

The YOUNG ICE-WHALERS



by *Winthrop Packard*



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THE YOUNG ICE WHALERS



“WAY ENOUGH,” SAID JOE. “STERN ALL!” (see p. 105)

THE
YOUNG ICE WHALERS

BY WINTHROP PACKARD

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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THE YOUNG ICE WHALERS

CHAPTER I

A CHANGE IN LIFE'S PLANS

“ I WILL do what I can to help make matters easy, father.”

The speaker was a handsome, well-built boy of seventeen, with a frank, winsome face that ordinarily showed neither strength nor weakness of character, — the face of a boy out of whom circumstances make much that is good, or sometimes much that is ill, according to what experiences life brings him. There are boys who will grow up strong and able men, anyway. They seem to have it in them from the start. There are others who have an in-born tendency to evil and dissipation, which no amount of training and opportunity for better things can eradicate. Harry Desmond was of neither of these types ; his character was rather that which responds easily to outside influences, whose weaknesses may easily

grow upon it, or whose strong points may be developed and brought out by use.

“Thank you, my son,” said the other simply, extending his hand; “I was very sure you would. The business will of course go on, and may be built up again with care and strict economy; but the outside investments, whose returns have made us well-to-do, and from which the money for your education was coming, are totally swept away. I’m afraid we shall have to withdraw you from the preparatory school. It is an expensive place, and just at present I do not feel able to supply you with the money necessary to keep up your standing among the boys there. In another year I had hoped to see you in the freshman class at Harvard, and that may yet be managed. There are always scholarships to be had.”

“Father,” said Harry impulsively, “I don’t think I care for college. I’d rather help you. To tell the truth, I have not stood very well at school; I mean my marks have not been high. I have managed to pass always, but it has been a close shave sometimes. I’ve liked it immensely because I have had such jolly times with the other fellows. I have thought of college much in the same way. So long

as we had plenty of money, it was just as well to go. A college man who has spending-money has no end of a good time, and I don't doubt I could pass in the studies as well as a good many of the fellows. But now it's different. You've always stood by me like a brick. Now I want to help you."

A look of pride and delight beamed in the careworn face of the elder Desmond, and the stoop came out of his shoulders a little as if a weight had been lifted from them. He had expected the boy would meet the news bravely and carry himself well. He knew his own blood. The Desmonds had never yet been the men to cry baby when unpleasant things had to be faced, and yet — he knew now how it had weighed upon him — he had feared in his heart for the effect of the news on his only son. He knew of the low marks at the preparatory school, and how careless and pleasure loving the boy had seemed. There had been one or two escapades, also, things which showed carelessness and high spirits rather than viciousness, and they had worried him a good deal.

"I think we shall be able to keep the house, here," said the father, "though we shall have to live rather simply. The horses must go

and most of the servants, but when that is done and things straightened out a bit, we shall owe no man a penny. The hardest rub is coming in the business. There we must reorganize and retrench, and the office force is badly cut down."

Harry hesitated, though it was only for a moment, and swallowed a lump in his throat. He had a pretty good idea of the drudgery of the office. The younger clerks came in at eight or before, and never got away until six. That was for every week in the year, except a brief vacation of ten days or so. He thought of his Saturdays and holidays, of the long vacation in the heat of summer; and then he saw the careworn look in his father's face, and he held up his head and spoke swiftly.

"I'd be glad to help you in the office if I can, sir," he said; "I'm pretty handy at figures and have a good idea of book-keeping. I'd like to do it, if you'll only let me. A year or two of it would be good for me. Then, if things go better, it will not be too late to go to college after all. Perhaps I shall feel more like it then." He smiled somewhat grimly, mentally noting how swiftly ideas and ideals change. College,

which had seemed inevitable only a few short hours before, had not appealed to him except as a pleasant place to spend time and enjoy himself. Now he suddenly seemed to see how useful it might be to him in the future, yet that he would probably not be able to go there.

“It is a good deal of a sacrifice, my boy,” said his father, “but you really could help me there a great deal. I need some one with the force whom I can be sure of as loyal to my interests. Think it over for a day, and if you are still willing you can begin right away. It is almost worth while to be ruined financially to find one’s son so plucky about it and so loyal to the house. I shall have to let you go now; I am to have a business conference here in a few minutes, and I see the others coming down-street now. Be as cheerful as you can about this with your mother. I think it is hardest on her; but if we can all be patient for a few years, I think I can pull through and get matters in good shape again. Good-by.”

Harry left the library, put his hat on, and stepped out of doors. It was one of those days in late April that make one glad he is alive, and in New England. The grass was

already green upon the lawn, the buds were swelling in the shubbery, and a bluebird caroled as he fluttered from the bare limbs of a maple and inspected the bird-box where he planned to build his nest in spite of the scolding of the English sparrows that flocked about and threatened to mob him, but did not quite dare. Harry turned down the gravel path toward the boat-house. Beyond, the waters of the bay sparkled and ruffled in the wind, and his knockabout, new only last year, swung and curtsied at the mooring as if in recognition of her master. The lump came in Harry's throat again. If he worked in the office, he would have little time in the long bright summer just ahead of him to sail the blue waters of the bay. Besides, perhaps he ought not to keep the knockabout. The boat was worth money, and should be given up just as much as the horses. Well, he had the boat now, and the afternoon; he would have a sail while yet he might. It would give him a chance to think over things, too, as his father had suggested, though he knew his mind was made up already. He found the skiff at the landing, rowed to the boat, hoisted mainsail and jib, then, as an afterthought, instead of towing the skiff astern he made it fast to the

mooring and sailed away without it. It was one of those little decisions which mean nothing at the time, but which, such are the mysterious ways of Fate, often change the whole current of life.

Pointing well up into the wind, the graceful boat slipped rapidly through the water. She was breasting the incoming tide, Harry knew, for he could feel that peculiar quiver of the rudder that thrills through the tiller into the arm when a finely balanced boat heads the tide and beats to windward at the same time. Harry looked backward at the Quincy Point Village as it slowly drew away from him. He saw the fine old houses, — his own the finest of them all, — and was devoutly glad that the business reverses were not so great that they would have to leave that. On the rear veranda of one of them he saw the gleam of a white dress, and a young girl waved her hand at him. It was Maisie Adams, he knew, and he regretted that he had not seen her sooner. Maisie was a jolly good sailor, and he would have liked her for company. It was the time of the spring vacations, and Maisie was home from boarding-school. She would no doubt have enjoyed this first sail of the season. He almost decided to put back and ask her to go out, then

he happened to think he was no longer the prospective Harvard freshman with plenty of money to spend, but the prospective clerk in an office, and not likely to have even the boat he was sailing, after a few days. He ought to have had sense enough to know that this would make no difference with Maisie, but he was only a boy after all, and could not be expected to know much about the way a really nice girl like Maisie would look at things of this sort. So he pulled his hat down over his eyes a little — to keep out the sun, of course — and sent the knockabout bowling along down the Fore River, by Germantown, by Rock Island Head, and out into the wider bay toward Hull, where he got the full sweep of the bustling spring breeze.

Meanwhile Maisie pouted on the piazza. She had recognized Harry, and she, too, wished he had seen her sooner. The day was warm, almost like summer, and she would have liked a sail down the bay. However, she got some fancy work and sat down in a big piazza chair in the sun, with a wrap about her shoulders, determined to watch the boat if she could not sail in it. After a little while her mother came out.

“Are n’t you catching cold out here, Maisie?” she asked.

"I think not, mamma," replied Maisie. "It's just as warm as a summer day, and I thought it would be nice to sit here in the sun and embroider — and watch the boats. Sit down with me, won't you, and talk to me?"

"I knew you would n't be home long before you were on the lookout for a sail," said Mrs. Adams rather roguishly. She knew that Harry Desmond's knockabout was the finest small boat on the river, and that he and Maisie were great friends. "There are n't many of the boats in commission yet. I thought I saw the Princess" — that was Harry's boat — "at the mooring yesterday, but I see that I was mistaken."

Mrs. Adams smiled quietly to herself as she saw the faint color creep up into Maisie's cheek and hide itself under the dark ringlets of her hair. Then the girl looked up with charming frankness and said, "The Princess was there a few moments ago, but Harry has just gone out in her. See, he is almost down to Sheep Island now. He would have taken me, I think, if he had known I was at home."

Maisie looked straight into her mother's eyes, and that was one of Maisie's chief charms. She had a way of looking at you clearly and honestly, and you knew that you were looking

down through pretty gray eyes into a heart that was as open and frank as it was sunny.

“I should have been perfectly willing to have you go,” said her mother. “Harry is a very gentlemanly boy, and a good sailor. I think I can trust you with him.”

“I think you can trust me with any of the boys I am willing to go sailing with, can you not, mamma?” said Maisie, and knowing it to be true, Mrs. Adams gave her daughter a little squeeze of affection and changed the subject.

They sat and talked for a long time in the bright afternoon sun, while Maisie embroidered industriously, now and then glancing at the sail of the Princess, which had diminished to a little white speck over toward the mouth of the harbor, then grown again as her skipper headed toward home. By and by Mrs. Adams went into the house, and Maisie laid down her embroidery and strolled across the lawn and down the path toward the Adams’s boat-house.

There she found none of the boats put into the water for the season except the smallest, a light little thing with one pair of oars. Maisie was a good oarsman, and she often rowed one or another of the boats up the placid reaches of the Fore River, above the bridge;

so there was nothing uncommon in what she now did. Finding it ready for use, she got into the little skiff, cast off the painter, and was soon skimming with easy strokes under the bridge and away up-river. The bridge and the heights of land on either side of it soon hid the bay and the sail of the Princess from her sight, if not from her thoughts. There were plenty of interesting things to see up-river, and who shall say that she did not turn her whole attention to these? At any rate, she alternately rowed and floated for some time, and thoroughly enjoyed the vigorous exercise and the outing in the bright spring sunshine. By and by the ebbing tide carried her back toward the bridge, and she turned the bow of her skiff homeward just as the Princess, with the west wind in her sails, came nodding and curtsying up toward her mooring.

Harry had thought it all out, and was at peace with himself. He would take the clerkship in the office and work patiently and bravely. Perhaps he would like business better than he thought, or if he did not, he could work faithfully and hope for an improvement in the family fortunes that would enable him to enter college after a few years. He had

heard it said that a year or two of experience in business was a good thing for a boy who was to enter college, just as a college education was a sure help in business, if that were to be taken up after graduation. At any rate, he would be doing the thing that his father wanted him to do, and that was bound to be best. So, with the buoyancy of boyhood asserting itself, his brow was clear, the trouble was already behind him, and he whistled a merry tune as he tacked to make his mooring.

Then he noted a skiff coming through the draw of the bridge with the tide, and gave a cheerful shout of greeting as he recognized Maisie in it. Suddenly something happened, and just how it did happen neither of them could clearly tell. The skiff was passing the piling at one side of the draw, and perhaps an oar caught between two piles, perhaps Maisie turned too suddenly at the call of greeting, or the sweep of the tide did it, or all three. Whatever it was, the skiff overturned, and before Harry could realize what had happened, Maisie's dark head floated for a moment beside the upset skiff, then sank beneath the water while the skiff floated away. He swung the tiller of the Princess swiftly so as to throw the

boat back on the other tack and head for the spot, which was not far away; but quick as the knockabout was in stays, the two tacks, one immediate upon the other, had lost her headway, and she got a fill of wind too late to fairly make the spot where Maisie had gone down. As the girl's head again came above water, the boat was a dozen feet to leeward and would be no nearer. There was but one thing to do, if she were to be rescued, and Harry did it. Letting go of tiller and sheet, he sprang quickly overboard and plunged with vigorous strokes in her direction, shouting a word of encouragement which she did not seem to heed, but which was answered by a wild warwhoop from the shore.

There the ancient ferryman, who takes people across from Germantown to the Point for a nickel, had suddenly waked up to the catastrophe and nearly swallowed his pipe, which he had been smoking placidly when it happened. He saw the need of immediate help, and sprang into the stern of his skiff and snatched an oar from the thwarts, swinging it hastily into the scull hole, very nearly upsetting himself in his excitement. Then he vigorously plied the oar and sent the clumsy boat through the water toward the scene of the accident.

Maisie was behaving herself well. Used to the water, but so weighted and snarled in her skirts that she was unable to swim, she nevertheless did not hamper Harry by needlessly clinging to him, but simply grasped his shoulders and clung tenaciously, though speechless and half drowned already. Yet Harry was having a hard time of it. He was a good swimmer, but the ice-cold water seemed to grip his chest and stop his breathing. He held Maisie up and looked for the Princess, but the boat, with its sheet caught, had swung off the wind and was rapidly sailing away. He could not reach the shore, and he knew it. He could hold Maisie up for a while, if he spared his strength as much as possible. There was a chance that help might come, though he could not tell from where. His head whirled, but he swam mechanically. Once they went under, and then as they came up something struck his shoulder and he grasped it and held on.

The swift tide had floated them out toward the mooring, and set them alongside the skiff that he had inadvertently left there some hours before. Thus kindly Fate helps us oftentimes in little things. It was only an impulse that had made him leave the skiff at the mooring,

and now it was to be his salvation and Maisie's as well.

There he clung, to be sure, but he was unable to lift the girl into the skiff. His head whirled with excitement and fatigue, but he would not let go. The iron grip of the icy water on his chest seemed to crush the strength out of him, and he scarcely knew when the ferryman, his clumsy craft quivering with newfound speed, swung alongside and lifted first Maisie and then him into the boat. Then with a strong sweep of his oar the old man swung the boat's head toward the shore, and fell to sculling desperately without the utterance of a word.

Harry was still dazed and breathless, and Maisie was the first to recover speech. "I'm sorry I made so much trouble," she said faintly to Griggs, "but we were nearly drowned, and would have been quite if you had not come just as you did. We thank you very much."

Then she turned to Harry, who could still only smile faintly and shiver. "I have to thank you, too, for my life. I should have gone down before any one else could get to me if you had not been so quick and brave." She held out her hand to him and he clasped it for a mo-

ment, while his teeth managed to chatter that it was all right.

The ferryman turned his head over his shoulder and grinned cheerfully and reassuringly across his pipe, which was still gripped in his teeth, but he said no word, only went on sculling. Then the boat reached the landing and he helped Maisie out and gave a hand to Harry. The boy rose with difficulty, he was so chilled.

"Thank you, Griggs," he said as he stepped on the wharf. "You came just in the nick of time, and I'll see that you have more than thanks for your trouble and coolness."

"Don't you say a word, Mr. Harry," said the ferryman. "You and I've been shipmates a good many times, and your folks have been more than kind to me. I'll get the Princess back to her mooring for you. I'm mighty glad I was on hand, and you'll do me a favor if you won't say anything more about it."

Harry was feeling better, but his teeth chattered still as he stumbled along with Maisie to her own door. At home he told his mother quietly that he had had a ducking, saying nothing about the rescue, and went to bed, while she dosed him with hot drinks. He did not seem to recover as he should, and his mother

sent for the family physician. He laughed at the escapade, and gave Harry medicines that brought him round all right in due time, though not feeling very active. But the next day the doctor took care to call on Mr. Desmond privately.

"The boy is all right," he said; "and the ducking is n't going to hurt him any, but I want to warn you that though he is constitutionally sound, he seems lacking a bit in vitality. He is not very resilient; that is to say, things that some boys would throw off as a duck does water are likely to hurt him. Indoor life is bad for him. He's the sort of chap that should be out in the open as much as possible for a few years. Don't let him study too hard. Keep him sailing his boat and playing outdoor games while his constitution hardens."

A day or two afterward Harry came into the library and found his father with an open letter in his hand.

"I'm ready to report for business; father," said the boy, smiling. "How soon do you want me to begin at the office?"

"Are you really anxious to begin?" asked his father.

"Why, yes, father," said Harry. "I know

it will be a good deal of a grind, but it will be good for me, and I feel that I am big enough now to help when you need me."

"Did Maisie stand her ducking all right?" asked his father with a smile, suddenly changing the subject.

"Why — yes, sir," faltered Harry. "How did you know about it? I was n't going to tell anything about that part of it."

"Oh, I saw Mr. Adams yesterday and he was quite full of the story. He spoke very nicely about your share in it, and I am quite proud of you."

"Oh, sir," said Harry, turning very red with pleasure at his father's praise; "it was n't anything much, and anyway it was Mr. Griggs who pulled us both out. We would not have got out at all if it had n't been for him."

"Well," said his father, "it was a very fortunate escape, and I'm glad it came out as it did. But I have two things that I wish to talk to you about, and it may be that we shall not need you in the office at all, but can use you to better advantage in another way. First, I want you to read this letter from Captain Nickerson, my old friend from Nantucket."

He handed Harry a letter written in a

cramped but bold handwriting. It was as follows:—

WHALING BARK BOWHEAD,
HONOLULU, January 15, 189-.

DEAR FRIEND DESMOND, — It is a year since I wrote you last, and longer than that since I have heard from you, but shall hope to hear from you when we arrive at Frisco, which will be in April unless something comes up to prevent. We have had rather an uneventful cruise so far, and have taken but few whales in the South Seas. We shall land about 1100 barrels of oil, however, as the result of the cruise up to date. We are refitting here as the result of a hurricane which we took about a month ago, in which we lost the fore-topmast and some gear with it. No one was hurt except two Kanakas, one of whom went overboard when the gale first struck us, and the other got a broken arm by a fall from the foreyard during the gale. How he escaped going overboard is a mystery, but it is pretty hard to lose a Kanaka. I watched out for the other one most of the way into Honolulu. Expected nothing but he might swim alongside and board us, but he did n't come. Picked up a couple of white men off the beach here to take their places.

Think they may prove good men. They have been on the beach long enough to know what it is to have a good ship under them and regular fare, though not so good as you people at home get, doubtless.

The old ship is in fine trim again, taut and nobby as a race horse over on the Brockton track. Guess I shall not be home in time to take in the county fair this year, though I would like to. We shall fit out again either at Frisco or Seattle, and will probably touch at Seattle anyway on our way north. I am going to cruise through Bering Sea and into the Arctic this summer for bowheads. Oil is cheap now, but bone is higher than ever, and a good shipload of bone and ivory, such as we can probably get if we go north, will be worth while. And this brings me to one object in writing this letter. My boy Joe is with us this cruise, and as fine a young sailor as ever you saw. I wish, however, he had a lad of good family of his own age for company. I do not like to have him have the crew alone for friends. Some of them are good fellows, too, but many of them are, as you no doubt guess, a rough lot. Your son Harry must be about his age now, — eighteen. Why do not you let him come on and meet us at

Seattle, and go north for the summer? He would enjoy the cruise thoroughly, and no doubt learn much that is useful to a young lad just growing up. We shall be back by November at the latest, and it would be nothing much but a summer vacation for him. If you think he would like to go, why not send him on? We'll make a man of him, and a sailor man at that. I spoke to Joe about it, and he is wild with delight at the idea. He remembers the visit that you all made to us at Nantucket some years ago, in which he and Harry came to be great friends. It would be good for his health, too. There is no place like the Arctic in summer for putting health and strength into a man. Besides, I could give him a paying berth as supercargo. There is not much to do in this except a little book-keeping, and that is just what a boy who has been to school as much as Harry has would do easily and well. He would have to keep track of the ship's stores, keep account of expenditures, and such things as that. The pay is not large, but it would give him some pocket-money when he got back, and he would not feel that he was dependent, or a guest even.

Write to me at Frisco about the middle of April, and we will plan to have him meet us

there or at Seattle before we start out, which will be some time early in May.

With many pleasant memories of old school-days together when Nantucket was really a whaling town, and the schoolmasters did a good deal of whaling, — Lord! what pranks we used to play, we two! — and my regards to Mrs. Desmond, and many to yourself, I am,

Yours very truly,

WILLIAM NICKERSON.

Mr. Desmond watched Harry narrowly as he read this letter. He saw his eyes light up at the prospect, and noted his suppressed excitement. Then the boy handed it back, and steadied himself.

“But you need me in the office, don’t you, father?” was all he said.

“Would you like to go?” asked his father.

“Why, yes, very much, sir,” answered Harry frankly; “but not enough to go when you need me for other work here at home. If things were as they were a year ago I should tease to be allowed to go, but now I would rather stay at home.”

Mr. Desmond looked pleased. “Now,” he said, “this is the other matter I wished to

the business of Arctic whaling and trading is carried on. If you take this trip with Captain Nickerson, you will have a chance to see much of these conditions, and be able to make such a report. It is true that you are young and inexperienced in such matters, but your work may be all the better for that. You will have no prejudices or already formed opinions to bias you, and what you lack in experience in that region may be made up by conversation with those who have made previous cruises there. At any rate, Mr. Adams seemed to think it was worth our while to give you such a commission, if you went out there. He seems much interested in you since the upset, and if you go, you will go on a modest salary in his employ, he being the head of the enterprise. That will perhaps be better for us both than work in the office would be. Now what do you say? Will you go?"

Harry looked hard at his father, saw that he, as usual, meant what he said, and was really desirous of having him go, and then his delight and enthusiasm bubbled right over. He danced about his father, wrung his hand, and in general acted more like a crazy boy than the sedate and repressed youth who had been so willing to go into the office. As he

rushed off to tell his mother, and plan his arrangements for the trip, Mr. Desmond smiled cheerily.

“Humph!” he said to himself, “I suppose the doctor was right, but there certainly does n’t seem to be much lack of vitality there.”

That afternoon he sent and received the following telegrams:—

To NICKERSON, Whaling Bark Bowhead, San Francisco, Cal.

Have decided to let Harry go north with you. Where shall he meet you, and when?

H. N. DESMOND.

To H. N. DESMOND, Franklin St., Boston, Mass.

Will be in Seattle May tenth to fifteenth. Have Harry meet me there. Great news.

NICKERSON.

Mr. Desmond wrote also, and five days later received a letter from Captain Nickerson, which he had evidently written as soon as the telegrams were exchanged, giving further instructions. Arrangements were hurriedly but carefully made, and one day early in May Harry bade good-by to father, mother, and

many friends at the station in Boston, and was off. Maisie was there too, with a smile on her face but a tear in her eye as she bade him good-by with a friendly handshake.

“Good-by, Harry,” she said. “I hope you won’t go plunging overboard after careless young ladies, up there among the Eskimos. It would be just like you, though. Be a good boy, and bring me a polar bear or something when you come back.”

“Good-by, Maisie,” replied Harry. “I’ll bring you the finest aurora borealis there is in all the Arctic.”

Some one shouted “All aboard,” the train rumbled from the station, gathering headway rapidly, and Harry Desmond was fairly launched upon a new life, which was to be so strange and so different from the old that he was often to be like the old lady in the nursery tale, who exclaimed periodically, “Lauk-a-mercy on us! This can’t be I.”

CHAPTER II

BOUND FOR THE ARCTIC

THE city of Seattle grows to-day by leaps and bounds. The roar of traffic sounds unceasingly in her streets, the city limits press outward in all directions into the unoccupied territory near by, and the present prosperity and future magnitude of the place seem already assured. She sits, the queen of the Sound, at the meeting-point between the great transcontinental railroads and the great trans-Pacific steamship lines. Great steamers, the largest in the world's carrying trade, ply unceasingly between the magnificent waters of Puget Sound and the mysterious ports of the far East, as we have learned to call it, — though from Seattle it is the far West, — and fetch and carry the products of the Orient and those of our own great country. Mighty full-riggers from the seas of half the world lift their towering masts skyward, as they swing at the city's moorings in water that is just offshore, but so deep that the ordi-

nary ship's cable hardly reaches bottom, hence special cables and moorings are provided. To the westward the Olympic Mountains, clad with the finest timber in the world, lift their snowy cloud-capped summits to the sky, and glow rosy in the light of the setting sun ; while, between the city and these mountains beautiful, flow land - locked waters which might hold all the navies of all the world without being crowded, and which seem destined to be the centre of the commerce of the coming century, borne over seas that are yet new to the world's traffic.

Thus to-day ! yet a decade and less ago the city was far from being as energetic. Seattle then slept in the lethargy of a "boom" that had spent itself, and was but just beginning to feel the stir of new life and a solid and real prosperity. Splendid business blocks were but half tenanted, many of the original boomers were financially ruined, yet the city kept up its courage, and had an unabating faith that position and pluck would win out. Already this faith was beginning to have its reward in works, and the faint glimmerings of future great advancement were in sight. More business began to reach the port, and the often almost deserted docks had now and then a

ship. One of these on the day of which I write was the Bowhead, and certainly business bustle was not wanting on and near her. Perhaps the amount of work going on was not so very great, but the bustle more than made up for that, and Ben Stovers, the Bowhead's boatswain, was the guide and director of this bustle, and to blame for the most of its noise.

Stovers had a voice as big as his frame, and that was six feet two in longitude, as he would have said, and it seemed almost that in latitude. Surely, like this terrestrial globe, his greatest circumference was at the equator. Captain Nickerson was wont to say that Stovers was worth his weight in ballast, and that made him the most valuable man on the ship. It was a stock joke on the part of the first mate, when the wind blew half a gale, the crew were aloft reefing topsails, and the good ship plunged to windward with her lee-rail awash, and her deck set on a perilous slant, to politely ask the mighty boatswain to step to the windward rail so that the ship might be on an even keel once more.

It was the voice of this mighty man that was Harry's first greeting as he came down the dock toward the vessel that was to be his

home for the long cruise. It rolled up the dock and reëchoed from the warehouses, and every time its foghorn tones sounded, a little thrill of energy ran through the busy crew.

“Hi there! Bear a hand with that cask,” it yelled, and two or three dusky Kanakas would jump as if stung, and the cask they had been languidly handling would roll up the gangway as if it concealed a motor.

“Come on now, Johnson, and you, Phipps; this is no South Sea siesta. Stir your mud-hooks and flip that bread aboard. Wow, whoop! you’re not on the beach now, you beach-combers; you’ve got wages coming to you. Step lively there!” Result, great rise and fall in breadstuffs, and boxes of hard bread going over the rail and down the hold in a way that made the Chinese cook below shout strange Oriental gibberish, in alarm lest the boxes be stove and the contents go adrift.

“Lighter ahoy!.” — this to the man driving a cart down the dock; “clap on sail now and come alongside. We’ve got to get away from this dock before night or the city’ll own the vessel for dock charges.”

This sally brought a grin from the loungers, not a few, who watched the loading, dock charges being always a sore point with

the vessels' owners, and brought the pair of bronchos and the load of goods down the crazy planking at a hand-gallop.

Flour in bags, bolts of cotton cloth and many hued calico, shotguns and rifles, ammunition, what the whalers know as "trade goods" of all sorts, for traffic with the Eskimo tribes, were all being hustled aboard the vessel before the impulse of this great voice, which sounded very fierce, and certainly spurred on the motley crew to greater exertions. Yet it had a ring of good humor in it all, and the men obeyed with a grin as if they liked it.

A tall young fellow with bronzed face and black curly hair stood noting the goods that came aboard and checking them off on a block of paper. He looked up as Harry came down the dock, then gave a shout of recognition, and came down the gangplank with hand extended.

"It's Harry Desmond, is n't it?" he said; "awful glad you came. When did you get here? Father is up in the city doing some business. He'll be as glad as I am that you are here. Come right aboard. I'm Joe Nickerson; of course you remember me, don't you? You're a good deal bigger and older,

but you have n't changed a bit. I'd know you anywhere. My! but I'm glad you are going up with us."

He glanced somewhat dubiously at the black hand-satchel that Harry was carrying, but said nothing about it as they went up the plank. Not so the boatswain; he took one look at it and rolled heavily forward.

"Ax your pardon, young feller," he said; "but ye'd better not take the hard-luck bag aboard, had you? Don't you want to leave it down here on the dock? We'll see that it's safe till you go ashore again."

Harry was somewhat surprised, and inclined to resent this seemingly needless interference, but Joe spoke up before he could say anything. "Mr. Stovers," he said, "this is my friend Harry Desmond, of whom you've heard me speak. He's going up with us this trip as supercargo."

The big boatswain reached down a hand like a ham, and shook Harry's awkwardly with it.

"Glad t' meet you," he said. "Did n't mean nothing sassy about the bag, you know, but sailors are queer fellows. 'T ain't me; I don't believe it, but the crew think a black bag is full of gales of wind, and lets 'em out

when it's brought aboard ship. See 'em looking at it, now. 'F you could leave it ashore, and bring your dunnage on in a canvas bag, they'd feel better about it. No use getting the men grumbling down for'ard."

"Certainly," said Harry politely. "I'll leave it out on the dock here, if some one will keep an eye on it for a while till I can get something else. Glad you told me. I don't want to be a bad weather man my first cruise."

"Thank you," said the boatswain with equal politeness; "I guess you and I'll get along all right." Then he turned suddenly to the crew, who were loitering and gazing uneasily at the black bag.

"'Vast gawking there, and bend on to that dunnage. Whoop, now! Get her up here! Heave her up, boys, lively now; the gale's gone down. That's the new supercargo, and you don't want to go cutting up any monkey-shines with him. He's going to leave the hard-luck poke-sack ashore."

"I've got a trunk over at the station, too," said Harry, as they went down the companion-way aft. "Do you suppose they'll mind if I bring that aboard?"

"Well," said Joe, "they're superstitious about trunks, too, although they don't care so

much about them as they do about a black bag. That's a special hoodoo."

"I'll store them both ashore, then," said Harry resolutely; "I want to start all fair with the crew. You have things pretty nice down here, don't you?" he went on with some surprise as they entered the cabin. Here he saw a room with a well-furnished dining-table, and doors leading off, the fittings being in hard wood, and the whole having an air of refinement and home surroundings pleasant to see.

"Why, yes," said Joe. "You see a whaling captain lives aboard his vessel the year round, and we like to have things snug. Father's cabin is just aft of this. He keeps his charts there and instruments. The first mate has the one on the starboard, and you and I are to share this."

Joe, as he spoke, showed Harry into a little cabin which was lighted by a port side dead-light, and which had two neat berths with clean bedding and white sheets. There was abundant locker room, and the whole looked somewhat as any boy's room might that was occupied by a young man studious and interested in outdoor sports. A rifle and shotgun hung on the wall, and other boyish belongings

were scattered about. There was a shelf or two of books, and it reminded Harry in a certain way of his own room at home. Joe noted his approval with pleasure, and seeing him glance at the books said : —

“ Father ’s got quite a library in his room that you are welcome to use. We ’ll study navigation and some of those things together, if you want to. Here ’s your locker, and these hooks are for you. You may have either bunk you wish, but I think you ’ll find the lower one more convenient. Come on ashore now, and I ’ll help you get your things aboard and get you settled. We sail to-morrow.”

That night at supper, which was deftly served at two bells by the Chinese steward, Harry was cordially welcomed by Captain Nickerson, and met the first mate, a lank, muscular man, bronzed and singularly taciturn, and learned much of his duties as supercargo, which he readily saw were nominal indeed. It was strange how easily he became adapted to life on board, and before bedtime he felt as if he had already lived a long time on a whaling ship. He stored his trunk and the “ hoodoo ” black bag in the city, and brought his belongings aboard in two canvas sacks, regular sailor’s bags, much to the approval of the two

brawny Kanakas of the crew detailed to bring them down for him. Harry was much interested in these dusky South Sea islanders, and found them intelligent, good-natured, and efficient. Joe showed him over the ship, introduced him to the engineer and his assistant, and taught him much about the general working of the vessel. He saw the great kettles, set in brickwork on the forward deck, for the trying out of blubber. He saw the whaling implements, the bundles of staves for casks, and the great space between decks above and below for the storing of these when they should be coopered and filled with oil. He saw the galley where two slant-eyed Chinese were in charge, and the narrow quarters of the crew forward, crowded as much as possible to give more space in hold and on deck for oil casks, and for such members of the crew as he came in contact with he had a pleasant word.

Until Arctic whaling by way of Bering Sea began, few if any whalers were fitted with steam as an auxiliary; but it was found that if vessels were to make a success of the industry among the ice-floes of these treacherous waters, get into and out of the Arctic by the narrow, current-ridden, ice-tangled passage of Bering Straits, it was wise and expedient



THE LONG ROLLERS OF THE NORTH PACIFIC

to add steam to the equipment. Hence many vessels like the *Bowhead*, though thorough-going sailing vessels, were equipped with engines and propeller, to be used when the wind did not serve, or when the passage of ice-floes made it necessary. It was under a full head of steam, then, that the *Bowhead* passed up Admiralty Inlet, as that portion of the Sound is called, rounded into the Straits of Fuca, and spread her sails to the westerly wind only when she was well out toward Cape Flattery, and breasting the long rollers that swung unimpeded from the vast expanse of the world's greatest ocean.

How Harry's heart had swelled within him at the sight of this sea! He had something of the feelings of Balboa when he first sighted it from that Central American mountain-top, and fell on his knees in adoration and thanksgiving. He longed like Captain Cook to furrow it with exploring keel, and seek out the enchanting mysteries that lie in and beyond the shores that it touches.

"Great sight, is n't it, Harry?" said Captain Nickerson, who stood near him and noticed his emotion.

"Yes, sir," replied Harry. "It seems like dreams coming true to think that I am to see

the things that I have read about this side of the world, but never really expected to see with my own eyes."

The captain smiled. "You'll see strange sights, my boy, before you get home," he said, and there was more of prophecy in this than either of them dreamed at the time.

"Are we liable to do any whaling right away?" asked Harry.

"Well, that depends," replied the captain. "There is now and then a humpback in these waters, but they are pretty shy nowadays, and hard to come up with. They're hardly worth while. I doubt if we shall lower a boat before we get into Bering Sea and get among the bowheads as they follow the ice up. We are likely to see a whale, though, most any time now."

"I wish we could," said Harry, the ardor of the sportsman beginning to thrill in his veins; but no whale appeared that day, though he watched the sea with patience and undiminished ardor.

A day or two afterward, as he came on deck, he saw a little cloud on the surface of the water like the puff of smoke that follows the discharge of a rifle loaded with black powder. A moment after another puff shot

into the air quite near the ship, and he saw beneath it a black body rise languidly to the surface, loll along it a moment, and then sink again. His heart gave a great jump. A whale! Why had none of the crew seen it? To be sure they were not on watch for whales, but still several were on deck, and the first mate, whose watch it was, was pacing leisurely back and forth behind him as he stood at the rail. The mate now and then glanced at the sails to see how they were drawing, and now and then shot a command, a single word if possible, to the crew for a pull on the braces, or something of that sort, but he seemed to take no notice of the puff of smoke and the black body just showing above the surface almost alongside. Harry looked again. Yes, it was there, so near that he could see that the little puff of smoke was a cloud or vapor blown with a whiff into the air from one end of this black body. He could stand it no longer, but rushed up to the mate, grasped his arm, pointed in the direction of his discovery, and said excitedly, "See, see! There he is! Don't you see the whale?"

"Nope," calmly replied the taciturn first mate, gazing at the little puff of vapor and the black body.

“Is n’t — is n’t it a whale?” faltered Harry, a little ashamed of his enthusiasm in the face of this stolidity.

“Nope,” said the first mate.

“But it looks like a whale,” persisted Harry; “and it acts like a whale, at least as I have read that they acted. What is it, then?”

“Blackfish,” said the mate, with a sweep of his hand to the other side of the ship. Harry looked in that direction, and was silent in astonishment and delight.

“Hundreds!” said the mate, and resumed his walk on the deck.

There were not so many as that, but there were certainly scores of these creatures sporting lazily in the waves, rolling their black bodies to glisten in the sun, and sending up the puffs of vapor that floated a moment in the breeze and then vanished. It reminded Harry of the skirmish line when the Cadets were encamped at Hingham, and the order “Fire at will” had been given. The puffs were much like those from the Springfield rifle.

The blackfish is really a whale, though the whalers do not like to consider him as such or give him credit for it. He is small, not

generally reaching a length of twenty feet, but otherwise he has all the characteristics of a whale. He blows, breathes, feeds, and lives in whale fashion. But he contains but a barrel or two of oil, of an inferior quality, and hence is beneath the notice of the average whaleman, though vessels in hard luck occasionally turn to and slaughter him rather than return to port empty. His meat, on the other hand, is better than whale meat, and is often esteemed a delicacy on a long whaling voyage when fresh meat from other sources has not been obtainable.

Some time afterward, as they were nearing the Aleutian Islands, Harry was to see his first "real whale," and witness one of the fierce tragedies of the sea. He sat by the taffrail conning Bowditch's Navigator, puzzling his way through the intricate and bewildering instructions as to the taking of the sun, the use of sextant and quadrant, the working out of longitude and latitude, while Joe, standing second mate's watch as was his wont, paced the deck, and now and then passed a word with the boatswain. That worthy was sitting cross-legged near the rail amidships, busy with sailor's needle and canvas rigging some chafing-gear for some of the lines, when he suddenly

sprang to his feet and gazed intently over the bow toward the horizon. A moment he stood thus, and then the great tones of his voice rang out in the musical call: —

“A — h — h blow! There she blows! Whale — o!”

The ship sprang into bustle immediately. The watch on deck, which had been languidly busy over such small matters as the boatswain could devise to keep them at work, jumped into instant action, scurrying hither and thither to get the gear up and the boats in trim for a possible conflict. Those below came piling up on deck, and Joe sprang into the rigging, looking intently toward the spot where the whale was supposed to be. Harry gazed eagerly, but he could see nothing.

Captain Nickerson and the first mate appeared as suddenly from below, and the whole ship was activity and attention.

“Where is that whale?” asked the captain.

“Three points off the port bow, sir,” answered Joe; “about four miles, I think.”

“Good!” cried the captain. “Hold your course” — this to the man at the wheel.

He climbed into the mizzen rigging with Joe, and gazed through his glass in the direc-

tion indicated. A shade of disappointment came into his face.

“It’s an old bull humpback,” he said, “and I don’t believe we can get near him, but you may see that the first and second boats are in readiness, Mr. Jones.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered that man of brevity, using three words in the excitement of the moment; but there had been no need to give the order, for he had several of the crew busy doing just that very thing already. All had been keen in the hope that it would be a sperm whale.

Harry climbed into the rigging too, and as the ship drew toward the spot, he plainly saw an occasional puff as the monster breathed and sent a little cloud of vapor into the air. Steadily they approached the lazy leviathan, and by and by Harry could see his black head and hump, yet still the vessel kept her course, and the order to lower was not given.

“Hullo!” said the captain. “He’s galled.”

What that might be Harry was not sure, though he took it to mean excited, for the animal suddenly surged forward, half out of water, swung a half circle on the surface with a great sweep of his mighty flukes, and began to forge through the water in their direction.

As he did so, something flashed into the air behind him, and a black figure twenty feet long, shaped somewhat like another whale, seemed literally to turn a somersault from the surface, landing with a thud right on the back of the great humpback. The noise of the blow was plainly heard, though the whale was more than a half mile away. The humpback gave a sort of moaning bellow, and sounded.

“’Vast there with your boats,” cried the captain; “the killer has got ahead of us.”

The orca, or “whale-killer” as the whalers call him, is one of the most powerful and rapacious animals in the world. Himself a whale, he is the only one of the species that lives on other whales, and does not hesitate to attack the largest of them. He grows to a length of thirty feet, and his activity and strength are extraordinary. One of them has been known to take a full-grown dead whale that the whalers had in tow, grasp it in his tremendous jaws, and carry it to the bottom, in spite of its captors. One does not have to believe an old writer who says that a killer has been seen with a seal under each flipper, one under the dorsal fin, and a third in his mouth. Eschrit, however, is reckoned reliable, and we have his authority that a killer has been

captured, from the stomach of which were taken thirteen porpoises and fourteen seals. The killer is shaped much like a whale, has great jaws filled with sharp teeth, and a pointed dorsal fin, with which he is fabled to dive beneath a whale and rip up his belly. He is found in all seas, but is particularly numerous in the North Pacific. In the far north he pursues the beluga or white whale and the walrus. He captures the young walrus in a novel manner. The latter climbs on the back of the mother and the great ivory tusks keep the orca at bay, but he dives beneath the old one and comes up against her with such a blow that the young one falls from the rounded back of its mother, when it is immediately seized and crushed in the great jaws of the rapacious animal.

For a few moments nothing more was seen of either animal, and then, not his own length from the ship, the whale appeared, shooting up as if from a great depth, and flinging almost the whole of his great bulk straight into the air. The orca rose with him, his jaws set in the body of the whale just behind the left flipper. As the monster shook himself in agony, even when reared almost his whole length in the air, and with his great flukes

beating the water beneath to foam, the hold of the orca was broken, and he fell back into the water beside the whale, leaving a great three-cornered tear in the whale's side that dyed the water crimson as with another tremendous leap the wild wolf of the sea was again on his victim.

Again Harry heard that strange half moan, half bellow, as the frenzied humpback ploughed along the surface to windward, beaten by the blows of the orca as he flung himself into the air, and again and again came down like an enormous club on his victim's back. And thus the unequal contest went on, and Harry watched them till they disappeared in the distance to windward. He was much impressed by the spectacle.

"How do you suppose it will come out?" he asked, as they clambered down from the rigging.

"The killer will get him, sure," replied Captain Nickerson. "He will hammer him and worry him for miles, till he is completely exhausted. Then he will get a bite in his lip, and it will be all up with Mr. Humpback. By this time to-morrow as much of him as the orca does not want to eat right away will be

floating belly up, and the sea birds and sharks will be busy with it."

Two days afterward great banks of fog, with now and then a white peak gleaming through, showed that they were nearing the Aleutian Islands. The course was changed more to the northward, and the ship sailed into the windy, cloud-tormented reaches of Unalga Pass. Just as they reached the edge of the mists, the clouds lifted for a moment, and showed a scene of surpassing grandeur. The scarred and weather-beaten abrupt cliffs of the mountain sides rose from dark waters, that flashed green and white as they broke against the island sides, varying from dull red to deep crimson, streaked with vivid green of grasses and golden brown with lichens. Above these again swept the bare uplands, golden and olive with the tundra moss that clothes all to the farthest Arctic limits of the north, while over all, majestic and wonderful, lifting its crystal pinnacle eight thousand feet to the heavens, stood the mighty crest of Shishaldin, clothed white with unmelting snows, and tipped with a fluttering banner of smoke from the undying fires within. Shishaldin and Pogromnia, the one white as snow, the other dark with fur-

rowed cliff and frozen lava, are chimneys to the banked fires of Unimak Island, in which slumber still, as they have slumbered since the white men first discovered them nearly two centuries ago, the mighty forces of eruption.

In the baffling currents and gusts of the pass sails were furled, and the ship proceeded under a full head of steam, skirting the lofty cliffs of Akutan. On this island once dwelt many thousand happy, contented Aleuts. They were great whalers, and when the summer brought the humpback whales in schools to their turbulent waters, they captured many of them by bold but primitive hunting. Wisely, they did not attack the old whales, for the humpback is a famous fighter, and the white whalers rarely attack them in these dangerous waters to-day. Instead they picked out the agashitnak (yearlings) or akhoak (calves), and boldly attacked them in their two-holed bidarkas, made of walrus and seal skin stretched over driftwood framework. In the after-hole sat the paddler, and in the forward one the harpooner with his six-foot driftwood harpoon, tipped with an ivory socket bearing a notched blade of slate. This was thrust deep into the young whale and then withdrawn, leaving the socket and blade

in his carcass. The mark of the hunter was scratched deep in this slate blade, that he might know it again. On being thus wounded the whale fled to sea, and there, as the Aleuts used to say, "went to sleep for three days." Meanwhile watchers lined the cliffs, and watched through the scurrying fog for the currents to drift the carcass back to the island. Once perhaps in twenty times this happened, and then there was a feast and great rejoicing in the villages. The mark of the mighty hunter, inscribed on the blade, was found when the weapon was cut out, and he was honored for his feat during life, and even afterward. After his death, if he had been one of the very great men, his body was preserved, cut up, and rubbed on the blades of the young harpooners, that his valor and good fortune might be thus transmitted.

The villagers were bold sea hunters, but gentle and peaceable in their intercourse with one another, and so large were their villages that to-day the ruins of one of them front for nearly a mile on the beach. Over on Akun — another veritable volcanic mountain rising abruptly from the sea — were other prosperous villages, also of primitive whalers. Here were boiling springs in which the villagers

might cook their meat without fire, and the winter's cold was in no wise to be feared because of the underground heat.

The humpbacks still school in summer about the islands of Akun and Akutan, and millions of whale birds swoop in black clouds above them. The little auks and parrot-bill ducks, as the sailors call the puffin, swarm upon the cliffs, and breed there as of old; but the Aleuts are gone from their ancient villages, and only a diseased remnant remains in favored spots in the once populous archipelago. On Akutan and Akun there are none. At Unalaska, or Illiluk as they called it, a remnant survives, their blood mingled with that of their exterminators, the Russians, and their sod huts cluster about the beautiful Greek church which they support. While the Bowhead lay at anchor in their harbor, Harry and Joe saw much of them, and found them so shy and gentle that it did not seem possible that they ever had risen in revolt against their fierce Cossack oppressors and swept them from the island; but such they did more than a century ago, only to be conquered and almost exterminated by fresh hordes of the invaders.

Like a necklace about the throat of Bering



HARBOR OF UNALASKA

Sea, the Aleutian Islands swing in a cloud-capped circle of peaks to within about five hundred miles of the Siberian coast. The story of their discovery and exploitation by the Russians is one of romantic interest, thrilled through with horror at the needless oppression and slaughter of their gentle inhabitants. It was in the year 1740 that the Russians first sighted them, on the ill-fated expedition of Bering and his fellow commander Chirakoff. During the preceding centuries the little white sable known as the Russian ermine had led the wild Cossack huntsmen across the Siberian steppes to the shores of Kamchatka. The value of east Siberian furs in Russian markets was great, and when the wild huntsmen and traders reached the sea limit, they learned from the natives legends of land yet beyond, over-sea, where furs were still more plentiful. Accordingly, with a commission from the Russian court, Bering and Chirakoff fitted out two little vessels and set out upon these unknown seas on a voyage of discovery. Bering touched the mainland of Alaska, but soon started for home. Chirakoff visited several of the Aleutian Islands and finally reached Kamchatka again, after losing many of his crew from starvation and disease.

Bering, however, was wrecked on the Commander Islands, just off the Gulf of Kamchatka, and died there, but after incredible hardships a remnant of his crew reached the mainland. They had been obliged to subsist on the flesh of the sea otter during their stay on the islands, and they brought back with them some of the pelts of the animals. These were received with great favor in Russia, and the high price offered for the skins gave a great impetus to further exploration of the islands, on which they abounded. Expedition after expedition was fitted out in crazy vessels, and the Promishlyniks, as the Russians called these savage huntsmen and voyagers, began to overrun the Aleutian chain.

Often their unseaworthy ships were wrecked in the gales which surge about the islands. Hunger and disease decimated their crews, and many an expedition started out boldly into the untried tempestuous waters, only to disappear and be no more heard from. Yet now and then an unseaworthy craft would escape the gales, and with half an emaciated crew return, the ship loaded down with many thousands of sea otter, fox, and seal skins, meaning great wealth to the survivors. Nothing could exceed the boldness and har-

dthood of these men. The half-starved, disease-smitten remnants of the unsuccessful crews would immediately dare the myriad dangers again in a new expedition, so great was their courage and so tempting the prize. We have scant records of the expeditions, yet in those of which we know the misery and death, even when success resulted, is appalling. Yet they kept on, and the boldness and hardihood of the Cossack hunter-mariners were equaled only by their rapacity and cruelty. Invariably met with goodwill and hospitality on the part of the natives of the mountainous islets, their return was invariably oppression and cruelty in the extreme. A busy, contented, hospitable people swarmed in the sheltered coves of the rocky isles when the invasion began. Within thirty years but scattered remnants were left, enslaved, diseased, discouraged. Once only, on Unalaska, they took advantage of the winter and slaughtered their oppressors who remained on the island, but with the spring came new hordes, and they were obliged to sue for peace, with slavery.

This uprising took place in the winter of 1763, and the story of the escape of two of the Promishlyniks, driven to the mountains,

at bay on a rocky headland, concealed in a cave, fleeing alongshore in a captured canoe, always with tremendous odds against them, yet always winning in the unequal fight, is an extraordinary one.

Most of the Aleutian Islands to-day are barren, and desolate of inhabitants. Few if any Russians remain, and but a handful of Aleuts. Moreover, the greed of a century and a half has practically exterminated the sea otter. Once so common that it might be killed with a club, the animal is to-day one of the most wary known, and the price of a single skin is a fortune to the Aleut hunter, of whom a few still seek for the prized fur. The Russian domination passed with the sale of Alaska to the United States. The American domination is kindly, but the Aleut does not thrive, and it seems but a few more years before he will have passed into the category of races that have faded before the advance of the white man.

The Bowhead made only a brief stay at Unalaska. Here some coal was added to their supply, and store of fresh water was taken from the reservoir, established by one of the big trading companies that have stations there, at the seal islands, and at St.

Michaels, at the mouth of the Yukon River. Then the anchor was hoisted, they steamed out of Captain's Bay, by the strange headland, Priest Rock, which marks its entrance, and with a southerly wind in the sails left the clouds and snowy peaks behind. Their prow was set toward the mysterious north, and already the man on the lookout was on the watch for the blink of Bering Sea ice not yet melted by the spring sun.

CHAPTER III

BUCKING ICE IN BERING SEA

HARRY sat at the mess-room table one morning a few days later, writing the first chapter in what he rather shyly called his "report." He had learned much from Captain Nickerson of the habits of the humpback whale, which frequents the Aleutian Islands, and the dangerous circumstances under which vessels would work while whaling in these waters. The captain had declared that it was not worth while to hunt the humpback, that the dangers and losses would more than balance the gain, and Harry believed him. Nevertheless it was on such things as these that Mr. Adams wanted knowledge, and so he was jotting down what he had learned.

The old humpbacks are born fighters. The shoals and currents, the fogs and gales, of the islands are their allies, and right well do they know how to take advantage of them. Once an iron is fast to a humpback, his first impulse is to turn and crush the puny boat which has

stung him. Failing in this, he rushes to a shoal, and rolling on the bottom tries to roll the iron out, or he swings in and out the narrow, reef-studded passages, and often wrecks the boat that is fast to him. Even if he fails in all these attempts and is killed, the swift currents and the fog which surrounds make the bringing of the carcass to the ship difficult and dangerous. Hence, now that the Aleuts have passed from the islands, he is left to pursue his ways in peace. "Why bother with him," say the whalers, "when just a little way to the northward are the bowheads, far more valuable, and as a rule killed almost without a struggle?"

Now and then Harry lifted his head from his work to listen to a peculiar grating sound that seemed to come from the side of the ship. It was the same sound that a small boat makes when it touches a gravelly bottom, and he noted also that steam was up on the vessel, and knew by the slow pulsations of the screw that they were proceeding at half speed. He was curious about all this, but decided that he would finish his work before he went on deck. Then a faint, far-away cry came to his ear. The man at the masthead had sung out — "A-h-h blow!"

The next cry was neither faint nor far, for it came from the mighty lungs of the great boatswain. "Whale — o!" he shouted; "tumble up lively, lads. There's a bowhead out here in the ice."

Harry tumbled up lively, indeed, but he was at the heels of the members of the crew, who had been below at the call, for all that. He found himself in a new world. During the early morning hours the ship had entered the southern edge of the Bering Sea ice, and was steaming steadily northward into it. Thus far the ice was neither thick nor in force, scattered floes to the right and left leaving open leads through which the vessel pressed, rubbing her sides against floating fragments as she passed. It was this scattered "slush" that had made the grating sound on the ship's side. A big bowhead was playing leisurely along in the broken ice some distance ahead, now diving beneath a floe, now appearing in an open space, feeding, and unconscious of danger. The open water and the ice round about was no longer the clear green which it had been, but was turbid with a brownish substance like mother-of-vinegar.

"What's that stuff?" asked Harry.

"Whale food," answered Joe; "the sea is full of it about here at this time of year."

“Well, I’m glad I’m not a whale,” said Harry; “I’d hate to eat that.” The brown, muddy, clotted messes were even frozen into the ice. They consist of minute forms of low-grade animal life, and are certainly not palatable in appearance. Yet the bowhead is fond of them. He sculls along with his mouth wide open, the bone in his upper jaw reaching down to his lower lip on either side, and making of his mouth a cavern into which food, water, and all enter. Once the great mouth is full he pushes his enormous spongy tongue up into it, squeezes the water out through the whalebone sieve, and swallows the food left behind.

One bell sounded in the engine-room. The throb of the screw ceased, and the Bowhead glided gently along an open space of water toward her namesake.

“That fellow will go sixty barrels, and a good lot of bone,” said Captain Nickerson. “Lower away there!”

Two whaleboats were swung over the side, the first mate in charge of one, Captain Nickerson in the other. Joe was left behind, nominally in charge of the ship, and Harry, of course, remained with him. His nerves were a-tingle with the excitement of the chase, and

he ardently wished he might be in one of the two boats.

“Hard luck, is n’t it?” said Joe, who noticed his excitement. “Tell you what, we’ll get ready for a strike ourselves. There’s likely to be more than one bowhead about, and we’ll get up some gear in case they want more of it. Here, Billy,” — this to one of the Kanakas on deck, — “get up a couple of tubs of that extra line.”

“There’s no knowing how soon we’ll want another boat away. I’ll get up another bomb gun and a supply of ammunition. Then we’ll be heeled, as they say in Frisco.”

Harry handled the bomb gun when it arrived, — a short, ponderous weapon of brass, clumsy indeed to one accustomed to handle an ordinary rifle or shotgun, but very efficient in the service for which it is intended. Joe showed him how it was used, and even loaded it, placing it carefully against the rail. The two boats, zigzag fashion, approached the whale through the floes, the captain’s much in advance, and finally came up with him. Cautiously they glided on till the bow of the foremost just grazed the black back. Then the harpooner, with a mighty thrust, sent the iron deep into the blubber, and the boat backed rapidly away.

“The gun missed fire! The gun missed fire!” shouted Joe excitedly; “they’ll lose him!”

So it seemed, for there was no sound of an explosion, only the welt of the whale’s flukes on the water as he sprang into action at the thrust of the harpoon. With this one great splash he went below the surface, sounded, as the whalers say, and there was no sign of his presence except the two boats and the rapidly whizzing line as it ran out through the chock.

“They’re heading this way,” said Harry; and so they were, the captain’s boat standing bow on beside a floe, with the line whizzing against the edge of the ice, and the first mate’s men pulling with all their strength toward the ship. Then they heard the warning shout from the captain, —

“Watch for him, we’ve parted.” The rough edge of ice had cut the line, and the whale was free.

The bowhead’s chances for getting away were good. He would come to the surface again only for a breath, and then continue his flight to safety in the distant ice fields. But now came one of those happenings which prove how wise it is to be prepared for any

emergency. Joe, in getting up that extra gear and the gun, had unwittingly saved the day. As both boys stood by the rail gazing toward the boats, there came a crash in the weak ice just alongside, a black bulk crushed up through it, and with a gasp like that of a steam exhaust a puff of vapor shot up right in their faces.

“There he is! There he is!” yelled Joe frantically; “give it to him!”

With the words he snatched up the iron at his side, and hurled it downward with all his strength into the head of the whale, where it stuck quivering. At the same time Harry, yelling like mad in his excitement, caught up the bomb gun, put it to his shoulder as if it were a toy, and discharged it full into the middle of the black mass, which he saw as through a mist heaving in the crushed ice. There was a dull, heavy sound of a muffled explosion, and the whale quivered and stopped. Then came a wild hurrah from the ship, and an answering one from the boats. The boatswain sprang up the short ladder from amidships to their side.

“Mighty good, young fellers,” he shouted, almost as excited as they; “you plunked him fair, and just one chance out of a thou-

sand. Whoop! but we're a whaling crew. Greenhorn bagged the first bull right from the quarter deck. Whoop!"

The bowhead lay motionless, evidently dead, and the boatswain made the line fast to a cleat. Then he sang a variation of an old sea chantey, cutting a ponderous pigeon wing to the tune —

“Tra la la, tra la la, tra la la boom,
Lorenzo was no sailor,
Tra la la, tra la la, tra la la boom,
He shipped on board a whaler.”

“'Vast there, bosun,” he said to himself, suddenly sober; “no monkeyshines on the quarter-deck. Get down amidships where you belong. Hi there, you Kanakas! clear away that cuttin'-in gear. Step lively now, they're alongside.”

The boats were no sooner at the davits than preparations for cutting-in the whale were made. He was hauled alongside, head toward the stern, and a heavy tackle was rigged to the mainmast head. Then the cutting-in stage of planking, rigged so as to swing from the side of the ship out over the carcass, was put outboard. Two men, each with the great steel chisel which the whalers call a spade, took stations on this. A

longitudinal slit was cut in the blubber just back of the flipper. Then cuts were made from this round the carcass, a hook from the tackle was made fast in the end of the strip, and hoisting away on the tackle the blubber was peeled from the dark meat beneath in a spiral peeling, somewhat as one might peel an apple. As the weight on the tackle grew great, the strip was cut away and hoisted upon the deck amidships. Meanwhile, others of the crew had started fires beneath the great kettles forward, and the blubber, cut into small cubes, was put in these. At first this fire was of wood, but as the work progressed the scraps from the blubber were thrown into the grate and burned fiercely, giving off a thick black smoke that had a disagreeable odor of burnt flesh.

By and by the blubber was all aboard, filling the space between decks with its quivering oily masses, among which the crew plunged and worked like demons. The furnaces spouted smoke and oil, and remnants of blubber made the decks slippery. Last of all the tackle was carefully made fast to the head, and the ship listed to one side as the donkey engine put a strain on the great mass. Then the great backbone was severed by the spades,

and the tense tackle sang as the enormous bulk was swung inboard and landed safely on the deck.

“What for goodness’ sake is that in his mouth?” asked Harry.

“That’s the bone,” replied Joe; “and a fine head of bone it is. Some of the slabs are eight or nine feet long.”

“Well, I never thought whalebone looked like that,” said Harry, gazing in astonishment at the black slabs varying in length from one foot to eight that extended down from the upper jaw. They were flattened, nearly a foot in greatest diameter at the base, and tapering to a thin tip. This was fringed far up on the sides with what resembled horsehair.

“Can he shut his mouth with all that in it?” asked Harry.

“Oh, yes,” replied Joe. “The tips fit into the groove between the tongue and the lip, and point backward when he shuts his jaws. They are very elastic, as you know, and they spring and bend close together.”

The boatswain and the mate busied themselves cutting out these slabs of bone, which were piled away to be cleansed before stowing them. The boatswain was jovial and talkative. He sang snatches of sea songs, made jokes,

and tried to draw out his companion as they worked ; but the taciturn mate was as silent as ever. Not so Harry and Joe, who put on oilskins and worked with them. After the bone was removed, the head was tipped overboard, and floated away with the stripped and abandoned carcass. Arctic gulls had gathered in troops from no one knew where, and dogfish were already nibbling at it. It would not be many days before the meat would be stripped from the bones, and the latter resting on the shallow bottom of Bering Sea.

“Pity the mersinkers could not have that meat,” said the boatswain. “It would make a feast for a whole village for a week.”

“Who are the mersinkers ?” asked Harry.

“The natives over at East Cape,” said the boatswain ; “that’s what they call themselves. You’ll see them in a day or two, probably.”

The twilight of early June lasts in Bering Sea until almost eleven o’clock ; then flares were lighted of scraps and blubber in wire baskets, making torches that lighted up the gloom with weird, fantastic glare, and still the work of trying out went on. The men loomed in and out of the shadows like strange goblins at uncanny sport. The fires illumined a brief

circle of the desolate ice, and showed only a part of the rigging which made ladders into an unknown gloom, and the whole was like a midnight assembly of goblins of the strange ice world, working spells about witch kettles that far outdid the wild work of the witch sisters in "Macbeth." The brief night had passed, and the morning sun was shining on the ice again, yet the incantations did not cease, and it was two days before the last of the bowhead's oil was stowed in casks below decks. Then only the weary crew had a brief rest, before the ship was cleaned and scrubbed down. Nearly a thousand pounds of whalebone was the most valuable result of this first catch, and as the market price of bone at San Francisco was something over three dollars a pound, Harry had matter of interest to jot down in his report as to the methods and profits of the pursuit of the bowhead.

The vessel now found herself in the middle of the Bering Sea pack ice. Here and there were open leads still, but they were fewer, more narrow, and much less connected. Now and again there were places where contrary winds and currents had crushed the floes together, piling the crumpled cakes high on one another in wild confusion, often to a height of twenty

or thirty feet. Joe called these hummocks icebergs, and Harry and he had much friendly controversy as to the correct use of that term. Harry explained that he had learned that icebergs were the product of glaciers alone, that there were no glaciers on the Alaskan coast north of the Aleutians, and that these should properly be called hummocks. In this he was right, but Joe, with the pride of the man who "has been there," would not concede it. Whatever they were, they totally prevented the progress of the vessel, and when they appeared in the path, the Bowhead was obliged to make a detour to avoid them. Now and then they were obliged to "buck ice" to get from one lead to another, and the process was very exciting. The vessel under a full head of steam would plunge straight at the field of heavy ice, striking it with a thump that entirely stopped progress and shook the structure from stem to stern. The masts would spring under the blow, and at each shock Harry fully expected to see Captain Nickerson jolted from his perch in the crow's nest, high on the foremast. Then the ship would back away again at the captain's order, leaving a three-cornered dent in the ice. Again and again she would rush at this dent with her great weight under



BUCKING THE ICE

full head of steam, till the floe would split, and leave a narrow crack through which the vessel could crowd her way. Thus for several days they hammered their way on through the pack, until they reached its northwestern edge, where open water gave them free passage to the ice-bound shores of east Siberia. There they came to anchor under a headland, and though it was mid-June and did not seem cold, were greeted by a storm of snow that came scurrying down from the snow-clad hills inland.

Next day it cleared, and the skin topeks of a Chuckchis village could be seen on the barren shore. A strip of shore ice still separated them from the land, but the natives came dragging their umiaks across this and then put to sea in them, soon paddling alongside. There were a dozen or more in each boat, men, women, and children, all clad much alike in walrus-hide seal-top boots, sealskin trousers, and a hooded coat of reindeer fur which extended nearly to the knee. Men and women and the older children alike paddled, and the walrus-hide boats made rapid progress over the waves. Once alongside they made fast and came aboard, all hands, smiling and silent, sitting or standing for a time until addressed

by some one who was or seemed to be in authority. Then they spoke, and conversation was soon general. It was limited, however. Many of the men know considerable English of the "pigeon" variety, and most of the whalers are familiar with the trade language of the Eskimos of Bering Sea and the straits, which consists of Eskimo, mingled with words and phrases picked up from the whalers and traders, and originating Heaven knows where. Possibly some are Kanaka words transplanted far north. Others are words invented by the sailors on the spur of the moment, which, once applied by the natives, have been adopted into general use.

Each native had a sealskin poke which he carried slung over his shoulder by a rawhide thong, and which consisted of the skin of the ordinary Arctic seal taken off whole, and tanned with the hair on. A slit was cut in the side of this, making a sort of traveling-bag, in which he carried articles which he was to offer for trade. Within these pokes were walrus tusks, plain and carved, some elaborately; walrus teeth carved into grotesque imitations of little animals; "muckalucks," the trade word for the native skin-boot; "artekas," or coats of reindeer skin; furs of ermine, mink,

otter, and the hair seal; in fact, anything which the mersinker could find at home that he thought the whalemens might fancy. None of these goods were offered on deck, however. Each waited until the captain, sitting in state in his cabin, sent for him; then one by one they went down to trade. After each man had made what bargain he could with Captain Nickerson, he brought what was left to the deck, and there traded freely with the sailors.

As supercargo, Harry sat in the cabin with Captain Nickerson, and kept account of each trade as it was made, having good opportunity to watch the methods of the natives. He found them very clever at barter, Captain Nickerson, Yankee that he was, often meeting his match in some stolid native, who seemed to have a very clear idea of what he wanted, and how to get it. The first day of trading was merely preliminary, however, the natives bringing off their least valuable goods for barter, reserving the best of the ivory, and all the bone, until they found how prices were going, and whether the ship held such supplies as they needed or not. Their first demand seemed to be for hard bread, of which they are very fond. For this they offered, as a rule, the muckaluck, or native boot. Calico,

as they had learned to call all forms of cloth, came next ; then flour in bags, and later ammunition, rifles, and trade goods. Of brown sugar they were desirous, and chewing tobacco was asked for almost as soon as the hard-tack. This they called kowkow tobacco, or eating tobacco, from their trade word "kowkow," meaning to eat. Harry made note of the Eskimo words as he heard them used, and picked up a working vocabulary, with the help of his notebook, in a very short time. Before the first day's trading was over he had begun to understand what was meant, and by the end of the third day he astonished Joe with his fluency. As a matter of fact, his vocabulary thus far consisted of only forty words or so ; but as they were the ones in most constant use, it made him seem quite a linguist. From this time forward he took great pains to jot down a new word and its meaning as soon as he heard it, getting many from the officers and crew, and this quick acquisition of the language was to stand him in good stead later on.

At the end of the third day trading had ceased. There were great piles of deerskins, muckalucks, and small furs, several hundred pounds of not very good bone, quite a quantity

of ivory, and many trinkets and curios. Harry wondered greatly as to the destination of much of this stuff.

“Are reindeer skins worth much in the States?” he asked Captain Nickerson once, as the pile grew larger at the expense of much flour and calico.

“I don’t think there is any market,” replied the captain, “though it is hard to see why. The fur is very thick and warm, the skin light, and should make most excellent lap robes and carriage robes, just as the buffalo fur once did. We shall trade them again when we meet the Eskimos on the other side of the straits. The caribou is scarce over there, and they gladly exchange fox, ermine, and bear skins for them. These we can dispose of readily in Frisco.”

A good quantity of bone was in hand, but it was only a part of what the natives had taken, as the captain knew. Two whales had been their good fortune as the ice came down the fall before, and a third had come to them that spring as the gift of the orcas. These eat the lip and the soft tongue of the bowhead, leaving the carcass to float ashore. Hence the mersinker looks upon the orca with a sort of veneration as a provider of great and val-

uable gifts, and has certain ceremonies which he goes through each year as an invocation to him and an expression of gratitude. The mersinker, in fact, is a man of many ceremonies, the reason for which he does not know, but which he follows because his father did the same before him. These three whales had been small ones, but there must have been far more bone from them than the natives brought to the ship for sale. The balance they were keeping back for further trading with other ships, nor was it possible to get them to bring this out, even by offering increased value for it. They held it in reserve, as is their custom, hoping that the next ship would bring goods which they would care for more than those at hand.

Captain Nickerson wished to purchase some reindeer for fresh meat, but none were at the coast. The deermen were said to be stationed in a valley half a dozen miles in the interior, and he decided to send an expedition inland in search of some. A coast native volunteered as guide, and brought along a sledge and dog team for the transportation of supplies. Mr. Jones, the taciturn first mate, was detailed in command of this expedition, and Harry and Joe were allowed to

go, with many injunctions to be careful not to get into trouble with the Chow Chuen, as the deermen call themselves.

It was a perfect June day when they set off. There was no breath of wind, and the sun shone brilliantly as they landed on the shore ice, transferred their supplies to the sledge, and set off through the native village toward the hills. They had instructions not to be gone longer than over one night, and it was agreed that a signal of trouble and need of assistance should be three shots repeated in quick succession. Such precautions were necessary as the Chow Chuen, though generally willing to barter, are of uncertain temper, and even the mersinkers are not to be trusted when they seem to have an advantage. Harry and Joe tramped on ahead of the company, the Eskimo following with his team and sledge, and Mr. Jones bringing up the rear. The air was warm, and on bare spots the spring grass was already growing through the tundra moss, but the snow still covered most of the earth, and the trail lay across it, well trodden.

Each boy carried a rifle and was well supplied with cartridges, while Harry had in addition a small camera slung over his shoulder by a strap. The boys were in high glee at

the outing, after the long confinement aboard ship, and rollicked along well ahead of the others. Yet their progress was slow, the way winding, and it was lunch time and yet they had not reached the upland valley, where the camp of the deermen was said to be. A few dry twigs of willow — the only growth of wood, and this in the main creeping vine fashion, and rising only to a height of two or three feet — were found to feed a fire, and a pot of tea was boiled. Then after the men had taken a hasty smoke, the journey was resumed. It was mid-afternoon when they seemed to be reaching the summit of a low divide. The six miles had stretched into a dozen, and there was no sign of human life among the hills, only the beaten trail leading steadily on over the snow. The mate had seemed anxious for an hour or so, and had swung into the lead along with the boys.

“Home pretty soon,” he said, wasting no words; “most far enough.” A moment after, they rounded a ledge of broken basaltic rock, and looked down upon a scene of pastoral life such as only the extreme north of Asia can show. A brown and sheltered valley wound among the rude hills. It was bare of snow in the main, and the golden brown moss, with

which it was carpeted, showed green with grasses already springing in it. In scattered groups about this grazed several hundred reindeer, many brown in color, some piebald, the old ones bearing branching antlers, the fawns spotted, and gamboling like any young deer. Here and there, fur-clad herders watched them, and there was a little group of large skin topeks at one side of the valley not far off, the homes of the herders and their families. Thither they turned, the coast native taking the lead now. They were near the little hut hamlet before any one took notice of them, when a man suddenly appeared with a rifle in his hands. He was taller than the coast native, and seemed more robust. He fearlessly pointed the rifle at the approaching party.

“Way enough!” shouted Mr. Jones.
“Hold water!”

At a wave of his hand the Eskimo went ahead resolutely, his hands held up palm forward as a sign of peace, and shouting, “Nagouruk! Nagouruk!”

The deerman lowered the muzzle of his rifle, and the two talked for a moment. Then the Eskimo made a sign for the party to come forward. The deerman met them with the

word "Nagouruk," which means "Good," in token of friendship, and talked with the Eskimo volubly in a dialect that no one in the party could make much of. The other, who could speak some English, explained that it was doubtful if deer could be bought. It had been a bad winter, many had died in the deep snow, and they wished to let the herd increase during the spring and summer, lest they face starvation next winter. In any case, it would be necessary to consult the head deerman, and he would send for him.

"Watch out," said Mr. Jones to Joe and Harry. "Don't like this gang."

The deermen's topeks numbered about half a dozen, scattered along the sunny side of an abrupt turn in the cliff which bordered the valley's edge. The deerman lifted the flap of one of these, and motioned them to enter. A crowd of curious women and children, the smaller of these latter perched on their mothers' shoulders astride their necks, had begun to gather. Men came running up from the other topeks, and the little party was soon being stared at, criticised, and even poked and hustled, in half-curious, half-insolent fashion. The Chow Chuen are certainly no respecters of persons. They hate and dis-

trust the white man, but they do not fear him.

Mr. Jones hesitated. Then he motioned to Harry to stand by the sled. "Stand watch, will you?" he said. "Keep 'em off. Don't get galled."

Harry, rifle in hand, took his stand by the sled, while the other three entered the topek. The Alaskan coast native builds a small summer shelter, but the Siberian coast native, and the deermen of the uplands inland, build great ones, sometimes thirty feet in diameter. These are covered with skins, held down with rawhide ropes and stone weights against the furious gales of that country. Within is a central common space surrounded by smaller rooms, made by deerskin curtains. They found this central room empty, but a rustling behind the curtains showed that the others were tenanted. The deerman bade them wait and went out, soon returning with another of his kind who seemed to be the head man, and followed by half a dozen others. Then the bargaining began, the Eskimo acting as interpreter, and signs filling up the spaces where words failed.

Meanwhile, Harry was very busy outside, and somewhat worried. The entire popula-

tion of the hamlet seemed bent on investigating him thoroughly. They made derisive remarks about his clothing, and tried to put their hands in his pockets, which they seemed to admit to one another were good things to have. One man took off his hat and started to put it on his own head, amid laughter from his comrades. He seemed to resent it when Harry snatched it away, and touched his knife significantly. But when one attempted to relieve him of his watch and chain he was forced to draw back hastily, for Harry felt that the limit of patience was about reached, and cocked and pointed his rifle threateningly. The others seemed to enjoy the hurried retreat of this man, and to deride him for cowardice. However, the men kept out of arm's reach after this. Not so the women and children. Their attentions were not only to himself, but to the sled; and he soon saw that under their carelessness was a systematic attempt to cast off the lashings and get at the goods there. During all this annoyance he happened to think of his camera, and decided that at least he could get a picture or two to counterbalance the trouble. So, unslinging it from his back, he slipped the little instrument from its case, drew out the

bellows to the universal focus, and proceeded to point it at the most picturesque of the insolent group. The effect was magical. They tumbled backward from the machine with alarm. When they saw the flick of the shutter as he pressed the button, they threw their hands before their eyes and retreated, repeating a word which he did not understand, but which he learned later meant "magic."

This amused Harry greatly, and afterward he had only to point the camera to widen the circle about him; and to take a new picture was to send arms flying to the faces that were in range. They seemed to think something would come from it to injure their eyesight. They resented this threat, however, and there were black looks on the ugly faces of the men when the mate and the head deer-man appeared from the topek followed by the others. The bargain had been satisfactorily concluded, and the deermen went off to drive in the purchased reindeer, while Jones and his lieutenants took the goods from the sled. The crowd of fur-clad Chow Chuen stood about, but kept a respectful distance from the camera.

But when the half-dozen deer were driven

up, there were fresh complications. Mr. Jones was about to slaughter them at once, and had passed the goods over to the head deerman, when a great outcry arose. The deermen flocked about the Eskimo, and seemed to demand that he tell the whites something, which he did.

“No kill. No kill,” cried the Eskimo in much alarm; “Chow Chuen kill.”

“Well, tell them to go ahead and do it, then,” roared Mr. Jones, so angry that he was fluent. “It’s nightfall now, and we’ve got a long road ahead of us.”

The Eskimo was much disturbed. He explained, with a strange mingling of Eskimo with his scant English vocabulary, that there was a ceremonial to be gone through with first. It could not be done at nightfall, they must wait the rising sun. “One sleep,” he said. “Nanaku kile. Bimeby he come,” pointing to the sun. “Mucky” (Dead), with a sweep of his hand toward the reindeer.

In vain Mr. Jones stormed with picturesque and unexpectedly voluble profanity; the deermen were determined. The head deerman ordered the goods brought out and laid at the feet of the company, scornfully waving his hand toward the home trail, indicating

plainly that they might consider the trade off, but he would not have the deer slaughtered then. Mr. Jones would not return without them, and so they waited.

“Tell him,” he said sulkily, “we’ll wait till sunrise.”

The Eskimo explained, and this seemed to clear matters somewhat. Some tobacco offered them helped still more; and the head man drove the crowd away, evidently telling them to go about their business, which they did reluctantly. He conducted the party down the line of topek to one which was near the end, and told them that that was to be their habitation for the night.

“We’ll stand watch and watch,” said Mr. Jones, as they entered this; “no knowing what these rascalions will try to do to us, if we all go to sleep.”

The interior of this smaller topek was all one room, and there were no traces of former occupancy, which was satisfactory. It gave promise of reasonable cleanliness, which could not be said of the others. It was no doubt a storehouse not in present use. The sled, their blankets, and belongings were hauled inside; the dogs were tied to the tent-poles outside, and the Eskimo disposed of himself

as best he might. Joe stood the first watch, while Harry and Mr. Jones rolled themselves in blankets on the mossy floor of the topek and were soon asleep. It was still light, though the sun was behind the northern mountains. Indeed, in June in that latitude, there is but a brief interval of dusk at midnight. The deermen retired to their topeks, except those on watch with the herd, and save for the howl of an occasional wolf-like dog, peace reigned.

At midnight Joe woke Harry, and he went on guard. A gray dusk hung over everything, there was a sharp chill in the air. All things seemed touched with a white fungous growth, which was frost. From behind the northern mountains the sun shot dancing streamers like aurora halfway up the sky. The whole scene was beautiful but strange, and gave Harry a sense of the ghostly and supernatural which was hard to shake off, and which he was often to feel still more vividly as he saw more of Arctic nights. The prowling, howling bands of Chow Chuen dogs loomed large in the uncertain light, and it seemed hard not to believe that they were bands of wolves bent on destruction. He was glad indeed when the first glimpse of the sun came over the



A SIBERIAN TOPEK

mountains to the northeast, and it was time to call Mr. Jones. The night had passed, and they were not molested.

With the sunrise the whole hamlet was astir for the ceremony of the slaughter of the reindeer. The six deer purchased were led up, and the shaman of the village appeared from his lodge, which was decorated with strange devices and carved images. He held in his hand a long, sharp knife, and as he passed Harry the boy inadvertently drew back, so fierce and sinister was the look on his evil face. Each deer in turn was led up to him and faced to the east. The shaman held his knife toward the sun, recited something that seemed like a liturgy, then with one thrust sent the keen knife full to the heart of his victim. With a bleat the animal fell to its knees, then rolled over dead, and the shaman, rushing forward, caught the blood from the wound in his palm, scattering it toward the sun with more words, or perhaps the same, of the ritual. Thus each deer was slain, and in a twinkling was fallen upon by the Chow Chuen and the entrails removed. The bodies were then placed on the sled, and it was evident that the adventurers might take their departure, which they were glad to do. A

mile or two down the trail they breakfasted on deer steak, broiled over the few willow twigs they were able to find, and went on, reaching the ship at midday. Captain Nickerson received them gladly and was pleased at their success, but had a long conference with the Eskimo. Then only they learned that the treacherous and ugly Chow Chuen had been much incensed at their wish to take the deer and slaughter them without the legendary rites of the tribes, and would have attempted to murder them during the night. The Eskimo had dilated upon the strange power of the little "magic box," which he told them could take each man's image and carry it away (he having seen photographs taken with a similar one by previous visiting white men), and crafty and superstitious as they are fierce, the deermen wisely decided to let the strangers alone. No doubt the fact that they stood armed watch had its effect as well.

The next day a southeasterly gale sprang up, and the vessel was obliged to hoist anchor and get away from the dangerous coast.

CHAPTER IV

THE LITTLE MEN OF THE DIOMEDES

IN the unremembered ages it is probable that the extreme end of Asia, which is East Cape, Siberia, was joined to the extreme western end of America, which is Cape Prince of Wales, Alaska. No tradition remains of the time when the sea broke through this slender barrier, yet even now it is but about thirty miles in a straight line across, and on clear days from the mountains of one promontory the other can be faintly discerned. There is a halfway station, too, two storm-beaten islands which lift rocky crests of grim granite in the very middle of the hurly-burly of the straits. These are the Diomede Islands, the greater belonging to Russia, the lesser to America, and the space between the two is so narrow that it seems in bright weather as if one could almost throw a stone across, though in reality it is more than a mile — farther than it looks. Across this slender land path in those forgotten years came one race after

another from Central Asia, which was the birthplace of races, pressing southward and peopling the Western hemisphere with tribes, of which scant traces remain in some instances, while in others their degenerate descendants are still fading before the westward rush of civilization. Individuals cross this narrow barrier of tempestuous sea still, but races come no more, and we find on the half-way station of the Diomedes a remnant of some ancient people that has stranded there and made a home where it seems scarcely possible that human creatures could live the year round.

Here during the recent centuries met the Asiatic and Alaskan Eskimos, to trade and fight; and the bold, bare cliffs have been the scene of many a bloody battle. Now even this custom has passed, and the men from one side of the straits rarely meet those of the other; but the little remnant of an unknown people, who stranded there no one knows how long ago, still cling to their rocky islets and live as did their forefathers. You may find among them some who bear the mark of the Chuckchis, some who are more like the Alaskan Eskimos, but the little folk, while having the manners and customs of each, have char-

acteristics which belong to neither. Hardly five feet in height, they are too small to have battled successfully with their more robust brethren, but they make up in slyness and ability what they lack in brute strength. They are shy and reticent, clever workmen, clever thieves, and cleverest of all in trading.

No vegetation save grass and chickweed grows on their cliffs. They build their dwellings of flat stones banked with scant earth, and the icy sea, which rims them round and seems to threaten with certain death, is their father and their mother in that it provides all they have in the world. In the brief summer an occasional log of driftwood is thrown against their cliffs, and from this they fashion their canoe frames and their spear handles. During all the cold and cruel winter the ice-floes which crash and grind against the worn granite of their islands bring the seal and walrus and the polar bear. These and the myriad sea birds of summer are their supplies.

For many days the southerly gale which had driven the Bowhead from the Siberian shore kept her in much danger. The sea room was narrow, ice-floes came driving down before the wind, it was impossible to get

sight of the sun to find the ship's position, and the drift of the current toward the straits was an unknown factor. Most of the time the vessel jogged under reefed topsails, with steam up for use in an emergency, and Captain Nickerson was almost constantly on deck. Thick clouds made the nights longer, and very dark, and Harry had a chance to see the full danger of Arctic navigation.

It was in the gloom of one of these nights that he stood on deck. The vessel heeled to the gale, now and then an icy wave sent a rush of spray over the windward rail, the wind howled and wailed in the tense shrouds, and an eerie glow seemed to show in the darkness without lighting it, as if dull fires burned behind the cloud curtains. It seemed to Harry as if they were blown about in chaos, a place dreary, ghostly, and lonely beyond expression. He shuddered and thought of the people at home, happy in the bright June weather. For the first time he was sorry for himself, and homesick. He thought with a great longing of the broad veranda looking out upon the bay, of his mother sitting there, and he seemed with his mind's eye to see Maisie, in a pretty white gown, flitting gayly across the lawn toward the boats. Then out of the

night came a wild, despairing cry, and something fluttered aboard, crashed against the mizzen rigging, and fell in a draggled white heap at his feet. The thought of Maisie was so strong that he sprang forward, with a great cry of alarm, to pick her up where she had fallen, when a sudden tremendous gust of the gale threw the Bowhead on her beam ends. A wall of white water roared down upon him, lifted him up with Maisie in his arms, and he went out into the night with it, still clinging to the limp figure he had clutched as he went down.

It was well for Harry that the same sea that sent him overboard sent with him a coil of line from a belaying-pin, where it hung against the mizzenmast. The whirl of the wave wound this round him, and the great boatswain, whose watch on deck it was, saw him go out with it, and finding it taut, and something towing, hauled away at it until he could reach down and get him by the collar. Then with one big swing of his enormous arm he landed him aboard. He set him in a heap on the deck, and with a hand on either knee peered down at him in the gloom.

“Young feller,” he said, with much emotion, “there’s just one thing I want you to

do for me when we get back to Frisco. Do you know what that is?"

"What?" asked Harry, wholly dazed and half drowned, replying mechanically.

"I want you to take all the money I get this trip and go and bet it on something for me. A man that can win out the way you've just done could n't lose at any game. Great jumping Jehoshaphat! what have you got here?"

"Is she all right?" asked Harry, struggling to his feet. He was still dazed, and had forgotten all the events of the last two months. It seemed to him that it was Griggs speaking, and that he had just pulled him and Maisie out of the Fore River.

The boatswain took the limp white figure from his arms and looked at it. It was a great white bird, quite dead, no doubt killed by its crash against the mizzenmast.

"Go below, my boy," he said; "and get something hot and turn in. You've had trouble enough for one night."

The great boatswain went forward, holding the bird in one hand and now and then slapping his great leg with the other, and letting forth a roar of amazed laughter.

"A goose," he said; "a Yukon goose!"

Went overboard and came back and brought a Yukon goose! Well, the young feller is a seven-time winner. Bet ye we'll raise whales this trip, all right." He went forward to the galley, where he left his game, and then went back on watch.

As light grew through the chaos of struggling mist, the cry of "Land ho!" rang out from the lookout, and the ship rounded to so near dark cliffs that stretched upward into the mists out of sight that she was fairly in the wash of the great waves that thundered at their base. A moment after, ice barred their farther way on the other tack, and a great floe moved majestically along, bearing them down toward the cliffs. To lie to was to be carried in and crushed between ice and rocks, and Captain Nickerson, who was on deck, wisely guessing that it must be one of the Diomedes, wore ship and ran before the gale, coasting within sight of the great rock barrier. A half hour afterward he rounded to and swung close up under the lee of the towering northeast cliff of the big Diomede; so close to its sheer lift that one could almost throw a line ashore.

Here was level water indeed, and they were safe from the northward driven ice-floes, which

would split on the island's prow and sail by to port and starboard; but they did not escape the wind, which came over the heights in tremendous "willie-waus," blowing, as the sailors say, "up and down like the Irishman's hurricane." This seems to be a peculiarity of the Arctic gale. It comes tearing over the great heights, plunges down the steep face of the cliffs, and striking the water at their base with tremendous velocity, sends it whirling out to sea in great masses of spondrift that sail along the surface as blown snow does in winter.

Two days more the ship lay head to the cliff, swinging to two anchors, then the mists blew away, the wind went down rapidly, and the sun shone brightly on lofty granite heights. Halfway up was a little space of level ground like a shelf set in a corner of rock, and out of holes in this green level came stubby fur-clad men and women, who swarmed down the cliff by paths of their own and launched umiaks from a sheltered little hidden cove, putting out to the ship.

Harry was none the worse for his sudden plunge overboard a few days before. Instead of the weakness and lassitude which had followed his April upset in the Fore River, there



AGME OF "THE LITTLE MEN" OF THE DIOMEDES

came an immediate reaction, and he declared a few hours afterward that it had done him good ; he would do it every day, if he could be sure of getting back to the ship so handily. The Arctic air was already working wonders in him. The experienced seamen shook their heads at this. They knew well that his chance had been one in a thousand, and Captain Nickerson rated him soundly for being so careless as to let a sea catch him that way.

The little men had much walrus ivory, but not much else that was of value to the ship, and their trading did not last long. They did have many curios, and Harry had an opportunity to buy some of these with the "trade goods" he had brought from Seattle for the purpose. By Captain Nickerson's advice he had laid in a few dollars' worth of rubber balls, huge beads, little mirrors, harmonicas, and trinkets, and he now found these very useful. He bought with them many walrus teeth ; the back teeth, which are as large as one's thumb, carved in grotesque but life-like shape of seals, bear, walrus, and other animals. Two bargains which he made are noteworthy as showing the ways of the little people in trading. One of these was for an

exquisite pair of little shoes, soled with walrus hide crimped up into miniature boots, topped with the softest of fur from the reindeer fawn, and with a bright edging of scarlet cloth. They were most skillfully fashioned, and tasteful, for the Eskimo is a born artist, and were brought aboard by a young woman who apparently was very proud of them, and wished rather to exhibit than to sell them.

Harry, proud of his newly acquired Eskimo, asked her immediately, "Soonoo pechuckta?" (How much do you want?) but she replied by shaking her head and putting the shoes away in her fur gown.

By and by she brought them out again and patted them lovingly. Again Harry tried to get her to name a price for them, and after much labor he got from her the single word "Oolik" (Blanket).

"Soonoo?" asked Harry again.

"Tellumuk," was the answer, further emphasized by holding up five fingers.

Five blankets was so obviously exorbitant a price that Harry could not and would not think of giving it, so he thought to tempt his adversary with the offer of other things. In vain he brought out tin trumpets, harmonicas, bangles, beads, and even two alarm

clocks, which he had found elsewhere to be greatly desired by the tribes, and offered them singly and in groups; the owner of the little shoes was determined. To all his offers she replied with fine scorn, "Peluck" (No good), and clung persistently to her first price.

But Harry, grown wise, took a leaf from her own book. He bethought him of a little plate-glass mirror, rimmed with scarlet plush, which he had not offered thus far. It had cost him a dollar and a half at Seattle, but he was willing to trade it for the shoes. Yet he was convinced that direct offer would be useless. So he brought it on deck, and without looking at the obdurate young woman began admiring his own countenance in it. When she took a furtive interest in it, he thrust it back in his own pocket. After a little he took it out again, and once more contemplated himself in its depths. This ludicrous performance continued for some time, and he could not tell whether or not his adversary were much interested, so cleverly did she veil her thoughts. By and by her boatload of people were ready to go home, and getting into the umiak, called to her to come with them. Harry saw that she lingered, and he played his last card.

“Ah de gar!” he exclaimed; “ah de gar!” (Wonderful! wonderful!) and held the mirror in front of the little woman. She saw her own comely countenance in it, she saw the beveled glass and the vivid scarlet plush, and as Harry held out his other hand she gave a twitch of her shoulders, snatched the shoes from their concealment in her gown, and gave them to him. At the same time she caught up the mirror, flounced down into the umiak, and settled herself on the bottom, with an air that was ludicrously like that of her civilized sister when angry with herself for being outwitted. Vanity and curiosity had conquered, but it was the only case in all his dealings with Eskimos in which Harry ever knew one of them to name a price for an article and then accept something different.

The other trade, if trade it could be called, was a different matter. It was with the smallest of the Eskimo men of another boat. He had half a dozen ivory finger rings, carved symmetrically with a seal's head, or two or three, where stones would be. Harry sighted these and wished to trade for the bunch, but this did not suit the little man at all. Instead, with much pomp and much show of

valuing it highly, he took one ring from the string and offered it to Harry, saying: —

“Tobac, tobac, tunpanna kowkow” (Eating tobacco).

The Eskimos are not great smokers, a whiff or two is generally enough for them, but they are very fond of chewing tobacco, or “eating tobacco” as they call it, and there was a good store of this on the ship. Harry offered a moderate-sized piece for the ring and then wanted to purchase the second with a similar piece. This he could not do. The crafty little man’s price had risen fivefold, and it was only reluctantly that he parted with the second ring at the price of five pieces of tobacco. But when it came to the third one, there seemed to be no such thing as purchasing it. Harry offered tobacco galore, added trinkets and trade goods, but the little man was obdurate and all chances of trade seemed off.

Harry remembered the shoes and the mirror, and did not despair. He went down to his locker and brought out the alarm clock again. He wound it up, set the alarm for a little ahead of the moment, and took it on deck. There he set it up on a cask and waited. Several of the Eskimos gathered

round and admired it, but the little man only looked at it out of the corner of his eye.

After a few minutes the alarm went off, and being a vigorous one, it startled the crowd of little men and women around it. They nearly fell over one another in astonishment, and when Harry wound up the alarm and set it off again, their delight was great. The ring-maker tried to assume an air of indifference, but when his boat was ready to go he came toward Harry as if to offer to trade. Harry had learned much of the ways of the Eskimo trader by that time and turned away indifferently. When the boat was loaded, he strolled to the side with the clock in his hand. The little man held up one ring, but he shook his head. Then the Eskimo offered two. The boat was just going, and Harry wanted the rings so much that he yielded. It would make four in all, which was perhaps all he cared for anyway. He handed the clock to the little man, and that worthy dropped something in his palm as he did so. At the same time he pointed toward the cliff and jabbered something excitedly in Eskimo.

Harry looked where he pointed but saw nothing. The boat was several lengths away now, the click of the windlass pawl showed

that the Bowhead's anchor was coming up, and they were off. The little man was no longer gesticulating, but looked back over his shoulder and solemnly winked one eye. This was a new feature in Eskimo expression, and Harry wondered much if a wink meant as much with these seemingly stolid people as with us. As he mused, the umiak rounded the cliff and was gone, and Harry looked at his two rings for the first time. They were not rings at all, only two circular sections of a walrus back tooth, flat and useless disks, which the little man may have meant to make into rings later.

Then he realized that a wink is a wink the world over, and the language of signs is common to all people.

The day was bright, the gale was over, and the Bowhead put to sea, once more heading northward into the mysterious Arctic, keeping a keen lookout for whales. The southerly weather had driven the ice of the straits far to the northward, and though there was now and then a floating cake, the pack was many miles distant.

"Suppose you could pull a whaleboat oar?" asked Captain Nickerson of Harry that day at dinner.

“Why, yes, sir,” replied Harry, “I think so. I’m a good oarsman, though I have never used quite such large oars as you have in the whaleboats.”

“I’m sure he could, father,” said Joe; “what of it?”

“Why, this,” replied his father; “you’ve been practically second mate of the Bowhead ever since we left Hawaii. Now I think I shall let you take a second mate’s place in charge of one of the boats, and am planning to have Harry pull an oar in your boat.”

Both boys turned red with delight at this prospect, and it was soon decided to thus promote them to the list of regular whalers. Billy, an experienced Kanaka harpooner, was assigned to their boat as being a level-headed, skillful whaler, whose counsel would be of use to Joe, and the whole thing was arranged.

If the two boys had been anxious to sight whales before, they were doubly eager now, and both spent as much time as they could in the rigging on the lookout. It was Joe who first of the two boys sighted a bowhead. The cry of “A-h-h blow!” had rung from the crow’s nest, and the Kanaka on the watch there reported a whale nearly dead ahead. All hands were on the lookout for

the spout of this one, for the Kanakas in many cases have wonderful eyesight and can sight a whale much farther than the average white man, when, several points off the windward bow, Joe saw another blow and loudly proclaimed it from the mizzen rigging. A few moments afterward a third and a fourth were sighted, and the ship approached a school of black monsters numbering a dozen or so. Then she rounded to, a little to the windward, and the boats were hastily lowered. Harry found himself at the end of a sixteen-foot sweep that was very different from the oars he had been used to, but he soon accustomed himself to the stroke and swung along in good time with the others. He was conscious of a feeling of great elation, the thrill of ecstasy of the huntsman mingled with the dread of the unknown. They seemed such puny creatures to be attacking the greatest monster in the world. As they went on, both these feelings increased, till he shook with excitement and the man behind him noticed it. He was a brawny, grizzly old timer, bronzed by all the winds of the world, and hardened by many a hundred conflicts with the whales of all seas.

“Don’t get galled, younker,” he said

kindly ; “ the bowhead ain’t no whale. He’s jest a hundred tons or so of blubber and bone. If we was goin’ up against a sperm now, or a fightin’ bull humpback, ye might feel skeery, but a bowhead ain’t nothin’. They kill as easy as a slaughter-house lamb.”

Just then Harry fairly jumped from his seat, and lost his stroke for a moment. A shout had sounded, and glancing over his shoulder he saw that the first mate’s boat near by had already made fast, but had not as yet used the bomb gun. Instead, the whale seemed to have sounded too quickly, then changed his mind, and as Harry looked up over his shoulder he saw a great black mass rise fairly under the attacking boat, lifting it clear of the water, where it hung high for a moment, then, by some miracle still uncapsized, slid from the broad mass as if being launched. Even as the boat left the mountainous back, the mate leveled the bomb gun and discharged it full into the whale’s side. There was a shiver, the great flukes curled in one sweep that sent tons of spray into the air, which Mr. Jones with a skillful sweep of the steering oar narrowly avoided, and then the great black mass floated quivering on the surface.

“I told ye so, younker,” said the veteran, still swinging steadily and strongly to his oar. “He’s a dead un. There ain’t no fight in a bowhead. Ef that had been a sperm bull, there would n’t have been enough of that boat left to swear by. Oh, this ain’t whalin’, this ain’t; it’s pickin’ up blubber.”

Joe, standing by the steering oar, lifted his hand in a gesture commanding silence. His eyes glowered big beneath his cap, and Harry knew that they were close on to their game. A few more strokes and then, “Way enough,” said Joe gently. They glided silently forward with lifted oars. It seemed to Harry as if something took him by the throat and stopped his breathing. He would have given much to look around, but something held him motionless. He heard the stirring forward as the Kanaka harpooner moved to his position in the very bow. Then there was a gentle jolt and a “Huh!” from the harpooner as he drove the iron home.

“Give it to him!” yelled Joe; “stern all!”

Harry backed water mechanically, feeling curiously numb all over. He heard the report of the gun, and saw something tremendous and black beat the water three times with

great blows within a few feet of the blade of his oar. A rush of foam shot from these blows and seemed to overwhelm him in a smother of salt water. Then he found himself still sitting on the thwart, wet to the skin and up to his knees in water, but still, to his great astonishment, alive and right side up, and backing water with mechanical precision. There was no sound save the whir of the line through the chock and the voice of the veteran in his ear.

“You’re all right, boy,” it said. “Ye did n’t jump out, and ye kept your oar a-goin’. Ye’ll make a whaleman ’fore many days, an’ a good one, too. He’s soundin’ now, but he’ll come up dead. The Kanaka put the bomb into him right. He’s our whale.”

The rush of the line slackened and then ceased, and they began to take in on it. A long time they pulled steadily, and at last the black bulk showed in the wash of the dancing waves on the surface, the nerveless flipper swaying in the swell, and blood flowing from the spout-hole. Joe and Harry had captured their first whale in regulation fashion, and two prouder boys it would be hard to find. A hole was cut in the gristle of the great flukes, and the work of towing the mon-

ster to the ship was begun. Harry could not put much strength into his stroke at first, he was too weak with the reaction from the excitement, but he soon recovered from this and tugged away manfully.

A little way ahead of them was the first mate's boat with an equally large capture in tow; astern was the captain's boat, which had failed to make fast, and which soon pulled in to their assistance; but the boatswain was having the greatest adventure of them all. He had made fast to a good-sized whale, which had immediately become galled, and without waiting to be reached by bomb gun or lance had started out at a terrific pace, headed apparently for the north pole. The boat was already almost out of sight in the distance and diminishing steadily in size. By and by it grew no smaller, but gradually moved along the horizon, proving that the tow had changed its course. Indeed, it seems to be well established that a frightened whale runs in a circle, though generally a very large one. This particular bowhead had done this, though his circle was much smaller than many would have made. Thus it happened that when the two whales which the first mate's boat and Joe's had struck were alongside, the

boatswain's was looming large on the horizon again and approaching rapidly. The circle which his whale had taken seemed to include the position of the ship in a part of its circumference. With strength and vivacity quite unusual for a bowhead, the monster kept up the pace, and had thus far frustrated the boat's attempts to close up and kill. The boatswain, seeing that the whale was towing them toward the ship again, had ceased to attempt it, confident that even such a wonder of a pace-setter would finally tire, and wishing to be as near the ship as possible when the final stroke was made. Much attention to the race was given by those aboard, and Harry had an uneasy feeling that the monster, even though a proverbially timid bowhead, was bent on wreaking vengeance on the ship. If the huge creature should hurl himself against it at the pace at which he was coming, the result would be wreck beyond a doubt.

On he came at a great rate, ploughing through the water like a torpedo boat, the boatswain now straining every nerve to get up with him, but when the whale was within an eighth of a mile, there was an unexpected interference. He swerved to the right, again

to the left, sounded and then breached, and the next moment a mottled black and white orca flung itself into the air, turned end over end, and came down with a tremendous thud in the middle of the bowhead's back.

A strange groaning bellow came from the whale, but he plunged on desperately. Again the orca launched its twenty-five feet of length into the air and came down on the poor bowhead; and now another appeared, and the two alternately beat the frenzied and exhausted whale till it apparently had what little breath there was left hammered out of its body. Right alongside he gave up the fight and rolled motionless on the surface. The bellow had already subsided to a moan; this was followed by a gasp or two, and the bowhead ceased to breathe, turned on his side with the flipper in the air, dead before the boat could get alongside and finish the matter. The orcas had literally hammered the exhausted whale to death, and were now tearing at his lip to get his mouth open and devour the soft, spongy tongue, which is their chief delight. They seemed to pay no attention to the ship or the boat, and Harry had a good opportunity to see the behavior of these wild wolves of the sea before the boatswain,

with much indignation, lanced them both to death.

“ You ’ll try to eat up my whale, will you, you blasted davy devils! Take that — and that — and that!” and with every “ that ” the keen lance searched the vitals of the gnawing orcas.

One died still voraciously tearing at the whale’s under lip, but the other turned at the blow of the lance and bit at what had stung it, taking the bow of the boat in its jaws and crushing and shaking it in the final agony as a terrier might worry a cat. The great teeth crunched the wood, and the men, with cries of terror, were shaken out of the boat, but luckily none were caught in the grasp of the jaws. The lance-thrust was deadly, and in a moment the orcas lay, belly up, beside the dead whale. The men were so near the side of the ship that ropes were thrown to them and they clambered aboard, after some trouble to save the gear and the crushed boat, which was towed alongside and hoisted on deck.

Thus ended the first adventure with a school of bowheads in the Arctic. Not so badly, though the whales had been much more lively and the events far more exciting than is common in the pursuit of this gentlest of ceta-

ceans. A week of calm, warm weather followed, and at the end of that time the three whales were cut in, the blubber tried out, and the oil stowed away, together with three good heads of bone, making a fine beginning of what bade fair to be a very prosperous summer cruise.

CHAPTER V

WHEN THE ICE CAME IN

DURING the cutting in and trying out of the three whales the wind and current steadily carried the Bowhead northward, until on July fourth they again sighted the pack extending from the headland of Cape Lisburne westward indefinitely. Along between the ice and the land was a space of open water, and into this the Bowhead passed, working her way northeast as the summer season opened and the ice gradually receded from the shore. Now and then a whale was sighted in the opening leads of the retreating pack, and they occasionally captured one, though these whales in the ice were far smaller than the ones they had found in the open and consequently much less valuable. Moreover, in the ice-fields they were difficult to get at, and almost invariably escaped by plunging beneath the floes and coming up in some distant lead whither the boat could not follow them. In this way the ship reached the shallow and

dangerous coast off Blossom Shoals and beyond to Wainwright Inlet with the waning of the brief Arctic summer without any special adventures.

Every day had hardened Harry in rugged strength and vigor, and he and Joe were as fine specimens of young whalers as the sea could boast. They had met and traded with the Eskimo tribes alongshore and exchanged the reindeer skins for fox and ermine pelts, ivory, and whalebone, thus adding to the value of their cruise. Harry and Joe had been rivals in acquiring the Eskimo dialect of this coast, and had been helped greatly in this by the presence aboard of a young Eskimo of the Point Hope tribe, who worked as a sailor, with the understanding that when the ship should go out he would be paid in "trade" and left with his tribe. Thus both were quite fluent and could understand much that the Eskimos said among themselves. This was of great assistance to them.

As far north as Wainwright Inlet you begin to see the end of the summer often by the last of August. Already the sun, which in June simply circled the sky without setting, has begun to set again, and there is a considerable period of darkness each night.

The marvelous growth of beautiful flowers, which stud the moss and grass of the Arctic tundra during midsummer, has already passed to quick maturity, and the slopes are brown and autumnal by the middle of the month. Gales set in and bring snow on their icy wings, and the threat of winter is everywhere. The whalers take this warning and begin, about the middle of the month, to work south again, unless they intend to winter in the region. Oftentimes the Arctic pack hangs just offshore here and with westerly winds menaces the ship with destruction, but more often — indeed, it is counted upon by the whalers — a northeast gale comes with the first of September and drives the pack seaward, while giving them a fair wind for the strait. It was about this time that the cruise, thus far prosperous, began to meet with a series of mishaps that ended in disaster.

It was the last day of August that the west wind began to blow, and Captain Nickerson was uneasy directly. The Bowhead was just north of Icy Cape, in comparatively shoal water and with much floating ice in the sea. The pack ice was not in sight, but it might loom up at any moment, so steam was got up on the vessel and she poked her way



WHALEMEN'S CAMP ON ARCTIC SHORE

among the floating cakes to windward, working out as fast as possible. The sky was still clear and it did not promise to be much of a blow, but things work together for evil quickly in the Arctic, and it behooves a navigator to be very wary there. The wisdom of the immediate move was shown in this case, for the ship was scarcely well off the shoals and round the cape into the deep water to westward, before a long, slender point of solid ice was noted to the windward. It might be the main pack or not. There was open water to seaward and clear sea between the ice and the land, and Captain Nickerson was puzzled which course to take. If it was but a detached floe, as it well might be, the open course lay to windward of it, away from the land. If, on the other hand, it was part of the main pack, the proper course lay between it and the coast. Captain Nickerson finally decided that the seaward course was the wise one, and soon a widening point of ice separated them from the shoreward stretch of open water. An hour later they were among drifting floes, but still had good water ahead of them toward the southwest. The breeze was gentle, but the sky was hazing up a little, and the sun shone coldly.

The next afternoon at eight bells (four o'clock), as the watch was changed, the man on lookout called down to the deck.

“Something adrift on the ice off the starboard bow, sir.”

“What is it?” asked Mr. Jones, whose watch on deck it was.

“Can't make it out, sir,” replied the lookout; “it might be a seal, then again it might be a man.”

There was much interest at once. Several other vessels were cruising in the Arctic, and they had occasionally sighted one at a distance, though there had been chance for a meeting and a “gam” but once. They knew that the other ships were already to the southward on their way out. Perhaps this was a man from one of them, gone adrift on the ice, and having but one chance in a thousand for rescue. Captain Nickerson was not called, as he had just gone below after a long siege on deck, but Mr. Jones took the responsibility of changing the vessel's course slightly, and they approached the figure on the ice. It was difficult to make it out. All hands on deck saw it, — a motionless huddle on a cake of ice, driving before the wind in the dreary polar sea.

By and by the ship was as near as it could well get, a heavy floe crowding in between it and the open lead in which the cake floated. Still it was difficult to decide just what the figure was, but Mr. Jones finally said: "Humph! Dead seal," and changed the vessel's course again.

Harry and Joe looked at each other. They also had been carefully examining the object through the glass, and each thought it might be a man, fur-clad and lying in a heap, dead or exhausted.

"I don't care," said Joe; "I'm going to speak to father, if he is tired out. We don't want to take chances of passing any one that way."

He hastened below with Harry at his heels, both with hearts swelling with indignation. They knew that Mr. Jones was probably right in his guess, but the thought of the possibility of a fellow creature floating thus into the desolate Arctic winter filled them with pity and a great desire to leave nothing to chance.

Captain Nickerson listened to their story with attention, and so eager and excited were they that he finally gave them permission to have Mr. Jones stop the ship long enough for them to man the dingey and investigate.

“Can you make it with the dingey?” he asked.

“Oh, yes, sir,” replied Joe. “There’s a narrow lead or two that will take us part way, and the dingey is so light that we can haul her across in the other places.”

The dingey had been the special care of the boys, and rarely used except by them. They had been duck shooting in her during the summer, when whales were not in sight, and had kept the ship’s larder well supplied with the great ducks which swarm in that region all summer long. They had fitted her with a light sail and a few reserve provisions, — a tin or two of meat and some hard-tack, in case they should happen to be away over meal time. There was also a small keg of fresh water, and in the locker forward a one-burner oil stove with tea, sugar, and condensed milk, by way of refreshment. The boatswain used to laugh at this “life-boat,” as he called it, but the arrangement had often been useful, and the little craft was very handy at all times.

Mr. Jones did not look particularly happy when he heard the order to stop and lower the dingey, but he did as requested and the boat was soon on its way. The boys entered one of the narrow leads in the floe which

barred their way, traversed it to its end, and hauled their boat out. It was some way across to another open space and this did not take them far in the right direction, but it led to where they could haul to another, and so little by little they won their way across. As they came to the open water, they found to their chagrin that other ice-fields had crowded in between them and their object, and they were obliged to make a wide and winding detour to approach it. Distance is always far greater than it looks to be in the Arctic, and they were fully an hour in getting near the motionless heap. At last the dingey grazed the floating cake and they sprang out on it, dropped the ice anchor at the end of the two-fathomed painter into a chink in the ice, and hastened toward the motionless object.

As they reached it the huddled heap of fur moved, wavered, and sat up, smiled faintly from a face sunken-cheeked and hollow-eyed, murmured the Eskimo word "Nagouruk," then wavered back into a motionless heap once more; and as it did so a whirl of great flakes came pelting down on the little group on the cake of ice, and the world was blotted out in snow.

All eyes on board the ship had been fastened on the two in the dingey, and the squall had taken them as much by surprise as it did the boys. It had come up with a sudden veering of the wind to the southward, and had taken them from behind. Before they knew it all things were smothered in the whirl of snow, and, though he thought it probably only a passing squall, Mr. Jones was very uneasy about it, and when after a half hour had passed with no signs of letting up, he called Captain Nickerson. As the wind and snow increased, all hands became very anxious, and everything possible was done to give the boys knowledge of the ship's whereabouts. The whistle was blown frequently and shots were fired in volleys every few minutes, but there was still no sign of them.

It soon became evident that a severe blow was threatening and, though terribly anxious about the boys, Captain Nickerson realized that he must give his attention to the safety of the ship. The south wind was bringing the shoreward floe out upon her rapidly. It had already closed the lead just ahead of them, and if they would not be crushed they must retreat. The ship was therefore put about and slowly worked its way eastward again,

keeping just out of the jaws of destruction, in the vain hope that the dingey would reappear. Day wore on and darkness came with no sign of the missing boat, and during the next day the best they could do was to work back to Icy Cape, where the floes grounded on the shoals and they found safe refuge, partly behind them and partly behind the cape. The wind had swung to the westward again during the night and the morning brought no snow, but the air was full of a black mist and bitter cold. There was but faint hope that they would see the boys again unless the weather soon moderated, and Captain Nickerson was overcome with grief and self-accusation. Nor was the taciturn Mr. Jones much better off. Each felt that he had been careless to let them go as they had, yet the squall was so sudden and unforeseen that they could hardly be blamed.

For days the wind hung to the westward, veering to the northwest, and at the end of the third the main pack came in in earnest, pushing the shore floes on the ship till she was forced into shallow water and grounded. It became evident that she would hardly be got off again that fall, and that immediate measures must be taken for the safety of the

crew. Leaving Mr. Jones in charge, Captain Nickerson took a strong crew of his best men and set off down the coast, hoping to find one of the other ships of the little Arctic fleet. The journey was hard and dangerous. Now they found a space of open water, again they had to drag the boat over the ice for a long distance, camping for the night under the overturned boat, and looking anxiously for traces of the boys, but finding none.

At the end of the fifth day the wind and cold diminished, and they joyfully sighted the *Belvidere* in open water near the shore, with what seemed a fair chance to work out. They were taken aboard, and the captain of the *Belvidere* readily agreed to wait until the remainder of the crew of the *Bowhead* could reach him. For his own safety this was as much as he could do. He could not agree to stay in and risk his own vessel and crew for the chance of getting the *Bowhead* out of her difficulty. It was decided that she must be abandoned, and Captain Nickerson, with one man, started back on foot to get the crew. The journey was made successfully, and within a day after his return the balance of the crew in four boats, with merely what provisions they needed for the trip, abandoned

ship and contents, and, after a hard struggle, reached the *Belvidere*.

It was time. Already she was hard pressed by the shoreward-moving ice, and the captain was taking great risks in remaining. She pushed slowly down the coast, forcing her way through closing floes and running a hundred hazards successfully, till at last they rounded Lisburne and were in comparatively clear water. Captain Nickerson had not made any further efforts to discover the lost boys. He knew that these would be useless. Depending on their own exertions, they had a slender chance for escape to some other vessel, if any remained, or they might reach shore and winter with the natives. In either case he felt that the chances were slight, and he aged perceptibly in the cruise back to the States. The loss of his only son and his protégé weighed heavily upon him with the loss of his vessel and valuable cargo. The taciturn Mr. Jones became more silent than ever, and hardly spoke the whole voyage through. It was a sad home-coming for the ship's company.

As for the boys, their plight was bad enough, but at first, at least, their anxiety was only for themselves.

Indeed, in the very beginning, it was only for their new found friend. "He's dying," cried Harry, when the Eskimo collapsed at their feet; "what shall we do?"

"Give him something hot," cried the practical Joe. "If we only had some brandy! But we have n't. I'll tell you — you chafe his hands and I'll make some hot tea."

So Harry fell to chafing the cold, skeleton-like hands, while Joe eagerly lighted the little oil lamp and soon had a pot of hot tea made, sheltered from the wind in the forward locker of the dingey. He poured this between the clenched teeth of the unconscious man, who choked a bit as it went down and opened his eyes.

"There!" said Joe; "I thought that would fetch him. It's strong enough to raise the dead and — well, I guess it's pretty hot, too. Lucky we stocked the dingey this way, ain't it? Whew! how it does snow. We'll have to wait till it quits before we think of getting back to the ship again. It's kind of risky to get too far away from your ship when the ice is coming in. Guess we'll make it all right, though."

For the first time Harry looked around him and thought of his surroundings. The snow

was pelting in on them in great flakes, and he could hardly see across the ice cake they were on. He did not realize that the wind had changed, but he noticed that it blew strongly, and he felt singularly lonely and distant from shelter and aid. Something of the eerie wildness of the Arctic came over him, as it had that night in the storm in Bering Sea, and he had a sense of desolation that was beyond words. The only link between him and life seemed to be the dingey, and even then an ice cake crushed against it with an alarming crash. He rushed to it and, hauling with all his strength, got it out on the ice. The planking was cracked, and it had barely escaped utter ruin.

“Whew!” exclaimed Joe; “they’re after us, are n’t they! We’ll have to mend that a bit before we can start out. But that will be easy. Once we get our friend here fixed up so he can travel, we’ll tend to all those things.” He crumbed a little hard bread into the balance of the tea, making a sort of soup which the Eskimo took eagerly. After a time he spoke briefly in his own language.

“No catch seal,” he said; “kayak gone. Nine sleeps and no eat.”

“Do you hear that?” said Joe to Harry;

“No wonder he ’s used up. Guess I ’ll give him some more to eat.”

The Eskimo answered this in English as he got up, rather waveringly. “No,” he said; “bimeby want.”

Born of generations inured to famine, no one recovers from it more quickly than the Eskimo, and within half an hour he was able to walk about and take a hand, in a feeble way, in patching up the injured dingey. They found that he was a Point Hope man by birth, and had learned a little English at the mission there. He had come north with some of his tribe a summer or two before, and finding a place to his liking near Point Lay, had settled there with them. He had been out after seal among the floes and lost his kayak, and had drifted on the cake for nine days. A day or so before, he had given himself up for lost, and calmly covered his head with his skin coat, waiting for death, as an Eskimo will. He had taken the boys at first for the ghosts of the ice world, come for him, and had gone to sleep at sight of them. Now he knew them to be men, his friends, and some day he would save their lives as they had his.

All this he explained, bit by bit, partly in brief English, partly in Eskimo which they

understood, as the boat was being patched with a bit of canvas tacked over the break in the planking. They had no tacks, but Harry had a many-bladed knife with an awl in it, and they made holes with this and used pegs whittled from a thwart. These they made a trifle long for the awl-holes, and hammered the protruding ends to a fuzzy head. It was not a good job, but it would do.

Harry was eager to start back for the ship at once, but Joe, wiser in the ways of the Arctic, wanted to wait. He knew that in that driving snow it would be almost impossible to reach her unless constantly guided by sound. Without that they might row within a dozen yards of her and not see her. More than one whaleman has lost his ship while wintering in the Arctic, and died in the storm within a few rods of her, never knowing that he was so near safety. So Joe, backed by the Eskimo, judged that they would better wait until they were sure in what direction to go. As a matter of fact, the ship, floe-bound near the shore, had drifted but slowly in the southerly wind, while the cake on which they were had gone northward quite rapidly. Hence when the shots and whistle sounded they heard them only faintly, and could not

tell, in the drive of the storm, from what direction they came.

Thus time slipped by and they still clung to their floating cake, a pitiful little ice world in a gray universe of flying snow. They were warmly dressed, but the inaction in the chill wind soon set the white men to shivering. The Eskimo, on the contrary, seemed comfortable in his furs, and regained strength every moment. He noted how cold they were, and, motioning them to his assistance, they turned the boat over, keel to the wind, spread the sail beneath it, and drew part of it up so as to close the opening. With the movable thwarts they blocked the wider apertures, and then, still at the bidding of the Eskimo, heaped the fast gathering snow about it. This gave them a narrow igloo, where they huddled for warmth. From now on the dusky brother they had rescued proceeded to rescue them, and they soon learned to trust his judgment implicitly.

As time passed more snow accumulated and was banked about, until their cave was well fortified and quite comfortable.

Gradually dusk came on, but still the snow fell as thick as ever, and there was no alternative but to remain where they were. Mat-

ters did not look very cheerful, and Harry, for one, heartily wished he had never seen the Arctic, or, for that matter, left the pleasant confines of Quincy Point. However, a healthy boy grows hungry at supper time, wherever he is, and he pulled one of the three or four tins of canned meat out of the locker, together with about half the hard-tack.

“Let’s have some supper,” he said; “I’m hungry.”

They divided the meat, and each ate several squares of hard-tack. Joe made shift to boil some water with the little oil stove, and they made tea. The glow of the flame lighted their shelter with cheer and helped to warm it. The drifting snow wrapped it closer, and, in spite of the keen nip of the frost and the icy gale without, they had a sense of warmth and comfort. Joe, however, put out the flame as soon as the tea was done.

“We may need that oil badly before we get back,” he said, “and it won’t do to waste it. No, we’d best sleep if we can till daylight. The storm may break by that time, and we can see better what to do. This ice cake is big enough to hold us safe till the blow is over, and that is the best we can do at present.”

They cuddled together for warmth, and in spite of the obviously great danger of their situation, two at least, Joe and the Eskimo, soon slept soundly. Harry did not sleep so readily. He was fairly warm and comfortable lying between his two friends in the narrow cubby-hole, now wrapped deep in the sheltering snow, but he could hear the howl of the storm without, and a sense of the weird and supernatural was strong upon him. It seemed as if the wild powers of the unknown ice world laughed and gibbered in the gale. He thought he heard low wails, hideous laughter, and a sort of insane babbling that sounded now far, now near at hand, and he did not blame the Eskimos for thinking the world of unknown ice and desolation to the north to be peopled by strange spirits. Once it seemed as if the Innuït at his side was awake and listening too, and he poked him gently and asked, "What's that?" as a sound of ghostly footsteps and something like deep breathing came to him in a lull of the gale.

The other lifted his head and was silent. "Hush," he replied, after a moment. "Nunatak mute (ghost people) come. Perhaps no hear, no see, bimeby go away."

He lay down again and was soon asleep,

and at last tired nature soothed Harry to slumber, and he slipped away into the world of dreams where was no ice or gale, no strange ghosts of the frigid night, but the pleasant warmth of his own fireside at home, his father and mother sitting by the evening lamp, and he himself propped among cushions, slipping gently into dreamland in the comfort of his own home.

Hours afterward he was wakened by a familiar scratching sound. It was pitch dark, and he was warm and comfortable though the air was oppressive. By and by there was a spurt of flame, and he saw that Joe was lighting a match. He touched it to the wick of the oil stove, put the teapot on, then looked at his watch.

“It ought to be light by this time,” he said. “It’s five o’clock. What do you suppose is the matter?” The Inuit was awake at this, and sat up also in his cramped quarters.

“Plenty snow,” he said. “Eat first, bimeby look out. Much cold.”

They made a hasty breakfast from the scanty stock of food, and the Inuit pushed his arm through the drift that had snowed them completely under, safe and warm from the tem-

pest. Light came in through the hole which his arm had made, and a whiff of fresh but very keen air. He enlarged the hole carefully, making it a sort of burrow out of which each crawled. The snow had ceased, but the wind still blew hard, and the air was full of a black fog, which gave no sight of the sun. It was bitter cold, and the short distance which they could see about them showed only a rugged mass of snow-covered ice. During the night their floating cake had joined with larger ones, how large they could not tell, and they were now on what seemed an ice-field.

“Shall we try to make the ship?” asked Harry dubiously, his teeth chattering in the keen air. Joe shook his head.

“I’m afraid we’re in a bad scrape,” he said. “We can’t be sure of the direction, and even if we could, we might pass within a short distance of the ship and not see her. Seems to me there is nothing to do but to wait for the weather to clear up. Then we can tell what we are doing.”

The Eskimo nodded his head in approval of this. “Too much cold,” he said. “Too much no see. Wait in igloo long time, maybe five, six sleeps. Then sun come.”

“If I only had a compass, so that we could

get the general direction, I'd chance it," said Joe; "but there is no telling how the wind may have changed, and we might be traveling right out to sea. It's better to wait where we are safe till we can be sure. They'll be anxious on the ship, but what can we do? No, the Eskimo is right. We've got to stay here till we can see the sun, at least."

The bite of the wind warned them to get within their shelter again, and they did so. The Eskimo, however, continued to work on the snow entrance to their cave beneath the drift, and soon had it made into a veritable tunnel, through which they could crawl, but which was long enough to keep out the worst of the cold. Then he enlarged their igloo by pushing out the sail, compacting the snow behind it, till they had quite a little room in which to turn round, though they could barely sit upright there. He almost blocked the far end of his entrance tunnel with snow, and closed the nearer end with the boat's thwarts. Thus the wind and cold were shut out, and they were surprisingly comfortable, considering that they had no fire. Their eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness, and they felt themselves quite at home. It was a long day, though they whiled away the time

talking with the Eskimo, who was quite recovered from his nine days of starvation.

At nightfall there was no change in the weather, and they resigned themselves to a long siege. Neither was there any change the next day, nor the next. Occasionally they went out and plunged through the snow about their igloo for exercise, but the Eskimo warned them not to go but a few steps away from it, for to be lost in the cold and black frost-fog was to meet certain death from exposure. Now and then it snowed again, but they did not care for this, as it drifted higher about their shelter and made it warmer. On the third day a serious matter was forced upon their attention. At breakfast, that morning, Joe divided the last of the meat and hard-tack. Only a little tea stood between them and starvation.

The night of the fourth day they were much disturbed by crushing and grinding noises, and got little sleep. Sometimes the ice beneath them seemed to jar as if hit by a tremendous blow. The Eskimo hailed this with delight.

“Nagouruk,” he said. “Ice talk. Bimeby get seal.”

At the first light he was out, taking his

spear with him, but he returned at nightfall, thoroughly chilled and empty-handed. Matters looked dubious. They drank tea and licked the inside of the can that had held the condensed milk. It was a poor substitute for a meal. They learned that the Eskimo had hunted long for an open lead, and had risked his life by venturing far from their shelter, but had found only a small crack, which he had watched all day without success. The next morning, however, Joe, who was first out, gave a great shout of delight. The gale had abated, and there was a faint glow through the black fog which showed the direction of the sun. He wished to start southeast at once, for that must be the direction in which they should go, but the Eskimo wished to wait.

“Get seal,” he said. “Much eat. Bimeby go;” and though Joe chafed at the delay, the weakness of hunger made him think it wise to defer to the man of the ice. The Eskimo went off with his spear, found an opening within sight of the igloo, and stood there motionless for literal hours, his spear poised, himself a statue frozen upon the frozen scene. Suddenly the poised spear shot downward, and with a shout of triumph he hauled a seal

out upon the ice, tossed him upon his shoulder, and came running to the igloo with him.

It took him but a moment to strip off the already freezing hide, and slice off big strips of blubber and meat from the carcass. Passing these to the boys he proceeded to eat others immediately. Joe and Harry were hungry enough to follow his example, but they nevertheless lighted the oil stove and partly broiled their steaks before eating. It must be confessed, however, that they were cooked rare. When they had satisfied their hunger the Eskimo carefully rolled up the remainder of the meat and blubber in the hide, and it soon froze solid, making a compact bundle.

The cold abated with the wind, and as the sun struggled through more and more, they made an immediate start. They dug the dingey out of the snow shelter that had saved their lives, packed their belongings carefully in it, and, with the Eskimo tugging at the painter, and Joe and Harry lifting and sliding it over the snow and rough ice, headed southeast as nearly as they could tell by the sun.

It was hard work, but the boat was still their only salvation, and they stuck to it. The



ROUGH ARCTIC CLIFFS

good meal of seal meat had put renewed life into them, and, in the clear Arctic air, headed toward safety once more, they felt almost jovial. The brown man of the ice seemed to have completely recovered his strength, and tugged manfully, working like a beaver, and leading the way with a discretion born of generations of men trained to the work.

By mid-afternoon it had grown quite clear, and they paused for a rest, making another meal of seal meat, very slightly cooked this time, for the oil in the stove gave out as they were cooking. When they started on, the Eskimo swung sharply to the south with a joyful shout.

“Emik! Emik!” (Water! Water!) he cried; and soon they saw an open lead in a southerly direction. It was not long before they had the boat in this, and with a sigh of relief Harry settled to the oars, while Joe took the tiller, and the Eskimo ensconced himself in the bow, spear in hand, in the hope of seeing another seal. An hour or two later the clouds to the eastward settled away, and they saw at no great distance the glimmer of snow-clad peaks in the setting sun. Land was in sight, and it seemed as if their troubles were soon to be over. The open water between

the pack and the shore could not be far ahead of them, and they found a place where a haul over a space of ice let them into another lead that took them in the right direction. Just before sunset a warning word from the Eskimo bade Harry cease his rowing, and the boat glided gently along through the water, while the Eskimo stood erect with poised spear.

Again there was the sudden thrust and the shout of triumph, and another seal was added to their larder. This was a larger one, and they had at least no fear of the starvation which had threatened them at sunrise. Still there was no sign of the ship, and even now a return of the gale, with snow, might easily prove disastrous. Therefore, changing places at the oars, they toiled doggedly on, making another short haul over the ice, and finding the open water just at twilight. They found it full of floating cakes, and as they neared the shore there was much "mush ice" newly formed in the open, which made their passage difficult. It was well into the night when they finally hauled the boat out on the snow-clad land with a great sigh of weariness and relief. It was like coming to a new and strange world, however. The brown tundra

was now drifted with snow, and the country round about was in the grip of the beginning of the long Arctic winter. There are years in which this is delayed until late in September, but in others it comes by the very first, and happy are those ships which escape to the warmer waters of the south before it happens.

They had not got sight of the ship, but they hoped to on the morrow. At least they were safe from the terrible drifting Arctic pack, and with thankfulness for the watchful care of Providence they once more overturned the dingey, rigged the sail over its open side, packed snow from a drift about it, and crawled into the improvised igloo for the heavy dreamless sleep that follows severe and long-continued toil.

CHAPTER VI

WINTER LIFE AND INNUIT FRIENDS

THAT night as they lay sheltered from cold and from sound, snug in their snow igloo, the four boats of the Bowhead battled past them on their way down the coast, leaving no trace behind in the shifting ice and mush of the narrowing waterway ; the difference of a few hours in time, of a few furlongs in distance, was so little, yet it meant so much ! With the passing of those four boats civilization shut her door upon the two boys, and was to open it no more for a year and a half.

Yet they knew nothing of this, and slept serene in the hope of soon rejoining their comrades. They woke to find the sun already up, and the Eskimo gone. His tracks lay through the snow inland. While they wondered if he had abandoned them he reappeared, bearing a scant handful of willow brush which he had dug out of the snow in the valley beyond. With this they managed to roast some strips of seal meat and make a satisfactory

breakfast. The wind had ceased, the air was keen but bracing, and they did not mind the cold, which, after all, was not great. The first warning of the terrible winter was on them, but it was not yet severe. Their young blood leaped in the keen air, and they felt a relief from danger that made them fairly frolicsome. The ship could not be far away, they were sure, and they would find it and all would be well.

“There is one comfort about this way of living,” said Harry philosophically; “you don’t have any dishes to clean up.”

“No,” replied Joe; “nor much to put in them, either.”

Then both boys noted the Eskimo’s manner. He stood looking toward the north with a strange intensity. Over in that direction the snowy fields of the pack ice stretched away to the limitless haze of the horizon. In the distance these ice-fields seemed to quiver as the air quivers in summer when the heat is intense. They trembled and wavered, and changed from ice-fields to open sea that shone fair under the morning sun. This sea was calm and free from ice, and seemed to move eastward, melting the ice and snow before it as it went. They turned to watch this eastward

movement, and after a little a headland appeared in it, and both boys gave a cry of delight.

“The ship! the ship!” they cried, and danced and swung their hats and hurrahed. There she was at anchor by the headland, safe and sound as they had left her, and their hearts glowed within them at the thought of home coming.

“There she is!” cried Joe exultantly, “right north by Icy Cape! I remember the headland there. Good Lord! What’s she doing?”

The Bowhead moved out from her anchorage on this quivering open sea with never a sail set, and no smoke from her engines, and lifting up and up seemed to climb the horizon to the northeast and disappear, a speck in the high heavens; and as she did so the shimmering waters vanished, leaving only the rough, snow-clad ice-fields, bleak and impenetrable.

Joe and Harry looked at each other. It was mirage, they knew that, yet there had been the headland, and the ship, her every spar and rope familiar to them. It was magic; that was what the Eskimo said, but he was quite confident that it was bad magic, and that this was to show them that ship and crew were lost, — had sailed far away to the unknown,

never to return. He would go to Icy Cape with them if they wished, but they would find only winter ghosts there.

Nevertheless it was their only clue, and they decided to go. With their friends camped only a few short miles to the southwest, they headed in the opposite direction and began struggling through the mush ice, across floes, making a toilsome but sure progress to the northeast. At noon they camped on a floe, ate seal meat, and, after a brief rest, toiled on. At night they camped as before. Thus for two days they steadily worked up the coast. At nightfall of the second the wind came in again from the west, with squalls of snow and a recurrence of severe cold, but the next day they went on still, and by noon were rounding the headland. The air was thick with snow, but in a lull they sighted what seemed to be the ship, and cries of thanksgiving went up from the weary wayfarers.

“The ship! the ship!” they cried once more, confident that this could be no mirage. The Eskimo shook his head.

“Bad magic,” he said; “ghost ship.” But the boys knew better. The Bowhead lay at anchor in mush ice and among floes, ghostly

enough in the whirl of flying snow that made the outlines of spar and sail white against the leaden sky, but the ship in very truth, and never so welcome a sight in any man's eyes. They shouted and hallooed, and listened in vain for any response as they neared her, and their exultant hearts grew cold with fear as they got none. A terrible weird loneliness brooded over her, and it seemed to the exhausted boys as if they struggled to her side through a bad dream.

There was no greeting as they stepped on deck, only the wail of the wind through the icy shrouds. The deck was drifted with snow that held no tracks. The cabin, the fore-castle, the galley, all showed signs of hasty leaving, and were untenanted. Then, once more in the cabin, the truth came upon them with stunning force. The ship had been abandoned, and they with it were left to face the long loneliness of the coming Arctic night as best they could. Joe sat down with a pathetic slump in his broad shoulders and buried his face in his hands, losing his cheerful courage for the first time; nor did he note for quite a while that Harry was face down on the captain's berth sobbing with homesickness, loneliness, and utter physical exhaustion. Of

the hour that these two spent in the full realization of their misfortune, it were best to say little. Up to that hour they had been boys. In it they passed through the crucible that melts and reshapes souls, and they came out of it men.

His anguish over and once more master of himself, Joe rose, and, stepping to Harry's side, laid a hand on his shoulder. Then he saw that Harry had found peace in sleep, and knowing how much he needed it, he threw a quilt over his shoulders and left him, going on deck.

The Eskimo had gone, and with him the dingey.

It did not change the look of serenity in Joe's face. He had met and conquered all fears and apprehensions in the hour that had just passed, and one more misfortune could have no effect on him. He turned to the galley, where he started a fire, and from the cook's stores took the material for a first-class hot supper. When this was ready, he went and wakened Harry. The two did not say much, but they clasped hands in the dusk of the cabin, and each saw the change toward manhood in the other's face, — the look of greater sturdiness, greater self-reliance, to-

gether with a certain serenity which surely marks the man. Some fortunate men acquire this serenity, self-poise, in the face of fortune, good or ill, early in life; some never acquire it, and they, as well as the world, are the worse off for that.

They slept warm and long that night, had a good hearty, hot breakfast the next morning, and felt fit to face the world. It was a bright morning, with the sun struggling through frost mists, and as they came on deck they found quite a change in the position of the small floes overnight, and some open water near the ship. Out of this open water came a quavering hail.

“Kile, innuit” (Come here, man); “kile, innuit,” cried Joe with delight, and the Eskimo paddled alongside in the dingey. He touched the ship gingerly, but it neither flew away nor burned him. He climbed aboard and looked earnestly at Joe and Harry, who shook his hand cordially. Then his face lighted up with a broad grin.

“Nagouruk,” he said. “No more ghosts. Good magic. White man great ankut” (wizard).

That was all. He thought it great magic that the boys had made the ghost ship real

and were living aboard it in safety. Henceforth he did not question his own safety there, but the night before he had feared to go aboard lest it sail off with him into the undiscovered country, as it had in the mirage.

That day the two boys — we will call them boys still, though, remember, they have the hearts of men — took stock of their situation, and found it not so bad after all. The captain and crew were gone southward, probably to safety, but they had left behind the ship, with abundance of provisions and all sorts of supplies, including a good amount of coal. There was really no reason why they should not be warm and comfortable all winter long, and find safety with the returning whalemens the next summer. If they had been short of provisions or without the splendid shelter and the coal that they had, it might have been wise to attempt to work south on the chance of catching a belated whaleship at Point Hope. As it was, the chance was too slender, and it was best to face the winter just where they were.

Thus they planned their life anew, and went leisurely about their preparations. The Eskimo wished to leave them for a time. His family were at the village at Point Lay, and

he would see them again. He would come back, perhaps bring his friends with him, and they would build another village ashore, so that he might be near his white brothers. The boys thought well of this. The friendly Eskimos might be of great help to them, and already there was in Joe's mind a half-formed plan in which they were to be partners. So, loading him down with such provisions as he could best carry, a rifle, and abundant ammunition, to his great delight, they bade him good-by, and he started bravely through the snow alongshore. They had no fear for his safety. He would burrow deep in the drifts at night or in case of severe weather, and reach the village safe and sound.

As if for his encouragement and their own, there followed several days of halcyon weather. It was calm and the sun shone brightly; and though the temperature remained below freezing and the thermometer went below zero at night, the air was so dry that it did not seem nearly as cold as it was. Yet they knew they were soon to face deadly cold, when the mercury would drop to fifty below and fierce gales sweep over them for weeks, and they must prepare for it. The position of the ship they could not change, but it seemed reason-

ably safe. It was well behind the headland, in shallow water; aground, as they soon discovered. The shore ice would form thick about it, and it could not be touched by the moving pack, which would grind back and forth all winter half a mile to seaward. Their next care was to decide in what part of the ship they could live most comfortably. The galley was large enough; it had the range, on which they could best cook, and there were two bunks in it which the Chinese steward and his assistant had occupied. No one is cleaner than a cleanly Chinaman, and these bunks bore inspection. They might fumigate them and bring up their own bedding and supplies, and it was by all odds the most convenient place. For all this, Joe shook his head.

“It won’t do, Harry,” he said; “the place will be too cold. It is on deck; and when the thermometer gets way down and the gales blow for a month steady, we shall surely freeze to death.”

“I suppose so,” said Harry doubtfully; “but it is low amidships here between the bulwarks. If we could only build a double house right around it, the air space between the two would be a great protection, — and it

is so handy. Tell you what, there's some spare boards and stuff down in the main hold. Could n't we do it with them?"

"Could n't make it tight enough," replied Joe. "The wind would shoot through and get at us. If it was buried deep in snow—but the snow would blow away in the wind." He pondered a moment, and shook his head.

"What's the matter with ice, then?" answered Harry. "We've got all the ice we want, right handy."

Joe sprang to his feet with a laugh. "I believe you've got it, this time," he said. "We'll make a regular Eskimo igloo all around it with ice blocks, same as we used to read about in the schoolbooks. We'll chink them with snow and pour water on, and when it freezes we'll be snug as need be."

They went immediately to work while the weather favored them. From the floes alongside they cut cubical blocks which they hauled aboard with a whip rigged to the main yard. These they piled one above another, about three feet from the galley sides. A second row was then set up a foot outside these, and the space between filled with snow. Thus they had two ice walls with a free air space next the building. Spare spars placed across

this served for rafters, and they covered these with ice cakes also. For cement, snow with water poured on was excellent, and at the end of three days their protecting igloo was nearly finished. It filled the space amidships from bulwark to bulwark, and the two architects were very proud of their creation.

“When you are in Rome,” said Harry, “you must do as the Romans do,” and in this he had solved the real secret of successful winter life in the Arctic. Through a thousand generations stern necessity has taught certain things to the Eskimos, and the explorers who most nearly follow their methods are the ones who winter in safety and with least loss of life and comfort.

Still in imitation of the ice-dwellers of the far north, they made the only entrance to this big igloo through a low tunnel of ice cakes, well chinked and mortared with snow and water, and with a deerskin doorway that dropped curtainwise and could be fastened tight. Had Sir Christopher Wren been viewing the completion of St. Paul’s Cathedral, he could have done so with no greater thrill of pride than did these two beginners in Arctic life their rough ice shelter from the cold to come.

“ I think that makes it all right,” said Joe, with great satisfaction. “ If it does n’t work we can retreat below, but with a good fire in the galley stove it seems as if we might be comfortable here, even in the coldest weather.”

They took stock of their provisions and coal and, as was to be expected, found both ample for a large number of men. Trade goods still held out, and they could purchase what the Eskimos had to offer during the winter, if they cared to. Joe sighed as he looked at the whaling implements, harpoons, bomb guns, and line, left just as they had been abandoned, ready for instant use. He picked up a harpoon and handled it lovingly.

“ I’ll have a shot or two with you, yet,” he said, “ before we get out of the wilderness.”

“ How do you mean ? ” asked Harry ; “ there ’s no chance to get whales in winter, is there ? ”

A half-formed plan in Joe’s head took shape in that instant.

“ No,” he said, “ not in winter, but the whales begin to appear in the leads in the ice very early in the spring. Long before the ships can get up here to get at them, the most of them have gone north. Now, situated as

we are, we can do whaling right from the ice, if we can get the Eskimos to help us. They will gladly do it for the blubber and meat, and we shall have the bone. That is the best part of a whale nowadays, anyway. Here's what I plan for the spring and summer. We will get all the bone and furs we can this winter to add to the cargo. We'll be as careful of the coal as we can, and if the Bowhead comes through the winter all right, as I hope she will, we will try and take her south ourselves, with the help of the Eskimos, when the ice opens next summer."

Thus, well provided for in the present, and with roseate plans for the future, they began the winter. Daily the sun got lower; so did the mercury in the thermometer; and often for days there was no sight of the former because of flying snow and the deep haze of frost-fog. The ice set more and more firmly about the Bowhead, and the pack which ground and crushed against the edge of the shore ice outside the headland no longer made any answering movement in the frozen stretch about her. The winter was upon them, and there were times when their ice igloo was put to severe tests as a frost defender. It stood them all well, and with a good fire in the gal-

ley range, it was always comfortable within. In the open space between the galley and the igloo frost crystals collected, till, in the glow of lamplight, the narrow way looked like a fairy grotto, all hung with spangles and frost gems.

The temperature there was always below freezing, and Joe prosaically suggested that it would be a good place to hang their fresh meat, if they had any to hang.

“I wish our Eskimo friend would come back and spear a seal for us,” said Harry. “We’ve had no fresh meat since he left. Suppose he got home safe?”

They were to have fresh meat soon, however, by way of a most interesting adventure that began the very night after.

October had come, and with the middle of it a few brief days of mild weather. The sun slanted upward in a low sweep from the southern horizon, then down, after scarcely three hours, leaving behind it, as it set, a running fire of beams that swept along the horizon like a prairie fire, then the dancing splendor of the aurora and a full moon that swung the circuit of the sky without setting. The refraction in the air, first cousin to the mirage, gave this moon odd shapes that were

indescribably weird. Sometimes it was cubical, sometimes an elongated oval, and often there were rainbows in the frost about it that made mock moons, two or three ranged in irregular order, with encircling fires that were as beautiful as ghostly. The boys, warmly wrapped in furs chosen from their stock, would, on these calm nights, often promenade the deck for an hour, viewing these phenomena and listening to the crash and grind of the pack against the shore ice beyond the headland. This night they had done so, then retired to the glow of their evening lamp, with books from their stock. They were studying navigation, and a book on engineering and seamanship from the engineer's locker, that they might be better able to handle the vessel if the chance came to them in the summer.

Weariness overcame them there, and Joe had already turned in, while Harry dozed in the chair over his book. He started up once, thinking he heard footsteps, then settled down again, sure that it had been only imagination. There he slept while the footsteps came along the deck, hesitated at the deerskin curtain, and then something tore it down. Harry stirred uneasily, but did not wake. The steps,

padded but scratchy, came along the ice tunnel and hesitated again at the closed door to the galley. Then something clawed at this door and shook it, sniffing. Harry came to his feet with a bound and listened, uncertain whether he had heard or dreamed. Then the sound went round the side of the galley, as if something were crowding through the ice passage to the window.

“Joe!” cried Harry; “Joe, there’s something here!” Joe roused sleepily, then tumbled out of his bunk with a rush, for there was a crash of glass and a great white forearm came through the little window with a black palm and long, hooked nails. Then the lamp went out.

Darkness, and the sound of heavy breathing, with a terrifying recollection of that great arm and the palm with long nails!

The two boys crowded together in the corner of the galley, quivering and terrified. The thought of the winter ghosts that the Eskimo had said they would find at Icy Cape came to both, and did not seem like a foolish superstition now.

“What is it? What is it?” cried Harry in terror. His voice sounded faint and far away to him.

"Can't you find a match?" replied Joe between his set teeth. He was trying hard to conquer this superstitious terror, but he only partly succeeded.

Harry tremblingly pulled a match from his pocket and struck it. The arm was there, reaching and clawing, and behind it gleamed two fierce little eyes. Joe snatched the 45-70 from the corner and began pumping shot after shot at the little window. In the confines of the little room the report was deafening, and the match went out at the first shot.

Harry lighted another. The arm hung limp and there was a heaving and straining without that fairly cracked the galley walls, then silence.

"Ghost or devil or what all, I've finished him," said Joe, after watching for a moment with pointed rifle.

Harry relighted the lamp. His courage was coming back, but his nerves were still shaky. Then he flung wide the door while Joe held the rifle in readiness. Darkness was there, but neither sound nor ghost. Cautiously, lamp in hand and rifle ready, they entered the space between the ice and the galley sides, and there they saw their ghost motionless. He was bulky and white, so bulky

that he filled the three-foot space tight, with his arm still stuck through the cabin window.

“Well,” said Joe, “he’s white enough for a ghost, but he is n’t one. He’s a white bear, and a fine one. Let’s get him out of that and skin him before he freezes.”

In the light of the ship’s lanterns they tugged and wrestled for an hour to get the great creature out through the igloo entrance to the deck. There they skinned him and cut him up, hanging the four quarters in what they henceforth named their refrigerator. The pelt was a fine one, in the full strength of the winter coat. In spite of the cold and dim light, they took it off carefully, muzzle, claws, and all.

“There,” said Joe, “that skin will bring a hundred dollars in San Francisco, if we can ever get it there. It is a good night’s work, if we were scared to death. What do you suppose brought him?”

“Don’t know,” replied Harry, “unless it was the smell of that salmon.”

Both sniffed, and on the air from the igloo caught the faint odor of the salted salmon that they had put on the galley range to simmer and freshen. He was probably right. The white bear has a keen scent, and the

odor of cooking will draw him a long way across the ice.

They repaired the window, re-closed the igloo entrance, and though somewhat apprehensive, slept soundly and unmolested until daylight. Then they sought and found tracks showing where the bear had climbed a drift and come aboard by way of the stern. Other tracks seemed to show that their intruder had a companion that had circled the ship on the snow but had not boarded it. This adventure gave them fresh meat, the first for a long time, and they ate bear steaks till they were weary of them; but it also gave them an idea for the capture of more valuable pelts.

“If white bears are coming our way,” said Joe, “we’ll try and fix things so they’ll stop with us. We must make a little shelter on the deck aft, and set a whale-oil lamp burning in it with a kettle of salmon stewing over it. Then we’ll fix things so that if his bearness approaches it, he’ll breast a string and set off a rifle. One of those old Springfield muzzle-loaders that dad could n’t sell, even to the mersinkers, will be just the thing. We can load it half full of bullets, and it don’t matter if it does burst. There’s plenty more of them.”

“Good idea,” said Harry. “If bears are coming, I’d like to have something stop them before they get far enough aboard to scare me the way the last one did. We’ll do it to-day.”

They did, but that night one of the terrible Arctic blizzards set in, and it never let up for a month. Their trap was rigged, but they could do nothing toward baiting it in such tremendous weather; they scarcely ventured outdoors, and got along as best they could by the galley fire. Yet the time did not hang very heavily on their hands. They read and studied, played all the games there were aboard the vessel, and slept a great deal. In the gloom and cold of the full Arctic night the tendency to hibernate seems to come on men as well as animals, and they sometimes slept the round of the clock at a stretch.

The fifteenth of November the gale ceased as suddenly as it had come up, and they ventured out at high noon. The air was still, but intensely cold. Clad in reindeer-skin suits from head to toe, with fur hoods, and little but the eyes exposed to the frost, they looked about. A luminous twilight hung over all the wastes of snow. To the north the sky was purple_black, flushing pink in quivering

streams of light toward the zenith, where glowed great stars. The heavens seemed, through this luminous pink haze, these quivering bars of aurora, to have wonderful depth and perspective. Great golden stars shone there, some far, some seemingly very near, and the distance between the two was very marked. The wonderful depths of infinite space were revealed to them as never before, and they gazed in awe and delight.

“I never knew before,” cried Harry, “what was meant by the depths of the heavens. At home the sky is a flat surface with holes poked in it that are stars. Here you see them worlds, with millions of miles of space before and behind and around them. It is wonderful. See the south, too; it is afire!”

A little to the east of due south lambent flames sprang above the horizon as if a great fire burned there. They shot up and moved westward as though a great forest was going down before a smokeless conflagration. On to the west they moved, and sank, glowed, and disappeared — burnt out.

It was the last of the midday sun, and they were not to see it again until well into February. A faint breeze seemed to blow in from the south, as if bearing a message and a pro-

mise that the sun would come again. Joe sniffed this breeze.

“Come,” he said; “let’s set that bear trap. This wind from the south will send the smell of burnt salmon miles and miles out on the ice. It ought to bring a lot of bears.”

They did as Joe suggested, and as the south wind blew gently and a spell of mild weather ensued, kept the toll-dish stewing for a long time. It was two days before anything happened. Then they were both called from the cabin by a tremendous explosion. They rushed to the trap and found a bear sprawled before it, dead, with a big hole torn in his neck. Nothing, moreover, was left of the Springfield musket but the breech. The tremendous charge with which it had been loaded had blown the barrel to pieces and shattered the bait stew as well.

“Whew!” exclaimed Joe. “We did things that time, did n’t we! How much did you put in that old musket, anyway?”

Harry looked a little guilty. “Why,” he answered, “you said to fill her about half full, and I did. There were nine bullets, I think.”

“Well, I should say so,” replied Joe, “by the looks of the bear. Guess we won’t

load quite so heavy next time. I don't care for the old musket, there's plenty more, but it don't do to tear up the pelt too badly. Great Scott, what's that!"

Both jumped, for, silhouetted against the aurora, figures stepped from the drift to the deck and approached. The thoughts of both were of bears, but a second glance showed these figures to be men, and in a moment they were greeting their Eskimo friend of the ice and several others who had come with him. Moreover, as they soon learned, the entire village was ashore, having decided to move to the neighborhood of the ship, where food and trade goods were plenty. They had come up with dog teams, and the women were already carving huts from the deep snow just back of the beach, in a spot sheltered from the north winds.

It was not until these other human beings appeared that the boys realized how lonely they had been, and in their joy at the sight of fellow creatures they planned a feast, to which they invited the whole village. This took place the next day, and though the village numbered scarce fifteen adults, they ate up pretty nearly the whole bear. However, it made them very friendly toward the two

Crusoes of the ship, and the boys did not grudge the feast in any case.

You must not directly ask an Eskimo his name ; they have a superstitious dread of telling it to your face, but you may ask another, even in his presence, and etiquette is in no wise outraged. So now, for the first time, they learned that the one they had rescued from the floating cake months before was Harluk, that his wife was Atchoo, while other men of the village were Kroo, Konwa, Neako, and Pikalee.

They had plenty of dogs, sleds, two umiaks which they had brought on the sleds, clothing, and a small amount of blubber and seal meat. That was all ; but they were happy, and viewed with no fear the narrow margin which separated them from starvation in the Arctic midwinter. Their snow igloos, carved deep in the drifts on the leeward side of a little hill, and warmed by a stone lamp full of seal oil, were comfortable and at first clean. When they were no longer so, they moved a few rods and carved another without much labor. If the weather was not too severe, the men watched the margin where the pack ice was ground back and forth by the shore ice, and were sometimes rewarded with a seal.



HARLUK AND KROO

They tracked white foxes, ermine, and now and then a wolf or a bear, and exchanged the pelts with the boys for hard-tack, or blankets, or other necessaries of life, and were singularly placid and good-humored. Everything with them was "Nagouruk," and their chief delight was to visit the ship, and spend hours in the company of their white friends. The outer sheltering igloo of ice cakes, which the boys had built over the galley, won their admiration at once, and they gave it the greatest compliment that an Eskimo can pay. Kroo, the oldest man, and in that respect the chief, as chiefs go in a little Eskimo community, inspected it carefully and solemnly, and then announced oracularly in his own tongue:

"It is good. The white brothers are almost as wise as Eskimos."

Many conferences were held between Harluk and Kroo and the two boys as to the prospects and methods of spring whaling in the ice, and as they learned the ways of the whale from their dusky friends and the ease with which they are captured by the Eskimos with their primitive weapons, Harry and Joe became very enthusiastic as to the success which awaited them with modern appliances. Harluk and Kroo were also greatly pleased.

The plan meant for them unlimited supplies of whale meat and blubber, and both parties were impatient of the long night of fierce cold that must still pass before they could begin. They got no more bears for a long time, because the cold was so severe that their blubber lamps went out and the tolling smell of stewing salmon failed them. Joe remedied this in part by mixing the whale oil with kerosene, which did not freeze even in the most severe weather, and finally he enlarged his lamp greatly, using a square kerosene can for a reservoir, and filling it with kerosene alone. This worked much better, and an occasional white pelt was added to their store by this means. Out of this, too, came a most singular adventure, which was of great service to the Eskimos, and no doubt saved the lives of both boys, though it lost them a valuable bearskin.

It happened late in February, after the sun had begun again to smile at them for a moment above the southern horizon, though his brief daily presence seemed in no wise to abate the cold.

CHAPTER VII

THE GHOST WOLVES OF THE NUNATAK

THE "Ankut," as the Eskimos call him, the wizard, is the bane of life among the peaceful Arctic villagers. He is generally of greater intelligence than they, his craftiness mixed with great greed and ferocity, and he brings strife and misery to the community on which he fastens. Beginning with little tricks and pretended magic, he gains an ascendancy over the tribe which often ends in their giving up to him most of their possessions and sometimes their lives. Growing thus in power and audacity, he becomes a veritable tyrant, and his career usually ends in the utter disaster of the people whom he rules, or else they in their extremity overcome their superstitious fears and drive him out. In either case he is apt to become an outlaw, living by brigandage, and working ruin wherever he goes. Among the tribes of northern Siberia the Russians have given him the name of "Shaman," but in Alaska a Pacific coast term is applied to him

when he becomes an outlaw, and he is known to the whalers as a "highbinder." Oftentimes he is a half-breed descendant of a white father and Eskimo mother, and seems to inherit the evil cunning of both races. Driven from a community by its utter ruin or by force, the highbinders band together and rove about, preying upon the gentle and superstitious villagers, and spreading disaster and terror wherever they go. They play strange tricks, murder, and rob with no fear of anything except superior force, and carry off boys and girls and sometimes grown men and women into slavery.

There came a week of chinook weather just at the last of February. The Indian tribes a thousand miles to the south have named the warm wind from the Japanese current "chinook," from the name of a tribe whose habitat was to the southwest of them, the direction whence this wind came, and the name has come to be applied to it the continent over. Down there, no doubt, this chinook melted the snow, and gave the first promise of coming spring. The faint breath of it that reached the far Arctic regions where our friends wintered could do nothing of that sort, but it did bring a period of mild, clear weather, when



VISITING ESKIMOS

the dry air seemed positively warm during the few hours of sunshine, while through the long night, under the dancing light of the aurora, the thermometer barely descended to zero. The first night of this warm weather and faintly breathing southern air brought two bears in from the ice-fields, one of which was killed at the trap. The boys, rushing out, saw the other on the ice near by, and Harry killed him by a lucky moonlight shot with the 45-70. Thus two fine pelts were added to their collection, which now numbered ten fine and three less valuable ones, captured by themselves or bought from their Eskimo friends. Joe figured that the value of these in the San Francisco fur market would not be less than a thousand dollars, and they decided that they would keep watch while the south wind lasted and thus lose no chances of getting more.

That night Harry called Joe hastily, and the two, fur-wrapped and rifle in hand, listened into the magnificent whiteness of the moon-flooded night.

“There!” cried Harry. “There it is!”

A low, half-fierce, half-mournful, wailing howl came from the ridge of land above the Eskimo village. It was repeated to the right

and left, and came again and again at brief intervals.

“Wolves?” asked Harry.

“I should think so,” said Joe; “but”—

Both boys shivered and drew nearer together, as if for mutual protection. The weird glamour of the Arctic night was upon them, and they thought again of the story that Harluk had told them of the winter ghosts at Icy Cape.

“Look there,” cried Joe. “The Eskimos are out.”

They dimly saw two figures, in the radiance of the full moon, come from the direction of the Eskimo village. Silhouetted against the snow, they moved to the right and left of the ridge, seemed to pause a moment, and then went back. There came the wolf-like howling again, but this time it had a sort of jubilant ring in it. It was heard no more that night, though both boys were up for a considerable time listening for it.

At dawn the next day Harluk appeared with woe in his countenance. “Good-by,” he said; “Eskimo all go to-day.”

“But why?” asked Joe in wonder; “are you not all right here with us?”

“Yesterday,” said Harluk, “plenty all right.

Last night Nunatak (ice spirit) people send ghost wolves for food. Eskimo put out plenty. Then they go away. To-morrow night come again. Bimeby food gone, furs gone, then they take Eskimo. More better Eskimo go away first. Too much winter ghosts at Icy Cape.”

Joe was in dismay at the thought of losing the village. The companionship of the Eskimos meant much to the two boys, and their leaving would break up their plans for the spring. But at first all argument was in vain. The Eskimos had had experience with the Nunatak people before. When Eskimos settled in their realm, they must pay tribute to the ghost wolves sent or move out. There was no alternative. If the wolves howled again, they must put out something in food or furs or other property to appease them, or else the ice spirit people would come and take the Eskimos themselves. The boys conferred together about this new difficulty.

“What do you suppose it is?” asked Harry.

“I don’t know,” replied Joe; “but whatever it is, ghost wolves or real ones, or just superstition, we must stop it. We can’t lose our friends this way, and they must not lose

their little stock of food and furs. Will you guard the ship to-night and let me sit up with the Eskimos? Ghosts must be pretty hard to hit, but we 'll see what a 45-70 will do for them."

There was a grim set to Joe's square jaw, and Harry felt the spirit of battle rise within him as he saw it.

"You go ahead," he said; "and if the ghost wolves come to the ship, I'll deal with them."

That night Joe sat in the snow igloo with Harluk, Atchoo his wife, and the two Eskimo babies, one a child of a year or so, the other four or five, both fat and roly-poly youngsters with beady black eyes that looked in wonder at the white man. A blubber lamp burned brightly in the centre of this igloo, while over it hung a kettle of melted snow-water. Round the wall was a seat of hardened snow covered with a few sealskins. In the corner was a bundle. Joe examined this bundle. It contained a small stock of food, all there was in the igloo, and some furs. Harluk was prepared to propitiate the evil spirits, should they again send their representatives. Later in the evening more of the Eskimos came in, until all the members of the village were con-

centrated in this igloo and that of Kroo, the head man, near by. Fear of their ghostly oppressors was strong upon the village, which, but for Joe's offered protection, would have been already far on the road south toward Point Hope.

About midnight Atchoo shuddered and drew her children to her. The other Eskimos looked at Joe with their brown faces whitening with fear, for right down the smoke-hole came that weird, wailing howl. Joe snatched the rifle and scrambled out through the low passage. The moon shone brightly on the still whiteness of the Arctic midnight, but there was no sign of living creature in sight. Only over the ridge, some distance away, came the howl again, this time with mocking intonation, as if the messengers of the Nunatak people laughed at his futile efforts. Again it seemed to come right from the ship, and Joe, baffled and angry, yet felt a chill of fear thrill through him. He jumped as a figure appeared almost at his feet, but it was only Kroo with a bundle of provisions and furs in his hand, scrambling from the low passage of his igloo.

"The ghost wolves must be fed," said Kroo resignedly. "My white brother is brave, but

he cannot shoot spirits even if he could find them. I will go."

Quaking with fear, but doggedly, the old man plodded through the snow toward the ridge. He had gone but a step or two when Joe was close behind him, walking as he walked, so close that from a little distance the two would look like one man in the uncertain light. When they reached a furrow between two drifts Joe dropped into this, out of sight. Kroo went on a few rods farther, placed his offering on the snow, and turned back. He would have paused by Joe, but the latter firmly motioned him on, and a few moments later he entered the igloo.

There was silence for a long time, while Joe watched the bundle narrowly where it showed dark against the white surface, holding his rifle ready for instant use. The minutes seemed to stretch into hours. He felt a chill that was not altogether cold, and his hand shook with a nervous tremor that was very close to fear. Real wolves he did not care for, yet with all his sturdy Anglo-Saxon sense, something of the superstition of the Eskimos seemed to touch him. Civilization slips easily from us when face to face with night, the wilderness, and the unknown. He had a

haunting feeling that something was near him, yet peer as he would he could see nothing but the whiteness of the moonlit expanse of snow and the black bundle, untouched, where Kroo had dropped it.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet with a gasp of alarm and surprise, for, seemingly right behind him, sounded a snarling howl. He turned and looked eagerly, and ran in that direction for a few steps, breathless, yet there was no sign of man or beast. He listened intently. No sound for a moment, then right behind his back the howl sounded again, this time with a chuckle like laughter in it, and he gave an exclamation of disgust, for the bundle no longer lay dark upon the snow. The ghost wolves had found their offering and made off with it. It seemed to Joe, as he looked about, as if he could see a blur of a white figure moving along against a white snow ridge, and he brought his rifle to his shoulder to shoot, then hesitated, thinking he must have imagined it, so indistinct was the impression. As he hesitated, he saw another blur of white over a near-by ridge, almost within arm's reach, with what looked like an evil face in it, and before he could turn, a heavy mass of frozen snow struck

him in the head and stretched him senseless. The figure of a white bear with the face of a man leaned over him, then lifted its head and gave forth the wolf howl, a different cry from the others heard that night. There was no chuckle in this howl. It was rather a cry of rage which carried in itself a command, and it had scarcely ceased before three other bear-like figures hurried up. These, too, had the faces of men and they walked erect, yet they left behind tracks of claws. Hurried low words were spoken in Eskimo, and the four took up the motionless figure and carried it away from the igloos, yet a little toward the ship, down a long furrow behind a drift, to a place on the shore where the ice crushing in during the early fall had left a sheltering ridge. Here they vanished with their burden as if they had been dissipated into air.

Harry's watch was long that night on the deck of the Bowhead. He felt appallingly lonely long before midnight, and it was all he could do to keep from setting out for the shore to see what was happening at the igloos. The ghost wolves seemed less a matter of superstition now that Joe's sturdy presence was lacking, and he waited with apprehension for

their howling, and shivered with nervous dread when it began. He watched narrowly, and saw what he thought was one figure go out from the igloo and return in the uncertain light. Again he heard the howling, now far, now seemingly near, and watching, with his rifle under his arm, he was surprised to see a figure appear dimly in the snow far over on the ridge. He saw this figure move back and forth. Then, to his astonishment, it seemed to rise up from the ground in a horizontal position and move off, disappearing again. All this was strange and disquieting, and for a long time there was silence.

What seemed hours followed, and at last he could stand it no longer. He fastened the galley door, took his repeating rifle under his arm, and marched down the hard drifted snow off the Bowhead in the direction of the igloos. As he did so, far off on the ice to the northward two great white bears lifted their noses and sniffed the wind, which blew from the south. On it came a faint odor of fish, always enough to attract any white bear, but this odor was more appetizing than any the two had ever smelled before. The salmon kettle was doing its work. Warily the two

great creatures took their way southward over the rough ice.

At the igloos Harry's call for Joe was answered by the furry Eskimo head of Harluk. He put this carefully out from the tunnel-like entrance and calmly said Joe was no more. He was a good man and a noble friend, but he was no longer even a spirit. The ghost wolves had no doubt eaten him, and thereby he became as nothing. Killed in battle, eaten by real wolves, his spirit would yet remain, but when the ghost wolves of the Nunatak people got a man, he simply vanished. If Harry did not wish to vanish, it would be well for him to come into the igloo.

Harry took Harluk by the shoulders and pulled the rest of him out into the moonlight.

"Look here, Harluk," he said. "You stop this nonsense, and tell me where Joe is. Is he with you? If not, where did he go? Tell me and tell me quick."

Like cures like, says the old adage. Harry's manner was so fierce that he frightened his dusky friend, and for a moment drove some of the superstitious fear out of him. He spoke to the point when he got his breath. Joe, he said, had gone out with Kroo to bait

the ghost wolves. In this direction they had gone, over toward the ridge. Kroo had come back, Joe had not. This was long ago.

“Harluk,” said Harry, “you get that repeating rifle that we gave you, load it, and come with me. Tell Kroo to come, too, and bring his gun and Konwa. The others shall stay with the women and children.”

The three came, reluctantly. Harry's impetuosity carried them along, but some distance behind. Any one of them would have faced danger and probable death without a tremor, but this matter of ghosts was different. They reached the place where Kroo had left Joe, and Kroo pointed out his tracks, indistinct in the moonlight, then farther on they saw where he had gone on. But they saw neither the bundle nor Joe. Unlike his cousin, the Indian of the interior, the Eskimo has no special aptitude in following a blind trail, hence it was Harry who first noted in the snow the indistinct marks of clawed feet. At sight of this the three men of the north collapsed together in a shivering bunch. The ghost wolves had been abroad, their eyes saw the marks of their feet. Joe, brave and able as he was, had been eaten and was now no more, even in spirit. The Nunatak people

were no doubt all about them at that moment, and if they got back to the igloos safe, it would be a wonder. They headed tremblingly for home, but Harry stepped resolutely in front of them. The spirit of battle was fully roused in him now, and he had no thought of ghosts. Joe was to be found, rescued if need be, and the Eskimos must be made to help. Force would be of no avail. He must meet superstition with superstition.

“Look here, Harluk,” he said, “do you not know that the white man is a great ankut, a wizard much greater than any? Did we not make the ghost ship real? Can I not make the spirit of a man or a place go into a little box and come out again so that you may see it and hold it in your hand? I tell you, if we do not find Joe and you do not help me, the ghost birds of the white man’s Nunatak shall fly away with you. They shall hang you head down in the smoke-hole of his igloo, and with fire shall torment your bones as long as the ice lasts in the sea. Now will you come with me?”

It was too bad, and Harry knew it, but there did not seem to be any other way. It certainly had a great effect on his superstitious friends. They drew suddenly back from

him with an alarm that nearly made him laugh in spite of the fact that he felt the situation to be critical. He held one hand aloft and seemed to listen. "The ghost birds are coming," he cried; "I hear their wings!"

Konwa's teeth chattered audibly, Harluk was sullenly silent under this counter pressure of conflicting ghosts, but Kroo, the old head man, drew himself up with a certain dignity. He seemed to conquer his fears, and for the rest of the night he acted the part of a brave man. "There be many wizards abroad to-night," he said, "and my white brother is perhaps one. Kroo will help his friends in spite of evil spirits."

Then the hunt for the missing man began again. The full moon shone low on the horizon, and the stately hosts of the aurora began to parade the sky with flaunting crimson banners. The two lighted up the white wastes with a radiance that was but little less than daylight, and with their help they followed the claw tracks here and there. It seemed as if many ghost wolves had been out that night, prowling along the hollows between snow ridges. Here and there they found an imprint quite plain, showing the mark of a heavy foot with claws on the

front. By and by Harry found a place where four of these converged in a spot, and something like a heavy body had fallen in the snow. Kroo looked at this place intently.

“Bundle here,” he said.

Then the four tracks blurred into one another and went on. Harry had a moment’s mental vision of the indistinct figure that had flitted back and forth in the moonlight, then risen and gone off in a horizontal position, and he guessed very nearly right as to the catastrophe. He found shattered fragments of a chunk of ice on the snow, and on one of these what looked like a spot of blood. A great anger swelled in Harry’s breast at the sight of this, and for a moment he choked for words.

“See,” he said, showing the blood-stained crystal to the Eskimos; “they have hurt him and carried him away. Here are their tracks. It cannot be ghosts. Ghosts do not draw blood. We shall find them and kill them. Kill them, do you hear? whether they are men or beasts.”

Kroo stepped forward and examined the deeper tracks critically. “Nanuk,” he said; “bear; plenty bear.” Konwa, himself a

mighty bear hunter, corroborated the testimony.

This put new courage into Harluk and Konwa. Bears they knew and would fight in any number, and for the first time they took an active interest in the proceedings. The trail was broad and easy to follow in the soft snow, and they went on for some distance. Down near the shore, however, they lost it, and did not pick it up again. Then, at Kroo's suggestion, they spread out far apart and began to zigzag along the snow, each hunting carefully.

But if the light-hearted Eskimos had in a large measure lost their superstitious dread, the discovery of bear tracks had not helped Harry to overcome his. Why should bears attack Joe and carry him off bodily? Why had he not used his rifle before it happened? It was a good deal of a mystery, and he could not help feeling that the whole affair was ghostly and savored of the supernatural. This in no wise affected his courage and eagerness in the hunt.

There certainly were bears about, real bears, for the two that had been attracted by the salmon bait had nearly reached the ship. They slipped along cautiously from hummock

to hummock, and were much disturbed by the presence of men ashore. These they wined; but the salmon bait was too much for their hungry stomachs, and they went cautiously toward it. The curiosity of madam bear, or else her hunger, was greater, for she was well in front and stepped forward and breasted the fatal line, while her lord and master stood to one side.

Meanwhile things had been happening rapidly over on shore. Harry, Kroo, and Harluk, armed with rifles, Konwa with his great walrus spear, had spread far apart and were hunting carefully for tracks in the snow, but it was drifted so hard thereabouts that they found none. Harry was nearest ashore of any, and he suddenly felt the snow giving way under his feet. He gave a cry of alarm and went down out of sight, landing full upon something solid, that in the indistinct light of an oil lamp looked and felt like a bear. This creature turned and grappled him, yet there was no clutch of bear's claws, but rather the arms of a man that had hold of him. The face that was turned toward him was not that of a bear either, but seemed to be the evil face of a man.

“Kroo! Harluk! Help!” shouted Harry, and wrestled desperately with his opponent.

Other bear-like figures seemed to swarm about him and join in the battle. As he fought, he noted that he seemed to be in an igloo like that of one of the villagers, and he backed toward the low entrance, clinging to his adversary and dragging him with him. His rifle had dropped in the beginning of the mêlée, but there was no chance to use firearms. It was a hand-to-hand struggle, in which the numbers of his adversaries were of little use to them. As he backed toward this igloo entrance, he saw another figure rise from the further corner, not that of a man-faced bear, this one, but of a fur-clad man. It seemed to take his part in the conflict, and hustled toward the low entrance also. Then the lamp was kicked over, and the affray went on in the dark. It was a strange mix up, but Harry found himself outside after a little, where he could see and act, and, seizing an opportunity, he dealt his opponent a stunning blow in the face with his fist. It broke his hold, and he had a chance to turn, just in time, for another man-faced bear was leveling a rifle at him. Harry struck this aside as it went off, and the bullet whistled harmlessly by. He grappled with this new adversary, and found himself much stronger. Round and round on the

snow they went; but another one seized him from behind, and the two bore him to the snow, and held him there.

The next moment he saw Joe, struggling weakly on the snow beside him, held down by other men clad in bearskins. He heard these bear-like men speak in Eskimo to one another. His own hands and Joe's were hurriedly bound with walrus-hide thongs; then the five men, — he could count them now and take note of their actions, — rifle in hand, advanced toward the ship. They began to shoot hastily and inaccurately, as Eskimos will.

The struggle had taken place almost entirely under the snow, and the shot which had missed Harry was the first thing to call the attention of Kroo and his men to the affray. Harluk and Kroo could not fire while it lasted, lest they shoot their friends. Konwa, however, mighty bear hunter and fearing nothing but ghosts, set his walrus spear at the charge and plunged valiantly at the group. He received one of the first bullets from the fusillade and fell. Kroo and Harluk, seeing themselves over-matched, and both Harry and Joe out of the combat, emptied their rifles hastily and without aim, then turned and fled before the superior numbers.

The battle seemed lost. Joe and Harry tugged in vain at their bonds. Konwa lay face down upon his walrus spear, and Kroo and Harluk fled for safety. One, who seemed to be a leader of the enemy, spoke to the others.

“Let them go,” he said in Eskimo. “We can get them later. Let us attend to these two first.”

He beckoned to another, and the two took a stand by Joe and Harry. Harry recognized the one by him as the man with whom he had first struggled, and he saw with much satisfaction that one of his eyes was well closed by that last blow. The other eye, however, looked upon him with an evil gleam of vindictive triumph in it. He leveled his rifle full at Harry’s head.

“Shoot,” he said to the other one, who had taken a similar position by Joe. “We will be well rid of the dogs.”

Over on the ship madam bear had just received the charge from the Springfield musket, and was plunging and kicking in the death agony on the snow. Her mate watched this with dismay, then anger, and finally rushed in blind fury at the thing that had hurt her. He swept the rifle three rods away

with one blow of his mighty paw. Then he plunged at the toll kettle, bit at it, and crushed it to his chest with one great bear's hug. The tin can flattened, the oil showered from his shoulders to his feet as he stood erect in his rage, and igniting, made of him a huge torch that rushed landward over the snow, a dancing figure of flame that snarled and roared, leaped and somersaulted.

Harluk and Kroo saw this strange apparition first, and fled to the right and left with yells of superstitious fear. On it came, tearing across the snow, right toward the outlaw Eskimos and their victims. The two about to murder hesitated and lowered their rifles.

"What is it? What is it?" asked the men of the bearskins, one of another, and the reply was but one word, "Ghost."

Harry heard and saw, and quick-wittedly took advantage of the opportunity. He struggled to a sitting position and shouted in Eskimo: "Come, spirit! I, the wizard, command you. Come and burn them with great fire. Come fire spirits all, and burn them."

The strange figure of flame seemed to obey his words. It rushed, roaring and capering, at them. It was too much for the Eskimo mind to stand. The men who had themselves posed

as ghosts were astonished at this far greater apparition than they could make. With one impulse of panic fear they turned and fled inland, leaving weapons and shedding their bearskins to hasten their flight. Nor did they stop till they had disappeared beyond the ridge.

The dancing figure of flame stumbled and stopped almost at the feet of Joe and Harry. There was a groan, and it lay motionless, while the flames flickered for a moment and then went out.

For some time Joe and Harry struggled with their bonds, but at last Joe slipped his and released Harry. They looked the field over. Konwa lay motionless where he had fallen. They examined the blackened figure that had been their flame deliverer, and finding it to be the carcass of a bear, guessed the strange accident that had set them free at the very moment when their case seemed hopeless. They shouted for Kroo and Harluk, and by and by the two came, hesitatingly. The sorrow of these two at the death of Konwa was genuine but undemonstrative. They were willing to believe that the battle had been with men clad in bearskins, but their theory of ghost wolves was in no wise

shaken. Yes, there was the carcass of a scorched bear on the snow. They saw that, but they had also seen a fire spirit dancing and roaring across the snow. This spirit might have tipped over the kerosene kettle and burned the bear, but to say that the bear was the spirit was foolish. They knew enough about wizards and their work to know better than that. The white men were certainly great ankuts as well as good fighters. They had driven away the ghost wolves for the night, and they had brought forth a spirit of fire that had driven away men, or ghost wolves changed into men. Anyway, the spirit of the white man was evidently much the stronger, and they would have no fear as long as Joe and Harry were by.

Thus reasoned Harluk and Kroo. The two boys saw that it was of no use to argue with them and wisely let the matter stand. They gently carried the body of Konwa back to the igloos, and Joe and Harry stayed with their friends till daybreak. They had collected the weapons that their enemies had dropped in their flight, and they stood watch lest they return, but they saw nothing more of them. Joe's head was slightly cut and somewhat bruised from the blow he had re-

ceived, and it ached, but otherwise he was uninjured, and he made light of the whole matter. There was no sign of the foe during the remainder of the night, nor did the ghost wolves howl again.

At daybreak, fully armed, they made a careful survey of the ground. The Eskimos, having no fear of the Nunatak people or their messengers as long as the sun was shining, turned out to a man. They found near the beach, in a big drift behind a sheltering ridge of ice, the igloo into which Harry had fallen. It seemed a temporary affair, built, perhaps, for the use of the outlaws in a future attack on the ship, or for a convenient hiding-place while they terrorized the Eskimos. Joe had no recollection between the time he was felled by the chunk of ice and the time he came to in the igloo and feebly joined Harry in his struggle there. The place was empty, except for one bearskin, evidently shed during the fight, that its wearer might have more freedom. An examination of this pelt showed the ingenuity of the outlaw Ankuts. The carcass had been taken from it through a slit beneath. This left the skin of the hind legs and feet intact, with the claws on. Walking in this bearskin suit, a man would leave the

trail of an animal with claws, and be nearly invisible in the night, the white skin being so like the snow in color. Slipping along the drifts, they could thus play all sorts of pranks on the superstitious Eskimos with little fear of detection, and, as we have seen, even a white man could be much puzzled by their antics.

The party warily followed the tracks inland. The blowing, fine snow had nearly obliterated them in spots, but they found them again. Moreover, they found two more bearskins, shed in the hurry of flight. A mile inland they found also a larger and more carefully made igloo, with traces of dogs and a sled. The marks showed that the outlaws had hastily harnessed up their dog team and gone on, with all their belongings, straight toward the interior. This probably ended them, so far as the little community at Icy Cape was concerned, and they returned to the igloos, taking the three bearskins with them. They were excellent pelts; and Joe, after declaring the Eskimos to be half owners in them, proceeded immediately to buy out their share. The Eskimos recognized this even-handed justice, and admired and respected the boys for it. But when Joe tried to make them see

how foolish it was to believe in ghost wolves and the evil spirits of the ice, the Nunatak people, they listened politely, but smiled incredulously. Had the boys not fought with them and heard them howl? Yes, there were bad men, too; but how did they know but the Nunatak people changed their wolves into bad men and then back again at pleasure? Thus the matter ended.

They buried Konwa the next morning. Harry thought they should read the service for the burial of the dead over him, but Joe vetoed it. He said that the Eskimos had funeral ceremonies of their own, and they ought not to be interfered with. They placed Konwa on a small walrus hide, dressed in his best furs, with his walrus-gut rain-coat over all. At one hand was his sheevee, or big knife, in the other the walrus spear with which he had made his last charge, and beside him were his plate and cup. On the very top of the ridge they laid him, carried thither by the men of the village, while his widow wailed loudly in the igloo. They brought stones from a ledge, blown bare by the wind, and piled these in a little cairn above him. Then they walked three times around him, chanting a weird chant, while the widow still wailed in the igloo.

Reaching the igloo on their return, they walked three times around this, and chanted again, while the widow wailed more loudly. Then the chanting ceased, the wailing was cut off with equal abruptness, and the little village resumed its round of daily life.

Harry carved the name "Konwa" deep on a board, and added the sentence, "He died bravely, fighting for his friends," and placed this over the body, supported by the stones.

CHAPTER VIII

WHALING IN EARNEST

THE bowhead whale spends his summers among the ice-fields that surround the pole. What he does in winter is still a mooted question, but there are many old whalers who declare that the bowhead hibernates. Many of them, they say, spend the winter about Bering Straits, and as far south in Bering Sea as the Seal Islands. Here it is claimed that they lie on the bottom and sleep till the warmer currents of the spring rouse them, as they do the marmots, badgers, and brown bears on land, and at about the same time. At any rate, the bowhead goes north with the ice in the spring, comes down with it in the fall,—and then vanishes. He is not found in the southern part of Bering Sea, nor in the north Pacific. Hence, say the whalers, who make a business of following him, if he does not hibernate, what does become of him? Ordinarily, in the summer time, the bowhead comes to the surface and

breathes every forty minutes or so. But now and then, for some cause or other, one will sulk, and the natives have watched them lying close in shore in shallow water for five days without seeing a movement or attempt to come to the surface to breathe. Such whales are denominated "sleepy heads," and when killed are found to have a blubber that is watery instead of full of oil. The blubber of more than one whale is thrown overboard after being cut in, because it is deficient in oil. Whether there is any connection between the sleepy heads and the hibernating may never be known, but if a whale can stay on bottom without air for five days simply because he is sick or sulky, say the whalers, ought he not to be able to sleep all winter in good health? There is no certain answer to the question.

At any rate, the whales appear in the open leads from Point Hope to Point Barrow about the middle of April. These are all young whales who seem to be the early risers. After them come the cows and their calves, and behind these, mostly in the open water, follow the older single whales. Bachelors and old maids these, and perhaps lack of responsibilities makes them lazy. As these are the last up in the spring, so they are the first down in

the fall. Sometimes they too go in with the ice, and in that case the whalships following do not get many. The whales which the Eskimos capture are almost always the young, who go up first, and they capture them quite easily from the ice. The Chukchis about East Cape get from twenty to thirty thousand pounds of bone annually, and the Alaska natives about as much. This is bought in the main by traders or whalmen, who pay in trade goods at the rate of about fifty cents a pound for the bone. As good bone is worth about three dollars a pound in San Francisco, it will be seen that the business is a profitable one for the buyers. Yet the Eskimos are glad to dispose of their surplus for the white man's goods, and the returns are of great value to them.

There used to be in Bering Sea and the Arctic a small black whale with a white spot near the small, which was easily killed and yielded good blubber, but was weak in whalebone. These whales were all killed off as long ago as 1885. Before them, and now probably extinct, were the old 100-ton gray backs, the monster bowheads of all. These whales were leviathans indeed, yielding sometimes four hundred barrels of oil, and often three to

four thousand pounds of whalebone. These were the prize monsters of the early days of the bowhead fishery, and the lucky ship that got through the straits and fastened to one or two of them was well along toward a full trip at a blow. The last record of the capture of one of these whales was as far back as 1876. They were sly, lazy old chaps, exposing often only the edges of the gray spout-hole when blowing, and having thus the appearance of a gull sitting on the water. It is perhaps plausible that these great-grandfathers of whales had survived the glacial epoch, as is claimed for them. At least, they were of as great age compared with the smaller bowheads as are the giant sequoias of California compared with the redwoods of the present day.

After the battle with the highbinders, the community at Icy Cape saw no more outsiders, but as day by day the sun rose higher and stayed longer, they began to await impatiently the coming of the spring and to prepare for it. March was a wild, uproarious month, intensely cold for the most part, and with fierce gales blowing. The boys got a bear or two and the Eskimos brought in a good number of smaller pelts, so that the



LOCKED IN THE ARCTIC ICE

collection of furs grew steadily and bade fair to be of considerable value. Joe used to figure it up every few days, and when it reached the two-thousand-dollar valuation mark he was quite jubilant.

“Now,” he said, “if we can only get a good catch of whalebone while the ice is melting and get the ship out safe, what happy fellows we’ll be!”

The Eskimos too began to prepare for whaling after their own fashion, and the second week in April began their ceremony of propitiation. They blackened their faces with soot and streaked them with red. They dressed in their best clothes, with hoods fringed with wolverine fur, giving their faces thus a halo of bristling hair that made them look quite savage and warlike. Then they took bits of blubber carefully saved from the preceding year and cut into little dice-like cubes. These they bore in pompous procession to the grave of Konwa, and placed them thereon with much ceremony, that his spirit might be propitiated. They marched about his grave as they had at the time of the burial, then passed down to the ice and across it to the first open water. Here they strewed the remaining bits of blubber, that the spirits

of the ice might be favorable. Nor would they consent that the boys, or modern weapons, should participate in the taking of the first whale. The others might be captured as they pleased, but the first must be taken with all the ceremonies and in the accustomed manner of their forefathers, else would not prosperity come to their whale hunting.

They mounted walrus-tusk spears, tipped with slate, on long driftwood poles. They sledded their umiaks out to the nearest open water, a half mile or so from shore. Here they placed them ready for launching, and built on the windward side a windbreak of ice and snow behind which they found shelter, for it was still very cold. Painted and plumed, here they waited for a week. One day the welcome cry of "Akovuk! akovuk!" (Whale! whale!) rang from the watchers, and the spout of a whale was seen in the open lead. The black body rolled along carelessly, heedless of danger, till it was nearly opposite them. Then the harpooner took his place in the bow of the umiak with two paddlers behind him. The others launched the boat with a rush, and it slid of its own momentum across the space of water till its bow gently rubbed the whale's side. Kroo, the harpooner, stood

erect. With all his strength he drove the slate-tipped and barbed harpoon into the whale's side, pushing desperately on the long driftwood pole. Then the paddlers backed rapidly away, while he threw overboard about fifteen fathoms of walrus line fastened to the ivory harpoon, and having along its length three sealskin pokes as floats. The wounded whale sounded, and tried to roll the weapon out on the bottom, but failing in this he rose again and began trying to lash the thing from him by blows of his flukes at the pokes. By this time the other umiak was launched, and another and another string of floats was made fast to him in a similar manner, till, buoyed up so that he could no longer dive, and exhausted with his battle with the light pokes, he lay sullen and was lanced to death by Kroo, with an ivory lance on a driftwood pole. Then there was great rejoicing among the villagers. The whale was hardly dead before they began to cut bits of the outer epidermis, the blackskin, from him and to bolt it raw, it being considered a great delicacy among "the people;" indeed, many white men find its nutty, oily flavor pleasant.

Then they towed the carcass alongside the ice, cut "jug handles" in the heavy floes, and

reeved their walrus-hide lines through these. With this primitive purchase they hauled the head up so that one side of the bone could be cut out. Then they rolled the whale and cut out the other side. Each native present received five slabs of bone. The crew of the boat making the strike received ten slabs more each, then the harpooner received the rest. Blubber and meat there was enough, and more than enough, for everybody, dogs and all, and the event closed with great feasting. Thus for the first whale; but the ancient customs having been complied with, and the spirits of the dead and the ice having been duly propitiated, they turned quickly to modern weapons, and the boys had no difficulty in getting them to use the whaler's harpoon and the bomb gun. Some of them had used these before, and all had seen the whalers use them and knew their efficiency. As the fishing progressed, the whole village, children and all, turned out, and the boys learned to brave the cold and be as hardy and patient as they. With the good supply of bomb guns and lances and harpoons of all kinds aboard the ship, the little army was well fitted out, and sometimes they were able to kill a whale from the ice with a single shot from a bomb. One whale came up and died

under the ice, but they blew the floe up and shattered it with tonite bombs, and got at the carcass in this fashion. When the weather became too severe, they retreated to the ship, and the boys entertained the village there, while the villagers in turn entertained the boys.

The Eskimo women were greatly interested in the cooking methods and implements of the boys and learned their use with surprising readiness, though there were many laughable incidents. They gave names of their own to many things, which were appropriate and interesting. Beans they called "komorra," from their word "komuk," meaning little grub, the larva of the gadfly. "Sava kora," chopped larvæ, was rice, and they named baking powder "pubublow," their word for bubbling. Soap the children were inclined to eat, but the older folks soon learned to use it, as well as towels.

Whalemen are apt to be fond of "chile con carne," as the Mexicans call it, — a red-pepper condiment for meat that is wondrous strong. Atchoo got hold of this one day and wondered long what it was. Finally she gave some to a boy who was waiting about, boy-like, for a chance to taste things. The boy

helped himself liberally, and the contortions through which he went on getting the full strength of the pepper were near to causing a stampede among the women and children, who thought him possessed of an evil spirit. When matters had quieted down, Atchoo took the balance of the can of "chile con carne" and dug a hole in the ice, burying it deeply there, and saying over it the words of an Eskimo incantation, which is supposed to keep the buried spirit of evil from ever rising again.

The wife of Kroo was quite an old woman, and she did not take kindly to the innovations in cooking. Finally, however, she was given some rice, and persuaded to boil it for Kroo's dinner. She retired to the fore-castle, and started a fire in the little stove there, that she might not be observed in her work. Not long afterward cries of alarm were heard, and Kroo's wife rushed frantically from the fore-castle, crying that she had the devil in the pot.

She had filled the kettle far too full of rice; and as it swelled and continued to pour out over the rim, she concluded that an evil spirit was in the white man's food, pushing it out continually.

But the matter of the explosive doughnuts was the most exciting, and indeed came near

being serious, not only in its immediate effects, but in the setback which it gave the white man's food in the opinion of the Eskimos. Joe, who was the cook for the boys, had frequently made doughnuts and fried them in oil for the delectation of the community, the natives having a great fondness for them. Then he taught Atchoo how to mix them up, and she seemed to learn very rapidly. One day, however, she undertook to make them without supervision, and used water from melted ice which had chunks of ice still in it. These chunks she incorporated in the doughnuts, no doubt thinking, Eskimo fashion, that it was just as good that way. The doughnuts fried, but the chunks of ice turned to steam within, and about the time Atchoo was forking the doughnuts out into a pan they began to blow up, scattering oil and the wildest consternation among those waiting for the feast.

The first one popped on the fork as Atchoo was handing it to Harluk, that he first might see how good a cook she was. The largest chunk of it landed square in Harluk's eye, causing him to dance with astonishment and alarm.

"Hold on!" he cried. "No want to see him; want to eat him."

Others blew up in the kettle, scattering hot oil, and sending the crowd in a wild plunge for the doorway. Out they scrambled, Harluk well in advance, as he had had the first warning. He plunged head first from the outer end of the entrance and butted Joe, who was about to enter, into a sitting position on the snow.

“Huh!” said Joe, partly because that is what one usually says when suddenly butted in the stomach, but partly in surprise at this exodus from the galley. “What is the matter?” he asked, as soon as he could get breath.

The answer came from Pikalye, who was fat, and who scrambled out on his knees and one hand, holding a hot wad of half-fried doughnut to the back of his neck with the other. Finding himself outside, he ducked until his head was well under one arm and he could lay his burnt neck gently in the snow. From this contortionist’s position he looked up solemnly sidewise at Joe.

“White man’s grub too much shoot,” he said.

The appearance of this fat Eskimo, tied in such an absurd knot to keep the back of his neck cool, was too much for Joe, who went off into howls of laughter, which were answered

by cries from within. Hurrying thither, Joe saw the fat on fire on the stove, the feet of Atchoo and her older child protruding from beneath his lower bunk, while in the upper one lay Harry in a worse gale of laughter than he. Joe put out the burning fat, prodded Atchoo and her youngster from beneath his bunk, and by the time he had found out who was burned and how much, and attended to them by binding the wounds with moist cooking soda, he and Harry had sobered down a bit and learned the cause of the disaster.

It was a good while before the Eskimos were willing to come into the galley again, and Joe profited by it by having them set up housekeeping in the forecastle while aboard ship. They did no more white man's cooking for some time, and doughnuts were especially avoided, but they were so fond of them that Harluk finally induced Atchoo to try her luck again. That day Harry beckoned Joe to look in on the forecastle. There was Atchoo frying doughnuts, indeed, but she put them into the fat, turned them, and took them out on the tip end of Harluk's favorite seal spear, which was at least six feet long.

With the exception of using modern harpoons and killing their whales directly, when

possible, with the bomb gun, the boys and their assistants followed Eskimo methods with great success. The whales are particularly unsuspecting when in the ice, and the killing of them was usually attended with little excitement or danger. They did not attempt to do anything with the blubber, as the distance they would have to haul it from the open leads to the ship was too great. The bone of these smaller whales was not so good either as that of those which come later in the open water, but it was nevertheless of much value, and footed up a thousand pounds or so to each catch. Thus the value of the stores aboard ship increased quite rapidly, and by the first of June half a dozen whales had added twelve or fifteen thousand dollars' worth of bone to the credit of the adventurers. They had paid the Eskimos a satisfactory amount of trade goods for their share, as well as the meat and blubber, and the little community was quite literally rolling in Eskimo wealth. Joe was afraid that prosperity would give them ideas above work, as it does some other more civilized people, but it did not seem to. They did not work for the returns alone, but out of loyalty and admiration for their white friends.

The sun now skimmed the northern horizon without setting, and daylight was once more continuous. Gulls, terns, and ducks in clouds came along the edge of the ice, working northward, and the weather was warm and springlike. To the first gull seen the Eskimos sang a greeting. Just as young people the world over apostrophize the first star they see at night, and wish on it in the more or less firm belief that their wish will be granted, so the Eskimos sang a greeting to this first gull: —

“Now yakaro. now yakaro,
Too loo kotaro.”

“Gull, gull, bring me good luck.”

On warm days the snow melted with great rapidity under this continuous sunshine, and the brown tundra soon began to show between the drifts. Yet the ice held firm, except that narrow leads opened here and there, and there was no hope that the ship would be able to get off for more than a month, in fact nearly two, and it would be that time also before any ships could come in from below.

In this ice whaling the entire Eskimo community had participated, yet such is the familiarity of the Eskimo with the world of ice that no serious accident had happened to any

one of them. It was not that conditions were not often dangerous as well as uncomfortable, but that the native instinct seemed always to find a way out of difficulty. Pikalye's two daughters, fine, strong young girls, were out on the ice one day many miles from land, with a team of four dogs and a sled, bringing in blubber from a whale that had been killed out there. A sudden violent snow-storm came up, and they were in great danger of being driven out into the pack and frozen to death. They lost the direction and were obliged to abandon the sled, but each girl fastened two of the dogs by their traces to her own girdle and let them go as they pleased. The result was, that the homing instinct of the dogs brought them safe to land, after many hours in the blizzard. They made the traces fast to their girdles that the dogs might not break away and escape in case they fell on the rough ice and were obliged to let go their grip on the lashings.

The natives gave Harry the nickname of "the whale walker," because one day he was on an ice cake near the open lead with a bomb gun, watching out for a whale that had been seen heading up the lead. The whale came up just beside him, and before he could

fire, rolled against the cake and capsized it. Harry sprang for the only available dry spot, the whale's back near his tail, and running hastily from that dangerous weapon up along the black length, sprang from his head to another cake of ice, reaching it before the lazy leviathan had made up his mind that anything out of the common was happening. Then he turned and discharged the gun into the whale's neck, breaking it at one shot. This whale was a particularly large one, with a tremendous spread of flukes, and Pickalye was so impressed with this that he ran toward the other villagers shouting, —

“Come and see! Come and see! Our brother who walks on whales has killed the one with the biggest feet in the ocean.”

After the ice whaling was practically over the village held a feast, a sort of thanksgiving, at which each man who had struck a whale gave to everybody else as many dinner parties as he had killed whales. Each of these was followed by games, in which the chief was blanket tossing. A large walrus hide was suspended horizontally three feet high by ropes, which ran to springy but stout poles of driftwood, thirty feet away. These gave additional spring to the walrus-hide blan-

ket, around which stood a dozen adults lifting on the edges. All the people came in their best clothes, and the prominent whale catchers had a smear of black on the left cheek as large as one's finger. This was a special mark of distinction. The ancient wife of Kroo, the head man, was the first to be honored, and she climbed into the centre of the blanket with surprising agility. Beginning, she gave a leap in the air, then as she came down, the spring of the walrus-hide ropes on the driftwood poles, supplemented by two dozen lusty arms, sent her high in the air again. Up and down she went, kicking and waving her arms amid cries of exultation and pleasure, and ceased only with utter exhaustion. Half a dozen girls rushed for her place, but all gave way to the most agile, who first reached the centre of the hide. Thus the sport went on, each following in turn, until all who wished had been tossed.

Pickalye, fat and simple-minded, was one of the experts at this game. He would take a sealskin poke and use it like a skipping-rope in the air, and the great sport of the contest came in the sidewise yanks which the crowd gave the hide as he leaped, in an attempt to upset him. This was often successful, and

when he came down on some one's head, wrong side up, as he generally did before the game was over, there was great laughter.

They danced by the light of the midnight sun to the music of tom-toms, the musicians being sheltered from the cold wind by an umiak turned on its side. They had wrestling matches, in which the winner had to hold the ring until beaten or exhausted, all remaining as long as they had breath or strength. The feast finally ended in a grand football game on the sea ice, at the close of which the best-dressed player on each side was ducked in a water-hole.

The delicacies at these feasts were whales' flukes and blackskin. The blackskin, the outer epidermis of the whale, is best liked when frozen, and then has a flavor something like that of muskmelon. The melting of the snows had made the winter igloos uninhabitable, and they were now living in their summer topeks, — cotton tents bought of the whalers and traders. There was much open water in the sea, and southerly winds were beginning to crowd the main polar pack ice back toward the north. The ice, within the arm of the headland where the ship lay was beginning to show many signs of weakening, and the boys

began to look forward anxiously to the time when they should get up steam on the engines and try to push southward. They decided it was not wise to do this until the way was fully clear, and meanwhile they kept good lookout for a final whale. They were quite proud of their work during the winter and spring, as well they might be: six heads of bone were worth at the lowest estimate twelve thousand dollars; there were furs, principally white bearskins, to the value of two thousand dollars, reckoning very conservatively; and a few dollars' worth of walrus ivory completed the list. They had used a small proportion of the stores and a reasonable amount of the trade goods left behind. They felt that it was a pretty good showing for two boys. Moreover, Harry had a monograph on the habits of the bowhead whale, gleaned from his own experience and the knowledge of the Eskimos, which he felt ought to add value to his report to Mr. Adams. How far away that other world which he had left only a year before seemed! His father and mother — and Maisie; had they given him up for lost? A great longing for home and friends and civilization came over Harry with these thoughts, — that homesick longing which is

like death itself, and which sometimes kills when he whom it attacks cannot find relief in action, cannot take some step, however slight, in the wished-for direction. He went to Joe with tears in his eyes.

“For God’s sake, Joe,” he cried, “let us get out of this. I want my home and my father and mother so that I can’t think nor sit still. Can’t we start up the engines and push out of this rotten ice? Once in the leads we could work south.”

Beyond a doubt homesickness is infectious. He had no sooner spoken than Joe began to show symptoms of the malady.

“Home?” he said. “Of course we’re going home. We’ll clear away this snow and ice from the deck and get ready for a start as soon as we can. A little more thaw would let us out.”

They called the Eskimos to their aid, and began to work with feverish haste. The ice igloo, which had been their protection for so long, but which was now no longer needed, was chopped apart and thrown overboard. They took soundings alongside, and found the ship still aground, but thought perhaps that under a full head of steam they could work her off. They sounded the wells and found

she did not leak. They went over the machinery carefully and made sure that it was all ready for use, so far as they could tell from their studies of the previous winter. The thought of really moving toward home filled them with a wild exhilaration, and they hardly ate or slept for three days.

In the midst of all this fever of preparation Pickalye, fat and foolish, came aboard and told them that they must wait. There was a great storm coming; his bear bite had told him so. They must not try to move before it had passed, else they would meet trouble. A bear had bitten him badly in the leg three years before. Since then, whenever there was a big storm coming, the spirit of the bear came and bit his leg again. It was biting it now. Therefore this was a warning, and he would like something from a bottle to rub his leg with.

Joe furnished the liniment, and the work went on. Nevertheless, two hours afterward the wind blew up suddenly from the south, and increased in violence rapidly, bringing snow with it. The Eskimos went ashore, nor could they be prevailed upon to remain aboard ship. Their belief in the power of prophecy of Pickalye's bear-bitten leg was strong, and

they were familiar with these swift, terrible spring storms. At midnight, though the sun was well above the horizon, the clouds were so thick that it became quite dark. The boys felt the shoreward ice pressing against the side of the ship. The vessel quivered and tugged at her anchor chain. The ice was going out. They looked over the side and, to their astonishment, found that it seemed to be dropping on the ship's side. That is, she stood up higher out of the ice than she had before. Joe pointed this out to Harry; and when they were back in the galley, where they could hear each other, he told what he thought the reason for it.

“The gale,” he said, “is pushing the ice northward so fast that it is making low tide on the shore. I think the Bowhead is sliding along the bottom, dragging her anchor, pushed by the ice.”

They could distinctly feel the shouldering crush of the ice and the scraping as the vessel slid along. With much labor and difficulty they put the other anchor overboard and let go a good length of chain cable. Nevertheless, they drifted outward for some hours, slowly but surely. Then there came a lull in the gale. It became light again, and the

wind went down rapidly. The sun struggled through the clouds that still flew overhead, and showed them that, to their astonishment, they had drifted and dragged the two anchors out well by the headland. To the northward they could see in occasional flashes of sunlight the surf leaping high on the main Arctic pack, driven back on itself, miles out. They were dangerously near the headland, but the wind was offshore, and a heavy floe lay between them and it, apparently grounded firmly at the shore end. The ship swung free in water deep enough to float her, and the open lead showed as far to the southward as the eye could see. Joe shouted with exultation, and Harry fairly danced for joy.

“Hurrah!” he shouted. “We can steam south as soon as we can get the fires up. Set a signal for the Eskimos to come out and help us. Then let’s get below and fire up.”

The signal was set, and ten minutes later both boys were busy below putting a fire under the boiler and getting everything in readiness for departure. It was unaccustomed work, and though they had often planned it together, there were many things over which they hesitated and were a little in doubt. Thus the time passed rapidly, and though a

black smoke now poured from the Bowhead's funnel, there was little steam on. Two hours the boys were below before they realized it, and Joe finally said with some uneasiness, —

“Wonder why those fellows don't come aboard?”

“Don't know,” said Harry. “You watch that steam gauge and I'll go on deck and see if they are coming. Is that their boat alongside?”

Something bumped and grated along the Bowhead's side. Harry started for the deck. Then something struck the ship again, this time hard enough to jar it from stem to stern. Joe followed Harry up the ladder. As they reached the deck the most astonishing change met their eyes. The treacherous Arctic gale had veered to the north and was blowing again with unexampled fury. Where had been open water for miles the Arctic pack was now crowding down upon them. The first scouts of ice were already bumping their sides, and the roar of the wind through the rigging seemed like hoarse shouts of derision at the thought that a ship might escape its fury. They had swung up alongside the shore pack, which stood firm, and already the seaward ice was crushing against them. Working in the

depths of the fire-room, they had sensed nothing of this change, and now the realization of it came upon them with stunning force.

Joe was the first to rouse from his stupefaction. "Go forward," he said, "into the chain locker. Knock the shackling pins out of both those cables and let them run overboard. Then come down into the engine-room with me."

Harry did as he was bidden in a sort of dream, the plunge from bright hope to chill fear was so great. In the engine-room he found Joe, sweating.

"We can't do it," he cried. "If the Eskimos had only come to us, we would have been all right; but two of us cannot fire, and run the engine, and steer ship, all at the same time, even if we could get out of the grip of the ice. I'm afraid we're done for."

Even as he spoke the ship staggered. The ice had crashed against her with such force that both boys were thrown from their feet. Joe stopped the engines, which had been turning slowly.

"I'm afraid we're done for," he repeated, and took his way to the deck, followed by Harry. The scene that met them there was one never to be forgotten. No man may

stand in the forefront of the onrush of the Arctic pack and forget it. Cakes of ice leaped like wolves on its forward edge. Behind them crushed the solid phalanx of the sea, white, resistless, terrible. The wolf cakes sprang at the ship, and bit at it. They leaped upon the solid shore floe, and climbed one another's shoulders there, and always just behind them came the forward impulse of that great white sea of ice. The touch of this main pack crumpled the shore floe. It crushed the Bow-head's staunch sides as if they had been eggshells. The decks burst from beneath with the pressure, the tall masts toppled and fell, and the wreck, crushing and grinding into the shore ice, became but a formless part of the ridge that the pack pushed up in front of it as it moved majestically shoreward. Mightily, foot by foot, it moved. Ice cakes burst with the roar of artillery, snapped like rifles, and the rumble of floe on floe was like the onrushing hoof-beats of a million cavalry. The cohorts of the ever-victorious Frost King were in full charge. Higher and higher piled this ridge of onslaught, nearer and nearer the shore it pushed, and the once staunch ship was rolled and pounded to chaff under the hoof-beats of its white horses.

Out of the white turmoil of death and terror it is hard to tell how the two boys escaped. Certainly neither of them knew. There was a confused recollection of planks bursting beneath their feet, of spars that, falling, mercifully spared them, of leaping and scrambling from toppling cakes to unsteady, crumbling ridges, of the howling of winds in their ears, and the sting of brine on their faces. Then they were being pulled and hauled and hustled across the heaving shore floe by Kroo and Harluk and others, who had rushed to their rescue and endangered their own lives to help their friends. Panting, exhausted, both in body and nerves, they lay in the little tents and listened to the howl of the gale.

They were safe; but the ship and its contents, their furs, their whalebone, and all their dear and valuable possessions, were being rolled and hammered in the mass of broken ice that the great Arctic pack was still crushing and piling shoreward.

Yet they did not give way to grief or repining. Nothing could show the manly spirit and self-reliance which their lonely life had bred in them more than this. They were calm, even serene, thankful for their lives, and confident that, having been spared those,

they would yet be able to win their way back to civilization with honor, if not with fortune.

It cured their homesickness, too. Nothing is so good for this as a batch of real and present trouble and physical discomfort. Physical weariness, a moderate amount of hunger, and something with which to battle, along with a feeling that you can overcome it, will make any real man satisfied with his lot. I know this sounds like a paradox; but just try it, as Harry and Joe did.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE ENEMY'S POWER

THERE are no tides on the Arctic coast as we of the temperate zones know tides. In calm weather the rise and fall of the sea is scarcely noticeable. In time of southerly storm, however, the wind and ice carry the water out across the shallow sea, and when the winds rage from the north they crowd it back again upon the land. Hence, with the rush of the ice pack to the shore there came a small tidal wave, with the result that the pack and the shore ice, crowded and crumpled together, were carried far up on the land. With the subsiding of the gale two days later, the receding waters left this great ridge piled there thirty to fifty feet high, a monument to the brave ship that it had wrecked, and to the power of the primeval Arctic forces. Scattered through this rough ridge were the remnants of the wreck. Here a mast protruded, there a shattered plank of the hull, but to find anything of use to the wrecked Crusoes

was difficult. When the ice melted, as it would in part during the brief summer, more might be revealed, but for now they were dependent on the hospitality of their Eskimo friends.

Right royally was this hospitality exercised. The boys had reached shore with only the clothes on their backs, but, thanks to the trade supplies which they had earned in their whaling, the Eskimos were rich beyond the dreams of Eskimo avarice. They had food supplies of all sorts, clothing, blankets, and calico in plenty, rifles, shotguns, ammunition, cooking utensils. Out of all these they outfitted the boys, even giving them an extra tent of their own in which they might set up their own housekeeping. To be sure the disaster was a bonanza in a way to the men of the ice. The broken timbers and spars of the staunch vessel would furnish fuel and wood for them for a long time to come, any iron which they might find as the ice melted would be eagerly seized upon, and they might even hope, as the summer proceeded, to get much in the way of food supplies. Yet their hospitality was in no wise tinged by this. The custom of sharing prosperity with all has come down to the tribes from time immemo-

rial, and is never questioned except by the outlaw "highbinders." The boys, aided by their dusky friends, searched long and diligently, and were finally rewarded by finding a portion of the galley. This was buried in the top of the ridge half a mile from where the disaster had occurred and a mile from the place where other portions of the ship, the spars and one mast, protruded. Such is the rending and disintegrating force of the floes grinding one on another.

In this portion of the galley they found the chest which contained the ship's log and other papers, including Harry's report of the conditions of the whaling, some extra paper, and his entire camera outfit. There also was Joe's journal of the events of the trip to date. They were overjoyed at this, but search as they would, nothing further of value turned up. The hull below decks seemed to have been carried down in the crush and sunk; at any rate, they never saw it more. Two busy weeks passed thus, and they were not altogether unhappy. They had seemingly lost all chance of returning with wealth, but their lives were spared and the summer was at hand, when ships would surely appear and rescue them. They talked this matter over together

and with Harluk and Kroo. The ships, said Harluk wisely, would be late in that summer, if they came at all. He knew this, because each storm had ended in a wind from the north which brought the pack in. He had noticed that when the storms began this way, they kept it up through the summer. The main pack was very heavy, and was crowded up against the shore now. It might not move for weeks. If there did come a southerly blow and carry it off for a day or two, the wind would end up in the north and bring it back. The boys had seen.

Harluk indicated the mighty ridge of ice alongshore with a sweep of the hand, and Kroo nodded confirmation of this. The boys looked at each other.

"Then," said Harry, "if the ships cannot come to us, we shall have to go to the ships. They will surely be at Point Hope, and if we go there we shall meet them."

"Of course they will," agreed Joe. "Father will be up here on a ship of some sort. He will be anxious to see if there is possible news of us. He is a whaler, and he will not go out of the business just because one ship is lost. We will go to Point Hope. How long will it take, Kroo?"

Kroo meditated. "When the ice is gone," he said, "s'pose take umiak. Not blow too much, you catch Point Hope in twenty sleeps. S'pose blow a good deal, no can tell."

"But if the ice stays, we will have to go overland," replied Joe. "How long will that take with a good dog team?"

Kroo's answer to this was "Ticharro pejuk?" which is a sort of Eskimo "How do I know?" There was some snow left in places, and they might follow the coast on the ice for a good way. At Cape Beaufort they would have to make a turn inland, as no one could pass Lisburne heights on the coast. There were mountains and there would be much soft tundra. It was a good deal of an undertaking. He could not tell. It was better to stay till the sea opened.

Thus reasoned Kroo and Harluk, and the others gave assent to this, but the boys were not to be moved. There was nothing for them to stay for now, and they were determined to go, even if the trip was to be a hard one. The Eskimos said little more. They knew if the boys had decided to go, go they would, and in their own way. A team of three dogs was picked, the best in the village, their goods were packed on the sled,—food enough to

last for weeks, rifles and ammunition, blankets, and their little tent.

The parting was hard. The two boys had not realized before how much attached they were to these brave, gentle, kindly friends; and as for the Eskimos, they were like children about to be deprived of their parents. The village wept, and at the last moment Harluk declared that he would not let his brothers go alone. He would travel with them to Point Hope, guide them on their journey, and then come back to his wife and children. Atchoo embraced him and bade him go, and Kroo came gravely forward to Harry and made him an address in Eskimo that was quite flowery, and the purport of which was that he wished Harry to become his brother, to which Harry cheerfully assented, assuring him that he was the brother of them all, and wrung his hand, thinking the matter was to end there.

Not so. Kroo took from his poke his ancient ivory pipe, carved from a walrus tusk to represent the body and flukes of a whale, its stem cunningly fashioned of whalebone. He held this toward the sun with one hand, pointed at Harry with the other, and solemnly recited something which sounded like poetry

but which had few words which Harry could understand. It seemed like an ancient ritual. Then he passed the pipe to Harry and looked at him expectantly. Harry looked at Joe in some dismay. He did not know what ceremony demanded of him in return. But the ever resourceful Joe pulled from his own pocket a briarwood pipe with imitation amber mouthpiece and German silver mountings, quite a pretty pipe.

“That belongs to the mate,” he said, “but I guess he won’t mind. I found it in the cabin one day, and it has been in my pocket ever since. Hurry up, he’s looking anxious. Recite him something or other.”

Kroo was indeed looking anxious, and Harry hastened to imitate him so far as he could. He held his pipe up to the sun, pointed at Kroo, and recited with all the elocutionary power he could muster:—

“Hickory, dickory, dock,
The mouse ran up the clock,
The clock struck one,
And down she run,
Hickory, dickory, dock.”

He looked at Joe with nervous eye as he did this, but Joe was solemn as a deacon, never moving a muscle. Kroo and the other vil-

lagers seemed much impressed with the Mother Goose rhyme, no doubt thinking it an incantation of much power, and the incident was happily ended with the transfer of the pipe and another hearty handshake.

Thus they bade good-by to their friends, and with Harluk in the lead and the dogs tugging at the loaded sled, took their way down the coast on the ice. For the first few days travel was not difficult, and they made good progress. They were inured to Arctic weather, and the mildness of spring and the thought that they were headed toward home, even though defeated and impoverished, filled them with exhilaration. In three days they made something over sixty miles, taking them well below Point Lay and promising an exceptionally quick trip. The Arctic pack was still glued to the shore, and the travel over it was safe. After the third night's sleep, however, they found an unexpected obstacle. The river known to the Eskimos as the Kukpowrak enters the sea here, flowing far from the interior and flooded by the spring thaw, a rushing torrent. It was impossible to ford this river, and its warmer waters had opened the sea ice for a broad space as far out as the eye could see. It effectually blocked their

further passage. Harluk wished, Eskimo fashion, to sit down by the bank of this river and wait till the snows were fully melted. Then the floods would fall as suddenly as they had risen, and they would be able to ford it.

“How long will that be?” asked Joe.

Harluk meditated, and then answered with the vague and irritating “Ticharro pejuk.”

“Ten sleeps?” said Joe; “twenty sleeps?” but the answer was still “Ticharro pejuk,” and it was evident that Harluk himself did not know. To attempt to pass the river mouth on the ice was a doubtful thing at that season. At any time a wind from the south might send the floes out to sea, and those on them would be lost.

It was possible that by proceeding up river they might find an ice jam on which they could cross, and after thinking the matter over for half a day, Joe decided that it would be wise to go upstream for a considerable distance in the hope of finding a passage. There was still snow in many places on the banks, and they took advantage of this where possible. In other places the sled did not go badly over the tundra moss, yet travel was much slower than on the ice, and in thirty-six hours they had hardly made fifteen miles.

They found dwarf willows and alders, scarce three feet high, plentiful along the banks of this river, and flocks of ptarmigan in these so tame that they would not rise at a rifle-shot. They killed many of these, and with plenty of willow wood for fire, lived well. Yet it was anxious work, and, as they proceeded, much more difficult; moreover, twenty miles from the coast they entered a height of land, almost a mountain range, through which the river broke in a series of falls. Here in three days' struggle through ravines and up limestone slopes they hardly made ten miles. At the top they found better going, but here the river seemed to trend more to the east, and they had the humiliation of working away from their destination in spite of their labor.

"Confound it," said Joe ruefully, as they camped late one afternoon, "we'd have done better to start before it began to thaw at all. Then it would be a straight trip on the ice and nothing to bother us but cold, and that's no great harm."

"I don't see much use in this," replied Harry, weary and somewhat discouraged. "We might follow up this river a hundred miles. Seems as if we had gone most as far

as that already, and still there is no chance to cross. We'll have to do as Harluk says, sit down and wait for the water to run out."

"I think we'll camp here for a day," said Joe. "The dogs are tired and so am I. Besides, we are almost out of dog feed. If we watch out, we may get a caribou. There were tracks back there. I'd like some deer meat myself."

The northernmost deer of the American continent is the caribou, sometimes called the American reindeer. He differs from the Asiatic reindeer mainly in size and length of limb, the caribou being taller and larger. Otherwise, physically, they are much alike, live on the same food, and have the same general appearance. But while the Siberian deer is easily domesticated and is bred and handled in vast herds by the natives, the American type is wild and untamable. He loves the barren wastes of the far north, and every summer migrates to the northernmost shores, even passing on to the unexplored islands off the coast in the Arctic sea. Here he roams and feeds until the fierce gales of winter drive him south to the first shelter of the low clumps of firs and birches which mark the limits of the barren grounds. Hardy,



CAMP ON THE TUNDRA

restless creatures, the caribou often wander in immense herds, following a leader as sheep do. The Eskimos hunt them in summer when they approach the Arctic shores, and know their habits well, taking particular advantage of their curiosity. The hunter sits down among the rocks when a herd is in sight and imitates their hoarse bellow. Some of the herd will surely draw near to see what this motionless object is. Round and round it they circle, approaching nearer and nearer, until one is within reach of the hunter's weapon. Sometimes the herd will run the gauntlet of a line of hunters just because one stupid animal has gone that way in his attempt to escape, and the rest are determined to follow his lead. At such times the Eskimo hunters lay in large stocks of meat and furs and consider themselves wealthy, for the hide of the caribou makes splendid clothing for them. It is very light and impenetrable to the wind, and no garment so successfully resists the Arctic cold as this. The Eskimo uses the hide, tanned, for thongs for nets and lines. A split shinbone makes a good bone knife, and fish-hooks and spears are made from the horns, while the tendons of certain muscles make fine and strong thread

for sewing with the bone needle. Hence, as with the walrus and seal, the whole animal is utilized. The caribou has a great hoof, split nearly to the hock, which spreads and enables the animal to travel in soft snow or boggy tundra, where an ordinary deer would sink.

This hoof, too, is sharp, and gives the animal a firm footing on ice. It is also a weapon of defense far more formidable than the horns. A blow from it is like that of an axe, and woe to the hunter who comes within reach of the fore hoofs of a wounded and desperate caribou. Thus shod the caribou can travel faster on the ice than any other animal, and, when at bay, can slay a wolf with one well-directed blow of its hoof. Yet the animal is so stupid and timid that it rarely uses this weapon, and then oftener in a blind struggle than with intent to do harm. Such are the deer of the barren grounds, which Harluk and the two boys set forth to hunt.

Harry and Joe had repeating rifles, but Harluk was armed only with his ivory-headed spear, tipped with a triangular steel point. With this in hand he led them, first, to a pinnacle of limestone, about three miles away. The tundra was bare and brown, patched here and there with snowdrifts, and undulating to

the southward in a sort of rolling prairie. Behind them and on either hand were the rough peaks of the height of land which they had gained the day before, — a scene bare, desolate, but fascinating, a bit of primeval chaos left over in the making of the world. Standing on this summit, Harluk scanned the horizon to the east and south, and finally pointed due east in silence. Joe and Harry looked carefully. They saw slowly moving dots on the plain some miles away. These had not been there a moment before. As they watched, others appeared, as if out of the ground.

A herd of caribou was rounding a low hill at a swinging trot. By and by there were perhaps forty in sight, traveling northwest at a quite rapid rate, as if fleeing before something.

“Kile,” said Harluk, and putting his head down, he started north at a good rate of speed, evidently bound on intercepting them. The Eskimo is not a good runner, but he is persistent. Harluk plunged on, falling over his own feet, but scrambling up again, leaving dents in the soft tundra moss, and still keeping up the pace, which bade fair in the end to wind Joe and Harry, until he reached a

place that suited him in what seemed to be the path of the advancing herd. It was a wide, shallow valley between two low limestone hills. It was dotted here and there with scattered boulders, and the ground was rough with broken rock chinked with deer moss. Harluk placed the boys behind boulders at the extreme right and left of this valley, and bade them wait motionless until deer came near enough to shoot. He himself hastily built a little circular inclosure of stone in which he could crouch unobserved.

A half hour passed, during which there was no sign. The sun was low, and Harry shivered, sitting motionless in the chill of the valley. A snow-bunting came flitting along and lighted fearlessly beside him, and the next moment a great snowy owl swept over the ridge and down upon the snow-bunting, which wriggled between Harry's feet for protection. The owl glared at him fiercely for a moment with great round eyes, then slipped into the air again, and vanished down the valley. As Harry watched him, he saw branching antlers, and a caribou came around the curve, followed by more and more, feeding and wandering toward him. He sat rigid, his eyes fixed upon them like a dog at the point. They nibbled

at the gray moss, unconscious of danger, but lifted their heads and gazed in surprise as a most discordant bellow came from the circle of stone where Harluk lay hidden. Their manner changed in a moment from shambling and slouchy to alert, upheaded, and vigilant. They pawed the earth and sniffed suspiciously, then began to move toward Harluk's stone fort. Their heads were high, their muzzles thrust forward, and they trod with dainty alertness where before they had shambled. Out of the tail of his eye Harry could see Harluk's hand and fur-clad arm waving grotesquely above the stones. It was this that had held the attention of the herd and toward which their curiosity was leading them. Within twenty minutes the whole herd were circling about the little inclosure of stone, drawing nearer and nearer to the hand that waved above it. They were within gunshot of either Harry or Joe now, but neither might shoot lest he endanger Harluk. Moreover, neither boy had shot deer before, and the sight of forty of these great creatures within gunshot had given both the buck fever. Harry found himself shaking as with the palsy, and had an almost irresistible desire to throw his gun in the air and halloo.

The deer were very near Harluk now, and his beckoning arm had shrunken to the tip of his mitten, now lifted a little, then slowly withdrawn. The deer fairly crowded forward to look for it. As their muzzles appeared over the stones, Harluk leaped to his feet with a tremendous yell. The effect was to paralyze the herd for a second. They stamped and snorted, but stood firm while Harluk lunged with his spear full at the shoulder of the nearest. The shaft went home, and the deer sank to the ground transfixed to the heart. Immediately there was a tremendous stampede among the deer. The stupid creatures rushed this way and that, colliding with one another in a paroxysm of terror, then started down the valley again in the direction whence they had come. In this sudden confusion a caribou was knocked fairly from his feet, falling against Harluk from behind and tripping him. He scrambled to his feet again with a rush and carried Harluk clinging mechanically to his back, too surprised to do anything else. As the herd clattered by, Harry saw Joe spring to his feet and begin to jump up and down, wave his rifle in the air, and halloo. He shouted to him to quit that and shoot, and then it came to him that he was doing

precisely the same thing, nor did he seem to be able to stop, even when he was conscious of it, until the herd was well by him.

Such is the effect of the buck fever. In its delirium people are sometimes conscious that they are acting absurdly, but do not have the power to stop it.

By the time the herd was so far down the valley that it was nearly out of gunshot, Harry and Joe had come to sufficiently to do some wild shooting. This had no effect but to bring an equally wild yell from Harluk, who rolled from his perch at the whistling of the bullets and abandoned his quarry. Of the forty caribou among which they had been for a half hour or more, they had secured but one. However, they had enough meat for the present, and they divided up the animal and started back for the camp with it on their shoulders.

They reached the spot where they had camped before the hunt, and stared and rubbed their eyes with many exclamations of astonishment and alarm. There was no trace of tent, sled, or dogs. All had vanished. They threw down their burdens and looked at one another.

“Are you sure this is the place?” asked Harry.

In reply, Harluk nodded his head vehemently, and Joe pointed in silence to the heavy stones they had used in place of tent-pegs. They still made a quadrilateral which marked the spot, but there was nothing more.

“What are we going to do?” faltered Harry. For a moment he felt as if the ghost people of the Nunatak were not so unreal after all. He thought he saw the same feeling reflected in Harluk’s face, and the fantastic loneliness of the country seemed to impress itself upon him more than ever. It was like a bad dream, in which, all things being unreal, nothing was too strange to happen.

Joe broke the spell with sturdy common sense. “I’ll tell you what we are going to do,” he said. “Here’s deer meat in plenty, and I’ve got matches in my pocket. We’re going to cook some venison and have a square meal. Then we’ll hunt for tracks. I don’t believe anybody could get away with that outfit without leaving a trail behind. You and Harluk cut some steaks off that rump while I get wood.”

The two turned to the carcass of the deer, while Joe started down the bank and round a jutting corner of cliff, toward some willow

shrubs. As he passed down along the side of the cliff, he had a strange feeling that some one was looking sharply at him, and turned just in time to see a face at his elbow, — the same evil, half-white face that he had seen in the night at Icy Cape, when he was struck on the head with the piece of ice. He gave a cry of astonishment and alarm, but was seized and tripped from behind, and any further outcry stopped by a blanket being bound tightly over his head. In spite of his struggles, he was effectually gagged, bound, and carried behind a projection of the cliff.

Harry heard this cry of Joe's, and answered it, thinking it was a call. Then, getting no reply, he went on with his very simple preparations for the meal. These done, he went in search of Joe. He could not see him among the willows. He called and got no answer. The ghostly loneliness of the Arctic came over him with telling force. Was Joe, too, to disappear and leave no trace behind?

“Joe!” he shouted; “Joe!” and the cliffs across the Kukpowrak answered with mocking echoes; that was all. Then he turned, and he, too, was seized by three men, who had stealthily approached him from behind. He was bound and silenced as Joe had been, but

not before he had shouted twice for Harluk at the top of his lungs.

One of the men who had captured him swore at this in good round English; then, leaving one to guard Harry, two of them hastened to the camp with rifles, but Harluk the wise had followed Harry empty handed, seen his capture, fled back to the camp, and with both Joe's and Harry's rifles was scurrying across the tundra in the direction of the sea, as fast as his Eskimo legs could carry him. Fired upon, he dropped behind a boulder, and pumped such a fusillade of shots back at his two would-be captors that one of them dropped his rifle with a cry of pain, put his hand to his leg, and went hopping off toward shelter in a hurry. The other followed; but just before he reached safety he threw up his hands, and plunged heavily forward on his face. Harluk's last shot had caught him under the left shoulder blade and passed through his heart.

The Eskimo gave a yell of triumph and defiance, and then fled on, with his two rifles, over the ridge and out of sight; nor did the enemy make any attempt to follow him. Had they done so, they might have seen that, after he had placed a good safe distance behind him, he climbed the highest peak near by,

and sat there, motionless, watching for hours. Then he carefully picked his way back, keeping in shelter as much as possible, still clinging to his two rifles, one of which held a few cartridges. The magazine of the other was full.

Of the party which had captured Joe and Harry, the evil-faced half-white man, who had sworn in English, seemed to be the leader. He took his way back to those who were guarding Joe and Harry, and bade them take the gags from their mouths and the bonds from their feet. Harry no sooner found his tongue free than he used it.

"Look here," he sputtered; "what does this mean? Why have you attacked us? We have done you no harm."

The half-breed smiled an evil smile, and pointed at his eye. Harry remembered the fight in the snow igloo, the blow with which he had closed his opponent's eye, and now he remembered the face.

"Bimeby plenty sorry," the half-breed said. "No fire ghost come now."

Harry and Joe were led back to the camping-spot. There lay the body of the dead; and as the half-breed looked at it he scowled and looked at his own roughly bandaged limb,

which caused him to limp painfully. He pointed at the corpse and then at the two prisoners.

“One dead now,” he said; “bimeby two dead.” Then he laughed a mirthless laugh.

Strongly guarded by five fierce-looking outlaws with rifles, there was no reasonable chance of escape, even when the lashings were taken from their hands as well, and the two boys submitted to being loaded with the venison they had shot, and marched on up river. A quarter of a mile away they found their dog team harnessed into the sled and their belongings securely packed upon it, guarded by a single outlaw. Here, too, was another team of four dogs and a sled, and traces of several days' camping. It was evident that in coming up the Kukpowrak they had marched right into the camp of the outlaw Ankuts who had personated the ghost wolves, and whom they, with the lucky aid of their impromptu fire spirit, had so signally defeated. Now the tables were turned; but they were totally unprepared for the further surprise that was in store for them. That was to come many days afterward, however.

The Ankuts cooked venison here and made a meal. The chief outlaw bound up his wound

more carefully, and though it was slight, insisted on riding as they went on up river. This overweighted the sleds, and the boys were forced to shoulder part of the load. Indeed, they soon found that, though they were not treated harshly, their position was much that of slaves, and they were so closely watched that escape seemed impossible without great risk of being shot down in the attempt. Thus for two days they followed the course of the Kukpowrak, then they bore off to the left across a nearly level table-land a day's journey.

There was no sign of human being on this three days' march; bare tundra and gray limestone or blue slate rocks made the scene one of peculiar desolation, yet, though neither the highbinders nor the boys knew it, a solitary figure kept watch of all their movements and was never far behind them. All the savage hunter had been roused in Harluk, and he trailed the band with the vindictive persistency of an Apache brave. He lived on an occasional ground squirrel or small bird knocked over among scrub willows, and kept his precious ammunition for more deadly use. It had been well for the highbinders if they had reckoned more carefully with

Harluk. He had seen his comrade Konwa dead. He had seen one of the enemy fall by his own hand. Henceforward the gentle and timid Eskimo was changed into a bold, aggressive, cunning, and bloodthirsty fighting man. The highbinders were to hear from Harluk again.

At the end of the third day's journey they came to a scene of wild and singular beauty. The table-land opened out into an oval valley rimmed at the further end with abrupt, sharp-pointed hills, at the base of which another river flowed northward. This valley, to the surprise of the boys, seemed a bit out of another world. In it was no snow, and the grass was already tall. Moreover, there the willows grew to a much greater height than elsewhere, and were already pale green with young leaves. Compared with the gray, bare, Arctic desolation through which they had traveled, it was like a bit of paradise.

Harry, tired out and discouraged, groaned at the sight of this beauty spot. "What's the matter with you?" asked Joe.

"It makes me homesick," said Harry. "It reminds me of the marshes down by the Fore River in early May. It's like home."

"Well, I guess it's likely to be home for

us for a while," said Joe philosophically. "It looks as if the highbinders made it their headquarters. See all the igloos down there, and the people, too!"

They noted many good sized stone igloos, chinked with deer moss, at their right as they wound down into the valley, and a small stream, which seemed to issue from the ground near by. It seemed as if little clouds of steam rose from this stream, especially at its source, and at sight of it Joe gave an exclamation of appreciation. "I know about this now," he said; "it's one of those hot springs I've heard the Eskimos tell about as being inland here. That is why the willows are so tall and everything so forward. It keeps the place warmed up the year round."

But it was little of the brightness and beauty of this little warm-weather oasis in the bleak surroundings that the boys were to see. They were ordered to drop their burdens on reaching the igloos, and presently conducted to one of the strongest built and least prepossessing of them. Once within this, the low entrance was blocked with stone and they were left to themselves.

CHAPTER X

“THE FEAST OF THE OLD SEAL’S HEAD”

THE igloo in which Joe and Harry were confined was unlighted except by sundry chinks in the stones through which rays of light pierced the gloom. These showed, as soon as their eyes had become accustomed to the semi-darkness, the customary raised bench at one side covered with some ancient deerskins for a couch, a stone blubber lamp, a stone fireplace in the centre, where charred willow twigs showed that some one had once used it, and nothing more. Yet so weary were the boys with their day’s toil that they threw themselves on this questionable couch and soon slept the sleep of utter fatigue. Some hours later they roused refreshed, and were greeted by a cautious “’St! ’st!” from the blocked entrance. Stepping quickly there, Joe, saw through an opening in the stones a good-natured Eskimo face that lighted up with a smile at sight of him.

“Here,” it said in Eskimo. “Plenty eat. By and by have trouble.”

A fur-clad arm thrust what looked to be a bundle of grass through the aperture in the stones, and the Eskimo hurried away. Joe opened this bundle and found in it several small white fish, just warm from the fire and cooked without salt, yet appetizing to the hungry boys, who made a meal of them forthwith. Nevertheless, though it was evident that they had a friend, his words were far from reassuring, and the boys speculated much as to what was to happen to them. Through the chinks in their rough stone prison they managed to see a good deal that was going on in the little village, and it did not take them long to guess something of its ways of life. It was evident that it was a highbinder stronghold, and that a band of a dozen or so of these marauders lorded it over the rest of the community, which seemed to consist of a dozen more Eskimos, one or two men, but mainly women and boys and girls. They saw these latter bring fish from the river and firewood from along its banks, one or two women cooking, boys and girls doing menial service at the bidding of the Ankuts, who stalked among them with airs of superiority that were comical. Not so comical was their brutality to their youthful slaves, whom

they did not hesitate to strike or kick brutally at little provocation. These seemed to be in a state of abject submission to their oppressors, and the sight made the blood of the boys hot with indignation, not unmixed with apprehension as to their own treatment in the near future. They discussed the situation, and tried to make plans for an escape, but it did not seem that this could be attempted immediately. To get out of their stone prison would be an easy matter, but once free, the chances of further escape from among the band of well-armed men who surrounded them would be slight, indeed. They must wait a more favorable opportunity, reserving the chances of a dash for a last resort.

As they talked and watched, they heard low moans of pain that came from a near-by igloo, and a wail of "*Ah-nu-nah! Ah-nu-nah!*" (Sick! Sick!) This was repeated at intervals and seemed to grow louder. By and by a boy issued from this igloo and went with seeming reluctance to another one some distance away, whence he issued with one of the Ankuts. The two came back to the first igloo, and the wizard took up his position in the open space directly in front of it. This was in plain view of the boys, and

they watched further proceedings with much interest.

Soon the Eskimo boy appeared again, bringing a couple of white fox skins. These he laid at the feet of the wizard, who regarded them contemptuously for a moment and then spurned them with his foot. The boy retired again, and after a longer time reappeared with several small ermine pelts. These he added to the fox skins and waited. The wizard shook his head, but the boy also shook his despondently, saying "Naume" (No more).

This seemed to satisfy the wizard that he was receiving all that he could get in payment for his services, and he finally picked up the pelts and laid them behind him. The boy reëntered the igloo and came out leading an old woman, whose wails of "Ah-nu-nah!" were louder as they reached the spot where stood the wizard. She pressed both hands to her head, as if that were in great pain, and crouched before the Ankut, who was immediately transformed from an immobile and haughty personage into a sort of wild skirt dancer. He whirled about the old woman in a circle, and from his clothes somewhere appeared a couple of great knives with which

he juggled in an astonishing manner, tossing and catching them deftly, and surrounding himself with a circle of flashing steel. Harry gave an exclamation of astonishment at this. It was so little like the clumsy and awkward manner of the every-day Eskimo. A crowd of people had surrounded the group, and gazed with wonder and awe on this performance, scattering like leaves in the wind when the dancing juggler of knives swung too near them. The wizard soon began to howl and clap his hands to his own head, still in some mysterious manner keeping the knives whirling. The sick woman had forgotten her own pain in wonder at this exhibition, and sat mute and open-mouthed. Suddenly the wizard shouted, "Come out, spirit! Leave the woman's head and come out!" He whirled up to the side of the sick woman before she could recover from her astonishment, slipped one of the knives out of sight again in his own clothes and with the other made a slash that cut deep into her temple, and pretended to draw something from the wound. This he held up in the sight of the surrounding crowd.

It was a curious, brown, many-legged worm, such as are found in rotten wood, and which

no doubt infest the tundra moss, or might have been obtained from driftwood from the sources of the Kukpowrak, which has its rise far inland in the timber line. The crowd murmured with astonishment at this, the wizard retired to his igloo with his fox and ermine pelts, and only the boy remained, sitting in stolid grief beside the old woman, who lay where she had dropped at the slash of the knife. It had cut deeper than the wizard perhaps intended. Certainly he had cured her headache, for she was dead.

The barbarous cruelties of the Ankuts, in their attempts to deal with the sick, are beyond description, and the boys had seen only one of the least, but they turned away, sick at heart, and willing to believe that the little oasis in the midst of the barren wastes was anything but an Eden to those who must live there under the cruel rule of the pretended wizards.

It seemed, however, that they were soon to be released from their confinement. When they again looked out, they saw that the body of the old woman had been removed, and there was a considerable stir among the inhabitants of the little village. In the open within the circle of igloos sat the Ankuts,

cross-legged, each with a rifle in his lap and a big knife at his hand. About them, at a respectful distance, stood the others of the community: two men, dejected and spiritless looking chaps, among whom Joe thought he recognized his friend of the fishes, three women, and six or seven boys and girls. All had the indifferent and apathetic air of slaves, which they were. As they looked, the boys saw two of the Ankuts approaching, and a moment after the stones which blocked the entrance of their prison were removed and they were bidden to come out. The two Ankuts marched them to the circle and stood by them.

Harry had a singular feeling of weakness in the knees in this march, a wild desire to put out across the hills at top speed coupled with this feeling that his legs might give way under him at any moment. Somehow he had not feared these men before, but now things looked ominous. He glanced at Joe, who was watching him narrowly. Joe walked erect and defiant.

“Whatever you do,” said Joe, “don’t let them see that you are afraid of them. Put on a bold front; it may help us.”

So Harry braced himself and tried to get

the limp feeling out of his knees, and hoped he succeeded in looking brave and cool. It was evident that they were before a sort of self-constituted board of judges. The evil-faced half-breed seemed to be the head of these, at once chief judge and prosecuting attorney. He spoke somewhat at length, always referring to Harry and Joe as "our white brothers." He told of their interference between the Eskimos at Icy Cape and the "ghost wolves of the Nunatak." Such interference with the Nunatak people, who were the fathers of wizards, he explained, was deserving of punishment. He told how the two had battled with the Ankuts in the snow igloo and outside, that night. How they had driven them away with fire spirits, robbed them of their bearskins, and otherwise ill-treated them. Such actions were deserving of punishment. He told how one of their comrades had fallen before the rifle of Harluk when the Ankuts had captured the two. For this also, he argued, they were deserving of punishment. The slayer of the Ankut was not there. Then these, his friends, must answer for his misdeed. This is the barbarous idea of atonement the world over.

To all these statements the other Ankuts

solemnly wagged their heads and chorused: "It is so." Especially were they vigorous in their wagging when the half-breed said: "They are deserving of punishment."

"And yet," continued the half-breed with a malicious smile, "the white men are our brothers. They, too, are wizards. They work with spirits of fire, and they rob the Innuits, the people, even as we do."

"It is not so," broke in Joe fiercely. "We do not rob the people. Instead, we trade with them, and give them good things in exchange. We are the friends of the people, as you well know. We are truly their brothers, as you call us in derision. But have a care. The white men are very many. They are more than the grass in summer in number. They are very wise, and can see far. Have a care how you punish us. The great chief of the white men will know of it, and will send his thunder ships to punish you, if you do us harm. If you do not set us free, there shall be no more Ankuts among the tribes. The great white chief will see to that."

Thus spake Joe, indignantly and fearlessly. Harry thought him very handsome as he stood erect and thus poured out defiance at his armed enemies; but he could not help wondering

what the effect would be and whether such talk was wise. He was surprised to see the apparent change in attitude of the Ankuts after it was made. They looked at one another in silence. Then the half-breed spoke again.

“What my white brother says may be true. Yet the white chief is a long way off, and the Ankuts are very near, if they choose to punish. Still, a feast is better than a fight. What say you?” he said to the other Ankuts, looking from one to another with his evil smile still on his face. “Shall our white brothers suffer punishment, or shall we bid them to a feast?”

The same smile seemed to run around the circle of Ankut faces, and they all wagged their heads vigorously. “It shall be a feast!” they affirmed in unison, and there was something sinister in their satisfaction in this change of programme.

Harry poked Joe with his elbow. “Great Scott!” he said in a low tone, “but we are pulling out of this in great luck.”

His knees ceased to feel weak under him, and he had great admiration for Joe's boldness, which had seemingly brought this happy change about. But Joe did not altogether share his delight.

“I don’t know about this,” he replied in an equal undertone. “They don’t look very feasty.”

It was a fact that they did not, nor did the listening drudges who stood outside the circle. A certain wide-eyed horror seemed to pierce their stolidity and apathy, and their faces, as they looked at the boys, showed it. The two wizards who had brought them out conducted them back to the igloo with much ceremony.

“Our brothers will rest here,” they said, “while the feast is prepared for them. It will be a great feast, — and there will be nothing but the bones left when it is over.”

Joe and Harry entered the igloo and sat down on the bench. The doorway was not blocked again, but the two Ankuts stood just outside, rifle in hand, as if on guard. A little later one of the Eskimo servants appeared bearing on a flat slate stone the head of an old seal. This he placed on the floor in the middle of the igloo, looking appealingly at the boys, but hastening away without a word. Then two Ankuts appeared, each leading by the leash three heavy-chested, wide-jawed dogs that snarled and fought one another as they came. These six dogs were hurriedly released at the igloo door and driven in. Then the

Ankuts again blocked the entrance with the heavy, flat slate stones, making it much more secure than before; so secure, in fact, that escape from within would be well-nigh impossible. Then one of them cried out in a loud, jeering voice:—

“This is the feast, O white men, to which you are bidden,—the feast of the old seal’s head. Eat and be merry,—and there shall be nothing but bones left.”

The sound of retreating footsteps was drowned in the snarling and scrambling of the six wolf dogs, already fighting in a blurred mass in the centre of the igloo over the old seal’s head.

The Eskimo wolf dog that one sees in Arctic Alaska is quite different from the Eskimo dog of the Yukon and the lower mining camps on the great northwest possession. The latter are more often mongrels, interbred with all sorts of dogs from civilization, and lack much of the robust fierceness of the Arctic type. On the desolate northern shores the pure type is much like the gray wolf, and is no doubt a descendant from him, sometimes intermixed with latter-day blood from the same source. Indeed, it used to be no uncommon thing in the Eskimo villages to see a

captured wolf tied to a stake in the village and used for breeding purposes. The usual color is a dingy gray black; sometimes almost pure black, as is the occasional wolf. These dogs are large, very agile, and have a jaw that is full of great teeth and as strong as iron. Ordinarily, when well fed, they are not vicious; oftentimes they are even frolicsome, like the civilized dog; yet such is the strength of their iron jaws that even a playful nip from them is a serious matter, and hence the Eskimos never encourage them to sportiveness. Neither do white men who have once experienced a grip from those jaws. Their wolf blood, while making them hardy and strong, gives them an understrain of fierceness which is apt to make them dangerous neighbors, especially when hungry. Their fights among themselves are tremendous and bloody, and at such times a man who would separate them must enter the combat armed with a heavy weapon capable of laying one out at a blow. Otherwise his own life is in danger. It was six magnificent specimens of this type that were walled into the igloo with the boys and were already battling fiercely at the feast of the old seal's head. Purposely left unfed since the boys arrived, they were in a ferocious

mood. Joe and Harry drew together and tried hard to make themselves very small against the wall at the farthest corner of the igloo. As yet the dogs paid no attention to them, and after the seal skull had been well polished and the battle subsided, they still were unmolested. Yet the intent of their captors was evident. Such is the cruel custom that has come down in the traditions of the Ankuts of Eskimo land from time immemorial. The enemy of the wizards is put to the feast of the old seal's head. If he survives, he, too, is a wizard, and wins the equal respect of the tribe. If he is not a wizard, in very truth, his polished bones are all that remain when the igloo is opened and the famished wolf dogs are taken out.

Harry had felt fear and discouragement before in the midst of his strange adventures in this strange land, yet never had terror possessed him so completely as now. In the gloom of the igloo he could see the glare of the eyes of the savage creatures as they crouched on the floor, half lazily, yet half ready for a spring, and he expected every moment that one would attack him. This he well knew would be the signal for a rush from them all, for the instinct of the wolf pack is

strong even in the most docile Eskimo dog, and when one fights they all do. He could feel the quiver of Joe's elbow where it touched his as they shrank to the igloo wall side by side, and knew that his consciousness of the danger was equal to his own. Yet though filled with a dumb terror of what was to come, neither lost his self-control. Their hardy, independent life, the dangers and disasters which they had already faced, had bred in each the courage of strong men, the self-reliance of pioneers, and, though their case was desperate, neither was willing to think that it was hopeless. Quietly Joe was feeling with one hand along the rough stones of their prison. By and by he found something, and passed it over to Harry without a word. It was a long, angular piece of the slaty rock, something like a rude stone hatchet. Such a weapon might save a man's life. Yet it could save but one. The man who wielded it might escape in the mêlée which was liable to come at any moment. It was a slim chance, but it was all there was. The weaponless man would be torn to pieces. Harry felt the devotion and courageous self-sacrifice which could make this priceless gift to a friend at such a moment, and his heart swelled within him as he

clasped Joe's hand in the dim light. He tried not to take this rude weapon, but Joe pressed it on him, and after a little he consented, mentally resolved that he would wield it in Joe's defense in preference to his own. It is such deeds and such resolves that try the temper of men's souls and prove them truly noble.

Time passed, how slowly only those who have faced similar terrors can tell. Moments seemed to stretch out into hours that in turn became an eternity. It seemed to Harry as if he were growing numb with waiting, and he had wild thoughts of forcing the attack with his primitive weapon. He even suggested it to Joe, who promptly vetoed the idea. Their low voices seemed to rouse the dogs and make them more uneasy, and they said no more. By and by, in the passing of what seemed weeks, they began to hear sounds from outside. It was a low murmuring, which grew louder into sounds of hilarity. There seemed to be shouts and laughter and the rude music of tom-toms. The Ankuts were feasting in celebration of the cruel death which they thought might be already coming to their enemies. About this time both pricked up their ears with a vague feeling of hope.

Somebody or something was scratching and working at the wall of the igloo outside,— the wall directly behind them and toward the low bluffs that rimmed the little valley. The change from dull expectation of calamity to a thought of hope sent a thrill of energy through each. Yet there was renewed danger in it, too, for the sound roused the wolf dogs, and made them more restless. They began to growl and move uneasily about. It was an ominous moment. Then there was the scraping of a stone, and a bar of light shone into the gloom of the igloo, bringing with it a voice,— the voice of Harluk. It was tremulous with excitement and apprehension.

“Oh, my brothers,” it cried, “are you there?”

“Yes, yes,” answered Joe. “Quick! Something to fight with.”

The need was indeed great, for the six wolf dogs were already crouching and snarling. Another moment would bring the conflict which they so feared. Quick as a wink Harluk’s hand was thrust through the aperture with his sheevee, his long knife, in it. Joe snatched this with a cry of delight. It was long, heavy, and keen,— an admirable weapon for a fight to the death at close quar-

ters. The flash of this knife in their faces had its effect on the pack. They drew back and hesitated. In their lives they had learned well the prowess of a man with a weapon in his hands; and the wolf dog of the tribes is as wise as he is fearless.

Joe took a single step, coolly, toward them. "Help Harluk," he said briefly to Harry; "I'll keep these devils at bay. But for God's sake, hurry!"

There was no need of this admonition. Harluk and Harry pried and tugged desperately at the stones. They came slowly, but surely. The pack were bounding over one another now on the far side of the igloo, lashing themselves into a fury of onslaught.

"Quick, my brothers!" cried Harluk. "It is big enough."

Harry looked at Joe. Moments were precious, yet still the pack hesitated, awed partly by the flash of the big knife, partly by his cool and constant gaze. "Go!" cried Joe. "I'll follow you."

Harry plunged through the narrow opening with a great thrill of delight as he felt himself in the outer air. As he disappeared from the igloo, the pack surged forward, but Joe had been waiting for this. He met the foremost

with a reach of the long knife full in the breast. With a howl of pain that was his death cry, the brute turned, biting the animal next to him in his agony, and starting a fight among themselves, which took their attention from Joe for a moment. Deftly and quickly he backed through the opening, keeping his eye upon the whirling pack, and holding the bloody knife still in readiness for instant use. A moment and he was safe outside, where he found Harluk and Harry, each with a rifle cocked and ready in his defense.

Without a word Harluk passed his rifle to Joe and hurriedly thrust the stones back into the wall of the igloo, shutting in the struggling and bloody pack. They were safe from this danger, but outside a new one menaced them. The hilarity among the dozen well-armed Ankuts was rapidly approaching a state of frenzy. A chief item of their feast was a peculiar liquor made by steeping toadstools in water, which produces what is known to the whalers as a "toadstool drunk." This potion first induces an ordinary sort of intoxication, but this soon passes into a sort of fury, in which its victims seem possessed with a demoniacal strength and ferocity. Under its influence the Ankuts were far more

to be feared than before. Hiding behind the igloo, the three watched them carefully. As yet they had no suspicion that their prisoners were escaping, and after a little Harluk touched each of his friends. "Come," he said quietly, and they followed where he led.

To make the situation clear, we must go back to Harluk's previous movements. He had followed the band of Ankuts warily on their way to the stronghold with their prisoners. Not once had he lost sight of them, not once had they suspected that he followed. He had not been sure, however, in which igloo the boys were confined until he had seen them taken out for the trial and then escorted again to the prison. He had seen the wolf dogs shut in with them, and knew that he must act at once if he would rescue them. The beginning of the Ankut feast had favored this, as well as the lay of the land. From the low bluffs a narrow ridge ran down nearly to the igloo. This gave him shelter in his approach, and it was behind this that he led the boys away from the igloo, but only for a little way. Then, still sheltered by the intervening rise of ground, he turned and led them down to the bank of the stream of warm water, just where it emptied into the

larger river. Here was an umiak, turned bottom side up on the bank, with a couple of paddles beside it. As they stooped to lift this umiak into the water, there was a wild howl from the direction of the village.

“Hurry, my brothers!” cried Harluk; “they are coming.”

There was now a tremendous uproar, and the Ankuts were seen tearing down the slope toward them at full speed. They hurriedly pushed off, and Joe and Harluk seized paddles and sent the light boat spinning out into the stream. There was the sound of shots and the spattering of bullets around them as they did so. The Ankuts had opened fire. Harry reached for a rifle and Joe nodded to him.

“See if you can’t stop some of that,” he said. “Plug that white-faced one, if you can.”

Harry hesitated a second. He had never before attempted the life of a fellow creature. Then something stung his left arm. One of the Eskimo shots had grazed him. His hesitation vanished in a second, and he fired coolly at the foremost Ankut. The man stumbled and fell headlong.

“Good!” cried Joe. “You poked him. Give ’em another.”

Again Harry fired, and another Ankut spun round like a top and rolled in a heap. Had not the toadstool poison been working in the Ankut veins, they would have been more cautious, and it would no doubt have gone hard with the three, but in their drunken frenzy the wizards came right on, firing a wild fusillade and yelling at the top of their lungs. They ran faster than Joe and Harluk could paddle, and drew steadily nearer. Two shots pierced the skin boat, and the water began to come into it. Joe laid down his paddle and took up the other rifle.

“We'll fight it out right here,” he said.

The interchange of shots grew more rapid. Two more Ankuts fell, and even their crazy ferocity began to waver before so well-directed a fire. The umiak was a third full of water now, and Harluk turned its prow back toward the shore. There was an ugly gleam in Harluk's eye, and he gritted his strong white teeth together, and now and then snapped them as a dog might. The Ankuts hesitated and stopped. Then an unexpected thing happened. Two shots came from behind them, and a fifth wizard sank to the ground.

“Nagouruk!” yelled Harluk, in his own language. “Kill some more; I come!”

The two Eskimo men whom Harry and Joe had seen treated as slaves had slipped up to the dead Ankuts, taken their rifles, and joined the fray. The Ankuts were bewildered. Drunk as they were, they realized that the tide was turned against them. Five of their number were already dead, and shots were coming upon them from seemingly all sides. They wavered. The bow of the umiak struck the bank and Harluk, with a yell, sprang from it and ran toward the wizards. His big knife flashed in his hand, and he yelled in a berserker rage. The stumbling, shambling run of the coast native was no longer his. He seemed to bound like a panther toward his prey. The apotheosis of the timid Eskimo had come, and he was a barbaric war god, glorying in the fray.

Cowards always at heart, the Ankuts turned and fled across the tundra toward the hills, pursued by shots from Joe's and Harry's rifles and those of the two village Eskimos. All but the white-faced half-breed. He stood his ground and reserved his fire as Harluk approached. His lip curled in that evil smile, and he leveled his rifle coolly. Harluk was face to face with doom.

Yet he never hesitated, but leaped on,

shouting his defiance and swinging the big knife, yet red with the blood of the wolf dog. At ten feet the half-breed pressed the trigger. Surely Harluk's amulet was potent that day, for the cartridge failed to explode. The half-breed cursed, snatched at the lever, then cursed again, for that, too, failed to work. The cartridge was jammed. Then he clubbed the rifle and swung it full at Harluk's head. The Eskimo yelled derisively, ducked, and sent the big knife home to the heart of the chief of the Ankuts. His blood mingled with that of the wolf dog that had been less fierce and vindictive than he.

A moment Harluk stood over him with the dripping knife in hand, then turned with Joe and Harry to the pursuit of the other Ankuts; but fear added to their toadstool frenzy lent them speed, and they disappeared over the hills, plunging through the soft tundra moss. The battle was over.

Harry sat down on the battlefield, feeling faint and sick. The horror of carnage was on him. True, they had fought in self-defense, and the Ankuts richly deserved death, yet the sight of men slain with his own hand filled him with remorse, and he felt for a time that his own safety was dearly bought. The sting

in his arm, unnoticed during the excitement of the battle, came back and turned his thoughts away from this after a moment. He examined it. The Ankut bullet had cut a slit in the fleshy part and passed on, doing little damage. He bandaged it as best he could, and, though Joe was solicitous, declared it was nothing.

The Eskimos came flocking about, and their gratitude at their deliverance was so great that he felt better. After all, great good had surely come to these poor people, and he felt that the traditions of his nation justified a war of emancipation. That was the way Joe put it, and he was no doubt right. They buried the dead wizards in the unfrozen earth, not far from the hot spring, and then ate a hearty meal, prepared for them by the grateful Eskimo women.

Not until then did they remember the wolf dogs shut up in what had been their prison. Harluk and the two Eskimo men released them from the igloo, nor did they, at Joe's orders, attempt to either harm or tie them up. He said that he had no wish for revenge on them, but he did not care to have such animals around, and in this Harry agreed with him. Some time afterward the two Eskimos re-

ported to Joe that the other dogs had also vanished. No doubt they had joined the fugitives, and the dominant wolf blood would again make a wild pack of them. It was really a serious matter, but somehow the boys did not care. They found the presence of an Eskimo dog of any sort very distasteful to them.

For some days they waited in the Ankut stronghold, keeping watch lest the enemy return, but seeing no signs of them. Harluk declared that they probably would not. They had received such a trouncing, and the odds were so much against them, that they would no doubt go on either to some other outlaw rendezvous, or else take up peaceful life with some Eskimo community for a while. This is the way of the defeated Ankut. And now, rested and recuperated, the problem of further action came up, and was discussed in a council of the whole. To travel across the fast softening tundra toward Point Hope, without dogs, was a difficult, if not impossible, matter, and they decided not to try it. By this time the ice must be out of the sea, and there was a chance of a ship. Their wisest course would be to proceed again to the coast. This would not be difficult. There were two umiaks at

the village. They patched the one riddled by Ankut bullets, and, loading their belongings into the two, the whole community set gayly forth downstream. To the Eskimos who had been held in subjection it was a happy deliverance, and their gentle natures brightened up wonderfully at the thought of escape. They would not allow either the boys or Harluk to do any work. They paddled, prepared meals, made camp, and showed their gratitude in a hundred ways, till they bade fair to spoil their deliverers.

CHAPTER XI

“THE VILLAGE WHERE NO ONE LIVES”

THE sudden summer was upon the Arctic, and in the days that followed the boys, in spite of their homesickness and anxiety in regard to the future, reveled in it. The tundra grew green, and seemed almost in a night to be spangled with countless flowers. Once, at camp, Joe wandered back into a grassy meadow, and found Harry there before him. Tears were running down his cheeks, but they were happy tears.

“Look, Joe!” he cried. “Come and see our old friend here. Oh, how good it is!”

The meadow was blue in patches with myosotis, — forget-me-nots, — and among them a yellow bumble-bee was buzzing and bustling in busy way, just as contentedly fussy and self-important as he would have been among the buttercups two thousand miles south. Down on his knees beside this messenger went Joe, with tears in his own eyes and thoughts of the Nantucket meadows of his childhood.

“And oh!” cried Joe. “Here’s another one. See!” This other one was a little brown butterfly that flitted gayly along in the warm breeze. Thus the two worshiped these spirits of sunshine, translated to their desolate northern wilderness for its brief summer festival. The snow-buntings and Arctic sparrows, already happy with nests and eggs, sang rapturously, and the ground squirrels sat at the mouths of their burrows and wrinkled their rat-like noses at the voyagers. It was a happy season, coming so soon after struggle, death, and disaster. The Eskimo boys and girls had lost that look of stolid misery which their life under the rule of the highbinders had given them, and blossomed into joyous, playful children. Even the river seemed to dance and dimple along its shallows.

Perhaps the daintiest spirit, the most chastely exquisite creature of the whole Arctic summer, is the little bird known to the naturalists as the hyperborean snowflake. Verily, a snowflake it is as it flits through the rosy glow of misty mornings over the tundra bog so richly carpeted with purple, yellow, and white. Here, in a fairy garden, grow the purple primrose, the golden cowslip, and the white-cupped dryas, and here flits and sings its dainty

song the snowflake bird. Its plumage is as pure as a newly opened lily, the spotless white showing more perfectly by contrast with the jet-black bill and wing tips. At the edge of its snowy tail are two black dots. All else is a fluttering flake of purest snow, and it seemed to the boys as if in it summer had transformed the frost-flakes into a living, breathing spirit of melody.

Thus for many days they glided along the placid shallows of this winding river, content in freedom, sunshine, and bits of summer, that reminded them of home. Yet by and by Harry became uneasy.

"Joe," he said one day, "it seems to me we have traveled far enough to reach the sea. Where do you suppose this river empties? Its course winds so that it is hard to say just which way it carries us, though, to be sure, the general direction is northerly, but don't you think it is pretty well to the east of north?"

"That's what is worrying me," confessed Joe. "In the nature of things we must come out north of our old camp at Icy Cape, but I had hoped for no great distance north of that. Yet no man knows what river's headwaters we struck. I hope it is not the Colville. That would land us a couple of hun-

dred miles to the east of Point Barrow, and unless we had phenomenal luck we 'd have to winter up here again."

"I would n't do it," cried Harry hotly. "I 'd sooner turn and tramp south across the tundra. We 'd at least be headed toward home, and every mile we made would be sure gain."

Thus anxiety came to them again, and they began to watch with care the general direction in which they were floating. It proved to be, as near as they could guess, northeast.

"This won't do," said Joe, "northeast is the trend of the coast up here; we 're not getting much nearer the sea. However, we 'll hold on a few days longer."

Neither Harluk nor the other Eskimos could help their knowledge of the river. The Eskimo knows the coast well and the streams for a few miles back of it. Beyond that, except in particular instances, the land is unknown to him. After another week, and just as they were about decided to camp and make a land reconnoissance to the westward, their stream took a turn to the northwest and they paddled on merrily. The course lay through low bluffs that bordered the river on either hand, and in these bluffs, one day, Harry

noted strata of dark stone. They landed, out of curiosity, and examined these black veins.

“Why, it’s coal!” exclaimed Harry in astonishment; and so it was, — a sort of semi-bituminous coal that is not so very different from cannel coal. The low bluffs were full of it in veins varying from a few inches wide to eight or ten feet. There was enough coal in sight to supply a city, with the promise of countless thousand tons in the veins beneath the surface. “Coal,” he explained to Harluk and the other Eskimos who had gathered about them, much interested by their enthusiasm, “to burn, makes fire, like wood.”

At this the men of the ice shook their heads incredulously. It was time for the mid-day meal, and Harry essayed to show them that he was right. He built a good fire of willow wood and piled bits of the black stones on it, but it would not ignite that way, and his Eskimo friends wagged their heads and murmured “Kukowillow,” which is an Eskimo word which may be freely translated “big fool.” Here Joe came to his rescue. He carefully built a cylindrical oven of the larger blocks that had fallen from the bluff, and started a snapping wood fire in it. Little by

little he added fine coal to this, and was soon gratified to find it ignited. The Eskimos looked on, with smiling incredulity at first, then with wonder, but as the fire grew and began to consume the oven itself, they calmly withdrew from the burning black stones. It was magic, and the stones did not really burn. Joe had only made them think so. Harluk knew he was a great wizard. He had seen his performances at Icy Cape, and this was another one. It was all very well for wizards to burn stones, but the Eskimos knew better than to try it.

This was the Eskimo solution of the matter. The coal measures of northern Alaska extend from the coast near Cape Lisburne eastward far into the interior. The rivers that run to the sea cut through them and expose vast quantities of the precious fuel. On the seashore at Cape Sabine the coal falls from the bluffs under the action of the frost, and may be picked up by the ton. With a little ingenuity this coal may be made to burn and give heat even by very primitive methods, yet the tribes freeze, and eat uncooked food, with these vast reservoirs of warmth untouched beneath their feet. They have seen it burn in the stoves and under the boilers of the

whaleships, yet they take no advantage of it. Some have tried to burn it in the open, and failing, were convinced that only the white man's magic could make use of it. Others have found heat enough in blubber and drift-wood or willow twigs, and do not care to try to utilize the more difficult fuel.

Some days later, they found their little river flowing gently into an arm of the sea which Joe, climbing a bluff and taking a survey, declared to be Wainwright Inlet. Harluk, too, recognized the place, and said that the river which they had traversed was the Koo of the tribes. Just north of them was Point Belcher, and Harluk pointed out, on the other side of the inlet, a place which he called "Nunaria," otherwise "The Village where No One Lives."

The story of this "Village where No One Lives," of the events which led up to its settlement and abandonment, is one of the most extraordinary which the Arctic has yet revealed. The annals of New Bedford whaling contain the first part of it. The traditions of the coast tribes reveal the latter part, the wild and tragic sequel. These last Harluk knew well, for the tale has come to be an epic, related about the blubber lamp during

the winter night, when the bitter wind blows without, and the Nunatak people are abroad and shout down the smoke-hole.

This is the story compiled from both sources : —

In the summer of 1871, forty or more splendid ships, the pick of the New Bedford fleet, were following the whales along this ice-bound coast. The pursuit had been one of more than common difficulty. The ice was everywhere, and again and again, even in midsummer, the ships had been in great danger from it. Boats were crushed by the shifting floes, and before September was fairly in, three staunch ships, the brig *Comet*, the barks *Roman* and *Ashawonks*, had been wrecked and their crews transferred to other vessels. The season was at an end, and the situation of the remaining ships one of grave peril, for the ice was closing rapidly around them and it seemed impossible to work out of it. There were not provisions enough to winter the crews, and frequent and serious consultations were held by the captains. By way of precaution, men were set to work building up the gunwales of the boats that they might better resist the waves, and they were sheathed with copper to keep the ice from

harming them. An expedition of three boats was now sent down the coast to see how far the ice extended. This returned and reported that it was utterly impracticable to get any of the main fleet out; that the Arctic and another vessel were in clear water below the fields which extended to the south of Blossom Shoals, eighty miles below the imprisoned crafts; and that five more vessels, now fast in this lower ice, were likely to get out soon. The leader also reported, what every man knew, that these free vessels would lie by and wait to aid their imprisoned comrades. It is a part of the whaleman's creed to stand by his mates. To remain with the imprisoned ships was to perish with them, and they decided to abandon them.

It was a sad day. The signals for departure, — flags at the masthead, union down, — were set, and with heavy hearts they entered their boats and pulled away, a mournful flotilla. Women and children, families of the captains, were there, and the keen north wind blew over the frozen sea, chilling the unfortunate fugitives to the marrow. At night they camped on the beach, turning the boats bottom upward and covering them with sails, making a comfortable refuge for the women and chil-

dren. The rest found shelter as best they might.

“On the second day out,” says one who took part in the expedition, “the boats reached Blossom Shoals, and there spied the rescue vessels lying five miles out from the shore and behind a long tongue of ice that stretched like a great peninsula ten miles farther down the coast. Around this point they were obliged to pull before they could get aboard. The wind blew a gale, the sea threatened the little crafts with instant annihilation, but still the hazardous journey must be performed, and there was no time to be lost in setting about it. The boats started on their almost hopeless voyage, the women and children stifling their fears as best they could. On rounding this tongue of ice, they encountered the full force of the southwest gale, and a sea that would have made the stoutest ship tremble. In this fearful sea the whaleboats were tossed about like corks. They shipped quantities of water from every wave that struck them, and all hands bailing could hardly keep them afloat. Everybody was soaked with freezing brine, and all the bread and flour aboard was spoiled. The strength of the gale was such that the Arctic,

after getting her portion of the refugees aboard, parted her cable and lost her port anchor, but brought up again with the starboard one, which held until the little fleet was ready to sail. By the second day all were distributed among the seven vessels, from two to three hundred souls each, — a total of 1219 refugees. They set sail, and reached Honolulu in safety.”

Thirty-four staunch vessels were thus abandoned to their fate, and only one, The *Minerva*, was released in safety the next summer from the grip of the frost king. More than a million dollars was abandoned to the ice and the Eskimos, and ruin brought home to many a fine old New Bedford shipping concern.

The sullen winter set in. The ice closed rigidly about the doomed ships scattered along the coast from Point Belcher to Blossom Shoals, and a wild carnival of loot began for the natives of the north coast. News seems to spread in strange ways in the Arctic. The Eskimo tells much, yet he learns more by the observation of his fellows. Most of all, however, he seems to have an instinct which is more subtle still; and the tribes learned the news in all these ways. To the place of great riches traveled all who had the means of travel. From

the bleak coast east to the mouth of the Mackenzie, from the sandy peninsula of Point Hope and from points between, each community saw another pack up and move, and hitched up their dogs and followed, knowing well that the prize for such a journey at such a time of year must be great, else it would not be attempted. By the time the winter sun ceases to rise in the southward, but merely lights the southern sky with a rosy glow at what should be noon, three thousand Eskimos had assembled and begun to build the greatest Eskimo village known to history.

The skin topeks were set up. Caves in the bluff became dwellings. Where the wind had swept the ledges bare, they quarried rough stone and built igloos of these, chinked with reindeer moss and banked with snow for warmth. Many of them, too, began to dismantle the ships and build rude cabins of the wood and sails. Such were the nondescript abodes of the new village, and here they settled down in the darkness and terrible cold of the Arctic midnight, content, for near at hand were provisions and loot such as had never been dreamed of in the wildest flights of Eskimo imagination. The looting went on continuously and peacefully, at first, for there

was more than enough for all. The village became crowded with cabin fittings, wrecked deck houses, spars, ropes, sails, and all the metallic paraphernalia of a full-rigged ship. In the holds they broke into the flour barrels and scattered the contents about in willful play, for they knew nothing of the value of flour. Hard bread they prized, but flour was then to them a thing of no meaning, and there are aged Eskimos alive to this day who will tell with sorrow how they wasted the precious stuff, throwing it at one another and setting it adrift down the wind in glee.

The ivory, they prized, the oil, and especially the whalebone, which they eagerly appropriated and took ashore, hiding much of it as well as they could from one another. Later, when all had been taken from the ships and trouble and distrust had come, the villagers began looting from each other.

But at first all went well. With plenty of the prized hard-tack, with meat in barrels, with oil in great profusion, and wood and iron galore, it seemed as if the Eskimo millennium was at hand, and that the tribes might live in peace and plenty here for a long time to come and — who knows? — out of their prosperity found a permanent city and develop a higher scheme

of Eskimo civilization than they had hitherto known. Yet it was not to be, and the very plenty that might have been their upbuilding became their undoing. The serpent of envy entered their below-zero Eden, and set tribe against tribe and family against family. Men began to quarrel over articles of loot aboard ship. There was not room to stow their wealth in the igloos, and the women and children fought over what was outside.

The supply of liquor had been in the main destroyed, but on one or two ships this had been overlooked in the haste of leaving, and after a time it was discovered. It was not very much among three thousand Eskimos, but a little liquor goes a long way among these hardy men of the north, and once this began to get in its work among them, no man can describe the extraordinary scenes which ensued. Tribal animosity which had been dulled by plenty and a common object grew keen again, and the men of one village fought with those of another until sometimes a whole tribe was wiped out. As the wild orgy increased and the supply of liquor gave out, they broke into the ships' medicine chests, and tinctures and solutions of deadly drugs were used with fatal effect.

The horror lasted until the spring sun was well above the southern horizon, and scarcely half the people of the new city were left to see him rise. These were half-clad, and emaciated by the terrible deeds and mishaps of the winter. The dogs, neglected and unfed, had gone "molokully" — crazy — with the cold and hunger, and were roaming the waste of snow, or were mercifully dead. The remnant of the people had no means and were in no condition to travel, yet travel they must. The daze of their orgy was over, and the place was become a place of horrors to them. Dead lay in every igloo, and in Eskimo land an igloo in which some one has died is henceforth a place of evil, and no man must take shelter there.

There were no doubt stores and material enough left in and about the vessels that were unburned to support the people remaining in comfort for a long time to come, and could they have had a chance to recuperate, they still might have made a village unique in size and prosperity, but they would have none of it.

Silently and in terror the remnant of the tribes scattered and hastened to their former homes, but only a part ever reached them. Sick and emaciated, their dogs dead or scat-

tered, the journey was one of hardship long to be remembered, and the miles were marked with the bones of those that fell by the way.

This is the story of "Nunaria," a place of ghosts and of the dead. To this day no Eskimo will willingly enter its precincts. The ice and gales of winter, the frosts and thaws of spring, the deluges of rain and the grass of summer, work hard to obliterate it, yet still it may be found, and its ruin tells the tale of one brief winter of too much plenty, and the evil effect of a sudden plethora of the good things of civilization and city life on the Innuut. With him, as with the rest of us, self-control is not easily learned where abstemiousness is continually forced. It takes a far greater man to stand sudden great prosperity than it does to survive lean years and narrow opportunities. Harluk expressed this in one brief Eskimo phrase. "Amalucktu amalucktu, peluk," he said. "Too much plenty is no good."

There is a brief sequel to the story. The next spring an enterprising trader brought up in his ship a three-holed bidarka from Unalaska. When the ship was stopped by the ice, he manned the bidarka, and went on, paddled by two men. He reached the village of death through the narrow leads opening

in the pack. Here he found no living thing save the foxes and crows making revel among the bodies of the dead. But he found much store of whalebone and ivory, — so much that he reaped a harvest and was able to visit the capitals of Europe in the style of a bonanza king. Yet, after all, what he got was not the half of the store the ships had accumulated during their summer cruise. What had become of the balance? Let us see.

Harluk would not join Harry and Joe in their exploration of Nunaria. It sufficed for him to point it out from the bluff opposite. They set out alone. Strange sights met their eyes in this village. Traces of former topeks could be found here and there by the white bones, which showed in the grass. Others built of stone had partly fallen in, but still in part retained their shape. From one of these a white fox bounded, and, on looking within, they found a litter of young foxes snuggled within the remnants of some ancient fur garments, among the bones of the man that had worn them. Here an arm bone was stretched out through the tundra grass, as if reaching up for aid. There a white skull grinned at them from the dark corner of a tumbled heap of rocks which had been a

home of the ancient village. They found the brass cover of a ship's binnacle over the ashes of a long-abandoned fire. The dark and mouldy remnants of an uneaten meal were in this strange pot, showing to what base uses the tribes had put the ship's instruments. Scattered about in inconceivable confusion that time could not obliterate were the useless fragments of the loot of the ships, — rotten ropes, decayed canvas, rusty iron, blocks, and wooden wreckage of all sorts, grown with tundra moss, half buried in waving grass, yet visible still in dismal disorder. There were many spots, very many, where this grass was longer and greener than the rest, and they knew that underneath were the bones of the dead of that dread winter of too much plenty.

In one of the igloos they found a couple of splendid walrus tusks, half hidden in a corner, and in two others single slabs of whalebone, still but little harmed by the weather and the passage of time.

“Queer there is n't more of this stuff,” said Harry, as he kicked out the slab of whalebone from the dark and grewsome hole.

“I don't think so,” replied Joe. “Of course the traders and whalers knew of the place and carried off all they could find.

They never got half that was on the ships, though. I imagine the natives never brought it off, but that it was burned or sunk with the vessels."

"Hum," said Harry. "But it might pay us to look pretty closely."

Joe looked at him with a new thought in his eye. "Do you think so?" he said, meditatively.

"Why not?" asked Harry in reply, and they continued their search. Yet they found nothing more of value among the igloos or on the tundra. It was after they had given up the search and were on their way back along the low bluff that they made a further discovery.

"Harluk told about part of the village that lived in what he called a 'kitekook.' What sort of an igloo is that?"

"That's so," replied Joe; "I had forgotten. Why, 'kitekook' is the Point Hope word for cave. We have n't seen any caves yet. They would be in the bluff, seems to me."

For a long time they searched the bluff without finding anything. The disintegrating forces of frost and thaw each spring change the face of all Arctic cliffs. Crumbled by the frost and torn off by the water, the

warm weather often brings the fronts down in little landslides. The streams gully through them and cut them away so that the face of nature often changes greatly in a single year. The low bluffs along the inlet showed many marks of this violence. By and by Joe, scrambling along the débris at the foot of the bluff, gave a shout to Harry, farther on. "Here's a wolf's den, or a cave, or something," he said. "Come and see it."

The wolf's den was a hole in the bluff, half smothered in the débris which had fallen and obscured it. There was hardly room to crawl in, but Joe managed it, while Harry waited outside in some excitement. In a moment Joe called out:—

"Here," he said in a smothered voice; "take this."

A splendid slab of whalebone was passed up through the hole. After a time Joe followed it, much besmeared with dirt, but with a radiant face.

"I think we've made a find, this time," he said excitedly. "That is one of the 'kite-kooks,' and it is chock-a-block with the finest bone you ever saw."

The slab which he had passed out was, indeed, a beauty, and was worth many dollars.

They proceeded with the hunt with great enthusiasm and found several other "kitekooks" well stored with bone. Joe's eyes snapped with excitement.

"There's fifty thousand dollars' worth of splendid bone stowed right in this cliff," he said, "and it has been waiting for us for twenty-five years. The people who came here that summer after cleaned up what was in the other igloos, but they never found this. Probably there had been a landslide that spring and blocked the caves. The Eskimos could not be hired to come here, and only they knew about it. It's a bonanza! Hurrah! this will pay for the loss of the Bow-head, twice over."

Harry examined the five caves that they found, and decided that Joe's estimate of the value of their find was a very conservative one. To him it seemed nearly double that, and after excitedly figuring the probable value, Joe was inclined to agree with him. It was certain that they had found a fortune, and the only question was as to how they might realize on it. The bone was worth that in San Francisco, to be sure, but they were a long way from San Francisco, and the problem of getting there themselves was still a great one.

Their great hope was that Captain Nickerson would be on the coast again with a vessel and would find them that summer. They decided to keep the presence of the bone a profound secret even from Harluk and his fellows. They returned to the camp and said very little about what they had seen. Harluk thought this reasonable.

“None but wizards,” he declared solemnly, “might unharmed visit a place of ghosts, and he saw that they even were wise enough not to talk about it.”

This find in the Village where No One Lives kept the boys chained to the locality, much to the sorrow of the Eskimos, who wished to get farther away from it. There were plenty of fish in the inlet, and wild ducks were tame and present in great flocks. They lived well, but they did not like to be so near the place of ghosts. But the boys were firm. It was midsummer, and just about the right time of year for ships to be off that coast, and they did not wish to leave their find. They decided that the bone must stay where it was until they could take it out and place it on a ship of their own, and they would better wait right there on the chance of such a ship. Thus they lingered on, week after week, in a

vain hope. No ship came. As a matter of fact, it was one of those seasons that Harluk and Kroo had predicted, when the Arctic pack hugs the coast and it is difficult and often impossible for ships to get beyond Blossom Shoals.

All too soon the brief summer waned, and their hopes waned with it. While they hesitated, the heavy sea ice pressed in nearer the coast and cut off any possible chance of a ship. The ducks flew away, the river froze over, and there was mush ice all along the coast where the pack had not frozen to the shore. The cold was coming on exceptionally early, and they were much dejected over the prospect. The wind blew keen from the north, and snow whitened the once blooming tundra. The winter was upon them before they knew it, so rapidly does it come in that land of ice.

In the midst of this trouble Harluk came to them with a face of good news.

“My brothers,” he said, “good luck is surely coming to us. The dogs have come back.”

Eight or ten gaunt dogs were eagerly snatching at food that the Eskimos threw to them; then, their hunger satisfied, they al-

lowed themselves to be tied up, and lay down by the topek doors in contentment.

The Eskimo dog grows very fond of the people with whom he is brought up, and never forgets them, no matter how long separated. Thus, though he runs away and sometimes roams wild over the tundra for months, he is almost sure finally to find his way back to the friends of his puppyhood. It was what had now happened.

Some hours afterward Joe found Harry gazing moodily at the icy sea with tears in his eyes. It was not the cutting wind that had put them there and Joe knew it. He laid his hand gently on his friend's shoulder.

"Cheer up, old fellow," he said, trying to smile and making hard work of it. "Cheer up, the worst is yet to come."

"I should say the worst was here," replied Harry dejectedly. "It's almost winter again and we are farther from home than ever. We have n't any ship for a refuge this time, either."

"I know it," said Joe, "and we've got to get out of this right now. We'll have to leave our bone behind, but that has been safe there a good many years, and I guess it will stay one more. At any rate, we'll risk

it. What do you say, old chap, if we go south?"

"What do you say if we have a little excursion to the moon?" said Harry bitterly; "the one seems as likely as the other."

"I don't think you ought to feel that way," replied Joe. "The tundra and the rivers are frozen, the dogs have come back, and I have a plan. We will not attempt to find a ship. I doubt if one is up as far as this this year. Nor will we try to meet one at Lisburne, the chances are too slim. We will pack up and start straight south. The traveling is good. The north wind will be at our backs, and we are used to the cold. It seems a bold scheme, but it has been done before. Funston made the trip north and back to the relief of shipwrecked whalers in the dead of winter, some years ago. He was no better fitted than we to endure the cold and the hardships. Come into the topek a minute and I'll show you something."

In the topek Joe unfolded the chart of northern Alaska, which was among the papers saved from the wreck of the Bowhead. He showed Harry the distance almost due south to the Yukon River, not five hundred miles. There they should strike the well-traveled

Yukon winter trail from St. Michael to Dawson City and find civilized men. The very thought of it made them both wild, so weary were they grown of barbarism and the frozen wilderness.

“Strong and well as we are, with a good dog team,” said Joe, “we ought to be good for fifteen miles a day, even in poor traveling. Let us call it a hundred miles a week. It should take us not over five weeks to reach the Yukon. Then with a good trail we can go either to Dawson City or St. Michael. In any case, it means that we get out and get home. It is now September. If we could reach St. Michael before the last of November, we might catch a late steamer for San Francisco or Seattle. At any rate, we would be among white men. It is better than staying on this coast for another winter, which is just what we ’ll have to do unless we start.”

It was rather a desperate venture, but neither was willing to live Eskimo fashion on Eskimo food for another eight months of terrible cold. It made their hearts sick to think of it. On the other hand, the thought of heading toward home, with a chance of reaching it, set the blood leaping in their veins again, and they went about preparation with

feverish haste. Fortune favored them, as it does the brave. The very next day a school of belated beluga came puffing and plunging alongshore headed south through the mush ice, looking like a foam-crested wave as they rolled along.

The Eskimos seized this opportunity with keen delight, and Harry and Joe joined in the hunting. The beluga is the stupid little white whale of the Arctic, fifteen or twenty feet long and white as milk. The whole community hastened out on the floes and in the umiaks on the seaward side of the school. Here, suddenly, they attacked them with shouting and shooting, with beating of paddles and thrusts of lances. A part of the school got away, but a dozen or more were shot, lanced, or driven ashore, where they stranded in shallow water and were easily killed. It was a feast in store for the natives and provision laid up for the winter, but it meant much more for the boys. The flesh of the beluga is not bad eating for man or beast, and it furnished supplies for themselves and dogs, sufficient to undertake the trip.

They were not long in getting away. The gratitude of the natives still held good, and they could have anything they wished. They

took five of the strongest dogs and a good sled. They loaded this with beluga meat, furs, a slab or two of whalebone slipped slyly in, "for a sample," as Joe said, ammunition, their papers, and the two repeating rifles. They did not ask Harluk to accompany them. Such a trip meant taking him from his wife and children for a long time, and he was perhaps needed for their support. He and his Eskimo friends would work down the coast to Icy Cape and join the little village there.

Good-bys were said with genuine sorrow on both sides, and the boys set their faces to the south, toward new and stranger adventures.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE HEART OF BLIZZARDS

JOE estimated that they made their fifteen miles the first day. The tundra was smooth, and had just snow enough for good traveling. The next, the dogs, unused to their masters, balked, and they hardly did five, to their great vexation. The day after was better, and with patience and firmness they taught the animals that they must obey. Then some rough traveling bothered them. Still they got on, and at the end of the first week they had probably eighty miles to their credit. They were hopeful, and planned to do more the next, but they made Sunday a day of rest.

It was a solemn thing, this cutting loose from friends and supplies and braving the unknown interior, and it made them thoughtful of observances that they had neglected in igloo and topek. Harry took from his inner pocket the little Bible that he had carried all through the trip, and, opening its pages, stained with Bering Sea water, at random,

found the book of Psalms. He read aloud to Joe, and the simple grandeur of thought and eloquent beauty of phrase steadied and heartened them both. Then they talked long of their home and friends, and, resting in the shelter of their tent while the dogs lay content in the snow outside, felt that the observance of the day had been worthy, and a wise thing. They made it their custom thereafter. Yet in all this talk of home Harry never mentioned Maisie to Joe. But that is not saying he did not think of her.

The fourth day of the next week carried them over a range of hills to a second, higher table-land. They had been helped in their journey by a river, on whose level, snow-covered ice they worked southward at a good rate of speed. Its course seemed fairly direct, and they made in speed what they lost by not going in a straight line. The four days must have added nearly another fifty miles to their journey, and Joe was jubilant. He began to predict that they would reach the Yukon in good season, and get out by steamer from St. Michael that fall.

The very next morning they waked cold, in spite of their furs, and found a gray and sunless dawn, across which a keen north wind

sang. They hitched up and pressed on, but the sky grew grayer, and soon the world was a whirling mass of snow. They drifted before this wind for a mile or two, the snow getting deeper, and their progress slower every moment. Soon it was half knee deep, and the load began to be heavy for the dogs. Now and then they looked up at the boys wistfully, as if wondering why they did not seek shelter. For two hours they struggled on, not so much because they wished to as that on the level plain there seemed to be no cover.

By and by Harry began to wonder if he was dreaming. The snow under foot seemed to be trodden and the walking easier. Then he began to have what he thought were fleeting glimpses of shadowy forms that surrounded them, yet never came near enough to be really seen. He spoke of this to Joe, who had been plugging along in a sort of weary daze behind the sled while Harry led the way for the dogs.

Joe waked up at this, and together they examined the ground. There certainly were countless tracks of hoofs under foot, though the rapidly falling snow blotted them out very soon.

“They are caribou tracks,” said Harry.

“But where are the caribou?” asked Joe.

“All about us,” replied Harry. “I keep thinking I see them, but the snow is so thick and blinding that I can’t be sure. See!”

They had stopped during this consultation, and, looking directly back, they could see dim antlered forms that divided as they approached, and went to the left and right of them, passing on into the blur of snow. An immense herd of caribou, perhaps miles long, was drifting before the gale, and by some strange chance had inclosed them within itself. The animals, stupid, and dazed by the snow, paid little attention to them, but pressed aimlessly on, as if blown by the storm. It was a strange experience, this being the centre of an invisible herd that made a path for them in the wilderness of snow. It lasted for another hour, and yet they had hardly a glimpse of the deer. It came to an end when they reached a broad gully that marked the course of a stream. In the shelter of the bank of this the snow had drifted deep, and here the tracks swerved and left them in the snow.

“We’d better camp here,” said Joe. “We’ve had enough for one day, and here is a good spot.”

The weary dogs dropped panting at the word, but Joe took a rifle from the sled.

“It seems a shame,” he said, “after they’ve broken a path for us for hours, but I want one of those caribou.”

He stepped back a few rods into the fog of the storm, and in a moment a single shot sounded. After making the dogs fast, Harry went back to him. A fine buck lay dead with a bullet through his heart.

“I could have had more,” said Joe, “but one is all we can carry with our other luggage.”

As they stood, two gray, shaggy forms sprang out of the storm, and would have fallen upon the dead caribou, but seeing the boys they hesitated and drew back with red tongues hanging from between their gleaming white teeth. A shot from the rifle laid one low, and the other vanished like a flash. They were gray wolves, which always hang about the flank of the caribou herds and fall upon the weak or wounded. Half frozen as the boys were, they skinned and cut up the caribou the first thing. Then in the shelter of the gulley they set up their tent, and with their meat and sled-load inside it banked it deep in the drift. For the dogs they dug a snow igloo and made them fast to the sled, with which they blocked the entrance to it. Thus the

dogs, well fed on deer meat, had shelter sufficient for their needs in spite of the blizzard. They themselves were snug in the little tent banked deep in the drift. There was no chance to get wood for fuel, but here they learned the wisdom of Harluk, who had insisted that they make a part of their load a seal poke of blubber and a rude lamp. With this they toasted caribou steak, and it added to the warmth of their den.

The storm continued for a week, the third since their departure, and when it broke and they struggled on through the deep drifts, they at once realized that their progress must be slow indeed. Yet, after all, they made about ten miles a day by patient toil, one going ahead and breaking a road for the dogs, the other following the sled and helping it along. They had ten days of beautiful weather, too, and at their end they guessed that they had made, altogether, nearly two hundred miles south. It was early October now, with the Arctic winter well upon them, yet they did not suffer from the cold, so well had they learned Eskimo methods of defense against it. To their great delight, about this time they began to find timber. It was small, it is true, and consisted of scattered clumps



TOILING ON THROUGH THE DRIFTS

of little birches and alders, with here and there a pigmy fir. They danced and shouted about this first fir till the dogs no doubt thought them "molokully." It seemed like an outpost of the home land of trees, real trees! They had seen none for a year and a half, and were fairly homesick for timber. They had wood now for their cooking, yet the timber was a hindrance to them. The wind-swept and hardened snow gave way under its protection to soft and fluffy drifts, which made the traveling far more difficult. And about this time they caught another storm. A genuine blizzard, this was, with some fall of snow, but mainly wind and cold.

They were obliged to camp, as before, nor did the gale let up for three weeks. It was maddening, but there was no help for it. These terrific Arctic gales sometimes last for literal months, and they were fortunate to escape as they did.

They fed the dogs lightly during their enforced leisure, but even thus their provisions began to run low, and they were anxious. It began to look as if it would be months instead of weeks before they reached the Yukon, yet they were not discouraged. It was better to steadily, though slowly, progress

toward home than to wait in inaction. When fair weather came, Joe decided that they must hunt before going farther. This they did for two days steadily, plunging round through the waist-deep snow, with a fox, a white owl, and several ptarmigan as the result, just about what they ate during that time. This was not worth while, and they struggled south again, with the fast lowering sun as a guide. Another week passed with slow progress, but the timber got thicker and ptarmigan became plentiful. There was hardly need to shoot these. They were tame enough to be knocked over with a stick.

It was weary work, and the last of their supplies was gone when they came out on a low bluff, the bank of a considerable river. Below them, on the river ice, was a winding mark through the snow. It might be a caribou trail, and they plunged eagerly down to it.

There were the footprints of moccasins and marks of a sled!

Harry felt much as he thought Robinson Crusoe must have when he saw the famous footprints in the sand. They had been so long without seeing human beings that it seemed as if the country must be utterly unin-

habited, but this proved something different. They turned and followed this trail up river. Then they rounded a bluff, saw smoke and heard the barking of many dogs, and from a cluster of timber huts a group appeared, and a man came to greet them.

"Nagouruk, nagouruk," shouted Joe, and greeted him in Eskimo, to which the other replied hesitatingly in a few words of the same language. Others, men, women, and children, poured out of the village and received the two adventurers hospitably.

"We'll camp with these people for a while," said Joe. "We must till we can get provisions enough to move on."

Harry assented. Indeed, both boys were heartily tired of their struggle against the odds of snow and fast approaching darkness. They were assigned an empty igloo, but preferred to build one of their own out of wood, brush, and snow, which had the merit of being clean. Their new-found friends were generous, had plentiful supplies of dried fish and frozen meat, and the boys lingered with them at first to rest. Later, the midwinter blizzards made it impossible for them to travel.

The inland Indians of northern Alaska are

few, but scattered villages of them may be found along the larger rivers. They are much like the Eskimos in their habits and dress, but are taller and of stronger build. Their dialect is different in many respects from that of their cousins of the coast, yet they have many words in common, and meet in trade often enough to be able to talk to one another. The boys learned that the river on which they dwelt flowed into the sea to the westward, and were convinced from their chart that they had reached the headwaters of the Kowak, which empties into Kotzebue Sound. When they talked of going on, the Indians told them it would be impossible. The snows, they said, were very deep, which the boys knew to be true. The country to the south was one of rugged mountains, which they would be unable to cross. Besides, they argued, what was the need? As soon as any one could travel in the spring, they themselves were going down river to meet the tribes of the great sandspit at the meeting of rivers with the sea. Thither, they said, came all the tribes of the coast to meet those of the rivers and exchange goods. Sometimes, too, ships appeared, and they would perhaps find white men there.

Thus, still baffled, the two waited doggedly for the spring, hopeful still, not giving way to useless repinings, yet very weary of the bonds of frost that held them fast. The Indians lived a simple life, not so very different from that of their Eskimo friends. They kept their igloos in severe weather. When it was mild, they trapped red and white foxes, wolverines, and ermine, and kept a keen eye out for caribou, whose coming meant a feast and many hides for traffic in the spring trading-meet, to which they looked forward. The sun vanished and came again. The winter solstice passed, and day by day he rode a little higher in the southern sky. February came and March, with its wild gales, and the flying snow that drifted back and forth across the country in clouds that obscured the sun at noon, and sometimes wrapped the igloos deep beneath its whelming white volumes, again drifted away from them and left them half bare to the keen winds; then April with its mild air, a sun that left them little night and settled the snow till it was as hard as a floor where packed in solid drifts. The Indians prospered, and the boys shared their prosperity. Early in April a great herd of caribou shambled by the village, and the whole

community turned out to slaughter them. Never had they killed so many deer; indeed, far more were shot than could be properly attended to, and many were left to the wolves. There was little hunting to this. The stupid caribou, running hither and thither, were shot down with repeating rifles, which are as plentiful among the wild tribes of Alaska as among civilized hunters. Then the herd, so great that the slaughter seemed in no wise to diminish it, passed on.

“Our white visitors,” said the head man of the village, “have brought good fortune with them. There shall be a feast.”

“Look here,” said Harry to Joe privately, on hearing this; “you don’t suppose this is any seal’s head business, this one, do you?”

“Oh, no,” said Joe, “this is to be a real banquet, I think.”

A real banquet it was, indeed. The largest igloo in the village was the scene, everybody in the place was present, and the amount of deer meat eaten was astonishing. Then there followed an entertainment in the nature of private theatricals. Each hunter in turn gave a description of the most exciting event in his life, suiting the action to the word, and making of it an exceedingly interesting and

dramatic recital. Humorous scenes in everyday life, and amusing mishaps in hunting and fishing, were also acted out in realistic fashion, and brought shouts of laughter from all.

The crowning number in the entertainment, however, was a cake walk done by the boys, who blackened their faces with soot and gave the burlesque with much spirit. They were called upon to repeat this until they were obliged to quit from sheer weariness, and then they laughed themselves out of breath at the queer antics of their friends, who began immediately to imitate this novel form of entertainment. It was the first really hearty laugh they had had for a long time, and it did them both a world of good.

Then came the start down river, and the bustle of preparation, together with the homeward thought, put them in great spirits. Half a dozen sleds, each with its team of dogs, were piled high with provisions, caribou hides, fox, ermine, and wolverine pelts, and the whole community started down the stream on the hard settled snow. The boys computed that they had a journey of two hundred miles ahead of them, taking into account the windings of the river, and that their destination was the sandspit at Hotham Inlet. The In-

dians verified this on being shown the chart, and seemed to have a good understanding of a map. They moved by leisurely stages, stopping often for a day or two to rest or on account of bad weather. Yet the weather in the main was delightful, varying between the freezing-point and perhaps zero or a little below, with a dry air and mainly a bright sun that made it a pleasure to be alive. In traveling, the head man of the village led, over the hard crust, or breaking a path through softer snow on rude snowshoes. His own team and sled followed, then another team with a man or boy leading, and so on. The women and children strung along between the teams where the snow was soft, or on either side where it was hard. The dogs were intelligent and well trained, and the work of guiding them thus in single file was not difficult.

Early May found them a hundred miles toward their destination, and here, in one day, many interesting things happened. They had found their two slabs of whalebone, brought from the Arctic coast, of great value to them in trade. They had split one of these into small strips and peddled them out in barter to the men of the tribe, who coveted

whalebone, and were as eager as stage Yankees for a trade. They had bought with this, among other things, two pair of rude snowshoes, and on the day I speak of, while the tribe rested, they started down river on an exploring trip. It was warm and bright, and thawed a little in the sun in sheltered nooks.

The Kowak in its middle course winds among cliffs, carving its way through high bluffs on one side, leaving alluvial stretches of level flats at the base of other heights opposite. From one of these sheer bluffs, facing the south, wind and sun had taken the snow, and as they approached they saw sticking from the dark soil of its surface white objects like weather-worn logs of driftwood.

"Funny!" said Joe; "they look like bones, those logs. See, there are some that look like the knuckle-bone of a ham, and there are others like rib-bones."

"Yes," said Harry, taking up the simile, "and there are two that stick out of the frozen mud like an elephant's tusks, only they are curved too much and about fifteen feet long. Let's get nearer."

As they approached, their interest gave way to wonder. The seeming bones were bones in very truth, piled fantastically and protrud-

ing in strange profusion. Harry climbed by knobs and steps of bone part way up the bluff and shouted down to Joe.

“These are tusks, mastodon tusks, sticking right out of the bank, and here is a bit of the skull sticking out with shreds of hide and hair on it. There must be a whole one frozen into the bluff here.”

Joe climbed up and viewed the remains with him. It really seemed as if, concealed in the frozen mud behind the great tusks, the whole creature might be preserved, in cold storage as one might say, kept during the long centuries, and exposed by the crumbling of the bluff during the rush of the river torrent in spring. An astonishing number of bones were in this place, all of the mastodon, and the only explanation seemed to be that in the forgotten ages when the frozen zone was a warm one and the mastodon roamed there in large numbers, this ground must have been a deep bog, in which many of the creatures became mired and were in a great measure preserved, as peat preserves things. The boys settled it in this way to their own satisfaction, at least.

“Come on,” cried Joe, in exuberance of spirits, “let’s ride the elephant.”

“ Ride the mastodon, you mean,” replied Harry ; and each scrambled for a tusk. “ Get up ! ” cried Harry, “ cooning ” along to the tip of his tusk. “ Get up old fellow and give us a ride. Great Scott, he ’s moving ! ”

The tusks of the mastodon, moving together, dipped gently and easily downward and both boys shot off them into space.

It was a matter of twenty feet to the soft snow, and they plunged into it out of sight.

Behind them came the great tusks, hundreds of pounds of weathered ivory, plunging through the snow nearer the base of the cliff. They missed the two by a little, but they missed them. Harry felt himself smothered in a whirl of snow, then falling again for a short distance, and finally brought up on a soft turf, where he lay for a moment half dazed by the thud with which he struck. Then he scrambled to his feet and looked around. He was in a low-roofed, wide cavern, dusky with a greenish pale twilight. Joe was sitting up on the ground by his side, rubbing his elbow and leg alternately and looking foolish, as no doubt he felt.

“ Where are we, anyway ? ” asked Joe, and the query was pertinent if the answer which he got was not.

“Riding the elephant,” replied Harry, with a rueful grin.

Over their heads, ten feet away in the snow roof through which they had come, were four holes which let in the nebulous twilight by which they saw. They and the mastodon tusks had come that way. To get back was another matter.

They looked about with much curiosity not untempered with dismay. They were beneath the crust of an enormous drift that the winter storms had whirled over the mastodon cliff. Under their feet was a mixture of mud and bones from the cliff, carpeted with grass and moss. Around them grew willows. The slender top branches of these had been caught by the first damp snow of early autumn and bent beneath it till they twined, holding the bulk of it up. This had frozen there and the succeeding snows had piled above it, leaving the place free, an ideal natural cold frame for the shrubs and grass of the bottom land. These appreciated the shelter, and feeling the thrill of spring in their dark world, were already putting forth young green leaves. Up and down stream the cavern extended indefinitely. On one side it ended abruptly against the cliff, on the other it tapered down to the river

ice, already worn thin on its edge and beginning to thaw.

For an hour they wandered back and forth in this strange cavern, their eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness. It was fortunate that this had not happened a few weeks later. Then the freshening flood of the river would no doubt have drowned them like rats in a hole. Now they were free — to wait for the flood, unless they could get out. But both boys were Yankees, and there is always a way out of a scrape, though it sometimes takes a Yankee to find it. Joe suggested that they climb the stubby willows and thence dig their way up, but his plan failed, for he could not get footing enough to get through the snow. Instead, he fell again to the bottom and rubbed his other leg. Harry suggested the plan that ultimately succeeded. With his knife he cut stout willow stakes and sharpened them at the end. Then walking toward the ice till they were blocked by the low roof, they began to dig a tunnel slanting upward and outward. It was a long dig through frozen crust and layers of damp snow, but they finally emerged like ground squirrels in the spring, and found the glare of the sun on the snow quite blinding.

That night in camp the head man of the tribe came to the boys to trade. He wanted more whalebone, and he offered them things which they had not seen before. These were rough ornaments of green jade, some mere bits of stone, others rudely chipped into shapes. One of these was a rude image of Buddha such as Harry had seen in Chinese collections. Harry marveled at this greatly, but the Indian could give no explanation concerning it except that his father had got it in trade from a coast native. By what strange mutations this had come from its Oriental fatherland may never be known, but the north has its routes of trade as have other regions. Things go from hand to hand among the tribes, and this had probably passed in centuries of time through Tartar tribes to the Chuckchis, over to the Diomedes, down the coast to Hotham Inlet, and up the river to the father of the head man. Now it was on its way back to the sea, and may ultimately reach its fatherland by circumnavigating the globe. Who knows?

It was while examining these jade ornaments that Harry noted something else that gave him a start of surprise. He thought at first it was a yellow and dirty image of a seal

carved from a walrus tooth, such as he had bought at the Diomedes as a curio and lost in the sinking of the Bowhead. He picked this up carelessly and was astonished at its weight. He put the point of his knife to it and it left a clear, dull yellow streak. Then he passed it to Joe without a word.

It was a two ounce nugget of pure gold, hammered or carved into that rude semblance of a seal which is the delight of the Eskimo image maker. Joe's eyes snapped at sight of it and he bought it forthwith, though he had to give a good deal of bone for it. The head man had seen his eyes snap when Harry handed it to him, and made him pay accordingly.

The head man could not tell whence this little image of pure gold came except that he had got it in trade from a man of the coast tribes who came in to the sandspit to trade from along the coast to the south. Like the jade Buddha, it might have passed from hand to hand for a long distance.

As they continued their journey, another tribe joined them, coming down a tributary of the Kowak; then others came, and soon the little expedition was a large one, steadily and leisurely progressing down river. It was

toward the end of May. The days were long and warm ; indeed, there was no night, for though the sun set for a few hours each day, only a gentle twilight marked his absence. The tributaries from the hills were running free of ice and threatened to flood the surface of the river, which was still solid. Signs of the spring break-up were numerous, and when the little army reached a long winding canyon among abrupt hills, there was much discussion whether they should continue on the ice or take to the banks. The easy but unsafe route of the main river ice was decided upon, and they entered between the hills and pressed on. They traveled rapidly now, and there was much uneasiness among the Indians, who seemed to fear something from behind. The ice was solid in the main, yet in spots it was flooded, and the increase in volume and rush of the water beneath had worn holes through it in other places. They pressed on with all the speed they could command, watchful always of the menace from behind.

It was on the second day that it came. They were between perpendicular bluffs, difficult if not impossible to climb, when a shout went up from those in the rear. As if at a signal, every one stopped and listened. Far

behind them could be heard a dull sound, faint, yet ominous. Somehow it reminded Harry of a still spring night when he had been boating late on the Charles River, and had heard across the water the steady hum of electric cars, speeding hither and thither in the city, a vibrant undertone like the quivering of tense wires in a gale.

A shout went from one end of the long line of sledges to the other. "Emik kile! Emik kile! Gur!" it said. "The water is coming! The water is coming! Go!"

At the word dogs and men, women and children, sprang from listening immobility into intense action. The dogs surged against their collars, and the sleds bounded forward. The men, shouting, ran beside them, urging them on with whip and voice. Mothers caught their smaller children to their shoulders, the older ones scampered beside them, and all rushed forward down the river, fleeing from that menacing hum, which was drowned for the moment by their own uproar. On they went, splashing across the flooded places, daring the thin edges of the water-holes, unmindful of the danger under foot, thinking only of what was bearing down upon them, still miles behind. As they plunged on, they

scanned the rude cliffs anxiously for a gully or a break that would give them passage to the upland, but they found none. Little need to lash the dogs; their own instinct told them the danger only too well. Their tawny sides panted, and their tongues hung from their dripping jaws.

A half mile, and still no escape to the right or the left. The women and children kept up with wonderful endurance, yet the pace was telling on them, and the weaker already lagged behind.

They had ceased to shout and urge one another on now. The race for life took all their breath. Out of the unknown distance behind them the low vibrant hum had increased to a grinding roar, in which there were sounds like cannon-shots, — the bursting of the ice under the pressure of the oncoming flood. Just ahead of Harry a youngster stumbled, then sprang to his feet, limping badly. The fall had wrenched his ankle, and he could no longer run. Harry hesitated for a second. There was an indescribable terror of that mighty uproar thrilling through him. What was the life of a little Indian boy to him? But it was only for a second, this hesitation. Then with a gasp of shame at the thought,

he snatched the youngster to his shoulder, and ran on, panting for breath, his nerves quivering with the bodily fear which no man can avoid, yet strong in the determination that his manhood should not fail in the crisis.

The roar of the flood suddenly grew louder yet, and he looked behind as he fled. Round a bend in the river he caught a glimpse of what was coming. The ice sprang into the air in great cakes, that were caught by a white wall behind and crushed into whirling rubble. It did not seem to come fast, this great white wall of ice and foam, yet it gained on them rapidly. In this look behind he saw Joe. He was near the end of the line of flight, helping along an Indian grandmother, who bore in her arms her little granddaughter, while the mother with a babe stumbled along at her side, her black eyes wide with terror. Their dogs with the loaded sled had outrun them both in this wild race.

Cries of encouragement sounded ahead once more. Those in the front of flight had seen a gully in the bluffs through which they might escape. Harry saw them turn toward this, and he stumbled and gasped along under his burden with renewed hope. Dogs and men foremost in the race leaped into this

gully and scrambled upward. He was near it now, running in a sort of bad dream, with the tremendous crushing roar of the flood seeming to overwhelm him in its waves of sound. Cannon boomed in this uproar, volleys of musketry pulsed through it, and the steady hoof-beats of the white horse cavalry of the flood rolled deafeningly on. Now he was at the bank, and plunging up it, too weak to do anything more than drop with his burden at the safety line. He was among the last to reach safety, but Joe was behind him.

The Indian mother with her babe was at the edge of the ice. Twenty feet behind them were Joe and the older woman and the child. Behind them again, not a dozen rods away, rolled the great white wave in the forefront of the flood. The river ice swelled to meet this wave. It rounded up, bulged, burst, and was tossed in the air in huge cakes, springing a dozen feet upward, engulfed in the white seething wall as they came down. In front of this the grandmother fell, sending the girl rolling ahead of her on the ice. Joe snatched up the child, turned as if to help the woman, and then the ice lifted under him, sending him spinning toward the bank. A moment and the ice burst beneath his feet.

A great cake rose and tossed him up, still clinging to the child, and then he was half smothered, bruised, and soaked in a whirl of ice-cold water, and sank and rose on the edge of the flood, washed into the eddy that whirled in the gully, and still he clung half unconsciously to the child.

It was the little one's father that pulled him out, with Harry a good second, yet distanced by paternal love. The flood was roaring through the canyon, breaking its fierce way to the sea, but the careless travelers were safe from its tumult; all but the old grandmother, whose devotion to the child had cost her her life. She had found the death that is so common to the Eskimo and the other folk of the wild north, — to vanish into the white arms of the flood, or go out to sea with the ice.

They traveled on by land, over melting snow, and across ravines in which splashed torrents. The Kowak was open to the sea, and summer navigation had begun.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MEETING OF TRIBES

THE Kirghis and Tartars of eastern Europe and Central Asia have held annual trading fairs from a time beyond which record does not go. Their restless progenitors, moving eastward, took the custom with them to the shores of the northern Pacific, northeast to Bering Sea and the limits of Siberia, and with them it must have crossed the narrow ice-ridden straits and found a resting-place in Arctic America. The great sandspit between Hotham Inlet and the waters of the ocean, at the head of Kotzebue Sound, has been the scene of this meeting for no one knows how many centuries. When the chinook winds melt the snows, and the Arctic ice pack retreats northward from Bering Sea and the straits, thither the tribes flock from hundreds of miles in all directions. Down the Kowak, the Selawik, and the Noatak rivers from the far interior come the taller, more distinctly Indian-featured men of the mountain fastnesses

and scant timber, bringing jade from their mysterious hills, and fox, ermine, wolverine, and caribou pelts. From Point Hope and the coast far to the north come the squat tribes of the sea line with their ivory, blubber, whalebone, and white bearskins. From the Diomedes and East Cape sail the dwellers on the straits, their umiaks built up with skins on the sides, that the rush of waves may not overwhelm them in mid sea, their wives and children at the paddle, and their leathern sails spread to the favoring gale. From King's Island, rocky eyrie to the south, where they dwell in huts perched like swallows' nests on the side of sheer cliffs, come others, while even the far shore of Norton Sound sends its contingent.

Wives, children, dogs, boats, sleds, and all earthly possessions they bring, leaving nothing behind but the winter igloo with its entrance gaping lonely where barbaric life had swarmed. They set up their topeks on the sandspit, which, for eleven months in the year so desolate and bare, now seethes with life. They visit back and forth. They exchange news of the berg-battered coast and the snow-smothered interior, and they trade. Hunting and fishing and trapping is business with an

Eskimo ; trade is his dissipation. During the weeks of this annual fair, things pass from hand to hand, and come back and are traded over again, in the pure joy of bargaining. Not only inanimate objects pass current, but the tribesmen, in the exuberance of barter, sell their dogs, their children, and sometimes their wives. It is a mad carnival of exchange.

The spirit of barter was in the air, and the boys found themselves entering keenly into it, yet with an eye to the future rather than for the purposes of mere trade. Their future travel must be by water, and they wanted an umiak, but those who had them also wanted them. They found one that belonged to a Point Hope man, however, that could be bought, but not at the price which they could pay. In vain they offered caribou hides, wolverine pelts, and almost everything they had. The price was not sufficient, and they would have given up had the eye of the Eskimo not lighted on the jade Buddha. Harry noted his interest in this, and the Yankee in him rose up.

He vowed that the bit of green stone was priceless and could not be parted with on any account. The Eskimo offered various articles for it. Harry would not sell. The owner



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increased the price. Harry turned his back with much indifference. He remembered the lesson of his trading with the little people of the Diomedes. How long ago that seemed! But the recollection of it was still there. Joe looked on this with much interest, well concealed. He had failed to buy the umiak. If Harry could do it, he was glad, but it would not do to show his gladness. At length, baffled, after offering everything but what the boys wanted, the Point Hope man went away. Joe laughed at Harry, who was chagrined. But the next day the Eskimo came back, bearing the umiak, which was a small one, upside down on his shoulders. He staggered beneath its weight, and it so nearly covered him that only his feet appeared. It had a ludicrous appearance of walking by itself. He emerged from beneath this and laid it at Harry's feet.

“Will the white men give me the little stone for this?” he asked. With wonder in his heart Harry waited a moment, not to seem to yield too easily. Then he passed over the bit of jade and placed his hand on the umiak. The bargain was completed.

Thus it is with the Innuït. He is a shrewd trader, yet, sometimes, for no explainable reason, will give his all for a bauble, and in

this he is perhaps not so very different from white men, after all. This peculiar trade left the boys with much merchandise still on their hands, and with this they bought trade goods and supplies for the furtherance of their journey. They sold their dogs and sled, and prepared for a boat trip to Bering Straits, where they might find ships. Failing in this, they planned to work south along the coast. Under no conditions would they go north. They had had enough of that.

About this time they took an inventory of their possessions. They had a tent, umiak, rifles, and ammunition, flour, sugar, salt, matches, and clothes rather the worse for wear, but new muckalucks. They had a few battered kitchen utensils, sufficient for rough camp housekeeping, a little dried fish, and some caribou meat, but not much. They had also vigorous health, courage, and a great desire to get home, and they planned to make a start soon, but while they planned things happened.

As may be imagined, among such a horde of barbarians from strange villages all was not law and order. At first the excitement of trading and the novelty of the situation kept everybody busy, but by and by barter

got to be an old story. Contests and games became prevalent, trials of strength in wrestling, shooting-matches, blanket-tossing, in which if no one volunteered to be tossed they went out and caught some one, who was tossed whether he needed it or not. Barbarians are like children, and those who lost at the games were not always good-natured. But the sport of all others at this meet seemed to be football. Not the Rugby game, but a sort of go-as-you-please match, in which a few started, then newcomers joined the weaker side, till hundreds swept back and forth across the tundra, sometimes for many hours. There were no rules to this game; it was simply get the ball back any way you could, and some of these ways proved to be rough indeed. Yet all these things caused only minor fracasés and individual discontent. There was another matter which threatened to make things more serious, and in fact did so. That was the making of "hootch."

If you mix flour and water and let it ferment, then distill the mixture by means of a rude apparatus, the result is "hootch." Probably the coast natives learned this method from some renegade white man; then the business spread. It came to the sandspit

that summer, and, as a result, old single-barreled shotguns were in great demand. If you take one of these and put the butt of the barrel in a good hot fire, the block becomes unbrazed from the breech and the barrel is a tube. It serves as the worm of a primitive still. Many of these machines were set up in the topeks on the sandspit, and the resultant hilarity became noticeable long before the boys discovered its cause. They foresaw trouble, but they could do nothing to prevent it. They did remonstrate with old Panik, the head man of the tribe with which they had come down river, and toward whom they had very friendly feelings. Indeed, since the kindness of the village to the boys had been in part repaid by their help in saving the youngsters from the river ice, there had been strong bonds of brotherhood between them all.

Panik had become infected with the desire to make the new drink, and had paid many skins to a Chuckchis for the old gun. He built a small fire at his topek door, and while Harry argued with him he thrust the butt of the barrel into it with a cheerful grin.

“You shall drink with me,” he said. “The new drink is very good.” And then there was an explosion, and Panik sank to the ground

without a cry. The old gun was loaded, and the heat of the fire had discharged it. The chief was dead, and Harry and Joe were much pained and horrified by the accident.

They helped bury him with much ceremony and genuine sorrow, but the matter did not end here. The Indian is more vindictive than the Eskimo, and the relatives of the old chief took up the matter. They blamed the Chuckchis who had sold the gun, even intimated that he had loaded it purposely, and they demanded either his life in return, or the payment of a large amount of goods. The Chuckchis, as I have said before, are a truculent and warlike people, and this one resolutely and scornfully refused reparation. Then there was a fight, and the Chuckchis killed one of Panik's relatives with his own hand.

The feud thus begun spread rapidly, the hootch adding fuel to the flames, and in twenty-four hours the camp was a pandemonium. All took sides, though few knew just why, or with whom, and a wild free fight ensued. Eskimos, maddened with the vile liquor, ran amuck, killing whatever came within reach, until they were themselves killed, and life was nowhere safe for a moment.

It was of no use for the boys to interfere,

and they soon saw that their only safety lay in flight. This agreed with their plans to get away as soon as possible, and they were fortunate in having a boat and sufficient outfit. Accordingly they quietly loaded the umiak, bade good-by to such of the villagers as were sober and they could reach without danger, and were about to embark when the Point Hope man who had sold them the umiak appeared. He was tipsy, like most everybody else, and in quarrelsome mood. He laid his hand on the umiak and demanded it back, saying that he was not satisfied with the terms of the trade. It was of no use to reason with him; he was not in a condition to understand things. Behind him came other Eskimos, also armed and equally tipsy, and matters looked decidedly unpleasant. It seemed as if they would have to fight to retain their property.

Joe took the matter in hand. "Stand by," he said, "ready to shove off; I'll reason with this fellow." He beckoned the Eskimo back a step from the water, and the other followed with a satisfied leer. Probably no one can be so insolent in the eyes of a white man as a half-drunken barbarian when he thinks he is safe in the abuse of power.

“You say the umiak is yours?” said Joe, quite humbly. Harry’s blood began to boil at this submissive tone, but he held his tongue.

“Yes,” replied the Eskimo, stepping nearer to Joe threateningly, “it is mine, and you must — ugh!”

Joe had suddenly caught a wrestling grip on him, and before the tipsy man of the ice knew what had happened, he was swung into the air and sent whirling into the shallow water of Kotzebue Sound, gun and all. Joe sprang to the umiak. “Shove off!” he said sharply, and putting his own shoulder to the light boat, with Harry’s help it slid into deep water while Joe sprang aboard. A roar of laughter went up from the crowd on shore as the discomfited Eskimo staggered to his feet, and tried in vain to use his wet gun on the fast receding boat. Then a moment after, the mood of the crowd changed, and they began to shoot, but none of the shots took effect. The wind was at their backs, and under steady strokes of the paddle the umiak was soon out of shooting distance. The last the two boys saw of the great trading fair at Hotham Inlet was a group of their former companions standing on the beach shooting at them. The last they heard was the uproar

of drunken riot and occasional rifle-shots as the land blurred in the distance behind them. They were free once more, headed south, and the dancing waters of Kotzebue Sound flashed around them as they spread their deerskin sail before the freshening breeze.

“We are well out of that,” said Joe, glancing to windward with a sailor-man’s eye, “but I don’t exactly like the looks of the weather.”

Harry noted the gathering clouds to northward, the discontent in the voice of the wind overhead, and agreed with him. The shallow waters of the sound were already leaping in a jumble of waves, from whose white caps the wind-snatched spindrift swept to leeward. Their light boat danced along like an egg-shell before the wind, safe as yet, but with it he well knew they could go only with the gale. They were bound to sail before it. After all, what matter? That was the direction in which they wished to go, and the harder it blew the faster they would go. So while Joe stood by the steering paddle, Harry busied himself in making all snug aboard, and tried not to fret about the weather.

Meanwhile the weather was fretting all about him. An hour, two hours passed, and

what had been a little blow grew into a big one. The skin boat, light as a cork, fairly flew before it. Often it seemed to skip from wave to wave, taxing Joe's skill at the steering paddle to the uttermost to keep it head on. To turn sidewise to the wind and sea was to be rolled over and over in the icy waters and be lost. Yet Joe kept her straight. Now and then some invisible force seemed to drag the cockleshell down, and a rush of foam came aboard, but she rose again, and Harry bailed out before the next volume of water could come in. It was wet and exciting work, but still neither boy lost his head, and still they kept afloat. There was a hissing roar in the waters and a howl of the wind overhead that made it difficult to hear one's own voice even when shouting, but a nod of the head or a look of the eye was enough for a command from the skipper, and Harry obeyed promptly and steadily. Never had he admired Joe so before. The sturdy young whaleman seemed to glow with power as he sat erect in the stern of the umiak, his cap gone and his long hair blown about his set, watchful face, his will dominating the elements and shaping their fury to his purpose.

On they drove through a period of time

that seemed endless. There was no night to fall, else Harry was sure that it would have come and gone, and still Joe steered, erect and immobile as the Sphinx, while Harry bailed till he felt as if all the waters of Kotzebue Sound must have come into the boat and been thrown out again. His very arms were numb with weariness and the chill of it. How long a period five hours is can be known only by those who have passed it in physical discomfort and with great danger continually threatening, yet even such a period passes. Five hours, ten miles an hour at the very least, they were making a record passage of the sound, yet the lowering clouds and the mist blown from tempestuous waves gave them no glimpse of any land.

Once Harry thought he could hear a dull booming sound, like the roar of cannon, but he could not be sure. The strain was telling on him, he knew, and he laid it to fancy. Then after a time he forgot it, for they seemed to enter a stretch of tremendous cross seas, seas which fairly leaped into the umiak and filled it faster than he could bail out. He worked with the tremendous energy of despair, and then the tumult ceased more quickly than it had arisen. The boat seemed gliding

into still waters, and the booming roar grew very loud, for it sounded from behind, down the wind. He looked at Joe and saw his face lose its look of grim determination for the first time since the wind had begun to blow. Joe nodded his head over his left shoulder, and as Harry looked, a trailing cloud of mist lifted and showed a rugged cliff, in the shelter of which they were.

The umiak had made port, where, they knew not; it was enough that it was a haven of refuge. The boat glided gently up to a shelving beach and touched. Harry attempted to spring out, and fell sprawling to the earth, which he embraced, partly because he was so glad to see it, but mainly because his legs were so cramped and numb that he could not use them. When he scrambled to his feet, he found Joe limping painfully out, much like an old man, so great had been the strain of his vigil, so cold the water that had deluged him. They set up the tent in a sheltered nook, and Harry made a fire from driftwood, which was plentiful. He had matches in a waterproof safe in his pocket, else their plight had been worse, for everything in the boat was wet through and had been for hours. They made a meal of what

they had, the last of their caribou meat and some dried fish, put great driftwood logs on the fire in front of their tent door, turned in beneath the canvas in its grateful warmth, and slept for hours and hours, utterly exhausted.

The storm continued for two days more, in which they did little except keep warm and pile driftwood on their fire, drying out their supplies as best they might. These were in sad shape. The flour was nearly spoiled, the sugar and salt melted and mixed, and the bulk of their matches soaked. These last they dried with much care, and made some of them serviceable again, but the most of their provisions were practically ruined.

When the storm broke, they climbed the hills behind them and looked about. Then their wonder was great. The umiak had been driven to the one harbor on that rocky shore, the one spot for miles to the east or west where they could land in safety. Had they come to the land a dozen furlongs either side of it, the surf must inevitably have overturned their frail boat and drowned them in the undertow. The discovery chilled them at first, — death had been so very near, so seemingly inevitable. Then it heartened them

greatly. They felt that the watchful care of Providence was over them still, and that its aid was ever present, however great the unknown dangers about them.

Descending the hills again, they took their rifles and began to explore the little inlet, following it back into the hills, and keeping a sharp outlook for game, which they sadly needed. They found nothing but a snow-bunting or two, too small to shoot except in extremity, and a sort of gray Arctic hawk, which promised to be but poor eating. Probably there would be ptarmigans back farther, but they did not see any. At the head of the inlet they found a brawling stream which descended from the hills over mica-schist ledges and along sands that sparkled with yellow mica. Harry sighted this mica as he stooped to drink from the stream, and scooped up a handful of it with eagerness. He called to Joe, and both examined it closely, but it was plainly mica.

“What did you expect it was?” asked Joe.

“Well,” replied Harry, “the same as you, judging from the way you rushed up when you saw me scoop it up.”

Then they both laughed, and Joe took the

yellow seal from his pocket and looked at it lovingly. "It was down this way somewhere that this came from," he said. "What we've got here is fool's gold, though."

"So it is," said Harry. "All the same, a mica-schist country is liable to be gold-bearing. We had a course in mineralogy at the prep school, and I learned about such things. What do you say if we prospect for a day?"

They would better have been hunting. They knew that, but the gold fever is a strange thing. The germs of it had been planted in their systems by the purchase of the singular nugget from the old Kowak River chief; now the sight of some mica in a stream had stirred the dormant microbes into action.

They tore back to camp and brought the umiak paddle to use as a rude shovel. They had nothing better. Harry also brought their one pan. Hunger was not to be thought of, home and civilization could wait; they had the gold fever. There is surely something in the Alaskan air that makes men peculiarly susceptible to this disease. During the last fifteen years a hundred thousand men have left home and friends, lucrative positions, all the comforts of "God's country," and risked fortune, health, and life because of this burn-

ing fever in their veins. Where one has succeeded thousands have failed, yet still they throng to the wild north, driven by the insatiable thirst for sudden wealth. Though the boys did not know it, the crest of this wave of hardy immigrants, wild fortune-seekers, and adventurers was already surging toward them from the south, and had nearly reached the wild coast that harbored them. Perhaps its enthusiasm had preceded them in the air. Anyway, they had the gold fever.

They dug the sparkling micaceous sand from the banks of the little creek, and Harry panned it, as the miners say. He filled the pan with it, added water, and by whirling and shaking the pan and flipping the water over the sides of it, he washed out all the lighter particles. As he reached the bottom, he proceeded more carefully, and both boys watched the result with eagerness. To "pan gold" well is not easy and requires much practice, but almost any one can with a trial or two pan it roughly. As the last of the sand was washed away by the whirling water, Harry set up a shout.

"Black sand!" he said. "We've got black sand!"

"Humph!" said Joe, much disappointed.

“What of it? It is n’t black sand we want, it ’s gold.”

“Yes,” replied Harry excitedly, “but that ’s a sign. The black sand always comes with the gold in placer mines. Wait till I wash this sand away.”

He whirled the pan with great care, and the heavy sand gradually disappeared. Then the boys looked at each other and shook hands. In the bottom of the pan lay several yellow flecks. Gold without a doubt, but not much of it. As a matter of fact, their discovery amounted to very little. Scarcely a stream in the Rocky Mountains, from Central America to Cape Lisburne, but in it you may find these occasional flecks of gold. To find it in paying quantities is altogether another matter, as many a gray-bearded prospector has learned after years of toil and rough life. But the boys were too young and inexperienced to realize this. They thought that fortune was verily within their grasp. They prospected up and down the stream, and never realized that they had not eaten dinner and were very hungry.

Yet wherever they went they found nothing but these faint prospects, and after long hours, fatigue and hunger finally asserted

themselves and they started back for camp. As they tramped, weary and disappointed, they came round a bend in the creek and Joe's eyes lighted up. There on the water's edge, strolling along a clay bottom thinly strewn with micaceous sand, were three ptarmigans, picking up bits of gravel for the good of their crops, as such birds do. They looked large and plump in the eyes of two hungry boys.

"Lie low," whispered Joe, "and we'll have one of those birds."

They watched them eagerly from behind a sheltering mound on the bank. The birds pecked leisurely for a while, then went toward the bank and settled contentedly beneath some dwarf willows in the sun. Paddle in hand, Joe slipped noiselessly forward, got behind the clump of willows, crept round it, and with a sudden blow of the paddle laid out a ptarmigan. The others flew.

"There!" said Joe. "Here's a good bite for dinner. Let's hurry back."

With renewed energy they hustled back to the camp, three quarters of a mile away, and soon had the ptarmigan broiling over a good fire. They made some rude flapjacks with the remnants of their spoiled flour, and ate the bird pretty nearly bones and all.

“There,” said Harry, “I feel better. Pity we did not have the rifle along. We could have had the two others. However, they’re up there somewhere and will do for another meal. Wonder what these fellows find to eat.”

He picked up the crop of the ptarmigan and opened it with his knife. “Buds, bugs, and gravel,” he said. “Not a very tempting diet, but we may have to come to it ourselves. Hello, what’s this?”

In the gravel in the bird’s crop were three or four pebbles, not much larger than grains of rice, but flattened and yellow. They examined these with growing excitement.

“It’s gold!” exclaimed Harry. “It’s gold! we’ve been prospecting in the wrong places.”

“I should say we had,” said Joe, giggling somewhat hysterically; “but we can’t kill ptarmigans enough to make a gold mine.”

“No, no,” cried Harry, too much in earnest to appreciate a joke. “It’s the clay bottom. The birds picked up the nuggets there. Gold sinks through sand in the stream just as it does in the pan. We should have gone down to ‘bed rock,’ as the miners say. There’s where it is. Come on back!”

The sun had swung low to set behind the

northern cliffs, and it lacked but two hours of midnight. But there would be no darkness in that latitude in late June, and forgetting fatigue, they hurried back to the spot which they now called Ptarmigan Bend. Here a bed of stiff clay seemed to underlie the bed of the stream, leading down to a mica-schist ledge over which the waters rippled as if from an artificial pond.

From the edge of this little lagoon they scraped sand and pebbles, getting well down into the clay with the now frayed and worn paddle. The clay flowed from the pan in a muddy stream, the sand easily followed, and they scraped out the larger gravel with care, panning the sand beneath it again. Then they set down the pan and shook hands with each other once more.

In the bottom of the pan were a dozen of the flat nuggets such as had been in the ptarmigan's crop, and one large one, the size of a large bean! They were on bed rock surely, and the gold that had tantalized them for a time seemed about to yield itself up in quantity.

CHAPTER XIV

STAKING OUT A FORTUNE

THE red sun sank behind the northern cliffs, hid there three hours, and slanted eastward and upward again, and still the boys toiled on, oblivious. Panful after panful of the sand they scraped from the clay bottom, now in the edge of the stream, now back toward the tundra, and always they found gold. At length their rude paddle-shovel was worn to a frazzled stick and they themselves were in not much better condition, but in Harry's worn bandana handkerchief was a store of coarse and fine gold and nuggets that was quite heavy.

Fatigue will finally, however, get the better even of the gold fever, and along in mid-morning, pale and hollow-eyed, quite exhausted with toil and excitement, but triumphant, they stumbled down to camp and turned in, too tired to eat, — indeed, there was little but damaged flour that they could eat. They slept ten hours without stirring, and

the sun was low in the northwest when they awoke.

Joe rubbed his eyes open and sat up. He found Harry, the bandana in his lap, poring over the store of gold.

“Gold,” said Harry, “is worth about sixteen dollars to the ounce, as the miners reckon it. I should say we had about three ounces here. Forty-eight dollars, — not bad for a first day’s work!”

“Um-m, no,” said Joe; “but I wish you’d take part of it and go down to the store and buy some provisions. I’m hungry.”

Harry looked at him. Was Joe daft? But no, Joe was the saner of the two.

“We’ve got gold,” Joe continued, “and we’ve got grit, — at least some of mine’s left, though not much, but what we have n’t got is grub. Seems to me the next thing to look out for is something to eat. The gold will wait a day for us, but there is something inside me that says the other won’t. We’d better go prospecting for food this time.”

Harry put his hand on his stomach. “Joe,” he said, “I declare you are right. You generally are. Fact is, I was so crazy over this yellow stuff in the handkerchief that I had forgotten everything else. We’ll hunt to-day.”

They made a sorry breakfast of some heavy cakes made from the last of the spoiled flour, then took their rifles and went down toward the sea. The cakes were heavy within them, but their hearts were light. They ranged through a little gully seaward and to the east, seeking for ptarmigans but finding none. They might have hunted for the other two up at Ptarmigan Bend, but each felt that it would not do. The moment they sighted the diggings it was probable that they would fall to mining again, and they knew this and kept away. Through the gully they reached the shore, a narrow strip of pebbly beach at the foot of rough cliffs, and here in long rows, sitting on their eggs on the narrow ledges, they found scores of puffins. They are stupid little fellows, sitting bolt upright on greenish, blotched eggs that are not unlike those of the crow, but larger. The flesh of the puffin is not bad eating when one is hungry, and the boys found these so tame that they hardly flew at a rifle-shot. In half an hour they had a dozen, and tramped back to camp, well satisfied that they need not starve. By the time two birds were cooked and eaten the sun was behind the cliffs, and the gray of the Arctic midnight was over all. They sprang

to their feet refreshed and about to plan to resume digging, when Joe held up his hand with a look of consternation on his face. A long unheard but familiar sound came to the ears of both boys, and Harry's face reflected the dismay that was in Joe's.

The sound was the rhythmic click of oars in rowlocks, and it came up the placid waters of the inlet from the sea.

A few days before, how gladly they would have heard that sound. Oars in rowlocks meant white men. Eskimos and Indians paddle. Each stepped to his rifle and saw that it was loaded, and then they stood ready to defend their claim against all comers. So quickly does a white man distrust another when there is gold at stake.

A moment, and a boat came round the bend, a rude boat, built of rough boards and well loaded, but with only one occupant. This seemed to be an oldish man, a white man, roughly dressed. He rowed steadily but wearily, without looking up. By and by the bow of the boat struck the beach not far away, and the man turned his head over his shoulder toward the bow and seemed to speak to the air. Then he nodded his head, stepped out, drew his boat up a little, and came toward them.

“Morning, gents!” he said. “How you finding it?”

The boys put down their rifles and greeted him cordially. They had nothing to fear from this little unarmed man who limped as he walked. After all it was good to see a white man, and his coming presaged much for their safe return to civilization.

“You’re not miners,” he said, after looking them over keenly.

“No,” replied Joe, “not exactly. We’re whalers. We were wrecked up on the Arctic coast about two years ago, and we’re working our way back to civilization.”

“Want to know!” exclaimed the other. “Well, you’re most to it now. Civilization is working right this way pretty fast, that is, if you’ve a mind to call it that.”

“What do you mean by that?” asked Joe in wonder.

“Mean?” replied the little man. “I mean that there’s sixty thousand people up in this country at this minute, only none of ’em have got quite up to here except me. They’re piling into Nome as fast as the steamers can bring them, and they’re spreading over the country as fast as horse and foot will take them. It’s the biggest rush the Alaska diggings ever saw.”

“Nome!” queried Joe. “Where’s that?”

The little man looked at him a moment. “Oh, I forgot,” he said. “You’ve been away two or three years, and it all happened since then. Nome is about two hundred miles south of this by sea. I’ve just rowed in from there. They found beach diggings there a year ago that were mighty rich, and the whole earth piled up there this spring. You can’t get a foot of ground anywhere down there for fifty miles. It’s all staked. I came in there late last fall and could n’t get anything then. Got a notion in my head that there was good ground north here and started across tundra in the winter. Froze my feet and had to crawl back on my hands and knees. Started out again this spring with this boat. Paid a hundred dollars for it. Rowed along-shore as far as Cape Prince of Wales. Father-in-law got aboard the boat there, and he’s been sitting in the bow ever since telling me where to row. He directed me here. Father-in-law has been dead these ten years.”

Joe and Harry looked at each other, and the little man noted it and smiled sadly.

“I know,” he said, “it sounds queer. Well, it *is* queer. Course ’t ain’t so, but it seems so. Ain’t nobody there, it’s jest my notion. A

man gets queer up in this country if he's too much alone. I reckon it's a sign, though, and I'm going to find something good. Now, I'm hungry. Will you eat with me? My name's Blenship, what's yourn?"

The boys helped Blenship get his outfit ashore, assured that they had found a friend. He had a pick, two shovels, two regular gold pans, a queer machine something like a baby's wooden cradle which he called a rocker, and a good quantity of civilized provisions and utensils, besides a camp outfit. The boat was heavily loaded, and it was a wonder to them how he had made the long trip in it in safety. This he could not tell much about. He had simply "followed directions." He had "sour dough" bread of his own cooking, and it did not take him long to broil some ham in a little spider. Then he invited the boys to fall to with him, and they were not shy about doing it. What if they had just eaten puffin? Real bread and ham! It made them ravenous.

After the meal they told Blenship of their discovery. His eyes glistened at sight of the nuggets, but he did not seem much surprised.

"Just as I expected," he said. "I've come at the right time for you, though. You want

to stake that ground right away, and then I'll stake what's left. We can't be too quick about it, either. You may see forty men coming over the hill at any minute. If you got all this with a wooden stick and a bread pan, there's stuff enough there for all of us. Wait a minute, though, let's see what father-in-law says."

He stepped down to his boat for a moment, then came back.

"Father-in-law is gone," he said. "Could n't raise him anywhere. Guess this is the place he meant for me to come to. No need of his staying round, long as the job's done. Now let's stake that ground, then we'll be safe. You are entitled to five claims. One of you is the discoverer. He can stake discovery claim and number one above and number one below; then the other can have one above him and one below him. That's all you are good for. Then I come in with one above and one below, and I've got powers of attorney enough in my pocket to stake all the rest of the creek. Got about forty men to give me powers of attorney when I left on this trip. They get half of each claim I stake for them. I get the other half, which ain't so bad in this case. Come on."

They worked steadily for several days, cutting and shaping stakes from driftwood, measuring distances carefully with Blenship's fifty-foot tape, posting location notices, and now and then stopping to prospect a locality. Blenship always went down to "bed rock" for his prospects. He handled a pan with the marvelous skill of an old timer, and his eyes always glistened at the result.

"Boys," he declared one day enthusiastically, "this is the richest creek the world ever saw, I believe. I want you to elect me recorder of this district. We'll call it the Arctic District, and I have a notion that I'd like to call this 'Candle Creek,' 'cause its prospects are so bright. Then I'll record the claims duly, and we'll be all registered and can hold everything according to law. What do you say?"

The boys were only too glad to thus find a mentor and friend, and cheerfully agreed to everything. An Alaska mining claim, according to United States law, consists of twenty acres, generally laid out in a parallelogram, 330 feet each side of the creek, making a width of 660 in all. Their five claims meant a hundred acres, and, if even moderately rich, were a fortune. In the end they had the entire creek staked from source to mouth, the

number of powers of attorney which Blenship produced being prodigious.

In spite of the hard work, perhaps because they were living well on civilized food, they never seemed to tire, and were as frisky as young colts. Ten days had passed, and never a sign of the invasion of prospectors which Blenship had so confidently predicted. Since the father-in-law episode the little man had given no signs of his "queerness," unless this story of thousands to the south were one. On the other hand, he seemed very sane and shrewd, and kindly in all ways. He shared his provisions in return for help in staking his numerous claims, and the boys could see that his advice was friendly and worth following. The day the last stake was driven he insisted that they celebrate, and got up a bountiful meal with his own hand, making a bread pudding with real raisins from his stores, which filled the boys with unalloyed delight.

"There!" he said, as he lighted his pipe after the meal was finished, "now we're fixed. If old Tom Lane comes up here and wants the earth, he can have it, but he'll have to pay good for it. You and I could work those claims and take out a few hundred dollars' worth of gold a day until the ground freezes

up, and then we would n't more'n pay our expenses up here and back and the cost of living. That is n't the way money is made in the mining business. You just stake the claims and hold on to them until the man comes along who has the millions to work 'em in a big way. There's several of those men up in Nome already, but the king of them all is old Tom Lane. He's got his men out spying round all over the country, and it won't be long before one of them drops on to this place. Then we'll drive a bargain that'll make the old man's eyes stick out. Meantime I'll just show you boys how to build and work a rocker, and we'll get out a few hundred a day and wait developments."

Blenship showed them how to handle the rocker that very day, and left them at Ptarmigan Bend gleefully running sand through it while he prospected his various claims more thoroughly.

A miner's rocker is ingenious in its simplicity. It is generally a wooden box, having a rough sieve-like hopper at the top, and an inclined plane of canvas within. You shovel the sand into the hopper, then pour in water and rock gently. The water washes the sand down along the inclined plane, where riffles



PROSPECTOR AND HIS OUTFIT

catch the heavy gold, while the sand washes over and out at the bottom. It is a simple matter to work this, though, like the gold pan, its perfect manipulation requires much skill and judgment. At the end of an hour the boys made their first clean-up, and were delighted at the amount of gold that lay yellow in the riffles. They worked thus with great glee till Blenship returned, long past the supper hour. He inspected the results, and even he was roused to enthusiasm at the quantity of gold that they had.

"I declare," said he, "it's about ten ounces, and most all small nuggets. Probably as much more fine gold went right through. You've been rocking too hard. A rocker is like a woman; you've got to humor her or she won't work well. Let me try the tailings."

He panned the heap of sand that had gone through the rocker, and showed them the fine gold still left in it.

"You only got about half on't," he said. "Geewhillikins! but that little pond is a pocket for you. There's a young million right in a few rods, or I miss my guess. I've got some rich spots upstream myself, but they ain't in it with this one. I'd like to try some sluicing on that. It would be dead easy. You

could dam the creek at that little gap up above and get at all this clay bottom, and have plenty of water for the sluice. How would it do for me to go into partnership with you boys for a time, and we try this thing? Reckon we could fix up some kind of a trade, could n't we?"

"What do you think?" said Joe to Harry.

"I think," answered Harry, "that Mr. Blenship is more than kind to us. I for one will heartily accede to any agreement that he wants to make."

"And so will I," Joe assented warmly.

"Listen to that, now," said Blenship in mock despair. "Here I was planning to drive a hard bargain with them, and they put me on my honor. Anything I want to do! Humph! Well, this is what I propose. Suppose we get to work and sluice here at Partridge Bend. You give me a hundred dollars a day every day of actual sluicing, as general manager; you take the rest. If you ain't suited at the end of the first three days, we'll call the bargain off."

"Agreed!" said Harry. "Agreed!" said Joe, and they set to work.

They blocked the stream with stones, and stuffed tundra moss into the crevices, then piled turf over the whole. With the pick

they hewed a gully in the mica-schist ledge that dammed the little pond and let the water out. Then they knocked Blenship's boat to pieces and made a rude sluice with the boards. This they braced upon driftwood logs set on the right slant for sluicing. Blenship, skillful as a woodsman with his axe, hewed more sluice timber out of driftwood logs, and finally the structure was complete. There were still no signs of other prospectors, and the boys began to think Blenship's story of the thousands in the country just south of them must be another delusion of his.

Finally, everything was complete. Blenship showed them how to shovel into the sluice so that enough but not too much dirt should be present in it, and then turned on the water. For two hours the boys swung the shovels lustily, and found it very fatiguing work indeed. Blenship managed the flow of the water so that it should work to the best advantage during this time. Then when the boys were thoroughly weary he shut it off and called a halt. Joe and Harry rested on their shovels, puffing.

"Time to clean up," he said. "Now we'll see whether I'm worth a hundred dollars a day or not."

With water in his gold pan he washed the remaining sand from riffle to riffle, and finally collected the gold in a yellow heap in the pan at the bottom of the sluice. It was quite a little heap, and Blenship weighed it, pan and all, in his hand, thoughtfully.

“Reckon there’s about three pounds of it,” he said coolly. “Say seven hundred dollars.”

Joe and Harry looked over his shoulder with bulging eyes. Seven hundred dollars! Two hours’ sluicing! Neither before had realized the full import of their good fortune. If they could do that in two hours,—in a day, a week, a month! Their heads whirled. And then all three started.

A shadow had fallen across the pan.

Blenship whirled sullenly and savagely, reaching toward his hip with an instinctive movement, though no weapon hung there. Then he laughed.

“Oh, it’s you, Griscome, is it? Be’n expecting some of you fellows this ten days. Come to camp and have a bite with us?”

“No, thanks,” said the other, a tall man in a blue shirt, stout boots, and a slouch hat, “my outfit’s back here. Pretty good clean-up for a little work.”

“That’s so,” replied Blenship. “And that ain’t all. The whole creek’s like that from top to bottom, and it’s staked from bottom to top, and recorded. I’m the recorder. We’d ’a’ staked the benches, only the powers of attorney give out. Better stake ’em, they’re likely good.”

“Much obliged,” said the other. “Guess I will. So long.”

He went out of sight over the hill in long, swift strides.

“What are the benches?” asked Joe. “Will he stake them? Who is he?”

“One at a time, young feller,” said Blenship. “He is one of Pap Lane’s men. The benches are the hillside claims. He may stake ’em, but I doubt it. He won’t wait. He’ll light out across tundra as fast as his horse can carry him, and tell his boss about this. Meanwhile we can wait, and we might as well get what’s coming to us. If one of you boys will try and handle that water, I’ll show you how to shovel.”

Joe thought himself a good deal of a man, but he could not keep up with the other in shoveling. He hung sturdily to his task, however, and for three hours more shoveled wet sand and clayey gravel into the sluice

while Harry regulated the water according to occasional directions from Blenship. The latter instructed Joe in the best methods of scraping bed rock, and showed him how the best of the gold was liable to lie in the little hollows of the clay, and be missed by an inexperienced hand. At the end of three hours Blenship ordered a cessation of work once more, much to Joe's relief, for five hours of labor with the shovel had thoroughly exhausted him. He lay back on the tundra while Harry and Blenship cleaned up. The result showed Blenship's superior skill in mining, and the longer run. It was nearly double the other.

"Guess we'll call it a day's work," said he. "Pretty near two thousand dollars. Have I earned my hundred?"

The boys thought he had indeed, and pressed him to take more for his share, but he resolutely refused. In the tent he took from his outfit a pair of miner's scales and weighed out his wages carefully, putting them in a little chamois bag in his bosom. The balance he turned over to the boys, and they stowed it in the bandana with what they already had.

"You see," said Blenship, "the better showing your little pocket makes in the next

ten days, the better price the whole creek will bring when Pap Lane or the Alaska Commercial Company or some of those fellows come up here to buy it."

"But why should we sell?" asked Joe.

"Young feller," said Blenship, "don't you make no mistake. If you can sell out your share of this creek at a good price, you do it. You've got a little spot that's mighty rich. The rest of your claim may not pay for the labor of working it. Two months from now it will be frozen up, and will stay so for nine months more. A man with a million behind him can take this creek and work it to advantage. You and I might peck at it for ten years and then not get a living out of it. If you get a good chance, sell."

As if in proof of what Blenship said, the next day it rained, the swelling waters carried out their rude dam, and it was three days more before they got it repaired and began sluicing again. Yet when they did, they took out three thousand in a single day. The next day it was only a thousand, because they had used up part of their ground and had to move their sluices, which took time. But on the third they found a hollow in the clay

bottom that was a veritable treasure house, and yielded up over five thousand dollars in fine gold and nuggets.

That morning three men came over the hills with packs on their backs. They camped near by and examined the notices with much disgust. It did not please them that the whole creek was staked.

Blenship greeted them jovially, showed them his records in proof of the validity of the claims, and advised them to stake the benches, which they did. They prospected these and found a certain amount of gold there. Others came, on foot and with pack-horses,—evidently the story had spread. The place began to assume quite a mining-camp air. Meanwhile Blenship and his lieutenants worked on industriously. They were questioned much, but not otherwise disturbed. The newcomers were as yet too busy prospecting and staking ground for themselves.

One day Harry dropped his shovel with a start. The long roar of a steam whistle sounded from the sea. A steamer! How it brought back memories of the Bowhead, now scattered in ruin along the Arctic shore, and through her the home thought again. Suppose Captain Nickerson should be aboard.

Perhaps he was bound north once more in search of them. The bustle of the new camp and the glamour of the greed of gold slipped from him like a garment, and his soul soared from it, free, back to the home fireside and his father and mother. The voice of Blenship recalled him.

“Come on, boy,” he said kindly; “let’s keep her a-going. I reckon that’s old Pap Lane come up in his steamer to see about this new strike. We want to have a good clean-up just going on when he strikes camp.”

An hour later Blenship stood by his tent door talking with a square-shouldered, resolute-looking man of perhaps sixty. His hair was gray, but there was no stoop in his figure and he seemed in the prime of forceful life.

“Pshaw! Blenship,” he was saying, “you have no business to stake all this creek. Even discovery would only entitle you to three claims, and you must have twenty. You’ll have to pull up and let my boys go in.”

“Nearer forty claims than twenty,” Blenship declared coolly, “and every one of them staked on a good power of attorney from good hard-headed men in Nome. If you try to cut them out, they’ll fight you, every one

of them, and you know what that means in the Alaska courts. No, sir, those claims are legally staked, on the square, and I propose to hold 'em."

"But you can't stake except on an actual discovery of gold," continued the big man. "Do you mean to say you have found prospects on every one of them?"

"Colonel," said Blenship, "you come with me and see."

The two were gone two hours and came back, still arguing the matter.

"All the same," said the big man, "it's only prospects, and the ground is more than likely to be spotted. What I want to see is actual outcome of gold from it before I consider any such preposterous price for a controlling interest in it."

"You do, do you, colonel?" queried Blenship calmly. "Well, just step this way."

Blenship stepped down toward the sluices where Harry and Joe stood, as had been quietly planned by the wily little man.

"Colonel," said he, "these are Mr. Nickerson and Mr. Desmond, discoverers of Candle Creek diggings, the richest in the known world. Boys, this is Colonel Lane, of California, now of Nome. He's also about the

richest in the known world, but, like Julius Cæsar or whoever it was, he's looking for more mining-fields to conquer. Gentlemen, show Mr. Lane what's in the riffles."

The boys stepped aside and Colonel Lane stepped up to the sluice boxes. He looked from riffle to riffle without a word. It was the result of a full half day's shoveling, and fate had been kind to them.

The big man looked long in silence, then he whistled. But in a second he chuckled.

"Blenship," he said, "I would n't have thought it of you. You salted the sluice boxes. You've put in all the gold you had in camp when you heard me coming."

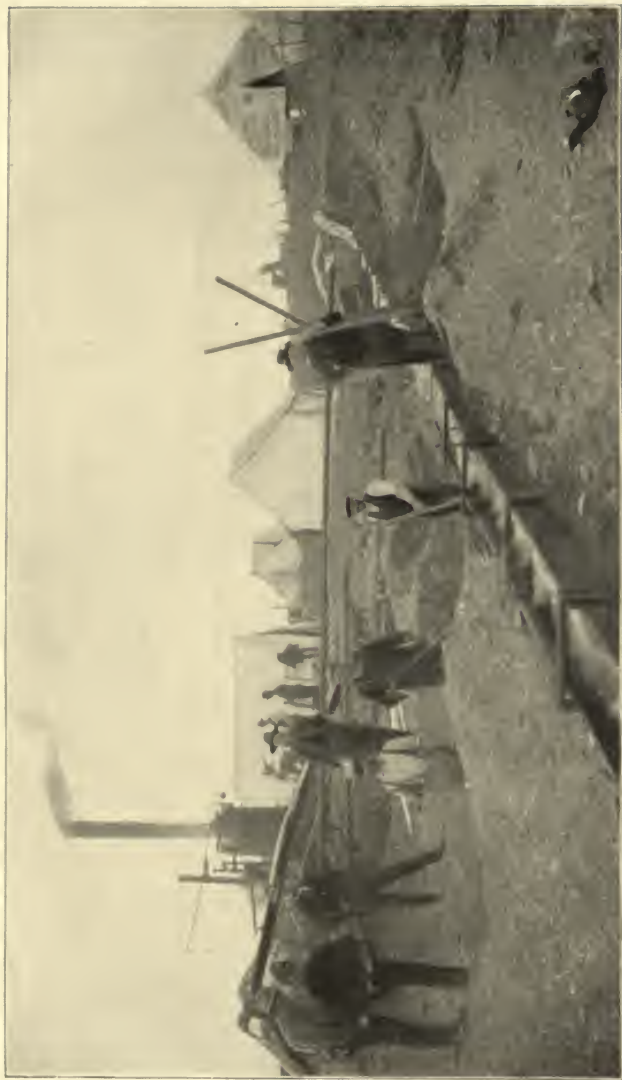
"Oh-h-h!" exclaimed Blenship, with scorn, "all the gold we have in camp! You must think we are pretty slow miners. Boys, come down to the tent and open the poke for him."

With trembling hands Harry drew out the bag of dust and nuggets from its hiding-place and opened it. The colonel looked long into this bag, lifted it, and then whistled softly for the second time.

"Why, confound it!" said he. "There's a good twelve thousand dollars there. Do you mean to say you got it out of that little mud-hole you are working out there?"

“All on ’t, colonel, all on ’t. That’s the richest bank — mud-bank — I’ve seen yet, and I’ve been in placer mining all my life. Now, colonel, come out here and talk with me. There’s no man in this world can handle this creek the way you can. It’s the biggest thing the country ever saw. Come out back while I argue with you.”

The two walked back on the tundra together, and Harry tied up the poke and put it in its hiding-place again. Joe, weary with his morning’s work, sat down in the tent, but Harry wandered outside. His thoughts were still of home and the people there. He had heard the steamer whistle again, why he did not know. Home was not so very far away now, he felt that, but the thought made him only the more homesick. He noted some men coming up the creek, seemingly strangers, but strangers were plentiful there now. Probably these were more people from the ship coming up to join those who were with Colonel Lane. There was a big man a little ahead of the group, and Harry did not notice that as he approached he looked earnestly at him and almost broke into a run. The great man rushed up to him, took him by the shoulders, and turned him round, looking him square in



SLUICING AT CANDLE CREEK

the face, then let out a roar that echoed from the surrounding hills.

"It's him!" he bellowed. "It's him! Great jumping Jehoshaphat, it's him! I knew he'd turn up. You could n't lose him. Did n't I see him go overboard in the straits in a livin' gale of wind and come back bringing a Yukon goose with him? It's the seven-time winner, cap. But where's Joe?"

Joe answered for himself, rushing out of the tent and flying by the great boatswain of the Bowhead, — for who else would it be? — into his father's arms. A moment later Harry was gripping Captain Nickerson's hand with one of his, the big boatswain's with the other, and laughing and crying and talking all at once, while Mr. Jones, the taciturn first mate stood by, erect and solemn, and seeming to look as if all this waste of words was a very wrong thing. When the two boys were released from the hands of Captain Nickerson and the boatswain, the first mate extended his, and though his face twitched with emotion all he said was, "How d' do. Glad." Evidently Mr. Jones's characteristics had lost nothing in two years.

Captain Nickerson was grayer, and there were lines of care about his eyes that had not

been there before. But these seemed to slip away as the boys told their story and he realized that he had them both back again, sound and hearty. Mr. Adams had fitted out another ship for him the following spring and he had made a trip north, but the ice had been very bad and he got no certain news of the boys, yet somehow neither he nor the folks at home had been willing to give them up for lost. Therefore he had come up again this summer, whaling, but determined to lose no chance to get news of them. By chance he had found at Point Hope the native from whom they had bought the umiak. He had told him how two white men who might be the missing ones had been at the Hotham Inlet trading fair and gone south across the bay. He had followed on the slender clue, had sighted Lane's steamer, and landed. And so they talked on, oblivious of all except that they were reunited again after so long a time. Harry and Joe forgot their gold, and the captain, full of news from home for them, asked nothing about their present condition.

Meanwhile Blenship and the colonel, arguing earnestly back on the tundra,* had noticed the commotion.

"Who are those people?" asked the big man.

Blenship did not know, but he was not going to let a little matter of ignorance spoil a good bargain. "Those," said he, "must be the wealthy friends of my partners from the States. They've been expecting some people up on their own steamer, exploring. I reckon they'll be glad to see how well the boys have done."

"Look here, Blenship," said the colonel hastily, "I reckon I'll have to take your figures on this trade. You are empowered to act for your partners, are n't you?"

"Certainly, colonel, certainly," replied Blenship, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Well, it's a bargain, then," declared the colonel. "Shake hands on it."

The two shook hands solemnly and hastened back to the tent. Mutual introductions followed, then Blenship spoke. "I've sold the creek, boys," he said, "and the colonel has driven a hard bargain with me, but I reckon we'll all have to stand by it. In the first place he gets my rights in all the claims I've staked, and that's most of the creek, for fifty thousand dollars. Ain't that right, colonel?" The big man nodded. "Next he buys a controlling interest in discovery claim and the two above and below, belonging to you two

boys, fifty-one per cent. of the five claims, for just a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars, cash and notes, you to retain forty-nine per cent. interest in them all and to receive that proportion of the net earnings, the proper share of expenses being taken out. Reckon he 'll stick you bad on them expenses."

"Look here," said Captain Nickerson. "What's all this?"

"Oh," said Blenship, "I thought you knew." The colonel was shaking his fist at Blenship, but he pretended not to notice it. "Show him the poke, man!" he said to Harry.

Harry drew the gold from its hiding-place and untied the neck of the sack once more. The big boatswain waited just long enough to see this gold, then he bolted from the tent. Outside they could hear him slapping his great leg with a noise like the report of a pistol and gurgling something about seven-time winners, but within they were too much interested in the story of the placer discoveries to heed.

CHAPTER XV

HOME AGAIN

THE boys slept that night in clean linen on board the *Maisie Adams*, Captain Nicker-son's new ship. What a thump Harry's heart gave when he saw the name on the stern and realized who it was that had come to rescue him! A thought that had been vaguely his for long, a desire that had been but a blush deep down in his heart, grew to a dominant purpose in a moment, then. Maisie's clear gray eyes shone out of memory with a new light in them, and the thought of home-coming thrilled him with an ecstasy more potent than ever before.

The next day the final papers in the mining deal were passed on board Colonel Lane's steamer, a splendid vessel, the *T. H. Lane*, named for himself. It is thus that the pioneer of the present day exploits the far regions of the earth. He comes with an army at his command, with every resource that steam and modern invention and unlimited capital can

furnish, and at the nod of his head cities spring up, great industries flourish, almost in a day.

What pleased Captain Nickerson more than anything else in the adventures which Joe and Harry related to him was the story of the finding of the stores of whalebone at the village of Nunaria. His own father had been an officer in the unfortunate fleet, and the finding of the bone seemed to come to him as a fitting inheritance. But before he sailed north to make the discovery good he turned the vessel's prow toward Nome, and there transferred the boys to one of the numerous steamers ready to sail for Seattle. The two should bear home the news of their own good fortune, — home to the waiting, anxious mothers in the east. And so they parted, and the boys, steaming south on a staunch vessel, gazed with tears in their eyes on the smoke of the *Maisie Adams*, which bore resolutely north again toward the straits and the fascinating, mysterious, dangerous region where they had been the captives of the frost for two long, eventful years. It may as well be said here that Captain Nickerson found the long lost bone without difficulty, and on his way south stopped at the little village of

Point Lay, where he found Harluk and Kroo living frugally and contentedly. Before he sailed away he rewarded the gentle friends of the two boys with stores and supplies that made them far richer than they had ever dreamed of being.

Seattle and civilization in very truth came next. How the city had grown, and what a pleasure there was in its bustle, the roar of traffic, and the throngs of well-dressed, busy men and women in its streets. Here they stopped only long enough to replenish their wardrobes, bettered already somewhat by the "slop chest" of the Maisie Adams, but still far from what they should be, and to send two telegrams to the people at home. They followed the messages on the first train for the east, and now let us leave them, flying across country as fast as steam can carry them, and see how matters stand at Quincy Point.

Like Captain Nickerson, Mr. Desmond had grown grayer in the years that had passed. To take up the débris of a broken fortune and out of it build a new one is no easy task. He had toiled faithfully, yet only a very slender success had thus far rewarded him. There was depression in his line of business, and the limited capital which the

downfall of the house had left him made it uphill work. Yet it was not so much the business cares as anxiety as to the fate of his only son that weighed most upon him. He had never for a moment given him up for lost, yet when the first summer passed without news of the absent ones the stoop came into his shoulders again, and the lines of care deepened on his face. More and more he had come to depend on the simple, cheery faith of Mrs. Desmond, whose hope and trust in the watchful care of Divine Providence had never for a moment seemed to waver. What it had cost her to keep up this cheery calm, no one but a wife and mother can tell. It is upon the good women of the world that these burdens come, and right nobly do they bear them.

It was on a bright day at the last of August that Mr. Desmond received that telegram at his office, gave the clerks a half holiday as a slight token of thanksgiving, and came down on the noon train. Mrs. Desmond met him at the door.

“What is it, Frank?” she said. “Aren’t you well?”

“Why, yes,” replied Mr. Desmond, casting about for a way to break the good news to

her gently; as if news could be broken, or good news ever needed it! "Why, yes, I'm more than well, I" — And then Mrs. Desmond took him by the shoulders and looked once in his face, and knew.

"Who can deceive a lover?" said one of the wise ones of old, and these two were lovers still and always would be. The father had brought the happy story in his face, and when he clasped his wife in his arms and told it in words, it was the second telling.

I've said something in this story about the rapidity with which news travels in Eskimo land, but you ought to see it go in a New England village. It flutters with the pigeons from house-top to house-top. It comes to the doorstep with the morning's milk, before you are up, and the expressman leaves it with a package at eight at night. You may start the story ahead of you and then follow it down street on a bicycle, but it will leave you a poor second at the far end of the town. Thus it became known before sunset that Harry Desmond, whom everybody thought had been lost in the Arctic, was on his way home, alive and well, and great was the rejoicing thereat. Everybody seemed to take especial pride in the safe return of the young

man, and the Adamses were in quite a flutter of excitement about it.

“Isn’t it splendid?” said Mrs. Adams to Maisie. “I feel as if Harry quite belonged to us since he pulled you out of the water that day nearly three years ago. He must be almost a grown man now, and you’ve grown up quite a bit yourself. How the time does fly!”

Maisie had indeed grown up quite a bit. The change from girlhood to young womanhood, which seems to come so suddenly with the lengthening of the skirt and the doing up of the hair, had come to her, and the coupling of her name so intimately with Harry’s sent a swift flush mantling her round cheek. Harry had been her playmate and friend since early childhood, and now he was coming back grown up, and she was grown up too. She felt her cheeks burn under her mother’s kindly scrutiny, and she hastened to change the subject, but the thought of Harry came back now and then, and the color with it.

Harry’s father and Mr. Adams met the two boys in Boston, but Joe left immediately on the train for the Cape. His mother was waiting for him, he knew, and the thought would brook no delay. Mrs. Desmond waited for

Harry at the house. She knew that if she came to the station, she could not help laughing and crying over him at once, and the reticence of the New England blood bade her avoid the chance of a scene. Queer thing, the New England blood, — sensitive, full of pathos and fire and enthusiasm, all masked beneath the cool steel of seeming indifference. All the neighbors saw her meet him at the door quite sedately; none of them saw the passion of mother love revealed after the door was shut, nor would she have had them see it for worlds.

Harry sat for a long time with his strong brown hands clasped tight in his mother's slender white ones. Now she wondered at his height and manly strength, again flushed with secret pride at the new look of character and decision in his face, and vowed that she had lost her boy after all, — he was a man now. He told them in brief the story of his adventures, but said nothing of the placer mine and the bargain with Colonel Lane. Somehow he wanted to wait on that, to keep it till the last.

“How has the business gone, father,” he asked after a while. “Did you manage without me in the office?”

“Not over well,” replied his father soberly.

“It has been a long hard pull on very little capital. Still, we are getting on.”

Harry noted again the gray in his father's hair and the lines of patient determination about the mouth that had not been there when he went away, and felt his heart thrill with joy at the thought that he had come back amply able to help him. He knew now that he had not cared for the money for its own sake. He had enjoyed the excitement of getting it. He had been glad that he and Joe could go to college together; they had planned that on the way home, and he felt now that he realized the value of a college education as he had never done before. But here was a better use for money than all that. He could lift the burden that his father had borne so patiently and put the family back where it had been before the business disaster. This was a greater happiness yet in his home-coming.

“Would fifty thousand dollars help you, father?” he asked quietly.

“It would indeed, my boy,” replied his father, smiling rather sadly, “but I don't see where I am to get it.”

“Well, I do,” said Harry triumphantly. “I've some things up my sleeve, as the boys say, that I have n't said anything about yet.

I wanted them for the last. In the first place, though, here's a little present from the Arctic for you and mother. Wait till I open my grip."

His hands trembled as he pulled out the bandana handkerchief and opened it, just as they had when he did the same thing for Colonel Lane up at Candle Creek.

"Why, my son," said his father in astonishment, "what's this?"

"Gold, daddy, gold!" shouted Harry, dancing round the two in his excitement and delight. "Just a little souvenir that I mined up in the Arctic with my own hands. We got out twelve thousand, Joe and I. That's only a little of it, but I thought it would make a nice thing for a present when I got home. There's about a thousand there. I've got notes for the rest."

"Why, Harry!" ejaculated his mother, her eyes gleaming with delight in her son's success. "Don't tear around so. The neighbors will think the house is afire."

"And so it will be in a minute, mother. That is n't half of it. Look at this, and this." He threw down two long envelopes filled with documents. "There's notes of Colonel Lane, the millionaire mining magnate of California, for about seventy thousand dollars, and there's

the papers that show I am a quarter owner in the richest placer mine in all Alaska."

His father's eyes gleamed as he looked carefully at these papers, and Harry gave his mother a hug that he must surely have learned of the polar bears up at Point Lay.

"Mother," he said, "when I was a little fellow" (you would have thought him at least thirty now to hear that, though not to see him), "you used to fry doughnuts for me and make one that was like a man. I want you to fry me two now, big ones, and make 'em twins. That's Joe and me up at Candle Creek."

Harry caught up his mother in his arms and danced a wild whirl about the room, finally seating her breathless and laughing on the sofa, while his father looked on with pride in his face and two tears shining on his cheeks. No one but he knew what a load the tidings of good fortune had lifted from his shoulders. With ample capital he would show the business world what the house of Desmond could do. The stoop was out of his shoulders again and Harry knew it, and would have gone through every hardship of the two years again for the sight.

Supper was announced before they had done talking over this glorious news, and

Harry was not so excited but that he did full justice to home cooking. In the evening there came a ring at the doorbell, and Mr. and Mrs. Adams came in — and Maisie.

“Well,” Mr. Adams said, “you went away a boy and you have come back a man grown. If being lost in the Arctic for two years or so will give people such size and rugged health as that, I should advise it for lots of them.”

Harry blushed and stammered at the sight of Maisie. She had grown up too, he thought, and how lovely she was! As for Maisie, she was cordially glad to see him, but as demure about it as the most proper young lady should be. Only when she went away she glanced up at him shyly and said, —

“Did you bring me that aurora borealis that you promised me the last thing when you went away?”

Then indeed Harry found his tongue, though he blushed in the saying. “You are like the aurora yourself. Come sailing with me to-morrow, will you not?”

Maisie blushed too, as who would not at so direct a compliment from a handsome, broad-shouldered young man.

“Why, yes, thank you,” she answered. “I’d like to very much. Shall it be at ten? Your

knockabout is down at the boathouse. Good-night." And as she tripped daintily down the broad walk to the street, Harry wondered what need there was of street lamps when she was out.

During the evening Mr. Adams asked him if he was ready to make that report concerning the whaling in Bering Sea and the Arctic, and was much pleased when Harry handed him quite a pile of manuscript, some of it written in pencil, and all stained with salt water.

"I'll put this in better shape in a day or two," he said. "It contains all I could find out about the subject, and I think is accurate."

"Well, well," exclaimed Mr. Adams, "this looks good. The company is already formed and ready to start business. They will be glad to get this;" and he tucked it under his arm just as it was, saying it bore greater evidence of reliability in that shape, and he wanted to show it to the directors without change.

"Let us see," he said, "you were to have a salary of twenty dollars a month for this work, and you have been gone practically thirty months. I will see that a check for six hundred dollars is made out to you."

Harry had another thrill of pleasure at this. It was not the money so much, but he felt that to have won Mr. Adams's approval in this way was worth while. He determined privately that Joe should have half. He had certainly helped him earn it.

The next day was one of those rarely perfect days that often come to New England in early September. The warmth of summer still lingers in the air, but there is with it too the glow and exhilaration of autumn. A faint breeze blew in from the west and lifted the August haze till distant objects stood out clear and sharp in outline, — a glorious day.

It was quite a bit before ten when Harry called for Maisie, but she was all ready, and chatted demurely of many things as they walked down the well-remembered path to the boathouse. There Griggs, the ancient ferryman, greeted Harry with a whoop, much like that he had raised two years and a half before in answer to his shout for assistance.

“W-e-ll, I swanny!” he exclaimed. “But I’m glad to see ye. Allus knew you’d get back somehow. How you have growed, though! Well, well! this is like old times, ain’t it? Ain’t been a day go by but I think how you

swum for the young lady here, an' I pulled you both out. How be ye?"

Harry shook hands with Griggs cordially, and noted that the old man had not changed a particle in the time that had passed.

"Kept the boat all ready for ye ever since," said Griggs. "S'pected you'd be along some day and want a sail in her. Here she is."

There she was, indeed, with every line and cleat in place, and Harry felt as if greeting an old friend as he helped Maisie in and hoisted the sail. The little boat glided gently down the river, and out into the wider waters of the bay. As Harry looked about and noted every object in the familiar scene, it seemed to him as if he had hardly been away a day instead of two years and a half, as if the home life only was real, and all the strange things that had happened to him had been but a dream. Yet when he looked at Maisie and found her grown up to the verge of young womanhood, he felt as if he had been away for years and years, and hardly knew the dainty lady who sat on the windward side and trimmed ship as a good sailor should. He was thoughtful and silent until Maisie looked up at him roguishly, and said, —

"Well, why don't you tell me all about it?"

It must be something very serious that keeps you silent so long. You used to chatter fast enough. Is it an Eskimo young lady?"

Harry laughed. "I've seen Eskimo young ladies," he said, "though I was n't thinking of them at just that moment. Some of them are quite pretty, too," — Maisie pouted a bit at this, — "though they don't dress in what you would call good taste."

"Tell me about them, tell me all about everything," said Maisie, and Harry, nothing loth, launched into stories of his adventures, and the strange sights he had seen, that lasted till it was time they were home for lunch. He was modest in relating his own share in the dangers and excitements, but Maisie saw through this and gave him perhaps a larger share of credit than he deserved. How strong and handsome he was, she thought. Of course he had been brave and noble, and now her eyes filled with sudden tears, and again shone with excitement and admiration, as he told of being lost in the Arctic pack, battling with the highbinders, and being chased by the river ice on the Kowak.

And so this modern Desdemona listened to her sun-bronzed Othello until the boat had swung gently back with the tide almost opposite the cottages at Germantown.

There Harry finished the tale, and Maisie noted that they were almost back again, with a sigh. A sudden impulse seized her.

“Let me take the boat in to the landing,” she said. “There is n’t much wind.”

She slipped quickly to the stern and seated herself the other side of the tiller. The boat was lazing along with the helm amidships and there was no need for Harry to move. Maisie’s hand dropped beside his, and with a sudden masterful impulse he laid his own over it.

And Maisie? She looked up at him with those clear, cool, beautiful eyes, and he said — But I shan’t tell you what he said. It is no affair of ours, and nobody was supposed to know it for a time, except, indeed, their own fathers and mothers, who, of course, vowed that the young people were altogether too young for such plans, and then gave their blessing.

Nobody was supposed to know, but it is funny how news will travel in a New England village, and the fact is, all this occurred right opposite the cottages, and as likely as not some one was using a field-glass at that very moment.

At any rate, the knockabout sailed herself for several minutes right across the place

where Harry plunged in to save Maisie once, and only the kindness of fate and a very light wind prevented them from being in danger of another ducking.

Griggs, the old ferryman, was not so very far away either, and he looked at them with a very knowing smile as they walked soberly up the path to the house. So perhaps *he* told, but I am not going to.

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