheer, the *Bearcat*'s boat pulled up to the ice. Its officer leaped upon the floe. Kendle stepped forward, introducing himself, and they shook hands.

"Thank God you're all safe!" replied the *Bearcat*'s officer briskly. "We'd almost given you up when we heard your shots. The pack's closing in. Get your hands and gear together to leave the ice. There's no time to lose."

In obedience to that urgent admonition, Beth was lifted unconscious down into the boat by steady hands. The others followed, and were rowed to the ship.

On board the *Bearcat,* in the presence of Dan and all his men, Kendle acquainted her skipper, Captain Scott, with the fact that three men had deserted, and that Kioga had gone

forth alone and remained unheard from. Captain Scott considered this carefully.

"Four deserters, eh?"

Dan interrupted him swiftly: "Kioga went out for meat and hasn't returned. You can't call that desertion."

"You're right of course." The skipper turned to Kendle: "Was search made?"

"I followed along the ice for several miles."

"You saw nothing of him?"

Kendle paled imperceptibly, but his voice was steady. "I did not."

"It's a shame to leave that brave fellow behind," said the Captain.

Dan spoke up again, pale and agitated:

"We can't do it. He risked his neck a hundred times for us. Give me a gun and some food—I'll go out."

Scott put a heavy hand on his shoulder and said, kindly: "Ye'll recall that I'm skipper here, La Salle. Now mind what I say: I've a stout ship and a valuable cargo, which I've risked before to save life. But I've also sixteen men, one with his appendix iced and in need of a doctor. I've none too much provisions, what with several new mouths to feed. It's twenty-odd lives—one of them a sick woman's—against three damned deserters and one good man. Hark—do ye hear that?" And loud in their ears roared the sound of the grinding floes that were closing in. "I see my duty, plain," went on the Captain. "And we'll sail before we're beset, before the packs close up tight and freeze us in." Then he put the question squarely up to Dan. "What would ye do in my place?"

"In your place," answered Dan tersely, "I'd do exactly what you're doing. But no matter what you do, that man's not going to be left alone on the floes. I'm going out, and if you won't send some one along, I'll go alone!"

Scott had risen and was facing him. "Ye'll stay aboard, and quietly," he growled, "or I'll clap ye in irons! Nobody doubts your good intent. But your friend is a man of resource. He knows the North, ye've said. He'll know how to look after himself if he lives, which I never doubt. I'll leave a cache of food, a gun and some ammunition at the site

of your camp. Then I'll stand by for an hour—no longer. More, I cannot do."

Captain Scott kept his promises, both as to the provisions and the time of departure. But he refused to let Dan accompany the boat to the floes, and to make sure of him, set two of his crew to watch him and prevent any last-minute attempt of returning.

At dawn the *Bearcat* steamed out of the pack. Beth La Salle, restored to consciousness, but still very weak, was kept in ignorance of Kioga's fate, lest the news retard her recovery.

It was a strange tale which the rescued party later told, stranger than anything which has ever been recounted of the North, relating as it did to unknown inhabited land beyond the ice-barriers.

If reports of the discovery of a new Northland were taken lightly by the *Bearcat's* officers, it but accentuates the fact that men do not greatly change with time. Four centuries earlier other men had laughed when a Genoese named Columbus declared the earth to be round.

Rumors of the rescue, including the names of the survivors, and those who had not been saved, went to the outer world by radio. On the second list appeared the name of Lincoln Rand.

But all reference to new land was omitted on orders from the *Bearcat's* skipper. Scott, though brave as any man could be, feared ridicule. If the statements of these castaways proved to be the mental wanderings of mind-sick men, he would be the laughingstock of the North, having broadcast them.

Of all who intercepted that wirelessed message of salvation and forced abandonment, none was more profoundly moved than the tense listener at a radio receiver in the cabin of the two-masted schooner *Narwhal,* southbound after a summer's geological study on the north Alaskan coast.

More than two decades had passed since the disappearance of an American doctor, his lovely wife and Mokuyi the full-blooded Indian, third crew-member of the vanished ship *Cherokee.* It was seven years since James Munro, now famous for his scientific researches, had given up the long

futile search for the friends of his youth, and the woman he had loved and lost to young Dr. Rand.

And now, amid the barking of dogs on deck, strange tidings flashed into Munro's ken, interrupted by the auroral crackle: Tidings of the near-rescue of a man he had given up for dead, yet who appeared to be alive somewhere near, in these ice-fields through which his little ship was bumping her way.

News of Lincoln Rand's existence after all these years came like a bolt from the blue to James Munro, bringing back to vivid life old emotions only partly healed by time. He knew his Arctic too well to discount the *Bearcat's* reports as to ice-conditions. But his *Narwhal* might penetrate where even the greater *Bearcat* dared not go, for she was built for Arctic work, and shaped to rise upon the floes if pressed by the pack. Best of all, upon his ship were dogs and sledge, and two master Eskimo dog-drivers. One was Kamotok, faithful companion of many summers, whose life Munro had once saved, in like circumstances. The other was Lualuk, Kamotok's cousin, only less expert as a dog-driver by reason of his lack of one hand—bitten off by a polar bear several seasons ago.

To Kamotok, Munro addressed a few words in the Eskimo tongue:

"The voice of a ship has spoken. Someone waits alone upon the ice. It will be a long winter, this."

"And cold," agreed Kamotok, tossing a piece of meat to one of his dogs. "Is it a white-skin?"

"Yes," answered Munro. "A man someone knew many winters ago."

"Man is not born to die on the ice alone," commented the Eskimo, thoughtfully. "Someone who has dogs and a good sledge will surely go and look for the white-skin."

"There is much danger, traveling on open ice," began Munro, reluctant to peril the life of his friend.

"It has been done ere now," answered Kamotok. "Did not someone near by thus save Kamotok from death? The ship will be near."

Thus simply the two men came to agreement, with Lualuk concurring. The *Narwhal's* course was directed into the ice-

fields until her position roughly corresponded with that given by the *Bearcat*. When further progress could not be made safely, she was anchored to a floe. The eager dogs were harnessed and put overside, the sledge made fast to the traces. Munro gave instructions to his crew to keep rudder and screw free of ice. Then, amid cracking of whips and a blast from the *Narwhal's* whistle, they were off to scour the ice. . . .

Aboard the *Bearcat*, already many miles in the south, a woman looked back with tragic eyes upon the white wilderness of the desolate floes. Beside Beth stood Dan, whose lot it had been to tell her of the circumstances which had compelled Kioga's abandonment. The shock of that news had left her quivering and speechless.

Alone in the rich hunting-ground of his native wilds, she would have felt no fear for him. But here, alone in the darkness and cold, on this silent ghostly drift of moving ice, from which all his skill had produced but one small seal! Long since, he must have returned to the silent and deserted camp. Not all the food in the world, she knew, could lessen his bitterness on learning that those he had served until the end of his strength had gone off without even a note of farewell.

A hard dry sob rose into her throat.

"He would have wanted it this way," said Dan.

"I know," she returned. "All he did was for our benefit. And I could call him savage—and worse! What will he think when he finds us gone?"

Observing her, Dan wondered. "Does this mean so much to you?" His tenderness released the flood dammed up in her.

"Oh, Dan," she whispered brokenly. "It means—pretty nearly everything."

Then, giving way, she went into his arms and wept against his breast.

XXX

ALONE ON THE FLOES

BACK on the ice near the walrus-hole, unconscious for more than an hour, Kioga lay weighted down beneath the leathery bulk of the animal which had so nearly killed him. Pinned to the ice by one of his ivory tusks as by an enormous spike, his first movements caused the surge of pain which revived him to consciousness.

Above him, unmistakably dead, but menacing even in death, the grotesque bearded jaws were red with froth and blood, which ran down the tusks to mingle with his own upon the ice. He could see the harpoon sticking out of the animal's side, its rope trailing back out of view. He had no recollection of hearing Kendle fire; he wondered about that a little. To move was almost impossible, but by continued effort he managed to free one leg from under the animal's body. Resting, he next attempted to raise the brutish head which, supported erect upon its tusks, fairly nailed him to the floe.

One arm, however, was numb and useless for the moment, and the power of the other sapped. Finally, with the aid of his free foot, he succeeded in forcing the head up a few inches. Then, with a mighty contraction of calf and thigh, he raised it high enough to pull the tusk off his arm, which it had gashed badly. Thereafter it was only a matter of time until he had worked himself out from under.

Weak from starvation himself, his first thought was of meat for the others. Looking upon that huge carcass, he realized with intense satisfaction that Beth and his white friends could live for weeks upon this meat. Cutting off several flat large slices, he set out for camp, already anticipating the shouts of welcome with which the meat would be received.

He came soon upon Kendle's trail. At any moment he expected to meet him, and others, returning to lift the wal-

rus from himself, which doubtless Kendle had found it impossible to do alone. But he approached the camp, seeing no one, and in a moment more, in full view of the shelter, gazed in amazement.

Of all those who had rested there on his departure, not a soul remained. The camp was empty, silent. Careful examination assured him there was no trail in either direction along the ice. But on the camp-site there were several boxes —the cache left by Captain Scott; and from these he finally deduced the truth.

Judging from the name stenciled on the boxes, the *Bearcat* had come up. The party had been taken aboard, and the ship had sailed. Barring an inconceivable callousness on the part of all white men, that could only mean one thing: On account of his long absence they had believed him dead. But not being sure, they had left this cache. . . . No, they had not been sure of his death, but had left him behind none the less!

That Beth had consented to his abandonment, he could hardly believe at first, though in time this conviction was to gain strength. He could not know that her slumber had been the stupor preceding complete unconsciousness. In vain he searched among the things left behind for some note from her, or some last word of final explanation—which none of the others had thought to leave, in the excitement of rescue.

Little by little conviction forced itself upon Kioga: Beth had intervened, calling him a savage when he would have taken the life of Allan Kendle. But when Kendle deserted him upon the ice, her voice had not been raised in protest. To his question, which of the two meant more to her, there could be only one answer.

Believing this, he experienced a bitterness he had never known before, and stood for a time lost in thought. But finally, with the fatalism of his adopted race, he turned to the meat he had brought into camp. Cutting himself a generous slice, he ate slowly and deliberately. Having partially satisfied his hunger, he returned to the walrus.

With his sharp knife he laid the animal open lengthwise, being careful to preserve the hide intact. Removing several more thick steaks, he placed these upon the hide and with

his rope attached thereto dragged meat and skin to the abandoned camp. Here he built a fire, using some of the wood from the cache boxes left by the whaler. Partaking again of the fresh meat, he threw himself to rest beneath the shelter which Beth had so lately abandoned, leaving the skin near the heat to prevent its freezing. In a moment he was sleeping soundly.

Rousing several hours later in full command of his powers, again he set to work reducing the sledge to a pile of wood, and applied all his knowledge and skill to the task of creating a canoe from the materials at hand. One of the longitudinal pieces of the sledge made a fair keel, to which he added ribs, trimmed to shape out of the remaining wood. The ribs he lashed to the keel with strips of the walrus hide which in drying would shrink to form a tight joint. When, after many hours the framework was completed, he spread out the walrus hide from which he scraped all the flesh. Upon this he placed the framework, stretching the skin tightly up and over the gunwales, lashing it there securely. The greater part of the labor was done. The fashioning of a pair of paddles was simple by comparison.

Now he lowered the craft into the water beside the floe, satisfying himself that it was seaworthy and sufficiently well-balanced. An hour spent in experimental packing assured him that he could now leave the floe at will and place confidence in his new-made skin boat.

He made one more trip to the bare carcass of the walrus and returned with a last back-load of frozen meat, which he had had to chop away with the ax.

Into the boat he loaded a quantity of the supply left by the *Bearcat,* all the frozen meat the stem could safely hold, and some of the walrus-fat by means of which to keep his rude lamp alight, so as to melt ice into water. The rifle he laid against a thwart, the harpoon and its rope-coil at his right hand. As a last precaution he decked his craft with the canvas which had originally covered the *Alberta's* lifeboat; and took along two strips of wood to serve as runners if he had to drag his canoe across the ice.

Then he pushed away from the floe and felt the welcome swell of the sea. For a time it had been in Kioga's mind to

return to Nato'wa. Yet the circumstances of his abandonment were a challenge. Fiercely, he longed to confront Kendle with his perfidy. And nothing could quench his desire to see the white man's country of which Mokuyi and Beth had told him so much. . . . The dipping paddle urged him through the open lanes and into the darkness toward the south, leaving a shimmering wake on the moonlit waters behind him.

Thus for some days he traveled, eating when hungry, sleeping on the ice when weariness overcame him, beneath the shelter of the inverted skin canoe. And every few hours he ascended some high hummock for a look around, seeking a glimpse of land.

But all unknowingly, each time he lighted his oil lamp he exposed himself to one of the greatest threats which awaits man or beast on the northern ice-pack. Moist black twitching nostrils as keen as his own winnowed the air miles away. Atop an ice-ridge an immense yellow-white form stiffened and stood a moment rigid as a sculpture cut in snow. Then, agile as a cat for all its hugeness, it leaped from its watching-place and slouched across the broken ice with unbelievable speed, nose in air.

It was a white bear, a haunter of the winter night, a born stalker and devourer of flesh, thrice the size of a Bengal tiger, hated and feared by primitive men from Mackenzie Bay to the New Siberian Islands, and known by the name Broken Foot.

Surly by nature, contact with man had multiplied its natural ugliness of disposition. The constant irritation of a bone Eskimo lance-head, encysted in the flesh of one shoulder, gave each step a gnawing pain and kept alive its hatred for the whole tribe of men. Then one day it had trapped and killed a dozen prime sledge-dogs in a crevasse, smashing in the heads of their three Eskimo owners, returning later to eat of their flesh.

In that hour it learned its strength. Spurred on by the unending twinge in its shoulder, it had turned to cache-robbing and the vengeful killing of men and dogs, satisfying its rankling grudge against mankind wherever opportu-

nity arose. . . . This was the beast that moved up-wind along the scent which had advertised the walrus-oil lamp.

Perhaps an hour later, out of a crevasse behind a new-made camp, the bear's close-set eyes fell upon a familiar sight—a kayak, the possession of hated man. Forth came the bear, low-held head swinging from side to side upon the long neck. Boldly into the camp strolled the white baron of the northern wastes. Upon the overturned canoe it laid one heavy paw, and with a stroke clawed the bottom open as a knife slashes a melon. It tried its long yellow fangs upon the woodwork, grinding out a rib as if it were wax. The stock of the rifle was next crunched to splinters between those powerful teeth. Then, having snapped up and devoured all the provisions and meat, the bear began ripping and tearing the other objects. One of these, the buffalo-skin containing Kioga's possessions, was about to receive special attention, when of a sudden the huge beast quivered and froze rigid, with head high.

Returning by way of the backbone of a ridge, from which he had again surveyed the ice, Kioga rounded a peak and looked down upon the bear wreaking wanton destruction upon his camp. Fortunately for the Snow Hawk, the old habit of spear-carrying had not deserted him, and he had the harpoon over his shoulder. And though he was too wise in the ways of wild animals to have taken the offensive against this monstrous beast ordinarily, these circumstances were not ordinary. At one glance he grasped the full significance of this raid upon his camp. Not only was his escape by water destroyed, but his meat was eaten to the last ounce.

In an instant the bear had become not an enemy from whom to escape, but the prey whose flesh he must have, if he were to survive. His decision made, Kioga drew back the harpoon, cast out a length of rope and made ready for the throw.

In turning to sample the air whose taint had given it pause, the bear exposed for one instant the curve of its elongated neck. On the wrong side for a heart thrust, the Snow Hawk took quick aim at that other center of vitality, whose function and vulnerability he knew so well—the spine.

With lightning quickness he hurled the weapon forward

and down, transfixing the bear through the neck. But the cast was a little low. The instant paralysis and quick death which accompany a severed spinal cord did not follow. Through the shaft stuck out at both sides of the animal's head, it must have pierced only the heavy neck muscles.

Instead of collapsing, the bear wheeled, wrestled the spear a second, then caught sight of Kioga. Experience had taught it only contempt for the puny physical armament of mankind. With a mighty bound the great white form catapulted itself up toward that man-figure poising just above.

To the killer's surprise, this man evaded its great paw, dropped past like a stone and alighted by the wrecked canoe. In falling, Kioga was a human counterweight upon the harpoon rope, which he had drawn round a shoulder of ice. The bear received another tear of pain from the harpoon and turned to pounce down upon the fur-clad man, who was taking hitches of the rope about a block of ice.

As the bear began its leap, Kioga laid hold of the ax beside his canoe and stood ready where the beast must land.

And then to the ice-bear came a second surprise. In mid-leap it was suddenly jerked off balance by the rope attached to the harpoon through its neck. Half-suspended like a great gaffed fish, it hung an instant with hind feet on the ice, its forepaws striking furiously at the rope.

Knowing that in another moment its enraged struggles would snap the rope or drag out the barb, Hawk aimed a blow which, had it struck the skull, must have brained the beast. Instead, as the bear swung round, the ax-head fell an inch short, laying open the neck.

The rope suddenly parted with a snap. The helve was torn from Kioga's grasp as the bear crashed to its side on the ice. The knife upon which Kioga now depended sank thrice, its full length, in that reddening side. As the bear twisted in a frenzied convulsion there was a brittle snap. Armed with only the hilt, Kioga slipped on the ice and dropped within range of the deadly quarter-stroke of the bear's single useful forepaw. He was instantly clutched toward the black-lipped cavern of the gaping jaws.

Straight into that yellow-fanged maw, Kioga hurled the

haft of his broken knife. It was his last desperate resource, a feeble attempt to stave off the imminent clench of those lacerating fangs which sought to meet in his brain. For a moment it was successful, enabling him to straighten his arms against the haft of the piercing harpoon, before the beast coughed out or swallowed the knife-handle—he never knew which.

Then, with every mighty ligament and sinew locking his arms straight, he braced himself against the bear's efforts to draw him into its bite. He felt the fur garment and some of his own hide torn from his back, down which a warm flow instantly began. Then the bear was convulsed again, touched in some vital part by one of the pieces of imbedded steel. If he could hold out a little longer, it would be over. But his joints felt afire, his tendons seemed tearing away from their bony seats. The sweat was starting from his brow and clenched jaw as he resisted the immense power of that massive foreleg round him curved and strained away from the jaws clanking repeatedly shut, an inch from his face.

XXXI

AFTER TWENTY YEARS

A FEW miles back, Munro and his two Eskimos, discouraged in their search for the abandoned man, had come upon the fresh sign of bear, with its promise of a good supply of meat. Setting their leashed but eager dogs upon the hot scent, Munro and his men followed swiftly. A scant half-hour passed thus, before the barking animals were loosed. Five minutes later Lualuk checked suddenly, and with Kamotok examined a bear's track, clear and perfect in a patch of snow.

It was none other than the hated Broken Foot. Though armed with lances, and with Munro's rifle to fall back upon, neither man would stir another inch.

Then came a redoubled yammer of their dogs somewhere ahead. Waiting no longer, Munro hastened forward alone. Courage inspires courage. A moment later Kamotok and Lualuk followed.

Just as it seemed to Kioga that his arms must be forced from their sockets, the bear sank to its side, drawing him down, the while it shuddered, coughing. Suddenly above its ceaseless growling, he heard a snarling bedlam, as of wolves slashing and snapping around him, and he rose up to defend himself against this newest menace.

Thus Munro and his Eskimos came upon him, a wild and fearsome figure, rising like a figment of the imagination from the icy waste of the wind-blown pack. Straddling the immense mountain of bearskin which he had just laid low, erect in the barking circle of the frenzied dogs, he stood. Naked to the waist, bleeding from a dozen slashes on back and sides, enveloped in the vapor of his own breath, he looked as fierce an animal as those which ringed him round.

Dumbfounded, the newcomers gazed from the man to his kill underfoot.

Now, at sight of the Indian's face, Munro stared in surprise. He had hoped to meet Dr. Lincoln Rand, the friend of his youth; and in the moonlight Kioga's resemblance to the elder Rand was indeed startling. But as he approached the other with extended hand, his gladness became uncertainty. Despite an astonishing resemblance, this swart giant was not the Lincoln Rand of earlier years; yet Munro could scarce tear his eyes from the striking lean face, so like in general aspect but differing in details from the one he had expected to see.

While Kamotok whipped off his dogs, Kioga remained impassive before the other's searching scrutiny, his own eyes missing nothing of Munro's wonderment and evident confusion. But he gripped the scientist's brown hand none the less.

Munro was explaining:

"I mistook you for a man named Lincoln Rand. We heard he was lost somewhere on the ice near here."

"My name is Lincoln Rand," answered Kioga.

Munro was nonplused. But finally, he spoke briefly of his long search for the owner of the missing *Cherokee*.

And comprehension had flashed into Kioga's mind and eyes at the mention of the *Cherokee* and his parents' names.

"Long ago two men and a woman were wrecked on a

northern coast in a vessel called the *Cherokee,*" he said slowly. "One man was my father, the other an Indian. The woman was my mother. My father's name—Lincoln Rand—is also my name."

Munro's face lighted with excitement.

"And your people? Mokuyi? Helena?" Kioga caught the note of anxiety and suppressed dread. "They are safe and well?"

As he looked into the eyes of James Munro, Kioga knew that it would be hard to give him the truth, but quickly perceived how best he could do it. Indicating his few possessions, he replied: "I have a record kept by my father which will tell the story better than I could tell it."

"Good!" cried Munro. "Let's get back to my ship, where we can talk."

While Kamotok and his cousin Lualuk went back with their dogs to fetch the sledge, Munro bound up Kioga's wounds. When the Eskimos returned, the bear was skinned, its paws cut off and some of its meat loaded upon the sledge. The party then returned to the *Narwhal.*

In the privacy of Munro's own cabin Hawk produced the log-book of the *Cherokee,* and sat silent and immobile while his companion opened it. Several times he saw the older man start as he perused the battered record, only to become completely dominated again by its amazing revelations. Soon Munro came to that part of the book where the handwriting of the elder Rand ceased and that of Mokuyi began, telling of the Indian raid.

He looked up once, questioning Kioga by a glance. With infinite regret Hawk affirmed the truth of those old tragedies.

But not even grief could blind Munro to the immense scientific importance of the document which was the log-book. And when he had completed reading the little volume, he laid it aside with a care amounting almost to reverence.

"What's written here," he said thoughtfully to Kioga, "may clear up one of the greatest puzzles of science—the riddle of the American Indian. And in this little box we may find the undeveloped negatives mentioned in the log."

To his intense satisfaction, the photographs responded to

the developing process to which he later subjected them in the dark-room on his ship. Kioga the Snow Hawk then looked for the first time—with a strange mixture of emotions—upon the likenesses of the white parents he had never known. Here were they who had set down the record of the *Cherokee*'s cruise. Here, as he had never known him, was Mokuyi, garbed as a white man. And here were scenes at which his heart expanded; scenes of Hopeka village and of the wild landscape roundabout which sent a pang of homesickness deep into his heart; pictures of wild-life, and persons long forgotten. And also the picture of a little white child, in the arms of Helena Rand—the photograph of himself as a baby.

Thus was crowned with pictorial evidence Munro's interpretation of this strange tale, as taken from log-book and picture-skin. Further corroboration was found in the birth-certificate, executed by the hand of Lincoln Rand, years ago.

Some hours later Munro returned with his men, among whom was Barry Edwards, his Canadian associate, for another sledge-load of bear-meat. Having cut away enough for their needs, in accordance with their habitual custom, the two scientists proceeded to open and examine the bear's stomach, so as to note its contents, for zoological record.

In addition to the meat recently devoured, it yielded a curious assortment of objects, as the bellies of these great robber-bears often do—pieces of dog-collar, a short length of Eskimo whip-handle, a handful of stones—all of which were noted and laid aside. Then, with an exclamation of surprise, Munro saw something else. It was a strip of cloth, apparently stiffened by some kind of filler. He soon uncovered a small pocket pen-knife, the initials on which had been dented out by the bear's teeth. Finally he found fragments of a leather pocket notebook. Upon the notebook fragment, in stamped gold letters, was the last syllable of what may have been a name. He could just detect the letters *"-sen."*

With conjectures tumbling over one another in his mind, he found Edwards staring at these objects with something like horror. As their gaze met, between question and assertion, Edwards spoke one word: *"Amundsen?"*

Amundsen! The very name brought back those terrible

hours not long before, when the entire world had waited to learn the fate of the famous explorer.

And yet—it was into the European Arctic that Amundsen had disappeared. The bear which had devoured these dim traces of tragedy had been slain near Alaska, far to the west. Granting that one of these polar-bears might range for a thousand miles over the Arctic ice drifting in its eternal great circle, still it seemed unlikely that this explained Amundsen's disappearance.

Belatedly Munro answered his subordinate: "Amundsen? Maybe—poor fellow! But dozens of Scandinavian names end in the syllable *'sen.'* Let's go on hoping that one day Amundsen'll be found, as Greely was, still alive."

That night the *Narwhal* began its homeward journey, fighting its way through the ice-pack. When no openings appeared, Munro resorted to dynamite, by means of which great fissures were started, through which his vessel was able to force her way until a wide channel of open water was found at the Alaskan coast. With favorable easterly winds prevailing, Munro crowded on sail and power. At Kotzebue Sound, farewell was taken of the Eskimos. Thereafter the approach to the *Narwhal's* home port of San Francisco was swift.

On this return voyage Munro recreated from information supplied by Kioga a picture of Nato'wa, a new land peopled by red men such as the earliest *voyageurs* found. Munro had decided to seek financial support for an expedition to this newest frontier. But of this he made no mention to Kioga at the time. Nor had he disclosed to anyone the contents of the log-book and picture-skin. He was aware of the value of his newfound documents and eager to add them to the sum of scientific knowledge. But with true scientific zeal for accuracy, he wished first to see Nato'wa with his own eyes.

And Snow Hawk, in turn, tapped Munro's vast reserves of knowledge concerning everything civilized. By the time they had reached California a strong attachment had sprung up between the two men, strengthened by their common memory of Mokuyi, and Munro's own enduring love for the friends of his youth.

And then, one bright brisk morning, they came into the port of San Francisco—by water, as Kioga's parents had left it—the only citizen of Nato'wa known to have set foot on American soil in modern times. The Snow Hawk's newest adventure was begun.

XXXII

THE LAND OF HIS FATHERS

EAGER to assist Kioga in every possible way, Munro insisted that Kioga remain his guest until he could be suitably equipped with the everyday necessities of civilized life. To this the Snow Hawk assented gratefully, asserting his desire to spend a few weeks visiting all the civilized countries, and learning all there was to be learned.

Munro laughed. "I can teach you a lot. But no man can learn all there is to know. As for travel—what will you use for money?"

Kioga looked up, puzzled, at that. The scientist smiled. "But don't let that trouble you. This little volume of yours is probably worth a fortune."

In reply to Kioga's questions, Munro then explained the need for and the uses of money. A great light began to dawn in the Indian's mind. The mystery of those sailors, paying with their lives in an attempt to salvage his abandoned gold, was clearing. He began to realize, too, why the skeleton aboard that old hulk had sacrificed all for the yellow metal. For among civilized men, money was almost equal to blood; without it men could not live. How, then, would he manage, if Munro's prediction as to the worth of his log-book did not prove true?

Munro had prepared to advance funds to defray his young friend's current expenses, when he learned of Kioga's emperor's ransom in precious stones. Great was the young man's own astonishment to find that his glittering pebbles could be turned into cash.

"What their value may be, I cannot say," declared the scientist, "but we can soon find out."

True to his word, he found little trouble in exchanging a small fraction of Kioga's treasure for a sum ample to take care of him for a year or more.

"You are rich," Munro explained. "Nothing is impossible to a man with money. What do you want to do first?"

"You've said that your American Indians are related to my people, the wild tribes of Nato'wa. Let us visit them, first of all."

Munro agreed. And Kioga saw here, in the Land of the Free, the privileged charges of a generous government, the remnant of a red-skinned race living with all the wild, contented liberty of animals caged. Old men, who should have been respected councilors, squatted indolent before their dilapidated canvas lodges, sad scarecrows in the habiliments of white men, objects of curiosity to tourists who came to stare uncomprehendingly.

What a contrast to the Wa-Kanek horsemen of Nato'wa, whipping their sweating mounts into the black buffalo-herds, while their horses' manes stung their tattooed cheeks and the painted, tasseled exploit-feathers spun against their brown bare shoulders!

Both men came away filled with pity. But Kioga was to learn still more of civilization and its defenders. Strange sights met the eyes of the young barbarian in the land of his ancestors. On the one hand he saw those long human queues of hungry men—the breadlines—and on the other, a hundred steps away, sumptuous hotels into which plump and solid men strode heavily from shining motors, to seat themselves at tables laden with the richest of fare. Even among the cruelest Indian tribes, chieftains and great men impoverished themselves to give to others. If there were no food, all starved together.

But Kioga was becoming adjusted. Guided by the scholar with whom he traveled, he was soon at ease in his new surroundings. He had, besides, the native dignity inevitable in one accustomed to presiding over Indian councils.

Pleased by these signs of conformity, Munro made great plans for Kioga—a career in business or law or engineering. And exulting over the changes he had apparently wrought in his protégé, when personal business relating to his Amer-

indian collections required his presence on the West Coast, Munro felt he could at last throw the Indian upon his own resources. Accordingly the scientist wrote a letter conveying appropriate orders to his domestic staff, by means of which Kioga was to identify himself on arrival in Manhattan. And it needed but Munro's suggestion, added to his own impatience to visit the place near which Beth dwelt, which sent Kioga, as by the magnet drawn, to New York. . . .

He went to sleep in a drawing-room quiet but for the rapid click of rail-joints beneath the wheels of his train. He awoke in a railroad terminal hidden in the depths of the earth. Above him, spread out like a huge sprawling lioness, roaring Gotham crouched on guard over her strange litter of peoples.

One of these, with red cap and ebony skin, took command of Kioga's bags and led him along a subterranean labyrinth of tunnels, through revolving doors and into a richly carpeted hotel. Here, by the magic of an entry in a register, Kioga acquired title to a square cave in a great building of steel and stone, crowded with hundreds of cliff-dwellers like himself.

That night, Kioga, the erstwhile savage, roamed this pulsing jungle of man's creation, exploring with as much interest as had his father explored the mysteries of unknown Nato'-wa, and marveling at the wonders of the commonplace.

He got lost in the subway system. He rode elevators and escalators until told to move on, by men in blue coats and polished shields. He wore callouses on his fingers inserting endless coins into endless machines, and came home laden with things he would never use. But how fascinating were these turning wheels everywhere—wheels which symbolized the difference between this life and the culture of his own tribes.

And there was one other thing which seemed very strange: The men of civilization did not paint themselves, but the women everywhere applied the color, with occasional results that would have made a Shoni brave, painted for his first war-party, turn green with envy.

One night Kioga attended a theater and was supping in a night-club afterward, thoughtful of the changes the months

had made in his life. Round about him there was the hum of conversation, light laughter, the strains of soft music, the clink of glasses, all that pleasant combination of sounds which denotes people at ease, enjoying themselves.

Suddenly he noted a hush, like that preceding the coming of a tigress through the silenced forest, and he witnessed a strange phenomenon: All present were reaching upward with both hands. Taking his cue from the others, Kioga did likewise, with an amused and tolerant grin. No doubt this was some new absurdity of civilized conduct.

But the smile faded when across a few tables he saw a woman faint, while her escort, white-faced, made no move to revive her. Everyone seemed frozen as with fear. Glancing over one shoulder, Kioga saw a masked figure standing at the doorway several yards distant, covering the patrons with a pistol. Two other men, with guns drawn, stepped inside.

Undoubtedly Kioga was the particular target of the hold-up, since one of the bandits quickly singled him out and began rifling his pockets. Rooted in amazement, the Indian had been slow to comprehend something which his limited experience had not hitherto encompassed.

As it happened, Kioga's pockets contained but a few bills. Angered and disappointed, the bandit cursed and raised his gun to strike the white Indian. But that single hostile gesture signaled the truth to Kioga. Even as in his native wilds, there were those in the jungle of civilization who lived by fang and claw! It had not taken the hunters long to assemble, once they had winded rich game.

Ah, but here was no tame and submissive prey, awaiting an outlaw attack in fear and trembling! Lincoln Rand, thus far, had submitted to the training-collar of civilization; but now the collar slipped. As that gun came up, Lincoln Rand sloughed off name and white-man's teaching and became in an instant the Snow Hawk, the primitive cliff-man disturbed at his meat. He struck as he had learned to strike—fast, hard, suddenly.

Under the driving impact of an iron fist, his assailant reeled back a dozen feet and collapsed. The second thief was about to shoot when a grip like a steel manacle fell upon his gun

wrist. A sudden wrench, jerk and the man writhed on the floor, screaming with the agony of a dislocated shoulder.

Possible resistance on the part of these soft dinner-club patrons had been far from the calculations of the bandits. For a brief instant their leader at the door was taken by surprise, before wheeling to fire at the Indian. In a bound Kioga was upon him, his hand at the bandit's throat as the hot red blast of a firearm scorched his neck.

To spare one who would have fired at random into a roomful of innocent people never entered his mind. He attacked with the fierce retaliation of a wounded leopard, pausing not to measure his blows nor the expenditure of power. He felt the bandit go limp in his grip and flung him aside. A heavy hand fell upon his arm, and he spun round to face a fourth man.

In the whirl of excitement he saw but another bandit to be dealt with summarily, and struck twice, felling him like a sledge-smitten steer, and bending above him, ready for anything. As he stood thus, the metallic clink of steel sounded, closing cold about his right wrist. He found himself shackled to one of three blue-coated policemen.

From the springs of wildness just below his surface there rose not fear, but the unreasoning reaction of the wild paleolithic animal whose sole obsession it is to evade the trap.

With a surge, he sought to drag his hand from out the steel link. But before he had done more than tear the skin at his wrist, the full weight of a nightstick descended, beating him half-stunned to his knees.

He recalled succeeding events as through a thick haze; the herding of frightened patrons from the scene, the postmortem held over the dead bandit, the revival of the injured officer, and something else—the dull concussion of exploding flashlight powder, as some enterprising press photographer wheedled his way in and departed with the coveted picture.

With the acrid smell of burned powder stinging his nostrils, Kioga's mind gradually cleared to a realization of what had transpired. Gravely in need of Munro's counsel, fearful of what Beth must think should garbled reports of this

reach her, he gave his name, but then turned a deaf ear to the questions of his captors.

Speechless and utterly stoic, he was led, still manacled, from the scene of his clash with civilized men of the law, and driven to the nearest police station. After a futile attempt to learn other particulars of his identity, the Snow Hawk, free rover of the Nato'wan forests, was locked in a solitary cell, and left to meditate upon another phase of civilized life.

Several days passed thus, his meals pushed to him through the bars. Hardly an hour that he did not receive a visit from one or another person, seeking to break down that barrier of secrecy which he had thrown up between himself and the world outside the bars. Otherwise a model prisoner, inwardly, his thoughts were in a bitter turmoil:

Tonight on the rivers of Nato'wa the soaring hymns of the Spring Festivals would be rising and swelling in the mist-drenched air, while even the greatest beasts paused in their hunting to harken. On the foaming streams, in light barks, the shadows of red men would be hunting in silent phalanxes toward the southern villages, to participate in the Sun-worship Ceremony. . . . How he hungered to feel the springy bow jar against his own palm, to see the dark streak of the speeding arrow, to hear it *fluck* into the bounding buck; to listen again to the lash of the elements beyond the door of his cave; to hear the bark of sea-lion herds, pouring in upon the serrated southern shore through the foaming breakers, while the sea-spray stung his lips and beaded on his hair. To dash taunting at the apex of the fanning pack, leap from out the very clutches of Guna at the edge of the salt-lick of Go-Manu—ah, that was the life with which the Great Ones had endowed him!

He would get out of his present plight—of that he had no doubt. But was not all of civilization a prison? Was he, who had slept in grottoes and caves on the wind-torn heights of lofty cliffs, forever to dwell within the confines of four walls, to wake in the night stifled and panting for air? Was he who had hunted with the beasts upon the winding forest paths to eat forever of meat killed by others, and never to pursue his own prey again? Was he who had sprawled

at will on any grassy sward, to meet daily with signs proclaiming No Trespassing, Keep Off, Private Property, in a land where by virtue of purchase alone men thought they owned the earth?

He would get free, he assured himself again. But in the night, laying hold of the doors to his cell, he tried his mighty strength upon the bars and found even that of no avail.

XXXIII

"THE WINDS BLOW ME"

From the hour when Dan had told Beth of Kioga's abandonment, she had waited all the long months in expectation that word of the Indian would come. With difficulty Captain Scott of the *Bearcat* had persuaded Dan and Beth of the folly of attempting rescue in defiance of the winter season.

"Come next summer," concluded the old sailor, "we can have a try. But not this season. If your man is saved, 'twill be by the Eskimo. Among them word travels, and we can learn of it next summer, not sooner—unless by a miracle."

Kendle's agreement added weight to Scott's opinion. . . .

When the *Bearcat* discharged them at a civilized port in Alaska, except for signs of exposure and hardship, the rescued passengers were outwardly sound and whole again. While Kendle, Beth and the others took a steamer for the States, Dan remained in Alaska. Scott's advice to the contrary, he organized an expedition to make a search for the missing Indian, but before final preparations were made, the North was gripped in the rigor of winter; the attempt was reluctantly abandoned, and Dan wrote Beth to that effect . . . .

Kendle, meanwhile, had set himself to win Beth anew, proving by a thousand little acts of kindness that she had misjudged him. The frightful experiences on the ice had placed an undue strain on him, as leader of the party responsible for their survival. If he had cracked under that tension, it was no more than anyone else would have done unless, like Kioga, he were made of iron.

How great that strain had been, was not at once apparent. It might never have been known, but for events which followed soon after their arrival in America. The Kendle fortune was one of the first to crash at the beginning of the world depression. With it, his health, hitherto superb but undermined by exposure and injuries sustained on that fatal voyage of the *Alberta,* began to fail. At first he thought little of it, but the day came when he collapsed in his office and was taken to a hospital. There Beth had been his daily visitor.

And there it was, one evening, after his illness had seemed to take a turn for the better, that Kendle was reading one of the newspapers which his nurse had brought to him. Of a sudden he stiffened, staring at the picture of a man whom —surely—he had seen go to his death on the northern ice-floes.

Skimming the bold-face headlines, his eyes leaped to the news item pertaining to the photograph. It read:

> Last night at the exclusive Alessandra Club, one gangster was killed and two others injured. A fourth, Patrolman Patrick Smith, was also manhandled and critically hurt by a man who calls himself Lincoln Rand. Rand was beaten into submission and locked up on a technical charge of homicide.
>
> Considerable mystery surrounds the prisoner, who though well dressed and with no lack of money, refused to divulge further particulars concerning himself. It is believed that he is a member of a rival Chicago gang, using an assumed name, and was defending himself against an underworld feud over an unnamed woman.
>
> All efforts at further identification having failed before the stubborn silence of the prisoner, he will be held awaiting a hearing next week. . . .

Kendle's every instinct sought to deny the identity of the man in the photograph, but sudden dread racked him.

Relieved by time and fancied immunity of the last whisperings of conscience, he had almost forgotten that hour

when he had withheld the bullet which might have saved Kioga's life. But now—again a prey of the conscience so long set at rest, he passed through that particular hell reserved for those capable of knowing shame. Profound relief came, out of the knowledge that he was not, after all, responsible for a fellow-man's death. But if Beth should read this, if she should meet Kioga!

Hitherto Kendle had not pressed the advantage he had won by his fine consideration during the hours when she had been mourning the Indian. But that afternoon, anxious to secure her promise at once, his hand fell upon hers.

"Beth—if I recover from this—will you marry me?"

Yearning had often carried Beth back to those happy hours when a godlike figure had carried in the antlered buck on sun-browned naked shoulders. But the passage of time had gradually extinguished the flame she had tended with fierce devotion. Compassion for Kendle, the realization that his illness rose partly out of sacrifices made for her, and the strong attachment which had existed between them since childhood—all these things had combined to soften her toward him. Yet with consent trembling on her lips, she hesitated. Then, noting Kendle's unusual pallor, aware that her promise might be the stimulant to his recovery, she answered: "I'll not leave you, Allan."

Hearing that, he leaned back, apparently to regain some of the ground he had lost in the last few hours. But on Beth's departure, his fears returned. What would Beth think if she learned that he had left a man to die, and falsely represented Kioga as unaccounted for, to Captain Scott? Kendle lay long awake, spent with worry and apprehension. . . .

On the train from San Francisco, on Dan's return from Alaska, he also sat up with a start on reading the news-item which had prostrated Kendle. Though encouraged to believe so by resemblance and name, Dan was not absolutely certain that the photograph was indeed that of their Indian benefactor. After all, men often do look alike, and the name Rand was not uncommon. Beth, waiting at the station, greeted him affectionately.

"Any word of Kioga?" she asked.

Loath to raise her hopes unjustifiably, Dan did not tell her of what he had read. But as soon as possible he left her and going alone to the police station, identified himself and asked to speak with the prisoner.

He was conducted to a cell wherein a tall figure lay at ease on a cot. Addressing the occupant, the attendant received no reply. Then Dan spoke.

"Kioga! Is that you?"

At the sound of his voice the tall figure was up in a quick bound. And after one glimpse of those green-blue eyes, Dan knew he had found his man.

"Dan!" came Kioga's instant response, as the hands of the two friends met and gripped strongly between the bars. "How did you know I was—here?"

La Salle passed in the clipping, which Kioga read in amazement, to find himself termed a gangster, a murderer and a philanderer in a breath. It was his first experience with the genus *news-hawk*.

"Why didn't you let us know you were safe? Why didn't you tell us you were in trouble?" Dan rushed on, without waiting for an answer. "It's an outrage! I'll have you out in no time."

"You'll have trouble, Dan," answered Kioga. "I've killed a man."

"Not a man, my friend—an underworld rat. It was justifiable self-defense, and they won't hold you for that. But the copper you hurt—I'll have to make peace with him. I think it can be done with a check-book. The other charges—I'll have them quashed. But before I go—tell me what happened up there on the ice."

Kioga told him. And in return he learned the reasons which had dictated his abandonment. Exulting in knowledge that Beth had not consented to leaving him on the floes, Kioga scarce heard Dan's account of Kendle's illness and reverses.

A little while later Dan left, to return soon with the good news that he had arranged for Kioga's liberation. And after another hour the Snow Hawk was a free man again.

Dan had taken it for granted that Kioga would immediately go with him to see Beth, and the Snow Hawk's hesitation took him aback.

Kioga had not had much time in which to weigh what Dan had told him of Beth and Kendle. He sought some plausible excuse by which to create a delay, until he could think the matter over. He took refuge in his obligations to Munro and ended by pleading pressure of affairs.

"But you'll come—as soon as you've finished that?" Dan insisted.

"As soon as I possibly can," Kioga assured him.

"Good! Meantime I'll break the good news to Beth."

So for the time they parted, Kioga proceeding toward Munro's house, intending to say nothing to anyone of his imprisonment, Dan going to Beth with tidings of Kioga's safety.

"Take a good grip on yourself," he advised her. "It's wonderful news I'm bringing you." She looked up, smiling, instantly to sober at his expression.

"Kioga's alive, Beth."

White to the lips she went, at that, paler than she had been amid all the perils on the Arctic ice. "Dan—you wouldn't say that unless—" There was entreaty in her voice.

"I left him an hour ago," he told her.

Her hand flew to her throat. "You talked to him!"

"Yes." He knew that her world was suddenly reeling; yet only a quiver betrayed the tumult his words must have roused. Her next words betrayed her.

"Oh, Dan," she whispered. "I'm so happy!" But she burst into tears.

Alone, however, Beth's first reaction of intense happiness was already tempered by actualities. Though all her friends and relatives had voiced their horror at reports that she had fallen in love with a savage, she hadn't taken them seriously. But now, faced by that newspaper report, she wondered. She knew, of course, that he was no gangster, but were not the dire predictions of kin and intimates confirmed by the newspaper account of his unquenchable violence? Recollection of that time on the floes, when he had so nearly taken Kendle's life, came to her again.

Moreover, if she threw Kendle aside, it would be said that her love had been that of a fair-weather friend, that she was deserting him because his fortune was gone. For the

opinions of others she cared little; but Kendle—friend of many years' standing—Kendle himself would believe it. She could not bring herself to pile this misfortune atop the other trials he had endured.

At last she reached a decision: she would go to Kioga, thank him for all he had done in their behalf. She would explain away any hurt still remaining as a result of his abandonment. More than that she could not do as yet—nor less, in common decency.

But her intention was interrupted by telephoned word that Kendle's condition had become much worse. Scrawling a quick note to Kioga, she explained her delay but promised to get in touch with him next day. Posting the letter, she hurried to the hospital.

Kendle was in delirium, the nurse told her—possessed by terrors the nature of which no one could surmise. His physician, who was in attendance, and who knew something of their Arctic experiences, thought Beth might be able to explain his nightmare or perhaps by her presence help to quiet him.

Kendle did not recognize her. He seemed re-living those fearful experiences in the Indian village, and recounting them accurately according to her memory of his earlier accounts. He spoke of events on the ice, after the sinking of the *Alberta*. Nervously Beth followed his words, no longer in a sick-room, but carried by his words back upon the drifting floes. . . .

The immense Arctic stars hung low overhead. . . . Out somewhere in the darkness, Kioga had been absent many hours in his search for meat. . . . Rifle in hand, Kendle was leaving the camp. . . . All this was clear and lucid enough in her aroused memory.

But now the image was less distinct, for it was Kendle's own experience, in which she had not shared, of which he now talked.

It seemed to Beth that near a patch of broken ice she saw Kioga, some mighty menacing shape bearing down upon him. Kendle's rifle rose, wavered, fell without being discharged. In a voice that reflected some of the agony of those terrible moments on the ice Kendle raved softly: *"God . . .*

why don't I fire? No—let it finish him. Who'll know I was here? . . . All that meat, enough for weeks—meat—meat." A moment later Kioga was down—beneath that monstrous dark thing, unidentified to her mind.

Stiffening with horror, Beth drew suddenly away from Kendle, scarcely able to believe what he was saying. And yet—dark, gloomy lines from "Macbeth" came suddenly to mind:

Foul whisperings are abroad; unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles; infected minds
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.

And now Kendle was uttering words which put the final stamp of proof upon all he had revealed. *"What will I tell Beth? Nothing. . . . Who's ever to know I let him die? Nobody. . . . Who cares if he's dead? . . . Nobody. Great hunter—warrior—all that rot! Only good Indian's a dead Indian."* Low laughter shook the sick man, subsiding as suddenly as if choked off. But that poor infected mind was not yet done discharging its troubled secrets: *"But he's not dead. He's alive—killing again. Beth mustn't know—mustn't learn."* Kendle started suddenly up, as if galvanized by apprehension. *"What if he comes here? Good God! But he can't. They've got him in a cage. . . . But what if he gets out . . . . I had the chance—why didn't I kill him? . . . Will . . . if he comes here."*

Beth scarce heard what followed, for reason was telling her that Kendle's words had been too sharp and graphic to be the pure fabrication of a disordered brain. No imagination, however feverish, could conjure out of thin air a knowledge of Kioga's jailing. Kendle had known of that when he had asked her to marry him! He had harbored a knowledge of Kioga's plight even on the ice, but had given Captain Scott the misleading information which resulted in abandonment, when search must have resulted in Kioga's immediate salvation. And all this time, while Beth had grieved and hoped and prayed, Kendle had watched—and kept silence!

She might have forgiven the abandonment, since she had

long ago forgiven the state of mind which led up to it. But the utter baseness of this continued deception was the final blow to her affection for Allan Kendle.

Her promise to him need no longer be honored, since it had been asked and given under false pretenses. Had he been well, she would have left him at once, to go to Kioga. But he was calling her name now. Pity welled up in her. The thought of deserting him in this hour of his need was too much for her. She would wait, until he showed definite improvement, then communicate with the Snow Hawk.

But long hours were to pass before Beth left the hospital, with Kendle resting quietly, the crisis definitely past.

Dr. James Munro, returning to New York with a trunkful of fresh Indian relics, encountered a young woman on the doorstep of his house. It was Beth, weary and wan after her long siege at the hospital.

"I am looking for Dr. Munro," she explained.

"I am Dr. Munro, Miss La Salle."

"You know my name?" in surprise.

"Better than you think," he told her gently. "Kioga has told me of what happened on the floes."

He saw her breath suddenly quicken. In answer to his summons a manservant appeared. Munro gave an order.

"Wake Mr. Rand. Tell him Miss La Salle is here."

The servant looked surprised. "Why—Mr. Rand's gone out, sir. I'm sure 'e went out during the night and left a note on the hall table. 'Ere it is, sir."

Hastily Munro tore open the envelope. The note was in Kioga's bold script. It read:

My dear friend:

The winds blow me. I return whence I came, to live and die an Indian. I am convinced that Beth has decided in favor of Kendle. Perhaps that is best. I could not live as a white man—for long. And I have no right to urge her to a life away from her home and people.

A third of the gems in our safe-deposit box, I give to you. The log-book and the picture-skin, and the photographs—all are yours to do with as you see fit.

The remaining stones, please turn into funds. Put

the money at the disposal of Miss La Salle—and of Allan Kendle, if that is her wish.

The letter was unsigned; Munro handed it to Beth. Then, without loss of a moment he resorted to every means at his command by which to reach the writer—telephone, telegraph and the combined forces of radio and the police of three Governments. But in vain. Kioga had vanished as completely as he had effaced himself in the green crypts of his native forests.

Day after day the girl's persistence in pursuit amazed Munro. When he admitted defeat, it was Beth who clung to the hope that somehow, somewhere, Kioga would be recognized and detained. The scientist shook his head.

"All the border forces couldn't stop him if he wanted to pass."

Beth hardly heard him. She was thinking of a firelit cavern in the heart of a wild and savage land called Nato'wa. A woman waited for her man beside the glowing embers. Thunder rumbled in the distance, and rain fell with a hissing roar. All the elements opposed his passage, but he came, laden with the spoils of the chase, which he laid at her feet.

She was thinking, too, of Heladi, waiting in far Nato'wa, with open arms and beautiful eyes afire, for the mighty warrior scorned by a Christian maid. For Heladi, henceforth, he would wing the arrow swift away and bring in the fresh-killed deer.

Beth no longer asked herself if she could have lived the life of an Indian wife, taken up an Indian woman's burden or shared the man she loved with others, in the Indian way. She knew now that anything was preferable to this intolerable separation. She had the will and means—what with his princely bequest—to follow him to the ends of the earth. She told Munro so.

"You would go to those lengths—even into the Arctic?"

"Wherever the trail leads, Dr. Munro," she assured him quietly. The words echoed in Munro's mind. He recalled all that Kioga had told him of the Indian life, melting away on one continent, but continuing unchanged as of old on an-

other. Already, in fancy, he heard the low tattoo of the Indian ceremonial drums, speaking to the Great Mysteries; the thunder of the buffalo-hoofs across the Shedowa. The flicker of the aurora borealis in the northern sky was the reflection of Indian campfires, round about which aged chieftains sat and told tales to the pulse of the thumping tom-toms—tales that were old when Rome was young, tales of the Buffalo Stone, of the Moon and her Seven Sisters the Pleiades; while from the outer ring of darkness, cut by the orange glowing cones of the skin tepees, came the nicker of piebald ponies and the eerie howl of prairie wolves.

Now he thought he could hear the muted whisper of the P'kuni heralds, calling their sonorous messages from camp to camp, and fainter still, dim songs sung by people of whom the modern world knew nothing.

Here was the dream of a lifetime. A new land to be discovered, new history to be written. Adventure, exploration, his name added to the illustrious roster of those who sought in vain the secret of the polar North. A monument to be erected above those unmarked graves.

He was powerfully stirred by the prospect of gazing upon the glittering mosaic of Indian existence, unspoiled in its ancient liberty. He was attracted as are all true adventurers by the lure of unknown, unheard-of places. But in the end his decision turned upon the fact that a part of his own heart was buried with Helena Rand on unknown Nato'wa. It seemed fitting that he should follow her there.

"It's a long trip, full of danger," he warned Beth. "There's the risk of hunger, snow-blindness, freezing—some of which you've already experienced."

She looked up at him, smiled and answered: "There's also Kioga—and that's all in the world I care about."

The daughter of pioneers had spoken.

So ends the tale of the Log and the Skin. You will recall that Munro shipped to me the strange relics of a strange story and visited me preliminary to setting out upon this, his most daring adventure, in the distant spaces of the polar region. The picture-skin, the log-books and the photo-

graphs have found a place amid the collection of Indian relics enumerated at the beginning of this narrative.

The fate of James Munro and Beth La Salle, as yet is unknown. Will it be the triumphant return of a Peary, a MacMillan, a Stefansson—or the eternal silence of a Hudson, a Franklin, or an Amundsen?

The gods of the white North are jealous and guard their secrets well behind gates of ice. My story remains unfinished, perhaps never to begin anew, unless the frozen lips of Boreas relent from their age-long silence to fathom for mankind the riddle of Nato'wa and its copper-skinned peoples.

Somewhere above the Arctic circle lies a volcanic ice-ringed island of evergreens and mighty forests and primeval creatures. And in this land, Kioga, the last survivor of a lost ship, grew to manhood. Kioga, whose white skin and hunting skill earned him the name of Snow Hawk, found adventure his daily fare, made the great bears his friends and a savage mountain lion his companion.

The terrific saga of the HAWK OF THE WILDERNESS has long been a classic among devotees of the Tarzan tales. A vivid novel of peril and adventure in a forgotten land among savage peoples, it is an exciting reading experience.