

## The Wisdom of the Trail

Sitka Charley, Indian Though  
He Was, Knew, and Failed Not  
in the Fight with Grim Death

By JACK LONDON

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ITKA CHARLEY had achieved the impossible. Other Indians might have known as much of the wisdom of the trail as did he; but he alone knew the white man's wisdom, the honor of the trail, and the law. But these things had not come to him in a day. The aboriginal mind is slow to generalize, and many facts, repeated often, are required to compass an understanding. Sitka Charley, from boyhood, had been thrown continually with white men, and as a man he had elected to cast his fortunes with them, expatriating himself, once and for all, from his own people. Even then, respecting, almost venerating their power, and pondering over it, he had yet to divine its secret essence—the honor and the law. And it was only by the cumulative evidence of years that he had finally come to understand. Being an alien, when he did know he knew it better than the white man himself; being an Indian, he had achieved the impossible.

And of these things had been bred a certain contempt for his own people—a contempt which he had made it a custom to conceal, but which now burst forth in a polyglot whirlwind of curses upon the heads of Kah-Chucte and Gowhee. They cringed before him like a brace of snarling wolf dogs, too cowardly to spring, too foolish to cover their fangs. They were not handsome creatures. Neither was Sitka Charley. All three were frightful looking. There was no flesh to their faces; their cheek bones were massed with hideous scars which had cracked and frozen alternately under the intense frost; while their eyes burned luridly with the light which is born of desperation and hunger. Men so situated, beyond the pale of the honor and the law, are not to be trusted. Sitka Charley knew this; and this was why he had forced them to abandon their rifles with the rest of the camp outfit ten days before. His rifle and Captain Eppingwell's were the only ones that remained.

"Come, get a fire started," he commanded, drawing out the precious match box with its attendant strips of dry birch bark.

The two Indians fell sullenly to the task of gathering dead branches and underwood. They were weak, and paused often, catching themselves, in the act of stooping, with giddy motions, or staggering to the center of operations with their knees shaking like castanets. After each trip they rested for a moment, as though sick and deadly weary. At times their eyes took on the patient stolidism of dumb suffering; and again the ego seemed almost bursting forth with its wild cry, "I, I, want to exist!"—the dominant note of the whole living universe.

A light breath of air blew from the south, nipping the exposed portions of their bodies and driving the frost, in needles of fire, through fur and flesh to the bones. So, when the fire had grown lusty and thawed a damp circle in the snow about it, Sitka Charley forced his reluctant comrades to lend a hand in pitching a fly. It was a primitive affair, merely a blanket, stretched parallel with the fire and to windward of it, at an angle of perhaps forty-five degrees. This shut out the chill wind, and threw the heat backward and down upon those who were to huddle in its shelter. Then a layer of green spruce boughs was spread, that their bodies might not come in contact with the snow. When this task was com-

pleted, Kah-Chucte and Gowhee proceeded to take care of their feet. Their ice-bound moccasins were sadly worn by much travel, and the sharp ice of the river jams had cut them to rags. Their Siwash socks were similarly conditioned, and when these had been thawed and removed, the dead-white tips of the toes, in the various stages of mortification, told their simple tale of the trail.

Leaving the two to the drying of their footgear, Sitka Charley turned back over the course he had come. He, too, had a mighty longing to sit by the fire and tend his complaining flesh, but the honor and the law forbade. He toiled painfully over the frozen field, each step a protest, every muscle in revolt. Several times, where the open water between the jams had recently crusted, he was forced to miserably accelerate his movements as the fragile footing swayed and threatened beneath him. In such places death was quick and easy; but it was not his desire to endure more.

His deepening anxiety vanished as two Indians dragged into view round a bend in the river. They staggered and panted like men under heavy burdens; yet the pack on their backs were a matter of but few pounds. He questioned them eagerly, and their replies seemed to relieve him. He hurried on. Next came two white men, supporting between them a woman. They also behaved as though drunken, and their limbs shook with weakness. But the woman leaned lightly upon them, choosing to carry herself forward with her own strength. At sight of her, a flash of joy cast its fleeting light across Sitka Charley's face. He cherished a very great regard for Mrs. Eppingwell. He had seen many white women, but this was the first to travel the trail with him. When Captain Eppingwell proposed the hazardous undertaking and made him an offer for his services, he had shaken his head gravely; for it was an unknown journey through the dismal vastnesses of the Northland, and he knew it to be of the kind that try to the uttermost the souls of men. But when he learned that the captain's wife was to accompany them, he had refused flatly to have anything further to do with it. Had it been a woman of his own race he would have harbored no objections; but these women of the Northland—no, no, they were too soft, too tender, for such enterprises.

Sitka Charley did not know this kind of woman. Five minutes before, he did not even dream of taking charge of the expedition; but when she came to him with her wonderful smile and her straight clean English, and talked to the point, without pleading or persuading, he had incontinently yielded. Had there been a softness and appeal to mercy in the eyes, a tremble to the voice, a taking advantage of sex, he would have stiffened to steel; instead her clear-searching eyes and clearing voice, her utter frankness and tacit assumption of equality, had robbed him of his reason. He felt, then, that this was a new breed of woman; and ere they had been trail mates for many days, he knew why the sons of such women mastered the land and sea, and why the sons of his own woman-kind could not prevail against them. Tender and soft! Day after day he watched her, muscle-weary, exhausted, indomitable, and the words beat in upon him in a perennial refrain. Tender and soft! He knew her feet had been born to easy paths and sunny lands, strangers to the moccasined pain of the

North, unlicked by the chill tips of the frost, and he watched and marveled at them twinkling ever through the weary day.

She had always a smile and a word of cheer, from which not even the meanest packer was excluded. As the way grew darker she seemed to stiffen and gather greater strength, and when Kah-Chucte and Gowhee, who had bragged that they knew every landmark of the way as a child did the skin bones of the tope, acknowledged that they knew not where they were, it was she who raised a forgiving voice amid the curses of the men. She had sung to them that night, till they felt the weariness fall from them and were ready to face the future with fresh hope. And when the food failed and each scant stint was measured jealously, she it was who rebelled against the machinations of her husband and Sitka Charley, and demanded and received a share neither greater nor less than that of the others.

Sitka Charley was proud to know this woman. A new richness, greater breadth, had come into his life with her presence. Hitherto he had been his own mentor, had turned to right or left at no man's beck; he had moulded himself according to his own dictates, nourished his manhood regardless of all save his own opinion. For the first time he had felt a call from without for the best that was in him.



Could Not Keep Up for Long.

Just a glance of appreciation from the clear-searching eyes, a word of thanks from the clear-ringing voice, just a slight winking of the lips in the wonderful smile, and he walked with the gods for hours to come. It was a new stimulant to his manhood; for the first time he thrilled with a conscious pride in his wisdom of the trail; and between the twain they ever lifted the sinking hearts of their comrades.

The faces of the two men and the woman brightened as they saw him, for after all he was the staff they leaned upon. But Sitka Charley, rigid as was his wont, concealing pain and pleasure impartially beneath an iron exterior, asked them the welfare of the rest, told the distance to the fire, and continued on the back trip. Next he met a single Indian, unburdened, limping, lips compressed, and eyes set with the pain of a foot in which the quick fought a losing battle with the dead. All possible care had been taken of him, but in the last extremity the weak and unfortunate must perish, and Sitka Charley deemed his days to be few. The man could not keep up for long, so he gave him rough cheering words. After that came two more Indians, to whom he had allotted the task of helping along Joe, the third white man of the party. They had deserted him. Sitka Charley saw at a glance the lurking spring in their bodies, and knew they had at last cast off his mastery. So he was not taken unawares when he ordered them back in quest of their abandoned charge, and saw the gleam of the hunting knives that they drew from the sheaths. A pitiful spectacle, three weak men lifting their puny strength in the face of the mighty vastness; but the two recoiled under the fierce rifle blows of the one, and returned like beaten dogs to the leash. Two hours later, with Joe reeling between them and Sitka Charley bringing up the rear, they came to the fire, where the remainder of the expedition crouched in the shelter of the fly.

"A few words, my comrades, before we sleep," Sitka Charley said, after they had devoured their slim rations of unleavened bread. He was speaking to the Indians, in their own tongue, having already given the import to the whites. "A few words, my comrades, for your own good, that ye may yet perchance live. I shall give you the law; on his own head be the death of him that breaks it. We have passed the Hills of Silence, and we now travel the head reaches of the Stuart. It may be one sleep, it may be several, it may be many sleeps, but in time we shall come among the men of the Yu-

kon, who have much grub. It were well that we look to the law. Today, Kah-Chucte and Gowhee, whom I commanded to break trail, forgot they were men, and like frightened children ran away. True, they forgot; so let us forget. But hereafter let them remember. If it should happen they do not." He touched his rifle carelessly, grimly. "Tomorrow they shall carry the flour and see that the white man Joe lies not down by the trail. The cupfuls of flour are counted; should so much as an ounce be wanting at nightfall—Do ye understand? Today there were others that forgot. Moose-Head and Three-Salmon left the white man Joe to lie in the snow. Let them forget no more. With the light of day shall they go forth and break trail. Ye have heard the law. Look well, lest ye break it."

Sitka Charley found it beyond him to keep the line close up. From Moose-Head and Three-Salmon, who broke trail in advance, to Kah-Chucte, Gowhee, and Joe, it straggled out over a mile. Each staggered, fell, or rested, as he saw fit. The line of march was a progression through a chain of irregular halts. Each drew upon the last remnant of his strength and stumbled onward till it was expended, but in some miraculous way there was always another last remnant. Each time a man fell, it was with the firm belief that he would rise no more; yet he did rise, and again, and again. The flesh yielded, the will conquered; but each triumph was a tragedy. The Indian with the frozen foot, no longer erect, crawled forward on hand and knee. He rarely rested, for he knew the penalty exacted by the frost. Even Mrs. Eppingwell's lips were at last set in a stony smile, and her eyes, seeing, saw not. Often, she stopped, pressing a mittened hand to her heart, gasping and dizzy.

Joe, the white man, had passed beyond the stage of suffering. He no longer begged to be let alone, prayed to die; but was soothed and content under the anodyne of delirium. Kah-Chucte and Gowhee dragged him on roughly, venting upon him many a savage glance or blow. To them it was the acme of injustice. Their hearts were bitter with hate, heavy with fear. Why should they cumber their strength with his weakness? To do so, meant death; not to do so—and they remembered the law of Sitka Charley, and the rifle.

Joe fell with greater frequency as the daylight waned, and so hard was he to raise that they dropped farther and farther behind. Sometimes all three pitched into the snow, so weak had the Indians become. Yet on their backs was life, and strength, and warmth. Within the flour sacks were all the potentialities of existence. They could not but think of this, and it was not strange, that which came to pass. They had fallen by the side of a great timber jam where a thousand cords of firewood waited the match. Near by was an air hole through the ice. Kah-Chucte looked on the wood and the water, as did Gowhee; then they looked on each other. Never a word was spoken. Gowhee struck a fire; Kah-Chucte filled a tin cup with water and heated it; Joe babbled of things in another land, in a tongue they did not understand. They mixed flour with the warm water till it was a thin paste, and of this they drank many cupfuls. They did not offer any to Joe; but he did not mind. He did not mind anything, not even his moccasins, which scorched and smoked among the coals.

A crystal mist of snow fell about them, softly, caressingly, wrapping them in clinging robes of white. And their feet would have yet trod many trails had not destiny brushed the clouds aside and cleared the air. Nay, ten minutes' delay would have been salvation. Sitka Charley, looking back, saw the pillared smoke of their fire, and guessed. And he looked ahead at those who were faithful, and at Mrs. Eppingwell.

"So my good comrades, ye have again forgotten that you were men? Good. Very good. There will be fewer bellies to feed."

Sitka Charley retied the flour as he spoke, strapping the pack to the one on his own back. He kicked Joe till the pain broke through the poor devil's

bliss and brought him doddering to his feet. Then he showed him out upon the trail and started him on his way. The two Indians attempted to slip off. "Hold, Gowhee! And thou, too, Kah-Chucte! Hath the flour given such strength to thy legs that they may outrun the swift-winged lead? Think not to cheat the law. Be men for the last time, and be content that ye die full-stomached. Come, step up, back to the timber, shoulder to shoulder. Come!"

The two men obeyed, quietly, without fear; for it is the future which presses upon the man, not the present. "Thou, Gowhee, hast a wife and children and a deer-skin lodge in the Chippewyan. What is thy will in the matter?"

"Give thou her of the goods which are mine by the word of the captain—the blankets, the beads, the tobacco, the box which makes strange sounds after the manner of the white man. Say that I did die on the trail, but say not how."

"And thou, Kah-Chucte, who hast no wife nor child?"

"Mine is a sister, the wife of the Factor at Koshim. He beats her, and she is not happy. Give thou her the goods which are mine by the contract, and tell her it were well she go back to her own people. Shouldst thou meet the man, and be so minded, it were a good deed that he should die. He beats her, and she is afraid."

"Are ye content to die by the law?"

"We are."

"Then good-by, my good comrades. May ye sit by the well-filled pot, in warm lodges, ere the day is done."

As he spoke, he raised his rifle, and many echoes broke the silence. Hardly had they died away, when other rifles spoke in the distance. Sitka Charley started. There had been more than one shot, yet there was but one other rifle in the party. He gave a fleeting glance at the men who lay so quietly, smiled viciously at the wisdom of the trail, and hurried on to meet the men of the Yukon.

MAKE APPEAL TO APPETITE

Food Materials Which Are of Little Real Value Have Distinct Place on Table.

Not all food materials are said to be valuable in proportion to the appeal which they make to the appetite. For example, the flavor substances in foods which stimulate the olfactory and gustatory nerves, and thus give rise to appetite, are not ordinarily the substances on which the body depends for its fuel, nor for the great bulk of its building materials. The latter materials—proteins, fats or oils and carbohydrates—when chemically pure, have little or no taste or smell. The preference for thin and crisp rather than greasy bacon is given as an illustration.

In a recent experiment it was found that of the 129 calories which represent the fuel value of a very thin 20 gm. (three-fourths ounce) slice, only nine calories remained when the slice was sent to the table, 120 calories being represented by the fat which "fried out" into the pan. In this case a considerable amount of flavor body also goes into the fat, yet most persons would not consider eating it unless it has been skillfully blended with large quantities of other foods; whereas the scrap of skeleton tissue which has lost 93 per cent of its food value is regarded as a dainty morsel.

He Was No Post.

"You have a pretty good business, even in December."

"Yes," said the proprietor of the ocean hotel.

"They hear the sea a-calling, I presume."

"I dunno about that. We keep sending out booklets right along."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Suffers in Silence.

The average millionaire knows how unpopular it is to be rich, but he goes right along and endures the painful responsibilities of wealth, suffering the scorn and calumny of a cruel world in silence, and awaits his vindication beyond the grave.—Houston Post.



Smiled Viciously at the Wisdom of the Trail.

## BOY SCOUTS

(Conducted by National Council of the Boy Scouts of America.)

### SCOUTS IN FOOD CAMPAIGN

Among the workers who have been doing excellent work in arousing the people to the necessity for conserving food and signing the pledge card, the boy scouts deserve to be given much credit.

Some of these scouts have had very interesting experiences. One Wilmington woman came to the door with a baby in her arms. Had she signed the card? No, she hadn't and didn't intend to either. She told the scout to move on and not bother her.

But this scout had much diplomacy in his makeup. While the woman was berating him, he began petting the child. He remarked what a fine-looking girl it was.

Told indignantly by the mother that it wasn't a girl, but a boy, he tactfully remarked that if that was the case, he bet the babe when it reached manhood would help Uncle Sam in every way that he could.

The children across the seas were in such sorry need of food, the scout remarked, it was a shame that they did not have some of the stuff that people in Wilmington threw away in garbage pails.

That made the woman ask some questions of the scout. When he had answered them, about the need for food being conserved, she asked for a pledge card and signed it.

### SCOUT HANDLES POLICE DOGS.



Police Department Bloodhounds Placed in Charge of This Scout While Official Was Ill.

### SCOTCH SCOUTS AID NAVY.

Boy scouts are acting as dispatch bearers in the north of Scotland, and without any officers watching them, but working simply under their own boy leaders, they are doing their patriotic duty, said Lieut. Gen. Baden-Powell recently.

"Every night without fail," he continued, "these boys have carried dispatches along that wild coast down to the admiral at the base, and they do about six miles every night. I saw the one hundred and nineteenth message go down. It is wonderful how these boys face difficulty and danger simply from a sense of duty."

### SCOUTS ARE NIGHT POLICE.

A large number of burglaries having occurred at Pecan Gap, Tex., and there being a large amount of cotton stored there, the railroad company and the business men employed a local troop of boy scouts to police the town.

Cots were placed in the depot for the scouts to sleep upon while not on duty. Four scouts are on duty every night, and there is not an hour that passes without the streets being patrolled.

Pecan Gap scouts occupy a unique position and are rendering effective service.

### BOY SCOUTS FIND BONES.

Boy scouts, digging into a large mound near Park River, N. D., unearthed the skulls and the skeletons of three Indians, who must have been buried there a hundred years or more ago, as the mound was there when the earliest pioneers came to that section of the state. It is believed that further excavating will yield some interesting relics of aboriginal Indian days.

### GOOD TURNS BY SCOUTS.

Boy scouts in every part of Indiana have been called upon by Commander J. A. Bell of the Indianapolis Naval Recruiting station to distribute handbills urging men to join the navy.

The Spokane Scoutmasters' association has pledged that their scouts will sell one War Savings certificate each per month.

Scouts of Troop No. 1, Assumption, Ill., rendered efficient service as telephone operators during Chautauqua week.

### Mistletoe.

The old custom of hanging the mistletoe from the ceiling is said to have its origin in the idea that since the plant did not have its roots in the ground no part of it should ever be permitted to touch the earth. Among the Saxons the fact that mistletoe was suspended from the roof of a dwelling intimated to the wayfarer that the hospitality of the house was at his disposal, and beneath its branches friend and stranger, vassal and lord, gathered together in comradeship and good cheer.

## DOCTOR URGED AN OPERATION

Instead I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Was Cured.

Baltimore, Md.—"Nearly four years I suffered from organic troubles, nervousness and headaches and every month would have to stay in bed most of the time. Treatments would relieve me for a time but my doctor was always urging me to have an operation. My sister asked me to try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound before consenting to an operation. I took five bottles of it and it has completely cured me and my work is a pleasure. I tell all my friends who have any trouble of this kind what Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done for me."—NELLIE B. BRITTINGHAM, 609 Calverton Rd., Baltimore, Md.

It is only natural for any woman to dread the thought of an operation. So many women have been restored to health by this famous remedy, Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, after an operation has been advised that it will pay any woman who suffers from such ailments to consider trying it before submitting to such a trying ordeal.

**DROPSY TREATMENT.** Quick relief. Swollen feet, ankles, and short breath. Never leave bed. No need for drops. Try it. Trial treatment sent FREE, by mail. Write to DR. THOMAS L. CROWE, 200 N. 1st St., St. Paul, Minn.

W. N. U., LITTLE ROCK, NO. 6-1918.

Best Way.  
"How objects do pass from eye to eye." "Yes; I suppose they do it on the bridge of the nose."

## NOW GETS NOURISHMENT FROM FOOD

Arkansas Man States That Orgatone Caused His Appetite to Return and Also Relieved Liver Troubles.

Among those to indorse Orgatone recently is C. T. Kaser, a Little Rock contractor and builder, who found speedy relief from stomach and liver troubles by the use of the triumph preparation. Mr. Kaser has this to say:

"I was completely run down and very nervous, could not sleep for any length of time at night. I had no appetite and what I did eat did not seem to do me any good. I had been a sufferer for some years with liver troubles which I think was the cause of me feeling so bad."

"I had several friends recommend Orgatone to me and I decided to try a bottle. I was astonished at the results I obtained from the first bottle, and before I had finished taking the second my appetite grew better and my nervous condition was greatly improved. My sleep was more restful at night, and I was ready for my meals and enjoyed them, and they nourished me as they should."

There is an Orgatone dealer in your town; if not the preparation will be sent prepaid to any address upon receipt of \$1 per bottle or six bottles for \$5 by the distributors, Harry Kessinger Co., Joplin, Mo.—Adv.

The Idea.  
First Magistrate—"I am afraid of these laws with teeth." Second Ditto—"I'm not, if they're gold filled."

Watch Your Skin Improve.  
On rising and retiring gently smear the face with Cuticura Ointment. Wash off Ointment in five minutes with Cuticura Soap and hot water. For free sample address "Cuticura, Dept. X, Boston." At druggists and by mail. Soap 25, Ointment 25 and 50.—Adv.

The best way to ask a girl to marry you is to first obtain her full cooperation in the plan. The rest is easy.

Better make your calls short than be a yawn maker.

## ALMOST FRANTIC

Had Kidney Trouble From Childhood and Was Discouraged. Doan's, However, Brought Health and Strength.

Mrs. C. Anderson, 4104 W. 22nd St., Chicago, Ill., says: "I had kidney trouble from childhood and three years ago a severe spell developed. If I stooped, a terrible pain took me in the small of my back, and for several minutes I couldn't straighten. Often at night the pain in my back was so bad I had to prop myself up with a pillow. It seemed as if my back would break. Watery sacs formed under my eyes and my feet were so swollen I had to wear slippers. Sudden dizzy spells came on and pains in my head drove me almost frantic."

"I felt tired and weak and had hardly enough ambition to move. Nothing seemed to help me and I was discouraged until I commenced taking Doan's Kidney Pills. They cured me completely and my health has been of the best ever since. Doan's surely deserves my endorsement." Sworn to before me, FRANK H. POCH, Notary Public.

Get Doan's at Any Store, or a Box of Doan's Kidney Pills. DOAN'S KIDNEY PILLS. FOSTER-MILBURN CO., BUFFALO, N. Y.

## FOR COUGHS AND COLDS

—Take a prompt and effective remedy—one that acts quickly and contains no opiates. You can get such a remedy by asking for

PISO'S



They Cringed Before Him.