

# In a Far Country

## The Gold Seekers Who Journeyed Into the Silence and Peace of the Arctic and Who Never Came Back

By JACK LONDON

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WHEN a man journeys into a far country he must be prepared to forget many of the things he has learned and to acquire such customs as are inherent with existence in the new land. He must abandon the old ideals and the old gods, and oftentimes he must reverse the very code by which his conduct has hitherto been shaped.

When the world rang with the tale of arctic gold and the lure of the north gripped the heartstrings of men Carter Weatherbee threw up his snug clerkship, turned half of his savings over to his wife and with the remainder bought an outfit. There was no romance in his nature. The bondage of commerce had crushed all that. He was simply tired of the ceaseless grind and wished to risk great hazards in view of corresponding returns.

There was nothing unusual about this party, except its plans. Even its goal, like that of all other parties, was the Klondike. But the route it had mapped out to attain that goal took away the breath of the hardiest native, born and bred to the vicissitudes of the northwest. Even Jacques Baptiste, born of a Chippewa woman and a renegade voyageur having raised his first whippers in a deerkin lodge north of the sixty-fifth parallel and had the same hushed by blissful sticks of raw tallow, was surprised.

Percy Cuthbert's evil star must have been in the ascendant, for he, too, joined this country of arctic gold. He was an ordinary man, with a bank account as deep as his culture, which is saying a good deal. He had no reason to embark on such a venture—no reason in the world, save that he suffered from an abnormal development of sentimentality. He mistook this for the true spirit of romance and adventure.

The first breakup of spring found the party following the ice run of Elk river. It was an imposing feat, for the outfit was large, and they were accompanied by a disreputable contingent of half breed voyageurs with their women and children. Day in and day out they labored with the bateaux and canoes, fought mosquitoes and other kindred pests or sweated and swore at the portages. Severe toil like this lays a man naked to the very roots of his soul, and ere Lake Athabasca was lost in the south each member of the party had hoisted his true colors.

The two sharks and chronic grumblers were Carter Weatherbee and Percy Cuthbert. The whole party complained less of its aches and pains than did either of them. Not once did they volunteer for the thousand and one petty duties of the camp. They thought nobody noticed, but their comrades swore under their breaths and grew to hate them, while Jacques Baptiste sneered openly and damned them from morning till night. But Jacques Baptiste was no gentleman.

At the Great Slave Hudson bay dogs were purchased, and the fleet sank to the guards with its added burden of dried fish and pemmican. Then canoe and bateaux answered to the swift current of the Mackenzie, and they plunged into the Great Barren Ground. Every likely looking "feeder" was prospected, but the elusive "pay dirt" danced ever to the north. At the Great Bear, overcome by the common dread of the unknown lands, their voyageurs began to desert, and Fort of Good Hope saw the last and bravest bending to the low lines as they bucked the current down which they had so treacherously glided. Jacques Baptiste alone remained. Had he not sworn to travel even to the never opening ice?

Abandoning their river craft at the headwaters of the Little Peel, they consumed the rest of the summer in the great portage over the Mackenzie watershed to the West Rat. This little stream fed the Porcupine, which in turn joined the Yukon where that mighty highway of the north counter-marches on the Arctic Circle. But they had lost in the race with winter, and one day they tied their rafts to the

thick eddy ice and hurried their goods ashore. That night the river jammed and broke several times. The following morning it had fallen asleep for good.

"We can't be more'n 400 miles from the Yukon," concluded Sloper, multiplying his thumb nails by the scale of the map. The council, in which the two incapables had whined to excellent disadvantage, was drawing to a close.

"Hudson bay post, long time ago, no use um now," Jacques Baptiste's father had made the trip for the Fur company in the old days, incidentally marking the trail with a couple of frozen toes.

"Sufferin' crack!" cried another of the party. "No whites?"

"Nary white," Sloper sententiously affirmed. "But it's only 500 more up the Yukon to Dawson. Call it a rough thousand from here."

Weatherbee and Cuthbert groaned in chorus.

"How long'll that take, Baptiste?"

"The half breed figured for a moment. 'Workum like h—, no man play out, ten, twenty, forty, fifty days. Um babies come' (designating the incapables), 'no can tell. Mebbe when h— freeze over; mebbe not then.'"

The manufacture of snowshoes and moccasins ceased. Somebody called the name of an absent member, who came out of an ancient cabin at the edge of the campfire and joined them. The cabin was one of the many mysteries which lurk in the vast recesses of the north. Built when and by whom no man could tell. Two graves in the open, piled high with stones, perhaps contained the secret of those early wanderers. But whose hand had piled the stones?

The moment had come. Jacques Baptiste paused in the fitting of a harness and plinned the struggling dog in the snow. The cook made mute protest for delay, threw a handful of bacon into a noisy pot of beans, then came to attention. Sloper rose to his feet. His body was a ludicrous contrast to the healthy physiques of the incapables. Yellow and weak, feeling from a South American fever hole, he had not broken his slight across the zones and was still able to toil with men. His weight was probably ninety pounds with the heavy hunting knife thrown in, and his grizzled hair told of a prime which had ceased to be. The fresh young muscles of either Weatherbee or Cuthbert were equal to ten times the endeavor of his, yet he could walk them into the earth in a day's journey. And all this day he had whipped his stronger comrades into venturing a thousand miles of the stiffest hardship man can conceive. He was the incarnation of the unrest of his race, and the old Teutonic stubbornness, dashed with the quick grasp and action of the Yankee, held the flesh in the bondage of the spirit.

"All those in favor of going on with the dogs as soon as the ice sets say 'aye.'"

"Aye!" rang out eight voices—voices destined to string a trail of oaths along many a hundred miles of pain.

"Contrary minded?"

"No!" For the first time the incapables were united without some compromise of personal interests.

"And what are you going to do about it?" Weatherbee added belligerently.

"Majority rule! Majority rule!" clamored the rest of the party.

"I know the expedition is liable to fall through if you don't come," Sloper replied sweetly, "but I guess, if we try real hard, we can manage to do without you. What do you say, boys?"

The sentiment was cheered to the echo.

"But I say, you know," Cuthbert ventured apprehensively, "what's a chap like me to do?"

"Ain't you coming with us?"

"No-o."

"Then do as you please. We won't have nothing to say."

"Kind of calidule yuh might settle it with that canoodlin' partner of yours," suggested a heavy going westerner from the Dakotas, at the same time pointing out Weatherbee. "He'll be shore to ask yuh what yur a-goin' to do when it comes to cookin' an' gatherin' the wood."

"Then we'll consider it all arranged," concluded Sloper. "We'll pull out tomorrow, if we camp within five miles, just to get everything in running order and remember if we've forgotten anything."

The sleds groaned by on their steel shoe runners, and the dogs strained low in the harnesses in which they were born to die. Jacques Baptiste paused by the side of Sloper to get a last glimpse of the cabin. The smoke curled up pathetically from the Yukon stovepipe. The two incapables were watching them from the doorway.

Sloper laid his hand on the other's shoulder.

"Jacques Baptiste, did you ever hear of the Kilkenny cats?"

good. Now, these two men don't like work. They won't work. We know that. They'll be all alone in that cabin a winter—a mighty long, dark winter. Kilkenny cats—well!"

The Frenchman in Baptiste shrugged his shoulders, but the Indian in him was silent. Nevertheless it was an eloquent shrug, pregnant with prophesy.

Things prospered in the little cabin at first. The rough baggage of their comrades had made Weatherbee and Cuthbert conscious of the mutual responsibility which had devolved upon them. Besides, there was not so much work, after all, for two healthy men. And the removal of the cruel whip hand, or, in other words, the bulldozing half breed, had brought with it a joyous reaction. At first each strove to outdo the other, and they performed petty tasks with an unction which would have opened the eyes of their comrades who were now wearing out bodies and souls on the long trail.

All care was banished. The forest, which shouldered in upon them from three sides, was an inexhaustible wood yard. A few yards from their door slept the porcupine, and a hole through its winter robe formed a bubbling spring of water, crystal clear and painfully cold. But they soon grew to find fault with even that. The hole would persist in freezing up and thus gave them many a miserable hour of ice chopping. The unknown builders of the cabin had extended the side logs so as to support a cache at the rear. In this was stored the bulk of the party's provisions. Food there was, without stint, for three times the men who were fated to live upon it. But the most of it was of the kind which built

up brain and sinew, but did not tickle the palate. True, there was sugar in plenty for two ordinary men, but these two were little else than children. They early discovered the virtues of hot water judiciously saturated with sugar, and they prodigally swam their flapjacks and soaked their crusts in the rich, white sirup. Then coffee and tea, and especially the dried fruits, made disastrous inroads upon it. The first words they had were over the sugar question. And it is a really serious thing when two men wholly dependent upon each other for company begin to quarrel.

Weatherbee loved to discourse biantly on politics, while Cuthbert, who had been prone to clip his coupons and let the commonwealth jog on as best it might, either ignored the subject or delivered himself of startling epigrams. But the clerk was too obtuse to appreciate the clever shaming of thought, and this waste of amputation irritated Cuthbert. He had been used to blinding people by his brilliancy, and it worked him quite a hardship, this loss of an audience. He felt personally aggrieved and unconsciously held his mutthead companion responsible for it.

Save existence, they had nothing in common—came in touch on no single point. Weatherbee was a clerk who had known naught but clerking all his life; Cuthbert was a master of arts, a dabbler in oils and had written not a little. The one was a lower class man who considered himself a gentleman, and the other was a gentleman who knew himself to be such. From this it may be remarked that a man can be a gentleman without possessing the first instinct of true comradeship. The very presence of either became a personal affront to the other, and they lapsed into sullen silences which increased in length and strength as the days went by. Occasionally the flash of an eye or the curl of a lip got the better of them, though they strove to

ignore wholly each other during these mute periods. And a great wonder sprang up in the breast of each as to how God had ever come to create the other.

As the sugar pile and other little luxuries dwindled they began to be afraid they were not getting their proper shares, and in order that they might not be robbed they fell to gorging themselves. The luxuries suffered in this gluttonous contest, as did also the men. In the absence of fresh vegetables and exercise their blood became impoverished, and a loathsome, purplish rash crept over their bodies. Yet they refused to heed the warning. Next their muscles and joints began to swell, the flesh turning black, while their mouths, gums and lips took on the color of rich cream. Instead of being drawn together by their misery, each gloated over the other's symptoms as the surly took its course.

They lost all regard for personal appearance and, for that matter, common decency. The cabin became a pigpen, and never once were the beds made or fresh pine boughs laid underneath. Yet they could not keep to their blankets, as they would have wished, for the frost was inexorable, and the fire box consumed much fuel. The hair of their heads and faces grew long and shaggy, while their garments would have disgusted a ruffian. But they did not care. They were sick, and there was no one to see. Besides, it was very painful to move about.

To all this was added a new trouble—the fear of the north. This fear was the joint child of the great cold and the great silence and was born in the darkness of December, when the sun dipped below the southern horizon for good. It affected them according to

during one of these sane intervals the chief bone of contention, the sugar, had been divided equally between them. They guarded their separate sacks, stored up in the cache, with jealous eyes, for there were but a few cupsful left, and they were totally devoid of faith in each other. But one day Cuthbert made a mistake. Hardly able to move, sick with pain, with his head swimming and eyes blinded, he crept into the cache, sugar canister in hand, and mistook Weatherbee's sack for his own.

January had been born but a few days when this occurred. The sun had some time since passed its lowest southern declination and at meridian now threw flaunting streaks of yellow light upon the northern sky. On the day following his mistake with the sugar bag Cuthbert found himself feeling better both in body and in spirit. As noontime drew near and the day brightened he dragged himself outside to feast on the evanescent glow, which was to him an earnest of the sun's future intentions. Weatherbee was also feeling somewhat better and crawled out beside him. They propped themselves in the snow beneath the moveless wind vane and waited.

The stillness of death was about them. In other climes when nature falls into such moods there is a subdued air of expectancy, a waiting for some small voice to take up the broken strain. Not so in the north. The two men had lived seeming aeons in this ghostly peace. They could remember no song of the past; they could conjure no song of the future. This unearthly calm had always been—the tranquil silence of eternity.

Their eyes were fixed upon the north. Unseen, behind their backs, behind the towering mountains to the south, the sun swept toward the zenith of another sky than theirs. Sole spectators of the mighty canvas, they watched the false dawn slowly grow. A faint flame began to glow and smolder. It deepened in intensity, ringing the changes of reddish yellow, purple and saffron. So bright did it become that Cuthbert thought the sun must surely be behind it—a miracle, without warning and without fading, the canvas was swept clean. There was no color in the sky. The light had gone out of the day. They caught their breaths in half sob. But, lo, the air was aglint with particles of scintillating frost, and there, to the north, the wind vane lay in vague outline on the snow! A shadow! A shadow! It was exactly midday. They jerked their heads hurriedly to the south. A golden rim peeped over the mountain's snowy shoulder, smiled upon them an instant, then dipped from sight again.

There were tears in their eyes as they sought each other. A strange softening came over them. They felt irresistibly drawn toward each other. The sun was coming back again. It would be with them tomorrow and the next day and the next. And it would stay longer every visit, and a time would come when it would ride their heavenly day and night, never once dropping below the sky line. There would be no night. The ice locked winter would be broken; the winds would blow and the forests answer; the land would bathe in the blessed sunshine and life renew. Hand in hand they would quit this horrid dream and journey back to the southland. They lurched blindly forward, and their hands met—their poor maimed hands, swollen and distorted beneath their mittens.

But the promise was destined to remain unfulfilled. The northland is the northland, and men work out their souls by strange rules, which other men who have not journeyed into far countries cannot come to understand.

An hour later Cuthbert put a pan of bread into the oven and fell to speculating on what the surgeons could do with his feet when he got back. Home did not seem so very far away now. Weatherbee was rummaging in the cache. Of a sudden he raised a whirlwind of blasphemy, which in turn ceased with startling abruptness. The other man had robbed his sugar sack. Still, things might have happened differently had not the two dead men come out from under the stones and hushed the hot words in his throat. They led him quite gently from the cache, which he forgot to close. That consummation was reached; that something they had whispered to him in his dreams was about to happen. They guided him gently, very gently, to the woodpile, where they put the ax in his hands. Then they helped him shove open the cabin door, and he felt sure they shut it after him—and he heard it slam and the latch fall sharply into place. And he knew they were waiting just without, waiting for him to do his task.

"Carter! I say, Carter!"

Percy Cuthbert was frightened at the look on the clerk's face, and he made haste to put the table between them.

Carter Weatherbee followed without haste and without enthusiasm. There was neither pity nor passion in his face, but rather the patient, stolid look of one who has certain work to do and goes about it methodically.

"I say, what's the matter?"

The clerk dodged back, cutting off his retreat to the door, but never opening his mouth.

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The master of arts was thinking rapidly now, shaping a skillful flank movement on the bed where his Smith & Wesson lay. Keeping his eyes on the madman, he rolled backward on the bunk, at the same time clutching the pistol.

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Percy Cuthbert felt his strength leave him. The lower portion of his body was useless. The inert weight of Weatherbee crushed him—crushed him and pinned him there like a bear under a trap. The cabin became filled with a familiar odor, and he knew the bread to be burning. Yet what did it matter? He would never need it. And there were all of six cupsful of sugar in the cache. If he had foreseen this he would not have been so saving the last several days. Would the wind vane ever move? It might even be veering now. Why not? Had he not seen the sun today? He would go and see. No; it was impossible to move. He had not thought the clerk so heavy a man.

How quickly the cabin cooled! The fire must be out. The cold was forcing in. It must be below zero already, and the ice creeping up the inside of the door. He could not see it, but his past experience enabled him to gauge its progress by the cabin's temperature. The lower hinge must be white ere now. Would the tale of this ever reach the world? How would his friends take it? They would read it over their coffee, most likely, and talk it over at the clubs. He could see them very clearly. "Poor old Cuthbert!" they murmured. "Not such a bad sort of chap, after all." He smiled at their eulogies and passed on in search of a Turkish bath. It was the same old crowd upon the streets. Strange they did not notice his moose hide moccasins and tattered German socks! He would take a cab. And after the bath a shave would not be bad. No; he would eat first. Steak and potatoes and green things—how fresh it all was! And what was that? Squares of honey, streaming liquid amber! But why did they bring so much? Ha, ha! He could never eat it all. Shine! Why, certainly. He put his foot on the box. The bootback looked curiously up at him, and he remembered his moose hide moccasins and went away hastily.

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Well, he would have company. If Gabriel ever broke the silence of the north they would stand together, hand in hand, before the great white throne. And God would judge them, God would judge them!

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Sprang to Their Feet, Shrieking With Terror.

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Chinese Ignorant of the Anatomy of Human Body—Subject of Microbes Difficult to Teach.

Ignorance is responsible for the guesswork of the Chinese about the anatomy of the human body. Jean Price writes in World Outlook, "Nothing is known of the nervous system or of the circulation of the blood, and every organ except the brain is said to have a pulse. The heart is considered to be the center of being, and therefore it must also be in the center of the body." The Chinese also believe that the brain is in the stomach. Perhaps that is the reason that more than half the thought and conversation of the common people relates to food!

It is ignorance which makes a mother chew her child's food, before putting it in the little one's mouth. It is ignorance which allows a mother to wash the clothes in a green, stagnant pool while the child at her side eagerly drinks the same water. It is ignorance which our mission doctors have to fight when they suggest that women should not use poisonous face paint, should bathe the baby at least once before it is grown, should wash the dishes once a month in clean water. This ignorance makes the subject of microbes more difficult to teach than the English in which it is taught.

And, though it's hard to say, it is ignorance which causes a lover to take water in which his body is washed and secretly mix it in the drink of his loved one. But, then, that is romance and we wasn't mention germs in the same breath.

Correct.

Little Jim, did not know quite so much about scriptural history as he ought to have known, but when his sister asked him, "Where was Solomon's temple?" he was rather angry that she should think him unable to answer a simple question like that.

"Don't you think I know anything?" he asked.

"Well, where was it, then?" his sister repeated.

And then he informed her: "On the side of his forehead, of course, the same as other folks! Do you think I am a dunce?"

HOMER C. ROBBINS ENLISTS.

Homer C. Robbins, son of Mr. and Mrs. O. W. Robbins of Molalla, formerly a Clackamas county boy, but late of Montana, appeared before the local board for entry into the aviation service. He was examined Monday afternoon, found fit for service, and will leave in the next few days for the aviation training camp at Leavenworth, Kansas.

Pendleton—Warren Construction completes 10 miles paving between here and Blakely.

Linnton—Clark & Wilson Lumber Co. purchase large tract timber land in Columbia County for \$800,000.

## This Is Our Winter of Test

SERVING food is a local problem for each community. Prices and definite rules for every one cannot be formulated. It is a duty for each one to do as much as is necessary to maintain the human body healthy and strong. This winter of 1918 is the period when it is to be tested here in America whether our people are capable of voluntary individual sacrifice to save the world. That is the purpose of the organization of the United States Food Administration—by voluntary effort to provide the food that the world needs.

U. S. FOOD ADMINISTRATION

NEED BIG HERDS

Europe's Meat Supply Must Come From America.</