



The Son of the Wolf

He Would a Wooing Go to
Win Him an Indian Bride

By JACK LONDON

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MAN rarely places a proper valuation upon his woman-kind, at least not until deprived of them. He has no conception of the subtle atmosphere exhaled by the sex feminine so long as he bathes in it; but let it be withdrawn, and an ever-growing void begins to manifest itself in his existence, and he becomes hungry, in a vague sort of way, for a something so indefinite that he cannot characterize it. If his comrades have no more experience than himself, they will shake their heads dubiously and dose him with strong physic. But the hunger will continue and become stronger; he will lose interest in the things of his every-day life and wax morbid; and one day, when the emptiness has become unbearable, a revelation will dawn upon him.

In the Yukon country, when this comes to pass, the man usually provisions a poling boat, if it be summer, and if winter harnesses his dogs, and heads for the Southland. A few months later, supposing him to be possessed of a faith in the country, he returns with a wife to share with him in that faith, and incidentally in his hardships. This but serves to show the innate selfishness of man. It also brings us to the trouble of "Scruff" Mackenzie, which occurred in the old days, before the country was stamped and staked by a tidal wave of checha-quas, and when the Klondike's only claim to notice was its salmon fisheries.

Scruff Mackenzie bore the earmarks of a frontier birth and a frontier life. His face was stamped with twenty-five years of incessant struggle with nature in her wildest moods, the last two, the wildest and hardest of all, having been spent in groping for the gold which lies in the shadow of the Arctic Circle. When the yearning sickness came upon him he was not surprised, for he was a practical man and had seen other men thus stricken. But he showed no sign of his malady, save that he worked harder. All summer he fought mosquitoes and washed the sure-thing bars of the Stuart river for a double grub-stake. Then he floated a raft of house-logs down the Yukon to Forty Mile, and put together as comfortable a cabin as any the camp could boast of. In fact, it showed such cozy promise that many men elected to be his partner and to come and live with him. But he crushed their aspirations with rough speech, peculiar for its strength and brevity, and bought a double supply of grub from the trading-post.

He was a sturdy traveler, and his wolf-dogs could work harder and travel farther on less grub than any other team in the Yukon. Three weeks later he strode into a hunting camp of the Upper Tanana Sticks. They marveled at his temerity; for they had a bad name and had been known to kill white men for as trifling a thing as a sharp ax or a broken rifle. But he went among them single-handed, his bearing being a delicious composite of humility, familiarity, sang-froid, and insolence. It required a left hand and deep knowledge of the barbaric mind effectually to handle such diverse weapons; but he was a past master in the art, knowing when to conciliate and when to threaten with Jove-like wrath.

He first made obeisance to the Chief Thling-Tinneh, presenting him with a couple of pounds of black tea and tobacco, and thereby winning his most cordial regard. Then he mingled with the men and maidens, and that night gave a potlach. The snow was beaten down in the form of an oblong, perhaps a hundred feet in length and quarter as many across. Down the center a long fire was built, while either side was carpeted with spruce boughs. The lodges were forsaken, and the smokers or so members of the tribe gave tongue to their frolics in honor of their guests.

Scruff Mackenzie's two years had made him the hot man of the

tribe, and he had likewise conquered their deep gutturals, their Japanese idioms, constructions, and honorific and agglutinative particles. So he made oration after their manner, satisfying their instinctive poetry-love with crude flights of eloquence and metaphorical contortions. After Thling-Tinneh and the Shaman had responded in kind, he made trifling presents to the menfolk, joined in their singing, and proved an expert in their fifty-two-stick gambling game.

It was slow work and a stiff game; but Scruff Mackenzie maneuvered cunningly, with an unconcern which served to puzzle the Sticks. He took great care to impress the men that he was a sure shot and a mighty hunter, and the camp rang with his plaudits when he brought down a moose at six hundred yards. Of a night he visited in Chief Thling-Tinneh's lodge of moose and caribou skins, talking big and dispensing tobacco with a lavish hand. Nor did he fail to likewise honor the Shaman; for he realized the medicine man's influence with his people, and was anxious to make of him an ally. But that worthy was high and mighty, refused to be propitiated, and was unerringly marked down as a prospective enemy.

Though no opening presented for an interview with Zariska, Mackenzie stole many a glance to her, giving fair warning of his intent. And well she knew, yet coquettishly surrounded herself with a ring of women whenever the men were away and he had a chance. But he was in no hurry; besides, he knew she could not help but think of him, and a few days of such thought would only better his suit.

At last, one night, when he deemed the time to be ripe, he abruptly left the chief's smoky dwelling and hastened to a neighboring lodge. As usual, she sat with squaws and maidens about her, all engaged in sewing moccasins and beadwork. They laughed at his entrance, and badinage, which linked Zariska to him, ran high. But one after the other they were unceremoniously bundled into the outer snow, whence they hurried to spread the tale through all the camp.

His cause was well pleaded, in her tongue, for she did not know his, and at the end of two hours he rose to go.

"So Zariska will come to the white man's lodge? Good! I go now to have talk with thy father, for he may not be so minded. And I will give him many tokens; but he must not ask too much. If he say no? Good! Zariska shall yet come to the white man's lodge."

He had already lifted the skin flap to depart, when a low exclamation brought him back to the girl's side. She brought herself to her knees on the bearskin mat, her face aglow with true love-light, and shyly unbuckled his heavy belt. He looked down, perplexed, suspicious, his ears alert for the slightest sound without. But her next move disarmed his doubt, and he smiled with pleasure. She took from her sewing-bag a moosehide sheath, brave with bright beadwork, fantastically designed. She drew his great hunting knife, gazed reverently along the keen edge, half tempted to try it with her thumb, and shot it into place in its new home. Then she slipped the sheath along the belt to its customary resting-place, just above the hip.

For all the world, it was like a scene of olden time—a lady and her knight. Mackenzie drew her up full height and swept her red lips with his mustache—she, to her, foreign caress of the wolf. It was a meeting of the stone age and the steel.

There was a thrill of excitement in the air as Scruff Mackenzie, a bulky bundle under his arm, threw open the flap of Thling-Tinneh's tent. Children were running about in the open, dragging dry wood to the scene of the potlach, a babble of women's voices was growing in tenacity, the young men were competing in skill groups, while from the Shaman's lodge came the eerie sounds of an incantation.

THE CHIEF WAS RIDING WITH HIS DEAR- eyed wife, but a glance sufficed to tell Mackenzie that the news was already old. So he plunged at once into the business, shifting the beaded sheath prominently to the fore as advertisement of the betrothal.

"O Thling-Tinneh, mighty chief of the Sticks and the land of the Tanana, ruler of the salmon and the bear, the moose and the caribou! The white man is before thee with a great purpose. Many moons has his lodge been empty, and he is lonely. And his heart has eaten itself in silence, and grown hungry for a woman to sit beside him in his lodge, to meet him from the hunt with warm fire and good food. He has heard strange things, the patter of baby moccasins and the sound of children's voices. And one night a vision came upon him, and he beheld the raven, who is thy father, the great raven, who is the father of all the Sticks. And the raven spake to the lonely white man, saying: 'Bind thou thy moccasins upon thee, and gird thy snowshoes on, and lash thy sled with food for many sleeps and fine tokens for the Chief Thling-Tinneh. For thou shalt turn thy face to where the mid-spring sun is wont to sink below the land, and journey to this great chief's hunting grounds. There thou shalt make big presents, and Thling-Tinneh, who is my son, shall become to thee as a father. In his lodge there is a maiden into whom I breathed the breath of life for thee. This maiden shalt thou take to wife.'

"O chief, thus spake the great raven; thus do I lay many presents at thy feet; thus and I come to take thy daughter!"

The old man drew his furs about him with crude consciousness of royalty, but delayed reply while a youngster crept in, delivered a quick message to appear before the council, and was gone.

"O white man, whom we have named moose-killer, also known as the wolf, and the son of the wolf! We know thou comest of a mighty race; we are proud to have thee our potlach guest; but the king-salmon does not mate with the dog-salmon, nor the raven with the wolf."

"Not so!" cried Mackenzie. "The daughter of the raven have I met in the camps of the wolf—the squaw of Mortimer, the squaw of Tregidgo, the squaw of Barnaby, who came two ice-runs back, and I have heard of other squaws, though my eyes beheld them not."

"Son, your words are true; but it were evil mating, like the water with the sand, like the snowflake with the sun. But met you one Mason and his squaw? No? He came ten ice-runs ago—the first of all the wolves. And with him there was a mighty man, straight as a willow-shoot, and tall; strong as the bald-faced grizzly, with a heart like the full summer moon; his—"

"Oh!" interrupted Mackenzie, recognizing the well-known northland figure—"Malemute Kid!"

"The same—a mighty man. But say youught to the squaw? She was full sister to Zariska."

"Nay, chief; but I have heard. Mason—far, far to the north, a spruce tree, heavy with years, crushed out his life beneath. But his love was great, and he had much gold. With this, and her boy, she journeyed countless sleeps toward the winter's noontide sun, and there she yet lives—no biting frost, no snow, no summer's midnight sun, no winter's noontide night."

A second messenger interrupted with imperative summons from the council. As Mackenzie threw him into the snow, he caught a glimpse of the swaying forms before the council fire, heard the deep basses of the men in rhythmic chant, and knew the Shaman was fanning with anger of his people. Time pressed. He turned upon the chief.

"Come! I wish thy child. And now see! here are tobacco, tea, many cups of sugar, warm blankets, handkerchiefs, both good and large; and here, a true rifle, with many bullets and much powder."

"Nay," replied the old man, struggling against the great wealth spread before him. "Even now are my people come together. They will not have this marriage."

"But thou art chief."

"Yet do my young men rage because the wolves have taken their maidens so that they may not marry."

"Listen, O Thling-Tinneh! Ere the night has passed into the day, the Wolf shall face his dogs to the mountains of the east and fare forth to the country to the Y-hon. And Zariska shall break trail for his dogs."

"And are the night has gained its middle, my young men may fling to the dogs the flesh of the wolf, and the



Swayed a Moment and Pitched Forward. bones be scattered in the snow till the springtime lay them bare."

It was threat and counter-threat. Mackenzie's bronzed face flushed darkly. He raised his voice. The old squaw, who till now had sat an impassive spectator, made to creep by him for the door. The song of the men broke suddenly, and there was a hubbub of many voices as he whirled the old woman roughly to her couch of skins.

"Again I cry—listen, O Thling-Tinneh! The wolf dies with teeth fast-locked, and with him there shall sleep ten of thy strongest men—men who are needed, for the hunting is but begun, and the fishing is not many moons away. And again, of what profit should I die? I know the custom of thy people; thy share of my wealth shall be very small. Grant me thy child, and it shall all be thine. And yet again, my brothers will come, and they are many, and their maws are never filled; and the daughters of the raven shall bear children in the lodges of the wolf. My people are greater than thy people. It is destiny. Grant, and all this wealth is thine."

Moccasins were crunching the snow without. Mackenzie threw his rifle to cock, and loosened the twin coils in his belt.

"Grant, O chief!"

"And yet will my people say no."

"Grant, and the wealth is thine. Then shall I deal with thy people after."

"The Wolf will have it so. I will take his tokens—but I would warn him."

Mackenzie passed over the goods, taking care to clog the rifle's ejector, and capping the bargain with a kaleidoscopic silk kerchief. The Shaman and half a dozen young braves entered, but he shouldered boldly among them and passed out.

"Pack!" was his laconic greeting to Zariska as he passed her lodge and hurried to harness his dogs. A few minutes later he swept into the council at the head of the team the woman by his side. He took his place at the upper end of the oblong, by the side of the chief. To his left, a step to the rear, he stationed Zariska—her proper place. Besides, the time was ripe for mischief, and there was need to guard his back.

The singing and dancing ceased, and the Shaman flared up in rude eloquence. Through the stinnosities of their vast mythology, he worked cunningly upon the credulity of his people. The case was strong. Opposing the creative principles as embodied in the crow and the raven, he stigmatized Mackenzie as the wolf, the fighting and the destructive principle.

"Ay, my brothers, Jelchs is all-power! Did he not bring heaven-born fire that we might be warm? Did he not draw the sun, moon and stars from their holes that we might see? Did he not teach us that we might fight the spirits of famine and of frost? But

now Jelchs is angry with his children, and they are grown to a handful, and he will not help. For they have forgotten him, and done evil things, and trod bad trails, and taken his enemies into their lodges to sit by their fires. And the raven is sorrowful at the wickedness of his children; but when they shall rise up and show they have come back, he will come out of the darkness to aid them. O brothers! the fire-bringer has whispered messages to thy shaman; the same shall ye hear. Let the young men take the young women to their lodges; let them fly at the throat of the wolf; let them be undying in their enmity! Then shall their women become fruitful, and they shall multiply into a mighty people! And the raven shall lead great tribes of their fathers and their fathers' fathers from out of the North; and they shall beat back the wolves till they are as last year's campfires; and they shall again come to rule over all the land! 'Tis the message of Jelchs, the raven."

This foreshadowing of the Messiah's coming brought a hoarse howl from the Sticks as they leaped to their feet. Mackenzie slipped the thumbs of his mittens, and waited. There was a clamor for the Fox, not to be still till one of the young men stepped forward to speak.

"Brothers! The Shaman has spoken wisely. The wolves have taken our women, and our men are childless. We are grown to a handful. The wolves have taken our warm furs and given for them evil spirits which dwell in bottles, and clothes which come not from the beaver or the lynx, but are made from the grass. And they are not warm, and our men die of strange sicknesses. I, the Fox, have taken no woman to wife; and why? Twice have the maidens which pleased me gone to the camps of the Wolf. Even now I have laid by skins of the beaver, of the moose, of the caribou, that I might win favor in the eyes of Thling-Tinneh, that I might marry Zariska, his daughter. Even now are her snowshoes bound to her feet, ready to break trail for the dogs of the Wolf. Nor do I speak for myself alone. As I have done, so has the bear. He, too, had slain the father of her children, and many skins has he cured thereto. I speak for all the young men who know not wives. The wolves are ever hungry. Always do they take the choice meat at the killing. To the ravens are left the leavings."

"There is Gugkla!" he cried, brutally pointing out one of the women, who was a cripple. "Her legs are bent like the ribs of a birch canoe. She cannot gather wood nor carry the meat of the hunters. Did the wolves choose her?"

(Continued Friday.)

Twice-a-week Polk County Post, ONLY ONE IN COUNTY Phone Main 621.

BILLS ALLOWED BY COUNTY COURT AT JULY SESSION

(Continued from Page 2.)

Shop \$63.05, Oregon Gravel & Construction Co. \$79.65, J. N. Jones \$136.50, Earl Ruef \$144, Henry Lehman \$57, Ralph Barber \$12, George Wilson \$21, James Morgan \$18, W. T. House \$5. Total \$536.20.

Road District No. 10

Farmers State Bank \$109.05, Oregon Gravel & Construction Co. \$72, W. J. Steele \$162, A. R. McCallum \$36, Adolph Aebi \$10, A. T. Steele \$102. Total \$491.05.

Road District No. 11

W. C. Williams \$3.50, Chas. Lehman \$38.50, Rex Womer \$237.50, E. M. Turner \$150, P. L. Lewis \$54, E. D. Brown \$24, Eric Petre \$73.20, Darrell Turner \$15, W. H. Stonehocker \$257.40, D. N. Turner \$144, C. E. Staats \$145.20, Cecil Embree \$54, Wm. Boyer \$84, Fred Boyer \$42, Guy L. Wisecup \$24, W. B. Whittington \$36, J. W. McBee \$42, C. R. Nendel \$78, H. C. Nendel \$42, H. C. Byerley \$58.50, Glen Hadley \$60, L. B. Miller \$33, Wiley Norton \$81, Francis Sturges \$21, J. Bagley \$133.20, Frank Smith \$84, E. W. Staats \$222, V. L. Staats \$151.20, Percy Hadley \$120, J. W. Powell \$100.20, Otto Fleischman \$67.20, George Rhodes \$124.20, H. P. Whitaker \$105, J. B. Embree \$126, M. D. Coulter \$115, A. F. Huber \$194.40, W. E. Williams Jr. \$42, P. M. Schweizer \$24, E. E. Staats \$135, H. Yost \$57, R. P. Mathany \$12, Leroy Byerley \$70.20, Clifford Calkins \$43.20. Total \$3732.80.

Road District No. 12

Total \$1016.75.

Road District No. 14

Total \$89.

Road District No. 16

John Underwood \$97.50, John Walker \$94.50, Lee Roberts \$87, C. Whipple \$90, Harry Heffley \$81, Lou Chase \$49.50. Total \$490.50.

Road District No. 17

Total \$1298.75.

Road District No. 18

Total \$43.33.

Road District No. 19

Total \$1202.25.

Road District No. 20

Total \$982.50.

Road District No. 21

Total \$626.50.

Road District No. 22

Total \$453.

Road District No. 24

Total \$54.50.

General Road Fund

Total \$3268.40.

Total Road Warrants \$22315.18.

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