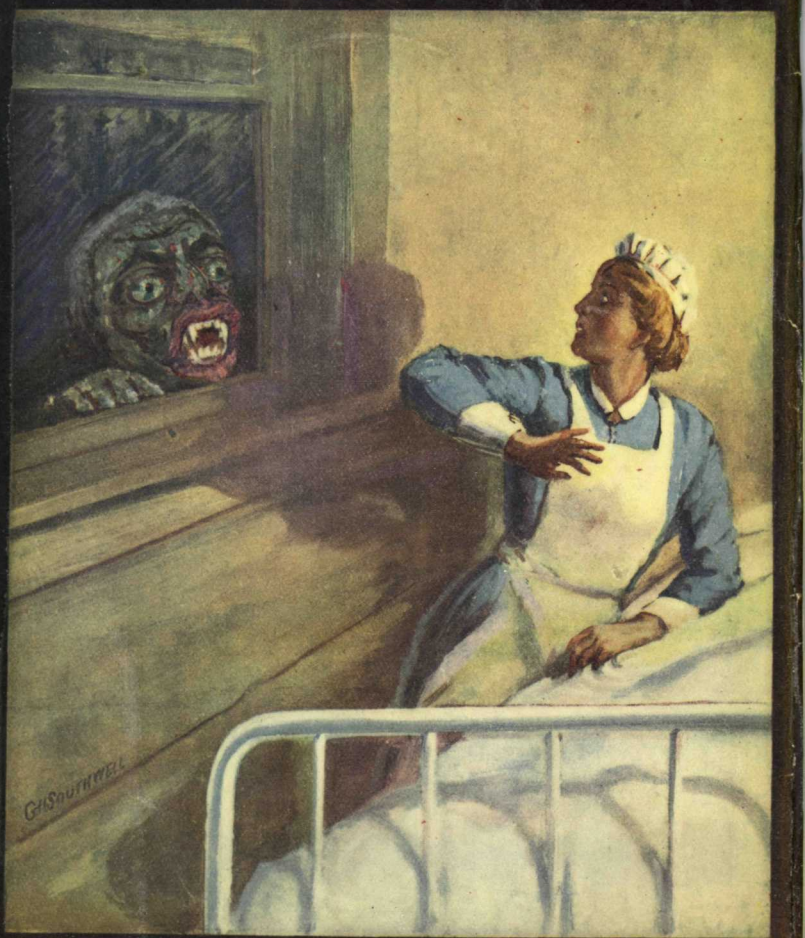
HULDOWGET

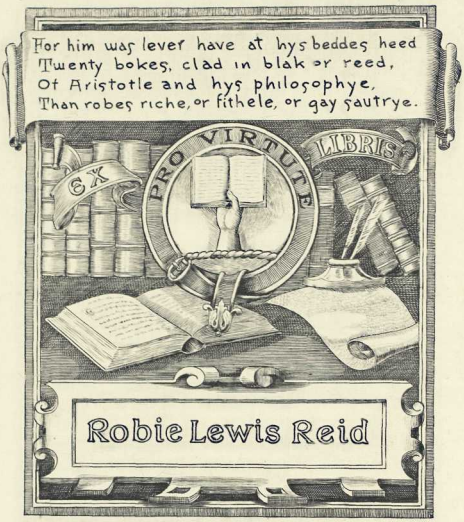
by

B. A. McKelvie



A STORY OF THE NORTH PACIFIC COAST

HULDOWGET is a powerful story of conflict between the superstitions of the Indians and the convictions of white men. It is something new in Canadian literature. Written by a man who has known from infancy the rugged coast of Western Canada and her untamed Indians, here is a unique story replete with the legendry of the North, with the odor of the fresh, damp forests, and with the salt of the sea.



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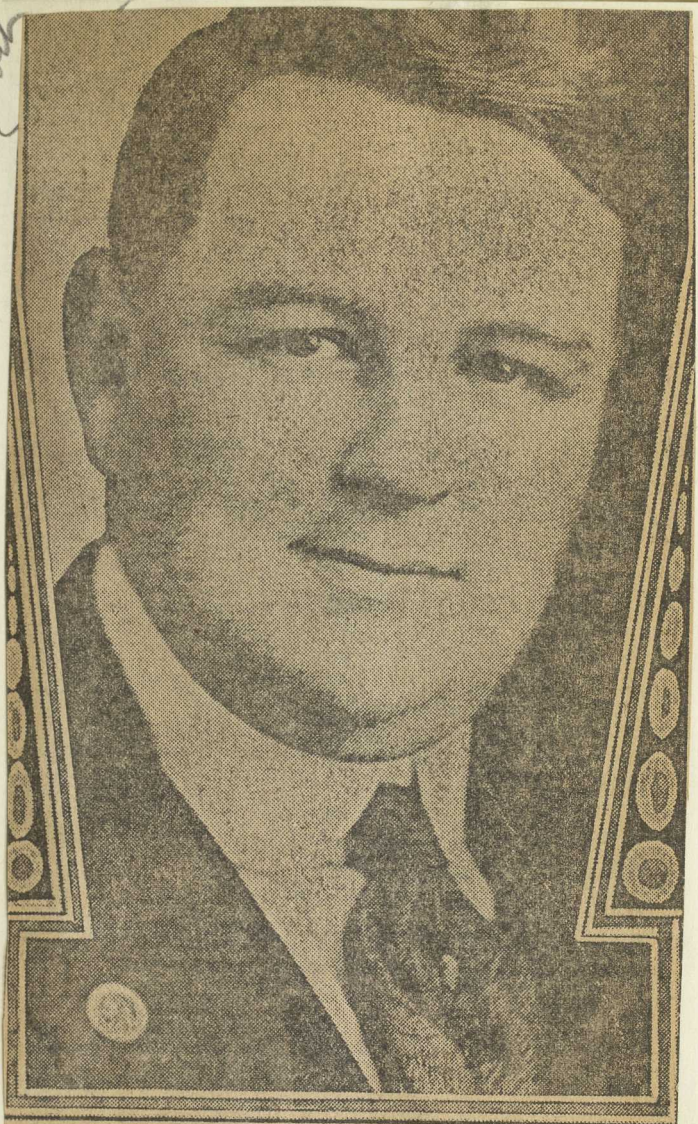

B. A. McKELVIE

Chief factor of the Native Sons of British Columbia, whose romance of Indian life in the Northwest has just been published. 1926

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PACIFIC COAST

BY

B. A. McKELVIE

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FOREWORD

PRIOR to the discovery of gold in British Columbia, in 1858, the country was controlled entirely by the Hudson's Bay Company. The servants of the company were the only white men in the great territory west of the Rocky Mountains and north of Old Oregon.

The native population at that time was estimated to be from 100,000 to 150,000, but to-day, after less than threescore years and ten of the white man's occupation and civilisation, there are but 25,000 on Government reservations. The white man's diseases and his fire-water have wiped whole tribes out of existence.

Scattered along the seven thousand miles of tidal waters of Canada's Pacific province are numerous reserves where remnants of once powerful nations have been gathered. Here the Federal Government agents seek to combat the causes which have decimated the aborigines.

In its wisdom the Government has endeavoured to replace ancient customs and tribal rites with the civilisation of the white man. The potlatch—a peculiar banking system—has been banned, and the bartering of coppers has been declared illegal. No longer are the winter ceremonials, with their weird and fantastic dances, held, and no trials of endurance mark the initiation of young braves into the secret organisations of the Coast. The Government frowns on such things.

The authorities may prohibit, but they cannot eliminate from the minds of those who listen in the lodges to the tales of the old men the desire for a return to the exciting times that are no more, when the customs of centuries held sway. Nor can the instruction of teacher and missionary altogether banish the fear that arises at the mention of evil spirits.

"I have seen," says a friend, "young men who had been educated in the schools turn pale and tremble when it was rumoured in the village that some man or woman was invoking the aid of evil spirits. I have known men to die—gradually fade away—when they believed a spell had been cast upon them. It is hard indeed to remove in a few years the superstitions of countless centuries."

The hunting of the huldowget and the trial by the mouse are barbaric customs which a few years ago were common, and which to-day are followed when opportunity offers to do so beyond the scrutiny of the law.

It is only a few months ago that Mounted Police penetrated the trackless Northland to bring to trial those charged with the murder of a boy suspected of exercising an evil influence over others.

Records of different Government agencies reveal dozens of instances of the fight which the authorities and missioners are waging against the return of the shaman, or medicine man.

The story of self-sacrifice and devotion of the missionaries of the Coast is one of great inspiration. In the earlier days of Christianity among the natives of British Columbia and Alaska the lives of these

devoted men were in constant danger, but they faced their trials and difficulties without complaint, toiling ceaselessly to help the Indians. Praise is especially due to those splendid women, the wives of the Protestant missionaries, who assisted them in their work.

In the story of Huldowget an effort has been made to picture some of the trials and tribulations, the dangers and disappointments of a missioner and his wife, but no pen can do full justice to the men and women of whom Father David and Mother are types.

An endeavour has also been made to portray in a slight measure the confusion that often arises in the mind of the native when asked to accept new doctrines in place of those held by his forefathers. Not long ago an Indian woman asked me to explain why the stories she told were bad and those the missioner related were good. Her spiritual adviser had told her to discard her practice of story-telling. "He said," she explained, "it was bad for me to tell how the eagle talked. Then he tells me about Balaam's ass. Why, if my story is bad, is his story good?" I could not answer.

B. A. M.

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HULDOWGET

CHAPTER I

AN EVIL OMEN

"I WONDER, David, if the Mission Board will send the nurse. It seems too bad to have to ask for help, but I really cannot go on much longer unaided—and it is not for myself I ask for assistance, but for the sake of the work."

"I know, my dear," affectionately answered the big, grey-bearded medical missionary. "It has been a long, trying service—forty years in this place. But," he continued more cheerfully, "I am sure that the answer to our letter will come——"

"What is that? Listen!" interrupted his wife.

From the village came the sounds of song, the plaintive wailing of Indians chanting; now slow and mournful, now quickening in crescendo to an abrupt termination, only to be repeated again and again.

The old couple sat looking at each other without speaking, the face of each expressing a dread that neither would voice, for it had been many years since they had heard a similar air in the village that clustered about the ruins of the abandoned trading-post of Fort Oliver, and neither wished to recall to the other the memory of those early days.

At last the missioner broke silence. "It must be

those Alaskan Indians," he said. "They came to-day for the oolichan fishing. They have no right here."

Further comment was cut short by a rapping at the door of the Mission House. Dr. Mainwaring responded to admit to the hallway a crippled native, whose agitation suggested that he was the bearer of news of some importance.

"Come in, Paul," invited the priest. "What is it?"

The young man remained standing in the hallway. "No, Father David," he answered, in fairly good English, "I just come to tell you something."

"What?"

"The people make prayer to Nexnox to send plenty oolichans."

"Who?"

"The Alaska people."

"And our people, what are they doing?"

"They watch. I come to tell you. I must go"; and the Indian opened the door and disappeared into the failing light of the early spring afternoon.

"Who was it? What is the matter, David?"

"It was Paul," answered the doctor, re-entering the room. "He says those Alaskans are making mischief. They are praying to their heathen god, Nexnox, and are making the oolichan fishing sacrifices. I must go at once. Where are my boots?"

Father David was soon striding towards one of the larger houses set aside for the use of the strangers on their arrival that morning from the North. As he neared the place the chanting ceased and gave way to the united supplication of many voices, punctuated by the blowing of spirit whistles.

The missionary recognised the prayer. It was an appeal to the supernatural helper of the Being in the sky to favour them in their fishing.

On entering the narrow doorway, he stood for a moment surveying the scene, unobserved by the actors in the strange rite or by those of his own flock who viewed the ceremony with fascination.

On the earthen floor a great fire was blazing, the flames leaping up until they almost licked the cedar-log rafters and scorched the hideous carved face of Nexnox, suspended below the smoke-hole in the roof. The lurid, dancing light cast grotesque shadows through the weaving smoke on the circle of faces about the blaze. Men and women passed slowly around the fire, shouting in the guttural language of their race:

"Nexnox, Nexnox, be good to us. Give us lots of oolichans or we will die. See, Great Chief, we give you something. It is all we have."

At each repetition of the prayer the Indians threw upon the burning pile wooden dishes containing food, cedar baskets, articles of clothing and fragments of a fine canoe that had been splintered for the purpose. At the first sign of the flames dying down beneath the weight of slow combustibles, a big, broad-shouldered man, naked to the waist, ladled fish grease from a large box on the fire and again it flamed brightly.

When his eyes had become accustomed to the sting of the smoke, Father David advanced to the outer fringe of spectators and, in a powerful voice that rang out above the shouting of the worshippers, thundered:

"Stop this idolatry! What means all this?"

The circling chain of men and women halted and

broke. Had the wooden mask given answer to his petitioners, greater consternation could not have resulted, and indeed several, worked to a state of religious frenzy, collapsed to the floor, calling, as they grovelled in the dirt, "Nexnox has spoken!"

"Away with you, worshippers of Baal!" exclaimed the missioner, pushing his way towards the fire. The crowd melted before him. Members of the Fort Oliver band slipped out of the building and disappeared, while the strangers ran from him, gathering on the farther side of the burning pile for mutual protection. As he moved towards them, berating them in their own tongue, they edged away, keeping the flames between them and this scolding giant in black.

"When the sun comes, you go," he ordered, when he ended his tirade.

Murmurs, and then shouts of defiance, answered him.

Lifting his voice, he thundered: "When the sun comes, you go."

He turned and started for the door. Hardly had he taken half a dozen steps when a savage sprang after him, and a knife-blade flashed in the light of the fire. Quick as was the native, the priest was quicker; he stepped aside, half-turned and caught the descending arm in a powerful grasp. He gave a quick twist: there was a sickening sound of splintering bone and a cry of pain broke from the Indian.

Father David did not release his hold, but, turning to the natives, who were too astonished to move, he said, "I will fix this man's arm," and he left the building, dragging his assailant after him.

In the dispensary of his little hospital the doctor

set the fractured bone. Then, having followed the age-old custom of making a present of goodwill, he permitted the man to go to his friends.

"You had someone in the dispensary; I did not want to bother you," observed his wife when, a few moments later, Father David sat down to his evening meal. "Who was it?"

"Oh, one of the strangers had a broken arm, that was all."

"And the trouble in the village, dear?" she ventured.

"They were praying to Nexnox, but they stopped when I appeared. They are going away in the morning, so there is nothing for you to worry about," he assured her.

Mother did not question him further, although she knew that he had found cause for anxiety. She was not surprised, therefore, when he announced, a little later, that he was going out.

He had not gone far before he became aware that something was causing a stir in the village. No men were in sight about the Indian shacks and the squaws he encountered hurried by without speaking.

"What is it, Martha?" he asked one woman. "What is the matter? Come, tell me," he pressed, as she hesitated to answer.

"The men are meeting," was the reply.

"About what?"

"About you sending the people from the North away."

"Well, well, I must see about it. Where are they?"

"In Chief John Peter's house. Don't say I told you."

"No, Martha, I won't. Good night!"

Surprise showed on every face when Father David entered the house where the council was being held. The chief was speaking, but he stopped and looked at the intruder in blank amazement.

"Go on, chief," urged the missionary. "You were talking about me?"

There was a sullen whispering, and then a voice: "Yes, go on, chief. Tell him what we think."

"The people say——" and he stopped.

"Yes?" encouraged the priest.

"They say," went on the chief, "you did bad. You make us 'shamed——"

Exclamations of assent encouraged him, and John Peter went on more boldly: "You do bad to send our friends away. They go now. No stop for sun. You do bad for us. The people say you must send for our friends and tell them to come back. That is what the people say; that is what I say. I have spoken."

All eyes turned to the missionary. He looked down upon them from his superior height and noted the angry expression on every countenance.

"Children, children!" he exclaimed tenderly. "I will make answer to your chief, but first let us sing"; and he broke into one of the favourite hymns of his congregation. He knew these simple folk better than they did themselves, and in a moment they were lustily following him in a song of praise.

"Now, children," he said, when the singing ceased, "I will make answer to you.

"I have lived with you forty snows. When Mother and I came here our hair was black like the raven; now it is white like the swan. You have known me,

chief, since you were a little boy. Did you ever know my words to be bad? Did you ever know the words of Mother to be bad? Did you, chief?"

"No," was the grudging answer.

"That is good. All the time we worked to help the people; to tell them of God's way. All the time we to tried to help the people when they were sick, and to teach the boys and girls. Are my words good words? Are they true?"

"Yes," agreed several.

"Did the Alaska people ever do as much for you? Do you want us to go away and the Alaska people to come?"

"No, no."

"You know the Nexnox way is not God's way; that it is the old way, the bad way. Do you want that way or God's way?"

"No," shouted a dozen voices, "we want the good way."

"That is good; for if you want the Nexnox way, then I will not stay. If you want us to stay we will be glad, but I will not send for the Alaska people. It is for you to say."

"We want you," stammered the chief. "You must not go."

"Then we will stay. We want to help you all. We are both getting old, and, when we are gone, we want the people to be cared for when they are sick. Mother is getting tired, and she must have help, so we may have another one here to help her, and perhaps to nurse the sick people. You will be good to the new nurse when she comes? I have spoken."

There was silence for a moment and then a babel of voices. The thought of losing Father David and Mother had never entered their minds, while the very suggestion of another white resident at Fort Oliver was itself sufficient to agitate the assembly.

The chief arose and motioned for silence. "Father David," he began, using the form of address that the priest had encouraged because of the difficulty that pronunciation of his surname presented, and by reason of the paternal care he sought to exercise over his flock—"Father David, we have heard your words, and they are good. We want you to stay. We are sorry for our black hearts to you.

"You are like good canoe, we all know. We ride with you when lots of storm come and nobody gets lost. Perhaps other canoe like Alaska people. He look nice, but we not know him well. Big storm come; canoe break and all men are lost.

"What you tell us about another woman come, we not know. We wait and see what this new klootchmans like. Maybe we like her, maybe not. We like Mother. We like you. We want for you to stay."

Then the Indians crowded around him, endeavouring like children who have been detected in some prank to ingratiate themselves with a parent who has corrected them. They shook him by the hand, told him of their love for him, and belittled their late guests who had been the cause of the trouble.

It was late when Father David reached home. Mother had retired, and he threw himself down in his easy-chair before the fireplace and stirred the embers into flame. He wanted to think, for he was

puzzled. He could not understand why his people had permitted the heathen ceremony. It worried him, for there had been several happenings of late that evidenced a sinister influence at work among the natives.

Try as he would, he could not focus his mind on the problem, and his thoughts went back to the early years of his ministry, when he brought his wife, as a bride, from the East to the North Pacific Coast.

Their first home had been in one of the buildings of the old trading-post, where the privacy of their abode was continually invaded by threatening shamans in fantastic garb, beating drums, shaking rattles and blowing horns to call down destructive spirits upon them.

The smoke-filled interior of the old hall, with its leaking roof and windows covered with cotton to mitigate the intensity of the winter winds, was pictured in all its wealth of cruel detail in his memory. He recalled their first attempts to eat the dried fish and unpalatable oolichan grease, regarded by the natives as a great delicacy.

They had nearly perished when, on an errand of mercy to the bedside of one of their friends who could not altogether free himself from his old superstitious beliefs, and was gradually succumbing to the machinations of the medicine men, their blankets had been stolen. All night long they crouched over the smoking fire that burned slowly on the hearth, while outside the gale drove sleet and hail through the chinks between the logs of their dwelling. Illness followed, and it was only the providential arrival of another missionary on his way to Metlakatla that prevented the shamans from forcing their way into

the building to practise their gruesome rites over them in their helplessness.

There rose before him a scene which recalled the horror with which he had viewed it in the second year of their life among the Indians. News had been brought of the killing of a party from Fort Oliver by the warriors of another tribe, sixty miles to the north. Instantly there was wild tumult in the village. The howlings of the medicine men, the wailing of the women and the bloodthirsty whoopings of the braves, the firing of muskets and the pounding of drums, made the night hideous.

Men blackened their faces with the sombre paint of war. The shamans worked themselves into a frenzy as they led the dance of death about the great fire on the beach. Then, screaming and yelping like a pack of hounds on the scent, they dashed away from the circle of light to return, dragging by the hair of her head, a terrified woman who had married into the tribe from among the people against whom they were about to make war.

Before Father David could intervene, perhaps to his own destruction, she had been beaten to death and her body had been torn limb from limb by the fiends.

He could see once more the return of the defeated warriors, and could almost hear again the grievings of the squaws as the toll of battle was recited. It was from that moment that he dated his own slow success, for he had seized upon the opportunity to denounce the medicine men who had predicted the destruction of their enemies as false prophets, and the natives had listened.

Then came the ceremonies of peace, with the exchange of goods in reparation for the losses. Their late enemies came to Fort Oliver in state to accept tribute, and a great feast was prepared for them. He had been a witness of the scattering of the swans' down over guest and host alike. His knowledge of the language was such by this time that he was able to address the gathering, and he likened the message of Holy Love that he bore to the gentle falling of the white feathers that signified eternal friendship.

There had followed no rush of converts to his teachings, but one by one, slowly and with diffidence, they had come, until after a time, such was the number that had banded together, there was less open hostility towards him and Mother, and less derision expressed of those who embraced the faith.

The medicine sect had not relinquished its efforts to combat the growing influence of the priest, and at every opportunity attempted to undo his work. Time and time again did the shamans seek to win back their waning power.

The first chapel which had been erected, a crudely constructed edifice, the medicine men destroyed by fire and sought to resurrect from its ashes their former dominion. It had been a blow to Father David and Mother, for it had been consumed before it could be consecrated by a service within its walls.

Undaunted, they immediately set to work to rebuild on a larger scale, and by example and precept succeeded, not only in holding together their little band of worshippers, but obtained additions to their congregation.

Year after year the grim fight continued, until at last, to all appearances, shamanism was dead, but this, Father David suspected, was not true. Among the older men and women who had known and feared the influences of the medicine men, there were some who still held, in secret, to their first beliefs.

He recollected the last open defiance of the shaman cult. A powerful man, one of the medicine men from Alaska, had appeared at Fort Oliver. He was almost as tall as Father David himself, and stood head and shoulders above the natives of the vicinity. He had attempted to sow seeds of dissension in the village. The priest warned him away, but the stranger replied by slapping the face of the big white doctor.

Father David turned pale. He clenched his hands, but made no effort to retaliate. Instead, he turned his head, presenting the other cheek, and the shaman, mistaking the action for one of cowardice, repeated the blow.

"Father, I have obeyed Thy command," exclaimed the missionary, and, with an unholy joy in his heart, he flew at the stranger.

With a single blow he knocked him down, and when the Indian arose he planted his great fist full on the painted face. The shaman dropped like a stunned bullock. Reaching down, Father David picked him up and, lifting him above his head, carried the inert form down to the water's edge and cast it into the sea.

The shock revived the necromancer, whose bedraggled appearance, as he struggled to his feet in the shallow water, was seized upon by the priest as

an illustration of the futility and wickedness of heathenism.

Since that time there had been no open parading of shamanism, but of late an insidious propaganda was being spread among the villages of the Coast, and he believed that the Nexnox dance had been inspired by a necromancer of more than ordinary cunning, who carefully concealed his identity. The thought troubled him.

CHAPTER II

AN UNEXPECTED PASSENGER

"THIS is a hell o' a country," declared the watchman at Sliam cannery, as he spat spitefully at the oily, rain-splashed swells that slopped about the piling of the wharf.

"What's the matter now, Bill?" good-naturedly queried the young man who was tinkering with the engine of the raised-deck motor-boat, looking up from his work to his guest, who was perched half in and half out of the cabin. "The lonely life gettin' you?"

"Uh huh," grunted the other, adding as he filled his pipe: "Too blasted much rain, rain, rain; too much mist an' not enough sunshine fer me. I'm sick o' it."

"Go on, Bill," chided the other. "I'm surprised. t' hear an old sourdough like you talk that way. Now, if it had been some chechako, I could savvy it, but you—why, you've been in this North country since they planted the first trees."

"Yes, I know, but this is my las' season, I'm tellin' you. I'm through, Collishaw, I'm through."

"Uh huh," agreed the other placidly, as he screwed an oil-cup down on the engine. "Uh huh, heard you say the same thing last year."

"Maybe, but this time I'm tellin' you; I'm fed up on it."

"Yep?"

"Sure thing."

"Until next winter, and then I'll find you here as handsome and as crabbed as ever," predicted the younger man.

"Th' hell you will"; and again he expectorated to emphasise his statement.

"Why don't you get married, Bill?"

"Why don't I what?"

"Get yourself a wife. There are lots of nice girls who'd be glad t' get you."

"Nuthin' doing; I ain't no squaw man—not yet," exploded Bill.

"Don't need to marry a squaw. There's heaps of pretty nice-looking half-breeds on the Coast."

"Why don't you get one yerself?" countered Bill.

"Me? Oh, I will, maybe, sometime, when I'm as old as you, but not just now. I'm not the marryin' kind."

"Uh huh!" grunted the watchman, and then, returning to his grievance "But on the square, now, ain't this a hell o' a country?"

"No, Bill, it is not"; and there was a note of seriousness in the voice of the speaker. "The North is getting me, Bill."

"How? come."

"I can't just tell you what I mean, in a way that you'd understand it. I'd have to use highbrow language to describe it, and that lingo would be out of place here, wouldn't it?"

"Kinda, I wouldn't get you at all; but all the same, tell me what you mean, 'the North's gettin' you.'"

"Well, let's see how I can explain it," answered the boatman, as he pushed his sou'wester back on his head and ran his fingers through his wavy brown hair. "I don't see just how I can get it across to you—and it should not be necessary, for if ever there was a man in the thrall of the North, it's you——"

"In the what? That sounds like a fightin' word," exclaimed the watchman belligerently.

"Keep your shirt on, Bill," grinned Collishaw. "The thrall means the service—the hold of the North. The North is cruel to its friends. It beats them and freezes them; it fights them for everything they get, and lets go its wealth like a miser. Sometimes it smiles, but mostly it frowns—but still men stay. They desert the easy ways of the cities and the comforts of civilisation to come back to the hardships and the struggles they know they will face—and they like it."

"That's highbrow stuff, but I get you all right," assented Bill, after a pause. "I get you."

"Well, when men are like that, the North has got 'em."

"Guess ye're right! Just like squaws we be—the more we're licked, the better we seem t' like it. We must be married to the damn' country.

"I mind once," went on Bill, "when I went out with quite a wad o' money—went out cursin' the country; I was sure glad t' get back again.

"Say," he added, "them people in the cities take awful chances, with their street cars and autos an' everythin'. I'd sure hate t' be shut up like they are. Believe me, I nearly smothered in those big hotels; an' the streets—they was jus' like walkin' along the

bottom o' a big canyon—you know, Jack, buildin's shut you in—there ain't no room to spread yourself like. Yes, I guess ye're right—this ain't such a hell o' a country after all—but I sure do wish it'd quit rainin' fer a spell."

Suddenly out of the mist sounded the deep note of a steamer's whistle.

Bill jumped to his feet. "What the blue blazes d'you know about that! A steamer!" he exclaimed, as he swung himself over to the loading-slip. "Say, Collishaw, better get yer boat outa th' way—an' do it quick"

Already the boat owner had his engine spinning, and as Bill cast off the headline, the launch backed slowly away from the approaching steamer, now showing a big black mass against the lighter shade of the rain mist.

At half-speed the vessel approached, taking the shape of a rusty, sea-battered, snub-nosed freighter —not one of those boats pictured in colours on attractive pamphlets advertising summer cruises, but of the class of slow-moving, storm-battling drudges of commerce that make possible the gradual development of the serried coast-line of the North Pacific.

When within hailing distance, Bill was ready with his favourite prefix to a query, "What th'——" but he was arrested in the completion of his question by the strange antics of the captain, who waved his arms, shook his fist, and after pointing with a huge forefinger to the deck below, placed his hand over his mouth, which Bill rightly concluded enjoined silence.

Having caught the headline and made fast the

spring, the watchman lifted his eyes in puzzled interrogation to the man on the bridge, who, he noted, was wearing the uniform of his rank instead of the usual greasy cap and blue jersey that was his accustomed raiment.

Cupping his hands in the form of a megaphone, the captain leaned far over the little bridge of his boat, and whispered in a voice that carried like a fog-horn, "Got a lady aboard fer you."

"A lady—fer me!" cried the watchman in alarm.

"No, not fer you, y' fathead," answered the skipper. "You conceited ol' chump, what'd a lady want wi' you? She's a passenger booked fer here—leastways fer Fort Oliver, but I guess you've got to look after her till she can get over to Father David. And see that you treat her right, or by the great Jehosaphat you'll answer t' me."

The gang-plank was run out while they were talking, and a young woman, escorted by the mate, crossed to the dock, a deck-hand following with her hand baggage.

The watchman stood gazing at the girl in utter and incredulous amazement, until the mate came forward: "Bill, this is the young lady who is going to Fort Oliver."

"What th'——" began Bill, when a look from the mate and an ejaculation from the bridge stopped him so suddenly that he almost choked. Doffing his hat, he approached, and after vigorously wiping his hand on his coat, extended his paw in greeting.

"This is Miss Cunningham," announced the mate, "and this," indicating Bill, with a stubby thumb, "is Bill Dorsett, the man in charge here."

"Glad t' meet you," interjected Bill as the mate continued with the air of a lecturer:

"He ain't much t' look at, miss, but he ain't too bad when y' gets t' know him."

There was freight to unload, for new machinery was to be installed in the cannery, and it was coming piece by piece. The last time the ship's crane swung over the dock was to unsling a big steamer trunk.

"Mine," said the girl, as she pointed to the piece.

"Good-bye," called the captain, and the lines having been thrown off, the steamer churned her way back from the river mouth and disappeared again in the mist.

"Well, miss," said Bill, addressing himself to his charge, "I really don't know what t' do with you."

The "chug-chug" of a gas-engine coming slowly towards the dock was heard, and Bill's troubled brow cleared. He ran to the edge of the wharf: "Collishaw. Oh, Jack, I want you."

"Well, I'm coming as fast as I can; keep your hair on"; and the boat drew up at the berth she had quitted for the larger craft.

"I want you t' go over t' Fort Oliver," shouted the cannery man, leaning over the string piece.

"Oh, you do, do you?" questioned the other. "I thought you wanted to have me stay here for the night an' play solo with you. I——"

"Shs-s-s!" warned Bill.

"Beg your pardon," exclaimed Collishaw as he caught sight of the young woman who had moved forward to see the person with whom the watchman was conversing.

"You see, miss, this is Jack Collishaw, the Indian policeman," explained the cannery guardian, when his friend had clambered to the wharf deck.

"Oh, but you don't——" and she hesitated and blushed.

"No, ma'm," and the young man laughed pleasantly, "I'm not a native. My old friend Bill would have been more correct if he had said I was the policeman for the Department of Indian Affairs. But why are we standing here in the rain?" and he led the way to the protection of one of the big buildings.

"Now, Bill, what can I do for you?"

"It's this way, as I understan's it: this young lady is goin' t' Fort Oliver—leastways, she wants to—an' as I can't take her there, it's up t' you t' do it. There ain't no place where she can stay aroun' here. The manager's house is all right, but it ain't had anyone in it since las' season."

"Why, certainly, I'll be pleased to substitute for my friend here and escort you to Fort Oliver, Miss——?"

"Cunningham, Mary Cunningham."

"Thanks. You already know my name, so we will consider ourselves properly introduced."

"Yes, it's informal, but quite effective," she laughed.

"Bill, I'm ashamed of you," chided Collishaw. "You have let Miss Cunningham stand in the rain until her hat and coat are all wet. Hustle around and see if you can't find her some oilskins."

"You know," he said, turning to the girl, "a sou'-wester," and he touched the visor-like peak of his oiled hat, "and a coat like this, with rubber boots, form the universal garb on the North Coast from

October until April, for it rains most of the time between those months."

Bill returned with a hat, coat and rubber boots. "They belong to Mrs. Drain, the manager's wife," he explained. "She left 'em when she went South. Send 'em back any time it suits you, an' it'll be all right."

"Just go down in the cabin and put on those dry things," advised the policeman, and he assisted her down to the deck. "Bill and I will get your things aboard."

It was with some difficulty that they managed to get the heavy trunk down the incline and on to the deck of the launch. "Must be goin' t' stay quite a spell," puffed the watchman as he hung on to the strap to keep it from sliding too rapidly.

The girl appeared a moment later, smilingly parading herself in sea clothing. Collishaw dropped below, started the engine, cast off the lines and backed away from the wharf, while Miss Cunningham waved adieu to the watchman.

"Great old character," commented Collishaw, but it was not at the receding form of the cannery man that he was looking. He was studying the girl who, half-turned, was still trying to make out the details of the fishery plant through the mist.

The prospect pleased him, for Mary Cunningham was a beautiful girl, with golden hair and blue eyes that held a suggestion of the dreamer in their depths. Her nose was just a trifle short of the perfect, Collishaw decided, while the well-modelled mouth and the set of the sharply-defined chin belied the story of her

eyes. "They are the windows of the soul," he told himself, as he turned to direct the course of the boat, "and the nature that is expressed there don't match with the determination of that chin and mouth."

The girl was talking now, and as she did so, she was covertly scanning the face of the policeman. John Collishaw was a little above the average height, broad-shouldered and thick-set. Steel-grey eyes looked out from under a broad intelligent forehead, while a finely-chiselled nose was set above a straight thin-lipped mouth and square-cut chin. She judged that he was about thirty.

"Are you well acquainted with Dr. Mainwaring?" she asked.

"Dr. Mainwaring?"

"Yes; the missionary at Fort Oliver."

"Oh, you mean Father David," he answered. "Yes; know him very well indeed. Funny, though, I should have forgotten his name, but, you see, he is always called 'Father David,' and his good wife is known as 'Mother,' to everyone for miles around."

"What kind of a man is he?" questioned the girl.

"Why, don't you know him?"

"No. You see, I am going to Fort Oliver as a nurse; to help in the work there, and I have never met either of them."

"You are—no, surely, you don't mean it! You are going to live at Fort Oliver, and—nurse Indians?" and he whistled softly in amazement.

"Yes," responded the girl, "that is my field of service."

"But, surely, you could have—well—found employ-

ment without coming away up here to this lonesome part of the Coast?" he exclaimed after a pause.

"Oh, it's not the need of employment, of earning my living, that brings me here; it's the idea of the service itself—to do good, and make others happier."

The policeman looked at her in astonishment. In his experience in the North he had met many strange characters, men and women, but this was something new to him. He could understand a missionary, fired by the flame of his holy office, devoting his life to working among the natives, and even comprehend the devotion and self-sacrifice on the part of a missioner's wife; but for a young woman voluntarily to cut herself adrift from the fascinations and comforts of city life! It was beyond him.

She interrupted his thoughts by repeating her question, "What kind of a man is he?"

"Father David," he replied, "is one of the whitest men in the world, and Mother—well, she is a dear. They have lived here for forty years; working all the time for others. If they don't get to Heaven, there's not much chance for the rest of us, who have been trying to play the game of Life in a sort of half-decent way.

"Father David is one of the biggest men, physically and morally, I've ever seen. He stands well over six feet—about six feet four, I'd judge, and is built in proportion, and in spite of his age, he's so powerful he don't know the limit of his strength.

"Mother—well, she's just one of the sweetest little women alive; just like a fellow's own mother.

"They're deeply in love with one another," he continued, "and it'll do you good to see their devotion to

each other. You'll be happy with them—if the lonesomeness of the North doesn't frighten you away."

"It will not do that," answered the nurse.

"They had a hard time here in the early days," he went on. "The medicine men tried to frighten them with their charms and incantations. Several times they even attempted to kill Father David, but he kept on with his work, and——"

"Do the medicine men still practise their arts?" she interrupted with some show of eagerness. "I wonder if they are anything like the fakirs of India. My aunt used to tell me about the wonderful feats performed by the Indian magicians in the Punjaub. I used to listen to her by the hour. I would just love to see some of the things she described."

"All trickery," snapped the policeman; "all clever swindling."

"But," she persisted, "no one has ever been able to find out how they do some of those things, if they are tricksters."

"'If they are tricksters'!" he repeated. "Why, of course they are"; and then in a more bantering tone, "But I thought that nurses were all practical-minded and didn't believe in hobgoblins and fairies, and couldn't be deceived by the jugglery of Indian fakirs."

To his utter astonishment the nurse commenced a serious defence of her position. "Well," she said, somewhat defiantly, "have not some of our great scientists accepted theories that have been ridiculed for years; theories that are opening up new lines of thought, not incompatible with the teachings of centuries?"

Collishaw made no answer, and the girl went on, "Of course, I don't say that I believe in the Indian fakirs, for I've never seen them, or that I am a convert to Spiritualism, but when leading medical men and scientists are giving such subjects serious thought, I am not going to say they are all wrong."

The policeman changed the subject, and they talked of many things as the boat chugged along, hugging the rocky coast-line. The shore, for the most part, rose abruptly from the sea to timbered heights which were lost in the low-hanging mists. The forested slopes that could be discerned through the vapour appeared dark and mysterious to the girl, while the dozens of cataracts that fell, roaring and splashing, down the mountain sides from sources found in the melting snow and draining muskeg far up in the obscurity of the higher altitudes, thrilled and delighted her.

"There is Fort Oliver," exclaimed Collishaw at last, and he pointed ahead. She rose from her seat at the companionway and stood beside him, as he indicated the objects of interest that could be seen but dimly at the distance.

"The village snuggles at the foot of such slopes as we have been passing," he told her. "There is a little valley going back for several miles, and through it a small stream runs. Just now it is swollen by rains, but later on it will be almost dry. There is a good sloping beach of shingle, in the form of a crescent. It extends from the hill on this side to the old fort occupying a point of land at the mouth of the creek.

"There! see that big white building. That's the Mission House and hospital. It's a roomy place, for

Father David always keeps two or three spare beds for poor devils like myself whose work takes them up and down the Coast.

"Look! there is the church. The old one was too small, so they pulled it down and built a larger one.

"There is Father David himself," he added.

"Where?"

"There, coming down to meet us. Hide down there. Don't let him see you"; and Mary dropped down to her seat on the companionway.

Collishaw threw the engine into neutral. The boat slowed down as it approached the landing-stage, and the girl heard the voice of the priest raised in greeting: "Didn't expect you, John, lad. What brings you this way? My lambs are all behaving—they'd better, or I'd know the reason why. Didn't see a young lady at Sliam looking for me, did——"

A peal of feminine laughter stopped him. "Eh! wha—what's that?" he demanded.

Mary appeared. She could not conceal her amusement at the manner in which Father David was ready to guarantee the behaviour of his flock, and his confusion on discovering her.

But as the policeman assisted her ashore she approached the priest. "I must beg your pardon, Dr. Mainwaring," she said, "but really, you do look so capable of enforcing your doctrines, that—well, I just couldn't help it. You will forgive me, won't you? I'm Miss Cunningham."

"Forgive you? Why, child, there's nothing to forgive, bless your heart"; and he extended an immense hand in welcome.

"No, you don't," exclaimed Collishaw, and he caught the girl's arm and gently drew it aside.

"Why, Mr. Collishaw, what do you mean?" she indignantly demanded.

"It's all right, Miss Cunningham; I just didn't want you to start your duties with a couple of crushed fingers. Father David is sometimes so enthusiastic in his handshaking that he uses more power than he intends, that's all."

"John, you rascal, I've a good mind to shake you," laughed the doctor, adding, "Don't believe all he tells you about me, for he's not one of my parishioners, and I'm not responsible for his veracity." Again he put forth his hand and buried the girl's small one in his grasp.

"Now, where's your trunk?"

"I'm afraid it's very heavy," she responded, and pointed to the big box stowed under a tarpaulin in the cockpit.

As the priest pulled the trunk from the boat and, without effort, hoisted it to his broad shoulder, she realised the truth of what had been told her of the tremendous strength of the man. She found that she had almost to run to keep up with his long, easy strides, as he led the way up the beach.

Collishaw followed with the hand baggage.

Setting his burden down in the hallway of the house, Father David exclaimed, "Take off your things. This is your home."

She did as she was directed and her golden hair fell in picturesque disorder about her face.

"Mother!" called the missioner, when they were in

the big sitting-room. "Mother, come and see who's here."

"Coming, dear"; and the door to the kitchen opened to admit Mother, who stepped into the room, stopped and stood facing the stranger.

The bright eyes of the older woman searched the face of the nurse, while her hands nervously turned and twisted the corner of her apron.

Mary felt as if her soul was being bared before the kindly scrutiny, and in that moment was bred within her an affection, and an almost overpowering desire for the regard of the white-haired little woman. "What if she failed?" The thought frightened her.

The big missioner watched the faces of the two women closely, and the tenseness of the moment was reflected in his anxious eyes and clenched hands.

"Thank God!" he whispered fervently as the women, each satisfied with what she had found in the other, embraced. To hide the moisture that filled his eyes he turned and brought his big hand with a resounding "whack" on the shoulder of the policeman who had just entered. "John!" he exclaimed. "You're a rascal."

"I may be," answered the other as he ruefully rubbed the back of his neck, "but even a rogue has a trial before he's punished."

CHAPTER III

OLD SUPERSTITIONS

SUPPER was over and the fire was blazing in the big open fire-place of wave-rounded stones and clay. Father David and John Collishaw drew their chairs close to the blaze and produced tobacco and pipes, while the women continued their conversation over the empty tea-cups.

"John," whispered the doctor, motioning with the stem of his pipe toward the dining-room, "John, this is a happy day for me, for Mother likes her, and I think Miss Cunningham likes Mother.

"It's been a lonely life for the little woman here all these years. With me it has not been so bad, for I've had my work with the Indians, my medicine and my books, and above all—Mother. It's only recently that I've come to realise that she has had only me—and I must be a bit of a trial at times.

"I was afraid they might send some person who would be hard to get along with, and that would have been worse than no one at all. I'm glad it was Miss Cunningham they selected."

"She'll love your wife; she can't help it," declared John. "She seems to be an exceptionally nice sort of a girl, and takes an interest in everything she sees. She had me guessing for a time with her questions on the way over. She wanted to know the name of every point, bay and boulder.

"But for the life of me, I can't understand why a

girl of her type should be willing to come to such an out-of-the-way place as Fort Oliver. I asked her, and she told me that it was a matter of service to humanity. I should have thought she would have found a field for her skill closer to civilisation."

"You cannot tell, John. She may feel she is called to come here. It is not for us to question the motives that may have been directed by the Divine Will."

They smoked for a time in silence, then Father David asked, "No trouble about, I hope?"

"Well—no," answered the younger man slowly. "Of course, the cause of my coming here to-day was Miss Cunningham, but I had intended to nose down this way in a day or so, anyway. To tell the truth, it's just a 'hunch.' Perhaps you never feel the force of a 'hunch' —a sort of compelling something; call it what you like —that seems to urge you on to do something without apparent reason for your act. Once you have acted you may feel foolish, but you feel uneasy if you don't.

"I really came over this way because I heard that Caleb Thompson, the half-breed, was prowling around the reserves. I have no reason to suspect Thompson of anything, but I never feel just right when he's in this part of the country. He gets on my nerves."

Father David puffed away at his pipe for a moment without speaking. "So Caleb is around again," he muttered half to himself, and then to his guest, "I don't feel quite comfortable when he's around, either. Strange that a man like him should cause such uneasiness. Of course, you know his story?"

Collishaw shook his head, and after a pause the priest went on:

"He's the son of a captain of a small trading schooner and the daughter of one of the chiefs of Slianch. A strange creature was the captain. He married the girl in the belief that eventually he would become a chief himself, for he had a passion to attain rank, even if it was only as head-man of an Indian village. He came from the State of Maine, he once told me, and had led an adventurous life as a sailor. In some manner he became possessed of a small sloop and started as a trader along the coast. I do not imagine that it was so much the profit of the enterprise and the opportunity to command his own craft that appealed to him. I flattered him by always calling him 'Captain,' a dignity which he assumed with all the pomp and circumstance that the commander of a battleship might adopt.

"He did not long survive his marriage, and died just before the birth of his son, who was named 'Caleb' after him. The babe, of course, was brought up by the mother in the native manner.

"The captain left some papers and these the woman brought to me. I wrote to an address I found there, and four years later an answer came from Thompson's brother in the State of Maine. It was but an acknowledgment of my letter. Two years passed and, when the boy was six, a queer little man came to see me.

"He spoke in quick, abrupt sentences. 'Am Thompson's brother,' he snapped at me by way of introduction. 'Caleb was a fool; married a squaw; son a half-breed. Don't know what to do with him. Can't take him back to Maine.'

"He was looking about my place all the time he was

talking. 'You seem comfortable,' he exclaimed. 'Think I'll make a preacher out of him. Then he can teach Indians.' He thanked me for my advice, although I had given him none, declined my invitation to stay, and went away in the canoe that had brought him.

"I later heard that he had taken the boy South and placed him in a school. From time to time in the succeeding years I learned that Caleb was progressing in his studies, and was preparing to carry out his uncle's plan for him and qualify as a Methodist missionary.

"Just why he failed to seek ordination, I never did find out, but something went wrong and he left college, and came back to his native village. I met him shortly after and endeavoured to be nice to him, but he spurned my offers of friendship. Since then, seven or eight years ago, he has flitted from village to village throughout this vast country, silent, inscrutable, mysterious.

"I have no evidence for saying so, John," continued Father David, dropping his voice and leaning toward his friend, "but my suspicion is that he's practising necromancy."

"Oh, go on. You don't mean to tell me that you honestly believe the Indians are still that gullible, after mixing with the whites at the canneries and on the fishing banks, that they would let those old tricks fool them?" was the incredulous exclamation of the policeman. "I've never seen anything that would suggest the practising of sorcery to me."

"Quite possible, John," answered the priest, "but perhaps you wouldn't recognise the signs of the medicine man's activities if you saw them."

The younger man flushed slightly. "Of course, Father David, I have only been here four years, and have not had your opportunity of studying the natives."

"Of course not, boy," answered the missioner kindly, "and when they can carry on their work and deceive me, as I suspect they are doing, it is not surprising if you can't detect them."

"And you really think the shaman can find Indians who will listen to him, and upon whom he can sponge?"

"John," said Father David sadly, "some of the Indians are mighty fine men, but, remember, we have only been teaching them the story of the Bible for a few short years, compared to the countless centuries in which their forefathers believed in idols of their own making, and the spirits of the forest, the sea and the air. I fear that in a crucial test between the old superstitions and the story of Christianity, which so many of our own people will not accept, it would be found that the deep-rooted beliefs and fears would prove, in many, that our teachings had reached but to the fringe of their minds.

"I am getting old, John, and perhaps I look at these things in a different way than I did when I was younger; not that I am one whit less opposed to the wickedness of the medicine men, but I am more tolerant and sympathetic in my regard for the beliefs of others."

"You surely do not sympathise with necromancy?"

"Certainly not. Don't mistake me. The hideous rites and devilish dances of the necromancers still fill me with rage and disgust when I recall them, but I do regard with greater leniency those who can't altogether

put aside their inherited superstitions and accept the story of Divine Love we have been trying to instil into their minds and hearts.

"Look here," he challenged, "you're superstitious yourself. We all are, despite our boasted civilisation. Show me the man who, somewhere in his make-up, is not a prey to some odd belief or foolish tradition. You believe in 'hunches,' as you call them. Others will not start a journey on Friday, or sleep in a room numbered 13. Some place faith in a four-leaf clover and some in a cast-off horseshoe.

"I, myself, follow a superstitious custom," and he smiled sheepishly. "I always put my right foot first across the threshold when I'm entering a house. Why I do it, I cannot tell, and have no reason for it, except that my father always did the same thing, and his father before him, declaring that to do otherwise was to bring bad luck on the occupants of the house.

"Who are we, then, to blame the Indian if he can't shake himself free from the customs and beliefs of ages?"

"I guess you're right; I never looked at it in that light before," agreed Collishaw. "But it is a surprise to me that the natives should still—even a few of them—fear the power of the shaman."

"Not only do they believe in the power of the medicine man to banish evil spirits or cause them to harm any person who is distasteful to him, but sometimes, in secret, the Indians permit him to carry out old tribal customs which are forbidden by law. The very existence of the law against necromancy testifies to the possibility of its practice.

"It is not so many years ago that there was a trial by the mouse not far from here."

"Trial by the mouse! What's that?" asked the younger man, leaning forward.

"Well," commenced the doctor, speaking slowly, "it was an old and very wicked custom of deciding the guilt or innocence of a person suspected of doing another a wrong; and it was so cruel and barbarous that even the savages only resorted to it when all other means failed.

"Usually it was to decide which of several suspects were guilty of a crime. A mouse was caught and caged. Two men of influence in the village were chosen as watchers or referees. They purged themselves by eating the pulverised ashes of roasted frogs or by drinking sea-water, the idea being that having empty stomachs they must necessarily have clean minds.

"The suspects were placed in front of the cage. The medicine man called out their names in a slow monotone, while squaws beat time on their drums and maintained a low, doleful chant. The watchers kept their eyes on the little animal in the cage, and sooner or later it would, in its fright, cringe farther back in its cage. In doing so it would nod its head. The name being called at that instant was that of the guilty person."

"What happened then?"

The old man hesitated. He seemed lost in thought; to be reviewing the past.

"There was a missionary who witnessed such a trial," he said at last. "He was hidden away and watched the whole ceremony. He lacked the courage

of the moment to go in and attempt to put a stop to it until the penalty was about to be inflicted. The man had been sentenced to the hemlock needle torture.

"He was stripped and pitchy needles were pressed into the flesh of his back. They were set on fire. It was awful"; and he shuddered.

"But what of the missionary; what did he do?" demanded Collishaw excitedly.

"He rushed into the circle, threw some of the natives aside and seized the tortured wretch before the astonished Indians realised he was there. He carried him away and nursed him back to health."

"Didn't the Indians try and stop him?" persisted the policeman.

"Oh, yes," answered Father David. "One of them stabbed him, cut him on the arm, but he soon got over that."

Father David rose. "Here are the ladies," he exclaimed. As he reached out to place a chair near the fire for Miss Cunningham, the sleeve of his right arm was drawn back almost to the elbow.

John Collishaw almost exclaimed aloud when he saw the white mark of a knife-wound extending in a jagged half-circle from beneath the cuff down Father David's arm, almost to the wrist.

Refusing the proffered chair with a smile, the girl dropped down on the floor beside Mother's rocker. Not a word was spoken for several minutes, then a sigh escaped from the beaming old priest. It was a sigh of contentment.

"Why do you sigh?" asked his wife.

"Was I sighing?" demanded Father David in

genuine astonishment. "Surely it must have been the Song of the Wind that you heard."

"'The Song of the Wind'!" exclaimed the girl. "That sounds poetic, doesn't it, Mr. Collishaw? What is it?"

As she sat with the warm reflection of the fire playing on her golden hair and pleasing features, Collishaw thought he had never beheld a prettier picture. She looked at him with puzzled inquiry in her blue eyes, and he suddenly realised that she had asked him a question which he had failed to answer. He flushed to the roots of his hair.

"Perhaps Father David can tell you better than I," he stammered, not sure of her query.

"Then you will tell me, won't you?" she pleaded. "What is the Song of the Wind? I don't know anything about this big strange country of yours, so you will tell me about it, Doctor Mainwaring, please?"

"It is just a simple Indian legend," answered Father David. "It's a story they tell of the sighing of the wind over the water, and like so many of their stories, it has a sad ending; but there is a certain beauty to it.

"Ages and ages ago the villages on this part of the Coast were in the grip of a famine. The great fish chiefs were angry and did not send food supplies to these waters. The beautiful daughter of the head chief of one of the villages was filled with a desire to find food for the suffering ones, and every morning she took her clam digging-stick, and her clam basket, and went down on the beach when the tide was out to hunt in the sands for clams.

"One morning she heard a bird calling her name.

She looked up, not recognising in the bird that spoke an evil spirit.

"'Walk along the shore until you come to a big black rock with a sea-gull sitting on top of it,' the bird told her. 'Dig there and you will find food for the people.' So she did so.

"She soon found the rock with the gull, and started to dig. She found one or two clams for her basket, and then dug deeper. She put her hand down to pick up another, and her fingers were seized by the great King Clam. She struggled but could not free herself.

"To her horror she saw that the tide had changed and was coming in. She cried out for help, but no one heard her.

"Swiftly the sea moved in upon her until it was about her skirts as she knelt on the sands. She was afraid and again cried out, but the sea continued to rise, and as it gradually crept higher and higher, her heart became brave. She started to sing the songs of her people. She sang of their prowess in war, and of their accomplishments in the arts of peace. Still higher and higher rose the tide. It was about her neck now, but she continued her songs.

"Now it was almost to her mouth, and she started to sing her own death-song, but before she had finished the waters closed over her.

"So, at night, when you hear the wind moaning and sighing over the water and the trees of the forest rustling their branches in tune to the lapping of the waves on the beach, you may know that it is the voice of the Indian girl, singing again the uncompleted song of her passing."

Silence followed Father David's story. There were tears in Mary Cunningham's eyes and she could not trust herself to speak for a time. At last she ventured, "I think that is a very pretty story—a tale of devotion and service. I thank you for it."

"Some Indian stories are all right, but others are ludicrous in the extreme," Collishaw declared. "There is that story you were telling me the other day, Father, of the manner in which the islands were formed. That's absurd."

"To your mind, perhaps, but not to these people who have lived for ages in close contact with Nature. To them the birds and the beasts have intelligence equal to man, and we who have listened to Æsop's Fables, and hold as sacred the story of Balaam—can we deny them the right to believe that at one time the wild life of the forests and air spoke a language common with man?"

"Oh, doctor, won't you please tell me that story, too?" pleaded the nurse.

"Let Collishaw do it; he should for his impertinence in denying the beauty of the legend."

"Yes, Mr. Collishaw, please do!"

"I don't know if I can remember all the details," hesitated the policeman, "but it was something like this:

"Centuries ago, the great chief of all the eagles was flying over a village on the Nass River. A young boy seized his bow and shot an arrow at the bird. Other boys joined him and soon a number of them were trying to strike the eagle.

"The great bird, instead of flying away, circled over the village, and flew lower and lower. Men now joined

the youths and, in spite of their superior skill, none could hit the bird.

"The eagle kept wheeling in narrowing circles, and in their efforts to keep him in sight the men and boys were soon in a compact group.

"Suddenly it swooped down and seized one young man by the hair of his head and lifted him from the ground. As he rose above the others, a friend caught him by the heels, and he too was raised. He found he could not let go, for some strange power held him fast. In turn his lower limbs were caught by another, and so on, until every male in the village was a link in the human chain.

"Higher and higher the eagle flew, straight at the face of the sun. When he was away above the clouds he stopped in mid-air and started to swing the long line of human beings, gently at first, then faster and faster, until the poor wretches had gained a terrific momentum. Then the great eagle released his hold and the power that held the chain together was gone. Away through space they flew, to fall into the sea.

"Where each Indian splashed there arose an island. Large islands represent the men who were of importance in the tribe, and the smaller ones those of less consequence, and rocks are the children, in proportion to their size. So that is the way the islands were formed, according to the Indians."

"I don't see anything especially ludicrous in that story," declared the girl when he had concluded. "What I do see is a lesson—in fact, two lessons; the first, not to wantonly destroy wild life, and the second, one of heroic self-sacrifice, which in this instance is rewarded

with everlasting monuments in the sea. I'll never look at an island again without a feeling of reverence and respect."

She spoke with such earnestness that Collishaw looked at her in some alarm, remembering their conversation of the afternoon, and her readiness to defend the fakirs of India because of the stories she had heard in her childhood.

"That's all right, Miss Cunningham," he replied soberly, "but don't let your romantic nature carry you the length of believing all these stories. If you do, you'll regret it some day."

"Thank you for the warning," answered the girl with some coldness.

"Come, come, you young people must not get excited about the silly stories the Indians tell." It was Mother who spoke. She had taken no part in the previous conversation, but had sat gently rocking to and fro, as her busy hands plied her knitting-needles. "David," she added, "you started this, so you just go and prepare a nice cup of tea before we go to bed. Nellie has gone to her uncle's for the night, so you must take her place as punishment for your thoughtlessness."

The grey-bearded priest shifted uneasily, and then lifted his great bulk from the chair, looking for all the world like a schoolboy who had been reproved for some mischievous act.

"See how I'm bossed," he laughed, and, stooping down, he picked his wife up as a mother would a child, kissed her and gently replaced her on her chair again.

"Oh, David, don't be silly!" she exclaimed as he stamped away to the kitchen to prepare the tea.

CHAPTER IV

THE FACE AT THE FORT

MARY CUNNINGHAM awoke the next morning to hear the pounding of the surf on the shingle of the beach. It was some time before she could realise where she was; then, as sleep gave place in her brain to the recollection of the events of the previous evening, she sprang from her bed and ran to the window.

It was a glorious morning, one of those rare occasions in the early spring on the North Coast when the sun, for a brief period, dispels the rain and permits the rugged coast to be viewed in all its massive grandeur.

Before the eyes of the girl stretched the waters of the bay, gleaming and glistening as the sunlight struck the foam-topped waves that raced in stately and regular procession to shatter themselves on the shore. In the distance the protecting island, with its bluff base and heavy growth of timber, recalled the story she had heard of the formation of the islands of the Coast, and idly she fell to wondering what manner of man had been the genesis of the tree-clad rock. The legend had intrigued her fancy, and now she let her imagination run riot, as she pictured the place as an eternal monument to a gallant young warrior who had sacrificed himself in a vain attempt to save his fellows.

Her reverie was broken by the sound of voices and she turned to look toward the landing-stage, where

Father David and Collishaw were busy with the policeman's boat. It was the voice of the younger man that disturbed her, and instantly she remembered his warning of the night before and without reason she was annoyed. What right had he to talk to her as if she was a child? His kindness in bringing her from Sliam had not given him the privilege of dictating her beliefs.

Then she laughed at her own pettishness, for hers was not a nature to cherish spite. She decided, however, to be just a trifle cool in her manner, in order, she told herself, to let him know he had transgressed the limits of acquaintanceship. He had seen fit to challenge her views, and had undertaken to enclose her enjoyment of the legendary of the natives within a wall of prejudice. She would put him in his place—and the thought pleased her.

Hastily dressing, she hurried to the living-room where Mother greeted her smilingly.

"I'm afraid I over-slept, Mrs. Mainwaring," she apologised; "I hope I have not delayed you."

"Oh, no," answered the older woman. "You were tired after your long trip, and it was only right that you should rest. I will have Nellie prepare some breakfast for you, and serve it here. If you will excuse me for a little while, I will leave you, for I have my tasks to do. You see, I try to teach the three 'R's' to some of the children."

As the door closed behind Mother, Mary stood for a moment lost in thought. Her eyes filled with tears. "My, what noble souls they are!" she exclaimed. "May I be worthy of their trust."

Suddenly there came a cry of fright and pain from

the kitchen. Instantly sentiment and emotionalism were forgotten, and it was Nurse Cunningham who rushed towards the sound. In the kitchen she saw a half-breed girl, evidently Nellie, the servant of whom she had heard mention. Blood was flowing from a deep cut in her left hand, where a sharp knife had inflicted a wound when it slipped from a shelf above the table at which the girl had been working.

"Here, let me see it," Mary commanded, and the girl obeyed.

Seizing a pan, the nurse emptied the contents of the kettle into the dish and told the half-breed to bathe the cut while she ran to the dispensary, where she had seen a bottle of iodine when Father David had shown her about the premises.

Returning with the disinfectant and bandages she dressed the wound.

Nellie did not say a word or give utterance to a sound after the first startled scream, but with large, fawn-like eyes, in which there was a strange expression, half fright, half wonder, she watched the deft fingers of the nurse as she did her work.

Somewhat above the average height of the native women, and with sharper features and lighter complexion, Nellie was rather pleasing in appearance. She was not a native of Fort Oliver, although her mother was of the tribe. She had been born at Slianch, and had been brought to her mother's people when her parents perished in the upsetting of a canoe when she was but a baby. Ever since she was old enough to make herself useful about the place she had found employment at the Mission, working in the kitchen until she

had acquired, under the direction of Mother, whom she adored, a skill in cookery and the household arts that made her now almost indispensable.

Nor had her education been neglected. She had been taught to read and write, and had adventured some distance into the mysteries of mathematics, sufficient to meet the requirements of figuring any of the problems that might arise when the time came for her to fulfil the destiny which is the goal and ambition of every Indian girl—marriage, and the consequent care of a home for her husband and progeny.

"There, I think that'll do," said Mary, when the bandaging had been completed. "How did it happen?"

"The knife fell," answered Nellie simply. "Thank you," she added after a pause.

"Oh, that's all right. That's my work, you see; I'm Miss Cunningham, and I guess you are Nellie. Am I right?"

"Yes."

"What's your other name?" asked the white girl.

"Oh, just Nellie, I guess," was the answer.

"But you must have another name," insisted Mary.

"Maybe I have. My uncle, he's James Charley; maybe I'm Nellie Charley. It don't matter. Bye-'n'-bye, p'rhaps, I get me a man; then I'll be his squaw —his wife—and have his name, so it don't matter what it is now—I'm Nellie."

"Poor child," murmured Mary as she looked at the tall, bronzed young woman. "What a future! No hope of independence—of service—just the bondage of married life. Poor thing."

Despite her injury, Nellie contrived to set an appe-

tising meal before the nurse in an incredibly short space of time, and when she was complimented on the performance she only laughed and ran back to the kitchen.

Hardly had Mary finished her breakfast than Father David and Collishaw entered, the voice of the priest booming out his morning greeting as soon as the door was opened.

"Ho, ho, happy day to you," he cried. "We've been out in God's own cathedral, getting some of His own tonic—fresh air."

"Good morning, Miss Cunningham," volunteered the policeman more sedately.

"Good morning to both of you," answered the girl. "I'm afraid I slept in—and I'm really ashamed of myself for doing so."

"Not at all, not at all; you were tired and deserved your beauty sleep," declared the missioner.

"But I've been working," she laughed. "I've had my first patient."

"Eh, what? Not you, John, was it?"

"No, indeed."

"Who, then?"

"Nellie," and she told of the girl's misfortune.

"Not serious, I hope," and there was a note of concern in his voice.

"No, just a clean cut."

"I must see," and Father David strode to the kitchen.

For a moment there was an awkward silence, then Collishaw blurted out, "I hope our silly stories didn't disturb your dreams last night."

Almost before she flashed back a reply he realised he had said a foolish thing.

"Thank you, but I expressed my opinion of the worth of the stories last night."

Although surprised at the belligerent attitude assumed by the girl, the policeman persisted: "Yes, I know, but don't let your imagination and romantic nature carry you to the length of believing in them."

"Thank you again, but I think I'm quite able to take care of myself," she replied haughtily. Then, ashamed of her rudeness to one who undoubtedly was sincere in the advice he was proffering, she smiled. "Come, don't let us quarrel over my beliefs or disbeliefs, they're not worth it."

Father David returned and picked up his hat. "I must go out and visit the sick," he announced. "You don't need to bother coming with me to-day, Miss Cunningham," he added, noticing that Mary rose as if to accompany him. "You'll get plenty of work before you've been here long, and you just take it easy for a day or two. John will take you to look at the sights."

"Yes," agreed the policeman, "I'll be delighted to do so, and I'd advise you to do as Father David suggests, as goodness only knows when you'll have such a fine day again. You know it's a great place, this, for rain in the winter and spring, but the summer time—it's just glorious."

"Don't overlook any of the places of interest," laughed the missioner as he took his departure.

"I think he's a dear," exclaimed the girl, as the door closed behind Father David; "and Mother, too, she's just wonderful. I feel grateful to them already."

"Yes," responded Collishaw warmly, "they're both wonderful. They've been doing a great work in this

country, and the whole Coast has benefited by their labours. They have been very kind to me, and whenever I feel depressed and blue, and things don't seem to be going right, I think of them, and it seems to brace me up. I come here to spend a day or two whenever I can; they do a fellow so much good."

While he was talking, Mary was putting on her hat and coat. They stepped outside, and she obtained her first real view of the village in which she had volunteered to labour.

The Mission was near the beach, at one end of the village, and at some little distance from it was the white-painted church, with its little belfry, surmounted by a cross. Between the Mission and the point where the old fort was built on rising ground the village straggled, following the contour of the tide-line.

The houses, for the most part, were rudely constructed shacks, some boasting weather-boards of milled and planed lumber, but the majority were of rough upright boards, or shakes, sealed with battens. Square, ugly little houses they were, with roofs sloping only enough to permit the rain or melting snow to run off. An occasional window served to dimly illuminate the interiors. Stove-pipes thrust through the upper sidewalls or roofs evidenced that many adopted the white man's stove in preference to the open fires that burned in the single room of the dwellings in olden days.

Several of the buildings had been painted, but time and weather had peeled off or faded the colouring, leaving the boards beneath partially bare, and more unsightly than those to which no brush had been applied.

Grotesque markings, intended to picture animal, bird, or fish forms, were streaked on some of the dwellings, while before three or four of the houses decaying totem poles leaned awkwardly at different angles, their peculiarly carved lengths smeared with pigments of native manufacture. Each told a story of bygone glory or spiritual adventure.

One building, larger than the rest, had several of these symbolical cedar timbers erected before it. It was the council hall—the meeting-place where matters of moment to the village were discussed.

Canoes were drawn up on the beach, their long, sharp, curved prows and graceful lines testifying to centuries of experience in the art of fashioning craft from single logs. At anchor rode a number of gasoline launches and Columbia River fishing-boats.

John and Mary started towards the old fort, and as they walked he pointed out to her the peculiarities of the village and its inhabitants.

They passed several men, dark-skinned fellows, with broad, almost Mongolian features, great powerful shoulders and bodies, narrow hips and short lower limbs. The Indians looked stolidly at the girl, and muttered reply to Collishaw's "Klahowya tillikum." Women, mostly fat, shapeless females, clothed in non-descript garments of glaring colours, with handkerchiefs of vivid hues tied tightly about their heads, were seen waddling about the houses, while children, their flat faces betraying astonishment at the sight of the white girl, appeared at the doorways, or could be seen peering from behind rocks or from the cover of the underbrush. Every family seemed to possess a pack

of mongrel dogs which set up a yapping and barking at the approach of the strangers, only to run yelping for the shelter of the bush when Collishaw tossed pebbles at them.

Everything she saw delighted Mary. The slow-motioned men, the squaws, the children and even the curs, pleased her fancy, but it was the weed-entangled ruins of the old Hudson's Bay post that made the greatest appeal to her imagination.

The old hall, with its great central room, she peopled again in her mind with the picturesque old traders, carrying on their barter with the natives for furs. The broken stockade was once more a formidable means of defence, and the remaining bastion, unroofed and tottering to its fall, was menacing the village with its little cannon, from which, at any moment, red fire might flash and round-shot or canister be sent on its way to cause havoc among the homes of the natives.

She played about the place like a schoolgirl, commanding Collishaw to set guard on the fortifications, as she imagined the old chief factor had done when trouble threatened from hostile tribes.

They explored the wrecked buildings and wondered at the purposes to which they had been put in former times. One structure alone seemed to have fared better than the rest, although great holes appeared in the roof, and the moss and clay had long disappeared from between the logs that formed its walls. It was a windowless place, and only the narrow doorway permitted a bright patch of light to penetrate the gloom of its interior.

It was damp and musty, and as they stepped into

it, a big rat scampered across the earthen floor to disappear through an opening in a rotted base log.

"Ugh!" shuddered Mary; "let's get out of here; I don't like it. It seems haunted."

"I think it's the old salmon house," Collishaw advised her.

"But what's the matter?" he demanded as the girl uttered an exclamation of fright as they stepped out into the open air.

"I saw a man. He was over there."

"Where?"

"Over there, behind that bush, and he was watching us."

Before she ceased speaking the policeman had crossed the intervening space, but although he searched the vicinity, he could find no one. Not a sign of a human was visible.

"Come, you're nervous; that old building has frightened you. It was the sudden change from the dark interior to the light that gave you the impression of seeing someone," said Collishaw.

"No," she insisted. "I saw him quite distinctly—and, oh, he had such funny eyes. He didn't look like one of those Indians we passed. He was not as dark, and he was better dressed. I'm sure I saw a man."

"What's that you say?" demanded the policeman excitedly. "He had funny eyes? Were they narrow-set, sort of piercing eyes?"

"Yes, yes."

"He was clean shaven?"

"I'm not sure; it was his eyes that attracted me."

"Would you know him again?"

"I'm sure I would. I only saw him for a second, but I'd know him again."

Mary shuddered again at the thought of being spied upon. She reached up and took Collishaw's arm. "Let's go back to Father David," she said.

CHAPTER V

THE MEDICINE MAKER

COLLISHAW took his departure from Fort Oliver the day after the visit to the old fort, and Mary entered in earnest upon her duties. It was with some regret that she bade adieu to the policeman. Friendships are easily formed in the Northland and their worth is often put to the test within a few hours of birth. Equally true it is that animosities and enmities and antagonisms exist between men who have never spoken. It is the intuitive instincts of man quickened by the unconscious forces of the primeval—the response of the mind to the vibrations of Nature.

Mary was a little surprised at her liking for this man whom she had met only by chance three days before, and her failure to keep her promise to herself to treat him with coolness. She was not sentimental in her regard for the opposite sex, and while she enjoyed the companionship of many young men, she regarded them as friends and not as prospective suitors, nor as such did she for a single instant look upon Collishaw. It had not been her custom, however, to admit to the circle of her friendship one upon such short acquaintance.

She had been reared by a maiden aunt whose memory she revered, and whose example had been her inspiration. Disappointed in her affections early in

life, the aunt had enlisted as an army nurse and had spent a number of years in Egypt and India. The mysticism and theosophy of the East had influenced her to such an extent that even the religious ardour of her declining days had not banished her respect for the philosophies of the Orient. She had instilled into the mind of her ward that a successful life was not measured by material possessions, but by the amount of good that could be accomplished.

The lives of Father David and Mother during their years of toil among the natives appealed strongly to the girl. The gentleness of the big missionary as he doctored the ailing, his patience and solicitude for his "children," brought tears to her eyes.

Mary could not understand the conversations that were carried on between the priest and the older natives in the guttural language of the tribe, or the Chinook of the fur-traders, but the devotion of his parishioners was evidenced in many ways. The younger men and women responded to his questions in slow, hesitating English, with occasional recourse to the trade jargon, when they failed to find in the limited vocabularies they had acquired through Mother's teaching expression for their thoughts.

In the presence of the white nurse they appeared shy and ill at ease. Father David took care to explain her purpose among them and introduced her as his assistant.

"You'll have to learn Chinook, Miss Cunningham," he remarked as they passed from house to house in their first tour of the village.

"There is one thing, doctor, that I would like you

to learn first, if I may be bold enough to suggest it," she said.

"Good gracious! what is it?"

"Not to call me 'Miss Cunningham.' My name's Mary."

"Mercy me! So I shall; and I was just wondering when I should dare to do so"; and he laughed.

"And now, please, tell me about Chinook."

"It was a jargon invented by the early traders. There were so many different tribal languages and dialects in the country west of the Rockies that it was necessary to adopt a common means of expression suitable to the commerce of the day. The entire vocabulary consists of three or four hundred words, sufficient for the purposes of barter. Of late some few additional words have been added by the Catholic priests, but, all told, about five hundred words comprise the jargon. The native languages are more difficult to master, but with Chinook and English you can get along very well. At first it may trouble you to translate your thoughts into Chinook, and it may puzzle you even after you have a grasp of the jargon."

"In what way? I was always good at Latin at school, and was considered to be fairly proficient in French. Surely a language of a few hundred words can offer no great obstacles."

"Well," mused Father David, "you may get on to it all right, but let me illustrate it by giving you the translation of the Lord's Prayer. Of course, you know it in English. This is the way it sounds after it has been retranslated from Chinook:

"Our Father who stays in the above, good in our

hearts be your name. Good, your chief among all people; good your will upon earth as in the above. Give every day our food. If we do bad be not angry, and if anyone makes bad to us, not we angry to them. Send away from us all bad."

"And what is it in Chinook?"

The missionary stopped, lifted his hat and Mary bowed her head as he repeated:

"Nesika papa klaksta mitlite kopa saghalie. Kloshe kopa nesika tumtum mika name; kloshe mika tyee kopa konaway tillikum. Kloshe mika tumtum kopa illahie kahkwa kopa saghalie. Potlatch konaway sun nesika muckamuck. Spose nesika mamook mesahchie wake nika hyas solleks kopa klaska. Mahsh siah kopa nesika konawau mesahchie. Kloshe Kahkwa."

"You must teach me that. What could be more fitting than the Lord's Prayer for my first lesson?" suggested the girl.

"It shall be so," agreed Father David.

They walked a few steps in silence, then a startled cry escaped from the lips of the girl.

"What is it?" demanded her companion.

"That man!"

"What man? where?"

"Over there. Coming out of that house."

"I don't see anyone. Who was it?"

"I don't know. I only saw him once before——"

"Where?"

"By the fort. He has such cruel, piercing eyes. He was hiding and he looked at me. I can't forget his eyes. I just saw him for an instant as he came out of the third house from the end of the row. He turned

and I recognised him; then he disappeared. I think he must be a half-breed."

"A half-breed with peculiar eyes," muttered the priest, and then with conviction, "It's Caleb Thompson"; and he started towards the shack indicated by Mary at such a pace that she was forced to half run to keep up with him.

"Caleb Thompson," he repeated to himself, and then aloud, "I know what he's been up to: Mary Elizabeth's son is sick. He's been making medicine. I'm not going to stand for him corrupting my children by his sorcery; no, indeed!"

Without the ceremony of knocking, the big man burst into the house, with Mary at his heels. Once inside he stopped still and sniffed the air like a bird-dog on the scent, as if seeking some peculiar odour in the many that pervaded the gloomy interior.

Thin partitions divided the dwelling into several rooms. It was an untidy place, almost bare of furniture. A door opened and the frightened face of a hideously wrinkled old squaw peered at them through the opening. "Umph, I thought so," was his only comment as a particularly rancid perfume floated into the room, and he brushed the klootchman aside and entered what was evidently the kitchen. Mary followed.

On a small rusty stove a dark unsavoury-looking mess was brewing in an old iron kettle. Father David picked it up, opened the back door and hurled it outside.

The old hag cried out in protest, but he paid not the slightest attention to her, and she retreated to a far corner of the room, from where she glared at him

with such a venomous expression that the white girl started back in alarm.

The missioner returned to the stove, and stooping down, opened the door of the fire-box and raked out four white round stones, which he booted across the uncarpeted floor and kicked outside.

"She's been making shaman medicine," he exclaimed, and, turning to the old woman who cowered in the corner at his approach, he berated her in the native tongue with such effect that she began to whimper.

Turning from the wretched klootchman, the missioner entered the third room of the shack. On a rude bed lay a young man, his bright eyes and flushed countenance bespeaking a high fever.

Father David stood for a moment looking down at the sick man. Then the anger died out of his face, and when he spoke Mary was surprised at the gentleness of his voice, which had, only a moment before, cut like the lash of a whip.

He addressed the sufferer in English: "Simon, my boy, why didn't you send for me when you became worse?"

Then, recollecting the immediate reason for his visit, "Has Caleb Thompson been here?"

Simon nodded.

"I thought so."

"Mary," he said, "run back to the dispensary and bring me some of those pills you will find directly above the scales, and that bottle of mixture I showed you this morning."

As she hurried away on her errand, Mary could not

help wondering at the strange scene she had witnessed. Her curiosity was aroused, and she determined to ask the doctor the ingredients of the mixture which the old woman had been stewing.

She found, on her return, that brief as had been her absence, Father David had tidied the bedroom and had induced the old squaw to a feverish activity in cleaning the other rooms of the shack.

They remained for some time, and before their departure Simon had fallen into a sleep.

"Unless he shows improvement to-morrow, I'll have him removed to the hospital," declared the doctor

"But what was the matter?" asked Mary. "Why did you scold the old woman?"

"She was practising shamanism: making medicine to drive away the evil spirits," he answered. "That man Thompson is at the bottom of it. He's no good, cultus. He's a shaman, or medicine man—a sorcerer. But I could not get old Mary Elizabeth to acknowledge that he had advised her," he added.

"While you were away I bullied her a bit, trying to get her to admit it, but she's a stubborn old thing. I've had lots of trouble with her. She's like a fox. She readily admitted that Thompson had been there, but took all the responsibility for making the medicine."

"And the white stones—what were they?"

"They were a part of the charm. If they had cracked in the fire, she would have believed that her son would die. If she had her way and had a lot of medicine men about him, he would die, and no mistake about it."

The old missionary was much depressed by the occurrence For years he had waged a war against

necromancers, and had come to believe that even although the old superstitions still lived in the minds of some, Fort Oliver, at least, had been purged of the influences of the medicine cult. He did not talk much during the supper hour.

Nellie was busy clearing away the dishes from the table when a knock was heard at the door. The servant, at a nod from Mother, answered it, returning a moment later to say that Caleb Thompson was without and desired to speak to Father David.

"What can he want with me?" exclaimed the missionary in astonishment. "Show him in."

As Thompson followed Nellie into the room, Mary could hardly prevent herself from crying out. There was no mistaking him—Caleb Thompson was the man with the narrow, hypnotic eyes; the eyes that had stared at her amid the ruins of the old fort.

"Well," demanded Father David, "what can I do for you, Caleb?"

The half-breed looked inquiringly at Mary and then back at the missionary. "Excuse me, sir, and you too, Mrs. Mainwaring, but I thought you would be alone. I did not mean to intrude."

"That is all right, Caleb," answered the priest. "This is Miss Cunningham, who has come here as my assistant in the hospital work. This, Miss Cunningham, is Caleb Thompson—of Slianch.

"You may speak before Miss Cunningham," went on Father David coldly, for he realised that he had been forced to make an introduction which he fancied was at least partly the desire that had prompted the visit.

"Well, sir," said Thompson, seating himself on a convenient chair, "I'm told by Mary Elizabeth that you suspect me of practising shamanism among the people. I—I came to disabuse your mind of such ideas."

The audacity of the man unnerved Father David. He made no answer, and after a pause the other went on:

"I can't understand how you could suspect me of doing such a thing. My education and the other advantages I have enjoyed should, if nothing else, be a safeguard to me against any such unjust charges. Just because you find an old woman who has more faith in the ancient remedies of her people than in your medicine—you will pardon me, doctor—in a house where I visited, is no reason why you should accuse me of lessening her confidence in your prescriptions."

Despite himself, the doctor felt that he was at a disadvantage in dealing with this man, and although indignation welled up within him, he could only reply:

"I am sorry if I have misjudged your reason for coming to Fort Oliver. You know the difficulties that have beset the way of the Church in ridding the people of their old superstitions and foolish doctrines. What, then, can you expect when you are seen coming out of a house where shamanism is being practised, when you are the only stranger in the village?

"Besides, Caleb," went on the doctor, "you know that this is not the first time that you have been suspected of the same thing. It's peculiar indeed, is it not, that happenings of a similar kind should take place in different villages at the time of your visits to them."

"Yes," answered Thompson, and there was such a

ring of sincerity in his voice as he continued, that it was with difficulty that the missionary disbelieved him. "It's strange, and it is because of these unfortunate coincidences that I have come to you as soon as I heard that you suspected me—in order that you might do justice to me and to your own good self by ridding your mind of such thoughts."

Appreciating the advantage he had gained, and realising that to remain longer might prove dangerous, the half-breed rose and excused himself. He hesitated a moment and then stepped forward, his thin lips curved in a smile, and extended his hand to the missioner. Father David, finding no ready excuse for refusing the courtesy, accepted it.

Turning to Mother, he shook hands with her, and then, bowing to Mary, he said, "I'm pleased to have had the honour of meeting you, Miss Cunningham."

The girl controlled herself with an effort and inclined her head slightly in acknowledgment.

"Oh, how I dislike that man," she exclaimed when the door closed behind him.

"So do I," declared Father David.

CHAPTER VI

THE EVIL SPIRIT

"Is there anything else you want me to do, Mother?" called Nellie from the kitchen. "I'm going to my uncle's now."

"Nothing, dear. Good-night."

The half-breed girl, softly crooning a song, stepped out of the back door into the darkness, and started towards the village. She had not gone far when she was halted by hearing her name called from the shadows. She gave a start as she recognised it to be the voice of a man, and would have cried out in alarm had not the speaker continued, "It's all right, Miss Nellie, don't be frightened," and Caleb Thompson stepped from the shade of a low bush, where he had been awaiting her appearance.

Thompson knew how to win and hold the attention of the females of his race, and many a girl of mixed blood would only be too pleased to have him pay her court. He had never shown any inclination to wed, and klootchman and half-breed belle alike waited with expectancy the day when he would nominate the woman who was to be his squaw. His sudden appearance was not an unagreeable surprise to the girl, and she exclaimed:

"Oh, Mr. Thompson, you scared me!"

"I did not mean to," he apologised, and continued with well-simulated concern, "What is the matter with your hand, Nellie? I noticed the bandage when I was at the Mission and it worried me."

The girl blushed with pleasure as she told him of the mishap. Truly, she thought, it was kind of him to be so solicitous.

"And did Father David bandage it?"

"No; it was Miss Cunningham."

"That yellow-haired girl?"

"Yes."

"Umph!" grunted Thompson. "Do you like her?"

"Yes. She's nice."

"Not as nice as you," answered Thompson, and he noted in the moonlight that the compliment pleased. "A cat can be nice, but a cat has claws and an evil spirit."

"What do you mean?"

"Walk with me and I'll tell you"; and together they started along the beach, away from the dwellings.

For several minutes nothing was said; then the man suddenly demanded, "You love the doctor and Mother?"

"Yes," answered the girl. "I'd die for them."

"Perhaps it will not be necessary."

"Why, what do you mean? What is it? You tell me"; and she seized him by the arm.

"I like Father David and the old lady, too," declared Thompson, "and someone else in the household as well," he added slyly. "I would not like to see any harm come to the Mission."

"What is it? Tell me," insisted the girl.

Thompson dropped his voice to a whisper: "The yellow-haired girl has an evil spirit," he hissed.

"No evil spirit can hurt Father David and Mother; those are old stories," but there was a note of fear in her voice as she made denial. Thompson's keen ear caught it and he was satisfied.

"Our mothers' people," he went on, softly at first, but increasing the intensity of his tone, "before the white man came, were strong and powerful. They were as the stones on the shore; no man could count them, and their villages were everywhere. They believed in spirits—good ones and bad ones. Then the white man came and the people took up his ways. Where are they now? They are only a handful: no longer are they mighty in war or great hunters. They live on land the white man does not want and sets aside for them. No more do they carve totems or tell the stories of the past in the making of blankets. No, they are fast passing away and soon they will be forgotten."

Nellie was silent, but she trembled as a leaf in the wind as the insidious logic of the tempter drove distrust into her soul.

"The religion of Father David tells you to allow the Spirit of God to come into your heart—does it not?" argued Thompson. "And does it not tell you to rid yourself of the spirit of evil—the devil? and what is the difference between the evil spirit, whether he is called the Devil or Txamsem, or is known as the Evil One or Huldowget?

"And," he went on when she made no reply, "if a good spirit can enter the body of a man or woman, so can a bad spirit. Is it not so?"

"May be," whispered the girl.

"Don't mistake me," urged the man. "I believe in the teachings of Father David, but I believe also in the power of the spirits as our mothers' people knew them.

"I am a wise man," boasted Thompson. "I went to the big schools of the city, and I have the power to know who has evil spirits. The yellow-haired girl has a bad spirit. She may not know it, but it is there all the same. It will harm Father David and Mother unless something is done."

The eyes of the girl blazed with passion. "I'll kill her if she hurts them," she threatened fiercely.

"No, no; that would not be right, and it would not help them. It is the spirit that must be killed. You can have that done without harming the girl—or letting her know you are doing it."

"How?"

"By helping me. I can get rid of the huldowget in the young woman, and protect the doctor and the old lady. I have the power. Will you help me; will you?"

The intensity of his tone and the earnestness of his manner was such that Nellie replied without hesitation: "Yes; what do you want me to do?"

"To-morrow is church day. You won't be working late; meet me when the sun is sinking, at the old fort, and I'll tell you."

They turned and slowly retraced their steps. Nothing more was said until the buildings were close at hand. "Now, you go ahead," he advised. "We must not be seen together, and remember, don't breathe a word of

this to anyone. We're working for the doctor and the old lady—and the yellow-haired girl as well. If you speak, you'll spoil everything. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Then promise me."

"I promise."

"That's fine; good night."

"Good night," replied Nellie, as Thompson disappeared in the deeper shadows.

Sunday morning, as was his custom, Father David visited his patients and in the afternoon conducted services in the church. Mary accompanied him on his tour, and was delighted to find the condition of Simon, Mary Elizabeth's son, much improved.

On their return to the modest luncheon that preceded Divine worship, she noticed that her movements about the house were keenly observed by the servant girl. This, she thought, was but the natural curiosity on the part of one to whom she must appear more or less strange. She determined that she must show Nellie some little attentions and win her regard. It might be, she told herself, that she could bring some measure of sunshine into what must be a somewhat drab existence, and she realised at the same time that the young half-breed woman could teach her a great deal which would be of benefit to her in her work among the natives.

She waited for Nellie and walked beside her across the distance that separated the Mission House from the church. Mary sought to engage the girl in conversation, and plied her with questions about different things, hoping to lead her into discussion on a topic

that would appeal to her. She received only curt, muttered replies. Sensing the reluctance on the part of the other to respond to her advances, Mary naturally attributed it to shyness, and renewed her endeavours to draw the half-breed out of her shell of reserve. Her failure only made her more determined to accomplish her objective and win the friendship of the domestic.

The service was conducted by Father David in the native language. Unable to follow the sermon, Mary had ample opportunity to study those about her.

She marvelled at the decorum and attitude of reverence on the part of the Indians, and could not help contrasting their devotion with congregations in the more fashionable churches in the cities, to the advantage of the natives. What surprised her most, although, she reasoned, there was no cause for it, was to observe, seated near the back of the church, their visitor of the previous evening. Thompson appeared to be as deeply interested and impressed with the remarks of the priest as any person in the building.

When the service was over and they were filing out of the church, she noticed a look pass between Thompson and the girl at her side, which seemed to convey more than the courteous nod that was exchanged between them. Mary was on the point of asking her companion if she was well acquainted with the man, but hesitated to do so, fearing that the girl might mistake her query as an effort to pry into her private affairs. Even if there was some understanding between Thompson and Nellie, she thought it was no concern of hers, and because she had taken a sudden dislike

to the man was no reason why others should share it. Instead, as they walked back to the Mission, she continued her chatter about persons and things in the village, hoping to penetrate the armour of the girl's reserve, but without success.

"I wonder," she mused, "if Nellie is jealous of my place in the household; if she thinks that my coming will lessen her in the affections of Father David and Mother?"

It seemed to be a reasonable solution of the strange manner of the half-breed servant, and she decided that everything within her power must be done to disabuse the girl's mind of any such thoughts.

There were several things to be done in the late afternoon. Sustaining foods, which Mother had prepared, and medicines to be taken to some of the villagers, and Father David required her assistance in the dispensary in binding a crushed finger which one of the young men had received. She did not see Nellie again until the evening meal was being served. Then, remembering her determination to win the affection of the girl, she insisted on helping to clear away the dishes and wash them.

"You must have that finger dressed again before you go out," she said, having noticed that the bandage had become soaked with water and soiled in her duties about the kitchen.

"No," was the sullen answer; "it's good enough."

"Don't you think she should have that dressing renewed?" Mary appealed to Mother.

"Why, certainly. Run along with Mary and let her fix your hand."

"I don't want to," stubbornly insisted the girl, looking out of the window at the sinking sun.

"Don't be foolish; go along."

"No, not to-night," she said with such decision that her mistress was surprised. "I'm going," and picking up her shawl, she threw it over her head and shoulders and opened the door. "Father David can do it in the morning, maybe," she added, and stepped out into the twilight, slamming the door behind her.

"That's strange. I've never known Nellie to act that way before," exclaimed the older woman.

"Perhaps it's my fault. I should not have insisted. She does not know me yet, or understand my interest in her," suggested the nurse. "We mustn't let her think that my coming is going to make any difference —and it must not—in your relations with her. She's only a child, and it may be that she looks on me as one who may usurp her place in your regard."

"Certainly I will treat her just the same. Poor child, I never expected her to think anything like that," replied Mother. "You're right, we'll both endeavour to show her that we love her."

Nellie turned in the direction of the old fort as soon as she quitted the Mission House. It was almost dark, and when she was far enough away that her footsteps could no longer be heard, she increased her pace to a half-run.

She was out of breath when, nervous and excited, she reached the broken palisades. Thompson was waiting for her. "You're late," he said. "I expected you half an hour ago."

"I couldn't come sooner"; and she proceeded to tell

him of the manner in which she had left the Mission House in order to keep her appointment with him.

Quick to seize upon anything that would further his grip on the girl, the renegade exclaimed, "What did I tell you? It was the evil spirit in the yellow-haired girl that tried to prevent you coming here. You're lucky that you did."

"I came as soon as I could."

"Yes," he agreed, "I guess you did. It's good for you that you didn't let the evil spirit keep you away."

Nellie shuddered.

"Did she talk to you to-day when you went to the church?" he asked, anxious to discover if Mary had intercepted the look that had passed between them.

"Yes, a great deal."

"About what?"

"Everything."

"Did she ask about me?"

"No."

"That's good. Did you answer her pleasantly?"

"No," responded the girl. "I don't want to talk to her. I hate her. She's trying to hurt them."

"You silly girl," exclaimed Thompson sharply, "that's why the evil spirit tried to stop you. You mustn't let it appear that you suspect anything. You must pretend to be her friend. If you don't, we can't do anything to help Father David and Mother. She doesn't know that she has an evil spirit. It's not her fault, and to kill the bad medicine of the huldowget you must have her confidence. Now you do as I tell you; it's the only way."

Nellie began to cry softly. "I'll try," she whimpered.

"That's fine. Now don't cry," he urged, and then, in a milder and more hesitating tone, "Some day, Nellie, I'm going to marry. I want a wife who is clever and can help me. You, too, want to marry—am I right?"

"Yes," she whispered, and there was a fluttering of her heart that choked back further words.

"Then you do just as I say and maybe——" He did not complete the sentence, but a sudden joy and hope filled the girl.

"I'll do anything you say," she eagerly volunteered.

"That's right. Now listen to me." He dropped his voice and she bent forward to hear the instructions that he whispered.

Thompson spoke for a long time in slow intensive speech until he was satisfied he had made his meaning clear. Then he made her repeat his instructions, painstakingly going over with her portions which he thought she might forget.

"That's good," he said at last. "Now to-morrow I go away. I'll come again, but no one will see me. I'll look beneath that white stone by the old fire-place in the big building there," and he motioned towards the tumbled ruins of the former quarters of the trading company's officers, silhouetted against the lighter shade of the evening sky. "I'll expect to find what I seek, and if I don't—well, it'll be better that you don't forget to do what I've told you."

"I'll do it," answered Nellie.

"You must," he insisted. "And now you'd better go home."

As she rose and turned to obey, Thompson put out

his hand and stopped her, and as she half turned, he kissed her. "Now remember all I've told you, dear, and it'll be well."

It was the first time that a man had touched her lips with his and the sensation thrilled her. She almost reeled as the blood pounded through her veins, and her heart was filled with a strange new happiness.

"I'll not forget—I'll do anything for you," she stammered.

Caleb Thompson, as he moved off in the direction of the little river beyond the fort, where his canoe was drawn up, chuckled to himself. He knew that by that single simulation of regard he had won greater obedience than by all his thinly-veiled threats of what would follow disregard of his orders.

It was a girl of a totally different mood that Mary found in the kitchen the next morning. She smiled at the nurse when she entered, and held out her injured hand.

"I was a mean girl last night," she said. "You were very kind, but I was not feeling very good. I'm all right to-day, and I'm sorry."

"I, too, am sorry," said Mary. "I should not have bothered you. Was it a headache?"

"Yes," lied the half-breed.

"Why didn't you tell me? I might have done something to help you. I want to be your friend, Nellie, if you'll let me. Will you?"

"Yes."

Mary did something for which the other was totally unprepared. She took Nellie into her arms and kissed her.

It was the second time that she had been kissed within the space of a few hours, and the soft lips of the white girl seemed to rob her of the ecstasy that the other had given her. She remembered the bargain that had been sealed with that kiss of the night before, and remembering it, she burst into tears.

CHAPTER VII

UNCANNY HAPPENINGS

SPRING lengthened into golden summer, and the friendship between the two young women grew and developed. Mary took a great interest in her companion and pictured to her some of the big world outside, which had been as a closed book to the servant girl. In turn, the half-breed instructed the white nurse in the lore of the North Coast, finding her at all times a ready and eager listener.

Despite her best endeavours, however, to penetrate into the confidential recesses of the girl's mind, Mary always felt that there was a barrier of reserve—a closed chamber which had been purposely locked against her. While sensing this she made no effort to discover the reason and never intimated by word or action that she was conscious of the obstruction in their otherwise cordial relations. She did not know that to keep the secret and prevent herself from opening her heart to the nurse, Nellie had often to stand with clenched hands and gritted teeth and fight a battle with herself—a fight wherein the active mind sought to overcome the promptings of the unconscious will.

"She has a bad spirit," the girl would tell herself. "I must do it; I must, for the good Father and Mother." Then fiercely, "I must, I will do it. The

huldowget must be killed. Why did she come here and make me like her? Why is she so kind? It makes it hard for me."

Then more gently, "She don't know—she means no harm. She is good herself—and don't mean anything bad," and the half-breed would weep for her friend.

Though she knew it not, each time Nellie's resistance and determination became weaker and she found it more difficult to carry out the dictates of Caleb Thompson. It was only by recalling the picture he had painted of the dire consequences of failure to comply with his instructions that she brought herself to do his bidding at all. Gradually she grew slower in compliance with the schedule of acts to which she was committed, and finally hesitated and stopped, love having temporarily conquered fear.

At first it had been the half-spoken promise, the suggested affection and hope that some day he would claim her as his bride that bound the girl in willing servitude to the rascal whose native cunning had been augmented by his schooling in the deceit and deceptions of his white brothers. As time went on and her liking for Mary Cunningham increased, Nellie found less and less satisfaction in the contemplation of herself as the wife of Caleb Thompson, and it was the fear of his narrow-set hypnotic eyes that haunted her.

Mary Cunningham had applied herself assiduously to learning all that she could of the ways, customs and beliefs of the Indians among whom she had chosen to labour. Her knowledge of Chinook was soon such that it was no longer necessary for the doctor or Nellie to accompany her on her visits to the homes of the

natives, and they no longer looked upon her with curious, speculative eyes, but accepted her presence in the village without comment. The dogs barked less at her as she approached to make her daily visits to the different houses along the beach. Even the old squaws, who had at first been diffident about entering conversation with Father David or Mother when she was present, would give slow-voiced answers to her queries. She made friends with the children and could often be seen surrounded by a dozen or more half-clothed little creatures, who watched her every action, and delighted to draw her attention by their antics.

Mary found her work interesting, although she had but little actual nursing to do, there not having been a bed case in the hospital since her arrival. But there had been several happenings which caused her annoyance and mystified and worried her.

She never spoke to Father David or Mother of these occurrences. Her love and regard for the great, simple-hearted old doctor and his devoted little wife increased every day, and not for anything would she make complaint to them of the things that puzzled her. Besides, she argued to herself, of themselves these things would appear trivial in the telling. She did discuss them with Nellie, who advised against speaking to the missionary or his wife, saying that they might think she was not content to stay at Fort Oliver. This argument coincided with her own ideas and made her more than ever determined not to bother her friends with her troubles.

The first of the series of strange incidents took place two days after Nellie had agreed to accept her friendship. She had called the half-breed to her room

to show her some of the treasures of her wardrobe. After having examined the articles, they laughed and chatted and talked in the way that young women do over inconsequential matters. Mary, in passing the small mirror that hung above the table that served for her dressing-stand, glanced in the glass and saw that her hair was in some disarray. Almost unconsciously she reached down to pick up her comb with which to catch the erring strands. She lifted it, and then uttered a cry of surprise, for except the two end pieces, there was not a tooth in the comb. Every one had been broken off close to the base.

"What is the matter?" asked Nellie.

"Look! Look!" and she held out the broken piece of ivory. "How ever did that happen?"

Nellie's eyes opened wide in astonishment. "Was it like that this morning?" she asked.

"No, certainly not. I used it, and it was all right then. What could have happened?"

"Perhaps you dropped it and stepped on it," suggested the servant. "Let's look on the floor."

"Yes; let's see where the teeth are"; and together they dropped to their hands and knees. Not a sign of a comb tooth was visible. The well-worn carpet and old-fashioned rag mats were spotlessly clean, and every inch of their surfaces was scanned without result.

Mary looked at Nellie for a moment without speaking, then in a low tone, "Isn't that strange?" she asked.

"It is," agreed the other. "I wonder——"

"Wonder what?"

"Oh, nothing, but it's awfully strange. Are you

sure you didn't do something with it and then forget about it?"

"Certainly not. It was all right when I used it this morning, I tell you."

The half-breed regarded her with such a peculiar, searching scrutiny, that Mary felt a sense of uneasiness creeping over her. "What is it, Nellie?" she asked. "Why do you look at me like that?"

"Oh," answered Nellie, "I was thinking, that's all. I was just thinking how strange it was—funny things happen sometimes."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing—but it is funny, ain't it?"

Mary sought to question her further but without satisfaction, the other replying in the same enigmatic manner, "It's strange; it's funny."

When the domestic had retired to the kitchen, Mary repeated her search of the room, and for a long time sat on her bed, going over in her mind the events of the day. She was sure that the comb was undamaged when she left the room that morning. How then could it have happened?

There was something so mysterious about the incident that it worried her for several days, until a fresh occurrence claimed her attention.

She had been sewing, and had been suddenly called away to attend, with Father David, upon a case in the village. She put down her work and went out. On returning several hours later, she took it up again, but could not find her thimble. She remembered distinctly taking it off her finger and placing it with her sewing on a small table. It was of silver, a birth-

day gift from her aunt some years before, and she valued it very highly as a keepsake.

She called Nellie and explained her loss. Together they searched the living-room, but could find no trace of the missing thimble.

"That's funny," exclaimed the half-breed, as they prosecuted their examination of the room.

"What?"

"The way you lose things. It was your comb before, and now it's your thimble."

"It is strange," agreed Mary, and she was conscious that Nellie was again looking at her with the same weird gaze. She felt a sudden indefinite fear clutching at her, such as haunts the dark and silent pathways of the forest.

"What—what is it, do you think?" she asked hesitatingly.

"I don't know—but it's funny," declared Nellie.

"Perhaps you put it in your pocket when you went out, and lost it," the servant suggested after a pause.

"Perhaps I did," agreed the nurse, but she knew very well that she had not done so.

There was something unreal about the thing, and she puzzled and fretted herself about it for a time. Hers was an imaginative mind. She had been brought up to accept certain beliefs in the supernatural, and while she did not actually attribute either the loss of her thimble or the disappearance of the teeth of her comb to any spiritual agency, she could not altogether shake off the eerie feeling that from time to time assailed her.

Nothing happened to further disturb her for some weeks, and she had almost forgotten the incidents

which had so vexed her when she had an experience that came near to prostrating her.

She had been called out in the middle of the night to a family where a new life was being ushered in, and was tired and weary. It was a lovely warm afternoon and she stretched herself on a rustic lounge chair Father David had fashioned, in the shade of the Mission. She had intended to read, but after several attempts to focus her attention on the printed page she abandoned the idea and let the book fall to the ground at her side.

There was hardly a ripple on the sunlit bay, save where a spring salmon rose to snatch at some insect that had flown too close to the surface. She looked with listless eyes at the tranquil scene and then away off at Kiaso Island, and idly she recalled the story of its formation. Sleep overpowered her, and it must have been the legend of which she had been thinking that made her dream of the teller, for in her vision John Collishaw appeared. It was a troubled dream. She was caught in a deep morass from which she could not extricate herself, and he was on higher ground. She cried for him to come and help her, but instead of the policeman, it was the half-breed, Caleb Thompson, who came to her assistance—came with a sneer on his lips and mockery in his eyes.

She awoke with a start, and brushed her hand across her eyes to blot out the memory of her nightmare, and then sprang to her feet with a wild shriek, her senses reeling with horror. Transfixed by fear, she stood gazing in awful fright at the sleeve of her blouse. It was spotted with fresh blood.

Father David and Mother were absent, but Nellie, in the kitchen, heard the agonised cry and ran to her. "What is it?" she shouted as she rounded the corner of the house.

"Look! look!" was all the answer she could give, as with eyes starting from their sockets she motioned with her hand to the red splotch on the white fabric.

"What is it? Are you hurt? What has happened?" The words tumbled from Nellie's lips.

"No, I'm not hurt. I don't know where it came from."

"See! There's more of it," and the girl pointed to half a dozen other stains on Mary's skirt.

For a moment the nurse swayed, tottered and would have fallen had not the servant caught her. Nellie was strong, and it was but with little difficulty that she half carried, half dragged the senseless white girl to the house and into her bedroom. Setting down her burden on the bed, she ran to the kitchen and returned with a glass of water, some of which she dashed over the blanched face of the nurse.

An outburst of wild, half-hysterical weeping followed, and Nellie feared for a time she would not be able to control her own feelings. After a few moments, however, she managed to soothe her friend, and assisted her to disrobe and get between the sheets.

"Don't be frightened," she crooned. "It might have come from a wounded bird flying above you."

"Do you think so?" gasped Mary, anxious to find some explanation, however improbable, for the gruesome stains.

"Yes," answered the other. "What else could it be?"

"I don't know. That's the trouble. I don't know"; and again she shook with sobbing.

Nellie turned and looked out of the window. Tears stood out in her eyes, and it was only by biting her lips that she could prevent herself from crying aloud.

After a time Mary ceased her weeping. "Nellie," she said, "don't tell Father David or Mother anything about this. I don't want them to worry. Besides, they might not understand—they might think it was the sight of blood that unnerved me. It wasn't—it was—was—well, it was just the terrible uncanniness of it all. You won't tell them?" she pleaded.

"No," was the answer. "But what'll they say if they find you sick?"

"You're right," declared Mary after a pause. "I must pull myself together. I must get up. I'm ashamed of myself really," and summoning all her courage and determination, she rose and started to dress.

"See who is coming," suddenly exclaimed Nellie, who had returned to the window.

"Who?"

"See, coming around the point"; and she motioned towards the headland.

"I see a motor-boat, but who's in it?" demanded Mary, lacking the experience of the other to distinguish at such a distance the peculiarities of individual craft.

"It's Collishaw's—the policeman"; and, observing a slight flush of pleasure spread over the pale cheek of her companion, a new hope was born in the heart of the half-breed.

"You like him?" she asked in an eager voice, almost a whisper.

"Yes, I think he's very nice."

"Why don't you get him for your man; marry him, eh?"

"Oh, Nellie!" exclaimed Mary in surprise. "Don't be so silly. I don't want to marry him or anyone else. You shouldn't say such things."

Again the servant's expression changed. This time to one of astonishment. "And don't you want to get a man—ever? And to get married and have children?" To her mind it was unheard of that any woman should deny the natural destiny of her sex.

"I never think of such things," answered Mary sharply. "I have work to do for the suffering—and please, Nellie, don't ever say anything like that to me again."

Puzzled by the attitude of her companion, Nellie quietly withdrew from the room, but there was taking shape in her mind a vague, indefinite plan which suggested an escape from the misery that had been filling her life. "If she only would, then they would go away from here. I must try." But the thought of parting with Mary caused a pang of regret.

Dropping to a chair, she broke into tears, and she was still crying when Mary entered the kitchen a few minutes later.

John Collishaw had made several trips to Fort Oliver since the day when he brought Mary to the Mission from Sliam. In fact, so frequent had his visits become that Father David slyly remarked to his wife: "Seems as if we need a lot of looking after by the Indian Department since Mary arrived. John certainly finds lots to do about here this summer."

A strong friendship had naturally developed between the nurse and the handsome young policeman, which on the part of Collishaw promised to become something stronger. Mary had not considered him other than a warm friend in whose society she delighted, and the query of the half-breed had come as a distinct shock to her, which could only result in the creation of a certain reserve in the future expressions of her friendship.

John Collishaw had no doubts as to the measure of his regard for the nurse. At first he had laughed at the idea of his falling in love, for he had, with the conceit of sturdy young manhood, often told himself that no woman could induce him to sacrifice his freedom and put his head in the matrimonial noose. He found, however, a special delight in the society of this splendid young woman, and began after a time to temporise with his former resolutions, saying that if ever he did decide to marry, it would be to a girl like Mary Cunningham. Each time he met her he found it more and more difficult to leave Fort Oliver, and he discovered after each visit more and more excuses for returning to the place.

When Mary opened the door in response to his knock, and smiled a welcome, he felt that he had never beheld a more entrancing vision of loveliness. He stammered out his greeting, for a strange shyness seemed to overwhelm him, and he became more confused as he realised that he was acting like an awkward schoolboy. He thrust a parcel into her hands, exclaiming at the same time: "Here, Miss Cunningham, I brought you some candy. Thought you'd like it. Got it off the boat at Sliam. Where's Father David?"

The girl looked down at him from her vantage point on the doorstep and burst into a laugh, in which he joined. "My goodness, Mr. Collishaw," she said, "you do talk fast. Thanks for the candy, and Father David will be back in a moment. But won't you come in? Really, I don't want to stand here all day, holding the door open for you."

"Thanks"; and he entered.

He had been planning all day what he would say when they met. He had framed many smart speeches to the tune of the engine, but now, seated in her presence, he could not remember a single one.

"Well, what's the news from the big world outside?" she asked, when silence threatened to become embarrassing.

"Boy hurt at Slianch," answered the policeman, as if reciting a lesson, for it was his custom when visiting the Mission to gather, on his way there, all items of interest from the trading boats and Coast camps, for Father David's information. "Three Indians drowned near Kincolith," he went on. "Turkey wants to go to war again—whisky boat captured at Port Simpson—trouble near Aiyansh with medicine man—killed all the dogs in a village—good thing to get rid of the curs—must catch the medicine man——"

"Oh, don't," protested Mary, unable to longer restrain her laughter. "You're wound up like a phonograph. What ails you to-day?"

Before he could give answer the door burst open and Father David appeared. "Oh ho!" he boomed. "Am I disturbing a *tête-à-tête*? No? Well, John, glad to see you. How's your behaviour? Hope there's no

trouble about? That's good. Didn't think there was, but you can never tell, can you?"

"No, doctor, there's nothing wrong here that I know of, but there's some trouble in the district. I was just telling Miss Cunningham about it. There is a medicine man at work again. I'm on my way down the coast to some of the villages where the rattles have been going pretty strong. I can't understand it at all. I thought all that stuff was done away with long ago—that the missionaries had dispelled the old ideas about those things, but evidently there's some evil influence at work to try and bring back the old practices."

"There is," answered the old man gravely. "The Evil One is always seeking to restore his kingdom, and he always finds those who are ready to help him. I saw some signs here at Fort Oliver not long ago, but I could not get enough evidence to make a complaint to you about it. I have my suspicions, but you can't act on suspicions. You know, without me telling you, who it is that I suspect."

Collishaw nodded. "Yes, and I have the same idea, but the trouble is to catch him. He's been schooled in the guile of the white man, and retains the cunning of the Indian. But this thing's got to be stopped, and it's how to go about it that's worrying me. I thought I'd ask your advice. Candidly, I didn't believe the tales I'd heard of the influence of these men, but natives come to me almost white with fear, saying that spells are being worked against them."

"Yes, I know, John. I've seen Indians die when they thought an evil spirit had been set against them

by a medicine man. Men who were leaders in war, and who would not hesitate to attack a grizzly with a knife, have died before my very eyes in the early days, under the influence of medicine men."

"Those old shamans seemed capable of anything, from what I can learn," agreed the policeman. "They tell me that they did some remarkable things, too. Lately, some peculiar things have been recounted to me by one or two of the older men, who still speak in whispers of some of the actions of the spirits, or—— Why, what's the matter, Miss Cunningham?"

Mary was leaning forward in her chair. Her eyes were filled with horror, and her face was deathly pale. As they talked, the terror of her experience of the afternoon had returned, and an awful question had arisen in her mind—could it be that she was bewitched? The exclamation of the policeman had broken the spell that held her, and with a faint cry she swooned, dropping back in her chair.

Both men sprang to their feet. "Here, John," shouted the doctor, "hold her while I get something for her"; and he dashed away in the direction of the dispensary.

Kneeling beside the girl's chair, John lifted her head to his shoulder and supported her in that position.

Presently her eyes opened. "There, there, you'll be all right in a moment," he said as she sought to move. "Just lie still for a little while."

"You won't let them touch me, will you?" she half cried in terror.

"Who? what?" demanded Collishaw. "Certainly not; no one'll hurt you."

With a sigh she again lapsed into unconsciousness,

just as Father David returned and the door leading to the kitchen gently closed.

Nellie had been attracted by the disturbance and had looked in to see the girl resting in Collishaw's arms. There was a happy smile on the face of the half-breed.

Mary quickly recovered under the ministrations of the old doctor. "I'm all right now," she murmured, and in reply to his question smiled weakly. "I went to sleep outside in the sun, and I guess it was too much for me."

Father David had called Nellie and ordered her to assist Mary to bed. "You must take care of yourself," he said, when she protested against retiring. "You just take it easy for a few days, for you've been working pretty hard lately."

"There's something on the child's mind," he said to Collishaw when they were alone. "I wonder what it is."

"I think that it was our talk of the medicine men and evil spirits," suggested the policeman.

"Nonsense."

"Well, you may be right, but she once told me that her aunt had spent years in India and used to tell her stories of the fakirs and their works. Her mind may be receptive to the spirit tales of this country."

"Rubbish, John, rubbish! You can't tell me a girl with a hospital training—a practical girl—would pay any attention to the native legends and beliefs. No, there's something else. She may tell me some day. If she does, all right, but I'm not going to bother her about it."

"Hope you're right," commented the younger man.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CANOE-MAKER'S TRAIL

DESPITE the physical exhaustion and mental agony of the day, Mary found sleep elusive. As she tossed about on her pillow, the lapping of the waves on the shingle, the sighing of the wind over the water and the creaking of the forest trees, noises that usually lulled her to slumber, seemed to drum on her brain and fill her mind with unpleasant fancies.

"How are you, dear?" It was the quiet voice of Mother. "I heard you, so came in to sit with you for a little while, if I may."

"I'm so glad you came," whispered Mary, as Mother took a seat beside the bed and looked out of the window across the bay.

"I'm afraid," said the little woman sadly, "that the influences of the North are a little too much for you. Now, tell me," and she smiled sweetly, "is it not the loneliness of Fort Oliver that is troubling you?"

There was something in her voice, an indefinite yearning, sympathy and appeal, that the younger woman was quick to sense and appreciate. She seemed to feel the unspoken fear in the mind of her friend. Mother believed that the absence from the city, with its gaiety and excitement, had proven to be too much for her and had caused her breakdown, and it might eventually lead to her leaving Fort Oliver and the Mission.

"No, Mother," and she reached out and patted the wrinkled hands; "it's not the loneliness. I'm happy as I can be, with you and Father David, and I'm not going to desert and go back to the city. I'm going to stay right here—if you'll let me, but after to-day I'm—I'm afraid you'll not want to keep me." Tears filled her eyes and she turned her head away.

"There, there," answered Mother brightly, "you'll stay with us—certainly you shall; who said you wouldn't? Don't worry about your little attack this afternoon, but don't sleep in the sun again. You know, if we women didn't do something like that once in a while, we wouldn't be entitled to be called the weaker sex.

"You know, dear, I fainted once. Yes, I did, but David don't know it to this day. It would have worried him, and he had enough troubles then. It was when we first came here and everything was still more or less strange to me."

"Tell me about it, please."

"I don't think I should. You'd better go to sleep."

"Please!"

"It was a long, long time ago; in the second year of our stay here. David was called to attend at one of the other villages where the small-pox had broken out. He went to fight the disease, to vaccinate and quarantine. I was left alone.

"The natives were very much frightened and excited. They feared the small-pox more than anything else. David vaccinated all who would submit to it before he went away. It was the first time that preventive serums had been used among them, and only

a few would trust our remedies enough to become inoculated.

"While David was away trying to protect the other villages from the scourge, those who had been vaccinated here began to suffer from the inflammation that followed. The medicine men were quick to perceive an opportunity to combat our influence. They told the people we were trying to kill them off and had poisoned their arms so they could not fight.

"They went to those who had been vaccinated and told them that their arms would wither so that they could never hunt or paddle a canoe again, and that the affliction would spread to all members of the tribe. When this was brought about, then white men would come and kill them.

"Shamans came to our home and threatened me. I could not speak the language very well then, but I pretended that I was not afraid of them, and did not lock the door. One of the chiefs, who was sympathetic towards us, although at that time he had not professed the faith, was among those who followed the medicine men, and I addressed him.

"'It is false,' I said. 'We have brought you the message of life, not death. When your son was sick, chief, and the shamans could not cast out the evil spirits, who was it cured him and looked after him?'

"'Father David,' he answered.

"'And has not Father David told you the story of Life, and has he not brought you food for your spirit?' I asked. 'What do you do when a dog bites you when you feed it? Father David has fed you: are you dogs? I have spoken.'

"He was a chief of the eagle crest and was very powerful among the people and had a lot of influence all along the Coast. When I was through talking he stepped to my side.

"'The squaw of the white father has spoken good words,' he said. 'He has spoken to us and his words were like the scattering of swans' down. They were words of peace, not war. Did he not say his medicine would make our arms sore for a little time? Is not the haightly-lahaksh (small-pox) worse than a sick arm? It is the spirit of small-pox coming out. If any man hurts this woman he must do hurt to me, Kodonsh, chief of the eagle crest. You have heard my words.'

"After that they were afraid to touch me, but all night long they kept up a noise in the village, beating drums, blowing horns and pounding rattles. They danced and yelled in an effort to frighten away the evil spirit of the disease. They attacked and almost killed a slave who had been captured in youth in the part of the country where the small-pox made its appearance, fearing that he might be harbouring the spirit of the disease. In fact, they thought they had beaten him to death, but he recovered. It was a terrible time.

"I did not leave the house until I saw from a window the canoe returning with David. Then I fainted, but by the time he reached shore I was all right again. I did not want to tell him, you see, because it might prevent him from going away again when his duty called him."

Mary gazed in open-mouthed astonishment at the quiet-mannered, gentle little old lady who recited her

confession of "weakness" in such a placid manner. "And you went through all that, and other trials like it, when you were my age!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, yes."

"And I faint because of—of sleeping in the sun. I'm ashamed of myself. I'm better right now," declared Mary decisively. "I'm going to get right up."

"No, my dear, you're going to go to sleep. It's time you were in bed, anyway. It's nearly ten o'clock and I've been gossiping away here, keeping you awake. I'm ashamed."

"But it's not dark yet."

"You forget that the days are long up here in the summer. I'm going to leave you now. I'm a silly old woman to be telling you such frightful things"; and she bent and kissed the girl before leaving the room.

Despite her intention to forget her troubles, Mary lay a long time before she fell into a fitful sleep.

The sun was shining over the tree-tops when she awoke. A delicious odour of fir and cedar, and the salt air of the sea pervaded the room and gave her strength. She rose, filled with fresh courage.

Nellie had kept some breakfast for her and, as she ate, the servant smiled at her in a whimsical way.

"Miss Mary," she said, "I know what's the matter with you; it's love."

"Perhaps," was the idle answer, "I'm in love with Father David and Mother."

"Perhaps," mocked the half-breed, but, absorbed in her thoughts, Mary paid no heed to the remark. She was going over the events of the preceding day, from the time she went to sleep in the chair until she

swooned while listening to the doctor and policeman discussing the activities of a suspected necromancer. She was trying to analyse and understand why their talk had so affected her.

When, a few moments later, she appeared at the door of the Mission, it was to see John Collishaw engaged in conversation with Simon, the young Indian, who had now recovered from his illness. The policeman waved for her to join them. She did so, to find them arguing the respective merits of canoes and engined craft.

"We were just going over behind the fort to see a canoe that Simon is making," he said. "Run and get your hat and come along with us."

"Long time before white man he come," said the native, when Mary had gone for her hat, "my people make big canoe. Maybe ten, twelve, fi'teen mans ride in one. More big canoe come from Queen Charlotte Islands. Haida people make him; more big cedar tree grow there."

"Did you get your war canoes from the Haidas?"

"Yep," was the answer, and then Simon went on: "Them come here catch oolichan grease. We sellem for big canoe. Haida mans bring over big canoe, go back old one. Haida war canoe ride maybe twenty, twenty-fi' men when they go fight other mans."

Mary rejoined them and Simon led the way. They walked past the old fort to the edge of the rivulet, where a trail skirted the stream. Following this, they plunged into the forest, and as they walked, Collishaw explained to her the manner in which the natives fashioned their canoes from cedar trees, in the

early days, using stone chisels and fire to hollow them out, and hot rocks in water to steam the wood so that it could be drawn and shaped into the graceful lines of the swift-moving little vessels.

"Those old Indian canoe-makers were masters of their craft," he explained. "The Haida canoes were the largest on the Coast, by reason of the fine cedars growing on the islands. The Haidas took a great pride in their work—and indeed they should, for what horses were to the Indians of the plains, canoes were to these people. They were a tough lot, were the Haidas. They made periodical raids along the Coast as far south as Puget Sound, earning for themselves the reputation of being the terrors of the North. They exacted tribute from weaker nations, and seized and enslaved men and women of tribes who did not pay them for protection.

"They put me in mind of the old Norsemen—regular vandals of the sea. They would put out in storms in their canoes, that their descendants would not face in powerful motor launches. Nor did they depend entirely on the paddle, for their boats were fitted with double sails, spread out like wings. Just where they learned the art of sailing has been a mystery to me, for there were not many uncultured native races who possessed the same ideas of navigation and seamanship in their wild state as the Haidas."

So they talked as they followed Simon, until they heard the sound of chopping, and soon came upon the workers. Two men were engaged with hatchet, adze and chisel in fashioning a canoe from a log.

The combined scent of the hemlock needles and

freshly-hewn cedar, the bright sunlight filtering through the foliage, and the babbling waters as they fell and splashed over the boulder-strewn bed of the creek, delighted the girl and filled her soul with contentment. They lingered for some time, watching the workmen at their tasks, and praised their efforts until the Indians fairly glowed with the satisfaction they made no effort to conceal. Simon remained to assist his friends, and the policeman and nurse turned to retrace their steps.

"This is wonderful," exclaimed the girl enthusiastically. "I just love all this. I'm going to come here often. It's just like a park."

They were walking slowly, their footsteps muffled by the carpet of fir, spruce, and hemlock needles and moss. Nothing was said for some time. All nature seemed to be rejoicing, and at the moment, the girl thought, human utterance would be akin to desecration of a holy place.

At last, as they neared the trail end, Collishaw spoke. "Mary," he ventured, using her name with some hesitation—"do you mind if I call you Mary?"

She caught her breath, turned towards him and looked searchingly into his flushed face. She saw in that brief scrutiny into the very depths of his soul.

"My friends all call me Mary," she answered, "and I like to think we're friends."

"We certainly are, and——"

"That's good, and we can call each other by our Christian names, just as if we were at school together," she interrupted. "Let's get real well acquainted," she went on, with a trace of nervous haste in her voice.

"I've told you how I was brought up by my aunt, who had been a nurse, and how she trained me for the same service; and how I determined to be just like her—to give my life to suffering humanity and—and die an old maid—in fact, you know all about me, but I've heard very little of your career or adventures."

It had been a saying of this same worldly-wise old aunt, "Get a man to talk about himself and he'll forget all else," that had prompted her to ask his story; and in doing so she had reiterated her own conception of her duty and purpose in life.

Collishaw looked at her as they walked. The flush had died out of his cheeks, and his lips were drawn tight as if he was suffering pain.

"Oh, I've not much of a story," he said at last, with a mirthless laugh. "My life was always more or less colourless until recent years. My parents were well-to-do people in the East, and they spent their money freely on my education and in gratifying my whims. I'm afraid I didn't appreciate their kindness as I should have. I was taught everything but that which would be of practical use to me, and cultivated habits that were idle and expensive.

"Then came the war. We'll not discuss that. I was only eighteen when I enlisted."

"And you're a veteran," exclaimed Mary. "You never told me that before."

"No, why should I?" he asked. "I only did my duty as did millions of other young fellows. I was lucky enough to return uncrippled. It was more than thousands of other men—men with responsibilities—with families to support, did. Why should I parade

my service, or boast of what small contribution I was able to make to the cause of the Empire?

"Had I been crippled—suffered like some of those brave lads who are now trying to carry on with only one arm, or one leg, or in the darkness of perpetual night—I might have felt that there was a debt owing to me, but my wounds did not permanently disable me.

"I tell you, Mary," he went on earnestly, "it was easy to go when the bands were playing and the bugles were calling. It was pleasant to hear the momentary acclaim of the rejoicing crowds after the armistice, but the real suffering of the war is going on now, and will continue for years. There are heroes fighting a more desperate fight to-day to keep themselves and their families alive, than they faced in France. There are widows struggling to raise families, boys denied the care and educational advantages that would have been theirs had their fathers returned; men with weakened constitutions and broken bodies fighting to maintain themselves in competition with physically perfect men, and the public looks upon what meagre assistance it gives to them in the light of charity—nor do they obtain that assistance that is theirs by right. Those men and widows and fatherless children are the ones who have every right to expect a helping hand—not as a charity but as interest on the investment of life and suffering made for the Empire—those have the right, I have not."

Mary had never heard him talk that way before, and she liked him the more for the expression of his views. His face showed the earnestness of his convictions, and she could see that the subject was one

that was close to his heart. After a pause, he continued in a less emphatic vein.

"The war gave me something. It taught me to realise my position; to appreciate the futility of being a loafer. I came back determined to be a sponger on my parents no longer, and after visiting the dear old mother and dad, I came West. I tried a number of things before I drifted up to this country, where I finally found employment as policeman for the Indian Department. So, you see," he concluded, "there's nothing much in my life to talk about—just a very ordinary career so far, devoid of any accomplishment."

"I don't think so," declared the girl.

Collishaw looked at his watch. "Goodness!" he exclaimed, "it's nearly noon, and I have to make the villages below the Dundee cannery before dark. I must hurry away."

Mary walked to the float, where his boat was tied, with him, for he refused her invitation to stay for luncheon. She waved him farewell as he pushed off and started the engine turning, and stood with her golden hair blowing about her face until the boat was in the passage between the island and mainland.

From the Mission, Nellie watched her, and smiled happily to herself.

CHAPTER IX

THE MESAHCHIE BOX

THE salmon-fishing season was at its height and the majority of the Fort Oliver Indians were absent from their homes, garnering the silver harvest of the sea for the insatiable maws of the "Iron Chinks" at the Sliam cannery. Night and day, men toiled with boats and gill-nets, seeking to enmesh the much-prized sockeye, the king of the salmon tribe, while squaws and young girls worked in the different processes of canning the freshly caught fish. They worked beside almond-eyed Chinese and tiny Japanese women, packing, loading on to the travelling belt to the cooker, or labelled and cased the still warm tins for the markets of the world.

Nor were the ancient fishing grounds free from the competition of modern times. The natives vied with the more active and industrious little brown men from across the Pacific, and the sturdy fishermen from the North Sea and the fjords of Scandinavia, in making returns to the cannery wharf. The run was on. Sockeyes were coming in thousands, and these were the fish that spelled profits to cannery men and fishermen alike. Overhead expenses could be made from the cohoe pack, but sockeyes signified success to operators and affluence to the toilers, according to their respective views of prosperity.

So it was that at the village of Fort Oliver only

the older men and women, the small children and the infirm remained.

Father David was frequently away from the Mission for days at a time, for it was his custom to follow his flock to the fishing grounds, and there to keep watch over them. Men, white of skin, but black of heart, degraded creatures, usually invaded the waters where the fishers drifted their nets, preying on the weakness of the natives. They bartered vile alcoholic concoctions for money or fish—they cared not which—for a sock-eye was worth its price to the independent buyers for other canneries, and no questions were asked from these men as to who had netted the fish. Occasionally one of the bootleggers would be caught by fishery protective officers, or the provincial police, and for a time the others would lessen their activities, only to return like flies chased from a sugar bowl.

Long experience in combating the activities of these evil-doers had taught Father David to anticipate their actions, and he often assisted in apprehending them. In gas-boat or canoe he was a familiar sight during the fishing season, laughing and jesting with the fishers and searching with a practised eye for evidences of contraband among the natives. His efforts were appreciated alike by police and canners, for the former looked upon him as a valuable ally and the operators knew only too well that fire-water destroyed the efficiency of the Indians.

These weeks, when the run was on, were busy ones for John Collishaw, and he found but little time or opportunity to visit his friends at Fort Oliver. In the agency to which he was attached were a number of

canneries employing natives, and over these wards of the Government he had to keep a careful watch.

Mary carried on her routine work at the Mission, visiting the sick, giving advice and encouragement to the old men and women and instructing the children, and in turn seeking instruction from them all, for she was essaying to learn the native language, having mastered the Chinook jargon. She was making rapid strides in her studies, assisted greatly by the teachings of Mother and Nellie.

The nurse was worried about Mother. Although she would not admit it, nor make complaint, the little woman was far from well, but she refused to let the younger woman assume her duties.

"No, dear," she protested when Mary urged her to take a rest for a few days. "It's nothing. I'll be all right in a day or so. I wouldn't like to have David return and find me ill. It would worry him, and might keep him from his duties."

On the occasions when Father David did return for a brief visit he was tired and worn out. Mother would then appear bright and cheerful and would not permit Mary to suggest that she was not in her usual good health. But after the priest departed Mary could observe that each time the reaction was more serious, and Mother appeared weaker and less determined in her opposition to the efforts of the nurse and Nellie to care for her.

"But I must visit the sick. I've done it for years, child, and they expect it," she argued when Mary coaxed her to cease her labours for a time.

"That may be," agreed the other, "but one thing

is certain; if you work yourself into a serious illness they will be deprived of your care for a longer time. You must let me take up your duties for a time. You formerly did it all; surely I can do the same for a short while."

At last she consented and Mary was kept busy. If it had not been for her anxiety for Mother, she would have been very happy. None of the annoyances that had so disturbed and frightened her during her first few weeks at the Mission had recurred, and although she thought of them at times, they did not cause her such fear as formerly. She was absorbed in her work, and delighted in the knowledge that she was bringing a measure of sunshine and cheer into the sombre lives of those in need of it.

Mother did not improve, and it was not long until Father David, on one of his visits home, noticed the change in his wife, which she could no longer conceal.

"I'm worried about Mother," he told his assistant. "I feel as if I should stay here, but I'm needed over there at the cannery. I know you and Nellie are taking good care of her—as good as I could give her. I have prepared this medicine for her; see that she takes it."

"Go on, David. You have your work to do. God will take care of me, and I am having the best of attention from the girls," interjected Mother. "You must not let me keep you from your duty."

"It is rest that she needs," he explained to Mary, when he was leaving the next day. "Don't let her do any work, and whatever happens, see that she does not become excited. It seems to be a needless warning

here in Fort Oliver these days," he added with a smile, "for there is but little excitement—not like the old days when each day had its own unknown dangers."

Mother's condition remained unchanged. She did not seem to benefit by the treatment Father David had prescribed, nor did she appear to grow worse. Mary and Nellie were constant in their care of her, and the half-breed especially was devoted in her attention. An excellent cook, Nellie prepared tasty dishes for the invalid in an effort to intrigue her appetite. Often Mother would eat when she had no desire to do so, just to please and justify the praise she lavished on the cookery, knowing well the delight it would give the girl.

Nellie was returning to the Mission one afternoon from an errand when an old Indian motioned for her to stop. She did so and awaited his approach. He hobbled up to her and whispered:

"Caleb Thompson wants to see you. He says you will know where to meet him."

Nellie caught her breath. She knew instantly the purpose of the message, and for a moment thought of answering with a refusal.

"He says he will come to the Mission if you don't," the old fellow said.

"Oh, he mustn't," she exclaimed. "Tell him I'll see him to-night."

The Indian limped away, leaving the girl wild-eyed with fear. Then rebellion surged within her. She would be done with all this. She would free herself from the phantom of terror that had possessed her for so long.

She had no difficulty in keeping the appointment this time. She mentioned that she felt tired and would take a walk.

"That's right, Nellie," readily agreed the nurse. "You've been too much in the house, and a walk will do you good."

Thompson was waiting for her. "Well," he exclaimed sternly, when she arrived at the old fort. "What have you to say for yourself?"

"What do you mean?" she demanded, trying to avoid his compelling gaze.

"Why haven't you carried out my instructions?"

The girl trembled in every limb. She did not answer and Thompson seized her by the wrist, twisting it until she cried out in pain.

"I did not want to," she declared defiantly. "She's going to get married and leave here, so I didn't think it mattered."

"She's going to get married? Who to?" and he bent down until he could look into her eyes.

"To the policeman; to Collishaw."

"Oh, she's going to marry Collishaw!" he mocked. "I think not."

"Yes, she is," stubbornly insisted the girl.

"You lie. She's not going to marry him, I tell you."

Nellie stood her ground and faced him, although her heart was pounding and her teeth were chattering with terror.

"She is."

Thompson saw that he was making no headway with the girl and suddenly changed his attitude. The harshness of his voice gave way to a pleasing purr.

He smiled at her. "Nellie," he said, "you are a good girl. You like this yellow-haired nurse and you're afraid some harm will come to her. It won't. She will be married soon, but in the meantime the evil spirit she possesses is doing harm.

"Is it not so that Mother is sick?" He shot the question at her.

"Yes," was the startled answer.

"What did I tell you?"

The girl hung her head. Her face paled and her limbs shook as a leaf in the wind.

"You carried out my instructions for a time and no harm came to her. Then you stopped and now she is sick. If she dies you will be to blame."

"Oh, no. She must not," almost screamed the unhappy servant, and then she burst into tears.

Thompson regarded her for a moment. There was a pleased expression on his face. "Stop your crying, woman," he ordered. "It may not be too late. You may be able to save her."

"How?" she snivelled.

"By doing what I tell you."

Thompson again instructed her in the things he wished her to do. For a long time he talked, and then, as before, had her repeat his directions.

As she was about to leave him he asked, "Do you ever read the Bible?"

"Yes," she answered in surprise. "Why?"

"Well, there are some passages I want you to study," he said. "Here they are," and he handed her a slip of paper. "Sit down again."

For nearly an hour Caleb Thompson talked on the

texts he had chosen for her to read. At length he told her, "Now you can go."

As she turned he again stopped her, and repeated the kiss he had given at their former meeting. This time it did not thrill her as on the previous occasion, but still she felt an irresistible attraction towards the man. He frightened her and at the same time impelled her to do his will.

Thompson gazed at her through half-closed lids as she slowly made her way down the incline towards the village. "I think you require further urging, young woman," he murmured to himself.

Nellie did not sleep that night. She lay awake trying to make a decision. It was a fight between her regard for Mary Cunningham and her fear of Caleb Thompson and the supernatural powers he seemed to possess. The thought of Mother's illness, a gradual wasting away, without apparent pain, just as had the men and women of the village in the olden times when a spell had been cast upon them, convinced her that evil spirits were indeed at work, but she could not bring herself to believe that the fault was that of the kindly white nurse. With the coming of daylight her courage grew, and she almost decided to defy the man, despite his renewed half-suggested promise to make her his wife.

It was with this thought in mind that she rose earlier than usual, and having lighted the kitchen fire, picked up the water bucket to go to the well, for she had neglected to bring water for the breakfast cooking the night before.

She had not gone many steps when with a sudden

cry she dropped the pail and jumped back in alarm. Directly in front of her on the little pathway was a small oblong cedar box. For a full minute she stood staring at it, her face ashen grey. Finally she summoned courage enough to stoop and lift the lid. Her jaw dropped, and she clutched at her breast, as she gazed in horror at a small doll, crudely fashioned out of the skin of some animal. Through the heart of the image was thrust a fish bone.

"A mesahchie box!" she whispered hoarsely. "A mesahchie box! It's the threat of death"; and she started to cry.

"I must do it. I must do it," she sobbed, as with the pail half-filled with water she stumbled back to the house.

"You don't look well to-day, Nellie," observed Mary when she came into the kitchen. "You look as if you'd been crying."

"I have. I had the toothache."

"You poor thing. I'll get you something for it"; and Mary went to the dispensary for toothache drops.

"Take care of yourself. You've been working too hard, and you're run down," advised the nurse. "Let me get Mother's breakfast. You rest yourself for a while."

Later in the day Mary went to her room to change her house slippers for the strong Oxfords she wore about the village.

She reached behind the curtain that partitioned off one corner of her room as a clothes closet, and picked up the shoes. The laces were gone. Dropping the shoes, she reached for her buttoned boots, only to find that they were devoid of buttons.

She could not prevent an exclamation of alarm. The old fear returned. For a moment she stood looking at the footwear, and then turned and threw herself on the bed and gave way to a paroxysm of weeping.

"What is it? Why should I have to suffer from these mysterious visitations?" she asked herself.

Nellie came to her chamber a moment later. "What's the matter?" she asked, when she saw the nurse in tears.

"Look," and Mary pointed to the shoes.

The half-breed exclaimed in surprise, "It's strange, Miss Mary. It may be because you leave your window open. It may come in there."

"It?" cried the white girl in consternation. "It; what do you mean by 'It'?"

"Whatever took your laces and buttons," was the bland answer.

Mary worried over the singular happening and when, three days later, she discovered that a piece had been cut from her raincoat she was almost frantic with fear.

"This is awful," she cried as she showed the torn garment to the servant. "It's terrible. I don't know what to do. It wouldn't be so bad if I knew what was the cause of all these things, but it's the strangeness of it all that frightens me. And it never happens to anyone else—just to me."

The absence of any visible agency for these small acts of destruction gave the girl a sense of sickening fear. She became nervous and uneasy in her room at night, lying for hours at a time unable to sleep, with ears alert for the slightest sound out of the ordinary, and with eyes straining into the darkness.

CHAPTER X

DISTURBING DOCTRINES

MOTHER was sleeping, and Mary and Nellie had stolen away to enjoy a brief period of rest in the cool of the long summer evening. They were seated on a log on the beach, near the Mission, when Mary broached the subject which was uppermost in her mind.

"Nellie," she said, "the other day when—when that strange thing happened to my shoes, you said that 'It' might have come and taken the laces and buttons. What did you mean? I want you to tell me."

"You wouldn't understand."

"Why wouldn't I?"

"Lots of funny things happen here. People who were born on the Coast can understand, but those from the cities, they can't."

"But, Nellie," persisted the other, "perhaps I can understand what you mean. Try me. Tell me, for anything is better than this awful uncertainty. I don't know when something is going to happen again—and —it gets on my nerves."

"Well," said Nellie slowly, "when anything, like you losing your laces, happens—well, when the people don't know what takes them, they just say 'It'—that's all."

"No, it's not, Nellie. You have not told me what this thing is. For goodness' sake, tell me."

"I don't know," hesitated the girl. "It may be a bad spirit or something like that."

"Do you believe in those sort of things?" asked the white girl timidly.

"Sometimes I do; sometimes I don't. Do you?" and the half-breed looked at her with that same odd, searching look that she had noted before.

"Really, I don't know," slowly answered the nurse. "I don't suppose I do, really, but sometimes I kind of half believe in some of the things I've heard. I suppose I'm very wicked, a sort of a heathen, but I can't help it."

They were silent for a time. Then Mary said with a nervous half-laugh, "I wonder what Father David would say if he heard us?"

Nellie smiled. "He wouldn't like it. He's like a father to me, but he's the same as all the white people. He don't understand—he can't. He thinks the people shouldn't make totems, or anything like that, and everything the people did before the white man came, should go."

She hesitated for a moment, and then pointed at the church steeple. "What do you see on top of the church?" she asked.

"Why, the Cross, of course."

"Well, it's a totem," asserted Nellie. "It tells you about a story."

"Oh, how can you say such things! You shouldn't compare the crucifix with a totem pole," exclaimed Mary.

"Why not?" and then, with a light laugh, "Well, perhaps it ain't just the same, but it tells you of a story, don't it?"

"Yes, the story of Christianity."

"And totem poles, they tell about other stories."

"But you believe in the Bible and Christianity?" demanded the white girl.

"Sure—but I believe in some of the Indian stories too."

"But there's only one God, and Christ our Saviour."

"Yes, and there's lots of devils," argued the servant. "The Bible says so. There's a big one and lots of little ones. One time one man or woman, maybe, had seven devils."

Mary looked in astonishment at her companion, amazed at the strange theology she was expounding.

"And if lots of evil spirits, like that, could go into anybody, then it's sure they could go into animals. They do, too," she declared with conviction.

"How do you know?"

"It says so in the Bible."

"Where?"

"When they were all in a man and then they chased out of him and they went into a lot of pigs."

After a pause the half-breed continued: "When the Indians think funny things are being done that they don't know the reason for—and perhaps it's a bad spirit, or something—why they just say 'It' instead of saying it's a bad spirit or a 'huldowget.'"

Mary shuddered. She was conscious of a sinking sensation, a sort of sickening fear stealing over her. "Let's talk of something else," she said.

"Do you want me to tell you about the Raven?" Nellie suggested. "It's all about how the people came into the world, and everything about how light came. It is an old story."

"Do you mean that they have a story of the creation?"

The half-breed nodded, and after a moment's silence, went on:

"Long time ago—long, long ago, before the big flood, everything was dark. Only one man lived in the world. Up in the sky there was an old man. He had a daughter. He owned the light. He had one maa, or big box, with the sun in it; and one with the moon in it; and one with the stars in it.

"The man in the world—his name was Wigett. He wanted to get the maas with the light. By his supernatural power he made himself into a bird. He flew up through the hole in the sky.

"He didn't know how he was going to get into the old man's house. He watched, and after a while the girl she came out to the spring to get a drink. Then Wigett he changed himself into a hemlock needle. He fell down on the water. The girl she swallowed him when she drank the water.

"After a while the girl had a baby. It was Wigett, but she didn't know it was him.

"The old man he was fond of the baby. He used to play with him. Then one day after the baby was pretty big he started to cry and he wouldn't stop.

"Then the old man he gave him the maa with the stars to play with. Wigett he rolled the box to the hole in the sky. He took the lid off and let the stars fall through.

"He thought that there was not enough light. Then he went back again. After a while he began to cry again. The old man was afraid to let him have the maa

with the moon, but he cried all the time. Then the old man let him have it and he did the same thing.

"Then he wanted to get the box with the sun. It was a long time before he got it. At last the old man let him have it. As soon as Wigett got it, he used his power again. He changed himself to a bird and he flew down to the World with the box.

"There were some people or animals or something fishing for oolichans on the Nass River. Wigett he said, 'Give me something to eat.' They said, 'Go and get some for yourself!' He was mad, and he told them if they don't give him something he'll break open the box and let the light out. They said, 'You are a big liar. You ain't got any light.' Then Wigett he broke the box open and the light came out. Then he saw that they were not men he had been talking to, but they were frogs. Then when they saw the light they all ran down the river to an island and they turned to stone. You can see them there now, too."

"What a peculiar story," commented Mary.

"There's another one. It tells about the Nass people, too, and explains why sometimes the trees make a creaking noise."

"Let's hear it."

"I don't know this one so well. I only heard it once —one time at Port Simpson. A man from up the river was telling it.

"He said once, long time ago, all the people on the Nass River died except one old woman and her daughter. The old woman she did not know where to get someone to marry her girl.

"Then the squirrel said he would. The squaw she

said 'No.' Deer he said he would—that he was good-looking and could run fast, and would make a good husband. She told him he would not do. Then Grizzly Bear said he would marry her, because he was strong and could get lots of food, she should let him marry her daughter, but the old woman she said 'No' again. She said her daughter should only marry a man.

"At last there was a great white light came down from the sky. Down this light came a white man. The old woman and the girl they were afraid. They hid themselves. He went to the place.

"He said, 'I've come to marry your daughter.' And the old squaw she said, 'Yes, you are a man; you can marry my daughter.'

"The white man said he could not marry her there. He must take them both to his father's home—up in the sky. He wrapped them in his blanket and told them not to look out at all. Then he started to go up in the sky.

"The girl she kept her eyes shut, but the old woman she wanted to look out. She didn't think the man would know. She lifted the blanket just a little bit and looked out.

"They stopped going up and started to come down again.

"When they were down on the ground, the white man went to a big tree. He pulled a limb out. It left a hole in the tree. Then he put the old woman in the hole, and he put the limb back again. So when you hear creaking in the trees, you will know it's the spirit of the old lady trying to get out."

"What a dreadful punishment!" exclaimed Mary.

"No worse than what happened to Mrs. Lott. She looked back when that town was burning up, and she was made into salt."

"Why, that's so!"

The stories and strange arguments of the half-breed made a greater impression on the mind of Mary Cunningham than she at first realised. She had always accepted the teachings of the Bible without reserve, and now, to have native customs and Indian superstitions paralleled with the stories in which she had believed from childhood was bewildering to her already vexed and frightened mind. Her faith in the Scriptures was not lessened by the odd doctrines to which she had listened, but it did make her the more sympathetic and receptive to the influences that were being set against her.

Little did she think that Nellie had been but playing a part, and that the contentions she had advanced so adroitly were the product of a far brighter mind that had schooled her in the rôle, realising that sooner or later an opportunity would arise when so unsuspected a weapon could be used to prepare her for a more ready acceptance of that which, under ordinary circumstances, she would reject.

In her own room that night she turned to the incidents in the Bible to which Nellie had alluded, and having found them, studied them carefully. She closed the book and sat for a long time, caught in a whirlpool of doubt and despair. The more she worried, the more the native legends and beliefs in spirits seemed compatible with Christianity.

She determined, at last, that she would discuss the

subject with the missioner when he again visited Fort Oliver. But when Father David did arrive there were so many things to be done by him for Mother, and the people of the village, in the brief time at his disposal, that she did not have an opportunity of engaging him in a quiet discussion of her doubts and fears. The priest was worried. He did not find the improvement in his wife's condition that he had expected, although he was gratified to find that she was no worse.

He would have gladly remained at home, and indeed would have done so had not the brave little woman insisted that he return to his labours.

"I may be away longer than usual," he protested. "The salmon runs will be over shortly, and I want to be there when the men are paid off to prevent them, if I can, falling victims to those who would rob them of their earnings and leave them helpless for the winter. The Indian agent asked me to stay, and John Collishaw wants what help I can give him.

"Oh, by the way, Mary, John sent his respects. He said that he might look in, on his way to or from the canneries farther down, if he could."

This was indeed good news to Mary. She felt that she could tell all her troubles to her friend and he would give her the advice and assistance she needed. She was sure of his sympathy and counted on his understanding. She rather hesitated to approach the missionary on the subject as she had planned, and now that he had told her of Collishaw's intention to visit Fort Oliver, she decided to await the arrival of the policeman.

It was with some anxiety and a peculiar foreboding

that Mary saw Father David go away. The happenings of the past months, trivial as they seemed, and the singular theories of the only person with whom she could carry on intimate conversation, combined to depress her when the big, fatherly old man bade her adieu. She had not, since coming to Fort Oliver, been so lonely and desolate.

She felt like a child in a darkened room, knowing that there was nothing there to do her injury, but still afraid. The mysticism of the North was weaving its spell over her; the web was being directed by an unseen hand.

At times she reasoned with herself and sought to laugh away her growing uneasiness, but without success. Her mind continually reverted to the troubles which only became magnified by the absence of one with whom she could discuss them. She could not speak to Mother of her doubts and fears, and to talk on the subject to Nellie might only result in further complicating the tangle.

"If I only knew what is behind it all, I would be content," she would exclaim. The wizardry of the Orient as related to her by her aunt years before, all came back to haunt her. Forgotten stories of fakirs and magicians she remembered in all their weird details, and they served only to frighten her further as she compared the incidents with the stories of West Coast sorcery.

"This can't continue," she told herself. "I can't stand it. I must do something to get a grip on myself, or I'll break down"; and she exerted her conscious will to erase the subject from her mind, and threw

herself with the vigour of desperation into her work. While it was possible to forget her fears during the day, the very concentration she practised to do so only seemed to invite the spectres of her wildest fancies to take possession of her dreams.

She was careful that the invalid should not suspect that she was harassed by any anxieties. In the presence of Mother she forced herself to simulate a cheerfulness that she did not feel, and sought by her demeanour and actions to encourage and interest her patient. She was often rewarded by a gentle smile on the pale face of the little woman, who sat for the greater part of each day in a big easy-chair near the sea window of the big living-room.

"I don't know what I would do without you, Mary," she said one day. "You and Nellie have both been so kind and thoughtful."

"No more than you deserve. All we want is for you to regain your strength and be your own dear self again," the nurse answered, and leaning down, kissed the wrinkled forehead. "Come, it's time that you were in bed"; and she assisted her patient to her chamber.

It had been a hard, trying day, and Mary was almost worn out. Having made Mother comfortable for the night, she decided to go to bed, hoping to obtain some needed rest.

She opened the door of her room and stepped in; as she did so, she saw a huge rat rush across the floor, frightened at her approach, spring to the sill of the open window and disappear in the gathering shadows of night. She uttered a cry of terror. The room swam before her eyes. She staggered towards

the window, closed it, and then turned and threw herself across the bed, giving way to a fit of hysterical sobbing.

How long she lay there she did not know, but it was dark when she recovered herself, and only partially undressing, crawled beneath the covers.

CHAPTER XI

A NIGHT OF HORRORS

MARY awakened when the first signs of dawn heralded, in mystic grey, the approach of another day. For a time she lay trying to unravel the skein of doubt and despair that seemed to be imprisoning her mind and enmeshing her soul, until at last she realised the futility of her endeavours, and recognised that to continue to strike blindly at the unseen and indefinite was but to blunt the edge of her judgment and destroy the balance of her imagination.

She dressed quickly and, stepping softly, passed through the silent house, opened the front door and slipped outside. Almost instinctively she turned towards the landing-stage and stretched out her arms towards the East, where Nature, with a lavish hand, was smearing the sky with great streaks of vivid yellow. She looked like some goddess of the ancients making her appeal to the Sun, or like the daughter of a Viking tendering offerings to the storm king for the safe return of her lord. Her golden hair fell over her shoulders in picturesque disorder, and caught by puffs of the early morning breeze, blew about her face. Behind her the details of the forest were still lost in the masses of the night mist. Everything was so big and so quiet and so mysterious, and she so small, that for an instant the vastness of it all chilled and frightened her, but

all thought of self was lost in a sense of wonderment and astonishment at the majestic beauty of the scene.

The pure air, fresh with the smell of fir and cedars, and seasoned with the salt of the sea, was a healing balm to her soul, while the gentle lapping of the tiny waves on the pebbled shore was as a strain of comforting music. She wrapped her shawl about her shoulders and sat down on the boards of the float, watching with fascinated interest and delight the budding of the day, with its bringing into being new hopes, new disappointments, new joys and new sorrows.

Gradually, as she watched, the sky took on a more intense tone; banks of clouds commenced to gather on the horizon—hard-lined, greasy-looking clouds—and as the tints of colour gave way to darker shades in which the more sombre greys predominated, scud squadrons formed and charged across the heavens on the wings of the morning.

Overhead a sea-bird called, and soon wild water-fowl, in regular formations, were winging landward to find refuge and resting-place on the surface of mountain lakes. Even tawny old gulls, veterans of a thousand battles with the fury of the elements, and the slate-blue birds of less mature experience, forsook their seeking for food in the less protected waters of the wider channels seaward, and whirled and turned, screaming and scolding, in great circles over the shore.

Inexperienced as she was in the wisdom of the weather, Mary could read and recognise the coming storm. Soon there was a stir among the houses and first one, then another, and finally half a dozen old men and squaws were down on the beach. Canoes

were dragged above the high-tide mark, and the one or two gasoline launches riding at anchor, or moored to buoys, were visited, and additional weights were dropped to prevent dragging, while cabin hatches were secured and port lights locked.

It was a new and interesting experience to Mary. The hurry and excitement of the Indians; the uneasy rustling and sighing of the trees; the overcasting sky, and the mobilisation of the clouds with the strange white light that occasionally broke in the darkening distance, held her attention. Then, far out on the leaden surface of the bay, appeared a black patch of agitated water; another and then another, until the squall struck fairly. A white line of foam broke around the end of the island, and the heavy, oily waters of the cove were transformed, as if by magic, into silver-crested waves, dancing and tossing in wildest confusion, until forming in regular lines they rushed in great semicircular battalions to dash themselves against the shore-line. Larger and larger they grew until giant combers were crashing on the beach, only to retreat, grasping and clawing at the pebbles, to join with the succeeding wall of water in another vain attempt to clutch and tear and destroy.

The wind-driven spume lashed and drenched Mary as she turned to make her way back to the Mission. She had forgotten the passage of time, so interested and absorbed had she been in witnessing the birth of the storm. It was only as she stumbled, shoulders hunched against the wind, back to the house, that she realised that her teeth were chattering with cold, and that she had been nearly two hours on the beach.

"Thunderbird, he spik soon," shouted an old man as he climbed the grade with her. "He spik bad."

Hardly had she gained the shelter of the house than the very heavens seemed to split asunder above her. She looked up aghast, and was almost blinded by a flash of lightning. There followed a torrential downpour of rain that hammered the sun-dried shingles of the roof until it sounded like a drum.

Nellie was just bestirring herself in the kitchen when Mary entered the house. In the confusion of the storm she was able to regain her room without attracting attention.

All day long the storm raged, the thunder rolling, now among the hills, now crashing above the nearer tree-tops and then far out at sea, while forked flashes of lightning crumpled giant trees, split great rocks, or flared across the grey vault of the sky to strike harmlessly in the tumbling waters of the ocean.

Donning rubber boots and oilskins, Mary fared forth into the tempest, making her way with difficulty from house to house, carrying on her ordinary work among the sick as best she could, and comforting those whose hearts were filled with terror of the storm. It was all that she could do, at times, to make headway against the fury of the wind blasts, and she wondered how the ill-constructed Indian habitations withstood the force of the gale. The Mission shuddered and rocked again and again, as a gust of greater violence would strike it.

Mother was nervous. She was thinking of Father David; worrying for fear that his boat had not made convenient shelter, although her better judgment told her that he was safe. She fretted herself with the

reasonless apprehension of an invalid, until she was in high fever. Nellie was in constant attendance upon her throughout the day, while Mary devoted what time she could spare from her other duties, to attempt to comfort and reassure her.

As the day wore on and dull morning passed to drear afternoon, the hurricane increased in intensity. The house rocked on its foundations, and the rain drove fiercely against window-pane and weather-board. Darkness closed in as supper was being prepared. The murk of the late afternoon was suddenly torn apart by a flash of lightning close to the Mission, followed instantly by a crashing of wood and the wild cries of humans in distress.

"Goodness! It's struck one of the houses," shouted Mary. "Come on"; and she dashed to the dispensary for an emergency kit. Nellie followed the nurse out into the darkness after stopping for a moment to assure the invalid that she would soon return with news of the accident.

The girls made their way with all possible speed to the spot where already a number of Indians had gathered. Lightning had struck and splintered a huge tree which, in falling, had crashed against the side of a dwelling, causing it to collapse.

Several old men were at work, feverishly tearing and pulling at the wreckage, from beneath which cries of agony could be heard above the howling of the storm.

Cupping her hands, a squaw shouted into Nellie's ear that a small boy was caught beneath the timbers. The girls waited to hear no more, but rushed forward to assist in the work of rescue, and were soon tugging

and lifting with all the strength of their strong young bodies. It was only the work of a few minutes before they were able to release the now unconscious child, a boy of ten, a happy, good-natured little fellow named Mark, who was a great favourite with all.

Ordering his removal to the nearest house, Mary made a hasty examination of his hurts, and stanched the flow of blood from several nasty cuts on his head. Men and women, and even children, crowded into the hut, and soon she saw it would be impossible to treat the boy in the place. Calling two men, she told them to secure something upon which the lad could be carried to the hospital, while she sent Nellie ahead to prepare a bed for his reception.

It was the first time since her coming to Fort Oliver that there had been a case necessitating hospital treatment. Three beds comprised the larger ward, while a single cot was set up in a smaller room. A door led into the combined surgery and dispensary, which formed a connection with the Mission House itself. There was a covered passage between the house and the hospital, which was used as the entrance to the latter and which was closed by a heavy door. It was through this corridor she directed the carrying of the boy, and when the Indians would have followed, she locked the door, sending the stretcher-bearers out through the house. Such was their curiosity, however, that for an hour the natives hung about the hospital, seeking to peer in through the windows of the ward to see what was going on within. Only the grandmother of the boy was admitted for a short space after he had been bandaged.

As Mary, with the coolness and efficiency bred by long training in the admitting office of a large hospital, examined and bandaged the wounds, Nellie was filled with awe and admiration for the manner in which the white girl went about her task.

"I am afraid," the nurse said, when the boy was at last between the white sheets of one of the cots, "that he is injured internally. I wish we could reach Father David, but that's impossible," she added as the building shook before an extra strong blast.

"Will he die?" asked Nellie tremulously.

"I don't know, but the chances are against him."

"Oh, I'm frightened," half sobbed the other.

"You'd better go back to the house and look after Mother," advised Mary. "You can do nothing here and she may be wanting something."

Nellie hurried away, returning half an hour later with supper on a tray. She reported that Mother was worse. The excitement and worry occasioned by the accident and her own inability to be of service to the afflicted had been too much for her and she suffered in consequence.

Mary did not wait to touch the food that had been brought, but leaving the servant to watch the native boy, she ran through the dispensary, into the house and to Mother's room. She found the little woman feverish and excited, her cheeks flushed and her eyes unnaturally bright. Remembering the instructions she had received from Father David for the treatment of his wife in such an emergency, Mary mixed a nerve-soothing draught for her, and talked quietly with her for a few moments. She took her departure as soon as she saw that the medicine was taking effect.

Nellie was crouched beside the small heater, in which a fire blazed in the hospital hallway, when Mary returned. From time to time she glanced timidly through the half-opened doorway at the motionless figure beneath the white spread, fearful that the unseen messenger which she realised was not far off, had arrived.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come," exclaimed the girl in a half-whisper as the nurse appeared.

"Yes, dear," answered the other kindly. "I know how you feel, but there's work for you to do. Mother is very sick and she shouldn't be left alone for long."

"She's not going——?" interrupted Nellie, hesitating to frame in speech the query her frightened eyes completed.

"I hope not; I don't think so. We mustn't let her," answered Mary, a catch in her voice.

The face of the half-breed darkened, and her lids narrowed to twin slits through which her eyes blazed fiercely. "You had better not," she hissed.

"Why, Nellie, what do you mean?" But the girl had gone, and had taken with her the untouched meal on the tray.

For a moment Mary stood gazing in dumb astonishment at the door through which Nellie had disappeared. "What's the matter with the child; has she gone crazy?" she asked in perplexity, and then more gently, "I guess she's worried about Mother. It's been a hard day for her. She must be unnerved."

Still bewildered by Nellie's actions, Mary turned towards the little ward and approached the bed where Mark lay. The laboured breathing and bloodstained

froth about the babyish mouth confirmed her worst fears. She had seen too many die to think there was a chance of saving the little life that was burning out like the flickering flame of a candle. There were tears in her eyes when she bent over and wiped the boy's lips.

It was with a sinking heart and tired body that she returned to her place beside the stove in the hall and prepared for the vigil of the night. Outside the wind screamed and whistled, rattling the windows, against which the rain kept up a continuous drumming, while above all the other noises in the medley of the storm, the sea pounded and beat the beach in an angry and incessant roar.

The spluttering wick of the bracket lamp cast grotesque, dancing shadows on the white board walls and across the floor of the ward. They caught her attention and, idly at first, almost dully, she followed them with her eyes, until at last her imagination quickened to their antics and gave them weird and fantastic shapes and illusionary substance.

An uncomfortable chill stole over her, and it was with a start that she realised she was letting her fancy frighten her. She got up and walked over to the cot again, just to do something. "I wish I had brought a book or some work with me," she thought, and was tempted to run into the house to procure something with which to occupy the hours, but decided against it. "I must be getting nervous," she murmured, and then she remembered Nellie.

What could be the matter with the girl? She was so strange, with her peculiar outlook on life and odd beliefs! Back to her mind came all the fears and per-

plexities that had so terrorised her, and which, in the excitement of the day, she had almost forgotten. She shivered, afraid of her own thoughts.

"I must not let myself do that again," she said almost fiercely, speaking aloud. "I've got to get a grip on myself"; and for lack of something to do, she again tiptoed to the bedside of the injured boy. There was nothing that she could do for him other than the bandaging that had already been effected, and she returned to the hallway.

Seated once more in front of the fire, she sat for a time gazing at the coals that glowed through the half-opened door. As she looked, a face appeared to take form in the heart of the fire, and lips and eyes smiled encouragingly out at her. It was the face of John Collishaw she fancied she saw, and the sight warmed her heart. She made no effort to dispel the illusion, but welcomed it as does the stranger in a strange land the appearance of a close friend.

Her eyes grew heavy and her head began to nod, until at last her senses succumbed to the plea of her fatigued body and she slept. How long she slumbered she did not know. When she awoke with a start it was to find that the fire had burned out and the chill of early morning was in the air.

It was with a feeling of nervous guilt she approached the bed, only to find that the little figure beneath the coverings had not altered its position. The breathing was more laboured, but otherwise she noted no change.

There was something different—something changed—and at first, still half asleep, she could not discover it. She moved uneasily about the room and peered

into the gloom of the passage and, finding nothing there, timorously approached the outer door, to find it securely bolted. On returning to the stove to re-kindle the fire, she suddenly understood what it was that was missing. It was the sound of the wind. The storm had blown itself out; no longer was the house being shaken by each recurrent blast, or the windows pelted by driven rain. Only the steady booming of the surf could be heard in a continuous hollow-toned roar, which soon fretted the girl with its monotony.

She was cold, unrested by her sleep, and weakened by her long abstinence from food. The cramped position she had assumed in her slumber had stiffened her muscles, causing them to ache. She was miserable and uncomfortable. Her powers of resistance were lowered, and her jaded nerves started at every sound of the night that reached her above the pounding of the sea.

Her mind became a prey to the stories she had heard. All the lore of the natives, and the mysteries of the forest, haunted her, while the annoyances and peculiar happenings of the past few months were magnified in her imagination. She tried to articulate a prayer—to appeal to a higher protection—but her thoughts only became confused with the doctrines of Nellie, and she could not seem to so direct her plea as to obtain any comfort from it.

Dawn was just breaking when suddenly a voice sounded. It startled her, before she realised it was that of the boy. She hastened to his side, duty for the moment overcoming fear. "What is it, Mark?" she whispered as she knelt down, but the answer was only a mumble of incoherent words. He was talking

in the delirium of death. She knew the end was but a short distance away, and she felt her powerlessness to prevent its coming.

As she bent over the bed there came a sharp, distinct rapping at the window. She looked up in alarm and then with a cry of terror sprang to her feet. She sought to turn and run, but her limbs refused to act. She was held spellbound, paralysed by fear, and could only gaze in horror at the window where, framed against the misty background of dawning day, a horrible painted face with great round gleaming eyes stared in at her.

For a full minute the apparition was motionless, and then its tremendous jaw dropped slowly, opening a blood-red mouth lined with fang-like teeth. Slowly it closed again, and the face vanished as suddenly as it had come.

Mary turned, her senses reeling, staggered a few steps, and fell in a dead faint across one of the unoccupied beds.

It was half an hour before consciousness returned. At first she was dazed—could not understand where she was or how she had come there. Then as reason came back she remembered it all, and wild terror again seized her. Weak and trembling, she managed to gain her feet. The room was filled with the cold light of early day, which mocked the feeble glow of the oil lamp. She swayed to and fro for a few seconds and then tottered to the bed of the injured boy. He was not talking now; no longer his breath came in tortured gasps. The reaper had come.

"Dead!" she exclaimed dully. "Dead!" and she

gazed uncomprehendingly down at the lifeless form. Panic seized her. She must escape from this awful room. Her brain was in a whirl and her heart was choking her. She must fly—must get out into the open air—away from this hideous chamber of horrors.

Blindly she stumbled towards the door. Only instinct directed her steps as she groped her way, with unseeing eyes, along the passageway. She reached the door and fumbled for the bolt. She could not find it. She became as a trapped animal, screaming aloud in her fright, clawing the rough-hewn panels with her finger-nails, and pounding the heavy timbers with her fists.

She was being crushed by the fear that lurked in the shadows. She must escape and find human companionship. Her soul cried out against the "aloneness" that encompassed her, and mind, heart and very being found expression in one anguished cry: "John!" It was a prayer, and an agonised appeal for help.

At last she found the lock, shot back the bolt. The door opened and she staggered outside.

CHAPTER XII

VOICES AT DAWN

"WHA's fashin' ye, Jock?" demanded Malcolm Finlayson, the red-headed, red-bearded manager of the Dundee cannery, as he glared from beneath bushy eyebrows at John Collishaw. "Here it's blawin' the wors' storm in years, an' ye're worrin' tae be awa oot in't in yon wee cockle-shell o' a boat."

"I don't know, Malcolm," replied Collishaw uneasily, "why I want to be on my way, but I do, that's all. It kind of gets on my nerves to be kept back by a storm —not that I'm anxious to leave you," he hastened to add, knowing the sensitive nature of the Scot. "You're a decent old rascal, and I like you, and all that, but I don't feel just right this trip."

"Aye, bit it's a' o' thairty mile tae Fort Oliver, an' there's naethin' sae pressin' as to mak' ye risk yersel' tae see they ugly Siwashes. Bit noo I think on't, is there nae a wee sonsie lass stayin' wi' the auld doctor?" and his eye twinkled merrily.

Malcolm Finlayson had two failings. One he was unable to gratify at the moment owing to the delay of the freight boat, and its failure to bring on the last trip a supply of his native distillation. The other was a readiness to at all times engage in argument on the subject of religion, and particularly his theories on predestination. Collishaw, as did everyone along

the Coast, knew of Malcolm's weaknesses, to the extent that his acquaintances refused to supply him with liquor, and avoided engaging him in debate. Invariably the first led to the second, and when Malcolm was properly launched on his favourite topic, he was a fortunate man indeed who could get away from him until the whole of the dogmas and doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, with a few of his own fire-and-brimstone ideas, had been expounded.

Collishaw, seeing the older man had unwittingly stumbled on the secret of his anxiety to be on his way, could see no other way of escaping the confession which he feared the inquisitive old Scot would worm out of him. "You surprise me, Malcolm," he declared with severity. "I never thought you'd mock the handiwork of the Lord."

"Wh—wha's ailin' ye?" demanded Finlayson.

"Why, sneering at the Indians—calling them ugly. Why, you might have been one yourself if you hadn't been a Scotsman."

"Aye," answered Finlayson, bringing his huge fist down with a crash on the table of the room where they were sitting. "Aye, an' it shaws th' infallible weesdom o' the Lord, bless His name."

"By making the Indians ugly?"

"Nae, aiblins that's their ain fault; bit in makin' me a Scot."

John laughed aloud at his friend's conceit.

"Laugh, laugh yer heid off," shouted Malcolm, as his eye lighted with the fire of religious controversy.

"Oh, go on, Malcolm, who wouldn't laugh at your opinion of your countrymen!" bantered the police-

man. "You people who didn't know enough to wear trousers until recently think Heaven's your own private stamping ground."

"Aye, an' why not? Did nae Adam an' Eve speak Gaelic in the Garden o' Eden?" and he launched into his argument to prove that the Scots were the chosen race.

John knew it required to be a patient listener, for the man whom Malcolm Finlayson considered to be an ideal antagonist in matters of theology was he who would allow the Scot to do all the talking. An occasional "yes," or "no," or more often only a nod of the head, were John's only contributions to the debate which commenced shortly after supper and concluded nearly three hours later.

"Jock, lad," Finlayson concluded huskily, "A'm thinkin' ye're improvin' in yer understan'in' o' th' Word. It's too bad ye're nae Scottish, bit A'm thinkin' perhaps it's nae yer fault yer faither was yin o' they Canadian folk, an' yer mither an' English body. Ye ken, Jock," he added sadly, "A'm no jis' sartin' if Canadians are included in the Great Plan at a'. I canna jis' see them in the prophecees—bit mind, dinna be dispairin', they may be gittin' intae Heaven after a', bit o' course they'll nae be as near the Throne as the Scots."

"You may be right," agreed the policeman. "I'll not argue the point, for you seem to have it all doped out. But, Malcolm, I think the wind's dropping."

"Ye mon be richt."

The wind was not striking with such force as before, although the sheltered position of the cannery

prevented it catching the full burden of the sou'-wester. Collishaw stepped to the door, followed by the canner, and they went out into the night, passing along the wet slippery dock toward the office where the storekeeper was at work on his books.

The storekeeper, a heavy-set young fellow, was singing as he worked beneath a swinging oil lamp, and John motioned to his companion not to disturb him until he had concluded. It was evident that the ditty was of his own composition, and he was singing it with due regard to the genius of the composer.

You are my pretty Indian squaw,
Kloshe tum-tum kopa nika;[1]
I'm going to take you home to maw,
Kloshe tum-tum kopa nika;
She'll give you pretty things to wear,
Kloshe tum-tum kopa nika;
And teach you how to comb your hair,
Kloshe tum-tum kopa nika;
You'll be to her a pride and joy,
Kloshe tum-tum kopa nika;
If you will only have her boy,
Kloshe tum-tum kopa nika.

How many more verses there were to the love song, Collishaw did not learn, for Finlayson exclaimed, "Stop yer blitherin' aboot yer squaw, an' tell us hoo's th' gless."

The storeman turned with a sheepish grin, not untouched with a certain pride. "How'd you like my song?" he asked.

"Fine," answered the policeman, but the Scot only grunted as he leaned over to get a look at the barometer above the desk.

[1] Good heart towards me.

"Aye, Jock, she's gaein' up," he announced. "The wind'll be doon enough fer ye tae start awa' aboot noon."

"Well," commented Bates, the storekeeper, "it's sure been a rough un to-day. The old thunderbird was sure making a noise and——"

"Thinderbird, losh!" snorted Finlayson in derision. "Did ye ever hear sich blitherin', Jock?"

"Don't you believe in the thunderbird?" asked the policeman in mock astonishment.

"Nae fear."

"Did you ever hear the Indians tell the yarn?"

Finlayson shook his head, and Collishaw remarked, "Bates, tell Malcolm the story. He don't seem to know why it thunders."

"It ain't much of a yarn. Not like some of 'em," commenced Bates. "But the Indians believe there's a big bird, somethin' like an eagle, only about a million times bigger. When he flies around, the sky gets dark; the flappin' of his wings causes the thunder and the wind. When he winks his eyes there's lightning. On his back there's a lake, and the flappin' of his wings shakes water out of it, and that makes the rain. He keeps on goin' till he catches a whale. He takes it to the top of a mountain and eats it. He's some bird all right, I'll tell the world."

"And, Finlayson," added Collishaw, "they say if you ever see one of them eating a whale you'll become rich."

"Aye, an' sae y' will if by ony chance ye find th' end o' a rainbow," responded the canner.

Leaving Bates to again take up his song, Collishaw and Finlayson went back to the Scot's quarters, where

John had spent the preceding night as the cannery manager's guest.

"Do you ever have hunches?" asked the younger man when they were once more out of the wind.

"Wha' d'ye mean?"

"Oh, I can't exactly explain. It's just a sort of a feeling that something's going to happen. You know what I mean."

"A ken fine what ye mean," nodded the other. "It's the secon' sight. I had an auntie wha thocht she had it, bit th' doctor said it wis only a bit wind on her stummick."

"No," laughed Collishaw. "It's not my stomach. It's my mind."

"A'm telled," went on Malcolm seriously, "there's they in th' Hielan's wha hae it a' richt. Dis it bother ye much, Jock?"

"I don't think I've anything like the second sight, but occasionally I get strange desires, sort of feelings that I ought to do things. I can't explain it. Now to-day I've been thinking I should be over at Fort Oliver—that there's trouble there. I can't tell why I think so—but I do, that's all."

"Feedlesticks, Jock; it's yon canned corn ye had. I thocht it'd be troublin' ye. Ye're jis' like ma auntie —it's yer stummick," Finlayson assured him. "Come awa t' yer bed."

Obedient to the advice of his host, John turned in, climbing into the bunk on one side of the small room that served the Scot as a bed-chamber, while Finlayson clambered into the other. For a time they lay talking across the narrow room. "Jis' turn doon th'

licht when ye're ready," said the canner at last, nodding to where a smoky oil lamp sat on the packing-case that served for a dresser.

Collishaw hesitated to do so for some time, for he knew the lamp gave out an even more pungent odour with the wick turned down than when burning a full flame. Had he carried out his own desire he would have extinguished it altogether, but he knew it was the custom of his friend to do otherwise, so he leaned over and turned the light down until only a narrow rim of flame appeared above the burner. Then, rolling over, he endeavoured to follow the example of Finlayson, who was already filling the place with his nocturnal song.

Try as he would, John could not go to sleep. The uneasiness that had oppressed him all day only became more intense when he closed his eyes. He imagined he could see Mary, and she was beckoning to him. She was in distress, but the nature of her difficulty he could not determine. He tossed and twisted about on his bed for several hours, turning from one side to the other, changing the position of the pillow in vain attempts to induce slumber. Finally he did doze off, to dream again of Mary Cunningham, but only to awake with a start.

Day was just breaking. The cold light of dawn was stealing through the unwashed window of the room. Below him the splashing and slushing of the waters about the piling of the wharf told him a heavy sea was still running. In the opposite bunk Finlayson snored in untuneful crescendo.

Suddenly, as if the speaker was in the room, he

thought he heard his name called. It was an anguished appeal and the voice was that of Mary. He jumped to his feet, his mind made up.

"Wha's the maitter?" demanded Finlayson, sitting up in bed and rubbing his eyes.

"I'm beating it right away," announced Collishaw decisively, as he hastened to dress himself. "I'm going."

"Ye're gaein' t' dae naethin' o' the sort," declared the other, swinging his long legs over the side of his bunk.

"Malcolm," answered John earnestly, "I must."

The canner ran his thick fingers through his shock of tousled red hair, while he watched Collishaw in a puzzled way for a moment. He rose and started to dress with feverish haste.

"What are you doing?" asked the policeman. "There's no need for you to get up. Go back to your sleep."

"Ye're set in yer ways, Jock, an' I'm thinkin' ye are daft, for it's suicide t' gae oot there in yer wee boat; bit daft or no, ye're nae gaein' t' leave Malcolm Finlayson's roof wi' an empty stummick"; and he thumped his way out to the kitchen.

Collishaw could not deny the wisdom of fortifying himself with food before leaving, and he thanked his friend for his thoughtfulness.

It was not long before a bright fire was burning in the stove and the kettle was singing. Bacon and eggs were soon fried and, almost before he deemed it possible, John was seated at a substantial breakfast of hot coffee, bacon and eggs, and biscuits.

"See ye eat every bit o' it," ordered Finlayson.

"It's no' as sustainin' as parritch, bit there's no time t' mak' it fer ye."

The big Scotsman was moving about the room as John ate, muttering to himself of "daft yins," but when the policeman had finished his breakfast, the canner thrust a thermos flask into his hand, saying: "I've naethin' stronger t' offer ye, bit this'll dae ye some good. Ye'll be needin' it."

It was useless to try and thank Finlayson and John knew it, so he accepted the gift without a word and thrust it into the pocket of his slicker coat.

The policeman's boat had been moored in the shallow water behind the cannery wharf, where it had ridden out the storm in safety.

"Jock," called the Scotsman when John had the engine turning over. "Ye'll jis' mak' all they port lichts fas', an' be closin' th' companionway too, fer yon cockpit, where ye'll be standin', is gaein' t' fill, the firs' crack."

It was good advice, and the policeman proceeded to carry it out. He secured the fastenings of the ports, which fortunately were of heavy plate glass, and secured the hatchway against flooding from following seas. Taking his place at the wheel, where his engine controls were located, he waved good-bye to his friend as the boat headed away from the wharf.

"Good-bye, ye loon," shouted Finlayson in answer to his adieu.

The Dundee cannery was situated well within the mouth of a small river, which was sheltered from the fury of the storms by a well-wooded island. Behind this rode the fishing fleet, and as Collishaw threaded

his way among the craft, the chugging of his engine attracted attention aboard one or two of the large fish collectors. Several men called to him, warning him that the sea was still running high outside, but he only waved them greeting and continued. Already he felt the swell, and he had not yet entered the narrow passage through which the river broke to the sea.

Now he was in the gut, and his boat was plunging and wallowing about, and spray was splashing over him as the water pounded against the side of the launch. Nor'-nor'-west he ran, taking the cross-seas while he could still have a measure of protection from the island. Now the headland was passed, and he was in the full sweep of the long rollers. On and on he ploughed, turning due north. The great seas struck and buffeted the boat. The sturdy little craft shivered and shook as she plunged and rolled, a quarter on to the sea.

Collishaw held to the course for half an hour, although his arms ached from the tugging of the wheel, and he was standing knee deep in the water of the cockpit. He was holding well out to sea in order that he might run with the waves on the longer course to Fort Oliver. When he was three miles from shore he threw over the wheel and brought the boat head up with the seas.

The strain relaxed somewhat on his arms, and the boat increased her speed, shaking herself for a brief moment. "Taking the bit in your teeth, old girl," he commented. The next instant the craft slithered down a giant wave to bury her nose in the green wall of water in front. Not anticipating the action or the

abrupt stop, Collishaw was thrown against the wheel with tremendous force. He felt a sharp pain across his right side. "Good Lord!" he muttered; "a rib gone."

Recovering, the launch fought her way gallantly up the rise of another wave, poised for a second on the crest, and plunged down in a splash of spume to again dig her bows into the water before she could respond to the lift of the following sea. This time Collishaw was braced for the shock, but he was totally unprepared for the sudden blow dealt from behind as a big comber broke over the stern and hurled him against the cabin. The dinghy, which had been lightly lashed on the cabin deck, went by the board a few minutes later, the lashings fraying through with the continual pitching and rolling.

Mile after mile he continued the battle with the sea, maintaining his grip on the wheel until his hands were numbed. His teeth were clenched so tightly that his jaws ached with the tension, while his body was chilled and bruised. Then he noted a change. The waves were flattening a trifle. They were longer and more uniform in their swell. For some time now he had not been deluged by pursuing seas, while the nose of the boat did not dig as deeply as before into the waves ahead. He shifted his position and loosened one hand from the wheel. The fingers were stiff and sore, but he fumbled at the fastenings of his coat until he opened it, and from the inside pocket drew out the thermos flask. With some difficulty he unscrewed the top and drank deeply of the contents. The warm coffee revived him.

On and on ploughed the little boat, pitching and

tossing, and rolling from side to side, but keeping steadily on her way. Collishaw hesitated to attempt to bail the cockpit until the seas were smoother still. He recognised that while the water chilled and benumbed his limbs, the added weight in the little hold kept the stern down and the propeller from racing.

Several hours later he could see Fort Oliver in the distance, through the small strait between the mainland and Kiaso Island. As he came nearer his anxiety increased instead of diminished. The seas were almost flattened out now, and he had managed to free the cockpit of water with the small hand-pump he used for bailing purposes. The pain in his side was acute, and every muscle of his body seemed to ache, while his teeth chattered with the cold. But before him was the vision of Mary Cunningham, and in his ears reverberated that pleading, despairing cry.

The steady stroke of his faithful engine began to wear on his nerves. He wanted speed and more speed —to cover the intervening distance in a second. Anxiously he strained his eyes towards the village. Now he could make out the steeple of the church, and now the white-painted Mission. There were the ruins of the old fort, and the homes of the natives bathed in the bright sunshine of the morning.

He was entering the bay now, and for the first time the thought crossed his mind: "What if the hunch was wrong!" He sincerely hoped so, and he knew that in any event Mary would be pleased to see him.

Bringing his boat to a gentle stop at the remaining section of the landing-stage, for the major portion had been torn away by the storm, he clambered ashore

with some difficulty and made fast. His limbs were stiffer than he had imagined, and his feet were swollen in his rubber boots, making walking painful. Despite his anxiety to hurry, he found he must move slowly at first, but as circulation quickened he could increase his pace.

As Collishaw rounded the corner of the Mission he came to a stop, and then started forward. Indians were carrying something out of the hospital on a plank, and over the form was a sheet.

"What—who is it? What has happened?" he asked.

The natives halted and eyed him sullenly. "Him boy. Him dead. Make ready to bury," answered an old man.

"Where's Mary—the nurse?" he demanded.

"Dunno," replied the native, and a look of fright entered his dark eyes as he spoke in a whisper to the others, and they started away.

"Here, you, stop," shouted the policeman. "You lie. Tell me"; and he seized the Indian by the shoulder with a grip that hurt.

"Dunno," persisted the old fellow stubbornly, and then, "Ask him," and he motioned towards the house from which Nellie had just emerged. She stopped short when she saw Collishaw, and her face paled. Striding up to her, John repeated his question: "Where's Mary?"

The half-breed was plainly frightened. "Tell me," he ordered.

She tried to speak, but no words came. "Hurry up," he shouted, and he was not good to look upon. His hair was wet-matted and salt-encrusted, and his face worked convulsively beneath a two days' stubble

of beard, while his bloodshot eyes blazed fiercely from red-rimmed lids.

"Tell me, and tell me quick."

"She's at the fort," gasped Nellie.

"At the fort! What's she doing there?"

"They're killing the huldowget," she whispered huskily.

"Good God!" cried the man, and the exclamation was a prayer.

"Come on," he cried, and started to run, unmindful of his swollen limbs and bruised and aching body.

Involuntarily Nellie followed.

CHAPTER XIII

HUNTING THE HULDOWGET

WILD-EYED and fear-wracked, Mary staggered from the hospital. She had no thought of where she was going. Impelled by blind, unreasoning fear and primeval instinct, she sought only to flee from the place; to escape from the terror that had seared her senses. Unseeing, she ran, stumbled and fell, only to rise and continue her uneven, broken, tottering course.

Past the houses of the village, about which the dogs were beginning to stir themselves; past the sanctuary of the church, its doors blown open by the wind, she fled; on towards the ruin of the white man's first habitation, until tripping again, she fell headlong and lay prone, almost within touch of the ancient palisade. Here it was that relief came to her—the relief that only a woman can find in tears. Throughout the torture of the night she had remained dry-eyed, but now, with her face pillowed on the wet moss and withered bracken, she wept with all the anguish of mental suffering.

In the outpouring of her grief Mary did not hear the soft approach of footsteps, nor sense the presence of a witness to her woe, until a voice said kindly:

"There, there, Miss Cunningham, don't cry any more. It will be all right"; and a hand gently touched her shoulder.

It was so sudden and unexpected that the nurse

involuntarily ceased her sobbing and looked up, to see Caleb Thompson bending over her.

"Now don't try and talk, Miss Cunningham, please," he said when she was about to speak. "Just try and be quiet for a moment, and you will soon be yourself again."

Despite her dislike of the man, Mary welcomed his company as does a castaway the fellowship of a dumb animal in his misery. Here at least was a human being, with powers of understanding and expression.

"I know everything," Thompson continued in a low, melancholy tone. "I understand all—it is given to me to do so. I know the little boy has gone."

Mary sat up with a start.

"I know all—everything."

"What—what do you know?" she asked in a frightened whisper.

"It is given to me to know. I know what you have suffered. I'm sorry for you and would help you if you would let me."

"How? What do you mean—how can you help me?"

"There are many strange things in this big, wild country," he answered. "Things that perhaps you can never understand—or hope to. You need my help, I know you do, and I would gladly be of service to you, if you would let me."

"Ye—s, but what do you mean?—I don't understand."

Thompson looked at her steadily for a few seconds without speaking, then asked, "Are you strong enough to hear something?"

Mary was silent. She swallowed hard, and clenched

her hands until the nails dug into her palms. At last she nodded.

The half-breed leaned towards her until his face was but a few inches from hers. His dark eyes seemed to flash fire from between narrowed lids, until she thought they would scorch her very soul. "Miss Cunningham," he said in a whisper, "you are pursued by an evil spirit—a huldowget."

"Oh, good God have mercy on me!" gasped the girl as the last vestige of colour fled from her face, leaving it ashen grey.

"While the huldowget is following you," and he spoke slowly, and with a deliberation that made every word a hammer on her brain, "every person you nurse will—die."

The girl shrieked and would have fallen had he not caught and steadied her.

"But you can get rid of it—save yourself," he said quickly. "There's hope. I'll save you, if you'll let me."

"Oh, oh, this is terrible: I'll go mad!" screamed the girl. "And I've been nursing Mother!" And then in a spirit of self-accusation bordering on hysteria: "No wonder she is sick. It's all my fault. I'm to blame. Kill me; I'm wicked—Oh, this is awful!" And she wrung her hands, twisting her fingers until the joints cracked.

"No, no," shouted Thompson, realising he had almost gone too far, and catching her by the wrist, he held her roughly while he compelled her gaze. "No, no," he repeated sternly. "I've told you that I'll help you; that it'll be all right, if you say you want my help. Do you?"

"Yes, yes," answered the frenzied girl. "I'll do anything—anything you say, if you'll only help me."

"That's good. You're sensible now. It's now 6.30"; and he looked at his watch. "Go home. Don't tell any person what's happened. Go to your room; wash yourself and tidy your hair. Take four white pebbles and put them in the four corners of your room and put a green twig of cedar beneath your bed, and then in two hours come to me here at the old fort."

"I will," answered Mary.

"Mind you don't tell anyone what's happened, or where you're going," he warned. "You'd better speak to Mother and let her think you've gone to bed. Don't worry about anything; I'll attend to the remains of the boy. They'll be removed to his uncle's. All you have to do is to obey my instructions."

"Yes," she answered dully.

As Mary was about to move away Thompson stopped her, and pointing to the ground said, "There are some white pebbles. I mustn't touch them, but you pick them up. They'll suit the purpose."

Obedient to his will, she stooped and tremblingly gathered the stones, and Caleb Thompson, watching her closely, smiled a quiet smile of satisfaction. "There's a twig that will do," he said, indicating a near-by growth, and she snapped it off. He waved her away with his hand, and again she docilely obeyed.

Mary walked back to the Mission, her mind in a daze, only remembering that she must do the things that Thompson had instructed. Her eyes were fixed straight ahead of her, uncomprehending that which she saw. Her head was thrust forward and her jaws

were set, while in her hands she clutched tightly four small white pebbles and a sprig of cedar.

Mechanically she entered the passageway between the house and hospital, and gained her room by way of the dispensary. Still in a stupor, she repeated in a monotone the half-breed's words: "Take four white pebbles and put them in the four corners of your room, and put a green twig beneath your bed."

Dropping to her hands and knees, she reached under the bed and placed the bit of cedar there, and then crawled, first to one corner and then to the others, and placed one pebble at each.

She rose and washed her soiled hands and face, and brushed her hair with the same care with which she would have prepared for a garden party or church festival, but her actions were purely involuntary, for her conscious mind was for the moment numbed and inactive.

Having completed her toilet, she dropped into a chair beside the window, allowing her hands to fall idly to her lap, and thus awaited the passing of time. Only once did a flicker of interest chase the expression of vacuous melancholy from her countenance. It was when she caught the flash of the morning sun reflected from the port lights of a launch being buffeted by the still high-running seas, a dozen miles at sea.

Slowly the minute hand of the little clock on her dresser circled the dial, and the hour of eight was passed. Dully she watched the almost imperceptible movement of the large hand for another five minutes. Then with a sharp intaking of breath she rose. It was time to face—she knew not what—but before doing

so she had to pass through an ordeal that she did know and dreaded. It was to meet Mother—to face the little woman she loved with the devotion of a daughter, and whose life, by some strange mystery of the Northland, she seemed to hold in her keeping.

She could not proceed for a moment, and had to steady herself against the wall. "O God," she gasped, "help me. Take me if you want, but don't let me bring grief to this household."

For another minute she stood with closed eyes, and then by a tremendous effort of will she walked firmly across the floor, opened the door and went out. As she approached Mother's room she came face to face with Nellie. "She's sleeping," whispered the servant almost defiantly.

Mary recoiled as if she had been struck. She had forgotten the servant girl and her grim, half-uttered threat of the night before. Now it all came back to her with the sting of a whip-lash. Nellie must know of her sinister influence in the Mission; she must have discovered the malefic power of her presence in the household!

It was with difficulty that she restrained herself from screaming aloud a denial of the charge she knew lurked in the mind of the half-breed—or protesting her innocence of wrong motive or intent. She swayed unsteadily. She clasped her head, which seemed as if it must burst. There came a glimmering—a faint spark of hope, that steadied her; perhaps Caleb Thompson would be able to save her from this awful fault, and free her from the enormity of the guilt which she felt and which was driving her to the verge of madness.

"I'm going to bed. The boy has gone," she muttered thickly, and staggered towards her room. She did not enter, but continued through the dispensary and out of the building by the way she had entered. Once outside she turned her face toward the old fort.

She did not look back, but with wild staring eyes, like those of a trapped doe, gritted teeth and clenched hands, she made haste to the place where Thompson was already awaiting her coming.

From behind a curtain Nellie saw her go, and smiled happily.

A number of Indians had gathered at the abandoned fort to assist in the ceremony, while others, less willing openly to associate themselves with the sorcerer in his rites, stood at some little distance, watching with more or less sympathetic interest the preparations for the ceremony.

A lesser number of aged men and women, gathering the children they could induce to follow them, went to the church, and there with heavy hearts offered prayer for the deliverance of their village from the threatened return of the thrall of the medicine man, from which the coming of Father David had freed them. Now from the priest's own house the ancient practices were to be revived. No wonder they were dismayed, knowing nothing of the cause, and fearful only of the effect of this public acknowledgment of the power of the shaman. And as they prayed Mary stumbled on, not comprehending, not reasoning, only blindly striving to avert the black doom that threatened; reaching out for some material assistance, some human comfort and understanding in her hour of need.

The natives, gathered in whispering, muttering groups, eyed her strangely as she passed and ascended the slope to the old fortress. The Indians standing in a semicircle in front of the decaying bastion with its empty, yawning ports and vacant loopholes, opened their ranks to permit her to pass through to the centre of the little knot, silently closing in again behind her.

Caleb Thompson stood in the middle of the group —not the suave, educated man of two hours before, but Thompson the necromancer, the medicine man. On his head was a hat fashioned from the skin of some animal and decorated with ermine pelts, while about his neck he wore a collar of buckskin from which hung wolves' teeth and the claws of the grizzly bear. An apron of woven goat hair, fringed with dried sea-grass and cedar roots, covered him from waist to knees. Beneath this he wore the blue serge trousers and brown shoes of the white man. Slung about his neck on a thong was a large wooden horn, while attached to his belt was a rattle, carved to represent the sun.

In his right hand Thompson held a mirror, such as could be found on any well-appointed dressing-table.

Squatted on the ground immediately behind the necromancer were several old squaws, one of whom appeared to be his chief assistant. Despite her nervousness and fear, Mary recognised the old woman. She was Simon's mother, the same whom Father David had scolded for practising witchcraft when her son was ill. She wore a dirty red blanket about her shoulders, while on her head was a bonnet of shark hide and porcupine quills. She was drumming on an oblong cedar box, over which was stretched a dried

skin, and as the white girl approached she commenced a low unmelodious chant, swaying to and fro in harmony with her weird music. The other women beat time with flat sticks, following the lead of Mary Elizabeth.

Thompson nodded in recognition as Mary entered the circle. When she was seated, in obedience to his gesture, he suddenly emitted a piercing yell and jumped up in the air and then dropped to his hands and knees, only to spring up and turn to the east, wheel to the west, and then address himself to the north and south. Seizing the rattle and horn, he placed the latter to his lips and blew a blast, while he pounded his right thigh with the rattle. Again he faced east, west, north and south, stopping at each of the cardinal points of the compass to summon with horn, rattle and voice the huldowget from its hiding.

The old squaw and her companions maintained a drumming all the while, the chant now dying down to a plaintive whisper, now increasing to a frenzied wail, in which all joined, their bodies swaying in time with the drum and sticks and the motions of the old hag.

Catching up the mirror Thompson presented it, face from him, to the four winds, the circle parting and closing again in order to permit its magic eye to see unobstructed into the distance. Having turned the glass to the sky and the earth, he suddenly straightened to his full height. His body trembled, and beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. His eyes blazed with the light of fanaticism and his breath came in quick, convulsive gasps through his distended nostrils.

Mary looked on in terror. Her heart seemed as if it

would choke her, while her brain was in such a whirl that she fancied it would burst from her head. She no longer saw the circle of swaying figures about her, nor heard the droning of the voices in the wild, barbaric chant that continued unceasingly. She only saw Thompson. His actions hypnotised her and compelled her entire attention.

Now the necromancer was looking in the mirror which was held close to his face. He seemed to be seeking something in the reflection he saw there. Slowly he pivoted, and again the circle parted to permit him an unobstructed view.

He was facing the north-east, and was looking into the reflected south-west, where the passage opened between the island and mainland. What he saw there caused him to stop for an instant, and the natives dropped their song. It was not the huldowget he had discovered, but a sea-battered motor-boat headed for the landing-stage. For a second only did he pause, and then he turned more rapidly. He must hurry.

Now he was searching the woods behind him. His body stiffened, and finally he came to a dead stop, every muscle rigid.

Mary Elizabeth beat her drum with increased vigour, screaming a savage pæan of victory in which the others joined. One man leaned over the crouching white girl and seized the wooden horn, blowing it with all his might, while a squaw picked up the rattle and beat it against her body.

"I see," said Thompson, speaking slowly, as if in a trance, "the evil spirit—the huldowget—hiding in that bush beside the bastion."

"Come, Miss Cunningham," he said in English, "see."

Shaking in every limb, Mary rose and peered into the glass. "Where?" she whispered through parched lips.

"There, there; see. It's in that clump of bushes."

"Yes," she gasped. "I see the bushes."

"My power tells me that is where it has been hiding, but it is dead. Its evil heart has vanished."

"Go and see," he ordered the Indians.

Fearfully they approached the place and stopped.

"Search it," commanded the necromancer, and timidly one or two advanced and parted the bushes and peered into the tangled growth.

"Hurry," exclaimed Thompson, looking back over his shoulder, to see the motor-launch half-way across the bay.

"You have found it?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Come, Miss Cunningham. You must see it taken out," he said; and then, "Show me the place." Mary Elizabeth pointed to the spot where two men were bending the bushes back.

"Pull it out," said Thompson. There was no response, the natives shuffling uneasily, eyeing each other in alarm.

"You do it, Mary Elizabeth," said Thompson sternly, and the squaw reached down and caught something. With a fiendish yell she pulled it clear of the bush. It was a big rat, and the old woman had it by the tail. As she held it aloft she stared wildly at the dead animal; blood was dripping from a jagged tear in its stomach.

Mary Cunningham was paralysed by fear. Her eyes

nearly started from their sockets as she looked at the dead rodent, swinging and turning slowly as the klootchman, her own face paled, held it at arm's length. The natives crowded in close, each face expressing fear and awe. They gazed spellbound at the rat.

"Drop it," ordered Thompson, and the squaw gladly obeyed.

"Miss Cunningham," he said, turning to the girl, "do you doubt this was the huldowget that pursued you?"

"No, no. It must be. It was in my room the other night," she answered stupidly.

"Open it and see what's inside," he directed, and two squaws dropped to their haunches, and with sticks pried open the wound in the rat's belly. They scraped out an odd assortment of things on to the wet grass. Mary, who was watching, screamed.

"Do you recognise anything?" asked Thompson, as with a stick he separated the different articles. "Is this yours?" and he indicated a silver thimble.

"Yes," panted Mary.

"And this?" and he pointed to a piece of blood-stained cloth.

"God help me!" she shrieked. "It's from my coat."

"And these? And these?" went on the man as he touched a pair of knotted shoe laces, some shoe buttons and comb teeth.

"All mine," she cried. "All mine."

She stood for a moment gazing in horror at the collection on the grass. Then pressing her hands to her head, with a groan she collapsed.

"Quick," shouted Thompson excitedly, looking toward the beach, where the boat was just approach-

ing the dock. "Bring water. Here, get it from the creek," he called, and a woman seized the felt hat from an old man and ran to the brook, now swollen to the proportions of a small river. She returned in a moment with the hat filled to the brim.

The shaman dashed some of the contents over the face of the insensible girl, while squaws rubbed her throat, breast and wrists. The treatment was effective and at last she sighed and opened her eyes. "Where am I?" she asked weakly.

"You're all right. The huldowget's dead," answered Thompson.

"Oh, yes! I remember"; and she shuddered and started to cry.

"Yes, that huldowget is dead," said Thompson, again glancing over his shoulder and speaking rapidly. "That one's dead, but there are others."

"Oh, no. Don't say that. It can't be!" Mary screamed incredulous denial.

"Yes, it's so."

"But you will save me? You will kill them too?" she pleaded.

"On one condition."

"What is it? I'll do anything."

"Then promise to marry me."

Even to her terrorised senses this sudden proposal came as a horrible shock. She looked at the crouching figure of the half-breed in amazement. "No, I can't do that," she whispered.

"Then perhaps you'll attend to your own evil spirits," hissed the man, his eyes narrowing. "Perhaps this one can be brought back to life," he said

cruelly as he picked up the dead rat and dangled it before her eyes.

"Don't, don't!" shrieked the girl, trying to shield her eyes from the sight with her uplifted arm. "Stop it. Don't do it."

"But I will."

"Oh, don't. Please don't." But the shaman for answer drew the carcass across her bare arm.

"I will. I will. I will marry you," she screeched, frantic with fear. "I'll marry you"; and she burst into wild hysterical laughter.

"I'll marry you," she repeated and sprang to her feet and made one or two steps towards the Mission, the awe-stricken Indians falling back in terror from her. "I'll marry you"—again the piercing, mirthless laugh.

Even Thompson was not prepared for this outbreak and could only look at her in frightened surprise. He made no effort to follow as she broke through the circle and then stopped.

A figure was advancing unsteadily towards the hill. She looked at it dully for a second, and reason returned. "Oh, John!" she cried, stretched out her arms towards the policeman, tottered and fell insensible to the ground.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIGHT

COLLISHAW had no idea what he would do when he arrived at the fort, nor did he outline any plan as he ran. All that he knew was that Mary Cunningham was there and that she was in trouble and needed him. It was his heart not his head that urged his jaded limbs to greater speed, and through his clenched teeth he cursed because he could not force himself to move faster. His heavy sea boots retarded him and made his running awkward and erratic.

He could see Indians standing in little groups at some distance from the fort, apparently interested in the proceedings of a larger congregation about the ruins of the old bastion. As he passed these little knots of men and women they fell in behind him, following at a slower pace, moving nearer to see what would happen when the representative of the law came face to face with the necromancer and his adherents in the practice of the old arts.

Nellie, despite herself, had followed Collishaw, running at his heels for the greater part of the way. As they neared the place, she gradually dropped back and became hidden in the crowd of curious Indians who followed him. The natives moved forward, confident that now the policeman had arrived they would not be accused of having taken part in the medicine man's

magic, not having been included in the number of those whom the officer found surrounding the sorcerer.

Collishaw heard a woman's voice raised in wild hysterical laughter. He recognised it and a pang shot through his heart. It was the voice of Mary Cunningham.

Suddenly there was a movement in the group at the top of the rising ground. The assembly which had been intent on some object or person encircled within its numbers, stirred and opened.

The policeman stopped, his bloodshot eyes staring in horrified amazement. Mary, her head thrown back and her hands tearing at her golden hair, broke out from the crowd, screaming and laughing hysterically. She hesitated, looked full at him for an instant and, extending her arms to him, called his name. It was a similar call to that he had heard in the early morning hours at Dundee cannery; the cry that had brought him through the storm-driven waters to her—the cry of an agonised soul.

Before he could reach her she had tottered and fallen. In an instant he was at her side. Forgetful of all else, he dropped to the ground and gathered her in his arms, while the Indians pressed around and watched them in silent wonderment.

"Mary, Mary," he pleaded. "Speak to me. I've come, Mary."

She made no answer.

"Mary, oh, Mary, what have they done to you?" And then sweeping the circle of brown faces with a glare of such ferocity that those in the front rank instinctively shrank back against those behind, "What have you hounds of Hell been doing to her?"

Spying the frightened face of Nellie in the throng, he pointed an accusing finger at her. "Here, you she-devil, come here and take care of her. I'm going to find out who is responsible for this."

Nellie came guiltily forward and knelt by the unconscious form of the white girl.

"Get someone to help you, and get her home to bed—quick," he ordered, and his tone brooked no disobedience.

Nellie motioned to a woman whose face showed some expression of sympathy, and together they lifted the unconscious form of the white girl to a sitting posture.

There occurred at that moment a stir in the crowd and Caleb Thompson, arrayed in his shaman costume, forced his way through the massed natives. Collishaw, who was bending over the nurse, looked up as the half-breed appeared.

"What have you been doing with the woman who is to be my wife?" demanded the sorcerer.

"What?"

"She's promised before all these people to marry me."

Before Collishaw could make answer there was a cry of rage from beside him and Nellie, changed in an instant from a timorous, phlegmatic half-breed girl to a veritable tigress, sprang to her feet. "You lie," she screamed. "You promised to marry me"; and she rushed at the man in an effort to tear him with her finger-nails.

It was Collishaw who prevented her doing so. "Leave this to me," he said sternly. "You get Mary away from here—damned quick. Get her home."

"Yes," assented Thompson, eager to free himself of

the presence of the jealous girl, whom he had not observed before making his former remark. "Get her home."

Nellie hesitated. Tears were streaming down her cheeks, tears of bitter rage. "Go," shouted Collishaw, and she motioned to the squaw who was still supporting Mary. Together they lifted her. The crowd opened and they carried her away.

Wild rage flamed in Collishaw's breast. He needed nothing more than the barbaric dress of Thompson to tell him the whole story, but he realised that he must spar for time to permit Mary to be carried to the Mission.

"So it's you, Thompson," he said, contempt curling his lip. "So it's you who frightens women and children."

Caleb Thompson only shrugged his shoulders.

"Why did you do it, you dog?"

Still the necromancer was silent.

"Why don't you answer, you snake?"

"She asked me to," snarled the shaman.

"You lie."

"Besides, I don't see that it's any of your business. She's going to marry me," sneered Thompson.

"It's a lie." A red film came before Collishaw's eyes. "It's a damned lie"; and he sprang at the half-breed.

Thompson had been expecting attack and was prepared for it. Lifting the wooden horn, which he had unslung from his neck, he struck the white man across the face with it.

Stunned for an instant, Collishaw reeled back. Blood spurted from his mouth and, recovering, he spat out several broken teeth.

The blow had a sobering effect on him. He realised that he must fight carefully and not with the blind rage of a madman. Remembering a trick of boxing he had learned in the army, he feigned to be more dazed than he actually was, hoping to deceive his antagonist.

The Indians widened the circle, moving back from the combatants, leaving them plenty of space in which to fight. Thompson was not one who would willingly provoke personal encounter, preferring always to win his objective by stealth and cunning, but when necessity arose he was not afraid of open warfare.

Recollecting the duty of his office, and believing that it might further mislead Thompson, the policeman called, "Help me arrest him."

Not an Indian responded. The men only shifted uneasily and backed away.

As he had anticipated, Thompson mistook the call for assistance as a display of cowardice and advanced, smiling grimly, the wooden trumpet upraised to strike again. Collishaw covered up, swayed for an instant and, as the blow descended, stepped aside and forward, crashing his fist full on the other's face.

The shaman dropped the horn and staggered back. The white man followed his advantage and caught him a terrific left to the chin that sent him reeling into the front rank of the spectators.

In an instant Thompson was back in the ring. Crouching low, his arms outspread like a wrestler, he circled around the policeman, who could not move with the same agility in his heavy boots.

Thompson darted forward and John swung for his face, but missed and grazed his shoulder. His next

blow struck the top of the half-breed's head, and by the pain that darted up his left arm he knew he had splintered the bones of his hand.

With the instinct of the primitive battler Thompson reached for the white man's hair. He loosened his hold when Collishaw drove a smashing uppercut to his face.

The half-breed recoiled and, stepping back a few paces, threw off the collar and apron that were, to some extent, impeding his movements. His head-gear had been knocked off in the first encounter. Blood was streaming from a cut on one cheek, and his left eye was closing.

Collishaw was in an even worse state. One hand was useless for anything but defence. His mouth was cut and swollen, and his face was lined with red scratches where the half-breed had dug into the flesh. His breath came in short painful gasps, for his broken rib was hurting him intensely. He knew that he must harbour his strength, so made no effort to follow Thompson, but took full advantage of the moment's respite.

His eyes blazing with hate, the necromancer advanced again. Slowly he circled the policeman, then faster and faster, turning and twisting and finally rushing in, his hands reaching for the other's throat. Collishaw met him with a jab to the face that made him draw back for an instant, but only to come on again.

This time he managed to grasp John about the left arm and around the body, but Collishaw battered him over the kidneys and punched the back of his neck until he let go. He came on once more and again

secured a hold. This time the medicine man, with the savagery of his mother's race, sank his teeth into the white man's shoulder. Yelling with pain, Collishaw seized him by the hair of the head, and getting his disabled hand beneath the other's chin, tore him loose and threw him from him. He did not hesitate now, but followed. All thought of scientific fighting was gone. He only wanted to punish and destroy.

Putting all his strength into the blow, he caught the half-breed fair on the point of his unprotected chin and sent him crashing in a heap to the ground. In an instant he was on top of him, his fingers encircling his adversary's throat.

Someone in the crowd called out, and Collishaw was seized from behind in a powerful embrace and was torn off the body of his senseless foe. Tighter and tighter he was squeezed; the pain of his broken rib was excruciating. He struggled to free himself; then all went black and he knew no more.

The crowd surged forward about the unconscious men, talking and muttering excitedly. Forcing her way through the mob, Nellie got to the inner circle, only to recoil at the sight of the bloodstained forms inert on the wet grass.

With the assistance of the squaw she had experienced no difficulty in carrying Mary to the Mission and to her room. Here, under Nellie's direction, the woman undressed Mary and put her in bed.

Remembering her mistress, the servant went to Mother's room, and in response to her questions said that Mary, tired after her duties of the night, was asleep. She had already placed food before the invalid,

whose wants were few. The injured boy, she told Mother, was still alive and Mary had instructed her what to do for his care during the day. She was sorry, she said, she could not give her mistress the care and attention she should receive.

"You go right ahead, dear," was the answer. "I'm really in no pain—just weak, that's all. I had a good rest, and with what you've brought me, I can make myself quite comfortable. Our duty is to see that the injured boy is cared for, and I think it's splendid of you to act the way you're doing."

The girl hung her head for a moment, shame reddening her cheeks.

"I've called Martha in," she said at length. "You know she helped us before."

"Yes?"

"She'll be in the house all day and will do anything you want."

"That was very thoughtful of you, dear," answered Mother as Nellie withdrew.

In the girl's mind a plan was already taking form. She saw how Thompson had duped and deceived her, and made her act a part in his nefarious scheme. Going quickly to Mary's room she motioned to the squaw to come out into the hall.

"Martha," she said, "you will look after Mother and her," nodding towards the half-opened door. "Don't tell Mother what's happened, and let her think Mark's all right and that I'm with him. I may not be back until late."

The squaw nodded.

Catching up her shawl, Nellie ran through the dis-

pensary and out by the hospital entrance. She must do something, but what, she did not know. Fury raged in her heart against Caleb Thompson. Her mind was in a confusion. She wanted revenge—a revenge that would torture him as her conscience was making her suffer now. How could she accomplish it?

She could only think of one thing—one plan. It was to get word to Father David. She must get someone to go for him. The idea was drumming on her brain ever since she discovered the perfidy of the necromancer. She must get Father David at once—before it was too late.

She ran towards the fort. There in the crowd she could surely find some person to go for the doctor. Perhaps Collishaw himself would make the journey in his launch.

She reached the edge of the mob just as the fight ended and, making her way into the centre, she witnessed the result. Anxiously she looked about her. There was not one there whom she could trust—not one that she could depend on to take the message.

She would go herself if she had a boat. The canoes were all drawn up above high-water mark and they were too heavy for her to launch unaided. If she tried to do so she might be prevented. It was too great a risk to attempt the task.

She looked about at the milling crowd again and scanned the sullen faces. No, not a single one was there to whom she could appeal. Then her eyes rested on the face of old Mary Elizabeth, who was sitting on the ground with Thompson's head pillowed on her lap, bathing his temples with water. Already the

necromancer was recovering. His eyes were opening. She must hurry.

An idea came as she gazed at the old woman. Yes, surely! Mary Elizabeth's son was a canoe-builder. Yes, she remembered now that he had been working on a canoe, a small one, just before he went away to the cannery—perhaps he had not taken it with him.

Elbowing her way through the crush, she walked rapidly past the fort, and once out of sight of the natives, turned and ran as fast as she could along the trail that skirted the creek. Her heart was throbbing with excitement. Her feet beat dully on the sodden leaves and splashed through puddles of rain water, but mixed emotions of hope and fear drove her on until, catching her foot on a trailing root, she stumbled and fell, twisting her ankle.

Despite the pain, she was up in an instant and on her way, her lips tightly compressed to prevent the cries that the injured ankle sought to force from her at every step. Now she was nearing the place. Yes, there was the canoe, just as Simon had left it, turned bottom up on two trestles. It was almost completed, only the finishing touches remained to be given the up-tilted prow. Glancing beneath the craft, she almost shouted with joy, for there was a newly-fashioned paddle.

Lifting one end of the dug-out, she held it braced against her body while she pushed the trestle aside. She let the bow down to the ground, and then limping to the other end she lifted it off, turning the craft over as she lowered it.

The launching of a fourteen-foot canoe offered no

difficulties to Nellie, and in a few moments she had it in the waters of the creek.

Stepping in, she seized the paddle and shoved off. The current caught the little craft and shot it down stream towards the sea. Carefully she guided it along the near shore, taking full advantage of the cover thus afforded by the bank. As she neared the salt water, however, she edged it out into mid-stream, and then towards the opposite side of the creek. If she could escape detection as she emerged from the mouth of the river, she knew she might make her escape. She would take the opposite side of the bay and cross in the protecting shade of the island.

Her heart was pounding with fright as she dipped her paddle and propelled the light canoe with all the might of her strong young arms. It darted ahead, out into the bay, not a hundred yards from the fort. With a wide sweep of the paddle she turned away from the village, and in a dozen vigorous strokes was beyond the little point and out of view. Fortune had favoured her. She had not been seen.

CHAPTER XV

TRIAL BY THE MOUSE

COLLISHAW regained consciousness to find himself lying on the earthen floor of an old building. Through the broken roof above him he could glimpse small patches of the blue sky, which only served to increase the murk of the interior. The place smelled strongly of moist mould and decay.

His head was throbbing with a dull pain. His left shoulder was stiff and numb and his hand was swollen and useless. His side felt as if it was being seared by a hot iron, while every joint and muscle of his body was aching. His tongue was dry and his throat parched.

For several minutes he lay trying to collect his scattered senses—to recollect what had happened and endeavour to discover the cause of his being in this place. Gradually memory returned. He remembered the fight, and his last desperate attempt to throttle Thompson. Ah! that must be it. He had killed the half-breed and he was in jail. The thought did not disturb him. Dazed as he was, it gave him a certain savage joy. He had strangled the necromancer and Mary was safe.

Mary! Now he recalled everything. His coming to the fort; the crowd; Mary's collapse and her being carried away.

"Mary." He muttered the name through swollen, blood-caked lips, and it seemed to act as a magic tonic. He attempted to rise but fell back, and realised for the first time that he was tied hand and foot. He was helpless.

The exertion tortured his pain-racked body and he groaned aloud in his agony.

There was a movement in the room opposite to him, and he knew that he was not alone. A young man with a lame leg and withered arm hobbled across the intervening space and stood above him.

Collishaw knew the youth. He had often seen him on his visits to the Mission. A cripple from birth, Father David and Mother had rather favoured him, and had shown him many kindnesses.

"Paul," whispered Collishaw thickly, "water."

"Don't know," answered the young man, also in a whisper, looking around in some trepidation. "Maybe; I see"; and he moved away in the direction in which John fancied was the door. He was gone for some little time, but when he returned he carried in his hand a cupped leaf which contained a little more than a mouthful of muddy water.

"Him not much good," he whispered. "Catchum from mud-hole. S'pose me go to creek, maybe other mans see me"; and bending down, he moistened the white man's lips, and then gave him the dirty liquid to drink. But Collishaw was not particular, and drained every drop.

Taking the leaf, the Indian went to a far corner and ground it into the soil with his heel, after which he kicked the dirt over the place.

Refreshed somewhat by the drink Collishaw asked: "Paul, where am I?"

"Old salmon house."

"What are they going to do with me?"

"Dunno," answered Paul stolidly. "Maybe kill you, I dunno."

"Untie me, will you?"

"No. S'pose me do, maybe kill me."

John Collishaw was not afraid of the quick death he had faced a thousand times in the trenches, a death in the heat of battle, or a sudden blotting out of life in the twinkling of an eye from shell-burst or machine-gun fire. But to be butchered in cold blood, trussed-up like a goose, with no chance of saving himself—he shuddered at the thought. And Mary! What would become of her?

Hot blood raced through his body. The veins stood out on his forehead and neck as he thought of her being left alone, at the mercy of such fiends as had terrorised her that morning. He rolled, twisted, gnashed his teeth in his rage, until exhausted, he ceased and lay still.

"No good do that," advised Paul quietly.

Collishaw did not reply for several minutes, and then: "You're right, Paul. Tell me, did I kill Thompson?"

"No, him all right; beat him, you no kill him."

The policeman cursed bitterly that he had not committed murder.

"Say, Paul," he ventured; "put me up against the wall."

"You be good man?" demanded the Indian.

"Yes. I promise."

"All right"; and the Indian, with his one good arm, managed to drag the policeman to the side wall, where he propped him against the logs.

"Why are you helping Thompson?" John asked after a pause.

The Indian came close and, bending down, looked the white man in the eyes. "Paul no help Thompson," he said earnestly. "Paul stay with you; s'pose some other mans stay, maybe kill you. Me your friend."

The sincerity of the man was such that Collishaw could not disbelieve him. "Thanks," he said. "I'll not forget this if I come through. What are they going to do with the white girl?" he asked fearfully.

"Dunno"; and Paul shook his head. "Him all right now. Him in Mission. Bad mans 'fraid go there. Maybe three four mans and some klootchmans stay in church house and pray. Me there, then come up here see what is matter. S'pose bad mans try touch Mission house" —and he spoke with slow deliberation—"maybe lots shooting."

"Thank God," ejaculated Collishaw fervently; and after a space, "But surely there's some way to prevent bloodshed."

For some minutes he was silent, his brow puckered in thought. Suddenly his face brightened. "Yes, by Jove, there is a chance. It's an even break anyway," he exclaimed. "Paul, come here. I want to whisper to you."

When the Indian bent down, Collishaw spoke rapidly. At first a look of incredulous amazement spread over the cripple's countenance, and he shook his head doubtfully. "But it's my only chance," argued the captive. "I'm not afraid."

"Maybe," agreed the native dubiously.

"But you'll act as interpreter: you'll tell the others what I say?"

Paul nodded acquiescence.

"Then I think you'd better put me back where I was, and when they come, you abuse me. It will look as if you were my enemy."

Again the Indian nodded, and did as he had been directed.

After a wait of what seemed to Collishaw to be hours, but was in reality but a few minutes, Paul hobbled to the end of the building and applied his eye to a chink between the logs.

"They come," he whispered.

"How many?"

"Maybe eight, ten."

Returning to his station, the Indian started to berate his charge, and in a sneering tone taunted him with his helplessness, and heaped insults upon him and his ancestors.

Collishaw snarled back answers, and from time to time twisted and rolled about in efforts to free himself. These manifestations were only rewarded by further maledictions and jeers from his keeper.

It was not long before John's senses, keenly attuned to such a purpose, told him that some person was peering into the interior between the logs. He increased the violence of his struggles to free himself and the vehemence of language with which he answered the jibes of the cripple.

A moment later he heard unmistakable sounds of approaching voices and then that of Thompson at the

doorway in conversation with Paul, who made reply in the native tongue.

Striding over to where Collishaw lay, the half-breed kicked him viciously. "How do you like that?" he asked.

Collishaw only groaned.

Again the necromancer kicked him cruelly, and the old men and squaws who had followed him into the place laughed like children.

"You dirty coward," called the policeman, glaring up at his enemy.

"Eat that with this dirt"; and Thompson picked up a handful of earth and threw it in his face.

"You'll pay for this, Thompson," spluttered John.

"Well, you won't be there to see me do it," threatened the other.

"So you would kill me, and have all these people die with you?" was the answer Collishaw framed in Chinook.

There was an uneasy stir among the crowd, for they were not yet prepared to follow their new leader into the shadow of the white man's gallows. Often King George's policeman neglected to bring to task offenders against the lesser laws of his chiefs at Ottawa, but the pursuit of the perpetrators of murder never slackened. Thompson was quick to appreciate the effect of the warning on his adherents, and viciously repeated his kicking.

Despite the pain he was suffering, Collishaw followed up his momentary advantage by calling out in the traders' jargon that he wished to talk to the people.

There was a murmur among the natives, which

Thompson immediately stopped by starting to harangue them, and then turning to the helpless man before him, exclaimed, "You fool, who said you were to be killed? You're going to be kept prisoner though, until I marry the nurse."

"I want to talk to the people," insisted the policeman. "Are you cowards that you refuse to hear a man speak?"

There was a muttering of dissent.

"Then hear me."

"Go ahead; make your talk, damn you," hissed the half-breed, punctuating his remarks with a still more vicious kick.

"I want to talk to you in your own speech," said the captive. "Let Paul be my tongue."

There was an exclamation of approval from the natives.

"Unloosen me, that I may talk like a man and not a beast. If my words are not good, then tie me again."

Paul started to interpret the speech, and without waiting for the sanction of Thompson, one of the men cut the bonds that held the policeman's hands, allowing him to sit up. Collishaw did not press for further concessions, realising that to do so might be to his disadvantage.

"Hear my words; they are good words," he said, speaking slowly and deliberately. "You have done injury to King George when you hurt me, but I will not speak of that, for King George's chiefs know how to punish those who do wrong. But you have been like the dog that bites the hand that gives it food. You have listened to the words of Father David. He

has been good to you, and now you have gone away from him and have taken one from his house the wrong way. You have followed Thompson, who is bad, and left Father David, who is good. You have helped Thompson, who would make the white girl his squaw. It is not for him to do so——"

"I'll show you," interrupted the half-breed.

"It's not for you to decide," went on Collishaw.

"Who will, then?"

"The mouse." Collishaw shot back the answer and the half-breed recoiled, stunned and startled, and a slight exclamation of terror escaped him. He sought to interfere, to stop Collishaw, but John was talking rapidly now and Paul was translating each word as it fell from his lips.

"I call for trial by the mouse. Thompson has brought back the old medicine to the village. He cannot refuse to have the mouse decide between us. I challenge him to have trial. I call for men to watch the mouse. Is he afraid? Does the medicine man refuse his own medicine? Then he is a coward and fit only to be with the women—not men."

"Stop, you fool," almost screamed the necromancer. "Do you know what you're asking?"

The effect on the natives was startling. Had Collishaw suddenly changed form before them their consternation could not have been greater. Several faces showed unmistakable indications of fear.

The policeman had asked for a revival of an ancient custom that none had anticipated. One or two seemed to welcome the suggestion, and their dark eyes sparkled with the sudden light of savagery. Over the

wrinkled, evil countenance of Mary Elizabeth broke a smile of fiendish delight. Not since she was a young woman, and her uncle was the chief shaman of the tribe, had she heard such a demand, and it was as music to her ears.

"The judgment of the mouse! The judgment of the mouse!" she croaked in ecstasy.

"We fought as King George men decide their quarrels, but we did not finish. Let the mouse decide in native fashion," concluded Collishaw.

As the policeman ceased the crowd broke out into excited, noisy conversation which stopped as suddenly as it had started, and with one accord they turned questioning eyes on Thompson. The necromancer could hardly control the shaking of his limbs. Cold sweat stood out in great beads on his brow. His throat had become parched and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. For nearly a minute he could say nothing. This was a blow he had not expected. He realised that the edifice of power which he had so long striven to build, and which was almost completed, was tottering. To refuse was to win the contempt of the people over whom he had sought mastery, and make himself the laughing-stock of the Coast. He had planned for months his triumph of to-day, when he was to assert himself boldly as the great medicine man who had come to bring back the glory of departed shamanism. He was to signalise the event by an incursion into the very home of the veteran missioner. By clever strategy he had hoped to win for himself a white wife who, he believed, would be the means of saving himself from the prosecution of the law. He

had reasoned that for the sake of the work of the church, the humbled priest would endeavour to hush the matter and would not have recourse to the authorities.

Through the ill-timed arrival of this pestilential policeman his schemes had been interfered with, but luckily he had been able to overcome the white man in their first encounter. This had strengthened his position temporarily. Now, in the very hour of his victory, when he had come to taunt and torture his helpless rival, the white man had shattered his dream of power and affluence.

Refuse he could not and retain even a vestige of influence. To do so meant voluntary exile. Acceptance meant facing the possibility of failure with all its attendant barbarities, and the crushing for ever of any hope of again establishing the age-old doctrines of heathenism. Acceptance also offered the chance of success—an even chance, nothing more, for he knew that, while he might influence the mind of man, he could not compel obedience in the smallest and most timid creature of the animal kingdom.

Murder flamed in his heart. His hand stole beneath the shaman apron to the hilt of the knife that was hidden there. If he could only plunge it into the heart of the policeman; but he could not—not just then. There was a deathly silence. The natives were watching him, and he looked dumbly back at them.

"Let us hear your words." It was the voice of the old squaw addressing him in his own tongue.

"He is crazy," answered Thompson thickly. "He does not know what he asks."

"The judgment of the mouse!" insisted the old

hag, her wrinkled, leathery face and hungry, merciless eyes gleaming hideously in the half-light of the shed.

"He knows what he asks." It was Paul who spoke, and one or two of the party nodded.

Thompson hesitated. Surely there must be some way to escape from this predicament with which he had been so suddenly confronted. Time—if he could only obtain time, he knew he could contrive some way out of this maze that befogged his wits and threatened him with destruction.

"What right has this white man to interfere in our old customs?" he argued desperately. "It is not for him to seek the judgment of the mouse."

"He has the same right as you had to seek the huldowget for the white woman." Again it was Paul who gave answer, and he continued: "The half-breed is afraid of his own medicine. His heart is filled with water. Let him leave us and go live with the children of his own village."

"No, no," denied Thompson fearfully, as he steadied himself against the wall. "I'm not afraid. I will accept the judgment of the mouse, and it will prove that the medicine of your fathers is good. I have spoken."

Collishaw had been watching, with every nerve and sense alert, the struggle that had been going on within the mind of the half-breed. He could almost read the thoughts of his enemy and knew that he would ultimately accept the inevitable. He noted the effort that it required for Thompson to make his decision; how his eyes had taken on the look of a wounded wild animal at bay, and the working of his throat and the twitching of the muscles of his face.

Hardly had the half-breed spoken than Collishaw called out in a voice of authority, "Seize him and take his knife away."

Involuntarily the Indians fell upon Thompson and pinioned his arms and robbed him of his sheath-knife. As he had anticipated, the necromancer had not had time to recover from the reaction that followed his acceptance of the challenge, and he submitted dumbly to being searched.

"Bind him as the policeman is bound," ordered Paul, who assumed leadership. In a trice it was done, and Thompson was propped against one wall and opposite to him Collishaw was placed.

"Now," said Paul to the natives, "go get the mouse and the cage and bring them to the old house over there. I will stay and guard these men."

As the group of fearful, wondering natives turned to go, he halted them. "Andrew and Joseph Jimmy will watch the mouse," he said. "Let them eat frogs' ashes or drink sea-water, that they may have empty bellies and clean minds."

"I have frogs' ashes," shouted Mary Elizabeth gleefully.

"That is well."

The man addressed as Joseph Jimmy would have protested against his selection as referee, but the others, happy to have escaped the responsibility, would not permit him to do so and led him grumblingly away.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CREEPING SHADOW

COLLISHAW looked dully across at his enemy and fellow-captive. The strain had been terrible, and, now that it was over, the agony of his bruised and broken body was such that his brain no longer functioned as a sensitive organ. Nature provides a point at which physical anguish ceases to be recorded on the nerve centres of the mind—a saturation point beyond which it is impossible for physical emotions to become registered—where the faculties of feeling fail, and mental inertia mercifully develops. Collishaw had reached this extreme limit of suffering. He looked uncomprehendingly across in the half-gloom of the shed with unseeing eyes. Then his head fell slowly forward. A sigh like that of a tired child escaped him and he lapsed into unconsciousness.

Thompson's puffed and swollen face showed the marks of the fight of the morning. One eye was almost closed, but from between narrowed lids it showed as clearly as its mate the fear and mental suffering that was torturing his soul. Gifted with an active imagination and cultivated with a veneer of education, the half-breed lacked the stoicism and fortitude of his mother's people. Cruel and calculating, and ready to engage in physical battle for the attainment of his ends when necessity drove, he was not inured to mental suffering or to the tortures of slow uncertainty.

Now as he sat with his back against the wall and saw Collishaw's head sink forward, he mistook the white man's attitude for one of sleep. It maddened and terrorised him. It unnerved him to think that his enemy could find repose in the shadow of the approaching ordeal. There must be some trick, some prepared plan of which he knew nothing, by which the policeman was to escape and he was to suffer. Collishaw had no right to sleep while he was in such torment; he was not going to permit it; the white man must keep him company in misery.

"Wake up, you dog," he hissed.

There was no answer.

"Wake up, I say; wake up, you snake!" he cried almost hysterically.

"Shut up," Paul ordered.

"I won't. He's got to keep awake. I'm not going to stand for it"; and he began feverishly to tear at the strong knots that bound his lower limbs.

"Stop," shouted the cripple; but the half-breed paid no attention.

"Stop it," repeated the guard, and when there was no sign of compliance with his order, he brought the heavy stick he used as a crutch down on Thompson's fingers.

With a cry of pain the half-crazed necromancer dropped the knots and clasped his hands to his bosom, while he cringed closer to the dead wood of the walls.

"Do that again and I'll hit you on the head," threatened Paul.

"Don't do it," whimpered Thompson.

For a time he sat still, watching the cripple closely.

Then a look of craftiness crept over his disfigured features. "Paul," he whispered, "Paul, untie me and I will pay you well."

"No."

"I'll buy you a new gun and a canoe."

"No."

"I'll give you a gallon of whisky."

"Shut up."

"Then I'll put the evil spirits on you"; and his face was contorted with hatred.

Paul shuddered and paled, but he answered, "Use such threats to frighten women and children. Now shut up or I'll make you."

While he was talking Thompson had been digging in the earth beside him, and now his hand closed over a fairly large stone.

"Look! Who is that?" he exclaimed, pointing to the doorway. Paul turned, and at the same time stepped to one side. It was fortunate for him that he did so, for the rock, hurled with all the force that the half-breed could command, flew past his head and struck against the end wall of the shed.

With surprising agility in one so lame, the Indian whirled, his face dark with passion, and, lifting his crutch, brought it smashing down through the defence of uplifted arms, on top of Thompson's head. With a groan the half-breed rolled over, stunned.

Without bothering to see if he had killed the sorcerer, Paul grunted and limped over to the block of wood that served him as a seat, and fell to contemplating the unconscious forms before him.

It was nearly an hour before Thompson showed

signs of recovery. He sighed, turned his head slowly from side to side, and then opened his eyes. For a moment he lay in a daze, looking fixedly up at the torn roof.

"You be good now," admonished Paul, again speaking in the aboriginal tongue.

"Uh! Where am I?"

"You are here, and if you try any more evil tricks I'll kill you," answered the cripple grimly.

"Oh, my head!" exclaimed the shaman, pressing his hands to his temples.

"Keep still and I'll not hurt you, but if you try and talk to me, I'll fix you."

Thompson pushed himself up to a sitting posture. "Get me some water," he begged.

"No. I can't trust you."

The sound of their voices had the effect of bringing Collishaw from his daze, back to a full realisation of his sufferings. He groaned, and the sound delighted the half-breed.

"Do it again. It's music to me," he sneered.

"You devil," answered the white man.

The other only laughed. "Go on," he mocked. "Groan. I like to know you're suffering."

Collishaw forgot his pain in his murderous hate of the man. The very intensity of his passion cooled and steadied him. He looked across the room at the half-breed and remembered the paralysis of fear that had seized him when faced with the decision of trusting his fate to the old tribal custom.

"Thompson," he said, speaking slowly and with a cold incisiveness that drilled each word into the

consciousness of his enemy—"Thompson, you will do the suffering when the mouse decides. I will be there to see it, Thompson. Can't you just see yourself turning and twisting in torment? Can't you hear the fire crackling and the squaws drumming in tune to your misery?"

"Stop, stop, for God's sake stop," shrieked the wretch, his face livid with fear.

"Yes, you can hear them," went on Collishaw quickly and, pointing at the necromancer as he leaned forward, "Listen, Thompson. You can hear them now. Look, look, see your tormentors!"

The half-breed screamed in a delirium of fright, "No, no, don't touch me; leave me alone," and fell to sobbing.

"Now perhaps you'll not mock me," muttered Collishaw, as he turned his bruised cheek to the wall and closed his eyes wearily. Such was his physical exhaustion that despite the pangs of his wounds he dozed.

It was evening when he awakened to find that the hour of trial had arrived. The place was almost dark and Indians filled the interior. Paul was speaking: "The trial will be held in the old potlatch hall," he said. "Unbind these men and give them water. Help them to the place."

Two natives came to Collishaw and cut the ropes that tied him.

"Cut my boots off me," he told them, and with some trouble the canvas and rubber was severed and his heavy sea-boots were removed, bringing almost instant relief to his swollen limbs.

Before the work was completed a boy brought water from the creek and gave him to drink. The supply was sufficient for him to bathe his temples and pour the remainder over his head and shoulders.

He essayed to rise, but found that his feet and legs were too numbed and stiff to permit walking. With the assistance of the two men who had liberated him he finally managed to stand upright, and with an arm about the neck of each started for the door. Thompson, with the help of another native, followed. In passing his enemy, Collishaw obtained one glance at the fear-blanched face and, in spite of his hatred for the man, could not forbear to pity him.

Stepping out into the softening light of departing day, he paused for a moment to look about him. Indians were standing in silent little groups, and he realised that few had remained behind in the village church. From the position of the sun he knew there would be less than an hour of daylight left, and he wondered if night would bring eternal darkness for him. Standing in the open space between the old salmon shed and the larger building which, in the olden times, was the great dining-hall where factor and trader, clerk and apprentice gathered to dine sumptuously or meagrely as the food supplies permitted, and where mirth and jollity, laughter and jest featured the welcoming of the daring old sea-captains who came at infrequent intervals to take away the fur harvest of the forest, he paused for a moment in silent prayer.

John Collishaw was not a deeply religious man, and he scorned the idea of appealing for Divine intervention

in a moment of personal danger only to neglect his devotions in more tranquil periods. His prayer now was not for himself. "O Lord," he whispered, "I'm not asking you to save me, but, in the name of your Son who suffered, protect Mary if anything happens to me, and don't let the work of Father David be undone."

Urged on by his companions, he stumbled forward.

It seemed fitting that this old hall, the first abode of the white man, should be the place chosen for the revival of the aboriginal tribunal which his coming had relegated to the realm of tradition. The big room had, in the days of the Hudson's Bay traders' occupancy, been very comfortable. Framed of squared logs and sealed with moss and clay, it had withstood the winds and shut out the winter cold. The floors had been of whip-sawed lumber and the doors of heavy-edged and planed spruce. A great open fireplace gave warmth to the interior, which had been lighted by two small windows, facing the west to catch the last rays of departing day. The window openings would have been larger, but Fort Oliver had boasted real glass in the frames of these windows, and the openings had been cut to fit the panes and not the glass fashioned to the openings.

The destroying hand of time and the depredations and necessities of the Indians had left the place a sorry wreck. The flooring had long since disappeared; the doors had been carried away to answer other purposes, and the two western windows were without glass. In one of these remained a portion of the frame, from which the four small lights had been removed.

The front porch which had dignified the place and set it aside from the other buildings of similar architecture in the fort was no more, and the rain and snow of many winters had beaten in through the gaping doorway and windows. The shakes and cedar bark that had once shingled the roof had been shorn almost completely off the sea side by succeeding gales.

The room had an almost nauseating odour of dank decay about its mildewed walls and rotting rafters, while in the unlighted recesses and dark corners great grey rats, disturbed by the approach of humans, scurried fearfully to secret hiding-places beneath the foundation logs or in nooks and crannies of the crumbling fireplace.

There was a sense of clammy uncanniness about the musty interior that caused Collishaw to shudder as he stepped over the splintered threshold to the damp earthen floor.

The mouse was already there. It was caged in a little box woven from split cedar branches, so fashioned that there was no escape for the tiny prisoner whose every movement could be observed.

A discarded salmon-case had been brought from the village, and on top of this the wicker cage was placed. The dozen Indians who were already there were watching, with awesome dread and respect, the tiny creature that was to be sole judge and arbiter between two human beings.

Joseph Jimmy and Andrew, the men chosen as referees, pale and ghastly from recent retchings and fearful of their terrible responsibility, were standing apart from their fellows, their faces twitching with

nervousness. Only old Mary Elizabeth seemed to contemplate the impending barbarities with pleasurable anticipation. She cackled mirthfully as she chose a place for herself and drum and directed three other frightened old women to their stations. Two of them had crudely-made cedar boxes similar to the more finished instrument that Mary Elizabeth carried, and the third held two wide, flat polished bones, about a foot in length.

Collishaw felt a sickening fear steal over him as he glanced quickly around and then at the little animal that would decide his fate with a nod. By a tremendous effort of will he overcame the horror that gripped him, and turned to see the approach of his enemy.

Thompson reached the doorway, looked inside at the solemn-miened group of witnesses to the affair and started back. His face filled with horror, his jaw dropped and he swayed unsteadily, so that he required assistance to move forward.

Paul followed Thompson, and after him came fourteen or fifteen more Indians, who moved timidly to the door and stopped.

"Come in or go away," ordered Paul. "There must be light from the door."

Ten or a dozen timidly entered and edged to the back of the big room.

"Is everything ready?" asked Paul.

"Yes"; and Mary Elizabeth nodded happily.

"Move the mouse forward so there will be good light," the cripple commanded, and the salmon-case was shifted several feet closer to the window with the broken cross-frames.

Collishaw did not pay any particular attention to this or the succeeding orders that Paul issued for the better arrangement of the principal witnesses and actors in the affair. The human mind is peculiarly constituted. Often in times of great stress the thing that attracts attention is not the vital element of the crisis, but some indifferent and wholly extraneous subject, or some minor detail only remotely connected with the issue. So it was now with John Collishaw. He seemed oblivious to the preparations being made for the trial, and riveted his attention for the time being on the shadow cast by the broken window-frame in the square patch of sunlight that fell directly in front of the salmon-case.

Dully he watched it move almost imperceptibly forward, until when Paul, standing directly behind the box, announced that all was in readiness, it had started slowly to mount the smooth side of the case.

Recalled from his preoccupied following of the shadow by the self-appointed master of ceremonies, Collishaw nodded affirmatively his preparedness to proceed. He was seated in front and to one side of the mouse, while Thompson was directly opposite. Joseph Jimmy was crouched beside the box, his eyes level with the little cage, while Andrew occupied a similar position on the other side.

Squatted on the ground in a semicircle behind Paul were Mary Elizabeth and her assistants, while in a large sweep almost enclosing the actors in this strange savage drama were the half-frightened spectators.

Paul raised his hand and the three drums and the bone clappers beat time, slowly at first, but quickening

slightly at a signal from the conductor. When the measure was to his liking he again motioned, and the squaws, maintaining the same methodical beating, started to croon a weird unmusical chant. Their bodies swayed from side to side, in keeping with the monotonous drone of their voices.

The whole thing was so strange, so unreal, and so fiendish in its savagery, that Collishaw could hardly realise that it was not some awful hallucination, and that he was actually in jeopardy of his life or reason, before a tribunal such as even the hellish injustice of the ancient Druids had never conceived. He looked across the narrow space that separated him from Thompson, and the abject terror in that disfigured and distorted face convinced him of the gruesome reality of it all.

"If it will save Mary, I don't care," he told himself, and, closing his eyes, he repeated his prayer for her protection, while in his ears droned the squaws in dreadful monotony.

Somehow, he seemed relieved by his appeal to the Almighty, and when he opened his eyes it was to look with amazement at the shadow mounting more quickly now as the sinking sun sought refuge behind the western horizon. It startled and fascinated him.

Now Paul commenced to call: "John—Caleb—John—Caleb." The names were enunciated slowly and distinctly, a measured pause between each. The cold sweat stood out on John's forehead now. His breath came in deep, spasmodic gasps—an inhalation of dread and fear as his name was called and an exhalation of relief and thankfulness as that of his adversary was uttered.

He looked towards the sunlit side of the box for hope and encouragement, and then again at the lips of the cripple.

"John — Caleb — John — Caleb — John — Caleb," called the Indian; "uughm-uughm-uughm," went the drums, and "thlak-thlak-thlak" the sharper note of the bones.

Now the room was darkening. A cloud was passing in front of the fading orb of day, but still the measured time of that awful medley of death continued unchanged, and above the other noises the clear, carefully timed voice of Paul: "John — Caleb — John — Caleb."

The watchers of the mouse, their attention riveted on the small animal, strained their eyes to see the better in the lessened light of the room. Collishaw dropped his eyes to the box. There was no longer a shadow there. He felt as if hope had been snatched from him—that he was doomed.

"John—Caleb—John—Caleb," went on the voice of the cripple, above the droning of the swaying old women and the regular beating of their drums.

Suddenly the cloud passed, and with the last bright ray that the sun sent forth—a promise of a brighter day coming—the shadow reappeared. It fell directly across the cage. "John—Caleb—John—Caleb."

A startled cry broke from the referees. The tiny mouse had given judgment. The sudden coming of the shadow had caused it to cringe farther back in its prison, and, in doing so, it had nodded in its efforts to get away from—the shadow of the Cross.

There was a hush; a deadly silence. Collishaw and

Thompson both leaned forward, eyes bulging, nostrils distended, limbs shaking, senses reeling. Each had heard, and one hoped while the other feared that over-wrought nerves had deceived him in the name.

"What did the mouse decide?" asked Paul.

Men and women looked fearfully at each other.

"What did the mouse decide?"

"Caleb is guilty," answered the watchers in tremulous unison.

A double cry rent the air; one the agonised shriek of a mortal in hopeless terror, the other a woman's scream of joy and thankfulness.

It was the feminine voice that Collishaw heard. He half rose as he turned towards the door. There was no mistaking—there, framed in the doorway, was Mary.

He echoed her "Thank God," stretched out his arms to her and pitched forward. She caught him as he fell and, sinking down beside him, cushioned his head on her lap.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRE NEEDLES

THOMPSON rose uncertainly, his hands groping aimlessly, as if seeking something that eluded him. He stood on legs spread far apart, his body swaying slowly from side to side, while through his wide-opened mouth his breath came and went in laboured gasps. His unseeing gaze became fixed on one face and then another.

The Indians, appalled by the sight, recoiled as if fearing destruction from his sightless look.

Then he saw Mary bending over the unconscious white man. He gazed at them with a vacuous expression on his face; memory returned and a wild berserker rage filled him. With a demoniacal cry he plunged forward, his eyes gleaming with murder and his fingers outstretched like the talons of a hawk descending on its prey. He would rend them with his bare hands.

The girl looked up, and an exclamation of fright escaped her as she threw herself forward to shield the policeman's head with her body. She closed her eyes against the sight of this fiend who terrorised her and to whom she had pledged herself only a few hours before.

She waited, her flesh cringing from the onslaught, but in her soul there was a strange joy that she might suffer in protecting the bruised face of the man who

had so sacrificed himself for her, and thus in a measure atone for the agonies she had brought upon him.

The blow did not fall. Thompson did not reach the objects of his wrath. Indians threw themselves upon him, and with savage yells and imprecations hurled him, fighting and screaming, to the ground. He was no longer the great medicine man. He could no longer command evil spirits to do them hurt. They had witnessed his failure and it had been in the fire of his own making. With that strange perversity of human nature, be it in untutored native or cultured Caucasian, the downfall of a popular idol is always greeted by his former admirers in proportion to his previous eminence. And so it was now. These Indians who had, that very day, been prepared to follow him in open defiance of the law to the very foot of the scaffold, if need be, were now anxious only to accomplish his utter humiliation and defeat.

He fought like a tiger, lashing out with his feet and striking and tearing with his hands at those nearest to him, but his efforts were futile against the numbers that assailed him. They struck at him, screaming insults, and those closest to him kicked viciously, their blows losing effectiveness by the very desire of those behind to press forward to boot the prostrate form of the half-breed.

In vain did Paul call out to leave the sorcerer alone. He no longer commanded their attention. All trace of the white man's civilisation had vanished, and they were once more creatures of the wild, bent only on revenge and torture.

Mary Elizabeth, her lips drawn back over her yellow

fangs and her eyes lighted with fanatical purpose until they blazed like living coals, wormed her way through the fighting, screaming crowd, until she attained the inner circle, and with her long claw-like nails marked the face of her former friend and mentor.

The sight of the hideous old creature caused even the inflamed passions of the savages to cool for an instant, and compelled attention to the directions she shrieked:

"The fire! The fire! Get wood for the fire!"

"The fire!" A dozen voices echoed her cry, and men and women rushed to do her bidding. The old hearth was soon heaped high with twigs, splintered wind-blown shakes and branches of deadwood. A match was applied and flames shot up through the pile, crackling and hissing. Smoke wreathed through the old building, shadowing for an instant the lust-drunken faces limned in the red radiance of the blaze.

Thompson, his face streaming blood, sought to rise, but again he was hurled to the ground.

"The needles! Get the needles!" shouted the old hag, and several men, lighting their way with burning brands snatched from the fire, disappeared into the darkness of the forest to return with evergreens.

"No, no," screamed Thompson. "Not the needles. For God's sake, not the burning needles. I'll do anything——"

Despite his screams and heedless of his cries for mercy, his tormentors dragged him towards the fire. The gaudy but dirt-bespattered dress of the medicine cult was torn from his quivering limbs and was ruthlessly cast aside. The wolves' teeth and grizzly claws, but so shortly before potent with mystic charm to these

people, held no terrors now. They cut away the apron of shamanism that girded his waist and severed the cedar withes of his necklace. The white man's shirt of fine linen was ripped from his back, and he appeared, stripped to the waist as he lay on the ground, too paralysed by fear to attempt to rise.

An old squaw, whose lower lip still bore the scarred hole where an ancient labret had been set, with devilish delight rolled him over until his bare neck reddened in the heat of the burning wood.

Others were engaged in feverishly stripping the fir and spruce branches, and now needles were ready. Thompson, moaning and groaning piteously, was dragged from the hearth, and Mary Elizabeth, with another, commenced to force them into the tender and quivering flesh of his back. His tortured cries were terrible to hear.

Mary Cunningham, aghast with horror, realised her impotence and inability to do anything to stop the savages. She could only cover her ears and close her eyes—and pray.

Paul had disappeared when the fire was lighted. There was none to whom she could appeal for assistance, for she feared that to attract attention to herself and the insensible policeman would be to invite similar treatment to that being accorded the half-breed.

When the necromancer, writhing and twisting in anguish, sought in a frenzy of desperation to fight against the final torment, Mary took advantage of the shadows of the crowd in front of the fireplace to drag the senseless policeman to the door.

It was a tremendous task, for she feared to rise

from her knees, and he lay a dead weight. It required every ounce of her strength to pull him forward a few inches. With each meagre gain she stopped to look back at the fiends about the fire.

Gradually, little by little, inch by inch, she lessened the distance to the door. If she could only get him from the building she could hide with him in the forest until help could be secured!

She had almost attained the threshold when she sensed some person standing there. She had been detected and stopped! Such was the thought that fear drove through her brain. She was to be prevented from the attainment of her purpose.

The wild fury of despair surged through her, and she half rose to fling herself on the person who thus blocked the way to escape. She stopped; her heart almost ceased its beating; she would have called out, but a choking in her throat prevented articulation, for outlined against the lighter shade of the night sky was the great, rugged form of Father David.

For an instant only the priest stood looking in at the wild scene of paganistic brutality before him. He threw back his head and uttered a mighty shout that filled the building with its volume:

"Stop it, you devils!"

Followed his battle-cry, "The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and with a bound he was among the erring members of his congregation.

The suddenness of his appearance and the manner of his coming startled the natives into instant submission and filled them with a desire to escape.

"You would, would you?" he cried, as he struck

out with his open palms. "You stiff-necked and disobedient people"; and one and then another felt the terrific force of his heavy hand.

"You would have trial by the mouse!" and he lashed out with his foot and sent the salmon-case flying across the room to bowl over a squaw who was attempting to escape from the building.

Again and again he repeated his war-cry, darting hither and thither, his long arms working like flails. Every blow knocked an Indian down, only to rise again and dash, squealing and whimpering, about the room in vain efforts to avoid further chastisement. One would almost achieve the portal when the priest would be upon him, and with a powerful heave throw him back among the milling pack.

"You, Matthew!" and he caught one old fellow and cuffed his ears. "Get back there"; and he sent the man reeling against another, who was edging towards the opening.

"You, Solomon! I'm surprised. Named after the Lord's anointed!" and he slapped Solomon. "You, too, Rebecca!" and she was sent shrieking across the room, to cringe in a corner.

"And you, Mary Elizabeth! The devil's in you"; and he picked the old crone up and shook her until her teeth rattled. "You would lead my children astray!" and he flung her from him.

He stopped for an instant, his face crimson with rage. "Where is he? Where is he?" he cried, and spying Thompson, "Ah, there you are, crawling on your belly like the snake that you are," he exclaimed as he rushed at the half-breed.

"There you are," he repeated as he stooped down and seized the hapless sorcerer in his powerful grasp. With one hand he raised him to his feet and with the other he enclosed Thompson's throat.

"You would lead these people to the devil, would you?" and he shook the man as a terrier would a rat.

"I'll teach you, I will," he threatened, and again and again he shook the wretch. Thompson's eyes stood out from their sockets and his tongue was forced between his teeth, while his face gradually took on a darker hue.

Just how far the enraged missioner would have gone in his wrath was uncertain, for Mary threw herself on him and seized him by the arm.

"Father David!" she cried. "Stop! stop! you're killing him. You're choking him to death. Stop it."

"Eh, what?" and he loosened his hold. The half-breed fell in a crumpled heap, gasping and choking and fighting for breath.

"Forgive me, Lord, I was nearly committing the sin that marked Cain," he muttered. "But, Lord, there was justification for chastisement."

He paused and then lifted his head, and again the mighty shout rang out: "The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

Those Indians who had escaped from the building during the brief time in which he was dealing with Thompson, hearing it, fled with startled cries as fast as their ages and infirmities would permit, into the forest or along the beach, some one way, some another, but all urged on by the fear of the priest's vengeance. They remained in hiding for several days,

until they thought his anger would have cooled. In the years that he had been among them they had occasionally seen him in righteous rage, but never before had they beheld him so wild and war-like.

The missionary bent over the sorcerer, watching him with some concern showing on his honest old face. At last, with a satisfied sigh, he said, more to himself than the half-breed, "I've cheated the devil. He's not going to get you for awhile."

Turning to Mary, he shook his head as he looked at her, standing with downcast eyes in the glow of the firelight.

"Little girl, little girl," he said with such a note of sorrow in his voice that she burst into tears. "Poor little Mary"; and he put his hand tenderly upon her head.

"But where's John?" he asked anxiously. "Have they——?" He hesitated to complete the query.

"No, Father. He's here, but he's hurt."

"Where? Show me."

"There"; and she motioned to the prostrate form near the wall, where she had dragged Collishaw when the priest appeared.

"Here he is"; and she ran to the policeman and knelt beside him.

"I don't think there are any bones broken," ventured Mary, "unless it be one of his ribs. I've not had much chance of finding out. I tried to do so before moving him, but it was all so terrible I could not do much. I thought they were going to kill us both, and—and—I deserved it"; and again she started to sob.

"Poor lad," repeated the old man, and he gathered

the policeman in his arms with no more effort than a mother lifting her babe. "Come," he exclaimed, "this is no time for tears. Come along"; and he stepped to the door. Mary followed.

Forms appeared in the darkness outside.

"Who are you?" demanded Father David.

A shout of delight gave answer and half a dozen men, armed with rifles, followed Paul into the light of the doorway. "It's you, Father David! We not know you come," said the cripple. "We glad. We come stop the people burning Thompson. These men pray in church all day. God bring you back to us."

"Praise His name," was the fervent response of the priest; "the seed was not all on stony ground.

"Thank you, my children," he added, and then, looking back into the old hall, "Better bring Thompson along. He needs some attention."

Without further speech the old doctor started away with his burden. Mary followed as best she could, but found it impossible to keep up with his long strides. Weak from her exertions and the horrible spectacle she had witnessed, she could not hurry and gradually fell behind.

As she stumbled along, every outstanding object was transformed in the darkness, by her imagination, as a new and horrible menace. She cried aloud, and found no relief in tears.

Now some person was walking beside her, someone whose footsteps were halting. She would have screamed but her throat suddenly parched. She cringed, as if from a hand that would seize her, and fell.

"You'd better take my arm." It was the voice of Nellie.

"Oh, Nellie, it's you! Where have you been all day?" For the moment she forgot her fear of the girl who had believed her possessed of some malignant power.

"I went for Father David."

"You went for Father David! Why, he was at Sliam."

"Yes, I went there."

"Who with?"

"I went alone, in a canoe."

"But how did you get there to the fort?" questioned the servant. "I thought you were in bed."

"I stayed there till quite late. Then I woke and found you gone and Martha there, and I made her tell me what happened, and then I went to look for John—for Mr. Collishaw, and—and—Nellie, it was terrible," she sobbed.

"Never mind, Miss Mary," soothed the other. "Never mind; come on, they'll be needing us."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GREATER SERVICE

THE guest chamber at the Mission was always ready, and to this Father David carried Collishaw and set him gently down on the bed.

Martha appeared from the kitchen and he nodded to her. "Stay here with him for a moment. Get his coat and shirt off"; and he disappeared in the direction of Mother's room.

Father David reappeared shortly, and there was less anxiety in his face, for he had found his wife much improved, having slept well during the day.

The doctor was in the dispensary when they carried Thompson in. "Put him in the hospital, and I'll attend to him presently," he said, as he gathered bandages, antiseptic dressings and ointments, and started for Collishaw's room. No longer was he the missioner fretting over the waywardness of his flock, but the keen-eyed, iron-nerved man of medicine.

As he passed through the living-room he saw Mary sitting on a chair. There was a vacant stare in her dry eyes. Near her, gazing pityingly at her, was the half-breed girl.

He stopped and looked at the nurse. "I'll see if she'll respond," he murmured, and, turning, issued some instructions to Nellie. She disappeared, and returned in a moment with Mary's white cap and nurse's apron.

"Come, Miss Cunningham," said the doctor sharply. "There's need of you in the sick-room"; and he held her uniform before her.

"What? Yes?" she answered.

"Come, put these on"; and he dropped them on her lap.

For an instant she looked at them dully. Then all the force of her training came to her aid. "Yes, doctor," she answered, and stood up. With a slight smile and nod of his head, Father David proceeded on his way. "I knew it would work," he told himself. "Training is a wonderful thing. It will save her from herself. The nurse will overcome the woman."

A moment later and Mary was beside him at the bedside of Collishaw. As Father David had anticipated, she was once again the competent, careful nurse, efficient in her work, and sympathetic and considerate towards her patients.

"I don't like the look of that shoulder," commented the doctor. "His hand is badly broken, but that will mend all right; so will his rib; but there's danger of infection in that wound on his shoulder where Thompson bit him.

"There's only one thing that will prevent it"; and he looked searchingly at the girl. "It's careful nursing." He noted how she paled. "Do you think you're capable of undertaking the task?"

"I am." There was an eagerness and a note of determination in her answer that satisfied him.

"Then I'll leave him in your charge. You'd better stay with him to-night. I can relieve you in the morning."

"Yes, sir," she said. "I will stay."

"He's in a delirium now. You might give him this when he wakes"; and he indicated a small vial on which he had marked directions.

"Yes, doctor."

"She will be able to carry on all right," muttered Father David as he hurried away to attend to Thompson. "Poor child, but love is a great doctor."

Thompson's injuries were painful but not necessarily of a serious character. He was soon bandaged and in bed, in a cot beside the one little Mark had occupied the previous night. He looked at the still rumpled bed clothing and shuddered at the sight, then timidly asked that someone might stay the night with him. The doctor nodded grimly, for he had learned of the tragedy of the early morning and understood. He sent for the two men who had carried the necromancer to the hospital, and charged them with the task of keeping vigil.

Mary sat beside Collishaw's bed, her cool hand pressed on his heated brow, while great tears stood out in the corners of her eyes and slowly trickled down to fall on the coverlet. She forced back those that would have followed.

"He'll hate me after this," she told herself and, despite her effort to prevent them, tears again welled to her eyes and her bosom heaved with emotion.

Now he was muttering. It was a prayer. She leaned forward, her ears straining to catch his words. "O Lord," he whispered, "I'm not asking you to save me, but in the name of your Son who suffered, protect Mary if anything happens to me, and don't let the work of Father David be undone."

Her heart filled with a great joy. This had been his prayer in a moment of great torment—not for himself, but for her and Father David. She stooped down and kissed him, and it seemed as if his wandering mind comprehended, for a smile flickered over his bruised and swollen mouth.

During the long night he went over the trial of the day in his ravings, and from his utterances Mary pieced together the whole story of his sacrifice. Her name occurred frequently, and each mention of it only served to convince her further of the manner in which this fine young fellow loved her. She could not but reproach herself with her unworthiness for so great and holy an affection, and she kissed again and again the finger-tips that showed from beneath the bandages of his broken hand.

The dawn of another day was chasing the darkness of night from the room when Collishaw half sat up in bed. He pointed his right hand at the foot of the bed. "See, see," he exclaimed. "See the shadow, see it. Look, look, it's crawling up the box. There it goes. It will save me. O God, hurry it.—Now it's gone, I'm lost," and he sobbed. "No, there it is again. Look, see it on the cage. See it, it's the shadow of the Cross—I'm saved." He fell back on his pillow, mumbling softly, "It's defeated the spirit of darkness."

A moment later and Mary knew by his measured breathing that the delirium had given way to sleep. She fell on her knees and poured out her soul in thanksgiving.

When two hours later Father David relieved Mary he marvelled at the change in the girl. She seemed to

have regained her strength by her night of watching, and there was something in her face, a look of peace and contentment, that had not been there the night before.

"I can stay here longer," she protested. "I'm not tired."

"No, you'd better go," he said. "You need the rest."

In the living-room, where breakfast had been spread for her, she paused to refresh herself with a cup of tea.

Nellie approached with hanging head and flung herself down beside Mary, and buried her face in her lap.

"Oh," she wailed, "can you ever forgive me for what I did?"

"You have done nothing to me," exclaimed the white girl in astonishment.

"Yes, I have. I helped Caleb Thompson"; and she poured out the whole miserable tale of her confederacy with the necromancer while Mary listened in amazement.

"It was me sprinkled blood on you when you were asleep—chicken blood," she wailed. "It was me put the rat in your room to frighten you, and cut your coat, and took the other things," she confessed. "He told me you had a huldowget that would harm Mother and Father David."

Only once did Mary interrupt: "Oh, Nellie!" she said, and then, as the other concluded her recital, "Can you tell me what it was I saw at the window in the hospital?"

"That," said the girl, "was one of the old devil masks. Thompson was watching you, and he put it up against the window to scare you."

There was silence for a few moments, broken only by the sobbing of the half-breed girl. Mary gently stroked the bowed head on her lap, as she looked with unseeing eyes out of the window at the waters of the bay, which sparkled and glittered beneath the morning sun. Her thoughts were with the man in the sick-room and the knowledge of the suffering that had been his, and of the great love he had disclosed in his unconscious talk.

"Can you ever forgive me?" pleaded the servant.

"Nellie," Mary said gently, and she lifted the tear-stained face so that she could look the girl in the eyes—"Nellie," and she smiled sweetly, "can I blame you when my own faith was so weak? I can forgive you. I do so freely, for what I have suffered, but we both—you and I—must beg forgiveness from Mr. Collishaw and from Father David." Stooping, she kissed the half-breed girl.

There came a loud rapping at the door, and before Nellie could dry her eyes and respond to the summons it opened to admit a big, rough-looking man with a flaming red beard. "Whaur's Jock Collishaw, lassie?" he demanded brusquely. "His boat's doon yonder, bit whaur's the lad?"

"Ah, Finlayson, it's you," exclaimed Father David, entering the room. "I'm glad indeed to see you."

"An' me t' see yersel', Faither," answered the manager of the Dundee cannery. "Bit A'm seekin' Collishaw. He stairted awa' in his wee boat frae the cannery in the storm an' A've been worrit aboot him since."

"He's hurt, Finlayson; but he'll be all right, I trust."

"Hurted! Losh! The puir laddie. A tell'd him nae tae try it, bit he would. He did it despite me. Bit hoo did it a' happen?"

"Oh, he tried to stop a necromancer—a half-breed—from carrying on his devilry, and there was a fight. But—here, let me introduce you to Miss Cunningham, our nurse and assistant here," added Father David as Mary rose to leave the room.

"Good losh!" exclaimed Finlayson, and he dropped into a chair and stared in open-mouthed amazement at the girl. He extended his great rough hand, stopped, looked searchingly at the nurse for a moment, and then almost shouted:

"It was nae the canned corn! A see it a' the noo. A was richt the firs' time, A was."

"What has canned corn to do with Miss Cunningham, Malcolm? Are you daft?" demanded Father David in astonishment.

"Naethin', naethin' at a'," laughed the Scot as he grasped Mary's hand and shook it again and again. "Naethin' at a'," he repeated. "Bit ye see, Jock said as he kenned he should be here an' in the airly morn he said he'd a bit hunch like, an' I couldna stop him comin'. A tell'd him it was canned corn we had fer supper that was botherin' him"; and again the canner shook with laughter. "Bit noo, I see it a'. It was th' lassie here that was wantin' him."

Then soberly he asked, "Miss, aboot daybreak, did ye call him—kind o' send oot a mind message tae him?"

Mary looked at Father David and her eyes filled with tears.

"Miss Cunningham," started the priest, "has had a very trying time, Malcolm, so perhaps——"

"Yes," interrupted Mary. "Yes, Father David. I did call for him about daybreak—I—I called with all my mind and all my soul and my very being—and—and he came."

"Good losh!" exclaimed Finlayson, and he dropped his jaw and stared in open-mouthed amazement at the girl.

"Yes, I know; I understand," said the priest sympathetically. "I know, Mary. Now you run right along and get some rest."

"Losh! She mist be Hielan' an' hae the secon' sight," announced Finlayson with conviction when she had gone.

When the canner heard the full story of the day he insisted on staying at the Mission, "tae gie a han' aboot the place," as he described it, and Father David, not sure to what extent the righting of the wrongs done by the necromancer would require his attention, gladly availed himself of the offer.

So it was that when Collishaw awoke that afternoon he found Finlayson sitting by his bedside. The policeman looked at him for a moment, then down at the white sheets. "Malcolm," he whispered, "is that you?"

"Aye, it's me," softly answered the Scot.

"Where am I?"

"Ye're in Faither Dauvid's house."

"And Mary—Miss Cunningham?"

"The lassie's fine," Finlayson assured him. "She's haein' a bit sleep. She wis wi' you all nicht."

"And Father David?"

"He's aboot the village fer a wee. He's fine tae."

"Thank God.

"And, Finlayson, where's the other man—the half-breed—Thompson; where's he?"

"He's nae sae fine," chuckled the canner. "He's in the hospital. He'll be gettin' better though, an' that's nae sae fine either," he added.

"Bit noo, the auld doctor says ye're nae tae talk, an' ye're tae drink this"; and he lifted Collishaw's head from the pillow with as much gentleness as a girl would have shown, and held the glass while John drank.

The invalid was soon asleep again, and as Finlayson sat watching, he exclaimed softly to himself, "This love's a queer thing. Solomon was richt when he said there's nae understandin' the way o' a lad an' a lass—an' Solomon kenned a' aboot them if ony man did."

Gradually Collishaw gained in strength. As Father David feared, the injury to his shoulder was the most troublesome of his hurts. The broken rib and the bones of his smashed hand mended rapidly, but the bite of the sorcerer festered and caused him much pain.

Mary was in constant attendance, while Mother, now slowly recovering from her illness, came often to sit with him. Finlayson, too, the salmon run being well over, came often to "hae a crack wi' the lad."

As soon as Mary considered him to be strong enough, she and Nellie both came to his bedside to beg forgiveness and pour out anew their confessions. But he stopped them and refused to listen, declaring that he had nothing to forgive. He would not, thereafter, permit them to even mention the affair.

But while he evaded discussing the fight and the ordeal through which he had passed with others, his own mind was filled with it, and often at night as he lay awake he worried over it, for he believed that the service he had rendered Mary had made it impossible for him to attain his soul's desire. He could not, he reasoned, hope now to speak of his regard, for it would appear as if he was asking for payment of a debt. It was this thought that retarded his complete recovery more than the wounds he had received.

And Mary, watching him day by day, wondered why it was that he did not voice the love for her that his eyes assured her he possessed. Perhaps, she told herself, he did not want to wed one who had proved so untrustworthy, and many nights her pillow was wet with tears as she thought of the penalty of her lack of faith.

"There's something I can't understand worrying the boy," Father David confided to his wife. "He's not getting along as well as he should."

"Yes, David, I've noticed it too. I wonder what it can be?"

It remained for Finlayson to discover the cause. On one of his visits to Fort Oliver the Scot was sitting with Collishaw before the fire. They were alone in the room.

"Jock, lad," he said, "ye're worrit aboot somethin'. Noo A'm auld enough tae be yer faither, sae ye'll no be mindin' me; bit is it aboot yon lassie?"

Collishaw did not answer.

"Well, jis' be gettin' better an' get marrit tae her, fer she'll hae ye the meenute ye'll ask her."

"But, Malcolm," exclaimed the other, "I can't ask her."

"An' why not? Ye're no marrit already?"

"Certainly not."

"An' there's nae ither lass?"

"No. But you don't understand—you couldn't, so let's not speak of it any more."

"Weel, jis' as ye say, Jock," answered the Scot. "Jis' as ye say"; but a plan was slowly taking shape in his mind.

"Miss Mary," said Finlayson, a day or two later, "A'm wantin' tae hae a wurrd wi' ye. Let's gae ootside."

When they were seated on a log on the beach he ventured, "Ye'll nae be gettin' mad wi' me, lassie, fer what A'm aboot tae say, fer it's concernin' Jock."

"Concerning Mr. Collishaw?"

"Aye. He's nae gettin' weel as fas' as he should, an' it's nae his hurts either. It's his heid and his hairt that's botherin' him, an' the auld doctor has nae lotion that'll cure that trouble."

"Yes?" whispered the girl so low that it was hardly audible.

"An' it's you that's the cause. Noo, dinna be greetin'," he cried in alarm as he saw tears spring to her eyes. "A hae been speirin' him aboot it."

"You've been doing what to him?"

"Speirin' him—askin' him."

"Yes, yes?"

"Weel, ye see, it's somethin' A dinna understan'. Noo if it wis aboot fish, A'd ken all aboot it, bit aboot love——"

"But, Malcolm, what did he say?" Her voice was eager.

"Oh, aye," went on the canner, "he said as he couldna ask ye. He wants tae all richt, bit he canna dae it."

"Oh, Malcolm, you darling," cried the girl, and she threw her arms about the astonished Scotsman's neck and kissed him, and then jumped up and ran off to the house and to her room.

"Good losh!" exclaimed Finlayson, and after a moment, "Malcolm, ye auld scoundrel, ye may nae look the pairt, bit A'm thinkin' ye're a braw cupid," and he laughed uproariously. "Aye, Malcolm, ye red-heided auld cupid, ye."

Collishaw was to go out the following day for the first time, and it had been arranged that Finlayson was to accompany him, but at the breakfast table he began to make excuses. "A'm thinkin' A canna dae it," he said. "A mist pother aboot wi' the engine o' my boat. Perhaps Mary'd gae a wee walk wi' ye, Jock."

And so it was that Mary accompanied him on his walk. The first chills of autumn were painting the foliage of the forest with glorious shades of old gold, crimson and orange. The sunshine of midday was breaking through the branches, weaving a wonderful tracery of shadow and light on the leaf-strewn pathway beside the creek. They stopped to permit Collishaw to rest.

"John," she said tremblingly, "do you remember the last time we walked up this pathway?"

He nodded.

"And—and I said," she blushed, "that my life was devoted to service."

Again he motioned with his head, not trusting himself to speak.

"John," and she dropped her head, "yours has been the greater service."

He was trembling from head to foot as if seized by a chill.

They were both silent. Then she looked up at him, her face crimson with blushes.

"Must I say it, John? You may speak; I'm yours—if you want me."

"Mary," was all that he could say. He opened wide his arms, and with a glad cry she pillowed her head against his breast.

FINIS

Province - Dec. 5 - 1931

IN Huldowget: A story of the North Pacific Coast, by B. A. McKelvie, Vancouver, the publishers of Everyman's Library have, indeed, found a "tale which holdeth children from play and old men from the chimney corner." It will also hold many a middle-aged man and woman from sleep with its series of climaxes and its final breathless Indian witchcraft scene.

For Huldowget is a thrilling story of the clash between the customs of the aborigines of Canada and those who now hold the land. Its author is well known as the popular chief factor of the Native Sons of British Columbia and an ardent historian. This is his first fiction book. It comes closely after a History of British Columbia by the same author, and will be followed soon by his book for boys called Black Canyon, a tale of the Fraser Canyon.

Huldowget's plot is built on the fact that spirit worship and the Indian devil dances still hold sway under a surfacing of Christianity in settlements within a few miles of the heart of Canadian civilization. Its scene is a Northern British Columbia coast fishing village, where a mission has been established forty years.

Here, indeed, is a book of action. Thrill follows thrill. Last minute rescues add to the excitement and mysterious happenings contribute those touches that make ghost stories so irresistible. The movement is swift and decisive. Even the description is conveyed by action, and one of the word pictures is that of sea birds fleeing to safety as a mighty storm sweeps toward the Indian settlement.

For Mr. McKelvie has woven the spirit of unrest not only into the hearts of a once docile Indian mission flock, but has imbued the earth and sea and air with it.

The plot gathers speed chapter by chapter. It is a placid reader who quietly opens the first page of Huldowget. He is shown a small mission at Fort Oliver, up the coast. The missionary, apparently successful after forty years of service in winning the Indian village to Christianity, hears grim rumors that a "shaman," or witch doctor, has come secretly into the settlement and is practicing horrible rites. Huldowget is Tsimpshean for "evil spirit," which the witch doctor dares to tell the Indians has entered the body of the beautiful white girl.

At once, in the first chapter, the battle between the cultures of two great races is joined. Father David, missionary, has not only the patient loving spirit of his Master, but is consumed with the energy of the Crusader. Almost before the gauntlet is thrown he takes the field. Practically each chapter thereafter is a skirmish or engagement between cohorts of the two sides. And none are lacking in action.

There is a love element too. For the witch doctor, a half-breed, wants to wed the missionary's assistant, a beautiful girl. But a British Columbia police officer also falls in love with her. The girl loves the white man, but falls under the spell of the breed. So the tenseness of the original situation is doubled.

Then other excitements are added, all relevant to the plot and all consequent on the situation briefly told in the first few pages.

Finally comes the grim denouement when the white policeman and the half-breed witch doctor are pitted against each other in a primitive trial scene.

A terrified mouse holds their fate in the balance.

For the two men are being tried by the north coast Indian parallel of our ancient trial by fire—the trial by mouse. A movement by the little animal when in the presence of the men on trial fixes the guilt on one of them, say the rules of this rite. Fortunately in this story, the frightened mouse, by an instinctive movement, gives life to the white man, and awards the death and torture with demoniacal rites to his enemy. Fortunately too the half-breed is rescued at the last moment from the penalty for his crimes by help from an unhoped-for quarter.

So the story ends happily ever after; and the reader sinks to the sleep of exhaustion.

The reader of Huldowget is swept whole-heartedly along in this torrent of happenings. Indeed, the most probable criticism of the author will be that he hurries up too much. He has conceived an incomparable situation in which the civilizations of two peoples are mobilized against each other. Indians, and their spirit worship, is what the story is about, and a few readers would like a little more time to dwell on the problem.

Largely by speed and concentrated action, Mr. McKelvie has successfully impressed on the reader that Indian beliefs can not be wholly wiped out in a generation. After nearly half a century of service Father David was still not in absolute control of his people, runs the story.

Perhaps in no other way than by swift action could the author have so distinctly and definitely filled the mind of the casual reader with the depth of Indian veneration for the beliefs

of his fathers. Having served that purpose he quickly ends his book. Yet the more thoughtful reader, whose interest has thus been so spectacularly aroused, is left with a slight feeling of disappointment that the historian was unable to pursue further some of the problems raised in the story, and that the graphic writer did not develop a little more the original characters gathered together there.

For real insight and imagination are shown in some brief glimpses of tribal life and of missionary experiences.

Mr. McKelvie refuses to be the judge when he touches on certain aspects of our religion. He throws them into contrast with the beliefs of his north coast Indians. But he shows in his dialogue that the Indians find some of our Old and New Testament stories as difficult for them to believe as we think theirs are.

A Canadian ethnologist, Mr. E. Sapir, says the Indians of the coast had a vague notion of one supreme being, and Mr. McKelvie bears him out. He has one of his Indian characters tell a Nass legend of the creation. Very interesting, it is a little cruder than ours.

Here it is:

There was one old man dwelling in the sky. He owned the light. He had one "maa" or big box with the sun in it, and one with the moon in it and a third containing the stars. In all the world there was only one man, named Wiggett. He wanted these things. So he changed himself into a raven and flew up through the hole in the sky to the old man's home. And using the old man's daughter, he obtained all these valuable boxes.

He emptied the ones containing the stars and the moon through the hole in the sky and they spread over the heavens. He took down to earth the box containing the sun, and thus the world had light. This man Wiggett also formed several coast islands.

Here is an illuminating dialogue on another question:

"What do you see on the top of the church?" asks one of the characters in Huldowget of another.

"Why, the cross, of course,"

"Well, it's a totem," is the response. "It tells the story of Christianity. The totem poles are symbols of Indian stories while the cross tells of Christianity." This thesis is elaborated.

Here is the Lord's Prayer in Chinook:

"Our Father who stays in the above, good in our hearts be your name. Good your chief among all people; good your will upon earth as in the above. Give every day our food. If we do bad be not angry, and if anyone makes bad to us, not angry we to them. Send away from us all bad."

It will be seen that the Indian's conception of our religion must thus be considerably limited by difficulties of language. It will indeed be understood also that much of the successful evangelism on the coast must have been the result less of the doctrines of the Testaments, scarcely understood by them, than of the examples set by the missionaries themselves, who fled comfort and braved danger to spread the Gospel. Mr. McKelvie pays well-deserved tribute to their work in his preface.

Thus in Huldowget we have not only a hair-raising story, but brief glimpses of the task, requiring imagination and courage, of those who would weave into the best of the Indian religion the best in our own.

We have six main characters in Huldowget. Father David, the missionary, is a giant who believes in muscular Christianity. He subdues his enemies by brawn and holds his flock together by love. Their well-being is his heart. His battle-cry is the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. With his two fists he almost kills an enemy, and then sends him to his own little mission hospital and tends him until cured.

Mother, the missionary's wife, is at heart a womanly counterpart of her husband. Mary, the heroine, is assistant at the hospital, and her soul of a mystic is fruitful soil for the machinations of the half-breed witch doctor. In his description of the storm, Mr. McKelvie pictures her looking over the rising waters. Her golden hair over her shoulders in picturesque disorder, she "looked like some goddess of the ancients making her appeal to the sun, or like the daughter of a Viking tendering offerings to the storm king for the safe return of her lord."

Nellie, the Indian girl, is domestic of the missionary's household, and her religion is a veneer of Christianity, with an instinctive dread of Huldowget. Her real religion is one of service to the beloved missionary and his wife.

The half-breed witch doctor is a combination of the worst elements in two races. He works magic for his own ends, wherein he resembles the medicine man, whom Paul Kane, the artist, met in his journey from Toronto to the Coast more than sixty years ago, and who sold six days of favorable winds to the artist for a plug of tobacco, having reduced it from an initial demand of three days for a pound of tobacco. Personally, I should have wished Mr. McKelvie had not made such a bad man a half-breed, for I have met many half-

breeds who are industrious and lovable.

Collishaw, the policeman, is a brave man, who loves the golden-haired nurse, and whose fearlessness helps win the day for the white man. A seventh character is Finlayson, whose fetish is the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church, and whose besetting sin is love of whisky. There are plenty of Indians, too, in the story.

All these characters cast themselves with all the force of their beings and all the movement of which they are capable into working out the theme of a story of action.

Mr. McKelvie is to be congratulated on this, his first story, and may be expected eventually to take a definite place in the world of the historian-novelist. —C. S.

Here's Unique Praise For Novel Written About B. C.

Province — 30 April 1927

MR. B. A. McKELVIE, author of "Huldowget," has received the following letter of commendation. It is written in Chinook and probably is unique among literary criticisms:

Mr. B. A. McKelvie,

Papa of Huldowget Book,

Province Newspaper.

Nika hyas klossh tumtum kopa mika book yaka neme Huldowget. Mika mamook delate kloosh tsum pepa; mike delate kloosh kumutx knoawa itka kopa Siwash wawa.

Mika kakhwa Siwash tillicum.

Spose mika mammook hiyu tsum peepa, kopa Siwash tillicum mika iskum hiyu chickamun.

Nika chako kopa Kak-wee-kin River by by mika kooli nika house yaka mamook salmon. Kopa kole ilahie klosh muckamuck.

KAK-WEE-KIN JOHNNY.

A free translation of the above letter is as follows:

I have a good feeling to your book named Huldowget. Your action is straight good writing. You have understanding of all what Siwash talk.

You like your Siwash friend.

If you work on big writing paper for Siwash friends you will receive lots of money.

I come to Kak-wee-kin River. By and by you travel to my house, lots of salmon; in winter good food.

KAK-WEE-KIN JOHNNY.

PURCHASED 23rd November 1927

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