

# The SKY-MAN

HENRY KETCHUM WEBSTER  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHAS. W. ROSSER  
COPYRIGHT 1910 BY THE CENTURY CO.  
COPYRIGHT 1910 BY THE SUCCESS CO.

12

## SYNOPSIS.

Philip Cayley, accused of a crime of which he is not guilty, resigns from the army in disgrace and his affection for his friend, Lieut. Perry Hunter, turns to hatred. Cayley seeks solitude, where he perfects a flying machine. While soaring over the Arctic regions, he picks up a curiously shaped stick he had seen in the assassin's hand. Mounding again, he discovers a yacht anchored in the bay. Descending near the steamer, he meets a girl on an ice floe. He learns that the girl's name is Jeanne Fielding and that the yacht has come north to seek signs of her father, Captain Fielding, an arctic explorer. A party from the yacht is making search ashore. After Cayley departs Jeanne finds that he had dropped a curiously-shaped stick. Captain Planck and the surviving crew of his wrecked whaler are in hiding on the coast. A giant ruffian named Roscoe, had murdered Fielding and his two companions, after the explorer had revealed the location of an enormous ledge of pure gold. Roscoe then took command of the party. It develops that the ruffian had committed the murder witnessed by Cayley. Roscoe plans to capture the yacht and escape with the big load of gold. Jeanne tells Fanshew, owner of the yacht, about the visit of the sky-man and shows him the stick left by Cayley. Fanshew declares that it is an Eskimo throwing-stick, used to shoot darts. Tom Fanshew returns from the searching party with a sprained ankle. Perry Hunter is found murdered and Cayley is accused of the crime but Jeanne believes him innocent. A relief party goes to find the searchers. Tom professes his love for Jeanne. She rows ashore and enters an abandoned hut, and there finds her father's diary, which discloses the explorer's suspicion of Roscoe. The ruffian returns to the hut and sees Jeanne. He is intent on murder, when the sky-man swoops down and the ruffian flees. Jeanne gives Cayley her father's diary to read. The yacht disappears and Roscoe's plans to capture it are revealed. Jeanne's only hope is in Cayley. The seriousness of their situation becomes apparent to Jeanne and the sky-man. Cayley kills a polar bear. Next he finds a clue to the hiding place of the stores. A cellar in the hut has a chimney-like hole leading up through the ice to an observatory where Captain Fielding had hidden supplies.

## CHAPTER XVI.—Continued.

about, and—Jeanne, it was no baseless terror, no product of the twilight and the fact that you were far from home. There was something there, slipping along from the shelter of one boulder to that of another. I found the tracks in the snow. They weren't more than ten paces away from you when I came down out of the sky."

"Was it the bear?" she asked. "That was what you thought it might have been, at the time." But he could see in her eyes that this was not the answer she expected.

He shook his head; that told her enough.

As Roscoe fled along the beach on the night Cayley descended upon him through the fog, there was no doubt in his mind that he had seen the ghost of the man he had murdered and the shadow of a black avenging spirit hovering over his head.

When he found that his boat had gone adrift and that his only means of getting back to the Aurora had gone with it, he dropped down upon beach, crawled up into the lee of a great rock and had spent the night there, his mind completely torpid with fear.

When the numbness of this terror passed away, as gradually it did, he bent all his thoughts upon the Aurora and upon the possibility, not quite inconceivable, that his crew had succeeded in overpowering her people and were now in possession of the yacht. He tried to persuade himself that this was so and that with the coming of the dawn they would send a boat ashore for him.

Of the strange figure he had seen there in the hut, so like and yet so terribly unlike the victim of his murderous lust four years ago—of that, and of the more terrible apparition he had seen coming down out of the sky, he thought, or tried to think nothing at all. It was only a nightmare, only a delusion, natural enough when one considered all the circumstances.

When the fog lifted with the approach of dawn, he discovered what Philip and Jeanne did not become aware of until several hours later, that the Aurora had drifted out to sea in the gale. The clean line of the horizon was broken by nothing but the plunging masses of the ice. There was just one chance, he thought, that she might still be comparatively near at hand. Southward and eastward the horizon was unbroken, but the jutting mass of the promontory to the west cut off his view in that direction. It was possible that the gale which had destroyed the floe that formed the harbor, had also broken up the pack ice at the other side of the peninsula, the side from which Cayley, on the wing, had first approached this unknown land. The yacht might be there, riding safely in practically open water.

He got up from the snow nest he had made for himself in the lee of the rock, and excitedly flexed his stiffened muscles, with the idea of setting out at once down the beach and around the headland to learn whether this last hope of his was groundless. Really, in his heart, he had no hope at all, but that fact made it easy to postpone for a little longer the putting of this delusion of a hope he has to the test of reality.

The excuse he made to himself was, that he was ravenously hungry, and that his most sensible course would be to go up the glacier to the cave and seek himself a breakfast before he did anything else.

He was fully persuaded by that time that what he had seen at the hut last night during the storm had been nothing but a hallucination. None the less, he knew that it would be easier to walk past that empty hut in full broad day, than in this tricky, misty, uncertain light of dawn.

He carried out this plan at once, to the point, that is, of going up the glacier to the cave, building a fire there and satisfying his sharp hunger with an enormous meal. But he had not slept at all the night before, and now the warmth and the satisfaction of his appetite made his nerveless hand release the bone he was gnawing, and caused him to roll over beside the fire and to fall asleep.

He slept deeply for a number of hours. Then, arming himself with a throwing-stick and a number of darts, he stepped outside the cave, intent upon his expedition to the other side of the peninsula where there was a possibility of finding the yacht.

The cave was situated some little distance up the glacier, and the shortest, though by far the more difficult, way of reaching his destination lay, not along the beach but up through the interior valley and across the precipitous coast range of hills.

It was not the natural way to go, but the fact that it was actually shorter gave him a sort of excuse for avoiding another visit, just now, to the scene of his discomfiture of the night before. He swore at himself, not so much for taking this course as for the reasons which his common sense alleged against him.

His present route took him close to the gold ledge, and the sight of the inexhaustible, precious metal that remained here brought upon him for the first time, in full force, a sense of his loss, a sense of what that luckless trip ashore from the Aurora in search of that rosewood box had cost him.

At an increased pace he descended from the glacier, crossed the valley and scaled the landward side of one of the mountains of the coast range, to a notch where he could command a view of the sea to the westward.

He saw there what, in the bottom of his mind, he had all along been sure he would see—nothing but another barren, bleak horizon.

At that, for a while, his fortitude broke down, and he raved and wept and cursed like one demented. But at last, spent, sobered, conscious once more of a sharp hunger, he climbed a little farther up the mountain to a ledge, where, as his minute knowledge of the country led him to expect, he found a number of loons sitting. He killed one of these birds with a dart, and then, like the brute he was, ate it raw and warm.

By that time it was late in the afternoon. Bravado, combined with a more real belief than he had yet succeeded in retaining, to the effect that all his terror of the night before had resulted from nothing more serious than a nightmare, led him to decide to go home by way of the beach, rather than along the difficult interior trail up which he had come.

The descent from the cliff-head to the beach was nothing to a man of his inhuman strength and activity, though an ordinary skilled mountaineer might have hesitated before attempting it. Nevertheless, two-thirds of the way down he nearly fell—but for luck he would have fallen, for he caught a glimpse of a lonely figure, a quarter of a mile away, perhaps, seated upon a ledge, bending forward, chin in hand, in an attitude which recalled, and horribly echoed, that of the man he long ago had murdered.

When he had steadied himself a little, he made his way cautiously down to the level of the beach. His emotions were divided about equally between fear and anger, the anger existing because of the fear.

With infinite caution he approached that lonely, unsuspecting figure, slipping from the shelter of one rock to that of one a little nearer.

Three times his left hand drew back the throwing-stick, balanced and aimed along a line that would send its thin ivory dart as swiftly and as surely to that beautiful throat as the one that had found and transfixed Perry Hunter's; and three times his muscles braced themselves for the effort to propel it. But each time, with a breathless oath, he lowered the weapon again, and with the back of his hairy hand wiped the sweat from his forehead.

The act had none of the quality of mercy in it; it was simply the result of a logical dilemma. If the thing he saw before him were a ghost, the ghost of the man he had already murdered, his dart would do no harm. If it were not a ghost; if it were what it looked more and more like as he drew nearer, a living, breathing woman—he licked his lips and wrung them with his hand—if it were a woman, he did not want to kill her. If he could be sure, could only be sure, he would drop his weapon and make one rush and hold her helpless in those great hands of his.

And with every five paces that lessened the distance between them, that certainty grew upon him. No, this was no immaterial spirit of a man

long dead. She was alive; warm. He was near enough now to make out the soft curve of her throat, the retreating and returning color which bathed cheeks and forehead. He could see the faint rise and fall of her breast when she breathed. He laid the throwing-stick upon the ice, drew nerves and muscles taut for his rush.

Then, just then, he saw the thing that made Jeanne close her eyes, the flashing sword-cut of that great golden wing, as the thing it bore turned upon the other.

Roscoe dropped down, as if he had been blasted by the sight of a sworded archangel, in the shelter of his rock. He lay there, prone, hugging his head in his arms. He did not rouse himself, did not succeed in forcing his treacherous nerves and muscles to obey his will until it was quite dark. Then, without a glance behind him, he arose and began scrambling madly up the broken face of the talus, and, reaching the top of it, went on and scaled the cliff itself. It was a feat which even he could hardly have accomplished except under the extremity of terror.

For only so long as was necessary to regain his breath, he lay panting upon the cliff-head. In the dark, rushing along as if the precipitous trail he followed had been a well-worn thoroughfare, he retraced his way down the landward side of the mountain and across the valley. He did not pause until he found himself safe in the cave again beside the glacier.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A State of Siege.

Cayley's discovery of the tracks furnished the last element of the drama which was to play itself out that winter upon this stage which had been so strangely set for it. It was just three days since, flying slowly northward before a mild southerly breeze, the ice pack below him, he caught his first glimpse of the unknown land where Captain Fielding had met his tragic fate so many years before. Three days since he had witnessed, from aloft, the murder of a man he might have saved, the man to whom, had he saved him, he might have turned for exoneration from a stain upon his name which was now ineradicable.

Three days ago he had thought his world was empty, swept clean of human concern and human affection. Three days ago he had not known that Jeanne Fielding existed.

As for the identity of the monster who had left the proof of his existence in those tracks which Philip had discovered in the snow, they of course had no certain knowledge; nevertheless, they entertained but little doubt that he was Roscoe himself. The footprints were immense, Cayley said, and their distance apart bespoke the stride of a giant.

If it were Roscoe who had been crouching there behind the boulder, then it seemed to them unlikely that he was here alone; unlikely that he had not at least two or three of his crew with him.

That idea, when it first occurred to them, brought little added terror with it. The person of the monstrous murderous ruffian, who was the chief, dwarfed his subordinates to pygmies. Yet when they came to think over the situation, reasonably, this uncertainty as to the number of their enemy proved a vital element in it. It put an unequivocal veto upon Cayley's first plan, which was to start out at once and take the aggressive against their enemy, before he should have time to move against them.

This bit of beach where the hut stood was practically fortified. The cliff behind it was absolutely sheer, and was capped with deep, perpetual snow. Half a mile to the westward was the promontory, and about half a mile up the beach from the hut, to the eastward, the glacier projected its ice masses in a long floe out to seaward. This glacier provided the only practicable means of entrance to the interior valley and the ledge where the gold was.

By means of a large scale map, Cayley pointed out to Jeanne this advantage of their position. "So long as we stick to this bit of beach," he said, "we can't be rushed nor surprised. No one can attack us without either coming down the glacier at one end, or around the promontory at the other. From either direction they've got to approach without cover. Of course if there are a lot of them, we shan't have any chance. But it may be there's only one, and it's likely that there are not more than three."

"But at night," said the girl, "at night there'll be nothing to prevent their coming as close as they please. They may be out there, not a dozen yards away."

"They're not doing much if they are. We're securely barricaded here, and they can't attempt to break in without giving us fair warning. Unless there are too many of them we should beat them at that game. No; the time to look out for them is when we're outside the hut, out on the beach doing the things we'll have to do—bringing in firewood, looking for more game, and so on."

"Shall we have to do that? Can't we just stay in here, safe?"

"The daylight will answer that question for me," he said. "We must make the most of it. A month from now there'll be but little. We mustn't make prisoners of ourselves until the winter does it for us. There is one thing, though," he added thoughtfully after a little silence, "one thing that I must do at once, and that is to destroy these sheds where they kept their stores. They would furnish a cover—as good a cover as any enemy could ask for. They hinder our view up the beach."

"How long do you suppose it will last?" she asked, in a voice that shook a little. "How long can it last? How long can we live like that, even supposing that our watch is effective and that they aren't able to surprise us?" She clasped her hands, with a shudder, and gripped them between her knees. "Oh, if it would only happen soon," she went on, "whatever it is!"

"What I don't understand," said Cayley, "is why they haven't attacked us already. Why have they waited until we are fortified and secure? Why didn't they attack us yesterday morning when they would have found us helpless?"

"Surely," said Jeanne, "he couldn't have hoped for a better opportunity to attack me than he had when I was alone there in the twilight, before you came flying down out of the sky; and you said he was quite near. Why do you suppose he didn't? Why do you suppose he waited?"

"And even after I came down," said Cayley, "I was helpless for a minute while I was getting clear of my planes. Yes, that was his chance, and yet he waited. After we had gone, he apparently scaled the cliff, for his tracks led right up to it, and then disappeared. It's not quite so precipitously steep there as it is here, but I would hardly have dreamed that a human being could climb it."

"He's afraid," said Jeanne after a little thoughtful silence, "simply afraid. But if he's the man we think he is, it wouldn't be a human fear. It must be superstitious in some way. It wouldn't be wonderful if he felt that, after the two glimpses he had of you. I remember how I felt at first when you alighted on the floe beside me. He's seen you twice, remember. The first time at night in the fog; the second time in broad day, with the sun on your wings. No, it isn't strange if he thinks of you, not as a man at all, but as a sort of terrible angel keeping guard over me. When I go very long without seeing you, or when I see you in flight, I get to thinking of you in that way myself."

"If that's the way he thinks of me," said Cayley, "we'll try not to disabuse him. A belief like that is an item on our side of the ledger, certainly. And we haven't any such balance in our favor that we can afford to throw an advantage away, even a small one."

Really the balance of advantage be-

tween them and their enemy was amazingly even. They had the hut, the enemy the stores. They had Captain Fielding's journal, their enemy the experience and practical knowledge of the country. They were two, with but a single weapon between them. Their enemy, for aught they knew, might be one or a half a dozen; and how armed, they did not know.

Fortunately, no prophetic vision enabled them to anticipate, on that first evening, the length of time that that precarious life and death balance would maintain itself. They had agreed, Philip and Jeanne, that the only thing to do was to wait and to maintain an unwinking vigilance. But both of them thought of the duration of this wait in terms of hours, or at most, days. Had they foreseen that it would stretch itself out into weeks and months, they might well have despaired.

There were two things that kept them from succumbing to despair. The first was that they never really permitted themselves to hope, to indulge in any thoughts of a summer's day when their horizon should be cut by the spars and funnels of a ship bringing relief. They were simply going to live one day at a time. For every day that they could snatch out of the hand of death, they would give thanks. It was the only attitude possible for people in their condition.

And the thing that helped them to maintain it was the abundance of necessary routine occupation. They divided their day into watches. Cayley slept from four o'clock in the afternoon until midnight and then kept watch alone, as the girl had done, until eight. During that period they remained inside the hut. The day, from eight until four, they spent out of doors, when the condition of the weather made this possible, either at work or merely tramping up and down for exercise.

At first there was a good deal of work to do. Tearing down the sheds which clustered about the hut, and reducing their frames and planking to fire-wood was an arduous task, but he worked at it until it was done, Jeanne standing sentinel all the time.

When it was done, they were practically secure against surprise, for from their windows, with the aid of a field-glass which Cayley had found in the observatory, they were able to sweep the whole beach absolutely clean, in both directions.

And almost every day while the light lasted, with Jeanne, armed with the revolver, keeping watch before the hut, Cayley took to his wings and patrolled the beach, from the glacier to the promontory, high up above the level of the crest of the cliff. His flight was always along the same track. He never winged his way inland nor out to sea.

There were two reasons for this. He dared not go so far away from Jeanne that a flash and a swoop would not bring him to her side. The other reason was, that if a superstitious fear of this great man-bird were really what deterred their enemy from attacking them, it was well to let him believe that immunity from this portent could be secured by keeping away from this particular stretch of beach.

As the shortening days sped by and began to get themselves reckoned into weeks, the conviction grew upon Philip and Jeanne that their secret protection lay in his wings, in the terrorizing effect upon their invisible, silent enemy of the majestic winged apparition which was so often seen soaring in midsky above the hut and the little stretch of beach surrounding it. Something was protecting them evidently. Almost every week brought some evidence, not only of the existence but the nearness of their enemy. They never actually caught sight or sound of him, but some times when the wind blew from the right quarter they could make out, with their field-glass, a wrack of brownish smoke, such as would be given off by burning whale oil, drifting down from somewhere along the glacier, and made visible by the dazzling whiteness of that background.

And sometimes they saw track in the newly fallen snow, never coming very near the hut, but trespassing a little way, either down from the glacier or up from the headland, upon the stretch of beach they were defending. They never found the tracks of more than a single man, and these were always the same. So that they came to believe, although they could not know that they had only one man to deal with.

They sometimes speculated on the question whether he was Roscoe or some other member of the Walrus crew; really, in fact, they found it impossible to hope that it was any other than he.

They got proof of his identity, or what amounted to it, along toward the end of October. Cayley's keen eyes caught, one day, from up aloft where he was soaring, the glint of something on the beach near the foot of the headland. He circled down in a long swoop, caught it up without alighting and mounted into the air, a trick of aerobatics which made Jeanne, accustomed as she was by now to seeing him in flight, catch her breath a little.

When he descended and alighted beside her a few moments later, he showed her a sheath knife, the haft of which was a rudely carved walrus tusk. The hand of the last user of it had had blood upon it, and its imprint upon the surface of the ivory was plainly to be seen. The lines in the palm were traceable and, lengthwise, along the side of the handle, the print of an immense thumb.

"You see," said Cayley quietly, "he was using this knife left-handed."

The girl paled a little as she handed

the weapon back to him, but she spoke quietly enough:

"It's good to know," she said, "—most a relief."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### An Attack.

The fact that their enemy was alone and that he was Roscoe himself was responsible for the conviction that Cayley's wings were all that stood between them and an attack. No terror attributable to human causes would have held back that solitary and altogether desperate out-cast.

The thing in the situation which caused Cayley the most uneasiness was the fear that some time or other Roscoe would solve the mystery, would see him in the very act of taking to the air. This fear suggested an expedient to him one day as he was flying along near the snow-crested edge of the cliff.

"I don't know why I never thought of it before," he said to Jeanne as he alighted beside her a moment or two afterward; "but I've got it now—the way to prevent Roscoe from every-



"What Do We Do to Sentinels Who Go to Sleep?"

solving the mystery of your guardian angel. I thought of it when I saw the mound up on the cliff-head that is formed by the observatory. It can't be buried so very deep in the snow because the mound isn't so very big. I'm going up there now to dig it out, enough, at least, so that I can take wing from there."

"You never can dig out enough snow to get a running start up there," she objected.

"I shan't have to. I'll just dive off the cliff."

"Philip, you shan't!"

"Why not?"

"You know what you told me yourself. That none of the big birds can take to the air without a running start; and about taking pelicans and birds like that up into high buildings and throwing them out of windows, and how they were always killed."

"That's because they've only got instinct instead of intelligence. None of their family had ever been thrown out of windows before, and they didn't know what to do. But I can get my start quite as safely that way as any other. Oh, yes, I've done it. Do you imagine, Jeanne dear, that I'd take an unnecessary risk so long as my life is the only possible protection there is for yours?"

He spent the rest of the day tunnelling out from the observatory. He did not dig in the snow; he simply packed it, gradually enlarging the space from a section the size of the pilot house door to a space at the cliff's edge wide enough for the full spread of his wings.

Jeanne was watching on the beach when he made his first flight from this aerial, and, in spite of her confidence in his powers, she endured a horrible moment or two. For he came hurtling down, head first, at an angle of 60 degrees; and he had traversed two-thirds of the distance to the beach before his line deflected outward and began curving up toward the horizontal.

When she saw that he was safe, that he had really done the thing he had said he could, she dropped down upon a bear-skin, which was spread before the hut, and shut her eyes, for what she had seen had turned her a bit giddy.

That feeling passed in a moment. She opened her eyes and lay, stretched at full length, upon the bear-skin, watching him as he wheeled and dipped, then towered aloft again in that fading violet sky, supremely masterful, majestically dominant of the unstable element he had conquered.

She sat up suddenly, erect, upon the bear skin, with the realization that it was nearly dark. Their hours of daylight were getting very scanty now. "Today's allowance was gone, although it was not yet three in the afternoon."

She looked aloft for Cayley, but could not see him. Then, the next moment, she heard the whine of the air through his rigging, and he sailed down on a long slant and alighted beside her.

He got clear of his planes with an unaccountable air of haste, and held out both hands to help her rise.

"What do we do with sentinels who go to sleep on duty?" he questioned with a laugh.

"I wasn't asleep," she said contritely, "but it was just about as bad. I was thinking—" She paused there, then added, "about you. What's the sentence of the court?"

Already he had his wings folded up and was handing them to her.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



"He's Afraid," Said Jeanne, After a Little Thoughtful Silence.