



Cayley Wheeled Sharply Up Into the Wind.

CHAPTER I.

The Man With Wings.

For many hours—Cayley was too much of a god today to bother with the exact number of them—he had been flying slowly northward down a mild southerly breeze. Hundreds of feet below him was the dazzling, terrible expanse of the polar ice pack which shrouds the northern limits of the Arctic ocean in its impenetrable veil of mystery.

A compass, a sextant, a bottle of milk and a revolver comprised, with the clothes he wore, and with the shimmering silken wings of his aeroplane, his whole equipment. His nearest base of supplies, if you could call it that, was a 20-pound tin of pemmican, hidden under a stone on the north east extremity of Herald Island, 800 miles away. The United States rescue station at Point Barrow, the extreme northerly point of Alaska, the place which he had called home for the past three months, was possibly, half as far again away, somewhere off to the southeast.

But for these past weeks of unbroken arctic sunshine, he had fairly lived a-wing. The earth had no obstructions and the air no perils. Today, with his great broad fan-tail drawn up arc-wise beneath him, his planes pitched slightly forward at the precise and perilous angle that only just did not send him plunging, head-first, down upon the sullen masses of ice below, he lay there, prone, upon the sheep-skin sleeping bag which padded the frame-work supporting his two wings, as secure as the great fulmar petrel which drew curiously near, and then, with a wheel and a plunge, fled away, squawking.

For all practical purposes Cayley had learned to fly. The great fan-driven air ship, 100 feet from tip to tip, which had long lain idle on his ranch at Sandoval, would probably never leave its house again. It had done yeoman service. Without its powerful propellers, for the last resource, Cayley would never have been able to try the experiments and get the practise which had given him the air for his natural element. He had outgrown it. He had no more need of motors or whirling fans. The force of gravity, the force of the breeze and the perfectly co-ordinated muscles of his own body gave him all the power he needed now.

Perhaps the succeeding generations of humankind may develop an eye which can see ahead when the body is lying prone, as a bird lies in its flight. Cayley had remedied this deficiency with a little silver mirror, slightly concave, screwed fast to the crossbrace which supported his shoulders. Instead of bending back his head, or trying to see out through his eyebrows, he simply cast a backward glance into this mirror whenever he wanted to look ahead. It had been a little perplexing at first, but he could see better in it now than with his unaided eyes.

And now, a minute or two, perhaps, after that fulmar had gone squawking away, he glanced down into his mirror, and his olympian calm was shaken with the shock of surprise. For what he saw, clearly reflected in his little reducing glass, was land. There was a mountain, and a long dark line that must be a clifflike coast.

And it was land that never had been marked on any chart. In absolute degrees of latitude he was not, from the arctic explorer's view, very far north. Over on the other side of the world they run excursion steamers every summer nearer to the pole than he was at this moment. Spitz-

bergen, which has had a permanent population of 15,000 souls, lies 300 miles farther north than this uncharted coast which Philip Cayley saw before him.

But the great ice cap which covers the top of the world is irregular in shape, and just here, northward from Alaska, it juts its impenetrable barrier far down into the Arctic sea. Rogers, Collinson and the ill-fated DeLong—they all had tried to penetrate this barrier, and had been turned back.

Cayley wheeled sharply up into the wind, and soared aloft to a height of, perhaps, a quarter of a mile. Then, with a long, flashing, shimmering sweep, he descended, in the arc of a great circle, and hung, poised, over the land itself and behind the jutting shoulder of the mountain.

The land was a narrow-necked peninsula. Mountain and cliff prevented him from seeing the immediate coast on the other side of it; but out a little way to sea he was amazed to discover open water, and the smoke-like vapor that he saw rising over the cliffhead made it evident that the opening extended nearly, if not quite, to the very land's edge. It was utterly unexpected, for the side of the peninsula which he had approached was ice-locked for miles.

He would have towered again above the rocky ridge which shut off his view, and gone to investigate this phenomenon at closer range, had he not, just then, got the shock of another surprise, greater than the discovery of land itself.

The little valley which he hung poised above was sheltered by a second ridge of rocky, ice-capped hills to the north, and, except for streaks, denoting crevices, here and there, was quite free from ice and snow. There were bright patches of green upon it, evidently some bit of flowering northern grass, and it was flecked here and there with bright bits of color, yellow poppy, he judged it to be, and saxifrage. Hugging the base of the mountain on the opposite side of the valley, then notching the cliff and grinding down to sea at the other side of it was a great white glacier, all the whiter, and colder, and more dazzling for its contrast with the brown mountain-side and the green-clad valley.

Up above the glacier, on the farther side, were great broad yellow patches, which he would have thought were poppy field, but for the impossibility of their growing in such a place. No vegetable growth was possible, he would have thought, against that clean-cut, almost vertical, rocky face. And yet, what else could have given it that blazing yellow color? Some day he was to learn the answer to that question.

But the thing that caught his eye now, that made him start and draw in a little involuntary gasp of wonder, was the sight of a little clump of black dots moving slowly, almost imperceptibly from this distance, across the face of the glacier. He blinked his eyes, as if he suspected them of playing him false. Unless they had played him false, these tiny dots were men.

All of the party, but one man, were dressed exactly alike, in hooded bearskin shirts and breeches, and boots of wh. t he guessed was walrus hide. They moved along with the peculiar wavy shuffle of men accustomed, by long habit, to the footing and to the heavy confining garb they wore. So far as he could see they were unarmed.

The other man was strikingly different. He appeared to be clad much as Cayley was himself, in leather, rather than in untanned hide. He seemed slighter, sprightlier, and in

The SKY-MAN

HENRY KETCHUM WEBSTER
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every way to convey the impression of having come more recently from the civilized, habitable portion of the world than his companions. He carried a rifle slung by a strap over his shoulder, evidently foreseeing no immediate use for it, and a flask.

Cayley was too far aloft for their conversation to be audible to him, but he could hear that they were talking. The leather-clad man appeared to be doing the most of it, and, from the inflection of his voice, he seemed to be speaking in English.

Presently he noticed that the leather-clad man had forged a little ahead of his companions, or, rather—like a flash, this idea occurred to Cayley—that the others were purposely lagging a little behind.

And then, before that sinister idea could formulate itself into a definite suspicion, his eyes widened with amazement, and the cry he would have uttered died in his throat; for this man, who had so innocently allowed the others to fall behind him, suddenly staggered, clutched at something—it looked like a thin ivory dart—that had transfixed his throat, tugged it out in a sudden flood of crimson, reeled a little and then went backwards over the glassy edge of a fissure in the ice, which lay just to the left of the path where he had been walking.

From the instant when Cayley had noticed the others dropping behind, to the last glimpse he had of the body of the murdered man could hardly have been five seconds.

The instant the murdered man disappeared, another, who had not previously been with the party, it seemed, appeared from behind a hummock of ice. There could be no doubt either that he was the assassin, or that he was the commander of the little group of skin-clad figures that remained. The ambush appeared to have been perfectly deliberate. There had been no outcry, not even a gesture of surprise or of remorse.

Cayley looked at the assassin curiously. He was dressed exactly like the others, but seemed very much bigger; seemed to walk with less of a slouch, and had, even to Cayley's limited view of him, an air of authority. Cayley was surprised at his not being armed with a bow, for he knew of no other way in which a dart could have been propelled with power enough, even at close range, to have transfixed a man's throat. The assassin's only weapon, except for a quiverful of extra darts, seemed to be a short blunt stick, rudely whittled, perhaps ten inches long.

Obedient, apparently, to the order of the new arrival, the party changed its direction, leaving what was evidently a well-known path to them, for a seemingly more direct but rougher route. And they moved now with an appearance of haste. Presently they scrambled over a precipitous ledge of ice and, in a moment, were lost to Cayley's view.

The world was suddenly empty again, as if no living foot had ever trodden it; and Cayley, hovering there, a little above the level of the ice, rubbed his eyes and wondered whether the singular, silent tragedy he had just witnessed were real, or a trick the mysterious arctic light had played upon his tired eyes. But there remained upon that vacant scene two material reminders of the tragedy to which it had afforded a setting. One was smudge of crimson on the snow; the other, a little distance off, just this side of the icy ridge over which the last of the party had gone scrambling a moment before, was the strange looking blunt stick which he had seen in the assassin's hand.

Cayley flew a little lower, his wings almost skimming the ice. Finally, reaching the spot where the thing had fallen, he alighted and picked it up. Whether its possessor had valued it, or not, whether or not he might be expected to return for it, Cayley did not know, and did not much care.

He stood for some time turning the thing over in his hands, puzzling over it, trying to make out how it could have been used as the instrument of propulsion to that deadly ivory dart. There was a groove on one side of it, with a small ivory plug at the end. The other end was curiously shaped, misshapen, rather, for, though it was obviously the end one held, Cayley could not make it fit his hand, whatever position he held it in.

Giving up the problem at last, he tucked the stick into his belt, slipped his arm through the strap in the frame-work of his aeroplane and prepared for flight. He had a little difficulty getting up, owing to the absence of a breeze at this point. Finally he was obliged to climb, with a good deal of labor, the icy ridge up which he had watched the little party of murderers scrambling.

At the crest he cast a glance around, looking for them, but saw no signs of them. Then, getting a favorable slant of the wind, he mounted again into the element he now called his own.

Five years before Philip Cayley would have passed for a good example of that type of clean-limbed, clean-minded, likable young man which the

best of our civilization seems to be flowering into. Physically, it would have been hard to suggest an improvement in him, he approached so near the ideal standards. He was fine grained, supple, slender, small-jointed, thorough-bred from head to heel.

Intellectually, he had been good enough to go through the academy at West Point with credit, and to graduate high enough in his class to be assigned to service in the cavalry. His standards of conduct, his ideas of honor and morality had been about the same as those of the best third of his classmates. If his fellow officers in the Philippines, during the year or two he spent in the service, had been asked to pick a flaw in him, which they would have been reluctant to do, they would have said that he seemed to them a bit too thin-skinned and rather fastidious; that was what his chum and only intimate friend, Perry Hunter, said about him at any rate.

But he could afford to be fastidious, for he had about all a man could want, one would think. For three generations they had taken wealth for granted in the Cayley family, and with it had come breeding, security of social position, simplicity and ease in making friends, both among men and women. In short, there could be no doubt at all that up to his twenty-ninth year Fate had been ironically kind to Philip Cayley. She had given him no hint, no preparation for the stunning blow that was to fall upon him, suddenly, out of so clear a sky.

When it did fall, it cut his life clean across; so that when he thought back to that time now, it seemed to him that the Lieutenant Cayley of the United States army had died over there in the Philippines, and that he, the man who was now soaring in those great circles through the arctic sky, was a chance inheritor of his name and of his memory.

He had set out one day at the head of a small scouting party, the best-liked man in the regiment, secure in the respect, in the almost fatherly regard, of his colonel, proudly conscious of the almost idolatrous admiration of his men and the younger officers. He had gone out believing that no one ever had a truer friend than he possessed in Perry Hunter, his classmate at West Point, his fellow officer in the regiment, the confidant of all his hopes and ideals.

He had come back, after a fortnight's absence, to find his name smeared with disgrace, himself judged and condemned, unheard, in the opinion of the mess. And that was not the worst of it. The same blow which had deprived him of the regard of the only people in the world who mattered to him, destroyed, also, root and branch, his affection for the one man of whom he had made an intimate. The only feeling that it would be possible for him to entertain for Perry Hunter again must be a half-pitying, half-incredulous contempt. And if that was his feeling for the man he had trusted most and loved the most deeply, what must be it for the rest of humankind? What did it matter what they thought of him or what they did to him? All he wanted of human society was to escape from it.

He fell to wondering, as he hung, suspended, over that rosy expanse of fleecy fog, whether, were the thing to do over again, he would act as he had acted five years ago; whether he would content himself with a single disdainful denial of the monstrous thing they charged him with; whether he would resign again, under fire, and go away, leaving his tarnished name for the daws to peck at.

Heretofore he had always answered that question with a fierce affirmative. Today it left him wondering. Had he stayed, had he paid the price that would have been necessary to clear himself, he would never have found his wings, so much was clear. He would never have spent those four years in the wilderness, working, experimenting, taking his life in his hands, day after day, while he mastered the art that no man had ever mastered before.

He had set himself this task because it was the only one he knew that did not involve contact with his fellow-beings. He must have something that he could work at alone. Work and solitude were two things that he had felt an overmastering craving for. And the possibility he had faced with a light heart every morning—the possibility of a sudden and violent death before night, had been no more to him than an agreeable spice to the day's work.

It was not until he had actually learned to fly, had literally shaken the dust of the earth from his feet and taken to the sky as his abode, that his wound had healed. The three months that he had spent in this upper arctic air, a-wing for 16 hours out of 24, had calmed him, put his nerves in tune again; given him for men and their affairs a quiet indifference, in place of the smarting contempt he had been hugging to his breast before. Three months ago, at sight of those little human dots crossing the glacier, he would have wheeled aloft and gone sailing away. Even a month ago he would hardly have hung, soaring



He Heard a Little Surprised Cry.

there, above the fog, waiting for it to lift again the veil of mystery which it had drawn across the tragic scene he had just witnessed.

The month was August, and the long arctic day had already begun to know its diurnal twilight. A fortnight ago the sun had dipped, for the first time, below the horizon. By now there were four or five hours, out of every 25, that would pass for night.

The sun set while he hung there in the air, and as it did so, with a new slant of the breeze the fog rolled itself up into a great violet-colored cloud, leaving the earth, the ice, the sea unveiled below him. And there, in the open water of the little bay, he saw a ship, and on the shore a cluster of rude huts.

It struck him, even from the height at which he soared, that the ship, tied to an ice-foe in the shelter of the great headland, did not look like a whaler, nor like the sort of craft which an arctic explorer would have selected for his purposes. It had more the trim smartness of a yacht.

They were probably all asleep down there, he reflected. It was nearly midnight and he saw no signs of life anywhere. He would drop down for a nearer look.

He descended, with a sudden hawk-like pounce, which was one of his more recent achievements in the navigation of the air, checked himself again at about the level of the mast-head, with a flashing, forward swoop, like a man diving in shallow water; then, with a sudden effort, brought himself up standing, his planes nearly vertical, and, with a backward spring, alighted, clear of his wings, on the ice-floe just opposite the ship.

As he did so, he heard a little surprised cry, half of fear, half of astonishment. It was a girl's voice.

CHAPTER II.

The Girl on the Ice Floe.

She stood there on the floe confronting him, not ten feet away, and at sight of her Philip Cayley's eyes widened. "What in the world!" he gasped. Then stared at her speechless.

She was clad, down to the knees, in sealskin, and below its edge he could see the tops of her small fur-trimmed boots. Upon her head she wore a little turban-like cap of seal. The smartly tailored lines of the coat emphasized her young slenderness. Her bootmaker must have had a reputation upon some metropolitan boulevard, and her head-gear came clearly under the category of what is known as modes. Her eyes were very blue and her hair was golden, warmed, he thought, as she stood there in the orange twilight, with a glint of red.

Cayley gasped again, as he took in the details of this vision. Then collected himself. "I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I don't mean to be rudely inquisitive, but what, in the world, is a person like you doing in this part of it—that is, if you are real at all? This is latitude 76, and no cartographer who ever lived has put that coast-line yonder into his maps. Yet here, in this nameless bay, I find a yacht, and on this ice floe, in the twilight, you."

She shook her head a little impatiently, and blinked her eyes, as if to clear them of a vision. "Of course," she said, "I know I've fallen asleep and this is a dream of mine, but even for a dream, aren't you a little unreasonable? Yachts are a natural mode of conveyance across the ocean. You find them in many bays—sometimes in nameless ones—and they always have people on them. But you—you come wheeling down, out of a night sky, like some great nocturnal bird, and alight here on the floe beside me. And then you change your-

self into a man and look at me in surprise, and ask me, in English, what in the world I am doing here—I had the yacht; and ask me if I'm real."

There was a moment of silence after that. Unconsciously they drew a little nearer together. Then Cayley spoke. "I'm real, at any rate," he said; "at least I'm a tax payer, and I weigh 160 pounds, and I have a name and address. It's Philip Cayley, if that will make me seem more natural, and my headquarters this summer are over on Point Barrow."

"I'm not dreaming, then?" she asked dubiously.

"No," he said; "if either of us is dreaming, it's not you. You fly furled up my wings and talk to me for awhile?" Her eyes were on the broad-spread, shimmering planes which lay on the ice behind him. She seemed hardly to have heard his question, though she answered it with an almost voiceless "yes." Then she approached, half fearfully, the thing he called his "wings."

"It is made of quite commonplace materials," he said with a smile—"split bamboo and carbon and catgut and a fabric of bladders, cemented with fish glue. And folding it up is rather an unglorious job. The birds still have the advantage of me there. In a strong wind it's not very easy to do without damaging something. Would you mind slipping that joint for me—that one right by your hand? It's just like a fishing rod."

She did as he asked, and her smile convinced him that she had at least half-guessed his purpose in asking the service of her. The next moment her words confirmed it.

"You wanted me to make sure, I suppose, that it would not turn into a great roc when I touched it and fly away with me to the Valley of Diamonds." She patted the furled wing gently with both hands. "I suppose," she continued, "one could dream as vividly as this, although I never have—unless, of course, this is a dream. But—" and now she held out her hand to him, "but I hope I am awake. And my name is Jeanne Fielding."

He had the hand in his, and noticed how live and strong and warm it was, before she pronounced her name. At the sound of it, he glanced at her curiously; but all he said just then was, "Thank you," and busied himself immediately with completing the process of furling his wings.

When he had finished, he tossed the sheep-skin down in a little hollow in the floe, and with a gesture invited her to be seated.

"Oh, I've a great pile of bear skins out here," she said, "quite a ridiculous pile of them, considering it is not a cold night; and we can make ourselves comfortable here, or go aboard the yacht, just as you please."

They were seated side by side in the little nest she had made for herself, before he reverted to the idea which had sprung up in his mind upon hearing her name. "There was a 'Captain Fielding' once," he said slowly, "who set out from San Francisco half a dozen years ago, in the hope of discovering the pole by the way of Behring strait. His ship was never seen again, nor was any word received from him. Finding you here and hearing your name, I wondered—"

"Yes," she said gravely, "he was my father. We got news of him last winter. If you could call it news, for it was four years old before it reached us. A whaler in the arctic fleet picked up a floating bottle with a message from him telling where he was. So we have come here to find him—at least to find where he died, for I suppose there is no hope—never so much as a grain of hope of anything better."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)