

# KING OF THE FLYING SLEDGE



CLARENCE HAWKES



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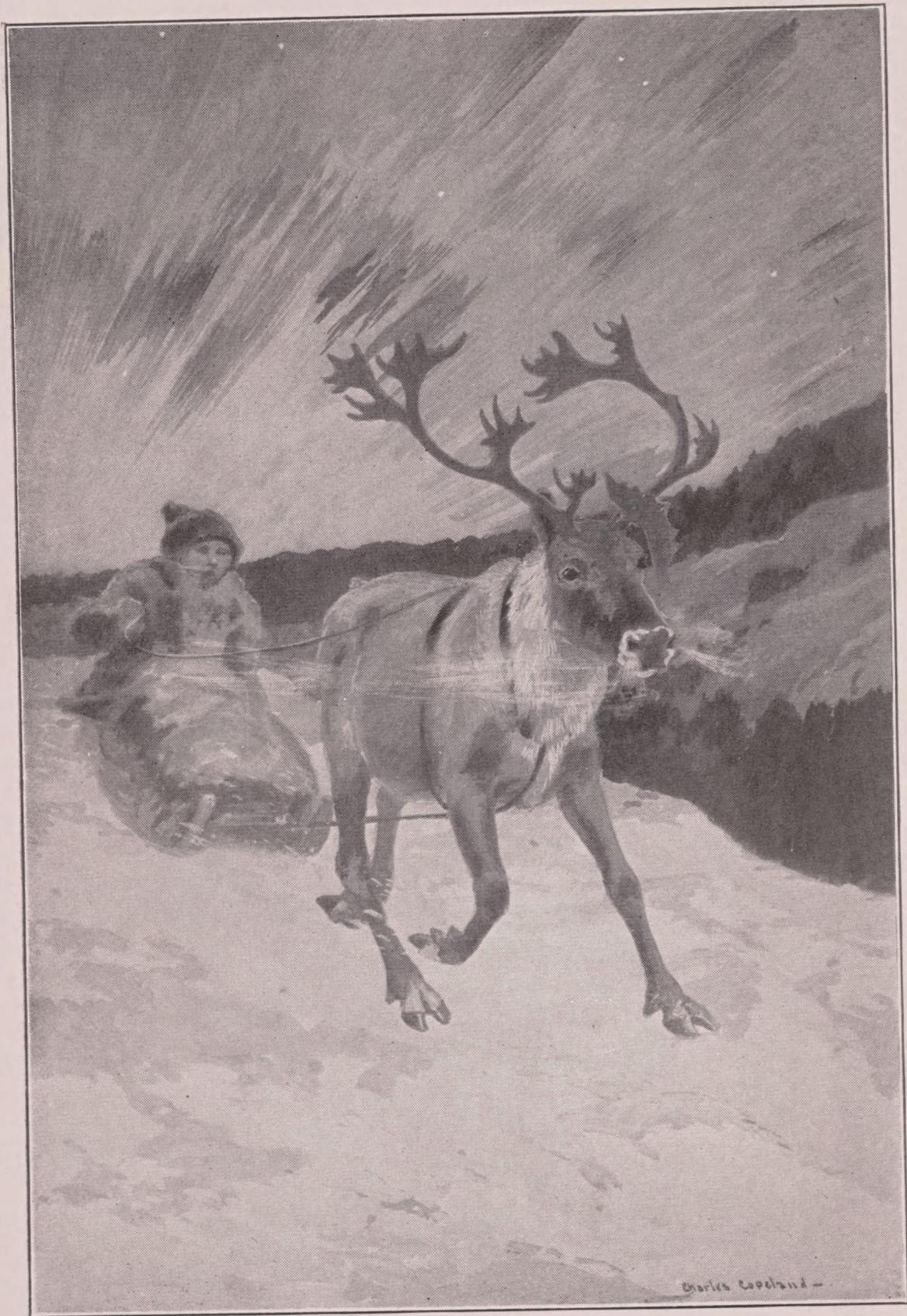
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SHOOK THE REIN THAT HUNG LOOSELY ALONG THE BACK OF THE REINDEER. [P. 30]

# KING OF THE FLYING SLEDGE



THE  
BIOGRAPHY OF  
A REINDEER

BY

CLARENCE HAWKES

AUTHOR OF

SHAGGYCOAT

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BEAVER

BLACK BRUIN

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BEAR

THE WILDERNESS DOG

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A GRAY WOLF

THE TRAIL OF THE WOODS etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

CHARLES COPELAND



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## DEDICATED

To my friend, the Bird Woman, Gene Stratton Porter. As a slight recognition of the great service she has rendered the English-speaking people through her beautiful books, in which she has so happily blended nature and human nature.





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# KING OF THE FLYING SLEDGE





## KRIS KRINGLE'S HORNED HORSE

BREATHES there a man among us with soul so dead that he does not often, when the Yuletide season comes round, recall with boyish delight the good old days when he firmly believed in a real Santa Claus and, best of all, in the reindeer and sledge piled high with the bulging pack.

The cut-and-dried spirit that has fallen upon this age has done few more questionable things than the attempt to rob the old world of that ancient myth, dearest of all to the heart of childhood, Our Santa Claus. He so warmed our hearts, and kindled our imagination. Then, too, we so gradually came to know that Father and Mother were the real Santa Claus that I fail to see the harm of the dear old myth, while its good I know is enormous, carrying in its

very spirit as it does the Christ idea of giving and doing good.

What pictures of childhood more delighted us than those of the fat, rosy-cheeked old gentleman, muffled and fur-coated, with benevolence radiating from every portion of his fat person. But even more interesting than the man, if possible, was the wonderful reindeer, with his fantastic branching antlers, his long, warm-looking coat, that could well withstand the bitter cold of that polar country which was supposed to be the home of the dear old Saint. How sleek and dainty was the reindeer's nose, and how bright and spirited his eyes; but most suggestive of all the many wonderful things about this remarkable horse was the cloud of steam that jetted from his nostrils, suggesting the very cold weather.

To the childish mind how much depended upon the reindeer. Would he be able to haul the heavy sledge, with its bulging packs,

through the deep drifts? Was there any possibility that they might become stalled in a bad storm and the wonderful day be lost?

These and a dozen other childish impressions come back to me as I write, and I am sure that my own childhood would have been robbed of a lot of its indescribable charm, its fancy, and its wonder-pictures had I been told, as soon as I was old enough to comprehend the statement, that there was no Santa Claus and no reindeer.

Christmas without Santa Claus for the young people, the real mythical Santa Claus, with reindeer and sledge, is a very tame affair.

But even if scoffers partly destroy the ro-tund old Gentleman, his reindeer still remains more widely used and of more importance to-day than ever before, and it is of that splendid comrade of Santa Claus, his Horned Horse, that I am going to tell you.

It will probably surprise my readers considerably to learn that there are over thirty thou-

sand reindeer in their domesticated state right here in North America. All but a few dozen of them which are owned by that splendid philanthropist, Doctor Grenfell, of Labrador, are found in Uncle Sam's dominion of Alaska, to which rugged country the first small herd was imported from Siberia in 1892 by the educator, Dr. Sheldon Jackson.

As for the wild reindeer, or caribou, in North America, he is nearly as countless as the stars. A few years ago the naturalist, Mr. Thompson Seton, went away up beyond Athabaska into the Canadian barren-ground country beyond the timber-line. In this desolate land, which seems to be the natural home of the caribou in America, he found them in such numbers he thought they were as numerous as the buffalo had ever been on this continent. One herd that he discovered he estimated as containing millions of head.

Extending clear around the earth and just

above the timber-line and stretching away to the snow-line is the barren-ground country, the home of the barren-ground caribou. This is a cheerless waste, where only the smallest willows and birches grow, and where the summer is of the shortest. The woodland caribou, which is considerably larger than its barren-ground kinsman, ranges much further south than does the barren-ground, having been known to stray down into northern Maine.

The home of the domesticated European reindeer, where it runs in a wild as well as domesticated state, is Norway, Sweden, and Finland, and in the islands of Nova Zembla and Spitzbergen.

The subduing genius of the reindeer, the people who have done the most with him, and gotten the most out of him, are the Lapps, a primitive people living in a rugged country known as Lapland, which means "land's end." So the name Lapp is indiscriminately applied to many

of the people in that desolate land fringing the Arctic Sea in northern Europe and Asia.

The caribou or reindeer in his wild state weighs from one hundred and thirty to one hundred and fifty pounds for the barren-ground species and two hundred and fifty pounds to three hundred for the woodland species, but in captivity, by careful breeding, some larger specimens have been obtained. Not much of a horse for size, you may think. But he makes up in endurance and in strength what he lacks in actual weight, for he will draw more than his own weight over the snow at a pace that in the end would leave a good horse far behind, and keep it up for a day or two if required. All writers agree that the reindeer is a steed that practically never tires, while some of the records of his endurance seem unbelievable.

To the Lapp he is not only a fine horse, when hitched to the pulk, but also a beast of burden, being used as a pack animal, and likewise some-

times ridden in the saddle, although he is rather small for that purpose.

The wealth of the Lapps is computed by the number of reindeer in their herds. There are a few very rich men among them, owning herds containing several thousand, but most own a few hundred, while the very poor Lapps only possess a few head.

Not only is the reindeer the Lapp's faithful steed, but he is also food and raiment as well, while the tender reindeer tongue, which is considered a great luxury in Europe, gives the primitive Lapp an export trade that makes him a citizen of the world.

The reindeer skin, which is soft and pliable, is covered with a thick hair from one and a half to three inches in length, so it makes the warmest kind of robes. Clothing, blankets, and everything that more civilized people use cloth for are here supplied by the reindeer's useful skin. His antlers are made into spoons, ladles,

and many other utensils. His sinews, which are very strong, form the stoutest kind of cord, while his hoofs and many other parts find their use in the hands of the ingenious Lapp.

His flesh, pounded up and mixed with one-third fat, forms a prepared meat that is a standard article of diet among the Lapps. It will keep for a long time when so prepared, and it is admirably suited to the cold climate.

When the reindeer is killed, the partly digested moss in the stomach is taken out and mixed with some wild berries and made into a pudding which is considered the greatest luxury among this primitive people, where luxuries are not a matter of every-day diet.

The milk of this useful deer is very thick, like cream, but rather aromatic in taste. It has to be diluted two or three times before it is suitable to drink. When coagulated, cheese is made from it, while the whey is drunk greedily by the Lapp. The milk is also fermented, and

a liquor similar to the drink made by the Tartars from mare's milk is produced.

In color the reindeer or caribou is far removed from the sleek, rich, reddish-brown creatures that we see represented in the Santa Claus pictures. Its prevailing color is gray, very slightly tinged with brown, but so slightly colored as to look almost white at a little distance. The markings are a white ring around the tip of the nose and a corresponding ring about each ankle just above the hoof. When the coat is first shed the color is much darker, but as soon as the new hair comes in it grows gray again. The hair is not shed at the root as in other animals of the kind, but breaks off close to the skin. The fawn is reddish-brown when dropped, but after six or eight months puts on the adult-gray.

The horns of the reindeer are most curious, being cylindrical at the base, but branching both backward and down. Only one side of the set,

however, puts out brow antlers. The length of the brow antlers is nearly that of the head, while the other branches writhe and twist about, giving this remarkable deer's head a very fantastic appearance.

The more primitive harness is a simple collar with a single tug passing between the animal's legs to the front end of the sledge, while the steed is driven by a single rein, this being passed from side to side as the driver wishes the animal to go to the right or left. The rein is secured to the antlers. This mode of driving is quite similar to the gee-line with which a six-mule team is sometimes driven.

The horns of the buck are shed in November instead of in February, as in the case of most other deer. The hind does not shed her horns until April, provided she is with young, but if she is barren they fall in September. This enables the herdsman to know which hind to kill for meat and which not.

Of all the deer family, the reindeer or caribou is the most restless and given to fitful migrations. Several of the North American Indian names for him mean "The Wanderer"; and who has named the wild creatures as fittingly as the Indian?

Like a gray shadow he blends with the landscape, being nearly invisible against the new snow, and also blending nicely in the gray, colorless, barren ground above the timber-line, between that and the snow-line.

To-day he pulls the fantastic reindeer moss from rocks, or paws and roots for it beneath the snow, in one parallel of north latitude; and to-morrow he may be feeding a hundred miles away.

When upon these autumn migrations—although the caribou is always wandering—they band together in herds of hundreds of thousands, and rush across the barrens like a mighty tidal-wave. At such times they are perfectly

fearless of man, and entirely fearless of firearms.

With rattling antlers and cracking ankle-joints, and hoofs snapping like castanets, with steam pouring from their nostrils, and a cloud of vapor rising from the mighty herd, they sweep over the barren north lands, the mighty phalanx of Santa Claus's horned horse.

Sometimes, when they have gone for months without finding any suitable supply of salt, they become locoed and frenzied with the smell of the salt water from Hudson's Bay, which they scent many leagues away. Then the migration, which is usually rather leisurely, becomes a mad rush for the salt shores—a stampede in which all things are swept before it, and many sometimes perish in a ravine or muskeg.

Of the endurance of the reindeer when driven, all writers agree.

Two army officers in the seventeenth century, while making a rapid trip northward for the

government of Sweden, drove a reindeer for several hours at the rate of eighteen miles an hour. Many of the figures which I find in seemingly trustworthy authorities I dare not quote, but it is certain that a good reindeer would kill three or four horses in a relay race, running against them all, and still be fresh.

The most extravagant account of all concerning the speed of this remarkable Horned Horse is found in Scandinavian history. At a certain time of revolution and unrest in the kingdom a plot to overthrow the government was discovered by an officer, who at the time was eight hundred miles from his King and the capital. If he could reach the capital in just two days, the government might be saved. His only hope of reaching his King in time lay in the fleetest and most wonderful reindeer in Norway. Upon this slight hope and with the destiny of the nation in his hands, the officer set out. For forty-eight hours, without stopping for a mo-

ment, the noble deer carried the frantic officer, and came to the King with the life-and-death news of treason. But when the terrible race was over the faithful reindeer fell dead.

A wonderful picture of the reindeer still hangs in the palace at Drontheim.

I give you the story as I got it from the pages of history—but to me it looks incredible. Man, when great emergency calls him, and life and death hang in the balance, can make these superhuman efforts, and pay for it with his life; but that an animal, a mere brute, without understanding the mighty thing at stake, could make such a sacrifice argues a nobility of wonderful quality. It also suggests a faith in the hand of the master that drove it so cruelly, that puts our own faith in the power above us to shame.

After all, there is a spark of nobility in a fine horse, a reindeer, or a faithful dog that makes man, who is their god, ashamed of his own unworthiness.

# I

## A RACE WITH DEATH

OLD Oscar Valdemar and his good wife sat in their little kitchen close to the bright fagot fire that burned upon the hearth, listening to the crackling of the flames, the steady ticking of the little Dutch clock, and the mournful moaning of the wind outside.

They were also listening for another sound—the merry tinkle of bells on the reindeer bringing young Hans Peterson to them with tidings of Olga, their beloved daughter.

They listened and watched with fear and foreboding clutching at their old hearts that had known many sorrows, and the sorrow that now threatened was the most dire of all; for Olga, their only daughter, the child of their

old age, was in the throes of childbirth, and her life hung by a thread.

It was as though the mist of their sorrow hung like a veil in the little kitchen, causing them to see but dimly, or perhaps it was tears in the eyes of the old couple. There was frost upon the window-pane, and on this cheerless early winter morning the old folks seemed to feel the cold more than ever, for they huddled close to each other and stretched their thin hands to the bright fire, seeking to absorb something of its warmth and cheer.

Occasionally the toil-hardened hand of the man clasped the thin, work-scarred hand of the old woman, and then he would say in a cheery voice: "Don't worry, Mother. It will be all right. We must trust God and hope for the best."

The only thing in the dull gray room which did not seem to be downcast by the pending sorrow was the little sturdy Dutch clock. That

seemed to tick even louder than usual, and the worst of it was that it would go on ticking just as vigorously whether Olga lived or died. Finally old Oscar stretched his stiff legs and got up slowly and put new fagots on the fire. "I will make more fire, Mother," he said. "I will warm the stew and the barley cake again, and you must eat. You have not eaten since yesterday, and you will be sick if you do not eat."

"I cannot eat," replied the old woman with a deep moan, "when my child is lying at death's door."

"Tut, tut, Mother," replied the old man chidingly. "It may not be as bad as we fear. I am sure it will come out all right. We must have faith; God is good."

Presently, while bringing fagots for the fire, he stopped in a listening attitude, his whole figure tense with suspense.

"I hear the bells, Mother," he said huskily.

“ I hear the bells upon the reindeer; we will soon know the worst. Be brave, for all our sakes.”

His prophecy of bells in the distance was soon realized, for in a very few seconds a merry tinkling was heard at the door, and with loud trampling of feet, and with a gust of cold air that made the old couple shiver more than ever, young Hans Peterson rushed like the North Wind into the little kitchen.

“ Oh, Hans! ” moaned the old woman, “ tell me, how is my Olga? Is she alive? ”

The young man shook the snow from his heavy deerskin coat and threw it upon a chair before replying, while the two old people watched him eagerly.

“ Yes, Mother,” said the young man at last; “ she is still alive, but the doctor says that she must have the great surgeon from Drontheim within forty-eight hours or she will die, and the child also.”

The two old people groaned in unison: "The great surgeon at Drontheim within two days." The round trip was three hundred miles. Their little Olga must die after all. God was not good, as they had thought.

"Our child must die," moaned the old woman. "Our child must die."

"Not while I have a breath left in my body and the fastest reindeer in Norway to drive," cried young Hans with such ferocity that the old couple started with fear. They were old, and their nerves were unstrung this morning.

"You can never do it, my boy," said old Oscar, shaking his gray head.

"I can do it or die in the attempt," growled the young giant.

"Mother, bring me barley cake and meat enough for two days. Put in enough for three days, for there will be two of us on the way back. Have it ready in ten minutes."

The old woman looked helplessly at her hus-

band and then imploringly up at the young man who might well have been descended from the Vikings. Then she began to weep.

“Mother,” said old Oscar sternly, “you must get the barley cake and meat quickly, for Hans will be gone in ten minutes, and you do not want him to go hungry.”

For the next few minutes the old woman bustled confusedly about in her larder putting up the necessary food, while she sobbed softly to herself, wailing: “He can never do it. My child must die.”

But the old man seemed to catch something of the younger man’s fire and bustled about getting his son-in-law the necessary clothing and spirits for the journey.

Meanwhile the faithful hind stood before the door, her forefeet spread apart, her head drooping, and apparently half asleep.

Wise beast that she was—she was resting, getting her muscles and sinews ready for the

long and terrible journey which something in the manner of her young master told her was in store for them both.

She did not look a formidable steed, for she hardly weighed three hundred and fifty pounds. Her coat was long and rather coarse, of a dull-gray color, with flecks of light brown. There was a white ring around the muzzle and one above each hoof. As a naturalist would say, she was protectively colored so that she blended with the landscape when there was snow upon the ground until it took a very keen eye to discover her a few hundred yards away, even though within plain sight.

Her horns were branching and graceful, for the reindeer or caribou is the only species of deer that allow the female horns.

The simle would have looked very insignificant beside even a small horse, but her muscles were like rawhide, and her wind was of the kind that never gave out or went wheezy. In a two

days' run she could have killed three or four good horses and left them lying lifeless by the roadside while she still trotted untiringly forward.

Presently the preparations of young Hans were completed; and he printed a kiss upon the quivering mouth of his mother-in-law and gave old Oscar's hand a grip "in farvel" that made the old man cry out with pain. Then he threw his food and extra wraps into the pulk, took a hasty survey of his steed and the simple harness, and, jumping in, they were off on their three-hundred-mile race against death—the race that was to decide the fate of the young and beautiful wife and the little life still unborn.

There were three hundred miles of crunching snow, up hill and down dale, between them and safety for Olga—and only the reindeer to do it. But she was the fleetest hind in Norway. She had trotted the five-mile course at

Bergen in seventeen minutes, and in half a day she could kill any horse in the north country.

So as long as the pulk and the harness held, and the simle drew the sledge, he would fight for the life of Olga with the last breath in his body, and, God helping him, he would save her yet.

It was very cold, but Hans was well clad against wind and frost. His vest was made of homespun wool with stripes of gorgeous colors. Over that he wore a red woolen jersey, and over all his heavy deerskin coat. His feet were encased in deerhide boots, made from the skin taken from the animal's forehead, which best sheds water, while his head was surmounted by a very high-peaked cap, which telescoped and came down to the shoulders, if the wearer wished, so that he was only exposed to the outer world through small slits at the front. The dress was rather bungling, but entirely necessary in this frigid climate.

It was a typical winter's night in these north latitudes, all moonshine and starshine; so bright that young Hans could have read a paper.

It was very beautiful, the young Norwegian thought, as the light sledge slipped swiftly along, drawn by the sturdy reindeer that never varied the steady, persistent trot—a gait which did not look very fast, it was so steady and even.

But this wonderful creature that he was driving was almost like a machine. The fatigue which other steeds soon feel was not for her. This animal had been built to trot, by a good builder, who knew how to stiffen the sinews and the muscles, and also to give just that free play which can go for hours and never tire.

Who shall guess the thoughts of young Peterson as he crouched upon the sledge and watched the familiar landscape slip by? Sometimes the road led through deep valleys where the spruces and the firs stood Druid-like, guarding the way

on either hand. Deep valleys of despair, the young man thought, for the gloom about them seemed to settle upon him, and he was always glad and breathed freer when they again came out on the open way, where they got the full shimmer of moonshine and starlight.

Not so dark and forbidding were the birches, although their mantles of moss were nearly gone. They seemed, seen in this unearthly moonlight and star shimmer, more like the ghosts of trees than real trees.

Whenever they skirted a stream with its dazzling coverlet of ice Hans thought how lifeless and dreary it must seem, locked under the ice for five months of the year and to be so cramped in one's flowing.

There were no birds in the trees, no call from Ptarmigan, Pipet, or Fieldfare, and no animals to be discovered anywhere on the frozen waste—for nearly all had “denned up.” Hans thought the earth had never looked so solitary;

but it was probably only his own mood that he saw reflected in the landscape.

One hour, two, three went by, and he figured that he had covered over forty miles. He estimated that his reindeer could travel sixteen miles for the first hour or two, and then fourteen for an hour or two more, and then twelve. Finally they must slow down to eight or ten miles, and then after six or eight hours of this desperate pace they must rest for an hour and have feed for the faithful steed.

Presently he noted that wonderful colored shadows, or so they seemed to him, were dancing over the fields about him; and turning to look over his shoulder he discovered that the aurora borealis was in full play,—the great wonder of this wonderland of the midnight sun.

One moment the sky would be opalescent, with the stars burning brightly in their usual places, and then a mighty streamer, extending from horizon to zenith, orange, crimson, blue, yellow,

and every other imaginable color, would leap clear across the northern half of the heavens, rising and falling, like an enormous curtain fanned by a cyclonic wind; then it would die down, and the sky would return to its opalescent color, with the stars all burning steadily. Sometimes the fluttering of this mighty curtain was from horizon to zenith, and sometimes from east to west, but it was equally mysterious and dazzling. Just as though the Creator was setting off some mighty fireworks, or pyrotechnic display, to awe the antlike creatures who crawled to and fro on Mother Earth and called themselves lords of creation.

This was the thought of Hans as he gazed reverently over his shoulder. How insignificant and puny we were, after all, when face to face with the workings of nature! How little the elements, the wind, fire, and water, considered man when they went mad and did the work of nature!

Hans shuddered as he thought how cold and pitiless the world was this night. There was no comfort for Olga and the little new unborn life in the moonlight and the starshine. Nature, for all her beauty and mystery, would not veer a hair's breadth from her course if all the mothers and all the unborn children in the world were to perish that very night.

It was only man who could help, man with his strong muscles and stout heart to fight and overcome Nature and her obstacles.

He squared his broad shoulders, and shook the rein that hung loosely along the back of the reindeer. At least he and his faithful steed would do their part, and the rest was with God.

At Desseldore he stopped for an hour to feed the reindeer and eat a hearty meal, while the groom rubbed down the frost-covered deer, for her breath froze to the outer ends of the hairs in the coat, until the reindeer looked as

though she had been frosted over with the finest of crystals.

The hind munched away vigorously for half an hour, and then, spreading her forelegs apart to steady herself, went fast asleep.

This was the best thing to do, for it relieved all the muscles and made them ready for that steely tension necessary to keep up the tireless, endless trot.

Shortly after leaving Desseldore, Hans guided the reindeer sharply to the right and struck across Lake Bjornfeld. By this move he would cut off twenty miles from his one hundred and fifty; for straight across the lake it was only twenty miles, while around it was forty.

Here it was much smoother going than it had been upon the land, and the reindeer, refreshed by food and the few minutes' sleep, put forth a new burst of speed.

But they had not been fifteen minutes upon

the ice when a blinding snow-squall struck them. It had been threatening for the last half hour, as there had been strong gusts of wind out of the southeast, where dark cloud banks had unexpectedly appeared.

Hans drew his cap down further over his ears, huddled down in the pulk, and considered this new peril. It was not the discomfort that he feared, for a little squall like this was nothing to a man who was frost- and wind-proof, but it was the danger of being bewildered and then lost upon the lake that filled him with fear.

He had often driven the reindeer across the lake at this point to Randsfjord, on the further side; but would she remember? Could he put any reliance on her brute intelligence and her power to keep in a given direction, whether guided or not?

If they were to be lost on the lake they might lose hours.

Why had he not kept to the road and on firm land?

The storm was at their backs, and if the wind did not veer he could guide the reindeer by that sign alone, but the storm was a fickle one, judging from the rapidity with which it had come up; and dared he to trust to the wind? It was his only compass.

Now a thousand doubts and fears that had not assailed the young man when he was sure of the road began to trouble him. They would be lost upon the lake. He would lose precious hours, perhaps just enough to be too late with the great surgeon from Drontheim.

Why had he ever taken the route by the lake? The road was further—but it was sure.

How his muscles ached to do something. If he could only solve his difficulty by physical exertion; but all he could do was to sit helpless in the pulk, listening to the clacking of his reindeer's hoofs and the sing of the runners on the

ice, while the snow swirled about him and the winds buffeted him.

Presently his heart gave a great leap and then nearly stood still. The storm that had been at his back a moment before now cut him in the face like a knife. What did it mean? Had the reindeer turned in a great circle and headed back for Desseldore to have the storm at their backs? He had not noticed any change in direction, so they must be traveling in a circle.

Should he turn his steed about and head her again into the teeth of the storm?

Sweat stood upon the young man's brow, and he groaned aloud in his agony. Perhaps Olga's life depended upon his decision.

"Oh, God help me!" he groaned. "I am lost upon the lake."

But even while he spoke he was once more perplexed and plunged in still further gloom, for the wind was again at his back.

This would seem to argue that they were traveling in a small circle—one that could be completed in a very few minutes.

He listened to the hoofs of his reindeer. They were as steady as the movements of a machine. She seemed to know where she was going. Her nose was thrust out well in front of her, and he could hear her steady, deep breathing, without a suggestion of a whistle in it, although they had traveled nearly a hundred miles.

What a wonderful beast she was; without the intelligence of a horse or the affection of a dog, yet doing her duty blindly, with as much fidelity as either of these could have done!

He would trust in her. The storm might shift from his face to his back as many times as it wished, still he would cling to the instinct of his reindeer.

With this thought Hans was much comforted, and began to recall many instances of which

he had heard of how horses had brought their masters safe home when they had been lost in storms. His reindeer was as good as any horse; he would trust in her.

So the young giant leaned his head in his hands and prayed again. "God, Thou art above the cloud," he said. "Guide us safely to Randsfjord."

It seemed to the tormented man that they spent hours upon the ice. This time was longer than all the rest of the journey thus far, but, finally, when he had about given up hope and felt sure that they were lost upon the lake, with a sudden plunge the pulk ground upon the crust of beaten snow, and Hans knew that they had crossed in safety.

Then a shout of joy burst from his lips, for the lights of Randsfjord were just ahead. A minute later, as they sped through the streets of the little town, he looked at his watch, and saw that they had been just an hour and ten

minutes on the ice, having made the twenty miles in that remarkable time.

The rest of the run to Mjosen was made in three hours and a half; here they stopped for breakfast for both man and beast.

The faithful simle, after munching upon her bundle of reindeer's moss for perhaps fifteen minutes, braced her forelegs as before and went fast asleep. She evidently needed rest more than food.

After a rest of nearly an hour, they started upon their last lap of twenty-five miles. This was covered in about three hours, so that shortly before noon they reached Drontheim, the home of the great surgeon.

Hans left his faithful reindeer in the care of a friend, in order that she might be fed and rubbed down while he went for the doctor.

He found the surgeon to be a peppery little man who did not relish the idea of being tumbled about on a pulk for one hundred and fifty

miles. But Hans was not to be refused. He coaxed and stormed, wheedled and cajoled, until finally the doctor consented, and the start was set for three o'clock in the afternoon.

Promptly at the appointed time the little doctor, scolding and sputtering at his fate, was bundled into the pulk, and the long, hard return journey was begun. This was to be the real test of both man and reindeer.

Coming out there had been but one passenger on the sledge, while now there were two; but Hans lightened the load all he could by jumping off and running where there was any up-grade, while on the level or down-grade his weight did not make any difference.

It is no joke running twelve or fourteen miles an hour over slippery snow, and the young Norwegian soon found it difficult to keep up the pace; but he did not spare himself, wishing to keep his good steed fresh.

They made the first lap to Mjosen in good

time, and after stopping for a drink of hot tea at the inn were off again.

This time Hans did not dare risk crossing Lake Bjornfeld, but had to go around it. To add to his difficulties the little doctor continually grumbled and cursed his luck at being dragged off on this wild-goose chase, as he termed it, by a madman.

Finally the crafty Hans suggested that he was a hero, and that his profession would be proud of him; that his run of one hundred and fifty miles would always stand as a wonderful feat in the annals of Norway, and that his own name would go ringing down to posterity—so the doctor was somewhat mollified.

It was two o'clock in the morning when they reached Desseldore, having rounded the lake. Here Hans aroused his friend who had lodged him on the way out, and food for both man and beast was quickly forthcoming.

The doctor and Hans gulped down their

steaming coffee and ate ravenously, but the weary simle only sniffed at her moss, and then went to sleep in her accustomed position.

After allowing the poor beast an hour's rest, they aroused her, and set off again.

Hans could not help noticing, in spite of his optimism, what a heavy load the two men made for the faithful hind, so at every possible opportunity he slipped from the sledge and ran. How his muscles ached and how heavy his feet had become only he knew, but he said nothing.

His jaw was set like a steel trap. He was a true son of the old Norsemen who had fought and conquered the sea. His ancestors had overcome obstacles, and so would he.

Finally they narrowed the distance between them and home down to thirty miles.

The little doctor was sleeping soundly, slumped forward in a sorry heap. He was evidently thoroughly tired out. The faithful hind was keeping up the slow pace of eight miles

an hour with difficulty. Occasionally she stopped, unbidden, to rest. This was a sure sign that she was very tired.

Mile after mile they plodded on, Hans calling out cheery words, or running beside the deer, patting her neck, and cheering her on.

But he too was nearly spent. His feet were heavy as lead, his muscles ached, and he could hardly keep his feet from tripping as he ran.

At ten miles from home he fell heavily in the snow, and could not rise. He had gone to the very end of his strength.

He raised himself upon one elbow and looked fearfully around him.

He was dazed. There was a buzzing in his head. He was tired enough to sink back into the snow and die of exhaustion.

Then the thought of Olga and the baby flashed through his brain, and he sat up, alert and eager, but without strength enough to rise to his feet.

“Wake up!” he thundered at the doctor, who at once sat upright and rubbed his eyes.

“Listen,” said the young giant in a voice terrible with his concentration. “I can go no further, but you must go on. The simle will take you to my door. You keep urging and she will keep on going. She’ll make it. I’m sure of that.”

“But,” objected the doctor, “I cannot go and leave you. You will die here in the snow in an hour.”

“I tell you, you must,” raged Hans. “I have not come all this way to be foiled here.”

But the little doctor was obstinate, and would not go.

“You would go if I were dead?” asked Hans.

“Of course I would go if you were dead. My duty would then be to the living.”

With a quick motion that the doctor could not

stay, Hans drew a large, old-fashioned revolver from his coat pocket.

“Go, then,” he roared, leveling the revolver at his own forehead. “If you do not go in ten seconds, I will blow my brains out, and then you will have to go.”

The little man with a shudder turned and shook the rein over the simle’s back, and she trotted away into the gloom, leaving Hans lying in the snow, nearly dead with exhaustion.

He strained his ears after the tinkling bell as long as he could hear it, and when the slight sound had died away sank down wearily in the snow. He was so tired. He closed his eyes, and a heavy drowsiness stole over him.

Two hours later the faithful hind, blowing like a wheezy bellows, reeking with sweat, and with barely strength enough left to lift her feet, trotted up to the stable at her master’s home.

The little doctor seized his medicine chest and hurried into the house, all eagerness and atten-

tion now his own part in this day's work was reached.

Old Oscar Valdemar, who had come over to his son-in-law's house to look out for things while Hans was gone, soon came stumbling out to the shed to care for the faithful reindeer and to see if anything of Hans could be discovered, for the doctor had merely told them that he was soon to follow.

The simle stood with her legs far apart and her head nearly as low as her knees.

She did not even raise it when old Oscar patted her neck, but sank still lower and lower to Mother Earth, as though seeking rest.

While the old man still gazed at her, dumfounded to see the splendid beast so completely worn out, she sank to her knees, rolled over on her side, and stretched out—dead. She had found rest at last.

She had paid the price of beautiful Olga's life and that of the unborn babe, the price that

man often exacts from his faithful animal slaves—her life.

But the master himself did not die in the snow, as the little doctor had prophesied, although he might have had not timely aid come to him.

Half an hour after he left Desseldore his good friend Vilhjalmur Bjornsen heard of the desperate race that he was running with Death and set out with a fresh reindeer team, determined to overtake him and carry one of them the rest of the way.

Bjornsen soon discovered Hans lying unconscious in the snow, and, after pouring some brandy down his throat, brought him hurriedly on to his own home. Following only a mile or two behind the faithful hind, Hans arrived just in time to hear the first cry of his little daughter, and also to hear the glad tidings that the mother, golden-haired, blue-eyed Olga, would live.

It was a happy family that gathered about the kitchen fire that night and thanked God deep in their hearts that all had come out so well. Nor was the dead reindeer in the stable forgotten. They could not bring her back to life, but her brave part in the two days' work would never be forgotten, and the story of it would live for all time in the annals of Norway.

## II

### LITTLE LIGHTFOOT

THE faithful hind was dead. Her noble heart had burst as she stood gasping before her master's shed at the end of her three-hundred-mile run.

But the fine strain of reindeer blood that coursed in her free veins was not dead, for Little Lightfoot was munching reindeer moss in his snug corner of the shed, just as though nothing tragic had happened outside.

He was a six-months-old fawn, the offspring of the fleet Varsimli and the great buck, which were the two finest specimens in the small reindeer herd of Hans Peterson.

Usually a herd of wild animals such as the deer, moose, or buffalo are presided over by a

male, who is their leader, determining where they shall feed and when they will move, and who also guards them from danger. But in this case the famous hind was so much larger than the buck and was such a good fighter that by her sheer force of strength she had assumed leadership of the little herd.

This reindeer herd of Hans Peterson ranged in the summertime far to the north, upon the southern edge of the great tundra, or barrens, which is the natural range of the reindeer or caribou throughout the world. This tundra is just above the timber-line and between that and the snow-line. The firs and the pines were the last trees to drop out of the race northward, before reaching the land of the tundra, where only scrub willow and birches survive. These last remnants of birch and willow are very small and rather sickly looking, and only found in sheltered nooks.

The more tender and nutritious grasses have

also disappeared when the tundra is reached. There is still an apology for grass to be found on the lee side of friendly rocks, which hold the heat of the sun by night, and thus help on the slender vegetation.

The flowers of this inhospitable region are few and pale of color, with the exception of bright orange beds of polytrichum, the delicate little harebell, however, being among the survivors.

The reindeer herd of Hans Peterson ranged so far north on the tundra in summertime that they came in contact with the large herds of the Lapps, which wander unrestrained over the tundra. This is the pasture land of the Lapp, who is gradually being driven further and further into the high mountains to find feeding-ground for his herds, that number over four hundred thousand head, in both Norway and Sweden.

The reason they have to seek higher altitudes

for their pasture is that the farmer in northern Norway and Sweden has begun to gather the reindeer moss in the summer and stack it up to feed their cattle on in the winter, thus limiting the supply.

This moss is a beautiful gray-green, and covers the tundra like a thick carpet.

Little Lightfoot had been born about the first of June, much later than the young of the rest of the deer family. Peterson's herd had been feeding northward for several days. The reindeer or caribou is the most restless of all the deer species. Several of their Indian names signify "wanderer."

They feed restlessly, grabbing a bite here and a snatch there, and then moving onward—their nervous tails are constantly twitching, and they utter that peculiar grunt which is characteristically their own—a lot of restless, gray-brown shadows, shifting and drifting like the wind clouds of June over the tundra.

For days the great Varsimli had felt dumpish and out of sorts.

Often she would stand for fifteen minutes thoughtfully chewing her cud, while the rest of the herd moved on and left her behind.

When they had passed she would look up hurriedly and then trot after her little band. She wanted something, she knew not just what, so she often sought for it under silvern birches and in clumps of pale-green willows.

At last, on a fresh June day, when the wind was blowing briskly over the tundra and the sky was nearly free from the scudding wind-clouds, she found just the spot she wanted. It was a warm, sheltered nook and hidden away from inquisitive eyes. There, screened from the rest of the herd, or any prowling lynx, or wolverine, by birch and willow, she lay down and gave birth to Little Lightfoot.

He was an awkward little chap, all joints and legs, like most young deer—of a rusty-brick or

dull-brown color, with a queer little hump at the shoulders just like his dam. But when she had licked him dry and he at last stood up to get his first meal, she thought he was the most wonderful reindeer fawn that had ever been born on the tundra.

The first few weeks of Little Lightfoot's life were rather uneventful, as an outsider would have looked at it, but it seemed very wonderful and full of interest to him. He was no weakling, for he was on his feet and following his dam the same day that he was born, just as though locomotion in that manner was an old trick for him.

He thought some of the yearlings in the herd were rather rough and impolite when they tried to butt him over and crowd him about, as indeed they were; but he soon learned to stick close to his mother, and if the yearlings got too fresh the great hind sent them sprawling with one shove of her strong head.

There are many things for a young reindeer to learn, even though he does live on a great, lonely, desolate tundra, where there would seem to be nothing to fear or avoid.

He was very inquisitive, as are all the members of the deer family, and was always nosing about, smelling and nibbling things.

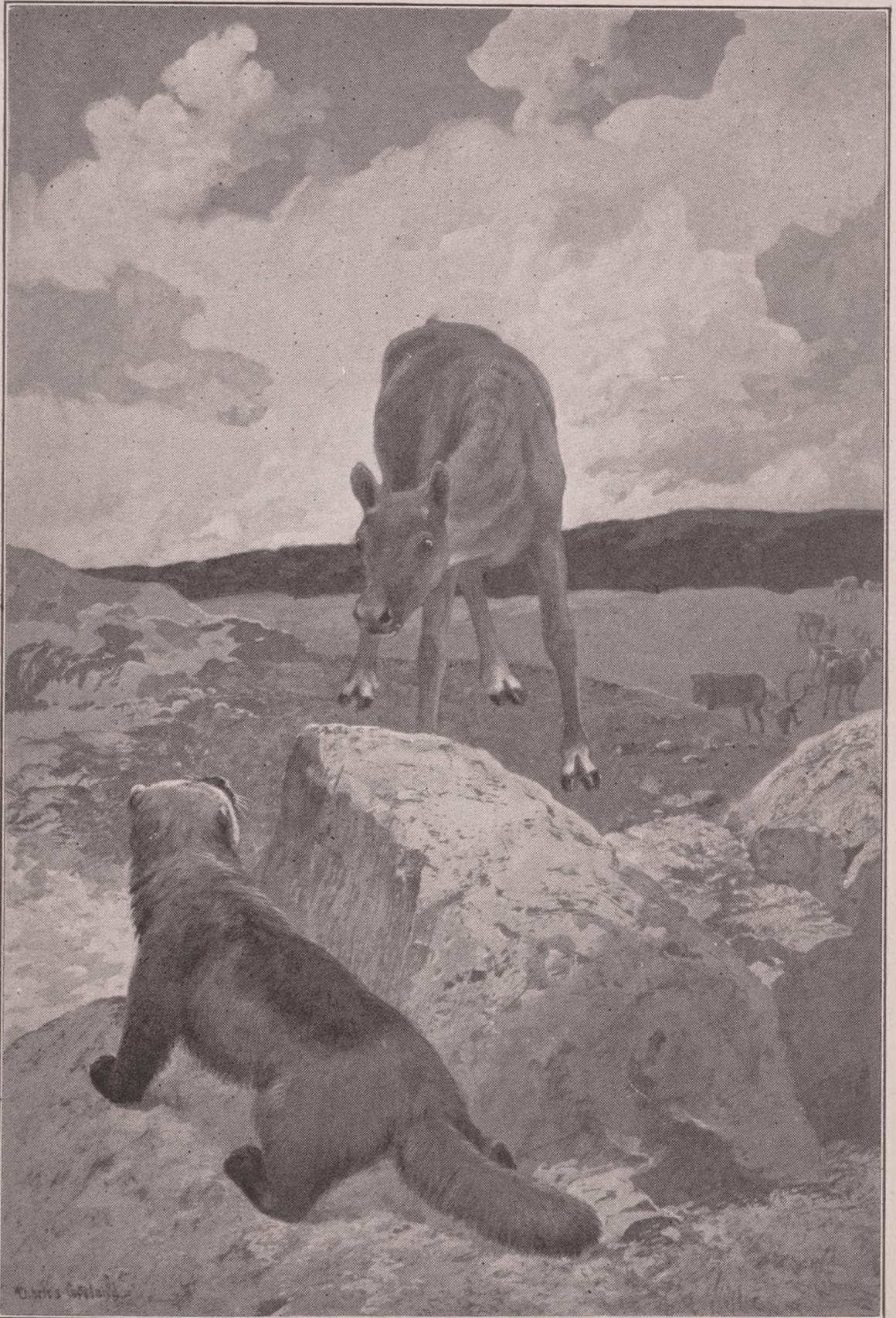
One of his first lessons was to learn what things he might nibble and nose and what to let alone. Brambles and thornbushes he soon discovered were not to his liking, for their flavor was not good, and they often left a smarting sensation in his nose which was not pleasant. The thistle he also learned to avoid.

There was a very bright green-leaved plant that grew on the edge of marshes that he one day investigated. His mother discovered him just in time, and butted him away from it with such ferocity that whenever he saw it afterwards it made him shiver with fear and glance warily at his dam, to see if she saw him look-

ing at the hateful plant. Even the nibble or two that he got of the plant before his dam discovered him made him sick for the rest of the day. He drooled and vomited, and had he eaten a few more mouthfuls nothing could have saved him.

One day he very luckily discovered a brownish-gray animal slowly stealing upon him from behind a rock near which he was feeding. He did not know what it was, but the inherited knowledge of the reindeer which had battled so long on the barrens told him that this stealthy gray form was a menace, so he faced about towards it and stamped his forefoot and lowered his head just as he had seen his dam do on a certain occasion when attacked by another hind.

But his bluster did not scare his enemy at all. Instead of fleeing away in terror, as it should have done at such a brave front, it crept stealthily towards him. The long, coarse hair



THE LONG COARSE HAIR UPON THE FAWN'S NECK STOOD UP, AND  
FEAR SENT A SHIVER THROUGH HIM



upon the fawn's neck stood up, and fear sent a shiver through him.

The wolverine lifted his great head, with the two gleaming eyes and a row of hungry teeth, and looked over the top of the boulder. Then the blusterer fled to his dam, terror giving him the wings of the wind.

It was lucky for him that terror had overcome him at just this moment, for even then the wolverine nearly overhauled him before he reached the protecting flanks of the hind. But this was another lesson that he had learned—the scent of the wolverine—and he never forgot it as long as he lived.

The most persistent and relentless of all Little Lightfoot's enemies were the deer-flies, which hovered in a black, angry cloud over the herd wherever they went. These did not menace the fawn's life, but they often drove him nearly distracted, causing the old hind and the fawn to flee from the slight cover of willow and

birch to the water, and then back again. The water was really the best refuge, when they could find it handy. These tundra are threaded by a few sluggish rivers and dotted with lagoons and marshes.

During the last of August, when there had been a long hot spell, the deer-flies came down upon the herd in swarms and stung Little Light-foot so persistently about the eyes that he became entirely blind, not because his eyes were injured, but the lids about them were so swollen that he could not see out between them. They burned and smarted so that he was frantic. Finally the wise Varsimli saw his plight, and speedily took him to the nearest lagoon. He stuck very close to his dam's side, fearing to get lost in the strange darkness that had come upon him. When they reached the lagoon his dam butted him unceremoniously into the water beyond his depth.

It was his wont to wallow about in the shal-

low, but the old hind did not seem to remember that he was afraid of the deep water, so he bobbed about like a cork, blowing and trying to keep his head above water. He could swim, as can all the wild creatures, instinctively, but he was rather timid.

He could not imagine what had made his dam suddenly become so rough and unfeeling towards him. Presently, as he bobbed about, blowing and roiling up the water, his mother suddenly thrust her muzzle against the back of his neck and plunged his head completely under water. Then in an instant he knew what it was all about. The wonderful relief of the cold water on his burning, smarting eyes.

After that, whenever his eyes troubled him, he would go hurriedly to the water and plunge his own head in and keep it under as long as he could hold his breath.

One morning, after they had spent a very cold, desolate night in a clump of willows, they

came forth to find the world dressed in a new and strange garb. The deer moss on the tundra was all cold and white. When the fawn undertook to nibble it the strange, cold stuff, which was like nothing he had ever seen before, chilled his muzzle and astonished him. Everywhere it was just the same. All the weeds and grasses were feathered and starred with this new, strange white something, which was soft and yielding, yet so very cold.

This was the fawn's first experience with snow. It was not long after the first snow, which was a very slight affair, that the fawn had an experience he never forgot. There was something so strange and terrifying in this event that it burned into his brain, so that ever afterwards, when the same scent came, it would set the hair erect upon his neck and his knees to quaking.

The little herd of Hans Peterson was pasturing on the extreme southern edge of the tun-

dra, next to the tilled land of the poorer farmers. Half a dozen miles to the north, roving restlessly here and there, was a mighty herd of reindeer, numbering perhaps two thousand head. These were the property of Anders Poulsen, a very rich Lapp, who was said to breed the finest reindeer in Norway.

Occasionally the little herd of Peterson would sight the great herd of the Lapp as they ranged down to the southern edge of the barrens; but most of the time they did not intermingle.

One evening, just at dusk, while Little Lightfoot was getting his supper, there floated down upon the evening stillness a sound that made all the feeding reindeer throw up their heads and some of them to snort. The feeding fawn did not know what it meant, but instinctively he felt the wave of fear that ran through the herd.

The sound was not voluminous; indeed it was

rather slight, but it was peculiar,—a sound that once heard either by man or beast is never forgotten.

The cry that had startled the little herd of reindeer was high-keyed, and mournful beyond comparison. It was thin and wavering, like the cry of a lost soul. It was unspeakably mournful, yet there was a menace to it, and a warning. It was the cry of a lone gray wolf that sat upon a distant hillock and watched the feeding reindeer.

He did not look formidable, as he was alone just then, but this weird, unearthly cry was his hunting call, and there were a half dozen of his gray associates within reach.

That afternoon Peterson's little herd had sighted the large herd of the Lapp, so without a minute's delay the old Varsimli turned her head northward and led her own herd at a slashing trot towards the herd of the Lapp. They might not fight off the gray pack alone,

but the mighty herd of the Lapp could better cope with this gray menace.

The pace was so terrific that poor Little Lightfoot was obliged to strain every nerve and sinew of his wiry body to keep from being left behind. But the menace of that long, weird howl still rang in his ears. Every drop of blood in his small body was scared. He thrilled and quivered with fright. To him the whole world was filled with fear.

So he stretched out beside his dam and plied his long, nimble legs with all the desperation of terrible fear; and in this state of mind the full-grown reindeer in the little band would have had hard work to have left him behind.

They fled like gray specters, all fear-haunted and terror-propelled.

Their muscles sprang and gathered again for the jump, like steel springs, and their sharp, rattling hoofs made very little noise, instead of

clacking loudly, as they did when they trotted slowly.

If they had seen the five gray shapes that came slinking from as many different directions at the old, lone wolf's call and formed themselves quickly into a hunting band, it might have even quickened their pace.

But after they had been running for half an hour, as they came out on a long stretch of rather high-lying land, the old hind discovered the gray pack in pursuit, and by a violent snort gave the alarm.

Then all the adult reindeer quickened their trot and all the yearlings and fawns their gallop.

On they sped like the wind, while the tireless gray pack pursued.

If no unseen power intervened, the fate of the reindeer was sealed. It might take a half a day, or it might take a day, to run them down, but the tireless gray pack was equal to either

run. A small wolf band like this will often run down the strong, fleet buck by continually cutting across on him, by playing into each other's way, or by driving the quarry to water.

But there was a power which was destined to intervene between the little herd of Hans Peterson and the wolves, and that was the great reindeer herd of the Lapp, towards which the wise old hind was leading her little band.

Fifteen minutes' more hard running, in which time the gray pack had narrowed the gap between themselves and the fleeing reindeer considerably, then they sighted the stragglers of the great herd.

The old hind once more quickened the pace at which she led her small band, and the wolves in turn quickened their pace to try to overtake them before they should reach this haven. There was a desperate race for a few minutes,

but the wise old deer led her little band into the great circle of the Lapp's reindeer, with perhaps a hundred yards to spare, and they were safe for the time being.

The great herd had evidently gotten wind of the wolves, for they were formed ready for battle.

The wise old buck who led them had, like a good general, chosen his battleground well. His herd was assembled upon a plateau perhaps three acres in extent, where there was no chance for ambush or flank attack. Here the enemy must attack immediately in front or not at all.

It was as desolate a sight as could well be imagined; the dreary, lifeless tundra, with all the weed tops fringed with snow. All the verdure that the barrens had boasted in summer-time was departed. The wind swept across the broad expanse pitilessly. The moon and the stars looked down upon the scene coldly, while

the two thousand restless, anxious forms of the reindeer, in their gray coats, were more like ghosts than real, fear-haunted animals.

The herd was formed in a great circle, perhaps a hundred yards across, with the hinds and the fawns in the middle and the bucks on the outside. They stood like good soldiers, shoulder to shoulder, with their sharp-pronged antlers at "bayonet-charge," their eyes red with the lust of battle, and flashing with anger.

Whenever a terrified fawn broke away from its dam and ran belling hither and thither, it was promptly driven back to the center of the herd.

A cloud of steam, like a great shroud, stood above the herd, while every pair of nostrils sent forth its jet of white steam.

When the gray pack pressed close to one side of the circle it would bend in at that point, and the whole herd would surge away from the gray danger.

The wolves continually rushed the herd at different points, seeking to stampede the compact body, knowing they could pick up some of the stragglers if they could break up the formation.

Occasionally a buck would become terrified and run hither and thither, creating panic in the whole herd.

Once, after the gray pack had rushed the line of bucks in the circle and nearly broken through, a small simle became frantic with the scent of the wolves, and, after running about the circle several times, sprang clear over the outer fringe of bucks and started across the tundra.

She ran almost into one of the gray sentinels who had been posted for just that purpose. With a great leap he was upon her, and the second snap he got the throat-grip, and dragged her to earth.

From a small hillock, where he and his

mother stood at the center of the circle, Little Lightfoot saw the gray pack swarm over the luckless hind and bear her to earth, never to rise again.

All night long, while the silent, pitiless moon and the cold stars looked down upon this battle between horns and fangs, the gray pack hovered on the outskirts of the herd. Two fawns they got, in addition to the foolish simle, and were well paid for the night's hunt.

For three days the wolves hovered about the reindeer herd, but were finally driven away by the Lapp herdsmen, who came to the assistance of the reindeer.

Then it was that the little herd of Hans Peterson was parted from the large herd, and started southward; and the following day they trotted into Peterson's own farm domains, where they were safe from the wolves, as they did not venture so close to the farmed lands.

It was not until the mistress saw Little Light-foot, and he learned to come to the shed door and eat from her hand, that he received the name by which we have called him in this chapter.

### III

#### THE HOME OF THE REINDEER

ABOUT two weeks after Hans' long and desperate race against death, which cost the life of the brave old Varsimle, a remarkable reindeer outfit drove up to Hans' little cottage.

The pulk was drawn by two reindeer, instead of one, driven tandem. They were very large and sleek. Their condition reflected well the esteem in which they were held by their master.

The buckles on the harness were pure silver, and glistened in the sunlight, while a silver rail ran clear around the pulk.

The man who sat in the pulk was dressed in a beautiful fur coat, his head surmounted by a tall fur cap of sable skin, and his whole attire bespoke the gentleman. It was none other than

Anders Poulsen, the richest of all the Lapps, and his business was to see if he could buy any reindeer from the fine strain owned by Hans Peterson. The feat of the faithful hind in covering three hundred miles in forty-eight hours was the talk of northern Norway, and the Lapp was very keen to pick up all the fleet reindeer stock in the country.

When he made his errand known to Hans, the young man looked very grave. Little Lightfoot was the only immediate offspring of the Varsimle that he possessed, and to sell him after what his mother had done for the Peterson family seemed like betraying him and a breach of fidelity to his dam.

But young Peterson needed money. There was a new mouth to feed. And there had been considerable cost in connection with little Johanna's advent into the world, besides the fee of the great surgeon, and that had been appalling to the young Norwegian.

For a long time he hesitated, for he well knew that once the Lapp set eyes upon the fawn he would not rest until he had secured him.

So finally, after debating all the pros and cons in his own mind, Hans sorrowfully led the way to the shed where the fawn was kept.

One look at the wonderful fawn was enough for the Lapp. His eyes glistened, and his usually stolid face for once showed excitement. He nodded his head with approval.

Then a more cautious manner was adopted. He walked about the fawn, poking him in side and shoulder, and shaking his head.

But Hans had noted the Lapp's first start and look of triumph on seeing the fawn, and gauged his price accordingly.

To sell Little Lightfoot was like selling one of the family, especially since the mistress had taken such a liking to him; but money they must have. Hans thought of the pale mother

and the wee face against her breath. Thinking of them, he smothered his own liking for the fine animal, and, weighing everything in the balance, decided to sell.

After considerable bargaining the Lapp counted out five gold pieces into the hand of Hans.

To the poor young farmer it was a king's ransom, but he saw it through a fringe of mist upon his eyelashes. He loved his reindeer even as the Lapp did, and this particular strain meant so much to him and his family. But the bargain was concluded.

Poor Hans stroked the sleek sides and rubbed the nose of the fawn for the last time, and the Lapp took possession of him.

He tied a long thong of deerskin about his neck and tied the other end to the horns of one of his reindeer.

Then he nodded to Hans, slapped his reindeer on the side with the one rein which is

all that is ever used by a Lapp, and they were off to the natural home of the reindeer: the land of creeping glaciers and beetling mountains, dark and forbidding.

Little Lightfoot had never been halter-broken. He had come and gone just as he wished since being on the farm, so he took his loss of freedom very much to heart.

At first he sulked back against the rein and threw himself. The old reindeer paid no attention to this tantrum, but simply trotted forward, dragging him in the snow. This was very harsh treatment for a fawn who had always had his own way and never been restrained, but as he was in danger of having his head pulled off, and was being cut by the crust, he quickly got to his feet and trotted along by the side of the old reindeer, just as though he had been her own fawn instead of a stranger.

The Lapp laughed. The fawn had been so

quick to discover his mistake that it greatly pleased him. Usually these young deer were rather stupid, and did not learn quickly, even through harsh treatment. Here was a fawn that would in time prove a wonder and well worth the five glittering gold pieces.

For two or three hours Little Lightfoot trotted easily along by the reindeer team; but as they went northward the snow grew deeper and deeper and the traveling became more difficult.

Finally the Lapp took pity on the fawn and, throwing him, tied his legs and put him upon the pulk in front of him. This was the way they journeyed up into the land of the Lapp, the home of the glacier and the beetling mountain, the cold, inhospitable land of the tundra, and the high mountains beyond.

For the Lapps are nomads and land's-end people. They have no fixed home, but wander where the pasturage is best.

The poorer farmers south of the tundra are constantly encroaching upon the free lands and driving the Lapp further and further north. Now they have taken up the custom of gathering the reindeer moss for their cattle and stacking it up like hay, so the Lapp must seek higher and higher altitudes for his great herds.

The reindeer of Scandinavia, Russian Lapland, and Finland now number about four hundred thousand, and they will probably never be more numerous in that country, as the poor farmer is driving the Lapp towards the snow-line.

But the future of the reindeer is not wholly concerned with Scandinavia, for there is a great natural feeding ground for these wonderful deer in America. There is room for ten million reindeer in Alaska, where their own gray-green moss grows just as freely as in Norway, and there is room for fifty million in

the Canadian Northwest. Some day these great natural reindeer pastures will be swarming with millions of deer, and their meat will be for sale in every market in the United States and Canada.

Lapland, the home of the Lapp who must always be regarded as the domesticating genius of the reindeer, is a long, narrow country lying along the bleak shores of the Arctic and Atlantic oceans, and along the White Sea. It is formed by taking the northern end of Norway and Sweden, a piece from Finland, and a slice of Russia. So you see it is not a country by itself with a government, but a portion of several countries. It is merely the country that the Lapps inhabit.

It is a high-lying plateau, surmounted by frowning mountains, whose tops are never quite free from snow.

This is partly because this land of the Lapps extends as far north in Russia as the Arctic

Circle, while the whole of the country lies well above the temperate zone.

Down the sides of these mountains, for several months each year, the glaciers are continually slipping and sliding on their way to the sea. The valleys between these mountains are deep, and much warmer than the mountaintops, and the Lapp takes advantage of this, keeping his herds in the sheltered valleys.

There are three kinds of Lapps—the Fisher Lapps, the Forest Lapps, and the Mountain Lapps.

The Fisher Lapps live by the sea, and get most of their living from fishing. The Forest Lapps live in or near the forest, while the Mountain Lapps live for the better part of the year in the mountains. These latter are the people whose living comes entirely from the reindeer, just as the American Indian lived entirely upon the bison.

The villages in Lapland are very small, only

a few hundred people, and it takes very little to cause a village to entirely disappear.

Most of the land is held by rich Lapps, who do not really own it, but have wandered for so long over the same territory that they have established a sort of ownership which is recognized by fellow-Lapps. Such a Lapp mogul will have a series of camping-places, at which he will spend a few weeks each year, perhaps making the round in a year's time.

The reindeer of such a man often number several thousand head, and he has many herdsmen and poorer Lapps to follow his camp and work for him.

In the wintertime the Lapp moves often, as the feed for the herd is scarce, so he rarely stays more than a week in a place. In May he turns his reindeer loose to run, for a time, wild, and the young are born early in June. In July he is busy making cheese and butter—putting in a supply for winter. In August the

deer-flies often become so troublesome that the herdsmen again round up the reindeer and drive them away to the mountains.

This herding process is accomplished by catching one of the deer and putting a bell upon it, just like the bellwether in a flock of sheep. The rest of the herd follow the bell, and by leading the bell-reindeer the whole herd is controlled.

After the first frost in September has killed the deer-flies and the gnats, the herd is again turned loose, and wanders at will, until the snows get so deep that it is again necessary to guide them to the best feed.

It was to one of these great herds owned by the mountain Lapp Anders Poulsen, a mogul among his fellows, that Little Lightfoot was journeying.

He did not like being bound by deer-thongs, as they made his legs ache and cramped him; but the Lapp often leaned over and patted him,

so he knew he intended him no harm. Finally his new owner loosened the thongs and left him nearly free, while he threw the end of a blanket over his head, and soon he fell asleep.

For a whole day and a half of another they journeyed up into the land of the Lapp, while the snows grew in depth and the air in keenness.

At last they reached the temporary headquarters of the Lapp, which were in a deep valley, and here the thongs which tied Little Lightfoot were loosed, and he was set free.

He was so stiff from the long ride in the cramped position that at first he could hardly stand upon his legs, but his nimbleness soon came back to him, and he frisked and capered about just to try out his joints and to show the scores of reindeer that he saw standing all about what a really lively fawn could do.

From that time on Little Lightfoot was merely one of a thousand, a unit in the great

herd. Occasionally his master sought him out to see how he was getting on, but aside from that he was left to fight his own battles and get along the best he could.

Little Lightfoot's chief trouble at this time came from being so large for his age. All the yearlings in the herd mistook him for a yearling. This put him in the position of having to fight an unequal battle. He was continually being pushed about by the yearlings, all of whom wanted to engage in butting matches with him.

Although he was large, he was not hardened as were the yearlings, and his strength had not come to him; but he was pushed and butted about unmercifully.

The calves he could push and hustle about as freely as the yearlings did him, so he got even with fate by butting them for all the buttings he received at the hands of the yearlings.

It was very interesting for him to watch a

buck digging in the snow for reindeer moss. It seems almost incredible that these hardy animals can sustain life at all when there is three or four feet of snow upon the ground, but they can, and keep sleek all the time.

The buck would select a spot where his intuition told him the moss was luxuriant, and then he would go after it like a dog after a woodchuck. He would dig away the snow with his horns and hoofs, making it fly like a good snow-shoveler.

Further and further down he would go, until at last he was almost standing on his head and the hole was three or four feet deep.

All this time the hinds would be standing about watching their lord, for they make him unearth their breakfast for them.

At last the violent twitching of the buck's tail would tell them that he had found moss. Then they would drive him away and appropriate the hole for themselves.

It is a peculiarity of the deer when feeding that the tail always twitches, so that in all the sign languages of the American Indians the sign for deer is made by holding up the index finger and wiggling it.

Little Lightfoot had watched the bucks digging in the snow for a couple of days before he discovered what it all meant. All the deer family are very curious. If they do not know what an object is, they will circle about it, coming nearer and nearer until they discover. It is because of this curiosity that the deer can be shot by the process known as wigwagging. The hunter lies in the grass and waves a cap or a flag above the grass tops. The deer circles about until it comes within range.

So Little Lightfoot finally went and looked into one of the deep holes and saw that there was reindeer moss at the bottom. He was very hungry, so he went sprawling down after it. He had partly satisfied his hunger when he was

ruthlessly dispossessed of his finding by a belligerent hind who literally lifted him upon her antlers and tumbled him out of the hole.

The same hind, later on in the day, discovered that he was a fawn. This was when he tried to get his supper at her udder. And as she had lost her own fawn the week before she adopted Little Lightfoot, and after that, with his foster-mother to look out for him, things were more to his liking.

One great bully there was among the yearlings who seemed to have a special grudge for Little Lightfoot. He was no match for the yearling, who was about twice his weight, so his only recourse was in flight, and he kept out of the bully's way; but there was an occasional red light in the eye of the fawn which showed he could be filled with wrath even at his age.

One day he caught the bully just where he wanted him. He was looking into a deep hole

that a buck had dug in the snow while prospecting for moss.

Without a second's hesitation Little Lightfoot went at him behind like a battering ram, and as the bully was off his guard he sent him floundering to the bottom of the hole.

He did not run away even then, although his act had been a rash one, but stood guard above his enemy and butted him back as fast as he tried to get out.

This cured the bully of his antagonism, and after that Little Lightfoot had no more trouble from him.

It was a dreary, desolate life, this existence of the Lapp's reindeer, compared with the semi-domesticated life of Hans Peterson's little herd. Peterson's herd could always find shelter in the lea of buildings, or even in open sheds that he had built for them, but the reindeer of the Lapp were always out in the open. It was a question whether they slept more by day or

night. They were restless, and perhaps this was a habit they had formed, partly to keep warm, for they were always moving hither and thither.

Sometimes at night they would gather in small bunches huddled up together for warmth, with their backs to the wind.

In the daytime also they often gathered in small groups along the warm and sheltered slopes, and there they would stand dozing and chewing their cuds. But for the better part of the day they were always trying to grub out a living down under the snow-banks.

When the snow-banks at last partially melted and patches of half-frozen moss appeared above the snow, the herd seemed to take on a new interest in life.

Even the great, desolate, lonely tundra was glad in its cold, silent way, for now the catkins had been shaken out on the willow. Soon the pale, ethereal green leaves upon willow and

birch would appear, and the stunted flora would again gladden the land.

About the time when the first patches of green appeared the herd was turned loose and no longer controlled as it had been in the winter. Only Little Lightfoot and a few other choice yearlings—for he was now almost a yearling—were kept together.

Just about this time Anders Poulsen made a rather long journey to see some of his kinsmen among the Fisher Lapps, and this journey changed the whole subsequent life of Little Lightfoot.

The master had been with the Fisher Lapps about three days, and was thinking of returning, when a great vessel suddenly appeared off the little fishing village.

A boat soon put off, and American sailors came ashore.

It appeared that the boat was from the American revenue-cutter "Bear," and the of-

ficer in command of the small boat said that the cutter had been skirting the coast of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russian Lapland in search of some of the finest strains of reindeer to be had. He would pay good money.

His government was desirous of getting the best deer possible to improve a new herd in the barrens of Alaska.

The fisher kinsmen of Anders Poulsen at once told the officer of the celebrated hind that had made the wonderful run of three hundred miles in forty-eight hours, and also introduced the mountain Lapp as the owner of her offspring.

At first Anders Poulsen was obdurate. He had bought this strain to keep, but the officer of the "Bear" finally shook so many glittering gold pieces in his face as the price of the fawn that he yielded, and sold his favorite.

It was arranged that the cutter should pick up the fawn at a fishing town on the further

side of the peninsula, and Poulsen at once returned home to deliver the fawn.

Again Little Lightfoot went upon a long journey with the Lapp's splendid team of reindeer, driven tandem, but now he was large and strong enough to trot all the way by the side of the adult deer.

His pace was so free and easy and he had such a stride for a yearling that Poulsen was almost sorry when he saw the cutter's boat again coming ashore for the yearling.

But a bargain was a bargain, so he patted the fawn's sleek sides just as Hans Peterson had done a few months before, rubbed his nose, and pocketed the stranger's shining gold, for which man has betrayed so many of his friends.

They unceremoniously bound Little Lightfoot and threw him into the boat. He kicked and thrashed, but it was useless, so he at last lay still and looked with wide eyes across the

great water, while the boat rowed away to the cutter.

When they had reached the great ship's side the sailors let down a rope, a loop was fastened about the fawn's neck, another about his girth, and kicking and floundering he was dangled for a few seconds above the white sea, suspended between heaven and earth, but the next moment was sprawling upon the deck of the American revenue-cutter, a full-fledged American reindeer, bound on one of the most remarkable voyages that a wild animal ever took, outside a circus.

Before Little Lightfoot again set hoof on Mother Earth the ship saw many strange sights, for they were destined to half girdle the earth and sail in every clime.

## IV

### THE CRUISE OF THE "BEAR"

THE revenue-cutter "Bear," upon whose slippery deck Little Lightfoot now found himself dangling helplessly at the end of a rope, was a long, rakish ship, perhaps two hundred feet in length.

She was strongly built for service in the Arctic, and also made for speed, as she was one of Uncle Sam's policemen upon the high seas, and would often have to pursue poachers and smugglers.

She was narrow in the beam, and of considerable draught. There were three small guns mounted upon her forward deck, in case she had to use force in stopping miscreants upon the high seas.

But her duties as policeman often led her into many other vocations. Wherever she could do good in the behalf of Uncle Sam's citizens she was always willing to lend a hand.

She had just come from a long cruise along the Siberian coast, where she had been looking for some trace of a lost Arctic expedition. Scientists had thought that the expedition, although lost upon the American side of the pole, might drift to the Asiatic side, so the "Bear" was in search of any trace of the ship that would show how the expedition had perished.

She was also picking up reindeer for Uncle Sam's far-off territory of Alaska and recruiting the herd that Sheldon Jackson and other philanthropic men had dreamed of establishing in that country.

She had touched at a point in Russian Lapland, and had taken on several choice reindeer. It was from the Russian Lapps that the cap-

tain of the boat had heard of the celebrated reindeer of Norway, and especially the great herd of Anders Poulsen, the Lapp.

He had, therefore, sent a boat ashore, and the result had been that two days later Little Lightfoot was dangling at a rope's end on the deck of the "Bear," bound for far-away Alaska.

He was at once hustled unceremoniously into the reindeer quarters, which were aft and on the lower deck.

On the deck several stalls, or pens, had been built, each with a manger for reindeer moss and a bucket for water. The floor had been covered with sod, and it was altogether rather comfortable quarters for a calf or any more domesticated animal than a reindeer.

But these restless wild deer had been born and bred upon the vast, free tundra. The one thing that they had possessed above all others was space, and they took advantage of it, and

were continually wandering, to-day in one spot and to-morrow in another.

Even in the shed at Hans Peterson's, Light-foot could always caper out into the fields if he wished, but here the little reindeer was in prison, for what, he knew not. But he did know that he hated the cramped quarters of his pen and longed for the great herd of Poulsen, or better still for the free, glad days when he had run with his dam upon the tundra.

The "Bear" turned her sharp nose to the northwest and for several days was busy skirting the Scandinavian peninsula.

It was the last of May, but the ice was still running freely in these northern latitudes. She was constantly bumping against small cakes of ice which had been broken off from large bergs, and almost continually she plowed through slush. When the full sunlight fell upon these ice fields, and the ice caught the sunbeams and

broke them into all their prismatic colors, it was a wonderful sight.

After the "Bear" had rounded the peninsula, she came into the North Sea, and here the ice all disappeared, and the air, which had been cold because of the ice, became balmy.

It was while in the North Sea that the "Bear" stopped at a Dutch port, and received orders from the Navy Department.

These orders called her at once to the English Channel, where she joined herself to two colliers, and convoyed them as far as Gibraltar, on their way to the Philippines.

Then she bade farewell to her sister ships, and once more turned her nose westward, bound across the Atlantic.

She had been five or six days out of Queens-town, and was feeling her way along at half speed—as she was nearing the Grand Banks and the bergs were still running—when the

Marconi instrument at her mast began clicking away frantically.

It was an S.O.S. cry for help, flung over the dark expanse of the broad Atlantic, through the splendid genius of Marconi,—a message that would send as many ships as heard it to the right-about and head all their prows towards the ship in distress.

The “ Bear ” pointed her nose southward, towards 45-76, and put on full steam.

Black, gritty stokers and engineers worked frantically at the engine, and the long keel of the “ Bear ” slipped through the dark Atlantic at full speed, regardless of the black night, for a sister ship was in peril.

Soon a bright light glowed along the southern horizon, and all knew that their worst fears had been realized, that they were to be treated to that horrible spectacle—a burning ship at sea.

Nearer and nearer they drew to the scene of

the disaster, until at last they could see the flames shooting skyward at the bow of the ship.

When they came into the bright circle of light—for the fire illumined the sea for a mile about in every direction—they found other ships already standing by, and small boats were putting off to rescue the terrified passengers.

The following two hours were never forgotten by the crew of the "Bear," especially Billy, the cabin boy, whose tow hair fairly stood up in fright as he saw the frantic people quickly lowered into small boats, while the waves threatened to engulf them, and then the boats climb slowly up on the crest of the waves and battle their way back to their respective ships.

After two hours of this heartrending work, under the unearthly glare of the light from the burning ship, which made the faces of the men as they worked even more ghastly, the last passenger was taken off, and the "Bear," in com-

pany with three other vessels, stood by to see the doomed ship sink.

As the flames gained headway the bow of the ship settled more and more in the water, until the climax. This came about three hours after the "Bear" had received the wireless. Without much warning the vessel suddenly reared up her stern, while the flames shot three hundred feet into the sky in a splendid funeral pyre, and with a roaring, and hissing, and crackling of the burning hulk, she sank to a watery grave. How many fathoms beneath the boiling surface God only knew.

When the last vestige of the ship had disappeared, the "Bear" turned about and went upon her course towards Cape Sable, not forgetting to report the incident of the burning ship to the Navy Department by wireless.

She had only been upon her course a few hours when she received another wireless.

This time the message was not as tragic as it

had been before, for it read: "Icebergs reported off the Grand Banks. Patrol the northern lane until further orders."

So the faithful policeman of the high seas turned about again, and for six weeks went patiently back and forth in the northern lane off the Grand Banks, searching all the time with horn, and glass, and thermometer for that most dreaded of all perils at sea—the iceberg.

At the end of six weeks the bergs had ceased to run, and the "Bear" again went upon her way; but again she was not destined to proceed very far.

She was hailed off Cape Sable, and this time to go in search of smugglers. She touched in the night at a New Brunswick port, and took on board a United States marshal, and then for nearly a week stood off the coast between New Brunswick and Maine, watching for the prey.

Finally one night, when they had nearly given

up the search, the muffled panting of a small engine was heard near at hand.

Slowly the "Bear" crept forward, and then with her powerful searchlight did the trick. The smuggler tried to run, but a shot across her bow and another over her midship soon brought her about, and she was towed into Portland harbor, a prize for the government.

From this point the "Bear" proceeded on her way unmolested, until she reached a point off Cape Cod, and here the wireless again waylaid her.

A Cape town was having a great celebration and was to have some warships from the navy—a part of the North Atlantic squadron—for a naval parade, so the "Bear" was ordered to join the demonstration and help celebrate the birth of the old town. When this duty was over she once more started on her way for the Horn, en route to Alaska.

Off Old Point Comfort she was hailed and

ordered into Hampton Roads, to be inspected, and also for supplies.

Here another week was consumed before the "Bear" again went upon her way.

While in the Caribbean Sea she was hailed, this time from Key West, and had to turn about and rescue some American citizens who were bottled up in one of the Central American states in a revolution. When these unfortunates had been rescued and transferred to a passenger ship from Porto Rico to Boston, the "Bear" again resumed her course.

She was obliged to stop, however, at Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Ayres upon government business, so that it was not until late autumn that she finally rounded the Horn.

It may be well imagined that all this tedious sea voyage was anything but pleasant for the reindeer in their cramped quarters on the lower deck. A more complete change could hardly have been chosen for them, accustomed as they

were to the vast, lonely tundra of the Old World.

But Little Lightfoot felt it the least of all the herd, as he was a privileged animal on the ship because of the friendship of Billy, the cabin boy, who was also the son of the captain.

Billy was watching, all eyes, when the young reindeer had been pulled aboard that spring day on the White Sea, and from the moment that the forefeet of the fawn touched the deck he appropriated him for a pet and companion.

Used as the reindeer fawn had been to the petting of Olga, his Norwegian mistress, in the days when he was one of Hans Peterson's herd, he took most kindly to Billy, and licked his hand and butted at him playfully.

So all through this long voyage the friendship grew.

Whenever Billy was free to do so, he would steal away to the reindeer stalls, and fondle and talk to Lightfoot.

Finally he got permission from his father, the captain, to lead his four-footed friend about the ship, and the sailors, when they saw them coming, would always sing out, "Here comes Mary and her little lamb."

Billy soon discovered that the reindeer was nearly as nimble as a goat, and a rather good climber. After that they were likely to appear in any part of the ship.

Many of the sailors also became friends with Lightfoot, and he was finally adopted as the ship's mascot.

Billy also discovered that this four-footed friend was very partial to salt, and he was often caught stealing salt from the cook's galley for him.

He would tuck away much of his food in his pockets at mealtime, and steal away to the reindeer quarters to try it on Lightfoot.

Pastry the reindeer did not seem to care for,

but cereals, like oatmeal, he would eat, and also beans.

Billy developed his friend's butting habit by holding up a coat on a handspike for him to butt at by the half-hour.

He found that the reindeer could strike viciously with the forefeet when he had a mind, and likewise kick.

Although their play was often rather rough, because of the growing strength of the reindeer, it was always good-natured, for Lightfoot almost never showed any anger or temper.

While nearing the Horn a most surprising adventure befell Lightfoot, and one that nearly ended his eventful life.

Some of the highest waves to be found anywhere upon the Seven Seas are to be encountered near the Straits of Magellan, on the eastern side of the continent.

This may be partly due to the narrowness of the straits, or to the curved shape of the land,

but in either case some of the waves running near the southern end of the continent are fairly mountainous.

Little Lightfoot and Billy had been having a fine romp on the lower deck. The young reindeer now went almost anywhere upon the ship, except aloft. He would often be left to himself for an hour or two at a time, as everyone was on good terms with the mascot.

Billy had been romping with him, when their play was cut short by duties that called him to another part of the ship.

He went at once, forgetting to tie up the reindeer in his stall.

Half an hour later the lookout cried out, "Comber ahead; comber ahead."

The great wave was almost upon the ship before the warning was given, so each sailor, if he happened to be in an exposed place, caught hold of the nearest thing that bade fair to prove a good anchor.

The wave in question proved to be the very father of combers, and swept both the lower and upper decks, making a tremendous roaring and swashing, and leaving tons of water in the ship's hold.

When the great wave had passed, it was a bedraggled and sorry-looking set of sailors who counted noses and took an inventory of the damage.

A boat or two had been smashed and some loose things washed overboard, but no further damage done.

Things were settling down in their accustomed routine after the flurry, when Billy came running, wild-eyed and breathless, on deck.

“Where was Little Lightfoot? Where was Little Lightfoot?” He had left him upon the lower deck half an hour before, and he was not to be found.

The mate said he guessed the reindeer would turn up all right, and all hands turned to and

searched for him. But all to no avail. They scoured the ship from end to end, but no mascot was to be found.

The mate shook his head sorrowfully, and in answer to Billy's breathless appeal as to what had become of him pointed his finger over the side of the ship.

"He's been washed overboard, shipmate," he said kindly. "He's gone to feed the sharks."

Billy turned without a word, that they might not see the tears in his eyes, and the lump in his throat was so big he could not have spoken even if anything was to be said.

But there was nothing to say. His pet had gone to feed the fishes, as the mate had said, and it was all his fault. If he had been careful to tie him up when their romp was over, it never would have happened.

He went sorrowfully below, to be alone with his grief.

Half an hour later Billy went on deck, his heart heavy, and in a mood to see no one.

His foot had just touched the last step when he heard the ringing voice of his father calling from the bridge, "Reindeer ahoy! reindeer ahoy! Reindeer aloft, Billy."

It is safe to say that no other cabin boy ever made the distance from the lower deck to the captain's bridge in the time that Billy did.

When he reached the bridge, panting and pale, there, sure enough, was Little Lightfoot, where the great wave had lifted him, licking the salt water from his gray coat, and looking just as though nothing exciting had happened.

"Oh, shipmate!" cried the boy chokingly, throwing his arms frantically about the reindeer's neck, "I thought I had lost you."

Once more the rope-end was brought into play, and the reindeer, kicking and pawing the air, was lowered to the deck and safely tied in his stall.

No more exciting mishaps befell him during the long voyage.

The cutter had to stop at a port in Chili to take part in a revolution, and again in Central America to take some refugees away from a besieged city; but at last they reached the western coast of the United States.

It was now too late to make the remainder of the trip to Alaska, for navigation had closed a month before, so the reindeer were unloaded and cared for at a reindeer station in the State of Washington, and the cutter went about Uncle Sam's business in the Pacific.

Here for six months the young reindeer lived upon the fat of the land. He was confined in a corral of several acres, which seemed almost like the tundra, after the cramped stall in the ship.

But, best of all, he was attended, as were the rest of the herd, by two Lapps, whom the United States Government kept at this station just for

the purpose; and who knows the wants of the reindeer better than the Lapp?

There were tons of bagged reindeer moss, and barley, and rye, tasting just as delicious as though it had been raised in old Norway.

Lightfoot grew like the proverbial weed, his coat became sleek, and during the latter part of his stay in the corral he began putting out two small knobs. You might have wondered what they were, but Lightfoot would have told you, had he been able to talk English, that they were going to be horns—his very first.

Finally, early in May, when that great fleet of Alaskan boats point their noses northward, and shake off the sloth of winter, the "Bear" came steaming into the harbor of Seattle.

She loaded with supplies for teachers and government agents away in the frozen North, and last of all loaded her consignment of reindeer, and started upon the last leg of her long cruise.

She went by the inland passage, and, stopping at Juneau and Sitka, left some supplies at the Aleutian Islands, and then was off for Nome.

She was full early, and had to break her way towards the end of her journey.

It was almost the first of July before she reached Teller, Alaska.

When the morning for unloading the reindeer came round there was one individual on the "Bear" who was anything but glad, and that was Billy. In fact, he was down in Lightfoot's stall, with his arms about the reindeer's neck, laying his cheek for the last time against the face of his animal friend.

"Good-by, old shipmate," he blubbered as the Eskimo herders came down to the stables, to take the reindeer ashore. "We've been good pals, and I hate to let you go."

Lightfoot in his turn rubbed his nose against the boy's cheek and licked his hands.

## V

### BARREN FOR TUNDRA

FIVE years have now elapsed from that eventful day in the career of Little Lightfoot when the revenue-cutter "Bear" set him down at the reindeer receiving station at Teller, Alaska.

Since that day he has had an eventful life, as the life of a reindeer goes, but through all its vicissitudes he has grown both in stature and strength, until to-day he is the largest, strongest, and fleetest reindeer in the New World.

But stranger than all this is the fact that once again he is the property of Hans Peterson, whose fawn he was when he ran with his dam upon the tundra of northern Norway.

Just how all this came about I will tell later on; but now I wish to turn aside and show what

it was that caused Lightfoot to be purchased by the captain of the revenue-cutter "Bear" and taken so far from his native tundra.

In the year 1892 Sheldon Jackson, who was then general superintendent of education in Alaska, imported the first herd of reindeer ever seen in this country. There were only sixteen head in this little herd, which was brought from Siberia and placed at Unalaska, one of the Aleutian Islands.

The reason for Sheldon Jackson's strange innovation was this:

About thirty thousand Eskimos and Indians were in danger of starvation in Alaska. Steam whalers were penetrating further and further northward, driving their prey before them. The gasoline schooner was devastating the walrus herds, while the firearms of the whites were making the caribou and moose harder and harder to obtain.

Not only was the poor Eskimo losing his

food, but also the whalebone, walrus tusks, and pelts, which were his sole means of barter, both with the trading-posts and with his neighbors across in Siberia. Up to that time all the reindeer skin worn in Alaska had been purchased from native tribes in Siberia.

If something could not be done for the Eskimo he would have to be fed by the government or starve; hence Sheldon Jackson's experiment.

The little herd was a success from the start, and in 1894 the government took the matter in hand. Six thousand dollars was the first appropriation per annum, but it has subsequently been increased to twenty-five thousand.

The government loaned the revenue-cutter "Bear" for the importation of the deer, and for the ten years from 1892 to 1902 fifteen hundred and sixty-five deer were imported.

From this nucleus the herds have increased to thirty-three thousand six hundred and ten

head, and the number of reindeer stations from the receiving station at Teller, Alaska, to forty-five stations. These stations are placed all the way from Point Barrow, on the north, to Lake Iliamna, on the south, and from the Tanana River, on the east, to Bering Sea, on the west—an area of four hundred thousand square miles. Nearly all this land is “barren,” as it is called in this country and “tundra” in the Old World.

The government agents have trained Eskimo boys not only to herd and break the deer, but also to care for them in every way.

The first teachers employed for the Alaskan Eskimos were the Siberians from whom the reindeer were purchased. But these men proved rather sullen and unwilling to impart their information, partly because they knew they would ultimately lose the trade from Alaska, so the government finally turned to the pleasant and willing Lapps, who have made a

science of reindeer raising and who understand it as none other.

The Eskimo reindeer apprentice must be able to read and write and to keep herd accounts. At the end of the first year this boy is given eight deer, and at the end of the second year the same. The two following years he is given ten deer per annum, so at the end of five years, with the natural increase, he has a herd of fifty deer, which are his own property, worth anywhere from twenty-five to forty dollars per head.

The ownership of reindeer is kept entirely in the hands of the natives. No white man can purchase a female deer.

The reindeer has been used some for pack purposes in Alaska, but not as extensively as in Siberia.

The Eskimo herdsman lives in a log cabin for nine months of the year—during the long Arctic winter—near to the favorite feeding-

ground of the herd. Two boys usually tend a herd of a thousand. They are assisted by a little deer-dog that has also been imported from Lapland for the purpose. He helps with the herding just as a sheep-dog helps with the sheep.

The most striking results from the introduction of reindeer into Alaska are yet to come. The four hundred thousand square miles of tundra in that country is capable of feeding ten million deer, while the correspondingly much larger area of barrens in British America will feed perhaps forty million head. With this mighty herd adding to the meat supply of the continent, what economic advantages might be obtained, all because of Sheldon Jackson and his little herd of sixteen deer.

While Lightfoot had been fighting the battles of a reindeer buck in the Alaskan herd—battles under the Arctic night, which often ended in the death of one of the assailants—a remarkable

chain of circumstances had befallen his former master, Hans Peterson, who, with his family, had come to cast in his fortunes with the reindeer people in Alaska.

It had come about quite naturally, although it seemed so strange. Hans had long wished to get away from the worn-out farm in northern Norway, and he thought the New World offered better opportunities for a young giant like himself who was willing to work.

Especially had he been attracted by the stories of gold to be gained by the hardy and the courageous in Alaska.

So when he received a letter, some five years after the event that started the fawn upon his world-girdling trip, from a cousin in Minnesota, saying that he had been commissioned by the United States Government to select ten reliable men from among the Lapps or Norwegians to help in the work of training and

caring for the deer in Alaska, he was naturally much excited.

The pay was good, when compared with the meager living he obtained from the farm, and besides it would bring him close to the gold fields, so the position was accepted.

The farm in Norway was sold, together with the reindeer and most of the personal belongings of the family, and within a month from the time of the receipt of the letter they were on their way to America, full of enthusiasm and hope.

They did not take the long and tedious route which the fawn had traveled before them, but went straight to New York by a North German-Lloyd steamship, then by rail to Seattle, and from there by steamship again to St. Michaels, at the mouth of the Yukon River. At this point they transferred to one of the flat-bottom river steamers plying on the Yukon, which in turn landed them at Nulato, where there was

a reindeer station, a Roman Catholic Mission, and a public school.

Here they lived in a little log cabin in a sheltered valley upon a small creek, a tributary of the Yukon.

Hans Peterson's new occupation was that of superintendent of instruction in the herding and breeding of the reindeer in the Yukon district, his territory comprising about ten reindeer stations scattered over a very wide area.

These trips often covered hundreds of miles over hard trails, and much of the time during the most inclement weather. He was used to the Norway winters, so the Arctic winters of Alaska had no terrors for him, but it was often very lonely for Olga and little Johanna while he was away.

His meeting with the reindeer that he had sold five years before in Norway to Anders Poulsen, the Lapp, was as astonishing as it was

welcome, and in keeping with the strange events of this story.

He had gone over to the Roman Catholic Mission for supplies and for the mail, where he made the acquaintance of Father Adelbert, a Roman Catholic priest. Naturally the talk drifted to the subject of reindeer, and Hans told with pride of the celebrated strain of deer that he had bred in Norway, which he believed the largest and fleetest deer that ever drew a pulk.

“Speaking of Norway deer,” said the good man, “would you like to see the fleetest and largest deer in Alaska? He too is descended from famous Norway stock.”

Hans was all excitement, although rather incredulous as to this deer, so the missionary led the way to the small open shed at the back of his cabin, where he often kept the deer tied, ready for a trip.

Hans's eyes fairly glistened as they took in

the fine animal, tall, subtle, sleek, and with muscles as hard as rawhide.

He was fully a hand taller and fifty pounds heavier than any reindeer Hans had ever seen, and he wanted him for his own at the first glance.

“ There is a story connected with this deer,” said the father, rubbing the nose of the animal affectionately, “ although I have never more than half believed it. It is said that his dam was driven three hundred miles in forty-eight hours, to save human life, and at the end of the journey fell dead.

“ The captain of the revenue-cutter ‘ Bear ’ heard of this wonderful strain about five years ago while he was cruising along the Norway coast and purchased him of a Lapp named Anders Poulsen.”

A great lump filled the throat of Hans Peterson at these words, and, rough man that he was, tears coursed down his cheeks. He had never

been comfortable about the selling of the fawn, and Olga, his wife, and little Johanna, whom he had told much of the famous fawn, had also wished that they might have kept it.

“The story is all true,” said Hans, after a long pause in which neither man spoke. “I was the man who drove the hind three hundred miles in forty-eight hours, and I sold the fawn to Poulsen. I was poor and needed the money or I would never have done it.

“It seemed like betraying him after what his dam had done.

“There will be joy in my cabin on the Yukon if you will sell me the deer. I want him more than you can possibly know. I will give you twice what he is really worth.”

Father Adelbert considered. This deer was not much more to him than any other good reindeer, although he was a fine specimen. Perhaps these people had the first claim on him.

So after some further parley the purchase

was concluded, and Lightfoot was once more the property of his first master, Hans Peterson.

As Hans had predicted, there was joy in the little log cabin on the Yukon that night when he related the wonderful story to Olga and little Johanna, while the deer, munching moss in the lean-to shed at the rear of the cabin, was also well content, for there was something about this new master that appealed to him. His touch on the rein and his voice when he spoke were both sympathetic. The starbuck had found his master, and was content.

## VI

### THE RESCUE OF THE FOUR HUNDRED

THE new life of the Petersons was very strange to them in many ways. They had lived in a northerly latitude in Norway, but it was far south of their present home on the banks of the Yukon.

They had had friends and acquaintances in Norway, but here everyone was a stranger, though these New World adventurers and pioneers did not stand on ceremony. They were "hail fellow well met." To meet a man once was to be well acquainted with him, and friendship of a few hours' duration often cemented lifelong ties.

The town boasted only two dozen log houses, besides the Mission buildings, the schoolhouse, the trading-post, and the fort, where soldiers

were sometimes quartered, but which was more often empty.

Olga did not wish to send little Johanna to the Mission school, so she taught her at home. She was a fine story-teller, one who could draw upon the imagination when necessary, so on tedious winter nights when Hans was away on long trips the two would sit by the cheerful wood stove while the mother told the little girl stories, and very often they turned with wistfulness to the old days in Norway, with fine old Norse folktales, which always delighted the little girl.

For their special friends they had Father Adelbert, the Catholic priest and head of the Mission; two Indian teachers at the school—nice boys who had been trained for the work at the Indian school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania—the factor of the trading-post, and two or three officials of the Alaska Commercial Company, who attended to the receiving and sending of

freight by the river boats. But these were all they could really call friends, although everybody was on speaking terms with everyone else in such a community.

The one event in the monotonous life of the little town was the coming of the river boats. Then everybody, from the oldest man to the youngest woman, hastened down to the wharves and gazed, fascinated, at the great, noisy river boat. It was as motley a crowd that gathered at the wharves on these occasions as you could find anywhere on Mother Earth.

There were whites who hailed all the way from Maine to California, Indians who had come down the river in their canoes, and Eskimos who had come up in their kyaks, with a sprinkling of silent huskies, all eager and alert, half-starved scavengers, watching for what they might steal.

In the summertime the huskies are turned

loose and left to hang about the camp or town and shift for themselves.

Their owners rarely feed them, and consequently they degenerate into thieves, ready to snatch anything they can lay teeth upon.

For this reason all provisions and supplies in Alaska are usually kept in a little house which is set upon posts eight or ten feet from the ground.

Plain box coffins are also frequently placed in the same way, but not wholly because of the dogs. In this portion of Alaska the subsoil never thaws out, but is frozen down for hundreds of feet. For this reason it is sometimes very hard to dig a grave, so the whites often resort to the Indian custom of placing the body upon a platform above the reach of wolves and huskies.

During the first winter of their stay in Alaska Hans Peterson received a duty call that carried him upon one of the most trying and

dangerous trips he had ever experienced up to that time, although, in after years, he had many close calls in this land of hardship and adventure.

He was down at the trading-post, enjoying a pleasant evening with the factor, when their exciting game of cribbage was interrupted by the hasty entrance of two frost-covered, panting Eskimos, and after them scrambled a pitiful, limping, half-starved dog-team. Both men and dogs were nearly "all in."

They brought a letter from Mr. D——, the general superintendent of education for the United States in Alaska, and this letter set everyone in the little town into the wildest excitement.

Eight whaling vessels were locked in the ice north of Point Barrow, and five hundred American sailors were in a starving condition. Relief must be had immediately if they were not to starve.

Hans Peterson was ordered to gather at once all the available reindeer at the station, and to begin with the least possible delay a march of a thousand miles across the desolate, congealed tundra, bringing meat upon the hoof in the form of his reindeer herd to the starving sailors.

It was a trip that might well make the stoutest heart to quail. The barren tundra was covered with snow two or three feet deep on the level, and in places the drifts were twenty feet deep where a thick clump of willows, perhaps, had caught the snow and lodged it. Much of the way they would have to carry firewood, as the small green willows were the only firewood available on the mighty, cheerless, lifeless expanse.

They would have to tramp afoot twenty or thirty miles a day, with the snow anywhere from the knee to the thigh, often with the wind blowing violently, and with the thermometer

from thirty to fifty and sixty degrees below zero.

But the worst thought of all to Hans was that he would have to leave Olga and little Johanna for the rest of the winter alone in the log cabin, and also that haunting possibility that he might leave his bones upon the pitiless, desolate tundra, and thus leave them to fight out their remainder of life's battles alone.

But Hans was a brave man, and his wife Olga was a brave woman. With her arms about his neck and tears streaming down her cheeks, she bade him go at once and have no thought of them, but to remember the starving sailors. They would be all right.

So Hans hastily gathered together a herd of one hundred deer, selecting only bucks, secured the services of two Eskimo herders to help in driving, and started off across the Yukon upon this perilous, desperate race with starvation.

Hans went ahead, taking their course by the compass, as they traveled far from the mountains, so the compass was their only guide. Close behind him followed the "bell-deer," a fine old buck. The rest of the herd straggled after them, while the two Eskimos came behind with the sledge on which was the camp equipment. This consisted of a deerskin tent, a small sheet-iron stove, coffee-pot and frying-pan, coffee, pepper, salt, and sugar, but very little other provision. They would live out of the herd by killing a deer every few days.

The Eskimos took turns in driving the sled deer and driving the herd. The deer, which were very hungry, continually scattered out to feed. Whenever they came to a portion of the tundra where the wind had swept it clean of the snow and the moss was plenty, it was almost impossible to get them to make the distance agreed upon for the day's march. But the

herdsmen were greatly aided by two queer little deer-dogs which Hans had brought with him all the way from Norway. The Eskimos called them "Snap" and "Snarl."

Hans and the Eskimos found it very much more efficacious themselves to bark when trying to head off refractory deer than to shout, so there was sometimes a continuous chorus of the barking of the two dogs and the three men. Often the men barked until they were fairly hoarse by night when the hard day's work was done.

The deer did most of their feeding, however, at night, and they often strayed three or four miles away from camp. Then in the morning the Eskimos would go in search of the herd and round it up for the day's march while Hans got breakfast.

Hans always planned to camp by one of the sluggish creeks which flow from the mountains to the sea, crossing the barrens at right angles.

They were usually fringed with willows, and these offered all the shelter there was to be had from the biting winds.

They could also get water from the creek.

In half an hour after the camping-place had been selected they would have the snow cleared away and the tent up and tied down to the stems of the willows; even this was not always sufficient to keep the tent over their heads. Then the little sheet-iron stove would be set up, with the stovepipe thrust out through a slit in the tent, and they would start the fire from some willow fagots they had dried the night before, and also get new willow to dry for the next night.

Hans understood very little Eskimo and the Eskimos very little English, so it was usually a silent meal of fried deer meat and tea, varied by having coffee for breakfast and dinner. Coffee seems to be a staple with these pioneers; whether they be miners or trappers, on the

trail or in camp, they must always have coffee, if they can get it.

It took them four days to make the one hundred miles to Battles, and here they were joined by another white man, Mr. Anderson, from the Mission, and two more Eskimo herdsmen.

The Battles party also added a hundred deer, with another tent and outfit. This would be their full quota until they should reach Point Rodney and Cape Prince of Wales, where another herd was to join them.

It was not until after they left Battles and struck off into the unbroken, lifeless, endless barrens, with five hundred miles of desolation between them and Cape Prince of Wales, that the full significance of the journey was realized by Hans.

Away and away stretched the desolate waste. The only sign of vegetation was an occasional clump of willows in a moist spot. Frequently they would come to a lake of two or three miles

across, where they would make good time, for the deer could not feed while the going was good.

But even on the lakes there would often be a thin skin of ice over the thicker ice, and between them three or four inches of slush. Here the sledges ran harder even than on snow.

The fourth night out, when they had covered about one-fifth of the distance to Cape Prince of Wales, the wind came up and blew very violently. It was with difficulty that they could pitch the tent. When they tried to start a fire the wind continually unjointed the stovepipe and filled the tent with smoke, so one of the Eskimos finally stood by the pipe and held it together at the joint.

A half-cooked supper was eaten at last, and they went early to bed. The deer-dogs whined and whimpered so persistently at the tent flap that they were let into the tent; but they concluded the tent was colder than out of doors,

so they went outside and burrowed in the snow as usual.

The Eskimos were soon snoring, but the violent gusts of wind made Hans nervous. At last he dozed off, but was soon aroused by a more violent gust than usual, and waked just in time to see the wind lift the tent on the windward side, and with a crack like the flapping of a sail in a stiff breeze the tent was gone.

Hans had just presence of mind enough to grab at a corner as it disappeared over his head, and as good luck would have it he held on.

Out into the darkness he went, tumbling down and rising again, fighting like a madman to keep possession of the end of the tent, which continually bellied and flapped as the howling, demoniacal wind caught it.

Finally he managed to bring the squirming, writhing thing down in the snow, and sat upon it. Then with frantic bellowing he guided the two Eskimos to the spot, and together the three

half-dressed men dragged the flapping, unwieldy tent back to the camping-place; but try as they would it was impossible, in their half-frozen state, to get it back in place, so they crawled back into their sleeping-bags, with the tent partly under them and partly over them, and slept out the rest of the wretched night.

But the very worst of their troubles came three days later, when they had covered over half of the distance to Cape Prince of Wales.

About two o'clock in the afternoon a lowering cloud-bank appeared in the northwest, while on the tundra it seemed unusually calm. But there was a peculiar phenomenon, for little spirals of snow could be seen suddenly rising and winding heavenward in funnel shape. This without any wind, as though the snow was moved by some unseen hand. The Eskimos seemed much alarmed, and continually pointed to the cloud and talked among themselves. They also talked to Hans, and seemed to be try-

ing to explain something to him. He did not understand, and so they plodded on.

But in half an hour's time it had grown so dark that they could not proceed further, so they halted and started to make camp. They had barely scraped away the snow when the "poorge" (or Russian blizzard) was upon them in all its fury.

It blew so fiercely that they did not dare to put up the tent. Some of the gusts were so violent that several of the reindeer that had huddled together in a scared bunch near the camp were blown over upon their sides and left kicking and sprawling in the snow.

The wind increased to almost a tornado, so the men lay down in the snow and clung to the roots of the stunted willows to keep from being blown away.

And added to this was the fact that the mercury fell rapidly, so they were in danger of freezing if it kept up for long.

Occasionally there were bits of ice like hail in the wind, and it cut the face like a knife. Both Hans and the Eskimo were bleeding freely on their faces.

Finally one of them lifted his head to see if the wind had abated any. "Snap," one of the deer-dogs, was whimpering nearby, where he had managed to lodge himself in a clump of willows, but at that instant a cake of ice about the size of a man's fist came hurtling through the air, struck him squarely between the eyes, and he stretched out dead. His troubles were over.

After two hours of this fiendish, howling, swooping wind the storm abated, and the half-frozen men crawled out of their hiding and made camp.

That night they ate frozen deer meat, and went to bed without their hot tea, taking a pull at the flask that they carried for emergency instead.

The following morning when they came to round up the herd it was found that about fifty head had broken away and made a "bee-line" for the mountains, which at this point were about a hundred miles away. They followed them for half a day, thinking to overtake them and bring them back, but had to go on without them.

To chronicle the desperate trip further would be useless. It was too desolate, too monotonous. It was one dull round of trackless snow. The men tramped mile on mile, their legs aching, their feet heavy, constantly slipping in the snow or in the slush on the lakes, and if the snow had blown away on the barrens they constantly slipped on the "niggerheads," which were their worst menace. These are hard-knotted bunches of fern or brake-roots which bulge up here and there. They are as slippery as though greased, and they frequently strained their legs or sprained their ankles; but there

could be no cessation of travel, for somewhere in the frozen sea away to the north of Point Barrow four hundred men were starving for want of the meat they were driving to them on the hoof.

One morning, when they were only two days' journey from Cape Prince of Wales, where they were to be joined by another herd, a thought suddenly came to Hans that left him speechless and gasping and laid a blackness over the rest of the journey.

It was this: the reindeer who had drawn the sledge with their provision was the old-time Little Lightfoot, now the mighty buck—the faithful old starbuck, the fleetest deer in Alaska, his most priceless possession, whom he loved, after his family, the most of anything in the world.

Would the fine deer have to be sacrificed when he reached the starving sailors? Could he save him?

True, he was meat like the rest of them, but he was so much more than that. He was a comrade on a long journey, and a friend at all times. Hans would talk to him as though he had been human. He meant so much to the family. Then Hans fell to thinking of that desperate ride when the old hind had brought the surgeon to Olga and saved both the mother and child.

He could not let them kill him. But they would consider the deer only as another head. If they were starving, and if the starbuck stood between human life and starvation, then he could not say them nay. He could not protect the starbuck. He would have to let them kill him just like any other reindeer.

After this to Hans the journey was one long round of mathematics. How many reindeer would it take to feed four hundred starving sailors for ten months.

He thought and thought until his brain

ached and his heart was heavy, but he plodded wearily on. He must do his duty. They were starving, and the starbuck was only a deer.

While Hans and his companions are covering the rest of the weary miles let us turn aside and see what it was that sent them upon this desperate errand in which the fate of the old starbuck hung in the balance.

## VII

### MEAT! MEAT! MEAT! MEAT!

SOME five or six months before Hans Peterson and his companions started on their perilous march eight whaling vessels from San Francisco had been lying in Bering Sea, just off the Diamond Islands, waiting for a favorable wind to clear the straits of ice. At last it came, about the first of July, and they all pointed their noses northward and slipped up through the strait into the Arctic Ocean. Then they turned their bows eastward and skirted the northern coast of Alaska.

For the next two months they hurried in and out among the islands and through the straits and bays that fringe the northern coast of North America in search of whale. They

hunted all the way from Point Barrow to the mouth of the Mackenzie River.

Formerly they would not have had to venture so far north for whale; but the gasoline schooner had done its fatal work, and the whale in the Pacific were nearly extinct.

The season was only about three months long, so they hunted feverishly. They were on good terms with the Eskimos about the mouth of the Mackenzie and along the northern coast of Alaska, so they traded rifles and ammunition, clothes and provisions, for caribou meat and skins. They were specially glad to get the fresh meat, as it kept them from getting scurvy, as they might have had from a strictly salt-meat diet.

The catch had not been large, so they stayed until the last day of grace before heading their prows back towards the straits.

Even then they would have been in time had not an obstinate southwest wind sprung up at

just the wrong moment. It filled the straits with ice as they were about to enter, and packed it so thoroughly that they could not plow their way through.

They still hoped the wind would shift and free the passage, but obstinately it held southwest, and before they knew what was happening the great freeze had sealed the passage for nine months, and they were caught like rats in a trap.

There were two dangers that confronted them. One was starvation, as they had only about four months' provision, and the other was that the ice might crush their vessels in the spring when it broke up. They could abandon their ships and thus escape shipwreck if the worst came, but food they must have.

To get help by sea was out of the question, so they finally hired some of the Colville River Eskimos to carry word to Point Barrow. It could be sent from there by the reindeer mail

route to Teller, and perhaps help could be had from that quarter, although how it would come the sailors knew not.

The Eskimos had done their work well, as had the agents at Teller, and Hans Peterson and his companions were on the march with four hundred head of reindeer, among which was the old starbuck, the idol of the Peterson family.

It was now the middle of February, and the desperate sailors had been living upon half rations for the past two months, with just enough more left for another week.

They were pale, emaciated, and sullen—more like wolves than men. They rarely talked, and when they did it was of meat—red, bloody, juicy meat—meat that would satisfy the pangs of hunger that were gnawing their vitals out.

They hated the sight of each other, and old shipmates glowered savagely at one another. Many of them had scurvy.

Two had died, and several more were dangerously ill.

The one thing they needed was meat.

Word had been sent back from Point Barrow that their cry for help had been forwarded to Teller, and that a reindeer expedition was on the way.

For days half-frozen men had clung in the rigging of the different ships straining their eyes for the first sight of the long-promised herd.

It was a bitter-cold morning, and the wind howled and shrieked in the rigging of the ships, and sent all but the most hardy below.

Two forlorn salts stood by the wheel of the largest of the whalers and growled at each other like two polar bears. Their cheeks were sunken, their eyes were red and hollow, and they were desperate with hunger.

“Bill,” snarled the first, “when you looks

at me you allus looks just as though you wanted me to die so you could eat me.”

“ You are too durned lean an’ poor for me ter eat,” growled Jack. “ I’d eat you, though, quick enough if you would hev the goodness ter die.”

“ Now, Jack,” returned Bill, “ hain’t you and me been shipmates ever since we wuz kids an’ sailed on the ole ‘ Jerry Jordan ’ ? What’s the use of glowerin’ at each other like we was wolves? ”

“ I know it, shipmate,” replied Jack. “ Usual there ain’t nothin’ I wouldn’t do for you, but we hain’t ever been up agin no sech as this.

“ I tell you, Bill, I hain’t got no morals nor manner left. I am a wolf, or any other durned animal you air a mind ter mention.

“ Let’s go aloft an’ see ef we can’t make out that reindeer fleet they have been talking about for so many weeks. Seems ter me it is about

time they hove in sight, ef they air ever goin' to drop anchor in these here waters."

"Go along if you want ter," growled Bill. "There ain't no reindeer fleet. It was all a durned bluff."

Bill bit off a cud of tobacco from his last plug and chewed it savagely, while Jack went slowly aloft.

"It ain't no use, old shipmate," Bill shouted after him in a milder tone. "We air goin' ter starve, that is what's comin' ter us."

But Jack had barely reached the lookout and faced about to the south, when his ringing cry full of savage triumph was heard in every part of the ship, even above the shrieking of the wind:

"Reindeer ahoy! reindeer ahoy! Reindeer on our starboard."

Jack climbed down from the lookout in frantic haste, and in about two seconds after he reached

his shipmate he and Bill were piling over the sides of the ship, armed with harpoons.

A poor, shivering wreck of a sailor climbed upon the gunwale and bellowed at the top of his voice, "Meat, meat, meat!"

All of his shipmates took up the cry, "Meat, meat, meat!"

The wind flung it across to another ship, and it echoed from bow to stern, "Meat, meat, meat!" Still another ship caught up the cry, and repeated it. It spread like wildfire from ship to ship, echoing across the frozen Arctic, until the entire crews of the eight ships were nearly all of them crying, "Meat, meat meat!" like demented men, just as though that was the only word they knew in the English language.

Hans Peterson was on the sledge at the front of the herd, driving the starbuck. He was foot-sore and spent. His eyes were bloodshot like those of the half-starved sailors, and he was nearly as gaunt as they. When he had heard

the first cry of meat it sent a shiver through him. It seemed more like the cry of a wolf than the cry of a man; but when he heard the famine cry ringing through all the eight ships, echoing and re-echoing over the frozen sea, his heart grew sick within him and his chin sank down on his chest, and he sobbed like a child. It was awful. The starbuck must go. This pack of ravenous wolves would stop at nothing; and how could he ask them to spare the starbuck when they were like this.

Just at this moment two ravenous sailors, armed with harpoons, came running towards him across the ice, brandishing their weapons. Their bloodshot eyes were fixed upon the starbuck.

On they came, crying, "Meat, meat!" and shaking their harpoons.

At first Peterson sat upon the sledge dazed, but when they came alongside and raised the harpoon, about to plunge it into the noble deer,

Hans sprang up like a madman and shook his great fists in their faces and threatened them with death if they so much as touched a hair of the starbuck.

“ I know you are starving,” he groaned, finding his voice, “ but spare him until the last. Kill all the rest, and then if you are still hungry kill him. He’s like my own brother, but I can’t see you die.”

With these words the exhausted, half-frozen man fell his full length in the snow.

The two sailors, Jack and Bill, threw down their harpoons and picked Hans up tenderly and carried him to the cabin of their own ship, where he was laid in the captain’s bunk.

“ Damn me,” growled Bill, “ if hearin’ him take on so about his ole deer hasn’t plum taken away my appetite. I only hope they ain’t all uv um been adopted like this here one.”

For days Peterson lay in the captain’s bunk tossing in fever. The only doctor on the eight

ships, a sort of quack, attended him, and did what he could for the man. He said that he was "all in," and it would be a close call for him.

The one thing that tormented Hans day and night was the fate of the starbuck. "I know you are hungry, boys," he would mutter. "I don't blame you, but he is like a brother," and then again he would mumble, "I know you are hungry—God! shall I ever forget that cry—but don't kill him until the very last."

This one thought haunted him so persistently by day and night that the kind-hearted sailors finally rigged up a pulley and hauled the great deer, who had been spared through the intervention of Mr. Anderson, over the side of the ship and then fairly carried him, kicking and struggling, down to the cabin.

They led him snorting and afraid over to Hans's bunk. They thought that Peterson was

almost at death's door, but to the astonishment of everyone he reared upon his elbow and gazed wildly at the deer.

“ Is it you, old starbuck,” he whimpered, “ or is it only a ghost? Have they killed you? Are you dead? ”

Then the deer recognized his master under these strange conditions, and reached out his nose and licked the man's hand.

Hans fell back on his pillow with a joyous cry. “ It's him,” he gasped in a whisper so feeble that they could hardly hear him, “ and he's alive.”

Then the doctor bent down close to his ear and said:

“ He's all right, man. They are going to keep him. You will drive him back to the Yukon in a couple of months.”

“ They are going to keep him,” repeated Hans, and a faint smile stole over his face. “ They are going to keep him,” he repeated,

“and I am going to drive him back to the Yukon to Olga and little Johanna,” and with these words he fell into a deep, peaceful sleep, and the doctor said he would live.

## VIII

### THE LURE OF THE GOLD TRAIL

HANS PETERSON did not die, but came rapidly back to health and strength.

In the opinion of the captain of the ship and the physician the turning point in his sickness was the visit of the starbuck to his bunk and the assurance that the noble animal would not be butchered.

After his recovery, Hans was for starting at once on the return trip, as he thought it would be very lonely for Olga and little Johanna in the log cabin on the Yukon, but Mr. Anderson and the Eskimos said, "Wait." The tundra was then in the most desperate throes of winter, and only those who had experienced them fully knew what that meant. The young Norwegian

finally yielded to their advice and spent several weeks with the whalers, he and Mr. Anderson being the special guests of the captain of the largest and most comfortable of the ships.

Finally, however, Hans could stand it no longer, so the start was made.

They made very much better time in going than coming, as they were not hampered by the deer, so that Hans reached home about the last of April, two or three weeks before the breaking up of the Yukon.

Few people who have never visited Alaska even dream of the mighty volume and astonishing length of this, the father of waters, in the north country.

The truth is, this mighty river is only second to the Mississippi on this continent, and in two or three particulars it even surpasses that river. It is navigable from White Horse to the sea for large river steamers, a distance of over

two thousand miles, while the Mississippi is navigable for less than two thousand. Much of the way it pours its mighty volume between banks a mile apart at the rate of ten miles an hour. Its delta is twenty miles broad and one hundred miles in length, dotted with considerable islands, upon which grow willows thirty feet in height.

But the most interesting thing about the Yukon is the manner in which it breaks up. Like the Lena River in Asia and the Mackenzie in North America, it rises in the south and flows northerly for most of its length, so the source feels the warm rays of the spring sun for two or three weeks before the sunbeams begin to melt the ice at the mouth. This seems to be directly against all the decrees of nature. Nearly all the rest of the great rivers in the world flow southerly and open up first at their mouths.

So is it any wonder that the breaking up of

the Yukon is one of the majestic and terrible spectacles of this north country, almost rivaling the Muir Glacier in its destructive force?

About the first of May—for spring comes earlier near the Pacific than on the Atlantic seaboard—the tributaries of Lake Bennett break up.

They come grating and grinding, seething and boiling, down to the lake, and break that body of water up in short order; then trouble begins.

Out of Lake Bennett go thousands of cakes of grinding, heaving ice, smashing and breaking everything in its way.

You can better understand this when you remember that the current of the Yukon is very swift. The ice may pile up to-day, mountain upon mountain, filling in all the cracks and cranies with slush, until it has formed a perfect dam, but the angry waters are not to be denied their right of way to the sea. They will surge

and toss, foam and hiss, until they are tired of it, and then will set back for five or ten miles, calling their reinforcements from all the swollen tributaries of the south, and when they become strong enough they will rush the dam.

Then there will be sounds like the primeval thunders when Thor worked in his mill; and this is the mill of God surely but slowly grinding and leveling down the high mountains of this region.

When the mighty flood, perhaps two miles in width and ten in length, finally puts its titanic shoulder against the ice-dam something has to move. At first it starts slowly, then faster and faster, until at last, grinding, thundering, and shaking the solid earth, it starts for the sea, taking parts of the bank, large trees, and mighty boulders with it—the mill of God, grinding, grinding, grinding.

At Dawson, where the channel is free and broad, it rushes by in a ceaseless procession,

mighty cakes following one another rapidly, all obeying the water's behest.

At Circle City, on the Yukon Flats, it spreads out into a great lake, shouldering the ice out in every direction—mountains and mountains of ice piled up in ice palaces, stranded, and left high and dry, where they will stay until they melt beneath the spring sunbeams.

This mighty river goes on its majestic way, battering its banks, bowling over great trees and carrying them out to sea, that they in turn may be thrown upon the western coasts of the continent and piled up as driftwood for the poor natives and the whites as well. This is the only wood supply at Nome.

Seething, roaring, and rushing it goes, carrying tons of silt to build up the islands in the delta at its mouth, leveling down this new country like a mighty shoveler; breaking, tearing, uprooting, dislodging, and despoiling the

works of man, but all the time doing the appointed work of God.

About the middle of May, when this majestic cataclysm of nature had reached Nulato, Hans took Olga and Johanna out to the river to see the wonderful sight.

It was a beautiful spring night, all moonshine and star-shimmer, and this added to the unearthly beauty of the ice carnival.

The swift current had shouldered mighty mountains of ice out on to the bank, almost into the very streets of the little town.

The moonbeams fell full upon the ice, shimmering and dancing, sparkling and twinkling, until it seemed almost like fairyland. But there was also another aspect of the spectacle which was anything but fanciful.

That was the deafening roar of the angry waters and the crash and groan of grating, breaking, grinding ice. Every few minutes the current would topple over some mighty moun-

tain of ice which it had builded up only a few hours before, and with a crash like the loudest thunder it would fall to its doom.

The waters were covered with foam and filled with broken trees and driftwood. The river seemed more like a great demoniacal monster than the gentle liquid fluid we usually see.

Finally, after a crash more deafening than its fellows, little Johanna began to cry, and her father took her in his strong arms.

“ I don't blame the child,” said her mother. “ It is the most awful sight I ever saw. Hans, how fearful and wonderful are the works of God. This and the soul-sickening storm that we experienced at sea when we came over.”

“ I know,” returned Hans, “ but I do not feel that way. To me it is grand beyond measure. It is God at work.”

Finally they went silently back to the little cabin on the Yukon, where there were peace and

comparative quiet, although all through the night they could hear echoes of this mill of God at work.

Late in the summer of the second year that the Peterson family were in Alaska Hans got the gold fever so badly that he could no longer restrain himself, so he resigned his position with the government and cast in his fortunes with the seekers after the precious metal.

Many a man goes to Alaska to be a civil engineer, a teacher, or for commercial reasons. He always shakes his head wisely, and says that the gold fever will not get him. He is impervious to such delusions, but nine out of ten of them, if they stay in the country five years, will hit the trail for the gold fields.

Hans had always had this idea in the back of his head, but even if he had not it would probably have been just the same.

There was red blood in his veins. He was

an adventurer by nature, a true son of the old Vikings.

Olga and little Johanna were heartbroken at the thought of having him go away into unknown regions, into what perils they knew not.

But Hans was all eagerness. He was full of dreams for their wealth. He would come back soon, with so much gold that they would be able to move to the States and buy a splendid home, where they would live in quiet and peace ever afterwards.

But finally Olga consented, and Hans made ready for the journey.

He arranged that the factor at the trading-post should look after his wife and child while he was gone, and laid in an ample supply of provisions for them. Then he saw to his own preparations.

At last the morning for his start was at hand. He was to take the noble old starbuck with him as a pack animal, and the deer had

been so trained that he was as good as a burro.

His pack was a rather heavy one, but he did not mind it. There was a deerskin tent and cooking utensils, but there were few; a frying-pan, a coffee-pot, and a tin plate, spoon, knife, and fork.

Then there was the necessary gold pan for washing out the gold, together with shovel, ax, and pick. Added to these were a few clothes, and a small rifle with which to shoot game.

Perhaps the most important thing that he carried was a compass, for he was to penetrate a very little-known region, far to the north and east, and his only guide in finding his way hither and return would be the compass.

When all was ready he lifted his little daughter in his arms and kissed her, receiving her small, warm kiss in return, and held his wife in a long, loving embrace; then he caught the leading rein with which he had fitted

the starbuck and the two were off for what was the most exciting and desperate adventure that they ever had together.

They went in a northerly direction to Battles, and thence still northerly to Coldfeet. Fifty miles more of leisurely travel brought them to Lake Chandler, the source of the Colville River, which point marks the watershed between the rivers flowing into the Yukon on the south and the Arctic Ocean on the north.

Hans spent a few days testing sand from the bottom of several small creeks that emptied into the lake, and then he began slowly to follow the Colville towards the Arctic. He turned aside several times to examine branches.

In the wash of two of these creeks he found a little gold, but not enough to warrant further investigation.

He followed the Colville clear down to the Arctic tundra, which at this point is about fifty miles wide. When he saw the level, monotonous

expanse of the tundra stretch away as far as the eye could reach towards the Arctic Ocean he knew that his dream of finding gold on this river was futile. He turned and retraced his steps back to the watershed between the Arctic and the Yukon, then he went along the ridge of this watershed, going easterly, and examining the sources of all the rivers that flowed both northerly and southerly.

It was hard work, and he spared neither himself nor the starbuck; but this was nothing to the hardy deer. To carry a pack of seventy-five or a hundred pounds twenty or thirty miles a day was but play for him.

Occasionally Hans stopped to hunt and add some ptarmigans to their bill of fare.

When Hans had traveled about two hundred miles to the east, going along the watershed, and had about concluded to quit and turn their steps homeward before it should get too cold, he made the strike.

One evening just at dusk they entered a little valley that at once attracted Hans's attention for its beauty, as well as its likelihood of being good gold country.

A brawling creek came leaping and plunging down through the valley by a series of small waterfalls.

The creek was a very swift stream, and had been washing away at the rocks ever since the dawn of creation. Hans thought it must have washed out some gold if there was any there, so they made camp on the bank of the stream, but postponed looking for gold until the morrow.

The young Norwegian usually fell asleep as soon as he had crawled into his sleeping-bag, but to-night he could not sleep; there seemed to be something in the air that hinted of success. He seemed to feel that he was "hot" on the gold trail.

He did not wait for breakfast the following

morning, but was busy washing out some of the sand at the bottom of the creek as soon as he could see to do it.

To his great joy, even the first pan showed signs of gold, for when he had washed out all the sand and turned the bottom of the pan up to the light it was flecked with small yellow specks, not very many, but still they were there.

He tried again, and this time with better luck, for now the pan was yellow in places. Once more he filled the pan with sand, and carefully washed out the dirt and gravel, and this time he gave a great shout of triumph, for the bottom of his pan was well yellowed over, and when he turned it up and poked the yellow specks together along one side it made a generous pile, perhaps the value of a twenty-dollar gold piece. It was not a great strike, but still there was gold here.

After that there was no rest for Hans Peter-

son by day or night. As soon as he could see in the morning and as late as he could see at night he worked feverishly washing out the precious metal and stowing it away in small buckskin bags which he had brought for the purpose.

Finally he became disgusted with the slow process of washing the sand out a panful at a time, and contrived a rude sluice-box.

This was made by digging a shallow ditch on a low-lying sand-bar. He placed riffles made of bark crosswise in the bottom of the ditch about a foot apart. The water was taken in at the upper end of this ditch by means of a branch ditch.

He would bring the pan dirt to this improvised sluice-box and wash it out for several hours. Then he would turn the water off from the ditch, take up all the rich sediment, and rewash it in the pan.

He could work a good deal faster in this way,

and after that the dust in the small bags grew more rapidly.

He also went over his claim very carefully. He went back to rimrock and discovered that the layer of earth above mother rock was very shallow. It would not be a hard claim to work.

He also sunk a shaft near the stream, working away desperately by day and night. He only had to go about ten feet to strike bedrock, and the first pan that he washed out taken from the bedrock set him wild, for the bottom of the pan was fairly yellow. He scraped together the gold, and estimated it to be worth two hundred dollars. It was no Bonanza, or Eldorado, but it was a fortune for the poor Norwegian.

All that day he worked feverishly, washing out dirt taken from the bottom of his shaft, and the following day he staked out his claim: five hundred feet cross-section of the stream, running back on each side of the creek to rimrock. Then he staked out half a dozen more claims

on either side of him, each two hundred and fifty feet wide. These he would have his friends record for themselves; then he would try and purchase the claims from them if he could.

It was very lucky that he staked out the claims and made a map of the country that day, for something occurred the next day that might have ruined his strike for all time.

At about noon he was busy in the shaft bringing up more dirt, when the starbuck came tearing down the side of the little valley, snorting and whistling as he did when greatly startled. He charged straight up to the mouth of the shaft, and Hans, who was just coming up, was nearly knocked back into the bottom of the shaft.

There was cause for all the whistling and blowing that the deer was doing, for an Indian arrow was sticking in his flank, and blood was running freely down his hind leg.

While Hans was still gazing at him dum-

founded and fearful, a half dozen Indians, some of them armed with bow and arrow and some with rifles, came over the top of the ridge.

Then in a minute the whole strange happening was clear to Hans. They were a hunting party and were after the starbuck.

They evidently thought him caribou, having never seen reindeer.

As they caught sight of the deer they came on down the hillside at a run, and one of them raised his rifle and fired a bullet, cutting a piece out of Hans's cap. The man had been standing behind the deer, and they had not seen him.

But they were not going to kill the starbuck before his very eyes, and Hans stepped forward and stood between them and the deer, at the same time waving his arms and making signs for them to keep off.

They stopped in great confusion when they saw him, and made signs in turn which Hans

did not understand; but they pointed continually at the starbuck, and made signs that they would kill him.

“Keep off!” Hans roared, making more frantic signs than ever. They paid no attention to him, but charged them, shooting indiscriminately at the deer and the man as they ran.

Another bullet inflicted a slight flesh wound upon the deer’s belly and Hans had a finger broken by a ball that grazed his hand.

Their plight was getting desperate, so he caught the starbuck by the antlers, and man and deer made a break for camp, where the rifle and his “forty-four” were.

Here Hans left the deer in a deep gulch that he had made by digging for gold and waited for his assailants.

He had not long to wait, for in another second a bullet kicked up dirt at his feet, and the whole party came into sight.

The rifle was only a little "thirty-thirty," but with a lucky aim he got the foremost Indian the first shot, and he pitched forward, throwing his gun as he fell.

It looked like a repeater, although Hans was not sure at that distance. This first lucky shot determined the young miner's course.

He must put up a terrific fight for a few minutes, and perhaps, as they were superstitious, he might stampede them. Otherwise they would not only kill the starbuck, but his master as well.

So he opened on them with his "forty-four," lying upon his belly, that he might afford as little target as possible. He emptied the five chambers so rapidly that the echoes followed one another in a long, continuous roll. Then in a flash he had slipped in his extra cylinder and was beginning upon the second round.

A yell from a savage told him that a second ball had found its mark.

By the time he had emptied the second cylinder and was reaching for more cartridges they broke and fled up the hillside, yelling and pointing as they ran.

Hans did not wait to see more, but in ten seconds his plans were made. They must strike camp at once.

The Indians would consider that he had interfered with their hunting and had attacked them without reason. They would go for reinforcements and would be back shortly to kill him, in revenge for their wounded comrades, whom he now saw crawling to cover.

In five minutes he had struck the tent and packed it. The frying-pan and the coffee-pot were stowed away in the bundle with the tent.

His sacks of precious gold, which he estimated at twenty thousand dollars, were safely stowed away. The rifle was strapped to the pack, and leading the starbuck, who limped slightly from his wound, with the "forty-four"

in his right hand and the leading rein in his left, they slunk away into the shadows, going as rapidly and silently as they could in the opposite direction from that in which the Indians had appeared.

They did not stop to pick their way, but plunged down deep gulches and went up steep hillsides, the starbuck climbing like a goat.

“He’d follow me into hell and through it,” Hans thought as he noted how faithfully the deer scrambled after him, no matter how rough a way he chose.

For three hours they journeyed to the eastward, going at the very best pace they could keep up. Hans reeked with sweat, although it was very cold and flakes of snow were beginning to fall—the first of the season.

By three o’clock it began to get dusk, and they halted to make camp. They had covered all the distance they could for that day, perhaps

ten miles. If the snow would only keep falling the Indians could not follow their trail, so perhaps they were safe from pursuit.

They had pitched their tent on a stream which should flow, according to Hans's reckoning, into the Yukon, a hundred and fifty miles to the south; it flowed north instead, which greatly troubled and puzzled Hans. So he reached in his pocket for the compass, but no compass was there.

He searched his other pockets in quick succession, but it was gone.

He had lost it during their flight; and one thing the river flowing in the wrong way proved beyond a doubt—he was lost.

Lost in this vast wilderness, somewhere between the Yukon and the Arctic Ocean!

A storm was coming up, there was only about two days' provisions, and he was not as warmly clad as he should have been for winter. His ammunition was also low. The ten shots that

he had fired to save the starbuck had left him but half a dozen more cartridges.

His plight was desperate. What would he not give for the compass; then he would soon get out of this wilderness.

He was due at home, and had been for a week, and he was lost, with only the stars to guide him.

“Lost,” moaned the winds in the spruces nearby. “Lost,” shrieked the gale as it whistled down the gulf; and the snow sifted silently down upon the lone man and the silent beast in this the great silence of nature. These two alone in the wilderness.

Then a fearful thought came to Hans. If he was to have his back to a tree and be fighting for his life, perhaps fighting his last fight, there would be no one to answer and come with help, even if he had breath enough left to cry out. He was alone.

“Alone,” moaned the wind; “alone, alone, alone.”

## IX

### A CIRCLE OF EYES

It was anything but a comfortable night that Hans spent alone with the thought that he was lost in this Yukon wilderness, and the sounds of the storm raging outside his tent did not tend to raise his spirits.

He had camped upon the banks of the stream, the stream that worried him by flowing the wrong way. His tent was pitched in a clump of small spruces, which afforded a little shelter, but even then it was cold and cheerless, for he had no sheet-iron stove to warm it on this trip.

But the old starbuck cared not for wind or cold.

He had found a luxurious bed of moss just before dark, and he now stood under a spruce near the tent munching his cud contentedly.

Hans was up the next morning with the very first streak of light, which at this time of the year came at about nine o'clock. He hurried through his breakfast of half rations, as his provisions were very low, and immediately after the cheerless meal struck the trail, or rather made one, through the snow, which was now knee-deep and steadily falling.

He determined to follow the stream for half a day and see where it might lead. There was no sun, and nothing else to guide him. The moss on the spruces was not pronounced enough for him to determine the direction in that way, and there was no decided lean of the timber. In this desolate, wind-swept country it merely leaned away from the prevailing wind, and that was all. So he plodded wearily on, going where he knew not, not sure but what this stream would lead them further from home and nearer to the Arctic tundra; but this was the

only way in which he could travel in a given direction.

About noon, when he had covered perhaps five miles, he saw to his great joy that the stream was doubling back on itself. They had covered a great loop and were once more heading in the direction which Hans thought south. This probably explained the whole matter. Perhaps they were not lost, but he could not be sure.

The question of being lost partly dispelled, Hans felt better, but he soon remembered another anxiety. His provisions were almost gone. He had a can of salmon, a can of beans, coffee enough for two meals, and that was all. He should have stopped and done some hunting the week before, but he was so excited with the mining that all else was forgotten.

Now perhaps he might have to pay the penalty.

He opened these two last cans for dinner,

and ate sparingly from them, making his coffee very weak but exceedingly hot. Then they resumed the weary march.

By nightfall, which came at about three o'clock, Hans estimated that they were perhaps three miles further south than in the morning, having traveled twelve miles about the circle to make that distance.

That night he ate all but just enough of his provisions for breakfast.

They spent another cold, cheerless night, and were up again at dawn and ready for the day's march. It had stopped snowing, but there was now about two feet of snow, which made it hard traveling.

Hans had eaten the last of his provisions for breakfast; but the river was now running in the right direction, and he started off in better spirits than he had known for the past two days.

He would knock over a ptarmigan if he had

luck and not go hungry for dinner, and sure enough he did. A bird was most accommodating, for it flew up just in front of him and lit in a spruce, where it sat cocking its head on one side, eying him curiously. It was lucky that it was so good a mark, as he had no ammunition left for the rifle, and he could not shoot close with the "forty-four."

He ate half the ptarmigan for dinner and saved the rest for supper, and was on the trail again.

About the middle of the afternoon he came out into a wide valley which was rather marshy. Moss grew sparingly here, and they stopped to let the starbuck feed. He had been nibbling away but a few minutes when a strange sound pierced the silence, a cry that made him throw up his head and snort and Hans look anxious. It was not a loud sound, but there was a menace in it for both man and beast—a danger that both were quick to recognize.

It started rather low down, but mounted rapidly, growing in volume and fierceness until it reached its highest note, then died slowly away in a note as desolate as the cry of a lost soul.

It was a queer blending of pathos, anger, and dire threat.

The starbuck had first heard it when he was Little Lightfoot feeding with his dam at twilight on the edge of the tundra in Norway—on that night when the great herd of Anders Poulsen had fought the gray pack to a standstill.

Hans had heard the cry often, both in Norway and Alaska. It was a sound that he did not much fear when his belt was well filled with cartridges, but now his ammunition was very low—only five cartridges for the “forty-four” and none for the rifle.

While he was considering this grave fact another howl answered the first, also behind and a little to one side. Then it was taken up far

ahead of them in the direction they were traveling, and then again to the left and the right.

The starbuck came snorting and blowing to his master, the long hair upon his neck and back erect with fright and anger.

“ We are in for it, old starbuck,” said Hans, rubbing the deer’s nose. “ They are after us sure as preaching. You had better stick close to me if you know when your hide is on tight and your bones are covered with meat. Them devils mean business! ”

He caught the leading rein tightly in his right hand, and they plodded wearily on their way, the new danger that lurked in ambush for them on all sides lending gloom to the dreary scene.

They did not see anything more of the wolves until after supper, although Hans knew they were following his trail.

Just before the light faded he knocked over

another ptarmigan, so did not have to go supperless to bed.

He did not dare put up the tent, as that would leave the starbuck outside to the mercy of the wolves.

So he cut a large quantity of boughs and built his campfire close to a small spruce, to which he tied the deer. He made the campfire much larger than usual, and slept with his feet towards it. He would abandon the tent on the morrow. It would go to feed the wolves.

He noted while he was getting ready to crawl into his sleeping-bag that the starbuck was very restless, and snorted and stamped. At first he could not locate the thing that disturbed him, but he finally made it out: two phosphorous eyes, gleaming malignantly through the darkness. Then he looked in another direction where he had heard the snow crunch, and there was another pair, glowing with hunger and hatred like the first.

He turned to still another direction, and made out still a third pair. It was like counting the stars at eventide. At first you think there are none, but the longer you look the more you see. Hans finally counted a dozen pairs of eyes, all hungry, all watchful, and all eying himself and the starbuck steadily, like something that they intended to make a supper on soon. They were very patient, although desperately hungry.

Spite of himself Hans could not sleep because of the circle of eyes that inclosed the camp on every side.

So he fell to watching them and trying to discover new ones. When the fire died down the wolves would steal slowly nearer, belly to earth, and then he could make out dark forms about the gleaming eyes, forms that crouched in the snow, watching, watching, watching the man-creature and the big deer.

Well, he determined that they should have the meat of neither as long as he could fight.

So he finally went to sleep, relying on the starbuck to arouse him if they came too near.

Once the snorting and stamping of the reindeer awakened Hans, and he found that the wolves had drawn in much closer, so he threw more fagots on the fire, and the eyes that burned themselves like coals slunk away into the darkness.

Three more times that night Hans was aroused by the snorting, whistling, and stamping of the old starbuck, when the circle of hungry eyes had drawn in too close, and each time he replenished the fire and drove them back.

Both the beleaguered ones were glad when the first gray streak of dawn appeared and the gray shapes stole away into the gloom of the spruce trees.

Hans went without his breakfast this morning, for the very simple reason that there was nothing to eat.

They took the trail very early and plodded monotonously along until noon, following the stream, as they had been doing ever since the discovery of the loss of the compass.

About noon Hans tried a shot at a snowshoe rabbit that squatted under a dead spruce, but the rabbit was so nearly the color of the snow and the man's hands were so numb from the long exposure without gloves that he missed, while his dinner skurried away with great leaps.

This left him but three cartridges, and he made up his mind that if the starbuck should try to break away from him and run for it he would shoot him, as he felt sure that the wolves would overhaul him in an hour or two in the deep snow, so it would be a mercy to shoot him; besides it would give Hans something to eat. His conscience recoiled at the thought of eating the faithful starbuck, but his stomach ached

and gnawed with hunger, and this made the cold doubly hard to bear.

“It’s all right, old companion,” he said, patting the deer affectionately on the shoulder, “as long as you and I stick together.

“I’ll stand by you, and we will die like brothers, but if you go back on me and try to run I shall have to plug you.”

But the great deer had no notion of running. In fact, he felt, in his dim animal way, that his only salvation lay in this man-creature, his master. He was powerful. He had the wonderful fire stick, and in some way he would destroy the wolves when he was ready. It made a difference with the old starbuck because he could not summon a hundred bucks to fight with him.

Many a time, when he was a half-wild reindeer and ran with the great Yukon herd as its leader, he had marshaled his forces just as he had seen the leader of Anders Poulsen’s herd do long ago in Norway. Many a time he and

his little army of bucks had fought the gray pack to a standstill under the pitiless Arctic stars. But now it was different. He and his master were alone. The woods were full of wolves, and every hair upon the old fighter's back tingled with rage and fear. He would put up a good fight when the time came.

Just as the gray gloom which answers for day at this season was fading into darkness a ptarmigan flew up into a tree just ahead of them. Hans could see the bird quite plainly.

Should he risk a shot? He was desperately hungry. It did not seem as though he could travel to-morrow without food. He weighed all the chances. He had three cartridges. He would need them all when the wolves closed in on himself and the starbuck.

Finally his hunger got the better of his judgment, and he raised the "forty-four" and fired.

To his great joy the bird fluttered down into the snow dead, and he started forward to get

his prize. He had not taken two steps when a gray figure shot out of the bush within six rods of him and snatched his supper. It was one of his enemies from the gray pack.

In uncontrollable anger, and without weighing the consequence of what he did, Hans took a snap shot at the gray thief.

The bullet kicked up a cloud of snow a hundred feet beyond the wolf, while he skulked away into the thicket with the ptarmigan, himself unscathed.

Hans groaned aloud in his despair. He had but one cartridge left. What a fool he had been!

Silently he led the starbuck a dozen rods further down the stream and chose their camping-place with great care. The wolves were following him so closely that he dared not go further. They must have a bright campfire at once.

There was a tall boulder and two large

spruce trees at their back, and a large dead spruce near at hand for fuel.

He tied the starbuck—but there was really no need of that, for he could not have been driven away from his master—and then began felling the tree. Even before he had brought it down the circle of eyes had begun to form, and they came in much earlier and nearer than the night before.

When he had kindled a bright blaze they drew back, but not as far as the previous night. He could see dark forms just out of reach of the outer fringe of light. They were certainly less afraid of him and more sure of their prey.

The starbuck continually pawed, and snorted, and whistled, while his usually mild eyes burned as red as the coals in the campfire. He would fight if he had to, but would much rather have run away.

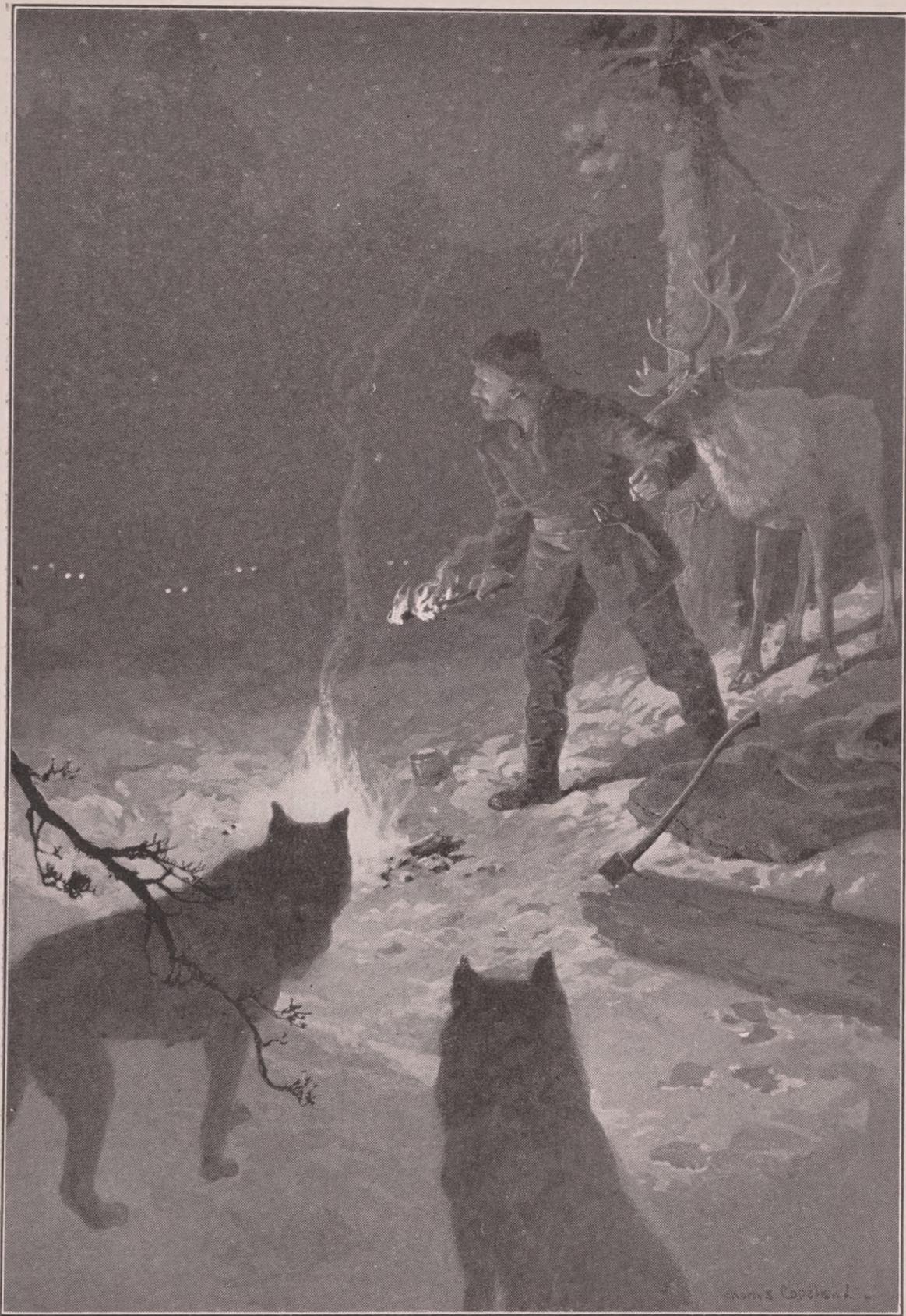
By nine o'clock they had come in so close that he could see them plainly at the edge of the

firelight. They were very poor, judging from the way in which their bellies were gaunted up, but they were very patient, for they lay there, belly to earth, watching, watching, watching with hungry eyes the man and the deer. They could afford to be patient, for they would eat soon. Hans felt this himself as they drew still nearer towards the firelight.

Then he thought with a terrible pang at his heart of the cabin on the Yukon and the brave wife and the sweet little girl who would watch and wait for him in vain.

They were working in rapidly. Something must be done to check them. He could not waste his last shot; that would kill but one wolf, and what was one out of twenty?

Then a bright thought came to him. They were afraid of the fire, and he would give them some of it to eat. So he picked a fagot about two feet long which was burning at one end and sent it hissing and sputtering into their midst.



HE PICKED UP A FAGOT WHICH WAS BURNING AT ONE END AND  
SENT IT HISSING AND SPUTTERING INTO THEIR MIDST



There was the smell of burning hair and a yelp of pain, at which Hans felt a savage joy.

“Come again if you want to,” the man growled; “I’ll feed you fire all night if you want it.”

He did not think that they would so soon accept the invitation, but in fifteen minutes they were back, and he gave them another brand; but his aim was not good this time, and they merely jumped aside, and were back again in a few seconds eying him hungrily.

After that it was one continuous fight all night long with the firebrands. Constantly he replenished the campfire, and cut short fagots which he could hurl into the pack as fast as they caught fire.

Occasionally he singed a wolf, when there was a yelp of pain, but more often they dodged, and were back again watching and waiting hungrily. So, spite of all Hans could do, the circle of eyes drew steadily in upon him, and the gray

forms crawled, belly to earth, closer and closer to their prey.

At daybreak he had hopes that they would go away, as they had done the days before, but here he was disappointed. When the gray dawn lit the forlorn scene there they were, sitting in a gray, expectant circle, entirely hedging in the camp.

When he started to get more fagots they sprang up and advanced towards him, showing their fangs hungrily, and he returned hastily to the campfire. Clearly here was where the last fight would be made.

He would keep them off as long as he could with the fire, and what then?

All the forenoon he gathered the fagots that remained within reach, and as soon as they had caught threw them into the pack, but by noon he saw with horror that his wood supply was nearly gone. The campfire was getting dim. It would burn barely half an hour longer.

With this thought a desperate calm came to Hans, and he did not fear death any more. The only thing that troubled him was the thought of those on the Yukon, his wife and child.

Who would care for them? All his precious gold that he had gained with so much toil would be lost. What was it good for after all? Why had he risked so much for it?

Well, the thing was done. He would not mourn. They would not take his life without paying a good price.

Then his thought of two days before, when he had first discovered the loss of the compass, came to him. What if he were to have his back against a tree, and be fighting his last fight, and should call out in his extremity, and no human being in the whole world should hear? Well, just that very thing was going to happen in about half an hour.

Hans sat and watched with a terrible fas-

ination his last fagots catch and slowly burn out, while the gray pack drew in closer.

He would not throw any more fagots at them. The fire would serve him better by burning.

He reached over to the starbuck, who had pressed in close to the fire beside his master, and rubbed his nose affectionately.

“ Looks like the last account, old buck, don't it? Well, we will try and kill a few of them.”

The old veteran of many a wilderness battle spread his forefeet well apart, lowered his horns of many branches, and whistled viciously.

“ They will be too many for us, old starbuck, but some of them will go along with you and me, I'm a thinking.”

Even while the man spoke the leader of the pack, a huge dog-wolf, bounded close to the fire, which had nearly died out, and snapped at Hans, his jaws clicking like a steel trap.

Hans thought he could not use his one cartridge to better advantage than on him, so he

took deliberate aim between the brute's eyes and pulled the trigger.

To his utter disgust there was merely the sharp click of the hammer, but no report. A dozen times he tried, but this one out of a thousand cartridges was imperfect, and his "forty-four" was useless.

He hurled the weapon at the wolf's head with all his might, and took up the ax. That at least would not miss fire.

The advance of the old leader was a signal to the pack, and in five minutes half the pack were advancing and retreating, springing and snapping.

One sprung full at the starbuck, who caught him fairly on his many-pronged antlers, and he struggled back with a yelp, and Hans saw that the antler point was bloody.

"Good, old starbuck!" he called. "First blood for you."

The wound was evidently deep down in the

wolf's coat, and the rest of the pack were too excited with the man and the deer to notice it, or they would have turned upon their wounded comrade.

Again the great leader sprang at Hans, and this time the Norwegian's blow fell true. The ax caught the wolf fairly in the side of the head.

He sprang backward and fell over on his side.

This was a signal to the rest, and they piled upon him, mad with hunger and jealousy.

A dozen jaws were fixed in the old leader's body at once, and they tore him to bits as easily as though he had been made of cotton batting.

Hans shivered, and a chill like death crept over him. He did not mind dying like a Christian, but to be torn to pieces like carrion—it was awful!

“God be good to my wife and child,” he prayed. “God be good to them.”

In ten minutes' time it was all over with the

old wolf, and they were springing and snapping at the beleaguered man again.

He aimed blow after blow at them, but they kept just out of reach, and he got in only one glancing blow.

If he could only kill another wolf, perhaps they would get sick of it.

So when the next wolf sprang he reached far out with the ax and struck with all his might.

To his utter horror the helve slipped in his half-numbed hand, and the ax flew a dozen feet beyond the outskirts of the pack.

It was all over. They might come and get him and the starbuck as soon as they wished now.

But, like a drowning man, when they did surge in upon him a minute later, he fought desperately. The first two he caught under the jaw with well-directed kicks and sent them to the rear, but others took their places.

He kicked and struck with his bare fists like

a madman. He could see over their heads the old starbuck down on his knees fighting desperately. He too was game.

But he could only keep the pack at bay for a few seconds.

His clothes were torn until he was nearly naked. He received a terrible gash in the leg and another in the arm. Then his foot slipped and, still fighting, he went down and the gray pack swarmed over him.

In the last moment of conscious life, when the most precious thing that we possess is about to be taken from us, there is an instinct in man, and in all the animals as well, to call out to some power beyond ourselves for succor.

The tiniest mouse and the largest wolf, or the bravest man, all possess this instinct in common. Whether they understand it or not, it is a rude prayer for help.

So when the gray pack surged over Hans, and he felt that his last hour had struck, he ut-

tered a wild, despairing cry that echoed away and away through the desolate woods.

Not that he expected anyone to come to his assistance, but he merely obeyed the impulse of nature.

He felt pain in every part of his body and loud noises in his ears. These noises were fairly deafening and seemed all about him. Then the pain and the noises grew fainter and fainter, and he knew no more.

The next thing Hans remembered of that never-to-be-forgotten day he was lying upon a camp blanket, beside a bright fire, and his head was in the lap of a man, while the nozzle of a whisky bottle was being thrust into his mouth.

“He is too far gone to take it,” he heard a voice say, and it sounded a thousand miles away. He thought he would let them know he was not too far gone to take it, so he gulped down a swallow. He could not speak, but this was his reply to his rescuers.

Then for a long time Hans lay very still, while tender hands bound up his wounds and gave him more whisky. He watched them as though they had been administering to someone else.

Perhaps it was his funeral. He did not know.

Then with a snap his brain cleared, and all his pains came back to him, and he could hear more distinctly.

“He’s coming round, Shorty; damned ef I don’t believe he is,” he heard one of the men say.

Then the man called Shorty came and stood over Hans.

“Well, stranger,” he said kindly. “Do you hear me?”

“Yes, I hear you,” answered Hans. “Didn’t they get me, or am I dead?”

“No, they didn’t get you, but they came damned near it.

“We got four ov them, though.”

Then Hans lapsed into silence. He was so tired.

By and by he motioned the man to come near, and he came and bent over him.

“ Did they get the starbuck? ” he whispered. “ I mean the deer.”

“ No,” said the man, “ but we is going to kill him for breakfast. We are rather short for grub, and he’ll be all right.”

Hans sprang up to a sitting position, as though propelled by steel springs. “ No you ain’t,” he gasped. “ He is mine.

“ He and me stick by one another like brothers. You can’t kill him,” he moaned. Then he collapsed and fell back again.

By and by he came round, and motioned to Shorty to come to him.

“ You ain’t going to kill the starbuck, are you? ” he whispered as feebly and tremulously as a child.

“ Gol darn it, no,” replied the man gruffly.

but kindly. "We wouldn't kill him for the world."

"They ain't going to kill the starbuck," murmured Hans, and he fell asleep.

The following day Hans was so far recovered that he and his rescuers started for the Yukon, which was only fifty miles away, for Hans had wandered about in a circle and made part of the return journey home without knowing it.

On the way down the party of three belated prospectors who had rescued Hans told him of how they had heard his agonized cry for help and had run to his assistance, as Shorty said, "like the devil was after them."

They had reached the scene just as the pack swarmed over Hans, and their "forty-fours" had done the rest.

Two days of easy traveling brought the little party to the Yukon, and when Hans saw the long stretch of smooth ice and knew that this fine road stretched all the way to the little

cabin at Nulato his heart gave a great bound of joy.

At the Methodist Mission he procured a sledge, and in an hour after having made the purchase he was gliding down the Yukon as only the starbuck could draw him.

“ Home,” sang the clacking hoofs of the reindeer, “ Home,” sang the runners of the sledge, but Hans’s heart, overflowing with gratitude for his escape, and for the fortune which he was carrying back to Olga and little Johanna, sang “ Home ” loudest of all.

## X

### THE GREAT RACE

It is safe to say that there were not two happier people in Alaska than Olga and little Johanna when Hans and the faithful starbuck appeared at the log cabin at Nulato some four or five days later. For the past two weeks they had been suffering horrible suspense. Hans had promised to be home that much earlier, and every hour the brave woman and the little girl had watched for him all day long, and had begrudged the long, dark night when they could no longer see the trail leading to the cabin.

But they made it all up during that winter. What cheerful, gleeful parties they had by the roaring wood stove, while Hans told of his rich gold claim away to the north; and little Johanna

was never tired of listening to the thrilling story of the fight with the Indians and the marvelous escape from the wolves. The starbuck was almost as much of a hero in her eyes as was her father, and she often stole away to the shed which adjoined the cabin to pet him and to tell him what a brave old deer he was, all of which the starbuck understood perfectly, or if he did not he kept the fact to himself, so his ignorance was not even guessed.

One day when Hans was down to the trading-post talking with the factor he discovered a lot of government maps of Alaska, and from patient study of them he was enabled to trace his journey of the summer before. He finally decided that his claim was located on the middle branch of the Chandler River, and this was where it was finally recorded as lying.

While they talked and planned about the red-hot stove during the long Arctic night, Hans told his family of his wish to take them all up

to the claim the following summer, where he would build a new log cabin and work the claim until he had made a fortune for them. When that had been accomplished they would move down to the States and purchase a fine home in Michigan, where several kinsfolk were located. The latter portion of Hans's plan pleased Olga more than all the rest, for this wild country was very lonesome and fearful for a woman like her, and she did not wish her little daughter to grow up without the company of other little girls and the advantages of good schools. So it was agreed that as soon as the going was good in the spring the move should be made.

But there was another turn in the fortunes of the Peterson family, in which the starbuck played a most important part, that occurred in April, and this story would not be complete without it.

The clubroom and lounging place for the men

of the little community was down at the post, and Hans spent many pleasant evenings there playing cards and listening to miners' and traders' experiences.

About the middle of February there had come down the Yukon a wonderful dog-team of malamutes, driven by one Big Alec.

What his other name was no one knew, or ever asked. If a man is out of jail, and the police are not after him, he is accepted as all right in this rough country.

He was a French Canuck, and had come to Dawson the winter before, coming across country from the Northwest Territory. It was supposed that the territory had been too hot for him, and so he had moved to Dawson.

He was a gambler by profession and had picked up quite a fortune at the roulette tables and the faro banks at Dawson. He had been mixed up in a gun-play affair just before the river closed for navigation, and the mounted

police had handed him a small card the day after the affair.

This card was a polite invitation to leave Dawson by the next boat, with the alternative of arrest if he stayed.

He knew well what it would mean to be apprehended, with his record in the Northwest Territory, so he wisely took the boat.

He had spent a part of the winter at Circle City, but here he had also received a polite invitation from the marshal to move on, so he had journeyed down the river to Nulato.

He was a bully and blowhard, and also possessed of great strength. This, coupled with his deadly use of his "forty-four," made him a bad man in a mix-up.

His recreation was driving dog-teams, and he possessed two of the fastest teams in Alaska: the fine team of six malamutes that he had driven to the town and another team of huskies which were still at Fort Yukon, but were ex-

pected down the river soon, driven by his friend and partner, Antone Dubois.

Hans first met Alec one night at the post about the middle of April

He was blowing about his dog-teams, saying that they were the fastest team that ever drew sledge. He punctuated his observation with many oaths and loud blows of his fists on the table.

Finally someone mentioned the reindeer that were being imported into Alaska, and told of Hans's famous starbuck and of the great run that his dam had made in old Norway.

At the conclusion of the narrative Big Alec burst into a coarse laugh.

“ Reindeer, py gar. They tam snails. By gar, my tog-team run further and faster on tree leg than any tam reindeer that ever live. Ha, ha, ha! ”

At this taunt Hans's blood ran hot This strain of reindeer meant so much to him and

his family that they were almost sacred. Next to his family he loved the starbuck best of anything in the world. Hans was a strong, hot-headed fellow, with a heart as tender as that of a woman, and the taunts of this blackguard roiled him beyond endurance.

At first he could not control himself to speak he was so incensed, and Big Alec interpreted his silence as an acquiescence in his statement.

“ What you tink, pig Tutchman? ” he jeered at Hans. “ You tink so too, by gar? ”

“ I don't think anything of the kind,” roared Hans, his temper getting the best of him. “ I have got a reindeer over at my shed that can outrun any team of yelping mongrels that ever drew a sledge.”

“ Py gar, hear him; talk mighty cheap. You got no money that say your old teer can peat my tog? ”

There was deep silence in the room again, and

all waited to see what Hans's next move would be. He was not a betting man; the fleetness of his reindeer was questioned. He could see from the looks of the crowd that nearly all concurred in Alec's boast that his dog-team could outrun the reindeer; but they did not know the starbuck.

Again Big Alec repeated his taunt. "Py gar, you got no money what say your teer can run better than one cow. I tink him one cow, anyway. He run like a pig, py gar. A pig; ha, ha, ha!"

This was more than Hans could stand. He did not see the trap into which the gambler was leading him, and it is doubtful if he would have heeded it, in any event. Every drop of blood in his great body was mad. His reindeer who had stood by him in so many straits was being made fun of.

"Yes, by thunder!" he roared, "I have got five thousand dollars in dust that says my rein-

deer can outrun your dog-team for any distance you are a mind to mention."

Big Alec's eyes gleamed with savage triumph. He had trapped his man.

"Py gar, I take you," he said. "What will the tistance pe?"

"A thousand miles!" roared Hans promptly.

Alec gasped. "I no run my tog-team a thousand miles to please any Tutchman. I run a hundred miles. Fifty mile town the river and pack."

"All right," replied Hans. "Fifty miles down the river and return."

So it was arranged. Hans went over to the cabin and brought over five thousand dollars' worth of his hard-earned dust, and Alec deposited an equal amount in gold pieces, and the details of the race were arranged.

They would race to Ambia, fifty miles down the river, and return. Here the wiley Alec again got the advantage of Hans, for he in-

sisted that one hundred miles was too far to race a single dog-team and that he must be allowed two teams, running them in relays. Hans was most anxious to show what his reindeer could do, and so finally agreed to this modification of the original plan.

The little town was in an uproar, and everyone wanted to help about bringing the big race off.

A dozen Eskimos and Indians went down the river with half a dozen sledges and broke the trail where the ice on the river was not entirely free of snow.

Every ten miles they built a big campfire, where two or three of the Eskimos or Indians were stationed to give assistance in case of accident.

The day after the big bet had been made Antone Dubois appeared with Alec's other dog-team, and the following day he drove it down to Ambia, to have it in readiness for the run back.

The betting, as is usually the case in this free-handed country where fortunes are made and lost by the turn of a card, ran high. The odds were three to one on the dogs.

Reindeer were comparatively new in this north country, and their speed and endurance in a long race was not even suspected.

Up to this time all those who had heard of the celebrated run of Hans Peterson's faithful hind in Norway put it down as a yarn, but Hans determined they should have their eyes opened.

Three days after the bet had been made everything was in readiness. Hans had sent two of his Eskimo friends down to Ambia with a second sledge, to use in case of accident, and everything that could be done by both parties had been done.

Big Alec had placed every dollar that he was worth on his two dog-teams, so the loss of this race meant financial ruin to him.

On the fourth morning after the wager had

been made every inhabitant was out with the first gray streak of dawn, for at sunrise the race was to be started.

Big Alec with much swagger took his position with his splendid team of malamutes. He laughed and joked with the standers-by. He would show the "Tutchman" what an Alaskan dog-team would do.

Hans, on the other hand, was very quiet. His face was pale and determined. This race meant a whole lot to him besides the five thousand dollars of his dust. It meant that the value of the reindeer for Alaska would double if he could win the race. Besides he hated the bully and braggart, as did all other honest men, and wanted to see him discomfited.

The old starbuck shuffled slowly down to the starting line, just as though nothing important was on foot, and stood waiting the next move of his master.

Alec's six powerful malamutes were yelping

and tugging at their breastplates, all eagerness to be off.

Alec had his heavy driving-whip coiled up in his hand, ready at the appointed signal to throw it into the team.

“Are you ready?” came the clear voice of Mr. Adams, of the post. Then the sharp crack of a “forty-four” rang out on the morning air.

Alec flung his heavy whip viciously into the team, crying, “Mush, you tevils; mush, or, by gar, I kill you all.”

He was a dog-killer and not a sympathetic driver; but he could be trusted to drive as hard and as fast as sheer brute strength could push a team.

With a chorus of glad yelps and two or three snarls, for the whip hissed and bit their faces, the splendid team was off, running like the wind.

On the other hand, there was no demonstra-

tion about Hans's start. He merely slapped the starbuck gently with the rein and called to him in a cheery voice.

But what would not that steely four hundred pounds of muscles and sinews do for him?

The starbuck started at a rather slow trot, but each moment slipped into a faster gait, so that all noticed when they rounded a bend in the river a mile below that the starbuck was only about a hundred feet behind the dog-team, and running easily.

After the first dramatic start, when he knelt upon the sled, Alec lay face down, while Hans sat, as is the custom of the Lapp driver.

Every mile or so Alec would glance over his shoulder to see his rival. He always expected to discover that he had left him far behind, but he was always following closely, keeping up the pace like a machine.

Then Alec would turn his attention to the

team and try, by throwing his whip among them and cursing, to get more speed.

In these bursts he would often draw a hundred yards ahead; but the team was always exhausted after these spurts, and Hans would soon overhaul them. There was a difference in the driving of the two men. Alec was spasmodic, while Hans never varied.

They passed the ten-mile station not a hundred feet apart, and the Eskimos shouted for the reindeer and shook their fists at Alec.

At the twenty-mile bonfire there was no change, and Alec was furious, for try as he would he could not shake off the steady, persistent trot of the reindeer; but he flattered himself that it would be different on the return run, for then he would have a fresh team, while the deer must be "all in."

Just after they had passed the thirty-mile station there was a strip in the river where the current was swift. The winter had been a very

mild one, and the Eskimos had reported that it was open at this point.

Hans, who was sitting up, could see further ahead than Alec, who lay prone on the sled, but he did not notice this open place in the river until they were almost on it. He cried out a warning to Alec, who was about a hundred feet ahead. His first impulse had been to let him plunge into the river and go to the devil, but thought of the fine dog-team caused him to give the warning.

Alec reached out and caught his wheel dog by the hind legs and threw him. The animal turned and snapped, but he held on, and the wheel dog was dragged in the traces; but this brake of the dragging dog was not enough to prevent the mishap, for four of the team plunged into the river, while Alec held on the wheel dog and the sledge, thus preventing the loss of the entire team.

Hans stopped the starbuck and went to the

assistance of the gambler, and together they pulled the struggling team back on to the ice.

When this had been accomplished, Alec turned to Hans in utter disgust.

“Py gar, you one tam fool. Why didn't you let me go to hell in the water, togs and all?” He could not understand such an act when five thousand dollars was at stake.

Hans said nothing, but sprang upon his sledge and called to the starbuck, and they were off again, this time Hans leading.

Brutally, Alec urged on his water-soaked and limping team, who were running, tongues out, nearly spent.

He drove them mercilessly, and once again took the lead and held it till the forty-mile station, but here one of his dogs fell in the harness. Like a tiger the Canuck sprang to the disabled dog, cut him out, tied up the harness, and they were off again, having lost less than two minutes.

Halfway between the forty- and the fifty-mile stations, or five miles out of Ambia, another dog fell, kicking in the traces.

Alec could not cut him out readily while he kicked, so he shot him, and again they tore on; but Hans was leading once again.

Three miles out of Ambia there was a piece of very rough ice where many small cakes had been ended up in the rapids.

Hans slowed up and went into it rather carefully, but Alec yelled at his team and drove them harder than ever, thinking that the "Tutchman" was at last worn out; but both were destined to come to grief at almost the same instant.

Alec's sledge caught in a crevice and pulled off one runner, while Hans ran against a hummock of ice, and that side was crushed over.

Both hunting-knives were out in a flash, and the two men cut the traces which bound their teams to the sledge at the same moment, and

started to finish the three miles to Ambia on foot, one driving his dog-team and the other his reindeer.

Alec was lighter than Hans, and fleet of foot, so try as he would the Norwegian could not quite overtake him.

They ran almost side by side, Alec leading by six or eight feet down into the little town, while the crowd yelled itself hoarse.

Antone Dubois was waiting with the huskies, who were yelping as eagerly to be off as the malamutes had been at Nulato. Alec sprang upon the sledge, flung his heavy whip among them, and yelled, "Mush, you tevils, or I kill you all," and they did mush as few teams in Alaska were capable of doing. Hans hurriedly hitched the starbuck to his extra sledge, which he had sent to Ambia for just such an accident, and was after the yelping huskies, having lost only about a hundred yards.

Now it was that the real hard work for the

starbuck began. Up to this point Hans had not urged him. Now it was necessary, for Alec had very wisely kept his best team of dogs for the return leg of the race, and he drove them for every drop of blood in their lean bodies.

Hans found it difficult for the first ten miles to hang upon their flank as he had done with the malamutes.

Alec, who occasionally glanced over his shoulder, saw that his opponent was lagging behind, sometimes nearly a hundred yards, and his spirits rose. He was going to give the "Tutchman" the beating of his life. "That reindeer was vun tam fine animal, you bet."

At forty miles from Nulato Alec was two hundred yards ahead; but the pace was telling on his team, which was not as fresh as it should have been.

At thirty miles he was but one hundred yards ahead.

Hans occasionally called to the deer in cheery

tones, "Just a little better, old starbuck," but he never urged him unduly; he was saving him for the finish.

Halfway between twenty miles and ten miles from Nulato Alec's first dog went mad, and he began snapping at his team mates and biting at himself.

The gambler sprang from the sledge and shot him, cut out the dead dog, mended the harness, and rushed his team forward with whip and voice, seeking to make up the distance he had lost, for Hans was now leading by a hundred feet.

By a magnificent bit of driving Alec regained the distance and again took the lead; but his whole team were running with tongues out, and it was with difficulty that he could make them keep the pace.

Mile after mile they covered in this relative position, Alec cursing, throwing his whip into the team, and yelling at each individual dog.

He was clearly driving them to the very limit of endurance.

One mile from the finishing flag his lead dog fell kicking, and could not rise. Again he sprang from the sledge, and once more the crack of the "forty-four" rang out.

The reindeer passed him and took the lead.

Hans was now urging the starbuck with word of mouth and with gentle slaps of the rein on his side.

But reindeer and dog-teams were traveling much slower than when they started. Most of the distance they had come at sixteen miles an hour, and now they were barely making eight.

Nearer and nearer they drew to the finishing flag, while the entire population of the town shouted itself hoarse, as there were many thousands of dollars besides the ten thousand between Alec and Hans on the race.

Alec cursed and flung his whip constantly into his panting team, while Hans coaxed and

urged, "Just a little faster, starbuck; just a little faster."

They were perhaps half a mile from the finishing flag, the starbuck gradually passing the dog-team, spite of the brutal driving of Alec, the crowd cheering and groaning as their favorite lost or gained, when something happened that was not on the programme, an event so terrible that none who saw ever forgot it to their dying day.

Alec was well out in the river and Hans was nearer the Nulato bank. Another three or four minutes and the great race would be over.

But the great race was never finished on the river, for at that moment, without any premonition or warning, but with a crash as loud as the heaviest thunder, and with a shock that shook the solid earth in the village so that dishes rattled in their places, the ice upon the river for half a mile up and down and for the entire width fell about six feet into the swift

current below, breaking into hundreds of small cakes as it fell. With such a mighty weight suddenly precipitated into the river, the water jetted up like a geyser, in many places to the height of fifty feet. Small cakes popped up into the air and fell crashing upon larger ones, and the whole river seethed and thrashed as though swept by a mighty storm. The Yukon had frozen over in the autumn when the water was much higher than now, and that had caused the cave-in.

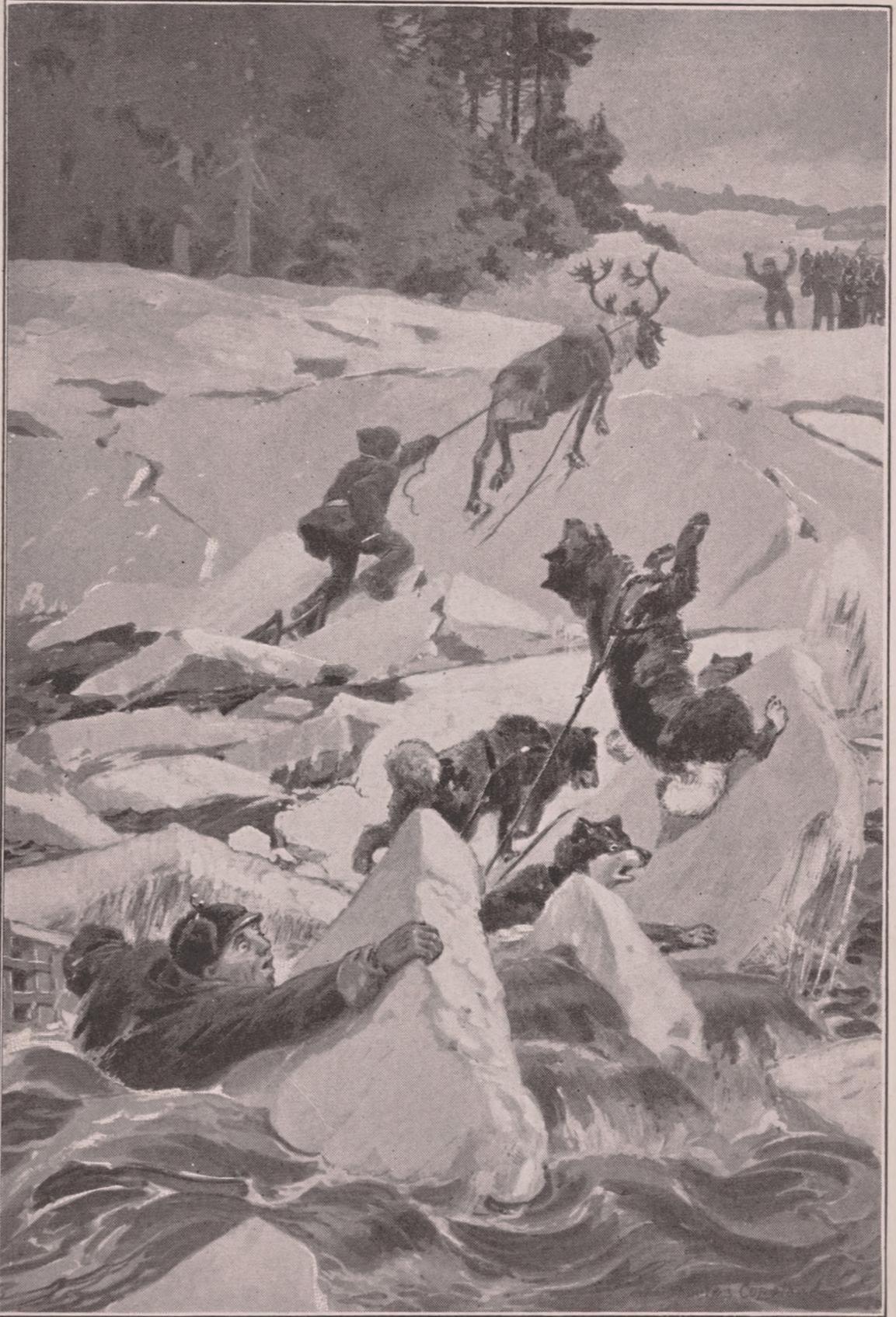
All eyes were fastened upon the contestants with the dog-team and the reindeer.

A great fissure yawned beneath the sledge of Alec; wider and wider it opened its mighty jaws, until the slight sledge slipped between two great cakes of ice and the current sucked mightily upon it to pull it down. Alec clutched at the edges of the ice to keep the sledge from sinking. Then there was a recoil as the cataclysm rocked the ice from side to side, and the

mammoth jaws slowly closed. Alec saw his impending doom, but too late to do anything to save himself. As he felt the great ice jaws close upon his sides he threw up his arms with a wild, despairing yell which was so full of terror and anguish that the watching women covered their eyes with their hands and wept.

Having crushed both the man and the sledge, the cakes again recoiled, the jaws opened, and the swift current pulled them down under the ice.

Three of the four dogs in the team had also been caught between the cakes and, like the man, crushed. The leader managed to get his forepaws upon a small cake and scramble upon it, but his release was only for a second, for the current, pulling at the sledge and his teammates under the ice, was too much for him. Frantically he worked his paws to keep his footing on the cake, but the current sucked him surely down to doom. First his hind feet



ALEC CLUTCHED AT THE EDGES OF THE ICE TO KEEP THE SLEDGE FROM SINKING



slipped from the cake, and it was no use struggling more.

Just as he let go with his forepaws he threw up his head and gave a despairing howl, as piteous and heartrending as had been the cry of the man.

Meanwhile Hans Peterson was fighting desperately for his life. He had been much more fortunate in his position on the river than Alec, as he had been close to the shore, within perhaps fifty feet. The ice on his side of the river had clung to the bank and had cracked about ten feet the other side of him towards the middle of the river. The shock even then was terrible, while the water swirled over the ice three feet deep, drenching Hans and threatening to carry the sledge under the ice with the recoil.

But Hans acted like a flash. With a strong pull upon the driving-rein he headed the star-buck up the steep incline towards the shore, while with his knife in the other hand he slit

the tug that held him to the sledge, retaining the driving-rein for his own safety.

The incline was so steep that with the water surging over it he never could make it by himself, and his only hope was in the starbuck.

So Hans called upon the old deer with a clarion yell that rang out like a trumpet blast above the tumult, "Mush, starbuck; mush." He had taught him to go forward at his best speed at this word the winter before, in order to show him off before some dog-drivers, and that training now stood him in good stead.

The old reindeer was almost as good a climber as a goat, and his hoofs were as sharp as any steel shoes. He answered to the call as though his life had depended upon it, as it really did. He dug his hoofs into the ice like a fury, and with short, quick springs, slipping and nearly falling, but with his hoofs working away madly, while his mighty muscles writhed and twisted beneath his coat, he struggled.

Once he slipped and nearly lost his footing, but in two seconds' time it was all over, and he had hauled Hans up on to the bank to safety.

The great race was over, and the starbuck had not only saved his master's five thousand dollars and won him an additional five thousand, but he had saved his life as well.

## XI

### AGAIN THE CRY FOR MEAT

THE week following the great race Hans took two Eskimos with him and went up to his claim on the middle branch of the Chandler River.

Then there was heard a new sound in the little valley, the ring of axes, while they cut spruces and built them into a commodious log cabin. When this had been finished to Hans's satisfaction, he went back for Olga and little Johanna, while the Eskimos were left to work the claim.

Two weeks later the entire family were located in the new home, and it was a pleasant and profitable summer that they spent, far from civilization or neighbors.

Johanna used to watch her father and the

other men as they worked, or stroll about the valley, which was really quite beautiful in summer, although it could be so bleak in winter.

Most interesting of all the inhabitants of the valley to Johanna were a pair of piliated woodpeckers, also called "the cock of the woods," that had their nest in an old spruce near the cabin. She also discovered a brood of ptarmigan chicks one day, and her delight knew no bounds.

The one thing that worried Olga was their plan to spend the winter on the claim, for she felt that it would be very dreary, so far from other white people. But Hans was anxious to work as late as possible and to begin early the next spring; to take his family to Nulato and then return for them in the spring would use up two precious weeks, so they finally agreed that all should stay.

It was surprising how soon the summer went and the cold again set in. They had so reveled

in the sunlight and gladness, and almost before they knew it the snowflakes were falling again.

Hans had built his cabin so large that it could be divided into two rooms, and they were very comfortable; yet the extreme cold of these northern latitudes is hard upon white women, and little Johanna soon began to grow pale and thin. She lost her appetite, and her parents were much worried about her.

Two weeks after the first snowstorm, when the bitter cold of these north latitudes was beginning to get in its work, they were visited by two belated prospectors who were making their way down to the Yukon.

They spent two days with the Petersons waiting for favorable weather.

One of them was a young doctor who had been obliged to give up his profession on account of poor health and rough it, going back to nature for sunlight and ozone.

Hans often during the two days would catch him watching the little girl narrowly. Finally he asked him what was the matter with her.

She was anemic, he said, with a tendency to consumption. She must have lots of sunshine, and fresh air, and plenty of fresh, juicy meat.

The fresh air Hans was sure he could supply, but at the mention of sunlight and fresh meat he shook his head. The sunlight would not come until spring, and while they had a large supply of provisions for winter fresh meat was not on the bill of fare.

When Hans mentioned this fact to the young doctor he laughed.

“Meat,” he said; “I should think you could find that readily enough. If you cannot do better, kill that fine reindeer that I saw in the shed this morning. He would last you all winter.”

At this suggestion the face of the little girl

went almost as white as the prevailing snow on the landscape.

“ Kill Starbuck, Mr. Doctor? ” she gasped. “ You can’t mean that. You do not know him. He is my friend. I love him almost like papa and mamma. I would rather die a million times than eat the starbuck.”

She was so troubled with the thought that Hans hastened to assure her that the starbuck would not be killed.

The following day the two prospectors took their leave, the young doctor not failing to remind Hans at parting of his prescription for plenty of fresh meat.

After that Johanna’s days were never quite happy. She had an anxious look which her parents could not understand. She never referred to the subject of killing the starbuck, but kept a sharp lookout for her old friend.

Every morning when she first got up she always inquired for him, and she would slyly

steal out to the shed to see him when her folks were busy.

“Starbuck,” she said to him one day, in a burst of confidence, “I don’t want you to be scat; but I am going to tell you, because it worries me so. A mean man told my papa one day to kill you so I could have meat. But they are not going to do it, Starbuck. I won’t let them. I’ll take care of you, Starbuck.”

The old deer bent down his head and sniffed the curly pate, while Johanna rubbed his nose and told him not to be afraid, for she would protect him.

After the prospectors had gone, Hans took down his rifle and went out to hunt. He also set snares for ptarmigan and rabbit in all the likely places in the valley, so for a while he was able to get fresh meat for his little daughter; but there came a time when these sources failed, and gloom rested upon the log cabin in the wilderness.

This was when the Arctic winter came down upon the land in all its fury—such a winter as old miners had not seen since the opening up of Alaska to the gold-seekers.

First snow fell to a great depth, and then there was such bitter cold as made the hardy trees of even that region cry out for mercy.

In the dead of night there would often come a crack like the report of a heavy rifle close to the cabin. Then in the morning Hans would find some noble spruce split to the heart by the awful cold.

They were quite warm in their snug log cabin, and Hans would not have minded the cold but that it drove all the game to cover, and scour the woods in every direction thoroughly as he might he could find no game. His snares were also futile, for no game was abroad.

Day after day he visited them in vain, always setting new ones in hopes that some fool-

ish ptarmigan or rabbit might stumble into one. He tramped miles in the lonely, forsaken forest, but no game could he shoot.

Each night when he appeared at the cabin Olga would ask anxiously what luck he had met with, and he always replied with the discouraging shake of the head.

Little Johanna noted all these things, and her young heart was very heavy. She made more visits than before to her friend the starbuck, and even conjured him to run away, but he took no heed of her warning.

Olga racked her brain to think up new dainty dishes that she might cook for her daughter, but the zest soon wore off them all, and the little girl grew paler and thinner.

This could not go on until spring. She would surely die before then. Several times Hans hinted to Olga in secret of killing the starbuck, but she always shook her head. "That would kill her anyway if she knew," Olga said, "and

we could not keep it from her. You do not know how closely she watches him. If he was to disappear she would know at once. Wait another day, Hans; perhaps something will turn up."

So they waited and hoped, but nothing desirable came of it. Hans got no game either with the rifle or with his snares, and Johanna steadily failed.

Then there came a day when she could not rise from her bunk, and the hearts of Hans and Olga were very heavy. "She must have meat at once," Hans announced, with a meaning look at his wife, but Olga replied, "Wait another day."

They waited another day, and still another, and Johanna grew steadily weaker. Hans would stand for an hour with his hand on the latch of the door leading to the shed where the reindeer was kept, listening to the low moaning of his child, but he could not act. Not so

much because he could not kill the deer as that he feared the results on the child.

Finally one night when the moaning had been more piteous and persistent than usual Hans could stand it no longer, so he whispered to Olga and she nodded her head in assent.

Then Hans took down his long hunting-knife from where it was stuck in a log and sat by the fire for a long time sharpening it, and with each motion he hardened his heart. Each time the stone passed over the keen blade the fate of the starbuck was nearer being sealed.

Occasionally a great tear streamed down his rough cheek, and he would wipe it away slyly. He was not ashamed to have Olga see, but he did not want to make it hard for her. She was weeping silently.

Who shall guess the thoughts of Hans as he sat and silently sharpened the long knife with which to butcher the starbuck? His mind would not let him rest. He thought of the long, des-

perate race of three hundred miles over the Norway snows for the lives of the two that he most loved in all the world.

He thought of Little Lightfoot, the fawn, so full of capers, as he fed from his mistress's hands in the old days in dear old Norway.

He thought of the long, terrible trip across the frozen tundra when they had suffered such hardships for the starving sailors. How strong and faithful, and what a companion the starbuck had been through it all, and now he was about to murder him.

Then he saw in his mind's eye the two gaunt, half-demented sailors come running over the ice, brandishing their harpoons, crying, "Meat, meat, meat!" God! would he never forget that cry, and that was just what his little daughter was saying now in her low moaning—"Meat, meat, meat!"

Each low moan now resolved itself into that dismal refrain, "Meat, meat, meat!"

For fifteen minutes longer Hans sharpened, with the low cry for meat still ringing in his ears, then he got up with a jerk.

At the move a low sob escaped from Olga. "Never mind, mother," said Hans, crossing to her and wringing her hand warmly. "If the starbuck knew, he would be willing. He would run till he dropped for us, and why not this?"

Hans tiptoed softly out of the room and shut the door without any sound.

He went swiftly to the shed. What he had to do must be done quickly while he had the nerve.

The starbuck thrust out his muzzle towards him in greeting as he approached. "God, no! Not that, Starbuck," he groaned. "I would rather you would fight me. Fight like the devil; then I can kill you easier."

But the starbuck made no such move; instead he stood meekly waiting, while his master passed his fingers lightly over his ribs on the left side, just back of the foreleg.

He would find that place just between the third and fourth ribs, and then would kill the deer at a single thrust.

At last he found the fatal spot, and steeled the muscles of his arm, that they might be strong to do this deadly work. He took in a deep breath and tightened his grip upon the knife. There must be no bungling.

But at that instant, half a second's time before the fatal plunge of the knife, there came a scream, clear and thrilling—a cry full of terror and appeal.

“Father! Father! Oh, father! Stop! If you kill the starbuck I shall die!”

Hans dropped the knife as though his arm had been suddenly paralyzed, and sank to the ground, the strength all gone out of him.

A second later Olga, pale as a sheet, appeared at the door.

“Hans,” she gasped, “did you hear that?”

It was awful. I know she will be dead when we go in to see her.”

For a few seconds the two stood clasping each other's hands and hardly daring to breathe. They were rather superstitious, and feared the worst.

“ Let us go in,” Hans finally said, and they went like two children, still holding on to each other's hands.

At the door the child called to them. “ Did I save the starbuck? ” she gasped.

Hans and Olga knelt down by the bunk and took the thin hands of their child in their own.

“ No, he is not dead,” answered the man in shaking tones. “ You saved him, but how did you know? ”

“ I was sleeping,” answered the child in a whisper, “ when I dreamed the starbuck was in trouble. I thought I was in the shed, and there you was, Papa, with that dreadful knife. If you had killed the starbuck I should have

died. I had a beautiful dream just before I had this bad one.

“ I dreamed you went hunting and killed a great moose, which was meat enough for us all winter, and I also dreamed that I got well, and we were all so happy because I knew then there would be no more danger to the star-buck.”

“ I pray God it may come true; one of your dreams was true, perhaps the other will be.”

“ I know it will be,” said the child faintly. “ Now if you are sure you will never, never try to kill him again I will go to sleep. It is awful hard work watching and watching to see your friend is not killed.”

“ Go to sleep, my child,” said Olga; “ no harm will come to the deer.”

The following morning, as soon as the dim, gray day made it possible to see, the Peterson family were astir, for Hans had planned an-

other hunting-trip. He had scoured the surrounding country for twenty miles in every direction with no success; but he was greatly impressed with little Johanna's dream. She had known that he was about to kill the starbuck when her body had been in the bunk screened from sight of the shed. There was something supernatural about it, so perhaps her other dream about the killing of game might also be true.

Hans made his preparations for the day's hunt, even buoyantly, so great was his faith. When he reached up for his "thirty-thirty" hunting-rifle he noted the "forty-five-ninety" Winchester which hung upon pegs above it. Why not take the larger-bore gun? Perhaps it would change his luck; so he took the Winchester.

For three hours he tramped through the snow-laden, ice-bound spruce forest, following the stream upon which his claim was located.

As each new vista of country opened up he scanned it with eager, hungry eyes, but it was always the same. He saw two or three snowshoe-rabbit tracks and the tracks of a ptarmigan where it had run about the perimeter of a low bush, budding, but that was all.

There was no sun, of course, but his watch told him that it was noon, and he had accomplished nothing. His heart grew heavy in spite of him, but there were still three good hours, and he would not give up hope.

Presently he left the valley and went upon some higher land which was sparsely sprinkled with aspens. How desolate and cold and utterly lifeless the world seemed! It would take a million years, he thought, for the sun to call life to this frozen waste.

Hans stood looking across the upland, through the naked aspens, and, spite of himself, a great heart-sickness came over him. Must his child die, after all? He would not

dare to kill the starbuck after what had happened last night.

But just at that moment something far across the waste caught his eye. It was not that he saw any game, but rather something queer. It was the bending and swaying of one of the aspens. The wind was blowing strongly; but wind could not cause this motion. The rest of the aspens about this one were only moving gently, but the top of this one was writhing and swaying. While he still gazed, spellbound and entirely at a loss to explain the strange phenomenon, a moose pushed out from a thick clump of bushes at the foot of the tree and began slowly bearing the sapling down under his foreleg. Finally, when he had got it where he wanted it, he began stripping it of small twigs, getting his own afternoon lunch.

As the moose stood he was almost broadside to Hans.

Eagerly the man's eye measured the distance

between him and the moose. It was a good three hundred yards. With joy he remembered the "forty-five-ninety" Winchester in his hands. This was the secret of his impulse to take the larger gun.

Should he wait and try to get nearer? It was a long shot and the life of his child depended upon it. At this moment he noted with alarm that the wind was directly at his back.

Even at that great distance the moose might wind him any moment and escape. He never could creep up on him going down the wind. He would risk the shot.

Very deliberately he raised the rifle. There was no chance for a rest. It would have to be offhand.

Hans drew in a deep breath, and, turning the wrist of his right hand, which held the forestock in its palm, he rested his forearm against his breast, thus getting a partial rest. He had previously elevated the rear sight to three hun-

dred yards. Again he drew in a deep breath, and took careful aim just behind the shoulder. For a second the sight glimmered in the right spot; then he pulled. But this one shot was not enough for Hans; he must make sure. He snapped the guard down and back with a motion like lightning, and before the first bullet had found its mark a second was well on its way.

The moose sprang back, let the aspen go up with a snap, and without even looking to see in what direction his assailant was he trotted off rapidly, his head held high.

Hans's heart sank, but he sent two more bullets after the retreating moose.

Just as he fired the fifth shot he noted that the moose was slowing down in his trot, and then, to his great astonishment, he stopped and stood stock still, his forelegs apart and his head hanging low. This could mean but one thing—he was mortally wounded. Hans did

not wait to fire more, but started at his best pace for the quarry. He had barely covered a quarter of the distance between himself and the game when the moose sank to his knees and rolled over on his side, and Hans knew he was his.

The kill proved to be a fair-sized bull, weighing perhaps eight hundred pounds, and in fine condition.

It is safe to say that mere man never worked as Hans did for the next two hours. With his keen hunting-knife, which he had sharpened the night before to slaughter the starbuck, he cut strips of steak until he had taken out perhaps twenty pounds. This he bound up with skin taken from the hide, so that it would carry easily.

He set to work to make as much of the rest of the meat as possible safe from the wolves. He kept on cutting out the best parts and tying them up in bundles with strips of hide. When he

had gotten perhaps twenty pounds he would climb a tree and secure it to a limb ten feet from the ground. For nearly two hours he worked in this manner, until he estimated that he had secured at least two hundred pounds. Then he reluctantly shouldered the twenty pounds of the best cuts, and started for his log cabin as fast as tired legs could carry him.

That night, for the first time in many months, there was the odor of fresh meat in the frying-pan.

Johanna ate ravenously, and her recovery began from that night.

How much the thought that the starbuck was safe had to do with it not even she guessed, but it was a wonderful tonic. She recovered so rapidly that when the first red rim of the returning sun showed over the southern horizon she was nearly as well as ever, and the pink had come back to her skin and the roses to her cheeks.

But the ordeal through which all the family had passed had been an awful one, and both Hans and Olga vowed they never would spend another winter in Alaska.

Gold and great riches were desirable, but health and friends were more so. They would winter in the States the next year if they had luck, and luck was with them.

## XII

### FAREWELL, OLD STARBUCK

THREE people stood on the wharf by the swift-running Yukon at Circle City, waiting for the down-coming boat. Her advent had been announced for some time by a dark cloud of smoke that wound heavenward in the blue distance.

It was Fourth of July morning, and a few flags floated in the breeze, even in this far-off town of Uncle Sam's domain. It was the largest log-cabin town in the world, boasting almost enough inhabitants to have gained it a city charter in a western State of the Union. Just how so much enterprise and hustle could have come together here on the Arctic Circle was amazing to one not acquainted with this remarkable story of gold in the Arctic.

There were men and women from all parts of the world here in this mining town—prospectors, capitalists, gamblers, and otherwise adventurers—all drawn hither by the glittering story of wealth to be gained in a few months of arduous work by those who could endure hardship and had courage to take a gambler's chance.

Presently the boat, "The North Star," one of the Alaska Commercial Company's splendid craft, came round a bend in the river into full sight, coughing, belching smoke and steam, and churning up a white roadway of foam in her wake.

"Here she comes, Papa," cried an excited treble. "Isn't she a great big ship?"

She surely was a fine ship for such a latitude, and her decks were swarming with passengers.

It was a cosmopolitan crowd that waited upon the wharf, bound down the river. A few

of them, strange to relate, were tourists who had found their way up this long, winding river in search of scenery and novel excitement.

Hans and Olga were not further from their native Norway than were many another passenger who took passage down the river from Circle City that July morning.

After leaving Circle City they wound their way carefully through the Yukon Flats, assisted by an Indian pilot, who stood in the bow and guided the ship merely by the color of the water, which was darker and had a different look in the channel. Here the river spread out into a great lake, perhaps ten miles across, and was very shallow everywhere except in the channel.

Once out of this devious winding way, the ship forged ahead, and they were off for the fifteen hundred-mile run down to St. Michaels, where they were to take a boat for Seattle, Washington.

Fate had been kind to the little family of Hans Peterson, and they were bound to the States. They intended to purchase a ranch in Minnesota, where many Norwegians lived, and enjoy the fruits of their labor.

True to his promise made to Olga and Johanna not to winter again in Alaska, Hans had sold his claim for a large price to four Englishmen who had come down from Dawson. The Petersons were now taking farewell of this rugged yet invigorating land that Hans himself had grown to love.

They had come down the Chandler River a month before and taken the first boat up the Yukon, just for a pleasure-trip, and they were now returning.

As they journeyed down the broad, swift-running river in this luxurious boat, the country and vegetation were a never-ending source of surprise to the Petersons, as they have been

to many another traveler who has visited Alaska in summertime.

It was surprising what twenty-two or -three hours a day of blazing sunlight could do, even in this latitude.

Flowers, grasses, and weeds had sprung up like magic, and they now luxuriated in the warm sunlight for the better part of the twenty-four hours, as fresh, beautiful, and vigorous as they would have been a thousand miles to the south. It was as though Nature repented her severity in dooming the country to so long and awful a winter and spread her treasures broadcast over the land.

Large white pines, aspens, and willows fringed the river, while wild roses clustered about stumps and rocks in rich profusion. To the family of Hans, and even to Hans himself, it seemed more like Eden than their pitiless Alaska—the Alaska they had known in the log

cabin upon the middle branch of the Chandler River.

For days they journeyed down this swift-running, wonderful river, with its swollen tributaries, its chasms, its rapids, its trading-posts, and missions, each with a thrilling story of adventure or hardship—this river of joy and sorrow, of sudden wealth or bitter disappointment.

At last Nulato was reached, the town which had been more nearly home to the Petersons than any other since they left Norway.

Here a score of friends were on the wharf to greet them—the factor of the post, the Carlisle Indian teachers from the Mission school, and Father Adelbert, all of whom had been good friends.

All had a cheery godspeed and a hearty handshake for the fortunate Petersons, who were so soon to come into their own.

Finally all the good-bys had been said, and

the wheel of the steamer again began to churn up the long ribbon of white foam at her stern, and they were leaving behind the little town where they had spent many happy though arduous months.

“ Papa, I have been wishing all the way down the river that we could see the starbuck before we left,” piped Johanna. “ He was such a good friend. I never shall love another animal like him. He wasn’t an animal, was he, Mamma? He was folks.”

Hans led his family to the port side of the ship. Olga noted that his face wore a broad grin. He and the Eskimo herdsman of the Yukon herd had arranged a little surprise party for Olga and Johanna, and it was about to come off.

“ You and mother come over to this side of the boat,” said Hans, taking his daughter by the hand. “ I shouldn’t wonder a bit if the

starbuck would come out on the bluff and say good-by to us.”

“ Oh, oh! ” exclaimed Johanna. “ Wouldn’t that be splendid! I have been feeling bad inside all day because we had got to leave him behind.”

“ It was the only way,” replied her father tenderly. “ The starbuck was born upon the tundra in old Norway, and the tundra is his home. He loves it, and he loves the cold. If we took him with us to the States he might die.”

“ I see him, I see him! ” cried Johanna excitedly as they rounded a bend in the river. “ He has come out to say good-by. Look, Papa, look; he has got an American flag in his antlers. Does he know it’s just been the Fourth of July? ”

“ Sort of looks so,” replied Hans, laughing all over his broad face. “ He is waving the flag to us in salute. It is his good-by.”

Hans himself, who had eyes like an eagle, could see a rawhide rope tied to the great buck's antlers, and he knew that the two Eskimo herders were lying in the grass at the deer's feet, enjoying the whole affair hugely.

They had tied the flag on the deer's antlers at Hans's suggestion.

“Lift me up, Papa,” said Johanna. “I want to see him just as long as I can, and the boat goes so fast. I should think the boat would go slower when we are leaving a friend behind.”

Hans lifted his little daughter and stood her on the rail, while he held her tight, that she might not be afraid.

“What a remarkable history that deer has had,” said Olga, “and how he has always been mixed up with our fortunes. I never can forget how cute he was as a fawn, when he used to feed out of my hands. How I hated to have you sell him to Anders Poulsen.”

“ I felt like a traitor myself,” said Hans, “ but it was all for the best. If we had not sold him we would not have had him here in Alaska.”

“ Do you remember, Papa, the saddle you made for me and how I used to ride him about in Nulato? ” asked Johanna. “ He was always so gentle with me.”

“ I remember,” replied Hans huskily.

“ I remember, too, the long, hard trip that we took across the tundra to save the starving sailors and how I worried all the way for fear we might have to kill and eat him.

“ He seems gentle enough, but he fought like a Turk when we were surrounded by wolves on the upper Chandler. He has a fighting spirit, has the old starbuck.”

“ Five thousand dollars of the money that we are taking out to the States he earned for us,” said Olga, “ by winning the great race.”

“That is so,” replied Hans. “It will help to buy our home.”

“We will name it after him, ‘Starbuck Ranch.’ Then we will always have something to remember him by.”

“I shan’t need anything,” whimpered the small girl on the rail. “I shall always pray for him every night. He’s getting awful dim, Papa. I don’t see why boats go so fast when you’re saying good-by to your friends.”

“Take a good, hard look,” said Hans; “we are coming to a bend in the river.”

So they all looked eagerly, for the last time, at the reindeer, standing erect, with head up, his splendid neck and branching antlers clearly silhouetted against the gray-green of the tundra, and that was the last they ever saw of him, for a minute later the boat rounded a bend in the river, and the noble old starbuck had gone from their lives forever.

THE END.



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