

**FRANK
NORRIS**

A MAN'S
WOMAN

Frank Norris
A Man's Woman

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Frank Norris

A Man's Woman

The following novel was completed March 22, 1899, and sent to the printer in October of the same year. After the plates had been made notice was received that a play called "A Man's Woman" had been written by Anne Crawford Flexner, and that this title had been copyrighted.

As it was impossible to change the name of the novel at the time this notice was received, it has been published under its original title.

F.N.

New York.

I

At four o'clock in the morning everybody in the tent was still asleep, exhausted by the terrible march of the previous day. The hummocky ice and pressure-ridges that Bennett had foreseen had at last been met with, and, though camp had been broken at six o'clock and though men and dogs had hauled and tugged and wrestled with the heavy sledges until five o'clock in the afternoon, only a mile and a half had been covered. But though the progress was slow, it was yet progress. It was not the harrowing, heart-breaking immobility of those long months aboard the Freja. Every yard to the southward, though won at the expense of a battle with the ice, brought them nearer to Wrangel Island and ultimate safety.

Then, too, at supper-time the unexpected had happened. Bennett, moved no doubt by their weakened condition, had dealt out extra rations to each man: one and two-thirds ounces of butter and six and two-thirds ounces of aleuronate bread—a veritable luxury after the unvarying diet of pemmican, lime juice, and dried potatoes of the past fortnight. The men had got into their sleeping-bags early, and until four o'clock in the morning had slept profoundly, inert, stupefied, almost without movement. But a few minutes after four o'clock Bennett awoke. He was usually up about half an hour before the others. On the day before he had been able to get a meridian altitude of the sun, and was anxious to complete his calculations as to the expedition's position on the chart that he had begun in the evening.

He pushed back the flap of the sleeping-bag and rose to his full height, passing his hands over his face, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. He was an enormous man, standing six feet two inches in his reindeer footnips and having the look more of a prize-fighter than of a scientist. Even making allowances for its coating of dirt and its harsh, black stubble of half a week's growth, the face was not pleasant. Bennett was an ugly man. His lower jaw was huge almost to deformity, like that of the bulldog, the chin salient, the mouth close-gripped, with great lips, indomitable, brutal. The forehead was contracted and small, the forehead of men of single ideas, and the eyes, too, were small and twinkling, one of them marred by a sharply defined cast.

But as Bennett was fumbling in the tin box that was lashed upon the number four sledge, looking for his notebook wherein he had begun his calculations for latitude, he was surprised to find a copy of the record he had left in the instrument box under the cairn at Cape Kammeni at the beginning of this southerly march. He had supposed that this copy had been mislaid, and was not a little relieved to come across it now. He read it through hastily, his mind reviewing again the incidents of the last few months. Certain extracts of this record ran as follows:

Arctic steamer Freja, on ice off Cape Kammeni, New Siberian Islands, 76 deg. 10 min. north latitude, 150 deg. 40 min. east longitude, July 12, 1891.... We accordingly froze the ship in on the last day of September, 1890, and during the following winter drifted with the pack in a northwesterly direction.... On Friday, July 10, 1891, being in latitude 76 deg. 10 min. north; longitude 150 deg. 10 min. east, the Freja was caught in a severe nip between two floes and was crushed, sinking in about two hours. We abandoned her, saving 200 days' provisions and all necessary clothing, instruments, etc....

I shall now attempt a southerly march over the ice to Kolyuchin Bay by way of Wrangel Island, where provisions have been cached, hoping to fall in with the relief ships or steam whalers on the way. Our party consists of the following twelve persons: ... All well with the exception of Mr. Ferriss, the chief engineer, whose left hand has been badly frostbitten. No scurvy in the party as yet. We have eighteen

Ostiak dogs with us in prime condition, and expect to drag our ship's boat upon sledges.

WARD BENNETT, Commanding Freja Arctic Exploring Expedition.

Bennett returned this copy of the record to its place in the box, and stood for a moment in the centre of the tent, his head bent to avoid the ridge-pole, looking thoughtfully upon the ground.

Well, so far all had gone right—no scurvy, provisions in plenty. The dogs were in good condition, his men cheerful, trusting in him as in a god, and surely no leader could wish for a better lieutenant and comrade than Richard Ferriss—but this hummocky ice—these pressure-ridges which the expedition had met the day before. Instead of turning at once to his ciphering Bennett drew the hood of the wolfskin coat over his head, buttoned a red flannel mask across his face, and, raising the flap of the tent, stepped outside.

Under the lee of the tent the dogs were sleeping, moveless bundles of fur, black and white, perceptibly steaming. The three great McClintock sledges, weighted down with the Freja's boats and with the expedition's impedimenta, lay where they had been halted the evening before.

In the sky directly in front of Bennett as he issued from the tent three moons, hooped in a vast circle of nebulous light, shone roseate through a fine mist, while in the western heavens streamers of green, orange, and vermilion light, immeasurably vast, were shooting noiselessly from horizon to zenith.

But Bennett had more on his mind that morning than mock-moons and auroras. To the south and east, about a quarter of a mile from the tent, the pressure of the floes had thrown up an enormous ridge of shattered ice-cakes, a mound, a long hill of blue-green slabs and blocks huddling together at every conceivable angle. It was nearly twenty feet in height, quite the highest point that Bennett could discover. Scrambling and climbing over countless other ridges that intervened, he made his way to it, ascended it almost on hands and knees, and, standing upon its highest point, looked long and carefully to the southward.

A wilderness beyond all thought, words, or imagination desolate stretched out before him there forever and forever—ice, ice, ice, fields and floes of ice, laying themselves out under that gloomy sky, league after league, endless, sombre, infinitely vast, infinitely formidable. But now it was no longer the smooth ice over which the expedition had for so long been travelling. In every direction, intersecting one another at ten thousand points, crossing and recrossing, weaving a gigantic, bewildering network of gashed, jagged, splintered ice-blocks, ran the pressure-ridges and hummocks. In places a score or more of these ridges had been wedged together to form one huge field of broken slabs of ice miles in width, miles in length. From horizon to horizon there was no level place, no open water, no pathway. The view to the southward resembled a tempest-tossed ocean suddenly frozen.

One of these ridges Bennett had just climbed, and upon it he now stood. Even for him, unencumbered, carrying no weight, the climb had been difficult; more than once he had slipped and fallen. At times he had been obliged to go forward almost on his hands and knees. And yet it was across that jungle of ice, that unspeakable tangle of blue-green slabs and cakes and blocks, that the expedition must now advance, dragging its boats, its sledges, its provisions, instruments, and baggage.

Bennett stood looking. Before him lay his task. There under his eyes was the Enemy. Face to face with him was the titanic primal strength of a chaotic world, the stupendous still force of a merciless nature, waiting calmly, waiting silently to close upon and crush him. For a long time he stood watching. Then the great brutal jaw grew more salient than ever, the teeth set and clenched behind the close-gripped lips, the cast in the small twinkling eyes grew suddenly more pronounced. One huge fist raised, and the arm slowly extended forward like the resistless moving of a piston. Then when his arm was at its full reach Bennett spoke as though in answer to the voiceless, terrible challenge of the Ice. Through his clenched teeth his words came slow and measured.

"But I'll break you, by God! believe me, I will."

After a while he returned to the tent, awoke the cook, and while breakfast was being prepared completed his calculations for latitude, wrote up his ice-journal, and noted down the temperature and the direction and velocity of the wind. As he was finishing, Richard Ferriss, who was the chief engineer and second in command, awoke and immediately asked the latitude.

"Seventy-four-fifteen," answered Bennett without looking up.

"Seventy-four-fifteen," repeated Ferriss, nodding his head; "we didn't make much distance yesterday."

"I hope we can make as much to-day," returned Bennett grimly as he put away his observation-journal and note-books.

"How's the ice to the south'ard?"

"Bad; wake the men."

After breakfast and while the McClintocks were being loaded Bennett sent Ferriss on ahead to choose a road through and over the ridges. It was dreadful work. For two hours Ferriss wandered about amid the broken ice all but hopelessly bewildered. But at length, to his great satisfaction, he beheld a fairly open stretch about a quarter of a mile in length lying out to the southwest and not too far out of the expedition's line of march. Some dozen ridges would have to be crossed before this level was reached; but there was no help for it, so Ferriss planted his flags where the heaps of ice-blocks seemed least impracticable and returned toward the camp. It had already been broken, and on his way he met the entire expedition involved in the intricacies of the first rough ice.

All of the eighteen dogs had been harnessed to the number two sledge, that carried the whaleboat and the major part of the provisions, and every man of the party, Bennett included, was straining at the haul-ropes with the dogs. Foot by foot the sledge came over the ridge, grinding and lurching among the ice-blocks; then, partly by guiding, partly by lifting, it was piloted down the slope, only in the end to escape from all control and come crashing downward among the dogs, jolting one of the medicine chests from its lashings and butting its nose heavily against the foot of the next hummock immediately beyond. But the men scrambled to their places again, the medicine chest was replaced, and Muck Tu, the Esquimau dog-master, whipped forward his dogs. Ferriss, too, laid hold. The next hummock was surmounted, the dogs panting, and the men, even in that icy air, reeking with perspiration. Then suddenly and without the least warning Bennett and McPherson, who were in the lead, broke through some young ice into water up to their breasts, Muck Tu and one of the dogs breaking through immediately afterward. The men were pulled out, or, of their own efforts, climbed upon the ice again. But in an instant their clothes were frozen to rattling armor.

"Bear off to the east'ard, here!" commanded Bennett, shaking the icy, stinging water from his sleeves. "Everybody on the ropes now!"

Another pressure-ridge was surmounted, then a third, and by an hour after the start they had arrived at the first one of Ferriss's flags. Here the number two sledge was left, and the entire expedition, dogs and men, returned to camp to bring up the number one McClintock loaded with the Freja's cutter and with the sleeping-bags, instruments, and tent. This sledge was successfully dragged over the first two hummocks, but as it was being hauled up the third its left-hand runner suddenly buckled and turned under it with a loud snap. There was nothing for it now but to remove the entire load and to set Hawes, the carpenter, to work upon its repair.

"Up your other sledge!" ordered Bennett.

Once more the expedition returned to the morning's camping-place, and, harnessing itself to the third McClintock, struggled forward with it for an hour and a half until it was up with the first sledge and Ferriss's flag. Fortunately the two dog-sleds, four and five, were light, and Bennett, dividing his forces, brought them up in a single haul. But Hawes called out that the broken sledge was now repaired. The men turned to at once, reloaded it, and hauled it onward, so that by noon every sledge had been moved forward quite a quarter of a mile.

But now, for the moment, the men, after going over the same ground seven times, were used up, and Muck Tu could no longer whip the dogs to their work. Bennett called a halt. Hot tea was made, and pemmican and hardtack served out.

"We'll have easier hauling this afternoon, men," said Bennett; "this next ridge is the worst of the lot; beyond that Mr. Ferriss says we've got nearly a quarter of a mile of level floes."

On again at one o'clock; but the hummock of which Bennett had spoken proved absolutely impassable for the loaded sledges. It was all one that the men lay to the ropes like draught-horses, and that Muck Tu flogged the dogs till the goad broke in his hands. The men lost their footing upon the slippery ice and fell to their knees; the dogs laid down in the traces groaning and whining. The sledge would not move.

"Unload!" commanded Bennett.

The lashings were taken off, and the loads, including the great, cumbersome whaleboat itself, carried over the hummock by hand. Then the sledge itself was hauled over and reloaded upon the other side. Thus the whole five sledges.

The work was bitter hard; the knots of the lashings were frozen tight and coated with ice; the cases of provisions, the medicine chests, the canvas bundle of sails, boat-covers, and tents unwieldy and of enormous weight; the footing on the slippery, uneven ice precarious, and more than once a man, staggering under his load, broke through the crust into water so cold that the sensation was like that of burning.

But at last everything was over, the sledges reloaded, and the forward movement resumed. Only one low hummock now intervened between them and the longed-for level floe.

However, as they were about to start forward again a lamentable gigantic sound began vibrating in their ears, a rumbling, groaning note rising by quick degrees to a strident shriek. Other sounds, hollow and shrill—treble mingling with diapason—joined in the first. The noise came from just beyond the pressure-mound at the foot of which the party had halted.

"Forward!" shouted Bennett; "hurry there, men!"

Desperately eager, the men bent panting to their work. The sledge bearing the whaleboat topped the hummock.

"Now, then, over with her!" cried Ferriss.

But it was too late. As they stood looking down upon it for an instant, the level floe, their one sustaining hope during all the day, suddenly cracked from side to side with the noise of ordnance. Then the groaning and shrieking recommenced. The crack immediately closed up, the pressure on the sides of the floe began again, and on the smooth surface of the ice, domes and mounds abruptly reared themselves. As the pressure increased these domes and mounds cracked and burst into countless blocks and slabs. Ridge after ridge was formed in the twinkling of an eye. Thundering like a cannonade of siege guns, the whole floe burst up, jagged, splintered, hummocky. In less than three minutes, and while the Freja's men stood watching, the level stretch toward which since morning they had struggled with incalculable toil was ground up into a vast mass of confused and pathless rubble.

"Oh, this will never do," muttered Ferriss, disheartened.

"Come on, men!" exclaimed Bennett. "Mr. Ferriss, go forward, and choose a road for us."

The labour of the morning was recommenced. With infinite patience, infinite hardship, the sledges one by one were advanced. So heavy were the three larger McClintocks that only one could be handled at a time, and that one taxed the combined efforts of men and dogs to the uttermost. The same ground had to be covered seven times. For every yard gained seven had to be travelled. It was not a march, it was a battle; a battle without rest and without end and without mercy; a battle with an Enemy whose power was beyond all estimate and whose movements were not reducible to any known law. A certain course would be mapped, certain plans formed, a certain objective determined, and before the course could be finished, the plans executed, or the objective point attained the perverse, inexplicable movement of the ice baffled their determination and set at naught their best ingenuity.

At four o'clock it began to snow. Since the middle of the forenoon the horizon had been obscured by clouds and mist so that no observation for position could be taken. Steadily the clouds had advanced, and by four o'clock the expedition found itself enveloped by wind and driving snow. The flags could no longer be distinguished; thin and treacherous ice was concealed under drifts; the dogs floundered helplessly; the men could scarcely open their eyes against the wind and fine, powder-like snow, and at times when they came to drag forward the last sledge they found it so nearly buried in the snow that it must be dug out before it could be moved.

Toward half past five the odometer on one of the dog-sleds registered a distance of three-quarters of a mile made since morning. Bennett called a halt, and camp was pitched in the lee of one of the larger hummocks. The alcohol cooker was set going, and supper was had under the tent, the men eating as they lay in their sleeping-bags. But even while eating they fell asleep, drooping lower and lower, finally collapsing upon the canvas floor of the tent, the food still in their mouths.

Yet, for all that, the night was miserable. Even after that day of superhuman struggle they were not to be allowed a few hours of unbroken rest. By midnight the wind had veered to the east and was blowing a gale. An hour later the tent came down. Exhausted as they were, they must turn out and wrestle with that slatting, ice-sheathed canvas, and it was not until half an hour later that everything was fast again.

Once more they crawled into the sleeping-bags, but soon the heat from their bodies melted the ice upon their clothes, and pools of water formed under each man, wetting him to the skin. Sleep was impossible. It grew colder and colder as the night advanced, and the gale increased. At three o'clock in the morning the centigrade thermometer was at eighteen degrees below. The cooker was lighted again, and until six o'clock the party huddled wretchedly about it, dozing and waking, shivering continually.

Breakfast at half past six o'clock; under way again an hour later. There was no change in the nature of the ice. Ridge succeeded ridge, hummock followed upon hummock. The wind was going down, but the snow still fell as fine and bewildering as ever. The cold was intense. Dennison, the doctor and naturalist of the expedition, having slipped his mitten, had his hand frostbitten before he could recover it. Two of the dogs, Big Joe and Stryelka, were noticeably giving out.

But Bennett, his huge jaws clenched, his small, distorted eyes twinkling viciously through the apertures of the wind-mask, his harsh, black eyebrows lowering under the narrow, contracted forehead, drove the expedition to its work relentlessly. Not Muck Tu, the dog-master, had his Ostiaks more completely under his control than he his men. He himself did the work of three. On that vast frame of bone and muscle, fatigue seemed to leave no trace. Upon that inexorable bestial determination difficulties beyond belief left no mark. Not one of the twelve men under his command fighting the stubborn ice with tooth and nail who was not galvanised with his tremendous energy. It was as though a spur was in their flanks, a lash upon their backs. Their minds, their wills, their efforts, their physical strength to the last ounce and pennyweight belonged indissolubly to him. For the time being they were his slaves, his serfs, his beasts of burden, his draught animals, no better than the dogs straining in the traces beside them. Forward they must and would go until they dropped in the harness or he gave the word to pause.

At four o'clock in the afternoon Bennett halted. Two miles had been made since the last camp, and now human endurance could go no farther. Sometimes when the men fell they were unable to get up. It was evident there was no more in them that day.

In his ice-journal for that date Bennett wrote:

... Two miles covered by 4 p.m. Our course continues to be south, 20 degrees west (magnetic). The ice still hummocky. At this rate we shall be on half rations long before we reach Wrangel Island. No observation possible since day before yesterday on account of snow and clouds. Stryelka, one of our best dogs, gave out to-day. Shot him and fed him to the others. Our advance to the southwest is slow but sure,

and every day brings nearer our objective. Temperature at 6 p.m., 6.8 degrees Fahr. (minus 14 degrees C). Wind, east; force, 2.

The next morning was clear for two hours after breakfast, and when Ferriss returned from his task of path-finding he reported to Bennett that he had seen a great many water-blinks off to the southwest.

"The wind of yesterday has broken the ice up," observed Bennett; "we shall have hard work to-day."

A little after midday, at a time when they had wrested some thousand yards to the southward from the grip of the ice, the expedition came to the first lane of open water, about three hundred feet in width. Bennett halted the sledges and at once set about constructing a bridge of floating cakes of ice. But the work of keeping these ice-blocks in place long enough for the transfer of even a single sledge seemed at times to be beyond their most strenuous endeavour. The first sledge with the cutter crossed in safety. Then came the turn of number two, loaded with the provisions and whaleboat. It was two-thirds of the way across when the opposite side of the floe abruptly shifted its position, and thirty feet of open water suddenly widened out directly in front of the line of progress.

"Cut loose!" commanded Bennett upon the instant. The ice-block upon which they were gathered was set free in the current. The situation was one of the greatest peril. The entire expedition, men and dogs together, with their most important sledge, was adrift. But the oars and mast and the pole of the tent were had from the whaleboat, and little by little they ferried themselves across. The gap was bridged again and the dog-sleds transferred.

But now occurred the first real disaster since the destruction of the ship. Half-way across the crazy pontoon bridge of ice, the dogs, harnessed to one of the small sleds, became suddenly terrified. Before any one could interfere they had bolted from Muck Tu's control in a wild break for the farther side of the ice. The sled was overturned; pell-mell the dogs threw themselves into the water; the sled sank, the load-lashing parted, and two medicine chests, the bag of sewing materials—of priceless worth—a coil of wire ropes, and three hundred and fifty pounds of pemmican were lost in the twinkling of an eye.

Without comment Bennett at once addressed himself to making the best of the business. The dogs were hauled upon the ice; the few loads that yet remained upon the sled were transferred to another; that sled was abandoned, and once more the expedition began its never-ending battle to the southward.

The lanes of open water, as foreshadowed by the water-blinks that Ferriss had noted in the morning, were frequent; alternating steadily with hummocks and pressure-ridges. But the perversity of the ice was all but heart-breaking. At every hour the lanes opened and closed. At one time in the afternoon they had arrived upon the edge of a lane wide enough to justify them in taking to their boats. The sledges were unloaded, and stowed upon the boats themselves, and oars and sails made ready. Then as Bennett was about to launch the lane suddenly closed up. What had been water became a level floe, and again the process of unloading and reloading had to be undertaken.

That evening Big Joe and two other dogs, Gavriga and Patsy, were shot because of their uselessness in the traces. Their bodies were cut up to feed their mates.

"I can spare the dogs," wrote Bennett in his journal for that day—a Sunday—"but McPherson, one of the best men of the command, gives me some uneasiness. His frozen footnips have chafed sores in his ankle. One of these has ulcerated, and the doctor tells me is in a serious condition. His pain is so great that he can no longer haul with the others. Shall relieve him from work during the morrow's march. Less than a mile covered to-day. Meridian observation for latitude impossible on account of fog. Divine services at 5:30 p.m."

A week passed, then another. There was no change, neither in the character of the ice nor in the expedition's daily routine. Their toil was incredible; at times an hour's unremitting struggle would gain but a few yards. The dogs, instead of aiding them, were rapidly becoming mere encumbrances. Four more had been killed, a fifth had been drowned, and two, wandering from camp, had never returned. The second dog-sled had been abandoned. The condition of McPherson's foot was such that no work could be demanded from him. Hawes, the carpenter, was down with fever and kept everybody awake all night by talking in his sleep. Worse than all, however, Ferriss's right hand was again frostbitten, and this time Dennison, the doctor, was obliged to amputate it above the wrist.

"... But I am no whit disheartened," wrote Bennett. "Succeed I must and shall."

A few days after the operation on Ferriss's hand Bennett decided it would be advisable to allow the party a full twenty-four hours' rest. The march of the day before had been harder than any they had yet experienced, and, in addition to McPherson and the carpenter, the doctor himself was upon the sick list.

In the evening Bennett and Ferriss took a long walk or rather climb over the ice to the southwest, picking out a course for the next day's march.

A great friendship, not to say affection, had sprung up between these two men, a result of their long and close intimacy on board the Freja and of the hardships and perils they had shared during the past few weeks while leading the expedition in the retreat to the southward. When they had decided upon the track of the morrow's advance they sat down for a moment upon the crest of a hummock to breathe themselves, their elbows on their knees, looking off to the south over the desolation of broken ice.

With his one good hand Ferriss drew a pipe and a handful of tea leaves wrapped in oiled paper from the breast of his deer-skin parkie.

"Do you mind filling this pipe for me, Ward?" he asked of Bennett.

Bennett glanced at the tea leaves and handed them back to Ferriss, and in answer to his remonstrance produced a pouch of his own.

"Tobacco!" cried Ferriss, astonished; "why, I thought we smoked our last aboard ship."

"No, I saved a little of mine."

"Oh, well," answered Ferriss, trying to interfere with Bennett, who was filling his pipe, "I don't want your tobacco; this tea does very well."

"I tell you I have eight-tenths of a kilo left," lied Bennett, lighting the pipe and handing it back to him. "Whenever you want a smoke you can set to me."

Bennett lit a pipe of his own, and the two began to smoke.

"M, ah!" murmured Ferriss, drawing upon the pipe ecstatically, "I thought I never was going to taste good weed again till we should get home."

Bennett said nothing. There was a long silence. Home! what did not that word mean for them? To leave all this hideous, grisly waste of ice behind, to have done with fighting, to rest, to forget responsibility, to have no more anxiety, to be warm once more—warm and well fed and dry—to see a tree again, to rub elbows with one's fellows, to know the meaning of warm handclasps and the faces of one's friends.

"Dick," began Bennett abruptly after a long while, "if we get stuck here in this damned ice I'm going to send you and probably Metz on ahead for help. We'll make a two-man kyack for you to use when you reach the limit of the pack, but besides the kyack you'll carry nothing but your provisions, sleeping-bags, and rifle, and travel as fast as you can." Bennett paused for a moment, then in a different voice continued: "I wrote a letter last night that I was going to give you in case I should have to send you on such a journey, but I think I might as well give it to you now."

He drew from his pocket an envelope carefully wrapped in oilskin.

"If anything should happen to the expedition—to me—I want you to see that this letter is delivered."

He paused again.

"You see, Dick, it's like this; there's a girl—" his face flamed suddenly, "no—no, a woman, a grand, noble, man's woman, back in God's country who is a great deal to me—everything in fact. She don't know, hasn't a guess, that I care. I never spoke to her about it. But if anything should turn up I should want her to know how it had been with me, how much she was to me. So I've written her. You'll see that she gets it, will you?"

He handed the little package to Ferriss, and continued indifferently, and resuming his accustomed manner:

"If we get as far as Wrangel Island you can give it back to me. We are bound to meet the relief ships or the steam whalers in that latitude. Oh, you can look at the address," added Bennett as Ferriss, turning the envelope bottom side up, was thrusting it into his breast pocket; "you know her even better than I do. It's Lloyd Searight."

Ferriss's teeth shut suddenly upon his pipestem.

Bennett rose. "Tell Muck Tu," he said, "in case I don't think of it again, that the dogs must be fed from now on from those that die. I shall want the dog biscuit and dried fish for our own use."

"I suppose it will come to that," answered Ferriss.

"Come to that!" returned Bennett grimly; "I hope the dogs themselves will live long enough for us to eat them. And don't misunderstand," he added; "I talk about our getting stuck in the ice, about my not pulling through; it's only because one must foresee everything, be prepared for everything. Remember—I—shall—pull—through."

But that night, long after the rest were sleeping, Ferriss, who had not closed his eyes, bestirred himself, and, as quietly as possible, crawled from his sleeping-bag. He fancied there was some slight change in the atmosphere, and wanted to read the barometer affixed to a stake just outside the tent. Yet when he had noted that it was, after all, stationary, he stood for a moment looking out across the ice with unseeing eyes. Then from a pocket in his furs he drew a little folder of morocco. It was pitifully worn, stained with sea-water, patched and repatched, its frayed edges sewed together again with ravellings of cloth and sea-grasses. Loosening with his teeth the thong of walrus-hide with which it was tied, Ferriss opened it and held it to the faint light of an aurora just paling in the northern sky.

"So," he muttered after a while, "so—Bennett, too—"

For a long time Ferriss stood looking at Lloyd's picture till the purple streamers in the north faded into the cold gray of the heavens. Then he shot a glance above him.

"God Almighty, bless her and keep her!" he prayed.

Far off, miles away, an ice-floe split with the prolonged reverberation of thunder. The aurora was gone. Ferriss returned to the tent.

The following week the expedition suffered miserably. Snowstorm followed snowstorm, the temperature dropped to twenty-two degrees below the freezing-point, and gales of wind from the east whipped and scourged the struggling men incessantly with myriad steel-tipped lashes. At night the agony in their feet was all but unbearable. It was impossible to be warm, impossible to be dry. Dennison, in a measure, recovered his health, but the ulcer on McPherson's foot had so eaten the flesh that the muscles were visible. Hawes's monotonous chatter and crazy whimperings filled the tent every night.

The only pleasures left them, the only breaks in the monotony of that life, were to eat, and, when possible, to sleep. Thought, reason, and reflection dwindled in their brains. Instincts—the primitive, elemental impulses of the animal—possessed them instead. To eat, to sleep, to be warm—they asked nothing better. The night's supper was a vision that dwelt in their imaginations hour after hour throughout the entire day. Oh, to sit about the blue flame of alcohol sputtering underneath the old and battered cooker of sheet-iron! To smell the delicious savour of the thick, boiling soup! And

then the meal itself—to taste the hot, coarse, meaty food; to feel that unspeakably grateful warmth and glow, that almost divine sensation of satiety spreading through their poor, shivering bodies, and then sleep; sleep, though quivering with cold; sleep, though the wet searched the flesh to the very marrow; sleep, though the feet burned and crisped with torture; sleep, sleep, the dreamless stupefaction of exhaustion, the few hours' oblivion, the day's short armistice from pain!

But stronger, more insistent than even these instincts of the animal was the blind, unreasoned impulse that set their faces to the southward: "To get forward, to get forward." Answering the resistless influence of their leader, that indomitable man of iron whom no fortune could break nor bend, and who imposed his will upon them as it were a yoke of steel—this idea became for them a sort of obsession. Forward, if it were only a yard; if it were only a foot. Forward over the heart-breaking, rubble ice; forward against the biting, shrieking wind; forward in the face of the blinding snow; forward through the brittle crusts and icy water; forward, although every step was an agony, though the haul-rope cut like a dull knife, though their clothes were sheets of ice. Blinded, panting, bruised, bleeding, and exhausted, dogs and men, animals all, the expedition struggled forward.

One day, a little before noon, while lunch was being cooked, the sun broke through the clouds, and for upward of half an hour the ice-pack was one blinding, diamond glitter. Bennett ran for his sextant and got an observation, the first that had been possible for nearly a month. He worked out their latitude that same evening.

The next morning Ferriss was awakened by a touch on his shoulder. Bennett was standing over him.

"Come outside here a moment," said Bennett in a low voice. "Don't wake the men."

"Did you get our latitude?" asked Ferriss as the two came out of the tent.

"Yes, that's what I want to tell you."

"What is it?"

"Seventy-four-nineteen."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Ferriss quickly.

"Just this: That the ice-pack we're on is drifting faster to the north than we are marching to the south. We are farther north now than we were a month ago for all our marching."

II

By eleven o'clock at night the gale had increased to such an extent and the sea had begun to build so high that it was a question whether or not the whaleboat would ride the storm. Bennett finally decided that it would be impossible to reach the land—stretching out in a long, dark blur to the southwest—that night, and that the boat must run before the wind if he was to keep her afloat. The number two cutter, with Ferriss in command, was a bad sailer, and had fallen astern. She was already out of hailing distance; but Bennett, who was at the whaleboat's tiller, in the instant's glance that he dared to shoot behind him saw with satisfaction that Ferriss had followed his example.

The whaleboat and the number two cutter were the only boats now left to the expedition. The third boat had been abandoned long before they had reached open water.

An hour later Adler, the sailing-master, who had been bailing, and who sat facing Bennett, looked back through the storm; then, turning to Bennett, said:

"Beg pardon, sir, I think they are signalling us."

Bennett did not answer, but, with his hand gripping the tiller, kept his face to the front, his glance alternating between the heaving prow of the boat and the huge gray billows hissing with froth careering rapidly alongside. To pause for a moment, to vary by ever so little from the course of the storm, might mean the drowning of them all. After a few moments Adler spoke again, touching his cap.

"I'm sure I see a signal, sir."

"No, you don't," answered Bennett.

"Beg pardon, I'm quite sure I do."

Bennett leaned toward him, the cast in his eyes twinkling with a wicked light, the furrow between the eyebrows deepening. "I tell you, you don't see any signal; do you understand? You don't see any signal until I choose to have you."

The night was bitter hard for the occupants of the whaleboat. In their weakened condition they were in no shape to fight a polar hurricane in an open boat.

For three weeks they had not known the meaning of full rations. During the first days after the line of march over the ice had been abruptly changed to the west in the hope of reaching open water, only three-quarter rations had been issued, and now for the last two days half rations had been their portion. The gnawing of hunger had begun. Every man was perceptibly weaker. Matters were getting desperate.

But by seven o'clock the next morning the storm had blown itself out. To Bennett's inexpressible relief the cutter hove in view. Shaping their course to landward once more, the boats kept company, and by the middle of the afternoon Bennett and the crew of the whaleboat successfully landed upon a bleak, desolate, and wind-scourged coast. But in some way, never afterward sufficiently explained, the cutter under Ferriss's command was crushed in the floating ice within one hundred yards of the shore. The men and stores were landed—the water being shallow enough for wading—but the boat was a hopeless wreck.

"I believe it's Cape Shelaski," said Bennett to Ferriss when camp had been made and their maps consulted. "But if it is, it's charted thirty-five minutes too far to the west."

Before breaking camp the next morning Bennett left this record under a cairn of rocks upon the highest point of the cape, further marking the spot by one of the boat's flags:

The Freja Arctic Exploring Expedition landed at this point October 28, 1891. Our ship was nipped and sunk in 76 deg. 10 min. north latitude on the 12th of July last. I then attempted a southerly march to Wrangel Island, but found such a course impracticable on account of northerly drift of ice. On the 1st of October I accordingly

struck off to the westward to find open water at the limit of the ice, being compelled to abandon one boat and two sledges on the way. A second boat was crushed beyond repair in drifting ice while attempting a landing at this place. Our one remaining boat being too small to accommodate the members of the expedition, circumstances oblige me to begin an overland march toward Kolyuchin Bay, following the line of the coast. We expect either to winter among the Chuckch settlements mentioned by Nordenskjold as existing upon the eastern shores of Kolyuchin Bay or to fall in with the relief ships or the steam whalers en route. By issuing half rations I have enough provisions for eighteen days, and have saved all records, observations, papers, instruments, etc. Enclosed is the muster roll of the expedition. No scurvy as yet and no deaths. Our sick are William Hawes, carpenter, arctic fever, serious; David McPherson, seaman, ulceration of left foot, serious. The general condition of the rest of the men is fair, though much weakened by exposure and lack of food.

(Signed) WARD BENNETT, *Commanding*.

But during the night, their first night on land, Bennett resolved upon a desperate expedient. Not only the boat was to be abandoned, but also the sledges, and not only the sledges, but every article of weight not absolutely necessary to the existence of the party. Two weeks before, the sun had set not to rise again for six months. Winter was upon them and darkness. The Enemy was drawing near. The great remorseless grip of the Ice was closing. It was no time for half-measures and hesitation; now it was life or death.

The sense of their peril, the nearness of the Enemy, strung Bennett's nerves taut as harp-strings. His will hardened to the flinty hardness of the ice itself. His strength of mind and of body seemed suddenly to quadruple itself. His determination was that of the battering-ram, blind, deaf, resistless. The ugly set of his face became all the more ugly, the contorted eyes flashing, the great jaw all but simian. He appeared physically larger. It was no longer a man; it was a giant, an ogre, a colossal jotun hurling ice-blocks, fighting out a battle unspeakable, in the dawn of the world, in chaos and in darkness.

The impedimenta of the expedition were broken up into packs that each man carried upon his shoulders. From now on everything that hindered the rapidity of their movements must be left behind. Six dogs (all that remained of the pack of eighteen) still accompanied them.

Bennett had hoped and had counted upon his men for an average daily march of sixteen miles, but the winter gales driving down from the northeast beat them back; the ice and snow that covered the land were no less uneven than the hummocks of the pack. All game had migrated far to the southward.

Every day the men grew weaker and weaker; their provisions dwindled. Again and again one or another of them, worn out beyond human endurance, would go to sleep while marching and would fall to the ground.

Upon the third day of this overland march one of the dogs suddenly collapsed upon the ground, exhausted and dying. Bennett had ordered such of the dogs that gave out cut up and their meat added to the store of the party's provisions. Ferriss and Muck Tu had started to pick up the dead dog when the other dogs, famished and savage, sprang upon their fallen mate. The two men struck and kicked, all to no purpose; the dogs turned upon them snarling and snapping. They, too, demanded to live; they, too, wanted to be fed. It was a hideous business. There in that half-night of the polar circle, lost and forgotten on a primordial shore, back into the stone age once more, men and animals fought one another for the privilege of eating a dead dog.

But their life was not all inhuman; Bennett at least could rise even above humanity, though his men must perforce be dragged so far below it. At the end of the first week Hawes, the carpenter, died. When they awoke in the morning he was found motionless and stiff in his sleeping-bag. Some sort of grave was dug, the poor racked body lowered into it, and before it was filled with snow and

broken ice Bennett, standing quietly in the midst of the bare-headed group, opened his prayer-book and began with the tremendous words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life—"

It was the beginning of the end. A week later the actual starvation began. Slower and slower moved the expedition on its daily march, faltering, staggering, blinded and buffeted by the incessant northeast winds, cruel, merciless, keen as knife-blades. Hope long since was dead; resolve wore thin under friction of disaster; like a rat, hunger gnawed at them hour after hour; the cold was one unending agony. Still Bennett was unbroken, still he urged them forward. For so long as they could move he would drive them on.

Toward four o'clock on the afternoon of one particularly hard day, word was passed forward to Bennett at the head of the line that something was wrong in the rear.

"It's Adler; he's down again and can't get up; asks you to leave him."

Bennett halted the line and went back some little distance to find Adler lying prone upon his back, his eyes half closed, breathing short and fast. He shook him roughly by the shoulder.

"Up with you!"

Adler opened his eyes and shook his head.

"I—I'm done for this time, sir; just leave me here—please."

"H'up!" shouted Bennett; "you're not done for; I know better."

"Really, sir, I—I *can't*."

"H'up!"

"If you would only please—for God's sake, sir. It's more than I'm made for."

Bennett kicked him in the side.

"H'up with you!"

Adler struggled to his feet again, Bennett aiding him.

"Now, then, can you go five yards?"

"I think—I don't know—perhaps—"

"Go them, then."

The other moved forward.

"Can you go five more; answer, speak up, can you?"

Adler nodded his head.

"Go them—and another five—and another—there—that's something like a man, and let's have no more woman's drivel about dying."

"But—"

Bennett came close to him, shaking a forefinger in his face, thrusting forward his chin wickedly.

"My friend, I'll drive you like a dog, but," his fist clenched in the man's face, "I'll *make* you pull through."

Two hours later Adler finished the day's march at the head of the line.

The expedition began to eat its dogs. Every evening Bennett sent Muck Tu and Adler down to the shore to gather shrimps, though fifteen hundred of these shrimps hardly filled a gill measure. The party chewed reindeer-moss growing in scant patches in the snow-buried rocks, and at times made a thin, sickly infusion from the arctic willow. Again and again Bennett despatched the Esquimau and Clarke, the best shots in the party, on hunting expeditions to the southward. Invariably they returned empty-handed. Occasionally they reported old tracks of reindeer and foxes, but the winter colds had driven everything far inland. Once only Clarke shot a snow-bunting, a little bird hardly bigger than a sparrow. Still Bennett pushed forward.

One morning in the beginning of the third week, after a breakfast of two ounces of dog meat and a half cup of willow tea, Ferriss and Bennett found themselves a little apart from the others. The men were engaged in lowering the tent. Ferriss glanced behind to be assured he was out of hearing, then:

"How about McPherson?" he said in a low voice.

McPherson's foot was all but eaten to the bone by now. It was a miracle how the man had kept up thus far. But at length he had begun to fall behind; every day he straggled more and more, and the previous evening had reached camp nearly an hour after the tent had been pitched. But he was a plucky fellow, of sterner stuff than the sailing-master, Adler, and had no thought of giving up.

Bennett made no reply to Ferriss, and the chief engineer did not repeat the question. The day's march began; almost at once breast-high snowdrifts were encountered, and when these had been left behind the expedition involved itself upon the precipitate slopes of a huge talus of ice and bare, black slabs of basalt. Fully two hours were spent in clambering over this obstacle, and on its top Bennett halted to breathe the men. But when they started forward again it was found that McPherson could not keep his feet. When he had fallen, Adler and Dennison had endeavoured to lift him, but they themselves were so weak that they, too, fell. Dennison could not rise of his own efforts, and instead of helping McPherson had to be aided himself. Bennett came forward, put an arm about McPherson, and hauled him to an upright position. The man took a step forward, but his left foot immediately doubled under him, and he came to the ground again. Three times this manoeuvre was repeated; so far from marching, McPherson could not even stand.

"If I could have a day's rest—" began McPherson, unsteadily. Bennett cast a glance at Dennison, the doctor. Dennison shook his head. The foot, the entire leg below the knee, should have been amputated days ago. A month's rest even in a hospital at home would have benefited McPherson nothing.

For the fraction of a minute Bennett debated the question, then he turned to the command.

"Forward, men!"

"What—wh—" began McPherson, sitting upon the ground, looking from one face to another, bewildered, terrified. Some of the men began to move off.

"Wait—wait," exclaimed the cripple, "I—I can get along—I—" He rose to his knees, made, a great effort to regain his footing, and once more came crashing down upon the ice.

"Forward!"

"But—but—but—*Oh, you're not going to leave me, sir?*"

"Forward!"

"He's been my chum, sir, all through the voyage," said one of the men, touching his cap to Bennett; "I had just as soon be left with him. I'm about done myself."

Another joined in:

"I'll stay, too—I can't leave—it's—it's too terrible."

There was a moment's hesitation. Those who had begun to move on halted. The whole expedition wavered.

Bennett caught the dog-whip from Muck Tu's hand. His voice rang like the alarm of a trumpet.

"Forward!"

Once more Bennett's discipline prevailed. His iron hand shut down upon his men, more than ever resistless. Obediently they turned their faces to the southward. The march was resumed.

Another day passed, then two. Still the expedition struggled on. With every hour their sufferings increased. It did not seem that anything human could endure such stress and yet survive. Toward three o'clock in the morning of the third night Adler woke Bennett.

"It's Clarke, sir; he and I sleep in the same bag. I think he's going, sir."

One by one the men in the tent were awakened, and the train-oil lamp was lit.

Clarke lay in his sleeping-bag unconscious, and at long intervals drawing a faint, quick breath. The doctor bent over him, feeling his pulse, but shook his head hopelessly.

"He's dying—quietly—exhaustion from starvation."

A few moments later Clarke began to tremble slightly, the mouth opened wide; a faint rattle came from the throat.

Four miles was as much as could be made good the next day, and this though the ground was comparatively smooth. Ferriss was continually falling. Dennison and Metz were a little light-headed, and Bennett at one time wondered if Ferriss himself had absolute control of his wits. Since morning the wind had been blowing strongly in their faces. By noon it had increased. At four o'clock a violent gale was howling over the reaches of ice and rock-ribbed land. It was impossible to go forward while it lasted. The stronger gusts fairly carried their feet from under them. At half-past four the party halted. The gale was now a hurricane. The expedition paused, collected itself, went forward; halted again, again attempted to move, and came at last to a definite standstill in whirling snow-clouds and blinding, stupefying blasts.

"Pitch the tent!" said Bennett quietly. "We must wait now till it blows over."

In the lee of a mound of ice-covered rock some hundred yards from the coast the tent was pitched, and supper, such as it was, eaten in silence. All knew what this enforced halt must mean for them. That supper—each man could hold his portion in the hollow of one hand—was the last of their regular provisions. March they could not. What now? Before crawling into their sleeping-bags, and at Bennett's request, all joined in repeating the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

The next day passed, and the next, and the next. The gale continued steadily. The southerly march was discontinued. All day and all night the men kept in the tent, huddled in the sleeping-bags, sometimes sleeping eighteen and twenty hours out of the twenty-four. They lost all consciousness of the lapse of time; sensation even of suffering left them; the very hunger itself had ceased to gnaw. Only Bennett and Ferriss seemed to keep their heads. Then slowly the end began.

For that last week Bennett's entries in his ice-journal were as follows:

November 29th—Monday—Camped at 4:30 p.m. about 100 yards from the coast. Open water to the eastward as far as I can see. If I had not been compelled to abandon my boats—but it is useless to repine. I must look our situation squarely in the face. At noon served out last beef-extract, which we drank with some willow tea. Our remaining provisions consist of four-fifteenths of a pound of pemmican per man, and the rest of the dog meat. Where are the relief ships? We should at least have met the steam whalers long before this.

November 30th—Tuesday—The doctor amputated Mr. Ferriss's other hand to-day. Living gale of wind from northeast. Impossible to march against it in our weakened condition; must camp here till it abates. Made soup of the last of the dog meat this afternoon. Our last pemmican gone.

December 1st—Wednesday—Everybody getting weaker. Metz breaking down. Sent Adler down to the shore to gather shrimps. We had about a mouthful apiece for lunch. Supper, a spoonful of glycerine and hot water.

December 2d—Thursday—Metz died during the night. Hansen dying. Still blowing a gale from the northeast. A hard night.

December 3d—Friday—Hansen died during early morning. Muck Tu shot a ptarmigan. Made soup. Dennison breaking down.

December 4th—Saturday—Buried Hansen under slabs of ice. Spoonful of glycerine and hot water at noon.

December 5th—Sunday—Dennison found dead this morning between Adler and myself. Too weak to bury him, or even carry him out of the tent. He must lie where he is. Divine services at 5:30 P.M. Last spoonful of glycerine and hot water.

The next day was Monday, and at some indeterminate hour of the twenty-four, though whether it was night or noon he could not say, Ferriss woke in his sleeping-bag and raised himself on an elbow, and for a moment sat stupidly watching Bennett writing in his journal. Noticing that he was awake,

Bennett looked up from the page and spoke in a voice thick and muffled because of the swelling of his tongue.

"How long has this wind been blowing, Ferriss?"

"Since a week ago to-day," answered the other.

Bennett continued his writing.

... Incessant gales of wind for over a week. Impossible to move against them in our weakened condition. But to stay here is to perish. God help us. It is the end of everything.

Bennett drew a line across the page under the last entry, and, still holding the book in his hand, gazed slowly about the tent.

There were six of them left—five huddled together in that miserable tent—the sixth, Adler, being down on the shore gathering shrimps. In the strange and gloomy half-light that filled the tent these survivors of the Freja looked less like men than beasts. Their hair and beards were long, and seemed one with the fur covering of their bodies. Their faces were absolutely black with dirt, and their limbs were monstrously distended and fat—fat as things bloated and swollen are fat. It was the abnormal fatness of starvation, the irony of misery, the huge joke that arctic famine plays upon those whom it afterward destroys. The men moved about at times on their hands and knees; their tongues were distended, round, and slate-coloured, like the tongues of parrots, and when they spoke they bit them helplessly.

Near the flap of the tent lay the swollen dead body of Dennison. Two of the party dozed inert and stupefied in their sleeping-bags. Muck Tu was in the corner of the tent boiling his sealskin footnips over the sheet-iron cooker. Ferriss and Bennett sat on opposite sides of the tent, Bennett using his knee as a desk, Ferriss trying to free himself from the sleeping-bag with the stumps of his arms. Upon one of these stumps, the right one, a tin spoon had been lashed.

The tent was full of foul smells. The smell of drugs and of mouldy gunpowder, the smell of dirty rags, of unwashed bodies, the smell of stale smoke, of scorching sealskin, of soaked and rotting canvas that exhaled from the tent cover—every smell but that of food.

Outside the unleashed wind yelled incessantly, like a sabbath of witches, and spun about the pitiful shelter and went rioting past, leaping and somersaulting from rock to rock, tossing handfuls of dry, dust-like snow into the air; folly-stricken, insensate, an enormous, mad monster gambolling there in some hideous dance of death, capricious, headstrong, pitiless as a famished wolf.

In front of the tent and over a ridge of barren rocks was an arm of the sea dotted with blocks of ice moving silently and swiftly onward; while back from the coast, and back from the tent and to the south and to the west and to the east, stretched the illimitable waste of land, rugged, gray, harsh; snow and ice and rock, rock and ice and snow, stretching away there under the sombre sky forever and forever; gloomy, untamed, terrible, an empty region—the scarred battlefield of chaotic forces, the savage desolation of a prehistoric world.

"Where's Adler?" asked Ferriss.

"He's away after shrimps," responded Bennett.

Bennett's eyes returned to his journal and rested on the open page thoughtfully.

"Do you know what I've just written here, Ferriss?" he asked, adding without waiting for an answer: "I've written 'It's the end of everything.'"

"I suppose it is," admitted Ferriss, looking about the tent.

"Yes, the end of everything. It's come—at last.... Well." There was a long silence. One of the men in the sleeping-bags groaned and turned upon his face. Outside the wind lapsed suddenly to a prolonged sigh of infinite sadness, clamouring again upon the instant.

"Dick," said Bennett, returning his journal to the box of records, "it *is* the end of everything, and just because it is I want to talk to you—to ask you something."

Ferriss came nearer. The horrid shouting of the wind deadened the sound of their voices; the others could not hear, and by now it would have mattered very little to any of them if they had.

"Dick," began Bennett, "nothing makes much difference now. In a few hours we shall all be like Dennison here;" he tapped the body of the doctor, who had died during the night. It was already frozen so hard that his touch upon it resounded as if it had been a log of wood. "We shall be like this pretty soon. But before—well, while I can, I want to ask you something about Lloyd Searight. You've known her all your life, and you saw her later than I did before we left. You remember I had to come to the ship two days before you, about the bilge pumps."

While Bennett had been speaking Ferriss had been sitting very erect upon his sleeping-bag, drawing figures and vague patterns in the fur of his deer-skin coat with the tip of the tin spoon. Yes, Bennett was right; he, Ferriss, had known her all his life, and it was no doubt because of this very fact that she had come to be so dear to him. But he had not always known it, had never discovered his love for her until the time was at hand to say good-bye, to leave her for this mad dash for the Pole. It had been too late to speak then, and Ferriss had never told her. She was never to know that he too—like Bennett—cared.

"It seems rather foolish," continued Bennett clumsily, "but if I thought she had ever cared for me—in that way—why, it would make this that is coming to us seem—I don't know—easier to be borne perhaps. I say it very badly, but it would not be so hard to die if I thought she had ever loved me—a bit."

Ferriss was thinking very fast. Why was it he had never guessed something like this? But in Ferriss's mind the idea of the love of a woman had never associated itself with Bennett, that great, harsh man of colossal frame, so absorbed in his huge projects, so welded to his single aim, furthering his purposes to the exclusion of every other thought, desire, or emotion. Bennett was a man's man. But here Ferriss checked himself. Bennett himself had called her a man's woman, a grand, splendid man's woman. He was right; he was right. She was no less than that; small wonder, after all, that Bennett had been attracted to her. What a pair they were, strong, masterful both, insolent in the consciousness of their power!

"You have known her so well and for so long," continued Bennett, "that I am sure she must have said something to you about me. Tell me, did she ever say anything—or not that—but imply in her manner, give you to understand that she would have married me if I had asked her?"

Ferriss found time, even in such an hour, to wonder at the sudden and unexpected break in the uniform hardness of Bennett's character. Ferriss knew him well by now. Bennett was not a man to ask concessions, to catch at small favours. What he wanted he took with an iron hand, without ruth and without scruple. But in the unspeakable dissolution in which they were now involved did anything make a difference? The dreadful mill in which they had been ground had crushed from them all petty distinctions of personality, individuality. Humanity—the elements of character common to all men—only remained.

But Ferriss was puzzled as to how he should answer Bennett. On the one hand was the woman he loved, and on the other Bennett, his best friend, his chief, his hero. They, too, had lived together for so long, had fought out the fight with the Enemy shoulder to shoulder, had battled with the same dangers, had dared the same sufferings, had undergone the same defeats and disappointments.

Ferriss felt himself in grievous straits. Must he tell Bennett the truth? Must this final disillusion be added to that long train of others, the disasters, the failures, the disappointments, and deferred hopes of all those past months? Must Bennett die hugging to his heart this bitterness as well?

"I sometimes thought," observed Bennett with a weak smile, "that she did care a little. I've surely seen something like that in her eyes at certain moments. I wish I had spoken. Did she ever say anything to you? Do you think she would have married me if I had asked her?" He paused, waiting for an answer.

"Oh—yes," hazarded Ferriss, driven to make some sort of response, hoping to end the conversation; "yes, I think she would."

"You do?" said Bennett quickly. "You think she would? What did she say? Did she ever say anything to you?"

The thing was too cruel; Ferriss shrank from it. But suddenly an idea occurred to him. Did anything make any difference now? Why not tell his friend that which he wanted to hear, even if it were not the truth? After all that Bennett had suffered why could he not die content at least in this? What did it matter if he spoke? Did anything matter at such a time when they were all to die within the next twenty-four hours? Bennett was looking straight into his eyes; there was no time to think of consequences. Consequences? But there were to be *no* consequences. This was the end. Yet could Ferriss make Bennett receive such an untruth? Ferriss did not believe that Lloyd cared for Bennett; knew that she did not, in fact, and if she had cared, did Bennett think for an instant that she—of all women—would have confessed the fact, confessed it to him, Bennett's most intimate friend? Ferriss had known Lloyd well for a long time, had at last come to love her. But could he himself tell whether or no Lloyd cared for him? No, he could not, certainly he could not.

Meanwhile Bennett was waiting for his answer. Ferriss's mind was all confused. He could no longer distinguish right from wrong. If the lie would make Bennett happier in this last hour of his life, why not tell the lie?

"Yes," answered Ferriss, "she did say something once."

"She did?"

"Yes," continued Ferriss slowly, trying to invent the most plausible lie. "We had been speaking of the expedition and of you. I don't know how the subject was brought up, but it came in very naturally at length. She said—yes, I recall it. She said: 'You must bring him back to me. Remember he is everything to me—everything in the world.'"

"She—" Bennett cleared his throat, then tugged at his mustache; "she said that?"

Ferriss nodded.

"Ah!" said Bennett with a quick breath, then he added: "I'm glad of that; you haven't any idea how glad I am, Dick—in spite of everything."

"Oh, yes, I guess I have," murmured Ferriss.

"No, no, indeed, you haven't," returned the other. "One has to love a woman like that, Dick, and have her—and find out—and have things come right, to appreciate it. She would have been my wife after all. I don't know how to thank you, Dick. Congratulate me."

He rose, holding out his hand; Ferriss feebly rose, too, and instinctively extended his arm, but withdrew it suddenly. Bennett paused abruptly, letting his hand fall to his side, and the two men remained there an instant, looking at the stumps of Ferriss's arms, the tin spoon still lashed to the right wrist.

A few hours later Bennett noted that the gale had begun perceptibly to abate. By afternoon he was sure that the storm would be over. As he turned to re-enter the tent after reading the wind-gauge he noted that Kamiska, their one remaining dog, had come back, and was sitting on a projection of ice a little distance away, uncertain as to her reception after her absence. Bennett was persuaded that Kamiska had not run away. Of all the Ostiaks she had been the most faithful. Bennett chose to believe that she had wandered from the tent and had lost herself in the blinding snow. But here was food. Kamiska could be killed; life could be prolonged a day or two, perhaps three, while the strongest man of the party, carrying the greater portion of the dog meat on his shoulders, could push forward and, perhaps, after all, reach Kolyuchin Bay and the Chuckch settlements and return with aid. But who could go? Assuredly not Ferriss, so weak he could scarcely keep on his feet; not Adler, who at times was delirious, and who needed the discipline of a powerful leader to keep him to his work; Muck Tu, the Esquimau, could not be trusted with the lives of all of them, and the two remaining men were in

all but a dying condition. Only one man of them all was equal to the task, only one of them who still retained his strength of body and mind; he himself, Bennett. Yes, but to abandon his men?

He crawled into the tent again to get the rifle with which to shoot the dog, but, suddenly possessed of an idea, paused for a moment, seated on the sleeping-bag, his head in his hands.

Beaten? Was he beaten at last? Had the Enemy conquered? Had the Ice enclosed him in its vast, remorseless grip? Then once more his determination grew big within him, for a last time that iron will rose up in mighty protest of defeat. No, no, no; he was not beaten; he would live; he, the strongest, the fittest, would survive. Was it not right that the mightiest should live? Was it not the great law of nature? He knew himself to be strong enough to move; to march, perhaps, for two whole days; and now food had come to them, to him. Yes, but to abandon his men?

He had left McPherson, it is true; but then the lives of all of them had been involved—one life against eleven. Now he was thinking only of himself. But Ferriss—no, he could not leave Ferriss. Ferriss would come with him. They would share the dog meat between them—the whole of it. He, with Ferriss, would push on. He would reach Kolyuchin Bay and the settlements. He would be saved; he would reach home; would come back—come back to Lloyd, who loved him. Yes, but to abandon his men?

Then Bennett's great fist closed, closed and smote heavily upon his knee.

"No," he said decisively.

He had spoken his thoughts aloud, and Ferriss, who had crawled into his sleeping-bag again, looked at him curiously. Even Muck Tu turned his head from the sickening mess reeking upon the cooker. There was a noise of feet at the flap of the tent.

"It's Adler," muttered Ferriss.

Adler tore open the flap.

Then he shouted to Bennett: "Three steam whalers off the foot of the floe, sir; boat putting off! What orders, sir?"

Bennett looked at him stupidly, as yet without definite thought.

"What did you say?"

The men in the sleeping-bags, roused by Adler's shout, sat up and listened stolidly.

"Steam whalers?" said Bennett slowly. "Where? I guess not," he added, shaking his head.

Adler was swaying in his place with excitement.

"Three whalers," he repeated, "close in. They've put off—oh, my God! Listen to that."

The unmistakable sound of a steamer's whistle, raucous and prolonged, came to their ears from the direction of the coast. One of the men broke into a feeble cheer. The whole tent was rousing up. Again and again came the hoarse, insistent cry of the whistle.

"What orders, sir?" repeated Adler.

A clamour of voices filled the tent.

Ferriss came quickly up to Bennett, trying to make himself heard.

"Listen!" he cried with eager intentness, "what I told you—a while ago—about Lloyd—I thought—it's all a mistake, you don't understand—"

Bennett was not listening.

"What orders, sir?" exclaimed Adler for the third time.

Bennett drew himself up.

"My compliments to the officer in command. Tell him there are six of us left—tell him—oh, tell him anything you damn please. Men," he cried, his harsh face suddenly radiant, "make ready to get out of this! We're going home, going home to those who love us, men."

III

As Lloyd Searight turned into Calumet Square on her way from the bookseller's, with her purchases under her arm, she was surprised to notice a drop of rain upon the back of one of her white gloves. She looked up quickly; the sun was gone. On the east side of the square, under the trees, the houses that at this hour of the afternoon should have been overlaid with golden light were in shadow. The heat that had been palpitating through all the City's streets since early morning was swiftly giving place to a certain cool and odorous dampness. There was even a breeze beginning to stir in the tops of the higher elms. As the drops began to thicken upon the warm, sun-baked asphalt under foot Lloyd sharply quickened her pace. But the summer storm was coming up rapidly. By the time she reached the great granite-built agency on the opposite side of the square she was all but running, and as she put her key in the door the rain swept down with a prolonged and muffled roar.

She let herself into the spacious, airy hallway of the agency, shutting the door by leaning against it, and stood there for an instant to get her breath. Rownie, the young mulatto girl, one of the servants of the house, who was going upstairs with an armful of clean towels, turned about at the closing of the door and called:

"Jus' in time, Miss Lloyd; jus' in time. I reckon Miss Wakeley and Miss Esther Thielman going to get for sure wet. They ain't neither one of 'em took ary umberel."

"Did Miss Wakeley and Miss Thielman both go out?" demanded Lloyd quickly. "Did they both go on a call?"

"Yes, Miss Lloyd," answered Rownie. "I don't know because why Miss Wakeley went, but Miss Esther Thielman got a typhoid call—another one. That's three f'om this house come next Sunday week. I reckon Miss Wakeley going out meks you next on call, Miss Lloyd."

While Rownie had been speaking Lloyd had crossed the hall to where the roster of the nurses' names, in little movable slides, hung against the wall. As often as a nurse was called out she removed her name from the top of this list and slid it into place at the bottom, so that whoever found her name at the top of the roster knew that she was "next on call" and prepared herself accordingly.

Lloyd's name was now at the top of the list. She had not been gone five minutes from the agency, and it was rare for two nurses to be called out in so short a time.

"Is it your tu'n?" asked Rownie as Lloyd faced quickly about.

"Yes, yes," answered Lloyd, running up the stairs, adding, as she passed the mulatto: "There's been no call sent in since Miss Thielman left, has there, Rownie?" Rownie shook her head.

Lloyd went directly to her room, tossed her books aside without removing the wrappers, and set about packing her satchel. When this was done she changed her tailor-made street dress and crisp skirt for clothes that would not rustle when she moved, and put herself neatly to rights, stripping off her rings and removing the dog-violets from her waist. Then she went to the round, old-fashioned mirror that hung between the windows of her room, and combed back her hair in a great roll from her forehead and temples, and stood there a moment or so when she had done, looking at her reflection.

She was tall and of a very vigorous build, full-throated, deep-chested, with large, strong hands and solid, round wrists. Her face was rather serious; one did not expect her to smile easily; the eyes dull blue, with no trace of sparkle and set deep under heavy, level eyebrows. Her mouth was the mouth of the obstinate, of the strong-willed, and her chin was not small. But her hair was a veritable glory, a dull-red flame, that bore back from her face in one great solid roll, dull red, like copper or old bronze, thick, heavy, almost gorgeous in its sombre radiance. Dull-red hair, dull-blue eyes, and a faint, dull glow forever on her cheeks, Lloyd was a beautiful woman; much about her that was regal, for she was very straight as well as very tall, and could look down upon most women and upon not a few men.

Lloyd turned from the mirror, laying down the comb. She had yet to pack her nurse's bag, or, since this was always ready, to make sure that none of its equipment was lacking. She was very proud

of this bag, as she had caused it to be made after her own ideas and design. It was of black russia leather and in the form of an ordinary valise, but set off with a fine silver clasp bearing her name and the agency's address. She brought it from the closet and ran over its contents, murmuring the while to herself:

"Clinical thermometer—brandy—hypodermic syringe—vial of oxalic-acid crystals—minim-glass—temperature charts; yes, yes, everything right."

While she was still speaking Miss Douglass, the fever nurse, knocked at her door, and, finding it ajar, entered without further ceremony.

"Are you in, Miss Searight?" called Miss Douglass, looking about the room, for Lloyd had returned to the closet and was busy washing the minim-glass.

"Yes, yes," cried Lloyd, "I am. Sit down."

"Rownie told me you are next on call," said the other, dropping on Lloyd's couch.

"So I am; I was very nearly caught, too. I ran over across the square for five minutes, and while I was gone Miss Wakeley and Esther Thielman were called. My name is at the top now."

"Esther got a typhoid case from Dr. Pitts. Do you know, Lloyd, that's—let me see, that's four—seven—nine—that's ten typhoid cases in the City that I can think of right now."

"It's everywhere; yes, I know," answered Lloyd, coming out of the room, carefully drying the minim-glass.

"We are going to have trouble with it," continued the fever nurse; "plenty of it before cool weather comes. It's almost epidemic."

Lloyd held the minim-glass against the light, scrutinising it with narrowed lids.

"What did Esther say when she knew it was an infectious case?" she asked. "Did she hesitate at all?"

"Not she!" declared Miss Douglass. "She's no Harriet Freeze."

Lloyd did not answer. This case of Harriet Freeze was one that the nurses of the house had never forgotten and would never forgive. Miss Freeze, a young English woman, newly graduated, suddenly called upon to nurse a patient stricken with smallpox, had flinched and had been found wanting at the crucial moment, had discovered an excuse for leaving her post, having once accepted it. It was cowardice in the presence of the Enemy. Anything could have been forgiven but that. On the girl's return to the agency nothing was said, no action taken, but for all that she was none the less expelled dishonourably from the midst of her companions. Nothing could have been stronger than the *esprit de corps* of this group of young women, whose lives were devoted to an unending battle with disease.

Lloyd continued the overhauling of her equipment, and began ruling forms for nourishment charts, while Miss Douglass importuned her to subscribe to a purse the nurses were making up for an old cripple dying of cancer. Lloyd refused.

"You know very well, Miss Douglass, that I only give to charity through the association."

"I know," persisted the other, "and I know you give twice as much as all of us put together, but with this poor old fellow it's different. We know all about him, and every one of us in the house has given something. You are the only one that won't, Lloyd, and I had so hoped I could make it tip to fifty dollars."

"No."

"We need only three dollars now. We can buy that little cigar stand for him for fifty dollars."

"No."

"And you won't give us just three dollars?"

"No."

"Well, you give half and I'll give half," said Miss Douglass.

"Do you think it's a question of money with me?" Lloyd smiled.

Indeed this was a poor argument with which to move Lloyd—Lloyd whose railroad stock alone brought her some fifteen thousand dollars a year.

"Well, no; I don't mean that, of course, but, Lloyd, do let us have three dollars, and I can send word to the old chap this very afternoon. It will make him happy for the rest of his life."

"No—no—no, not three dollars, nor three cents."

Miss Douglass made a gesture of despair. She might have expected that she could not move Lloyd. Once her mind was made up, one might argue with her till one's breath failed. She shook her head at Lloyd and exclaimed, but not ill-naturedly:

"Obstinate! Obstinate! Obstinate!"

Lloyd put away the hypodermic syringe and the minim-glass in their places in the bag, added a little ice-pick to its contents, and shut the bag with a snap.

"Now," she announced, "I'm ready."

When Miss Douglass had taken herself away Lloyd settled herself in the place she had vacated, and, stripping the wrappings from the books and magazines she had bought, began to turn the pages, looking at the pictures. But her interest flagged. She tried to read, but soon cast the book from her and leaned back upon the great couch, her hands clasped behind the great bronze-red coils at the back of her head, her dull-blue eyes fixed and vacant.

For hours the preceding night she had lain broad awake in her bed, staring at the shifting shadow pictures that the electric lights, shining through the trees down in the square, threw upon the walls and ceiling of her room. She had eaten but little since morning; a growing spirit of unrest had possessed her for the last two days. Now it had reached a head. She could no longer put her thoughts from her.

It had all come back again for the fiftieth time, for the hundredth time, the old, intolerable burden of anxiety growing heavier month by month, year by year. It seemed to her that a shape of terror, formless, intangible, and invisible, was always by her, now withdrawing, now advancing, but always there; there close at hand in some dark corner where she could not see, ready at every instant to assume a terrible and all too well-known form, and to jump at her from behind, from out the dark, and to clutch her throat with cold fingers. The thing played with her, tormented her; at times it all but disappeared; at times she believed she had fought it from her for good, and then she would wake of a night, in the stillness and in the dark, and know it to be there once more—at her bedside—at her back—at her throat—till her heart went wild with fear, and the suspense of waiting for an Enemy that would not strike, but that lurked and leered in dark corners, wrung from her a suppressed cry of anguish and exasperation, and drove her from her sleep with streaming eyes and tight-shut hands and wordless prayers.

For a few moments Lloyd lay back upon the couch, then regained her feet with a brusque, harassed movement of head and shoulders.

"Ah, no," she exclaimed under her breath, "it is too dreadful."

She tried to find diversion in her room, rearranging the few ornaments, winding the clock that struck ships' bells instead of hours, and turning the wicks of the old empire lamps that hung in brass brackets on either side the fireplace. Lloyd, after building the agency, had felt no scruple in choosing the best room in the house and furnishing it according to her taste. Her room was beautiful, but very simple in its appointments. There were great flat wall-space unspoiled by bric-à-brac, the floor marquetry, with but few rugs. The fireplace and its appurtenances were of brass. Her writing-desk, a huge affair, of ancient and almost black San Domingo mahogany.

But soon she wearied of the small business of pottering about her clock and lamps, and, turning to the window, opened it, and, leaning upon her elbows, looked down into the square.

By now the thunderstorm was gone, like the withdrawal of a dark curtain; the sun was out again over the City. The square, deserted but half an hour ago, was reinvaded with its little people of nursemaids, gray-coated policemen, and loungers reading their papers on the benches near the fountain. The elms still dripped, their wet leaves glistening again to the sun. There was a delicious smell in the air—a smell of warm, wet grass, of leaves and drenched bark from the trees. On the far side of the square, seen at intervals in the spaces between the foliage, a passing truck painted vermilion set a

brisk note of colour in the scene. A newsboy appeared chanting the evening editions. On a sudden and from somewhere close at hand an unseen hand-piano broke out into a gay, jangling quickstep, marking the time with delightful precision.

A carriage, its fine lacquered flanks gleaming in the sunlight, rolled through the square, on its way, no doubt, to the very fashionable quarter of the City just beyond. Lloyd had a glimpse of the girl leaning back in its cushions, a girl of her own age, with whom she had some slight acquaintance. For a moment Lloyd, ridden with her terrors, asked herself if this girl, with no capabilities for either great happiness or great sorrow, were not perhaps, after all, happier than she. But she recoiled instantly, murmuring to herself with a certain fierce energy:

"No, no; after all, I have lived."

And how had she lived? For the moment Lloyd was willing to compare herself with the girl in the landau. Swiftly she ran over her own life from the time when left an orphan; in the year of her majority she had become her own mistress and the mistress of the Searight estate. But even at that time she had long since broken away from the conventional world she had known. Lloyd was a nurse in the great St Luke's Hospital even then, had been a probationer there at the time of her mother's death, six months before. She had always been ambitious, but vaguely so, having no determined object in view. She recalled how at that time she knew only that she was in love with her work, her chosen profession, and was accounted the best operating nurse in the ward.

She remembered, too, the various steps of her advancement, the positions she had occupied; probationer first, then full member of the active corps, next operating nurse, then ward manager, and, after her graduation, head nurse of ward four, where the maternity cases were treated. Then had come the time when she had left the hospital and practised private nursing by herself, and at last, not so long ago, the day when her Idea had so abruptly occurred to her; when her ambition, no longer vague, no longer personal, had crystallised and taken shape; when she had discovered a use for her money and had built and founded the house on Calumet Square. For a time she had been the superintendent of nurses here, until her own theories and ideas had obtained and prevailed in its management. Then, her work fairly started, she had resigned her position to an older woman, and had taken her place in the rank and file of the nurses themselves. She wished to be one of them, living the same life, subject to the same rigorous discipline, and to that end she had never allowed it to be known that she was the founder of the house. The other nurses knew that she was very rich, very independent and self-reliant, but that was all. Lloyd did not know and cared very little how they explained the origin and support of the agency.

Lloyd was animated by no great philanthropy, no vast love of humanity in her work; only she wanted, with all her soul she wanted, to count in the general economy of things; to choose a work and do it; to help on, *donner un coup d'épaule*; and this, supported by her own stubborn energy and her immense wealth, she felt that she was doing. To do things had become her creed; to do things, not to think them; to do things, not to talk them; to do things, not to read them. No matter how lofty the thoughts, how brilliant the talk, how beautiful the literature—for her, first, last, and always, were acts, acts, acts—concrete, substantial, material acts. The greatest and happiest day of her life had been when at last she laid her bare hand upon the rough, hard stone of the house in the square and looked up at the facade, her dull-blue eyes flashing with the light that so rarely came to them, while she murmured between her teeth:

"I—did—this."

As she recalled this moment now, leaning upon her elbows, looking down upon the trees and grass and asphalt of the square, and upon a receding landau, a wave of a certain natural pride in her strength, the satisfaction of attainment, came to her. Ah! she was better than other women; ah! she was stronger than other women; she was carrying out a splendid work. She straightened herself to her full height abruptly, stretching her outspread hands vaguely to the sunlight, to the City, to the world, to the great engine of life whose lever she could grasp and could control, smiling proudly, almost

insolently, in the consciousness of her strength, the fine steadfastness of her purpose. Then all at once the smile was struck from her lips, the stiffness of her poise suddenly relaxed. There, there it was again, the terror, the dreadful fear she dared not name, back in its place once more—at her side, at her shoulder, at her throat, ready to clutch at her from out the dark.

She wheeled from the window, from the sunlight, her hands clasped before her trembling lips, the tears brimming her dull-blue eyes. For forty-eight hours she had fought this from her. But now it was no longer to be resisted.

"No, no," she cried half aloud. "I am no better, no stronger than the others. What does it all amount to when I know that, after all, I am just a woman—just a woman whose heart is slowly breaking?"

But there was an interruption. Rownie had knocked twice at her door before Lloyd had heard her. When Lloyd had opened the door the girl handed her a card with an address written on it in the superintendent's hand.

"This here jus' now come in f'om Dr. Street, Miss Lloyd," said Rownie; "Miss Bergyn" (this was the superintendent nurse) "ast me to give it to you."

It was a call to an address that seemed familiar to Lloyd at first; but she did not stop at that moment to reflect. Her stable telephone hung against the wall of the closet. She rang for Lewis, and while waiting for him to get around dressed for the street.

For the moment, at the prospect of action, even her haunting fear drew off and stood away from her. She was absorbed in her work upon the instant—alert, watchful, self-reliant. What the case was she could only surmise. How long she would be away she had no means of knowing—a week, a month, a year, she could not tell. But she was ready for any contingency. Usually the doctors informed the nurses as to the nature of the case at the time of sending for them, but Dr. Street had not done so now.

However, Rownie called up to her that her coupé was at the door. Lloyd caught up her satchels and ran down the stairs, crying good-bye to Miss Douglass, whom she saw at the farther end of the hall. In the hallway by the vestibule she changed the slide bearing her name from the top to the bottom of the roster.

"How about your mail?" cried Miss Douglass after her.

"Keep it here for me until I see how long I'm to be away," answered Lloyd, her hand upon the knob. "I'll let you know."

Lewis had put Rox in the shafts, and while the coupé spun over the asphalt at a smart clip Lloyd tried to remember where she had heard of the address before. Suddenly she snapped her fingers; she knew the case, had even been assigned to it some eight months before.

"Yes, yes, that's it—Campbell—wife dead—Lafayette Avenue—little daughter, Hattie—hip disease—hopeless—poor little baby."

Arriving at the house, Lloyd found the surgeon, Dr. Street, and Mr. Campbell, who was a widower, waiting for her in a small drawing-room off the library. The surgeon was genuinely surprised and delighted to see her. Most of the doctors of the City knew Lloyd for the best trained nurse in the hospitals.

"Oh, it's you, Miss Searight; good enough!" The surgeon introduced her to the little patient's father, adding: "If any one can pull us through, Campbell, it will be Miss Searight."

The surgeon and nurse began to discuss the case.

"I think you know it already, don't you, Miss Searight?" said the surgeon. "You took care of it a while last winter. Well, there was a little improvement in the spring, not so much pain, but that in itself is a bad sign. We have done what we could, Farnham and I. But it don't yield to treatment; you know how these things are—stubborn. We made a preliminary examination yesterday. Sinuses have occurred, and the probe leads down to nothing but dead bone. Farnham and I had a consultation this morning. We must play our last card. I shall exsect the joint to-morrow."

Mr. Campbell drew in his breath and held it for a moment, looking out of the window.

Very attentive, Lloyd merely nodded her head, murmuring:

"I understand."

When Dr. Street had gone Lloyd immediately set to work. The operation was to take place at noon the following day, and she foresaw there would be no sleep for her that night. Street had left everything to her, even to the sterilising of his instruments. Until daylight the following morning Lloyd came and went about the house with an untiring energy, yet with the silence of a swiftly moving shadow, getting together the things needed for the operation—strychnia tablets, absorbent cotton, the rubber tubing for the tourniquet, bandages, salt, and the like—and preparing the little chamber adjoining the sick-room as an operating-room.

The little patient herself, Hattie, hardly into her teens, remembered Lloyd at once. Before she went to sleep Lloyd contrived to spend an hour in the sick-room with her, told her as much as was necessary of what was contemplated, and, by her cheery talk, her gentleness and sympathy, inspired the little girl with a certain sense of confidence and trust in her.

"But—but—but just how bad will it hurt, Miss Searight?" inquired Hattie, looking at her, wide-eyed and serious.

"Dear, it won't hurt you at all; just two or three breaths of the ether and you will be sound asleep. When you wake up it will be all over and you will be well."

Lloyd made the ether cone from a stiff towel, and set it on Hattie's dressing-table. Last of all and just before the operation the gauze sponges occupied her attention. The daytime brought her no rest. Hattie was not to have any breakfast, but toward the middle of the forenoon Lloyd gave her a stimulating enema of whiskey and water, following it about an hour later by a hundredth grain of atropia. She braided the little girl's hair in two long plaits so that her head would rest squarely and flatly upon the pillow. Hattie herself was now ready for the surgeon.

Now there was nothing more to be done. Lloyd could but wait. She took her place at the bedside and tried to talk as lightly as was possible to her patient. But now there was a pause in the round of action. Her mind no longer keenly intent upon the immediate necessities of the moment, began to hark back again to the one great haunting fear that for so long had overshadowed it. Even while she exerted herself to be cheerful and watched for the smiles on Hattie's face her hands twisted tight and tighter under the folds of her blouse, and some second self within her seemed to say:

"Suppose, suppose it should come, this thing I dread but dare not name, what then, what then? Should I not expect it? Is it not almost a certainty? Have I not been merely deceiving myself with the forlornest hopes? Is it not the most reasonable course to expect the worst? Do not all indications point that way? Has not my whole life been shaped to this end? Was not this calamity, this mighty sorrow, prepared for me even before I was born? And one can do nothing, absolutely nothing, nothing, but wait and hope and fear, and eat out one's heart with longing."

There was a knock at the door. Instead of calling to enter Lloyd went to it softly and opened it a few inches. Mr. Campbell was there.

"They've come—Street and the assistant."

Lloyd heard a murmur of voices in the hall below and the closing of the front door.

Farnham and Street went at once to the operating-room to make their hands and wrists aseptic. Campbell had gone downstairs to his smoking-room. It had been decided—though contrary to custom—that Lloyd should administer the chloroform.

At length Street tapped with the handle of a scalpel on the door to say that he was ready.

"Now, dear," said Lloyd, turning to Hattie, and picking up the ether cone.

But the little girl's courage suddenly failed her. She began to plead in a low voice choked with tears. Her supplications were pitiful; but Lloyd, once more intent upon her work, every faculty and thought concentrated upon what must be done, did not temporise an instant. Quietly she gathered Hattie's frail wrists in the grip of one strong palm, and held the cone to her face until she had passed off with a long sigh. She picked her up lightly, carried her into the next room, and laid her upon

the operating-table. At the last moment Lloyd had busied herself with the preparation of her own person. Over her dress she passed her hospital blouse, which had been under a dry heat for hours. She rolled her sleeves up from her strong white forearms with their thick wrists and fine blue veining, and for upward of ten minutes scrubbed them with a new nail-brush in water as hot as she could bear it. After this she let her hands and forearms lie in the permanganate of potash solution till they were brown to the elbow, then washed away the stain in the oxalic-acid solution and in sterilised hot water. Street and Farnham, wearing their sterilised gowns and gloves, took their places. There was no conversation. The only sounds were an occasional sigh from the patient, a direction given in a low tone, and, at intervals, the click of the knives and scalpel. From outside the window came the persistent chirping of a band of sparrows.

Promptly the operation was begun; there was no delay, no hesitation; what there was to be done had been carefully planned beforehand, even to the minutest details. Street, a master of his profession, thoroughly familiar with every difficulty that might present itself during the course of the work in hand, foreseeing every contingency, prepared for every emergency, calm, watchful, self-contained, set about the exsecting of the joint with no trace of compunction, no embarrassment, no misgiving. His assistants, as well as he himself, knew that life or death hung upon the issue of the next ten minutes. Upon Street alone devolved the life of the little girl. A second's hesitation at the wrong stage of the operation, a slip of bistoury or scalpel, a tremor of the wrist, a single instant's clumsiness of the fingers, and the Enemy—watching for every chance, intent for every momentarily opened chink or cranny wherein he could thrust his lean fingers—entered the frail tenement with a leap, a rushing, headlong spring that jarred the house of life to its foundations. Lowering close over her head Lloyd felt the shadow of his approach. He had arrived there in that commonplace little room, with its commonplace accessories, its ornaments, that suddenly seemed so trivial, so impertinent—the stopped French clock, with its simpering, gilded cupids, on the mantelpiece; the photograph of a number of picnickers "grouped" on a hotel piazza gazing with monolithic cheerfulness at this grim business, this struggle of the two world forces, this crisis in a life.

Then abruptly the operation was over.

The nurse and surgeons eased their positions immediately, drawing long breaths. They began to talk, commenting upon the operation, and Lloyd, intensely interested, asked Street why he had, contrary to her expectations, removed the bone above the lesser trochanter. He smiled, delighted at her intelligence.

"It's better than cutting through the neck, Miss Searight," he told her. "If I had gone through the neck, don't you see, the trochanter major would come over the hole and prevent the discharges."

"Yes, yes, I see, of course," assented Lloyd.

The incision was sewn up, and when all was over Lloyd carried Hattie back to the bed in the next room. Slowly the little girl regained consciousness, and Lloyd began to regard her once more as a human being. During the operation she had forgotten the very existence of Hattie Campbell, a little girl she knew. She had only seen a bit of mechanism out of order and in the hands of a repairer. It was always so with Lloyd. Her charges were not infrequently persons whom she knew, often intimately, but during the time of their sickness their personalities vanished for the trained nurse; she saw only the "case," only the mechanism, only the deranged clockwork in imminent danger of running down.

But the danger was by no means over. The operation had been near the trunk. There had been considerable loss of blood, and the child's power of resistance had been weakened by long periods of suffering. Lloyd feared that the shock might prove too great. Farnham departed, but for a little while the surgeon remained with Lloyd to watch the symptoms. At length, however, he too, pressed for time, and expected at one of the larger hospitals of the City, went away, leaving directions for Lloyd to telephone him in case of the slightest change. At this hour, late in the afternoon, there were no indications that the little girl would not recover from the shock. Street believed she would rally and ultimately regain her health.

"But," he told Lloyd as he bade her good-bye, "I don't need to impress upon you the need of care and the greatest vigilance; absolute rest is the only thing; she must see nobody, not even her father. The whole system is numbed and deadened just yet, but there will be a change either for better or worse some time to-night."

For thirty-six hours Lloyd had not closed an eye, but of that she had no thought. Her supper was sent up to her, and she prepared herself for her night's watch. She gave the child such nourishment as she believed she could stand, and from time to time took her pulse, making records of it upon her chart for the surgeon's inspection later on. At intervals she took Hattie's temperature, placing the clinical thermometer in the armpit. Toward nine in the evening, while she was doing this for the third time within the hour, one of the house servants came to the room to inform her that she was wanted on the telephone. Lloyd hesitated, unwilling to leave Hattie for an instant. However, the telephone was close at hand, and it was quite possible that Dr. Street had rung her up to ask for news.

But it was the agency that had called, and Miss Douglass informed her that a telegram had arrived there for her a few moments before. Should she hold it or send it to her by Rownie? Lloyd reflected a moment.

"Oh—open it and read it to me," she said. "It's a call, isn't it?—or—no; send it here by Rownie, and send my hospital slippers with her, the ones without heels. But don't ring up again to-night; we're expecting a crisis almost any moment."

Lloyd returned to the sick-room, sent away the servant, and once more settled herself for the night. Hattie had roused for a moment.

"Am I going to get well, am I going to get well, Miss Searight?"

Lloyd put her finger to her lips, nodding her head, and Hattie closed her eyes again with a long breath. A certain great tenderness and compassion for the little girl grew big in Lloyd's heart. To herself she said:

"God helping me, you shall get well. They believe in me, these people—'If any one could pull us through it would be Miss Searight.' We will 'pull through,' yes, for I'll do it."

The night closed down, dark and still and very hot. Lloyd, regulating the sick-room's ventilation, opened one of the windows from the top. The noises of the City steadily decreasing as the hours passed, reached her ears in a subdued, droning murmur. On her bed, that had for so long been her bed of pain, Hattie lay with closed eyes, inert, motionless, hardly seeming to breathe, her life in the balance; unhappy little invalid, wasted with suffering, with drawn, pinched face and bloodless lips, and at her side Lloyd, her dull-blue eyes never leaving her patient's face, alert and vigilant, despite her long wakefulness, her great bronze-red flame of hair rolling from her forehead and temples, the sombre glow in her cheeks no whit diminished by her day of fatigue, of responsibility and untiring activity.

For the time being she could thrust her fear, the relentless Enemy that for so long had hung upon her heels, back and away from her. There was another Enemy now to fight—or was it another—was it not the same Enemy, the very same, whose shadow loomed across that sick-bed, across the frail, small body and pale, drawn face?

With her pity and compassion for the sick child there arose in Lloyd a certain unreasoned, intuitive obstinacy, a banding together of all her powers and faculties in one great effort at resistance, a steadfastness under great stress, a stubbornness, that shut its ears and eyes. It was her one dominant characteristic rising up, strong and insistent the instant she knew herself to be thwarted in her desires or checked in a course she believed to be right and good. And now as she felt the advance of the Enemy and saw the shadow growing darker across the bed her obstinacy hardened like tempered steel.

"No," she murmured, her brows levelled, her lips compressed, "she shall not die. I will not let her go."

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