The March of the White Guard

by Gilbert Parker, 1862-1932

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Chapter I

"Ask Mr. Hume to come here for a moment, Gosse," said Field, the chief factor, as he turned from the frosty window of his office at Fort Providence, one of the Hudson's Bay Company's posts. The servant, or more properly, Orderly-Sergeant Gosse, late of the Scots Guards, departed on his errand, glancing curiously at his master's face as he did so. The chief factor, as he turned round, unclasped his hands from behind him, took a few steps forward, then standing still in the centre of the room, read carefully through a letter which he had held in the fingers of his right hand for the last ten minutes as he scanned the wastes of snow stretching away beyond Great Slave Lake to the arctic circle. He meditated a moment, went back to the window, looked out again, shook his head negatively, and with a sigh, walked over to the huge fireplace. He stood thoughtfully considering the floor until the door opened and sub-factor Jaspar Hume entered.

The factor looked up and said: "Hume, I've something here that's been worrying me a bit. This letter came in the monthly batch this morning. It is from a woman. The company sends another commending the cause of the woman and urging us to do all that is possible to meet her wishes. It seems that her husband is a civil engineer of considerable fame. He had a commission to explore the Coppermine region and a portion of the Barren Grounds. He was to be gone six months. He has been gone a year. He left Fort Good Hope, skirted Great Bear Lake, and reached the Coppermine River. Then he sent back all of the Indians who accompanied him but two, they bearing the message that he would make the Great Fish River and come down by Great Slave Lake to Fort Providence. That was nine months ago. He has not come here, nor to any other of the forts, so far as is known, nor has any word been received from him. His wife, backed by the H.B.C., urges that a relief party be sent to look for him. They and she forget that this is the arctic region, and that the task is a well-nigh hopeless one. He ought to have been here six months ago. Now how can we do anything? Our fort is small, and there is always danger of trouble with the Indians. We can't force men to join a relief party like this, and who will volunteer? Who would lead such a party and who will make up the party to be led?"

The brown face of Jaspar Hume was not mobile. It changed in expression but seldom; it preserved a steady and satisfying character of intelligence and force. The eyes, however, were of an inquiring, debating kind, that moved from one thing to another as if to get a sense of balance before opinion or judgment was expressed. The face had remained impassive, but the eyes had kindled a little as the factor talked. To the factor's despairing question there was not an immediate reply. The eyes were debating. But they suddenly steadied and Jaspar Hume said sententiously: "A relief party should go."

"Yes, yes, but who is to lead them?"

Again the eyes debated.

"Read her letter," said the factor, handing it over. Jaspar Hume took it and mechanically scanned it. The factor had moved towards the table for his pipe or he would have seen the other start, and his nostrils slightly quiver, as his eyes grew conscious of what they were seeing. Turning quickly, Hume walked towards the

window as though for more light, and with his back to the factor he read the letter. Then he turned and said: “I think this thing should be done.”

The factor shrugged his shoulders slightly. “Well, as to that, I think so too, but thinking and doing are two different things, Hume.”

“Will you leave the matter in my hands until the morning?”

“Yes, of course, and glad to do so. You are the only man who can arrange the affair, if it is to be done at all. But I tell you, as you know, that everything will depend upon a leader, even if you secure the men… So you had better keep the letter for to-night. It may help you to get the men together. A woman’s handwriting will do more than a man’s word any time.”

Jaspar Hume’s eyes had been looking at the factor, but they were studying something else. His face seemed not quite so fresh as it was a few minutes before.

“I will see you at ten o’clock to-morrow morning, Mr. Field,” he said quietly. “Will you let Gosse come to me in an hour?”

“Certainly. Good-night.”

Jaspar Hume let himself out. He walked across a small square to a log house and opened a door which creaked and shrieked with the frost. A dog sprang upon him as he did so, and rubbed its head against his breast. He touched the head as if it had been that of a child, and said: “Lie down, Bouche.”

It did so, but it watched him as he doffed his dogskin cap and buffalo coat. He looked round the room slowly once as though he wished to fix it clearly and deeply in his mind. Then he sat down and held near the firelight the letter the factor had given him. His features grew stern and set as he read it. Once he paused in the reading and looked into the fire, drawing his breath sharply between his teeth. Then he read it to the end without a sign. A pause, and he said aloud: “So this is how the lines meet again, Varre Lepage!” He read the last sentence of the letter aloud:

> In the hope that you may soon give me good news of my husband,
> I am, with all respect,
> Faithfully yours,
> ROSE LEPAGE.

Again he repeated: “With all respect, faithfully yours, Rose Lepage.”

The dog Bouche looked up. Perhaps it detected something unusual in the voice. It rose, came over, and laid its head on its master’s knee. Hume’s hand fell gently on the head, and he said to the fire: “Ah, Rose Lepage, you can write to Factor Field what you dare not write to your husband if you knew. You might say to him then, ‘With all love,’ but not ‘With all respect.’”

He folded the letter and put it in his pocket. Then he took the dog’s head between his hands and said: “Listen, Bouche, and I will tell you a story.” The dog blinked, and pushed its nose against his arm.

“Ten years ago two young men who had studied and graduated together at the same college were struggling together in their profession as civil engineers. One was Clive Lepage and the other was Jaspar Hume. The one was brilliant and persuasive, the other, persistent and studious. Lepage could have succeeded in any profession; Hume had only heart and mind for one.

"Only for one, Bouche, you understand. He lived in it, he loved it, he saw great things to be achieved in it. He had got an idea. He worked at it night and day, he thought it out, he developed it, he perfected it, he was ready to give it to the world. But he was seized with illness, became blind, and was ordered to a warm climate for a year. He left his idea, his invention, behind him—his complete idea. While he was gone his bosom friend stole his perfected idea—yes, stole it, and sold it for twenty thousand dollars. He was called a genius, a great inventor. And then he married her. You don't know her, Bouche. You never saw beautiful Rose Varcoe, who, liking two men, chose the one who was handsome and brilliant, and whom the world called a genius. Why didn't Jaspar Hume expose him, Bouche? Proof is not always easy, and then he had to think of her. One has to think of a woman in such a case, Bouche. Even a dog can see that."

He was silent for a moment, and then he said: "Come, Bouche. You will keep secret what I show you."

He went to a large box in the corner, unlocked it, and took out a model made of brass and copper and smooth but unpolished wood.

"After ten years of banishment, Bouche, Hume has worked out another idea, you see. It should be worth ten times the other, and the world called the other the work of a genius, dog."

Then he became silent, the animal watching him the while. It had seen him working at this model for many a day, but had never heard him talk so much at a time as he had done this last ten minutes. He was generally a silent man—decisive even to severity, careless carriers and shirking under-officers thought. Yet none could complain that he was unjust. He was simply straight-forward, and he had no sympathy with those who had not the same quality. He had carried a drunken Indian on his back for miles, and from a certain death by frost. He had, for want of a more convenient punishment, promptly knocked down Jeff Hyde, the sometime bully of the fort, for appropriating a bundle of furs belonging to a French half-breed, Gaspe Toujours. But he nursed Jeff Hyde through an attack of pneumonia, insisting at the same time that Gaspe Toujours should help him. The result of it all was that Jeff Hyde and Gaspe Toujours became constant allies. They both formulated their oaths by Jaspar Hume. The Indian, Cloud-in-the-Sky, though by word never thanking his rescuer, could not be induced to leave the fort, except on some mission with which Jaspar Hume was connected. He preferred living an undignified, un-Indian life, and earning food and shelter by coarsely labouring with his hands. He came at least twice a week to Hume's log house, and, sitting down silent and cross-legged before the fire, watched the sub-factor working at his drawings and calculations. Sitting so for perhaps an hour or more, and smoking all the time, he would rise, and with a grunt, which was answered by a kindly nod, would pass out as silently as he came.

And now as Jaspar Hume stood looking at his "Idea," Cloud-in-the-Sky entered, let his blanket fall by the hearthstone and sat down upon it. If Hume saw him or heard him, he at least gave no sign at first. But he said at last in a low tone to the dog: "It is finished, Bouche; it is ready for the world."

Then he put it back, locked the box, and turned towards Cloud-in-the-Sky and the fireplace. The Indian grunted; the other nodded with the debating look again dominant in his eyes. The Indian met the look with satisfaction. There was

something in Jaspar Hume's habitual reticence and decisiveness in action which appealed more to Cloud-in-the-Sky than any freedom of speech could possibly have done.

Hume sat down, handed the Indian a pipe and tobacco, and, with arms folded, watched the fire. For half an hour they sat so, white man, Indian, and dog. Then Hume rose, went to a cupboard, took out some sealing wax and matches, and in a moment melted wax was dropping upon the lock of the box containing his Idea. He had just finished this as Sergeant Gosse knocked at the door, and immediately afterwards entered the room.

"Gosse," said the sub-factor, "find Jeff Hyde, Gaspe Toujours, and Late Carscallen, and bring them here." Sergeant Gosse immediately departed upon this errand. Hume then turned to the Indian, and said "Cloud-in-the-Sky, I want you to go a long journey hereaway to the Barren Grounds. Have twelve dogs ready by nine to-morrow morning."

Cloud-in-the-Sky shook his head thoughtfully, and then after a pause said: "Strong-back go too?" Strongback was his name for the sub-factor. But the other either did not or would not hear. The Indian, however, appeared satisfied, for he smoked harder afterwards, and grunted to himself many times. A few moments passed, and then Sergeant Gosse entered, followed by Jeff Hyde, Gaspe Toujours, and Late Carscallen. Late Carscallen had got his name "Late" from having been called "The Late Mr. Carscallen" by the chief factor because of his slowness. Slow as he was, however, the stout Scotsman had more than once proved himself a man of rare merit according to Hume's ideas. He was, of course, the last to enter.

The men grouped themselves about the fire, Late Carscallen getting the coldest corner. Each man drew his tobacco from his pocket, and, cutting it, waited for Hume to speak. His eyes were debating as they rested on the four. Then he took out Mrs. Lepage's letter, and, with the group looking at him, he read it aloud. When it was finished, Cloud-in-the-Sky gave a guttural assent, and Gaspe Toujours, looking at Jeff Hyde, said: "It is cold in the Barren Grounds. We shall need much tabac." These men could read without difficulty Hume's reason for summoning them. To Gaspe Toujours' remark Jeff Hyde nodded affirmatively, and then all looked at Late Carscallen. He opened his heavy jaws once or twice with an animal-like sound, and then he said, in a general kind of way:

"To the Barren Grounds. But who leads?"

Hume was writing on a slip of paper, and he did not reply. The faces of three of them showed just a shade of anxiety. They guessed who it would be, but they were not sure. Cloud-in-the-Sky, however, grunted at them, and raised the bowl of his pipe towards the subfactor. The anxiety then seemed to disappear.

For ten minutes more they sat so, all silent. Then Hume rose, handed the slip of paper to Sergeant Gosse, and said: "Attend to that at once, Gosse. Examine the food and blankets closely."

The five were left alone.

Then Hume spoke: "Jeff Hyde, Gaspe Toujours, Late Carscallen, and Cloud-in-the-Sky, this man, alive or dead, is between here and the Barren Grounds. He must be found—for his wife's sake."

He handed Jeff Hyde her letter. Jeff rubbed his fingers before he touched the delicate and perfumed missive. Its delicacy seemed to bewilder him. He said: in a

rough but kindly way: “Hope to die if I don’t,” and passed it on to Gaspe Toujours, who did not find it necessary to speak. His comrade had answered for him. Late Carscallen held it inquisitively for a moment, and then his jaws opened and shut as if he were about to speak. But before he did so Hume said: “It is a long journey and a hard one. Those who go may never come back. But this man was working for his country, and he has got a wife—a good wife.” He held up the letter. “Late Carscallen wants to know who will lead you. Can’t you trust me? I will give you a leader that you will follow to the Barren Grounds. To-morrow you will know who he is. Are you satisfied? Will you do it?”

The four rose, and Cloud-in-the-Sky nodded approvingly many times. Hume held out his hand. Each man shook it, Jeff Hyde first. Then he said: “Close up ranks for the H.B.C.!” (H.B.C. meaning, of course, Hudson’s Bay Company.)

With a good man to lead them, these four would have stormed, alone, the Heights of Balaklava.

Once more Hume spoke. “Go to Gosse and get your outfits at nine to-morrow morning. Cloud-in-the-Sky, have your sleds at the store at eight o’clock, to be loaded. Then all meet me at 10.15 at the office of the chief factor. Good night.”

As they passed out into the semi-arctic night, Late Carscallen with an unreal obstinacy said: “Slow march to the Barren Grounds—but who leads?”

Left alone Hume sat down to the pine table at one end of the room and after a short hesitation began to write. For hours he sat there, rising only to put wood on the fire. The result was three letters: the largest addressed to a famous society in London, one to a solicitor in Montreal, and one to Mr. Field, the chief factor. They were all sealed carefully. Then he rose, took out his knife, and went over to the box as if to break the red seal. He paused, however, sighed, and put the knife back again. As he did so he felt something touch his leg. It was the dog.

Hume drew in a sharp breath and said: “It was all ready, Bouche; and in another six months I should have been in London with it. But it will go whether I go or not—whether I go or not, Bouche.”

The dog sprang up and put his head against his master’s breast.

“Good dog, good dog, it’s all right, Bouche; however it goes, it’s all right,” said Hume.

Then the dog lay down and watched his master until he drew the blankets to his chin, and sleep drew oblivion over a fighting soul.

Chapter II

At ten o’clock next morning Jaspar Hume presented himself at the chief factor’s office. He bore with him the letters he had written the night before.

The factor said: “Well, Hume, I am glad to see you. That woman’s letter was on my mind all night. Have you anything to propose? I suppose not,” he added despairingly, as he looked closely into the face of the other. “Yes, Mr. Field, I propose that the expedition start at noon to-day.”

“Start-at noon-to-day?”

“In two hours.”

"Who are the party?"

"Jeff Hyde, Gaspe Toujours, Late Carscallen, and Cloud-in-the-Sky."

"Who leads them, Hume? Who leads?"

"With your permission, I do."

"You? But, man, consider the danger and—your invention!"

"I have considered all. Here are three letters. If we do not come back in three months, you will please send this one, with the box in my room, to the address on the envelope. This is for a solicitor in Montreal, which you will also forward as soon as possible; and this last one is for yourself; but you will not open it until the three months have passed. Have I your permission to lead these men? They would not go without me."

"I know that, I know that, Hume. I can't say no. Go, and good luck go with you."

Here the manly old factor turned away his head. He knew that Hume had done right. He knew the possible sacrifice this man was making of all his hopes, of his very life; and his sound Scotch heart appreciated the act to the full. But he did not know all. He did not know that Jaspar Hume was starting to search for the man who had robbed him of youth and hope and genius and home.

"Here is a letter that the wife has written to her husband on the chance of his getting it. You will take it with you, Hume. And the other she wrote to me—shall I keep it?" He held out his hand.

"No, sir, I will keep it, if you will allow me. It is my commission, you know." The shadow of a smile hovered about Hume's lips.

The factor smiled kindly as he replied: "Ah, yes, your commission—Captain Jaspar Hume of—of what?" Just then the door opened and there entered the four men who had sat before the sub-factor's fire the night before. They were dressed in white blanket costumes from head to foot, white woollen capotes covering the grey fur caps they wore. Jaspar Hume ran his eye over them and then answered the factor's question: "Of the White Guard, sir."

"Good," was the reply. "Men, you are going on a relief expedition. There will be danger. You need a good leader. You have one in Captain Hume."

Jeff Hyde shook his head at the others with a pleased I-told-you-so expression; Cloud-in-the-Sky grunted his deep approval; and Late Carscallen smacked his lips in a satisfied manner and rubbed his leg with a schoolboy sense of enjoyment. The factor continued: "In the name of the Hudson's Bay Company I will say that if you come back, having done your duty faithfully, you shall be well rewarded. And I believe you will come back, if it is in human power to do so."

Here Jeff Hyde said: "It isn't for reward we're doin' it, Mr. Field, but because Mr. Hume wished it, because we believed he'd lead us; and for the lost fellow's wife. We wouldn't have said we'd do it, if it wasn't for him that's just called us the White Guard."

Under the bronze of the sub-factor's face there spread a glow more red than brown, and he said simply: "Thank you, men"—for they had all nodded assent to Jeff Hyde's words—"come with me to the store. We will start at noon."

At noon the White Guard stood in front of the store on which the British flag was hoisted with another beneath it bearing the magic letters, H.B.C.: magic, because they opened to the world regions that seemed destined never to know the touch of civilisation. The few inhabitants of the fort were gathered at the store; the

dogs and loaded sleds were at the door. It wanted but two minutes to twelve when Hume came from his house, dressed also in the white blanket costume, and followed by his dog, Bouche. In a moment more he had placed Bouche at the head of the first team of dogs. They were to have their leader too. Punctually at noon, Hume shook hands with the factor, said a quick good-bye to the rest, called out a friendly "How!" to the Indians standing near, and to the sound of a hearty cheer, heartier perhaps because none had a confident hope that the five would come back, the march of the White Guard began.

Chapter III

It was eighteen days after. In the shadow of a little island of pines, that lies in a shivering waste of ice and snow, the White Guard were camped. They were able to do this night what they had not done for days—dig a great grave of snow, and building a fire of pine wood at each end of this strange house, get protection and something like comfort. They sat silent close to the fires. Jaspar Hume was writing with numbed fingers. The extract that follows is taken from his diary. It tells that day's life, and so gives an idea of harder, sterner days that they had spent and must yet spend, on this weary journey.

December 25th.—This is Christmas Day and Camp twenty-seven. We have marched only five miles to-day. We are eighty miles from Great Fish River, and the worst yet to do. We have discovered no signs. Jeff Hyde has had a bad two days with his frozen foot. Gaspe Toujours helps him nobly. One of the dogs died this morning.

Bouche is a great leader. This night's shelter is a god-send. Cloud-in-the-Sky has a plan whereby some of us will sleep well. We are in latitude 63deg 47' and longitude 112deg 32' 14". Have worked out lunar observations. Have marked a tree JH/27 and raised cairn No. 3.

We are able to celebrate Christmas Day with a good basin of tea and our stand-by of beans cooked in fat. I was right about them: they have great sustaining power. To-morrow we will start at ten o'clock.

The writing done, Jaspar Hume put his book away and turned towards the rest. Cloud-in-the-Sky and Late Carscallen were smoking. Little could be seen of their faces; they were snuffled to the eyes. Gaspe Toujours was drinking a basin of tea, and Jeff Hyde was fitfully dozing by the fire. The dogs were above in the tent—all but Bouche, who was permitted to be near his master. Presently the sub-factor rose, took from a knapsack a small tin pail, and put it near the fire. Then he took five little cups that fitted snugly into each other, separated them, and put them also near the fire. None of the party spoke. A change seemed to pass over the faces of all except Cloud-in-the-Sky. He smoked on unmoved. At length Hume spoke cheerily: "Now, men, before we turn in we'll do something in honour of the day. Liquor we none of us have touched since we started; but back there in the fort,

and maybe in other places too, they will be thinking of us; so we'll drink a health to them, though it's but a spoonful, and to the day when we see them again!"

The cups were passed round. The sub-factor measured out a very small portion to each. They were not men of uncommon sentiment; their lives were rigid and isolated and severe. Fireside comforts under fortunate conditions they saw but seldom, and they were not given to expressing their feelings demonstratively. But each man then, save Cloud-in-the-Sky, had some memory worth a resurrection.

Jaspar Hume raised his cup; the rest followed his example. "To absent friends and the day when we see them again!" he said; and they all drank. Gaspe Toujours drank solemnly, and, as though no one was near, made the sign of the cross; for his memory was with a dark-eyed, soft-cheeked habitant girl of the parish of Saint Gabrielle, whom he had left behind seven years before, and had never seen since. Word had come from the parish priest that she was dying, and though he wrote back in his homely patois of his grief, and begged that the good father would write again, no word had ever come. He thought of her now as one for whom the candles had been lighted and masses had been said.

But Jeff Hyde's eyes were bright, and suffering as he was, the heart in him was brave and hopeful. He was thinking of a glorious Christmas Day upon the Madawaska River three years agone; of Adam Henry, the blind fiddler; of bright, warm-hearted Pattie Chown, the belle of the ball, and the long drive home in the frosty night.

Late Carscallen was thinking of a brother whom he had heard preach his first sermon in Edinburgh twenty years before. And Late Carscallen, slow of speech and thought, had been full of pride and love of that brilliant brother. In the natural course of things, they had drifted apart, the slow and uncouth one to make his home at last in the Far North, and to be this night on his way to the Barren Grounds. But as he stood with the cup to his lips he recalled the words of a newspaper paragraph of a few months before. It stated that "the Reverend James Carscallen, D.D., preached before Her Majesty on Whitsunday, and had the honour of lunching with Her Majesty afterwards." Remembering that, Late Carscallen rubbed his left hand joyfully against his blanketed leg and drank.

Cloud-in-the-Sky's thoughts were with the present, and his "Ugh!" of approval was one of the senses purely. Instead of drinking to absent friends he looked at the sub-factor and said: "How!" He drank to the subfactor.

Jaspar Hume had a memory of childhood; of a house beside a swift-flowing river, where a gentle widowed mother braced her heart against misfortune and denied herself and slaved that her son might be educated. He had said to her that some day he would be a great man, and she would be paid back a hundredfold. And he had worked hard at school, very hard. But one cold day of spring a message came to the school, and he sped homewards to the house beside the dark river down which the ice was floating,—he would remember that floating ice to his last day, and entered a quiet room where a white-faced woman was breathing away her life. And he fell at her side and kissed her hand and called to her; and she waked for a moment only and smiled on him, and said: "Be good, my boy, and God will make you great." Then she said she was cold, and some one felt her feet—a kind old soul who shook her head sadly at him; and a voice, rising out of a strange smiling languor, murmured: "I'll away, I'll away to the Promised Land—to

the Promised Land… It is cold—so cold—God keep my boy!" Then the voice ceased, and the kind old soul who had looked at him, pityingly folded her arms about him, and drawing his brown head to her breast, kissed him with flowing eyes and whispered: "Come away, laddie, come away."

But he came back in the night and sat beside her, and remained there till the sun grew bright, and then through another day and night, until they bore her out of the little house by the river to the frozen hill-side.

Sitting here in this winter desolation Jaspar Hume once more beheld these scenes of twenty years before and followed himself, a poor dispensing clerk in a doctor's office, working for that dream of achievement in which his mother believed; for which she hoped. And following further the boy that was himself, he saw a friendless first-year man at college, soon, however, to make a friend of Clive Lepage, and to see always the best of that friend, being himself so true. At last the day came when they both graduated together in science, a bright and happy day, succeeded by one still brighter, when they both entered a great firm as junior partners. Afterwards befell the meeting with Rose Varcoe; and he thought of how he praised his friend Lepage to her, and brought him to be introduced to her. He recalled all those visions that came to him when, his professional triumphs achieved, he should have a happy home, and happy faces by his fireside. And the face was to be that of Rose Varcoe, and the others, faces of those who should be like her and like himself. He saw, or rather felt, that face clouded and anxious when he went away ill and blind for health's sake. He did not write to her. The doctors forbade him that. He did not ask her to write, for his was so steadfast a nature that he did not need letters to keep him true; and he thought she must be the same. He did not understand a woman's heart, how it needs remembrances, and needs to give remembrances.

Hume's face in the light of this fire seemed calm and cold, yet behind it was an agony of memory—the memory of the day when he discovered that Lepage was married to Rose, and that the trusted friend had grown famous and well-to-do on the offspring of his brain. His first thought had been one of fierce determination to expose this man who had falsified all trust. But then came the thought of the girl, and, most of all, there came the words of his dying mother, "Be good, my boy, and God will make you great"; and for his mother's sake he had compassion on the girl, and sought no restitution from her husband. And now, ten years later, he did not regret that he had stayed his hand. The world had ceased to call Lepage a genius. He had not fulfilled the hope once held of him. Hume knew this from occasional references in scientific journals.

And now he was making this journey to save, if he could, Lepage's life. Though just on the verge of a new era in his career—to give to the world the fruit of ten years' thought and labour, he had set all behind him, that he might be true to the friendship of his youth, that he might be clear of the strokes of conscience to the last hour of his life.

Looking round him now, the debating look came again into his eyes. He placed his hand in his breast, and let it rest there for a moment. The look became certain and steady, the hand was drawn out, and in it was a Book of Common Prayer. Upon the fly-leaf was written: "Jane Hume, to her dear son Jaspar, on his twelfth birthday."

These men of the White Guard were not used to religious practices, whatever their past had been in that regard, and at any other time they might have been surprised at this action of their leader. Under some circumstances it might have lessened their opinion of him; but his influence over them now was complete. They knew they were getting nearer to him than they had ever done; even Cloud-in-the-Sky appreciated that. Hume spoke no word to them, but looked at them and stood up. They all did the same, Jeff Hyde leaning on the shoulders of Gaspe Toujours. He read first, four verses of the Thirty-first Psalm, then followed the prayer of St. Chrysostom, and the beautiful collect which appeals to the Almighty to mercifully look upon the infirmities of men, and to stretch forth His hand to keep and defend them in all dangers and necessities. Late Carscallen, after a long pause, said "Amen," and Jeff said in a whisper to Gaspe Toujours: "That's to the point. Infirmities and dangers and necessities is what troubles us."

Immediately after, at a sign from the sub-factor, Cloud-in-the-Sky began to transfer the burning wood from one fire to the other until only hot ashes were left where a great blaze had been. Over these ashes pine twigs and branches were spread, and over them again blankets. The word was then given to turn in, and Jeff Hyde, Gaspe Toujours, and Late Carscallen lay down in this comfortable bed. Each wished to give way to their captain, but he would not consent. He and Cloud-in-the-Sky wrapped themselves in their blankets like mummies, covering the head completely, and under the arctic sky they slept alone in an austere and tenantless world. They never know how loftily sardonic Nature can be who have not seen that land where the mercury freezes in the tubes, and there is light but no warmth in the smile of the sun. Not Sturt in the heart of Australia with the mercury bursting the fevered tubes, with the finger-nails breaking like brittle glass, with the ink drying instantly on the pen, with the hair fading and falling off, would, if he could, have exchanged his lot for that of the White Guard. They were in a frozen endlessness that stretched away to a world where never voice of man or clip of wing or tread of animal is heard. It is the threshold to the undiscovered country, to that untouched north whose fields of white are only furrowed by the giant forces of the elements; on whose frigid hearthstone no fire is ever lit; where the electric phantoms of a nightless land pass and repass, and are never still; where the magic needle points not towards the north but darkly downward; where the sun never stretches warm hands to him who dares confront the terrors of eternal snow.

The White Guard slept.

Chapter IV

"No, Captain; leave me here and push on to Manitou Mountain. You ought to make it in two days. I'm just as safe here as on the sleds, and less trouble. A blind man's no good. I'll have a good rest while you're gone, and then perhaps my eyes will come out right. My foot's nearly well now."

Jeff Hyde was snow-blind. The giant of the party had suffered most.

But Hume said in reply: “I won’t leave you alone. The dogs can carry you as they’ve done for the last ten days.”

But Jeff replied: “I’m as safe here as marching, and safer. When the dogs are not carrying me, nor any one leading me, you can get on faster; and that means everything to us, now don’t it?”

Hume met the eyes of Gaspe Toujours. He read them. Then he said to Jeff: “It shall be as you wish. Late Carscallen, Cloud-in-the-Sky, and myself will push on to Manitou Mountain. You and Gaspe Toujours will remain here.”

Jeff Hyde’s blind eyes turned towards Gaspe Toujours, who said: “Yes. We have plenty tabac.”

A tent was set up, provisions were put in it, a spirit-lamp and matches were added, and the simple menage was complete. Not quite. Jaspar Hume looked round. There was not a tree in sight. He stooped and cut away a pole that was used for strengthening the runners of the sleds, fastened it firmly in the ground, and tied to it a red woollen scarf, used for tightening his white blankets round him. Then he said: “Be sure and keep that flying.”

Jeff’s face was turned towards the north. The blindman’s instinct was coming to him. Far off white eddying drifts were rising over long hillocks of snow. When he turned round again his face was troubled. It grew more troubled, then it brightened up again, and he said to Hume: “Captain, would you leave that book with me till you come back—that about infirmities, dangers, and necessities? I knew a river-boss who used to carry an old spelling-book round with him for luck. It seems to me as if that book of yours, Captain, would bring luck to this part of the White Guard, that bein’ out at heels like has to stay behind.”

Hume had borne the sufferings of his life with courage; he had led this terrible tramp with no tremor at his heart for himself; he was seeking to perform a perilous act without any inward shrinking; but Jeff’s request was the greatest trial of this critical period in his life.

Jeff felt, if he could not see, the hesitation of his chief. His rough but kind instincts told him something was wrong, and he hastened to add: “Beg your pardon, Mr. Hume, it ain’t no matter. I oughtn’t have asked you for it. But it’s just like me. I’ve been a chain on the leg of the White Guard this whole tramp.”

The moment of hesitation had passed before Jeff had said half-a-dozen words, and Hume put the book in his hands with the words: “No, Jeff, take it. It will bring luck to the White Guard. Keep it safe until I come back.”

Jeff took the book, but hearing a guttural “Ugh” behind him, he turned round defiantly. Cloud-in-the-Sky touched his arm and said: “Good! Strong-back book—good!” Jeff was satisfied.

At this point they parted, Jeff and Gaspe Toujours remaining, and Hume and his two followers going on towards Manitou Mountain. There seemed little probability that Clive Lepage would be found. In their progress eastward and northward they had covered wide areas of country, dividing and meeting again after stated hours of travel, but not a sign had been seen; neither cairn nor staff nor any mark of human presence.

Hume had noticed Jeff Hyde’s face when it was turned to the eddying drifts of the north, and he understood what was in the experienced huntsman’s mind. He

knew that severe weather was before them, and that the greatest danger of the journey was to be encountered.

That night they saw Manitou Mountain, cold, colossal, harshly calm; and jointly with that sight there arose a shrieking, biting, fearful north wind. It blew upon them in cruel menace of conquest, in piercing inclemency. It struck a freezing terror to their hearts, and grew in violent attack until, as if repenting that it had foregone its power to save, the sun suddenly grew red and angry, and spread out a shield of blood along the bastions of the west. The wind shrank back and grew less murderous, and ere the last red arrow shot up behind the lonely western wall of white, the three knew that the worst of the storm had passed and that death had drawn back for a time. What Hume thought may be gathered from his diary; for ere he crawled in among the dogs and stretched himself out beside Bouche, he wrote these words with aching fingers:

January 10th: Camp 39.—A bitter day. We are facing three fears now: the fate of those we left behind; Lepage's fate; and the going back. We are twenty miles from Manitou Mountain. If he is found, I should not fear the return journey; success gives hope. But we trust in God.

Another day passed and at night, after a hard march, they camped five miles from Manitou Mountain. And not a sign! But Hume felt there was a faint chance of Lepage being found at this mountain. His iron frame had borne the hardships of this journey well; his strong heart better. But this night an unaccountable weakness possessed him. Mind and body were on the verge of helplessness. Bouche seemed to understand this, and when he was unhitched from the team of dogs, now dwindled to seven, he leaped upon his master's breast. It was as if some instinct of sympathy, of prescience, was passing between the man and the dog. Hume bent his head down to Bouche for an instant and rubbed his side kindly; then he said, with a tired accent: "It's all right, old dog, it's all right."

Hume did not sleep well at first, but at length oblivion came. He waked to feel Bouche tugging at his blankets. It was noon. Late Carscallen and Cloud-in-the-Sky were still sleeping—inanimate bundles among the dogs. In an hour they were on their way again, and towards sunset they had reached the foot of Manitou Mountain. Abruptly from the plain rose this mighty mound, blue and white upon a black base. A few straggling pines grew near its foot, defying latitude, as the mountain itself defied the calculations of geographers and geologists. A halt was called. Late Carscallen and Cloud-in-the-Sky looked at the chief. His eyes were scanning the mountain closely. Suddenly he motioned. A hundred feet up there was a great round hole in the solid rock, and from this hole there came a feeble cloud of smoke! The other two saw also. Cloud-in-the-Sky gave a wild whoop, and from the mountain there came, a moment after, a faint replica of the sound. It was not an echo, for there appeared at the mouth of the cave an Indian, who made feeble signs for them to come. In a little while they were at the cave. As Jaspar Hume entered, Cloud-in-the-Sky and the stalwart but emaciated Indian who had beckoned to them spoke to each other in the Chinook language, the jargon common to all Indians of the West.

Jaspar Hume saw a form reclining on a great bundle of pine branches, and he knew what Rose Lepage had prayed for was come to pass. By the flickering light of a handful of fire he saw Lepage—rather what was left of him—a shadow of energy, a heap of nerveless bones. His eyes were shut, but as Hume, with a quiver of memory and sympathy at his heart, stood for an instant, and looked at the man whom he had cherished as a friend and found an enemy, Lepage's lips moved and a weak voice said: "Who is there?"

"A friend."

"Come-near-me,—friend."

Hume made a motion to Late Carscallen, who was heating some liquor at the fire, and then he stooped and lifted up the sick man's head, and took his hand. "You have come—to save me!" whispered the weak voice again.

"Yes; I've come to save you." This voice was strong and clear and true.

"I seem—to have—heard—your voice before—somewhere before—I seem to—have—"

But he had fainted.

Hume poured a little liquor down the sick man's throat, and Late Carscallen chafed the delicate hand—delicate in health, it was like that of a little child now. When breath came again Hume whispered to his helper "Take Cloud-in-the-Sky and get wood; bring fresh branches. Then clear one of the sleds, and we will start back with him in the early morning."

Late Carscallen, looking at the skeleton-like figure, said: "He will never get there."

"Yes, he will get there," was Hume's reply.

"But he is dying."

"He goes with me to Fort Providence."

"Ay, to Providence he goes, but not with you," said Late Carscallen, doggedly.

Anger flashed in Hume's eye, but he said quietly "Get the wood, Carscallen."

Hume was left alone with the starving Indian, who sat beside the fire eating voraciously, and with the sufferer, who now was taking mechanically a little biscuit sopped in brandy. For a few moments thus, then his sunken eyes opened, and he looked dazedly at the man bending above him. Suddenly there came into them a look of terror. "You—you—are Jaspar Hume," his voice said in an awed whisper.

"Yes." The hands of the sub-factor chafed those of the other.

"But you said you were a friend, and come to save me."

"I have come to save you."

There was a shiver of the sufferer's body. This discovery would either make him stronger or kill him. Hume knew this, and said: "Lepage, the past is past and dead to me; let it be so to you."

There was a pause.

"How—did you know—about me?"

"I was at Fort Providence. There came letters from the Hudson's Bay Company, and from your wife, saying that you were making this journey, and were six months behind—"

"My wife—Rose!"

“I have a letter for you from her. She is on her way to Canada. We are to take you to her.”

“To take me—to her.” Lepage shook his head sadly, but he pressed to his lips the letter that Hume had given him.

“To take you to her, Lepage.”

“No, I shall never see her again.”

“I tell you, you shall. You can live if you will. You owe that to her—to me—to God.”

“To her—to you—to God. I have been true to none. I have been punished. I shall die here.”

“You shall go to Fort Providence. Do that in payment of your debt to me, Lepage. I demand that.” In this transgressor there was a latent spark of honour, a sense of justice that might have been developed to great causes, if some strong nature, seeing his weaknesses, had not condoned them, but had appealed to the natural chivalry of an impressionable, vain, and weak character. He struggled to meet Hume’s eyes, and doing so, he gained confidence and said: “I will try to live. I will do you justice—yet.”

“Your first duty is to eat and drink. We start for Fort Providence to-morrow.”

The sick man stretched out his hand. “Food! Food!” he said.

In tiny portions food and drink were given to him, and his strength sensibly increased. The cave was soon aglow with the fire kindled by Late Carscallen and Cloud-in-the-Sky. There was little speaking, for the sick man soon fell asleep. Lepage’s Indian told Cloud-in-the-Sky the tale of their march—how the other Indian and the dogs died; how his master became ill as they were starting towards Fort Providence from Manitou Mountain in the summer weather; how they turned back and took refuge in this cave; how month by month they had lived on what would hardly keep a rabbit alive; and how, at last, his master urged him to press on with his papers; but he would not, and stayed until this day, when the last bit of food had been eaten, and they were found.

Chapter V

The next morning Lepage was placed upon a sled, and they started back, Bouche barking joyfully as he led off, with Cloud-in-the-Sky beside him. There was light in the faces of all, though the light could not be seen by reason of their being muffled so. All day they travelled, scarcely halting, Lepage’s Indian marching well. Often the corpse-like bundle on the sled was disturbed, and biscuits wet in brandy and bits of preserved venison were given.

That night Hume said to Late Carscallen: “I am going to start at the first light of the morning to get to Gaspe Toujours and Jeff Hyde as soon as possible. Follow as fast as you can. He will be safe, if you give him food and drink often. I shall get to the place where we left them about noon; you should reach there at night or early the next morning.”

“Hadn’t you better take Bouche with you?” said Late Carscallen.

The sub-factor thought a moment, and then said: “No, he is needed most where he is.”

At noon the next day Jaspar Hume looked round upon a billowy plain of sun and ice, but saw no staff, no signal, no tent, no sign of human life: of Gaspe Toujours or of Jeff Hyde. His strong heart quailed. Had he lost his way? He looked at the sun. He was not sure. He consulted his compass, but it quivered hesitatingly. For awhile that wild bewilderment which seizes upon the minds of the strongest, when lost, mastered him, in spite of his struggles against it. He moved in a maze of half-blindness, half-delirium. He was lost in it, swayed by it. He began to wander about; and there grew upon his senses strange delights and reeling agonies. He heard church bells, he caught at butterflies, he tumbled in new-mown hay, he wandered in a tropic garden. But in the hay a wasp stung him, and the butterfly changed to a curling black snake that struck at him and glided to a dark-flowing river full of floating ice, and up from the river a white hand was thrust, and it beckoned him—beckoned him. He shut his eyes and moved towards it, but a voice stopped him, and it said, “Come away, come away,” and two arms folded him round, and as he went back from the shore he stumbled and fell, and... What is this? A yielding mass at his feet—a mass that stirs! He clutches at it, he tears away the snow, he calls aloud—and his voice has a faraway unnatural sound—“Gaspe Toujours! Gaspe Toujours!” Then the figure of a man shakes itself in the snow, and a voice says: “Ay, ay, sir!” Yes, it is Gaspe Toujours! And beside him lies Jeff Hyde, and alive. “Ay, ay, sir, alive!”

Jaspar Hume’s mind was itself again. It had but suffered for a moment the agony of delirium.

Gaspe Toujours and Jeff Hyde had lain down in the tent the night of the great wind, and had gone to sleep at once. The staff had been blown down, the tent had fallen over them, the drift had covered them, and for three days they had slept beneath the snow, never waking.

Jeff Hyde’s sight was come again to him. “You’ve come back for the book,” he said. “You couldn’t go on without it. You ought to have taken it yesterday.”

He drew it from his pocket. He was dazed.

“No, Jeff, I’ve not come back for that, and I did not leave you yesterday: it is three days and more since we parted. The book has brought us luck, and the best. We have found our man; and they’ll be here to-night with him. I came on ahead to see how you fared.”

In that frost-bitten world Jeff Hyde uncovered his head for a moment. “Gaspe Toujours is a papist,” he said, “but he read me some of that book the day you left, and one thing we went to sleep on: it was that about ‘Lightenin’ the darkness, and defendin’ us from all the perils and dangers of this night.’” Here Gaspe Toujours made the sign of the cross. Jeff Hyde continued half apologetically for his comrade: “That comes natural to Gaspe Toujours—I guess it always does to papists. But I never had any trainin’ that way, and I had to turn the thing over and over, and I fell asleep on it. And when I wake up three days after, here’s my eyes as fresh as daisies, and you back, sir, and the thing done that we come to do.”

He put the Book into Hume’s hands and at that moment Gaspe Toujours said: “See!” Far off, against the eastern horizon, appeared a group of moving figures.

That night the broken segments of the White Guard were reunited, and Clive Lepage slept by the side of Jaspar Hume.

Chapter VI

Napoleon might have marched back from Moscow with undecimated legions safely enough, if the heart of those legions had not been crushed. The White Guard, with their faces turned homeward, and the man they had sought for in their care, seemed to have acquired new strength. Through days of dreadful cold, through nights of appalling fierceness, through storm upon the plains that made for them paralysing coverlets, they marched. And if Lepage did not grow stronger, life at least was kept in him.

There was little speech among them, but once in a while Gaspe Toujours sang snatches of the songs of the voyageurs of the great rivers; and the hearts of all were strong. Between Bouche and his master there was occasional demonstration. On the twentieth day homeward, Hume said with his hand on the dog's head "It had to be done, Bouche; even a dog could see that."

And so it was "all right" for the White Guard. One day when the sun was warmer than usual over Fort Providence, and just sixty-five days since that cheer had gone up from apprehensive hearts for brave men going out into the Barren Grounds, Sergeant Gosse, who, every day, and of late many times a day, had swept the north-east with a field-glass, rushed into the chief-factor's office, and with a broken voice cried: "They've all come! They've come!" Then he leaned his arm and head against the wall and sobbed. And the old factor rose from his chair tremblingly, and said his thank-god, and went hurriedly into the square. He did not go steadily, however, the joyous news had shaken him, sturdy old pioneer as he was. A fringe of white had grown about his temples in the last two months. The people of the fort had said they had never seen him so irascible, yet so gentle; so uneasy, yet so reserved; so stern about the mouth, yet so kind about the eyes as he had been since Hume had gone on this desperate errand.

Already the handful of people at the fort had gathered. Indians left the store, and joined the rest; the factor and Sergeant Gosse set out to meet the little army of relief. To the factor's "In the name of the Hudson's Bay Company, Mr. Hume," when they met there came "By the help of God, sir," and he pointed to the sled whereon Lepage lay. A feeble hand was clasped in the burly hand of the factor, and then they all fell into line again, Cloud-in-the-Sky running ahead of the dogs. Snow had fallen on them, and as they entered the stockade, men and dogs were white from head to foot.

The White Guard had come back. Jaspar Hume as simply acknowledged his strident welcome as he had done the God-speed two months and more ago. With the factor he bore the sick man in, and laid him on his own bed. Then he came outside again, and when they cheered him once more, he said: "We have come safe through, and I'm thankful. But remember that my comrades in this march deserve your cheers more than I. Without them I couldn't have done anything."

"In our infirmities and in all our dangers and necessities," added Jeff Hyde. "The luck of the world was in that book!"

In another half-hour the White Guard was at ease, and four of them were gathered about the great stove in the store, Cloud-in-the-Sky smoking placidly, and full of guttural emphasis; Late Carscallen moving his animal-like jaws with a sense of satisfaction; Gaspe Toujours talking in Chinook to the Indians, in patois to the French clerk, and in broken English to them all; and Jeff Hyde exclaiming on the wonders of the march, the finding of Lepage at Manitou Mountain, and of himself and Gaspe Toujours buried in the snow.

Chapter VII

In Hume's house at midnight Lepage lay asleep with his wife's letters—received through the factor—in his hand. The firelight played upon a dark, disappointed face—a doomed, prematurely old face, as it seemed to the factor.

"You knew him, then," the factor said, after a long silence, with a gesture towards the bed.

"Yes, well, years ago," replied Hume.

Just then the sick man stirred in his sleep, and he said disjointedly: "I'll make it all right to you, Hume." Then came a pause, and a quicker utterance: "Forgive—forgive me, Rose." The factor got up, and turned to go, and Hume, with a sorrowful gesture, went over to the bed.

Again the voice said: "Ten years—I have repented ten years—I dare not speak—"

The factor touched Hume's arm. "He has fever. You and I must nurse him, Hume. You can trust me—you understand."

"Yes, I can trust you," was the reply. "But I can tell you nothing."

"I do not want to know anything. If you can watch till two o'clock I will relieve you. I'll send the medicine chest over. You know how to treat him."

The factor passed out, and the other was left alone with the man who had wronged him. The feeling most active in his mind was pity, and, as he prepared a draught from his own stock of medicines, he thought the past and the present all over. He knew that however much he had suffered, this man had suffered more. In this silent night there was broken down any barrier that may have stood between Lepage and his complete compassion. Having effaced himself from the calculation, justice became forgiveness.

He moistened the sick man's lips, and bathed his forehead, and roused him once to take a quieting powder. Then he sat down and wrote to Rose Lepage. But he tore the letter up again and said to the dog: "No, Bouche, I can't; the factor must do it. She needn't know yet that it was I who saved him. It doesn't make any burden of gratitude, if my name is kept out of it. The factor mustn't mention me, Bouche—not yet. When he is well we will go to London with It, Bouche, and we needn't meet her. It will be all right, Bouche, all right!"

The dog seemed to understand; for he went over to the box that held It; and looked at his master. Then Jaspar Hume rose, broke the seal, unlocked the box and opened it; but he heard the sick man moan, and he closed it again and went

over to the bed. The feeble voice said: “I must speak—I cannot die so—not so.” Hume moistened the lips once, put a cold cloth on the fevered head, and then sat down by the fire again.

Lepage slept at last. The restless hands grew quiet, the breath became more regular, the tortured mind found a short peace. With the old debating look in his eyes, Hume sat there watching until the factor relieved him.

Chapter VIII

February and March and April were past, and May was come. Lepage had had a hard struggle for life, but he had survived. For weeks every night there was a repetition of that first night after the return: delirious self-condemnation, entreaty, appeal to his wife, and Hume’s name mentioned in shuddering remorse. With the help of the Indian who had shared the sick man’s sufferings in the Barren Grounds, the factor and Hume nursed him back to life. After the first night no word had passed between the two watchers regarding the substance of Lepage’s delirium. But one evening the factor was watching alone, and the repentant man from his feverish sleep cried out: “Hush, hush! don’t let them know—I stole them both, and Rose did not know. Rose did not know!”

The factor rose and walked away. The dog was watching him. He said to Bouche: “You have a good master, Bouche.”

Chapter IX

In an arm-chair made of hickory and birch-bark by Cloud-in-the-Sky, Lepage sat reading a letter from his wife. She was at Winnipeg, and was coming west as far as Regina to meet him on his way down. He looked a wreck; but a handsome wreck. His refined features, his soft black beard and blue eyes, his graceful hand and gentle manners, seemed not to belong to an evil-hearted man. He sat in the sunlight at the door, wrapped about in moose and beaver skins. The world of plain and wood was glad. Not so Lepage. He sat and thought of what was to come. He had hoped at times that he would die, but twice Hume had said: “I demand your life. You owe it to your wife—to me.” He had pulled his heart up to this demand and had lived. But what lay before him? He saw a stony track, and he shuddered.

As he sat there facing the future, Hume came to him and said: “If you feel up to it, Lepage, we will start for Edmonton on Monday. I think it will be quite safe, and your wife is anxious. I shall accompany you as far as Edmonton; you can then proceed by easy stages, in this pleasant weather. Are you ready to go?”

“Quite ready,” was the reply.

Chapter X

On a beautiful May evening Lepage, Hume, and the White Guard were welcomed at Fort Edmonton by the officer in command of the Mounted Police. They were to enjoy the hospitality of the fort for a couple of days. Hume was to go back with Cloud-in-the-Sky and Late Carscallen, and a number of Indian carriers; for this was a journey of business too. Gaspe Toujours and Jeff Hyde were to press on with Lepage, who was now much stronger and better. One day passed, and on the following morning Hume gave instructions to Gaspe Toujours and Jeff Hyde, and made preparations for his going back. He was standing in the Barracks Square, when a horseman rode in and made inquiry of a sergeant standing near, if Lepage had arrived at the fort. A few words brought out the fact that Rose Lepage was nearing the fort from the south. The trooper had been sent on ahead the day before, but his horse having met with a slight accident, he had been delayed. He had seen the party, however, a long distance back in the early morning. He must now ride away and meet Mrs. Lepage, he said. He was furnished with a fresh horse, and he left, bearing a message from Lepage.

Hume decided to leave Fort Edmonton at once, and to take all the White Guard back with him; and gave orders to that effect. Entering the room where Lepage sat alone, he said: “Lepage, the time has come for good-bye. I am starting for Fort Providence.”

But the other replied: “You will wait until my wife comes. You must.” There was trouble in his voice. “I must not.”

Lepage braced himself for a heavy task and said: “Hume, if the time has come to say good-bye, it has also come when we should speak together for once openly: to settle, in so far as can be done, a long account. You have not let my wife know who saved me. That appears from her letters. She asks the name of my rescuer. I have not yet told her. But she will know that to-day when I tell her all.”

“When you tell her all?”

“When I tell her all.”

“But you shall not do that.”

“I will. It will be the beginning of the confession which I shall afterwards make to the world.”

“By Heaven you shall not do it. Do you want to wreck her life?”

Jaspar Hume’s face was wrathful, and remained so till the other sank back in the chair with his forehead in his hands; but it softened as he saw this remorse and shame. He began to see that Lepage had not clearly grasped the whole situation. He said in quieter but still firm tones: “No, Lepage, that matter is between us two, and us alone. She must never know—the world therefore must never know. You did an unmanly thing; you are suffering a manly remorse. Now let it end here—but I swear it shall,” he said in sharp tones, as the other shook his head negatively: “I would have let you die at Manitou Mountain, if I had thought you would dare to take away your wife’s peace—your children’s respect.”

“I have no children; our baby died.”

Hume softened again. “Can you not see, Lepage? The thing cannot be mended. I bury it all, and so must you. You will begin the world again, and so shall I. Keep your wife’s love. Henceforth you will deserve it.”

Lepage raised moist eyes to the other and said: “But you will take back the money I got for that?”

There was a pause, then Hume replied: “Yes, upon such terms, times, and conditions as I shall hereafter fix. You have no child, Lepage?” he gently added.

“We have no child; it died with my fame.”

Hume looked steadily into the eyes of the man who had wronged him. “Remember, Lepage, you begin the world again. I am going now. By the memory of old days, good-bye.” He held out his hand. Lepage took it, rose tremblingly to his feet, and said, “You are a good man, Hume. Good-bye.”

The sub-factor turned at the door. “If it will please you, tell your wife that I saved you. Some one will tell her; perhaps I would rather—at least it would be more natural, if you did it.”

He passed out into the sunshine that streamed into the room and fell across the figure of Lepage, who murmured dreamily: “And begin the world again.”

Time passed. A shadow fell across the sunlight that streamed upon Lepage. He looked up. There was a startled cry of joy, an answering exclamation of love, and Rose was clasped in her husband’s arms.

A few moments afterwards the sweet-faced woman said: “Who was that man who rode away to the north as I came up, Clive? He reminded me of some one.”

“That was the leader of the White Guard, the man who saved me, Rose.” He paused a moment and then solemnly said: “It was Jaspar Hume.”

The wife came to her feet with a spring. “He saved you—Jaspar Hume! Oh, Clive!”

“He saved me, Rose.”

Her eyes were wet: “And he would not stay and let me thank him! Poor fellow, poor Jaspar Hume! Has he been up here all these years?”

Her face was flushed, and pain was struggling with the joy she felt in seeing her husband again.

“Yes, he has been here all the time.”

“Then he has not succeeded in life, Clive!” Her thoughts went back to the days when, blind and ill, Hume went away for health’s sake, and she remembered how sorry then she felt for him, and how grieved she was that when he came back strong and well, he did not come near her or her husband, and offered no congratulations. She had not deliberately wronged him. She knew he cared for her: but so did Lepage. A promise had been given to neither when Jaspar Hume went away; and after that she grew to love the successful, kind-mannered genius who became her husband. No real pledge had been broken. Even in this happiness of hers, sitting once again at her husband’s feet, she thought with tender kindness of the man who had cared for her eleven years ago; and who had but now saved her husband.

“He has not succeeded in life,” she repeated softly. Looking down at her, his brow burning with a white heat, Lepage said: “He is a great man, Rose.”

“I am sure he is a good man,” she added.

Perhaps Lepage had borrowed some strength not all his own, for he said almost sternly: “He is a great man.”

His wife looked up half-startled and said: “Very well, dear; he is a good man—and a great man.”

The sunlight still came in through the open door. The Saskatchewan flowed swiftly between its verdant banks, an eagle went floating away to the west, robins made vocal a solitary tree a few yards away, troopers moved backwards and forwards across the square, and a hen and her chickens came fluttering to the threshold. The wife looked at the yellow brood drawing close to their mother, and her eyes grew wistful. She thought of their one baby asleep in an English grave. But thinking of the words of the captain of the White Guard, Lepage said firmly: “We will begin the world again.”

She smiled, and rose to kiss him as the hen and chickens hastened away from the door, and a clear bugle call sounded in the square.

Chapter XI

Eleven years have gone since that scene was enacted at Edmonton.

A great gathering is dispersing from a hall in Piccadilly. It has been drawn together to do honour to a man who has achieved a triumph in engineering science. As he steps from the platform to go, he is greeted by a fusilade of cheers. He bows calmly and kindly. He is a man of vigorous yet reserved aspect; he has a rare individuality. He receives with a quiet cordiality the personal congratulations of his friends. He remains for some time in conversation with a royal duke, who takes his arm, and with him passes into the street. The duke is a member of this great man’s club, and offers him a seat in his brougham. Amid the cheers of the people they drive away together. Inside the club there are fresh congratulations, and it is proposed to arrange an impromptu dinner, at which the duke will preside. But with modesty and honest thanks the great man declines. He pleads an engagement. He had pleaded this engagement the day before to a well-known society. After his health is proposed, he makes his adieux, and leaving the club, walks away towards a West-end square. In one of its streets he pauses, and enters a building called “Providence Chambers.” His servant hands him a cablegram. He passes to his library, and, standing before the fire, opens it. It reads: “My wife and I send congratulations to the great man.”

Jaspar Hume stands for a moment looking at the fire, and then says simply: “I wish poor old Bouche were here.” He then sits down and writes this letter:

> My dear Friends,—Your cablegram has made me glad. The day is over.
>
> My latest idea was more successful than I even dared to hope; and the world has been kind. I went down to see your boy, Jaspar, at Clifton last week. It was his birthday, you know—nine years old, and a clever, strong-minded little fellow. He is quite contented.
>
> As he is my god-child, I again claimed the right of putting a thousand dollars to his credit in the bank,—I have to speak of dollars to you people

living in Canada—which I have done on his every birthday. When he is twenty-one he will have twenty-one thousand dollars—quite enough for a start in life. We get along well together, and I think he will develop a fine faculty for science. In the summer, as I said, I will bring him over to you.

There is nothing more to say to-night except that I am as always,

Your faithful and loving friend,

JASPAR HUME.

A moment after the letter was finished, the servant entered and announced "Mr. Late Carscallen." With a smile and hearty greeting the great man and this member of the White Guard met. It was to entertain his old arctic comrade that Jaspar Hume had declined to be entertained by society or club. A little while after, seated at the table, the ex-sub-factor said: "You found your brother well, Carscallen?"

The jaws moved slowly as of old. "Ay, that, and a grand meenister, sir."

"He wanted you to stay in Scotland, I suppose?"

"Ay, that, but there's no place for me like Fort Providence."

"Try this pheasant. And you are sub-factor now, Carscallen?"

"There's two of us sub-factors—Jeff Hyde and myself. Mr. Field is old, and can't do much work, and trade's heavy now."

"I know. I hear from the factor now and then. And Gaspe Toujours, what of him?"

"He went away three years ago, and he said he'd come back. He never did though. Jeff Hyde believes he will. He says to me a hundred times, 'Carscallen, he made the sign of the cross that he'd come back from Saint Gabrielle; and that's next to the Book with a papist. If he's alive he'll come.'"

"Perhaps he will, Carscallen. And Cloud-in-the-Sky?"

"He's still there, and comes in and smokes with Jeff Hyde and me, as he used to do with you; but he doesn't obey our orders as he did yours, sir. He said to me when I left: 'You see Strong-back, tell him Cloud-in-the-Sky good Injun—he never forget. How!'"

Jaspar Hume raised his glass with smiling and thoughtful eyes: "To Cloud-in-the-Sky and all who never forget!" he said.