

# THE SCARLET PLAGUE

JACK LONDON

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SYNOPSIS.

In a California valley an old man, one of the few survivors of a world-wide plague that has destroyed civilization, tells the story of the Scarlet Plague to his grandsons.

CHAPTER 1—Continued.

The boys were overwhelmed with delight at sight of the tears of senile disappointment that dripped down the old man's cheeks. Then, unnoticed, Hoo-Hoo replaced the empty shell with a fresh cooked crab. Already dismembered from the cracked legs the white meat sent forth a small cloud of savory steam. This attracted the old man's nostrils, and he looked down in amazement. The change of his mood to one of joy was immediate. He sniffed and muttered and mumbled, making almost a croon of delight, as he began to eat. Of this the boys took little notice, for it was an accustomed spectacle. Nor did they notice his occasional exclamations and utterances of phrases which meant nothing to them, as, for instance, when he smacked his lips and champed his gums while muttering: "Mayonnaise! Just think—mayonnaise! And it's sixty years since the last was ever made! Two generations and never a smell of it! Why, in those days it was served in every restaurant with crab."

When he could eat no more, the old man sighed, wiped his hands on his naked legs, and gazed out over the sea. With the content of a full stomach, he waxed reminiscent.

"To think of it! I've seen this beach alive with men, women and children on a pleasant Sunday. And there weren't any bears to eat them up, either. And right up there on the cliff was a big restaurant where you could get anything you wanted to eat. Four million people lived in San Francisco then. And now, in the whole city and county there aren't forty all told. And out there on the sea were ships and ships always to be seen, going in for the Golden Gate or coming out. And airships in the air—dirigibles and flying machines. They could travel two hundred miles an hour. Mail contracts with the New York and San Francisco Limited demanded that for the minimum. There was a chap, a Frenchman, I forget his name, who succeeded in making three hundred; but the thing was too risky for conservative persons. But he was on the right clue, and he would have managed it if it hadn't been for the great plague. When I was a boy there were men who remembered the coming of the first aeroplanes, and now I have lived to see the last of them, and that sixty years ago."

"But there weren't many crabs in those days," the old man wandered on. "They were fished out, and they were great delicacies. The open season was only a month long, too. And now crabs are accessible the whole year around. Think of it—catching all the crabs you want, any time you want, in the surf of the Cliff house beach!"

A sudden commotion among the goats brought the boys to their feet. The dogs about the fire rushed to join their snarling fellow who guarded the goats, while the goats themselves stamped in the direction of their human protectors. A half dozen forms, lean and gray, glided about on the sand hillocks or faced the bristling dogs. Edwin arched an arrow that fell short. But Hare-Lip, with a sling, such as David carried into battle against Goliath, hurled a stone through the air that whistled from the speed of its flight. It fell squarely among the wolves and caused them to slink away toward the dark depths of the eucalyptus forest.

The boys laughed and lay down again in the sand, while Granser sighed ponderously. He had eaten too much, and with hands clasped on his paunch, the fingers interlaced, he resumed his manderings.

"The fleeting systems lapse like foam," he mumbled what was evidently a quotation. "That's it—foam, and fleeting. All man's toil upon the planet was just so much foam. He domesticated the serviceable animals, destroyed the hostile ones, and cleared the land of its wild vegetation. And then he passed, the flood of primordial life rolled back again, sweeping his handwork away—the weeds and the forest inundated his fields, the beasts of prey swept over his flocks, and now there are wolves on the Cliff house beach." He was appalled by the thought. "Where four million people disported themselves, the wild wolves roam today, and the savage progeny of our loins, with prehistoric weapons, defend themselves against the fanged despotters. Think of it! And all because of the Scarlet Death—"

The adjective had caught Hare-Lip's ear. "He's always saying that," he said to Edwin. "What is scarlet?"

"The scarlet of the apples can shake me like the cry of bugles going by," the old man quoted.

"It's red," Edwin answered the question. "And you don't know it because you come from the Chauffeur tribe. They never did know nothing,

none of them. Scarlet is red—I know that."

"Red is red, ain't it?" Hare-Lip grumbled. "Then what's the good of gettin' cocky and calling it scarlet?"

"Red is not the right word," was the reply. "The plague was scarlet. The whole face and body turned scarlet in an hour's time. Don't I know? Didn't I see enough of it? And I am telling you it was scarlet because—well, because it was scarlet. There is no other word for it."

"Red is good enough for me," Hare-Lip muttered obstinately. "My dad calls red red, and he ought to know. He says everybody died of the Red Death."

"Your dad is a common fellow, descended from a common fellow," Granser retorted heatedly. "Don't I know the beginnings of the Chauffeurs? Your granddads were a chauffeur, a servant, and without education. He worked for other persons. But your grandmother was of good stock, only the children did not take after her. Don't I remember when I first met them, catching fish at Lake Temescal?"

"What is education?" Edwin asked.

"Calling red scarlet," Hare-Lip sneered, then returned to the attack on Granser. "My dad told me, an' he got it from his dad afore he croaked, that your wife was a Santa Rosan, an' that she was sure no account. He said she was a hash-slinger before the Red Death, though I don't know what a hash-slinger is. You can tell me, Edwin."

But Edwin shook his head in token of ignorance.

"It is true, she was a waitress," Granser acknowledged. "But she was a good woman, and your mother was her daughter. Women were very scarce in the days after the Plague. She was the only wife I could find, even if she was a hash-slinger, as your father calls it. But it is not nice to talk about our progenitors that way."

"Dad says that the wife of the first chauffeur was a lady—"

"What's a lady?" Hoo-Hoo demanded.

"A lady's a chauffeur squaw," was the quick reply of Hare-Lip.

"The first chauffeur was Bill, a common fellow, as I said before," the old man expounded; "but his wife was a lady, a great lady. Before the



Hare-Lip With a Sling Hurling a Stone Through the Air That Whistled From the Speed of Its Flight.

Scarlet Death she was the wife of Van Warden. He was president of the board of industrial magnates, and was one of the dozen men who ruled America. He was worth one billion, eight hundred millions of dollars—coins like you have there in your pouch, Edwin. And then came the Scarlet Death, and his wife became the wife of Bill, the first chauffeur. He used to beat her, too. I have seen it myself."

Hoo-Hoo, lying on his stomach and idly digging his toes in the sand, cried out and investigated, first, his toenail, and next, the small hole he had dug. The other two boys joined him, excavating the sand rapidly with their hands till there lay three skeletons exposed. Two were adults, the third being that of a part-grown child.

The old man nudged along on the ground and peered at the find.

"Plague victims," he announced. "That's the way they died everywhere in the last days. This must have been a family, running away from the contagion and perishing here on the Cliff house beach. They—what are you doing, Edwin?"

This question was asked in sudden dismay, as Edwin, using the back of his hunting knife, began to knock out the teeth from the jaws of one of the skulls.

"Going to string 'em," was the response.

The three boys were now hard at it; and quite a knocking and hammering arose, in which Granser habbled on unnoticed.

"You are true savages. Already has begun the custom of wearing human teeth. In another generation you will be perforating your noses and ears and wearing ornaments of bone and shell. I know. The human race is doomed to sink back—farther and farther into the primitive night ere again it begins its bloody climb upward to civilization. When we increase and feel the lack of room, we shall proceed to kill one another. And then I suppose, you will wear human scalp locks at your waist, as well—as you, Edwin, who are the gentlest of my grandsons, have already begun with that vile pigtail. Throw it away, Edwin, boy; throw it away."

"What a gabble the old geezer makes," Hare-Lip remarked, when the teeth all extracted, they began an attempt at equal division.

They were very quick and abrupt in their actions, and their speech, in moments of hot discussion over the allotment of the choicer teeth, was truly a gabble. They spoke in monosyllables and short, jerky sentences that were more a gibberish than a language. And yet, through it ran hints of grammatical construction, and appeared vestiges of the conjugation of some superior culture. Even the speech of Granser was so corrupt that were it put down literally it would be almost so much nonsense to the reader. This, however, was when he talked with the boys. When he got into the full swing of babbling to himself, it slowly purged itself into pure English. The sentence grew longer and were enunciated with a rhythm and ease that were reminiscent of the lecture platform.

"Tell us about the Red Death, Granser," Hare-Lip demanded, when the teeth affair had been satisfactorily concluded.

"The Scarlet Death," Edwin corrected.

"An' don't work all that funny lingo on us," Hare-Lip went on. "Talk sensible, Granser, like a Santa Rosan ought to talk. Other Santa Rosans don't talk like you."

The old man showed pleasure in being thus called upon. He cleared his throat and began:

"Twenty or thirty years ago my story was in great demand. But in these days nobody seems interested—"

"There you go!" Hare-Lip cried hotly. "Cut out the funny stuff and talk sensible. What's interested? You talk like a baby that don't know how."

"Let him alone," Edwin urged, "or he'll get mad and won't talk at all. Skip the funny places. We'll catch on to some of what he tells us."

"Let her go, Granser," Hoo-Hoo encouraged; for the old man was already maundering about the disrespect for elders and the reversion to cruelty of all humans that fell from high culture to primitive conditions.

CHAPTER II.

The Beginning of the End.

The tale began.

"There were very many people in the world in those days. San Francisco alone held four millions—"

"What is millions?" Edwin interrupted.

Granser looked at him kindly.

"I know you cannot count beyond ten, so I will tell you. Hold up your two hands. On both of them you have altogether ten fingers and thumbs. Very well. I now take this grain of sand—you hold it, Hoo-Hoo." He dropped the grain of sand into the lad's palm and went on: "Now that grain of sand stands for the ten fingers of Edwin. I add another grain. That's ten more fingers. And I add another, another, and another, until I have added as many grains as Edwin has fingers and thumbs. That makes what I call one hundred. Remember that word—one hundred. Now I put this pebble in Hare-Lip's hand. It stands for ten grains of sand, of ten tens of fingers, or one hundred fingers. I put this pebble in Hare-Lip's hand. It stands for ten grains. Take a mussel shell, and it stands for ten pebbles, or one hundred grains of sand, or one thousand fingers."

And so on, laboriously, and with much reiteration, he strove to build up in their minds a crude conception of numbers. As the quantities increased, he had the boys holding different magnitudes in each of their hands. For still higher sums, he laid the symbols on the log of driftwood; and for symbols he was hard put, being compelled to use the teeth from the skull for millions, and the crab shells for billions. It was here that he stopped, for the boys were showing signs of becoming tired.

"There were four million people in San Francisco—four teeth."

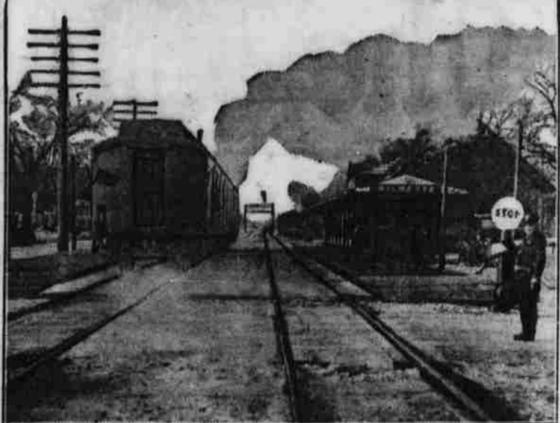
The boys' eyes ranged along from the teeth and from hand to hand, down through the pebbles and sand grains to Edwin's fingers. And back again they ranged along the ascending series in the effort to grasp such inconceivable numbers.

That was a lot of folks, Granser, Edwin at last hazarded.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A romance begins with a man trying to capture a woman. It ends with a woman trying to recapture a man.

ON GUARD AT THE CROSSING



Snapshot Taken of Flagman on the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad.

NEW SIGNAL SYSTEM WHEN LINES ARE PROSPEROUS

Means a Time of General Welfare for Practically All Sections of the Community.

For years I have tried to impress upon my readers the fact that the prosperity of the railroads meant the prosperity of the whole country. Jasper writes in Leslie's. I was struck by the extraordinary statement made, some time ago, by a leading railroad official to the effect that if the railroads were prosperous they would spend a billion dollars a year for five continuous years because of the need of replacements, repairs and extensions.

See how correct this statement really is. The railroads suddenly have found themselves crowded with business. The sharp cut in expenses they were compelled to make while earnings were declining has placed them where every penny counts and, as a result, their increased business is reflected in increased profits. Now what are they doing with the first money they earn? They are putting it into equipment.

Since the first of the new year the railroads have ordered 12,300 freight cars, against only 2,600 during January of 1915, and they are now negotiating for 18,000 more cars. The Pullman company has just taken back 1,000 of its former employees, laid off because of the lack of orders. This brings the Pullman employees up again to more than 9,000.

All over this country the railroads that are making money are spending it among their million employees, and these employees are spending the wages in the stores and the stores are ordering goods from the factories and the factories are buying supplies of raw products from the wool growers and cotton raisers, so that everybody is benefited when the railroads are prosperous.

SAFETY ON BRITISH LINES

Companies Spend Much Money for the Protection of Their Passengers and Employees.

With special trains running casually to distant stations outside the sphere of the men's acquaintance, or on to some portion of another company's system, it is a custom to provide a second driver belonging to the vicinity to act as conductor, and to take charge for the time being. This method is also followed—until the trainmen become capable of going alone—when one company obtains regular running powers over a section of line belonging to a neighboring one. In cases of the latter kind considerable expense is incurred, as a number of men have necessarily to be tutored.

At a depot the ordinary train workings are arranged in classes as "express passenger," "slow passenger," "express goods," and so on, and the drivers and their mates are apportioned to them according to their service and qualifications. The men of each grade form what is termed a "link," and work round in succession on the different weekly turns of their class.

During their careers some of the best of the men become conversant with considerable lengths of the line and a vast number of signals, and, on this account alone, are valuable assets to their employers.

Drivers are enjoined to run with judgment and care, and are particularly cautioned to do so when traveling down steep gradients or through busy junctions, and that this is observed in an unparalleled degree the universally acknowledged fact that our railways still offer the safest medium of travel, it must in justice be allowed, amply testifies.—London Tit Bits.

Large Locomotive Order.

The Chicago & North-Western railroad is to spend \$1,500,000 for motive power to be delivered by September 1. It has sent out inquiries for 25 freight Mikados, 12 passenger, and 25 switch and transfer engines.

The Omaha asks bids for ten Mikado freight and two passenger engines. It also has 31,000 tons of rails to be delivered by April 1, for the North-Western, and has 10,000 tons for the Omaha ordered last fall.

Extend Spanish Lines.

A great number of short railways are in the course of construction in Spain. These will act as feeders to the main lines.

HIGH PRICES—GOOD CROPS

And Good Demand for All Farm Products.

It is no new experience for settlers located in a fertile country such as Western Canada, where lands may be bought at very reasonable prices, to harvest a crop that in one season pays the entire cost of their farm. Undoubtedly this was the experience of many farmers during 1915, but one instance may be quoted. A settler who came to Canada from the United States some years ago decided to add to his holdings by buying an adjoining quarter section near his home at Warner, at \$20.00 an acre, with terms spread over a period of years. He got the land into a good state of cultivation and last spring put the whole quarter section in wheat. When the crop was threshed he found that it only took half the wheat on the farm to pay the whole purchase price of it; in short a single year's crop paid the cost of the land, paid all the expenses of operation and left him a handsome surplus as profit. This settler had some adjoining land, and his whole wheat crop for the season amounted to over 18,000 bushels. He is now planning to obtain some sheep and invest his profits in live stock which will assure him a good living irrespective of what the season may happen to be.

Canada's financial position is excellent. All speculation has been eliminated, and trading is done on a cash basis, with restricted credit. Detailed figures of Canada's trade for twelve months ending October 31 show how the war is forcing Canadian trade into new channels. One of the most extraordinary changes is in commerce with the United States. A couple of years ago Canada imported from the United States two or three hundred million dollars' worth of goods more than she exported. The balance of trade was all with the United States. The balance is rapidly disappearing, and the present outlook is that by the end of this year Canada will have exported to the United States more than she has imported.

The figures for the past four years are illuminating. They are as follows:

	Exports.	Imports.
1912	\$145,721,650	\$412,657,023
1913	179,050,796	442,341,840
1914	213,493,406	421,074,528
1915	314,118,774	346,569,924

Four years ago, in 1912, the balance of trade in favor of the United States was no less than two hundred and sixty-seven millions, and this year, the balance is reduced to only thirty-two millions. The figures are extraordinary and reflect the changed and new conditions in Canada. It looks as if for the first time in nearly half a century this year Canada will sell more to the United States than she will buy from the Americans.—Advertisement.

Know the Drama, Too.

Father, in the hall, has been standing for an hour while Millicent and Harold bid each other good night in the doorway.

"Parting," quoth Harold, "is such sweet sorrow that I could say good-night till—"

At this speech father gets a Shakespearean inspiration of his own and tramps down the stairs.

"Seems to me," he asserted, "there is too much adieu about nothing here."—Philadelphia Ledger.

IMPORTANT THAT PUBLIC SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GREAT KIDNEY REMEDY

The testimonial I am to give you comes unsolicited. I have been suffering from lumbago for ten years and at times was unable to stand erect. A Mr. Dean of this city, saw me in my condition (bent over) and inquired the cause. I told him that I had the lumbago. He replied, "If you get what I tell you to, you need not have it." I said I would take anything for ease. He said, "You get two bottles of Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root and take it, and if it does not fix you O. K. I will pay for the medicine myself." I did so and am a well man. For five months I have been as well as could be. Before I took your Swamp-Root was in constant pain day and night. This may look like advertising, but it seems to me most important that the public should be made familiar with this treatment as it is the only one I know which is an absolute cure. I owe a great deal to Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, and am anxious that others situated as I was should know and take advantage of it. Hoping that this testimonial may be of benefit to some one, I am,

J. A. HOWLAND,  
1734 Humboldt St.,  
Denver, Colo.

State of Colorado  
City and County of Denver } ss.  
Personally appeared before me, a Notary Public in and for the city and county of the State of Colorado, J. A. Howland, known to me as the person whose name is subscribed to the above statement and upon his oath declares that it is a true and correct statement.

DANIEL H. DRAPEL,  
Notary Public.

Prove What Swamp-Root Will Do For You. Send ten cents to Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y., for a sample size bottle. It will convince anyone. You will also receive a booklet of valuable information, telling about the kidneys and bladder. When writing, be sure and mention this paper. Regular fifty-cent and one-dollar size bottles for sale at all drug stores.—Adv.

When there is a famine in the matrimonial field at home a girl goes to some other town to study music or teach school.