

The SKY-MAN

HENRY MITCHELL WEBSTER
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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. Mounting 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 Flank 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 a big load of gold. Jeanne tells Farnshaw, owner of the yacht, about the visit of the sky-man and shows him the stick left by Cayley. Farnshaw declares that it is an Eskimo throwing-stick, used by the Eskimos. Tom Farnshaw 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. Roscoe is about to attack the girl when he is sent fleeing in terror by the sight of the sky-man swooping down. Measures are taken to fortify the hut.

CHAPTER XVIII.—Continued.

"The sentence is that you shall be frightened with a bear story. There's a big one coming down the beach after you this very moment, and you're to surrender the revolver to me and stay under arrest in the hut until after I have killed him."

She did not need to be told that he was in earnest, in spite of the smile that went with his words. She turned about quickly and looked up the beach, sighting along Cayley's arm as he pointed. Even in the deep twilight she could already make out the shambling figure that was coming along toward them on all fours.

"Why does he move in that queer sort of way?" she whispered. They had shrunk back into the shadow of the hut, the girl actually inside of the vestibule and Cayley on the door-step.

"He's been wounded. When I was overhead I could make out the blood stains on his side, and he was leaving a track on the ice."

"Wounded in a fight with another bear?"

"No, that's not likely." She asked no further explanation, but slipped into the hut. The next moment she was back with the field-glasses.

"While you're attending to the bear," she said in a whisper, "I'll just keep watch up the beach—for any one else."

The past weeks had made one difference in her attitude toward Cayley which she was now aware of, as she contrasted her sensations on seeing Philip step forward, out of the shelter of the hut, to confront the bear, with those she had experienced when he had set out on a similar errand once before. She knew him now, and she had no fear for him. The feeling that thrilled her now was nearer akin to pride than anything else.

Cayley fully justified her confidence. The course the bear was taking would have brought him within 20 yards of their door-step. When he first caught sight of Cayley he stopped, in two minds, apparently, whether to be hunted or to do the hunting himself. Then, as Cayley advanced upon him rather slowly, he decided, hissed at him venomously and reared up.

He was already badly enough wounded to have taken all the fight out of any other sort of animal, but half alive as he was, he cost Cayley four cartridges. Three of those shots Cayley was reasonably sure must have entered a vital spot. The first one took the bear between the eyes as he was rising. The second was fired into his open mouth. The third was probably deflected by the massive fore paw which he was holding across his body, in the attitude of a boxer. The fourth shot, however, penetrated his throat and probably smashed one of the two first vertebrae, for it seemed to bring the monster down all in a heap, where he finally lay still. Cayley could have reached him with his foot.

"Good shooting," said the girl quietly from the little vestibule.

He reloaded the revolver, letting the empty shells drop unheeded on the ice at his feet. He gave the weapon back to the girl, and bent over the bear.

"I'm less interested in what I did to him," he said, "than in what he got from the enemy who first attacked him."

The light was almost gone, so that all he could see were two or three irregular dark stains upon the white fur. A wound in the flank, which

none of Cayley's shots could have accounted for, he explored with practiced hand.

Watching him as he did so, the girl could see that he had found something unexpected, something which surprised him greatly. And there was more than surprise. There was alarmed urgency in his voice when he spoke to her. He offered no explanation. Merely told her to go into the hut and make fast the solid wooden shutters over the windows. He would come in and would tell her what it was all about, in a moment.

The girl had hardly finished the task he had given her, when he came in. In his blood-stained hand he was holding out something for her inspection.

Conqueror a feeling of repugnance, she bent over the hand, cast one glance at the thing it contained and then started up and gazed, wide-eyed, into his face.

"A bullet!" she said. "But—but you thought that Roscoe wasn't armed—not with fire arms, I mean."

Cayley nodded. "But this seems to be pretty good evidence that he is

"Get up quickly!" she said when she saw that he was awake. "Philip, the hut's on fire!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Roscoe.

Roscoe had never been able to clear up his doubt as to Jeanne's identity, nor to solve the mystery of Cayley's appearance in the air. The doubt and the mystery tormented him worse than any final conviction could have done. When he thought, as he sometimes did, that the cause of all his terror, the thing which kept him penned up here in the cave and denied him access to more than the furtive edges of the beach, might be just a rather defenseless human couple, a man and a woman, and the woman beautiful, young, alluring—when he thought of all that he would go off into transports of rage, which left even his gigantic body limp and exhausted. If that were the situation, he might have killed the man weeks ago and taken possession of the woman.

The thing that kept him sane was, in itself, a species of insanity, the passion for gold which had led him to murder Captain Fielding. Every day he tramped up the glacier to the gold ledge and there, while the light lasted, he worked, cutting the precious metal out of the rock, and with infinite labor beating it pure.

As the weeks and months dragged along, this unvaried routine more than compensated for the solitude and the terrors his superstition thrust upon him, and gradually restored him to his old normal, formidable, brutal self. On the day when he made the discovery that was to terminate the long series of golden days which Jeanne and

what once had been a shirt, sufficed to put it into commission again.

Then, with the rifle over his shoulder, he swaggered out of the cave. With his first glance abroad, he started. His devil was being kind to him today. There could be no doubt of that. Only, was he being too kind? Roscoe wondered a little uneasily. For, shambling along the ice, through the thickening twilight, not 100 paces away, was a big bear. Roscoe was tired of walrus meat. The thought of a bear steak made his mouth water.

Three years' disuse, however, had made his marksmanship somewhat uncertain. He fired too soon, and though he did not miss, the only effect his shot had was to make the bear turn about and go shambling down the glacier toward the beach, with ungainly haste. Roscoe hurried after him, and fired two more shots. Whether they hit or not, he could not tell. Certainly they did not serve to check the bear's flight. The next moment he had rounded the corner of the cliff and disappeared down the beach in the direction of the hut.

Roscoe hesitated, but only for a moment; then, with an oath, he set out in pursuit. It was not so much the protection which the rifle afforded him that was responsible for this new courage as it was that the mere feel of it in his hands brought him back in touch once more with the everyday matter of fact world, and made his visions and ghosts seem a little unreal.

It was fully dark down here in the shadow of the cliff. The lumbering yellow shape of the bear was indistinguishable against the icy beach. That didn't matter, for he could follow along well enough by the bloody tracks the wounded beast had left.

The last of the twilight was still in the sky, and half his glances were directed thither, looking for something which he told himself could not possibly exist, except in his own fancy, yet fully expected to see nevertheless, the shadow of Cayley's great wings. And at last he saw it impending in the lower air, like a brooding spirit, just above the tiny square of light which marked the location of the hut.

Roscoe abandoned his pursuit of the bear; all thought of it, in fact, was gone from his mind; but he did not, as on a former occasion, drop down prone upon the ground, his face buried in his arms; nor did he turn and flee like one hag-ridden up the beach. He

rage against the two who had baffled him and enjoyed immunity from him so long, almost led him to attempt to break into the hut then and there, and settle matters; but his saner common sense told him that the settlement would almost inevitably be against him should he attempt it.

He was still entertaining this notion, however, when a luminous idea occurred to him. Around on the far side of the hut, the west side, which looked toward the headlands, was a good-sized heap of fire-wood, which Philip had not been able to find room for inside the hut. Roscoe had with him a flint and steel and a quantity of tow. He never traveled without them.

With infinite precaution against noise he began laying a fire against the windward wall of the hut. Squatting, with his rifle across his knees ready to use in case of an emergency, he methodically whittled a quantity of dry splinters off a few of the sticks, ignited them and carefully nursed the blaze, until, under the rising wind, it grew to the beginning of a fair-sized conflagration. Then, catching up his rifle, he slipped around the other side of the hut, crouching down not more than 20 paces away, and waited.

Already the fire was burning finely and the silhouetted outline of the hut was plain against the glow of it.

His plan was a good one. The people inside the hut would have no choice and, probably, no thought, but of escape. When they rushed out, as they almost certainly would, bewildered and confused, and plainly visible to him against the glow of the fire behind them, it would be easy, from the safe shelter of the darkness, to shoot—the man.

It was only, indeed, by the merest hair's breadth that Roscoe's plan failed to work. The instinct of escape by the nearest way from a burning building is almost irresistible, and it led Philip and Jeanne to the very edge of the destruction, which Roscoe had planned for them.

Cayley had his hand upon the bolt of the great door, whither he had sprung when Jeanne's cry had awakened him, before the saving second thought stayed him and held him frozen where he was. For perhaps five seconds he stood there, while the memory of the unexplained bullet hole he had found in the body of the great bear, and the belated observation that the fire, which was destroying the hut, must have been started outside of it,

much with a rifle; and he remembered the deadly revolver shooting he had seen upon the body of the bear. Also, he would have to go into the dark, with the firelight behind him. No, it wouldn't do. He must wait. Well, he could afford to wait—much better than they could.

Reluctantly he rose, turned his broad back to the gale, and began making his laborious way back to the cave.

It was high time. His face was frozen already. The intensity of the cold had already rendered his rifle useless, for the whole mechanism of the breech was frozen fast. His stratagem had failed in its ultimate intention, for nature had laid her great icy hand upon the board and for the present declared the game a draw.

CHAPTER XX.

A Moonlit Day.

The midday moon had changed the somber purple of the snow to silver. The snow lay everywhere, save upon the vertical face of the cliff itself, an unrent, immaculate mantle over all this arctic world. The valley, the hills, the beach and the frozen sea all lay at peace beneath it, as if asleep or dead.

To Cayley, where he lay, suspended in midsky, the moonlight gleaming upon the sensitive fabric of his planes, as it gleams upon the faint ripples on a mill pond in the dead of some June night—to Cayley this white, sleeping, frozen world looked very far away. He was a-wing for the first time since that eternity ago when he had descended upon the beach beside Jeanne to warn her of the approach of the bear.

How long ago that was, by the measure of hours and days and weeks, he did not know. He had no data for an estimate that would be better than a guess. He remembered how desperately they had worked that night, saying what they could from the burning hut and carrying it back into the cave; remembered with what labor he and Jeanne had climbed the ice chimney to the only shelter that now remained to them, the little pilot house observatory upon the cliff-head; remembered the unremitting labor of uncounted hours while they adjusted their way of life to the conditions imposed by the calamitous loss of the hut.

But after that there were lapses of time which memory did not cover. During that time he knew the utmost fury of the arctic winter had been raging over them, without cessation. They had been sheltered from it down in the heart of the great drift of snow which the storm had heaped about them. But, even in this security the shock of those successive paroxysms of nature's titanic rage reached down and numbed them, body and soul.

But at last the rage of the storm had spent itself and had become still. The bitterness of the cold relaxed and became milder. Cayley had felt the blood stirring in his veins again, the power of consecutive thought and the ambition to live, coming once more into his possession. He had gone to work, feebly and drowsily at first, but with constantly increasing energy and strength, at the task of opening up, once more, the tunnel through the drift which the great storm had choked.

When he had broken through the outer crust of the drift, and the white radiance of the midday moon shone into the black tunnel where he had been working, he stood for a moment drawing deep breaths and gazing over the scene which lay beneath his eyes. He hastened back into the little pilot house.

Jeanne was dozing upon a heap of bear-skins. He roused her with some difficulty; really waking up had been a hard matter lately, almost as hard as really getting off to sleep. She was still drowsy when he led her along the tunnel to the cliff-head.

"Breathe deep," he told her. "We were half poisoned in there. This air will bring you back to life again, it and the moonlight."

He had been supporting her with his arm about her waist, but now, as she held herself a little straighter and he could feel her lungs expanding with the pure air she breathed, he withdrew the arm and let her stand alone. Even the white moonlight revealed the color that was coming back into her cheeks.

For a while she did not speak at all; then, as if replying to a comment of his, she said:

"Yes, it's beautiful. . . . But, Philip, it's dead. Dead."

"Not this air that has ozone sparkling all through it. It is alive enough to make your blood dance. It's doing that now."

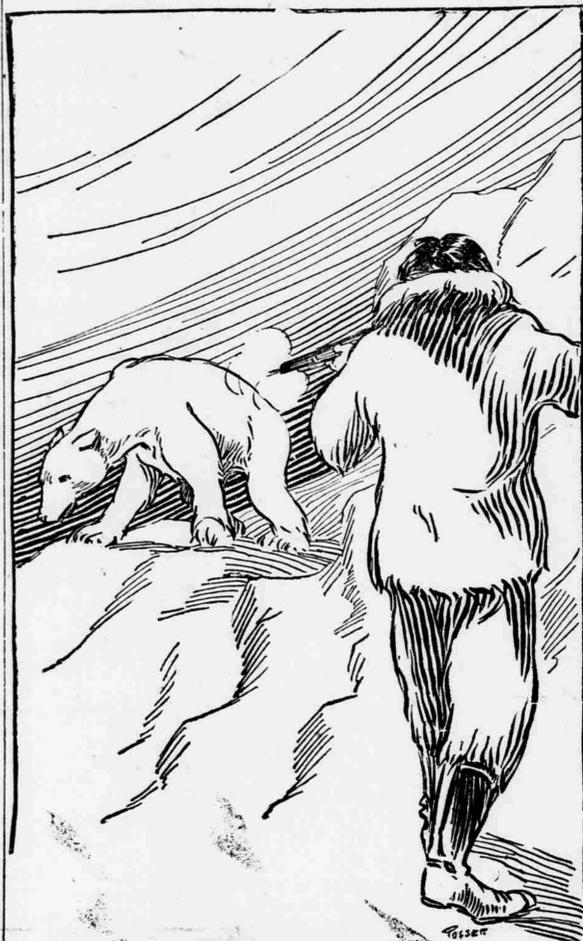
He tried to persuade her to take a little exercise along the length of the tunnel, but she demurred to that. Instead, she asked him to bring out some bear-skins and let her sit there at the cliff-head looking out.

"And," she supplemented, "if you want to know what I should like most of all, it would be to have you bring your wings so that I can see you flying again, and a field-glass that I can watch you through."

He felt some hesitation partly out of a fear of leaving her and partly from a doubt concerning his own strength; but neither of these reasons was one he cared to avow. So he unfurled the bundle that had lain unused so long, spread and tightened and tested it, and at last, with a nod of farewell to the girl, dived off the cliff-head.

Any doubt he may have had concerning his strength disappeared at once. The mere touch of those great wings of his seemed to bring it all back, and hope and joy and confidence along with it.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



He Fired Too Soon.

That's why I sent you into the hut. It occurred to me that he might be following the bear, and that the lighted windows might give him a chance for a shot at one of us. No matter what superstitious fears he has, he could hardly be too much afraid to fire at us from a safe distance, if we happened to offer a fair mark."

"But we must have offered him that a hundred times in the last weeks, that is, if his rifle had anything like a modern range."

"That bullet is certainly a modern piece of ordnance," said Cayley. "It's soft-nosed and steel-jacketed."

He laid it down on a shelf and went into the storeroom to wash the stains out of the encounter with his hands.

"After all," he said, "it's only one more mystery, and I don't know that one more can make any great difference. Not in our way of life, certainly."

Both tried to stick to that view of it and, for the present, to dismiss conjecture upon the new topic from their minds, but they did not succeed very well. The idea that forced itself upon them, in spite of their attempt to discredit it, was that Roscoe's acquisition of a modern, long-range weapon with ammunition to match did not date back to the murder of Captain Fielding, nor to the disappearance of the Aurora, but that he had found the weapon, by some strange chance, only very recently, perhaps within a day or two. It was a disquieting thought, at best.

It was time for Cayley to turn in and for Jeanne to begin her evening watch alone, but before that happened they paid an extra amount of attention to the security of their doors and windows.

It was a little before 11 o'clock when Cayley came out of a deep sleep to find her bending over him, shaking him by the shoulder and crying out his name.

Philip had been enjoying, he was, again, the very man who, during those long years of exile, had dominated crew and captain of the Walrus and bent them to his will.

He was returning from the ledge along the crown of the glacier, when, on the day of this discovery, he found that his accustomed path was interrupted by a new fissure in the ice; it had occurred since he had come that way in the morning, and was too broad to leap across. So he was forced to descend by the rougher and more difficult track which lay along the moraine.

Before he had gone three paces along this track his eye made out something, just off his patch and a little below it, which caused him at first to utter a snarl of anger, but led him the next moment to give a wild blasphemous yell of joy.

The great fissure which had opened in the ice had done, in an instant, what the party from the Aurora had failed to do after hours of hard labor—it had yielded up the body of Perry Hunter, which, during all these months, it had kept imprisoned.

Strapped across the dead man's shoulders, just where he had carried it in life, was a rifle and around his middle a belt full of cartridges.

The next instant Roscoe was bending over the body, jerking savagely at the frozen buckles which resisted his impatient fingers. But they were not to be denied. If they were clumsy, the hands were strong.

It was not five minutes later when Roscoe, rifle and ammunition belt in his hands, was hurrying on toward his cave once more. The body lay just where his desecrating hands had left it.

The rifle was uninjured; that he had seen at a glance, though, of course, all the mechanism of its breech was frozen fast. But a half hour's hard work with cleaning rod and rags of



"This Air Will Bring You Back to Life."

faltered, it is true, and his knees trembled beneath him, and yet, slowly and with many pauses he made his way forward.

He was horribly afraid all the time, but curiosity was all the while overpowering fear. He was not more than 200 yards away when Cayley alighted beside the girl.

At what he saw then, Roscoe dropped his rifle on the beach, with a whispered oath, and rubbed his eyes. The light which diffused itself from the open window of the hut was not much, but it was enough to reveal the fact that this great man-bird, this golden-winged spirit which had kept him in terror for his own sanity all these months, was taking off his wings and folding them up into a bundle, in as matter-of-fact a way as if he were furling an umbrella. He stood there now, just an ordinary human figure of a man; the very man, in fact, that he had seen before and would have killed long ago had it not been for his over-mastering terror of the thing with wings.

He presented a fair mark now, and was in easy range, but Roscoe was too thoroughly astonished to seize the opportunity, and in a moment it was gone again. The two figures shrank into the shadow of the hut, and the next moment the light disappeared.

For a moment, an accession of articulated themselves into a perfectly clear perception of Roscoe's plan. "The other way! The other way!" he cried, motioning Jeanne back through the storeroom. "Into the cave. He is waiting for us outside. That's why he fired the hut. Quick. We must save all we can."

And so it happened that Roscoe waited in vain. He saw the blaze he had kindled reach its fiery climax, and then in spite of the icy gale which was fanning it, die down into an angry, sullen, smouldering glow. But no man appeared to furnish a mark for his waiting rifle, and no woman was delivered defenseless, shelterless, into his brutish hands.

The failure of his plan brought back a moment or two of the old superstitious horror, but his mind was braced against it now and did not readily give way. Somehow, the failure must be accountable—humanly accountable.

At last he solved this mystery, too, partly solved it, at least, for he remembered the ice cave back of the hut. His first impulse, when he thought of it, was to attack them there and now, to charge in over the red hot coals of the hut and settle matters once and for all.

He was sane enough to see that the advantage would be all against him. In close quarters he could not do