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GORDON OF THE LOST LAGOON

A Romance of the Pacific Coast

BY

ROBERT WATSON

*Author of "My Brave and Gallant Gentleman," "The
Spoilers of the Valley," etc.*

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By ROBERT WATSON

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*To Those Who Are Not Too Young
To Have Felt The Glow of Romance,
Or Too Old To Have Forgotten It.*

ROMANCE

Come with me, sail with me
To the fairy isles on a fairy sea,
Where the blood of the dying sun seeps red

The chaste, smooth sheet of its ocean bed;
The moon night-rides in her ghostly garb,
Shooting her arrows with silver barb:
Where passions flare and lovers meet,
For men are strong and maids are sweet;
Where villains plot in their dark-browed way,
But pay their toll at the end of day:
The strain of brawn, the thrust of wit;
The glamour, the glow and the thrill of it.
Drink with joy of the sparkling brew,
For here at least may our dreams come true.
Come with me, sail with me
To the fairy isles on a fairy sea.

R. W.

GORDON OF THE LOST LAGOON

CHAPTER ONE

"It must be bred in the bone, boy, or it wouldn't be there; but I'd give a lot to know who your folks were."

That was the limit of any reprimand I ever received from my kindly old foster-mother, Sarah Berry, when she would gasp at finding me off the end of the mill wharf, naked as on the day I was born, astride a log in the Inlet, paddling as for dear life and in deadly combat with a nigger-boy playmate who was bearing down on me astride an enemy craft in the form of another log belonging to the Northern Pacific Mills.

She would ask big Forbes, the wharf foreman, to chase us home any time he found us there again, and he would agree to do so but would forget his promise and laugh to himself as he thought how humble our log-rolling performance had been compared with the one he had seen us at just before the anxious old lady came on the scene—diving beneath a boom of logs and swimming under water till we came up on the other side.

"Just water rats!" he would mutter to himself as he made across the wharf, "and the first water rat doomed to be drowned has yet to be born."

I was the spoiled favorite in a humble household of three, Mrs. Berry, Sam (my foster-father) and myself, then at the interesting and callow age of twelve.

I had learned in a disjointed way, from an odd phrase dropped now and again, that my real mother had died when I was born; that I had been brought up in another home until that home also got broken up; that my father might be alive, but, again, that in every probability he was not, for he had gone away after my mother's death and had not returned to claim me.

I had never discussed the matter with my foster-mother and the information had simply seeped into my mind, a word here and another there—to me at all times uninteresting and of little account, for Mrs. Berry had not once failed in filling all the exacting requirements of both father and mother.

Sam Berry, my foster-father, was a shiftless, good-natured, easy-going, easily-led, irresponsible individual who slept, smoked and talked with much greater gusto than he did anything else. When he could not get out of it, he worked as a longshoreman. He was what he jocularly called a "Green Funnel specialist"—for Sam could spring his little joke even when it was on himself—and he conveyed the idea in his talk that it would be a lowering of his dignity for him to help in the loading or unloading of any other than a "Green Funnel" steamer, and as these vessels generally came into port at the rate of one a month they did not unduly interfere with Sam's debates and arguments in the waterfront saloons.

Sam Berry had not always been this way. At twenty-two he had been reckoned the ablest of the younger stevedores in the great seaport of Liverpool, but time and drink had wrought changes much to Sam's detriment. And a strange thing with him was that he could run a boat with the same skill as he could load one.

It was next to impossible for anyone to get angry with him. There was nothing in his make-up to engender anger. He had an open ear and an open hand for any kind of hard-luck story. He spent what little money he earned in the same shiftless way as he worked. The Western Hotel bartenders got the most of it.

It was lucky indeed for our little home—as I can see now—that his good-natured, big-hearted wife was a practised hand at dressmaking, for she seldom if ever saw any of Sam's earnings and she had got so used to doing without his help that she took the condition more or less as a matter of course.

Sam was apparently past all changing. Mrs. Berry was his mainstay and his sheet anchor, and I can remember it was her constant prayer that she would be spared to outlive him, for she could conceive of herself living without Sam but never of Sam living without her.

Sam never quarreled with her. He bowed to her judgment in all things. What she said and what she did were quite all right with him. When she gave him a mild reprimand for his foolishness—and her reprimands were never other than mild—he would listen attentively and admit with a nod of his head the truth of all she said. He would even take his pipe out of his mouth as he listened, which, with Sam, was a tremendous show of deference and respect. But he would continue the uneven tenor of his ways.

I was a prime favorite with Sam and I used to look up to him as a paragon of all excellence, for did he not embody that wonderful being I so longed to grow to—a man, and a man who had sailed the seas?

Sam used to suck at his pipe and listen to my accounts of my boyish escapades with chuckles of relish. Maybe he saw in me an energy and keenness for life that he himself lacked. He never raised a hand against me and he was ever ready to make excuses for my shortcomings in spite of the remonstrances of his better half. Outside of taking on extra work or dispensing with his beer and his tobacco, Sam would have done anything in the world for me.

In his sober and contrite moments he used to hold himself up to me as a horrible example of all that a man ought not to try to grow to. At these times, he conveyed the feeling that his life would not be altogether a failure and he would not have lived in vain if the pitfalls he had tumbled into and would naturally continue to tumble into were avoided by me.

Our home was one of the semi-respectable houses—shabby-genteel—on the high side of the street overlooking Burrard Inlet and gazing into one of the numerous lumber wharves which lay to the east of the city, just beyond the freight sheds, the cheap hotels and saloons, and the conglomerate section inhabited chiefly by Japanese and negroes.

Early one afternoon, my mother—for I had learned to call her such—was sitting by the window, sewing. I was still at the table, rounding off my mid-day meal with odds and ends, as a hungry and growing boy generally does. She looked up suddenly from her work, with a worried expression on her face as she gazed at me.

"Sonny," she said as I glanced up, "come over here; I would like to say something to you."

I rose and went to her, standing by her side and placing my arm on her shoulder, for I knew she was feeling sad over Sam.

That morning, he had seen a "Green Funnel" liner, fully loaded, push her way through The Narrows, and six hours later he had stumbled home with a grin on his face and his pockets empty. My mother had pulled off his boots and clothing and had tumbled him into bed, where he now lay, flat on his back, asleep and breathing heavily.

"If anything should happen to me, sonny," she said, "what would you do?"

"Oh, I don't know. Nothing's going to happen to you. But I guess I would just stay with Sam. He would look after me."

Strange to say, I never called Sam anything but just "Sam."

My mother sighed. "You know, Douglas, Sam was not always a heavy drinker, not until he got caught in a fire in a shipping shed in Liverpool; after that he just seemed not to care. Now, Sam can't look after himself."

"Then I guess I would just have to look after him. But there isn't anything going to happen to you," I reiterated, as if in need of assurance on the point, for she set a fear in me. "We both need you too badly."

"We don't always get what we need in this world, Douglas. But I'm going to try hard so's nothing will happen for a while."

She put her arm round me and looked into my face.

"Sonny—I wish you were older and bigger," she sighed, putting her cheek against mine.

"Oh, I'm getting big!"

She smiled.

"What are you going to do when you grow up, Dougie? Mr. Gartshore says that, for all your pranks and mischief, you are a good boy at school. Your school reports tell me that too."

I thought for a moment as to what I would like to be, but had to shake my head.

"I don't know for sure what I want to be; but I guess it'll be something connected with boats and water."

"Well, if you ever have to go away and I am not here;—you see that trunk in the corner?"

I nodded.

"There is a long, tin box inside. You've seen it."

She rose and lifted the lid of the trunk, bringing out a good-sized cash box. She opened it. "See—right on top is this letter and it has your name on it. I put your name there, but inside of it is another letter with your name on it too. If I am not here and you have to go away, I want you to make sure that you take this with you, for it is your very own. You must never lose it. Sew it inside your coat-lining, or get somebody you can trust—somebody that likes little boys as I do—to keep it safe for you."

"What's inside?" I asked, with a boy's natural curiosity.

"I don't know all that's in it—a letter left to you by your father, I think, all sealed and not to be opened till you are twenty-two—and as it may be your father's very last message, his wish must be respected. There is also a letter in there from me to you, with a little present. I made it for your twenty-second birthday the same as the other, because maybe the one will help to comfort you a little should the other have something in it to cause you worry. It must not be opened till then—just as it says on the front. Will you remember that, Douglas?"

"Sure I will! That won't be hard to remember."

"Well—there it is, back on top of the box again, and you mustn't forget, for it might mean much to you then."

"But it is a long time to wait till I'm twenty-two," I remarked.

"Yes,—and that's why I'm telling you about it now, for lots of things can happen between the time a boy is twelve and he gets to twenty-two."

How true were her conjectures! Lots of things did happen in my case and the wonder of it is that I ever reached that seemingly tremendously old age of twenty-two.

"What is that?" she exclaimed suddenly, starting up at a noise at the window.

I ran to the front and looked out.

"Oh,—it is just Cooney. He wants me to go out."

"All right then,—off you go."

She wiped her eyes and gave me a kiss. But at the time, I hardly noticed her tears and I accepted her maternal kiss as most healthy boys do—I liked the caress and would have missed it, but, getting it, I did not stop to analyze it. It was one of those intangible somethings that one thinks about only long after they have ceased.

I grabbed up my cap.

"Tell Cooney not to throw stones up at the window when he wants you. He might smash it."

"All right!"

"And, Douglas——"

I stopped at the door.

"Why don't you play with some of the white boys? That blackamoor is always after you like the shadow he is."

"Oh, I play with white boys far more than I do with Cooney. But he's a nice boy—and he's terribly funny. Everybody likes him. It is just his black that's wrong with him."

She laughed, waved her hand, and I bolted down the veranda steps.

CHAPTER TWO

And thus it was with me, Douglas Gordon, as it is with all else in this transitory existence: time sped on with its youthful joys, excitements and disappointments. The glorious summer days, with the golden sunshine thrown back in dazzling brilliance from the everlasting, snow-tipped panorama of mountains to the ever-moving, sparkling waters of the Inlet, became interwoven with days when the heavy sea-logs rolled in through The Narrows and obliterated the beauties of the harbor, spreading their chilling forecast of winter, but leavening it with reminders of the days just gone with a few hours every afternoon of bright, Indian-summer sunshine, bracing and buoyant but all too short, for night harried day and winter pushed summer in relentless procession: when the long days and nights of rain; incessant, searching, chilling rain that hit the streets and splashed up again, thus getting one two ways; rain that no garment could for long resist, seeping and wind-blown; rain that made the traveler hasten on his journey, that cleared the streets of all humanity save those who could not be elsewhere, that overflowed the eaves-troughing and poured in a cataract from the roofs of the houses and buildings; rain rushing in torrents along the street gutters until they swelled and refused to swallow more, spreading over the street surface like a coating of fresh, liquid tar that mirrored the night-lights and the passing vehicles; rain that crammed the street cars with steaming, soaked humanity and chilled the marrow of the corner newsboy, causing him to count and recount his unsold and slowly dwindling bundle of papers under his arm; rain that sent the shuffling Chinaman into a jog-trot that was neither a walk nor a run and caused him to push his hands farther up his wide sleeves as he hurried along close to the shelter of the high buildings; skidding automobiles, shivering, homeless dogs and people cowering in alleyways; immovable, stoical, rubber-clad traffic-policemen—these, and all that go with them, passed in the procession of the seasons.

The cheerless, chilling wet of a November afternoon was sending me trotting homeward from school. I had no desire to loiter by the way. The rain ran in streams down my clothes. I was bumped and I in turn bumped into people who were sheltering behind downward-held umbrellas, all intent on nothing but getting to their respective destinations in the shortest possible time.

I ran up on the back veranda of our house and into the kitchen by the back door, shaking myself like a wet spaniel and shouting a cheery salutation.

"Hullo, mother! Gee, but it's wet out!"

The usual cheery answer did not come back to me. I hurried into the dining-room. There was no one there. The parlor, the bedrooms—all were empty.

I went back to the kitchen and changed my wet clothes, fancying that my mother had gone on some errand and would be back shortly.

An hour later a heavy tread up the back stairway told me of the arrival of Sam.

"Where's mother?" I asked, as soon as Sam showed his face indoors.

A glance at him and I noticed that he was unusually solemn. Not only that, but he was sober. Something in his look sent a chill of dread through me. He sat down dejectedly.

"What's the matter with mother?" I asked, going over.

"Dougie," he answered, gazing stupidly at the floor, "mother is very sick. She took bad after you left for school this afternoon and they sent to the sheds for me. The doctor hurried her away to the hospital. He says she's pretty bad, sonny."

And as Sam said it, my heart stood still.

"If I went up to-night, could I see her, Sam?" I asked at last.

"No,—they wouldn't let you in. We'll know better to-morrow how it is going to be with her, for they are trying to fix her up."

"Don't you cry, sonny," he continued, although he was unable to restrain the tears that rose to his own eyes. "She says not to worry, for she'll be all right soon."

But Sam Berry could not rid his voice of the hopeless tone. "She says you and me's to get our supper for ourselves and stay in and go to bed early. She wants you not to forget her when you say your prayers. She sent a kiss to you, Dougie, and asks you to be as good as you can."

Sam gulped. "She never asked me to be good. I guess she thought it was useless asking that."

I put my arm round his neck and tried to comfort him, but it was little that I could do, for this was something new in my own understanding. I had been too young to feel any earlier troubles that might have beset me.

I went to bed early, and I had been sleeping a long time when a noise woke me. The light was still burning in the kitchen. Sam had not gone to bed. He was sitting there in the chair with his head in his hands. I slipped out of bed and went to him. Tears were running through his fingers. I tried once more to comfort him, but only cried myself in unison. Helpless and forlorn both of us were, as most men are when, even if only temporarily, they lose their womankind in the home.

"She never asked me to be good, Dougie,—she never asked me to be good," Sam harped. "She knew it would be wasting words."

At last, with my continued coaxing, we huddled into bed together and slept till morning.

Sam had to hurry down to the dock, for his favorite "Green Funnel" liner was unloading. He had already lost time. He told me to go to school and take a lunch with me. He would take a lunch with him too, then, after tea time, he would take a run up to find out how the invalid was getting along.

But after Sam left I thought for a while. I had no desire for school. I fed my dog, Bones, then he and I set out all the way, in the pitiless torrent of rain—which had not ceased for two days—up Main Street, across the False Creek bridge, still on to the suburban part of the town, then off at right angles in the Fairview direction where I knew the great city-like building called the hospital was located.

I was terribly afraid of that hospital. I still am. Prisons, asylums, reformatories, morgues and hospitals were all in the same category with me then. Like policemen, judges, lawyers and dentists, I felt that doctors were good people to keep away from if possible. They overawed me and seemed to be a premonition of worse to follow.

The rain soon soaked me through and streamed from my forehead down over my face. Bones trailed along after me, his nose just touching my heels at every step and the water dripping from the end of his stumpy tail, presenting a picture of woe-begone dejection.

At last I entered the courtyard and stood aside in a state of indecision. An ambulance raced up to the main entrance. Two men, dressed in white, came out from swing doors, apparently without being signalled for. The men in the ambulance opened up the vehicle and brought out a stretcher containing a workman all bandaged and broken and bloody. The man groaned and swore in his agony. The swing doors closed again and the ambulance drove silently away, leaving me outside, alone again, shivering in the rain.

A kindly-faced man came out from the swing doors. As he turned up his collar, buttoned up his coat and opened up his umbrella, he noticed me.

"Did you wish to see anybody, sonny?" he asked.

"Yes!—my mother is in there. I would like to see her, please."

"Then you go right in to the office and ask them there. Just go right in."

The kindly-faced man hurried off. People came and went. Cars drove up noiselessly and as silently rolled away. But it was a long time before my courage was equal to permitting me to venture inside.

With a word of admonition, I left Bones and entered. Slowly I approached a counter and stood by while several people came up and were attended to.

"What would you like, boy?" at last asked a man behind the counter.

"I would like to see my mother. She is in here."

"What's her name?"

"Mrs. Berry, sir."

The man looked over a card-index.

"I'm sorry, but you can't see her to-day. It won't be possible to see her for several days."

I felt that strange, creepy, cold sensation of fear running in my stomach again.

The man turned away to attend to others, but I still stood by.

A nurse standing near came over to me. There was a real touch of the mother in her—she understood me.

"Do you wish to see her so very much as that? She is very, very sick, you know; and it might not be good for her to see anybody. Are you Douglas?"

"Yes!" I answered, brightening that she should know my name.

"Your mother was talking about you when she was coming out of the ether. She has been talking about you every now and again since. She loves you very much, Douglas. Now, I'll tell her that you called, if you run along to school like a good boy. She wouldn't like you to miss your school. Come back in two days and maybe we shall be able to let you see her then for a minute or two."

I had no notion what "coming out of the ether" meant, but I surmised that it was something very dreadful and dangerous. The nurse went with me to the swing doors and let me out with a smile.

But I did not go to school. All day long I lingered about, now so wet that I was past feeling the rain's discomfort.

I had never known before there was so much sickness in the world. Everybody seemed to have something wrong somewhere. People were driven up to the hospital in dozens; drawn, haggard, huddled; some violent, others deathly quiet; and people were driven away from it with the same deathly pallor and the same fragile-looking frames.

And my conception of God altered that day. My confidence in Him was shaken. It was in fear and trembling that my mind formed the words of a prayer for my mother, for I was not then old enough or sufficiently read to know that the good, all-loving God, who created all and pronounced it good, did not send sickness any more than He sent sin.

When it was beginning to grow dark, the nurse who had spoken to me at the desk came out. She saw me at once.

"Goodness, child!" she exclaimed, "are you still here?"

I did not answer.

"Have you been here all this time?"

"Yes, miss!"

"Haven't you had anything to eat?"

"I'm not hungry, miss. I just would like to see my mother, please. I won't speak, if you tell me not to, but I just would like to see her."

My childish appeal touched her tender heart. She put her arm round my shoulder and hurried me inside, and evidently she had more than the usual authority.

"Mr. Small," she said to the man behind the counter, "please have Johnson take this child's clothes off and have them dried. He is wet to the skin and has been in this condition all day. Give him something hot to eat. He is the son of the patient, Mrs. Berry. She has been calling for the kiddie all day. I packed him off this morning and I did not know that he had been standing there outside all this time. Doctor Sanderson said this afternoon that it would be well to indulge Mrs. Berry all she wants. Send the kiddie up to her for a few minutes after he is fed and dry.

"I must hurry off, but you'll do that like a good fellow, won't you, Mr. Small?"

The matron's smile was evidently irresistible.

In half an hour my clothes were dry and on again. I was fed, and in my pocket I had a slice of bread hidden away for the faithful Bones waiting outside. I was aglow with joy and excitement for I was being ushered along long corridors to see my mother.

"May I talk to her?" I asked of the nurse, remembering my promise to the matron.

"Oh, yes!—a little bit, but not too much."

It was a big room they led me into, curtained off in sections.

The nurse set aside a curtain and I was before my mother's bed.

I gasped, and that sickly fear got hold of me again, for her eyes were closed and her face was deathly pale.

"Mrs. Berry—your boy Douglas is here to see you. And he mustn't stay more than ten minutes."

At the mention of my name, her eyes opened and her face lit up with a tender smile. I stood by her bed, looking earnestly at her for a moment, then tears sprang into my eyes. She had never looked like this before and she was so changed. I sobbed till my heart ached, then I stifled my sobs, for I knew I had so little time.

Softly a white, blue-veined hand crept over the sheet and on to my head. The hand stroked my hair gently.

"Don't you cry, my own Douglas," came a far-away whisper. "Don't fret, laddie. I'm quite well, and nothing hurts me now except the fear for you and Sam. It's the fear that hurts always; and, after all, fear is just a big bugaboo."

"I'm not going to ask you to make promises to me, sonny. Just try to be as good as you can. Stay at school as long as you can. Help Sam, but never take him as your example."

She stopped and closed her eyes for a little, and I became too afraid to move. Then she went on.

"When you feel like doing anything shabby or mean, remember, sonny, your mother was a lady and your father, although he had to leave you, was a gentleman. I meant to tell you all I knew and I have always put it off thinking there would be lots of time, but now it is nearly too late."

Her breathing was difficult. "Will you try to remember all I tell you now, Douglas?"

With my cheek against hers, I whispered, "Yes."

"Your mother died when you were born. She was a very handsome lady and had run away with your father from over the water somewhere. His name I believe is the name I have always insisted on you keeping—Gordon. When your mother died so suddenly, your father was heart-broken, but he was called away. He gave you in the keeping of a woman I knew, and he left quite a lot of money to pay for you till he should send for you. And that was the last the woman ever heard of your father. Her husband put the money in stock of some kind and lost it all. Then he took some trouble in his eyes and went blind. The woman fell sick and, when I knew she was dying, I asked her to let me have you to care for, for I had none of my own. She said, 'Yes' and I have had you ever since."

"And we've got on so well haven't we, Douglas?"

"You may hear from your father some day and, again, you may never hear, because he may be with your mother, but—never forget—your mother was a beautiful, refined lady, and never do anything that would have made her ashamed of you."

"If ever you do meet your father, you want to be able to say to him, 'I fought my own battles, and I fought them clean.'"

"Don't think unkindly of him because he appears to have neglected you. Maybe he could not help it. He may have tried to find you and failed, having left no address behind him and Mrs. Rayburn, your first guardian, having moved from town to town before I made her acquaintance in the West here. She had had you four years when she told me your story."

"Don't bear your father a grudge, Douglas."

She rested again and her breath came fast. But she recovered quickly and continued.

"Remember the envelope in the trunk—it is yours. Give it to some banker to keep for you. A good banker will do that much and not charge you.

"I can't speak very well now, sonny. Just lay your head there beside mine and we'll stay quiet."

And when the nurse returned, she found us that way.

"You must come now," she said kindly. "You've been here a long time and your mother is very, very tired."

I kissed the woman who had been so good a mother to me, then I allowed myself to be led away. At the door of the ward, a strange impulse seized me, telling me that I would never see her again. With a sharp gulping cry—that hurts me yet when I think of it—I ran back, threw my arms about her and kissed her again and again.

And she patted my head and smiled through a mist of tears.



CHAPTER THREE

One afternoon, as I was sauntering home from school, Cooney, who had got home ahead of me, stopped me on the sidewalk.

"Say, Doug!" he cried, "you never told me you was movin'."

"Who's moving?" I retorted. "You're crazy!"

"Course you's movin'. There's a big dray at the door an' a lot of people an' everythin' comin' out. Gee—you're lucky!"

I sprinted away from the nigger-boy, round the corner for home.

My eyes bulged in amazement. A crowd of curious youngsters, white, yellow and black, cluttered about our front gate. A heavy dray was drawn up at the sidewalk while burly men were moving the furniture from the house.

I rushed up and intercepted two of them as they were carrying out the bureau.

"Here!" I cried, "what are you doing? That's our stuff you're taking."

The men laughed and brushed me aside.

I continued on headlong up the veranda steps and into the house.

Beds had been taken apart. Mattresses were rolled up. The stove-pipes were down and the stove disconnected; furniture was piled in a heap and carpets and rugs were off the floors. The whole arrangement was upside down.

I went up to a fat man who seemed to be directing operations.

"What are you doing to our house?" I asked, excitedly. "Wait till our Sam sees this."

"Better ask Sam, kid," answered the man, spitting tobacco juice on to the floor.

"Where is he? I bet you wouldn't do that if he was about."

The man grinned. "He's drunk somewhere, I guess. That's about all he's good for."

"But we stay here," I persisted. "This is our house and our furniture. I've to get the supper ready. We've to sleep here."

The fat man looked at me a little sorrowfully and replied in more kindly tones.

"Listen, kid!—this isn't your place any more. Sam Berry hasn't paid the rent on it for months, not since his old woman died.

"The landlord's been hounding him and he made a dicker with him yesterday. The landlord's to get all the stuff to cover the overdue rent. Sam's keepin' the kitchen things and a bed. He's sending them down to a shack foot of Dunlevy Avenue on the waterfront."

"But he never told me anything about it," I returned, still suspicious. "I could easily have made the rent selling newspapers or something—but he never said anything about it."

"Now, kid,—we're busy, so you just run away and find Sam and have it out with him, for I can't do anything. Like as ever you'll find him in the Western Hotel bar."

Two men came back to move more goods.

"Mean skunk," remarked the fat man. "Berry might 'a' told the poor kid. Decent kid too! Anybody with a blind eye can see he isn't any relation to that waster."

I never could stand sympathy and, further, I resented the allusion to Sam. I ran outside, away from the strangers, loosed my dog, Bones, from the rope that held him to the barrel kennel in the back-yard, and went off to battle the thing out by myself.

Six months had gone since my mother's death. Sam and I had kept house throughout the winter. Sam had stayed sober for two months, but after that had fallen back into his old ways. And now I seldom saw him otherwise than helplessly intoxicated.

We had had hardly enough to keep us in food, but we had managed to get along somehow. I had not worried very much about the ultimate outcome. Like most boys of my age, I was considerable of a fatalist.

I turned down toward the Inlet, intent on finding out our new place of abode. I knew all the shacks on the waterfront, and a tumble-down lot they were, even the best of them.

Suddenly I remembered my mother's envelope in the tin box in the trunk. I had left it there, feeling it was safe enough until such time as I might have to move away. I doubled back, running hard, with Bones barking at my heels enjoying the chase as if it had been got up for his particular amusement.

But I met the dray, fully loaded, making cityward. The trunk with a rope round it, was on the back of the wagon. I followed up behind the dray. It went slowly along Powell Street and down on to Railway Street, where the storage warehouses were situated. The dray turned in under the covered way leading into one of these. It was a large warehouse, which fronted on the street and backed right to the network of railway tracks. It was built on a steep incline, which made the ground floor in front one story high in the rear, with a basement in the rear that emptied onto the tracks.

I saw our humble furniture unloaded on to the warehouse platform. It looked as if the landlord intended storing it until it should be convenient for him to make a sale of it.

When the dray pulled out again, I walked boldly into the office of the warehousing people.

A little grizzled man, with dark, keen, snappy eyes and a kindly, wrinkled face, was standing at the counter writing in a record-book of some kind.

"That's our furniture that was unloaded just now," I said, as he looked over at me.

"It is, eh! And what about it?"

"Well, mister,—there's a trunk there that I want to get a letter out of."

The man looked curiously at me, seemed in a way reassured but still remained chary. No doubt he had been bitten before, for one does not have to be long in the storage business before he gets his fingers burned in the matter of warehouse receipts, fire insurance, breakage, pilferage and general misrepresentation.

"What's your name, son?"

"Douglas Gordon! My mother was Mrs. Berry, and it is her husband's furniture."

The man looked up the most recent entry in his book.

"This stuff is stored in the name of William Linton, and I am responsible to him for all of it.

"Now, you go and get him to give you an order, then I'll let you rummage through the trunk or anything else to your heart's content?"

"But can't I do it without an order?"

The man smiled. "No,—you can't do it."

"But, mister, my name's on the envelope, and besides, the furniture was ours."

"Maybe it is all as you say, but I can't do it. You go to Mr. Linton. His office is at 23 Hastings, west. Get your order and come back to me to-morrow. We are just closing for the night."

I became convinced of the hopelessness of my endeavors. I felt too that it would be worse than useless entering into any explanations with Landlord Linton, even if I were able to obtain an interview with that gentleman.

I ordered my dog, Bones, to go home. The faithful animal ran off a bit, stopped, looked round, then ventured slowly back.

Time and again this performance was gone through, but the dog's persistence failed to overcome my determination to be rid of him, so finally he made off for the old place.

I remained within watching distance of the warehouse entrance, keeping well out of sight. When the two warehousemen were elevating the furniture to the top floor, I crouched low and slipped inside by the large driving entrance. I scrambled over some cases and succeeded in getting behind a huge wall of canned milk where a pile of it had been broken down.

It was near to closing time. The man in the office had told me that. So I kept in hiding, silent and unnoticed.

The warehousemen made their returns to the office, removed their overalls, bolted and barred the huge doors, front and back, and departed for the night. The man and the girl in the office soon followed, locking the office door behind them, and I was alone, inside.

Everything was dreadfully still in there. Soon the shadows grew darker. I had never been afraid of darkness. It meant no more to me than it really was—a negative, an absence of companionable light.

I came out from my hiding place and made for the wooden stairway, intent on discovering the whereabouts of the trunk before it got too dark. I knew the furniture had been put on the top floor, for the men had discussed it when quite close to my hiding place.

As I climbed cautiously upward, strange little noises set my heart throbbing and caused me to scurry for the shadows on the second floor, which held orderly piles of sacks containing rice and flour. Gradually I became accustomed to the noises. I continued upward. The third floor was like a barred prison with padlocked doors. Behind the wooden bars were barrels and cases. Above the door were the words, "Inland Revenue Bond."

I climbed on. The next floor was the one I sought. Along its entire length were piled to the ceiling, furniture, trunks and grips, all labelled and orderly. I went slowly from one end of the building to the other in my search, but it was only on my second attempt that I was successful. In a corner I discovered the furniture from the old home, each article now labelled with the hateful name, "William Linton." The trunk was lying in a convenient position. It took me a long time to get the ropes undone, and it got so dark that I was compelled to switch on an electric bulb that hung handy on a wire, although I knew that in so doing I was taking the risk of being discovered by someone from the outside.

I found the tin box at last, and, better still, I found the envelope bearing my name, intact. I slipped this into my inner pocket, closed the lid of the trunk and tied the ropes about it again.

Only then, when I thought of getting outside, did it occur to me that I was securely locked in and might have to remain there in the warehouse till morning. I switched off the light and found myself in pitch-darkness. I felt my way along to the rear windows. With my coat sleeve I rubbed the dusty, cob-webby pane of one of them until it was fairly transparent, for the windows of storage warehouses have a habit of accumulating the dust of the ages.

The warehouse overlooked Burrard Inlet. What a glorious sight presented itself! I was higher up than I had ever been before. Railway engines were shunting on the tracks far below. Great arc lamps shed their radiance in circles of almost daylight. A ferry was slowly crossing the dark three-mile span of water which separated the city from North Vancouver. The ferry was a blaze of light, which cast a warm glow on the water around it. Away across on the north shore, the regular lines of twinkling fairy lights traced the streets as they ran from the shore-front right to the base of the great looming mountains behind. At the harbor entrance, an oriental liner was pushing its blaze of radiance through The Narrows, while away, far out, the blue-black sky was punctured every few seconds by the flash of the revolving beacon-light of Point Atkinson.

At that moment, I was no longer the waterfront waif; I was the combination of all that had gone before I was born—a dreamer, a rover, a poet maybe, an adventurer surely.

That is one picture of beauty that can never be totally obliterated from my consciousness.

I stood absorbing some of the wonders of that living night into my being, yet in a way I was unconscious of my surroundings and almost oblivious of the material side of the picture. Boy as I was, I was for the moment caught up by the dreamy hypnotizing of the restful and contrasting shadows and lights.

I saw myself a grown man with a man's strength, a man's mind, a man's ability to do things, and I felt too that I could

never separate myself from the ships and the sea, the busy wharves and the bustle of men, for they and I seemed necessary parts of the whole.

I gazed wistfully and I longed, but as I longed an engine shrieked and brushed an obliterating smear over my dream-picture. I roused myself, turned away from the window and made for the stairway.

When I reached the ground floor, I tried the front door. But it was barred on the inside and securely locked from the outside. I made for the rear and found the back portion still a long way from the ground. A stairway led to the basement. I followed it. There was a great door at the rear, but it also was barred and locked. The windows looked on to the railway tracks. I tried one of these. It was not fastened. I raised it cautiously, then tried to push my way through the iron bars which protected it on the outside. With a squeeze I succeeded. I jumped on to the platform in the dark and ran along the tracks, but when I had gone a block I suddenly remembered that I had left the warehouse window open. I retraced my steps, intent on leaving everything as I had found it, for I had only desired to get what really belonged to me. I climbed on to the window sill, put my arm through the bars and commenced to pull the window down. It took me a little time, because of the awkwardness of my position.

Without noise or warning, great hands grasped me tightly by the knees and pulled me roughly back on to the warehouse platform, then clutched me firmly by the collar.

My heart stood still. I almost collapsed with fear. I was in the hands of a policeman. A light flashed in my face and caused me to blink. Then a gruff but kindly voice exclaimed in disappointment.

"Well now!—young Doug Gordon a thief!"

Sergeant Alick Grier was looking steadily into my eyes and I was looking honestly back into his.

"I am not a thief, Sergeant Grier. Don't you call me a thief!" I cried indignantly, for I had been taught to loath the word and to abstain from any act that would call for the name.

"And what are ye, then? Folks have fancy names for everything now-a-days; names that do fine to satisfy themselves on their own goodness."

"I never stole anything in my life. I'm not a thief, I tell you."

"Then, in the name of Pete, what were you trying to get in there for?"

"I was shutting the window."

The sergeant gave an exclamation of impatience.

"And why were you shutting the window?"

"Because I left it open," I answered doggedly, "and I knew it should be shut."

Alick Grier was non-plussed, as well he might be.

He was big and he was kindly; his sympathies were even on the side of the poor devils who comprised the lower stratum of Vancouver's population. Many a one he had helped over a stile; many a time had he given some poor beggar another chance when his own conscience told him he should lock him up.

"Doug," he said, "this looks like quibbling; sit down here till I get it right. Let me know everything, and don't dare to tell me a lie or it will be the reformatory for ye. And you know what that means."

Grier squatted on the edge of the warehouse platform, with his legs dangling over. He pulled me down beside him; and there the big fellow got my halting but straightforward story; and what was all to his credit, he believed every word of it. Grier, although a policeman, was not hunting for wrong-doing; he was on the lookout for the possible good. He was not the kind that condemned first and tried afterwards.

"Man, Doug, but I'm glad you weren't thieving, because I didn't think you were that kind of a boy. But it's a God's blessing that it was not some other policeman that got hold of you, or it would have been short shrift.

"Now, I'm going to take care of this envelope to-night. You meet me at the Commercial Bank corner, Granville Street, to-morrow at dinner-time, half-past-twelve, and we'll see Mr. Adamson, the manager, and get him to take care of this till you're twenty-two, if ever you reach that age, which is not too probable judging by the rotten start you've had.

"And don't ever try this way to get your property back again, or you'll land in the lock-up. If you had come to me in the first place, I could have got it for you as easy as winking. There are more ways than taking it to get what's coming to you. Away you go now to your home, if they call that miserable shack a home for a laddie with fair hair and clear blue eyes like what you have.

"I'm watching you, Dougie, and don't you forget it.

"Good-night!" Grier held out his huge hand and smiled.

I took hold of it and felt reassured in the warm glow of confidence that seemed to run from the big man.

"Good-night!" I returned, and ran along the tracks.



CHAPTER FOUR

When I left the police sergeant and hurried along in the direction of Dunlevy Avenue—one of the numerous streets in this vicinity with high-sounding names and disreputable histories that dead-ended on the waterfront—the faithful and hungry Bones rushed up to me and did a sort of sand-dance round me, hopping gingerly on his feet and jerking his tail-stump in delight at finding me again.

He headed me to the shack and seemed quite happy at being able to know his way. As we had never been in our new abode before, I sensed that the dog must have met Sam and that the likelihood was Sam was now at home.

From the outside, it was a small, comfortless-looking woodshed that was misnamed home, unpainted and sloping precariously to one side on account of some of the supporting uprights having rotted through, so that an honest-to-goodness push would have changed it from a shack to a wood-pile.

I opened the door and went inside with the dog.

A coal-oil lamp was alight in the center of the kitchen table; the stove was set up and going. A cheery warmth pervaded the place. Sam Berry was sitting in a chair with his head between his arms on the kitchen table, evidently fast asleep. The remnants of a slap-up supper had been pushed on one side.

I looked over the kitchen curiously and, on the whole, I guess I must have been satisfied. I took up the lamp and went into the adjoining room. It was not really a second room, but simply a part of the first, divided off. It was bare, except for a chair, and two bunks, one built over the other, with some bedding on each. Something lay in the lower bunk. I went over to see what it was.

An ugly-looking man, big, unkempt and bearded, was asleep on his back with his mouth wide open, showing broken, yellow teeth. He was blowing with a quiet suction and exhaust that threatened every three or four strokes to break into a whistle. An empty whisky bottle lay on the floor, telling its own tale in dumb language.

When I finished my examination, I went timorously back to the kitchen, followed by the dog, who was keeping up a steady, subterranean growl which was about as much daring as he had been able, so far, to develop. We sat down, I on the remaining chair and Bones on his stump on the floor at my feet. Between us we cleaned up to the last crumb what had remained of the supper.

I rinsed out the dishes at the water-tap in an old metal sink in the kitchen, then I went over to Sam and pulled at his arms. But Sam didn't move. I shook him roughly, then I pushed his head backward and forward, pulling his hair in the process, but the only response I got was a drunken grunt.

I knew I would have to put Sam to bed and I knew also that to do so I would have to get the big man out of the lower bunk, for while I might be able to topple Sam into that one, I realized it was a physical impossibility for me to hoist him into the higher one.

So I took the lamp and went back into the room where the big fellow lay. Setting the light on the window-ledge, I went over and shook the sleeper as I had done Sam Berry, but in spite of my tugging and pulling, I did not elicit even the expected drunken grunt; so, feeling fairly safe, I scrambled over the man to the back of the bunk and wormed myself gradually between him and the wall, then, with my knees, feet and arms, I commenced a gentle pushing campaign which considerably widened the gap at the back of the bed.

The man rolled slightly on his side. I wriggled under him and levered him completely over, then, before he had time to sink back into complete limpness, I turned lengthwise, my feet against the wall and my head and arms against my living burden. I exerted all my strength, and this was not by any means inconsiderable, for I was growing into a sturdy youngster at this time. I slowly straightened out. The man kept turning over. At last he cockled uncertainly on the edge of the bunk, then, with a dead thud, he dropped two feet to the floor, where he lay, still in his fuddled stupor.

The dog went round the stranger from feet to head, growling quietly and sniffing in suspicion, but when he became too curious and caught a full blast of the drunken man's breath, his head dropped and he moved soberly over to a corner, sitting down in it with an offended air.

I returned to the kitchen, pulled Sam's boots off roughly, pushed him about and stripped him of his jacket and outside shirt, then with a struggle and much verbal encouragement and instruction, I succeeded in rousing him to a state of protesting semi-consciousness and action, finally staggering with him across the floor and top-ending him into the lower bunk.

In a few minutes more, the lamp was lowered to a peep, my clothes were discarded and I was fast asleep in the bunk above Sam.

How long I slept I do not know, but I was rudely awakened to a dazed consciousness by great hands groping for me among the bed-clothes. At last the hands grabbed me unceremoniously by the bare limbs. I struggled and let out a shout, but these great hands lifted me bodily and threw me with a crash on to the floor, where I lay startled and bruised.

A growl from the dog, a rush in the semi-darkness, then a curse from the dark shadow that loomed near the bunks, roused me thoroughly and told me that the big man had awakened and in anger at finding himself on the floor had at once decided to take possession of better sleeping quarters, much to my discomfort; and that the gallant Bones, for all his puppyishness and inexperience, had flown to the rescue, like the fools who rush in where angels fear to tread.

I sat up. The big man bent over me before I could get to my feet. He kicked me savagely, making me scream in pain. He raised his foot to kick me again, and as I tried to scramble away he did not seem to care whether my head or my body received the blows. But my shouting aroused Sam.

Even his stupefied mind took in in a moment that the youngster he claimed to father was being hurt. It sobered him as nothing else could have done.

Good old Sam! I never yet had to appeal to him for help in vain, and the pity of it was that my youthfulness had not allowed me to reason that this very love Sam bore for me might have been used for his redemption.

He sprang to the floor and rushed at the big fellow with both fists, taking him completely by surprise and sending him staggering across the room. Recovering, the man came back at Sam with an oath, and then blows rained fast and furiously. Sam fought gamely, much to my astonishment and possibly much to Sam's own, for it is doubtful if he had ever fought with anyone in his life before, so accustomed did he seem to be to allowing himself to be bullied and to following the line of least resistance.

But deep inside of Sam was a love for me—the only love I think that had survived in him against the overwhelming tide of circumstances—so, for anyone to hurt me was a greater insult to him by far than for anyone to hurt him.

Round and round the little room, in semi-darkness, the two fought, grappled and staggered, but the big man's weight and Sam's half-naked condition were telling. Sam's breath began to come whistling in great gasps.

I could see that it was only the matter of moments when the big man should prove the victor. I ran to the kitchen and seized hold of a length of kindling wood, then, darting back, I scrambled up to the topmost bunk, where I clung watching the struggling pair in the dim light. The dog had by this time joined in the melee and was harassing the big man's legs and causing him to bellow and kick out from time to time as the sharp, puppy teeth penetrated the soft flesh.

Both men were at grips, and the big fellow was pounding at Sam's skull unmercifully. They worked round to where I was. They swung, and Sam's opponent's head came temptingly within my reach. Raising my improvised club, I crashed it viciously on that head, throwing all my might into the blow. The great arms that had been crushing Sam dropped limply. The man staggered backward, bringing Sam stumbling with him. With a crash, they struck against the wall at the window where the lamp was. The lamp dropped to the floor. There was a great creaking of rotten woodwork, a flash and a sudden flare of light, and the shack—our only home—crashed outward and tumbled to pieces, the roof falling in and leaving only the bunks—to which I still clung—and the back wall standing.

A cold wind was blowing off the Inlet, and the gray of morning was trembling away in the east. But, clad only in my shirt, I had little thought for either.

I jumped to the ground in apprehension. The dog, who had escaped the debris, joined me, barking loudly in excitement.

I looked about for Sam and the big man, but I could not see anything of them. I pushed among the fallen timber. Flames had already caught the rotten, dry wood and, in what seemed to me less than a minute, these began to shoot skyward. In

the added light I caught sight of a protruding leg under a beam. It was Sam's leg, for it was encased in Sam's sock. I jumped in among the flying sparks and commenced struggling frantically to pull the wood away. I was still fruitlessly engaged, shouting madly for help the while, when I was joined by men and women coming in from every direction, springing seemingly from nowhere, giving the impression that in spite of the very early morning hour they were simply standing about waiting for some catastrophe like this to happen. I called their attention to Sam's dilemma, and willing hands lent rapid aid before the flames became too overpowering. They succeeded in dragging out the unconscious Sam Berry, whom they hurried away on top of an improvised stretcher of boards. Twenty minutes more sped before they discovered the whereabouts of Sam's unknown lodger. When they reached him he was horribly battered and quite dead.

With the waning of the excitement, I began to shiver with the cold, but no one seemed to heed me until Mammy Duff, black as night itself, but fat and big-bosomed, with a heart as big as her ample figure, spied me. Mammy was Cooney's mother.

"Fo' de land sakes, sonny!—yo' sure will catch de pleuricea, or de new-ammonia, or somethin', if yo' don' get some mo' clothes on. Yo' jest come right along me, right now, an' get warmed up in bed befo' you die."

She threw a shawl over my shoulders, grabbed me by the arm and went off with me in spite of my anxious protests that I wanted to be with Sam.

"Sam Berry ain't dead, sonny. He's jest subconscious. Lordy, boy! nobody couldn't kill dat Sam Berry with a stick of dynamite."

And in a short time I was fast asleep alongside Cooney, all unconcerned about the ethics of it and sleeping as soundly beside the little nigger as I could have slept beside any boy of my own color-scheme.



CHAPTER FIVE

I was now undergoing a series of new experiences and in consequence I was in my element.

Sergeant Grier, as good as his promise, had seen to the banking of my letter, and Adamson, the manager of the Commercial Bank, had made me sign my name on the outside of the package, with the date of my twenty-second birthday—like a million years off—for purposes of later identification; had noted that I had a mole in the center of the dimple of my left cheek as well as a little brown spot in the gray-blue pupil of my right eye. Grier had interviewed Sam at the hospital, where he was progressing as well as could be expected. He had suffered a broken leg, and had lost his left eye by the penetration of a rusty nail when the house fell in. He had been badly burned, but there seemed no reason why he should not ultimately be as well as he had been before. Grier succeeded in demonstrating to Sam that it would be for my good that Sam should have nothing further to do with me; at least until he had demonstrated that he could control himself, leave liquor alone and had got together a little home somewhere that would prove considerably more than a broken-down, abandoned stable.

Sam had agreed with Sergeant Grier, but had refused to make any promises to him to mend his ways, although, when he and I were alone he vowed to me that he would show them yet that Sam Berry was a man, that Sam Berry was the best stevedore on the Pacific coast at the age of forty-five as he had been the most promising on the Liverpool quays at the age of twenty; that he could still navigate a boat; that he would be able to see more that required putting right on the waterfront with his one eye than any other wharfinger would see with two. Sam and I built castles in the air with the beer and whisky bottles that Sam had emptied in the course of his career, and the castle looked wonderful till the nurse came along and told me I had better go as it was time for Sam to get his regulation dose of castor-oil—when the castles tumbled about our ears.

I spent the few remaining weeks of my school term at the home of Grier's mother, and I now found myself installed for the term of the summer vacation—if I behaved myself—with a bunch of daily newspapers, aboard the coasting steamer, "Seagull," which made the bi-weekly round trip up the sound, touching at all the way points, holiday resorts, summer camps, lumbering camps and salmon canneries.

The "Seagull" generally had a fair complement of passengers, travelling both ways, who purchased newspapers. There were always little crowds at every landing wharf anxious to purchase the news of the day, so that I plied a fair trade and promised to be well on the way to being a Lord Northcliffe before the summer holidays were over, providing of course that the business kept up and I did not get into trouble.

Captain Fullerton of the "Seagull" had known the shiftless Sam for years, he was a friend of Grier's and he liked youngsters, so that there had been little difficulty in arranging for my feeding and sleeping accommodation during the holidays in exchange for a little help washing dishes in the cook's pantry between the ports of call.

But, although I had installed myself in the favor of the captain, the same could not be said in regard to my relations with Coogan the cook, not so much because of myself but on account of the depredations my dog, Bones, had made on the ship's stores on the first up-coast trip.

I had completed four trips in all. On my first, I had Bones safely hidden away below decks until the steamer left Vancouver, but the intoxicating odors from the pantry proved too much for a city dog of Bones' garbage-can antecedents, with no fixed meal hours, and Bones had committed the felony of petty larceny, and then the greater and more unforgivable felony of being caught in the act, with the upshot that he was severely kicked by Coogan and tied up for the remainder of the trip, while I was warned with dire pains and penalties if ever I brought the "thievin' spalpeen" aboard again.

For the following three trips, I had obeyed Coogan's commands and had left Bones ashore in the care of Cooney Duff.

At the end of the second and third trips, Bones had been waiting on the wharf for me, jumping with delight, but when the "Seagull" berthed on concluding the fourth little voyage, my disappointment was very keen, for Bones was not there to welcome me; worse than that, an hour afterwards the dog walked right through the freight sheds at the heels of Cooney, straight past me and without so much as sniffing in my direction. I could see how matters were shaping and that if I did not assert my ownership at once the dog would be Cooney's, so I promptly claimed my property, smuggled it aboard and hid it in a dingy cupboard among old ropes and paint pots, down below near the engine room.

The joy of the sea and of living on that old steamer was already tingling my blood. For the first time in my life, I seemed to be really and truly alive every minute of the day. Each port of call was a fresh diversion, every headland and every wooded island in the sound were new worlds to me which I craved to investigate. For an hour at a time, I would stand at the very bow of the "Seagull," braced, with legs apart, looking ahead, the strong salt wind blowing through my hair as I imagined that I was really the steamer, pushing boldly ahead into the unknown, and filling up internally with the glory of my ability to do so.

At other times I would be at the stern, bending far over the rail in a sort of hypnotic dream, as I watched the white foam whirling and rushing in behind and trailing off until it disappeared far in the wake like a railroad track over a horizon.

But it was my fifth up-coast trip on the "Seagull" that was fraught with many happenings that were destined to interweave with my future. I had just made a visit to Bones, down below among the steamer's inwards, and had found all well. I was quite proud of my achievement in getting thus far on our journey without discovery. I had given Bones a hard biscuit and had sympathized with him until he had whimpered in self-pity and in no uncertain way had me understand that he was already more than fed-up with the miserable treatment to which he was being subjected.

Later on, I was sitting astride a rail on the starboard side of the boat, my arm around a stanchion and my feet swinging in blissful abandon. I fancied every now and again that I could hear the doleful whine of Bones oozing up from below. I hoped that it was just the noise of the engines, but I knew quite well that it was not. Then I hoped that fortune would be kind enough to prevent Coogan, the cook, from hearing these long-drawn howls. A little later I forgot about Bones and Coogan the cook, as I watched the circling seagulls swoop down for the refuse that emptied into the sea from the scuppers.

A fresh breeze was sighing up Howe Sound, tempering the heat of the summer sun and piling the white-crested, bottle-green sea as it swept in between the rocky, fir-bedecked little islands and the headland; a real magnetic, salt-flavored sea, urged along by the great, rolling swell from the vast Pacific which lay not so very far in the rear under the horizon.

The "Seagull" had just tooted a warning whistle as she rounded Geary's point and came into full view of her next stopping place, the drowsy, little fishing, lumbering and farming settlement of Cohoe. The few passengers on board were already on the upper deck enjoying the scenery or gathering their baggage together preparatory to disembarking.

I had just jumped down from the rail and was gathering my newspapers up in anticipation of a brisk sale at Cohoe wharf, when I saw Coogan come out from his cabin and enter the galley. There was nothing unusual about this, but I had no time to blot out the picture when I heard an oath, the rattle of falling and breaking delf, a thud and a loud, frightened yelp.

Too well I knew that yelp, and my heart stood still.

Coogan came out from the galley, dragging the half-strangled Bones by the collar. The dog was strenuously protesting every inch of the way, but clinging tenaciously to a hunk of raw meat. Coogan made for the starboard rail.

"Drat you for a dirty thief," shouted the cook, flushed with anger as he clouted the struggling animal over the head.

I rushed in and interfered.

"Here,—let him alone! He isn't hurting you."

"Oh,—isn't he? Well, he sure won't when I've done with him. Why the skipper hasn't more savvy than to let a water-rat like you aboard, gets me. Didn't I tell you to leave this sneaky, nosey thief ashore? Didn't the skipper tell you too? Didn't I tell you what I'd do to him next time I caught him thievin'? Didn't I?" shouted Coogan, his voice rising at every fresh phrase. "Well—I'm going to do it—see!"

The irate cook swung Bones by the collar, lifting him clear off his hind legs. I ran at the cook, beating him with my fists.

"Let him alone! Let him alone, I tell you. If you don't, I'll kill you," I cried passionately.

Coogan grinned and pushed me aside, then he pitched the dog across the rail and overboard.

I let out a shout, sprang up on to the rail and made to jump after the dog, and it was only through the agility of Coogan that I did not succeed. As I was pulled back, I fought and kicked, giving the cook all he could do to master me, for I was as strong as a young cougar.

Captain Fullerton, who was standing alongside the chief officer at the wheel on the bridge, heard the commotion and came down the ladder.

"Say!—what's all this row? Let the kid alone, Coogan. What d'ye want picking on the youngster all the time for? It isn't the first time I've seen you man-handle him with your would-be fun."

"I'm not hurting him, sir. It's his darned dog. I've told him a dozen times to leave it ashore. You've told him too. It's a born thief and it has just been at it again. I told him I'd chuck it overboard." Coogan was panting from his exertion of holding me, as I was still wiggling in his grasp, "—and I've just been and gone and done it."

"All right, Coogan,—you leave Gordon to me."

The skipper caught me by the arm in a brusque but not unkindly way.

"See here—Grier asked me to and I agreed to let you come aboard during the summer holidays. You've been having a good time, and good grub, and you're a whole lot the better for it. But I simply won't have you upsetting the cook in this way. That dog's got to stay ashore after this."

"But he can't sir," I answered. "He hasn't any home, any more than I have."

"But he's a thief,—you're not. There's the difference."

"He just takes it because he's hungry. That's not really stealing, sir. Coogan won't even give him an old used bone; he'd rather throw the bone overboard."

The captain laughed.

"I'm the only pal he's got, sir, and now he's drowning and nobody's helping him."

"Well—that'll be enough just now. You run along and look after your work. There are plenty more dogs where that one came from." The captain's voice grew sterner. "Now,—no more nonsense!"

"Yes! All right, sir!" I answered meekly enough, but not by any means satisfied.

Captain Fullerton made his way up the bridge ladder again, for the "Seagull" was just approaching the wharf. But he had not got more than half-way when I was overboard.

I came up and started swimming vigorously in the direction of Bones, whose head I could see, away beyond, bobbing on the crest of each wave as he swam two hundred yards out in the bay.

Looking behind me, I could see a boat being lowered from the "Seagull." I redoubled my efforts to get to the dog. I turned on my side and swam overhand, then I changed into the crawl, hardly coming above the water at all as I plunged and plowed ahead. I could swim like a mermaid, but the boat with two men in it soon made up on me. One of the seamen leaned over and grabbed at me. I struggled. Both men had finally to lay hands on me before they succeeded in pulling me in. I pleaded with them to get the dog, but they were angry at the extra work I had given them and told me to "shut-up" as they turned back. I threatened to go overboard again, but one of the men held me tightly as the other rowed. The "Seagull" was standing by, passengers were eager to be off, there was no time to waste.

The small boat drew alongside the steamer; its occupants were transferred and the "Seagull" continued the few remaining hundred yards to her stopping place, the landing wharf of Cohoe.

Meantime, dripping wet, I stood by the off-rail. My eyes were searching away out to the little, brown, bobbing ball which seemed now no more than a pin head.

"Don't give up, old man! Good old dog!" I whimpered dejectedly; more to comfort myself than anything else.

As the steamer grated alongside, I ran round to the stern, got on to the rail again and sprang out on to the wharf, not waiting for any gangway.

A number of rowing boats were tied up alongside the private landing wharf belonging to the General Store which stood up on the main road. One of the boats contained oars. I scrambled down into it and, loosing the rope, was soon plying

strongly out toward the Headland again.

I could row almost as well as I could swim. I was a Vancouver waterfront urchin and the sea was in my blood. Any boy who could ride a log in the tide-rip of the Inlet, with a barrel stave as a paddle, could have little difficulty with a boat and a pair of real oars.

In the excitement that the steamer's arrival always occasioned, no one had noticed my second attempt. Even had anyone done so, it is questionable if he would have paid any attention to the everyday occurrence in Cohoe—a boy in a rowing boat.

Out I went into the bay, gradually bringing the brown, bobbing ball closer to me.

When I was a hundred yards from the dog I stood up and shouted.

"Bones, Bones, old dog,—don't sink! Good old fellow!"

The almost exhausted animal saw me and took fresh courage. He gave vent to little, sharp yelps of relief as he changed his course and struggled toward the boat. I drew up, dropped my oars and hoisted the dripping Bones on to my knees, hugging him and talking foolishly to him, while the rangy Airedale snuggled and whimpered in self-pity.

I turned to my oars again, but to my consternation there was only one. The other had dropped into the water and was already fifty yards away. There was no other help for it; I got up and dived over the side and pushed after it. And, game to the last, poor, tired-out Bones came in after me and kept me company until the oar was rescued, the rowing boat was regained and was scrambled into as only a boy raised on the seaboard knows how to.

And as the whistle of the "Seagull" sounded and she drew out again toward the Headland, I and Bones came alongside the landing wharf of Cohoe.

Freight and baggage, lying in profusion, were being taken away in rickety wagons and hand-carts. A number of villagers were gossiping in twos and threes, while at the far corner of the wharf three boys, about my own age, were fishing soberly, like all earnest followers of Walton.

Bones shook himself and so got rid of his superfluous moisture. I could not follow his example, but I had a thought that shortly I would go along the shore a bit, take off my clothes and set them out on the rocks to dry. What I was going to do with myself during the process did not worry me a bit.

But first I turned my back on the sea and took in the village with my inquisitive eyes, for it was an unknown novelty to me to be ashore anywhere but at Vancouver.

I had seen Cohoe before, but I had never had the opportunity of giving it so close an examination as I did then. I had always felt drawn to the little place; it seemed to contain so much that might be explored and possibly exploited.

The wharf upon which I was standing continued on piles to the main road. The shore lay low and Cohoe was built on a hill that could not be hid. A few stores, ramshackle for the most part, took up the favored situation, while dwelling houses, also ramshackle for the main part, straggled off on both sides as far as the eye could see.

A gray, dusty road skirted the general store and ran sheer up the hill, disappearing finally from view but continuing, nevertheless, for twelve miles—connecting Cohoe with her sister town of Anvers farther up the coast. Side roads branched off and tapered to nowhere in particular, giving the gray, government trunk-road the appearance of the back-bone and ribs of a gigantic salmon. To the casual observer, Cohoe seemed a very small place indeed, hardly big enough to justify a government wharf and a bi-weekly call from the "Seagull," but Cohoe was the outlet for a large, general and sheep-farming community which spread itself up over the hills and along the expansive plateau on top.

On my right hand, the shore road ran apparently unending, but on my left there was a large saw-mill with truck rails running to the water, a burning sawdust pile and a boom of logs.

Farther over, toward the Headland, the country seemed heavy with virgin timber which dropped away in great shelving rocks into the sea.

By the time I got thus far in my survey, I had turned almost completely round, and I found myself once more looking out

to sea, to the three little fir-dotted islands fairly close in, and to others still farther beyond; to the great island across the sound which seemed almost to land-lock Cohoe; then away farther up the green waters to the mountains which rose, tier on tier, range on range, as far as eyes could scan, blending their snowy heads with the great billowy banks of white, woolly clouds that perpetually clustered over there in the blue heavens.

By nature, I think, I am a dreamer, and thirteen years of rough and tumble about the waterfront of Vancouver, while it had smothered some of the outward signs of this part of my being, had merely impressed the love for nature's beauties the more deeply on the soul of me.

I had puddled about the city when the seeming, never-ending sleety drizzle of winter soaked me unmercifully. In the dim lamp-light of an evening, in a creepy sort of fear, I had run along Powell and Cordova streets for home, for every fifty yards or so at that time harbored a saloon with swing doors from which issued the clink of glasses and the sour, conglomerate odor of stale tobacco, damp sawdust and liquor; and often as not would also issue the maudlin, staggering figure of some rough waterfront loafer in a temper that brushed aside everything living that happened to get in his way.

But in that rough and tumble, I had also watched, morning after morning, the sun's rays kiss the great, snow-chiseled Lions that guarded Vancouver's gateway. I had seen the fog-clouds roll in from the wide Pacific, through The Narrows, filling Burrard Inlet and rising higher and higher until the mountain tops showed as mere tiny islands on an ocean of vapor. With longing eyes I had watched the ships go out, majestic in their confidence of conquest over time and space, and in awe I had seen them come in, battered and broken in their duel with the elements—beaten back but unconquered. I had gazed upon the great, frothy breakers—that aftermath of a hurricane on the Pacific—hurling in on English Bay and throwing themselves on the shore, like exhausted runners at the finish of a marathon; and I had seen the blazing sun go down in all its blood-red glory behind the fishing fleet at the mouth of the Fraser River.

Who, after all, could live among these splendors and not be a dreamer!

I awoke from my reverie, feeling wet and not exactly comfortable, but the sun was warm, so my damp clothes did not worry me as they might have done otherwise. I sauntered over to where the boys were fishing. I watched them for a time in silent interest.

Nearest to me was a boy of rangy proportions, probably a year older than myself, tousled of hair and brown faced, dressed in a tattered pair of pants and a faded, green sweater which seemed to have been thrown on him in mistake for his older brother. As this boy fished solemnly, I ventured a remark, for I also was keen on fishing.

"Lots of fish here, huh?"

The boy turned, looked fondly at his catch of six as they lay on the wharf at his feet, then pityingly at me, but he did not answer my question.

"What kind of bait do you use, kid?" I asked.

"Frogs legs!" came the answer.

"That so? Can't you do any better than dirty little perch with frogs legs?"

The fisher looked over and scowled.

"Sure! We catch sardines in the mornings, with their tins on, perch about this time, whales at night, gold-fish on Sundays and suckers like you 'most any old time."

The other boys alongside laughed gleefully.

I flushed. I always resented ridicule. But I did not feel particularly belligerent at that moment. I turned away and sat down on the edge of the wharf, dangling my feet over the side and wondering what they would be having for supper on the "Seagull."

My thoughts were interrupted by a sharp yelp from my friend Bones. It was a yelp more of fear and surprise than of actual pain.

As I jumped up, the dog yelped again. The cause of the trouble was the fisher with the voluminous sweater. Bones was

circling him and the boy was doing his best to plant another kick on his canine person. I raced in angrily.

"Hey!" I shouted, "cut that out! What's the matter with you?"

Greensweater swung round. "Is that pot-licker yours?"

"He's my dog," I conceded with not a little pride.

"He is? Then I'll kick you and him too."

The other boys crowded round.

"You'd better leave him alone," I said.

"If you would only feed your old mongrel!"

"I do feed him," I retorted, although deep down in me I was beginning to get a little tired of my dog's habit of perpetual hunger.

"Gosh! He don't look like it. See his ribs, fellers! He chawed up all my fish."

I grinned, bent down and patted Bones. "Good dog!" I said, and he wagged his stump of a tail.

Greensweater flared up at once. He dropped his fishing line, and drew close to me and pushed me violently on the chest, sending me toppling over an iron cleat on to my back.

My head hit the wharf with a hard bump and I saw stars, but I was back on my feet at once. I put up my hand and felt that rising bump, gloomily appraising the extent of the damage and examining my fingers for signs of the blood I felt sure should be there. Then I went slowly over, using the same kind of play Greensweater had used, only a little more of it, and I sent him staggering backward. He recovered partly, then staggered afresh as his heel slid over the remains of his catch and my dog's repast. His arms fanned the air and he toppled over the edge of the wharf, head first, hitting the water with a splash fifteen feet below.

I called to Bones and sauntered up the wharf. But I did not get far. Greensweater's chums raised a hullabaloo. A woman with a parasol, who had been gossiping at the far end of the wharf, rushed to the edge, looked over and screamed. She came running at me, caught me by the arm and started in to belabor me with her parasol.

"You scamp! You little murderer!" she screamed. "He's drowning. Help! Help!"

"Not him!" I returned. "He can get out the way he got in."

"He can't swim, boy. He's drowning."

"What?—lives here and can't swim?—gee-whiskers!"

I raced back and as I looked over my incredulity departed. Greensweater was throwing his arms, windmill fashion, and swallowing the sea as fast as it could pour into him.

I dived over, feeling that to live in Cohoe meant living in a bathing suit. I landed on top of Greensweater, ducking him unmercifully. Next, I grabbed him by the mop of hair. He clutched, and I had a few exciting moments, but I finally hit him on the eye. I had owed him that much anyway. Then I dived under him and brought my knee into his stomach, so ending further struggles.

A man on the wharf let down a looped rope which I put round Greensweater and he was immediately hauled to safety. Before the rope could be lowered again, I dived under the wharf along the piles, for I had no stomach for further trouble.

CHAPTER SIX

Taking my own time about it, I made my way to the far side, worked round the little fleet of rowing-boats and gasoline launches, and finally paddled ashore without being noticed, for all who had been on the wharf were then gathered excitedly at the other side, making suggestions and giving instructions for my rescue to a man who had drawn alongside in a rowing-boat.

I continued along the cobbly beach, keeping in the shelter of the bushes and brush that came down almost to the shore line. I trudged round the bay in considerable dejection, feeling wet, miserable and hungry. I suffered from self-pity as much as anything and wished I had curbed my temper and had stayed on the "Seagull," as I would then have been dry, well fed and would have known where I was going to sleep that night.

I wondered where my dog Bones had got to. I was disappointed that he should desert me in my time of trouble, especially as the trouble had all been of his making.

At the head of the bay I came to a fence which cut off the rocky Headland and ran up over a hill, inland, apparently enclosing a large acreage of virgin timber terminated at the shore-line again, facing the open sound outside Coho bay. I remembered having seen a rustic house on the far side of the Headland, looking out to sea, so I conjectured correctly that these must be the private grounds surrounding it.

Private grounds hold little terrors for Western boys. I wished to dry my clothes on the shelving rocks on the Headland while the sun was still hot, so I climbed the fence and scrambled up.

What a wonderful rock this Headland was when one was close to it! Hollows, crags, shelves, steps, caves, crannies and fissures, in many places overgrown with green, soft, velvety moss!

I got into a sort of a cup, which hid me from all sides but the sea; not because I cared particularly about being hidden, but because, below this cup, sheer down, there was a natural pool of the clearest, greenest, deepest water I had ever seen, protected from the swell of the sea by a breakwater of smooth rocks.

I stripped quickly, wrung out my wet garments one by one, pulled them into some semblance of their original shape and spread them carefully on the sun-baked rocks to dry, crouching beside them on the soft moss and idly dreamed of dinner from the lavish leavings of the "Seagull's" pantry. From the pantry, I seemed suddenly to be transferred to the "Seagull's" dining-saloon, where I was sitting in Captain Fullerton's chair at the head of the table, dressed in Captain Fullerton's uniform, which, somehow, seemed to fit me perfectly, ordering Coogan the cook—now doing duty as steward—about like a slave, sending back under-done steaks and ordering fresh ones, to the accompaniment of Coogan's menial "Yes, sir! No, sir! Certainly, sir! Whatever you say, sir!" and making jokes and witticisms to the fair diners on either side of the table until I had them tittering in merriment.

I ordered Coogan to pour out a cup of coffee for me, which Coogan did; but in his usual careless manner he upset the coffee urn all over the table cloth. Coogan immediately started in to mop up the flow with a napkin. I—the new Captain Fullerton—hit him over the head with a fork. Coogan immediately assumed the visage of the boy I had pushed over the wharf and he boldly flicked me across the face with the warm, wet napkin. I put my hand up to my face. It was moist. The guests at the table faded away, or maybe it was that I had fallen unconscious from the cowardly blow from the wet napkin. Anyway, I opened my eyes.

Two eyes and a lolling tongue were immediately over me. I sprang to a sitting position. The eyes and tongue were the property of Bones. I was on the rocks of the Headland and as naked as a fish. Bones frisked excitedly, rushed a yard away and brought back something in his mouth. I glared, then I shouted gaily. The dog had brought me a loaf of bread.

"Oh, boy!—where did you get it?" I cried, taking a soft handful out of the loaf and stuffing it into my mouth.

I shivered with the cold breeze now coming in from the sea. I looked at the sun; it was now a whole lot lower in the sky. I felt my clothes. They were almost dry. I got into them hurriedly, then, with the dog, scrambled up over the rocks and down the other side where the rocks ended in grass, ferns, shrubbery and forest timber—all fairly open ground.

I took a trail that led through a fairy dell of ferns and undergrowth down to a little bubbling spring of clear water. Seating myself by the edge of the water, with Bones by my side, I soaked the bread until it swelled to twice its original

size, then, breaking it off, piece by piece, I fed myself and the dog turn about.

The soaked bread was food and drink, and I felt fairly satisfied. What vacant spaces still remained in my stomach, I filled up with the bubbling water. Rising with a sigh of satisfaction, I continued along the trail, and almost before I was aware of it the forest opened out to a great, wide lawn, with an orchard. A rustic house stood on the bluff at the end of it, facing out to the open sea, where, away beyond, I could catch a glimpse of the three little fir-dotted islands standing in the glow of the sun like a dream of the tropics. But neither the orchard nor the sea held my vision this time.

A piano was being played by some one who was singing in a sweet plaintive strain that set my blood trilling. Music has always had a strange influence over me. I knew little of it at that time. I had heard little of it. When the bands played in Vancouver's parks, or on the beaches, I had been present to hear whenever I could; the big organ in the church on Hastings street, east, near my old home, had often held me in the street, entranced. Sometimes I would stand opposite the open window of a house where some lady was singing a simple folksong; even the Vancouver policemen, when they first started practicing the bagpipes on a vacant lot on Powell street, had drawn and held me a curious and silent spectator and listener.

My foster-mother, Mrs. Berry, had often sung to me the old melodies, repeating them over and over again at my request; and with me her voice had always struck the highest pitch of human perfection. But the singing such as I now listened to was something sweeter and more beautiful than I had ever heard. It seemed to have tears and sorrow in it, the like of which I could not associate with singing and music, because I had always thought that people sang only when they were happy.

I sat down by the fringe of the lawn, and the dog squatted beside me. I was in no hurry about anything. The evening, the long night and all next forenoon were before me, for the "Seagull" was not due on her return trip until the following afternoon.

The lady's fingers were making the piano ripple in melody. She was singing the old favorite, "Annie Laurie," and her voice trembled over the last verse in such a way that, although some of the words were unintelligible to me, the sense was very plain. And, of course, I have heard them many times since, although never with such effect on me as on that occasion.

"Like dew on th' gowan lying
Is the fa' o' her fairy feet
And like wind in the summer sighing
Her voice comes low and sweet."

She finished, leaving in me an impulse to clap my hands for more.

I could see the lady's head, framed as it were by the open window, more of a silhouette than a picture, but I could see that her hair was white and that her face was very pale.

She commenced to sing once more, and still her voice had the tears and sadness in it. She sang a song I had never heard, although once more I caught the sense as if some part of my being were mysteriously keyed to catch the understanding. The lady sang as Sergeant Grier sometimes spoke, only in a more refined way. I felt sure she must have come from the same country, and I found myself wondering, foolishly enough, if by any chance she might know the sergeant.

The song was about the cold blast on a lonely moor; about someone being sheltered by a plaid; about the wild wastes, bleak and bare; then the happy ending of jewels, a crown and being made a queen. I could not catch the words clearly, so I cautioned Bones to remain where he was as I went closer to the house. I crouched quietly under the open window and listened again.

I waited and waited, but the music had stopped. Cautiously, I rose, inch by inch, until I could just see inside the room.

How my eyes stared into that place! the like of which I had never seen before. It had great couches and easy chairs, thick carpets and skin rugs. Wonderful painted pictures were hanging on the walls. Swords, and pistols, and shields were set above the open fireplace, which had logs neatly piled in it but not alight.

The lady still sat at the piano. Her fingers were resting lightly on the keys, her head was erect and she seemed to be

looking through the music book in front of her instead of on it. I could see that her eyes were brimming with tears. This I could not understand, for she was so beautiful, she had pretty clothes and her home seemed to me a perfect palace.

As I watched, she brushed away her tears, roused herself and ran her fingers over the keyboard. This time, her whole soul went into her effort. The piano seemed to speak of the wind and waves, of storms and thunder; then of the low sighing and sobbing of people who had somebody dead—and that was something I could understand.

It was an old ballad the lady sang, although to me it was just a sad song in the language that Alick Grier spoke. But the song was about someone called Douglas, so it held me listening intently. Of course, I did not remember the actual words at the time, but I know them by heart now.

My Douglas was sae blyth and gay,
Wi' swinging kilt and tartan plaid;
And aye he said I was the fay
Wha' stole the he'rt he ane time had.
"Gi'e yours tae me; ye've ane tae spare."
I gied,—but O, the place is sair.

Wae is me! Wae is me!
My faither found us i' the glen.
He cursed the troth that wouldna be
Sae lang as he had gear and men.
He pushed my laddie's boat tae sea.
Wae is me! Wae is me!

My faither was a chieftain prood.
He vowed I'd be a chieftain's bride.
But aye I wondered hoo I could
And my Doug's love like Solway's tide.
I'd gien my a'. I'd nocht tae share.
But noo, ah, noo, my he'rt is sair.

The music stopped. The lady rose. Her face was beautiful, but deathly in its paleness. How tall and graceful she was! but, oh, how sad-looking!

She stretched out her arms as for someone. I crouched again, afraid, for I noticed that although her eyes were open, she did not seem to see. It was as if she were sleep-walking.

When I peeped up again, she had moved to the adjoining room, clear through, and was standing at the large window which looked out on the sea. Her arms were still outstretched.

Slowly and in great distress, with many stops, her sorrow-laden voice recited the last of the ballad, in the magic-music of her earnestness.

Wae is me! Wae is me!
Love wadna let him bide awa'.
He cam' across the angry sea
Tae tak' me hame tae his ain ha'.
And i' the storm I watched him dee.
Wae is me! Wae is me!

And then, close up to the window with beating heart, as I peered into the room, I saw the lady sink to the floor.

Without giving thought to anything else, I darted to the screen door, but before my hand had grasped the handle, my way was barred by a figure of electrified fury in the form of a sturdy but slim girl who had come up on me all unnoticed. She was as tall as I, and dark as I was fair, although even in the blackness of her hair there was a tinge of gold that threw back the light. Her face was olive and pink and her bared arms bore the same olive tint. But, after all, it was her eyes

that stopped me so abruptly. They glowed darkly in haughty anger.

"You sneak! What do you want here?" she cried. "Go away!"

"I—I'm not a sneak," I answered, ever ready with a defence.

For answer, the girl smacked my cheek before I could draw back or duck. And that smack stung.

I was in a quandary. This was something new in my experience, and it was not agreeable. Had she been a boy, there would have been a fight right there. But she was not. No girl had ever hit me before. I felt too that I had not deserved it. I could not strike her back. Inborn chivalry told me that much. I wondered for a moment if I might not pick up a stone and throw it at her. I dismissed the thought; it would not let me out of my difficulty. I could run away: true! but then I had never run away from a girl before, and hardly ever from a boy. Conflicting thoughts flashed through me like lightning, as she again advanced on me.

"Spy!" she exclaimed. "Your dog has better manners than you have. He stayed on the other side of the fence where he belongs."

"I'm not a spy! The dog would be here too if I hadn't told him to stay. He doesn't like music anyway," I continued a little truculently. "Your mother——"

The girl was not listening to any argument. She grasped a pitchfork that lay against the house. She turned on me with it and I knew then that there was to be no compromise. I turned tail and fled for the fence a hundred yards away, and, notwithstanding my start and my fleetness of foot, I barely succeeded in throwing myself through the barbed-wire before the pitchfork glanced off me. As it was, I had to leave part of my only pair of trousers behind on a barb of the fence.

"Come on, Bones!" I cried, as I kept on down the trail. And every time I looked back, until the trees hid the picture, I could see that defiant figure, with the flashing eyes, standing, legs apart and pitchfork lowered for action like a Highlander in a bayonet charge.

CHAPTER SEVEN

It was beginning to grow dark. I was back almost at the place I had started from. I was on one of the wooden seats at the side of the main road, to the left of the wharf and overlooking the broad stretch of water which went by the name of Howe Sound. It was a beautiful sight, the gathering night on the great expanse of water and shadowy islands in the distance with their background of purple sky, but my eye for beauty had become a little dimmed, for a cold wind was springing up, as it so often does of a summer evening on the Pacific Coast, and it was searching through my still damp clothes.

I thought again of the "Seagull," with its lavish comforts, and I saw more clearly than ever what a foolish person I had been. As I thought, I searched my pockets for some of the nickels and dimes I had had when the trouble started with Coogan the cook. My search proved a disappointment. My money-pocket was empty. My wealth was evidently reclining at the bottom of Howe Sound. I turned wistfully to the general store, which was now closed, but still lighted up. Through the window, I could see a big man with stooping shoulders, bent over his books on the counter.

I yawned and shivered, then I pulled myself together. With a word to Bones, we two started slowly across the road. We skirted the glare of the store lights and passed up the lane that ran alongside. At the rear of the store were a stretch of pasture and barns. Lights above the store told me that the storekeeper's home was over his shop. There was no one about. I went cautiously over to one of the barns and peeped in. Three cows and a young calf were lying down on straw in enviable comfort. I admonished Bones in case he should be constrained to bark.

We passed inside and closed the door. A ladder led to a floor above. I mounted this and found that it opened into a spacious hayloft which smelled sweet and warm. As soon as the dog got up beside me, I set the wooden lid over the loft entrance for security, then, with a sigh of weariness, I took off my outer garments and hung them on jutting beam-ends, then, half-clad, I wormed myself in among the hay with Bones.

It became bright moonlight, so I lay for a while watching the cold, silver glow oozing through the loft window, sending ghostlike lights and shadows chasing one another across the walls and along the roof as the moon shone out strongly in the clear sky and as scudding clouds raced across the face of it. But soon I and Bones, a pair of waifs, dog-weary but unworried, dropped into sound sleep.

Next morning early, I awoke with a start at the sound of voices below. Bones, lying at my side, gave a low growl, which I immediately smothered by springing on top of him. I threw off my blanket of hay and rose, stretching myself. I put on the garments I had discarded the night before, then, with a caution to the dog, I crept to the lid covering the ladder-hole, raised it slightly and looked down. The storekeeper and his wife were each milking a cow. In a few minutes they got through and they let out the animals, the man herding them to some pasture up the hill and the good lady going back into the house with the milk.

When the way was clear, I slipped down and out on to the main road, unnoticed. I dropped on to the shore-line under the wharf and laved my face and hands in the refreshing salt water, then, for want of anything better to do, I strolled up that trunk road that led from Cohoe to Anvers. It was a case of passing the time till the afternoon, when the "Seagull" was due back on her homeward journey.

It was early morning, possibly seven o'clock, and already the sun was high in the sky and making the air more warm every minute.

With a gnawing hunger inside, which I knew I would have to smother for several hours, I sauntered slowly up the dusty road, feeling at outs with the world in general and with stomachs that gnawed in particular,—up the hill and across the plateau where the Finn settlement was located. I sat down by the roadside and saw away below me the great expanse of dazzling sea, the tiny islands, the trail of smoke from the ocean steamers—mere dots—away out on the gulf, and the everlasting background of snow-peaked mountains. I saw and compared that grandeur with the ramshackle, ill-kept farmhouses scattered about me on the plateau. I rose and turned back toward the golden glory of the sea. The sea was in my blood and it was always calling me almost before I was out of sight of it, for in all the life of me that I could remember, I had never been a mile away from it.

At one of the herring-bone crossings, I came upon a flock of sheep, which were being driven along slowly by my late opponent of the wharf, Greensweater, and a heavy-boned lump of a ragged youth who seemed to have been cast in a

mold after Greensweater's pattern, but bigger and coarser. And that was exactly how it proved, for I soon learned that the bigger boy was Zeke Ganns, Greensweater's older brother.

Now, on my downward trudge, when I saw those sheep through the cloud of dust they raised, I called Bones to heel, knowing him of old. He obeyed me this time, although I could see his envious canine eyes, for fun denied, rove longingly in the direction of the sheep.

After the sheep passed, I was stopped up with a challenge from Greensweater.

I was not in any mood for a quarrel, so I tried to push on, but Zeke—big and dirty—blocked the way. He wiped off his nose with his ragged jacket-sleeve and leered at me:—the kind of boy that gave anyone who was decently clean, the creeps.

"So you're the guy, eh!"

He grabbed at my jacket. I tugged to get away, but he was too strong for me.

"Now, you jes' cut that out, kid," said Zeke. "See this stick?"

I did not answer, but I kept a watchful eye on him and his stick.

"Well,—if you bend down and give me three whacks at you, I'll let you go. If you don't—you've got to fight Harry here, and then you've got to fight me,—see!"

"Let me alone!" I cried, wriggling free. "I didn't do anything to you."

"You didn't, eh! Didn't you nearly drownd him? If he was drownded, wouldn't I get all the chars to do? Ain't that doin' somethin' to me? Besides, what you doin' with that sheep-worryin' dog round 'bout here? Don't you think I seed him makin' for them? Keep your mongrel off'n this road, or he'll get a charge o' shot in him—you too."

"Here, Harry!—you lick the tar out o' this kid."

Harry held back. He didn't seem to enjoy the prospect altogether. As for me, I had my doubts about the ungainly Zeke, but I could see the chance of getting more than my own out of Greensweater, with the possible chance of running away down the hill afterwards.

"What's the matter with you?" shouted Zeke to his brother. "D'ye think he'll chaw ye up? D'ye think he can beat ye, an' me here to see fair play?"

He gave his brother a smart rap on the legs with his stick. In a second, the two of us were at it, hammer and tongs, with Zeke shouting and egging Harry on, and Bones the dog running about in a spirit of uncertainty.

It was not long before I began to wear Greensweater down, but not till I noticed blood trickling from his nose did I begin to feel really confident. Then I sailed in with both hands. We got to grips, but I received a stinging blow across my back which made me break away in surprise.

"None o' that, kid! None o' that!" shouted Zeke. "I seed ye. Foul play! An' I'll hit ye for it every time."

"I didn't do anything foul, you big coward," I shouted in anger. And as my attention was momentarily diverted, I received a hard crack on the face from Greensweater.

I rushed wildly in again and beat him about, only again to receive a weal, this time across the legs.

"I seed ye again, kid! Can't bluff me,—hittin' below the belt!"

"You cut that out," I cried, as tears of vexation and anger came into my eyes, for I could see I wasn't going to have a chance of fair play.

Next time we got together, I got a smash on the side of the head from a fist which I knew did not belong to Greensweater. That proved too much for me. Beating or no beating, I made up my mind I would not take it without a struggle. I jumped round suddenly and with all the force I could muster I smashed straight into the podgy face that leered at me. My

knuckles struck teeth. Down went the face in the dust, head over heels, while I stood over the fallen idol shaking my bruised hand. But I did not stand this way long, for the younger Ganns sprang on me from behind and brought me to the ground backward, as he shouted, "Come on, Zeke. Quick,—come on! I've got him this time!"

I was thoroughly vanquished, though I felt I was not dishonored.

I shouted to Bones for help, but he either did not understand or did not wish to interfere. He just barked around foolishly in evident enjoyment of the scene.

In a dusty mix-up the three of us rolled and fought, twisted and kicked, until we were almost unrecognizable. I felt that no matter what I did, there was always a Ganns uppermost, while four fists and four knees pummelled and kneaded me until I was dazed and exhausted, until I kept on fighting just because of the hopeless feeling I had that if I stopped I would be beaten the more.

When all my breath seemed to have been squeezed out of my body, the pressure was suddenly relieved. As I squirmed out of the tangle, I distinguished through the cloud of dust a girlish figure flailing with a tennis racket, right and left, on the heads of the two Ganns boys, who rolled and scrambled in an endeavor to get out of the way. There were no half measures with this girl, and every time the edge of the racket came down it hit noisily and brought a howl.

I jumped up to the assistance of my champion, and in one more wild rush the fight was ended, with the tattered and perspiry Ganns boys on the race up the hill after the sheep now a long way ahead.

I looked at the panting girl before me. I remembered her at once. She in turn gazed at me; but dirt, perspiration, a puffed lip, a bloody nose which had been hastily wiped and rewiped all over my face during the conflict, kept me in disguise for a time.

I grinned a kind of thanks.

"You're a great fighter," I said.

"Am I?"

"Yes!—we fairly sent them flying."

"Did *we*?"

Her short answers upset my conversation.

"Thank you very much," I said, by way of ending an uncomfortable situation. "Come on, Bones!"

"Here! Wait you!" cried the girl with a changed look in her face.

"So it is you? Little Peter Spy! And I helped *you*! Well—if I had only known!"

She took a step forward and raised her tennis racket.

"Go on,—run! Quick,—run!" she cried aggressively.

"I won't run," I returned doggedly.

Her answer to me was a crack over the skull with the tennis racket. It hurt and made me sway, but I held my ground, and I did not put up my hand to protect myself as I tried hard not to show that it hurt.

She raised her arm again, then a change flashed over her face. She dropped her arm to her side.

"You don't hit back," she said somewhat quietly. "I suppose you're afraid."

"I don't hit girls. If you were a boy I would knock your head off."

She tilted her chin in disdain. "And if I were a boy I wouldn't let you."

"You're a mean kind of a girl. You think you should have your own way. I guess you're spoiled," I replied.

The girl looked crestfallen. "I'm not mean."

"Oh, yes you are! You hit me because you knew I wouldn't hit you back."

I turned away, disgusted with everything. As I did so, I saw all that remained of the flashing anger disappear from the girl's face. She came after me and caught me by the arm.

"I guess I was mean," she said contritely. "I'm sorry I hit you, little boy."

That was the last straw. I became furiously indignant. "Little boy," indeed! I was easily as tall as she was, and possibly a year older. I had nothing more to say. I turned and walked quickly down the road that led to the sea, breaking into a jog-trot as soon as I got a respectable distance away from her.

I washed myself clear over the head at a pump in a back-yard, then dusted what I could of the Anvers highway from my clothing.

There was a vegetable patch at the foot of this yard. At the sight of a bed of turnips, my hunger reasserted itself with so much aggression that I uprooted two healthy-looking specimens, washed them off at the pump, and with them in my hands I turned on to the road, then over among some bushes where it was quiet. I sat down there and started in to my humble vegetarian meal.

CHAPTER EIGHT

I was not particularly fond of turnips, raw and by themselves, but my hunger was making good sauce and I started in, in an aggrieved way, feeling sulky at my misfortune. I was almost finished with the first turnip, when I heard a sound in the bushes at my back. I looked around.

It was that girl again. I frowned. Why couldn't she leave me alone?

She was standing a little to one side of me and she had evidently been watching me for some time. I jumped up and endeavored to hide the second turnip at my back.

"Who's Peter Spy now, I should like to know?" I asked angrily.

The girl laughed, not a bit abashed.

"So you remember that against me? Why—you can't call this spying! I just saw your dog running out, so I wanted to see what trouble you were running into next."

"I hope you are satisfied."

"What is that you are hiding at your back?" she asked, changing the subject.

"Nothing that matters to you!" I was still angry.

She laughed again as if she were enjoying my discomfort.

"Do you like turnips, little boy?"

"Don't call me little boy;—I'm as big as you are. Of course I like turnips. Do you think I would be eating them if I didn't? But I wish you would go away and mind your own affairs."

She remained.

"I shouldn't think you would like turnips so much as to eat them raw between breakfast and dinner-time,—big boy."

Her shot with its sarcasm went home. For answer, I stuffed the second small turnip in my pocket and started to walk away slowly. She caught me by the sleeve and faced me round about. There was an expression in her dark eyes that I could not understand. She seemed now all concern and sympathy.

"Say!——" There was a quiver in her voice. "You haven't had any breakfast."

"Well—that's all right, isn't it? People don't have to eat breakfast unless they want to."

She stood for a moment in a quandary, then she found her tongue again.

"You don't live here? You haven't any friends in Cohoe?"

"I'm glad I don't. I don't want any Cohoe people for friends."

"I don't have many friends here myself. Where do you come from? You don't have to be huffy about such a little thing as me calling you 'little boy.'"

"I come from Vancouver. I belong to the 'Seagull,'" I answered, with no small show of pride. "I missed her when she was here and now I have to wait till she comes back this afternoon."

"Oh,—I know now who you are," she said. "You're the boy that pushed Harry Ganns over the wharf and then jumped in for him and disappeared. I'm glad you did push him in. It is high time somebody did something to those mean things." Her lips tightened. "They are the boys that spread lies about my mother."

"Do you know, a lot of people thought you had got drowned."

I grinned at the thought.

"You must be a fine swimmer," she went on.

"I can swim well enough not to get drowned."

"Well—I'm sorry if I got mad with you yesterday, but I thought you were spying, and people here say nasty things about my mother, and they are—they are—liars." She stamped her foot. "They are too! I thought you were trying to find out things like they do." Tears came into her eyes, but she brushed them away in defiance and shook her head as if admonishing her inward self for her weakness. "My mother is good, and she's the dearest ever. Sometimes she is not very well and—oh, well!—they don't understand, that's all; and people shouldn't say things when they don't understand." She brushed her eyes with her hand again, then she smiled with her mouth although her eyes did not altogether give up their grave expression.

"I get mad sometimes, but I try hard not to. My mother says it is a sign of weakness to get angry. You aren't angry with me any more, please."

"Oh, I guess not!" I said with condescension. "You helped me against those two rough-necks."

She smiled. "You're terribly strong." Her admiration, real or assumed, whichever it may have been, won me. What boy can be harsh to anyone who admires his physical performances? I straightened myself.

"You've got to be strong where I come from," I answered. "If you weren't strong, you wouldn't be living."

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Douglas! They call me Doug."

"My name is Sheila Gordon Campbell. But isn't it the strangest ever: my father's name was Douglas."

"Then why did he change it?" I asked innocently.

"He didn't change it: my father is dead." She said it very quietly. "He died before I was born."

I thought of my own lack, but I did not venture anything, for I was a little afraid of her inquisitiveness.

"Well—I'll have to run along now," said Sheila Campbell. "I was up the hill arranging for the Finn woman who does our washing. Now I am going to the store. After that, I have to row back home."

"Do you go across the bay there and round the big cliff?" I asked, pointing.

"Yes! Won't you come? It is quite a while till the 'Seagull' gets in. You could be back again in loads of time."

"No—I guess not!"

"Mother wouldn't mind; especially when she knows your name is Douglas. And we don't have people at our place very often. Do come, please—it will be good fun. You don't have to be scared. Nobody will eat you, or anything like that."

"Oh, I'm not scared."

"Won't you come then?"

I pondered for a moment, then decided on the adventure. I never jaloused that Sheila Campbell had been maneuvering to this end with a set purpose in view—the purpose of appeasing the hunger which she knew I felt, although I had been too proud to admit it. That is a way women have, and it must be born in them for they show it early.

"I'll row you over," I said.

"Good! Our boat is the white painted one with the black lines, on the right of the wharf. If you go down to it, I'll get my messages at Davidson's store and follow."

When I found myself seated in the black and white rowing boat—with the faithful Bones sitting in the bow—waiting the coming of the black-haired girl, Sheila Gordon Campbell, who had scolded me, driven a pitchfork at me, bullied me, fought for me and hit me over the head, all in fairly quick succession, I had some misgivings as to my wisdom in

remaining, but any notions I may have had of retiring while there might yet be time were too late in assuming commanding enough proportions, for that young lady was already coming down the wharf with stately dignity. More than that, Davidson himself, the big, round-shouldered storekeeper, was escorting her and carrying her purchases in a very deferential manner.

"Is this boy rowing you across, Sheila?" asked the big man, eyeing me suspiciously.

"Yes, Mr. Davidson!"

"Uhm!—I guess that's just as well. It will keep him out of mischief for an hour—maybe. It didn't take him long to make a reputation in Cohoe."

Sheila laughed.

"Oh,—he's visiting us, Mr. Davidson," she answered with becoming dignity.

"Uhm! A friend from Vancouver; a representative of the press," he grinned knowingly.

"No! He's a sailor," she smiled, "off the 'Seagull.'"

I felt my face getting hot. I hated to be the subject of any conversation. I was at that particular age that just wanted to slip along quietly in company, unnoticed: just wanted to be one of the gang with no outstanding peculiarities except maybe a reputation for being courageous: and that was not a peculiarity, it was a virtue.

I longed to give the bantering old man a bump on the head with an oar, as he leaned over the boat to place the packages, but I refrained, for I suddenly remembered that Sheila Gordon Campbell's mother had been quoted as saying that anger was a sign of weakness, and Sheila might not like it.

I took off my coat and rolled up my sleeves. I was confident of myself on the water at any rate. Bones scrambled down from the bow and settled himself at Sheila's feet, with his muzzle on her knee. I pulled away from the wharf and rowed slowly out. I did not speak to the self-possessed young lady in the stern. I was still worrying over what the storekeeper had said.

"What is the matter, Douglas?" Sheila inquired at last. "Are you sorry you have come?"

"No!—but I don't wish you to think I am what I am not. I am not a sailor."

"Aren't you? Isn't that too bad:—I just love sailor-boys."

"I'm—I'm just a newsy."

"A what?"

"I sell newspapers on the boat."

The girl looked over at me, sensed my discomfort and answered buoyantly, to my reassurance, "You do? Well—that's not so bad; it is something connected with a boat anyway. I think everybody in Vancouver and on the coast should be connected with boats and the sea. Don't you? It has been boats, boats, boats, with my mother and me since ever we can remember, and long before that too, for mother says her people were always steam ship or sailing ship sailor-men; captains, ship owners, battle ship admirals, pirates, discoverers, smugglers—everything—but always something connected with the sea. Isn't that lovely?"

Her eyes, violet almost to blackness, sparkled as she spoke, and they awakened a responsiveness in me, for I could readily understand how she felt. But I still kept silent.

She fondled Bones, stroking his head. He wisely kept silent too, enjoying the luxury.

"This is a great dog you have. I wish I had him. Ours got killed. Some say another dog killed him, but I think he was killed by a cougar. I am sure I saw a cougar over on our land, just before we found him torn up. But mother says that is nonsense. This is a big dog of yours and he will be very strong when he is full-grown."

"Oh,—he's not a bad dog. He's an Airedale, but if I am ever to get on in the world I'll have to get rid of him. He gets me into all kinds of trouble," I ventured.

"Wouldn't you leave him with me then?"

"No,—I guess not!" I answered in decision.

"Say!"—She was off again at a tangent. Full of thoughts, fancies and ideas, she did not remain for long quiet or on one subject. "How is it that you don't use all the slang that other boys use around here when you talk?"

"I don't know; unless it is just because I try not to talk slang. Mrs. Berry, who brought me up, always told me to talk the best I could. I always wanted to do that anyway, so I used to try hard. Now I suppose it just comes easy, but I'm not very good at it yet. All the same, I like some slang. It sometimes explains things a whole lot better than grammar-book talk. Do you go to school here?"

"Oh, no! I was at school in Scotland, and I came out here for a holiday and to be with mother. Always someone comes out to keep mother company. I've been twice now. Mother won't stay anywhere for long excepting here. She says it is the only place she really enjoys and can be peaceful. She can teach me almost everything—better than lots of first-class teachers I have had—music, algebra, French, Latin, painting. Mother is very, very clever. She was at school in England and in France too.

"She says that I must go away again soon to finish, because I'm just wasting time here. But," she continued with a pout, "I don't think that rowing in a boat, fishing, swimming, watching the sea and playing in the woods, getting strong and healthy, are wasting time. Do you?"

"I would never be inside if I could help it. I'm glad I'll soon be able to get out and rustle for myself the way I want to. I haven't anybody to worry about me."

"Haven't you really?" she inquired in surprise.

"Oh, yes!—my dad Sam. He isn't my dad, of course, but he's pretty near it, and different people—but not anybody in particular," I answered a little reluctantly.

Sheila Campbell did not ask me anything further on this subject.

It was a glorious forenoon, with a soft, salt breeze blowing in from the gulf, and the joy of life was dancing in my veins.

As I rowed in close under the shelter of the great shelving cliff of the Headland, where the water lay still with unruffled surface, where barnacled rocks, the trailing seaweed, and darting fish could be seen for a fathom down, I stopped rowing and let the boat drift.

I drew a deep breath. "Gee!—I would like to live here forever."

"Isn't it just lovely, Douglas—Douglas—. Oh,—you didn't tell me your other name," she exclaimed.

"It is just Douglas," I answered, for I did not wish too much to be known about me in Cohoe.

"Well—I don't mind. You don't have to tell me. But it is just lovely here all the same, and you should see it when the wind is shrieking, with the big rollers swamping in on our beach; when we are all alone and no boats can go out. It is just as if all the witches and demons down under the sea were having a night out. Lying in bed when it is like that, I can hear the waves tearing in on the shingle. They lash over the loose pebbles, then suck and suck as the sea draws back again, just like as if some giant were rocking a great cradle full of broken shells."

The girl's eyes were wide open, but she seemed to be looking into space as she spoke, so earnest was she in picturing to herself the scene which she was trying to convey to me in words.

After a spell, I started to row again. "Is all this place yours?" I asked, pointing as we turned the great rock.

"Yes!—mother has two hundred and fifty acres: all the Headland, with all this run of beach facing the gulf, also part of the inside bay; all the forest-land back to where the high fence runs and the road cuts through. It is just a bit of everything—beaches, water, rocks, grassy lawns, orchard and forest, and all ever so quiet. No one ever disturbs us."

"Do we pull in there by the float?" I asked at last.

"Yes—and keep this side of it, for the tide is running."

We drew alongside. Sheila jumped out on the float and tied up the boat. I handed out her parcels. She gathered some in her arms.

"You bring these others," she cried, racing ahead happily. This was evidently quite an adventure for her. She went across the pebbled beach and up a zig-zag, wooden stairway which led from the beach up the face of the bluff to the smooth level on top upon which the house was built.

She disappeared from view, so I had no chance to make any of the objections that crowded inside of me. And this, seemingly, was just as that young lady desired it.

I threw my coat over my arm, picked up the remaining packages and followed slowly upward, full of misgivings and overwhelmed by an inborn shyness of new acquaintances that even the familiarity and rough-and-tumble of Vancouver's waterfront had failed to subdue in me. This shyness reasserted itself with such telling force as I went on that it at last became irresistible.

Fifty yards away, boldly prominent yet seeming to snuggle for coolness among the tall trees, I could see the girl's home, and inside I knew were she and her mother.

She had accused me of spying, although since that time she had in a mild way apologized. But her mother was already doubtless aware that I had been a witness of what I was not supposed to have seen. The afternoon before, the lady had appeared to me to be very much a lady; she was beautiful, she was nicely dressed, she could play the piano as I had never heard it played before; she could sing wonderfully, she had a nice home and ever so much land. And if she should say anything to me about spies, I knew I would want the ground to swallow me up. Yes!—I would be better out of it. It would be better for me to go when the going was good.

I laid the parcels on the grass, gave a muffled call to Bones and ran back down the zig-zag stairway on to the beach. The tide was out. I ran along the water edge and kept on running till I came to the Headland. I scrambled up the rocks and disappeared.

When Sheila Gordon Campbell came out with her mother to meet me, as no doubt she did, I was nowhere in sight.

I hurried on my way through the forest, never looking back, munching my remaining turnip and making for Cohoe.

I was far too hungry by this time to enjoy the coolness of the forest or to admire the sunshine over on the islands and the spangle-dance of the sea that opened up and spread out before me as I got out on the high road; I was too hungry to give even a thought to Sheila Campbell. The galley of the "Seagull" and Coogan the cook loomed large in my meditations, and I resolved that come what might, I would quarrel no more with Coogan.

I sauntered on to the wharf where several men were already busy handling merchandise in anticipation of the arrival of the "Seagull," and when that gallant little coaster at last tooted her whistle at the Headland, so intent was I in watching her come circling round and in, that I did not notice the white rowing boat with the black lines crossing the inner bay away ahead and pulling alongside the lower landing stage.

"Hullo, kid!" shouted Coogan cheerfully from the top of the gangway, as the steamer came to a standstill and a few passengers disembarked. After all, the cook was not a bad sort, as coaster cooks go, and he liked me although he hated dogs in his galley on principle.

"Got a swell dinner on the menu! Bet you're hungry! Come on aboard!"

I grinned and scrambled up, Bones following as if by right.

But at the top, Coogan grew stern again.

"Nothin' doin'! That darned dog can't come aboard here. The skipper is as much set agin' it as I am. Positeevly—no dog!"

I turned and went back down the gangway to the wharf.

"Say, youngster!—don't be crazy," shouted Coogan. "Give the pup to some of them kids. He'd be better here anyway than starving half his life in Vancouver. Come on aboard! I'll tell you—give it to that nice little dark-eyed dame standin' over there all by herself. Go on—don't be scared!"

I glanced over in the direction of Coogan's signal.

The "little dame" was Sheila Campbell; demure, very sober and not in the slightest way interested in what was going on by the gangway.

I made up my mind in a moment. I took a piece of string from my trouser's pocket and tied an end of it to the leather collar round the dog's neck, then I led the source of my troubles to Sheila.

She turned and looked me over quietly and with much dignity, tilting her head just a little.

"Miss Sheila—they won't let my dog aboard because he steals the beef. You wanted him. You can have him now."

"I don't wish your dog," she answered coldly.

"Aw, yes! Please take him. He's a good sort of dog, and he likes you."

The "Seagull" blew the warning whistle of her immediate departure. I pushed the string into her hand and her fingers closed over it. But that was the only signal of acceptance I got from her.

"Please don't be angry," I pleaded, "because—girls don't understand men."

Her head tilted again, but I had to be off. I ran from her to the edge of the wharf and jumped aboard.

The "Seagull" pulled out, and, as she circled and made once more for the open gulf, I waved again and again to the unresponsive figure of the girl with the dark eyes and the golden-black hair at the end of the wharf, who was still holding the dog by the string. Only when the "Seagull's" stern was disappearing round the Headland did an arm go up, fluttering a tiny, white handkerchief; then all was blotted out by the great, black rock of the Headland and a wide expanse of open sea.

CHAPTER NINE

Many were the days that went by and many things happened before I, Douglas Gordon, saw the little town of Cohoe again; not that it was so very far away—for a few hours only divided it by sea from the rush and bustle of Vancouver where I lived and worked, but Cohoe held nothing for me in the years that passed. When I felt my muscles, I knew that I was strong and growing big. I finished my schooling, I watched the work being done by others, then I took part in the doing of it. I watched the ships load and go out; I helped to load them, working day and night sometimes. I watched the seaport city grow and I grew with it.

With the passing of my happy-go-lucky school-days went many of my youthful foolishnesses. The Inlet bore me no longer naked and astride the logs by the lumber wharves, although my figure was still a familiar one on the waterfront. Where one ship had come gallantly steaming in, ten now crowded for service, and the ten received that service as promptly and as efficiently as the one had done before. Everywhere the great lumbering industries doubled and quadrupled their outputs and still British Columbia kept growing more lumber in the space of time than her sturdy sons hewed down and marketed.

A long time went by before my foster-parent, Sam Berry, received his discharge from the hospital. True, he had lost an eye, but he seemed to gain many things that more than compensated him for the loss. Strange that it should have been so, but it was a fire that had started him on his foolish career of dissipation and it had taken another conflagration to cure him, for never again was Sam Berry known to be the worse for liquor. Maybe other things also turned the scale in his favor, for Sergeant Grier had given a solemn warning to Sam that I would not be allowed to sleep under the same roof with him until he had demonstrated by two years of absolute abstinence, a decent home and a moderate bank account, that he was a fit and proper person to act as guardian to a growing and headstrong youth.

Dear old Sam, he loved me almost with a mother-love, yet I hardly gave it a thought. I think he loved me because I was I; but he loved me also as the only remaining connecting link between him and the old home. He fought hard in the early part of those two years of probation, and yet, so far as longing for the old dissolute state of existence was concerned, it was no fight at all. His toughest battles were with the old cronies of the freight sheds and wharves—the men who lived one day at a time and only for what that day might bring in money and its ultimate translation—drink. They never wearied of trying to get Sam back into the old, easy-going rut. Sam did not become religious as most men at his age do when they swear off their old vices. Sam was not that kind of man. He just stopped drinking in the same way as a man would stop wearing an old, worn-out pair of shoes. And it was not long before his body responded to the improved treatment. He filled out and seemed to grow taller with it. His muscles got back their snap; he carried himself better, and his one eye got to look fearlessly into any face and gave evidence many a time of seeing more that went on about him than his two eyes had done in the many years he had squandered. He ceased to be merely an odd-job laborer. Every day he was at work, and he never was behind when there was a call for extra shifts. It took Peter Calcroft, the manager of the Odds, Woodman & Odds Stevedoring Company, only six months to notice that the change was more than casual and to place Sam in charge of a gang. In twelve months more, Sam was the proud possessor of his old Liverpool title—the smartest stevedore on the shipping front. And he regained it too by sheer hard work and ability.

But in spite of all this, in the face of Sam's continual remonstrances, even against my own desires and threats to take the law into my own hands, that dour, determined Scot, Sergeant Grier, refused to relinquish his fatherly interest in me until the full two years had gone by. I realize now how wise he was in this, for, in Sergeant Grier's home and under the guidance of his old mother, who seemed to carry the wisdom of the ages in the great mind that her frail body contained, I learned much of what life means, of what it means to be a man, straightforward and honorable in all things; how it is given to every man to make and shape his own destiny, to fail or to succeed, to cringe and to be brow-beaten by the greatest of all ghosts, fear, or to rise above it, defy it and so see it disappear like Vancouver's fog-mist under an Indian summer's sun. I learned to love books by the quiet of the fireside, a delightful counterant to the inborn love I possessed for the sea, the forests, the mountains, and for the body that responded quickly and surely to the telegraph from the mind. I learned almost unwittingly the secret power that lies in the balancing of work and play, rest and exercise, study and amusement.

It was a proud day for Sam when I followed him with my pack of belongings to the little bungalow in the suburbs, and it proved a big surprise to me to find much of our old furniture installed—together with more that was new—sufficient to bring back pleasant memories of the old days, with regrets that the dear, old, hard-working lady was not there to see the

transformation.

It had been one of Sam's first notions, as soon as he had got a little money together, to go to the storage warehouse to find out if the old household goods were still there. When he satisfied himself on this point, he found it the easiest thing in the world to make a deal with the landlord, Linton, who preferred cold cash any day to second-hand furniture.

When I left school, the call of the sea grew stronger within me. Not that I wished to be a sailor exactly—although I wished that too—but just so long as my work would take me where I could look out on the ocean on whose bosom great ships came and went, I felt I could be contented.

It had been an easy matter for Sam, with Grier's backing, to induce Peter Calcroft to find a berth for me as an assistant in the wharfingers' office of Odds, Woodman & Odds. Calcroft had known me in and about the wharves almost all of my short lifetime. Many an errand I had run for him and many a nickel he had given me for the service. Sam was already an old servant of the Company, so what was more natural than that a place should be found for me? I can well remember what Calcroft said to me the day I started in.

"You're a fair-haired lad; you have a sunny face, Douglas, and you've got that kind of blue eyes that express very little but say a whole lot to a man that knows; you're a sturdy rascal and, if you mind your P's and Q's, and don't play too much school-boy mischief, you'll be useful in the Odds, Woodman & Odds outfit, maybe in more ways than that of making up ships' manifests and handling freight accounts. Don't forget it—I'll have my eyes on you. If you make good, you'll hear about it: if you don't—well—you'll hear about it too."

And it was there that I learned more of the ways of those who go down to the sea in ships, as well as of those who stay ashore and prepare the ships for their sea-going.

When I started in, I looked after the mailing; I delivered freight advices all over the city; I ran up and down the various wharves with shipping documents and I spent many hours hunting for elusive customs officers. Then I helped the man who made out the freight accounts. When that man was promoted, I got his job, and so made room for another junior. I helped the fellow who manifested the ships' cargoes, and in time I wrote up the cargoes myself. I looked after the replenishing of the ships' stores. In season, when the cashier grew sick, I took charge of that most detestable of all shipping office positions—the cash wicket—and I balanced the cash book. Then, once, when four steamers from different parts of the universe docked at the same time and one of the stevedores got hurt, I got my bigger chance which might have led even to bigger things still had I not been Douglas Gordon, with the destiny of Douglas Gordon to fulfil and the headstrong desires of youth to appease. It was a chance that gave me a reputation ahead of my fellows on the waterfront—not because others could not have done it, but rather that I was fortunate in being given the opportunity and that the happening in itself had the flavor of the dramatic in it; and, after all, a day of full-blooded dramatic action—that calls for little more than a combination of strength of body and common sense—often contributes more to the building of a reputation than years of hard honest grind under an electric light and behind a pen in the far from spectacular work at the desk of a wharf office, or any other office; for, as surely as all the world loves a lover, so surely does all the world laud and reward far beyond his deserts the dispenser of the glaring and spectacular parts of our daily grind.

Mr. Calcroft rushed into the office, pushing his hand through his hair in his desperation.

"Doug," he cried, "Barney Grady's been hit on the head with an iron bar that fell out of a chain. He has been taken to the hospital. Do you think you could handle that gang that's working on the 'Waterloo' down on the Jubilee slip? You're big and husky and, although you are just a kid in years, your head is secured on your body the right way."

I looked up at him in surprise. He laid his hand on my shoulder as I rose from my chair. "Say,—you've just got to do it, son! Sam says you can manage all right. Every stevedore in town is working double shifts, and the 'Waterloo' is already three days late. The skipper's raising Cain now. She simply must be out of here by to-morrow night. I cannot take any of the other stevedores off the work they are at as it would leave things just as badly off."

I did not relish the job but I hated to see Calcroft in a dilemma.

"All right," I said, "I'll try, but it is hardly in my regular line. I've never done that kind of work before,—still, I guess I can manage."

"That's the boy! Get down right away. The men are idling now. Don't stop till the job's through. It is to be done by

midnight to-morrow. And if you do it, Doug, then you will be as good a man as Sam Berry, and that's saying something."

"What about the gang?" I asked, a little dubious.

"Yes,—I know they are as tough a bunch as we have on the wharves, and they'll take some handling, but—have a go at it. They can't eat you."

I laughed.

"And I may do as I like so long as I keep within a mile of the rules and regulations and get the boat loaded and away?"

"That's it!"

I left the office with considerable misgiving, but I had little time to ruminate, for, in a few minutes I was on the Jubilee wharf.

The men were gathered in a crowd at the foot of the shed, some seated on cases and others standing about, smoking, laughing, chaffing and swearing as if the completion of the "Waterloo" for her trip to the Orient were a matter of weeks instead of hours. These longshoremen did not even look at me until I was right in among them.

"Come on, boys!" said I, in a cheery voice, "the 'Waterloo' has to be out by midnight to-morrow. I am to take Barney Grady's place and see the work done. Let's jump into it and get it through."

A big hulk of a docker—whom I had seen in and about the wharves for years, jeered loudly. "Gee,—but that's talkin', kid! And who sent you to do the job?"

"Calcroft sent me," I retorted.

"He did, eh! Good for him! Now, you can run back and tell Calcroft to go plumb. It's time some of us old hands had a look in on a job like this."

I turned to the men, but I failed to find any signs of friendliness, although many of them had been on more or less familiar terms with me for ever so long. I could see that at that stage of the game there was one thing only to do and that was to conciliate them at any cost, for it was impossible to get another gang in town that knew the work well enough to do it in the time stipulated.

I went up to the big fellow.

"Look here, Gallagher!—you don't suppose I chased after this job? I don't want it. I'd far sooner be where I came from, but I was told to see the work done and I am going to whether you like it or not. You're by far the biggest man in this outfit and you're a bully as well; you're pretty nearly twice my age, but all the same I guess I know more about stevedoring than you do with all your head-start. This job's got to be done quickly if it is to be done at all. If you don't like taking orders from me because I'm what you call a kid, let's settle it right here. If you win, I'll take a truck and go to it and you can boss the outfit. If I win, you'll jump in and do as you're told."

I threw this bomb at him with a bold show, although inwardly I feared what I might be letting myself in for. If I had had any sense at all, I would have slipped round this quarrel instead of plunging into it, head-first.

"Atta boy!" muttered one of the spectators.

"What d'ye know about that now?" grunted another, in mock approval.

"Gosh,—he's sporty!"

"Good old Doug!"

Half a dozen voices sounded their approval, and I gained a few supporters at the outset. But most of the men there were after a little bit of excitement and entertainment and it did not matter to them how they got it.

The big fellow spat a wad of tobacco, wiped his mouth on his sleeve, rose slowly and slipped off his jacket.

"Well,—I guess when a baby-boy needs a spanking, his daddy's got to give it to him," he grinned.

"Aw, say, Gallagher!—cut it out," intervened one of the men. "The kid's game; let's get on with the job. He's only doin' what he was sent to do, same as us. You don't call it fair, scrappin' with the likes o' him."

"Shut up, will you! If you don't hold your jaw right now, you'll be holdin' it later on, for you'll get some o' what he's goin' to get. It's young yaps like him that keeps us where we are—they grab the dough and the soft snaps and we do the dirty work."

I looked at my watch. Already, ten minutes of precious time had gone in talking.

I was strong and agile enough, so I jumped straight at Gallagher and hit him with all the force I could muster. But my blow fell on his arm, and in return I received a thumping, sledge-hammer whack on my chest. I thought for a moment that I had caved in in front and felt as if I had completed a somersault, but evidently still on my feet despite the whirl.

Gallagher knew how to fight, and I should have remembered that he knew. He was an old hand at the game. I prided myself I knew a little too, but my experience was of the impractical, gymnasium order.

Gallagher lunged at me, but I kept him off, and we fought and circled in the shed, surrounded by the men all silent and eager. Time and again my opponent had to guard a blow that might have dropped him had it got in. Time after time, a shot did strike through and leave its mark, but he was so big and bulky, and possessed so monkey-like an agility—all of which he used against me to my discomfort—that I could think of only one issue to the silly fight in which I had allowed myself to become embroiled.

Blood began to flow freely, breath whistled and perspiration oozed as we battled there in the gloom of the freight-shed, crashing against baled goods occasionally, but more often striking our heads against large cases of merchandise as we jerked back from each other's blows.

Sailors from the "Waterloo" came over and joined the spectators. The Captain of the ship came over too. I caught a glimpse of him and of the consternation in his face as he noticed that one of the combatants was the new stevedore. He rushed off to Calcroft in raging anger, to find out what kind of stevedores they had in the service of the Odds, Woodman & Odds Company.

I am sure I never fought as I fought that day. I felt stronger than I had ever felt before. What was more to the point, I felt in a way that my honor was at stake. It was a case of win or drop. The "Waterloo" had to be got ready for sea by midnight the following night. That thought kept recurring to me. I beat at this huge fellow and I got severely beaten by him in return, until both of us were staggering about like drunken men. I knew in a round-about way that Gallagher had a reputation as a fighter, but I did not know till some time after this encounter that, all the years he had worked on the waterfront, he had never been known to give in in a fight.

At last we threw defense aside, for we were tiring and defense used up energy. We stood up sheer in front of each other and smashed and smashed again in a wild endeavor to end a combat which had developed into a display of brute strength and endurance.

I gasped for air as if I would never draw another breath. I struck and was struck at again and again. I staggered and recovered. I could hear the crash of blows, but I did not feel them. I had long lost sight of the silent faces which surrounded me. I could see, that but dimly, only the blood-smeared face of Gallagher and when and where I saw it, I hit at it until I could hit no more, until I could see no more; then, although I felt no particularly deadening blow, my knees sagged under me and my senses oozed away like the air from a punctured balloon.

When I came to, it was with a sudden shock of cold. Some one was throwing water over me. I roused myself slowly and looked about. Out of a mist, I gradually realized that one of the men was silently mopping the blood from my face. I rose groggily and made for the water-tap. I felt light in the head, my lips were puffy and sore, but in a general way I was all right—I was intact. I swilled the water over my face and head and dried myself with my handkerchief.

So Gallagher had beaten me! Well—it was not my fault: I had done the best I could. All that I had been guilty of was that I had tackled a job too big for me. I could still play the game—and I would.

Most of the men were waiting at the end of the wharf. They were watching, evidently interested in how I was going to take my defeat. They wouldn't see much that would amuse them.

It was the spring of the year; the "Waterloo" was loading canned salmon in cases. Gallagher was a trucker. They had been starting in to the after-hatch when I originally came on the scene. I seized a truck and trundled it to the pile, and set in to break it down. But I seemed to be the only one working. With my truck full, I made down the shed and passed the gang. Some of the men laughed. I stopped and flashed back in anger at them, for fight still was uppermost in my foolish mind. They became solemn. A little, bandy-legged fellow came up to me.

"Well, boss—what are we to do? You ain't goin' to load the 'Waterloo' all by you'self?"

"What's your game?" I snapped. "You're too small for me to hit. All the same, keep your chaff to yourself if you value your good looks."

The little man's eyes widened in genuine surprise. "Gee—what's the matter? I ain't tryin' to be funny."

"And you better hadn't. Why doesn't Gallagher get us started in?"

"What!—Gallagher?" The little fellow laughed hilariously, and I felt sorely tempted to smack his grinning chops.

I set down my truck instead.

"Where is Gallagher? He has his chance now; why doesn't he make something of it?"

The little fellow jerked his head. "Say!—come on over here!"

I followed him behind some baled goods, and I got the surprise of my life.

There was Gallagher, stretched at full length, with his head on a sack of straw, his eyes and face almost unrecognizable, still unconscious but just coming to under the resuscitating influences of two of his fellows and a small bottle of brandy.

"Who did this?" I asked, still in doubt.

The men laughed.

"Gosh!—you sure ought to know, Gordon," replied one. "Why—you didn't stop hittin' the place he was in even after he was down and out."

I waited for no more. Something inside of me came alive again. I straightened myself and marched down the shed. I gave half a dozen quick orders, split the gang as I wanted it and made a promise to the men of a bonus if they finished the job in the stipulated time. And when the captain returned with Peter Calcroft, the latter saw nothing but work going ahead with snap and precision, with big Gallagher trucking twice as fast as he had ever been known to truck before and me directing operations, a veritable "sedulous ape" to Sam Berry. Calcroft laughed and I heard him say to the bewildered skipper,

"Don't worry, Cap'. That's the kind of stevedores we breed in this port. We catch 'em young. You'll be out in the gulf before your reckoning, or I'm a Dutchman."

He was out too—and Calcroft was no Dutchman.

CHAPTER TEN

A few weeks after my first practical experience in stevedoring, Peter Calcroft called me into his inner office. From what Sam had let drop, I had an inkling of what was in the wind and I felt ill-at-ease in consequence for I had other plans developing within me for the weal or woe of Douglas Gordon.

As I entered, Mr. Calcroft looked up from his work.

"Say, Gordon!—you made a fine job of the handling of the 'Waterloo's' freight the other week and I wanted to tell you so. I have something else to tell you too on the same subject. Barney Grady has decided to quit stevedoring here. His accident has upset him a whole lot and he is going down to 'Frisco. Now, how'd you like to be a stevedore for keeps instead of sticking at this recording stuff. You'd be the youngest stevedore on the coast. There'll be good money in it for you and it'll be a real big jump for a young fellow. I know you can make the grade or I wouldn't put it up to you. What d'ye say?"

Mr. Calcroft rose and smiled. He clapped his hand on my shoulder just as a big brother might do. Now, it hurt me to have to do it, and the look in my face must have betrayed the hurt, but at the same time it saved me much talking, for Calcroft seemed to get it in one look that I was about to refuse his offer. He became serious at once.

"Great Scot, man!—you don't mean to say you're not going to take it on?"

"I certainly hate to refuse," I answered, "because you've been more than good to me, but the fact is I have decided to quit."

"Quit? Holy mackinaw! What d'ye want to quit for? Man, you've hardly started. You're working for the best outfit on the coast, Doug—though I should say it myself. You're making good every minute. Here's your chance." His voice softened in a way that I had never heard it do before. "I've been banking on you. What's the trouble? Who's been getting after you? You're not going with the Oriental P.P.S. Company?"

I shook my head. "Nothing like that, Mr. Calcroft! There isn't any one I'd sooner work for than the Odds, Woodman & Odds Company and yourself—excepting maybe one person and his name is Douglas Gordon. That's exactly how I feel. I've just got to get out into the open to breathe for a while. The wharves get me the wrong way. I feel all damped down with the draughts shut off. I have never had my real fill of the open, excepting once when a kid selling papers during the summer holidays on the 'Seagull' on her coast trips, and I've never forgotten it. I'm going out for a bit, up the coast—anywhere. Until I get my fill, I won't be satisfied. I need room to grow, to expand. If I don't get it, I'll blow up or else hurt somebody in a crazy fit. I'm going to have a go at something on my own, even if it's catching salmon from a row-boat, pirating oyster beds, searching for that sailors' will-o'-the-wisp, ambergris, or trying to extract gold from the ocean. I don't seem to care very much what I do so long as I get away somewhere on my very own."

My enthusiasm must have set Calcroft wondering if I were in my right senses, for he looked at me steadily in a puzzled way. Then he shook his head and moved from one foot to the other.

"Oh, I know! I guess you think I'm crazy, Mr. Calcroft. Possibly I am. I cannot explain exactly just how I feel. Sam thinks I am off my head; 'dotty' as he calls it. Well, I can't help it. Likely enough I'll be sorry for it later on and come back and settle down to the hum-drum, but I've got to get out meantime to stretch myself anyway. I'm not going so very far away; the B.C. coast has always looked good enough to me."

Suddenly the puzzled expression lifted from Calcroft's face and he became his old self again—the Calcroft I had learned to like so well. He clapped his hand on my shoulder again and smiled.

"No,—I don't think you are crazy, boy. I've been all through this stage you are now going through. I was a young doctor in the East and I quit cold one day, because I felt I needed a muscular holiday. I never went back and now I'm an old wharf-rat that talks slang, without ever a regret that I quit the saw-bones business. I don't blame you, Doug, although this life has always seemed open and free to me. That, after all, is a matter of degree. I'll be sorry to see you go though, for I can use you. And, if ever you want to come back—well—just come,—see!"

"But what does Sam say to all this?"

"Oh, he's been kind of expecting it—I've been paving the way quietly; and he's not so bad about it now that he knows I don't intend going to the South Seas or to South Africa, or some such. I think it is a kind of disease I have contracted," I laughed, "what Jack London calls 'the call of the wild.'"

"A desire to be a hobo for a while," added Calcroft, "just the same sort of thing that makes the quiet, respectable, go-to-church, married man in the big cities back east want to go out once in a blue-moon and get beautifully and paralyzingly soused to the eyes, to the consternation of his family, his friends, and even himself. Well—don't let me stop you, boy, and the best of luck."

It had been an old longing with me and it had at last increased to such an extent that it had become irresistible. I had lived in the open all my life, but I longed to be more in the open still. Maybe it was the dreamer in me from some far-flung sire, maybe I was just tired of the steady grind and the crowded canvas of the wharf and freight-shed beehive existence, possibly I longed to be alone for a time to take stock of myself, maybe it was something stronger, the urging that impels, in fact, commands us to do things and to make journeys for reasons that are not explained to us, but which, if obeyed, ultimately prove for the good of ourselves and those whose destinies are inextricably mingled with our own.

I had no particular notion then what I wanted to be at, but, that afternoon, when the newspapers came out and I scanned the front page, a flitting fancy became concrete. I hurried down to the old Northern Pacific Lumber wharf, in and about which I had spent so many care-free days in my early boyhood. I strolled into the manager's office where I met with a kindly greeting from my old friend, Hugh Forbes who, when I as a little bare-footed youngster first made his acquaintance, was the wharf foreman, but had made much of the passing years and had now attained to the eminence of a swivel chair in the lumber-yard office.

"Hullo, Doug!—haven't seen you for a dog's age. What's the good news?"

"Did you see the papers to-day?" I inquired.

"Not yet! Anything unusual?"

"Walter Delmore's yacht, 'The Vampire,' ran full tilt into a stray log in Howe Sound last night and went down, drowning Delmore and four others."

"You don't say! Man, that's the third accident from that cause in twelve months."

"Yes!—and the log that did the trick bore the brand, N.P. in a diamond, for the only survivor was hanging on to it when rescued."

Forbes drew a deep breath and leaned back.

"Phee-ugh! That's worse and worse. Still, it might have been anybody's log, Doug. Most of our booms come down that way, you know, and with the wild weather we have on the coast at times it isn't anybody's fault if an odd log breaks away once in a while. But what is on your chest, lad? Sit down and unbosom yourself."

"Well,—I've just quit Calcroft," I said. "I'm going up the sound to work my muscles a bit. I've a notion I might do worse than hunt stray logs up there. Have you granted any beachcomber's licences lately?"

"Let me see! Yes, I have—but only one, Doug—to old Jim Flannigan away up at Barcombe."

"Would you grant me one? I think I could clear up some of the water, make a little on the side for myself and have some fun at the same time."

"Sure thing! Only you don't have to do that kind of thing with a good job at Odds & Woodman's."

I explained to him something of what I had said to Calcroft.

"Well—there's a little money in it, if you work hard enough and nobody puts anything over on you. I'll give you the full market price for all you bring in here. We can use all the timber we cut, and to us a lost log brought in is simply lost property recovered. But why not get a permit from the Ocean Mills Company as well? They operate up there and come in that way. You could work both."

"The more the merrier," said I. "I wonder if you could work it for me, Mr. Forbes? I don't know any of them in the concern very well and a word from you would do it."

"Sure I will! Come in this time to-morrow and I'll have both ready for you. Burns of the Ocean Mills will be tickled to death to have somebody straight on the work, for some of them are a crooked lot. You'll have your own troubles. There's a gang operating up the sound right now that would steal the pants off your legs and you would never know it till you felt the gentle breezes blow. They don't worry about licences, or a man's rights, any more than a man can defend with his fists or from the stock of a gun.

"Where do you propose making your headquarters?"

"Where would you advise?" I asked.

"I should think that Cohoe would be the best. The sea comes in there two ways and it is there it gets rough, so that's the likeliest place to work, although it is certainly the most dangerous."

I laughed, for I felt I would not be satisfied until I had run myself into some danger that would take a heap of getting out of.

"Yes,—you laugh," commented Forbes. "Your blood is thick and you don't mind danger, but wait till you're old as me, sonny." He grinned good-naturedly, and I left him with a wave of my hand.

Two days later I boarded the "Seagull"—same old coaster—but my friend, Captain Fullerton, was gone, and Coogan the cook, I learned, was lying somewhere in Flanders.

Once through The Narrows and creeping up that grand, rugged coast, with every breath of air sea-laden and bringing with it a wonderful admixture of western strength and oriental intoxication—it is little wonder that I, Douglas Gordon, just come to man's estate, with strong arms and a fairly clear head, with blood effervescing right to my finger tips and the "Vision Splendid" just ahead of me—it is little wonder I pulled off my battered felt hat and allowed the wind to chase through my hair as I stood at the bow of the boat, with legs spread and gazing away ahead where the sea and sky met in a golden line which was broken only by the everlasting, tree-dotted islands; little wonder I had no care for what might happen and thought only of the glory of the freedom of it all!

Soon the "Seagull" was steaming valiantly up the sound which brought back memories of a summer-time in the seeming long-ago, with pictures of a little boy peddling newspapers and getting into trouble over a dog. Yes!—there, right ahead of me, were the fascinating little fairy isles, still beckoning to be explored. There, away ahead, were the dancing sea and the hoary-headed mountains that defied exploration and pierced the very heavens; there, close by, the Headland and the house at the side of it in which the little girl with the golden-black hair had lived with her mother, the lady who had almost made me cry with the sadness of her singing. Gone both of them, no doubt, and the house probably now inhabited by some retired sea-captain or become the summer cottage of some Vancouver curb-stone broker who handled nothing in the course of his business career but the talk and the profits.

The "Seagull" shrilled her siren as she neared the Headland, rounded that great rock and steamed across the little inner bay and alongside the wharf at Cohoe.

It was the Cohoe of old—evidently never would be different. The old store was at the top of the wharf, the saw-mill was at work at the near end of the bay, the trunk road led up the hill and over to Anvers, with the ribs of the back-bone branching off all the way up.

I scrambled down the gangway on to the wharf and straight up to the store. No one knew me so far as I was aware, and I knew fairly well now what I was after.

The same big man with the bent shoulders was behind the counter, the man who, years ago, had accused me of gaining a reputation in Cohoe in quick time. I tried to remember his name but could not, and the sign-board above his door did not help me—Cohoe General Store.

He looked up and nodded as I entered.

"My name is Gordon," said I. "I intend living here for a time. Do you know of any small place I could rent?"

He thought for a moment. "No—can't say I do, young man. If you wanted a room and board, that might be easy enough. Most folks up here can always squeeze in a boarder."

"But I don't wish to be 'squeezed in' anywhere," I answered with a laugh. "I'd much rather be by myself in a little place, even if it is only a tent—although I prefer a little more privacy than a tent allows. You see, I am likely to be irregular in my meals and liable to be late at night, so boarding wouldn't suit me."

"Goin' to be here for long?"

"Yes!—maybe a year, maybe more!"

"Is it good, honest work you are goin' to be at?"

"Why—sure thing!"

"Well—I do happen to know of something that might suit you. It sets right out by itself and looks clear over the water. It belongs to a man called Dobie—a strange sort of a young-old man, if you get me—who lives here off and on. He's gone back to England on some property business and won't be back for a year or so. He left the key with me, to rent his place only if I hit on somebody who would keep it tidy and take care of things like they was his own. Otherwise—I wasn't to rent it at all." The old man stroked his chin and studied me calmly. "Now—if you was that kind of a man, I might let you have it."

This sounded almost too good to be true and I was afraid to show superlative anxiety.

"Well—if you care to let me have a peep at the house, and the rent is not too high, mister——"

"Davidson is my name."

Davidson! That was it:—it came right back.

"—Mister Davidson,—I'll guarantee it will be decently looked after and no damage allowed to come to it through any action of mine."

"And what do they call ye, did ye say?"

"Gordon!"

"Oh, yes!—you told me before. Well, Mr. Gordon, I kind of like the looks of you. You seem a straightforward sort of young fellow. I'll get the boy to run up and show the place to you. The rent won't hurt you. Mr. Dobie isn't worryin' about the money so much as he is about keeping the place aired and heated and dry. It isn't good for a nest to be without a bird in it."

He stopped suddenly as if he had overlooked something he should have inquired into before going as far as he had done.

"You're not a married man?"

I laughed. "Great Scot, no! And not likely to be! I am absolutely all alone and absolutely on my very own."

He seemed relieved.

"Any little supplies you may require, Mr. Gordon, I'll be glad to sell to you."

"Certainly! My wants will be few, but I'll get all I need from you with pleasure."

The little house that Davidson's boy showed to me was set just to the left of the Anvers highway, on a prominence on the high side of the road that led along and dead-ended in a narrow trail through the forest to the Headland. It overlooked the bay, across to Keats Island, and took in a clear view to the left far up the sound. The view to the right was cut off by the Headland and the thickly-wooded property surrounding it, but I could glimpse the fairy triplet of islands which I still yearned to explore.

This little cottage had a well-fenced piece of ground to it and bore every evidence of having been carefully looked after. The house had a good, shaded veranda and a rain-tight woodshed not too far off. This latter I knew would be very

necessary for the protection of my fuel during the rainy winter season.

Inside, the little house was perfection to my bachelor tastes. All that my simple needs demanded was there, from the kitchen stove and dishes to the bedroom bedding; in fact much more than my needs was there, for the living room had a carpet on the floor, two easy chairs, a cozy-looking, open fireplace and a sectional bookcase well stocked with reading matter. Neat little oil-paintings—evidently the work of the æsthetic Mr. Dobie—were hung around on the walls—all pictures of land and sea under the whip-lash of elemental fury. I dropped my pack on the kitchen floor, grabbed the key from the boy, bundled him outside, turned the key in the back door and hurried down ahead of the surprised youngster to clinch the bargain of fifteen dollars a month before old man Davidson might have time to change his mind about liking the looks of me. I ordered supplies sufficient for a week—for the day was Saturday.

"Have you a rowing boat you would care to sell me, Mr. Davidson?" I asked.

"I have six of them," returned the old man quickly. "I'll sell you any or all of them."

"I require only one, but if I buy may I have the privilege of tying up at your wharf?"

"Sure thing!—most folks hereabouts take the privilege without askin' for it, and growl if any of the boarding of the landing stage happens to get broken and they get their feet wet. It's got to be a sort of right-of-way with most of them. Even my boats have a habit of going out on their own and not comin' back for a week at a time. The Ganns outfit seem to think everything in Cohoe is their own particular property."

Ganns! Like a flash that name came back to me also. That was the name of the boys who had set on me on the Anvers road.

"Who are the Ganns outfit?" I asked innocently.

"Oh,—they kind of boss the Finn settlement. They own the lumber mill, they fish, they farm, they buy and sell and they do a lot of other things I can't just tell you about. If you are going to be here for a year you'll be sure to run into them and run foul of them in some way or another. The old man is bad enough, but since the sons have grown up things are ten times worse, for they are first-class at team work and young Harry Ganns has brains that he might well use to better purpose than he does.

"Cohoe is a great community settlement, Mr. Gordon. 'What's yours is mine and what's mine is my own.' You've got to hang on to your false teeth, unless they happen to be crown-and-bridge work, and then you can't afford to fall asleep with your mouth open."

I followed old Davidson down to the wharf, had a good look at his boats and picked out a sound, roomy one that would do the work I wanted—one that would stand the strain of a gasoline engine later on, if business proved good and funds permitted of the extravagance.

I paid twenty-five dollars for it, and the amount was satisfactory to both Davidson and myself.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

I awoke early next morning, but the sun had already beaten me to it. Its bright rays were pouring through the window of my front room like a cataract of liquid gold. I looked out from the front window across the bay to the islands, and my heart danced for joy. I was free—untrammelled; I ached to be out on the open sea in the glorious salt-laden air—caller air, as old mother Grier quaintly called it—out in the open spaces where I could be alone in a great universe of my very own. I was free to live and breathe, to work and to play, to be myself.

I pushed into my clothes, whistling like a school-boy. I stuffed some bread and cheese into a pocket, picked up a trolling line, and my oars which, on Davidson's advice, I had taken along with me the night before, and I sauntered down to the wharf. I wished, above everything else, to investigate those alluring little islands; I longed also for a swim and I had a notion that fresh fish for a late breakfast would not come amiss.

It could not have been later than six o'clock, and a Sabbath morning. An almost hallowed calm seemed to rest over everything—the sky was a restful, cloudless blue, the water smooth as a frozen lake, while not a sign of life stirred the still sleeping village. It was one of those calm, warm, drowsy mornings one associates with the late spring or early fall on the Pacific coast, when the sea takes on the appearance of liquid glue slowly solidifying. As I dipped my oars, they seemed to leave a hole in the water that took quite a time to fill up. From away across on Keats Island, I heard a voice. It had carried a full two miles' distance as if borne on a telephone wire. The plop of my oars in the water, the rattle of my row-locks, sounded a sacrilege; the splash of a bird's wing in the shallows, at the water-line, seemed a disturbance.

I pulled along the inner bay, close to the shore, to have a look at the carelessly-kept lumber mill whose sawdust pile still smoked and glowed as I had seen it do eight or nine years before. Probably it had never gone out in all that time, for I knew of one at least on Vancouver's waterfront that had been ablaze continuously for almost twice as long as I had lived.

As I drew near to the landing, a tall, athletic-looking man came out from one of the mill sheds and crossed the wharf. He looked my way. I was about to shout a cheery "Good morning!" to him, for I was happy enough to bid good morning to the devil himself, but something in the man's manner held my salutation back. There was an air about him that was, in a vague way, familiar and I felt an immediate, instinctive antagonism spring up inside of me that I had no control over and that I was in no particular way responsible for. The feeling was just there, where it had evidently always been.

He was young, this man; almost as young as myself. He was big, powerful; and in his bared head and bushy, yellow hair, made as handsome a picture as those of the vikings of old. His physical appearance attracted, but his arrogance and swagger repelled me.

He shouted across the span of water. I could not catch his words, so I stopped rowing. He shouted to me again, then I knew him for who he was—my very old friend, Greensweater, Harry Ganns.

"Where d'ye think you're going with that boat, stranger?"

"Where do you suppose?" I answered back, for I felt safe that he had not the faintest recollection of me.

"Better beat it back and leave it where you got it. I want it in half an hour. Take one of the others if you want a boat."

"I guess *you* had better do that," I cried, "because I want this one myself and I happen to have it."

I turned and rowed out across the water, leaving him glooming after me on the mill-front.

How stupid of him! I thought. Not much shrewdness shown there. With the water between him and me, unless he meant to swim for it, he was impotent and simply courted getting the worse of it—at least for the time being—if I decided to counter him.

I came to the immediate conclusion that he worked largely on bluff; that he was a bit of a bully and not used to being opposed; and this conclusion of mine proved not very far of the mark, although I discovered to my cost, several times, that Harry Ganns had a fine courage and determination that were a great inconvenience to anyone who did not see everything his way, yet whose work happened to run for a time on parallel lines with his.

Finally he turned back into the mill and soon afterwards the beauty of the morning obliterated the image of him from my consciousness.

I let out my trolling line, attaching the end of it to my leg. On hugging the rocky shore near the Headland, I felt a strong jerk. I grabbed the line and waited for the tugging to repeat, but it did not; still, there was a sinking and weighty feel on the line that suggested a certain fish to one who had combed the sea as often as I had. I pulled in my line and, sure enough, the ugly red head—all jaws and eyes—of a fine, six-pound rock-cod showed through the water. I swung him aboard with a chuckle, for there is fine meaty eating on the humped back of a red, Pacific coast rock-cod. I would have preferred him to be a fighter of the spring salmon disposition, but he served his purpose well—the providing of a substantial meal.

I rounded the Headland and held straight across the two miles of open water to the triplet of fairy islands.

I could see that the cottage on the promontory, beyond the Headland, was occupied. Smoke was curling upward from the chimney and floating like a magic carpet among the pine tree-tops. I saw some one come to the front veranda and look across the intervening water. I fancied it might be the Music Lady, but the distance was too great for me to distinguish in any way clearly.

Two more fish fell to my spoon-bait on my way across—a three-pound sea-trout who fought like a twelve-pound rainbow and another rock-cod who lay dead on my line like—well, just like a rock-cod, too scared even to back-water.

Ah, the charm of those little islands! I rowed around the first, seeking for a place to beach, for they seemed to shelve sheer down into the sea for the most part. Fathoms deep I could see down—as if peering through bottle-green glass—waving seaweed, starfish, crustacea and darting sea-trout; a world in themselves; while huge rock caverns, gloomy and forbidding, yet alluring as the shafts of golden sunlight flitted across their entrances, bade the man who knows the Pacific seaboard tread charily in his sea sport in case that devil of the ocean, the octopus, might have a home in one of them. Fifty yards away, a seal, fishing for his breakfast, came to the surface and gazed in sleepy-dog fashion as if surprised at my intrusion.

At last I found a convenient haven between some rocks. I ran my boat's nose in and grounded. I sprang ashore, pulled the boat in a bit for safety, then scrambled up. I felt monarch of all I surveyed, and yet the humble and willing servant of every part of it. I hummed to myself from pure delight, then, slipping out of my clothes, I poised on a rock and took a header. I dived and came up twenty yards out. I cavorted, I swam, I somersaulted in the water. It was cold and still had the taste of winter in it, but it only made me exercise the more. I swam forward and back between the islands until I became blown and temporarily tired, for it was the most strenuous swim I had had in years. Finally I got back on to the rocks and dressed leisurely, eating my bread-and-cheese breakfast with the relish that only salt-water-begotten hunger can conjure.

The sun continued to warm the air; a gentle breeze—just a sensation—was blowing. I lay down between two rocks on a soft, mossy bed. I struck a match and set my pipe agoing. Soon clouds of smoke formed above and about me in a dream haze. I think I must have fallen asleep and dreamed, for when I awoke again everything seemed to be as it had been and yet there was a difference—I seemed to have lived a further part of my life. I fancied I was—as I must have been—asleep, when my dream attention was arrested by some one near the water-edge singing a fairy song. That, after all, was the most appropriate thing for a singer to do, for the island was a fairyland, every inch of it; red arbutus dwarfs, small firs and pines, ferns, mossy dells, shelving rocks and great blue-green pools. If fairies did not dwell here then they were indeed poor choosers of a homesite.

It was a girlish voice that came to me and it rose and fell sweetly, coming nearer and nearer all the while. I caught the ripple of the melody and what was more strange, I caught the words and remembered them. Later on, when I had the opportunity to compare them, I found that my dream-memory had not played me false—that the song was a beautiful English one, several generations old.

"Do you wonder where the fairies are
That folks declare have vanished.
They are very near yet very far,
But neither dead nor banished.
They live in the same green world to-day
As in by-gone ages olden.
And you enter in by the ancient way

Through the Ivory Gates and Golden."

The music was delicious, as if it had conjured to life all the elves and fairies of by-gone days and they in turn had called to their assistance a dozen fairy pipers with double-reeded pipes.

The voice stopped, then it came again, this time much nearer and much more clearly.

"'Tis the land of dreams so fair and bright,
That land to many a rover;
But the heart must be pure and the conscience light
That would cross its threshold over.
The worldly man for his joys may yearn
Though pride and pomp embolden.
But never for him do the hinges turn
Of the Ivory Gates and Golden."

I fancied then that the singer came upon me suddenly as I lay and that she stopped abruptly in her singing. I feared to open my eyes, for I was anxious to hear the remainder of her song. But she would have none of it. It seemed to me that I finally looked up at her as she looked down on me. What a surprise I got! It was the little girl with the golden-black hair—just the same little girl I had met years before. Her eyes were flashing and she was calling me "Peter Spy" with a tremendous venom in her voice. I felt her prod at me with her pitchfork until I swooned away.

When I awoke again to consciousness, the prodding with the pitchfork still continued. Then I found that I had moved over in my sleeping against a jutting piece of rock which was pressing into me unmercifully. I sprang up and looked across the water. Three-quarters of the distance between me and the Headland, a boat was being plied. I could see the form of a woman pulling vigorously. Every now and then she would raise her arm and wave a handkerchief to a lady who stood on top of the Headland fluttering a large white object in response, while the excited bark of a dog floated over from the same direction.

Was she the same as I had met so long ago, I wondered? Hardly! I had been asleep, no doubt of that! My dream-girl would no longer be a twelve-year-old child as I had pictured her; she would be a grown-up young lady. It was all just a jumble of memories and fancies awakened in my mind by my coming suddenly into the environment of a bit of my past.

A summer visitor, no doubt, this young lady! Maybe a Vancouver stenographer; maybe a dining-room waitress on a summer vacation!

I had no interest in women-folks anyway. I was young; I loved the open and my own way in things; my position in the world of responsibility was a precarious one: I was just a beachcomber starting in on his apprenticeship. I turned to the west, where the hills on Vancouver Island showed above the distant haze. The sea in between was still, without a ripple on it. Here and there, dotting the surface, were gently-rocking objects, rising and falling on the slow heaving ocean—stray logs, runaways, waiting to be salvaged. What a chance, I thought! And, as I thought, I longed to begin operations.

I strolled down to the strip of beach where my boat was. I was about to push off when I missed something. My two goggle-eyed cod-fish were still there but my three-pound trout had vanished. And something else was there that surprised me. In the stern seat of my boat, held down by a pin stuck through it and into the woodwork, was a dollar-bill. Conundrum! Then there had been some one on the island as I slept. And a woman! for only a woman would pay so handsomely for a fish. A man would have left ten cents, or more probably nothing at all.

I stuffed the money into the inside pocket of my rough shirt and started back for Cohoe.

On the wharf, I met the big man who had accosted me from the mill. Evidently he had been on the lookout for me. That did not bode any good. He watched me step on to the lower landing stage and tie up the boat. I collected the oars, and when I climbed on to the main wharf and came up to him, he stepped up in front of me, but, as I thought, with not quite so much aggression in his looks as when I had drawn alongside below. Maybe he misjudged my size in the boat; possibly he had since then taken a note of my chest—for I pushed it out—and my arms—for they were bared to the shoulders.

"You didn't put that boat back when I told you to," he remarked.

"Didn't I? Now, isn't that too bad!" I returned.

"It certainly is: and you holiday guys want to keep away from other folks' property when you come up here on vacation. We are busy folks and want our things when we want them—see!"

"I am very sorry," I answered contritely, "but, really, I wasn't aware that it was your boat I had."

"It isn't my boat; but I have the use of it when I want it."

"So have I!"

"Not when I happen to want it!"

"Yes—I think so! When you or any one else wants it,—because, you see, it happens to be my boat."

He glared at me as I turned from him, and he gave me the feeling that he was not by any means finished with me, that this, in fact, was merely the first skirmish of a contest; that there was a strong, natural antipathy between us dating probably away back to the time when I pushed him over the wharf; maybe farther back than that—generations, ages back—in some feud never properly settled and consequently still on the lists to be fought to a finish. But I was certain in my mind that he did not connect me with the old wharf incident, if, by any remote chance, he ever recalled it.

I spent the remainder of that Sunday in a leisurely way. I baked my cod-fish and ate them with a wonderful relish. I smoked, I read without stopping that fascinating, romantic story which has been the inspiration of so many other stories—Stevenson's "St. Ives"—then I sat and dreamed before the open fire in my front room till the light of day was pursued by the shadows of the evening, which, for a time, held sway until they, in due course, like political factions, demagogues, empires and pugilists, had to give way to some stronger forces;—I sat till the moon came up and filled my room with its pale, mesmeric light.

I yawned and stretched my legs; I went over to the front window to look out, but that did not satisfy me. The beauty of the night was calling. I opened the door and went out on to the veranda and stood there alone with the silence of the night overshadowing me. Not a light showed in the village save those on the wharf and on the buoy away out by the Headland, yet every house, every tree, every anchored little craft in the bay showed clearly in silhouette.

The moon was shining on the water in a long, shimmering, silvery streak along the far shore by Keats Island, while a complete circular reflection of it—separate altogether from the distant trail of silver—showed in the deep pool of the sea, seemingly almost under me, where the water was so calm and still—as if that vain goddess were unsatisfied with a single reflection of her unmatched beauty and demanded her reproduction in duplicate.

I stood for a long time, bewitched, as I watched the wonderful night picture, then I thought of the busy freight sheds, the piles of sordid but necessary merchandise, the rumbling trucks, the creaking of winches and the jingle of chains; I thought of the glare of artificial lights strung from the rafters, of the coarse jests of rough men, the sweat and grime, the everlasting grind of the mills of gods and men in the chase for money, power, clothing, bread, even life itself; and though I loved most of these if only for the zest of the fight, I was filled with an immeasurable content in my present surroundings and I knew that I had chosen aright in breaking away, if it were merely to take stock of myself by myself, without rush, without coercion, without bias; if merely to fill up and renew from the great life-giving reservoir of God's glorious open. If I could have had my way that night, I would have made it possible, ay compulsory, for all city-bred and city-living men to spend at least one year in every five away from the suicidal shadow-ghosts of goods, fevered finance, exchange, barter and shady trickery, cent-per-cent and legalized robbery; for, after all, a hundred years hence and what matter these material things!

And as the cool breeze came in from the ocean gulf, I swept away all disturbing thoughts and breathed deep of the briny air, then turned into my bachelor lair with never a care in the world, for I knew and felt that good was supreme over all else, that it was good to be alive and here, that life was well worth while.

CHAPTER TWELVE

On my first morning of real business, I started down early for Davidson's store to purchase some stout rope and other materials which I knew I would require to tide me over till the supply I had ordered came up from Vancouver.

The weather was breezy, with a choppy sea, quite a contrast with the day before.

As I came out from my little wooden, front gate, a big, strong-limbed dog of the Airedale breed came cantering in my direction. He was a good-looking animal, with an intelligent head, but I should have paid little heed to him had he not stopped suddenly to sniff at me. He looked up into my face and gave a short, snappy bark that sounded mighty like a recognition, his stump of a tail flagging merrily.

As sure as I was alive—it was my old chum, "Bones."

"Bones!" I shouted, "Bones, my own old Bones, by all that's good and marvelous!"

I felt a strange emotion take possession of me. I knew my eyes were moist as I dropped on my knees beside him and he jumped to me in an almost human joy. I hugged him, and he thrust his tongue out at me as he whimpered his welcome. He had been wonderfully cared for and was still a powerful fellow, keen and sprightly, although I knew he must now be in the neighborhood of nine or ten years of age. What a memory, thought I, for an animal; almost better than that of a human!

At last I rose and started again on my way, but he followed closely, jumping and scampering in his pleasure. He set me thinking, and as soon as I reached Davidson's I made inquiries.

"Mr. Davidson, whose dog is this?" I asked. "He has taken a fancy to me this morning."

The old man took off his spectacles and rubbed them with his handkerchief, readjusted them on his nose and peered at the dog.

"Why,—everybody knows Julius," he answered. "But if that dog has taken a notion to you, it's the first time he's done it with anybody. He's a 'one-man' dog positively, and belongs to Miss Campbell over at the Headland. She has had him for years."

"Oh! And who is Miss Campbell?" I asked in assumed innocence.

"She's a young lady who lives there with her mother. Fine folks, with plenty of everything and lots to travel on when they feel inclined. Shipping folks! Mrs. Campbell likes to live here better than anywhere else. She loves the quiet, and the sea, and the sunshine. We seldom see her in the village. She seems to me to be a lady who has had trouble in her early days. Maybe a love affair! She's a wonderful scholar and musician. But I'm an old gossip this morning and should be holding my tongue regarding my neighbors and my customers."

"And her daughter?" I ventured, ignoring his hint.

"Oh,—she's a madcap and a sobersides running tandem. She's a great young lady, wilful and knows her own powers. She comes and goes—a year here and a year there. She has traveled a lot but seems to like to take turns of companionship with her mother up here in Coho. They are superior folks in every way. Miss Sheila can walk all over any of us here any time she has a mind to."

I ventured nothing more in the way of questions, for I was afraid that Davidson might be suspicious of my interest.

I got my supplies and started for my boat, but I could not rid me of Bones, or Julius as he was now called, although he would never be anything but Bones to me.

I went up the wharf and back to the store, with the dog following.

"Mr. Davidson, would you mind locking this fellow up for a few minutes till I get away. He won't leave me at all and I don't wish to get into trouble for dog-snatching."

Davidson looked queerly, first at Bones and then at me, but the puzzle was too much for him. Between us, we enticed the dog into a shed, drew the door on him, and I started off.

I was hugging the shore and had rounded the Headland, some twenty minutes later, when I heard a bark from the direction of the rocks, and there was Bones again, darting about excitedly as if wondering if he could make the fifty-yards jump from the rocks to my boat. Evidently Davidson had released him immediately on my departure and the dog had raced all the way back along the road and through the forest-land. And now, nothing daunted, he sprang—or rather dived, for he had the knack of it as good as any man—into the water and made for me with great speed. He had almost reached me when I heard a lady's voice call "Julius!" I hoped that I might catch a glimpse of the owner of that voice, but she did not appear. I tried to make the dog understand, and I made a half-hearted attempt to drive him off, but he persisted so that I had not the callousness to push at him with my oar. As he swam alongside, I hauled him aboard by the collar.

And all day long he stayed with me, happy and contented, going to sleep sometimes and yelping in a distant, ventriloquial kind of way, as if dreaming of his by-gone adventures in and about his garbage-can birthplace in Canton alley in Vancouver's Chinatown; at other times all alert and excited as I harnessed one log, and another, and still another, in the course of a long, hard, arduous day on the choppy water. It was new work to me, although it was really old play, for in my bared feet I could tread and roll a log with any man or boy in a fair water. Why, I had almost been born to it!

It set me thinking of Cooney Duff of my juvenile days and I wondered if he, in the capacity of sleeping-car porter on the C.P.R., making down berths and hooking them up again, cleaning boots, obsequiously brushing car-dust from disgruntled passengers, answering tom-fool questions of old ladies and carrying hand-baggage at twenty-five cents a time; it set me thinking, I say, if he was as happy in his sphere as I was in the glorious open places.

I found it brutal work in a row-boat towing a thirty-five foot log containing about one thousand feet of lumber, and I longed for a gasoline engine. But each log I knew meant something like sixteen dollars, at low estimate, in Vancouver, and three times sixteen for my first day's work got me figuring right there how long it would be before I would have my first boom ready and how soon afterwards I would be able to retire a very prince of beachcombers.

Until I could arrange with some one for permission to beach my logs somewhere inside the inner bay and as near as possible to my home, I decided to cache any I got in a little sandy stretch I discovered at the end of a long lagoon running into one of the farthest islands, about a mile from the Triplets, as I now dubbed the fairy isles, and about the same distance from the offside of Keats Island. This lagoon could hardly be seen from the sea as its entrance was a narrow neck of navigable water right between two great rocks and on the far side, unfrequented by either coasting steamers or by fishermen. Picnickers were likely to be my only visitors and these would be few and far between, as, on account of the three miles or so of a row each way, they were more likely to choose holiday grounds nearer to Cohoe. Another reason for my choice of this island was its greater proximity to my field of operations in the open straits.

I immediately dubbed my hiding place the Isle of the Lost Lagoon and, strange to say, that was the very name by which it was known to the old-timers.

I had two logs safely harbored by two o'clock in the afternoon. Then Bones and I had a swim together, followed by a dinner of tea, fresh fish, bread and butter and a hunk of cheese, all of which would have charmed the palate of a Roman epicure.

I would have been contented to call this a day's work, but the third log was bobbing so tantalizingly in the offing that I hated to leave it to the mercy of another twenty-four hours or so of wind and tide. I asked Bones about it and he barked, so I decided to take his advice and go after it. It proved to be farther away than I had anticipated; besides, it was such a giant for size that it had begun to get dark, with the beacon-lights showing on the buoy at the Headland and on Cohoe wharf, when I started to row for home.

Of course, I would have known again, anywhere, these my first three logs. What chesty, apprentice beachcomber would not? Two of them were fir and one was hemlock; two bore the Northern Pacific Lumber Company's brand, while the third had belonged to the Ocean Mills, so that they represented good money to me. I know, of course, that to keep within the law, I dared not put any other brands or marks on the logs, but on the advice of Hugh Forbes I had had a quantity of little, metal, triangular discs made, with my name stamped on them, "Douglas Gordon," which could easily be driven into the logs at a certain point in order to help in identifying them again at any later period before they happened to get sawed up. I drove one of these into each log—not that I anticipated any trouble, for I felt absolutely alone in my venture and monarch of all the log-fishing waters I surveyed, but I had the discs for the purpose and I felt I should make use of them.

By the time I got within hail of the Headland it was quite dark and I was gloriously tired, almost drunk with weariness. I ran my boat alongside the narrow slip on Campbell's beach facing the open sea and ordered Bones to run home like a good dog. But Bones positively declined to be like a good dog. He had bridged the span of years and he could see no just reason for recrossing. I got him on to the landing stage and pushed off, but he simply jumped into the water and came after me. I could see that there was nothing for it but for me to go ashore with him and tie him up to some tree in front of the Campbell's dwelling where his owner would find him in the morning. So I put back and started with him up the steep incline.

When I reached the grassy plateau, I could see the house was radiantly lighted up and I could hear that for which my soul seemed ever to hunger—music; rich, luxurious, lavish, intoxicating. I cautioned the dog, drew near and listened in an ecstasy, forgetting all about my tired muscles and my bodily hunger.

The music was produced from a combination of instruments I had never heard before, a piano and a wire-stringed dulcimer which was played by small wooden hammers in a race of harmonies that I could not have imagined possible.

A lady, with snowy-white hair, tall, graceful, beautiful, but intensely sad-looking—the same lady I had listened to when a little fellow—was at the piano. A smile was playing about her mouth and in spite of her wistful expression she seemed quietly and peacefully happy. Farther over, a young lady whom I recognized at a glance—Sheila Gordon Campbell—glorified from a tom-boy to a rhapsody of oriental olive-and-pink, black, gold, creamy-white and violet, but still with the tom-boy peeping through—was running her strumming dulcimer hammers over the wires of her instrument, until the very air seemed electrified with the old-time "Overture from William Tell."

Olive-and-pink, I say!—yes!—for these only describe her delicate complexion. Black-and-gold!—yes!—no other color combination could depict the rippling beauty of her hair under the soft light from the hanging lamp above her head. Creamy-white!—her teeth shone as she laughed and bandied words with her mother all the time she played. Violet!—as a boy I had noticed that that was the color of her eyes both in pleasure and in anger, and I knew that nature always blends her colors, so that violet they must still be.

I stood fearlessly and brazenly, and listened, forgetful of where I was and unthinking of the privacy into which I had broken, for my soul was filling up with this thing for which it so craved. But the music stopped at last and the young lady jumped over to her mother and hugged her boisterously. Then I came to myself. Peter Spy! Would I ever become undeserving of that name she had once given me? I blushed for shame of it.

I thrust a piece of stout cord through the dog's collar, tied him securely to a fir tree and hurried down the way I had come.

When Bones tumbled to my trick—and, believe me, it did not take him many seconds—he barked wildly, making me curse him for his betrayal.

I rushed down the boarded footway, stumbling and clattering. I sprang into my boat, feeling as guilty as a thief, and I had barely got the darkness between me and the shore-line when I saw swinging lights come down the pathway to the beach and I heard the voices of women as well as the excited jabbering of a Chinaman and the renewed barking of the dog. But I kept on, pulling vigorously until I rounded the Headland, when the voices cut clean away as if a door had suddenly been shut on them.

When I reached the wharf at Cohoe I found the store closed, but Davidson was at work inside. I knocked, and he came round the counter to let me in.

I had decided to inform him of my business in Cohoe—for it would soon be common property anyway—and, if possible, get his assistance in procuring permission for me to beach my logs somewhere adjacent. He took me into his tidily-kept kitchen, with its highly polished, nickel-plated stove and its scoured table by the side of which his wife, a quaint, dainty, lovable, little creature, was knitting and reading at the same time. I paid my respects to her, as it was the first time I had met her, and then I got to business with the old fellow. I told him all that was necessary and no more, and when I finished he shook his head.

"You're huntin' trouble, and I would fain tell you more than my discretion advises me to. But you will have to keep your eyes skinned, my boy, day and night, if you ever hope to get a boom together and safely away from here. I warn you this much—have no dealings with the Ganns crowd, directly or indirectly. If you do, they'll skin you to the bone, and crack you over the head as fast as look at you. As for that mill they have, they would put their dead grandmother into it if they

thought she would saw up into boards.

"I'm sick and harassed to death. They come in here and bully and badger. They say mean things about me in my wife's hearing, when I am out. They tell me to my face that I'm a profiteer and a robber—me that came in here fifteen years ago with thirty thousand dollars for the purpose of doing a legitimate little business—enough to keep me occupied. Now, what have I got?—this place, the wharf, some village property worth little or nothing, two thousand dollars in cash in the bank and fifteen thousand dollars in book debts, over ten thousand of it owing by that outfit and their parasites, and no chance of ever getting a penny of it back again."

Mrs. Davidson looked up, sighed, then went on again with her work.

"They have talked robber and profiteer to me and to everybody else for so long that even the respectable neighbors about the town have got to believing it too, although they must know deep down in their conscience that it is all lies and that I have done more than any of them for the good of this little place."

"But why can't you get your money out of them?" I asked. "Do you ever try to get it?"

"Try?—of course I try. I ask them now and again, but they put me off with a payment of ten dollars on account and then order twenty dollars worth more credit on top of it. I'm gettin' too old to be continually fighting and squabbling.

"But—that is all *my* trouble, my boy, not yours. Maybe I'll tell you more another time, but just now you forget what I've said.

"Now, about gettin' a place for your logs! Do you know the Campbell people over on the Headland? I needn't ask you that silly question, though. You can't know them, being a new-comer. Mrs. Campbell owns all the land from fifty yards beyond the saw-mill right over. Her rights include the shore, for she owned the property many years before the law came into force retaining shore rights for the government.

"Mrs. Campbell is a splendid woman in every way. She does what she can for everybody, and many a time she does it when she knows she is being imposed on, but she would rather be imposed on than miss a possible chance of doing some good. I'm quite sure she wouldn't mind you using part of the inner bay shore to set your proposed boom out. If you like, I'll ask her to-morrow, for I have to run over to see her about some outhouses she wants me to figure on for material."

"If you don't mind, Mr. Davidson," I said. "It certainly would be a great obligation to me—that place is so convenient and suitable and my being there should not interfere with anything else."

Davidson smiled grimly. "Convenient and suitable, yes!—but kind of too near the wolves' lair for your comfort."

I laughed. "Oh, I'm not scared," I remarked.

"No—I know! And probably if I was as young as you are, and as strong, I wouldn't be either. You're not scared, and that's what worries me a bit. But if I told you to pack up and go elsewhere, you wouldn't do it, so I'm not goin' to waste good advice and valuable breath on heedless youth."

I thanked him and was rising to go when the front door was pushed open and there came a sound of heavy footsteps in the shop. Davidson left me to attend.

A gruff voice sounded. "Say, Davidson,—what rotten kind of darned stuff's that you're sellin'?"

The man who spoke threw a bottle on the table.

"You call that good pickle? It's putrid, an' you rob me thirty-five cents for it. Give me another, an' be good an' quick about it. I ain't got no time to waste."

I was partly in the shadows in the kitchen, but I craned my neck to see what was going on.

The man who was complaining was a veritable monster, reminding me of the stories I had read of the huge ogres in Jack the Giant Killer. He must have stood six feet four inches. He was as big and as broad as the side of a small barn, and I am sure he weighed well over two hundred and fifty pounds. His face was heavily bearded and tanned to a dusky brown. It was not an ugly face by any means, and one could trace cleverness there, as well as health—two virtues which are

always to an extent beautifiers.

I sensed rather than gathered from the conversation that this was the much discussed Hans Ganns, the Finn boss of the plateau.

Davidson picked up the bottle, smelt it and examined its contents.

"Pretty poor stuff, Ganns!" he remarked.

"Yes!—pretty poor dope. Hurry up,—give me some good pickle."

Davidson examined the label.

"I didn't sell you this, Ganns," he exclaimed.

"Sure you did!"

"No, sir! You got this at Larsen's down at Blackwater. He stocks this brand. I don't, and never did."

The big man leant over the counter.

"You're not goin' to change it, huh?"

Davidson plucked up courage, and though his voice broke with suppressed excitement, he said what he wanted to say.

"No,—I won't change it. I'm sick and tired of your complaints and your whining. This is the last straw. There's nothing ever right with what you get here—after you've eaten half of it or all of it but a sample—but I notice you always keep comin' back. I won't change another man's goods for you or anyone else; what's more, it's time you were payin' for what you have had already. You have the whole settlement poisoned against payin' their debts."

The big man looked ferocious.

"Time I was payin', eh? You ought to be pretty glad I buy from you, for where Hans Ganns buys everybody else buys that's friends with him, see! In one day, I could call off every man on the plateau and he never buy another nickel of stuff from you, and close you up—just like that!"

He grabbed a can of milk from the counter and, under Davidson's nose, he squeezed it in one of his huge hands, crushing it inward and finally bursting it and spilling the contents over the counter.

"Pay you,—bah! I pay you when I'm good an' ready—an' that never. I get everybody else to do the same. You go plumb broke, an' a mighty good job too—you—you thief."

The old man Davidson sprang alert as if he had been struck across the face. He pulled off his glasses and ran round the counter.

The little old lady in the corner of the kitchen by the table rose quickly in alarm, but I cautioned to her that it was all right, although, personally, I did not feel that way about it.

"Don't you dare to call me a thief, you miserable rascal. Get out of this store and get out quick! Don't show your face in here again unless it's to pay your debt, or I'll—I'll put a gun under your ribs."

The big Finn just grinned. He could have eaten Davidson whole. I felt sure I was about to share in the sound drubbing that was going to be served up, but the coolness, after all, of Ganns amazed me. He just laughed, pushed Davidson aside and lunged out of the store.

The old man locked the door and came back to the kitchen. He was trembling and somewhat sick at heart now that the crisis was past.

I remained with the old folks for quite a time, trying to cheer them a little and to take their minds off the unpleasantness that had happened. The good lady cooked supper for us and joined with me in an endeavor to make her husband forget his troubles, but these were evidently not so easily forgotten.

Davidson let me into the secret of most of them and expressed his heart's weariness. His big desire now seemed to be to realize, if only in part, his questionable assets and to retire to some place of quiet and rest.

He told me in the course of his stories, of the terrible strength of Hans Ganns in his prime; how he had a hobby for stock-raising and for years had kept the finest bull in the district; how this bull had attacked his son Harry one day and Hans had rushed in on it, empty-handed, had been knocked down by it, but finally had beaten it back and into complete subjection with his bare fists delivered with smashing force again and again on the brute's nose.

And Davidson told me of his own fight in the district to get even a plot of land sufficient for a graveyard, as he had been horrified to find little graves, and big graves too, in the back and front gardens of the settlers, where one almost stumbled over them; where a mother, ever at home, never had the chance to forget, so near were these reminders of lost loved ones to her daily tasks.

He told me of the callousness of some of the foreign settlers; how, during a recent epidemic, the patient, hard-working slave, rather than wife, of Hans Ganns had died in harness and how father and sons had gone into a field close by, had dug a hole in the wet earth and had dropped wife and mother into this—like a sack of rotted potatoes—without so much as a box covering and with never a prayer or a sob—with only a self-pitying regret that things might not be so comfortable at home for a while until the twelve-year-old daughter and sister could be cuffed and bullied into doing things their way.

These and many other things Davidson told me; some stories of the patient, noble and persevering heroes and heroines who carved homes and courted happiness out of the almost impossible, some stories of gallant deeds and noble sacrifices; also stories that would be unprintable as well as unbelievable:—all the common, little, life-history of every small western pioneer settlement.

It was a realm of realism in an environment of romance, and so closely at times were realism and romance interwoven that it was hard, ay impossible, to distinguish between the two; and where the realism seemed the most sordid it was generally there that romance popped up its elevating and cheering countenance.

I consulted Davidson about his overdue accounts, for I fancied that there at least I might be able to help him.

Having lost in an action at law in his early days, he had allowed to grow up within him a strong antipathy to lawyers, law courts and all the legal machinery pertaining thereto. But I almost convinced him before I left that night that it would pay him a hundred times over to engage a young lawyer friend of mine from Vancouver, who was about to start in on his own and who, I knew, could clean up Davidson's ledgers or most of their pages, so quickly that it would cause the old man to gasp for breath—the more quickly in view of the fact that Davidson's desire now was to get what he could of what was owing to him and to retire from it all, with no deep anxiety regarding future business.

He promised to think it over for a day, which I gathered meant, talk it over with his good lady, after which he would give me their verdict. But one thing he did do then and there. There was an old Chinese settlement at Blackwater, consisting of Chinese laundrymen, Chinese market-gardeners, cooks in the surrounding logging camps and workers in the local salmon cannery. Most of them had been there for certain seasons every year for years. It astonished me when Davidson told me they also had acquired the "owing" habit and that certain of them were on his books to the total extent of six hundred dollars—it astonished me, I say,—for the average Chinaman in the West is considered "good pay," is much afraid of the white man's law and is generally willing to do anything in his power to preserve a quiet life.

"Mr. Davidson," said I, "if you are willing to give me a free hand for a week, I think I can get the most of that six hundred dollars for you, and without going to law either."

The old fellow shook his head in doubt. "Then why not do the same with the others?" he asked, logically enough.

"I couldn't do that. The others know English too well and they know the working of the law. The Chinaman does not and is always afraid of what he doesn't understand. My policy with him would be one of sheer bluff. Will you let me have a go at it?"

"Sure! And I'll give you thirty per-cent on all that comes in."

"No!—a lawyer would charge you only ten per-cent on that stuff. Ten per-cent will be good enough pay for me."

"All right! You go to it," he agreed.

And when I left that night, I knew he felt better and cheerier by a long way than he had done an hour or two earlier.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

For a few days after my talk with Davidson the weather proved favorable to my logging operations and, while I did not have the luck every day that I had on my first time out, I was still more than successful and more than satisfied.

My captured logs were piling up in the little natural harbor on the far-off Isle of the Lost Lagoon—so much so that I knew I should soon have to start in to bring them over to the inner bay at Cohoe.

William Davidson had got permission for me from the lady of the Headland to set out my boom in front of her beach, at the top of the bay beyond Ganns' saw-mill, so that my difficulties in this respect were behind me.

Bones the dog haunted me like a ghost. Wherever I went, there he seemed to be in anticipation, or to arrive immediately thereafter, as if he had received a wireless communication out of the ether of my whereabouts. I threatened him, I cajoled him, I threw stones and tufts at him—for he was not my dog any more. I had resigned all rights in him when I had put him in the hands of the indignant little lady on the wharf years before. But he accepted my cuffs and rebuffs as if I were conferring an honor on him. His meekness would then make me relent and I would allow him to accompany me, thus undoing in a moment all the work of estrangement I had previously put in.

I kept well away from Campbell's property around the Headland, although I was sorely tempted of a night, when work was done and I was well fed, when the moon was up and a pleasant, sad loneliness crept over me, to row across, or better still, to saunter along the soft trail that led through the forest beyond their home at the side of the Headland, just on the odd chance that I might again hear some of the delightful music upon which I had feasted that night I came so near to being discovered.

But I refrained, for I was by nature inclined to keep within myself, to furnish my own entertainment and to be contented with my thoughts as company. As a result of this, I did not have the good fortune—or, as I might have thought at that time, the disturbing misfortune—of meeting Sheila Gordon Campbell face to face.

Then a rainy, stormy morning came along;—the kind of rain that batters on the window panes and gives the one inside a feeling of comfort as he looks out;—when the sea fairly careened into the gulf in a white froth of rising fury, with a gale blowing on-shore that sent the lashing spray in an effervescing shower over any who dared along the shore-road.

"No kind of a day for log-hunting," I soliloquized, "but a real good morning to test out my little plan of getting in some of that money owing to Davidson by the Chinamen of Blackwater."

I threw on an oilskin coat and went down to the store, got a complete list of his oriental debtors from the old man, sat down at his desk and wrote for a while, then started out along the shore-road on my two-mile tramp, enjoying every step of the way, as the rain, mixed with salt spray from the sea, spattered over my oilskins and ran in streams from my face, which positively glowed with the freshness of it.

It was on that morning and in these circumstances that I felt as if some old recollection—ages and ages ago—reawakened within me. The salt air, the spray and the cold glow of it, all made me think I had lived this little part before. It resurrected something of the viking, the sailor-man, the dweller for ages in the open by the strong, salt seas, the high winds, the drenching fresh rains, mountains, floods, buffeting—and the thrilling glory of winning through. And for the moment it set me longing with almost a stomach-hunger for a knowledge of the forebears from whom I had sprung and of whom I really knew nothing. For after all, it would have been good to have known of a father, strong, noble, honorable, and of a mother, loving, tender, sweet and—motherly. Often in my thoughtful moments I had visions of what they had been and never at any time, I am happy to say, had the picture been blurred by a fear that they were other than I could be inordinately proud of.

Busy with my thoughts, I reached Blackwater almost before I was aware of it. I walked straight to the Chinese quarters and found as I had conjectured that many of the residents were at home on account of the weather.

I made for the largest rooming house in the strangely-smelling little street and started at once to tack up, with push pins at each corner, a square, blue notice that could not be overlooked. In fact, I had intended leaving nothing to chance in this respect; but I need not have feared, for no sooner had I taken that paper out of my pocket, when half a dozen gaping orientals, with their hands up their sleeves and their shoulders hunched because of the rain, were shuffling round me in

their soft slippers.

I stood back and surveyed my handiwork. It read well, I thought:

WHEREAS

Man Hung,
Sing Sing,
Lam Chop,
Lap Wing,
Chew Gum,
Laim Duc,
Wun Lung,
Kee Hoy,
See Saw,
Pee Bo,
Ling Cod,
Sam Suey,

Mee Yeow and others, have purchased merchandise from William Davidson, proprietor of the Cohoe General Store, AND WHEREAS the aforementioned have not paid for such merchandise, be it known, HEREBY, HERETOFORE, HEREOF, HEREFROM and HEREAFTER BY THESE PRESENTS by the Grace of Goodness and Mercy, the Beauty of Cleopatra and the Queen of Sheba; the Wickedness of Charles Peace the Burglar; and the humor of Harry Lauder; the Chicken Oath and the Ordeal of the Burnt Paper,—that unless all and every debt is paid in full within twenty-four hours, each and every Chinaman, individually and collectively, in and out of Blackwater, will be jailed and strung up by the thumbs until his toe-nails drop off.

Signed, Sealed and Delivered in the present year of our Lord.

Peter Pumpkin,

Lord High Executioner.

As I stood back with a determined look on my face and my arms folded, a Chinaman came up close to me—Lam Chop, Chew Gum or Ling Cod, I do not now remember which, but he was evidently a leader among them. He looked at me querulously, then at the notice.

"You savvy him blue-paper?" I asked.

"Ya!—I hip savvy—I come Vancouva. Blue-paper—policeman—plison! What him say—huh?"

The others gathered round anxiously, while, by some inexplicable method of their own, the news seemed to have percolated throughout the entire community and the crowd increased every moment.

"That paper say,—'Man Hung, Wun Lung ...' (I repeated the entire list) 'buy and no pay Cohoe store.'

"See that!"

I displayed an automobile-driver's license, several years back-dated, which I had pinned inside my jacket.

Those nearest to me took a hasty look at it.

"You policeman—sheliff, huh?" asked Lam Chop.

"Ya!—I policeman," I returned in my best pigeon-English. "If everybody no pay to-day, I come back and take every Chinaman to Vancouver and we string him up by thumbs till he pay—see!"

They were immediately impressed and tremendously overawed. Some of them shuffled off very hurriedly, muttering over the main points of what I had said to them.

"If I pay and other Chinamen no pay," asked Lam Chop in regular sea-lawyer fashion, "me no go plison—huh?"

"Ya!—you go, everybody go if every Chinaman no pay up."

Lam Chop dived into his clothing. "I pay you twenty-five dolla now. You take him?"

Others followed suit, proffering payment on account.

"No,—I no take'm," I said. "You all go pay Missee Davidson, Cohoe store. If no all pay, I come back to-morrow with ten more policemen—see!"

My work done, I strode off. But hard as I traveled for Cohoe, I could not get more than three hundred yards ahead of the first Chinaman, while behind him in Indian file, jog-trot, feet skiff-skiffing, came an endless stream of them, their cotton clothing soaked and bedraggled in the wind-blown rain and spray; a miserable, anxious-looking train of humanity, all infected by a suddenly acquired virtue of honesty.

I stood by the wharf and watched them file into the store before the astonished Davidson, until the place became overcrowded and a number stood outside waiting their turn.

I went up home and cooked my dinner. I wrote a letter to Sam, asking him to pick up a good, second-hand, gasoline engine for my boat and to send it up to me as soon as possible. I swept out my kitchen floor and tidied up a bit; I read for an hour, comfortable in an easy chair by the open fire, then, late on in the afternoon, I strolled down to Davidson's.

The place smelled strangely of a Chinese laundry.

When Davidson caught sight of me his face became a study.

"Great Scot, man!—come in and tell me how you did it. I've been doing nothing but take in money all afternoon. I haven't a Chinese debt left on my books. Six hundred and fifty dollars and twenty-seven cents I've taken. They've paid for two dead Chinamen that I know of and for half a dozen that haven't been here for two or three years. These two just comin' in again have been here four times, insisting that they owe me sixteen dollars and twenty-four dollars and thirty cents respectively, but I haven't a note or a scrap of either. I've refused to take their money and they refuse to go back as the other Chinamen won't let them into Blackwater until they get rid of their money. I want my own but I can't take money that doesn't belong to me—danged if I can!"

"Take it," said I, grinning. "I guess their system of bookkeeping is better than yours. It will help to pay that ten per-cent commission you owe me."

Davidson took the money reluctantly, and the Chinamen broke into smiles, mightily relieved when they pocketed their receipts.

"But lad,—tell me how you did it?"

"Ask no questions," I replied. "Be thankful that you have your money."

"Now, tell me—am I to write to my friend in Vancouver to come up and clean up the balance on your books?"

"Wait till I ask Jen," he said. He went into the kitchen and returned with relief showing on his old, wrinkled face.

"Jen says, 'Yes!'"

"And what do you say?"

"The same as Jen!"

"Good!"

And there and then I scribbled a note to my old school-boy acquaintance, Rob Simpson, asking him to take a run up. I posted this letter, along with my epistle to Sam, then I made the trip once more to Blackwater, this time to pull down and destroy that spurious sheriff's warrant before some of Davidson's questionable friends got their eyes and fingers on it.

There was a funereal quiet in the Chinese quarter when I put in an appearance, and anxious faces, peering through dirty

cob-webby windows and almost-closed doors, were the only signs of interest my presence brought forth as I tore down the notice.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The rain ceased at last and the clouds in the gulf gradually disintegrated. Soon the sun burst through, watery at first but later with such vim and brilliance that it was hard to realize that it had been wet all day.

I had just got home and settled down to a smoke and a glimpse at the previous day's Vancouver newspaper in front of that delightful little open-fireplace of mine where some fine dry cedar and fir logs were blazing cheerily, when something pushed against my front door. The catch gave way and the door flew open.

In sprang Bones, as usual delighted as a kitten, for I had succeeded in evading him for a day or two and no doubt he thought he had lost me. I rose and reclosed the door. A few seconds later, as he and I were trying to explain to each other what had happened since last we met, I heard the sound of footsteps coming up on to my front veranda. Whoever was there seemed to stand at the door irresolutely.

I rose to see to whom I was indebted for a visit.

I was very much taken aback and so apparently off guard that I must have appeared something of an idiot before the fairly tall, dark, olive-complexioned young lady who had called.

I said nothing, for I had nothing to say. I could not have said anything at that precise moment in any case, without a lead from her. She was very nice, very solemn, extremely self-possessed and delightfully ladylike, with a wistful plaintiveness in her face that seemed to invite confidence and protection, yet held aloof and dignified in no uncertain way.

How was she dressed? I have no idea! But I do know that the picture she presented was as refreshing as a summer breeze and it set me wondering regarding my own appearance.

"I believe you are Mr. Gordon."

"I—I believe so! Ye—yes!—my name is Gordon."

"For some reason which I cannot explain, my dog, Julius, has taken rather a fancy to you."

"Ah!" thought I with a pang, "she does not see any points in me that even a dog might take a fancy to."

"Yes!" I smiled, rather inanely. "He and I have become quite tillicums—you know, chummy. But won't you come in?" I continued after a pause, overcome with a sudden wave of hospitality yet embarrassed as to the correct procedure in such circumstances.

"No,—I think not!" she answered very soberly. "In fact, I should not have intruded this far only my dog has never behaved in such a manner before and I thought possibly if I asked you to, you would discourage him as much as possible."

"Why, certainly! In fact, I *have* tried to discourage him but he pays no heed. That must be the Irish in him. But I shall adopt stronger measures if you say so."

She smiled with her eyes. They were very wonderful eyes, I thought—soft blue-violet eyes. "That depends on what measures you have already adopted, Mr. Gordon."

"Well—I have spoken rudely to him—I've shooed him off. Sometimes I have eaten an entire meal through without so much as giving him a bite, but it has no effect on him. It really seemed to hurt me much more than it hurt him."

She smiled again, but immediately thereafter grew serious, as if she had suddenly remembered that she should not enter into flippant conversation with a stranger at a stranger's door.

I congratulated myself inwardly that, so far, she had not recognized in me the "Peter Spy" of old.

"I live by the Headland," she explained. "I am Miss Campbell. I have come to rely on my dog's companionship when I walk home through the forest of an evening."

"But surely there is little to be afraid of between here and the Headland," I remarked. "Bear don't come so far down, do they?"

"Why, yes! Bear and cougar both, but I am not afraid of quadrupeds. Two-legged animals are sometimes a source of greater annoyance."

Now what is she driving at, I wondered. She caught the question in my look.

"I would not explain, for I have not done so to anyone, but you are a stranger here and won't mind, besides you may understand the better why it is I wish to have my dog to myself.

"I have suffered annoyance several times from a young man in the district who insists on foisting his companionship on me when he sees me traveling alone. My mother is of a nervous temperament and I have not said a word to her of this in case it might worry her—and I cannot always have the maid with me, nor do I always wish to go home across the bay in the rowing boat."

I could see the young lady was impatient to end the conversation.

"I am very sorry, Miss Campbell, if I have diverted the affections of your canine escort and I can only say that he displays exceedingly poor taste. He at least is no gallant.

"Now, if you peep in here, you will see him asleep on the rug by the fire."

She put her head inside the doorway in feminine curiosity and I fancied that her eyes took in more than the snoozing dog.

"Here, Bones, here!" I shouted.

The dog sprang up and came to us at once.

The young lady gasped and her eyes opened wide in astonishment. For the moment I could not, for the life of me, understand what I had said or done.

She drew herself up with tremendous dignity and coolness. "Excuse me, Mr. Gordon, but what name was that you called to my dog?"

I blushed in my confusion. I had put my foot in it irretrievably.

"Why,—why,—Julius!" I stammered.

"It did not reach me like that. It sounded to me like 'Bones,' and what is more to the point the rascal seemed to understand."

"Oh, Bones! Yes!—" I laughed rather ruefully. "Just a name!"

"Just a name!" she repeated, her eyebrows going up querulously. "A bone by any other name would taste as sweet, to a dog."

"I give the name to all dogs," I lied. "Comes sort of natural! Dogs somehow suggest bones to me; they love bones so much. Now, Bones—Julius—has got used to the name from me. I had to call him something, not knowing his name was Julius."

"Quite so!" Her tone was very non-committal.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Gordon! I'll wish you good afternoon. Come, Julius!"

She moved toward the veranda steps.

The evening was fine, with the dusk just drawing over. There was a tang in the air and an imp inside of me that refused to be downed.

"May I act as your escort to the Headland, Miss Campbell?"

"I have a sufficient escort in Julius, thank you."

"But Julius doesn't seem to be aware of it," said I with a grin, for that ill-mannered creature was now lying at my feet, his head along his fore-paws, one eye shut and the other blinking up at me.

"Come, Julius!" she said again.

Julius blinked again, but did not budge.

"Julius, you rascal,—don't you hear me?"

"Better accept both of us this time. We are a great combination."

For a moment I felt sure I had offended her by my insistence, and I know full sure that she was on the point of leaving both Julius and me in high dudgeon, but then—and I'll always love her for it, for it might have been so different had she gone alone then—she looked at me, into me, through me, and she seemed satisfied with the scrutiny, for she smiled as only little, will-o'-the-wisp Sheila could.

"All right! In the circumstances I accept your tandem-escort."

I picked up my hat and was by her side in a second, my blood atingle in a way that was new to me, for my way and the way of women—young women—had ever been wide apart.

I said no word to the dog, but he was up and after us as if thoroughly well pleased.

We were beyond the general road, through the gateway and on to the trail leading through the forest-lands before either of us spoke.

"Miss Campbell," I ventured at last, "when you granted me permission to come with you, why did you say, 'In the circumstances?'"

"Did I say that?"

"Yes!"

"I must have said that because, Mr. Gordon, I know you for who you are."

For all the quiet, casual way she said it, I thought I could catch mischief in her tone, and when I looked into those eyes of hers, my surmise got confirmation—they contained a gaiety bordering on bubbling exuberance.

"You are——"

"Peter Spy," I put in, looking the other way.

"No! You are——"

"The little coward who would rather miss a dinner than face a little miss and her mother."

She ignored my interruption.

She started again. "You are——"

"One of the original owners of Julius, alias Bones."

"Mr. Gordon, it is very bad manners to cut into a lady's remarks. You are—now be quiet please!—you are Douglas of long ago."

She stopped and turned to me with a solemn face and a softness in her eyes. The tint of red roses was playing hide-and-seek on her cheeks. She held out her hand.

"I am so very, very glad to meet you after all these years. It is meeting an old friend again. It was for a little time only and we were such foolish kiddies then, but I have often remembered. Julius—Bones—has brought back that silly day many a time."

I could have hugged her for her show of sincere pleasure. *Could have*, but, of course, didn't, for I knew intuitively that had I dared such a liberty it would have been the end of something that was just coming to life in me.

And all I said in answer was, "Yes! and wasn't I the unconscionable little ass?"

She laughed. "I have often thought you were."

That sobered me down a bit. A man may consider himself somewhat of an ass at times, but he hates to think other people have discovered his secret.

"You have grown so big and strong in the interval that I do not think I would have known you again; and yet, somehow, at your door I did not seem to feel that we were strangers exactly."

"You didn't like me a bit that day," I ventured.

"And I am not sure that time has improved the liking in any way," she returned, "for you have acquired a glib tongue and glib tongues should be distinctly ladies' property. It is too much to have bodily strength and a sharp repartee as well."

I thought it desirable to change the subject at this point.

"Why on earth did you saddle that poor dog on ahead with the name of Julius?"

"Because one doesn't generally call a person or even an animal by the name of the food he likes best."

I laughed, and she looked at me as if a little uncertain of my sanity.

"Of course, what you say explains why you changed his name from Bones, but it doesn't explain the Julius."

"Well, Julius was the name of a very great Emperor and I have always considered my dog quite an emperor among dogs."

We passed on slowly through the closely-grown forest-lands, along the trail, soft and a little dank with the fallen, dead leaves of countless generations, banked on each side by giant ferns and long creepers which entwined about the rotted timber lying on the ground in Nature's endeavor to make even the decayed appear beautiful.

Miss Campbell asked me questions and I told her of some of the things that had happened to me in the intervening years, but always in that guarded, reserved way of young folks who have not yet found themselves secure on common ground.

"You have been a shipping man," she mused, "and you have thrown that up to become a—a—" She stopped.

"A beachcomber," I put in. "An amateur beachcomber!—but, ah, such a beachcomber as never was before," I added in mock zest.

"But are you going to be combing beaches all your life now?"

"Me!—well, I should hope not. I am out for a breather. If I can make my breather pay me as I go along, so much the better. If it pays well enough, I may buy a tug, or a ferry, or a launch, and, of course, ultimately start up an opposition Green Funnel Line of my own. Naturally that will take a year or two, but, after all, I am a shipping-man from environment, from education, inclination and, maybe—who knows—from birth. I guess I shall always be a shipping man, if it is only a steward's assistant or trucking on a wharf."

She looked over at me as if I had said something that raised a question in her that she was half-inclined to ask; but she let it pass.

"Well said, Mr. Gordon. If I were a man I'd be that too. The sea is in my blood and in the blood of all my people who have gone before me. If they did not handle the ships from shore, they were the men who went out to the sea in ships, and they continued to go out until—until they found their burying place. That has been the history of my people for generations; so you see I would be a sailor-man too. Sometimes, when the sea is blue to look on, it sings to me; sometimes, when drab and colorless, it weeps; and often, when it is green and white-tipped, it scolds—but I love it always and I pine and grow sick whenever I am away from it."

I had little to say in answer. Her mood was my mood. I repeated very quietly a verse of that wonderful poem of Allan Cunningham's that had been given to me as a lesson in a casual way at school, but had been absorbed by me in a manner far from casual, for it sang to me in my first understanding of what poetry really is and it piped of much that lay within me unexpressed.

"A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
And bends the gallant mast;
And bends the gallant mast, my boys,
While, like the eagle free,
Away the good ship flies, and leaves
Old England on the lee."

When I finished, we continued on, almost forgetful of each other, until she brushed away the mood and became gay again.

"Have you been fishing since you came up here?" she asked. "There is great sport around the islands just when the sun is going down."

"Yes!—I have been out, once, in the early morning."

"And did you catch anything?"

"I did. Two cod-fish and a fine trout!"

"But that was more than you needed for a meal. You should catch only what you can use, sir."

"Or what someone else can use!"

"Yes, of course!"

"The trout I caught that morning has laid the foundation of the new Green Funnel Line I mentioned to you a little while ago."

"I don't understand," she said.

"But weren't you the little lady who took the trout from the rowing boat one morning, a week or so ago, over on the middle island?"

She blushed and for a second seemed taken aback and embarrassed.

"Why, yes, I did!—but from Tommy Picken's boat. Tommy is Mr. Davidson's boy, you know. But I paid him for the trout, and it could not have had any connection with you, surely?"

I smiled. I could see now that she had been mistaken, not knowing of the change in the ownership of the boat. Yet,—yet,—how could she?

"Were you over on the island too that morning?" she asked.

"I was the only one there till you came."

"But I didn't see you!"

"Are you sure?"

"What a foolish question! Of course, I'm sure."

"And you didn't come over the rocks and find me asleep?"

It was her turn to be bewildered.

"Why, certainly not! I didn't leave the beach that morning, Mr. Gordon."

"And you didn't sing a song—let me think! I can remember the very words of it, although I never heard them in my life before."

I repeated the two stanzas, word for word.

"Yes!—that is a song I love very dearly and sing very often. More than likely I did sing it, but you have an exceedingly good memory."

The puzzle remained unexplained, for as we entered the fairy dell of ferns and underbrush which opened out on to a green, velvet patch where the spring bubbled up,—furnishing the water for the cottage—Bones barked sharply and we came suddenly upon Harry Ganns. He seemed surprised, but he looked a handsome rascal as he stood there, blue-eyed, clean-limbed, immaculately dressed in a fawn, leather jacket, sheepskin chaps and a conical, black Stetson hat with a fancy, beaded band on it, sitting rakishly on his head. A sleek, brown mare was cropping grass close by him.

He raised his hat and smiled in a confident manner to Miss Campbell, but, as I took her arm and set her to my right side, placing myself between him and her as we passed, the scowl he gave me told me better than words that I had added something more to the debtor side of my ledger with him.

Miss Campbell made no sign of recognition, but when I looked at her I could see that her face was a shade paler and that she was disturbed.

Although I did not look round, I knew that Ganns was watching us closely. Shortly, I heard his spurs jingle as he got astride of his mare and started back down the trail.

"You must not be afraid of that fellow," I said quietly, as we came to the fence before the orchard around her home.

Her eyes flashed as they had once flashed at me above a pitchfork.

"No,—I am not afraid of any man, but—but—the world is very beautiful and he—oh, I don't know!—I just hate him. He has no right in here. He does what he likes in Cohoe. He has everybody cowed. And—he says, what he wants he always gets. The beast!"

"But you must never give him the opportunity again to molest you in this way," I said.

She drew herself up in the charmingly imperious way that I have always loved in her. "I'm not afraid, Mr. Gordon. If ever Harry Ganns puts a hand on me, I'll—I'll kill him. And he won't prevent me from going and coming where and when I please."

She calmed down almost as suddenly as her flashing anger had risen, and, as she held out her hand to me, she blushed as if ashamed of her momentary lack of control.

"Good-by, and thank you very much! I am so glad that I accepted your offer of escort. Maybe you'll come some evening and meet my mother. And you *will* see that Julius stays with me, Mr. Gordon?"

"I certainly shall," I said with determination, "and please, please do not forget—so long as I am here, you need not worry about Harry Ganns. Say the word, and I'll pull him apart."

She smiled. "I do believe you would try. You can look very vicious, but he is big and strong too and it would be too dreadful even to think of a clash between you, and over nothing at all. I hope that will never happen." She grew wistful for a second. "I don't think you like Harry Ganns any more than I do."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

As I dallied in bringing my logs over from the Isle of the Lost Lagoon to the head of Cohoe bay, what I dallied for arrived from Sam—a good, serviceable, second-hand, gasoline engine, with a quantity of boom chains, ropes and wire cables. I spent two days fitting the engine snugly into my rowing boat and testing it out, then, feeling like an admiral on his flag-ship, I sailed out from Davidson's wharf, bent on work in real earnest.

No longer would I have to expend my strength on everlasting rowing and pulling over miles and miles of water. My little engine would relieve me of that, leaving me free to put out my energies on what counted—logs, logs and more logs, for tugs were busy along the entire coast, booms were being brought in continuously and logs were getting adrift continually in the dozens of ways that they can from the parent boom.

I crossed that three-mile strip of sea almost before I was aware of it and I recrossed it from the Lost Lagoon, towing three great logs in my wake like the immortal Gulliver bringing in the fleet of the enemy of Lilliput.

I made four trips that day, bringing three logs at a time, and I had the satisfaction of setting out the boom sticks for my first section and running the remaining logs inside to await the arrival of several hundreds more which I hoped to capture during the long summer ahead of me and before the wintry weather should set in.

Tired, but happy, and all unconscious of impending trouble, I betook myself to an early bed. I must have been asleep for several hours, for, when I awoke—with the full moon shining right on my face through an open part of the thin screen which covered my window—I seemed in a moment to be thoroughly aroused and quite rested.

I lay and traced the shadows and lights on the ceiling and along the walls, and my thoughts drifted in some strange way to the Ganns' outfit and old man Davidson's doleful prognostications of inevitable trouble if I had by any chance got in wrong with any of them.

I fancied I heard a creaking on my veranda, but as I lay and listened I put this down to one of the many strange noises that everlastingly break into the tremendous silences of the night on the Pacific coast—dying timber, the howl of preying animals, splitting rocks, the hooting of owls in the forest, the boom of loons upon the water, the sough of a gust of wind on the sea coming up as it were from nowhere and melting again into the oblivion of the great enveloping silence.

But the moon was full and I noticed a shadow pass my window. I lay quiet and watched. It came again—the silhouette of the head and shoulders of a man who peered closely to the pane, shading round his eyes with his hands. It was an ugly face, what I saw of it, and a chill ran down my spine, for one is often afraid in the dark of what he would scorn in the daylight, and it is always the mysterious, the unaccountable, that engenders the terror-thrill.

The man evidently found what he sought and was satisfied. He turned and waved his arm toward the roadway, then quietly he glided from view.

The tremor of excitement passed and left me cool and collected. As I lay I tried to reason out this peculiar happening. Someone was evidently anxious to know that I was safely at home and asleep. In my particular case I reckoned he could desire this assurance for one chief reason, that of theft. I had little worth stealing—my boat with its newly-fitted engine, and my logs. But these were my all, the beginning of my future fortune.

I grew so anxious over them that I slipped out of bed and tumbled into my clothes. I looked out on the roadway. All was quiet there. Through the trees I could see the silver shimmer of the moon on the restless, pulsing sea, but no sign of life was in evidence anywhere. With caution I left by my back door and, keeping to the shadows, I made for the slip by the wharf where my boat was tied up. In five minutes I got there and found everything secure as I had left it.

It was not the boat then that had occasioned the nocturnal visit to my cottage. My heart throbbed as I thought of the logs, and with the excitement came a wave of anger and passion against the unknown who might be scheming to rob me of what I had worked so hard for.

Fearful of the noise my gasoline engine would make if I started it up, I decided to leave it alone and, instead, to take one of Davidson's row-boats—one which, fortunately, had a pair of old oars lying in it. I started out, hugging the shore, because I was almost sure I could hear occasional voices and the rattle of chains in the direction of the saw-mill.

The water in the bay was positively alive with phosphorus. Every dip of my oar seemed to be bringing up a ladleful of liquid fire, while drops of mercury and electric sparks seemed to roll and dart from it back into the dark, glowing, satanic-green of the sea.

I passed close in the lee of the saw-mill. Between the piles supporting the wharf there, I could see the forms of two men on the other side. They were busy with my little section of logs, tying it to their end of the wharf near to the shore. I secured my boat on the offside and scrambled up an iron ladder on to the wharf, passing behind one of the sheds. From the office-end of the mill a light was burning as if someone was at work there.

The two men scrambled up from their side, as I had done from mine. One of them I knew immediately, Zeke Ganns, the same, podgy, uncouth, broken-toothed, dirty lout as of yore, only all his animal propensities that showed in his face seemed to have become intensified with the intervening years. He was the man whose silhouette I had seen on my veranda three-quarters of an hour before.

His companion was of the common type—neither big nor little, loutish nor clean-cut, ordinary in every sense of the word.

They were all unsuspecting.

Suddenly Zeke Ganns laughed.

"Well—I guess, Slick old kid, we got the logs all right, all right! Better'n breakin' a guy's back all over the darned gulf after 'em—Eh, huh? Harry'll grouse his head off when he has to pay us five dollars a log for this bunch. Easy pickin's!"

"You bet-ya!" grinned Slick.

I stepped out right in front of them, and they started as if they had seen a ghost.

"Pretty smart work, eh! Now you can break your fool backs putting these logs back where you got them," I shouted angrily. "And if you don't keep your fingers off my property in future, I'll give you both a dose more than you bargain for. I'm not beachcombing for the fun of it, and I'm not working for the Ganns family either."

They were taken by surprise, but Zeke Ganns swung over to me truculently.

"Who d'ye think yer talkin' to? Get to the deuce off this wharf an' quick about it, if you don't want to get throwed off.

"Here, Slick,—give'm a clout with that oar."

Zeke was ready, as in the old days, to encourage someone else to do his fighting for him, but I just gave Slick the go-by, for I considered him too small potatoes to worry over. I made for the ugly rascal Ganns and, before he could defend himself I had him by the soft, porridgy neck and I squeezed and shook him till I could feel his throat bones between my fingers. He struggled and flung his arms about. He gasped and spluttered, spraying me with a filthy froth of tobacco juice, but I just kept squeezing with my left hand until the elephantine movements and the frothy anger choked inside of him and he sagged quietly at the end of my arm against the side of the shed. I released him at last. His knees gave way and he dropped limply on the wharf. I turned about for Slick, but Slick was not to be seen. I stood over Zeke Ganns, watching in interest his slow return to life. I heard voices behind me and I turned.

Slick was coming out of the mill office in the company of Harry Ganns who was in his shirt sleeves and the very opposite of his elder brother for looks and general get-up. He came directly over to me, without the slightest show of animosity. In fact, he was calm and almost friendly in his manner.

"Hello!" he said, "what's all the trouble?"

"Not much!" I answered, "just a little thieving of my property, which I don't intend to stand for."

He smiled—the handsome devil that he was—showing his even white teeth. I could not but admire his play-acting.

"I don't quite understand. Here, Zeke!"

He pushed his brother with his foot, then he bent down, gripped him by the coat-collar and pulled him on to his legs where he swayed unsteadily. Harry Ganns then brushed his hands off, as if to free him from the annoyance of the contact

of his own brother.

"I'm afraid you've been a little rough with my brother, Mr. Gordon. I don't like that and I must ask you to settle your differences in future like a gentleman. If you ever have any cause for complaint, come to me. I am the boss of this lay-out and I am sure we can always come to a satisfactory agreement on any point—but, I will not have my men hurt."

His urbanity took my breath away, while the very thin veneer of sarcasm over it made me want to handle him as I had handled his brother, but he was a totally different proposition and I had no immediate desire to risk too much too early in the game.

"Might I ask what they've been doing?" he continued.

"Taking possession of my section of logs which I had secured at the top of the bay there."

"Here, Zeke,—what have you got to say to that?"

"Nuthin'!" he answered. "He's a liar. Slick an' me found them logs out most half-ways to Keats Island. Didn't we, Slick?"

"Sure we did."

Harry Ganns looked at me covertly out of his bright eyes.

Every moment the light of the morning was coming up stronger and stronger from the sea-horizon, and shadowy forms were now becoming clear-cut figures.

"Where did you say you got the logs, Mr. Gordon?"

"I didn't say," I retorted, "but I don't mind telling you that I have been gathering them together for some time now, as you already know."

"Funny we never saw any signs of them before!"

"Not a bit funny! I had them elsewhere and brought them in here only yesterday."

Harry Ganns threw up his hands and pursed his mouth.

"Well—I guess you're out of luck, friend. It's two to one, and my brother's word, and my honest workman, Slick's, to back it up, are good enough for me."

"You mean that these logs aren't mine and never were mine?" My blood leapt and I was out for fighting now—all they wanted of it.

"Looks that way!" he said easily.

"And if I can prove it?" I asked, in a last hope for peace.

"If you can—why, I'll be satisfied and you can have them."

"All right,—come down here," I said.

We went to the shore-end of the wharf, over to where the logs had been freshly moored. Zeke Ganns and his mate remained above. We climbed down on to the section and I bent over the place where I knew I had wedged one of my nameplates. I pried this out while Harry Ganns watched closely.

"There—read that."

His face betrayed just a flicker of surprise.

"Your name all right!" he answered. "I see you always leave your visiting card. Quite a good idea!"

"Quite a necessary one hereabouts," I returned. "Want to see the same in every log in this lot?"

"No—I guess that's good enough. You've proved your case."

He sauntered back up the wharf. I followed.

"Zeke,—I guess you and Slick are the liars this time and not slick enough for this guy. Get busy and put these logs where you got them, and don't let me hear of any more of your easy-money stunts or I'll kick the lights out of you both. Git now! Quick!"

The two set out to obey without a retort between them.

Harry Ganns looked at me in a careless way.

"Sorry, old man! Funny what that kind of cattle will do for a dollar or two. Have a cigar!"

"No, thanks!"

"I guess you have a license to comb the waters hereabouts?"

"I have. Have you?"

"Oh, yes!—all the license Harry Ganns needs! Do you wish to sell your logs?"

"No!"

"I'll give you ten dollars apiece for them and for every one you can bring in all summer."

"You're quite generous. That's five dollars more than you offered to your brother for them."

His eyes looked dangerous for a second, but he recovered himself.

I continued. "They're worth sixteen dollars apiece in Vancouver."

"Well,—to show myself a good fellow, I'll give you fifteen dollars and save you the towage."

"No! What is more, you daren't use them."

"And why not?"

"Because they are branded and should be sold only to the companies who originally owned them."

He laughed. "And who's to know whose logs they are when the brands are sawed off? I suppose you are one of those guys who believes that fairy tale that once a log is branded the mark can be traced clear down the tree no matter where you cut it. Well—you won't sell, eh?"

"No!"

He seemed suddenly to become suspicious. "Then what's your game up here?"

"None of your business!"

"Man, you're civil." Suddenly his eyes narrowed. "I can't say I love you exactly, and I seemed to have a feeling in my bones that I've met you somewhere before. We're the kind that fight when we meet. I don't want to fight. It doesn't suit my business at present. I don't know what you're here for; but I don't want you here. And if I find you poking and prying into my affairs, you'll be sorry for it. I warn you not to stay here if you value your health and your good looks. Altogether, it'll pay you not to be here. Now, I'll give you five hundred dollars cash to get out and to keep out. What do you say?"

"Better pay the family grocery bill with that five hundred, Mr. Ganns. If you made it five thousand, it would be just the same. I'm in Coho for as long as I please, to follow any bent that suits me. Believe me, your fraternal feeling is entirely reciprocated. I'm not looking for a quarrel either, but it will pay you and your men to leave my property alone from now on."

"Great Caesar!—still harping on that paltry fifty dollars' worth of lumber, and my men at this moment tying your precious logs securely up the bay for you. Well—I guess you'd better be going before we say things."

I went over the iron ladder leading down to where my boat was moored. As I lowered myself over the side, Harry

Ganns came close to the edge of the wharf, talking as he leaned over.

"You may get a boom together, Gordon,—if it happens to be a boom you are really after—. Nobody'll stop you; but, believe me, you'll never get it to Vancouver."

He moved his foot quickly and ground it hard on top of the fingers of my left hand which rested on the wharf-edge as I was descending. The pain of it was excruciating, and it was all I could do to keep from crying out.

He bent over tantalizingly, still with that easy expression on his face. He had me at a disadvantage in every way, and I was impotent so far as any retaliation was concerned.

"Why don't you get down?" he grinned.

"If you will kindly take your foot off my fingers, I may," I answered quietly, biting my lip.

"Oh, ah!" He ground harder than ever as he got off. "Sorry, old man! Sorry! Why didn't you holler?"

As I got into the row-boat I could hear him chuckle to himself above.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

And so the days went by: busy days and idle days, calm days and stormy days, days when I fancied the sun must burn itself out in its ecstasy of radiance; long days that seemed never-ending and nights intervening that claimed but a handspan between dark and dawn. The joy, the freedom, the glory of it sang and thrilled in my blood. I worked as I never could have worked in the city, and the fates were kind to me, for I piled and repiled my logs on the Isle of the Lost Lagoon, until the lagoon could hold no more of these fruits of my labors; then I would take a day or two and tow them across to the head of Cohoe bay, adding section after section to my rapidly materializing boom.

I suffered no direct interference from any of my Finnish neighbors; in fact, for quite a time I did not come into direct contact with any one of them, although I could see them at work at the mill and I could see them bring in logs from the sea, as I did myself, although I knew they were without license to ply their calling and, furthermore, that no logs were ever towed out from Cohoe bay for return to the companies who had put their brands on them. But, after all, that was little concern of mine, and I had no desire to play informant or to stir up strife so long as I was left alone.

I heard from Sam now and again—wonderfully often considering that it usually took him the entire part of Sunday to write any kind of a letter, and that he abominated that job, as most out-workers do who have not had any too much schooling. I learned from him that he was plodding away and keeping up his reputation for good work and expedition. I could gather that he was greatly interested in any of my escapades that I divulged to him in correspondence.

My lawyer friend, Rob Simpson, had found it impossible to afford the time to make any protracted stay in Cohoe in behalf of old man Davidson's sadly-overdue accounts, but he did what, after all, proved a much better thing.

He made a hurried trip up on the "Seagull," going back to Vancouver on her return voyage the next day. The night he did spend with us, he and Davidson and I closeted ourselves in the old man's kitchen and made up a detailed list of all the store's book debts which were more than six months old. Sure enough, they were almost incredible for bulk.

Davidson assigned these debts entirely to Rob Simpson, and Rob gave Davidson security in the form of some sort of trust deed. I was not very familiar with such documents at that time, but Davidson seemed satisfied. I knew, anyway, that the old fellow could bank on Rob—so there was no cause for anxiety on that score.

Rob went off next day armed with his documents, and it was not long before we learned how admirably his little scheme was going to work.

In the first place, he was handling Davidson's accounts against the debtors in a cold-blooded, business way, not knowing any of them personally. Sentiment—mock or real—could have little influence on him, as it might have had on Davidson, and when these debtors came to Davidson, either in a rage at the old man for daring to ask for his own, or with hat in hand craving another extension, Davidson was able to explain to them that the whole affair was entirely out of his hands, that he had no say in the matter now, one way or the other, and that all requests would have to be made direct to the assignee in Vancouver; thus leaving Davidson free to continue his business as if he had no interest whatever in the old accounts due to the store.

Many secret and hurried trips were made to Vancouver in those days by different members of the community who were known to be none too scrupulous in attending to their accounts. It seems that Rob Simpson had contracted suddenly a habit of issuing writs when payment was not forthcoming as quickly as he thought it should be. Not only that, but in the Ganns case no appearance was entered against the writ and Simpson plastered their property and other interests with a thousand-dollar judgment, tying up their bank account in the process and hurrying old man Ganns to the city to pay up without more to-do.

That set the entire foreign element by the ears, and in short order Davidson's bank account began to swell and his ledger balances to dwindle so rapidly that he had a fear it might prove all a dream and he would wake up any moment to find everything in the same, old, unsatisfactory way.

I do not think that my descent on the little township of Cohoe was in a general way connected up with this sudden insistence on the payment of the debts due to Davidson. The old man had a tight mouth and was not likely to give any information away. At any rate, in the many humble and sincere friendships I made among the fishing and farming folks, I never heard a word to make me think so. But of course, these good folks in general were not of the debt-contracting kind

and for the most part were all unaware of the condition of things around them.

With the dwellers on the plateau it was different, and I knew the Ganns element was ever ready to lay to my door the misfortunes and troubles that had assailed the community for the past twenty years, and more than likely they had poisoned their fellow countrymen with the same notions, in the hope that it would ultimately effect my departure and leave them to pursue their own shady transactions without the possibility of interference.

From the several peculiar things I had happened upon in my love for a stroll in the night-time when sleep refused to be courted, I had a growing suspicion that sheep-raising, logging, and saw-milling were not the only occupations of the Ganns family. I observed a sudden addition to the amount of boats—rowing and motor—possessed by the owners of the mill-wharf. I had witnessed strange signalling of lights from the wharf, replied to from boats in the gulf. I had seen row-boats come ashore, stay awhile and go off again heavily loaded. I had seen other row-boats and motor-boats too, come in as from some of the outlying islands—always at night—loaded to the gunwales, and next morning on my way to work I had noticed these same boats—the property of the Ganns outfit—moored and idle alongside the mill-wharf. To my way of thinking, there were too many sheds and outhouses, locked and bolted, on the wharf for an ordinary saw-mill. It set me thinking that their saw-milling was the least important of their money-making enterprises. And when I considered Harry Ganns, his suave, almost cultured manner, his confidence, his cleverness, I became more convinced than ever that he was not the kind of man to be contented with slow or small returns for his ventures.

But all this, like their log-fishing, was no affair of mine, other than providing me with some amusement in trying to size up their operations which they seemed so anxious to hide under cover of darkness.

And how I used to enjoy the calm serenity of the Sundays away up there at Cohoe. Church!—I never thought of it except in the detached way that it was good for the villagers to have some place to meet and to ruminate in and something to keep them from utter stagnation on this one day in seven when convention would not permit them to work. As for me—with a fishing line and my pipe, I would haunt the near islands in the early forenoon, then, when the heat of the day became insistent and the sun flashed back from the sea in a blinding glare of white light, I would run across to my beloved Isle of the Lost Lagoon, with its dwarfed trees and turfy grass, its bays and inlets, its huge sheltered rocks and its precipices that dropped like a wall into the sea, and—after a refreshing swim—in some little sheltered cranny, with nothing but the eternal waters in front of me—like the eternity of the life ahead of me and as inscrutable—and no sound save the haunting cries of the seagulls who resented my intrusion, and the never-ceasing shuffle and gurgle of the sea on the island shore—I would snuggle with a book in unutterable contentment—a book of poems sometimes, sometimes a book of essays, but most often with some tale of romance of sea-rovers and land-adventurers, who laughed at life and shook their fists in the face of death. I would lie with my thoughts and browse, half asleep and half awake, until the chilly wind of the late afternoon would come up across the gulf and tell me that the day was ending and that the night would soon be here.

As for Bones, his name became buried for a while in the dead ashes of the past and he became merely Julius. What a poor, miserable cad of a human, with the heart of a toad, he must have thought me! I had hunted him from me gruffly; I had kicked and even stoned him; all because of a promise made to a lady. Ah, ladies, what will we men not do because of you—sometimes!

Out on the road he would pass me slowly, look up at me with a wistful expression, then stand and gaze after me in the hope of a word of friendliness or a smile of recognition that did not come.

The cause of this estrangement of old friends, the young lady, Sheila Gordon Campbell:—my ways and hers did not converge much. I was always up and at work with the rising sun, with an objective that lay far out in the open gulf, far beyond the islands and the strip of sea that lay between these and the mainland. But sometimes, even at that early hour, I would see her tiny boat put off from the slip—for she seemed to adore the water and the early mornings as much as I did. At other times, in the evenings, I would pass her as I chug-chugged shoreward and she plied her oars for home. Generally on such occasions I would throw off my engine and, as it were, "signal in the passing." She seemed interested in the progress I was making with my fastly-growing boom of logs, but there was a shy diffidence in her manner that I could not fathom, as if she felt ashamed of some weakness she had at some time displayed. Possibly in me there was also a raised barrier. At times I know I had found myself day-dreaming of this strange, sea-roving girl with the violet eyes and the olive-and-pink skin—half witch and half fairy—cultured away beyond the average of young ladies of her age, wise beyond her years, and tremendously serious in her love and care of her sad-eyed mother:—yet in many ways a ravishing, care-free girl, abandoned to the glory of life and the pleasure it gave.

Looking backward now, I am convinced that I was afraid of her in that way that strong, foolish, shy, healthy, ambitious youth is sometimes afraid of soft, alluring, self-possessed femininity. My heart would beat fast at her approach and I would circle the gulf or take a by-path in the woods just to avoid meeting her directly, then, for a week afterwards, I would berate myself for a spineless idiot.

She had told me that she was waiting in Cohoe now for the arrival of a relative from Scotland who was to relieve her in her care of her mother during the coming fall and winter, so that she could resume some of her music studies over there.

Twice she had invited me to the little cottage beyond the Headland and twice I had concocted a reason for declining. Then later, when my soul hungered for companionship and for the tuning up which music alone can give to the spirit part of some natures, and I fain would have gone over, her invitation was not repeated.

But the way opened up in a manner that I little dreamed of, making me bless the work, the storm, the night with its fitful moonlight and the sad-eyed lady that caused it to come about.

I had had trouble with my gasoline engine—as most folks have sooner or later with second-hand machinery that has already served its natural lifetime and objects to serving another—and while waiting the arrival from Vancouver of a repair part required, I had reverted to the use of one of Davidson's rowing boats, because I hated to idle when the days were long, when the seas were calm and when my marine glasses informed me of logs in the gulf without an owner.

I had gone far afloat that day and had run in to the Isle of the Lost Lagoon several times with logs which I had wrested from the sea—all fairly easy work and good money—then, late in the afternoon, when a long way out in the open and plying leisurely back with my latest catch, I saw a great whirling roll gather on the horizon and rush in from the direction of the Pacific with a speed that I considered incredible. A gust of cold air disturbed the quiet of the summer's day, then a whistle and a piping, and almost before I was aware of it I was in the whirl of a rousing gale, with an inky, blue-black sky overhead and sheet lightning playing at every point of the compass.

I pulled strongly for the shelter of the Isle of the Lost Lagoon, but the sea came piling in on me, white-crested and seething, so that my little boat was no more than a cork bobbing at the end of a string and myself an ant plying matches for oars, vainly endeavoring to move an island across the Gulf of Georgia.

Reluctantly I cast my log adrift, then I grit my teeth and made a fresh start. The wind, strong but more steady, veered slightly in my favor and made my journey to the island somewhat more easy. But it was hard work, cruel work, and when the sky opened and poured down its deluge, it became miserable work indeed. It took me several hours to reach Lost Lagoon and I came mightily near to smashing my tiny craft to kindling wood as I tried to effect a landing. But I got through safely, beaching high and securely on the sandy part at the end of the little bay.

I spent some time securing my logs there, having no desire to lose them in the high seas that were running. As soon as the deluge stopped I set about kindling a fire to make me some hot cocoa and, if possible, to dry out my soaking garments. I had dry matches in the locker in the boat and I found some dead wood in the shelter of the rocks; so, with the driftwood which strewed the island everywhere—damp as it was—I soon had a roaring fire going and was well on the way to getting the chill out of my marrow.

I looked at my watch and I could hardly believe my eyes. It was midnight.

The moon was struggling through the disintegrating and scudding clouds, seeming to be riding madly on the shoulders of the hurricane, but, although the wind had abated slightly, the sea was still running high.

As I had become immensely cozy and even drowsy, I had almost decided to stay on the island for the remainder of the night, when I got to thinking about my boom at the head of Cohoe bay, of the possibility of a break-away and of the ease with which this break-away might be helped along should Harry Ganns and his associates take it into their heads to be spiteful in my absence.

The more I thought of this, the more uneasy I became, so, after about an hour's rest, I made up my mind to attempt the crossing.

It was not that I feared for myself, as I knew that the volume of water necessary to drown me when I was fit and unencumbered, did not flow through the three-mile span from the Lost Lagoon to Cohoe, but there was the danger of

losing Davidson's boat as well as the heavy toil of rowing in such a sea, and also the remote possibility of being swept clear away from my objective.

However, I pushed off from the lagoon with a heavy underdraw of water and soon I was battling my way across. I had to combat the open in the full oncoming of the tide and storm. I knew it was useless to attempt a broadside issue, so I veered more into the teeth of the wind, making for a point a mile or so to the west of the Headland. Time and again the water broke completely over my little boat and I was soon drenched through. Time and again, when she balanced precariously on the crest of a wave and I looked behind and below me, I felt certain she would slide back and be swamped, but she was sound and sea-worthy, and stood every test and strain she was subjected to.

I made progress, and when this bore in on me a feeling of exultation rose inside of me. I strained and pulled harder than ever, and soon I was laughing defiance to the sea-drenched wind that smacked my cheeks. I recited in a loud belligerent voice, trying to hear myself above the storm:—

"O, for a soft and gentle wind!
I heard a fair one cry;
But give to me the snoring breeze,
And white waves heaving high;
And white waves heaving high, my boys,
The good ship tight and free—
The world of waters is our home,
And merry men are we.

"There's tempest in yon horned moon,
And lightning in yon cloud;
And hark the music, mariners!
The wind is piping loud;
The wind is piping loud, my boys,
The lightning flashes free—
While the hollow oak our palace is,
Our heritage the sea."

I continued shouting and singing in a reckless foolishness that might have been expected of a sea-drunk corsair like Ralph the Rover of old, but hardly of—Douglas Gordon.

But, after all, even I did not know Douglas Gordon—what he had sprung from, and although I felt its presence at all times, I did not know what wild transfusion surged in his veins. For all I knew, Ralph the Rover might have been my far-flung grandsire.

After almost two hours of rack and strain, I found I had pushed through the most exposed part of the channel. I veered and pulled shoreward, well above the Headland, then, clinging close in for shelter, I rowed down on the flow with the wind in my favor. I knew my troubles were not altogether over as I would still have to face the full blast of the hurricane when I tried to swing wide round the rocky Headland in to Coho bay, for it would be courting disaster to cling too closely to the jagged and hidden rocks that infested that promontory.

Still shouting, I broke into an old Pacific coast chanty:—

Pull away—what care we!
Pull away on the open sea.
There's lots o' women and rum ashore,
But none out here where the sou'-wests roar.
'Tis Frisco bay at the break o' day.
Pull away—pull away!

I turned my head to take my bearings. I was thirty yards out from Sheila Campbell's little jetty and in the fitful moonlight the apparition I saw there set my blood achill.

The figure of a woman, clad in white, was standing at the very edge of the slip, her feet submerged in the sea which broke over; her thin garments and her loose hair blowing, ghostlike, in the wind. Her arms were held out in my direction as in piteous entreaty. I shouted and signaled to her to go back, as she seemed precariously near to falling into the water. She did not hear, or she heard and paid no heed, so I swung my boat about and made directly for the landing. It was a foolish and a thoughtless move for one to make who knew the sea as I did, for I immediately threw myself broadside to the storm. The woman's voice came piercingly and anxiously across the span of water in warning.

"Douglas!—oh, Douglas,—Douglas!"

That much talked-of seventh wave must have hit me then. My boat simply rolled over on top of me as I was thrown violently into the tide-rip. Just as I went under I heard that sorrowful cry again:—

"Douglas!—oh, Douglas,—Douglas!"

When I came up, my boat was swamped and sunk. On the rise of a wave I looked toward the slip. The apparition was gone. Swirling through the water, several yards from that little landing stage, I saw the flash of white garments.

Suddenly the thought rushed on me, "It is Sheila's mother."

All energy I had at my command I called to my aid. I plowed and darted through the intervening sea. The form disappeared then rose before I had time to reach it. It had almost gone a second time when I clutched at it and held it securely, limp and unconscious—dead, I feared. I battled and struggled against the sucking waters. In a few moments my feet touched the shingle of the beach and I scrambled ashore with my precious burden—Sheila's mother, the lady who had sung so beautifully in my hearing when I was a little fellow. I felt I had almost a proprietary interest in her. She was clad only in her night garments and as light in weight, I thought, as the proverbial feather.

Carrying her in my arms, I raced with her up the rustic stairway to the head of the bluff, knowing that every moment meant so much. Across the lawn I sped and on to the front veranda, where Sheila, wide-eyed and terrified, came upon us.

"Oh," she moaned, "my mother,—my mother!"

How my heart went out to her! But I feared that in my anxiety I was brusque and gruff with her.

"She isn't dead, Douglas? Oh, she isn't dead?"

"Hush! Not if you busy yourself!" I cautioned. "Blankets,—hot water,—warm clothing!"

Their maid, a red-cheeked Scottish lass, ran out from a bedroom, and it did not take her long to get things moving. As for Sheila, she was too fear-stricken and the death-shadow was too near home to permit her mind and body acting quickly.

I laid Mrs. Campbell gently on a couch and gave instructions to the maid, but she was as brusque with me as I had been with Sheila.

"I ken,—fine I ken!—far better than you do! Am I no' a Gourock coastguard's dochter? She'll be all right. Leave her to me!"

The water was dripping from me, so I went into the kitchen and stood by the warm range until sounds conveyed to me that the lady was recovering.

Just as I was preparing to leave, quietly and unobtrusively, Sheila came to me, wrapped up in a silken kimona, with her golden-black hair flowing like a cataract over her shoulders; her face pale, her lips atremble and her glorious eyes brimming over.

"You saved my mother! You have saved my mother to me!" she cried. "Oh, how can I ever repay you for it?"

She caught up my wet, grimy hands and she put them to her lips, and her tears fell on them and mixed with the salt of the sea that was already there.

But it was not for Sheila to kiss my hands. I snatched them away, and for the very fear I had for myself I, like an ill-bred carl, rushed away from her without a word, out into the open. And I ran blindly, madly, in a turmoil of hot and cold; stumbling, falling, but never stopping until I reached the safety and quiet of my cottage overlooking the slumbering town

and the tumultuous seas of Cohoe bay.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

When I looked out early next morning, it was hard to believe that my previous day's experience had been anything more than a nightmare. The air was balmy and the sea of Cohoe bay, and as far out beyond the islands into the gulf as I could see, was as smooth as a polished floor and blinding in its reflecting dazzle of the sun's brilliance.

It was a glorious morning to be out in, but, after what I had so recently gone through, I was not quite attune to it. My muscles were stiff, like violin strings drawn too tightly; my brain did not seem over-anxious for work; in fact, I felt lazy; so I dawdled in dressing and in the preparation of my breakfast, so much so that when I was cracking eggs into the frying pan, which was already half-full of bacon—a noble breakfast for any hungry man—the bell on the steeple of the humble church near the wharf was tolling out its five-minutes-to-eleven invitation to whoever might hear and heed, for it was Sunday morning, the one day in the week when most of the good folks of Cohoe did one of only two things—went to church or stayed at home abed.

Just as I was cracking those eggs, I heard a timid knock at my front door. I wiped my hands on the apron which I had round my middle and went hurriedly to answer. My visitor was the Scots serving lass from the home by the Headland. She was neatly dressed and evidently on her way to church. She held out a letter to me.

"I have to have an answer, please," she said demurely.

"How is Mrs. Campbell this morning?" I asked.

"She is very weel indeed, sir," she answered, "in fact, doing brawly—up and aboot as spruce as can be."

"And no after effects?" I queried.

"Not an effect,—unless that she seems brighter and brisker than usual, and says she thinks she is cured o' her dreams and her sleep-walking forever."

"Good!" I exclaimed.

"Would you please hurry and read your letter, and gi'e me an answer. I don't want to be late for the kirk."

I tore the envelope open and read its contents. I had half hoped that it might be from Sheila. But it was not.

"DEAR MR. GORDON:

"For the trouble caused you through a woman's foolish fancies, I apologize, and for your courage in saving a mother to the daughter she so dearly loves, Sheila and I thank you with all our hearts.

"I have not seen you yet, and I should like very much to.

"Please call over early in the afternoon. I promise you, you shall not be embarrassed, for we are plain folks and feel our gratefulness more deeply than we shall ever try to express.

"Yours sincerely,

"JEAN GILFILLAN CAMPBELL."

I re-read the letter as the church bell began to miss a beat in its ringing and as the servant girl before me moved impatiently from one foot to the other.

I was in a dilemma. Had Sheila written that letter, I possibly would have said, "No!" and then regretted it for the remainder of the day. But it happened to be Sheila's mother who wrote it, and that was very different. I could not be so churlish as to refuse. I looked over at the girl.

"Oh, man!—say 'Ay' and be done wi' it," she exclaimed, at the limit of her patience.

I laughed. "All right!—'ay' it is."

She ran off, and kept running for as long as she remained within my vision. Well I knew she would be blessing me for the

red face she would have in church throughout the service.

I ate my breakfast to the accompaniment of mental misgivings.

The replacement part I required for my engine had arrived the afternoon before, during my absence, and Davidson had had it delivered on to my back veranda along with my usual week-end supplies, so I took it down to the slip, adjusted it in short time and got the engine throbbing in first-class order. I cleaned my little craft thoroughly, then I sped over to my boom which I found had withstood the onslaught of the sea very well indeed. I hammered in a few loosened chain-ends and secured a misplaced swifter, shot back to Cohoe wharf, tied up and strolled leisurely back home.

I spruced myself up more thoroughly than I had done since coming to Cohoe. I soaked the grime from my hands. I shaved and made my recalcitrant curly hair behave itself. From the bottom of my trunk I fished out duck trousers, white socks, white canvas boots and a white sweater, and I decked myself out in these, determined that I would meet the ladies on an equal footing and not as some bold cave-man or hobble-de-hoy tar-and-soap deckhand who had wandered into the first-class saloon in mistake for the sailors' quarters forward.

I was all ready, with a Sunday-school-treat sort of feeling inside of me, long before what might be strictly considered "early in the afternoon." I sat down. I tried to read. I got up and walked to the window. I trimmed my finger-nails with my pen-knife. I looked at my watch half a dozen times. I sat down again and smoked a pipeful, then, thoroughly on the fidgets, I leisured down to the wharf and set out. I was round the Headland and opposite the slip far too quickly for comfort, and fearing that I might be too soon, I took a run up to the farther point, crossed over to the Triplets, ran between them and shot back straight across.

I dreaded the coming ordeal—three self-possessed women with one rather jumpy young man. For a crooked nickel I would have funk as I did once before, but to my credit I didn't, and a few minutes later I found that all my fears and tremors were utter foolishness.

Sheila and her mother were sitting on the veranda and welcomed me cordially and quietly, making me feel at ease from the very first moment, and from that moment I began to question which I loved the better, Sheila or her mother.

What a sweet lady Mrs. Campbell was!—full of wisdom, diplomacy and kindly forethought, with that soft gentleness in her face that comes to some women only, and to those women only after some great and lasting tragedy in their life's experience. Not that it made her in any way cynical of life, for she showed in no uncertain way a keen enjoyment of every moment of it, but rather it had left her incapable of an unkind thought and had given her a tender solicitude and brimming love for everybody and everything that lived, moved and had its being.

We talked in a general way of Cohoe, of the climate, of Vancouver, of the beauty of the islands, our love for the sea and the glorious Gulf of Georgia; then Sheila left us—to put the final touches, I surmised, to the afternoon lunch which the maid was preparing.

I happened to look up suddenly and I found Mrs. Campbell's eyes on me in kindly scrutiny, but also with a questioning in the scrutiny.

"Sheila tells me that your name is Douglas. That name is very dear to me. The Douglas family have a very inspiring motto. I wonder if you ever heard it."

I shook my head.

"*Jamais arri re*, which means, 'Never behind.'"

"Douglas Gordon!" she went on, more to herself than to me, "what a name for a young man to conjure with! Why, with a name like that the whole of Scotland should be flooding in your veins."

"I never saw Scotland, I am sorry to say," I answered. I might have said more, because she was a lady in whom one felt a desire to confide, but I was reticent of my obscure antecedents and so let the moment pass.

"So you are a Canadian!"

"Yes,—and very proud of it!"

"Assuredly!"

"But I have always been deeply interested in Scottish history and in Scottish names," I replied. "I know, for instance, that the Gordon motto is 'Bydand' and signifies 'Remaining' or, as one might put it more plainly, 'Stand-fast.'"

"Douglas Gordon! Never-behind,—Stand-fast!" she ruminated.

"Sheila tells me that you and she are old friends. I can well remember, years ago, when she flustered me suddenly in her wild scramble to drag me out to meet you, but—(Her eyes twinkled)—quick as we were, you were quicker, and all we saw of you was your dog, and a great old pet he has been to us since.

"But somehow, I feel as if I had known you before. My husband's friend was a Gordon—Hector Gordon, a very gay Gordon and a gallant soldier to boot. He was killed in some hill fighting in Northern India. You bring him back to me in memory." She sighed and then she smiled sweetly. "But, ohone!—that was in bonnie Scotland, laddie, years and years ago."

A bell tinkled. "First call for lunch!" came the merry ring of Sheila's voice, and our serious conversation ended abruptly, giving place to the gaiety and cheerfulness of the jolliest and one of the very few little luncheon parties I, up to that moment, had taken part in.

Not a word passed of what had happened the night before; not a note of sadness, or sickness, or trouble. Mother and daughter seemed to vie with each other for pride of place for gaiety, wit and bubbling good-humor.

After lunch, we were all of the one accord that it was far too glorious a day to spend indoors, and when Mrs. Campbell excused herself but suggested that Sheila and I take a spin in my motor-boat out to the islands, it suited the mood I was in to a nicety, although it left me doubting as to whether Sheila looked upon it as a pleasure or merely as a social duty.

Very little in the way of conversation passed between us as we crossed the channel. I felt that I ought to apologize to her for racing off from her so abruptly the night before, but I could not find a way to begin. Possibly she regretted her impetuosity and the betrayal of her feelings of gratefulness, and maybe she was thinking I had misconstrued them and might possibly presume. At any rate, it seemed hard to start in from where we had left off, and harder still to go back to some point before it had happened.

But I was contented. The day was delightful, the sea was a blaze of nature's perfection, and Sheila—her summer dress of chiffons and laces surrounding her like a great, fluffy sun-cloud, a picture of olive-and-pink-and-cream, her violet eyes in a restful languor which I had never before seen in her—was sitting before me as I steered. She watched me drowsily and smiled as only Sheila could smile. She had evidently discarded the tom-boy for once and had donned with her flounces and chiffons, the gentleness, the sweetness, the softness that were so much her mother's. Her smile was a smile that said so much, yet admitted so little, that it bewitched and entranced in its very uncertainty, and sent me into a whirl of unexplainable delight.

After one of her long, dreamy scrutinies, she remarked, "You are very, very strong, Douglas Gordon."

I laughed. "And you are very, very pretty, Sheila Gordon Campbell," I ventured.

"And—you are very, very bold," she said slowly, looking away and toying with the water over the side.

After a while she spoke again.

"You are very, very quiet, Douglas Gordon."

"That is the only way I can keep from being very, very bold, Sheila Campbell."

"But I didn't say I didn't like you when you were bold."

And with that the restraint vanished, the barriers tumbled down, we became our natural selves and gabbled like life-long chums.

"Let's go on to the island," she said as we neared the first of the Triplets. "We can sit down in the shelter and watch the sea. I often do that when I am alone."

"Which island?" I asked.

"Oh, the farthest one! It is the prettiest and I feel as if it belonged to me."

I switched off the engine and ran into a tiny cove and beached. Sheila jumped out and raced on ahead of me, swift and sure-footed, making for the farthest-out point. She disappeared round the rocks, and I was quite a time in discovering her whereabouts. For a moment I feared that she had fallen somewhere, but at last I found her, safe and secure, on a little, natural, mossy throne, surrounded on all sides but one by great rocks, a rocky canopy overhead and the sea lapping at her feet and thirty fathoms deep, with nothing before her but the great wide gulf, with the Vancouver-bound steamers creeping like flies on a window pane, the irregular, misty, purple coast-line of Vancouver island and the vast expanse of blue sky.

"Now, isn't this the finest place on earth?" she cried.

"Seems almost off the earth, but it is certainly a fine place," I agreed. And as I sat down beside her I could not help repeating an old familiar verse which I had read for the first time in Sergeant Grier's home and had taken a fancy for,

"Here with a loaf of bread beneath the bough,
A flask of wine, a book of verse—and thou
Beside me singing in the wilderness
And wilderness is Paradise enow."

She laughed and clapped her hands together.

"Bravo! Why,—he even knows his Omar. You seem to know anything and everything; a real Canadian who doesn't let you know what he knows until the right moment."

I blushed, for I knew that I knew so little; merely made the best I could of the very little I knew.

She grew solemn. "But you mustn't say these things to me, Douglas, unless, maybe,—just in fun."

"Just in fun," I repeated, for life was racing young in my veins as it was racing young in hers.

"All right! Just in fun!" she continued, making herself comfortable against the mossy background of rock.

"Well," I said, "we have no 'loaf of bread,' no 'flask of wine,' or 'book of verse'—but surely 'thou' could supply the song."

"You wish me to furnish the 'voice crying in the wilderness,' I suppose."

"No, no! 'And thou beside me singing in the wilderness.'"

"If you were not here, I might try. I used to sit here by the hour and sing everything I ever knew, over and over again, until the very seagulls knew the different tunes. Sometimes I come over here yet and sing.

"See that cleft in the rock there! I used to peer through that on to the grassy knoll beyond and I would sing my fairy song over ever so often, in the hope that I would entice the fairies out to dance and play for me."

"And did they ever come?"

"No,—but I kept on singing just the same."

She commenced to hum the pretty song I had heard her sing on the morning she carried away my only trout.

"Sing it out, Sheila! The words are great and I am aching to hear the melody again."

She sang it softly and sweetly—so sweetly that I felt we were surrounded by the last of all the fairies, dancing and gamboling in merry ecstasy, invisible, but none the less real as many invisible things are; such as thought, happiness, light, air, truth and love:

"Do you wonder where the fairies are

That folks declare have vanished.
They are very near yet very far,
But neither dead nor banished.
They live in the same green world to-day,
As in by-gone ages olden,
And you enter in by the ancient way
Through the Ivory Gates and Golden.

"'Tis the land of dreams, so fair and bright
That land to many a rover,
But the heart must be pure and the conscience light
That would cross its threshold over.
The worldly man for his joys may yearn,
Though pride and pomp embolden,
But never for him do the hinges turn
Of the Ivory Gates and Golden."

She stopped.

"The other verse, lady! Please,—the other verse!" I pleaded.

But as I turned to her, tears were filling her eyes and overflowing.

"No,—not to-day, Douglas!" she faltered, as she brushed them away almost roughly.

I put my hand on her arm.

"Oh, never mind me," she said. "I'm just a silly. When I was singing, I got to thinking of mother. She taught me that little song when I could only lisp it.

"Now, sit still, lad, and listen. I came here to tell you something—if I can—something I have never told to any one.

"I don't know where to begin, but—but—you have stumbled twice now on to our trouble—mother's trouble, my trouble—and you have been very kind. You have never asked; you have looked the other way. But I feel that you should know what it all means in case you might think something that isn't a bit true."

"Please, Sheila,—don't," I remonstrated. "I don't wish to know. It is none of my business. Really,—I am not inquisitive that way. Please just never mind about it."

"But I must—I must," she insisted. "And don't say a word, because—because—I might get muddled in the telling of it."

And as we sat there, with the wide sea before us, looking away ahead, her strong little hand gripping over mine, as mine rested on her left arm, she told me, and as she told me—despite the sadness of it—there came a singing into the heart of me that had been the missing part of me all the by-gone years.

"Long ago, in Scotland, on the Island of Bute, my mother lived—a little girl, with her father who was a ship owner in Glasgow. My mother's mother died when mother was ever so tiny, and after that mother was all grand-dad had of his own. My grandfather was drowned in a shipping collision during a fog on the Firth of Clyde, when mother was sixteen. She was left under the guardianship of his older brother, a bachelor who was nothing but a brute, although grand-dad could never have known it or he would have ordered things much differently. That uncle of mother's knew that if she did not marry, or if she died, he would get all that grand-dad left to mother, for he was the next in line. And he tried very hard to prevent the one and he almost succeeded in bringing about the other. But he didn't succeed.

"He kept mother as secluded as possible within the grounds of the home on the Island of Bute. He allowed her to meet no young people. But mother had a lover just the same—my father. He wished to marry mother, but her guardian wouldn't hear of it; called it school-boy nonsense. He told them they must never see each other again. But they did. They met in secret—there was no other way, and when people love, Douglas, don't you think they simply must meet in any way they can?"

I was about to answer, but Sheila put her little hand up to my mouth to stay the words.

"Then father used to come across to the neighboring village in a lug-sail to meet mother—as they thought—unknown to any one.

"My daddy was going away to West Africa for two years, and mother and he were afraid for what might happen when he was away, so, just before he went, he came over in his boat and met mother somewhere in the Glen. They could not get married before a minister, for mother was a ward and too young. But that didn't stop them. They married in the way that many Scottish people have married before—they accepted each other, their hands clasped over a Bible, across a stream."

Sheila looked at me searchingly.

"Oh,—in Scotland it means just the same as marrying before a minister," she said.

"Yes, Sheila!—I know it does," I answered.

Still she gazed into my face inquiringly, with her lips trembling and her bosom moving unevenly in her emotion.

"Please, little Sheila,—don't! You are worrying yourself," I exclaimed.

"No,—I wish to tell you; I must tell you, for mother said I might,—that you ought to know."

She averted her look from my face, as if satisfied at last. She then went on with her strange story.

"And they wrote their vows of acceptance in two Bibles, each signing in both books. Mother kept one and father the other, and no one but father and mother knew anything about it.

"And my mother did not see my father for two whole years, but an old lady who lived near by—mother's old nurse—got letters for mother and sent letters from her all the time.

"Then my father came back, bold and defiant, for he had been used to having his own way in the place he had been. But he reckoned without mother's uncle, of whom she had grown terribly afraid—so much so that she would not let my father tell of their Scots marriage.

"My father, as before, was forbidden the house. Then mother and he became desperate—maybe, it is just possible, a little foolish.

"Once, when her uncle was on a business trip to Glasgow and not expected back for several days, they bribed the house-keeper. It was on a wild day of thunder, lightning, rain and wind, but father dared across in his boat and moored boldly at the home wharf. Mother and he spent one wonderful day together at a little shooting lodge on the mountainside. The lodge belonged to a dear friend of father's—the same Hector Gordon mother mentioned to you this afternoon.

"Oh, I heard," she exclaimed, breaking the thread of her story, "although I was not supposed to be eavesdropping.

"Father intended carrying mother away with him the next day, but mother's uncle came back that very afternoon, all unexpectedly, saw the lug sail moored close by and flew into a mad rage when he found that the house-keeper had allowed the lovers to meet.

"He got some of his men together—those who were as unscrupulous as he—and they scoured the countryside. They never would have found them, but some one had been spying and told where they were. And they surrounded the little cottage without ceremony.

"There was a dreadful scene and hard names were exchanged. Mother and father both protested that they were husband and wife, but her uncle just laughed at them and so did the men with him. Mother's guardian struck my father with a horse-whip and my father strangled him and kept strangling him even when four men were struggling to pull him away. At last they got them apart.

"They trussed up my father and pushed him on ahead of them with their guns and cudgels.

"They loosed the boat from her moorings, set my father in it with the ropes entwined about him—not tied but entangled

as if by accident, then pushed the boat out into the Firth, in the rush of the tempest, with sail hoisted, shouting to him to sink or swim.

"And my mother, frantic with grief, saw it all, for her uncle held her by him—the poor worm that he was!

"Yes!—and the storm caught the boat and keeled her over, a hundred yards from the shore. A broken mast and a torn sail floated ashore, but the boat—it sank—and my father, entangled with those ropes so that he had no chance, was never seen again. His body was never found,—and—the people would not believe my mother's word against all those."

Poor little Sheila stopped, tired out and crushed by her feelings. I put my arm about her, heart-hungry and anxious to comfort her—and, for a little while, ah! so little a while, her head lay in the hollow of my shoulder.

But she quickly recovered herself, almost defiant in her endeavors to control her weakness.

"Please, Douglas," she said gently, "you mustn't, for—for—you don't know everything yet.

"My father's name was Douglas too, the same as yours. I would have been called Douglas if I had been a boy, but I wasn't, so I am just Sheila."

She tried to smile through her tears, but it was a sad, little effort.

"And my mother occasionally lives through those terrible times. That explains what you saw long ago—what you saw last night. You see, she was not herself for ever so long after that, and she kept on insisting that Douglas Campbell was her husband, and in her delirium she talked about their vows in their Bibles.

"Grand-dad's brother heard this and made sure work, for when mother grew better and needed the proof of it so much, the Bible could not be found, and the lock of the box she had kept it in was broken. Her uncle destroyed her Bible—the cur—but he got his deserts in due season. He never lived to reap any benefits; not only that, but what interests he had in grand-dad's shipping company went to mother instead of it being the other way about. He took a stroke shortly afterwards and died, and I love to think that possibly this was caused by the strangling my father gave him that afternoon.

"Of course, all the time he just tried to make believe that mother had fancies and talked nonsense. That was another of his cowardly tricks. When mother appealed to others—my father's people—they were very, very good. They searched my father's belongings for the copy of the Bible he was supposed to have had, but it could not be found. They even sent to Africa to find out if by any chance it was in his old quarters. But it never came to light, and his old servants had scattered so. Well! (And the sorrowful smile came to her face again) I'm simply Sheila Gordon Campbell, and my mother is my mother."

Then her spirits revived.

"But we don't care. Most folks try to think the worst of others, anyway, and don't think things can happen in an honest way sometimes. They preach Christianity and they don't know the teenie-weeniest bit about it. But,—we don't care."

Ah, how defiantly she said it!

I caught her by the arms and turned her facing me.

"Sheila, Sheila!" I said.

But she continued her railing, almost as if I too were included.

"I tell you, we don't care. My mother is a good woman. Her life has been made a misery for her because she dared to love too much. What harm did she do? Oh, they don't say anything directly, because we're independent of any of them, but there are other ways. I could just set them out in rows and rows and strangle them one by one."

"Sheila,—you really must not fret yourself in this way," I pleaded.

"Well—you too know now!" she exclaimed defiantly. She was Sheila with the pitchfork again.

"We don't talk much about the things that hurt us. But I had to tell you. I had to—see! I know you won't tell any one—but it will stop you from—from—caring anything about me. You won't say now that I—I'm very, very pretty."

She made to rise, but I drew her down firmly.

"Sheila,—Sheila Gordon Campbell!—I think, always have thought, and always will think,—you are very, very pretty," I said soothingly. And, oh, how I ached to clasp her in my arms! Little, elusive, evanescent Sheila—all fire, and sparkle, and wistfulness!

She ceased to struggle.

"And, Sheila Gordon Campbell,—there is something else. I love you very, very much. I think I have always loved you since the long, long ago."

She turned to me.

"Oh, no, no!" There was fear in her eyes. "You forget that I'm—I'm—I——"

I stayed the words.

"You are not, Sheila! That isn't true! *You* know you are not, and *I* know you are not."

"Ay! but others will say that I am," she argued.

"And I shall be there beside you to push the lie back down their throats every time."

Very quietly she faltered, "Douglas,—Oh, I know you will!"

But she still held me back as if uncertain.

"Listen, little woman! I have no right to talk of love to you;—I am only at the starting point of my endeavors. I have nothing to back me but my strong arms and my foolish head. And,—and—my case is worse than yours—a long way worse. I don't even know who my father and mother were. I'm a waif, a stray, a world's orphan, from God knows where or what."

Her demeanor changed and in a flash she became radiant.

"You don't? You are? Good, oh good!" she cried. She threw her arms about my neck and gave me the kiss I would have dared the universe to get.

And when she pushed me from her again, blushing and confused, she noticed that it was I who was now solemn, for her apparent joy at what for years had been my hidden sorrow, pained me somewhere inside.

"Oh, Douglas!—I am so sorry," she cried. "It was selfish of me, but don't you see what it means to me? Don't—you—see?"

With our arms about each other, I then told her the little I had gathered from dear old Mrs. Berry and from Sam. It did not take me long; there was so little to tell. But when it was told, she sighed and laid her head wearily on my shoulder. And later, when I looked down at her, her eyes were closed and she was peacefully sleeping.

How long she remained that way I cannot say. It was a long time, for I did not wish to disturb her. But when I felt a shiver run through her and I glanced across the sea and found the sun going down as if into the gulf itself, I woke her with a kiss. And all tenderness, all a fluttering softness, she rose with me, and I helped her across the rocks every one of which she knew blindfold.

We crossed the channel in a blaze of color. In the distance from the sea to the mountain-ridge across the gulf, was a bank of purple haze. Above it, a sky of pale, opalescent green, shading to a clear yellow, and higher up still a myriad of puff clouds transfused with a living orange-gold playing over a night-veil of hodden-gray; and that orange-gold began to dart at intervals clear across the dome of the heavens from the west almost to the extreme east. Every mood and fancy of the transformation scene duplicated themselves on the unruffled surface of the sea, and triplicated in the eyes, on the face, and upon the hair of Sheila—my Sheila.

It was an artist's evening, such as the Pacific coast often presents, yet an artist would have shrunk from endeavoring to depict a scene so fantastic, in his fear of being classed a romanticist in colors.

"A fairy's evening, Sheila!" I remarked.

"A fairy's wedding-day," she answered. "And, listen, Douglas!"

Her voice, ever so softly, gave me the third verse of her fairy song;—all that was required to complete the picture.

"While the innocent child with eyes undimmed
As the sky in its blueness o'er him,
Has only to touch its portal's rim
And it opens wide before him.
Some night when the sun in darkness dips
We'll seek that dreamland olden,
And you shall touch with your finger tips
The Ivory Gates and Golden.

"And you shall touch with your finger tips
The Ivory Gates and Golden."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

What a wonderful thing life is to be sure!

Work!—I was enveloped in it and my boom grew under my hands as a mushroom grows in the night. Happiness!—I was bubbling over with it. Peace and contentment!—I hoped and prayed that I might never be disturbed. Love!—I had the world of it, for I had Sheila.

On the Lost Lagoon, when I brought in my logs from the sea, I would sometimes find Sheila, perched precariously on the rocks, waving a handkerchief in welcome to me. In the evenings, when work was over, I would occasionally saunter through the forest to the cottage by the Headland—for I was always made welcome there—and I would listen in a whirl of transport to the music of the dulcimer and the piano played as only Sheila and her mother could play, and to the old Scottish ballads and folksongs that tugged and strained at one's heart-strings even when one did not understand more than half of the words, for, after all, the expression behind the words often conveys the meaning more clearly than do the words themselves.

To me, Sheila was the same little Sheila of old—for she was always different, and for Sheila to be different was—Sheila.

But I seemed to understand, deep down, that this could not last. Life itself does not, so how could any part of it, particularly the pleasantest part of it? But it is only by contrast that we come to measure the depth of our feelings and emotions—pleasure against pain, joy against sorrow, love against hate, hope against despair.

I dreaded the time which must soon come when Sheila would have to leave Coho for a season. Already that time was overdue, through the temporary sickness in Scotland of the lady relative who was to companion Mrs. Campbell during Sheila's absence.

Three times of late I had heard from Sam Berry and, I am ashamed to confess it, not one of those three letters did I answer.

I was living my life to the full and for the moment, yet even then the days were all too short. But by mail one day there came a letter from my old friend, now Inspector Grier, asking if I had forgotten about a business appointment I had made many years before with a certain bank manager regarding a large, sealed envelope which I had left in that gentleman's charge till I should reach the tremendously matured age of twenty-two. Was I aware that the date was now past and that Adamson, the bank manager, had a successor and that this successor had stated he was sick of the sight of that old envelope in the safe and that it was time it was looked after?

On the top of that came another from Sam, telling me that things were about the same on the waterfront; also that the bank officials had been inquiring at him for me; further that I had been away from Vancouver long enough, and folks could be dead and buried in-between times. Why didn't I take a rush trip down anyway?

These might have been ignored, but when an official document from the Commercial Bank almost insisted that I call on them immediately to prove my identity and to get possession of my property, I came to the conclusion that I had better not put off any longer.

I went down to Davidson at the store and told him of my projected trip.

My boom of logs was fast becoming large and valuable, and would soon be ready for shipping. I could arrange about that too when I got to the city.

I was afraid for the safety of the boom in my absence, but, when I mentioned this to Davidson, he told me to rest easy in mind; that it would be safe and intact when I returned, if he had to camp on the end of it with a six-shooter in each hand, day and night in the interval. Old man Hales, a sturdy, reliable neighbor, was at home and not doing much. Davidson said he would get him and one other, as good, to take shifts on watch till my return.

I ran over to tell Sheila of my proposed journey to Vancouver, but I did not say anything to her of the business I had on hand there, for I was never one to tell of my projects or ambitions until they were at least reasonably assured. And, after all, there was little I could tell her.

When I got to Vancouver, I dropped along the wharf to the shed in which Sam was working.

Poor old Sam! He flung his arms about me and hugged me. The dockers were moving about with broad grins on their rough faces, so his demonstration embarrassed me. But when I looked at Sam and saw tears in his eyes, I threw defiance to the dockers and hugged my old foster-father in return. Happy!—he was as happy as a sand-boy.

He struck work right there, and, relegating his duties to some one else, he came with me and we spent the evening and the entire night together.

I told him some things, although there were some things I omitted. He was greatly interested in my boom. He could hardly credit the success I had had, because he had known lots of men who had not been able to make salt to their cabbage at that work. He was anxious and impatient for the termination of my venture, when the boom would be safe in the Inlet at Vancouver and I would be back on the wharf. Somehow, Sam never seemed to doubt that I would pursue my old duties after my "mad notion" had petered out.

We arranged that when the time came, he would hire a tug for me and bring it up himself. Then he and I would bring the boom down in triumph to Hugh Forbes at the Northern Pacific Lumber Mills.

"Well over two hundred logs already, Sam," said I. "When I have three hundred, that should mean close on five thousand dollars' worth of good wood. And yet you talk to me about 'mad notions.'"

Sam just sucked his pipe and grinned in pleasure.

"Oh, son!—I always knew you could make it. But I'm never so certain about you holdin' on to it. You'll be tryin' something bigger with your money, and maybe lose it. Anyway—you'll never have it because it'll be out workin' overtime, most all the time."

Next forenoon I met the Inspector by arrangement and we went down to the bank together about that precious, old, tom-fool envelope.

I satisfied the manager with my signature. Inspector Grier's identification, the mole in the dimple of my left cheek and the tiny brown spot on the blue of the pupil of my right eye, finished the trick. I gave a receipt for my belongings, got possession of the envelope, then sat down in a corner of the bank to see what all the terrible fuss had been about.

The inspector was on duty so he left me to my own devices.

I tore open the outer cover, to find two envelopes inside. One was old and had a red wax seal on each end, unbroken. It was addressed, "Douglas Gordon." I put that one in my pocket.

The other was in my dear, old guardian's shaky handwriting. I tore it open and read the letter. It was all too short.

"MY OWN DEAR BOY, DOUGLAS:

"You will be a grown man when you read this and I shall be gone a long time. I did what I could for you, sonny, but I wasn't able to do very much. In here is a bank-book for you, with all I could spare and save. It is in the Savings Account of the Commercial Bank, in your own name, and it is earning three per-cent all the time. They know all about it at the bank. They told me it would be about thirteen hundred and fifty dollars at the end of ten years.

"Make good use of it, Douglas. Maybe it will furnish your start in some business.

"The sealed envelope that is with this I got when I got you and it has never been tampered with. I hope it does not cause you any sorrow.

"Sam, I suppose, will be gone too when you read this, but, if by chance he isn't, tell him that I always loved him. Help him if you can.

"Good-bye and God bless you, my own, cheery, fair-haired, little sonny-boy.

"SARAH BERRY."

I rose, with everything about me in a mist. Some bank official stopped me.

"Aren't you going to find out about your account, Mr. Gordon?" he inquired.

"Not at present," I said, moving away.

I walked on and on,—out to the park, the buttress of the Port of Vancouver—and I sat down where I faced the gulf and could see the great expanse of water bearing great ships that came gallantly in from the gray mists of the Far Beyond, or sailed defiantly out into those gray mists, fearless of what lay ahead.

I lived over the past, and I thought of the dear, old soul who had taken me into her home—a little waif—had fed and clothed me, had mothered me, had scraped and saved, and even denied herself of the common necessities in order to help me when she would be no more. And why? Just to appease in some measure the mother-love in her great heart that insisted on the right Nature had refused to her, the right to take to her starved bosom some little creature who had been denied that mother-love which she was capable of giving.

When I aroused myself, it was to find that I had barely time to get to the boat which was due to sail for Cohoe early that afternoon. The result was that my good-byes were few and hurried.

I gave Sam Berry his wife's message to read in the quiet of his own home, asking him to preserve it carefully for me.

"But what about the other one, Doug,—the one Sarah was always so anxious over?" he asked curiously.

I stared at him, then clapped my hand to my pocket.

"Man, Sam,—I read mother's first and it made me forget all about this other. I haven't even opened it yet. Well—it can keep now till I get to Cohoe. I'll let you know all about it later. Guess it can't be very important if it could wait twenty-two years."

Sam sucked at his pipe and gave a little, rueful sort of smile.

"Gosh!—there's a heap o' sense in that too, Doug."

The boat I returned on to Cohoe was making a special trip, and it was well on in the evening when it arrived there.

I learned from Davidson that everything was O.K. with my belongings. In fact, the Ganns gang had been up the sound, on business, and were still away.

I was in the quiet of my own front room, sitting in an easy chair before a nice log fire—for even in the summer nights up there a log fire is a bit of a treat, if only to dream at—with my pipe going nicely and my thoughts soaring up the chimney with the flames and sparks, when I decided to break the seal of the envelope in my pocket.

To be strictly truthful, I was somewhat afraid of that envelope, and, apart from deep curiosity, I would almost as soon that it had never existed and that I had been allowed to remain in the freedom of my own imagination in regard to my family history, knowing that family histories are often very unsavory things to probe too deeply into.

But the envelope was there, for weal or for woe, and my hour had come.

When I took the contents from the envelope, a ring dropped on to my knees. I examined it closely. It was a signet ring bearing the crest of a stag's head, with the word "Bydand" beneath.

So far so good:—I was evidently a Gordon all right.

The ring was heavy and well worn. Inside, in faint lettering, as if done by an amateur, I read what might have been "A.G." or "H.G."

There were two documents in the envelope. The first was a copy of the certificate of marriage between Hector Gordon and Lucille Grahame Fraser, celebrated at the church of Saint Ann's, De Roche, Montreal.

The second was a letter, and strange indeed it read to me.

"MY DEAR SON:

"I am broken-hearted. Your mother has died, and we are alone, you and I. Just one short year she and I had to love

in, and now the world is as black for me as it was before I met her.

"Her folks have as long a lineage as mine have. They would not have me as their daughter's husband because one of my ancient grandfathers had the ill-luck to be the youngest instead of the eldest son in the family and, as a result, never got a grip on the lands possessed by his father. So we ran off, your mother and I, and her people failed to find us till it was too late. Then they lost interest and forgot us.

"I am a soldier of fortune. Already I have fought for four countries, but I am always at the call of my own first, and never against her even if she be in the wrong, because, one's country *is never wrong*.

"I have named you Douglas, because my chum in my school-days and in my young manhood was Douglas—Douglas Campbell of Fairlie Mains.

"And now, my boy, I have been called away to fight again. God knows!—I may never come back. After all, I wonder if I do not really wish it that way?

"I dare not take you over the sea with me. The general on whose staff I go this time must not know that I am married and have a son. If he did know, he would have me replaced, for love and war do not mix with him. In any case, what can a warring soldier do with a helpless babe in his scabbard? As well you here as over there.

"I am leaving you in the care of humble, good-living, decent folks. I have paid them with all I have, to care for you till I come back or send for you. If I do not come back or send, you will understand later that I have joined your mother. Nothing short of that would keep me from claiming you as mine.

"We Glenavoch Gordons had much that we called our own at one time, but dissipation, speculation and misfortune for many generations played havoc, until little remained. Your great-grandfather was like his forebears in many respects, but he wisely provided that the sins of the father should not visit the children. He had no estates, but he had money—made in speculation as others of the family had lost it. And so it is, that when an eldest son of a Glenavoch Gordon attains the age of twenty-two, he can claim ten thousand pounds as his birthright—to spend wisely or foolishly as he sees fit. This right is yours.

"Your grandfather spent his portion in a month. Mine lasted one year:—so, you will notice, we are improving.

"When you can, lay claim to your portion by letter or in person, through Lovat, Ballantyne, Hackworth and Lovat, Barristers-at-Law, Princes Street, Edinburgh.

"The Gordons of Glenavoch are rovers—sea-rovers, desert rangers, jungle wanderers, all rolling stones. I wonder, Douglas, laddie, what mixture the ages have concocted for your portion of the drink of life? Whatever it may be, remember you are first, last and all the time—a gentleman.

"Fine would I like to span those twenty-two years to see you stand four-square to the world, on your own feet—as I know you will, if only through the goodness, ay, godliness, of your lady-mother that flows in your blood to quench a little the fires that have always burned in ours. One thing is certain, laddie, you will have had nothing of the 'silver spoon' to spoil you in your youth.

"Good-bye, son of mine! Forgive, if you can, a father who has not proved a father to you.

"HECTOR GORDON."

I read that document again and again and as I read and the truth of it sank in, I began to realize the cause of all the unrest and tumult that seemed ever to bubble and boil within me.

I could not rest—I could not remain indoors. I was stifling. During the night, from a maze of thought, I awoke at intervals to my surroundings. First, I was on the shore road, walking hard beyond the village of Blackwater. Again, I was sitting on the rocks of the Headland, staring at the sea, my head upon my upturned hands and my elbows on my knees. When dawn came, I was in my motor-boat miles out in the gulf, beyond the Triplets, without the faintest recollection of what I had done to get there. It was as if my body and my mind were acting quite independently of each other, coming together now and then as casual acquaintances might do.

But with the coming of dawn, these parts of me took up their old relationship, with the mind in command, with the shock and unrest gone and an uncontrollable desire in me for rest and sleep.

I ran for the Isle of the Lost Lagoon and beached, then, under a rock I lay down and curled myself up in the blanket I always carried in my motor-boat, and slept for several hours.

When I awoke the sun was high and the air was warm. I yawned and stretched myself. As I sprang up I felt as Father Adam must have felt when he first became conscious of the glow of life and of the beauty of Eden.

Miles from anywhere, I was the last of the humans, alone on the Universe.

I stripped off and let the warm air play upon my body, then I plunged from a high, jutting rock straight down into the pale-green pool twenty feet below.

When at last I started back for home, it came to me that Sheila was probably still unaware of my return. I decided to surprise her, so I ran in by the Campbell slip. But there was no surprising Sheila. She and her mother were seated on the veranda that faced seaward.

"And what luck on your trip, Douglas?" asked Mrs. Campbell, when I got seated on the top step of the veranda, at their feet.

"Good-luck or ill-luck, it still remains to be seen," I answered.

But her eyes were quick.

"But what is this?"

She bent over, raised my hand and examined the ring on my finger.

"The Stag's Head! Bydand!" she murmured, looking hard into me as if to read my mind.

I took the envelope from my pocket and handed it to her.

"You too, Sheila,—you may read," I said, in high spirits.

Sheila rose and went behind her mother's chair, to read over her shoulders, and I left them to the documents for I suddenly remembered that the tide was running out and my boat would be aground in half an hour if I did not tie her up nearer to the end of the slip.

When I came back, Sheila's mother was alone. She rose and placed her hands on my shoulders. She stood straight, almost as tall as I, and she was very beautiful in her sad, mother's way.

"So you are Hector Gordon's son," she said quietly, "and you are called Douglas after my Douglas. Let me look at you again, laddie. Let me look at you."

After her scrutiny, she seemed satisfied.

"Yes,—there is no doubt of it," she continued. "You are of the same family. I seemed to notice the resemblance the first time we met. Don't you remember, I spoke to you of it?"

She kissed me on the cheek.

"Did you know my mother?" I asked, after a time, for I so wanted to know some one who had known her.

"No, Douglas! I know of her family. They live in the extreme north and a long way from the Isle of Bute. I was not even aware, until I heard of the runaway marriage, that Hector Gordon knew any of them. Of course, there was a lot I did not know, was not permitted to know, in those days. But I did know your father, and I thought much of him, but he was seldom for long in any one place. He was a typical Glenavoch Gordon," she smiled, "a rolling stone, gay to folly, but ever a brave, manly gentleman."

Mrs. Campbell told me much that I was glad to know of this strange family and this soldier father of mine, and I listened till I began to weary of genealogy and lineage and to crave for the sight of two sparkling eyes.

"What has happened to Sheila?" I asked.

"Why,—I forgot about her, Douglas. She must have gone when I became so engrossed in the papers. She can't be far away. Off you go and find her."

But I failed to find her. She was not in the house. I searched the orchard and the fairy glade in the forest where the spring of water was. I scanned the beaches and I scrambled over the rocks of the Headland—all to no purpose.

I thought it strange. But, of course, Sheila was strange herself. That was one of her great charms. A creature of whims and fancies, all of which I loved in her, she was so much Sheila and so little anyone else.

"Well, little lass!" I thought, "if that is how you feel to-day, we will postpone our talk till to-morrow."

I went back to the slip, started up the engine and made for Cohoe.

When almost there, I saw Sheila standing on the topmost rock of the point, facing in my direction. I waved my handkerchief. She did not respond. I swung my boat round, as if to return to the Headland, but as soon as I did so she turned, jumped from rock to rock and disappeared, so I just completed my circle in the bay and continued for the wharf at Cohoe.

"Strange!" I thought. But I had no real misgivings. Sheila had given me her love, spontaneous, whole-hearted, with all the delight of one who took pleasure in the giving, and I had given her mine, such as it was, withholding no part.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

My castles in the air came tumbling about my ears and my fairy dream vanished into the ether whence it had come.

It does not take much to set a young man dreaming dreams, and fortunately it takes little to jolt him back to the realities of the fight for life going on about him.

Once more I had become Gordon the worker, who gloried in the interesting strength of his body; Gordon the ambitious, who meant from then, on, to go heart and soul into the carving of a future for himself even if he had to do it with his bare fists. I became Gordon the rover, who cared as little for the fifty thousand dollars that might be his for the asking as he cared for the spark of his life whether it glowed on or smoldered out; Gordon the reckless, who would have welcomed war or any forlorn hope as a path to fame or as a means of exit. Heads or tails; win or lose;—it was all the laugh anyway. At a little over twenty-two, I became Gordon the pessimist.

"Never mind, Douglas, lad,—you'll get over it." So said the voice of Experience. But who, at twenty-two, wishes to listen to the voice of old fogey Experience or, for that matter, the voice of any one else. Besides, Experience had never been in love with Sheila and then been cast aside in the passing of a night.

It had come sharp and sudden: a note left for me at Davidson's.

"DOUGLAS,

"With all my heart I congratulate you on your good fortune. It was bound to come that way for you, for you are one of Good Fortune's chosen. I am going to Scotland in a few weeks' time. Before I go, I wish to tell you—I do not love you. It was foolish of me to have you think that I did. Why!—I can't love anyone. Just because I'm me, I suppose! Anyway, you know we agreed that it was 'just in fun.'

"Please don't try to see me; that would only hurt. Go out into the big world and win. Some day you will meet some lady who will be better suited to you in every way.

"Good-bye, and good luck!

"Forgive me if, in my stupidity and selfishness, I have allowed you to misunderstand me.

"SHEILA GORDON CAMPBELL."

Try as I liked, I could think of no reason for this. I had done nothing that I knew of, in word, thought or deed, to hurt her.

When I was absolutely penniless and without a knowledge of my antecedents, she might have had an excuse for treating me so lightly, for thinking me an adventurer; but, in the new light of things, such an excuse was less permissible.

In a moment of rashness I had a desire to go over to the Headland and seek a fuller explanation, but my saner minutes advised me against this, for I knew that it was ever a lady's privilege to change her mind; it was in a woman's nature to be flighty; to want to try her wings, as it were, in whatever atmosphere might be available for the purpose. There were times when a woman insisted on being amused. That someone might be hurt in providing the entertainment was unfortunate perhaps, but really all in the game. And—we had agreed, of course, that it was to be "just in fun."

Great fun!

So I thought in those mad, wild, devil-may-care days; yet deep down in my heart a voice kept asserting:—

"That is not Sheila's way. That is not Sheila."

But for all its asserting, I refused to listen—or fancied that I refused.

Wild days!—when I tore into the storm-swept seas with my tiny boat and almost leapt from crest to crest of the great waves that rolled up the gulf. Calm, burning days!—when the dazzle of the sun on the seas left me blind and stupid. Wet days!—when the sky came down and met the sea, and both seemed one. Every day a day of labor; hard, pitiless, grinding, but welcome, as they kept me busy and freed me from overmuch thinking.

And every day added to my quickly-growing boom.

For me, the zest had gone out of the game; in fact the game was no more. But three hundred logs I had planned to have and three hundred logs I would have before I pulled out from Cohoe bay, never to return, leaving behind me vain regrets and foolish memories.

It was the last stage; another section to my boom and I would have seven—a boom such as I had dreamed of but had feared to contemplate as a fact accomplished.

Then! Well,—it would be anything, anywhere, after that. The world was large. I owed obligation and allegiance to no one. I was strong, I was young. The Glenavoch Gordons were rovers:—desert rangers, jungle wanderers, rolling stones. I would be out to live my life to the full and—"just in fun."

But, after all, Cohoe was a very little settlement. My own way from the gulf to the wharf was in part Sheila's way from Cohoe to her home by the Headland. Sometimes we passed on the water. I sensed that rather than saw it, for I circled wide at the first glimpse of her boat, and I never looked to her side of the sea till I knew she was gone.

For some weeks I had stopped using the Isle of the Lost Lagoon as my half-way mooring quarters of my daily toll of logs, for the tugs were now bringing their booms from another direction and stray logs seemed to have acquired the habit of drifting nearer to the shore than formerly and mostly a mile or two past the Headland. As a result, when I captured a log from the sea, I just ran it into some convenient shelter along the shore, then picked it up later on my way home, towing a string of three or four directly to my boom at the head of Cohoe bay.

One evening I was creeping along with three logs in tow. The work had been hard and a nasty wind had bothered from off-shore, so I was later than usual. It was growing dusky and a heat haze was beginning to rise from the sea as I passed Campbell's slip.

Someone pushed off from there in a row-boat. I thought at first that it was Sheila, but was surprised to find that it was her mother. I had never seen her in a row-boat before. I waited, and when she drew close I saw that she was greatly agitated.

"Douglas,—you haven't seen Sheila this afternoon?" Her voice was disconcertingly solemn.

"Why, no! Is there anything wrong?"

"Oh, I don't know what to think. I am terribly distressed. I would not ask you—I would not trouble you—but she has not been herself of late. She seems worried and listless, as if something, that she won't tell me of, were heavy on her mind."

"Yes!—but what is it now?" I asked.

"She went out in the other boat at noon, to fish, in the direction of the islands. She took Julius with her. She said she would be back in an hour or two. She hasn't come back, and it is six hours now since she went off. Julius has just come in, soaking wet, as if he had been a long time in the water."

Mrs. Campbell burst into tears.

"Oh,—I am so afraid, for there seems always to be evil in the sea for our family, although none of us seem to dread it enough to keep away from it. I am afraid that she may have met with a mishap of some kind."

I tried my best to calm her, but I was now uneasy myself and consequently not very convincing in what I said.

"But she can't drown, Mrs. Campbell. Sheila could swim twice the distance between here and the islands, if put to it."

"Yes,—I know. But you can't tell—she may have been hurt—she—she—. Oh, if only the dog had not come back alone!"

The good lady broke down completely.

"Now, don't you worry! Anything simple and ordinary could account for this," I said. "Her boat could have commenced to leak, causing her to run ashore on one of the islands. It could have drifted away after she had landed, for she generally does land on one of the islands when she goes out there. That's it!" I insisted enthusiastically. "Sure as preaching! And I'll bet she sent the dog across to let you know that she was in difficulties."

"Now you go right back home and remain as quiet as possible. I'll run into the bay with these logs. It will be quicker for me to do so than to beach them here. I'll go right out from there, across to the Triplets, and I'll have her back here in an hour or so or my name's not Douglas Gordon."

The very knowledge that some immediate action was about to be taken had the effect of pacifying her fears, so I succeeded in getting her to return on shore in greater composure than when she came out.

"Now, I won't be back till I find her, and no matter how late we are, we'll be back certain," I shouted as I hurried away.

In half an hour I was running across the narrowest strip between Coho and the islands in my motor-boat.

I was not by any means at ease in my mind about Sheila. She was far too experienced a sea-woman to come to grief in these waters in such easy weather, and unless she had hurt herself on the rocks on one of the islands, the indications were that some outside agency was at work delaying her in getting home as she had planned.

I circled the first island, ran in and examined it carefully. That was merely the matter of ten minutes, for the islands after all were little more than stretches of rock and sand thrown up out of the sea. I found no trace of Sheila there.

I looked over the second island in the same way, with the same result. It was then that I caught sight of something that made my pulses quicken. Away over on Keats Island—by far the largest island anywhere near and extending for several miles in an oblong—I saw an empty rowing boat bobbing on the low-lying rocks against the shore. It was Sheila's boat. I knew its lines and the color of it. I sped over. The boat was empty but for the oars which were lying across the seats. The mooring rope was trailing in the water. The wind and tide were moving directly on-shore at that point.

I felt reassured. Sheila then had landed on her favorite of the Triplets, the third island, the boat had been loosely moored by her and had drifted across the span of two hundred yards of water to Keats Island. I would surely find her on the third island.

But then, I thought, Sheila is a good swimmer and, rather than wait on indefinitely, would certainly swim across to the boat.

Well—I would soon find out.

I beached her boat securely and made for Sheila's Fairy Isle. I scanned the rocks as I had done the others, but I saw no sign of her. Surely if she were there she would make some sign!

My pulses began to quicken again: this time with a feeling of dread. I tried hard to shake off that feeling and to deny the possibility of mishap of any kind to Sheila, but my thoughts did not seem to clear. I grounded on that isle of happy memories at the beach where I had grounded that day of days when Sheila and I made love to each other—"just in fun." That seemed but yesterday. How different everything then from now!

I went over every part of Sheila's Isle. I scrambled the rocks to the hidden seat that looked away to Vancouver Island. Sheila was nowhere about. I hallooed. Not a sound came back but the screams of the alarmed seagulls.

Filled afresh with fear and dread, I examined the rocks and the pools, looking for something I hoped I might never find.

She was not there.

I left in a hopeless despair. It seemed to me now that the last chance for her safety was removed.

Away out, another mile to sea, was the Isle of the Lost Lagoon, looking like a long black cloud on a gray sea, for the night was fast closing in and the moon had not shown herself as yet.

Surely she could never be there! With the wind and tide as they had been her boat could hardly have drifted so far in the short time, nor could it have drifted in that direction exactly. It would have been blown past the far side of Keats Island.

It seemed to me foolish to try, but I had promised Sheila's mother that I would not return without Sheila, and promises were and are made to be kept.

When I drew out from the Fairy Isle I kept my engine shut off and used my oars. Why I did so I cannot for the life of me explain. It would have been easier and much faster for me to travel with the motor, but some premonition, or hunch, or

internal prompting; second sight—call it what you care—advised me that the quiet way this time would prove to be the better way.

I pulled across quickly, but when I got to the Isle of the Lost Lagoon, it had already become dark, with a full moon just beginning to show through the blackness of a cloud-ridden sky.

I ran in on the sands at the head of the lagoon. As I jumped out it seemed to me that there were signs of a boat having beached there before me. I did not move very quietly, for I had no great thought of danger; at the same time the noise of the waves booming on the caverns of the rocky foreland of the island smothered any noise I might have made.

I struck a match and bent down to examine the wet sand. There were footmarks plainly visible on the moist, claylike surface—large footprints of at least two people, but no sign of any that might be recognized as Sheila's.

I put the match out quickly and made for the shelter of some rocks. I strained my ears to catch any sounds, but none came to me. Cautiously I crept along, almost on my hands and knees, on toward the centre of the island. I do not know what I expected to find. I do not know that I expected anything. But suddenly every nerve and fiber of my being grew taut and on the alert.

A man's voice came to me on the breeze. It was low—almost suppliant in tone. But I was unable to catch the words.

As I crept forward, the moon began to sail up over the clearing sky. It aided me greatly as I wriggled along the rough way. I knew every inch of that Isle of the Lost Lagoon. In the centre of it there was a clump of arbutus and dwarfed firs within a grassy hollow, which was broken here and there with smooth boulders and surrounded on every side, like an amphitheatre, by great walls of rocks down which one had to scramble to get inside.

Intuitively, I made for this place. It was an ideal camping ground, sheltered from the wind and cut off on every side from external view.

Again came the voice, but this time there was no mistaking whose voice it was. I had heard it before, on several occasions. What was more to the point, I caught what the voice was saying.

"Why don't you speak to me? Got the sulks, eh! You've shouted and screamed aplenty, and it hasn't brought you anything. Now you won't speak when it might bring you something. There's nobody here but you and me, and there won't be anybody here till the morning."

I clambered up and over the rocks cautiously till I was high above the surrounding hollow; till I could see down into it through a cleft of rock as I lay flat on my stomach on a ledge.

Glory be! Sheila was there and, so far, safe. Standing beside her was Harry Ganns.

Sheila had her head on her hands in an attitude of despondency. Ganns, as always, was arrogant, picturesque and easy in bearing. He was dressed to perfection:—that was always one of his weaknesses.

As my finger-nails bit into the flesh of the palms of my hands, I thought of what that perfection in dress would look like when I was through with him, if only he should prove to be unarmed.

I was sorely tempted to jump down without ceremony, but my position was an awkward one; besides I had a mind to fathom what the game meant—so I beat back my desire for quick action.

"Sulking won't bring you anything with Harry Ganns, little girl. Why don't you just kiss and be friends," went on Ganns, sitting down beside her on a boulder.

"Go way, you beast! You boulder!" cried Sheila, edging back.

They were not twenty feet from where I lay stretched against a rock. In the moonlight I could even see Harry Ganns smile.

"Ladies shouldn't call men beasts and bounders on their wedding night, pretty little Sheila. Now,—I told you once before, didn't I, that Harry Ganns always gets what he wants in the long run? And now you're here, and I've got you—for keeps. Pshaw!—what's the matter with me anyway? Ain't I as good as any other fellow and a darned sight better than

most? I have plenty of money. I can buy you a good time."

"You hound!—buy me a good time indeed!" she flared up. Then she spoke hopelessly. "Oh, please go away! I detest the sight of you. Don't talk to me any more. If you want to, kill me and be done with it."

Again he laughed.

"Kill? No, siree! Just love you, Sheila!" He caught her hands as she sprang up, then he held her out from him.

I was crouched and poised, feeling as a cougar must feel when about to spring. I seemed void of soul and mind: all body, ferocious, murderous.

"You won't have me, huh? Well, you've got me, pretty eyes. Nobody knows where you are. You just came and your boat drifted away and left you—see! We're going to be here all night, just you and me, Sheila, and you can't get away. My man will come and take me off early in the morning before anybody thinks of coming here to look for you. And nobody'll know anything about this—just you and me. And I can say you're crazy and it's all lies whatever you say, afterwards. You'll want Harry Ganns to marry you then, little woman. And perhaps I will too—but just perhaps."

Sheila sprang at him angrily and beat at him with her little fists on his face, his chest, anywhere she could reach. But he simply stood and grinned at her in what looked like good-natured tolerance.

When her energy was expended, she sank back on her stone seat.

"Now," said Ganns, "five minutes, little Sheila, to make up your mind about it. Say, 'Yes' and I'll run you home within an hour—for I know you'll keep your promise—and we'll get married in real first-class style. I've only to light my lamp and swing it in a certain way to have my man here. After five minutes, little girl, well—we'll get married anyway,—see! Harry Ganns always gets what he wants."

He laughed as he took out his watch and turned his back on her.

As he did so, I pulled off my ring—my father's signet ring—and, aiming it carefully, I tossed it right into her lap, almost into her hands. She jumped nervously, then grasped it with a quick intuition. In stealth she glanced at it, and the change that came into her face is one I shall never forget. Hope, understanding, strength, renewed courage, all showed there.

She looked upward in my direction, but I made no motion. She thrust my ring down into her bosom and dropped quickly back into her old attitude.

Five minutes seemed a long time in passing, but it went by at last.

Harry Ganns turned, placing his watch in his vest pocket. He was still smiling but there was also an anxious look in his face; and even now I am convinced that he loved Sheila dearly in his own, forceful, brutish way and that he would far rather have won her by gentleness and persuasion than have had to try to get her by force.

"Time up, little woman! What's it to be?"

Sheila did not move.

He went over to her, pulled her hands from her head and tilted her chin.

"Better say, 'Yes.'"

She sprang up with a blaze of passion in her eyes.

"No, no! A thousand times, no! You low, miserable coward—to think you can win a woman's regard in this way!"

His teeth closed.

"All right! Now we'll see who is to be master." He made to grasp her. She sprang back.

"Douglas! Douglas!" Her cry rang loud and clear, and it sprang me into electric action. At a leap I was over that fifteen feet of rock and confronting Ganns, as Sheila dropped insensible to the turfy grass.

Ganns, cool-headed and seldom showing surprise, staggered in amazement. But he recovered quickly and the old, cynical smile dawned once more.

"Huh! So the ghost has come to the feast! I——"

I smashed that sentence back down his throat with a force that broke his front teeth and ripped my knuckles to the bone.

Maybe for me to hit him so quickly and so unexpectedly was taking an advantage; maybe it was fair enough. I was not too fastidious about fighting rules just then; but, fair or not, I never regretted striking that first blow, for it did much toward settling the ultimate issue, as I am sure it jarred and strained him in some manner that affected his movements throughout the entire struggle that followed.

But for that first blow, I fear my narrative would never have been written in the first person.

Ganns came back at me like a whirlwind, and we fought and smashed blindly inside that circle of rocks in the only way I knew he and I would fight if ever we got to it. I had always known there would be no science, no niceness, no quarter.

It would be foolish for me to attempt to describe all that happened there—with Sheila, half-dazed but conscious of what was going on, cowering in a corner in fear.

Much of our struggle I was unconscious of; only points, here and there, come back to me as I write.

When one of us missed the other, the solid rock as often as not stopped the blow; heads and bodies were battered and bruised, and rubbed against the rough surface of those walls of rocks; blood flowed freely; muscles were torn from bones and bones were cracked and twisted in such fashion that in weaker men they must surely have been broken.

Not a word passed between us. Words were unnecessary; would have been all unheeded. We had gone far past that stage.

The moon was high above us and grinned down on us with a yellow light that filled our cockpit.

On and on we struggled, blows smashing on flesh with dull, numbing thuds but without causing pain, for when the blood is up and the passions are high, the body becomes chloroformed against pain and, at the worst, only one pain is felt at a time—the most severe one—and with me that was a gripping ache to kill Harry Ganns.

It was a fight to exhaustion. Not once, but many times, we drew back, panting, gasping for air and for a moment's respite, only to rush in again at each other with greater ferocity than ever.

Oh, I was strong! But Ganns was strong too, and it was gradually being borne in on me that he was the stronger. I could feel our contest working to a duel between that extra strength of his and my edge of greater vitality. There was no liquor in my blood; there were no nights of dissipation behind me to dull the keenness that this—the greatest test of endurance I was ever put to—called for.

But for the ever recurring thought of Sheila's danger should I be beaten, I am sure I would have let go the faint hold I had at times of my slipping senses.

Then came the happier thought—Harry Ganns was also weakening. There was not the same sting in his blows, not the same driving power behind them, not the same quickness to them. What he could stand up to—so could I.

With our clothes torn almost to ribbons, we were gasping in a stolen breathing spell, when he whipped round suddenly and scrambled up the rocks out of the cockpit and into the open.

I could not fully realize for the moment what he meant by this. Was it the advantage of being above me if I attempted to follow him? Was it more space in which to fight? Was it the boat, so that he could leave us and compromise us in the eyes of Cohoe?

I dashed to the side of our arena which was nearest to the boat, so that if that were his objective I would beat him to it. As I did so, I had to pass close to Sheila.

"Make for the boat," I gasped. "Get ready to pull out! He may beat me,—God only knows!"

Whether or not she understood, I had no time to make certain, but I had at least warned her.

I clambered up the shelving rocks and met Ganns scrambling round to my side.

It was the boat after all that he had designs on.

I laughed to myself. So he *was* weakening! He wanted to get away! What a reviving thought!

I blocked him, and we renewed our fight over the rough ground. It was now no longer a stand-up encounter. We were too exhausted for that. The final phase had been reached and we were in deadly grips, over and over and over.

I caught the flash of Sheila's bright clothing as she passed us and made for the boat at the head of the lagoon.

She had understood me.

As Ganns and I rolled, the ground seemed suddenly to give way beneath us. We fell together. It was only a drop of a few feet on to a lower level of the island, but luck was with me and Harry Ganns was undermost. I could hear him grunt as his back struck on the flat edge of rock and the wind got knocked out of him with my weight on top.

His grip loosened and I seized my advantage, clutching him by the throat with both hands. I was not sane then. How could I be after what I had suffered and gone through at his hands? With my knee on his chest, I simply clutched and squeezed with all the energy I could muster. He roused himself and tried to wrench my hands away, then his grip relaxed and his eyes began to bulge.

As I continued to throttle him, his jaws opened like the gaping mouth of an ugly cod-fish freshly out of the water. His face grew livid, but still I had no qualms of conscience regarding him. Even when the thought flashed through my mind that he was dead, I did not seem to want to let go.

But gradually the presence of someone else, the pleading and beseeching, worked through the barrier of hatred and passion that encased me.

"Douglas,—don't—don't!" came a piteous voice. "You must not kill him! He is beaten—surely that is enough! Oh, Douglas,—don't—don't! I tell you—don't!"

She tried to insert her fingers between mine; and she interposed herself between Ganns and me. I began to wonder in a crazy way if he meant something to her after all.

"Think what it means! Not to him, Douglas,—but to you—to you; and—and—to me!"

I laughed and elbowed her aside.

Ah, poor little Sheila! How that laugh must have hurt!

With a cry she darted away from me, while still I gripped at the throat in my hands, for I was mad with the lust of the fight. And out of it all there came a great and sudden noise, like the crash of near thunder. It drove in on me until it seemed visible, whirling in great circles, drawing closer and closer, then returning to its natural state—sound,—tapering off to a buzz, intermingled with yet another sound—the moaning of some woman in distress.

The life oozed out of me and I knew no more.

CHAPTER TWENTY

When I awoke to consciousness it was to a feeling that only my mind was alive; that in reality I consisted of nothing else but mind. I tried to move, but I seemed to be bound hand and foot. I lay still, then tried again. I moved, and devoutly wished that I had not done so, for the pain of moving drew a groan from me and made my forehead moist.

I opened my eyes. The light hurt, so I closed them again; then, ever so long afterwards, when I felt something cool on my forehead, I opened them once more.

A kindly face was bending over me—the face of my good, old friend, Mrs. Davidson. She smiled.

"That's a great boy!" she said. "You're doing nicely. Rest quiet now!"

I tried to ask her something, but all I could say was "Sheila."

"She's all right,—all right! Now don't talk!"

At that moment, I could not have talked had I tried to, but an hour or two later I made up for it.

I could see that I was in my own front room; that it was daylight and that my window-blind was drawn down.

Mrs. Davidson fed me with soup, and I began to feel better.

Then, as I lay in a semi-stupor, someone came in, stooped over me, seemed satisfied and went out again.

How he could possibly feel satisfied it beat me to fathom. Lying with a head and mind in one place and a body, all tied up, in another, with no connection between—I myself was far from feeling satisfied.

When Mrs. Davidson came to my bedside again I was wide awake. I turned my head to her.

"Hullo!" I said, trying to smile.

She put her fingers to her lips.

"Mrs. Davidson, if you don't speak, I'm going to, or I'm going to get up," I whispered.

"Doctor Shaw says you are to be kept very quiet."

"Hang Shaw!" I exclaimed.

"What happened to me?" I asked next.

"You must ask Sheila Campbell that! I'm not supposed to know. Nobody knows but her, and you, and Harry Ganns."

"How am I to ask her?"

"Easy enough! She has been here day and night almost."

"Day and night! For goodness sake!—how long have I been here?"

"Two days and two nights! This is the third day. Now, you must be quiet and sleep again."

"Is Harry Ganns alive?" I asked, ignoring her admonition.

"Yes!—and out about since yesterday. His kind are hard to kill, fortunately for you."

"Is the boom safe?" I continued with some anxiety.

"Quite safe! My William has had a watch on it all the time."

I was satisfied, so I lay trying to raise some connections with the different, distant parts of my anatomy. It was hard work but I succeeded:—one arm, then the other; one leg, then the other; till even my toes came to attention at my command, assuring me that it was not so bad as it might have been—none of me was amissing.

I must have slept after that, for when I opened my eyes again, Sheila—shy, quiet and ill at ease—was sitting by my bedside. Her hand was on my brow and as I awoke she drew it away quickly.

"Sheila," I said quietly.

Tears were in her eyes.

"Oh, I am so glad that you are going to get better."

"Going to? I am better. I'll be up to-morrow."

For answer, she dropped on her knees at my bedside and buried her face in the white counterpane.

I put my hand to her hair. It pained me more than my body bruises to see her troubled.

"Please, Sheila," I begged.

"Oh, I didn't know! I didn't intend to hurt you so. I might have killed you—I thought I had killed you. Won't you please forgive me? And you saved me from him——"

I thought at first she had reference to her letter to me and to our estrangement. But then I seemed to sense that there was something else. I was bewildered.

"Sheila, you must tell me what has happened. I am all at sea still in this affair. Did Ganns' men attack us?"

She raised her tear-stained face. "Oh, n-no, Douglas! I—I did."

"You, Sheila?"

"Yes! I was afraid you were going to kill him. You wouldn't let go. You would have killed him too: I could see it in your face. I—I hit you on the head with a chunk of driftwood."

I laughed until I groaned with pain.

"Please don't laugh," she admonished with a serious face. "Doctor Shaw said the day before yesterday that you might die."

"But how did you get me here, Sheila?"

"Oh, I don't know,—I just dragged you to the boat and got you in. Then I ran you over. I—I was terribly afraid."

I placed my hand over hers, but she drew hers away. Then I noticed my signet ring on my own finger.

"You put it back there, Sheila?" I asked, pointing to it.

"Yes,—that is where it belongs, but it kept me from dying just then."

"And Harry Ganns—did you bring him over too?"

"No,—no! I left him there after I knew he was coming to."

"Bravo!" I cried.

"Hush! His man went over for him early next morning and found him, badly battered up but little the worse for his experience.

"He sent me a letter yesterday, begging forgiveness. He says no one knows but we three. He says he never talks; that his man daren't say a word of the little he knows; that he will never molest me in any way again."

"Tell me, Sheila, how they got you over there."

"There isn't much to tell, but I'll tell you if you promise to be quiet. I fished a little round the Triplets, then I went over to The Lost Lagoon. Julius was with me. When we were there, Ganns and his man came on us suddenly. They must have

been watching me: I guess from somewhere on Keats Island. Ganns seemed to know just what he was going to do, as if he had everything arranged. When I quarrelled with them, Julius attacked Ganns' man—a fellow they call Slick, who goes out with Zeke Ganns. They threw a sack over the dog's head and bundled him into their boat. This man went off with both boats, leaving Harry Ganns and me on the island. From what I hear, Julius must have got free in the boat, caused trouble and got himself pitched overboard for his pains. As you know, he got home, and that is what worried mother so."

She stopped suddenly.

"And what else, Sheila?" I asked.

"That is all, Douglas. You—you saved me from the rest."

"Does Harry Ganns know that you—that you beat me up when he couldn't?" I asked, changing the subject a little.

Sheila rose in mock dignity. "Certainly not!"

I caught at her hand.

"Douglas—please!" she remonstrated.

"But you *do* love me, Sheila;—not 'just in fun,'—but really and truly?"

She seemed perturbed.

"Unless you behave I am afraid I won't be able to come back any more."

I dropped back on my pillow.

"But you will come back, Sheila?" I entreated in a whisper.

"Yes,—I'll come back," she answered, but with no promise as to when. And she left me.

Life was strong, vitality recharged quickly, bed was no place for a young man with worlds to conquer.

Next morning I wired to Sam Berry to bring a hired tug and a boom-man to tow my logs to Vancouver, for the boom was complete—at least, as complete as I intended making it.

Despite Mrs. Davidson's protests and prosy old Doctor Shaw's threats, I got up, dressed, and spent the forenoon on the veranda enjoying the prospect out over the glorious bay and away to the Triplets which lay like battle-ships at anchor on the sun-kissed gulf.

I was feeling at peace with the world, when a familiar figure came slowly down the road. I was elated to notice that he limped as he came and that there was little buoyancy to his carriage. For the time being, life seemed something of a burden to have to carry about with him.

I got to wondering if his tongue had by any possibility lost its buoyancy in sympathy with the rest of him. But I did not remain long wondering on that score, for he was a curious mixture—afraid of nothing and never put out or off his poise.

He saw me, came over and climbed on to the veranda beside me.

He was cool as ever, but his face looked ugly. It was badly marked and swollen. He held out his hand to me, which I ignored.

"Sorry, old man!" he said. "Hope I didn't hurt you too bad!"

"Thanks!" I replied. "You didn't hurt me at all. You are slowly recovering yourself, I notice."

His lips parted in a grin, showing the mess I had made of his front teeth with my first blow. It made me feel almost sorry, because I had always considered him a handsome-looking fellow.

He must have sensed my thoughts. He put up his hand quickly to cover his mouth.

"Yes, darn you!—you spoiled a good set of teeth, all right. I'm going to Vancouver to get that fixed.

"Say, Gordon!—you're a mighty good scrapper. Hope you don't bear any grudge. But—why didn't you tell me long ago that you weren't a customs officer? Might have saved all this!"

"Why should I tell you what I wasn't? How am I to read your thoughts?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It wasn't a very gentlemanly thing to do to leave me out there all night on the island. I caught a brute of a cold over it."

"The last word that should pass your lips, Ganns, is the word, 'gentleman,'" I retorted.

He seemed a little abashed.

"Yes,—I guess so! But we won't scrap over that.

"I told you once that if ever you got that boom together, you'd never get it away from Cohoe,—didn't I?"

"You did,—but when I am good and ready, I am going to get it away from Cohoe, just the same."

"Sure you are! I'm through. You worked hard for that boom and you deserve it. Harry Ganns doesn't have to go log-fishing for a living. You know, I thought the logs were just your excuse, when you came up here."

I did not answer him.

"Say, Gordon!—you're the kind of man I've always had a hankering to be—a kind of natural gentleman; but, somehow, I've never been able to catch on to it and they don't teach it in the correspondence schools. There's something in my make-up that won't let me. I guess you've got to be born to it, so I'm going to quit trying and stay Harry Ganns from now on.

"You've got your boom, Gordon,—and I guess you'll get the young lady too. She's your kind anyway. I'm through there too. I'm a bit of a shyster with women. I wish you luck, old man!"

He held out his hand again. I still ignored it.

"You won't shake, huh!"

For a second, fire flashed in his eyes. "By gosh!—I believe we'll fight it all over again, you and me, if we don't keep apart."

He caught his right hand in his left and shook it. "So long, Gordon! You just beat me—and no more. Pleasant dreams and quick recovery!"

For a long time after he left, I sat and thought of him as he was, and of little Greensweater of my boyhood days, and I wondered if it would have been different with him if he had had a real chance. I had tried to be friends with him in the old days, but it evidently was not to be. Now, with the span of years between, we could not be friends if we tried. Birth and environment had been too strong for the part of Harry Ganns that craved to be a gentleman.

After dinner, Sheila came—and such a Sheila as I had only caught glimpses of before. She ran as she came along the dusty road, with faithful old Bones trotting by the side of her.

Panting, radiant, daring, yet shy withal, she threw her arms about my neck and kissed me, then, sinking at my feet on the veranda, she thrust something into my hands as she poured out excited sentences.

"Douglas,—Douglas,—see! My father's Bible! It is true! Oh, Douglas, it is true! My father is my very own father! People can't talk any more. See,—see!"

As Sheila raced on in a torrent of words, I read on the fly-leaf of this worn-out, tattered Bible the marriage vows of Jean Gilfillan McDonald and Douglas Campbell.

"They have come, Douglas!—my father's father and mother. They came in from Vancouver on a launch at noon to-day.

Don't you see? Someone in Africa, where father used to be, found this. When father didn't come back, his old black servant over there took it away as a keepsake. He didn't know, of course, what it really meant to us. He just knew that father used it. He was away in another part of the country for years and years, but came back. When he was dying, the white doctor who attended him at the settlement found this in the old fellow's possession. This doctor had known father; he had heard of the inquiries years before—and he sent it immediately to dad's father by registered mail. And they just couldn't think to mail it again to us from Scotland: they wanted to bring it and, if possible, to make amends to mother for all the neglected years. They have come all the way with the good news. Oh, isn't it a dear, old Bible, Douglas?"

I sat staring at the Book in my hands.

"Mother is foolish with joy—and so am I. Don't you see what it means to us?—everything is changed. Don't you see, Douglas?"

It dawned on me at last. Foolish, in man's peculiar way, that I had not seen it before and all the time.

Dear, little, wistful Sheila!—she had never once wavered in her love, but in its very strength she had shown her willingness to accept the love I brought to her only on condition that all things were on an equal footing, or, if not equal, that the balance should weigh against her.

She would have been happy and contented with me simply as a son of the unknown. Not because she was not already assured in her own mind of the legality of her own romantic birth, but because the definite proof was lacking and because others might be able to point a finger at a love which she would have beyond reproach or not at all.

Then later, brave and determined to exasperation,—as only Sheila could be—she would have sacrificed that happiness and contentment, would have sacrificed herself in fact, when the balance, to outward appearances, swung if anything the other way, refusing to accept what she felt she could not repay on a footing of equality.

Deeply sensitive—yet frantic to hide her hurt—she had suffered quietly all these years, had hoped against hope, and in the great love she bore for her mother, had smothered her sorrow beneath her gaiety, so that her mother of all people should never guess just what the loss of this little Book meant to her. And this ghost of the past was always present to mar the great moment of Sheila's life when love should come to her in flood.

Little wonder,—the wistful, plaintive look in her face which continually chased the natural merriment that bubbled up within her!

Sheila was now sitting with her chin resting on the backs of her hands as they clasped about my knee.

I raised her face and kissed her.

Sweet little Sheila!—the lady with the violet eyes and the golden-black hair; the olive skin suffused with the pinkness of June roses: all daintiness, maidenliness, charm;—she was mine, my own little lady.

"And you'll be going back, Sheila?" I said at last.

"Yes, Douglas!—we are all going back for a time. But only for a time, for no one can resist the beckoning of the West once he has been under its spell."

"Well, Sheila,—I am going too."

"Why, of course you are!" She smiled in her own, strange, sad way.

I folded my arms about her and for a long time, with my cheek against hers, we gazed out across the bay to the Triplet islands, farther off still to the Isle of the Lost Lagoon; and away beyond that again into the gulf where the sea kissed the sky—to the Ivory Gates and Golden of our Fairy Dreams.

THE END.

Transcriber's Note

Punctuation errors have been corrected.

The following suspected printer's error has been addressed.

Page 217. somewhere changed to somewhere. (somewhere in the Glen)

