

**DILLON
WALLACE**

THE
WILDERNESS
CASTAWAYS

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Содержание

CHAPTER I	4
CHAPTER II	20
CHAPTER III	28
CHAPTER IV	39
CHAPTER V	50
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	60

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CHAPTER I

GETTING ACQUAINTED

“DAN RUDD,” roared Captain Zachariah Bluntt, “if I has to tell you again to keep that mouth organ below decks, I’ll wring your neck! Yes, wring your neck! By the imps of the sea, I will!”

“Aye, aye, sir,” answered Dan Rudd, a robust, sunny-faced sailor lad of sixteen, quickly slipping the offending harmonica, upon which he had been playing a lively air, into his pocket.

Captain Bluntt, impatiently pacing the deck, was plainly in ill humor. His great red beard, standing out like a lion’s mane, bristled ominously, and his shaggy eyebrows were drawn down in an unpleasant scowl.

It was two o’clock on a mid-July afternoon, the last case of provisions had been lowered into the hold, the last lighter-load of coal stowed into the bunkers, steam was up, and the staunch little Newfoundland steamer *North Star*, riding at anchor in Sydney harbor, had been ready to sail for three hours, and for three hours Captain Bluntt had been impatiently awaiting orders to get under way.

Two clean-cut, smooth-shaven, alert young men of thirty or thereabouts were standing at the port rail aft. Their sun-tanned faces marked them as men accustomed to out-of-door life, and their sinewy, muscular frames and keen but good-humored eyes proclaimed health and genial dispositions. They were intently, and with visible impatience, watching a wharf from which a boat was putting off. As the little craft shot out into the open one of them raised a pair of binoculars to his eyes, studied it for a moment, and announced:

“There he is at last! Here, take a look through the glass, Ainsworth,” and he passed the binoculars to his friend.

“Yes, that’s he,” said Ainsworth, after a moment’s observation, “and, Remington, he’s sitting back smoking a cigarette as unconcernedly as if he hadn’t kept us waiting half a day for him.”

“I’ll tell the skipper, and ease his mind,” suggested Remington, and striding forward he called out cheerily:

“All right, Captain Bluntt, Master Densmore is coming. You may put out as soon as you please when he’s aboard.”

“Very vexing! Very vexing, Mr. Remington!” exclaimed Captain Bluntt. “Fair wind, fair tide, and losing advantage of it, sir! All right, sir, all right. We’ll weigh anchor at once, sir.”

In a moment sailors were working at the windlass, anchor chains were clanking, and the men singing in rhythmic unison as they swung up and down at the crank handles. Then the engines began to pulsate.

The *North Star* had been chartered by the two young men

—George Remington and Henry Ainsworth—for a summer's voyage to Hudson Bay. Both were enthusiastic sportsmen, and Remington, who had once before visited the region, had promised Ainsworth some exciting polar bear and walrus hunting, as well as excellent sport fishing the coastal streams for salmon and trout.

Paul Densmore, the only son of John Densmore, a multimillionaire ship owner and a friend of Remington's, had been invited by Remington to accompany them as his guest. When Remington and Ainsworth went aboard the *North Star* upon the morning our story begins, Paul had remained ashore in Sydney to make some purchases in the town, promising to follow them within the hour. Captain Bluntt had been instructed to make ready for departure accordingly. But Paul had failed to keep his promise, and with hours of idle waiting for the appearance of the delinquent youth Captain Bluntt had worked himself into the high state of ill humor in which we find him.

"The Captain was just at the point of blowing up," laughed Remington when he rejoined Ainsworth, "but he'll be all right presently. He's a very impatient old fellow."

"He's had good reason to be impatient," said Ainsworth. "I can safely prophesy more breakers ahead. Judging from the little I've seen of that boy, Remington, you'll be heartily sorry you brought him before we get back to New York."

"I'm heartily sorry already," admitted Remington, "but I couldn't help it. Densmore is one of the best fellows in the world.

He pulled me out of a tight place once when I was caught in the market, and when he asked me the other day if it would be an imposition upon friendship if he asked me to invite Paul, there was nothing to do but invite the youngster to come.”

“Oh, don’t think for a moment I’m finding fault with you, old man,” Ainsworth hastened to explain. “I see your position, and I’d have done the same under the circumstances, but it’s a pity nevertheless that we have to put up with him.”

“Yes, it is a pity,” agreed Remington. “That boy has no sense of responsibility. Never keeps an appointment or a promise. I never saw any one quite so lacking in consideration of others—selfish—selfish—that’s the word.”

“Why did his father ever let him grow into such a cad, anyway? What he needs is a good sound thrashing every day for a month. That would cure him.”

“Fact is, I don’t think Densmore ever knew much about him until recently. Too many irons in the fire to give much thought to his family. This steamship company’s his pet scheme just now, but he’s the head of half a dozen other big things, and even when he’s home his mind is all taken up with business. He left the boy’s training to the mother, and it’s the old story of an only child. She’s coddled and indulged and pampered him till she’s spoiled him. He failed in the final tests at school this year—he attends a select boys’ school uptown somewhere—and the head master wrote Densmore that there was no use sending him back unless he took more interest in the work, adding something to the effect that

he seemed strangely void of ambition, never obeyed rules unless convenient, and was a disturbing element in the school. I think that brought Densmore to his senses about his son's condition."

"And he shoved the boy off on us for the summer," said Ainsworth ill-naturedly.

"Oh, no, not for the purpose of getting rid of him," Remington hastened to explain. "Densmore's all right. He wouldn't intentionally cause us inconvenience. He had two reasons for asking me to bring him. He learned Paul was addicted to cigarettes, and he wanted to get him away somewhere where cigarettes aren't to be had. He thought, too, that good, wholesome exercise in the open, and a complete change of environment, might give him a new view of life and awaken his ambition. The boy's mother has never permitted him to take part in what she calls rough games—baseball, football and real boys' sports—and she'd never let him go camping with other fellows, though he's begged to go. Afraid he'd get hurt. It took a lot of argument on Densmore's part to get her permission to let him come with us."

"One of those young hopefuls, isn't he, that thinks his father is rich and there's no use of his ever doing anything but spend money?" suggested Ainsworth. "From the little I've seen of him, he'll spend it, all right, too."

At that moment the boat hove alongside, and a tall, sallow-faced lad, perhaps seventeen years of age, a cigarette hanging at the corner of his mouth, tossed a bill to the boatman, languidly rose to his feet, caught the rope ladder lying over the ship's side,

and with difficulty climbed to the deck.

“Glad to see you, Paul,” greeted Remington. “We were getting a bit worried about you. You’re late.”

“Oh, I didn’t think there was any rush,” said Paul indifferently. “Stopped for luncheon at the hotel. Horrible stuff they serve there. It really isn’t fit to eat.”

“I’m afraid your appetite isn’t very good, Paul,” suggested Remington. “Wait till you get your lungs full of salt air, and rough it a bit; you’ll think anything is good then.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Paul remarked indifferently, as he lounged back upon a chair, drew a fresh cigarette from a silver case, lighted it, flicked some ashes from his white flannel trousers and casually surveyed the deck. “What a rum old ship this is!” he continued. “I thought we were going to have a comfortable yacht.”

“The *North Star* isn’t much to look at,” admitted Remington, “but she’s the best sort of a ship for our trip. No ordinary yacht would do. We’re going to rough it good and plenty, you know.”

“That so? What kind of roughing it?”

“Hunting, fishing, camping, and that sort of thing. I hope we’ll have some good bear hunting before we get back.”

“Bear hunting!” Paul was interested at once. “What kind of bears shall we run across? Grizzlies?”

“No,” laughed Remington, “Polar bears.”

“Polar bear hunting! Cricky, but that’ll be great!” Paul sat up excitedly. “Where’re we going, Mr. Remington? I didn’t pay

much attention to what Father said about it. I thought it was just an ordinary yachting trip.”

“You didn’t seem to have much interest in it, coming over on the train,” said Remington, and as he explained the region, the prospective hunting and fishing, and the adventure, Paul forgot his cigarette.

“That’s just the kind of trip I’ve wanted to take all my life,” he exclaimed. “May I shoot too?”

“Yes, I’ve a rifle and a shotgun among my things for you.”

“May I see them? I’ve always been just crazy for a gun!”

“Wait a moment.”

Remington went below and presently returned with a modern high-power rifle and a beautiful double-barreled shotgun. Paul’s eyes sparkled with delight and he listened with close attention while Remington explained their manipulation, with due caution as to their handling. Then he exclaimed:

“Good old Dad! He is a good scout to let me come with you! Ever so many thanks, Mr. Remington. Where are the cartridges?”

“They’re with mine. I’ll get them for you when you need them. You may as well take the guns down to your stateroom, though, when you go.”

“I guess I’ll go now, and unpack my things.”

“Very well. The steward will show you your room. You’ll find everything there. Abner,” turning to a bareheaded young sailor clad in blue flannel shirt, with sleeves rolled up, and trousers

tucked into the tops of high sealskin boots, who was standing near the companionway, "this is Master Densmore. Will you show him to his room? Abner is the steward, Paul."

"Yes, sir; this way, sir," answered Abner, respectfully.

"He seems interested," remarked Ainsworth when Paul had gone below. "I'm inclined to think he's a pretty good fellow at heart after all. Just spoiled."

"That's so," agreed Remington.

A moment later Paul reappeared from the companionway, and asked:

"Where are my trunks, Mr. Remington? The steward took me to a room he insists is mine, but my trunks aren't there; just some canvas bags. Guess he's trying to put me in the wrong room."

"I left your trunks ashore, Paul."

"Ashore! Why, all my things are in them! I can't go without them! I've no clothes with me!"

"The canvas bags contain all the clothes you'll need. Look through them and see what you think of the outfit. Your father selected them."

"But my cigarettes! I packed them in one of the trunks!"

"I'm afraid you'll have to do without them. You'll find you can shoot straighter if you don't smoke. Cigarettes knock a fellow's nerves all out, you know."

"This is rum!" exclaimed the angry lad. "No cigarettes! Well, I'll go down and see the stuff."

"You'd better put on one of the warm suits you'll find in your

bags, Paul,” suggested Remington. “We’re getting out to sea, and it’ll be chilly on deck.”

Paul vouchsafed no reply, but he profited by the advice, and donned a complete new outfit of clothing suited to his surroundings.

“Look like a dago laborer, don’t I?” he asked Remington, whom he met at his stateroom door half an hour later.

“You look comfortably dressed,” was the reply. “You see I’ve adopted similar clothes.”

“You do look funny,” laughed Paul, “and that’s the way I feel. Mother *would* have a fit if she saw me now,” glancing down at his flannel shirt and heavy trousers and shoes. “Mr. Remington,” he continued, hesitatingly, “I—I want to apologize for what I said about the trunks and cigarettes. I can get on without cigarettes if they’d spoil my shooting.”

“That’s all right, Paul. They certainly would spoil your shooting.”

Captain Bluntt was in excellent humor when he took his place at the head of the supper table.

“So you’re the young rascal,” he said to Paul, “who kept us waiting at Sydney.”

“Oh, I guess there wasn’t any great rush,” answered Paul, somewhat nettled. “We’re on a pleasure trip, and not trying to break a record.”

Captain Bluntt looked at him curiously for a moment under his shaggy eyebrows.

“Not much of a sailor, I guess, youngster. Well, you’ll learn something before you gets home. Got a wonderful lot to learn, too.”

Paul flushed angrily, and retorted impudently and boastfully:

“Oh, I don’t know. This isn’t my first yachting trip. I know a thing or two about sailing. Captains of yachts don’t usually tell the guests what they’re to do.”

“Yacht, eh?” And Captain Bluntt laughed good-naturedly. “Well, well, don’t get grumpy. No offence meant. No doubt you’re a great sailor; you look it. Yes, you look it!” Turning from Paul as from a child whose presence he had quite forgotten, he remarked:

“She’s off in fine style, Mr. Remington, fine style! And we’ll make a rare fine run, sir, if the weather holds. Yes, sir, if the weather holds!”

“Is there much ice reported off the Labrador coast?”

“We’ll meet some ice, sir; bay ice. No trouble with that, sir. Plenty of bergs! Wonderful crop of bergs, sir!”

They had finished eating, and Captain Bluntt was striking a match to light one of Remington’s cigars which he had accepted, when strains of music floated down to them. He paused with lighted match in mid air, an ear cocked to one side, his red beard bristling.

“By the imps of the sea!” he blurted. “There’s that Dan Rudd with his mouth organ, and I *told* him to keep un below! The rascal! Wring his neck! Yes, sir, I’ll wring his neck!” and he

sprang up as though bent upon carrying his threat into immediate execution.

“I rather like it,” remarked Ainsworth. “May he play for us, Captain?”

“If you likes un, sir, if you likes un. But I don’t call un playin’, sir; I calls un just pipin’ a racket!”

“We would like to hear him,” said Remington. “Suppose we go above.”

On deck they found Dan working away with all his will at his harmonica, keeping time with one foot, while a sailor danced a breakdown, and other sailors clapped their hands and encouraged the dancer with:

“Go at un, Bill! Go at un, b’y! You’re a spry un, Bill!”

Then Dan glimpsed Captain Bluntt, slipped the harmonica into his pocket, and the dancing ceased.

“Oh, don’t stop playing—don’t mind us,” encouraged Remington. “We came to listen.”

“The skipper don’t like music, sir,” said Dan, looking regretfully after Captain Bluntt, who was disappearing in the chart house, leaving a cloud of smoke from his fragrant cigar in his wake.

“Captain Bluntt said you might play if you wished, so please do not stop.”

A little encouragement induced the dancer to resume his breakdown, and presently the fun was in full swing again. Another sailor took a turn, and then Dan suggested:

“Now Jack Griggs sing us ‘Th’ Minnie Dart.”

“An’ you plays th’ tune,” assented Jack.

Dan struck up a lively tune and Jack began to bellow the song, which began:

“Th’ Minnie Dart were as fine a craft

As ever sailed th’ sea;

She were eighty ton, an’ a fore an’ aft,

An’ as smart as she could be,”

and closed with a weird description of the going down of the Minnie Dart with all her crew.

The music at an end, Remington and Ainsworth lounged aft to smoke and chat, while they enjoyed a perfect evening. A full moon had risen, transforming the gentle swell of the sea into molten silver, and to the right, in hazy distance, lay in faint outline the Newfoundland coast.

Paul strolled forward and soon became interested in watching the compass and the man at the wheel.

“What course are you sailing?” he asked.

The man made no reply.

“Let me try it. I can handle the wheel all right,” he continued, attempting to take the spokes.

At that moment Captain Bluntt observed him.

“By the imps of the sea!” he roared, striding forward and grasping Paul’s arm with a steel-like grip that made the youth wince as he vainly struggled to free himself. “Keep away from

that wheelhouse or I'll heave you overboard. By the imps of the sea I will! Heave you overboard! Heave you overboard!"

"I guess I can go where I want to," answered Paul impudently, but none the less frightened.

Without releasing his grasp, or deigning to reply, the Captain half led, half dragged, Paul to Remington.

"This youngster must keep aft of the wheelhouse, sir! He was talking to the steersman, sir! Talking to him! I'll not permit it, sir!"

"I'm sorry," apologized Remington. "I'm sure he didn't understand that he was doing wrong, and he won't do it again."

Captain Bluntt, mollified but still ruffled, returned to his duties, and Paul, almost in tears, lounged alone, amidships, sulking.

Dan had witnessed the disciplining of Paul, and in the hope of smoothing matters presently wandered over to the lad, who was still sulking and nursing his injured dignity.

"Th' skipper's wonderful gruff sometimes," ventured Dan, "but he don't mean nothin'. 'Tis sort o' his way."

"Mr. Remington hired this old tub, and I'm his guest, and I guess I can go where I want to on it."

"'Tis an able craft, an' no old tub," resented Dan. "Th' skipper is master at sea. 'Tis a rule of the sea."

"He isn't my master."

"No, not that way. He's just master o' th' ship. Your folks is payin' th' owners for th' voyage, an' they is payin' th' skipper t'

run th' ship safe, an' he has t' make rules t' run un safe or we'd be foulin' reefs or gettin' off our course."

Paul deigned no reply, and after an awkward pause Dan inquired:

"What's your name?"

"Paul Densmore."

"Mine's Dan Rudd. Dan's short for Dan'l. It's after Dan'l that was in th' lion's den, Dad says. Yours is from th' Bible, too. I reckon you was named after th' apostle Paul."

"No, after my grandfather."

"Tis th' same name, anyway. Dad reads out o' th' Bible nights when he's home. We live in Ragged Cove, but Dad's fishin' down on th' Labrador now with th' *Ready Hand*."

"The '*Ready Hand*'? What's that?"

"She's a spry little schooner. Dad's part owner. I been down with her twice."

Dan told of fishing adventures on the Labrador. Paul described his home in New York, the great buildings, the subway and elevated railroads, the great transatlantic steamships—a thousand wonders in which Dan was intensely interested.

In the recital Paul soon forgot his injured dignity. He was glad of the companionship of a boy of his own age. No one, indeed, could long resist Dan's good nature, and when the sailor lad finally said it was time to "turn in," and they parted for the night, each was pleased with his new acquaintance—an acquaintanceship that was to ripen into life-long friendship. They

little guessed that they were destined to be companions in many adventures, to share many hardships, to face dangers and even death together.

The *North Star* rounded Cape Charles the following evening, passed into the open Atlantic, and turned her prow northward. Innumerable icebergs, many of fantastic form and stupendous proportions, were visible from the deck, their blue-green pinnacles reflecting the rays of the setting sun in a glory of prismatic colors. On their port lay the low, storm-scoured rocks of Labrador's dreary coast, its broken line marked by many stranded icebergs. Now and again a distant whale spouted great columns of water. The white sail of a fishing schooner, laboring northward, was visible upon the horizon. The scene, grim, rugged, but beautiful, appealed to Paul's imagination as the most wonderful and entrancing he had ever beheld.

That night Paul was suddenly awakened from sound slumber by a tremendous shock. He sprang from his berth with the thought that the ship had struck a reef or iceberg and might be sinking. Terrified, he rushed to the companionway, where he was nearly thrown off his feet by another shock. At length he reached the deck. Spread everywhere around the ship he could see, in the shimmering moonlight, nothing but ice. From the crow's nest, on the mizzenmast, came the call of the ice pilot: "Port! Starboard! Port! Starboard!"

The lad's terror increased as he witnessed the changed condition of the sea. It seemed to him that the great mass

of heavy ice which closed upon the ship on every side must inevitably crush the little vessel and send her to the bottom. As he ran forward, another and heavier shock than any that had preceded sent him sprawling upon the deck.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST BEAR

PAUL had scarcely regained his feet when the gruff voice of Captain Bluntt exclaimed:

“Well! Well, lad! And what brings you out o’ your snug berth at this time o’ night?”

“What’s—what’s happened? Are we wrecked?” asked the frightened Paul.

“Wrecked? No, no, lad! Just a bit of ice—just a bit of ice. ’Tis all right, b’y. Go below and sleep. ’Tis wonderful raw above decks for them thin clothes you’re wearin’.”

Paul, dressed only in pajamas, his feet bare, was indeed shivering. Much relieved, he turned down the companionway, glad to tuck himself in his warm berth, presently to fall asleep to the distant, monotonous call of the ice pilot, “Port! Starboard! Port! Starboard!” and in spite of repeated shocks, as the vessel charged the ice, alternately backing and forging ahead at full speed in her attack upon the pack.

The ice was left behind them during the night, and when morning dawned a stiff northeast breeze, cold and damp, had sprung up, and a sea was rising. The ship began to roll disagreeably, and at midday Remington encountered Paul, deathly pale, unsteadily groping his way to his stateroom.

“What’s the matter, Paul?” he asked.

“I—I feel sick,” Paul answered.

The call had come for dinner, but Paul was not interested, and retired to his berth. The fog mist thickened, and all that afternoon and night the fog horn sounded at regular intervals, a warning to fishing craft of the vessel’s proximity.

For three days Paul, in the throes of seasickness, was unable to leave his berth, but on the morning of the fourth day he reappeared on deck, where his friends greeted him with good-natured jokes.

They were entering Hudson Straits. On their port, near at hand, lay the rocky, verdureless Button Islands, and far to the southward rose the rugged, barren peaks of the Torngaek Mountains in northeastern Labrador. To the northward in hazy outline Resolution Island marked the southern extremity of Baffin Land.

Here and there, spread over the sea, were small vagrant ice pans, messengers from the far Arctic, which gave evidence of the high latitude the ship had attained.

Now and again seals showed their heads above the water for a moment, quickly to disappear again. Sea gulls, their white wings gleaming in the sunlight, circled about, but nowhere was a sail or any indication of human life visible upon the wide horizon.

It was a new world to Paul, and different from anything he had ever imagined. The utter absence of vessels, the apparently uninhabited and uninhabitable land, the awful primitive grandeur

of it all gave him a vague, indescribable sense of fear—such a feeling as one ascending for the first time in a balloon must experience upon peering over the rim of the basket at the receding earth. This sensation quickly gave place to one of exultation—the exultation of a wild animal loosed in its native haunts after long confinement. Paul became possessed of a desire to shout. His blood tingled through his veins. He drank the pure atmosphere in great draughts, and it stimulated him like wine. He felt almost that he could do anything—fly if he wished.

This was the first awakening in Paul of the primitive instinct which every human has inherited from prehistoric ancestors—an inborn love of the glorious freedom of the great wide wilderness where individual man stands supreme in his own right and where he may roam at will without restraint; where he feels that he is a person and not an atom; where he may meet nature face to face, and fearlessly match his human skill against her forces.

Too often this instinct to retreat for a time to the wild places of the earth, to stand with bared head under the open sky, to breathe great lungfuls of pure atmosphere undefiled by the smoke of chimneys, to make the acquaintance of rocks and trees, of mountains and sea—to renew one's faith in God—is smothered by the luxuries and pamperings of civilization. So it had been with Paul.

Standing on the deck of the *North Star* that bright July morning, in the midst of nature's most rugged abode, that primordial instinct slumbering in his breast had then its first

awakening. He seemed to expand. He felt himself grow. He longed to set foot upon those mysterious shores—to wrest from them their secrets. Presently he was to do so. Perhaps, had he known how close to the condition of his prehistoric ancestors he was to drift, he would have shrunk from his destiny. It is well for our peace of mind that an all-wise God hides from us today the happenings of tomorrow.

At length the *North Star* passed out into the wider waters of Ungava Bay, and directly after dinner Remington suggested:

“Suppose you bring your rifle, Paul, and I’ll get a box of cartridges. We’ll try it out and see how you can shoot.”

Paul had been looking forward to this opportunity, and a moment later he appeared with the rifle.

“Now draw a bead on that bit of ice out there,” said his instructor, “and we’ll see how you hold. Run your left hand farther forward on the stock—can’t hold steady with it away back like that—a little farther out—that’s better. Now you can stand straight and not have to bend backward like a woman does when she tries to shoot. Do you get the ice? Look through the notch on the rear sight, and bring the bead on the front sight in contact with the bottom of your object. Got it? Try it again. Now we’ll load. Now try it.”

Paul, a loaded rifle in his hands for the first time, took aim, and pulled the trigger. The shot went wild.

“You closed your eyes at the last moment, and wobbled the gun,” said Remington.

“Guess I did,” admitted Paul. “I was afraid to be so near the explosion.”

“Well, throw in another cartridge. That’s right. Throw the lever forward; now back. Be careful! It leaves it cocked, you see. Always remember, when you’re not going to shoot again immediately, to put the hammer down, and never carry a cocked gun. That’s a bad habit some sportsmen have, but a man that isn’t quick enough to cock his gun after he sees his game should practice until he can do it, and never go out with his gun until he can. With a rifle it’s never well to carry a cartridge in the chamber. You can throw one in as quickly as you need it. Now try again.”

Bang! The shot struck just beneath the bit of ice.

“Bully! Bully!” exclaimed Remington and Ainsworth together.

Paul flushed with pleasure and excitement. With the next shot he took more careful aim, and simultaneously with the crack of the rifle bits of splintered ice flew from the floating cake. This was indeed a good shot, for by this time the vessel had left the ice well behind.

“How was that?” asked Paul, with conscious pride.

“Good work!” Remington encouraged.

Several more practice shots were fired with varying success, the rifle cleaned, and Remington and Ainsworth went below to overhaul their fishing outfit.

Paul, with just pride in his initial achievement with the rifle,

strolled forward to exhibit his gun to Dan, who was splicing a rope near the foremast, and had been an interested spectator of the target practice.

“Hello, Dan,” he greeted.

“Hello, Paul. Been ailin’?”

“Ailing! I was awfully sick for two days.”

“We were havin’ a bit of nasty sea. ’Tis bad for the seasickness.”

“You bet it got me, all right. Would you like to see my rifle?”

“Yes, I were wantin’ t’ see un.” Dan took the rifle, looked it over, threw it up to his shoulder and sighted it, like one accustomed to the use of firearms.

“She’s a wonderful fine gun!” he exclaimed. “A rare fine gun! An’ she’s pretty, too. I never seen such a fine gun—and such a pretty un.”

“Can you shoot?”

“I does some shootin’. I hunts with Dad in winter. He traps furs in winter, and he’s took me with him two winters.”

“Did you ever shoot anything?”

“Oh, yes; lots of partridges and rabbits. Last fall I kills a deer and gets a crack at a bear, but misses; and last winter I shoots two foxes.”

“You must be a dandy hunter. I’ve never hunted any yet, but I expect to. Never went before where there was anything to hunt. This is my first gun. I’ve got a shotgun too.”

“That’s the gun for partridges, unless you shoots their heads

off with the rifle. Mostly I shoots their heads off with a rifle, but sometimes I misses. Mine's a 44—Dad's old one. He got a new 30-30 and gave me his old one.”

“I'd like to see it. You got it with you?”

“Yes, it's down in the fo'c'sl.”

“Here! Bring your gun, youngster! Bring your gun! Here's a shot for you!” called Captain Bluntt. “Here now!”

Paul ran forward.

“Where? What is it?” he asked excitedly.

“There, on that pan! That yellow spot. See un? See un? That's a water bear, and he's asleep. Get ready now and shoot un!”

Paul's excitement was intense. He nervously slipped some cartridges in the magazine and raised the rifle to his shoulder.

“Set up your sights, lad! Set up your sights! And cock your piece! Cock your piece! You can't shoot till she's cocked. Dan, look sharp now, an' tell the gentlemen there's a bear sighted! Now, youngster! Now! Don't hurry. Take your time. Why you're shakin'! Steady down! Steady down! That's right. Careful!”

With tremendous effort Paul steadied his nerves, and bang! The yellow spot rose. Sure enough, it *was* a bear, and it began to bite at its side.

“You hit un! You hit un, lad! Fine! Fine! Give un another!”

Paul fired again, but his nerves had got the better of him, and the shot went wide, as did several other shots. Captain Bluntt rang the engines to “stop,” as Remington and Ainsworth, rifles in hand, reached the deck. The bear had slipped off the ice pan

and taken to the water; at which Remington called—

“Launch the power boat!”

In a jiffy Captain Bluntt had men at the ropes.

“Come, Paul, we’re going after him,” said Remington.

“Take the tiller, Dan! Take the tiller of that boat!”

commanded the Captain.

In less time than it requires to relate, the boat was off and in pursuit, Dan steering with skill, Remington, Ainsworth, and Paul ready with their rifles.

CHAPTER III

A HUSKY CAMP

THE boat gained upon the bear rapidly, and had nearly overtaken it when suddenly it turned to the left, interposing a small pan of ice between it and its pursuers, effectually hiding it from their view.

Dan made a short cut around the opposite side of the pan, and as the boat shot out behind the ice its bow nearly struck the bear. The pursuers were no less surprised than the pursued, and as the boat darted past, the bear made a vicious lunge with its powerful paw, caught it amidships and nearly capsized it.

Dan made a graceful swing, and brought the hunters almost too close to the animal to permit the use of guns. It charged them again, but Dan, on the lookout for this maneuver, neatly avoided it.

“Now, Paul,” advised Remington, “shoot!”

The bear was less than twenty feet from the boat, but Paul was still in so high a state of excitement that he missed two shots, and it was only at the third attempt that he struck the animal in the head, and it collapsed.

“It’s a stunning big fellow!” Remington declared, while he slipped a rope over the animal’s neck to tow it to the ship.

“That was a splendid shot from the ship—I doubt if I could

have made it," said Ainsworth. "And you've got the first game of the trip, Paul."

"Twere a rare fine shot," put in Dan. "I were standin' by, an' I've missed many a better."

When the bear was at length hoisted on deck it proved indeed to be a monster polar bear, and Captain Bluntt declared it one of the largest he had ever seen.

Paul's pleasure was beyond bounds. His face, which was already losing its sallow, yellow appearance, glowed with delight. He was in a fair way to have his head turned by the unstinted praise of his companions.

The fine smoking roast which came on the supper table that evening certainly had an appetizing appearance, but when Paul received a helping he fancied he detected a fishy odor, and when he tasted the meat he made a wry face and exclaimed:

"Ugh! Why, it's strong with fish!"

"A bit fishy in flavor, lad. A bit fishy," agreed Captain Bluntt. "But a man o' the sea *and* a sportsman shouldn't mind that."

"Well I don't like it," asserted Paul, "but I killed it and I'm going to eat some of it anyway."

"That's the right spirit," said Remington, "but I think I'll pass it by. I never could bring myself to eat polar bear or seal. Perhaps because I never had to."

"I can't say that I care for it," admitted Ainsworth.

"Tis fine meat, I thinks," declared Captain Bluntt, helping himself liberally. "I finds it fine. Bear's meat is rare strong meat."

“I don’t think I can go it,” said Paul, who had tried another mouthful. “It’s strong, all right—too strong of fish for me.”

“I weren’t meanin’ that kind o’ strong. No, no! ’Tis good, wholesome, strengthenin’ meat. ’Tis not so high flavored of fish, either, as old swile, an’ swile is good.”

“Swile? What’s that?” asked Paul.

“Seal, lad, seal. We calls un swile in Newfoundland and down on the Labrador. Swile an’ ice bears live on fish, lad, and ’tis but natural they should carry a bit of the flavor of fish. That rascal the cook should have given un an extra parboil.”

“I didn’t suppose any one but Eskimos ate seal.”

“Only Eskimos eat seal! No, no, lad! We all eats un an’ likes un. Old seal is a bit high flavored, but white coats I finds as sweet an’ fine as mutton or fowl.”

“What are white coats?”

“Never heard of white coats? Well! Well! You sure *has* some things to learn of the North. White coats is young seals—very young uns.”

“I never heard them called that.” Paul felt some resentment at the implication that he was not well informed.

The sun went down that night in a blaze of wondrous glory. No human artist would dare be so prodigal with his colors or resort to such marvelous blendings of shades as the Almighty Artist paints into His sunsets upon the sky of the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions. The sunset on this occasion was unusually gorgeous. Brilliant reds shaded up into opalescent purples, deep orange into

lighter yellow, reaching to the very dome of heaven. The water reflected the red, and the *North Star* seemed steaming through a mighty heaving, throbbing sea of blood. It was as though the earth's very heart had been laid bare.

For a long time it lasted. Paul and his friends stood enthralled. It made them breathe deeply. They felt that they were in the presence of some mighty power, that very near them was the Master Himself, He who guides the world in its eternal journey, and holds in their places the innumerable millions of stars and untold other worlds that reach out into infinite space.

"Isn't this wonderful—wonderful!" exclaimed Paul, at the end of a period of breathless awe.

"I never saw anything to compare with it!" declared Ainsworth. "It's beyond the dreams of my wildest imagination!"

"It's nowhere but in the North that such sunsets are ever seen," said Remington.

"Fine sunset, sir. Fine sunset," remarked Captain Bluntt, as he passed them on his way to the chart house.

"It promises a good day tomorrow, doesn't it?" asked Remington

"Not so sure of that, sir. Not so sure of that."

Captain Bluntt's pessimistic prophecy of the morrow's weather was well founded. When day broke the sea was enveloped in a blanket of fog—thick, stifling, impenetrable. The rigging dripped moisture, the decks were wet and slippery, the atmosphere was heavy, clammy, difficult to breathe.

For two days the fog lay over the sea like a pall. The *North Star*, her engines working at slow speed, felt her way cautiously, for she was in uncharted waters. The tremendous tides of Ungava Bay render navigation here dangerous, even under the most favorable conditions, and Captain Bluntt was not the man to take undue risks, though he was a fearless seaman, and in his time had done many dashing and daring deeds, when circumstances had demanded.

Following the fog came several hours of cold dismal rain, accompanied by sleet. Then the clouds broke, and as though some fairy hand had brushed them away, the sky cleared and the sun shone warm and beautiful to cheer the depressed world.

“And there lies Cape Wolstenholm, sir,” said Captain Bluntt, pointing toward a low-lying coast off their port bow. “We’ll soon be in Hudson Bay now, sir, and what’s your pleasure?”

“While the fine weather holds I think we’d better do some fishing,” answered Remington. “Besides, I think we all want to get ashore to stretch our legs.”

“As you say—as you say, sir! But we’ll have to locate some huskies, sir, and get a native pilot.”

Upon rounding Cape Wolstenholm, which occupies the northwestern extremity of the Labrador peninsula, the ship swung in close to the coast, and, proceeding with great care, the leadsman calling his fathoms, felt its way between several small islands, until, the following morning, a safe anchorage was found outside a large island near the head of Mosquito Bay.

“We’ll be sure to find huskies up this bay, sir,” assured Captain Bluntt. “We can’t risk the ship any farther, sir. It won’t do, sir. But it’s a short run for the power boat to the head of that bay, and unless I’m mistaken there’ll be plenty of huskies there, sir. Yes, sir, plenty of ’em. I’ll send Tom Hand. Tom Hand speaks their lingo. Tom! Tom Hand!” he called.

“Aye, aye, sir.”

“Go ashore, Tom. We wants a husky pilot; a good one. A good husky, now! Dan! Here, you rascal! Go ashore with Tom, and help him look after things!”

“Come, fellows, we’ll go along,” suggested Remington to Ainsworth and Paul. “We’ll not be in the way, will we, Captain.”

“No, no! Go ashore if you likes. Better take some grub with you. Dan, tell the cook to put up some grub! Look sharp, now!”

Presently they were off, pointing toward the head of the inner bay. Paul took three or four shots at harbor seals which raised their heads now and again above the water, but always missed them.

“Tis wonderful hard t’ hit un from a boat,” said Tom.

Soon they discovered a column of smoke rising from the north shore.

“There un is! Turn she int’ th’ smoke, Dan,” directed Tom. “Th’ huskies is camped in there. Th’ smoke is a signal t’ call us t’ un. They’s seen us.”

Dan swung the boat in, and upon rounding a point and entering a cove two skin tents or wigwams were discovered, and several

people gathered upon the shore as if expecting them.

“There’s th’ huskies, an’ their families; leastways they has two tupeks,” commented Tom.

“Tupeks?” asked Paul.

“Aye—skin tents. In summer they lives in skin tents, an’ in winter in snow igloos.”

“They seem to be all men and boys,” said Paul.

“No, they’s women too, but husky women wears trousers. You’ll see th’ difference when we comes closter.”

“Well, they are a rocky looking crowd!” exclaimed Paul.

There were two men, three women and four children, one a half-grown girl. All wore skin garments and were bareheaded, their long black hair, coarse and straight, reaching to the shoulders. One of the women carried an infant in her hood, and its round, bright eyes peered wonderingly over the mother’s shoulders at the intruders.

“Oksunae,” greeted Tom upon stepping ashore.

“Oksunae,” answered the Eskimos, who came forward laughing to shake hands with their visitors, their round, greasy faces beaming good nature and welcome.

Tom began his negotiations at once, conversing with the Eskimos in their native tongue, for they could understand no English.

“Ainsworth and I are going up this stream a little way to try the salmon. Want to go along, Paul?” asked Remington.

“No, I’ll get fishing enough later. Guess I’ll stay and look this

crowd over.”

“All right. Don’t make eyes at that young Eskimo girl.”

“No fear!”

Skulking about were several big, vicious looking dogs, which reminded Paul of timber wolves he had seen at the Zoo.

“I don’t like the looks of those beasts,” said he. “Are they dangerous?”

“They’re cowards so long as you keeps on your feet an’ has somethin’ handy to beat un with,” reassured Dan. “Your gun’ll do for that. But let un get th’ best o’ you once, an’ they’ll just rip you up like wolves. They is wolves.”

“They look it,” agreed Paul.

The lads wandered about the encampment, examining the kayaks and crude hunting implements and paraphernalia of the Eskimos. Upon approaching the tupeks a stench met their nostrils, which they found came from half putrid seal meat and fish within.

“They eats wonderful bad meat,” remarked Dan.

“Why, they don’t eat that stuff!” exclaimed Paul.

“Yes they does,” said Dan.

“What pigs they must be!”

“No, ’tis just th’ way they always been used to doin’. They has wonderful hard times t’ get things t’ eat sometimes.”

At the end of an hour Remington and Ainsworth returned.

“Not a strike,” said Remington, “though I’m certain there are plenty of salmon in the stream. We’re a little far north for them

to take the fly. But Ainsworth got our dinner. That's something."

"Ran into a bunch of ptarmigans," said Ainsworth, holding up a half dozen birds.

"How are you making out with the huskies, Tom?" asked Remington of Tom, who had joined them.

"Kuglutuk, th' old un, sir, will go with us. He's ready to start any time, sir. We has t' land him at Cape Smith or Cape Wolstenholm, sir, when we comes back."

"All right, Tom. Can't we get brush enough around here to broil these grouse and make some coffee? I'm famished."

"Yes, sir. Dan, get th' axe, b'y, an' put on a fire, whilst I dresses th' birds."

When Tom drew the birds, to Paul's amazement the Eskimos gathered up the entrails, placed them on the end of a stick, broiled them slightly over the fire Dan had lighted, and ate them as they might a delicacy.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Paul. "I'd starve before I'd do that!"

"Maybe," said Tom, "but I'm thinkin' you'd eat un an' like un if you was hungry enough. They's no tellin' what a man'll eat. Th' huskies eats un because they likes un, an' entrails ain't so bad, an' you gets used t' un, though I'm hopin' you'll never have t' eat un, lad."

"I never would," positively asserted Paul. "I'd die first."

Luncheon eaten, they bade adieu to the Eskimos, shaking hands again all around. Kuglutuk, his kayak in tow, took his place in the power boat, "Oksunae" was shouted by those afloat and

those on land, and the little settlement was quickly lost sight of around the point at the entrance of the cove.

On board the *North Star* again, a conference was held as to the most probable point at which salmon and trout could be found, Tom acting as interpreter. It was at length decided, upon Kuglutuk's recommendation, to visit the rivers flowing into Richmond Gulf, which, considerably farther south, offered greater promise that salmon would take the fly, though Kuglutuk assured them that both varieties of fish abounded in all the streams of the coast.

Three days later found the *North Star* in the latitude of Richmond Gulf, and with much careful maneuvering under the guidance of Kuglutuk, and with frequent heaving of the lead, a safe anchorage was found in Nastapoka Sound, behind the islands which shut out the wider sea beyond.

The entrance to Richmond Gulf is an exceedingly narrow, treacherous channel, through which Kuglutuk declared no vessel so large as the *North Star* could pass in safety. Through this channel he said the rising and ebbing tide poured with so terrific a rush of the waters that dangerous whirlpools were formed, which rendered its safe passage for kayaks and small craft impossible save at the time of the turning of the tide.

It was late afternoon when the ship made her anchorage, and it was decided to prepare for the passage of the dangerous strait in the power boat when the tide should reach flood at ten o'clock the next morning.

Kuglutuk, Tom Hand and Dan Rudd were to accompany the three sportsmen, and it was planned that the party should carry a full camping equipment, and remain at the head of Richmond Gulf one week.

The weather was propitious—mild, clear, delightful. This was to be Paul's first experience in camp. Before him lay a rugged, unpeopled, unknown wilderness. He was to enter it and be a part of it. The romance of it thrilled him, and he lay awake that night a long while, feasting anticipation and imagination, too restless to sleep.

CHAPTER IV

THE WILDERNESS PRIMEVAL

THE passage of the channel leading into Richmond Gulf was accomplished without adventure, and within the gulf the power boat took a northeasterly direction, passing several small islands. Many wild ducks, gulls and other water fowl and birds flew about the islands, hovered over the water or rested upon the waves.

Presently Kuglutuk turned the boat into the mouth of a river, and ascending the stream for a little distance, against a strong current, made a landing near the foot of a rushing, tumultuous rapid.

“Tom,” declared Remington, when they were ashore, “I’m as hungry as seven bears. Fry some bacon and make some coffee, won’t you, before you pitch the tents?”

“Aye, aye, sir. We’ll put on a fire an’ have un ready in a jiffy. Dan, b’y, bring up the things from the boat.”

“Come fellows, we’ll get our rods up while Tom’s getting dinner,” suggested Remington. “I’m aching to try my luck.”

“Which of these rods shall I use?” asked Paul. “I never used a rod in my life, and I guess you’ll have to show me.”

“Try this one,” selecting a good weight steel fly rod. “That’s got strength, and if you strike a big one you’re not so likely to break it as that lighter one. You’ll be able to handle the lighter

one after some practice.”

In the meantime Tom cut a pole about eight feet in length, sharpened the butt, which he jabbed firmly into the earth, inclined it at an angle over a fire which Kuglutuk had kindled with moss and dead sticks, and in such a position that the upper end of the stick came directly over the blaze. On this he hung a kettle of water. Then he sliced bacon. In ten minutes the water had boiled, coffee was made, the kettle removed from the stick, placed close to the fire on the ground, and the bacon sizzling in the pan.

“Oh, cracky!” said Paul, sniffing the air, “that’s the best thing I ever smelled.”

“Doesn’t it smell bully!” exclaimed Remington. “I thought I’d have time to make a cast or two before Tom was ready for us, but he’s been too quick for me.”

“Now,” said Remington, when they were through eating, “we’ll see if there are any hungry fish in that pool.”

Paul looked on while the older sportsmen made one or two casts. Then he attempted it, at first very clumsily, but gradually improving. He was not very enthusiastic, however.

“I don’t see any fun in this,” he said finally.

“Keep at it, and you’ll learn,” encouraged Remington.

At that moment “whiz-z-z” and Ainsworth’s reel fairly hummed, with forty yards of line run out before he could check it—a flash of spray—a great silver bar in the air! The leap was full two feet! Splash! It doubled, demanded more line, fought as

only a salmon can fight, the supple steel rod bent and curved, but the angler, his face tense with excitement, held his advantage.

“Good! Bully!” shouted Remington with each play. “Look out! That’s the way! Easy! That’s it!”

Again and again the fish fought for the head of the rapid, but at length, conquered, it was drawn in, and with Remington’s assistance landed—a fine big salmon.

“That was great!” exclaimed Paul. “Guess there is some fun in it after all.”

“Fun! Just strike one, and you’ll say it’s the best ever!” Ainsworth was justly proud.

A few minutes later, “Whiz-z-z” again, and “Whiz-z-z!” Two silver flashes! Two fountains of spray! Two mighty splashes! Paul and Remington had each hooked a salmon at nearly the same instant! And then there was fun! Ainsworth could hardly contain himself as he watched the play, shouting directions and cautions to one and the other. There was danger of getting their lines tangled when both fish darted up stream at once, or made dives for the bank at the same time, in efforts to free themselves. Finally Paul’s fish rushed in upon him, gained slack line, shook loose the hook and was free.

Paul could have cried with disappointment and vexation.

“Just my luck!” he exclaimed, as he saw Remington land a fine salmon.

“Oh, no, don’t get discouraged. You did mighty well for the first time,” encouraged Remington.

"I notice you landed yours, all right," said Paul pettishly.

"But I may lose the next one. The uncertainty of whether you'll land them or not after you've hooked them is half the fun."

"I can't see that—"

"Whiz-z-z"—away went his line again before he could finish. For half an hour, directed by Remington, he played the fish, and was at length rewarded with as fine a salmon as Ainsworth's—considerably larger than Remington's.

"What fun! Oh, but it's great!" he exclaimed as, all a-tremble with excitement, he examined his catch.

"They're here all right, and they're taking flies. We've got all the fish Tom can take care of today, and we've had a week's fun in two hours. What do you fellows say to climbing that barren hill?" suggested Remington. "I'm anxious to see what the country is like behind those cliffs."

Paul was loath to go. The sport had set his blood a-tingling with excitement and he would much have preferred to remain behind and fish, but Ainsworth agreed with Remington, and his sense of courtesy to his host bade him join them.

"We'll stretch our lines to dry before we go, Paul. Never put your line up wet or it will rot, and some day you'll lose a fine fish," advised Remington, who had noticed Paul lean his rod against a tree.

Their lines stretched, they wandered up the defile down which the river plunged in its mad impatience to reach the sea. Here they were in a dark forest of stunted spruce, but very quickly,

as they began the ascent of the hill, trees gave way to straggling brush, and brush at length to bare rocks.

“There’s a view for you,” said Remington when the summit was reached.

“Magnificent!” exclaimed Ainsworth.

“Pretty rough country.”

“But grand! Stupendously grand!”

To the west, a shimmering vista, lay Hudson Bay; to the east, to the north, to the south, stretched a tumbled, boundless mass of rocky ridges, interspersed with starved forests of spruce. Here and there a lake sparkled in the distance. Below them the river, a twisting, winding thread of silver, coursed down to the sea.

The sensations that had come to Paul in Hudson Strait when he first beheld the distant wilderness and the sailless sea, thrilled him again—first fear and shrinking, then an inward, inexplicable sense of power and freedom.

“And no one lives there,” he said, more to himself than to his companions.

“No one but Indians,” said Remington. “Eskimos on the coast. They all live as close to nature as man can live, and they fight that wilderness pretty constantly for existence. It’s a land of the survival of the fittest.”

Later, on other occasions during their stay in Richmond Gulf, Paul visited the barren hill. He would steal away alone, and for an hour at a time sit upon its rocky summit, and revel in the rugged beauties of the landscape. Here he felt a something well up

within him, a desire to *do* something—an indescribable longing he could not define.

The lure and the power of the wilderness were exerting their influence. This was the world just as God had made it, untouched by the hand of man. Rugged mountains, patches of green forests, sparkling lakes, the distant sea, the blue sky, and silence. There were no brick walls to limit the vision, no tall chimneys belching out smudges of black smoke to defile the atmosphere, no rushing crowd to distract. Nowhere does one get so close to God as in the wilderness. The wilderness is the temple of pure thoughts, of high ambitions. Here man's soul expands as nowhere else on earth.

When the three returned to camp they found the tents set up and everything snug and in order. A fragrant and cozy seat of spruce boughs had been arranged by Dan and Kuglutuk before a roaring log fire, and, by no means the least attractive of the preparations, a delicious supper of salmon awaited them, which they attacked with a will, for the exercise had given them an unusual appetite.

"I never ate such fish before," Paul declared, between mouthfuls.

When supper was finished the two men lighted cigars, and chatted, while Paul reclined upon the boughs and gazed into the blaze. Presently Tom and Dan joined them, and Dan, producing his harmonica, began to play a soft, low air, while Tom cut some tobacco from a plug, rolled it between the palms of his

hands, stuffed it into a pipe, lighted it with a brand from the fire and handing the plug to Kuglutuk who followed his example, contentedly settled back to smoke and enjoy the warmth, for the evening was chilly.

“Them was fine salmon you gets this evenin’,” Tom remarked.

“Yes,” said Remington, “fine ones, and I hope we’ll have more tomorrow.”

“Dandies!” broke in Paul, “and dandy fun landing them!”

“Yes, ’tis rare sport landin’ un. And does you like troutin’?”

“Yes, to be sure. We expected to get trout here,” answered Remington.

“Th’ husky’s tellin’ me they’s plenty to be had a bit up the streams, sir, and big uns—wonderful big uns, by his tell, sir.”

“We’ll have to try them tomorrow.”

“Where did you learn to speak Eskimo, Tom?” asked Ainsworth.

“Where’d I learn un, sir? I never learned un. I allus knew un. I were born, sir, on the Labrador. My mother were a woman of Zoar, sir, an’ a half-breed. They talks mostly husky thereabouts. The first words she ever says to me, sir, was husky, an’ when I were a wee lad she talks all her baby talk to me in husky.”

“But your father was a white man?”

“Oh, aye, sir, he were from Conception Bay. He were down on the Labrador fishin’, an’ he meets my mother, an’ likes she, an’ th’ missionary marries un. Then he stays at Zoar an’ traps in winter, an’ there I were born, sir.”

“Are your parents still living, then?”

“Oh, no, sir. They both dies when I were a bit of a lad, sir—seven year old or thereabouts. ’Twere in winter, an’ my father is out to his traps. My mother expects him home in th’ evenin’, an’ when it gets dark an’ he never comes she’s much worried, for he’s always before comin’ when he’s promisin’, sir. He were a wonderful true man t’ keep his word, sir, even t’ wallopin’ me when I does things he’s denied me to do, an’ is deservin’ th’ wallopin’.

“Well, as th’ evenin’ gets on an’ he’s not comin’, my mother cries a bit an’ says somethin’s been befallin’ he, sir, out in the bush, an’ when she rouses me from sleep before the break of day th’ next mornin’, she’s in a wonderful bad state worryin’. She tells me she’s goin’ t’ look for he, an’ I’m t’ watch th’ baby.

“She goes, sir, an’ she don’t come back that day or that night or th’ next day. Snow comes fallin’ thick an’ th’ weather grows dreadful nasty. Th’ baby cries most o’ th’ time, an’ I carries un some. I knows th’ baby’s hungry, but I has no way t’ feed un. After awhile it stops cryin’ when I lays un on th’ bed.

“That were a wonderful cold night, sir. When mornin’ comes th’ baby’s still quiet, an’ I says to myself, ‘I’ll let un sleep.’

“Th’ bread’s all gone, an’ I only has a bit of salt fish t’ eat, an’ th’ fire I puts on in th’ stove burns slow. But th’ snow’s stopped in th’ night.

“Th’ baby don’t cry no more, but I does, for I don’t know why my father an’ mother don’t come, an’ I’m cryin’ when I hears dogs

outside. I wipes away th' tears quick, for I'm wantin' no one t' catch me cryin'.

"Then in comes th' Moravian missionary from Nain, a wonderful kind man. He asks where my mother is. I tells he how my mother goes away to look for my father an' never comes back, an' th' hard time I has. That th' baby were hungry, but she's sleepin' now.

"He goes an' looks at un, an' then very quiet he covers un over with th' blanket, an' puttin' his hand on my head an' lookin' in my eyes, he says: 'Is you brave, lad? We all has troubles, lad, an' you must be brave to meet yours.'

"Then he calls old Muklutuk, his driver, to bring in some grub. They puts on a good fire, an' gives me a plenty t' eat, an' goes away sayin' they'll be back by night.

"When they comes back the missionary holds me up to him, and he says, very kind: 'Lad, I'm goin' to take you to a new home, for your father and mother has been called away to heaven by th' Lord. He'll be needin' 'em there, an' they can't come back t' you, but th' Lord wants me t' take you with me.'

"I were wonderful lonesome when he says that, at not seein' mother an' father again, but I holds back th' tears, for mother has often been tellin' me that some day th' Lord might be callin' she or father away t' live in heaven, an' not t' cry or feel bad about un, for 't would be right, as everything th' Lord done were right.

"Well, th' missionary takes me on his komatik t' th' station where he lives, an' th' women there cries over me an' makes a

wonderful lot o' me, an' every one there is wonderful kind."

"What had happened to your father and mother?" asked Ainsworth, after a pause.

"I were comin' t' that. He'd been meetin' with an accident, his gun goin' off an' shootin' his foot off. She finds him in th' snow, an' tries t' carry him home, but 't were too much for she, an' when it comes on t' snow again she sticks to him, an' they both freezes t' death. Leastwise that's what th' missionary thinks, for he finds un froze stone dead. Mother has her arms around father, holdin' he close to her bosom, as though tryin' to keep he warm.

"So you sees, sir, how I come t' speak th' Eskimo lingo. My mother were a half-breed of th' Labrador."

"The baby?" asked Paul, much moved by the story. "What became of that?"

"The baby were dead for a long while ere th' missionary comes."

Tom rose and threw some fresh wood on the fire, cut some fresh tobacco from his plug, refilled his pipe, and sat down again.

"But you live in Newfoundland now, Tom?" Remington asked.

"Oh, aye, sir. My father's brother comes down t' the Labrador fishing the next summer, and takes me home with he. I'd like wonderful well for you t' meet my woman, and my little lad and lass, sir. There's no likelier lad and lass on the coast, sir. They're wonderful likely, sir."

Dan resumed his soft music on the harmonica. Twilight gave

way to darkness. Beyond the campfire's circle of light the forest lay black. Below them the rapid roared. In the North the aurora flashed up its gorgeous glory.

“Well,” said Remington at length, rising, “I reckon it's time to turn in for we want to be out early and make the most of our time.”

His warm sleeping bag seemed very cozy to Paul when he crawled into it, this first night he had ever spent in camp, the perfume of his spruce bough bed very sweet, and quickly he fell into deep and restful slumber, to be suddenly awakened by the sharp report of a rifle.

CHAPTER V

WRECKED

IT was broad daylight. Remington and Ainsworth were gone. Bang! Bang! Bang! The shots came in quick succession, and not far above the camp. Paul was frightened for a moment, then highly excited. He disentangled himself from his sleeping bag, sprang to the front of the tent and shouted to Tom, who was unconcernedly cooking breakfast:

“What is it? What’s up?”

“Bears.”

He drew on his clothes as quickly as possible, grabbed his rifle and ran in the direction of the shooting. A little way up the ravine he came upon Remington, Ainsworth, Dan and Kuglutuk, surveying the carcasses of two polar bears.

“Hello, Paul, you’re a little late for the fun,” greeted Remington.

“Got two,” said Ainsworth.

“Why didn’t you call me?”

“No time for that. Dan was poking around up here and saw them coming, and we had to hustle as it was.”

“It would only have taken a minute to call me.”

“Yes, but that would have been a minute too long, if they had happened to get a sniff of camp, and only for the north breeze

they would have anyway, and been off before Dan saw them.”

“Did they put up any fight?”

“Didn’t have a chance. We got them quick. Close shot and no trick at all. Nothing like your shot.”

“I’m sorry I wasn’t up earlier. What were they doing on land? I thought they kept to the ice.”

“No, we’re liable to see them anywhere on these shores. Guess they were going down to catch a salmon breakfast in our pool at the foot of the rapid.”

They saw no more bears while encamped on Richmond Gulf, though they caught plenty of salmon and trout, and now and again took excursions back into the hills and along the streams where ptarmigans were found, or took advantage of excellent duck and goose shooting on near-by lakes. Mallards and black ducks were plentiful, great flocks of waxies flew overhead and the Canada gray goose was fairly numerous.

The sport was so good, in fact, that the week which they had originally planned to remain ashore lengthened into two, and it was a fortnight after their arrival when reluctantly they broke camp one morning and returned to the *North Star*, carrying with them enough salmon and trout to supply both cabin and forecabin for several days.

“Glad to see you! Glad to see you!” greeted Captain Blunt as they drew alongside the ship. “Good sport? Have a good time?”

“Bully!” answered Remington. “Never better. Salmon and trout hungry for flies, and we got two bears in the bargain.”

“Good! Good, sir! And how did you find it, youngster?”

“Fine and dandy,” answered Paul. “Best time I ever had in my life.”

“Good! Good! Glad you’re aboard, Mr. Remington—glad you’re aboard. Barometer falling rapidly—outlook for bad weather—northeast blow, I’m thinkin’. Bad anchorage here. We’ll make for open sea. Get right away. Growing a bit nervous about it, sir—just a bit nervous.”

“All right, Captain,” said Remington. “We’re ready to go.”

Anchor was weighed, and slowly the *North Star* felt her way out of the uncertain waters toward the wide bosom of Hudson Bay.

“Now,” asked Captain Bluntt, when they had gained “elbow room,” as he expressed it, “what’s your pleasure, sir?”

“Well,” said Remington, “we want to have a little walrus hunting, we’d like to pick up another bear or two, and I’m mighty anxious to get a crack at caribou before we leave the country. Kuglutuk says, though, that all the caribou on this side are far inland on the highlands, and out of reach. I’ve been thinking that we might cross to the other side somewhat south of Chesterfield Inlet, and perhaps find caribou there, then cruise back along the islands looking for bear, and stop up toward Mosquito Bay a few days for our walrus hunt before we strike for home. Kuglutuk says the Eskimos up there will help us.”

“Good plan! Good plan, sir! But we must try to be through the straits by middle of September. Taking chances, sir—taking

chances with ice if we're any later, sir."

"All right, Captain. That'll give us over three weeks. We won't spend much time with walrus, but we'd like to get two or three heads for trophies."

The blow that was predicted came. It began with driving rain and sleet, which swept the sea in blinding sheets, and a rising northeast wind pounded Hudson Bay into a fury of wild white-crested waves that tossed and buffeted the *North Star*. But Captain Bluntt was an able master. He kept well offshore, faced the storm, and lay to, using only enough power to permit him to hold his position, and making no attempt to proceed upon the voyage.

Thus a week was consumed, and September was near at hand, when at length the clouds wearied of their task, and the sun again shone out of a clear sky through a glorious, transparent atmosphere.

But the northeast gale had reaped a harvest of ice from the Arctic waters, sweeping it down into Hudson Bay, where the packs broke into fragments, and vagrant pans were distributed far and wide, steadily working their way southward. This was not bay ice such as had been encountered off the eastern coast of Labrador, but the adamantine product of the Arctic. There was little difficulty, however, in avoiding the larger and widely distributed pans, and the smaller fragments bobbing here and there in the swell were quite harmless to the strongly built little steamship.

“Looks bad for the straits, sir, bad,” remarked Captain Bluntt, descending from the barrel in the foremast. “I’m thinkin’ th’ straits has plenty of ice now, plenty, sir. Bad place to meet ice, sir! Bad place! But if the weather holds calm for a week most of it’ll work out.”

“Are we likely to have trouble getting through the straits, Captain?”

“No! No! We’ll get through all right, sir, we’ll get through, with no more nor’easters or northers. A bit of a westerly breeze would clean the straits, sir, sweep the ice right out. Yes, sir, sweep it out!”

They turned northward, cruised close in along the Ottawa Islands, where Remington shot another bear, and then turned westward, where at length anchorage was made at 60° north latitude opposite Egg River and nearly a mile from its mouth.

“Not safe to run too close in,” explained Captain Bluntt. “Never like to anchor too close inshore when I’ve no cover, sir. Not safe, not safe. Always afraid of the rocks, sir, if a squall should strike me.”

“This is near enough,” said Remington. “It’s a short pull to the river mouth.”

“Now what’s the plan, sir? Going ashore to hunt caribou, you say? Well, you may find them in there around the lakes, sir. Must be lakes back there. Yes, sir, and caribou.”

“That’s the way we figure it. This is Sunday. Tomorrow morning as soon as we can see, Ainsworth and I will start, and

take Kuglutuk with us, and I'd like to have Tom if you can spare him, Captain."

"Spare him? Yes! Yes! To be sure I can spare him."

"We're not going to take Paul, for we'll have some hard tramping to do, and I'm afraid he wouldn't be able to keep the pace."

"No, no, don't take him. Too soft; couldn't stand it. 'Twould kill him in a day. Yes, sir, in a day."

"We'll take one light shelter tent, a blanket each, a couple of axes, and besides our rifles only four days' provisions. We can carry them easily, and we'll be back to the place where the boat leaves us on Thursday afternoon, no later than two o'clock. So a boat may come over for us then, and will surely find us waiting."

"All right, sir, all right. But suppose you gets your deer the first day? What then, sir?"

"Why then we'll come down to the shore and shoot. If you hear us shooting, why, send for us."

"Very good, sir, very good. All very good."

"I suppose Paul will set up a kick against our leaving him, but it's out of the question to take him. Can't you let Dan and him have a small boat to go ashore every day and hunt ptarmigans, or fish in the river? Dan is perfectly reliable, isn't he?"

"Yes, yes, sir. Dan reliable? True and sure, sir. Good as a man. Good head, sir. Good head. Only a lad, sir, but good as a man. Be a skipper himself, sir, some day. Yes, yes; Dan can take the youngster over."

Paul, who had been standing aft, examining the coast through binoculars, came forward at this juncture to join Remington and Captain Bluntt.

“Pretty rough looking country over there,” said he. “What have you planned to do? Are we going to hunt caribou?”

“Yes, Ainsworth and I have planned to go ashore tomorrow and hike back into the hills for three or four days, to see if we can’t run on some caribou. I’m afraid, though, you are not hardened up enough for it yet. We’ve got to travel fast and there’ll be no sleeping bags. You’ll stay here and Dan will take you ashore to hunt and fish, and you can amuse yourself that way until we get back on Thursday.”

“Oh, now, that’s pretty tough! I’m sure I can walk as fast as you can.”

“And carry a back load of stuff?”

“Of course I never tried that, and I don’t see why I should. There are men enough to do the work.”

“The more men there are the less ground can be covered, and this is a hunting trip where we’ve got to do fast work, and every one must do a man’s work. No, Paul, it’s too hard for you. You and Dan can have a good time here till we come back.”

“There won’t be anything to do here but hang around the old ship. I think you might let me go with you fellows.”

“As I said, you won’t have to hang around the ship. You and Dan go ashore. Take one of the tents if you’d like, and camp over there. Dan knows how to handle things. He’ll give you a good

time.”

“Well, I suppose if you don’t want me I can’t go, but I think it’s a pretty rough deal just the same,” and he went off sulking.

Paul had not yet learned that he could not have or do anything his fancy craved. But he held his host in high esteem. He was thoroughly grateful for the opportunity to take part in the expedition, and at the end of half an hour, when he had had time to consider his actions, he became quite ashamed of his childishness and his lack of courtesy to his host, and, naturally of a frank and open disposition, he approached Remington, put out his hand and said:

“Mr. Remington, I want to apologize for the way I acted and what I said awhile ago. I’m sorry for it. You’ve given me the greatest time of my life and I appreciate it.”

“That’s all right, Paul,” and Remington shook his hand warmly. “It’s given me a lot of pleasure to have you along. I knew you’d look at this thing right. I’d like to take you with us, but you can see it would be too hard work for you. You haven’t been at the game long enough yet.”

“I guess that’s right.”

Remington and Ainsworth did not appear at breakfast in the morning, and when Paul took his seat he asked:

“Where are the others, Captain?”

“Gone. Gone these two hours. Away up country by this time. For my part I can’t see the fun in it. No, by the imps of the sea! Cruising over rocks and mountains just for deer. Just for deer!

Fun, though, maybe, for them that likes it. Yes, maybe 'tis. Give me th' sea, an' a good deck under my feet. Good enough for me! Yes, good enough for me, or any sensible man."

"Mr. Remington said Dan could go ashore with me and camp."

"Yes, yes, of course. Dan knows. I told him. Ready any time. Told him to get ready. Hope you'll have a good time."

"We'll have a good time all right."

"Comin' back tonight? Going to camp? Oh, yes, you said you would camp."

"Yes, we'll camp. No need of coming back till Thursday. The other fellows won't be back till then."

"Very well, very well; stay till Thursday. Two o'clock. Remember be aboard at two sharp. Got to get away, get through the straits. No being late, now! Remember Sydney! Felt like wringing your neck that day. I did, by the imps of the sea. Heave you overboard or wring your neck if you're late!"

Paul glanced up at Captain Bluntt and discovered a good-humored twinkle in the Captain's eye, though there was no doubt that he was quite in earnest as to the admonition to return on time.

"All right, Captain; we'll be on time," Paul laughed.

"That's right. That's right. Always be on time. When you says you'll do a thing, do it."

But Paul had not yet learned his lesson.

Dan stowed sufficient provisions in a light punt to meet the needs of a few days' camping excursion, a light axe, a small sheet-

iron tent stove—for Dan was uncertain of finding sufficient wood for an open camp-fire to keep them comfortable during the cold evenings—evenings—a small tent, a tarpaulin, cooking utensils and two sleeping bags. Each carried his rifle—Dan's a light 44-40 carbine—and Paul did not forget his favorite steel fly rod.

“Two o'clock Thursday. No later! No later than two, now!” Captain Bluntt admonished as they drew away from the ship.

The mile to the mouth of Egg River was a short pull for Dan, and he found that with a little maneuvering he was able to work the boat a considerable distance up the river itself, to the first clump of straggling spruce trees.

Here it was decided to make camp, and while Dan pitched the tent and put things in order Paul wandered up the stream and soon had a fine trout on his hook.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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