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BENTON, BOSSIER PARISH, LA., THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1915.

NUMBER 50.

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PROLOGUE.
It is the "Hi! You! Mash on! Chook! Chook!" spirit—the vim, dash and "go" of a hustling mining country like the Yukon—that Jack London has put into these Smoke Bellew stories. Mr. London writes of real men—men whose daily job is to join issue with danger and sudden death with never a whimper. You can't help feeling the thrill that runs in the veins of these iron muscled giants of the gold fields, particularly since Jack London, a good, husky figure of a man himself, has been through many of the adventures he writes about and has the knack of taking you along and of making you "hit the trail" with him. "Smoke," once a tenderfoot, now a sure enough sour dough, has the test of his life in one story and is saved from defeat by a mere girl. In another he drops, as he supposes, to sudden death to save the life of a friend. Beyond question Jack London has struck the rich "mother lode" of fiction in these wonderful stories.

CHAPTER I.

The Taste of the Meat.

It was the beginning he was Christopher Bellew. By the time he was at college he had become Chris Bellew. Later in the bohemian crowd of San Francisco he was called Kit Bellew. And in the end he was known by the name that Smoke Bellew. Nor would it have happened had he not had a fond mother and an iron uncle and had he not received a letter from Gilet Bellamy.

"I have just seen a copy of the Billow," Gilet wrote from Paris. "Of course O'Hara will succeed with it. But he's missing some tricks. Go down and see him. Let him think they're your own suggestions. Above all, don't forget to make him fire that dub who's doing the musical and art criticism. Another thing: Tell him to kick around and get some gink to turn out a five serial and to put into it the real romance and glamour and color of San Francisco."

And down to the office of the Billow went Kit Bellew faithfully to instruct. O'Hara listened. O'Hara agreed. O'Hara fired the dub who wrote criticism. Further, when O'Hara wanted anything no friend could deny him. Before Kit Bellew could escape from the office he had become an associate editor, had agreed to write weekly columns of criticism till some decent pen was found and had pledged himself to write a weekly installment of 10,000 words on the San Francisco serial—and all this without pay. The Billow wasn't paying yet, O'Hara explained.

Luckily for Kit he had his own income. Small it was compared with some, yet it was large enough to enable him to belong to several clubs and maintain a studio in the Latin quarter. Yet he was always broke, for the Billow, in perennial distress, absorbed his cash as well as his brains. There were the illustrators, who periodically refused to illustrate; the printers, who periodically refused to print; and the office boy, who frequently refused to officiate. At such times O'Hara looked at Kit, and Kit did the rest.

When the steamship Excelsior arrived from Alaska, bringing the news of the Klondike strike that set the country mad, Kit made a purely frivolous proposition.

"Look here, O'Hara," he said, "this gold rush is going to be big—the days of '49 over again. Suppose I cover it for the Billow? I'll pay my own expenses."

O'Hara shook his head. "Can't spare you from the office, Kit. Then there's that serial."

The next Kit heard of the Klondike was when he dropped into the club that afternoon and encountered his uncle. "Hello, amvicular relative," Kit greeted. "Won't you join me?"

the plains by ox team in the fifties, and in him was this same hardness, and the hardness of a childhood spent in the conquering of a new land. "You're not living right, Christopher. I'm ashamed of you. Your father was a man, every inch of him. I think he'd have whaled all this musical and artistic tomfoolery out of you."

"Alas! these degenerate days," Kit sighed.

The older man was on the verge of choking with wrath, but swallowed it down and managed to articulate, "How old are you?"

"I have reason to believe—"
"I know. Twenty-seven. You finished college at twenty-two. You've dabbled and played and frittered for five years. Before God and man, of what use are you? When I was four years I had one suit of underclothes. I was riding with the cattle in Coloso. I was hard as rocks, and I could sleep on a rock. I lived on jerked beef and bear meat. I am a better man physically right now than you are. You weigh about 165. I can throw you right now or thrash you with my fists."

"It doesn't take a physical prodigy to mop up cocktails or pink tea," Kit murmured deprecatingly. "Besides, I wasn't brought up right. Now, if when I was a youngster I had taken some of those intensely masculine vacations you go in for—I wonder why you didn't invite me sometimes?"

The older man looked at his nephew with unconcealed disgust. "Well, I'm going to take another one of those what you call masculine vacations. Suppose I asked you to come along? Hal and Robert are going in to Klondike, and I'm going to see them across the pass and down to the lakes, then return."

He got no further, for the young man had sprung forward and gripped his hand. "My preserver!"

John Bellew was immediately suspicious. He had not dreamed the invitation would be accepted.

"When do we start?"
"It will be a hard trip. You'll be in the way."

"No, I won't. I'll work."
"Each man has to take a year's supplies in with him. There'll be such a jam the Indian packers won't be able to handle it. Hal and Robert will have to pack their outfits across themselves. That's what I'm going along for—to help them pack. If you come you'll have to do the same."

"When do we start?"
"Tomorrow."

"You needn't take it to yourself that your lecture has done it," Kit said at parting. "I just had to get away somewhere, anywhere, from O'Hara."

Kit Bellew landed through the madness of the Dyea beach, congested with the thousand-pound outfits of thousands of men. This immense mass of luggage and food, hung ashore in

mountains by the steamers, was beginning slowly to dribble up the Dyea valley and across Chilkoot. It was a portage of twenty-eight miles and could be accomplished only on the backs of men.

Tenderest of the tenderfeet was Kit Like many hundreds of others, he carried a big revolver swung on a cartridge belt. A strapping six foot Indian passed him carrying an unusual

by large pack. Kit swung to behind, admiring the splendid curves of the man and the grace and ease with which he moved along under his burden. The Indian dropped his pack on the scales in front of the post, and Kit joined the group of admiring gold rushers who surrounded him. The pack weighed 125 pounds, which fact was uttered back and forth in tones of awe.

"Going to Lake Lindemann with it, old man?" Kit asked.

The Indian, swelling with pride, granted an affirmative.

Here Kit sidled out of the conversation. A young woman standing in the doorway had caught his eye. Unlike other women landing from the steamers, she was neither short skirted nor blower wind. She was dressed as any woman traveling anywhere would be dressed.

The bright beauty and color of her oval face held him, and he looked over-shoulder till she resented, and her own eyes, long lashed and dark, met his in cool survey. From his face they traveled in evident amusement down to the big revolver at his thigh. Then her eyes came back to his, and in them was amused contempt. She turned to the man beside her and indicated Kit.

The man glanced him over with the same amused contempt.

"Chekako," the girl said.

The man, who looked like a tramp in his cheap overalls and dilapidated woolen jacket, grinned dryly, and Kit felt withered, though he knew not why.

"Did you see that man with the girl?" Kit's neighbor asked him excitedly. "Know who he is?"

Kit shook his head.

"Cariboo Charley. He was just pointed out to me. He struck it big on Klondike. Old timer. Been on the Yukon a dozen years. He's just come out."

"What does 'chekako' mean?" Kit asked.

"You're one; I'm one," was the answer—"tenderfoot."

Kit's first pack was a success. Up to Finnegans Crossing they had managed to get Indians to carry the 2,500 pound outfit. From that point their own backs must do the work. They planned to move forward at the rate of a mile a day. It looked easy—on paper.

Since John Bellew was to stay in camp and do the cooking, he would be unable to make more than an occasional pack. So to each of the three young men fell the task of carrying 800 pounds one mile each day. If they made fifty pound packs it meant a daily walk of sixteen miles loaded and of fifteen miles light, "because we don't back trip the last time," Kit explained the pleasant discovery. Eighty pound packs meant nineteen miles travel each day, and 100 pound packs meant only fifteen miles.

"I don't like walking," said Kit. "Therefore I shall carry 100 pounds." He caught the grin of incredulity on his uncle's face and added hastily: "Of course I shall work up to it. I'll start with fifty."

He did and ambled gayly along the trail. He dropped the sack at the next camp site and ambled back. It was easier than he had thought. But two miles had rubbed off the velvet of his strength and exposed the underlying softness. His second pack was sixty-five pounds. It was more difficult, and he no longer ambled. Several times, following the custom of all packers, he sat down on the ground, resting the pack behind him on a rock or stump.

He fastened the straps to a ninety-five pound sack of beans and started. At the end of a hundred yards he felt that he must collapse. He sat down and mopped his face.

"Short hauls and short rests," he muttered. "That's the trick."

Sometimes he did not make a hundred yards, and each time he struggled to his feet for another short haul the pack became undeniably heavier. He panted for breath, and the sweat streamed from him. Before he had covered a quarter of a mile he stripped off his woolen shirt and hung it on a tree. A little later he discarded his hat. At the end of half a mile he decided he was finished. As he sat and panted his gaze fell upon the big revolver and the heavy cartridge belt.

"Ten pounds of junk!" he sneered as he unhooked it.

He did not bother to hang it on a tree, but flung it into the underbrush.

His short hauls decreased. At times a hundred feet was all he could stagger, and then the ominous pounding of his heart against his eardrums and the sickening tottering of his knees compelled him to rest. And his rests grew longer. But his mind was busy. It was a twenty-eight mile portage, which represented as many days, and this by all accounts was the easiest part of it.

"Wait till you get to Chilkoot," others told him as they rested and talked. "where you climb with hands and feet."

"Wait till you hit the canyon. You'll have to cross a raging torrent on a sixty foot pine tree. No guide ropes, nothing, and the water boiling at the sag of the log to your knees. If you fall with a pack on your back there's no getting out of the straps. You just stay there and drown."

He and the sack of beans became a paralyzing tragedy. It reminded him of the Old Man of the Sea who sat on Sindbad's neck. Again and again he was nearly seduced by the thought of abandoning the sack of beans in the brush and of sneaking around the ramp to the beach and catching a steamer for civilization.

Before the mile pack was ended if ever a man was a wreck he was. As the end of the pack came in sight he strained himself in desperation, gained the camp site and pitched forward on his face, the beans on his back. It did not kill him, but he lay for fifteen minutes before he could summon sufficient shreds of strength to release himself from the straps. Then he became

feebly sick and was so found by Robbie, who had similar troubles of his own.

"And I am twenty-seven years old and a man," he privately assured himself many times in the days that followed. There was need for it. At the end of a week, though he had succeeded in moving his 800 pounds forward a mile a day, he had lost fifteen pounds of his own weight. His face was lean and haggard. All resilience had gone out of his body and mind. He no longer walked, but plodded, and on the back trips, traveling light, his feet dragged almost as much as when he was loaded.

He had become a work animal. He fell asleep over his food, and his sleep was heavy and heavily save when he was aroused, screaming with agony, by the cramps in his legs. Every part of him ached. He tramped on raw blisters.

When they had moved the outfit across the foot logs at the mouth of the canyon they made a change in their plans. Word had come across the pass that at Lake Lindemann the last available trees for building boats were being cut. The two cousins, with tools, whipsaw, blankets and grub on their backs, went on, leaving Kit and his uncle to hustle along the outfit. John Bellew now shared the cooking with Kit, and both packed shoulder to shoulder. Time was flying, and on the peaks the first snow was falling. To be caught on the wrong side of the pass meant a delay of nearly a year.

The older man put his iron back under 100 pounds. Kit was shocked, but he gritted his teeth and fastened his own straps to 100 pounds. It hurt, but he had learned the knack, and his body, purged of all softness and fat, was beginning to harden up with lean and bitter muscle.

Also he observed and devised. He took note of the head straps worn by the Indians and manufactured one for himself, which he used in addition to the shoulder straps. It made things easier, so that he began the practice of piling any light, cumbersome piece of baggage on top. Thus he was soon able to bend along with 100 pounds in the straps, fifteen or twenty more lying loosely on top the pack and against his neck, an ax or a pair of oars in one hand and in the other the nested cooking pails of the camp.

But work as they would the toll increased. The trail grew more rugged; their packs grew heavier, and each day saw the snow line dropping down the mountains, while freight jumped to 60 cents. No word came from the cousins beyond, so they knew they must be at work chopping down the standing trees and whipsawing them into boat planks.

CHAPTER II.
The Making of a Man.

Unwashed, unwarmed, his clothing wet with sweat, he slept another night in the canvas.

In the early morning he spread a tarpaulin on the ice, loaded it with three-quarters of a ton and started to pull. Where the pitch of the glacier accelerated, his load likewise accelerated, overran him, scooped him in on top and ran away with him.

A hundred packers, bending under their loads, stopped to watch him. He yelled frantic warnings, and those in his path stumbled and staggered clear. Below, on the lower edge of the glacier, was pitched a small tent, which seemed leaping toward him, so rapidly did it grow larger. He left the beaten track where the packers' trail swerved to the left and struck a patch of fresh snow. This arose about him in frosty smoke, while it reduced his speed. He saw the tent the instant he struck it, carrying away the corner guys, bursting in the front flaps and fetching up inside, still on top of the tarpaulin and in the midst of his grub sacks.

The tent rocked drunkenly, and in the frosty vapor he found himself face to face with a startled young woman



"Did you see my smoke?" he queried cheerfully.

who was sitting up in her blankets—the very one who had called him a tenderfoot at Dyea.

"Did you see my smoke?" he queried cheerfully.

She regarded him with disapproval. "It was a mercy you did not overturn the stove," she said.

He followed her glance and saw a sheet iron stove and a coffeepot, attended by a young squaw. He sniffed the coffee and looked back to the girl.

"I've shed my shooting iron," he said.

Then she recognized him, and her eyes lighted. "I never thought you'd get this far," she informed him.

Again, and greedily, he snuffed the air. "As I live, coffee!" He turned and directly addressed her: "I'll give you my little finger—cut it off right now—I'll do anything; I'll be your slave for a year and a day or any other old time, if you'll give me a cup out of that pot."

And over the coffee he gave his name and learned hers, Joy Gastell. Also he learned that she was an old timer in the country. She had been born in a trading post on the Great Slave and as a child had crossed the Rockies with her father and come down to the Yukon. She was going in, she said, with her father, who had been delayed by business in Seattle.

In view of the fact that she was still in her blankets, he did not make it a long conversation, and, heroically declining a second cupful of coffee, he removed himself and his quarter of a ton of baggage from her tent. Further, he took several conclusions away with him—she had a fetching name and fetching eyes, could not be more than twenty or twenty-one or twenty-two, her father must be French, she had a will of her own, temperamental to burn and she had been educated elsewhere than on the frontier.

The last pack from Long lake to Lindemann was three miles, and the trail rose up over a thousand foot hogback, dropped down a scramble of slippery rocks and crossed a wide stretch of swamp. John Bellew remonstrated when he saw Kit rise with a hundred pounds in the straps and pick up a fifty pound sack of flour and place it on top of the pack against the back of his neck.

"Come on, you chunk of the hard," Kit retorted. "Kick in on your bear meat fodder and your own suit of underclothes."

But John Bellew shook his head. "I'm afraid I'm getting old, Christopher."

"Amvicular, I want to tell you something important. I was raised a Lord Fauntleroy, but I can outpack you, outwalk you, put you on your back or lick you with my fists right now."

John Bellew thrust out his hand. "Christopher, my boy, I believe you can do it. I believe you can do it with that pack on your back at the same time. You've made good, boy, though it's too unthinkable to believe."

Kit made the round trip of the last pack four times a day, which is to say that he daily covered twenty-four miles of mountain climbing, twelve miles of it under 150 pounds. He was never alated.

Continued on Page Four.