The SKY-MAN

HENRY KITCHELL WEBSTER

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Simply Clung to Him.

SYNOPSIS.

Philip Cayley, accused of a crime of which he is not guilty, resigns from the army in disgrace and his affection for his friend, Lieut. Perry Hunter, turns to hatred. Cayley seeks solitude, where he perfects a flying machine. While soaring over the Arctic regions, he picks up a curiously shaped stick he had seen in the assassin's hand. Mounting again, he discovers a yacht anchored in the bay. Descending near the steamer, he meets a girl on an ice floe. He learns that the girl's name is Jeanne Fielding and that the yacht has come north to seek signs of her father, Captain Fielding, an arctic explorer. A party from the yacht is making search ashore. After Cayley departs Jeanne finds that he had dropped a curiously-shaped stick. Captain Planck and the surviving crew of his wrecked whaler are in hiding on the coast. A giant ruffian named Roscoe, had murdered Fielding and his two companions, after the explorer had revealed the location of an enormous ledge of pure gold. Roscoe then took command of the party. It develops that the ruffian had committed the murder witnessed by Cayley. Roscoe plans to capture the yacht and escape with a big load of gold. Jeanne tells Fanshaw, owner of the yacht, about the visit of the sky-man and shows him the stick left by Cayley. Fanshaw declares that it is an Eskimo throwing-stick, used to shoot darts. Tom Fanshaw returns from the searching party with a sprained ankle. Perry Hunter is found murdered and Cayley is accused of the crime but Jeanne believes him innocent. A relief party goes to find the searchers. Tom professes his love for Jeanne. She rows ashore and enters an abandoned hut, and there finds her father's diary, which discloses the explorer's suspicion of Roscoe. The ruffian returns to the hut and sees Jeanne. He is intent on murder, when the sky-man swoops down and the ruffian flees. Jeanne gives Cayley her father's diary to read. The yacht disappears and Roscoe's plans to capture it are revealed. Jeanne's only hope is in Cayley. The seriousness of their situation becomes apparent to Jeanne and the sky-man. Cayley kills a polar bear. Next he finds a clue to the hiding place of the stores.

CHAPTER XV.—Continued.

"Why, I found an unmistakable reference to it, and though the exact location wasn't given, it was plain that three or four hours' exploring by daylight would enable us to find it. But even if I hadn't minded leaving you asleep here, unprotected, in the hut, I doubt very much if I could have found it at night. But what's the mystery you were about to reveal to me?"

"No," she said; "tell me more about your discovery first. What was the reference in the journal?"

He rose and took down from the shelf the big leather-bound volume which was proving itself, with every hour, their greatest treasure.

"It's over here, toward the end," he said, "in that last winter when the Walrus came—oh, here we are."

He seated himself on the bunk beside her, and began to read.

"March 10th.—We have just spent an arduous and fearful week upon the task of unloading the wreck of the whaler. The weather has been severe—bitterly cold (—10 degrees Fahrenheit being the mildest) and three-quarters of a gale blowing most of the time. The men are inclined to be rebellious over my driving them out to work in such weather, but I dared not wait for it to moderate.

"When the ice opens round the whaler, she will go down like a plummet; and if that event should have happened before we unloaded her of her stores, our plight would have been utterly desperate. Of stores in the ordinarily accepted sense, she had but a scanty supply, and those of a miserably inferior description; but she contained half a cargo of whale oil in barrels, which now that they are landed will settle the problem of fuel for us as long as the last survivor of our company can hope to remain alive. And fuel is, after all, the only necessity which this land itself does not supply us with. Of course we shall have to forego the delights of bear steak when our ammunition gives out, but walruses we can kill with harpoons. And with these and scurvy-grass, which we gather in the valley every summer, there is no danger of actual starvation.

"We hoisted the barrels of blubber out of the whaler's hold with a hand tackle, sledged them ashore along the floe and the crown of the glacier to Moseley's cave, which seemed to be the most convenient place to store them temporarily."

Cayley laid down the book and turned to the girl.

"That's the place, I'm perfectly sure," he said. "It evidently faces the glacier, but it must be very near the beach, for they wouldn't have hauled those barrels any further than necessary."

"Is that all he says about it?"

"It's all he says directly, but there's a reference just a little further along which made me all the surer I was right. . . . Let's see."

He opened the book again and ran his eye down the page. "'—A hundred-weight or so of spermaceti and two barrels of sperm oil we took directly to the hut'—here, this is what I was looking for.

"'The knowledge we get by experience often comes too late to be of any great service to us. I made some mistakes in stripping the Phoenix, which I should not repeat now. For instance, carrying her pilot house, with infinite labor, up to the cliff-head for an observatory. It is thoroughly impracticable for this purpose. I doubt if I have visited it three times since Mr. Moseley's death—'"

"He was the astronomer and botanist of father's expedition," said the girl.

Cayley read on: "'But now that I have learned my lesson, I have but little to apply the knowledge to. The Walrus is, I believe, the most utterly wretched hulk that ever sailed the seas—ill-found, detestably dirty and literally rotting to pieces. We shall, however, get enough planks and timbers out of her to build a shed or two near the hut, for the more convenient storage of our supplies.'"

Again he closed the book. "That's what I was looking for," he said. "You see they brought that stuff down from the cave to these sheds; so the cave would be almost inevitably the first hiding place they would think of when the sight of the Aurora drove them to hustle everything out of sight."

"Where about on the cliff is the observatory, Philip?"

"I was wondering about that. I've flown across the cliff a number of times, but have never seen anything of it. He may have wrecked it; taken it down and used it for some other purpose."

"No," she said; "he'd hardly have had time for that. There weren't many more pages to write in the journal when he made that entry."

She fell then into a little abstracted silence, which the man did not know how to break. But presently she roused herself and came fully back to the present, back to him.

"Did you succeed in accounting for the thing you asked me about last night, the mark on the map right here where they built the hut afterward?"

"I didn't find anything about it in the journal, but this morning, before breakfast, when I went outside the hut, one glance at the fact of the cliff accounted for it fully. The cliff is split right here, from top to bottom, by a deep, narrow fissure. The fissure is full of ice, which I suppose hasn't melted for a thousand years. No summer that they could have in a high latitude like this would ever melt it, certainly."

The girl laughed and rose from her place at the rude table.

"Well," she asked, "are you ready for my discovery now?"

She took down his pocket electric bull's-eye from the shelf behind her, held out a hand to him and, on tiptoe, led him, with a burlesque exaggeration of mystery, out into the storeroom. As completely mystified in reality as she playfully pretended to want him to be, Cayley followed.

She went straight across the storeroom to the rear wall of the hut, the wall that backed squarely against the sheer surface of the cliff, flashed on the bull's-eye for a second, apparently to make sure that she had chosen the right point in the wall, then, letting go his hand, she stooped and picked up a stick of fire-wood which lay at her feet. With this she struck pretty hard upon the planking. The sound which the blow gave forth was as hollow as a drum.

Cayley started. "A cave!" he exclaimed. "A cave here!—Oh, I see. It's a cold cellar they made by cutting a hole in the ice that filled the fissure. And why do you suppose they boarded it up?"

The girl laughed delightedly. Evidently she had not, as yet, developed the whole of her discovery. She flashed on the light again.

"Look!" she commanded.

In the center of a little circle of wall which the bull's-eye now illuminated Cayley saw the barrel of a rusty hinge.

"You see," she went on, "it's a door, and they only nailed it up the other day. There's a nail-head somewhere here that's quite bright. I caught the glint of it while I was rummaging before breakfast, and that was what made me look."

Cayley darted back into the living room, returning almost instantly with the broken-handled pick.

In less than a minute, with a protesting squawk, the rude door swung open, and they saw before them just what Cayley had predicted. A rather high, but narrow cavity, the sides of which were the naked rock of the cliff, but the floor and ceiling solid ice.

Despite the fact that the girl's excitement over the discovery of the cave had, for a moment, carried Cayley along with it, he was not greatly surprised, and not at all cast down when, at the end of five minutes of hasty exploration, it was made evident to them that the ample supply of stores which they sought was not to be found here.

Jeanne herself would not, perhaps, have entertained so high a hope had she learned of the reference to the other cave which Cayley found in the journal before she herself had chanced upon the mouth of this one. As it was, his theory that the stores were to be found in a cave vaguely situated along the glacier, made little impression upon her, she was so sure that they had been right here, under their hands.

When their investigation made it clear that whether he was right or not, certainly she was wrong, she was bitterly disappointed. Cayley was aware of that, even as they stood here, side by side, with no light to see her face by. She said nothing, or very little, but he knew, nevertheless, that for just this moment all the life and courage had gone out of her; knew that the slight figure there, so close beside him, was drooping, trembling a little.

He laid a steady hand upon her shoulder. Almost instantly, under his touch, she turned to him, caught with both hands at the unbottoned edges of the rough woolen jacket he wore, and, sobbing a little now and then, but otherwise in silence, simply clung to him.

He did not offer, with his arms, to draw her any closer, to turn what was a mere instinctive appeal to the protection of his strength and courage, into an embrace. He kept a hand on each of her shoulders, more by way of support than anything else, and waited a moment before he spoke.

"After all," he said at last, "what we've got here is just so much clear gain, and it will be immensely valuable to us, though it isn't what we expected. The fact that it is their superfluity, the things they hadn't any particular or immediate use for, doesn't make what we've found here any the less valuable to us. That pile of bear skins there will supply what is, at this moment, the most vital of our wants. That big sack appears to contain feathers; and those walrus tusks will serve any number of purposes—forks and spoons for one thing. As to that great lump of spermaceti, it will keep us supplied with candles all through the winter. I can't imagine why they didn't use it themselves, except on the theory that the longer they lived here, the more they grew like beasts; the more content with the beast's habit of life, and the more inert about taking the trouble to provide themselves with such of the comforts and decencies of life as they might have had. So you see, we may find among the things they had no use for the very ones that will help us most."

The cutting in the ice did not go very far back in the fissure, and they were soon at the end of it, and without having made any new discovery of importance, either. There was a little of cast-off articles of various sorts, chiefly clothing which future privations might make useful to them. There was a great frozen lump of brownish-green vegetation, which they afterward identified as the edible scurvy grass to which Captain Fielding had referred in his journal.

That was all, or they thought it was, but just as they were about to retrace their steps to the hut, Cayley happened to glance up. The roof of the cave was not very much higher than it had to be to permit him to stand erect in it, something under seven feet; but here at the further end of it he saw a circular, chimney-like hole about two feet in diameter, leading straight upward through the solid ice in the fissure.

CHAPTER XVI.

Footprints.

Nature had nothing to do with the formation of it, so much was clear enough. It had been cut out by hand, and evidently with infinite labor.

Flashing his bull's-eye over it did not enable him to see the end of it, but it did reveal a series of notches running straight up the two opposite surfaces. The only purpose they could serve would be to make possible the ascent of the chimney.

Jeanne followed his gaze, and then the two looked at each other, completely puzzled.

"Some one must have made it," she said; "and it must have been frightfully hard to make—a tunnel right up through the ice like that. But what in the world can they have made it for?"

"I've no idea," he confessed, "but it goes somewhere, and I mean to find out where."

"Don't follow it too far," she cautioned. "It would only need one foot slip off one of those icy notches to bring about a dreadfully ugly fall."

"One couldn't fall far down a tube of that diameter, unless he had completely lost his nerve, for there's always a chance to catch one's self. And you're to remember that I'm used to falling. No, I'll be as safe up there as I would on a turnpike. Yes, really."

With that and a nod of reassurance, he scrambled up into the mouth of the long chimney. He had taken his bull's-eye with him, so the girl was left in the dark. She dropped down on the heap of bear skins to wait for him.

She had no means of measuring the time, and it seemed a perfectly interminable while before she heard Cayley returning down the ice chimney. Had she known how long it really was, she would have been justified in feeling seriously worried about him, but not knowing, she attributed the seeming duration of his delay to the tedium of sitting in the dark, with nothing to do. Even at that, she was conscious of a feeling of relief when she heard him call out to her once more, cheerfully, albeit somewhat hollowly, from the chimney's mouth:

"Jeanne, where are you?"

"Here, just where you left me."

"Here! All the while! You must be half frozen. I've been gone the better part of an hour."

"I didn't know how long it was, and I kept thinking you'd be back any minute. . . . But where in the world have you been?"

By the time she asked that question they had groped their way back into the storeroom and thence into the living room of the hut, and by now she was looking at him in the full light of day.

He dropped down, with a rather explosive sigh, upon one of the bunks, and poked tentatively at his thighs and shoulders as if they were numb with fatigue.

"I think by a reasonable estimate," he said, "that chimney is five miles high. I kept going and going and going, till I began to believe that there wasn't any end to it; or that, by some magic or other, I slipped down a yard as often as I went up one. But I did get to the end at last; and I'll give you a thousand guesses as to what I found there."

"The observatory," she hazarded. "Oh! but not really? I did not mean that for an honest guess at all. It was just the first thing that came into my head. But how could they pull the pilot house of the Phoenix up through that little hole in the ice?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I don't believe they did," he answered with mocking seriousness. "It's more likely that they took it to pieces, and then rigged a boom and tackle up at the cliff-head and hauled it up outside. But when they got it up there they put it together again right across the fissure, and then tunnelled down, or up, the whole depth of the cliff. It must have taken them weeks to do it, and when it was done they had an inside connection between it and the hut, so that they were quite independent of the weather. And it must have been a great place to make observations from."

"Have been!" she echoed questioningly. "Isn't it now?"

"No, because it's all snowed and frozen in. It's buried, I don't know how many feet deep by this time, and dark, of course, as a pocket. But everything inside is quite undisturbed. I doubt if a single member of the Walrus' crew ever saw it, or even suspected that such a place existed."

So He Set Off Alone.

He unbuttoned his jacket and took from an inner pocket a scrap of paper.

"Being a methodical person," he explained, "I made an inventory. It's really quite a respectable list."

She seated herself beside him on the bunk as if to read the paper.

"I imagine you will need an interpreter," he said. "I've half forgotten what these tracks mean myself. My hands were so stiff with the cold it wasn't very easy to write. But that first word is telescope. And then there are the meteorological instruments, barometers, thermometers, and so on, and the Phoenix's compass, sextant and chronometer, a microscope, a paraffine oven and a big chunk of paraffine, an oil lamp, a five-gallon can about half full of oil, and a small stove. There was a providential treasure for me in the form of a razor, which they used, I suppose, for cutting microscopic sections with. I'm glad they hadn't a microtone to do it properly."

"You didn't find a comb for me, did you?" she asked. "Because, unless you did, or until you do, you won't be allowed to use the razor."

"I suppose I could make you one, or a sort of one. It would be genuine ivory, anyway."

He had come, apparently, to the end of the list.

"Well," she said, "I suppose we might find something to do with almost any one of those things; some of them will be useful, certainly. And it's pleasant, somehow, to think of our little pilot house, all snowed in, up there on the cliff-head, and of our inside passage leading up to it."

"That's quite true," he said. "I suppose it's all romantic nonsense, but it does give one a certain feeling of security. . . . However," he went on, "we're not reduced as yet to anything as intangible as that as a subject for giving thanks. You haven't seen the whole of my list yet. I've saved the best till the last."

He turned the paper over in his hand as he spoke. She did not attempt to read what he had written, but sat there beside him, her hands clasped about one knee, her eyes upon the booted foot which was poised across the other, and waited rather tensely for him to tell her.

"It's not so very much, but it will mean an immense lot to us. What people die of in the arctic is not so often disease or accident, or even, directly, cold or starvation. They die more often of disgust and weariness and exhaustion. Your father knew that, and he set apart from his general stores some luxuries and delicacies, or things that would seem to be such to men in their plight, to be used against emergency. I'm sure that's why he took them up there and hid them away. Part of them are left. I wish he could have known to whom they were going to be of use. There's a little cask with brandy in it, a good-sized pot nearly full of beef extract, a jar of dried eggs, three tins of condensed milk, a big ten-pound box of Albert biscuit—"

His voice broke off there sharply, but without the downward inflection she would have expected had he reached the end. So she looked quickly and curiously up into his face. As quickly, her eyes sought the bit of paper which still lay open in his hand.

"You didn't finish," she said. "There was something else."

"I thought too late. Oh! it's nothing, but it caught me—rather, and I thought I would spare you the twinge that finding it had given me. I might better have read it right out. It was a big plum pudding, in a tin, you know—Cross & Blackwell's. But there it was, waiting, I suppose, to lend some sort of an air of festivity to their next Christmas."

The girl rose from her seat beside him and going over to the window, stood for a while gazing up the beach.

It was just about the same time in the afternoon that it had been yesterday when he set out, a-wing, to find her, and had come flying down out of the sky to drive away the sudden nameless terror which had beset her. That thought led him, now to visualize some sticks of wood, rather too large to carry, which had been lying on the beach near where he had found her. Thinking that it would be a good time to get them and drag them in, he got a harpoon line, and it was the girl's question what he meant to do with the rope, which caused him to tell her what part of the beach he intended to visit. He asked her then if she cared to come with him, but, after a moment's hesitation, she declined.

"It will be high time for supper before you can get back," she said, "and I'd better stay here and get it ready, that is, unless I can help you."

So he set off alone.

For awhile the occupation of setting their disordered living room to rights and getting the supper started were sufficient to take the whole of the girl's attention. But later, when it was a question merely of waiting for the pot to boil, and of not watching it so that it would boil sooner, she moved restlessly to the door and stood there, before the hut, gazing down the beach in the direction Cayley had taken. He was already out of sight around the headland.

She wished she had gone with Philip, and she gazed with straining eyes toward the narrow bit of slanting beach around the base of the headland which was the place where he must appear. He was not to be expected yet, not for a long time, probably, for his progress, dragging those great sticks he had set out to bring home, must be slow.

And then, even as she looked, she saw him, not moving slowly with his burden, but running—running at his topmost speed, like a man in fear of something.

Instinctively she moved forward to meet him, and this move of hers enabled him to see her. He slackened his pace instantly, and waved her back toward the hut. She obeyed that imperative gesture of his, without hesitation, but still remained in the doorway, watching him as he rapidly drew nearer.

When he had got near enough so that she could see his face and read, more or less, what she saw there, she again moved forward to meet him, and this time he did not wave her back. When he came within arm's reach of her, he caught her and held her tight in his two hands.

"What is it, Philip?" she asked, searching the depth of his eyes and trying to plumb the horror she saw in them. "What happened out there?"

"Nothing—happened. But I saw something there that made me anxious for your safety. . . . It's all right now you're safe. Nothing has happened here, has there, while I have been gone?"

"Nothing. What could have happened, Philip? It can't be anything that you're afraid to tell me," she went on, for he had not answered her. "There can't be anything you'd be afraid to tell me now—not after yesterday."

"Oh, no; it's not so bad as that, but I saw that I had been wrong to leave you, even for that little while. You see the sight of the place brought back to my mind what you had told me yesterday of the terror you had felt there, and of the thing that you saw in the twilight. And so I looked

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

WESTERN CANADA'S GOOD CROP PROSPECTS

YIELDS OF WHEAT WILL LIKELY BE 25 TO 30 BUSHELS PER ACRE.

In an interview with Mr. W. J. White, who has charge of the Canadian government immigration offices in the United States, and who has recently made an extended trip through the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta in Western Canada. He said that every point he visited he was met with the one report, universally good crops of wheat, oats and barley. There will this year be a much increased acreage over last year. Many farmers, who had but one hundred acres last year, have increased their cultivated and seeded acreage as much as fifty per cent. With the prospects as they are at present, this will mean from $12 to $15 additional wealth to each. He saw many large fields running from 300 to 1,000 acres in extent and it appeared to him that there was not an acre of this but would yield from 20 to 25 or 30 bushels of wheat per acre, while the oat prospects might safely be estimated at from 40 to 70 bushels per acre. In all parts of the west, whether it be Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Alberta, north and south, east and west, and in the districts where last year there was a partial failure of crops, the condition of all grain is universally good and claimed by most of the farmers to be from one to two weeks in advance of any year for the past ten or twelve years. It does not seem that there was a single foot of the ground that was properly seeded that would not produce.

There are those throughout western Canada who predict that there will be 200,000,000 bushels of wheat raised there this year, and if the present favorable conditions continue, there does not seem any reason why these prophesies should not come true. There is yet a possibility of hot winds reducing the quantity in some parts, but with the strongly rooted crops and the sufficiency of precipitation that the country has already been favored with, this probability is reduced to a minimum.

The prices of farm lands at the present time are holding steady and lands can probably still be purchased at the price set this spring, ranging from $15 to $20 per acre, but with a harvested crop, such as is expected, there is no reason why these same lands should not be worth from $20 to $25 per acre, with an almost absolute assurance that by next spring there will still be a further advance in prices.

Mr. White says that these lands are as cheap at today's figures with the country's proven worth as they were a few years ago at half the price when the general public had but a vague idea of the producing quality of western Canada lands.

The land agents at the different towns along the line of railway are very active. A large number of acres are turned over weekly to buyers from the different states in the south, where lands that produce no better are sold at from $150 to $200 per acre.

The homestead lands are becoming scarcer day by day and those who are unable to purchase, preferring to homestead, are directing their attention to the park acres lying in the northerly part of the central districts. It has been found that while these are somewhat more difficult to bring under the subjugation of the plow, the soil is fully as productive as in the districts farther south. They possess the advantage that the more open prairie areas do not possess; that there is on these lands an open acreage of from fifty to seventy per cent of the whole and the balance is made up of groves of poplar of fair size, which offer shelter for cattle, while the grasses are of splendid strength and plentiful, bringing about a more active stage of mixed farming than can be carried on in the more open districts to the south.

The emigration for the past year has been the greatest in the history of Canada and it is keeping up in record shape. The larger number of those, who will go this year will be those who will buy lands nearer the line of railways, preferring to pay a little higher price for good location than to go back from the line of railways some 40 or 50 miles to homestead.

Mr. White has visited the different agencies throughout the United States and he found that the correspondence at the various offices has largely increased, the number of callers is greater than ever.

Any one desiring information regarding western Canada should apply at once to the Canadian Government Agent nearest him for a copy of the "Last Best West."

Well Domesticated.

Judge Parry in the course of a sketch of his judicial duties states that he had learned to sympathize with domestic frailties. "I was once rebuking a man for backing up his wife in what was not only an absurd story, but one in which I could see he had no belief. 'You should be more careful,' I said, 'and I tell you candidly I don't believe a word of your wife's story.' 'You may do as you like,' he said, mournfully, 'but I've got to.'"

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SUPERSTITIONS OF SNEEZING

It Was a Thing of Ill-Omen Until the Time of Jacob, Say the Jewish Rabbis.

Many superstitions have gathered around the practise of sneezing.

The Jewish rabbis say that in the first ages of the world sneezing was considered a thing of ill omen, and even a presage of death, and that this terrible state of things lasted until the coming of Jacob, when that astute patriarch, anxious lest he should himself perish from such an insignificant cause, besought the Almighty to endow sneezing in future with more beneficent attributes.

Among the ancients sneezing was considered lucky or unlucky according to the circumstance of time and place.

For instance, it was considered lucky to sneeze between noon and midnight; also when the moon was in the signs of Taurus, Leo, Libra, Capricorn and Pisces.

But if, on the other hand, you sneezed during any of the hours between midnight and the following noon, or while the moon happened to be in the signs of Virgo, Aquarius, Cancer or Scorpi—above all, unhappily, you were just getting out of bed or rising from the table—then you were to consider yourself in a parlous state, indeed

The Greeks and Romans entertained the superstition that to hear anyone on their right hand sneeze was of good presage to all concerned, and the Greeks used to say of a beautiful woman that Cupid and his loves had sneezed at her birth.

Traditions of Mother Shipton.

Of all British prophets, Mother Shipton is beyond doubt the most celebrated. She was, in fact, all that a prophet and witch should be, in strange contrast to the serious and scientific nostradamus. The day she was born the sky became dark and gloomy and, according to her biographer, "belcht out nothing for half an hour but flames, thundering after a most hideous manner." Her personal appearance, described by her admiring biographer in 1662, is scarcely flattering: "Her physiognomy was so misshapen that it is altogether impossible to express fully in words, or for the most ingenious to line her in colors, though many persons of eminent qualifications in that line have often attempted it, but without success."—Metropolitan Magazine.

Candor in the Home.

"Your sister's a long time about making her appearance," suggested the caller. "Well," said the little brother, "she'd be a sight if she came down without making it."

Pointer for Book Lovers.

Oil of lavender, sprinkled about their shelves, will prevent books mildewing.