

SCARLET PLAGUE

JACK LONDON

COPYRIGHT 1914 BY MCCLURE NEWSPAPER STANDARDE

CHAPTER IV.

—7—

Beginning of Life Anew.

"But I must go on with my story. I traveled through a deserted land. As the time went by I began to yearn more and more for human beings. But I never found one, and I grew lonelier and lonelier. I crossed Livermore valley and the mountains between it and the great valley of the San Joaquin. You have never seen that valley, but it is very large and it is the home of the wild horse. There are great droves there, thousands and tens of thousands. I revisited it thirty years after, so I know. You think there are lots of wild horses down here in the coast valleys, but they are as nothing compared with those of the San Joaquin. Strange to say, the cows, when they went wild, went back into the lower mountains. Evidently they were better able to protect themselves there.

"In the country districts the ghouls and prowlers had been less in evidence, for I found many villages and towns untouched by fire. But they were filled by the pestilential dead, and I passed by without exploring them. It was near Lathrop that, out of my loneliness, I picked up a pair of collie dogs that were so newly free that they were urgently willing to return to their allegiance to man. These collies accompanied me for many years, and the strains of them are in these very dogs there that you boys have today. But in sixty years the collie strain has worked out. Those brutes are more like domesticated wolves than anything else."

Hare-Lip rose to his feet, glanced to see that the goats were safe, and looked at the sun's position in the afternoon sky, advertising impatience at the prolixity of the old man's tale. Urged to hurry by Edwin, Ganser went on:

"There is little more to tell. With my two dogs and my pony, and riding a horse I had managed to capture, I crossed the San Joaquin and went on to a wonderful valley in the Sierras called Yosemite. In the great hotel there I found a prodigious supply of timed provisions. The pasture was abundant, as was the game, and the river that ran through the valley was full of trout. I remained there three years in an utter loneliness that none but man who has once been highly civilized can understand. Then I could stand it no more. I felt that I was going crazy. Like the dog, I was a social animal and needed my kind. I reasoned that since I had survived the plague, there was a possibility that others had survived. Also, I reasoned that after three years the plague germs must all be gone and the land be clean again.

"With my horse and dogs and pony, I set out. Again I crossed the San Joaquin valley, the mountains beyond, and came down into Livermore valley. The change in those three years was amazing. All the land had been splendidly tilled, and now I could scarcely recognize it, such was the sea of rank vegetation that had overrun the agricultural handiwork of man. You see, the wheat, the vegetables, and orchard trees had always been cared for and nursed by man, so that they were soft and tender. The weeds and wild bushes and such things, on the contrary, had always been fought by man, so that they were tough and resistant. As a result, when the hand of man was removed the wild vegetation smothered and destroyed practically all the domesticated vegetation. The coyotes were greatly increased, and it was at this time that I first encountered wolves, straying in twos and threes and small packs, down from the wild regions where they had always persisted.

"It was at Lake Temescal, not far from the one-time city of Oakland, that I came upon the first live human being. Oh, my grandsons, how can I describe to you my emotions, when, astride my horse and dropping down the hillside to the lake, I saw the smoke of a campfire rising through the trees. Almost did my heart stop beating. I felt that I was going crazy. Then I heard the cry of a babe—a human babe. And dogs barked and my dogs answered. I did not know but that I was the one human alive in the whole world. It could not be true that there were others—smoke, and the cry of a babe.

"Emerging on the lake, there, before my eyes, not a hundred yards away, I saw a man, a large man. He was standing on an outjutting rock and fishing. I was overcome. I stopped my horse. I tried to call out, but could not. I waved my hand. It seemed to me that the man looked at me, but he did not appear to wave. Then I laid my hand on my arms there in the saddle. I was afraid to look again, for I knew it was a hallucination, and I knew that if I looked the man would be gone. And so precious was the hallucination that I wanted it to persist yet a little while. I knew, too, that as long as I did not look it would persist.

"Thus I remained, until I heard my

dogs snarling, and man's voice. What do you think the voice said? I will tell you. It said: "Where in hell did you come from?"

"Those were the words, the exact words. That was what your grandfather said to me, Hare-Lip, when he greeted me there on the shore of Lake Temescal fifty-seven years ago. And they were the most ineffable words I have ever heard. I opened my eyes, and there he stood before me, a large, dark, hairy man, heavy jawed, slant browed, fierce eyed. How I got off my horse I do not know. But it seemed that the next I knew I was clasping his hand with both of mine and crying. I would have embraced him, but he was ever a narrow-minded, suspicious man, and he drew away from me. Yet did I cling to his hand and cry."

Granser's voice faltered and broke at the recollection, and the weak tears streamed down his cheeks while the boys looked on and giggled.

"Yet did I cry," he continued, "and desire to embrace him, though the Chauffeur was a brute, a perfect brute—the most abhorrent man I have ever known. His name was . . . strange, how I have forgotten his name. Everybody called him Chauffeur—it was the name of his occupation, and it stuck. That is how, to this day, the tribe he founded is called the Chauffeur tribe.

"He was a violent, unjust man. Why the plague spared him I can never understand. It would seem, in spite of our old metaphysical notions about absolute justice, that there is no justice in the universe. Why did he live?—an iniquitous, moral monster, a blot on the face of nature, a cruel, relentless, bestial cheat as well. All he could talk about was motor cars, machinery, gasoline, and garage—and especially with huge delight, of his mean pilferings and sordid swindlings of the persons who had employed him in the days before the coming of the plague. And yet he was spared, while hundreds of millions, yea, billions, of better men were destroyed.

"I went on with him to his camp, and there I saw her, Vesta, the one woman. It was glorious and . . . pitiful. There she was, Vesta Van Warden, the young wife of John Van Warden, clad in rags, with marred and scarred and toll-calloused hands, bending over the campfire and doing scullion work—she, Vesta, who had been born to the purple of the greatest baronage of wealth the world had ever known. John Van Warden, her husband, worth one billion eight hundred millions, and president of the Board of Industrial Magnates, had been the ruler of America. Also, sitting on the Industrial Board of Control, he had been one of the seven men who ruled the world. And she herself had come of equally noble stock. Her father, Philip Saxon, had been President of the Board of Industrial Magnates up to the time of his death. This office was in process of becoming hereditary, and had Philip Saxon had a son that son would have succeeded him. But his only child was Vesta, the perfect flower of generations of the highest culture this planet has ever produced. It was not until the engagement between Vesta and Van Warden took place that Saxon indicated the latter as his successor. It was, I am sure, a political marriage. I have reason to believe that Vesta never really loved her husband in the mad, passionate way of which the poets used to sing. It was more like the marriages that obtained among crowned heads before they were displaced by the Magnates.

"And there she was, boiling fish chowder in a soot-covered pot, her glorious eyes inflamed by the acrid smoke of the open fire. Here was a sad story. She was the one survivor in a million, as I had been, as the Chauffeur had been. On a crowning eminence of the Alameda Hills, overlooking San Francisco Bay, Van Warden had built a vast summer palace. It was surrounded by a park of a thousand acres. When the plague broke out, Van Warden sent her there. Armed guards patrolled the boundaries of the park, and nothing entered in the way of provisions or even mail matter that was not first fumigated. And yet did the plague enter, killing the guards at their posts, the servants at their tasks, sweeping away the whole army of retainers—or, at least, all them who did not flee to die elsewhere. So it was that Vesta found herself the sole living person in the palace that had become a charnel house.

lowed, and that night he caught her. He struck her. Do you understand? He beat her with those terrible fists of his and made her his slave. It was she who had to gather the firewood, build the fires, cook and do all the degrading camp labor—she, who had never performed a menial act in her life. These things he compelled her to do, while he, a proper savage, elected to lie around camp and look on. He did nothing, absolutely nothing, except on occasion to hunt meat or catch fish."

"Good for Chauffeur," Hare-Lip commented in an understatement to the other boys. "I remember him before he died. He was a coker. But he did things, and he made things go. You know, dad married his daughter, an' you ought to see the way he knocked the spots outa dad. The Chauffeur was a son of a gun. He made us kids stand around. Even when he was croakin' he reached out for me once an' laid my head open with that long stick he kept always beside him."

Hare-Lip rubbed his bullet head reminiscently, and the boys returned to the old man, who was mauling ecstatically about Vesta, the squaw of the founder of the Chauffeur tribe.

"And so I say to you that you cannot understand the awfulness of the situation. The Chauffeur was a servant, understand, a servant. And he cringed, with bowed head, to such as she. She was a lord of life, both by birth and by marriage. The destinies of millions such as she carried in the hollow of her pink-white hand. And, in the days before the plague, the slightest contact with such as he would have been pollution. Oh, I have seen it. Once, I remember, there was a Mrs. Goldwin, wife of one of the great magnates. It was on a landing stage, just as she was embarking in her private dirigible, that she dropped her parasol. A servant picked it up and made the mistake of handing it to her—to her, one of the greatest royal ladies of the land! She shrank back, as though he were a leper, and indicated her secretary to receive it. Also, she ordered her secretary to ascertain the creature's name and to see that he was immediately discharged from service. And such a woman was Vesta Van Warden. And her the Chauffeur beat and made his slave.

"Bill—that was it; Bill, the Chauffeur. That was his name. He was a



With My Horse and Dogs and Pony I Set Out.

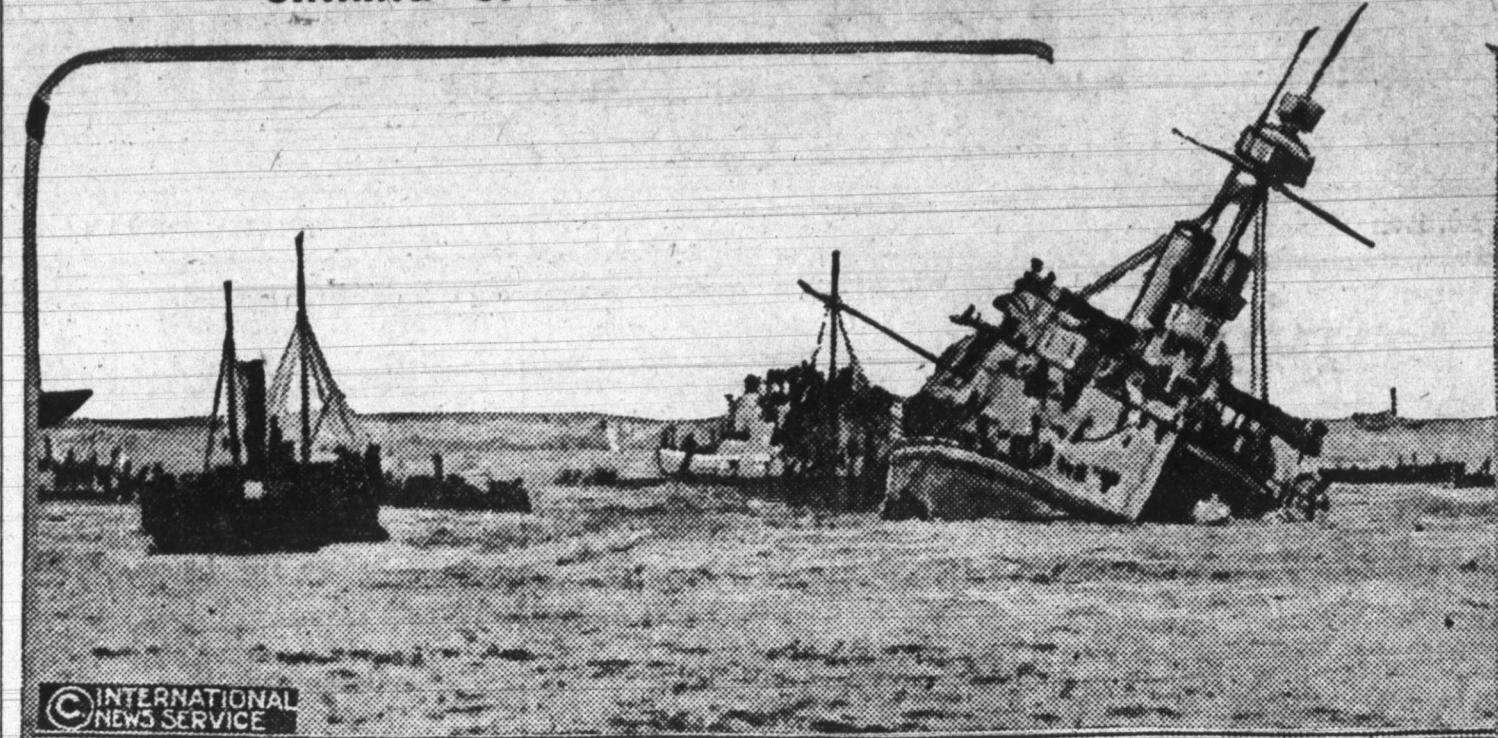
wretched, primitive man, wholly devoid of the finer instincts and chivalrous promptings of a cultured soul. No, there is no absolute justice, for to him fell that wonder of womanhood, Vesta Van Warden. The grievousness of this you will never understand, my grandsons; for you are yourselves primitive little savages, unaware of aught else but savagery. Why should Vesta not have been mine? I was a man of culture and refinement, a professor in a great university. Even so, in the time before the plague, such was her exalted position, she would not have deigned to know that I existed. Mark, then, the abysmal degradation to which she fell at the hands of the Chauffeur. Nothing less than the destruction of all mankind had made it possible that I should know her, look in her eyes, converse with her, touch her hand—aye, and love her and know that her feelings toward me were very kindly. I have reason to believe that she, even she, would have loved me, there being no other man in the world except the Chauffeur. Why, when it destroyed eight billions of souls, did not the plague destroy just one more man, and that man the Chauffeur?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Senator Sumner's Literalness.

Of Senator Sumner's literalness some amusing anecdotes have been told. At an official ball in Washington he remarked to a young lady: "We are fortunate in having these places; we shall see the first entrance of the new English and French ministers into Washington society." The young girl replied: "I am glad to hear it, I like to see lions break the ice." Sumner was silent for a few minutes, but presently said: "Miss _____, in the country where lions live there is no ice."—Christian Register.

SINKING OF BRITISH BATTLESHIP MAJESTIC



The sinking British battleship Majestic photographed in the Dardanelles three minutes after she was struck by a German torpedo. Her torpedo nets are out and the crew are scrambling down the sides. "As soon as she was torpedoed," wrote a French officer, "she heeled over in an alarming fashion until she had a list of about 45 degrees. Everything on deck fell or slid with a tremendous din. But there was not a single instant of panic. Four minutes after the explosion the Majestic turned completely over and went down."

BAND WIPE OUT LEADING CHARGE

French Composer Tells of Musicians Playing Till All But One Fall.

WROTE MARCH IN TRENCHES

Camille Decreus, French Composer, Describes Death of Collignon—Tells of Life in Trenches With French Soldiers.

New York.—Having served as a volunteer in the army until incapacitated through rheumatism brought about his honorable discharge, Camille Decreus, a well-known French composer and pianist, who two years ago made a tour of this country with Ysaye, the violinist, has just arrived here, and is a guest of ex-Senator William A. Clark at the latter's country place near Greenwich, Conn.

M. Decreus was a member of the same regiment with Collignon, former prefect, general secretary to the president of the republic, and councilor of the state, who at the age of fifty-eight enlisted, insisted upon remaining a private, and whose memory is now perpetuated at every roll call of the gallant Forty-sixth Regiment of Infantry, as is that of La Tour d'Auvergne, first grenadier of the republic.

M. Decreus knew Collignon, and after the latter's death, in the interval of duty, he composed the funeral march which was a feature of the memorial service held at Fontainebleau recently, and which M. Decreus had arranged.

"I was at Juvy with my friend Tourret when the war broke out, and we had been guests of Senator Clark at his chateau of Ivry, at Petitbourg, near by," said M. Decreus. "I had never been in the army. When my class was first called to the colors I was rejected because of failure to pass the physical examination. But when our country was threatened, my friend Tourret and I, unlike many French artists and musicians who flocked to this country, and who have, I fear, created an impression in America that a Frenchman following such a profession places it above patriotism and military service, felt we owed something to France, and volunteered. They rejected Tourret, but they took me.

Describes Life in Trenches.

"In two days we were at Soissons, and immediately we were sent to the trenches. That was in August. Now at that point I must confess that life in the trenches was not very exciting. Since September both sides had held about the same positions, with the exception of the incident in January, when the river rose, carried off a bridge and left part of our force on its farther side. The Germans immediately attacked and forced the French back over to the main body.

"It should be explained that one reason for the apparent inactivity at Soissons was the fact that in their march on Paris German engineers had taken the precaution to prepare trenches in the quarries, situated on a high plateau. Granite trenches are something whose taking would require the sacrifice of a tremendous number of men. The French generals, following Joffre's policy of saving his soldiers and wearing out the enemy by nibbling, think that in time they will be able to surround the plateau.

"Most of the while in the trenches in those days it was a case of keeping the time pass. We played cards to the accompaniment of shells screaming overhead or tearing up the earth in the trench. Whenever the explosion would bury some of our soldiers we would dig them out again and resume our occupations, the effort being always to keep in good humor. We became hardened to the visits of the shells and used to crack jokes and make wagers about where they would land. In fact, at one point we were so near the German trenches that we used to crack jokes with the Germans.

A feeling of human solidarity grew up.

"One day I got lost in a 'boyau,' or communicating trench, and came near not being here. I had been sent back to the third line to bring food, and the first thing I knew I found myself in the open country. Immediately shells began to fall about me. Now, when I was first drilled, I was instructed that the important thing about screening oneself was to be able to take advantage of any accidental shelter afforded by a rock. It seems incredible, but a stone six times as big as one's fist will absolutely hide your body if you lie behind it, and at 300 meters an observer cannot detect you. I threw myself flat and began to cast about for a stone that large. It was remarkable how few rocks were on the surface at that point. Finally I discovered one and dragged myself behind it.

Safe Behind a Stone.

"I cannot tell you how long I lay there, but when I discovered I was still alive I began to drag myself away by the elbows, and finally found myself in a trench again. My comrades did not recognize me. Exhaustion and rheumatism, the latter acquired through lying there wallowing my way back in the mud, invalided me back to the depot for a fortnight's rest.

"Then they gave me a job as distributor of munitions, food, clothing and other things meant for the men in the front line. These things were unloaded at a certain distance back. In that capacity I went to the Argonne, and was at the battle of Vauquois, at the end of February. I had come to know Collignon very well. I know that Collignon was repeatedly offered a commission, but he wanted to carry the colors of the regiment. He was a splendid figure, with his white beard, and the rosette of the Legion of Honor on his breast. He could not wear the military shoes and most of the time he went barefooted. Later he wore sandals. It was at Vauquois that he was killed. Our men had sought shelter in the cellars of ruined houses in the village. In a heavy rain of bullets from machine guns, Collignon rushed out from such a shelter to rescue a comrade who had fallen wounded. A shell burst near him and killed him.

"He was buried at the front, and it was not until after my 'reformation,' or honorable discharge, that the memorial service took place at Fontainebleau. I had composed my 'March Funèbre' between trips from the depot to the front trenches.

"It was at Vauquois that happened an incident that I suppose stands alone in this war, the charge of a regimental band at the head of troops. Nowadays the bands are usually kept at the rear. But a critical moment came. Our men had three times attacked the Germans, and thrice had been repulsed. The colonel felt that a time for supreme effort had arrived. He summoned the leader of the band.

"Put your men at the head of the regiment, strike up the 'Marseillaise,' and lead them to victory," he commanded.

"The bandmaster saluted. He called his musicians and told them what was expected. Then the forty of them took their positions. Our line was reformed. The bandmaster waved his baton.

"'Allons, enfants de la Patrie!' rang out, and the men took up the song. France was calling upon them to do or die. The band started out on the double-quick, as if on rapid parade. The Germans must have rubbed their eyes. No musician carried a weapon. But they were carrying the 'Marseillaise' against the foe. Then came the continuous rattle of the machine guns. The band marched on, their ranks thinning at every step. The leader went down. The cornetists followed him. The drummers and their instruments collapsed in the same valley. In less than five minutes every man of the forty was lying upon the ground, killed or wounded, that is, with one exception. That was a trombone player.

Instrument Shot Away.

"His whole instrument was shot away except the mouthpiece and the slide, to which his fingers were fastened. He did not know it. He still blew, and worked the slide. It was only a ghostly 'Marseillaise' he was playing, but the spirits of his dead comrades played with him, and with that fragment of a trombone he led the way to victory. The trench

was taken. Half of the band had died on the field of honor.

"You have perhaps read statements that the Germans were lashed to canon. Of that I have no proof, but with my own eyes I have seen German soldiers bound to machine guns with chains. We took several of these prisoners at the battle of Vauquois, and we found several dead lashed to their guns. Their officers had lashed them there, with instructions to keep turning the crank.

"Not a Red Cross flag came near our front but what the Germans fired at it. This cannot be disproved. We found the German prisoners we took in absolute ignorance of where they were. They had been told invariably that they were within a few miles of Paris.

"I finally had a breakdown, due to rheumatism, and the doctors sent me back to Fontainebleau, where, after a thorough examination, I was honorably discharged on May 4."

M. Decreus wears a diamond horse-shoe scarfpin presented to him by his regiment. Indicative of the spirit of comradeship prevailing between officers and men is a note he carried from his colonel. M. Decreus sent the commander a card of congratulation when the latter was made an officer of the Legion of Honor, and the colonel wrote an appreciative reply with his own hand. He also had a letter from General Sasset-Schneider, commander of the first and second subdivisions of the Fifth corps, commanding him as a "good patriot who had discharged his duties to his country until his strength had given way," to all representatives of France abroad.

CAUSED GREAT WORLD WAR



This is the first photograph received in this country of Wogo Tankositsch, the man who hatched the plot for the assassination of the crown prince of Austria and his wife, the denouement of which precipitated the present world war in Europe. Austria named Tankositsch in her ultimatum to Serbia, and peremptorily demanded his extradition to face a trial on the charge of murder—it was this ultimatum that Serbia accepted to in all its clauses except the trial of Serbian officers in Austria, among whom Tankositsch was the most prominent, a point of national sovereignty which Serbia asked to have settled at The Hague. Austria refused this offer and declared war. Tankositsch is now a major in the Serbian army.

FOUND AFTER FOUR YEARS

Missing Japanese Stowaway Is Discovered as Cook on an American Barkentine.

Fort Townsend.—Genjiro Suzuki, a Japanese stowaway, who arrived at Smith Cove on the Sado Maru four years ago and escaped from that vessel by jumping overboard and swimming ashore, was taken into custody a few days ago by