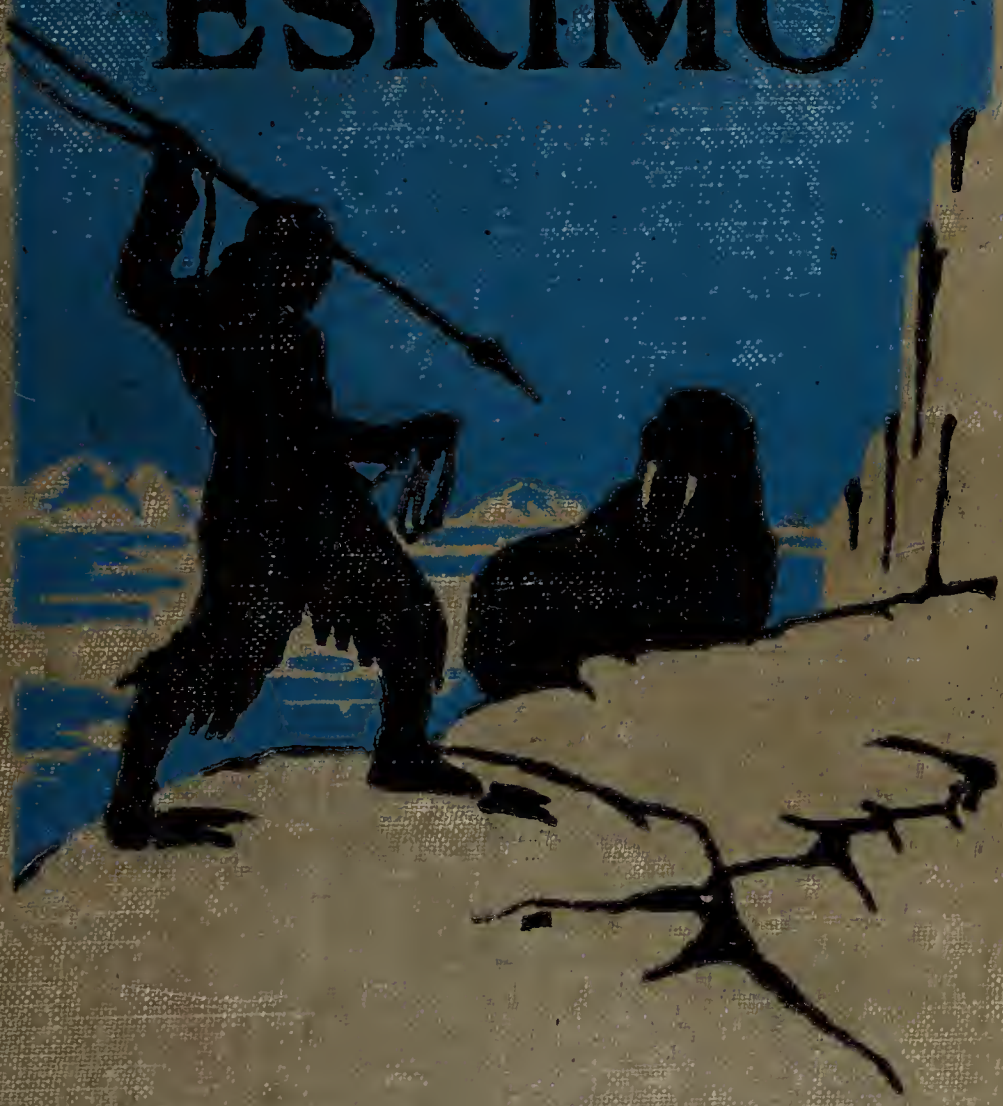
BROTHER ESKIMO



ALAN SULLIVAN

The boys glanced at him constantly, then at each other. Did Sachinnie know?

BROTHER ESKIMO

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CHAPTER I

KELEEPELES, whose name means in English "The Young Hunter," lay on his back and stared up at the ceiling. It was not papered or plastered or painted like your ceiling; it was made of snow and curved over his head just like the inside of the shell which, if you are careful, you can lift off a hard-boiled egg. For Keleepeles was an Eskimo boy and lived in an igloo,—a dome-shaped hut built of ice and snow.

Close beside him snuggled Cunayou, his brother, who was four years younger than he. He found it hard not to lose his temper rather often with Cunayou, for while the elder boy was very earnest and worked hard over his hunting and fishing, Cunayou used to lie about in a very provoking manner, and when scolded only stretched his wide mouth

into an enormous and good-natured grin that made him look like the sea sculpin after which he was named. It is known in the Arctic Circle, where the brothers lived, that for his size the sea sculpin has a bigger mouth than anything which flies, creeps, walks, crawls, or swims.

And while we are on the subject of names, it is without question that the small, brown folk of the North are very sensible in such matters. Amongst people we both know, for instance, there may be two Percy Smiths and the only thing in which they are alike is their names. But if they lived in this northern land, where you and I are going to spend a year, one would probably be called "the boy with a face like a seal," and the other "the boy who rolls when he walks." That is the way of it. So if you are traveling across the ice and meet a man who has one leg shorter than the other, you just say something about his leg and that is his name. Or if another stranger has had his face clawed by a white bear you just mention how ugly he is and he

will answer at once. It is all very simple and easy and much better than a lot of Percys and Harolds whose names don't mean anything at all.

Just as this moment Cunayou was snoring. He always snored when he was not grinning. It was not an ordinary twelve-year-old snore. Of course you know that snores have ages just like people, and after a little experience you can come pretty near guessing a person's age by the way he snores. This was an insulting kind of thing that began with a saucy, soft, wet little gurgle, went on into something like a flute, and finished with a ptarmigan whistle. Keleepeles paid no attention to it. He had heard it for so long that he hardly heard it at all; what seemed curious was that he heard no snore from his father, Aivick. He looked about the igloo. Neither his father nor his mother was there.

Just a word more about snoring. Some people think that the principal thing about the Arctic Circle is the midnight sun. Others think about seals or polar bears or caribou, or

reindeer getting fat before Christmas work begins, or gray geese, or black swans, or blue foxes. But if you want a real picture of the Arctic, just imagine little, white, egg-shell igloos scattered about on the plains of ice, and inside them small brown people, all lying on their backs and snoring while the wind whistles down from the north.

Presently Keleepeles felt restless and got up. It was not necessary for him to dress. He was already completely dressed; for in the best Eskimo families when you go to bed you don't take anything off, but just put a few things over you, such as a caribou skin or two or three bearskins, or a walrus hide. And when he got up the bed-spring did not squeak, for he slept on a little shelf of snow close up against the curving roof.

He stood for a moment staring at the hole in the floor in which the deep sea-water lay very green and quiet. This would be a comfortable arrangement to have in one's home, for if the weather were bad outside you could lie in bed and fish; and you could decide for

yourself whether you would sooner stretch out and read a boy's magazine or roll over and watch a twenty-pound salmon thrashing a broad silver tail while it was being pulled straight up through the floor of your bedroom.

Keleepeles stepped around the hole, carefully avoiding the automatic contrivance which tilts up and makes a noise when there is a bite —for fishing goes on all the time—and went out. He did n't go through the door, there being no door, but got down on his hands and knees and crawled along a narrow tunnel. Then he stood up, rubbed his eyes, and stared. He could not see much, for it was snowing hard, but he started for the igloos that the rest of the tribe had built, just a hundred yards away. Presently he came to a dead stop, for at his feet stretched a broad sheet of gray water into which a multitude of snowflakes settled in a mysterious silence. The village had disappeared.

Now, it is very easy for a man or a child or a cat or a tame rabbit or even a circus elephant to get lost, and it frequently happens

down our way, but in the North it is not people or animals but villages that go astray, and what had taken place this time was that the great ice-field on which Aivick's igloo was built, near the others, had suddenly split in two. Part of it grounded in shallow water and stayed where it was, while the piece on which Keleepeles and Cunayou slept was sailing away, driven before the storm in a strong current.

He stood for a long time and thought hard. Aivick, and the boys' mother, Allegoo, the Drinking Cup, were no doubt perfectly safe with friends, and probably at this moment were carving titbits from along the back of a square-flipper seal and chewing them with real content. That is another advantage of the North. You don't telephone the butcher, who gets the steak from the packing-house and hands it to the delivery man, who gives it to the cook, who turns it over on the stove and then turns it over to the housemaid, who puts it on the table, where your father turns a piece of it over to you. Nothing like that, at all. You kill a seal and eat it, with no bother about cooks, butchers,

housemaids, and stoves. The sea is the general shop where one goes for what one wants. So Keleepeles did n't worry about his parents, but instead began to realize that now he must live by spear and line and put into practice all that Aivick had taught him, and that while he was still a boy of sixteen he must act as a man and do a man's work, and, for a while at least, be both father and mother to the sculpin-mouthed youth who was still snoring in his own peculiar way. There was just one difficulty. The dogs had gone with Aivick.

He walked slowly back to the igloo and after a moment's hesitation sat squarely down on the sleeping form of his brother. The ptarmigan whistle broke off suddenly and Cunayou heaved himself up.

"What is the matter? My bones are still full of sleep. Am I a cow walrus, that you sit on me?"

"You are sick with sleep. I want to talk with you."

"Then talk, O wise one." Cunayou knew how to be very impertinent.

"The village is lost," said Keleepeles, slowly. "I tried to walk there, but came to deep water. We are alone—we sons of Aivick."

Cunayou sat up very straight. Presently he began to grin,—a wide, irrestible grin that seemed to spread to his ears. His oily, copper-colored face became covered with deep, soft wrinkles, his small, flat nose nearly disappeared, and his lids were half closed, but through their narrow slits his bright, beady eyes shone like black stars.

"Then for a time I shall do as I like," he chuckled.

"For a time you shall do as I like. Can you feed yourself like a seal pup? And when the white bear climbs on the roof of the igloo, what will you do then?"

"Nothing, but you 'll do it. Is not your name the Young Hunter? My stomach is cold and I would eat."

Keleepeles tossed him a slice of half-frozen salmon, but Cunayou shook his head.

"It lies beneath my ribs like ice."

"The seal meat is lost with the village and I

cannot kill more in a storm. Be content." But Cunayou had a discomforting vision. What if his brother should kill no seal? "Can we live, you and I?" he asked a little anxiously.

"The wolverine is a robber and he lives, and the white fox is a coward, yet he grows fat. Shall we starve who are neither robbers or cowards? Snore again, my brother, as only you can snore, and when the storm clears you shall stuff your stomach."

Cunayou took comfort and soon the ptarmigan whistle sounded again. Keleepeles squatted on the floor, thinking hard. He knew that he would never see that village again. By and by the great floe would recommence its journey and ultimately disappear through Baffin Straits. Aivick and the others would not be there. Somewhere along the shore a new village would be carved among the wind-whipped snow-banks, and in the long Arctic evening Allegoo would talk of her sons.

In the North men are like small specks on a thousand-mile counterpane. Keleepeles knew this, but he knew also that sometime and

somewhere he would see Aivick's kayak, or hunting boat, gliding over the green water, or catch sight of his tiny figure miles away on the flat ice. He drew a long breath and began to chew reflectively at the frozen salmon. But what should he do without the dogs?

Keleepeles and all his tribe lived on the ice without fire and water; and when one can do this, one is not worried by the loss of a village. It was the season of the year when the square-flipper seal comes up to bask on the drifting floes; and to hunt the square-flipper Aivick and the rest tramped many a league behind their panting dogs. The week before, Keleepeles had made his first kill, and now he surveyed his weapons and the contents of the igloo with sudden and profound interest.

On the floor were some skins of the coast caribou, and against the wall was skewered a piece of ice hacked from the house. Beneath it and a little to one side flickered an oil lamp made of a wisp of moss stuck in a small stone vessel filled with seal oil. Drop by drop the water fell into a small copper bowl hammered

out by the Yellowknife Indians. Aivick in turn had hammered it out of the Yellowknives. The water was not to be drunk, but squirted from Aivick's lips upon the runners of his sledge, next morning.

Against the wall stood two spears, which were very precious, and with them a short, thick bow made of driftwood and a sheaf of stone-headed arrows. For the rest there were a piece of flint, two knives, a bundle of moss, some fragments of timber from a wreck in Coronation Gulf, a coil of rope made of walrus sinew, a bladder float, two sinew fishing-lines, four hooks of fish bone and two of carved ivory, a piece of flint and a handful of touchwood for lighting fires. Such were the worldly possessions of Keleepeles, the son of Aivick and Allegoo.

By these things Aivick had lived, and the mind of Keleepeles did not go beyond them. The boy had learned to bait a hook before or almost as soon as he could walk, and when he was twelve he saw Aivick and Larquil the stout man kill a white bear with their spears, beside

an ice hummock, while the dogs snapped at the big creature's flanks. He knew the weather signs and though he had not come to full height he was very strong. Now he would just have to do by himself what previously he had done under Aivick's eye. So he worried not at all, but crawled into the sleeping-bag beside Cunayou with a queer little appeal to the Great Spirit, who keeps a friendly eye on all good Eskimo, that in the days to come he might prove himself a man.

Do you begin to see him,—this short, broad-shouldered, flat-faced, black-eyed boy? He was honest, because in the far North the lives of men depend on the few things they possess, and to steal is to take away that upon which life depends. He was brave, because the coward is likely to die soon under the midnight sun. He dreamed of hunting, because his days were destined to be one long hunt, and his standing would be reckoned by the flight of his harpoon and the thrust of his broad-bladed spear. He was wise, because while he thought slowly he acted like a flash, and though Ke-

leepeles did not know it, but only did the things that he found to do in his wanderings, and did them bravely and without complaint, he was destined to become the wisest and strongest Eskimo between Coronation Gulf and Baffin Straits.

CHAPTER II

IT was toward the end of March that Aivick stayed behind with the village, while his house and his sons moved on. In the month of March the Arctic Eskimo notice that the days are getting a little longer. There are perhaps five hours of good light. The past five months have been partly spent under the shimmery curtain of the aurora. This is not the pale light that sometimes hangs in the winter sky of the country most of us live in, but a great sheet of violet and purple flame that half fills the heavens and quivers exactly as though some giant were shaking one edge of it till strange waves of color ripple through it from end to end. Keleepeles always watched the aurora very carefully,—though, of course, that is not what he called it,—because one could read the weather by its depth and changes. And for the rest of the time the light was some-

thing like a gray dawn that got brighter if the skies were clear.

The thing to remember about Keleepeles is that his family had a yearly program. It was n't anything like yours. Instead of going where they wanted to, they went where they had to because the ice took them.

It was a simple and practical and very cheap way of traveling. Instead of jamming things into an innovation trunk, they took the whole house with them, and saved all the packing. There were no tickets—and no dining-car, where they stood in the aisle and wondered why the other passengers ate so much and so slowly. The dining-car was just under the house. In fact, the house moved along on top of the dining-car, which was a mile or two deep. The rate of travel was slow and the climate did not alter, but one did not miss the train, and one knew in a very accurate way just where he was going. One's friends and relations went along, too. This may not always be an advantage, for sometimes a fellow wants to get away to talk about his present friends to a set

of entirely new ones, but, be that as it may, the whole arrangement has suited the Eskimo so well for a great number of years that they are not likely to change it.

Now, as March was nearly over, the mind of Aivick the father of Keleepeles had been full of walrus-hunting, and if you have ever seen a walrus you will realize that it does not take many of them to fill one's mind. So when Keleepeles woke up next morning, he crawled out of his sleeping-bag and fingered the two spears that stood against the wall. Presently he poked the butt end of one of them into the ribs of Cunayou.

"Get up, brother; we have work to do."

Cunayou rubbed his eyes. "I have a great hunger. Go and kill something."

Keleepeles smiled. "I go, and you with me," he said. 'To-day we shall have fresh meat."

"What meat?"

"A cow walrus. The flesh beside her ribs is very good."

"Does the wolverine kill the white bear?" said Cunayou, his eyes very round.

"Two wolverines, you and I, will kill to-day."

"But we are small and the walrus is big like the oomiak, the women's boat."

Keleepeles chuckled. "His heart is not far under his skin."

"But he has tusks, and a beard. I like not his face when his mouth is open. Also, he roars like the grinding ice. My stomach is turned within me. I want no meat."

"I speak of a cow, not a bull," said the elder boy, steadily. "I am the son of Aivick and not afraid. You too are his son. We shall do great things, you and I, and when again we see Allegoo, our mother, we shall be hunters and not children. Remember the tale of the great sickness that fell upon the tribe, and how Allegoo killed the white bear when the men were too weak to hunt. She who was nursing you put you down so that she might fight. I watched from the mouth of the igloo,

and saw the bear run upon her spear. She was not strong enough to hold it, so put the end in a crack in the ice and the other end went through the bear and stuck out of his back. Are you a girl child and do your knees knock together when you walk?"

There was a long silence. Then Cunayou began to grin and his brother knew that the point was won. The grin widened and the boy's mouth lengthened till its corners seemed to disappear at the back of his neck, while his white teeth gleamed like polished ivory. He was very fat, and, as Aivick always said, walked near the ground. And this is a great help to a hunter, though it comes a little hard in soft snow.

"Give me a spear," he said, smiling. "Where do we go?"

"To the open water and follow it. We are not far from land."

They crawled out, and, before starting off, Keleepeles searched the horizon carefully. Another and larger ice-floe had come up in the night, and where it touched the one on

which they stood it had thrust up a pressure ridge of tumbled blocks, several feet high. This stretched east and west, it seemed for miles, but Keleepeles, climbing to the top, thought he caught a glint of water far to the south, and just beyond it a bit of broken sky-line that looked like land. It was all a dead, glistening white, with that unbroken glare which eats hotly into a white man's eyes and makes him blind. Keleepeles climbed down, fished in his pocket, and pulled out two pairs of the bone blinkers which the Eskimo use at a season of the year. Then, with their eyes shielded from the reflection of the plain, the boys struck south.

It was not bad going, except for the ridges which are like long thick walls that have been overturned in great confusion. When ice-fields, driven by the tide, current or wind, meet, their edges crumble from enormous pressure, and these, turning upward, form great broken parapets that traverse the Arctic from end to end and from top to bottom. To Keleepeles, who understood them, they meant extra work

and that was all. Here and there as the boys tramped southward were unexpected pools of motionless green water at which he looked contentedly and hurried on. It was a good omen for the future. At the end of two hours he dodged behind a spur of the ridge and beckoned excitedly to Cunayou, who toiled up, the sweat pouring from his round face.

"Swallow your breath and do not speak; but look."

The fat boy gulped and peeped, and as he peeped his bones turned to water and his stomach rolled over inside of him. Two hundred yards away was a patch of open water where the ice-field, driven east, had been thrust off shore by a low spur of polished rock. In its lee a tiny spot in the Arctic Ocean lay open to the sun. Cunayou's eyes bulged as he stared, for on the smooth surface of the rock a herd of walrus lay basking in the sun.

"Good hunting," whispered Keleepeles.

Cunayou gulped again but did not stir. Farthest from them a great bull raised his whiskered head, and the sun fell bright on his

long downward-gleaming tusks. The coarse bristles about his mouth were wet, and the boy could see the big mouth open redly and the bull-like head tilt back, while the great creature sent out a deep, hoarse, booming roar that made Cunayou's knees knock together as though he were indeed a girl. Between the big bull and the water the rest were scattered lazily,—huge, sleek, shapeless masses with swollen glossy sides, strong, shiny flippers, and broad, silky backs.

The younger boy drew a long and difficult breath.

"How much does he weigh,—the lord of the herd?"

"More than fifty Cunayous," whispered his brother with brotherly comfort. "Would you like to kill him?"

"Not this year; some other year," came the trembling reply. "Why should the lord of the herd die at my hands?"

Keleepeles chuckled. "Your stomach may be sick, but it is full of great mercy. Choose the one which is to die."

Cunayou looked long and thoughtfully. "That calf near the water," he said after a pause.

"He is too near safety and we should not have time; also, we should be between the lord of the herd and the water. It is not well to stand between a bull walrus and the place where he would go."

A prickly feeling ran suddenly through the roots of Cunayou's black hair, and just then he heard a friendly whisper: "It is not long since Allegoo carried you on her back and there is much to learn. The walrus has a great body but a small head. He thinks with his stomach and there is nothing to fear. His fat is very sweet. Were we in the kayaks which we shall build when the next moon comes, I should go hunt elsewhere, but here is meat for the taking. It is easy. Not far from the bull and nearly as far from the water behold that two-year cow. She is young and very tender. When we run suddenly at her, beware of the bull. Keep on one side and a little behind me. Now we shall kill."

The great bull raised his grizzled head and bellowed a furious challenge

Very carefully Keleepeles climbed down from the ridge and worked along its northern side toward the shore, with his brother at his heels. When the cover ended there was but a hundred feet of clear ice between them and the drowsy herd. He paused for a moment, glanced over his shoulder to see if Cunayou was ready, then, sloping his spear, dashed out. On the instant the old bull saw him, and, lifting his mighty shoulders, sent out a hoarse note of alarm. Fear rippled through the herd and there began the lurching of huge, smooth bodies toward safety and the deep green water.

"Come quickly," panted Keleeples. "They move down hill and very fast. Run in at the side, after me."

In another second he had leaped upon the rock. The great bull halted, raised his grizzled head, and bellowed a furious challenge that turned Cunayou's blood to water. He was very much frightened, but his brother heeded not. Jumping to one side, Keleepeles sprang toward the laboring cow. Just at that

moment a stone turned beneath his foot and Cunayou saw him stagger. A sick feeling flooded over the younger boy, but, remembering orders, he made a thrust at the smaller animal. Simultaneously the bull, answering the calls of the herd, flung himself toward the water. The next moment Keleepeles's spear was darting in and out of the cow's glossy side.

Half an hour afterward Cunayou gave a long, contented sigh, stopped eating, and looked around. So far as concerns the cow, it was not a pretty sight; but, then, neither would it be if you got your steak straight from the animal instead of from the cook. Cunayou, however, was full of great contentment. Presently Keleepeles began to talk.

"It was a good hunt and you did well, my brother, that you went straight for the cow as I told you. Walrus, having round heads, do not remember one thing long, for it is the animals with the flat heads that are wise and remember. He is strong in the sea but weak on the land."

Cunayou nodded. He was too full of

walrus to be anything but lazy and grateful. "There is a lot of meat here, but how shall we take it home, having no dogs?" he yawned, a little sleepily.

His brother's eyes began to twinkle and he got up and pushed the butt of his spear several times into a snowbank that lay close beside the rock.

"It is better to take our home to the meat. We will bring what is in our igloo and build another one here. There are holes where the square-flippers will come for air and sun, and under these cliffs the she bear suckles her young beneath the snow. Next moon we shall be in our kayak, hunting with the harpoon, and then will come long days with much food. Is it well, little brother?"

It all sounded so promising that of course Cunayou nodded at once and began to grin.

"There is much that we shall see," went on the other, happily, "when the winter has run away in water to the sea. The ducks and geese and eagles will come, and there will be many things along the shore. The caribou will run,

very many of them, and the gray wolves will pull down the outcasts of the herd. The white foxes will feast on dead whales when the tide is low, and the old birds will teach their young just as I shall teach you, O snoring one, with a mouth like a water-hole."

Now, the reason that Keleepeles finished up with his somewhat insulting remark was that Cunayou, who was lying flat on his back on the bare rock, had fallen sound asleep.

CHAPTER III

THEN came the last night the boys spent in the house of their father. Nearly every one down our way has moved at least once and knows just what a curious lost feeling one has when the furniture is standing in the street and the furniture man is scratching his head and wondering just how he is going to get the things into the van. There is something shocking and disgraceful about it. But this move was different. The old house would never be used again, and by and by would dissolve into the sea. It is true that the furniture was in the street, but the boys merely rolled it up into bundles and slung it on their backs by means of pack-straps that ran across their foreheads. There were the spears and knives and fishing-lines, but Kelcepeles carried these in his hands, and when they arrived at the cow-walrus place there was only the simple

matter of building a new house and the whole thing was finished.

Now, it takes two skilled hunters working an hour to build an igloo that is fit to live in, and it took the boys a good deal longer. The snow must be just right and wind-packed not too hard, and the blocks must be cut with the proper thickness and taper, and the curve of the roof must be true, or the whole thing will collapse half-way up.

The first three rounds were not so bad. Keleepeles stood inside and placed the blocks one by one as Cunayou, pressing them against his stomach, staggered up with load after load. Higher up the work got harder, and the last three courses, which are more and more horizontal, nearly broke the big boy's heart. But the igloo grew, though it was not pretty, and the joints were uneven and the thickness of wall was irregular.

And just here it might be well to say something about igloos,—that is, if you really want to understand the boys' method of life.

To be civilized is to take the things of the

country and use them as intelligently as you know how. So Keleepeles was, if you think about it, really a civilized person. He knew, for instance, that the walls of an igloo must not be too thick when the weather is mild or too thin when it is very cold; that the entrance tunnel must face down wind, and that it is a labor-saving plan to cut the first course or two of blocks out of the floor. It is the habit of the white bear sometimes to climb on top of an igloo in search of food in a season of storm, so the roof must be strong enough to carry him; and if an igloo is properly built, the key block, the last to go in at the very crown of the arch, should bind with every one of the previous course.

So with all this and a good deal more in their minds the boys toiled for three hours, till Keleepeles cut his way out through the bottom course; for, naturally, he had built himself in. Completing the entrance, he sat down and began to chew thoughtfully at a long strip of walrus that dangled jerkily from his strong jaws.

At midnight he woke with a start. Cunayou beside him was snoring vigorously, and in the dark he could just make out the white wall around him. He felt all at once very wide awake, for it is the gift of the born hunter to be able to sleep undisturbed through sounds that are natural, but to wake up with every instinct tremendously alive at any unusual noise, however slight. It is just as though some tiny sentinel were on guard at his ear, ready to send in a swift warning whenever necessary. And what Keleepeles heard in between the snores of Cunayou was a dull, short cough, like a grunt, close beside the igloo.

He lay for a moment, his heart pumping rapidly, then slipped to the floor. Glancing back at Cunayou's gently heaving form, he shook his head, reached for a spear, and on hands and knees moved noiselessly to the entrance. Peering out, he became suddenly rigid, for in the half-light was the rounded back of a white bear that lay nuzzling into the fat sides of the cow walrus.

The boy's eyes rounded and he felt for the

first time very much alone. The moon shone a little clearer. He could see that it was a she bear, very large and very thin, so thin that her backbone stood out sharp in a ridge. Her skin was a dirty yellow white, and when she lifted her lean, arrow-shaped head he caught the gleam of small, bright, pink eyes. Close at her side was a cub, fatter than its mother, playing with fragments of flesh it had worried from the great mass in front of it. Keleepeles drew a long breath and understood.

He knew that it is the custom of the she bear to desert her mate when early winter stiffens the Arctic, and seek a cave as shelter, where shortly the snow will drift over and hide her from sight. Here in darkness and silence she bears her young, nursing him through the long hard months when Unorri, the north wind, whistles across the ice, and the aurora hangs in purple flame from the zenith. It is a strange season. During four months she eats not at all, for there is nothing to eat, but weaves her slow paces up and down her few yards of freedom. In January the cub

comes, like a small Arctic Newfoundland dog with tiny, sharp claws and eye-teeth, and till March she suckles it, while her own great frame grows daily more gaunt and bony. Then when the sun is warmer she issues forth, mad with weakness and a great hunger.

Very cautiously the boy crawled back and put his mouth to Cunayou's ear. "Wake up, little brother; there is much to see."

Cunayou grunted, yawned noisily and stretched. "I was eating a calf walrus in my sleep. It was full of oil. What is it?"

He was told in a whisper. "Come and look," repeated Keleepeles.

"My stomach is warm where I lie," protested the fat youth, "but it will grow cold with fear if I look. You shall behold it for both of us."

"And tell Aivick and Allegoo that you are a girl and not a man child?"

"I had sooner be a girl and stay where I am, and be safe."

"Then I go alone," said his brother, gently, and moved off without a sound.

A moment later he felt a touch on his shoulder. "Look," breathed Cunayou. "There are many bears."

Keleepeles looked, and, shambling across the ice toward the igloo, came a great beast, His fur was like silk, and shimmered in the moonlight. He came at a long, slouching trot, his head low down, his big black-clawed paws falling like soft pads on the smooth ice. It was a curious shuffling gait, but it carried him fast, and the boys heard his claws scratch the polished rock as he sought foothold. In another moment he was beside the others.

Down our way if a family has been separated all winter they often meet at table in the springtime. This is what happens, in the Arctic also, but there are no greetings at all. The new-comer merely glanced at the cub, who was perhaps his son, and began to eat, and the she bear merely glanced at the new-comer, who might have been her husband, and went on eating. All husbands looked alike to her. She had a new one every winter, and after a few years it was hard to remember them

apart; and, besides, if you have not tasted food for four months you are likely to overlook your manners. In the next few minutes she began to bulge.

Cunayou was fascinated and Keleepeles so motionless that his brother began to think he had gone to sleep. Cunayou's stomach felt very cold, and his teeth began to chatter softly.

"Do we kill now?" he whispered.

Keleepeles chuckled, without any noise, far down in his throat. "We are not fools, you and I. It is in my mind that something else will happen. Watch and see."

And in an hour it happened. The bears, full of meat to the muzzle, waddled off, and the moon shone on the mangled carcass of the cow walrus, till from far off came a sound that gave Cunayou the prickly feeling to which he was getting accustomed.

"Look," said Keleepeles, and pointed south, where the white hills came down to the ice.

A shadow drifted across them, swiftly and silently, and then another, while four gray

wolves slunk down the long slope, drawn by the smell of meat.

"Be very quiet," warned Keleepeles. "They are too many for us."

Now, there is something about a white bear that one can like, but nothing about a gray wolf, which seems born for murder and cruelty.

"They are evil spirits, and not wolves," chattered Cunayou, sick with fear.

"Yes, for in them are the spirits of evil men and women, and a she wolf leads them. See how their eyes are gray and yellow, and their ears have black tips. Their skulls are flat, and therefore they are very wise. They run with their noses down, to hold the smell of that which they pursue. You have said a true word: they are not animals but devils. They hunt the caribou, and if the great spirit had not robbed the feet of the cow caribou of smell in a season of the year, there would not be any young ones. See,—what they eat not they destroy."

Gradually the hunger of the pack was

appeased. The long black noses ceased to bury themselves and the gray-white shoulders stopped hunching as the brutes tugged at the red flesh. Then began a savage play in which the curving fangs tore and threw aside great strips of meat and hide. It was exactly as though the pack were trying to foul that which they could not eat. In a little while the cow walrus was a shapeless heap, her ribs projecting and bare. Presently one wolf, the tallest of them all, put her nose into the wind and stood motionless. The others watched her, till, with a deep-throated whimper, she started back up the snow-covered slope toward the low ridge that lay southward. The others went in single file after her, gray and silent, the terrors of the North, the enemy of all that walk and run.

Keleepeles drew a long breath. "Sleep now, little brother," he said. "You have seen much, and it will soon be day, when we go to hunt the square-flipper seal."

CHAPTER IV

IT seemed to Cunayou next morning as he stood in the sunlight that a bad dream mingled with strange sounds and growls had passed, and that the world was now rather nice. At twelve years of age a fellow is conscious, even if he has a brown skin and lives in the Arctic Circle, that there is a good deal about which he does not know very much, and it is the thing about which one is ignorant that is most alarming. But now he drew a long breath and felt curiously and unexpectedly happy. Keleepeles was, he decided, wise as well as brave, but it is a question if the elder boy realized what an impression had been made on Cunayou's childish brain by the events of the past night. Presently Keleepeles began to smile.

"What does one take for hunting the square-flipper?"

Cunayou puckered his broad lips and thought hard. It was nine months since he had seen Aivick gather his gear for this purpose.

"The spear with the head that comes off, and the line, and the knife,—and—and—I forget."

"The skin to sit on and the fur socks for one's feet."

They struck out very cheerfully and soon the igloo blended in with its background of snow. The day was fine and already signs of spring were manifest. The skies seemed a little nearer and the horizon had a softened glint that was very comforting. To any one of us it would have seemed a strange thing that this wilderness of ice could yield food and even a sort of comfort, but to the young Eskimo the day was full of promise. To hunt as they hunted it was necessary to think and almost to act like the animals they pursued. Infinite patience, the ability to be motionless for hours, a knowledge of wind and weather, a keen eye and a quick, steady arm,—without

these they would soon have starved. To kill an animal at two hundred yards with a high-powered rifle is not difficult, but to beat that animal at his own game and with home-made weapons is quite another story.

And just here is a good place to say something more about hunting. Decent men, after they have learned what kind of lives most wild things live, generally cease to desire to kill. A dead deer at a fellow's feet is not so thrilling as the same deer was when he sailed like a bird through the woods. To watch a lynx while he himself is hunting means a revelation in woodcraft, and to see a cow moose teaching her calf to swim is to see something very tender and beautiful.

Keleepeles, for instance, never in all his pilgrimages killed unless he wanted meat; and it is safe to say that the man who needlessly butchers wild creatures, and boasts about the size of his bag, knows nothing about the history or habits of his victims.

If you examine a map of the far North you will see that Foxland lies just beyond

Hudson Strait. The latter is the great outlet for the southern Arctic. West of Foxland is Fox Channel, and west of that again is Melville Peninsula, and still farther northwest stretches Boothia Gulf. These have been known points for many years. The general trend of the Arctic currents is toward Baffin Bay.

Keleepeles had no clear understanding of the geography of the North, for Aivick's wanderings had not covered more than two hundred miles of land and ice in all the boy's life, but he remembered very distinctly that one day three Yellowknife Indians had appeared on the shore of the Melville Peninsula, where Aivick was camped, with copper arrowheads, and a bundle of the inside bark of the red willow, which they called *kinickinic* and smoked with great contentment, and ever since then the boy had been full of wonder as to what lay to the south of his father's yearly route. So this morning, when, before starting for the hunt, Cunayou asked him if he knew where they were, he scrawled a rough

outline on the inside of a caribou skin and laid a brown finger on what was meant for the east side of Melville Peninsula. With great positiveness he said:

"We are near this point. Aivick and Allegoo have without doubt moved on to the big waters" (he meant Fox Channel), "but if we wait till the water opens along the shore and travel south, we shall find much game and see many things. Soon we shall get wood for kayaks and paddles, and then life will be very good. Is it well, fat one?"

Cunayou grinned in his own particular way and the boys set out. The sun was strong and the ice smooth, with nothing on the horizon but the tumbled backs of pressure ridges that glinted in unending confusion. Presently Keleepeles pointed to the breathing-hole that lay just ahead.

In five minutes the bigger boy was seated on a block of snow two feet from the edge of the hole. In front of him were two small rests, cut also from the snow, across which his spear lay ready. His feet were thrust into large,

loose fur socks, and a coiled line lay by his side, one end of it made fast to the sharp head of the spear. Cunayou, sprawled behind him, drew a long breath and waited.

An hour went by and nothing happened. Cunayou began to move restlessly, but stiffened at every reproving glance from his brother's dark eyes. Keleepeles was bending forward, arms crossed and elbows on knees, staring intently into the breathing-hole, where the water heaved at intervals as though from wind pressure on the ice, till, quite suddenly, he pointed.

In the transparent green depths a single bubble was rising,—a round, small thing that looked like a moonstone floating in a melted emerald. Keleepeles tightened his lips and reached for his spear. This was the square-flipper's signal that he was coming up for air. The young hunter drew back a little and stood rigid, the spear in his lifted arm. His muscles were tense and his eyes shone. Cunayou held his breath and waited.

Then, as though by magic, there was framed

in the breathing-hole the head and sleek shoulders of the seal. He seemed to appear very mysteriously, and the younger boy had a glimpse of round, soft, bulging eyes, stiff bristles, black expanded nostrils. It was all as though some queer spirit were rising up out of the sea to find out what manner of thing it was that walked about on the great roof of ice. Just in that instant the seal caught sight of Keleepeles and in another second would have vanished, when the boy's right arm stiffened and the spear went home.

It flew straight and made almost no splash. Simultaneously the head of it, which imbedded itself in the square-flipper, became detached from the shaft just as it was meant to, and the line went singing into the green depths. Keleepeles dropped on the remaining coils and held fast.

"Help me, little brother. He is very strong," he panted.

Cunayou jumped to the rescue. It was a curious thing to feel their dinner battling in the ocean below, but he stuck out his jaw

and held fast. Presently the line was pulled slowly in, and it took their united strength to get their quarry up upon the ice. He was a young bull, and very fat.

A little later Cunayou leaned back. He was very full and very happy, and he surveyed Keleepeles with an additional and comfortable respect. This brother of his was a wonder.

"We are the enemies of the square-flipper, but what others are there?" he demanded.

"The white bear," said Keleepeles, thoughtfully.

"But the white bear has no spear."

"It has that which is as good. He will lie beside the air-hole, very still, for many hours, and cover the blackness of his nose in the whiteness of his paws. Perhaps for a day he will wait and not move, if he is very hungry. Then, when the seal has lifted himself upon the ice, the bear will jump and strike him on the head very quickly."

"And the she bear?"

"In the summer she goes out on the ice

with her cubs and follows her lord. For a year she suckles her young, and teaches them to hunt and to swim, taking them on her back in the water, and, yes, under the water."

The eyes of Cunayou widened. "Why under the water?"

"If by chance she is pursued by hunters."

"Then there is much wisdom in a bear."

"When bears are young they drink through their paws, and the hairs between their toes keep the beetles out of their throats. Once Aivick told me that out at sea in his kayak he found a bear asleep, floating in the water on his side with a forearm under his head. He had been hunting whale."

Cunayou sat up very straight. "My brother has a long tongue."

"And mine has an empty head, so I am trying to fill it. The white bear can swim like a fish, and in the water gallops with his front legs and walks very fast with his hind legs, and he can stay under a very long time. He strikes at the whale with his claws, so that

by and by the whale is killed, and comes to the shore and there is much food for many animals. But the bear eats first!"

Cunayou drew a long breath. His brother was speaking very simply and earnestly, and it was quite evident that he knew what he was talking about. The small boy had heard talk of this kind between Aivick and other men during the past year, but had not paid any attention to it. Now the whole subject seemed marvelous and very important.

"And we shall see this, you and I?" he said, a little breathlessly.

Keleepeles nodded. "We shall see more. Aivick told me last moon about the Yellowknives who trade in copper. They are red men—not brown—and are like dogs. To the south, I do not know how far, is the bay where is the copper, and on the way there will be timber along the shore for kayaks and sledges."

"Tell me more. Speak very quickly."

"And there run the coast caribou like flies, and white foxes like stones at the water's edge. There are also many birds, great and small,

and the black swans in a season of the year are naked of feathers. There is too much to tell you, little brother, but not too much to see."

Keleepeles spoke gravely. He felt within him a strange stirring, a deep desire to make this year one great pilgrimage. He feared nothing in the wilderness and had a curious confidence,—which even he himself could not understand,—that he would be able to win through. He looked at Cunayou and pondered whether this smiling fat boy could accompany him uncomplaining, then decided that such a trip would be just what Cunayou needed. Allegoo had always spoiled her younger son. So, with all this in his mind, he looked his brother straight in the eye.

"What is the first duty of the small person who is learning how to hunt?" he demanded.

"I—I don't know."

"It is to obey. Sometimes that will seem very foolish, but it is because your brain, being not yet heavy, rattles about in your head. And the second?"

"I don't know," stammered Cunayou.

"To speak but little, and not to complain. Can you do these things? For, though too fat, you are not a coward."

"I' ll try." The round-faced boy spoke very soberly.

"Then we shall make a great journey. It will take many moons, and without doubt we shall look at death very close, but wisdom will follow, and there is no Eskimo on the water who will know what we know. But it will be a hard journey without dogs."

Cunayou stared at him, and his mouth opened and his eyes half closed as though he were deep in some sudden thought. "But it may be, my brother, we shall have dogs."

"We cannot put harness on the dogs of a dream," smiled Keleepeles. "Last night you were calling to them in your sleep. What is it?"

"I cannot tell you; perhaps my mind is sick —and," added the fat boy with a grin, "I am already learning to speak but little."

CHAPTER V

TO any eyes except those of an Eskimo the easterly shore of the Melville Peninsula would have been a forbidding scene. In these high latitudes the earth is very naked and her bones project through her skin. Whipped all winter by the keen winds of the Arctic, and smitten by intense frost, it seems that it is hard even for the solid land to survive. And when the snows begin to go, and the smooth outline of the land is roughened by projecting ridges, there is presented a great expanse of bare rock patched here and there with caribou moss and small lakes of shining water, where the salmon spawn and numberless winged things live in peace and safety; and it was one day in April, when they came in off the ice to the shore of the peninsula that Cunayou made the great discovery which was to insure the success of the journey before them.

He was walking slowly along the rocks, very much alone, and feeling very much a man, when there sounded the sigh of great wings, and an Arctic eagle floated lazily over his head. Cunayou's heart gave a throb, for the Arctic eagle comes to the far North, the first adventurer of spring, three weeks ahead of all the feathered population. The boy noted the sturdy curved beak, the snowy crested head, the black talons doubled close up under the smooth body and the wide sweep of the blue-black pinions. The eagle was hunting, and Cunayou held his breath and waited.

Came a sudden throb of the motionless wings, and the big bird hung poised over a crevice in the glistening rocks. All in a second he dropped like a bullet, and there reached Cunayou a small, sharp yelping and the hoarse scream of the lord of the upper air, and at that, trailing his spear, the boy ran for the spot with all the speed he could get out of his round fat legs. A moment later he was watching the best rough-and-tumble fight it is possible to imagine.

The eagle was having the time of his life with four wolf cubs. They were small and had woolly hair, and looked something like young Airedales, except that their noses were sharper and their tiny ears were very pointed. Their den lay in a narrow place into which the eagle had darted, and now, with a cub in his talons, he was making desperate efforts to rise.

But he had stirred up a hornets' nest. The cub in his claws, though its soft fur was stained with blood, twisted like a piece of rubber and bit savagely at its enemy's thighs, while its brothers, their mouths full of feathers, waged bitter warfare each on its own chosen point of attack. There was a quick yelping as the eagle made desperate lunges with his curving beak at the infuriated pups, which were fighting as a pack fights, and, very literally, for their lives. Gradually the unequal combat drew to a close. Two wolves crawled off, licking their bloody legs, a third lay panting on its side, and the eagle with a scream of triumph shook his wings free while his claws sank deeper in his helpless victim. And just then the spear

of Cunayou swung whistling through the air. An hour later Keleepeles, coming across the ice from the south, saw a strange sight. A quarter of a mile away, Cunayou was staggering toward the igloo, dragging what seemed to be a seal but which his brother knew instantly was not a seal. Its size and shape were wrong. The small boy drew nearer, his face shiny with sweat, but his eyes bright with triumph, and from the big bundle was heard a muffled sound of yelps and squeals. And the bundle changed its form in the most astonishing manner possible. So Keleepeles waited till Cunayou came up, and, slacking his tow-line, dropped on his stomach in utter exhaustion.

Now, it is the mark of a good hunter that he is slow of speech and is willing that another man should speak first; so Keleepeles, although greatly puzzled, sat still, with his eye on the heaving bundle, till, after a few moments, Cunayou began to breathe more easily, and sat up, and the first thing he did was to grin.

"You told a true tale, my brother, when you said we should see strange things. I have

some here in a bundle. It has been heavy in my stomach that we are without dogs, for we love one another, the dogs and I."

Keleepeles stuck out his lips. It was true that Cunayou understood dogs, for even when a very small child he would waddle out and pull the tail of the old bitch who was the leader of Aivick's team, a thing which Aivick himself did not care to do; and he never had been bitten or even scratched, and as in the North there is a good reason for most things,—which is not the case down our way,—Keleepeles did not laugh, but waited as quietly as a dead seal.

"It has pricked in my throat like a fish bone," went on Cunayou, very earnestly. "that we have no dogs. To-day, when alone, I saw an eagle hunting young wolves. I crawled up and looked over the rock and my tongue swelled because of fear that the wolf mother would come back and find me. Then, at the proper time, I killed the eagle, and ran away quickly to the igloo for my sleeping-bag, into which I have pushed the cubs. They are sick with fighting and are very bloody. So now,

Keleepeles, even though my brain is light and rattles about in my head, I would teach them as you teach me. There is nothing so hard that I will not do it. Is it not true that the dogs of Aivick are brother and sister to the wolves? Let me try, O wise one, and when the ice tightens and we go back to find our father, we shall go with dogs and not like worthless ones whose weight is always on their feet; and then perhaps there will be found for me a better name than the Sculpin."

This was a long speech for Cunayou, the longest he had ever made; and Keleepeles, listening very quietly, realized that his brother had never before in all his life been so much in earnest. And as some men are best at building igloos and others at hunting, or carving on ivory, or whatever it may be, it was quite evident that this boy with the pleading eyes was destined to be a good man with dogs. So, though Keleepeles anticipated trouble, he only nodded very gravely, whereat Cunayou's heart leaped within him and he was full of a great joy.

It was an hour later that the elder boy wrinkled his brow suddenly.

"Is there not something you have not told me?" he asked.

"What?" said Cunayou, puzzled.

"About the mother of the pups."

"What is there to tell? I did not see her."

"No, but it may be that from a long way off she saw you. It is not the custom of the she wolf to part with her pups, and I have it in my mind that she will come for them."

"Oh," grunted Cunayou, "and what then?"

"It is better that we go to her; if not, there will be little sleep. Let us put her family into the igloo and go at once."

The snarling bundle was dragged to the opening through the snow wall and emptied inward. Came a medley of sound, then the hole was stopped and the two struck out, Cunayou in the lead. When they came to the den his brother examined it with the greatest care.

"The dog wolf himself has deserted the mother, for there are no signs of his lair," he

said presently, and pulled a feather from the dead eagle's wing. "Let us climb up. She may still be here. If we find her and she jumps on me, look not at all at me but only at her, and strike very quickly. Her teeth are long and my throat is soft."

On top of the cliffs, a little out of breath, they peered west over the bare and shining tundra. There was no sound save of the wind and on the glistening surface there seemed to be neither motion nor life. It was very cold, and it struck Cunayou that to live on these bleak plains was not to be compared to living on the ice where there was found everything for comfort and health.

"I do not understand," said Keleepeles, after a long, searching stare. "Not at any time will a she wolf leave her pups, and even now she is not far away."

He stood for a long time quite motionless, his quick eyes roving from side to side. Finally he shook his head as though greatly puzzled and started back with Cunayou, now a little nervous, at his heels.

That night when the cliffs cast black shadows on the ice Keleepeles sat up wide awake and touched his brother on the shoulder, "I was right after all,—listen!"

From the bare hills came a voice that drifted into the igloo and roused the sleeping pups coiled in round balls of fur on the floor. Clear and terrible it came,—the voice of the gray wolf, mad with the loss of her young. The pups lifted their sharp noses and whined understandingly, while Cunayou shivered in his skin sleeping-bag. There was fury in the howl, and a wild desire for her young, and a note of grim revenge that waited the robbers. Keleepeles, as he listened, could picture the tall, lean form trotting up and down the naked shores, pausing now and then to lift its black muzzle and send its cry through the night winds.

The next night it came again, and the next; but the pups were safe inside, and on the fourth night it did not come at all.

"She has gone away." whispered Cunayou, thoughtfully, after listening a long time.

"Perhaps. I do not know. The wolf has a flat skull."

But little did either of them dream where or in what strange manner she would come back again to her young.

To describe Cunayou's labors for the next month would be really describing the manner in which he said good-by to the things of childhood and became a very useful person. It was in his mind all the time that Keleepeles was right in saying that patience was a valuable thing. It seemed at the outset that his task was hopeless. In the first place the cubs had a natural fear of the smell of man, and whenever the boy came near, their ears tilted back and the black lips lifted, showing the small, sharp teeth beneath. Cunayou kept them in a little snow pen, which had no roof, but whose walls were too high to jump. Their food was seal fat and fish, for the fishing was now good.

Within the next fortnight Keleepeles built a sledge out of a good find of driftwood, the joints being all neatly dovetailed and lashed with sinew, as there were of course neither

nails nor hammer. It sounds very simple, but it is n't, and there is nowhere anything built of iron or of steel which has to withstand such rough handling as an Eskimo sledge, especially in the season of the year when the ice is distorted with pressure ridges and the heavily loaded runners drop first on one end and then on another.

It was the carefully thought out plan of Keleepeles to leave his brother alone to his work of training; and though Cunayou nearly went crazy, he never complained. The pups soon got strong in the legs, and he made walrus-hide collars with a strap on top so that their growing necks would not be pinched. With two pups tugging at each arm he took them for miles across the ice, where now and again they would stop dead and sniff at the wind with their sharp, wrinkling black noses, every nerve keenly alive. Soon they got used to the smell of their master and Cunayou was feeling vastly encouraged, when one day he harnessed the four to the sledge and flicked the long lash of his whip over their gray backs. And then

something happened. The pups plunged at their single traces, each pulling a different way, and the next moment had fallen upon one another, their ears back, the long hair on their shoulders bristling savagely. Followed a sort of Chinese puzzle of wolves, traces, sledge, whip, and boy, out of which Cunayou at length emerged, his face hot with anger.

Keleepeles, who had been watching him, said not a word as Cunayou sent the long lash out with stinging force and seemed to have been transformed with fury and disappointment. Suddenly the boy stiffened, and, without glancing at his motionless brother, stared at the snapping heap of fur thoughtfully. Then he too sat down and waited. The battle went on till, gradually, the victor emerged, a lean, young she wolf with a torn ear, a dripping flank, and a patch of white fur on her shoulder. She bit savagely once or twice,—quick family bites that reached home each time,—then the yelping died out and with a defiant glance to which none of her relations responded she curled up on the ice and began to lick a bleed-

ing leg. At that Cunayou heaved a sigh of content, and for the first time in twenty minutes glanced at his brother.

"Behold, the leader of our team,—that she wolf," he said, smiling.

CHAPTER VI

THERE is nothing more wonderful or beautiful than the coming of spring to the far North. It is as though the earth, stiff with the intense frost of many months and now feeling a thrill creeping through her ancient bones, began to stretch herself luxuriously and yield to the soft touch of the south wind. Her old ribs begin to appear, black and shiny and polished smooth with the passage of forgotten glaciers that moved down thousands of feet from still farther north. And with the south wind and the rains come the first feathered voyagers from more sunny lands.

First of them all there are the eagles, lonely and high, their hooded eyes searching the plain for prey. Then, as though by magic, come clouds of snowbirds with black and white bodies and alabaster wings, that seem to have arrived in thousands. The eagles sweep on

to the Arctic Ocean, but the snowbirds stay. And after them the rooks and the first of the big Canadian geese, and leading battalions of large, strong-pinioned ducks. And after the ducks there is a break in the procession for a week or so, while the weather becomes more settled, till, with the next good south wind the general immigration is in full flood. Smaller geese and waveys (the white geese) and cranes that strike booming along the shore, teal and bluebills with their marvelous colors, loons that wake the echoes with weird laughter, plover and a host of water-birds, all these drop down from the skies! And as though the cycle of the North had still more secrets to unfold, there comes another lull and then still warmer weather that brings the wrens and finches and crossbeaks, and, most wonderful, the swans, black and white and blue, whose single flight may be a thousand miles and whose winter home is the Caribbean Sea or the hidden lakes of Venezuela.

Week by week the weather softens. The days grow longer and the barren lands become

the most populous with wild things in all the continent. The caribou move north before the icy covering of the lakes is too weak to carry them. There is a clicking of hoofs and a rattling of antlers, and the great herds are like shaggy, gray-brown blankets that undulate in long waves over the plain. The fresh-water lakes, and they are all of fresh water, swarm with fish,—trout, herring, codfish, whitefish, suckers, perch, crawfish, clams, periwinkles, leeches, eels and minnows. To their shores the birds fly wearily at the end of the marvelous journey, and seek secluded places where they may breed, for in a season of the year when the old feathers have dropped and before the new ones are fully grown, they cannot fly, but waddle helplessly, the prey of the fox and wolf and the wolverine and the slim-bodied mink.

Cunayou watched and wondered. At night he lay out on the ice and stared at the stars which now seemed large and soft, and listened for the howl of the mother of his team. But he did not hear it. By this time the pups were

fairly well trained. Long in leg and body, they could not pull like a good sledge dog, but they were ridding themselves gradually of bad habits. They did not now eat their harness, a favorite pastime of the first weeks of captivity; and one which kept Cunayou toiling over strips of walrus hide and a sharp bone skewer. The young female had achieved a complete mastery over the others that was never disputed. When she worked they worked, and when she was sulky the others displayed the worst of tempers. There were times when their noses puckered with faint, strange smells that drifted out from the land, which the boys could not distinguish, and made the pups whine as though they had received some wild message from afar. But Cunayou slaved over them as if he loved them, which indeed he did; and Keleepeles, who saw most things but said little, nodded contentedly and was satisfied. The thing was,—and this made him content,—that the pups had never known hunger or cruelty, for these work like poison in the blood of both men and animals. Then

on a long-remembered day the mother of the young wolves came to her own.

Cunayou was driving them and he felt very proud of their performance. They looked much like any other team, except that they were perfectly matched, and instead of curling their tails over their backs carried them straight out. Keleepeles was trotting behind, when suddenly the leader sat down stubbornly on the ice, put her black nose to the wind, and yelped. The sledge overtook her and there followed a general mixture out of which Cunayou vainly endeavored to restore order. But, for all his efforts, the pups seemed full of uneasiness, snuffing at the wind and cocking their sharp ears at the shore which was a mile away.

"What is it?" said the boy, scratching his head in doubt. "Are they young devils and not wolves?"

Keleepeles laughed. "They know that which we do not know," he said. "Let us go to the land."

Somehow the team got into motion despite

the tangled harness. As they drew near the shore a frenzy seemed to run through them, as though they were indeed possessed of devils. Cunayou's heart was heavy and furious. What had become of his training?

"I am a fool," he panted angrily. "The smell of that which I cannot see is stronger than my whip,—and the dogs obey it."

"A small smell speaks very loud to a wolf," said Keleepeles, with quick comfort. "Are you sure that the dogs will come back if you let them loose?"

Cunayou hesitated.

"Yesterday they would return, but now I do not know," he said.

"Then let them go, and try it."

The fat boy, with doubt in his mind, loosened the collars one by one from the wriggling, snapping pups, and one by one they tore off at top speed to where a single hummock of ice lifted near the shore. Around this they disappeared, and instantly there came back a chorus of frantic barking, mingled with a deeper and stronger note.

"It is the mother of them," said Keleepeles, gravely. "Have your spear ready and come."

They walked steadily, having no desire to arrive out of breath. Ever the din grew louder, till, cautiously rounding the hummock, they saw that which sent the blood pumping through their hearts. Backed up close against the vertical wall of ice was a gaunt she bear, and huddled against her side a four-months cub. Twenty feet away, lying on her stomach, her jaws open and dripping, was a great she wolf, her red tongue hanging far out, and her eyes blazing. In between was the pack, nipping frantically at the bear's yellow-white flanks.

Cunayou's heart stood still, and his knees knocked together. They were immediately behind the wolf, which did not move, though she turned her head and gave them one terrible glance. It was just as though she said: "We are both enemies of the bear, you and I, and afterward we can fight it out between us."

Then her attention went to the pups, and she was divided between licking and fondling them, and sending deep coughing barks against

the great beast backed up against the wall of ice. Keleepeles shook his head and motioned, and the two boys retreated to the corner of the hummock.

"Wait and watch," whispered the elder. "We do not kill to-day."

The bear sat back on her haunches, with the cub snuggling between her hind legs, her terrible fore arms free for action, her long black claws projecting, curved and sharp. A pup darted in from each side, snapping viciously. She swung at each, right and left, like a boxer. One she missed, but the other, caught in the tremendous force of her blow, flew thirty feet through the air and landed in a ball of yellow fur with a broken back. Cunayou trembled.

"How soft were the arms of Allegoo, my mother," he quavered. "Let us go home."

But Keleepeles neither smiled nor spoke. His whole body was tense. Every action of each animal meant something to him. He was reading the unwritten book that fascinates the hunter of the North. The cub pressing close

to its mother's side made quick little strokes of defense. The old bear did not notice her, the pink eyes being too busy elsewhere. Came a pause and the she wolf stiffened for a spring. She drew back, every sinew taut, the grizzled hair on her back standing straight up, her long tail straight out, her black muzzle lifted till it almost closed her nostrils. Then she came forward, not with a rush but in quick dancing bounds, from which one could not guess where she would attack. The bear waited, swaying a little, her great body and narrow, deep shoulders seeming almost soft and defenseless except for the mighty arms that she held out, the paws drooping as though in an attitude of prayer. The three pups squatted and licked their tongues. Then, in a flash, the end came.

The mother of the team bayed a deep, angry note and darted forward. She touched the ice just six feet from her enemy, and, twisting her body, struck like lightning,—not at the bear's left side at which she seemed to be aiming but high up in the hollow under her left

forearm. Came a hoarse cough of pain, and the bear's right arm twisted curiously down and, swinging across her chest, caught the wolf in her gray-white stomach. A muffled thud, the breath left the savage body, and it dropped immediately in front of the hesitating pups, where it twitched for a moment and lay still. Then with a throaty grunt the great white beast settled on all fours, and, with her cub trotting loosely close beside her, started for the shore. She did not even look round, but disappeared amongst a nest of boulders under the cliffs. Cunayou, glancing after her with the tears streaming down his face, stepped forward and picked up the body of the dead pup.

It was just like Keleepeles not to say much at the moment. In fact he said nothing at all, but let his brother collect the battered remnants of his team. Being wise, he knew that one could not put cool thoughts into a hot brain; but that night after the fat boy, who was now getting a little thinner, had fed the surviving pups and put away four pounds of seal meat himself, Keleepeles began to talk.

"It was the fight of a mad wolf against that which was too strong for her."

"Why mad?"

"She had gone mad because of the loss of her young, and was without doubt an outcast from the pack. It is so with most things that run. If one has a bad temper, or is old and useless, the pack turns it out and it hunts for itself. And the she wolf has seen us many times when we have not seen her, and followed along the shore. To-day, being crazy, she met the bear and fought. When I looked at her teeth, I found them much worn; she was old and has fought much, for there were many wounds. The black hairs on her tail were nearly gone, and when winter came the wolverines would have pulled her down and eaten her."

Cunayou felt a little happier. His brother seemed to understand everything and it was very comforting, but, for all that, when he crawled into his sleeping-bag that night his brain was full of strange pictures that would not fade away and let him sleep. Presently he poked Keleepeles in the ribs.

"Is there anything which is not killed and eaten,—but just dies? You told me to-day that the white fox and the ravens would eat the dead wolves."

"I do not know of anything," was the answer, "except ourselves. It is the law. Aivick told me that, and he knows all things."

Cunayou thought hard and in silence. "What is the law?" he demanded presently.

"It is that by which all animals live." Keleepeles was trying hard to make clear something rather difficult for himself. "How else could they live?" He had never thought of that before.

"But the she wolf went mad because we took her young. Is that the law? You have given me a strange word and perhaps I am a fool."

This was too much for his brother, who turned over and went straight to sleep, but Cunayou's eyes would not stay closed. It was all so queer. The mink killed the marmot, and the wolverines killed the mink, and so on all the way up. The she wolf had gone mad because he had taken her pups, and as a result the she

wolf was stiff on the ice, waiting for the ravens. Suddenly he had a throb of pity, and then a curious wave of affection for all living things came over him. He shut his eyes and thought of them,—a great procession that walked and ran and swam and flew. He did not want them to die, and most particularly he did not want to kill them. One of the pups had once licked his hand. He liked that and always remembered it. And just then far away he heard a honk-honk that seemed to come straight from behind the clouds, which it actually did, so once again he poked Keleepeles in a certain place that always awoke him immediately.

"What is it?" he whispered.

"Does not the sculpin know the wild goose?" yawned Keleepeles. "I am full of slumber; put your hands on your stomach and sleep also. Your head is too empty to be filled to-night."

Cunayou put his hands where he was bid, but his active little brain worked on. It was

no use bothering Keleepeles any more, and he would have to think for himself. Just at that moment a delightful idea came to him.

In the igloo of Aivick there had been something that the hunter cherished greatly,—a small ivory model of a kayak, with an Eskimo in it and his paddle in his hands. Across the kayak was the body of a small seal. 'Cunayou had fingered this very carefully, for he loved it, and despite all that Allegoo had said it did not seem a difficult thing to make if his fingers were strong enough. As he lay, he knew that he could make one just like it, and furthermore, that he could make drawings of animals and hunting-scenes that the tribe would be proud of, and perhaps sell to the captains of the whaling-ships which Aivick's brother had once seen in Baffin Bay. But to do this it was necessary that he watch the animals and see how they walked and slept and hunted so as to get the thing down right. The more he thought of it the more he liked it, and straightway reached over and punched Keleepeles just

where his stomach runs into his chest. At that the wind went out of his brother with a great gust and he sat up gasping.

"Have you gone mad like the she wolf? Shall I be the white bear and kill you?"

But Cunayou was too full of eagerness to mind, and poured out his heart in the dark, until at the end of it Keleepeles yawned, and, pinching the round cheek, spoke sleepily:

"It is well, fat one, and perhaps through you great honor will come to our tribe. But now let me, your brother, sleep in peace, or your body will be too sore to draw anything until you are an old man and blind, and then it will be too late."

CHAPTER VII

IF it had not been for Cunayou's team the boys would never have got as far south as Wager Bay, which they reached at the end of April, but the going was so good, and the pups pulled so well, that, seized more and more by the spirit of adventure, they held on day after day, past bleak shores and long headlands, where, after all, there was little invitation to explore.

"It is in my mind," said Keleepeles, one night after they had eaten heartily of seal meat, "that we are coming to the place of the Yellowknives, and it is well to be very wise."

"Tell me." Cunayou's mouth was full and he spoke indistinctly.

"I remember," said his brother, "especially one thing among many that Aivick told me. He said that when a Yellowknife gets very old and cannot chew anything, his eldest son takes a cord, which must be of moose sinew, and

puts it tight around his neck and strangles him, after which the son shouts three times, to empty his heart of many things."

Cunayou's eyes opened wide. He tried hard to speak. "But why moose sinew?" he stammered presently.

"Because his father has got it ready for the purpose."

"Then why do we go to the place of the Yellowknives?—my stomach is sick."

"They will not hurt us. There are many things to put away in the mind and make pictures of by and by. And they make much fire."

"What is fire?" Cunayou was obviously puzzled.

"It is like many lamps that burn together with a great flame. Only it is not oil but wood that is burnt."

"Then after the fire there is nothing left?"

"Not anything."

"Is it not foolish to make fire instead of paddles and kayaks and sledges?"

"There is plenty left for that. Aivick told

me that they use strange kayaks, which are open on top, when they cross the little seas in which the water is not bitter. They are not like the one we shall build to-morrow. And they have pipes which are made of the dew claw of a moose, a great deer larger than a caribou, and the stem is the wing bone of a crane. They are strange people."

Cunayou nodded. There were almost too many wonders, but when next morning Keleepeles set about building his kayak he was full of interest. Enough driftwood had been collected for the frame, and the boy toiled over the thing with the queer wisdom that one finds in the silent races of the earth. He could not have told Cunayou how to do it, but he did it himself because he knew quite certainly by the look and the feel of the slim wooden skeleton when he went wrong. There was not a nail or a screw in the whole affair, and, like their sledge, it was built with a knife and held together by sinews. Then, when he had put the last touches on the framework, he stretched scraped walrus hide over it until the thing

was as tight as a drum. There was the slim bow, and the equally slim stern, and the cockpit shut off from the water-tight compartments fore and aft, and the apron that kept water out of the cockpit. It took them more than a week, and when it was finished they fashioned a double-bladed paddle and looked at the sky and longed for open water.

Perhaps you have never seen a kayak. There is a model of one in front of me now, carved out of a walrus tusk by the clever fingers of Cunayou years later. It is delicate and slim and perfectly balanced, and altogether fit for any weather. The sturdy figure of Keleepeles sits amidships with the double-bladed paddle in his hands, and every curve and line of it speaks of the far-away Arctic seas.

In May there was open water south of Southampton Island, which lies just east of the wide mouth of Wager Bay, and the boys, being now completely equipped with dogs, sled, kayak, and weapons, struck seaward until they came to the edge of the great ice-field.

Here they lived for two weeks, and Cunayou learned how to handle a paddle as well as the shortness of his arms permitted. But despite the fact that there were white whales a little farther out, and walrus and seal, and an abundance of fish, the mind of Keleepeles continually struck inland to the unknown places where lived the wandering Yellowknife Indians. Then one day he spoke out.

"It is in my heart that we go on to the south and west," he said, "but I am greatly puzzled."

"Why?" demanded Cunayou. It was a new thing for his brother to be puzzled, and matters had progressed very well in the past.

"It is the dogs."

Cunayou stared at his team. The young wolves had grown prodigiously, and though twice a day they ate enormous quantities of fish and seal fat, they were still hungry. But for all that they had a wild, tireless strength that seemed to know no limit. He had never been away from the shore in all his life, and his ideas of what lay beyond it were extremely

hazy; still, it was impossible to think of life in any form without dogs.

"On the land away from the sea there is no place for young wolves in summer-time unless they return to the pack," Keleepeles said, with evident distress. He knew what the pups meant to his brother.

"Then I do not go. Have you not said that we shall go back to Aivick and Allegoo behind my team when the snows come? I will stay on the ice all summer and feed them," concluded the fat boy, despondently. "I will never leave them."

"The day may come when you will be glad to leave them."

Cunayou shook his head. He was a little frightened at the thought of differing from this brother, who knew so much, but the pups had entered into his very heart. He had never before possessed anything that was quite his own to love, so he did not say anything at all, but went over and sat down amongst them, whereupon they began to climb all over him and push their cold, black pointed muzzles into

his hot brown palm. After a while he felt somehow comforted. It could never be that on a journey so wonderful as this he would be asked to do anything that hurt so much.

It was with mixed feelings that the boys first saw great Wager Bay open its hundred-mile length into the country of the Yellow-knives, and, if the truth be told, it would not have taken much to alter Keleepeles's decision and turn him back to the edge of the ice. And to understand this it is necessary to understand what the Island Eskimo—for of such were the people of Aivick—felt about the Yellow-knives. It was seldom that they saw more than very few of them together, for they do not travel as a tribe but in isolated families. Compared with the Eskimo they were not strong, but they were better armed, being usually possessed of rifles, which, amongst the Arctic Islanders, were till a few years ago very scarce. The Eskimo, while they despised their Indian visitors and would not intermarry, were at the same time a little afraid of them, just as most simple-minded people are sus-

picious of strangers. Aivick would eat with his dogs but not with a Yellowknife; but for that matter the Eskimo at large considered himself superior even to the few white men he saw.

Aivick's father had believed that his father's father had come across from Asia by the Behring Straits, and that soon afterward the Eskimos divided themselves into three groups, —the Laplander, who is small and dumpy and nearly white, the Coast Husky, who is a poor fellow and does not venture much on the ice, and the Islanders, his own tribe, the aristocrats of them all. As for an Indian. he was an outcast,—a person to be suspected and of no real importance.

The boys traveled steadily a mile from shore, and what took Cunayou's fancy most was the number of trees. They were not what we call trees, being only a few dwarf birch and spruce and black alder that grew in the bottom of the gullies running down to the edge of the ice, but to Cunayou they were enormous and remarkable, because neither of the boys had

ever seen anything growing except the gray tufted caribou moss, and lichens and other stunted things that manage to live in the very far North. These scattered thickets puzzled him, and were suggestive of other strange things to come.

On the fourth day, when they were perhaps a hundred miles in from Hudson Bay, the sharp eye of Keleepeles caught a thin gray wisp that seemed to curl up out of one of these thickets a long way off. He stopped at once and pointed.

"There is fire there," he announced with a touch of triumph. "It is the fire of the Yellowknives."

Cunayou felt greatly troubled. He had never seen smoke going up into the sky before; in fact, the only smoke he had ever seen was when Allegoo's seal-oil lamp needed oil.

"Then where do we go?" he asked uneasily.

"Straight on. We sleep there to-night."

"But will they not hurt us with the black stick that spits fire and kills a long way off,—as Aivick once told me?"

Keleepeles laughed. "A dog does not kill a wolf, and we are wolves of the islands, you and I. Let your heart be large. There is nothing to fear."

They went on, the pups pricking their ears when the smell of the distant camp came down the wind, but Cunayou kept them well in hand. Indeed, he could not well know how complete his mastery was, for, while his team was used to the scent of the two boys—and to an animal who thinks through his nose every man has a different scent—they knew nothing of the strange odors that now drifted into their twitching nostrils.

Keleepeles halted a mile off shore.

"Stay here with the dogs," he commanded. I go to see."

He strode off confidently, trailing his spear. Cunayou, sitting on the sledge beside the kayak, which was balanced carefully across it, saw his figure dwindle, and thought very hard. Suppose Keleepeles went into that place and never came out. What then? He was so lonely that after a little he moved and sat

amongst the dogs, scratching the lean gray head of the leader, and reflecting that here at least was something he could depend upon. Then his brother disappeared altogether, and the fat boy waited with his heart in his mouth, until, some moments later, he saw the short, broad figure step out and hold his spear level above his head, which was, of course, a signal to come on. Ten minutes later Cunayou was staring at the oldest old woman he had ever seen.

She was very bent and very bony,—so bent that, though the boys were not tall, her head came below Keleepeles's shoulder. It was just as though she stooped to pick up something but never quite reached it. Her eyes, which had once been black, were now half covered with a dull glaze, and her voice was queer and cracked. Cunayou, staring round, felt much as any of us felt when we saw our first Indian. The igloo he saw was queer, being made of skins over a pointed framework of poles, and through the point where the poles crossed the smoke lifted lazily.

The old crone began to talk in a jerky manner. Keleepeles seemed to understand fairly well, but Cunayou, though he caught an Eskimo word here and there, was greatly puzzled. There was much use of signs, and a drawing of lines in the ashes of the fire. Finally she looked at the pups and showed her yellow teeth, just as though she were an old she wolf herself. Pointing to the sun, she made a short curve low down near the horizon, raised her fingers three times, drew another line in the ashes,—but toward the fire,—peered once more at the pups, rubbed her leg and cackled, and finally hit at the ground with a stick, whereat the pups whimpered nervously. After it was all over, and the cracked voice had subsided into mumbling, Keleepeles nodded contentedly and explained:

"She says that her name is Keepatis, the Giddy Girl. She is very old, and by and by will be blind, therefore the tribe has gone away and she is an outcast. I told you that the animals have outcasts, but so have the Yellowknives. She is able to take care of herself by

snaring rabbits and fishing, and will stay here all summer. There are thirty people in her tribe, and they will not come back until the sun is low down, at the beginning of winter. They are hunting and fishing in some lakes not far from here. She is not afraid of the dogs, and will beat them if they try to bite her, but after she is blind she cannot do anything any more. She says, too, that we must stay here until the pups know her."

Cunayou stared. "She is too old to master them."

"She is very old, but her legs are like the sinews of the walrus, and very strong. Look at her now."

Cunayou looked. She was peering at him, and presently, beginning to laugh, took up a short, thick stick and holding it in her arms commenced to sway back and forth, and mumble a Yellowknife lullaby. The fat boy felt suddenly very angry.

"Am I a child, that she mocks me?"

"You are a child among the Yellowknives, and she is very wise and no fool."

Cunayou swallowed something he felt like saying, and looked at the pups. The leader was sniffing at the old woman. It was a new human smell, quite different from that of the two boys. Keepatis sat motionless until the leader turned away, and, one after the other, the other pups crept up and made their own investigation. Then the three lay down, their noses between their paws, their gray-green eyes fixed watchfully, while the wind ruffled the tawny hair on their long backs, and their black pointed nostrils quivered with odors that were new and strange. Keleepeles watched it all with intense interest.

"I did not think they were so well trained," he said presently. "There will not now be any trouble. They know the smell of Keepatis and will not forget."

CHAPTER VIII

THAT night Cunayou for the first time tasted food that had been cooked. He watched a rabbit sizzling in front of the fire, and strange smells came to him just as they had come to the pups. He licked his lips, just as any fellow would lick his if all his life he had sat in a butcher's shop and eaten the steak as the butcher gave it to him. He saw a whitefish put in a copper pot and boiled, and, to keep him quiet, for he was getting very restless, Keepatis gave him the water the fish had been boiled in, and he thought it delicious, but it burned his throat rather badly. Then they divided the fish into three parts, and ate the rabbit with their fingers, tossing the bones to the pups, and the fat boy crawled into the teepee, where he lay on his back and thought what a wonderful world it was.

Now, in order to get the picture of the far North just a little clearer, consider old Kee-

patis. All that she had in the world was a small copper pot, a crooked knife—very much worn—a small hatchet, a fishing-net, a few feet of copper wire for rabbit snares, an ice-chisel a pair of snow-shoes, a flint and steel, a pipe made of the dew claw of a moose with a stem of the bone of a crane's wing, a little kinic-kinic or wild tobacco, a small canoe and a few skins to sleep in. So long as her strength and sight lasted she could and did live in what she thought comfort. No doubt she had at times dim longings for the sight and sound of her tribe, and children playing in the sun, but, if so, there was no use complaining. It is true that Keepatis knew very little, and was only waiting for the time when she would not see anything any more, but it is written that the Master of All Things gives a special kind of comfort in the wilderness. So, by and by, the snows would come, and Keepatis would go before the snows disappeared. No smoke would drift up from her camp until, months later, some other Yellowknife would happen along and take the copper pot. As to the

fishing-nets, the rabbits would have eaten them, and Carcajou, the wolverine, would have his home under the old canoe.

That is a fair picture of the North,— a place where the sky and the horizon seem a long way off, and quiet brown and red people live close to the ice or close to the earth, with but few possessions; where man seems very small in his surroundings, and does not complain.

At midnight Cunayou woke up with a groan and punched his brother in the ribs.

"There is an evil spirit in my stomach. What shall I do?"

Keleepeles grunted. "His brother is in my stomach, and a greater spirit than yours. Lie on your face and kill it."

Cunayou rolled over, but the spirit was hard to kill. "Is it the food that has been in the fire?" he whispered uncomfortably.

"Without doubt."

"But the old woman is at peace. Why am I tormented?"

"Wait for some days and your stomach will

like it. Could Keepatis eat a square-flipper seal and have peace? This is a strange country, and it is well that we take it slowly. Perhaps next winter you will miss the fire."

Cunayou drew a long breath. It was a strange country, inside and out. He thought a little longingly of Aivick and Allegoo, until a whimper from the pups recalled him. The wind whispered through the bare branches beside the teepee, and just then Keepatis, who seemed fast asleep, reached out and threw some wood on the fire. The smoke tickled his nose, and he began to sneeze. Presently he felt a dry, withered hand patting his round cheek, and that brought him a queer sort of comfort, though it was very different from Allegoo's fat, oily palm.

During the next few weeks the boys learned many things. Keepatis, though very old, was still very wise in the ways of her people. To see her setting a snare was a lesson in woodcraft. When Cunayou tempted her into the sledge for the first trial and raced along shore, there was a wild time while her cracked voice

screamed strange things, and her one fairly good eye snapped with excitement. Indeed, it seemed that the arrival of her visitors had renewed her youth, so agile and tireless did she become. Cunayou was taught to build a fire of dry cottonwood, which is smokeless and does not betray one's presence. She told him of the training of Chiliqui, her grandson, and what she lacked in Eskimo the boys soon picked up in the Yellowknife language. She told of the white men who build a big fire and have to stand away, while the Indian builds a small one and stays close to it. Sometimes with a lingering tenderness she spoke of Sachinnie, the Beaverwood, her son who was hunting somewhere to the west. She would never see him again. And all this time the days were getting longer, till there opened down the center of Wager Bay a strip of clear water. Spring had come to the far North.

It was nearly the end of May before the bay was empty of ice from shore to shore, but long before this the boys were at home in the small canoe which Keepatis insisted they should take.

The kayak, she said, would do for her. There were some breathless moments when first she ventured into it, but these soon passed, and they had a vivid picture of the active old woman wielding the double-bladed paddle. Then came the evening before their departure, when she gave Keleepeles a short, stiff bow and a sheaf of arrows that she had toiled over night after night. It was only when it came to bending the bow and setting the sinew string taut that she had asked for help. After that she looked at Cunayou with a queer affection in her dim eyes, and bade him strip and hold out his arm.

"You go to a strange country," she said, "and this will make you safe."

So, using a sharp fish bone, she tattooed his smooth skin with the sign of the track of the black bear, which is something like the mark a child's foot makes in wet sand, only the instep shows as deeply as the rest of the foot. And, when the pricking was done, she rubbed in charcoal dust, and over it all pressed some hard

grease till the tiny sores should heal and new skin grow over the charcoal. Cunayou winced, but caught his brother's eye and did not laugh.

"It is the sign of Sachinnie, my son," said Keepatis, contentedly, "for first of all he killed a bear. It is the same custom with all hunters. The Yellowknives will not hurt you now."

They pushed off next morning, and Cunayou looked back with a lump in his throat. He did not know where he was going, and Keepatis had been kind. She stood on the shore, staring after them. Beside her the pups, now half grown, sniffed at the wind and from the teepee a thin wreath of smoke lifted into the clear sky. The place was not home, but Cunayou had been happy there. He wondered if they should find the old woman when they came back; and if they did not find her, what of the dogs, for without dogs it would be hard to regain the Arctic ice and discover Aivick. Then the gully slid away, the camp vanished around a point, and there was no

sound except a ripple at the bow, and the steady stroke of Keleepeles's paddle behind him.

The country was very new. Hour after hour the land drifted slowly by, nearly bare of snow. There was the sound of many waters from rivers through which inland lakes emptied themselves into the sea. For the most part it was a succession of bare rocky ridges, except where the gulleys came down to the shore. Cunayou fell into a sort of dream and paddled quite without knowing it, till on one sunshiny afternoon Keleepeles spoke sharply:

"Look!—straight ahead!"

Cunayou started and stared hard. Three miles away was a strip of muddy sand on which he saw a queer mound that was unlike anything he knew. At the same moment he smelt an old smell. Around the mound was a group of yellowish, white specks that continually moved. It was for all the world like a swarm of ants that were exceedingly busy about something.

"What is it?" he said over his shoulder.

"White foxes. We go ashore here, then climb up and look down at them."

Two hours later Cunayou lay on his stomach and peered over the edge of the cliff. Fifty feet below and two hundred feet away a band of white foxes tore at the body of a blue whale left by the receding tide. With them were perhaps thirty pups.

Keleepeles grunted with satisfaction. "I have not seen so many before."

"Then it is good hunting?"

"But what shall we do when we kill?"

The fat boy rubbed his stomach. "Eat them."

"The wolverine may eat them, but not we. This is not the time to kill. See, they are very foolish."

Cunayou's eyes narrowed. He knew the red fox, and noted that these were shorter and stumpier, with a poor brush, and no marking on the end of it. They seemed clumsy in comparison. "They are like children," he said presently.

"They are children," said Keleepeles, "but

they go out on the ice a long way, and can swim fast. In a season of the year their skins are yellow from oil. By and by the new hair will come, till in winter they are like the snow; but in summer the fur is nearly brown, and that on the belly is blue like the sky. They have no stomach to fight, and will hunt only for their own young—of which there are many —twice a year."

"And that one," said Cunayou, pointing to where a mile down the shore stood a single fox, very much alone.

"An outlaw. When it is dark he will come and eat. There is no place for him now. Watch!"

He threw a small stone that hit one fox on the back. It turned like a flash, gave a sharp angry bark and jumped at its nearest neighbor. In ten seconds the whole band was snapping furiously, a heaving blanket of stained yellow fur. Food was forgotten: It was exactly like a swarm of dirty children in a rough and tumble fight. Old foxes, middle-aged foxes, young foxes and pups, rolled over and over,

their noses wrinkled, their white teeth bared, all intensely savage and all about nothing.

"He works hard, but he is a fool," chuckled Keleepeles. "When there are no whales he eats lemmings or marmot. He is always in a hurry, but he does not get anywhere. Every animal despises him, and is his enemy. The snow owl follows his young to kill them with his beak, and the gray wolf hunts the parents, who do not defend themselves but sit on their stomachs and snap. See, they have killed one of their brothers and go on eating."

Cunayou watched and marveled, for in the real Arctic one does not find many animals together. Presently the whole pack, as though seized by some wild idea, set off down the coast, quarreling and playing. A moment later the boy stood over the body of the dead fox.

"His feet are different."

"They are very woolly, because he travels much on the ice, and they have pads of down underneath so that he may not slip, and sometimes when he goes through the beach slime

his feet become great balls of clay, and he drowns when the tide comes in and catches him. Aivick told me that far out on drifting ice he has found white foxes, who do not starve but catch birds and seals. At times they are very sick, and die from dirt and too much food, and when sickness comes they go and hunt for old wife's grass to heal them. But they are fools and die nevertheless. Let us go back and watch. We shall see many things."

An hour passed, and from the cover of the cliffs the boys noted the outcast of the pack steal up to the dead whale and gorge himself. He was on guard every moment,—an old broken-down dog fox who seemed to show in every movement that he admitted himself to be disreputable and unworthy, and ate, choking his food down, exactly as does a greedy boy who has stolen a banana and is putting it out of sight in the shortest possible time. Then, as day drew into night, followed a strange procession that came in appointed order, and ate and slipped away. First a white bear, and when he was satisfied two gray

wolves; and after the wolves there waddled down Carcajou, the wolverine, and after Carcajou there was a dribble of smaller animals, each knowing perfectly well where he fitted in. It was the law of the wilderness. Cunayou saw it working, and put away in his head as many of these things as he could, that some day he might draw and carve them for the tribe.

Do you begin to understand Cunayou, this fat boy who had in his nature nothing hard or stern, and was full of a queer love for all living things? He admired Keleepeles, and knew in his heart that he himself was different. He would never be a great hunter, but he was convinced that some day he would be something unusual. He never spoke of this, though his fingers were beginning to itch for something with which to draw or carve. And the very next day they found a real Yellowknife hunter.

CHAPTER IX

IT happened again through smoke, just as it generally does in the North, where there are no visiting-cards. There a fellow makes a fire and knows perfectly well that if another fellow is near he will pretty soon drop in. It is a place where you don't depend on others, but are glad to see them. That gives another picture of the North,—an enormous tract of country where, miles apart, little wreaths of smoke are going up from little camp fires, each one signaling "Come in and have something to eat." It is rather nice when a fellow thinks of it.

The Yellowknife did not move a muscle when the boys beached their canoe, and came slowly toward him. Of course they stopped a little way off and held their hands empty above their heads, which is a sign of peace, but even at that Cunayou felt a bit uncomfortable. The hunter was sitting by a small fire, his rifle

within reach, and looked at them suspiciously, —for the Yellowknife is apt to be afraid of the Eskimo. Presently he put the two questions which open all conversations in the wilderness.

"Where do you come from?"

Keleepeles made a gesture that took in the whole Arctic Circle. He spoke with his eyes as much as with his arm.

"Where do you go?"

Again Keleepeles motioned, but this time somewhat indefinitely, after which the Yellowknife got up and stared hard at the canoe. Suddenly his face grew dark.

"Where did you steal that canoe?"

"It was not stolen: an old woman gave it to us."

The hunter shook his head angrily and snatched up his rifle. "You are thieves and liars. You have stolen it. All Eskimo are liars."

Fear trickled through Cunayou's veins, and he felt rather sick, but Keleepeles stood like a statue.

"We are not thieves, and for a whole moon we stayed with an old woman. She gave us the canoe, and this bow she made me. I speak truth and no lie."

But the Yellowknife did not answer. The rifle lay loose in the crook of his elbow, and one lean, brown finger curved around the trigger. Then Cunayou, who had been thinking hard, even while his blood turned to water, had an inspiration.

"You are Sachinnie, the son of Keepatis, the Giddy Girl, and I am your brother," he blurted. His eyes were very bright.

"Then you are a fool as well as a thief," the Yellowknife growled exactly like an angry wolf.

"Look and see." Cunayou tore open his tunic and bared his shoulder. "Is not this the sign of Sachinnie, the Beaver Wood, and was it not made there by your mother, and am I not then your brother, having the same sign? You speak too fast, and we are not afraid. Let me see your own arm."

The fat boy got this off very fast, for it

was a good deal for him to say, and at the end of it his cheeks were puffed out, and he breathed hard while he looked up at the hunter —who was a very tall man—with an air of defiance that was almost contempt.

For a moment nothing happened. Presently Sachinnie began to laugh and show his yellow teeth, till, presently, he bared his shoulder and there was the sign of the black bear, but done very evenly and beautifully in gunpowder, just as the fingers of Keepatis had left it when he was only seventeen years old. Then he put out a long, sinewy hand and laid it on the head of Cunayou.

"We are indeed brothers, you and I."

Cunayou nodded rather stiffly, and tried not to show how excited he was. Keleepeles had a wild desire to shout with laughter, and conquered it with difficulty, but his brother had without doubt saved the situation, and just then Sachinnie asked about Keepatis, and where she was. He did not appear particularly interested to hear that his mother was still alive and apparently well, and something

warned the boys to say nothing about the dogs, but the danger-point was passed and gradually their talk became more free. Sachinnie seemed puzzled that two young Eskimos should have ventured so far, and after a while asked in an off-hand way whether they would come with him. The invitation sounded generous, but, as a matter of fact, the Yellowknife realized that while the boys would help him hunt, it was not probable that they would want to take any fur back with them. And to make the prospect more attractive he displayed his rifle and an assortment of traps that made Keleepeles's eyes bulge.

"Where do you go?" asked the latter, curiously.

Sachinnie stooped and drew a map in the sand, which, though it was rough, was nevertheless extremely accurate, and showed many things that government surveys do not record. There was Wager Bay contracting to a narrow channel, and expanding again to the west, the Quoich River running south toward Chesterfield Inlet, and the inlet itself broadening to

salt water with all its tributary lakes and streams.

"I hunt here and here." He indicated the places with his forefinger. "There are caribou and mink and otter. Perhaps there are wood-buffalo, but I have not yet found them. In the lakes are many geese and swans and very many berries in the months of the large moon." He meant August and September. "Then the fur is not good, but the caribou are very fat, and it is easy to live. To-morrow I go."

"Where will you be when the snow comes?" put in Keleepeles, with the return trip in the back of his head.

"I travel to trade at Dubaunt Lake." Sachinnie bent over and enlarged his map to show the country to the southwest.

"But we go north, to my father's tribe."

"Then I will take you to the long bay that leads to salt water."

"Do you search for your people?" asked Cunayou, a little uncertainly.

Sachinnie grinned. "Have I not found a brother? And besides, where there are many

hunters there is poor hunting. I go alone." At that Keleepeles nodded slowly, and things took shape in his mind. Had Sachinnie been traveling to his people he could have gone alone, for the young hunter had no desire to spend months as a member of a band of Yellowknives. But that the three of them should journey inland seemed attractive. There was much to be learned from Sachinnie. Then he had a sudden thought.

"Shall we take much fur?" he asked carelessly. "And whose fur shall it be?"

"Are they not my traps?" The answer came a little sharply.

"But shall we not help to set and empty them?" Keleepeles's voice was very good-natured and very steady.

"You cannot carry fur to the North. It is not worth anything to those who live in snow houses and see no white men."

"I have it in my stomach that I and my brother, Cunayou, would carry each a piece of fur to Allegoo, our mother,—the piece we would have. Is is well?"

Sachinnie thought hard and quickly. In case they got a black fox it would not be well, but though he had caught both silver-gray and pointed foxes, he had never yet got a black one. These boys were strong and capable, and he looked forward to a summer of leisure when there would be little for him to do but eat.

Presently he nodded slowly: "It is well."

That night there was but little sleep for Keleepeles and his brother. Their heads were full of visions. Sachinnie had showed them his traps again, and talked with fascinating knowledge about the smaller fur-bearing animals. The large ones they knew themselves, but not the mink and otter and marten. Carcajou, Keleepeles had sometimes seen, but it was hard to imagine anything like a lynx in a region where there were no trees. He fondled the steel traps as a child fondles his toys, while the hunter's spirit throbbed and throbbed. Cunayou was rather silent. Would he ever be able to draw half the things he would probably see? It seemed to him that Keleepeles was wiser even than he thought; for Kelee-

peles had apparently known what this journey of theirs would reveal.

Then there was the rifle. It was quite impossible to describe what Cunayou felt about this, but if you had been all your life accustomed to hear of your father walking up to a white bear and pushing a spear into his stomach, and suddenly discovered that he could stand two hundred paces away and kill him quite dead just by pressing with your forefinger, you might get something of the queer thrill that ran through the boys the first time they looked through the V-shaped sights. It was, of course, white man's magic, but good magic, and Keleepeles ached for the time when he should put it to his own shoulder.

They started the day afterward, Sachinnie ahead in his own canoe. His paddle made no noise and he skirted the islands of upper Wager Bay with slow strokes, while his keen eyes continually explored the shore. If you have ever watched an Indian paddling alone it must have been quite clear that his body became almost a part of the canoe, and yielded

to it with an easy grace very difficult to attain. By this time the boys were accustomed to cooked food, so that when camp was made they busied themselves around the fire while Sachinnie set up the teepee poles, a simple affair that took only a few moments, and struck Cunayou as a much easier process than building an igloo. The camp itself was much the same every evening, a sheltered spot in the thickest part of the scanty timber, and one from which they could see the water. And the very first night out Sachinnie laughed and asked Keleepeles to snare some rabbits for breakfast.

"But I have no wire or sinew," said the boy.

The Yellowknife chuckled and gave him a small coil of the precious material. Then Keleepeles, walking slowly,—for he was in a strange place,—selected a run where there was rabbit dung, and set up on each side of it a piece of branch, so that when a rabbit passed he would perforce go along the middle of the narrow track. Just beyond the branches, and a little to one side, he selected a sapling some

seven feet high, bent it over, and, trimming the top, fastened to it some three feet of wire, the end of which formed a running noose. Holding the noose carefully, he pinned it down, so that it remained just clear of the ground. It was large enough to admit the head and neck of a rabbit, but not his shoulders, and was fastened just so that the animal running into it would release it from the pin. He did this four or five times, when it was too dark to work any longer. Just as he finished he started up and saw Sachinnie standing beside him. The Yellowknife had come without a sound.

"It is very good," said the latter, approvingly. "We shall feed well."

That night when the fire was puttering in the middle of the teepee, and Cunayou was sitting with his shirt off, he glanced curiously at Sachinnie, and spoke after a little hesitation.

"Yesterday you said that perhaps we should kill a wood buffalo. What is this thing?"

"It is larger than a caribou, and has long hair on its chest that reaches to the ground.

There may be some where we go, but their home is between the Peace River and the Slave River, —a long way off to the south and west."

"Tell me more," demanded Cunayou, his eyes very bright. "I did not know that anything was bigger than a caribou, except the whale and the walrus."

"He lives in the land of little sticks. The cow has but one calf, late in the summer time. It has long legs, and is foolish and weak."

"But it is strong when the snow comes?"

"Not so."

"Then how does it live?"

"Because the cow takes it to a hidden place among the little sticks, and stays beside it. When the snows get too deep for it to walk, the calf lies still and soon is covered. Then it moves a little but does not come out, and more snow falls and it is by itself in a small house of snow and quite warm."

"But, having no food, it dies," said Cunayou, sadly.

"It does not die but puts its head out of the snow and the cow, being still there, suckles it

all winter. Its body does not come out, but only its head."

Keleepeles looked up sharply. This sounded like big magic, but Sachinnie was quite grave.

"Is this a true tale that you tell?"

"I do not lie to my brother," came the somewhat stiff answer.

Cunayou said nothing, his mouth being wide open. Presently he drew a long breath.

"Tell me, why are you called the Yellowknives?" he asked after a pause.

"Many miles from here there is a big river" (he meant the Coppermine), "where strange stuff that is hard, but not so hard as stone, sticks out of the ground. My tribe has gone there for many summers, to make pots and arrow-heads and knives. The stuff is of a yellow color, and that is why we are called Yellowknives. Are you answered?"

The fat boy nodded. He had had enough for one night, and just then in the silence outside sounded a queer, shrill, almost human scream. Cunayou would have started had it

not been for his training with Keepatis, but now he knew that somewhere near by a rabbit was dangling from a strand of copper wire four feet in the air. That night he did not say anything more. He liked the taste of cooked rabbit, but he never could get accustomed to that scream.

CHAPTER X

THE routine of travel established itself very soon, and it is important that one understands just how the boys regarded Sachinnie. Between the hunter and themselves there was the difference of Indian and Eskimo. They were not afraid of him, but did not trust him quite completely. No Eskimo puts entire confidence in any Yellowknife. Sachinnie was, it is true, very wise in the woods, but on the other hand the boys could live on the ice all winter without fire or water, and this would have been too much for Sachinnie. The latter, for instance, could never have walked up to a white bear and killed him with a spear, while Keleepeles was quite ready to try it. Eskimo life called for more sheer courage than did that of the Indian, and every Yellowknife knew it; and, besides this, the boys had a sturdy, self-reliant independence that commanded respect. In the

back of his head Sachinnie wondered whether they were forerunners of a tribe that was tired of life on the ice and now sought new hunting-grounds. If so it might be a serious thing for the Yellowknives.

It fell on a day in June that they left salt water and struck into a small chain of lakes, leading to the Quoich River. Here Cunayou noted the growth of flowers that sprang up on the bare tundra. Mosses were in bloom and a coarse, stunted anemone with its lilac blossom. At the edges of dwindling snow patches were snow forget-me-nots, shaped like those we know, but white. The wild crocus, yellow streaked with red, dotted the higher ground, while in the hollows Cunayou bent over the scarlet tulip with its feathery edges. Here and there were small wild roses that filled him with wonder and pricked his fingers. He was amazed, just as any fellow would be on seeing flowers for the first time in his life. They seemed like spirits, very beautiful and tender.

They were paddling very gently and close

to shore, when Sachinnie, who was a little ahead, suddenly backed water and pointed, and on a low point, with its long neck thrust straight out in the most enquiring manner possible, Cunayou saw his first trumpeter swan.

It is the custom of these great birds to separate into pairs when they arrive in the North, and seek, each pair, some little lake on the shore of which they build their nest. Nature has given them a piercing sight, and an extraordinary power of hearing, but very little sense of smell, so that the travelers, approaching slowly and close under the land, got very near without being seen.

The trumpeter is white, with black tips to his wings, a few black feathers in his tail, black mandible and feet, and reddish eyes,—a big bird and strong, which, with his gray and blue-black brothers seeks in his flight the upper air, and travels faster than an express train hour after hour. He is wonderful in the air or water, but on the land is somewhat naturally a bit of a fool, and builds a nest—if you can call it a nest—out of a few sticks,

in which the lady of the house sits with an air of proud suspicion. That is what the boys saw,—a long neck, small arrow-shaped head, and shining black beak, standing straight up out of a large handful of short sticks, lined with a little moss and soft down from the birds' own breasts.

Then, suddenly, she saw them, and, without moving, began a deep soft coo-whoo that echoed over the quiet water till there came the throb of mighty wings, and the male bird whipped across the lake, landed close to shore with a splash, and waddled awkwardly toward his better half. Instinctively Keleepeles drew his bow, pulling the stone head of the arrow back till it almost touched his swelling finger joints. It was good hunting. But in the same instant, Cunayou, his eyes full of soft pity, sent an imploring glance and shook his head.

"Do not kill, brother! Do not kill them!"

Keleepeles frowned, and with an angry grunt put down the bow. It was hard to refuse the fat boy, and after all there was

food everywhere for the taking. Sachinnie, looking round, saw that Keleepeles did not mean to shoot, and his canoe moved back like a dead leaf. All three sat so motionless that in a moment they seemed to be part of the shore itself.

The two swans stared and stared, their long necks stretched and stiff, till, in a little while, they decided that no danger was near. Then followed a sort of conversation, and a rubbing of necks, which both seemed to understand and enjoy, till the female bird lumbered awkwardly from the nest and her lord, with a preening of shining wings, and a lifting of wide membraned feet, took her place, and settled down over the two great mottled slate-colored eggs, while the lady moved royally over the quiet water, fishing for shrimps. Cunayou watched it all and his eyes were very soft. Then he turned and sent his brother a quick nod of thanks. He found it curiously hard to speak.

That night Sachinnie talked long about swans. He told how the male birds in a season

of the year go to their council,—a gathering on a lonely lake where no female is admitted, unless by bad fortune she has lost her mate. Then the grieving bird may fly straight to this assembly and choose another husband, who immediately follows her and becomes a new father to the young.

"The swan will not fight without cause," went on the Yellowknife slowly, "and he lives only with his mate. But she will steal another nest, and kick out what eggs she may find there. Year after year they return to the same lakes in the spring with the young they have raised in the South, for they breed twice each year. It is clear water that they choose, a lake that has an outlet and is not dead. Most swans are not like the trumpeter, but are gray like a white goose that has grown rusty. They have yellow feet, and their breasts are also of a yellow color, and the middle of their eyes are black with gray around it."

"And their food?" put in Cunayou.

"Their food is swan weed, and the periwinkle and shrimp."

"Do they go away, two by two, with their young?"

"Not so, but before they travel south they gather at the edge of the bitter water to get shell-fish and harden their strength. It is necessary that they walk part of the way, eating berries while they walk, for their young are not yet strong enough to fly. Then, in great numbers, they meet at the coast and become harder, and make short flights with their young, who till now have been very ugly, with legs and heads and wings and fat bodies, and hardly any feathers. The swan is strong,—but not wise. In the air he cannot fight when the hawk or eagle attacks him, but flies in circles and climbs very high to escape his enemy."

Sachinnie talked like this for a good while, and the boys drank in every word. To Keleepeles it was like rounding out one of the stories of which, from time to time, he had only overheard a few words, while to Cunayou it was all sheer delight. It is possible, too, that the Yellowknife was a little proud of all he

knew, but, though every other Yellowknife hunter knew it, this was the first time he had ever had such an attentive audience.

"Tell me more," urged the fat boy; "something about your tribe."

"While I was young and still very foolish, like you," began Sachinnie, thoughtfully, "my father, every night beside the fire, told me about animals till by and by I learned how to skin and cut them up. In those days, and it was far south from here, when my father found a moose track he left me by the fire while he hunted, but one day I went with him for the first time. I had a bag of *babeeche,* which is uncured hide, and in it was a small kettle, and Yellowknife tea, and my blanket, socks, and a bag of pemmican, which is pounded meal and grease, and around my shoulders was a caribou robe, and my tunic and trousers were of this skin. I took a little ax, too, and a tump-line of shaganappy, which is rawhide, and a knife, and a fire-bag with flint and steel, and my pipe. All these things I had, and I was very happy."

Cunayou bent forward, his eyes glistening. "Tell me more."

"Always I walked three paces behind my father, to give him room to act very quickly. Not at all did I speak, unless first he said the word, nor must I cough or sneeze, but swallow many things that came up in my throat, for I was very happy. If there was an animal that I saw before my father I gave a low whistle, but even then did not speak, and in the middle of the day we made not any fire, but at night time I gathered dry wood, which burns without smoke,—for there must be no smell of smoke when one is hunting,—and started the fire and my father made the rest of it. Then again, every night, he told me about the animals we hunted."

"And then you killed one?"

"Not for many days, for I was yet young and foolish, and not soon does a foolish one become a hunter, but little by little. In the morning I made tea, and my father followed fresh tracks while I stayed in camp. Not for any reason must I leave it. Then if my father

killed he fired again, once, and I put together all that we had, so that when my father came back all was ready to be moved to the deer or moose. That night he told me how he killed, also many small things that make good hunting. Then, by and by, I went ahead on the fresh tracks myself, with my father three paces behind. He did not speak any word, being silent like myself, but made a sign when I did that which was wrong. If more than one animal was seen, he fired first and I after him at the other."

"And then you were a hunter?"

"Not so, for it was necessary that I went altogether alone first, and bring back some part—being the nose or tongue or eyes or ears or kidneys or heart—of the beast I killed. That night there was a feast with the girls, and the sign of the animal was made on my arm with gunpowder and rubbed in, and the arm was greased and tied with a rag. And then I was no longer a child but a man and a hunter."

Keleepeles had listened very quietly. He

was vastly interested, but it all sounded very easy and nothing like killing the white bear in the manner of his own people. Here one could kill a long way off, and, if one missed, could climb a tree. His mind went back to Keepatis. Why should not the old woman be comfortable with her son instead of leading a hard life in solitude? Sachinnie might be a good hunter, and it might be the custom of his tribe to desert old women, but the young Eskimo did not like it.

"And your father?" he said presently. "Where is he now?"

"Dead for many seasons."

"Did he go by way of the moose sinew, as my father once told me?"

Sachinnie nodded, and did not speak. He felt a little restless, and the subject was not pleasant.

"And your father? Where is he?" asked the hunter.

"On the ice, fishing, and hunting the square-flipper. His father is dead, but he went as a chief should go."

"How is that?" demanded the Yellowknife.

"In a big igloo that was built for him by the tribe, when he told them that the time had come. It was very big, and the tribe brought many skins and robes as presents. There was a great feast for the men inside, while outside the women harnessed the dogs and waited. Many words were said by my father's father—who was Tarpill—the Fishing-Net—to those who were to come after him, and no man answered back, for after this night he would not say anything any more. There was a hole in the ice for him to fish in, and much food, and a lamp and seal oil. Then, when the men's stomachs and Tarpill's heart were full, they said farewell; and last of all Aivick, my father, kissed him, and, going outside, closed up the door with a block of snow, and set a walrus tusk on top of the igloo, that all might know this was the place of death. Then all the tribe called out good-by many times, and Tarpill answered from the inside, putting his mouth near to the roof. After that the tribe went away two days' journey, that the spirit of

Tarpill might not be hurt by the sight of man when it left his body. And so he died."

"It was the same with my father," said Sachinnie, shortly.

Keleepeles shook his head. "My father went,—but yours was sent. There is a difference."

Sachinnie smiled, but not very pleasantly. "We have talked enough of these things. Tomorrow we reach the place where I have set traps. Let us sleep."

Silence fell in the tepee. Cunayou dropped into dreamland at once, and saw a large number of remarkable and interesting things, but Keleepeles lay awake. His brain was very busy. Sachinnie was the only man who was not an Eskimo with whom he had ever talked, and he studied the Yellowknife just as closely as he studied every new and strange animal. He noticed that his neck and body and hands were bony and rather thin, and very unlike those of an Eskimo, also that his skin was always dry and never oily. He did not quite like the way Sachinnie smiled. It was true that the

boys could turn back at any moment, but this would mean missing a deal of useful information, which was the object of the whole journey. Then the vision of Keepatis came before him, and he dropped into a restless slumber. The last thing he remembered was getting a queer idea that when they next saw Keepatis it would be in a curious and unexpected way.

CHAPTER XI

IT seemed, next day, that luck was against Sachinnie. Out of the four traps that he visited, three were unsprung, while the fourth held in its steel teeth a tiny blood-stained ball that the hunter examined closely and exhibited to the boys. He did not swear, for one of the peculiarities of all Indian languages is that they contain no oaths; and perhaps, too, a man becomes more self-controlled in the wilderness.

"What is it?" Keleepeles was intensely curious.

"The foot of an otter. He is very quick and can spring nearly as fast as a trap. Also, there has been a fight."

The boys looked, but could see nothing except some upturned dead leaves and a few drops of blood that led to a near-by stream.

"It was Carcajou, the wolverine, who heard the otter in the trap and came to kill and eat

him. He is a coward and a great thief. Let us find him."

Keleepeles stared, for to try to find either animal in this thicket seemed absurd. But Sachinnie stood for a moment, his dark eyes searching the ground, then walked very slowly toward the stream, and on one side of a faint and irregular track that the boys could hardly detect. On the edge of the water the hunter paused.

"He has gone down stream like all others when they are pursued. There is not much water, and Carcajou, following him, has run along the bank—here and here. The otter, being hurt, will not stay under long, and Carcajou knows this, for he is very wise. Now, listen. I can hear them."

Through the sparse and naked undergrowth came the sharp sound of combat; from the otter a series of shrill screeches like an owl, and then a quick yapping as of a fox. These were the calls of fear and anger. Mingled with them the boys distinguished a coughing bark that seemed half choked.

"Carcajou fights hard in a season of the year," grunted Sachinnie. "Tread softly and come."

A hundred yards away the travelers peered over the edge of a low bank at a stretch of wet sand, where otter and wolverine were locked in battle. At first sight it seemed that the former was overmatched, so great was the difference in weight. The wolverine, stout and broad, fought like a bear, using his great strength to the utmost, while the otter, slim and sleek, met him with amazing swiftness. Over and over they rolled. Soon the otter's glossy fur became streaked with blood, drawn by his enemy's sharp claws, but always like a twisting arrow he darted back to the attack.

"It is the season of breeding, and their young ones are not far off," said Sachinnie, under his breath. "At this time all animals fight hard."

Keleepeles stood motionless. He had never seen a wolverine before. Now he got glimpses of a black pointed nose, small brown eyes, short round ears and sturdy legs. The

"It is nearly done," said Sachinnie

back was dark, the head a light brown, the skull sharp and rather flat. Strength was in every line and curve of the beast, and his long hair seemed to wrap him in safety like a blanket. Where the otter was graceful, he was clumsy, but he fought with a grim determination, punctuating his attacks with a rapid wolf-like yapping.

Against this strength the otter battled bravely, his lifted lips showing the black roof of his mouth. It seemed that he was determined the wolverine should not approach a certain spot, and constantly thrust his smooth body in front of an opening in the bank left by the receding stream. His left fore leg being limp, he jerked it up, wincing every time the weight of his antagonist drove it into the sharp sand. He was a big dog otter, some five years old, and had large brown eyes that now were alight with fury. Presently both animals drew off and rested for an instant.

"It is nearly done," said Sachinnie, evenly.

The next instant it seemed that they leaped at each other as though by signal. Came

again the snapping of sharp teeth, a whistling cry from the otter and they met in one last effort. Then very swiftly the teeth of each met in the throat of the other. They swayed, their muscles quivering, locked in their death bite, till, together, they sank to the sand. Came a twitching of limbs, and a sharp wheezing breathing, and gradually the sturdy bodies slackened and grew limp. Carcajou was foiled of his prey, but the dog otter had paid with his life.

Sachinnie stepped down and stared at the torn fur, ripped by Carcajou's sharp black claws. It was not worth anything in trade. As to Carcajou, his hide also was damaged, and in any case was too heavy and coarse to pack four hundred miles to the nearest trading-post. He turned the two over with his foot, then stared hard at the hole in the bank.

"I shall set my trap to-night and catch the she otter," he said contentedly. "Her skin is not so large, but it is finer—and still worth something."

Cunayou looked up in sudden distress, and

was about to speak, but Keleepeles swiftly motioned him to be silent. The fat boy swallowed a lump in his throat.

"Do we leave them here?" he stammered, glancing at the victims.

"Yes, for the other carcajous. They will be gone to-morrow. Come, we make camp now."

Keleepeles followed cheerfully, but Cunayou's heart was heavy. That evening the Yellowknife set his trap opposite the otter hole. It was a simple enough proceeding. Fastening the end of a light chain to the root of a dead tree that projected above the surface of the sand-bank, he attached the trap to the other end. As a bait he used a small fish that he netted after a few moment's casting. Then sand was carefully scattered so that chain, trap, his own tracks and everything but the bait was obliterated, and all the time he wore a pair of deerskin mits which had been rubbed with the musk bag of the weasel, so that no faint trace of human smell might remain, When he was finished there was observable

only a small fish that had apparently been washed up on the shore. The boys followed every movement with a steady, unwinking stare. They had never seen this thing done before.

That night in the tepee the talk was about Carcajou, the wolverine. Sachinnie did not think much of the glutton of the North,—for so Carcajou is known.

"What he can carry, that he steals, and what he cannot steal he destroys. He is a great robber, and the enemy of all things."

"And who are his enemies?" put in Keleepeles.

"The wolf, also the eagle, who seeks the young, who are six in a litter. These are like small dogs, whose claws and teeth are very sharp. Their fur is brown and like wool, and for three days they are blind and see not. As to the head, they are round; as to the legs, long. Their noses are black and often full of many wrinkles. For three moons their mother suckles them, and then they hunt by doing what their father does. But their parents bring food to the den. A great

follower is Carcajou after those animals that kill for themselves; what is left he takes, and what he cannot eat he defiles so that none but himself can eat it."

"Where is his home?" Keleepeles was putting away many things in his mind.

"In a hole or a cave or a bank of sand. When the fox leaves, Carcajou enters in. He can climb like a lynx, and—"

"What is a lynx?" demanded Cunayou.

"In a few days we shall take one, and you shall see. Carcajou will drop from a tree on his enemy, or hunt him by keeping down the wind. He is very wise and strong and dirty; also he is mean, for he hunts when other animals are resting, four or five in a band, but often they fight together like dogs. When they throw themselves on their backs, then there is most danger, for their claws are very sharp. Also, they smell like many dead things close at hand. They are devils, not animals."

"Why?" said Cunayou, with a curious light in his eye.

"Because they steal all things,—a rifle or

snow-shoes or fishing-nets, and the fish that are in the net. Even they will steal traps and carry them away. They are very cunning, but also great cowards."

"Why?" asked Cunayou, again.

"Because when they are frightened they hide their heads between their paws that no one may see them, or they will get behind a bush even though it be very thin and without leaves."

"And their tracks?" said Keleepeles. His hunter's brain was busy.

"It is like a wolf and a fox, but not quite the same, being more round than a wolf and more large than a fox. It is also like a small bear cub, and there are pads underneath that make a mark in the snow. They do not walk, but trot, and a good runner can catch them. Carcajou is a glutton, and his stomach is always in his brain, and in a season of the year he goes mad. The Yellowknife does not eat him, but there is not anything he will not eat. I have spoken too much, and my eyes are heavy. To-morrow we shall have a she otter."

In three minutes it was very quiet in the teepee. Sachinnie and Keleepeles were breathing with the slow, deep respiration of tired bodies, but Cunayou's eyes were wide open. It was curious how often he lay awake now, trying to sort out things in his own particular way. To-night it was the she otter. Somewhere, just outside the overhanging bank a few paces off, was the sleek, bright animal with her young, waiting the return of her lord, and just outside lay the trap, cunningly baited, against the time when she would come out to seek food for her children.

The more Cunayou thought of it the less he liked it. It might be the law that wild things kill and be killed, and very certainly it was Sachinnie's right to set his traps where he would, but just now the boy was chiefly conscious of his own growing love for all living things,—even Carcajou, the glutton.

An hour later a round oily face protruded through one side of the tepee, followed by a short, broad body. Then came the rest of Cunayou. When his feet were clear, he lay

motionless for some time, while his pulse hammered in his ears. Presently, like an overfed eel, he wormed his way a few paces further and stood up.

The sky was cloudless, and full moonlight lay on the silent land. The boy darted quick glances into the shadows, for where he came from there were no shadows, and with infinite care slipped very slowly toward the otter's den. The air was mild, and strange smells came to him. Here, all around, were things of which he was only just beginning to learn. Carcajou, who dropped from branches, and the lean gray wolf were both abroad to-night. The thought burned in his stomach and made him a little sick, but he did not hesitate. At every snapping of a twig he halted, his heart in his mouth, for he was going to do that for which Sachinnie would kill him if the Indian ever found out,— a thing that is a black mark against any hunter.

It took him half an hour to cover the short distance to the sand-bank, and before he reached it there came to him a series of low,

musical whistles that sounded quite clearly in the still air. At last, peering over the edge, he caught the gleam of water. He was some eight feet above the dead root to which Sachinnie had anchored his chain. Leaning forward as far as he dared, Cunayou looked over. The end of the chain was out of reach. He dared not climb down lest fresh tracks on the sand betray him at sunrise, for Sachinnie was very wise in such things. Thirty feet away was the fish. Again from the otter hole thrilled that musical whistle. Cunayou drew a long breath, and, suddenly, inspiration came to him.

Close at hand was a clump of black alder, so, choosing a sapling that branched near the ground, the boy cut it off and amputated one branch, leaving a rough hook with a handle some ten feet long in all. The fresh cut looked suspiciously bright in the moonlight, therefore he rubbed it with black, damp earth. Leaning over, he slipped the hook under the chain and pulled gently. The trap moved ever so slightly. Gathering in the slack, he repeated

the performance, and brought the trap two feet nearer. In ten minutes it was immediately under him, and upside down. The fish lay harmless and glinting on the sand. Then the boy waited as quietly as a dead rabbit.

Presently from the hole protruded the sleek head of the she otter, and very slowly she came into view. After her rolled four pups, lean like lizards, and just about as active, long and thin with fur like silk velvet. To the water they ran, and there began a beautiful game led by the mother, in which all five flashed up stream like fragments of living, shining copper. Cunayou's heart leaped, for the mother was teaching her young to hunt. Under water she stayed five minutes at a time, while the cubs dived and searched frantically, then emerged, leaping clear into the air with the drops flying from her glossy sides. Cunayou thought he had never seen anything half so quick, or half so graceful.

Suddenly she darted up the opposite bank, and slid down into the dark water with a splash. After her came the cubs, whistling with de-

light. It was an otter slide, of which Cunayou had heard Sachinnie speak,—but which the boy had never expected to see. Then the mother caught sight of the fish on the sand bank and dived swiftly. She came up on the near side without a ripple, and approached very cautiously, her small eyes very bright, her black nostrils very wide.

For some time she did not touch it, but smelled about chasing away the cubs when they came too near her. She seemed ready to spring, and apparently perceived the presence of danger. It was a beautiful sight. The evident annoyance caused her by her young was quite human, for they treated her with scant respect, and the fish looked very good. One of them was so insolent that Cunayou, despite himself, chuckled with amusement.

In the same instant sounded a whistle, but this time quite sharp, and all five vanished as if by magic. Cunayou rubbed his eyes, lay still for a little while, then got up with a deep sigh of satisfaction. He did not remem-

ber ever having been so happy. But what about Sachinnie?

For the next half-hour he was very busy, working thoughtfully and knitting his smooth brows. The dead leaves where he had lain were pressed flat, so he backed up and loosened them as carefully as possible. He collected the black alder chips, pushed them into the soft earth, and, retracing his steps, obliterated his trail as best he could. Just as he left the bank he saw a mink run down by the water's edge. The fish vanished, and at this the boy grunted contentedly.

It was a slow business to reach camp at his rate, and on the way he hurled his hook far into the brush, but once at the teepee he stood doubtfully and struck off again to the stream, this time in another direction, taking no care how he walked, and leaving many and obvious tracks by the water's edge. Stealthily regaining camp, he listened breathlessly, till, with infinite care and inch by inch, he crawled to his place by his brother's side. But for the rest of the night there was little sleep for him.

CHAPTER XII

SACHINNIE'S breakfast next morning was a gosling he had killed with his paddle the day before. Cunayou watched till the last morsel vanished, and the Indian, stretching himself, announced that now they would get a she otter. The fat boy gulped, so that Keleepeles glanced at him curiously. But, being wise, the elder boy said nothing, nor indeed had he the faintest notion of the whole truth.

An anxious heart lightened a little when the hunter struck off to the stream over a new trail, but Cunayou still felt rather sick, and as Sachinnie stood over the empty trap that now lay close up under the bank, his pulse nearly stopped.

"What is it," he asked, a little shakily, when the silence had become more than he could endure.

Sachinnie's face grew dark. "I do not

know. It is either a .wendigo, or more likely it is Carcajou, who, being wise like a devil, has pulled the chain and not touched the trap. The she otter has been here with her young, for there are many tracks, and after them came a mink, and on the other side of the stream is a new slide that was not there yesterday. But there are holes in the sand where the chain is pulled that I do not understand. Let us go up and see."

Cunayou breathed very quickly, till, catching his brother's eye, he gave one agonized glance, and motioned desperately up stream. Keleepeles's brows went up and he was obviously puzzled, but such was Cunayou's unspoken appeal that, like a good hunter, he asked no questions and acted quickly.

"It does not matter. Let us go and see what is left of the other otter and the wolverine."

Sachinnie looked sharply around, but the boy's face was quiet and untroubled. Presently he laughed, a little disagreeably.

"You will make a poor hunter if you do not

look close. Perhaps that is the way of all Eskimos."

Keleepeles smarted under his skin, and instead of answering walked slowly up stream. After a little, the Indian followed him with trap and chain. He said nothing, but when they reached the spot where Cunayou had tramped so carelessly in the sand, he stopped short.

"Who is it that walks by night?"

The fat boy choked a little. "I had many bad dreams and came here to drink. On the ice we use no water, but here I have a great thirst."

Sachinnie grunted and bent over the tracks, and without a word followed them. Back at the camp he turned and smiled, but it was not a nice smile.

"It was in my mind that perhaps it was not Carcajou that saved the otter, but you have spoken a true word. I will get her when I come again. To-morrow we shall meet the caribou."

Cunayou nodded. There were many more

things he wanted to ask about otters, though just now it seemed a dangerous subject. An hour later, while the boy's canoe was some distance behind the hunter, he turned and spoke.

"It was well, Keleepeles, that you did not let Sachinnie climb up on that bank. My tracks were there, though I tried to wipe them out; so, fearing many things, I made other tracks that we found."

"But the next time, let it be my trap and not that of Sachinnie," answered Keleepeles, slowly.

Cunayou's mouth opened, just like a sea sculpin's.

"What!"

"I was awake and heard you go out, also come back after a long time. I did not speak, not knowing what was in your head. Now I know."

The fat boy drew a very long breath. "But Sachinnie does not know," he said faintly.

"There is much concerning Sachinnie of which I am not sure. He tells us that which is in his head to tell us. I think he does know,

but is keeping it in his stomach. He is wise in many things, but has he not strangled his father and gone away from his mother? We are Island Eskimos, you and I, and boys; therefore we shall keep our tongues in our mouths and learn many things, till in a season of the year we return. As for Keepatis,—who waits for us,—she is more strong now than when she was left to die. Sachinnie knows this too, and it is well not to talk too much of the mother to her son. I have spoken."

For a while Cunayou did not answer, having that wherewith to keep himself busy, so he paddled a mile before his tongue worked loose in his mouth.

"Sachinnie said it was a wendigo or a wolverine that moved his trap. What is a wendigo?"

"An animal into which has entered the evil spirit of a man."

"But we have no wendigos on the ice."

"Because amongst the Island Eskimos there are no evil spirits," grunted Keleepeles contentedly, and relapsed into silence.

Now, whatever the boys may have thought,

or whatever Sachinnie may, as Keleepeles put it, have kept in his stomach, none of them betrayed any but the best of feelings. From all appearances they were still the closest friends, and since they approached the country of the caribou, the Yellowknife cleaned his rifle with great care, and Keleepeles did a lot of practising with bow and arrow.

There was much talk of caribou, for it is the way of the North to let the mind dwell upon that which one expects to find. Keleepeles already knew something of them, it being the custom of the coast caribou not to migrate. The latter is smaller and whiter than his brothers, living the year around on the northern edges of Hudson Bay and the adjoining plains, waging unending war against the lean coast wolf. The boy told of these and drew a rough outline of their track.

"The bull," he said, "has a round foot. It makes a mark like a heart which is very fat. But the cow's is more narrow, and both of them spread out at will, so as to cross thin ice, or ground which is soft. Also the leader of

the herd is a female, who is very white and fat, and, having no young to care for, thinks only of the herd. She is very wise."

Sachinnie nodded. "Up there you find only a few, but here, north of the land of little sticks, they are in numbers like the poplar leaves in a season of the year. The young are born in the month of melting snow." He meant May. "They are pretty, with long legs, and slim bodies. For the first three months they are suckled, and for the next three they both suckle and graze for themselves. Two months before the calves come the whole herd has a fever to travel, and by many thousands they go north from the edge of the land of the little sticks. After a while the bulls stay and the females go on."

"Why?" asked Keleepeles thoughtfully.

"In order that their young may be born on the big plains. Then in the month of berries" (he meant August) "they come south with their calves, meeting the bulls and all travel together. On the way north their feet have lost their scent, that the gray wolf may not

follow and kill them. During this time the herd has a leader, but not before this, for a cow will not follow a leader before her young are born."

"Then the wolves do not kill the females?"

"It is the law that they do not often find them, but fight with the bulls, and it is good fighting. The caribou runs loosely with all its body as though it would shake to pieces, and, if frightened, their feet close up very tight, so that there is hardly any split in the middle. All run at the same speed, young and old, and none are left behind for their enemies except the outcasts."

"It is in my mind," said Keleepeles, "that Aivick told me that once he met a strange Eskimo from Lapland, where there are caribou, but that they are larger, and pull sledges like dogs." Aivick had meant the reindeer. "It was a strange story."

"But a true word. Also, their horns are different, and branch out at once near the bone of the skull, while here they grow longer before they branch, and have a shield point in

between. So my father's father told me, and he has seen many things. Still farther south from here there are caribou that do not leave the land of little sticks, whose hair is darker and more short; also they are more wise."

Now this conversation took place in camp, and when the boys started across-country, trailing Sachinnie, Cunayou promptly forgot all about it, for in a few miles farther inland the ground was covered with things he had never seen before. The North is a strange place, and however bare and unfertile it may appear, there is in its thin soil a marvelous richness. This, added to the hot blaze of the summer sun—for it was already the middle of August—gave to all plants and flowers a remarkable quickness of growth.

In the swamps Cunayou saw the moonberry, with its single yellow fruit on a stem amid four-leaved clusters; the eye-berry, which is like a small raspberry; the crowberry, in wet ground; the blueberry, higher up, on short bushes covered with oval sweetness; the weedberry, which Sachinnie picked for tobacco; the

cranberry, scattered over rocks and sand, and the poisonous bright red snake-berry, nodding on its slender stalk. Then, too, there was the dwarf *saskatoon* along the creek beds, and dwarf raspberries that had survived the intense frost of winter. Out on the plain was wild tea, a low stunted growth with velvety pointed leaves, whitish bloom, and a delicious odor. And highest of all the mosses, the coarse green ground plant, with tiny plum-coloured blossoms, that were like little brooms, and on top of it the gray caribou moss in tufty clumps. On the north side the rocks were bare, but on their more sheltered slopes Cunayou found thick patches of lichens, black where they were young, gray and cup-like later on.

Can you see the boy in the middle of it all, his young brain expanding to each new wonder? It was exactly as though a fellow who was very fond of flowers, but had never been able to buy or pick one, were set loose in a more beautiful garden than he ever dreamed of, and told to take what he liked. Keleepeles was interested in all these things

because they were food for animals, and it was useful knowledge, but Cunayou loved them because they were new and fascinating, and filled him with strange thoughts and imaginings that he had never felt before. It was hard to believe that winter would soon return and wipe out this multicoloured blanket.

That day they did not find caribou, nor for days afterward, and it was when they were camped by the side of a lake which was alive with ducks and geese, teaching their young to hunt for food, that Keleepeles motioned his brother to come and sit by the water's edge, and, speaking slowly, emptied his heart of many things.

"It is now three moons since we started with Sachinnie, and by the course we are still taking we shall not return to the bitter water before the snow comes. For many days we have journeyed with the sun, and it is time we turned to journey against him. Once or twice I have seen smoke a long way off, and Sachinnie has been many hours out of our sight, and I am in great doubt."

Cunayou was startled, for Keleepeles seldom admitted doubt. "What is in the mind of the Yellowknife?" he asked, a little nervously.

"I do not know, unless it is that when we are a long way from the bitter water he will give us to his tribe as prisoners."

The eyes of the fat boy bulged. "But why?"

"Again I do not know, except that the Yellowknives fear the Eskimos, and it might be a great thing for Sachinnie to say to his tribe, 'Here are two from the islands; take them.' "

"Oh!" said Cunayou, under his breath.

"That is the way of it," went on the bigger boy slowly, "and there are many things in my mind. The caribou run in great numbers not far from here, and I would see them. Very soon the birds and animals will prepare for the winter, and I would see that also. I am not afraid of Sachinnie or his rifle. Now, tell me what is in your stomach concerning this matter?"

"It is many days' journey to the camp of Keepatis. Do you know the way if we take it alone?"

Keleepeles nodded. "Where once I have been, there again can I go, and all waters run to the sea. There is another matter. Sachinnie has caught but little fur, which is poor, being taken too late in the spring, and his traps are many times empty. The skins we shall choose for Allegoo, our mother, are in his hands, and there he would have them remain."

Cunayou grinned. "The eyes of all Yellowknives close at the end of the day. It is very easy."

"Perhaps, but there is much else to remember. For another moon we may stay with Sachinnie, but at the end of it we must be lost. If it is in his mind that we have run away, he will look and perhaps find us, but if to him we are lost he will not care, but only think that by and by there will be food for the wolverine and raven. So, fat one, put this away secretly in your heart, and it is well that we do not talk too much together, for the eyes and ears

of the hunter are very sharp. See, he comes now, and steps so that not any one can hear him."

Cunayou glanced around and saw Sachinnie approaching rapidly. He seemed to move without a sound, and as he drew nearer the boys noted that his eyes were very hard and bright. He sent them a quick glance.

"I have come from the west, and have seen many caribou. They feed on the other side of the ridge. To-morrow morning, very early, we go north and then west to where there rises a small hill, and there we shall kill; but first there will be much to do, for we shall kill without weapons. The moss is good where they are, and they will not move. They are cows with their young and travel south to meet the bulls."

CHAPTER XIII

CUNAYOU slept but little that night. He had asked Sachinnie how they were to kill without weapons, but the Yellowknife only smiled in his peculiar and rather irritating way, and told him to wait and see. The weather was very warm, so they did not put up the teepee, and lay on the moss. Cunayou was tortured by the mosquitoes, but the other two covered up their heads, and dropped off immediately. Sachinnie had allowed no fire, game being too near.

Despite the mosquitoes the boy found that night very wonderful. The stars seemed soft and very near, and the still air was full of small noises that came from everywhere. He heard the twitter of sleepy birds, the splash of big fish out on the lake, and the quacking and honking of ducks and geese that were very busy in the dark. In the low bushes close by was a rustling that sounded like Carcajou, but

the boy now knew that Carcajou would not bother the camp when there were so many tender, defenseless creatures all around him. From across the water came a trumpet-like note from a male swan, who was getting home late from his council, and an equally melodious call from his wife, where she sat motionless and faithful on her slate-colored eggs. A mink darted along the shore, and very distantly there lifted the long-drawn howl of a wolf. At this Cunayou began to think of his team in the camp of Keepatis, and presently his eyes closed.

It seemed but a few moments later that Sachinnie touched him on the shoulder and the three set out before the east was even gray. At the end of three miles the hunter turned along a broad ledge that ran beside a deep gully bearing east and west. South of the boys, and between them and the plain where Sachinnie said the caribou were feeding, rose a low hill. From where they stood only the crown of the hill was visible, but nothing of the plain. And then the hunter explained his plan.

"Here, on the ledge, with its point at the edge of the gully, we will build a trap. It is shaped like an arrow-head, and is of low walls of loose stone. The points of the walls do not touch, but are open a little, so that the caribou, when driven in between the walls, are pressed together till they reach the point where the walls are higher and they cannot jump, but must run straight on and fall into the gully, being pushed by many others from behind. It is good hunting."

Keleepeles opened his eyes, but said nothing, and for twelve hours the three toiled in the blazing sun. There was plenty of loose rock. The walls they built were hardly walls, but rather two rough lines of stones that nearly met just at the edge of the gully. Sachinnie examined it all and seemed satisfied.

"Were there not such a great herd we should work longer, but it is enough. Now, come very quietly."

They crawled on their stomachs to the crown of the long, low hill, and peered over. At the sight the boys held their breath in wonder. A mile away to the south, the plain seemed to

have changed color, from green to a light, tawny yellow. At first it seemed that nothing moved, but gradually individual animals detached themselves, till there were thousands and thousands of caribou, some resting, others feeding on great patches of gray moss. The wind came up very gently, and the boys caught a smell, faint but unmistakable, of innumerable warm bodies. To them it appeared that all the caribou in all the world were gathered here, though, as Sachinnie whispered, it was just one big herd of cows that journeyed south with their long-legged calves. Cunayou thought that the latter were too interesting for words.

"They journey always into the wind," Sachinnie spoke under his breath, "and will not travel south if the wind is from the north. Their smell is very quick, and, though there be very many, each calf will go only with its own mother. and will find her if by chance she be lost amongst a thousand other cows. There, far off on the other side, is the leader of the herd—a big cow who is nearly white. To the leader they turn if there is fear amongst

them, or danger, and always it is she who does what is to be done."

"What is that noise?" whispered Cunayou.

"The caribou grunt to clear their throats of flies that are snuffed in when they feed, but many of the flies remain and breed maggots in the caribou's flesh by laying eggs in their skins. So by and by the caribou sicken, and their skins become full of holes, and they die. Always, also, they feed into the wind, that there may be fewer flies. Twice during the day do they drink. Should one caribou drink, all want water, and while the leader feeds they feed also. Of their young they are very fond and should a calf be lost or killed, the cow will hunt for it and even leave the herd that she may find it, and, finding it not, will take another and suckle it. Look now at the leader."

The big white cow ceased feeding, and, lifting her head, seemed to be staring toward them, as though warned by some faint, invisible herald of danger. Had the wind shifted then ever so slightly, she would have dashed

off with the herd after her; but the wind held, gentle but steady, and the boys lay, hardly daring to breathe, till after a long investigation the leader resumed her browsing.

"Come now," whispered Sachinnie, and backed down hill to the ledge. Here he turned east, and under the shelter of another rise struck southward for two breathless miles. Then again he turned, but this time to the west. Presently he began to run at top speed toward a ridge that lay between them and the herd.

"Hasten. They will smell us very soon; already they are frightened, and in another moment they will move."

Two minutes later the boys caught the tumult of countless hoofs, and, gaining high ground, perceived the herd already in motion. The leader had run straight through them, heading north, and fear was abroad in the wilderness. Innumerable and tawny backs swung swiftly as there began that shuffling trot which leaves the miles so rapidly behind. There was a frantic calling to scattered calves,

a frantic searching for scattered mothers, the sharp clicking of a myriad of hoofs, and the whole great yellow blanket flung itself up the long, low hill that screened the fatal gully. Like waves they went, and like a broad stream they rippled, till, huddled together and cresting the ridge, they hurled on toward the trap of Sachinnie.

The next moment they saw it, but too late. The herd split, streaming to right and left; and some there were that could not but run straight, owing to the press on either side, and it was on this that the Yellowknife had counted. Thirty or forty of them dashed into the narrowing wedge. Flanking this group were many who leaped the walls to safety, but three or four, driven so far that the stone parapet was too high to jump, raced headlong through the open part of the arrow-head and plunged into the gully. When Cunayou panted up he saw a cow and a calf, each with a broken leg swinging loosely, clamber up the opposite side, but down at the bottom were two cows, with heaving flanks and glazing

eyes, who would never again taste the gray caribou moss.

It was all over in a moment, and the three hunters surveyed their work; Sachinnie quiet and satisfied; Keleepeles tremendously excited; and Cunayou saying not a word. There was, it is true, much meat, and Sachinnie wasted little. But Cunayou in the back of his head could not feel that this was good hunting. It was fear that did the trick. Of course it would have been very much of a mistake for him to say what he thought, and even Keleepeles would not have liked it. So he spent a long time studying with a sort of sad interest the shape and body of the caribou, and putting many things away in his head for future use. Then Sachinnie roasted some steaks, and cut up a large quantity to be dried in the sun and be cached in a safe place he knew, against the time he should come this way again.

Next day they walked again for miles, but saw not a sign of a herd. That is a curious thing about the North. At a given time the

caribou may cover the plains, and in twenty-four hours the whole country seems empty of them. And, though mysterious, it is just as well, for this is one of the means that nature takes to prevent her wild things from being wiped out.

CHAPTER XIV

AUGUST drew on toward September, and everything that had life seemed to revel in sun and warmth. By this time the plumage of the young birds was more advanced, though the heavier of them, particularly the swans, were not yet ready for the trip to salt water, and it was when he was watching a young cygnet take a trial trip with its mother that Keleepeles got still more intimate information about Carcajou, the glutton.

The boy had developed a keen instinct for woodcraft, and nearly rivaled Sachinnie himself in the noiseless way he got about. Furthermore, he was acquiring that admirable habit of sitting or lying perfectly still for a long time and letting things talk to him. It is remarkable what there is to be thus picked up in two hours in any country where there is bird or animal life. The wild thing which is

watching you in fear is a very different creature when he has become accustomed to your presence and then forgotten it.

And just here seems a good place to say something about the way in which animals and birds communicate with one another. Five things they express—love, fear, anger, hunger, and contentment—and if a fellow thinks it over he could not express so very much more himself. There are some who would have one believe that all kinds of conversations go on, say, between a pair of foxes, but what actually takes place is just the operation of instinct, which in wild creatures is very remarkable. It brings the swan six thousand miles—half of it in the dark—to last summer's breeding-place, and leads the she bear at a certain season of the year to her cave of hunger and darkness. It makes her lord drink through his paw, and hide the blackness of his nose when he hunts the square-flipper; it draws the broad-tailed salmon from salt water to spawn in a thousand running streams. It whispers to the otter to lay up food against the winter, to the arctic

owl to pull out her own feathers to line her nest, and warns all flat-billed birds to harden their bodies with salt food before they attempt their long, long flight. So if instinct does all this, and a great deal more, is it necessary to credit the inhabitants of the wilderness with any other faculty in order to make them interesting?

It was no doubt the instinct of the born naturalist and not that of the hunter which had held Cunayou motionless for an hour before he saw the cygnet, and in that hour he seemed to blend with the ground and bushes till he became a part of them. So when the cygnet came paddling cheerfully round the next little point, which was only two hundred feet away, the young bird saw nothing suspicious in the roundish hump close up against a near-by rock, and just at that moment Cunayou caught sight of Carcajou, who was squatting equally motionless in a patch of moss between two low bushes that just cleared his back.

The tableau lasted for some moments while

the cygnet fed nearer and nearer the shore. A hundred yards away the mother bird was particularly busy over an exceptionally tasty bed of swan root into which she thrust her strong beak and tugged, while the other end of her stood straight up out of the water and quivered in every feather as she pulled. Cunayou, glancing cautiously and without showing the whites of his eyes, saw the wolverine hunch up his strong hind quarters as though ready to spring, and, despite himself, he opened his mouth ever so slightly, showing a red tongue and small, strong teeth. Presently, as Cunayou expected, the cygnet moved toward the shore, waddled a few feet up the smooth rock and began to smooth the new feathers on its round, pink stomach. He was n't a pretty bird, for he was overly fat and only half feathered and had, so to speak, only his underclothes on, but he was very proud and fairly strong so seemed rather pleased with himself. To Carcajou he looked very good to eat,—so good, in fact, that just at this moment, the glutton made a serious mistake, and, half

rising, opened his mouth very wide, and it happened that in the same instant the cygnet saw him.

It all happened very quickly after that. The cygnet gave one quick trumpet-like call of alarm and plunged toward the water. After it came the glutton who had hurled himself through the air and caught the young bird ten feet from safety, but so fast did he come that the immediate result was a mouth full of tail feathers snatched from the cygnet, which made a sudden lunge to one side. There was a scrambling of sharp claws on slippery rocks, and the glutton bounced back. This time the cygnet, whose wings were spread out flat, met him with a straight driving hammer blow of a horny mandible that caught Carcajou in the most sensitive part of his whole, tough body; that is on the tip of his soft black nose. The agonizing pain made him furious, and the coarse brown hair on his back stood up, bristling. In a flash the cygnet struck again, but, over-reaching, landed on the wolverine's fur-padded shoulder. A sec-

ond later Carcajou's sharp teeth had sunk into the first joint of the bird's long wing bone, and the cygnet was dragged toward the shelter of some neighboring rocks.

Cunayou saw it all and reached for the bow that lay close beside him, when there sounded what to any of us would have seemed like a seaplane making a landing. Came a sharp whistling of mighty wings, then a splash as though a barrel of flour had fallen off a bridge. The old swan lighted at the water's edge, and with a sudden beating of wings flung herself at the glutton. Like those of a trip-hammer were the blows of her beak, and every time she curved her long, strong neck the attack took on more power. Carcajou could do but little, and that was not enough to ward off this revengeful enemy. Once he broke loose, only to be swept off his feet, and rolled over and over by the sweep of a great pinion and stabbed mercilessly again and again. And all the time there sounded the high, piercing, flute-like call of the trumpeter swan. Presently the glutton, receiving punishment every

foot of the way, crawled between two large stones to safety. Here he lay, showing his red tongue, his whole body shaking with pain and anger, while at the water's edge there was a rubbing of loving necks and a soft sound that was unmistakable in its tenderness, till the two great birds, one trailing loose an injured wing, moved royally around the point and out of sight.

Cunayou stared thoughtfully toward camp. It had been a great afternoon and he had seen just exactly the sort of thing that interested him most. It was a sort of reward for silence. He was glad the cygnet had got off, and not a bit sorry for the wolverine. The boy did not like Carcajou, because he was a thief and dirty and had a bad reputation, so after the two swans sailed away he had thrown stones at the glutton and addressed him in Eskimo, using all kinds of words that a fellow does not use when addressing a friend.

But, now that he came to think of it, Carcajou had been following the law of eat and be eaten, so it seemed unfair to despise him

because he happened to be doing the only thing he knew how to do. From that the boy's mind went on to Sachinnie, and what might be in the back of Sachinnie's head. The reflection was making him rather uncomfortable when he saw Keleepeles's broad figure on top of a little mound, evidently on the lookout.

"What is it?" asked the younger lad.

Keleepeles frowned, though he seemed rather relieved. "Where have you been since the sun was high?"

"I found great pleasure. There was a wolverine and two swans—"

"I found something else," interrupted the other. "Come—I would talk with you."

They sat beside each other on a little knoll in full sight of Sachinnie who was smoking a thoughtful pipe beside the fire he had just rekindled. Keleepeles glanced swiftly at the hunter.

"You will not turn and look at Sachinnie while I talk to you, and between us it will be as though we spoke of that which does not matter," he began very quietly. "But it does

matter, so see if you can hide your thoughts behind the fatness of your face."

"Let us talk in some other place." Cunayou's tone was a little nervous.

"Not so, for it must appear that we do not hide anything from the Yellowknife. It is now many days that he has not hunted alone, but always has he taken me with him."

"It is true, but why?"

"In a little while we shall come to that. Not once has he let me shoot with the gun, though I have seen him kill many things. The gun he keeps beside him when he sleeps, wrapped up in his blanket." Keleepeles paused, then went on, his eyes narrowing: "For three moons we have journeyed to the west. Always we have gone up the streams which got smaller, but now are bigger as we follow them."

"Why?" demanded Cunayou, puzzled.

"Because they are farther from our big sea water, and run the other way."

There was a moment's silence after this. The younger boy felt suddenly uncomfortable, as though something he had put away in the

back of his head now moved forward and took on an ugly shape. Keleepeles shot another glance at the Yellowknife, and his brows wrinkled. He was deep in thought.

"It is nearly two moons since I told you that perhaps Sachinnie had a crooked heart. Yesterday when we were together a long way from here, he made a little fire of dry wood, and when it had burned bright he put upon it wet moss, and there came a smoke that went up like a thin tree into the sky. Then he took his coat and covered it while I could count five, and stopped the smoke, till, when he took it away, the smoke went up again like a little gray cloud. This he did four times and said not anything at all. When it was finished I looked very hard, and a very long way off I saw another smoke which made likewise four small clouds. So I asked Sachinnie what it meant and he told me that a long way off were some Yellowknives whom he would see in four months."

Cunayou stirred restlessly. "What do you say it meant?"

"Four days," answered his brother slowly.

Despite himself the fat boy felt a sudden distress. "You think that Sachinnie is taking us to his tribe—as—as prisoners?"

Keleepeles nodded, his black eyes suddenly very hard.

"But Sachinnie is my brother."

"Not under his skin," said the older boy, gruffly. "The needle of Keepatis did not go deep enough.

"But the Yellowknives are afraid of the Eskimo."

"A whole tribe does not fear two boys."

"Then let us go back very quickly and take the gun of Sachinnie, without which he will be like a child," blurted Cunayou, with decision.

"We shall go at a certain hour, taking not anything except that which is our own, and no gun."

"But why? Sachinnie will follow and kill us a long way off.

"Because a hunter does not steal like Carcajou. The Yellowknife may follow, but he will not see us. Now listen: In the next days we shall talk only about animals, till on a night,

so soon as Sachinnie is asleep, we shall go in one canoe, having first broken his canoe, so that for some time he will be mending it."

"But where shall we go?"

"Where the water runs. And when Sachinnie comes after us we will play a small game with the Yellowknife. Until that hour you do not know anything. I have spoken."

Cunayou nodded, but did not speak, and the two boys walked carelessly into camp. Sachinnie glanced at them without suspicion. He seemed well content about something,—as indeed he was, for some twenty miles away was a band of Yellowknives who loafed through the sunshiny weather till it should please the hunter to join them with his captives. There was no particular reason why the thing should not be carried out now, but Sachinnie had his own way of doing things and there was no hurry. It was a matter of pride with him that, single-handed, he should make this valuable present to his tribe.

CHAPTER XV

THAT evening Cunayou sat fingering a mink trap for which there would soon be use. He was watching Sachinnie while the hunter overhauled his scanty take of furs. Presently the latter came to one that was like a piece of a child's stocking, except that outside there was the uncured hide, and inside very fine, soft white fur. And this, of course, was because Sachinnie had skinned the animal by pulling the skin over its head, just as a fellow pulls off an undershirt when he is in a hurry.

"Ermine," said the Yellowknife, and tossed it into the boy's lap.

Cunayou fingered it, remembering that the little animal had looked like a big snowflake tangled in the trap.

"He is a great hunter of small things, and mostly of the musk-rat. He will cut a hole in the rat's house and wait inside till the rat comes

back, which he knows by the big bubbles, and, not content with one, he waits till he has killed the whole family, eating them not, but only sucking their blood at the throat. And while he waits he will stir the water so that it does not freeze, the house being thin on the south side and thick on the north."

"But he is smaller than the rat," objected the boy.

"It is so, but he has a bigger heart with which to fight."

"And when he is very young?" Cunayou always liked to know about the early days of living things.

"There are six or nine in a litter, and they are like a piece of sinew, and brown, and not like an ermine at all. Nor have they any teeth; but their eyes open in a week and they are fed by their mother, and on the blood of mice which she tears for them.After a little they go to hunt with her at night when their prey is asleep, for when it is dark they see better than most things except the owl. They kill rabbits and young geese and ducks, but are in danger from

the mink, the skunk, the white owl, and from crows, foxes, hawks, and wolves."

"But he is brave," put in Cunayou, hastily.

Sachinnie smiled in a rather peculiar way. "Yes, but he is always a child."

It was on the tip of the boy's tongue to say that a child need not be a fool, when just at that moment he caught his brother's eye. Keleepeles frowned ever so slightly. He had been watching the Yellowknife count his furs, and silently decided that if he himself took a mink skin and Cunayou an otter skin for Allegoo, the thing would be about right. So he noted just where they came in the bundle that Sachinnie always kept in the coolest place he could find. Presently the hunter stood up and, shading his eyes, stared for a long time at a low ridge of hills that lay some miles to the west.

"To-morrow night we shall camp there," he said, pointing.

"Does that take us nearer to the sea?" asked Keleepeles, so carelessly that Cunayou's attention was attracted at once.

"Yes, to a river that runs in the direction where we would go."

"But this water which for many days we have followed runs to the west."

Sachinnie glanced sharply at the young Eskimo. "You are very wise. Perhaps the water turns again to the east. A river does not go in a straight line in our country."

Keleepeles bit his lip and said nothing more. For weeks past he had noted that all the water they saw was moving toward the west, ever since they passed the ridge where had been the caribou hunt. And this was true, for that ridge actually formed the height of land between Chesterfield Inlet, which Keleepeles wanted to reach, and the Backs River, which as every one knows, flows straight north through a chain of small lakes into the Arctic Ocean. But now, though he was quite convinced that the Yellowknife spoke with a crooked tongue, the boy only looked rather foolish.

"Perhaps, I am still young and not very wise," he said stupidly and grinned at Cu-

nayou, who sat perfectly still and apparently had not heard anything.

Sachinnie grunted and seemed to forget all about it, but for the rest of that evening he found so many unnecessary jobs for the boys that they had no opportunity to talk, which was exactly what the Yellowknife desired, and it was not till the sun went down that Keleepeles sidled over near his brother and, looking directly at Sachinnie, spoke under his breath.

"To-night," he whispered, very softly, but very distinctly.

And just at this point it is well to get a clear idea of what Keleepeles was going to undertake. He reckoned they were about two hundred miles from Chesterfield Inlet and the same from the end of Wager Bay. He had a canoe but no rifle, and did not propose to steal the weapon of Sachinnie. He had no map, but there was not a river or lake or bay or point which they had passed that was not photographed in his brain. He calculated that he and Cunayou could make as good time over the water as the Yellowknife, but on the land the

Indian could travel faster. It was yet to be settled whether the fugitives should strike out for Keepatis and the dogs or go around by the Inlet, but whichever way they went Keleepeles would follow the guidance of that wonderful instinct of the hunter which brings him at last through a strange country and over mysterious waters to the place where he would be. And just then he had a new idea, and, rolling over, blinked at Sachinnie.

"To the Inlet from here—how far is it?" he asked.

"Fifteen days," said the hunter. "That is if one travels every day."

"You know the way?"

"Yes, in the darkness of night; it is very easy."

"But it may be that you get sick or die, and how then shall we two return to the ice?"

Sachinnie showed his yellow teeth. "I shall not get sick, but with my eyes shut I could draw a map of the way, so that it would be a fool who did not follow."

Keleepeles laughed in great appreciation of

this joke. "Keep then your eyes open and draw it, so it will be the better."

There followed a little silence while the hunter scanned the boy's animated face. There was no guile in it, and suddenly it struck Sachinnie that now if his captives did make a run for liberty, he would know exactly where to look for them. It was quite evident that Keleepeles did not feel equal to returning by the way he came.

"You are wise," went on the boy, "and I am young and a fool. Many things you have taught us that we knew not before. It is not possible that I myself should make a map, for the fingers of the Eskimo are too thick, but it is in my stomach that we shall take your map back to the tribe, that all may know how clever is the hand of Sachinnie. The Eskimo hunters will look at it in their igloos and wonder and call it white man's magic; but there is not one of them who will be able to make another. Make it now, for I have spoken."

"Sachinnie shook his head. "It is easy, but I have no ink."

"What is ink?" demanded Cunayou.

Keleepeles looked puzzled, not being quite sure what it was. Then he had a sudden inspiration and stretched out his arm.

"Here is plenty. Take it."

Sachinnie grinned despite himself, and, opening one of the small veins in the boy's forearm, let the blood fall drop by drop on to a flat stone. Into this he rubbed a little fine gunpowder, then, strolling to the nearest thicket, girdled a four-inch birch-tree and came back with a roll of bark six inches long. Flattening this out on the blade of a paddle, he dipped a sharp nail into his ink and set to work.

Have you ever seen an Indian draw a map? He does not use a white man's methods and establish first of all various points and then work to them. On the contrary, he begins at the beginning and works straight on to the end. There was no going back and no rubbing out, but the lean fingers of Sachinnie moved slowly and steadily tracing point after point and bay after bay, and stopping only long enough to dip his nail in the mixture which every now and then he made a little

fresher from Keleepeles's outstretched arm. He did not speak at all, but bent over his work, evidently thinking very hard, while the nail point crept along the shores of tiny lakes, crawled up and down rivers an inch long, marked portages no bigger than the head of a pin and rapids that the boys' sharp eyes could hardly see. And when at last the Yellowknife looked up, there was on the roll of bark an irregular red-black outline that showed, much more perfectly than any other map that existed, Baker Lake and the Quoich River and many other streams and Chesterfield Inlet as far as Fairway Island, which is of course in Hudson's Bay itself.

Keleepeles stared for a long time, and drew a deep breath.

"It is indeed great magic. How wonderful is the eye of Sachinnie, and is this the way we return to the sea?"

The hunter nodded.

"But where, then, is the way by which we have come?"

"There is no need of that." Sachinnie's

dark eyes were half closed, but he was regarding the young Eskimo very keenly and was satisfied when the latter looked frankly disappointed. "Have you not come that way and is your eye so forgetful?"

Keleepeles sighed quite audibly. "I wanted to show Aivick, my father, the journey of his sons."

"Then finish it yourself," grunted the Yellowknife with a discomforting little laugh to which the boys were now accustomed.

CHAPTER XVI

THAT evening Sachinnie smoked in great contentment. It was quite evident that Keleepeles had no idea of the route by which he had come, and, thanks to the map, it would be easy to follow should the boys slip away. He had not been so contented if the whispered conversation which was going on a hundred feet away had drifted toward him a little more clearly. The two were sitting near each other, apparently talking about a flock of wild geese to which Keleepeles pointed as they floated on the glassy water just out of range.

"He thinks I have forgotten the way to Wager Bay," whispered Keleepeles, staring out over the lake. "Did I look like a fool?"

"You did indeed," said his brother, fervently. It was not often he got the chance to say things like this.

"I tried to; so do you think that in the mind of Sachinnie I am a fool?"

Cunayou nodded. "There is not any doubt."

"Then I am content."

"But do you know the way by which we came from Keepatis and the dogs?"

Keleepeles smiled a little proudly. "Such a map as Sachinnie has made, I too can make. There is nothing I have forgotten. All the time we came there was that in my stomach which told me many things were to be remembered."

The younger boy hesitated. "Then do we go to-night?" he asked rather uncertainly.

"If it is in the mind of Sachinnie to move farther west, then we go to-night."

A call from the hunter, which made them both start, signified that he was ready for his evening meal, but when the boys put food in front of him and he motioned them to eat, they found it hard to be natural. Cunayou's heart was pumping violently, and he dared not meet his brother's eye. Sachinnie satisfied himself, then drew out his pipe and squatting by the embers of the fire began to smoke. An hour

passed and another, but still he did not move. Once he looked at Keleepeles and said, "Tomorrow we go on," but even after that he did not lie down to sleep. The moon came out, the wind died away, there sounded all those tiny noises of the night that are audible if one only listens for them, and still Sachinnie squatted, throwing now and then another stick on the fire, and continually filling his tiny pipe and pressing down the red man's tobacco with a brown, bony finger.

The boys glanced at him constantly and then at each other. Did Sachinnie know? And if he did know, what was in the back of his head? Never before had he spent a night thus beside the fire. The deep plans of Keleepeles all faded away. The boy looked at the canoe of Keepatis and his fingers itched for the paddle, but not by sign or glance must he reveal the bitterness of his disappointment, The bundle of pemmican he had been collecting, piece by piece, was ready at his hand, as were the short bow and a sheaf of arrows. He stared at Sachinnie out of the corner of his

eye, but the hunter was just as motionless as though he had been carved from the yellow stuff that sticks out of the ground near the mouth of the Coppermine River. Not even a white bear waiting for a square-flipper could be more still. Presently he crooked a finger at Cunayou and the two went quietly into the teepee and lay down. Cunayou was just dropping off to dreams when he caught the faintest whisper.

"Be not afraid, little brother, of anything that may come to-morrow. We go no farther from Aivick and Allegoo."

And then the dreams came in earnest.

In exactly seven hours Cunayou awoke with a start at the sound of Sachinnie's voice. He rolled over, saw that Keleepeles was already up, and was on his feet in a moment. The hunter was standing beside his canoe, which was already loaded for the journey, and peering about, while a frown settled on his dark features.

"Where is your brother?" he demanded.

Cunayou rubbed his eyes. For one second

he wondered whether Keleepeles had slipped off in the night, but there was the canoe of Keepatis just as they had left it. And just then from behind a patch of cranberry bushes a little way off came the sound of some one in great distress. The fat boy ran over in sudden fear.

On the ground lay Keleepeles, his body twisting and his face swollen. His lips were half open and bubbling, and only the whites of his eyes were visible. He groaned once or twice, and began to double up as though in extreme pain. Tightly grasped in one hand was a cluster of bright-scarlet saken-berries, and on his lips were fragments of others he had apparently been chewing. As Cunayou stared, the fat boy's heart seemed to stop. Then, stricken with fear, he shouted.

"Come very quickly. It is the death of my brother."

Sachinnie glanced up and came on the run. Leaning over Keleepeles, he picked a half-chewed berry from the swollen lips and stared at the distorted face.

"It may indeed be death, but help me to carry him. Much tea may yet save him, but death is not far away. I knew that he was a fool, or how else should he eat poison of which I have told him many times?"

Cunayou could not answer; he felt too sick himself. Between them, he and Sachinnie carried Keleepeles, who sagged to the ground in the middle, to the teepee and laid him down on his back. Whereupon Sachinnie rekindled the fire and made a copper pot full of red man's tea.

"It is necessary that he take all of this and perhaps more, or else he will surely die, being full of poison. See how his face is swollen."

Cunayou could hardly bear to look, but he took his brother's head between his knees, while the hunter made a birch-bark funnel that he forced with a stick between the clenched teeth and began to pour. Keleepeles gulped and swallowed. Sachinnie poured steadily on, and the boy just as steadily swallowed, till the entire potful had disappeared. After which the hunter deliberately lit his pipe and

leaned over his patient with a long, long stare.

"It is well," he said slowly, "and he can hold no more tea. If he be not dead in an hour the sickness will leave him."

Cunayou began to swallow hard and struggled to keep the tears from rolling down his cheeks. He loved this big, strong brother so much, and what would it be like to be alone amongst the Yellowknives. Sachinnie moved off and sat by the water's edge to wait till Keleepeles should either die or live, and Cunayou was battling with himself, when from the swollen lips close beside him came a whisper, low but very clear.

"Take your heart in your hands and be no longer a fool. I am too full of tea to say more."

The fat boy started so violently that Sachinnie glanced up, walked slowly back and looked again into the puffy features.

"He will die," he said quietly, and strolled away again.

Cunayou held his breath, till a moment later another whisper reached him.

"Sachinnie is a liar, like all Yellowknives. I shall not die."

At that the fat boy felt a little dizzy, but no more whispers came, and in something less than an hour Keleepeles began to roll over and groan and presently opened his eyes with the queerest expression possible.

"I have had many dreams of many things. Where am I?" he asked, seeming to speak with great difficulty.

Sachinnie lounged up and stared at him. "You were dead and came to life again. There be not many who do this."

"Why?" asked Keleepeles faintly.

"From eating the poison berry. You are a fool."

"Without doubt I am a great fool," was the uncertain answer. "My strength has run away like water and my bones are very soft. I cannot walk."

"Nor for two days can you walk. Sleep now, and to-morrow at midday you shall eat and the next day be strong."

Keleepeles nodded and shut his eyes. Sa-

chinnie waited a moment, and turned to Cunayou.

"He is still very sick, so stay with him. I go to hunt alone. It may be that I shall not return till to-morrow and till then he may not eat for the poison that is in him."

Ten minutes later Cunayou saw the tall form of the Yellowknife disappear over a near-by ridge, and for the first time in weeks the two were alone in the wilderness.

"Is he gone?" sounded a weak voice that seemed to drift in from a long way off.

The fat boy stroked his brother's face with great tenderness. "Yes, he is gone. Does the fire in your stomach still bite?"

Then wonderful to relate, Keleepeles began to laugh noiselessly but so heartily that he shook all over. "Don't! You tickle my nose, and my stomach is full of tea as a pool is full of water. My skin is stretched like the hide on our kayak." He rubbed his eyes and drew a long breath, while the swelling began to go out of his face and there were no more bubbles in his lips. The next moment he jumped up.

"We have no time to talk, but in a little while I will tell you, for now we start toward Aivick and Allegoo."

Cunayou could not say a word, but only blinked and did as he was bid, while very swiftly, the canoe of Keepatis was loaded and the canoe of Sachinnie was punched full of holes. Presently Keleepeles pulled out the bundle of furs, and taking one otter and one mink skin he tied the bundle up neatly as it had been before. From the fire bag of Sachinnie he got one flint and one steel, which is permitted of all men in the wilderness, and put back the bag in the place where the hunter slept. Then he stamped on the ashes of the fire so that no trace of smoke came from them, rolled up the two sleeping bags, and when these were loaded, together with his store of pemmican, he worked the canoe into deep water and held her bow against the land so that Cunayou might embark. Five minutes later the teepee of Sachinnie was out of sight, and the boys were around a point, and keeping close to shore paddled eastward at top speed.

It was not till an hour had passed that Keleepeles, laying his blade across the thwarts, leaned forward and spoke very briefly.

"Do you remember, O fat one, what I told you yesterday?"

Cunayou shook his head. So many things had happened since yesterday that he was rather mixed.

"I told you to have no fear whatever might take place."

"But you were very sick."

"And you, O foolish one, had great fear. But I was not sick."

Cunayou twisted round in the bow of the canoe. His eyes were bulging.

"You were not sick when your eyes turned white and there was foam on your lips as on a river when it flows from a water fall?"

"I was sick when my stomach swelled with tea; but not otherwise. To-day Sachinnie had moved farther west and it was in my heart that this must not be, so very early I got up and, gathering poison weed, lay down behind the cranberry bush and swallowed much air

and pressed the blood into my head so that my face puffed out, and it was as Sachinnie told us two moons ago when first we saw the snake-berry, that if a man eat of it he shall look as I looked. So then I groaned and crushed some of the berries and rubbed them on my lips and made many small bubbles till you came and found me. And Sachinnie, seeing me, said that it was death and called me a fool, and I was content, hearing him through much noise in my ears, for I knew that he would not go farther west this day."

Now this was a long speech for Keleepeles, but when he stopped to take breath Cunayou only gulped once or twice and in a rather thick voice asked him to go on.

"When Sachinnie made the tea I saw him out of the end of my eye and drank it, though it was hot like fire and burned my throat and filled my stomach so that now when I move there is the sound of many waters inside me. And when he said that for two days I should be very weak, my heart was glad, and when he told me I was dead and came to life again

I bit my tongue so that for the pain I could not laugh. Had you much fear, little brother?"

"So much that my heart turned to blubber within me."

Keleepeles leaning forward, stretched out his arm and rubbed the wet edge of his paddle into the fat little crease that ran round Cunayou's neck. It was the only caress he could give in a canoe as cranky as theirs.

"When by and by we find Aivick and Allegoo you shall forget it."

Cunayou shook his head with conviction. "It is too much; I shall never forget."

"It may be—but now listen," went on his brother, becoming suddenly quite serious. "The great spirit put it into the mind of Sachinnie to hunt till to-morrow, for, believing me sick, he is not afraid that we run away. So to-day and to-morrow we go very fast, and stop only to eat but not sleep, till we come to a certain place; and when in another day Sachinnie also comes there in pursuit he will again think me a fool, and it will be well.

'And now, little brother, we will not talk, for your breath is needed for your paddle, and the way to Aivick and Allegoo is getting shorter. I have spoken."

The canoe leaped forward at the last word, and the two settled down to a long, hard paddle that put the miles rapidly behind them. Both were good canoe men now. They had learned to use their backs and shoulders, and knew that about all the arms should do is to hold the swinging blade. Cunayou's heart was too full of pride in his brother to say much. It had indeed been a marvelous journey and the end was not yet. His mind pitched forward to Keepatis and the pups. It was good to know that every stroke brought them nearer.

CHAPTER XVII

THE hours slipped by, and not once did the blade of Keleepeles falter, nor was he ever in doubt as to the way. They passed portages where the big boy pointed without a word to the black cinders of camp fires around which they had sat not long ago, and when noon came they halted only long enough to eat a lump of pemmican.

"To-morrow morning," mumbled Keleepeles, his mouth full, "we come to the place where it is one trail to Wager Bay and another to Chesterfield Inlet, and when that is passed we shall make fire, but till then it is well not to cook anything, lest the smoke betray us."

"Which way do we go?" asked Cunayou. "To the dogs on Wager Bay?"

"It is in the mind of Sachinnie that I have forgotten the trail and will follow his map, but there is one in my head that we shall follow."

They pushed off in a few minutes and all afternoon half-remembered points and bays dropped steadily behind. At sunset they ate again, this time raw fish which lay heavy and cold in Cunayou's stomach, then went on through the night. At sunrise Keleepeles looked at his brother's weary face and drooping body and spoke very quietly.

"For an hour there shall be sleep."

Cunayou needed nothing more and curled up on a mound of moss. When he opened his eyes at a touch on his shoulder, Keleepeles had not, apparently, moved, but still sat staring back over the lake they had just crossed.

"In three hours you shall sleep again and I with you. Come."

How the fat boy got over the next eight miles he never quite knew. His eyes were hot and the lids drooped over them so that when he tried to paddle he found himself swaying over the side of the canoe. The sinews in his arms burned and his fingers were so stiff that he could not straighten them. There was pain in his neck and shoulders and back and

legs, and he moved as though in a bad dream, but ever as he wavered there came from behind the steady thrust of Keleepeles's paddle beneath which the canoe heaved regularly forward, and the kindly voice of his brother, encouraging him to further effort. In mid forenoon the elder boy turned the slim bows to shore, and, getting stiffly out, stared at a trail that led faintly to the southeast.

"It is thus that one goes to the inlet and here Sachinnie shall think we have gone. Take no care when you get out, but leave many foot prints as you did on a certain night when Carcajou stole an otter trap. I go down the trail a little way to light a fire that shall smoke till to-morrow. Pull up the canoe so that it makes a mark in the mud."

In a quarter of an hour the canoe moved off again, and Keleepeles, glancing back, saw a thin wisp of smoke climbing into the still air. Coming down to the shore he had walked backward in the soft mud so that these, the freshest of all their tracks, could mean only one thing. There were plenty of signs that

they had landed, but none that they had pushed off again. Cunayou, despite a great weariness, was full of new wonder and admiration for this brother of his. But he was so nearly spent that he could scarcely see, when, a quarter of a mile farther on, they headed in toward the trail to Wager Bay.

"Here," said Keleepeles impressively, "there must not be any signs," and he brought the canoe broadside against a flat ledge of bare, clean rock which was well away from the usual landing.

In an hour they were over the divide, having come not by the trail but by following a smooth ridge that ran a hundred yards on one side of it. Not a leaf or a twig was disturbed; nor was there the slightest mark at the water's edge. The elder boy heaved a long sigh as they pushed off.

"To that point we go," he said, stretching out his paddle, "and then there shall be great sleep."

Cunayou did not answer. His eyes were shut and his head nodded. As in a dream he

felt the canoe move beneath him, and without knowing it, began an uncertain stroke. Keleepeles, watching, wanted to laugh, but could only yawn. There was a murmur of water at the slim bows, and the fat boy felt the wind in his face and in a little while a voice from far away told him to step out. He did so, and stepped straight into the water. Then, without noticing that he was wet, he lay down on his stomach in a bed of dry leaves and knew nothing more.

It was eighteen hours later when he rolled over. There was a smell in his nostrils that tickled them pleasantly and he saw Keleepeles roasting a fish on a small fire of dry wood that made no smoke. The fat boy rubbed his eyes.

"Where am I?"

"On the way to Aivick and Allegoo." Keleepeles was smiling and looked very contented.

"But how did I get here?"

His brother chuckled. "Is the Sea Sculpin lost so soon?"

"But where is Sachinnie—oh!—I remember." Cunayou said this rather indistinctly

because his mouth was full of fish. "Why are my arms so sore?"

"Because without knowing it you have come fifty miles in a day and a night. And it is well that we came, for already there is a little ice. Did it not go in the heat of the sun it would cut the canoe. But now the rivers will grow larger on their way to the sea, and we shall go with them like the geese and swans which seek salt food for their long journey. You and I also seek salt food, little brother."

Cunayou nodded, his mind now being quite clear. "How much longer do we travel to the sea?"

"In one moon we shall find Keepatis and the dogs." Keleepeles spoke very confidently. In the back of his head he hoped it might all be true.

"And if we find her not?"

"There was a time when we had no dogs, but only our legs. Have you forgotten?"

Cunayou had not forgotten, but he was full of a great hunger for the old life; for igloos, and fishing through the floor, and bear stories

and the crack of a long whip over the tawny backs of the team, and the bump of the sledge as it lurched over rough ice, and a thousand other things that are known best by the small brown people who live without fire or water and are not known at all by the Yellowknives or any other red-skinned folk.

There was, too, something in the keenness of the air that made the fat boy think very hard. Two months ago he knew that Aivick and the other hunters of the tribe were then out fishing and hunting on the floating ice, while Allegoo and the rest of the women finished their work on shore. By now they were all together, dressing skins for winter clothing and killing geese and feasting, for food would be very plentiful—and of course uncooked. Cunayou's stomach gave a little quiver at the very idea of it.

Presently he got up, and stepping rather stiffly to the canoe thrust his hand into the narrow bow. Pulling out a little bundle, he looked at it thoughtfully, unrolled it, and without a word handed Keleepeles a small white

thing that shone in the sunlight. And while Keleepeles looked at it, Cunayou stared at his brother with big, round eyes and did not say a single word.

"Where did you find it?" said the older boy after a long pause.

"I did not find it. I made it."

"What!"

Cunayou answered rather proudly. "It was from the walrus tusk we found in Wager Bay. Perhaps it is not very good, but the bone was very hard."

Keleepeles rubbed his finger on the smooth ivory. Cunayou had fashioned a tiny sledge and across it lay balanced the boys' kayack, just as it was the day they found Keepatis.

"I made it when I was alone, with no one to laugh at me."

Keleepeles did not laugh, but stared curiously at his brother who had such a wonderful eye and such clever fingers. The sledge was exactly as he remembered it, with one runner a little thicker than the other, and the kayack was the image of the one he had made, and both

of them were carved out of the one tusk. How many days, he pondered, had Cunayou toiled over this thing, so small and yet so perfect?

"I am a hunter," he said slowly, "and there are many hunters, and they are all the same; but in our tribe there is not one who can do this, even though he be wise and of many years. It is for Allegoo without doubt."

Cunayou was very happy, so he nodded and his eyes were very soft. "There is so much to tell her that I have tried to talk with my fingers. There is also this"—he gave Keleepeles a bit of ivory two inches long—"but I do not think that the left hind leg is quite right. Do you like it?"

The big boy fingered gently a carving of a she otter, sitting up straight and apparently whistling to her pups. A queer feeling ran through him, for something in the back of his head told him that this was the kind of thing which was kept very carefully year after year and handed down in the family as a token. He also knew that, strong as his own hands

were, he could never fashion anything half so fine and small and perfect.

"Are there any more?"

Cunayou chuckled and brought out a little roll of birch bark on which he had drawn a picture of a walrus hunt. There were the big brutes lurching down a smooth rock toward the sea, their mouths open, their tusks gleaming, while behind them came the hunters with stabbing spears. It was all full of life and motion and the spirit of the chase, and Keleepeles, staring at it, felt his heart surge within him. Presently he looked at his brother with a queer mixture of pride and affection.

"It does not matter if after this you do not anything else but only such things as these. When did you make them, for I did not see you?"

The fat boy laughed down deep in his throat. "When you and Sachinnie were away hunting and thought I was asleep. But I was not asleep, for many animals walked all day through my head, one after the other, and it seemed that they looked at me and tried to

speak, but having no voice they could not. It has been like that for many days, and at night, though my eyes were shut, I could see nevertheless birds and fishes and beasts that did nothing but eat and sleep and fight and die, so that it was like a picture. And I wanted to make it and I have tried and —and—"

But at this point the emotion of Cunayou became too much for him, and because he was conscious of a multitude of things he could never put into words, no matter how much he felt them, he began to stammer and bright tears trickled down his round cheeks.

"I am a fool," he blurted, pushing his face into the damp moss.

"Then I wish that I also were a fool," said Keleepeles, patting his shoulder, and sat quite still till the younger boy began to smile through his tears, just as the sun reflects brightly on a brown, wet boulder.

CHAPTER XVIII

SO began a journey which brought the travelers daily nearer the sea. Fear of Sachinnie soon ceased to trouble them, as it was too unlikely that he could ever find them in this wilderness. The approach of winter afforded constant interest, for by now all furred and feathered things were preparing for the bitter months. The skins of mink and ermine became soft and glossy, and the bright-eyed river folk were busy putting away food. The muskrat strengthened his house, and Carcajou found it harder to kill than in the lazy summer-time. The air was full of the cries of birds that winged steadily to the salt marshes, and up every stream great fish pushed their way to spawn in safety. Along the shores of shallow pools was a crinkling of ice, and in the scanty thickets came a fluttering of leaves, so that the branches began to show bare and slender against the gray sky.

On a day they reached salt water, and Wager Bay stretched ahead to the open sea. There were still two hundred miles to the camp of Keepatis, and Keleepeles, staring down the shining expanse, wondered if, by chance, the old woman had moved because there were no rabbits left. Then they came to a salt marsh that was alive with birds.

As far as the eye could reach was what seemed to be a training-ground for feathered things,—as indeed it was. Old ducks and geese gathered their families and took them for trial trips high up where the air was thin and cold. There was a quacking and a honking till the very skies seemed to have a multitude of voices. At times a flock of young birds struck off as though daring the long journey by themselves; but always they came back, for something had whispered that the hour had not yet arrived. The boys' keen black eyes saw it all, and saw too that the white foxes were now really white, and that the brown hair of the rabbits had disappeared, leaving them like large, fat snowflakes. The

And then there were found great arrow-heads of ducks and geese with the wisest and strongest bird at the front

weather grew colder, till one day there was a flurry of snow. This false alarm sent some of the birds off, but only a few. Then followed a week of mild weather during which the quacking along the shore got louder and louder, till there came a day when the wind dropped altogether, and sky and sea and land seemed to turn gray. And that night the pools froze over.

At sunrise the birds began to climb, seeking a favorable current. Flock after flock went up, and then, so high that Cunayou could hardly see them, there were formed great arrow-heads of ducks and geese, with the wisest and strongest bird at the point of the arrow so that he might break the wind for the rest. All day they gathered in their strange regiments, and all day they disappeared like small black specks against the gray clouds. And when evening came there was no quacking or honking along the shore, but a great silence and another flurry of snow and a chill breath from the north.

"Winter has come," said Keleepeles, as he

pulled his sleeping-bag up around his ears. That was the way of it all over the wilderness. The female white bear got ready for her winter lodging so soon as it should be ready for her. Big fish deserted the streams and betook themselves to deep water. The caribou had moved south to the land of little sticks. Carcajou found himself a warmer den, the muskrat stuffed his house with food, and the gray wolf chose a lair where there was good hunting in the bitter months. Snow lay in large patches on the northern slopes of the hills and the boulders along the shore were girdled with ice.

On a certain morning Keleepeles looked first at the water and then at the canoe and shook his head.

"We wait now till the ice is strong enough to carry us."

It was very quiet, with more snow in the air, and no small birds in sight, but only the ravens who spend the year round in the north. All the short-beaked and cross-beaked tribes had vanished within a few days, the first to go

being the last to come,—those that have small wings not suitable for long flight, such as the wrens and finches and woodpeckers.

For days the weather tightened and hardened. The canoe of Keepatis being carefully laid bottom up in a little ravine and covered with branches, the boys rolled their possessions into two bundles and, packing these with tump-lines that pressed close against their foreheads, set out along the broken shoreline. It was, they reckoned, a hundred miles to the narrows beyond which, if all was well, would be found the dim-eyed old woman and the young wolves.

Two weeks later Wager Bay shone like a sheet of clear glass and new ice stretched from shore to shore. By now the narrows were reached, and it was necessary to cross the four-mile stretch to the northern shore. Keleepeles sounded the ice, going out a hundred yards with a long pole, and came back shaking his head, with the thin sheet yielding in front of him at every step.

"We must wait," he said patiently.

Cunayou nodded. He was sitting on a rock, searching the opposite side with eyes that by now were as sharp as a microscope. Presently he pointed.

"I see smoke."

Keleepeles stared for a long time and finally drew a breath of relief.

"It is the camp of Keepatis. Having snared all the rabbits where she was, she has moved to a new place. It is well, and soon we shall see the dogs."

The fat boy was suddenly very happy. For months past he had ached for the dogs, who were his by right of capture and training. He pictured them now, wolves nearly a year old, strong of leg and deep of chest. But he wondered if they could remember him, or would have only the smell of Keepatis in their nostrils. Presently he glanced at his brother.

"And having the dogs, when shall we find the tribe and where? It is in my stomach to sleep in an igloo again, for I am sick of Yellowknife teepees."

"It may be one moon or two. What is it

you long for and why are you sick of teepees? Sachinnie may be crooked, but we fed well."

"I long for the ice," said the fat boy, earnestly; "much ice and many walrus and square-flippers."

"But you have seen much, and shall you forget it?"

"I have seen the glutton and the she otter fight," chanted Cunayou, half closing his eyes, "and how the young swan calls for help. I know how the caribou cover the land and come to their death, and how the white bear battles with the gray wolf in a season of the year. All this and much more have I seen, and always shall I see it and make many pictures, but my stomach is sick for the seal-oil lamp on the wall of the igloo and the sight of Aivick squirting the water from his mouth on the runners of his sledge." And having got off all this, the fat boy opened his eyes and looked rather foolish.

Keleepeles did not even smile. He experienced a queer feeling that he had been listening to something very deep and honest, and that

however Cunayou might wander in later years this brother of his would always be an Island Eskimo at heart. For such is the way of the folk of the real wilderness. A fellow born and brought up on the ice like Cunayou could never be happy with the solid land always under his feet. If by chance you ever get well north of Southampton Island and into Coronation Gulf or Melville Sound and see the brown-faced folk in their egg-shell igloos, don't be in the least sorry for them or try to get them to wear American clothes, which would not fit and in which they would freeze to death, but remember that they are just as happy as you are and probably a deal more comfortable and as proud of their ice-floe as you are of New York or Cincinnati or Poughkeepsie.

Now, of course, Keleepeles did not reason like this, but he was sensible and wise and knew perfectly well what Cunayou meant by his little chant, which indeed had made Keleepeles rather homesick. The last two months had been hard on him, who, being older

and stronger, had taken on himself to do the thinking and deciding. He felt for Cunayou much as Aivick and Allegoo would have felt had they been rolled into one person. He had also a fixed idea that the name of Cunayou would be remembered long after his own was forgotten, because the fat boy would leave behind him many strange and beautiful things. And from all of this it may be seen that Keleepeles was not only brave but that already he was very much of a man.

That night when the boys lay awake listening to the sharp cracks that rang out like rifle shots as the ice thickened and expanded, there drifted across Wager Bay the faint yapping of a gray wolf. In a moment two others came in with their wild and distant chorus. And at that Cunayou sat up very straight.

"It is my team," he said breathlessly. "So many hundred miles have we come and yet found them!"

Morning dawned gray and cloudy, and when Keleepeles announced that the ice was thick enough to carry them, there followed a few

breathless moments while the boys rolled up their packs and strung them just below their shoulder-blades. Then very gingerly they set out, Keleepeles in the lead. The heart of Cunayou was beating very fast.

Ten minutes later the clouds came very low and they seemed to be in another world that was made of whirling snow. The shore on both sides was blotted out in a curtain of dancing flakes that soon turned the green ice to a carpet of smooth, dead white on which the footing was very slippery. Keleepeles pushed out his lips, but went straight ahead as though he could smell the North. Suddenly Cunayou whistled very softly.

"What is it?" Keleepeles stopped at once.

"There on the left—I saw something—a man, I think."

The elder boy stared, then in a flash pulled his brother down on the ice, where they lay no more perceptible than two hummocks of snow. Followed a breathless moment till two hundred yards away a tall figure became faintly visible, moving very fast. Like a

dream it appeared and disappeared in the whirling flakes and in one hand was what looked like a rifle.

"It is Sachinnie," whispered Keleepeles, slowly. "The smoke we saw was from his camp and not that of Keepatis."

"But the dogs," quavered Cunayou. "We heard the dogs."

"Keepatis is camped farther down where we left her, and Sachinnie is in between, waiting for us to come across. Lie still and move not."

Cunayou lay and trembled, while the snow came thicker and thicker. Presently Keleepeles motioned and they moved ahead, searching the white curtain with anxious eyes. Could they reach the dogs without meeting Sachinnie? They had come so far, and it was only a mile or two more. Keleepeles set his teeth and his hunter's spirit stirred within him.

"Let your breath be long and your heart steady and your legs strong, little brother," he said over his shoulder. "We are no longer children, but men, you and I. We are not on the land but on the ice, where we would be."

Cunayou only nodded and moved as fast as the shortness of his legs would permit, and the far shore was half-way reached when that which Keleepeles feared began to happen.

Came a drop in the wind and a thinning of the snow flurry. Then a quarter of a mile away the figure of Sachinnie stood out clearly. Simultaneously two miles to the east sounded a sharp yapping. The dogs were on the ice, too.

CHAPTER XIX

SO began a tense triangular game which Keleepeles played with all the skill he could muster. The thing was to reach the team before Sachinnie. Taking advantage of every snow flurry, he worked his way westward, dropping when the air cleared ever so little, that the sky-line might betray nothing. But Sachinnie's legs were long and he moved fast. The big boy put on all the speed Cunayou could stand, who panted close after him, his lips puffed out. Once Sachinnie raised his rifle and they heard the muffled report while a bullet cut a little trench in the ice at Keleepeles's feet. The sound of the dogs became louder and with it there drifted in the cracked voice of Keepatis, who was screaming with excitement. They were now only half a mile away, but Sachinnie was nearly within range.

Cunayou's knees began to give way. "I can run no longer," he gasped, "let me lie down."

"Come on, little brother with the large heart. Aivick and Allegoo and the dogs await you!"

Keleepeles jerked this out, though he hated to use up so much breath. His pack was very heavy, but he dared not drop it. And, too, it might stop a bullet.

The snow flurry lifted. Two hundred yards off was the team, tearing toward them in full cry, the black noses in the air and each red throat yelping out a wild song. On the sledge swayed crooked old Keepatis, one withered arm swinging a long whip, while her cracked voice screamed encouragement. On they came in a yellow tornado, while the dogs went mad as the well-remembered smell of their master worked into their savage brains.

Suddenly from Sachinnie came a hoarse shout. His arms went up straight over his head, his rifle slid off on the smooth surface and the rest of him disappeared. There was left only something that stuck out of the ice like two short, thick branches shaken violently by

an invisible wind. Then the branches folded flat down and there remained that which looked like a square-flipper come up for air.

"He has gone through!" roared Keleepeles, with a triumphant chuckle. "His blood will now get cool."

"Do we leave him there?" panted Cunayou, aghast.

"Without doubt we leave him. When his arms, which are wet, freeze to the ice he will pull himself out, and, having then enough to think of, he will trouble us no more. So let there be peace in your stomach; for here is Keepatis."

At the last word the dogs dashed up. Keepatis, crazy with excitement, jabbered things past understanding as she rolled off the sledge and stood pointing a withered hand toward the head and shoulders of her son.

"You have come back, O young and fat one," she squeaked, "but who is it that shoots at you?"

Cunayou pulled himself together and told her. "But now he does not shoot any more," he concluded.

"Then leave him—and come, O little part-

ridge of my heart," she urged. "Not yet is the ice strong, so why do we make more talk?"

"It is a wise word," snapped Keleepeles. "Let us go. But first I would say farewell to the blood brother of my brother."

With a broad grin he trotted up to where Sachinnie's grim face lifted itself over the ice. The Yellowknife was quite helpless, and though his soul was hot with anger his legs and body were horribly cold.

"Farewell, O great and wise hunter," said the young Eskimo, with an impudent grin. "Many things have you taught us; and now, perhaps, though we be still but children, there is some small thing we have taught you. I take your map to the igloos of my people, whereby you shall be remembered, and often when the north wind blows and we fish for salmon through the ice we shall speak of Sachinnie and tell of the night when Carcajou, the glutton, did.not rob your otter trap, and of the poison berry which if a man eat as I ate he must surely die. There is great wisdom in the land of little sticks."

With that he turned and ran toward the others. Cunayou, shaking with laughter, seized the whip, Keepatis climbed on the sledge as it slithered round and for three miles they tore on, the team making straight through blinding snow till the shore darkened in front of them and the teepee of Keepatis became visible. The old woman put out a shaky arm, and her bony fingers stroked the round cheek of Cunayou. She did not say a word, but just caressed him in a voiceless affection. And Cunayou saw by her gestures that Keepatis was now very nearly blind. The next moment he rolled off the sledge, and sat down amongst the dogs.

It was a great reunion. The tall leader licked his face, and the others bit playfully at his clothes, all wild with delight. They were bigger in the feet, broader in the back, deeper in the chest. The long tails were thicker and of a beautiful gray white, the hair on their throats was like snow and the pointed ears were twitching with excitement. Full of life and strength and restless energy. They

seemed to Cunayou more wonderful than anything he had ever seen. He longed to draw them and make an ivory carving of the way they had looked as they raced toward him. Then he became aware that Keleepeles and Keepatis were talking very earnestly.

"He will not come any farther," said the old woman, whose voice was very weak, "being a coward from his birth. And, besides, the dogs would kill him. Never before has he been so near the sea, which he does not like. He will reach the land and make fire with flint and steel, and not any of us will see him any more."

"And you," asked Keleepeles. "Do you stay here? And how did you keep the dogs all summer?"

"On an island near here. I lived with them so that they ran not away. It was fish that I caught which fed them; and as for me in another moon I shall be altogether blind and then die."

Cunayou looked up and shook his head. "You may be blind soon, but you shall not die

alone. And how, being so blind, did you come to us with the dogs?"

"It was not I, but the dogs themselves. Four days ago they were very restless, smelling something I did not know when the wind was from the south. It was your smell that came across the ice. And this morning they became like mad wolves, as indeed they were, so with great labor I harnessed them and got on the sledge, and they took me where they would. Truly, they are more wise than any dogs."

"It is very wonderful," said Keleepeles under his breath, and looked hard at Cunayou.

"And as for me, I have lived many years alone, and soon I shall not see anything any more; but it does not matter, for I have found that which I loved," continued the old woman, and she too was peering at Cunayou.

That night it was Keleepeles who lay awake in the well-remembered teepee, listening to the dogs' whimpers as they went hunting in their sleep, and at daybreak he went out on the ice and stared hard to the west, till from the camp of Sachinnie there came out a small black

speck that grew smaller and smaller till finally it vanished round a point. That was the last the young Eskimo saw of Sachinnie, the Beaverwood,—Sachinnie with the crooked heart. He went back to shore with joy in his breast and a great hunger. It was after they had eaten that Keepatis spoke.

"It is time that you return to your people. The ice is good now and the dogs are strong."

Cunayou glanced at his brother, who nodded ever so slightly. "We do not return alone. You come with us."

"Not so," croaked the old woman. "I should be a stone in the sledge and a great burden. It is well with me here,—for a little while only."

"Allegoo will care for you."

"The Yellowknife does not live in an igloo; nor will my stomach hold raw meat."

"We will cook it for you."

"But have you not told me that with your people there is no fire, there being no sticks to burn?" said Keepatis, weakly.

The smooth brow of Cunayou wrinkled into

deep lines. It was quite true. His heart protested at the thought of leaving this ancient one who had saved his life.

"At any rate you shall come with us," he announced doggedly, "and for so long as it may be we will care for you."

Then a curious thing happened. Keepatis closed both her blind eye and the one with which she could see just a little, and, rocking to and fro where she sat, began to chant a queer song in a queer, cracked, uncertain voice. The sound of it lifted through the bare trees and drifted along the ice till the dogs pricked up their ears and wondered what it was all about.

"I am Keepatis, the mother of Sachinnie," droned the quavering tones, "and it is time for me to die. Many moons have I lived without my people, for many moons ago a mist came over my eyes, so that men looked like trees walking in the rain. My bones are old and weak, and my skin like the bark of a dry cedar-tree and the young men and girls laughed when they saw me. Then after many

days a boy came from the North and my eyes cleared so that I saw him, and I loved him and made him my son with a sign on his arm. Now he has returned and my spirit told me that he would come, so, having seen him, it is well that I do not see anything more. I have spoken."

Then Keepatis moved stiffly, took the smooth face of Cunayou between her withered hands, looked at it long and very tenderly, and, without saying anything more, lay down on her side and covered her face with what was left of her most treasured possession,—an old red shawl.

There was silence for some time and neither boy stirred. They were not afraid of death, for in the North death walks quietly and speaks gently and is usually not far off, but what struck Cunayou as being very strange was that Keepatis had kept alive just long enough to help them and then closed her dim old eyes.

"How is it," he asked under his breath, "that this happened?"

"It is of the things that are known without speaking," answered Keleepeles very thoughtfully. "Because you were in her heart, she lived, saving her strength for a certain day. When she had found you again her strength went out like a little wind at sunset and there was none left. It is without doubt that she knew you would come."

Again there was silence, while two pairs of steady black eyes stared at the bundle that had been Keepatis.

"It is in my stomach," ventured Cunayou, "to make a carving of Keepatis on the sledge and give it to Allegoo, my other mother. Is it not strange that I who am so young should have two mothers?"

"Perhaps you had need of them," said his brother quietly.

CHAPTER XX

TWO months later, an Eskimo hunter might have been seen running behind his sledge far out on the ice north of Southampton Island. He was a big man and strong, with a broad, flat face and deep-set, dark eyes, and for the most part he looked straight ahead. Presently Aivick, for it was Aivick, shouted to the dogs, who curled themselves up while he sat on the sledge in deep thought. He often came out like this, having nowhere in particular to go, just because he could not stand the way Allegoo wept for her two boys. It was nine months since they had disappeared and, though he never admitted it, Aivick had at last given them up for lost. There was so much that could happen to two boys adrift on an ice-floe. For the thousandth time the big man wondered whether he had not often been too cross with Cunayou, even though the fat boy seemed to care for nothing but play. And

just as his thoughts were getting very hard to bear, one of the dogs put his muzzle into the air and began to yelp excitedly. The next instant the whole team had joined in.

Aivick stared around. There was nothing in sight except a low pressure ridge to the south. But it was toward this that the dogs were straining, so he drove on carefully, keeping tight hold of the walrus-hide rope that trailed from the end of the sledge. Then, drawing nearer the ridge, he saw something move as though a small snow-drift had been stood up on end. At that the dogs went altogether crazy.

Now, Aivick had not come out to hunt bear, though of course his spear was on the sledge, but something of the dogs' excitement got into his brain and because he was feeling lonely and unhappy he felt also reckless and suddenly decided to try it, even if the thing had to be done alone. So he loosed the team, which tore on in a frenzy of barking, and, picking up his spear, advanced with an utter lack of his usual caution.

The bear was a big one, and, since it was January, he was lean and very hungry. Aivick noted his height as he sat up to meet the dogs, and decided it was the biggest bear he had ever seen, with long forearms and broad white paws from which the curving claws stuck out like great talons. The team, too, seemed impressed with his size and strength, for they approached very gingerly, their teeth bared, the hair on their backs standing straight up.

So the fierce game began, with Aivick waiting tensely for his chance, his spear held level, while the dogs snapped at the great brute's side and flanks, dodging back like lightning with a mouthful of fur and skin. The mighty arms swung great blows and the small pink eyes were alight with anger, but, however the dogs worried, the big beast knew that his most deadly enemy stood straight in front of him with the long, bright-pointed thing in his hands. Presently the leader of the pack swerved just a fraction too late and went flying through the air with all her ribs

broken,—a mere wreck of a dog. This enemy out of the way, the bear decided to end the thing, and, regardless of the sharp teeth that tortured him, coughed deep down in his white throat and lurched straight forward at the hunter.

Aivick took a deep breath, sank on one knee, and, dropping the butt of his spear into a little hole in the ice, slanted it forward so that the sharp head took his quarry under the left fore arm and sank deep, but such was the weight of the great brute that the spear splintered and left him with the shattered butt still in his grip. Over him towered the bear, with blood spurting out on the white fur. Simultaneously the hunter turned and fled, hearing as he ran the yelps of his battling pack, and at that it seemed that three gray wolves raced round the end of the pressure ridge and hurled themselves into the combat with such savageness that the lord of the North was forced to turn in renewed torture to face them. And then, marvelous to tell, there appeared another hunter in strange clothes which Aivick

did not know, who, seizing his opportunity, thrust his spear so strongly into the bear's side that the great creature's life ran out in a crimson flood through his mouth and he toppled over, twitching and harmless, amongst his enemies. And the next thing Aivick knew was that this hunter had been mysteriously joined by another, much smaller and fatter, and both were rubbing their faces against his own and calling him by his name, while his team walked round on their toes and growled at three gray wolves that had dropped from nowhere.

Such was the home-coming of the wanderers, and it had turned out better than they had ever dreamed it could. What Aivick felt and said, it is better not to try to tell; for if you find two sons you have thought were lost, and one of them saves your life at the same moment, your thoughts and feelings are just the same as those of any father, whether he is an Island Eskimo or lives in Boston. But it is worth while stating that as Aivick and Keleepeles were both good hunters they set about skinning

the bear before he froze stiff, and cutting up such parts of him as were fit to eat,—and there were not many. And while they were doing this, Cunayou was kept busy making peace between his young wolves and his father's team, for they were longing to spring at one another's throats.

Picture the fat boy an hour later as he drives his beloved beasts up to the egg-shell igloo. Inside, is Allegoo, not dreaming of what has happened. The tears are running down Cunayou's face, for this is the precious moment he has so long looked forward to. Crawl into the igloo at his heels and hear the little cry when Allegoo sees him in the half-light of her home, and then leave them for a while till there have been said a few of the many things that are said on such rare occasions. For this is the business of Aivick and his family, and it is naturally private.

It was after they had all eaten some half-frozen fish that the boys brought out their presents, and while Allegoo was delighted with the furs, she seemed to love Cunayou's draw-

ings and carvings better. She was, too, impressed by the way in which Keleepeles treated his younger brother. At the story of Keepatis her eyes grew very soft and she stroked Cunayou's cheek just as the old woman had done; only her hands were smooth and oily and soft. Then other hunters and their families came in, when the story, or at least part of it, had to be told all over; and this went on nearly all night till Cunayou, after going out to see his team, crawled up on the sleeping-ledge and shut his eyes. But, try as he would, he could not rest.

"Put your hands on your stomach and sleep," said Keleepeles, who had begun another meal.

"My stomach and heart and head have all run together. I cannot sleep," answered a small, tired voice.

"He is so full of great weariness that it is sickness," sad Allegioo, anxiously. "What shall we do?"

Keleepeles pondered a moment. "Wait, and I shall try."

He crawled out, and presently came back,

dragging the gray leader of Cunayou's team. Lifting the young wolf in his arms he dropped him beside the restless boy. Came a laugh, then a small brown hand crept out to be laid caressingly on the lean head, and after that silence,—broken only by a gentle snore that sounded exactly like a ptarmigan's whistle.