

Lost over Greenland

**LOST OVER
GREENLAND**

OR

Slim Tyler's Search for Dave Boyd

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LOST OVER GREENLAND

CHAPTER I

THE ONRUSHING TRAIN

"Go in and win, Slim."

"Good luck to you, old boy!"

"We're rooting for you, Slim Tyler."

A chorus of these and similar good wishes came from a host of throats as Slim Tyler, with an embarrassed grin on his freckled face, made his way toward his plane through the crowd of people on the North Elmwood flying field. The crowd had gathered to witness the take-off on the great refueling endurance flight, in which Slim Tyler was a competitor and which, it was hoped, would establish a new world's record.

The interest in the contest was intense and had attracted spectators from all over the country. Four teams of the most celebrated aviators in America had entered for the prize, and their machines, groomed to the minute and gleaming in the sun, stood quivering on the field, as eager, apparently, to go aloft as were their masters.

As Slim Tyler reached his plane in which Jerry Marbury, his assistant pilot, was already seated, the famous aviator, Dave Boyd, the ace of all the world's flyers, came up to him for a final word.

"Go to it, my boy," said Dave, as he wrung Slim's hand. "I'm backing you to the limit. I've been bragging to everyone that you're the finest airman of your age in America and I'm depending on you to make my boast good."

"I'll do my best, both for your sake and my own," promised Slim. "But it isn't going to be any cinch, considering the fellows I'll be against."

"Righto," agreed Dave Boyd. "But there'll be all the more glory in winning. It wouldn't be any fun if you were fighting against dubs. They'll give you a run for your money, all right. All the same, you're going to lick them. You have the stamina, you have the skill, and, above all, you have the bulldog stick-to-itiveness that's going to count."

"I hope you're a true prophet," said Slim, as he drew on his helmet, adjusted his goggles, and jumped into the plane.

The luck of the draw had placed him last in the order of ascent, and he and Jerry Marbury watched with keen interest as one after another the competing planes were drawn to the head of the runway and soared into the air.

"Those boys know their business," murmured Jerry, as he noted the grace and celerity of the three take-offs.

"They sure do," agreed Slim. "It won't be an easy job to pluck their feathers. But if we don't do it, it won't be for lack of trying."

Generous applause greeted all the pilots as they mounted into the air. But it was nothing compared to the thunderous shout that rose when the *Lightning Flash*, the plane of Slim Tyler and Jerry Marbury, roared down

the runway and darted up into the sky.

"Seems as though they rather like us down there," remarked Slim to Jerry, as he brought the plane to an even keel at an altitude of about fifteen hundred feet.

"Sure does," agreed Jerry. "Of course, it's our home crowd and they want to see us win just as a matter of local pride. Then, too, they know that Dave Boyd is backing us, and anything that Dave wants everybody else in this burg wants."

"That's my own chief reason for wanting to win," declared Slim. "I'd far rather please Dave Boyd that win the two thousand dollars they've hung up as a prize."

"Same here," assented Jerry. "But, oh boy, those two thousand berries look awfully good to me! A thousand apiece for a few days in the air! Not bad, is it?"

"Not to mention the five thousand dollars we'll divide between us if, in addition to beating these fellows, we make a new world's record," added Slim.

Faintly to their ears came the music of the band, which regaled the ears of the spectators with a medley of popular tunes, though without diverting their attention from the four planes that circled about the field in a variety of graceful evolutions, occasionally indulging in stunts that made the spectators gasp.

"Whom do you think we have to beat?" asked Jerry, as he watched the movements of their three rivals.

"All three of them," replied Slim, grinning.

"Of course," rejoined Jerry. "What I mean is, which of these bozos is likely to give us the most trouble?"

"Hard to tell," judged Slim. "They're all good. Ellison and McCarthy in the *Comet*, Braxton and Deimer in the *Scout*, Axtell and Wilson in the *Speed King*. None of them's to be sneezed at. If I were picking any of them, though, I'd fix on Braxton and Deimer as the most dangerous. They won a flight of this kind out in California, you know, and they're veterans."

He pulled the stick and the *Lightning Flash* darted up to an altitude of three thousand feet. At the same time he reduced his speed from sixty to about fifty miles an hour.

Gradually the crowd below thinned out, although some of the most enthusiastic of the flying fans camped there permanently for the whole duration of the flight. There was always the chance of something sensational happening to one or more of the four competing planes.

Soon the time came for refueling. The supply of gas was running low and the aviators, too, were beginning to feel the pangs of hunger.

Slim gave the preconcerted signal, and their supply plane, manned by Biff Donovan and Tom Ellsworth, rose swiftly from the ground.

"Here comes our flying wagon," murmured Jerry with satisfaction.

"And here's the crucial test of the whole thing," added Slim Tyler as he watched keenly the approaching plane. "I'll tend to the controls while you show me what a perfect contact you can make."

He gradually went lower as the other plane came higher, and the two planes maneuvered until the supply ship was almost directly over the *Lightning Flash*.

"Let her go, Tom!" shouted and signaled Jerry.

"Here she comes!" called Tom, and a long hose, like a great serpent, came shooting down directly behind the propeller.

Jerry grabbed it deftly before it had time to touch the plane and connected it with the main tank, which immediately began to fill.

"Smart work, Jerry!" exclaimed the young pilot. "Cut her off when we've taken on about seventy gallons."

Jerry Marbury complied and then unscrewed the hose and cast it off.

Aluminum cans, three feet long, containing sandwiches, fruit, and coffee, in addition to a bottle of distilled water, were then swung down to them by Tom Ellsworth.

Jerry received them with marked enthusiasm, which was fully shared by Slim.

"They've sent us plenty, I hope," remarked Slim Tyler.

"They have," declared Jerry, as an avalanche of good things slid from the container that he turned upside down. "If we fail in this flight, it won't be because they've let us starve to death. Sink your teeth into that," and he flipped a lettuce and egg sandwich to his companion, who caught it deftly in his left hand and ate it eagerly. The supply plane slid down in long spirals to the ground, and Jerry, after a copious meal, relieved Slim at the controls so that the latter could follow his example.

They ate with appetite, for it was now nearly night, and in the feverish excitement of the preparations for the flight neither had tasted food since early morning.

The sun went down, dusk deepened into night, and gradually the heavens were studded with stars. The moon would not rise till late, but with the brightly lighted field beneath them and the searchlights that kept sweeping the skies, there was no difficulty in avoiding contact with the rival planes.

Slim had throttled the motor down to about twelve hundred revolutions, and the *Lightning Flash* maintained a pace which, while it would have been fast for an express train, was slow for an airplane. They were not going anywhere, and it did not matter whether they loafed or sped, as long as they remained aloft.

"We'll work this thing on three-hour spells," decided Slim. "Suppose you get some sleep now, Jerry, and I'll call you three hours from now."

"Suits me all right," acceded Jerry. "Talk about an outdoor sleeping porch! This lies all over that. All the ventilation you want and then some."

He stretched out on his narrow mattress and in a few minutes was fast asleep. At the appointed time Slim Tyler woke him and took his place, and thus they alternated through the night.

A slight haze lay low on the ground when morning broke and shut out the sight of the field. It made flying hazardous, also, and had the rival planes been flying at the same altitude, there would have been great danger of collision.

But it had been previously arranged that in case of bad weather conditions they should fly at different heights, so that the pilots had little worry on that account.

About ten o'clock the haze lifted and the circling planes were bathed in sunlight.

Slim Tyler and Jerry Marbury cast a glance about for their rivals.

"Look at the *Scout*!" exclaimed Jerry. "She seems to be coming down."

"Wonder what the trouble is," said Slim, with quickened interest.

Braxton could be seen at the controls while Deimer was on the narrow catwalk working desperately to adjust some trouble with the motor.

"Seem to be making heavy weather of it," remarked Jerry. "Something gone wrong with the engine."

Whatever the difficulty was, it seemed unconquerable, for Deimer at last threw up his hands in a gesture of despair, got into his seat, where he sat with drooping head, and Braxton in long spirals brought the plane to the ground. The *Scout* was definitely out of the race.

Slim Tyler and Jerry Marbury looked at each other, the same thought in the mind of each. The dropping out of one of the contestants marked a step toward their own final triumph. They had only two to beat now, instead of three. They could not help a feeling of elation, but blended with this was a feeling of sympathy for the discomfited aviators. They knew how they would have felt in a similar position.

There were no more casualties on that day. But on the following morning, Ellison and McCarthy in the *Comet* were forced to quit because of a split in the propeller that had developed during the night.

"Falling like autumn leaves," murmured Jerry. "I can see those two thousand berries coming nearer. We have now only the *Speed King* to beat and the race is ours."

"They're saying the same thing about us," observed Slim. "Everything seems to be all serene with them so far. Listen to their motors. They're working like a dream."

A little later Slim Tyler himself had a scare. His own motors began to miss.

Jerry's face paled when he heard the ominous knocking.

"Gas giving out?" he asked in alarm.

"No, we have plenty," replied Slim, as he tapped the tank. "It must be that the feed pipe is clogged. Hustle, Jerry, and get it cleared."

Jerry worked like a madman and adjusted the trouble while Slim, with consummate skill, so maneuvered the plane, which for the time was practically motorless, as to keep it from descending.

Even at that, it was dangerously near the ground before the engines resumed their usual hum and Slim Tyler gave her the gun and mounted to a realm of safety.

"Close call that!" exclaimed Jerry, with a gasp of relief as he wiped his streaming brow.

"Sure was," agreed Slim. "It simply shows what an assortment of chances there is in this game."

This was illustrated an hour later when the *Speed King* was seen to falter and go into a tail spin.

"She's going down!" cried Jerry excitedly. "Here's where we win."

But his excitement was premature, for by a herculean effort the *Speed King* was brought out of her spin and to a level keel.

"Now where's your two thousand?" chaffed Slim.

"Only postponed a little while," replied Jerry. "Be all the more fun counting it when it comes."

Slim Tyler in his moments of leisure was thinking of far more than two thousand dollars. He was mulling over in his mind the twenty thousand dollars out of which he believed his father had been swindled by the old skinflint, Nat Shaley.

Would he ever get it? Could he ever pin the crime on Shaley and compel him to make restitution?

His last interview with the miserly old lumber dealer had convinced Slim of the man's guilt. But moral certainty was one thing and legal proof was quite another. He had not a shred of real evidence that would stand up for a moment in a court of law.

If the tramp, High Hat Frank, who knew so much about the matter had not died so soon! If——

But what was the use of "ifs?" Slim Tyler put the matter in the back of his mind and devoted himself to the task in hand.

In the afternoon, to vary the scene of action a little, Slim Tyler sailed in a wider circle that carried his plane over the railroad tracks skirting the mountains.

A long whistle came faintly to the ears of the two airmen, and, looking up the tracks, they saw a freight train winding its way down the grade.

Jerry touched Slim's arm.

"Look at the auto coming down that mountain road!" he exclaimed, pointing to the right. "Looks as if the driver had lost control. And that road crosses the railroad tracks!"

"Brakes won't work, I guess," cried Slim in alarm. "Looks as if he were heading for a smashup."

The auto went plunging crazily along, made a wild skid as it approached the roadbed, and turned over on its side on the track, throwing out the driver, who lay stunned across the rails.

"And the train's coming!" cried Slim, with blanched face. "Because of the curve, they won't see him until it's too late to stop. We'll have to go down and save him, contest or not!"

"But the money—" began Jerry, and then added hastily: "All right. I'm with you."

There was an open field near by, and Slim Tyler made the quickest landing of his life. Before the plane stopped, Slim and Jerry had jumped from the cockpit and were racing at full speed toward the wrecked car.

As they neared the track the prostrate man rose and staggered toward them. A shock ran through Slim Tyler as he saw the man's face.

It was the face of Nat Shaley!

CHAPTER II

A BITTER DOSE

Nat Shaley! The worst enemy Slim Tyler had on earth! The man who had cheated him out of his wages! The man who had hounded him on false charges and had had him arrested! The man who, in Slim's belief, had swindled his father out of twenty thousand dollars!

And for the sake of this miserable rascal, Slim had thrown away his chance of winning fame and money and possibly of hanging up a new world's record! And not only his own chance, but that of his loyal friend and companion, Jerry Marbury!

A wave of bitterness swept over Slim Tyler as he looked at the mean, wizened face of the old skinflint.

"So it's you, is it, Nat Shaley?" exclaimed Slim.

"Yes, it's me," snarled Shaley. "Why do you fellers stand here with your mouths open, lookin' so dumb when the train's comin'? Hurry up an' pull that car of mine off the tracks, an' be quick about it."

The indignant response that flew to Slim's lips at the man's brusque order was lost in the grinding of brakes as the freight train rounded the curve and the engineer noted the obstruction on the track.

But the train was heavy and the grade steep, and despite the engineer's utmost efforts the locomotive struck the car and hurled it, a twisted mass of wood and metal, to the side of the tracks.

"There, drat it!" cried Shaley, "they've smashed my car, all because you lazy lummoxes wuz as slow as molasses instead of hustlin'. But somebody'll pay fer this, by gravy!"

"Oh, shut up!" commanded Jerry, stung beyond endurance by the fellow's arrogance. "Who do you think you are, to order us about?"

"You ought to be glad you saved your miserable life," declared Slim. "The old car was a rattletrap, anyway. It ought to have been in the junk heap five years ago."

"What's all this about?" demanded the engineer of the locomotive, who had descended from the cab and approached them, accompanied by his fireman, while the conductor was hurrying from the caboose. "Whose car was that on the track?"

"Mine!" shrieked Nat Shaley. "An' you've got yourself in a pretty mess by smashin' it. I'll sue the company, by heck, an' you'll be lookin' fer another job."

"Cut out that kind of guff," growled the engineer. "What was the car doing on the track?"

"That ain't neither here nor there," retorted Shaley. "You got eyes in your head, ain't you? Why didn't you stop your train when you seed it there?"

"Couldn't stop in time," replied the engineer curtly.

"That's because you don't know your business," snarled Shaley. "You ain't heerd the last of this yet. That car wuz worth twelve hundred dollars, an' your company'll pay every last cent of it. I've got witnesses here," and he pointed to Slim and Jerry.

"Don't call on me," put in Jerry.

"Nor me," added Slim bitterly. "The old car wasn't worth twenty dollars. I've heard you say that you'd had it for fifteen years and it was second hand when you bought it."

"Tain't so," snarled Shaley vehemently. "You lyin'——"

He stopped abruptly and stepped back as Slim Tyler took a quick step forward.

"Look here, you old rascal," said the young aviator, his eyes blazing, "no man calls me a liar and gets away with it. I won't hit you, because you're too old. But another word like that and I'll take you by the scruff of the neck and shake you till your false teeth drop out."

"Aw, go on," said Shaley sullenly, taking care to keep his distance. "Anyways, I'll make the company pay _____"

"How did the car come to get on the tracks?" asked the conductor, who by this time had joined the excited group.

"Because there must have been somethin' wrong in the right of way," replied Shaley. "Part of the rail stickin' out or somethin' that upset it. Why don't your company keep the tracks in order? I wuz joggin' along nice an' peaceable, everything shipshape, an' I struck somethin' at the track that upset the car quick as a wink. Wonder I wuzn't killed. Your company'll have to pay me fer personal damages, as well as fer the car——"

While this farrago of lies was being reeled off, Slim Tyler and Jerry Marbury had been looking at each other in stupefaction.

"You infernal old crook!" Jerry finally burst forth. "The whole thing was your own fault, or the fault of the car. You'd lost control of it, brakes out of order or something, and you were coming down that hill lickety-split."

Shaley glared at him, bursting with rage.

"Well, we can't stay here all day chewing the rag," interrupted the conductor, looking at his watch. "I'll take the names of you two gentlemen," he said, taking out a notebook and doing some hasty scribbling. "As for you," he said to Shaley, "you can put your claim in the regular way, though I don't think you'll get anything. Get into the cab, Jim," he directed the engineer, "and start her going."

A minute or two more and the train was under way.

Slim Tyler had gained his nickname because of his tall, lanky figure. He had been christened Ross Joseph, and was the son of Stillwell and Mary Tyler. Both had now been dead for years. Mr. Tyler had once been possessed of considerable means, but most of it had been swept away in the later years of his life by unfortunate investments.

There was practically nothing left for the orphan lad, and he knocked about, supporting himself as best he could, until he got a job in Nat Shaley's lumberyard at Centerville.

Slim worked early and late, hard and faithfully, but Shaley, whose dislike he had incurred because of an accident that had been wholly Shaley's fault, discharged him abruptly, owing him forty dollars in wages. Shaley offered him twelve dollars in full settlement, but Slim Tyler insisted on getting the forty that were due him. High words took place and Slim declared that he would get square with Shaley for cheating him. The threat was thrown out in the heat of anger and really meant nothing.

But that night Shaley's yards burned, and Slim, friendless and moneyless, realized the deadly significance that would be attached to his threat, which had been overheard by the foreman. In bewilderment and consternation he "hopped" a freight train that same night. In the car where he had ensconced himself he came in contact with a half-drunken tramp who called himself High Hat Frank and who referred to the fire, chuckling tipsily.

In his wanderings Slim Tyler finally brought up at North Elmwood, where he found employment with Carl Stummel, a good-natured old German keeper of a "hot dog" stand. It was a great relief for Slim to have his livelihood provided for, but his chief satisfaction rose from the fact that the hot dog stand directly faced the North Elmwood flying field, one of the great aviation fields of the country.

Slim Tyler, from his earliest boyhood, had been fascinated by the idea of flying. He would have given the world to be an airman. But without money to go to a flying school it seemed that this ambition would never be realized.

It was a great delight, however, to watch the planes circling about and to see the pilots and mechanics at work. He picked up many acquaintances among the aviators, and every spare hour he had he spent on the flying field. He looked with reverence on the famous airmen and especially on Dave Boyd, the most famous aviator in the United States and, for that matter, in the world.

Slim's great chance came when he found in the road, where it had been jolted from an automobile, a satchel containing two thousand dollars in cash. To his delight this proved to belong to Dave Boyd, and Slim hurried to him with the money.

The great aviator was so struck with the boy's honesty that he insisted on giving him a substantial reward, and finding that Slim was interested in flying, he gave him employment in his own hangar. The lad was in the seventh heaven and was learning rapidly all that was to be known about airplanes when one day, just on the eve of a South American flight by Boyd, he found himself confronted on the crowded flying field by Nat Shaley.

The latter clamored instantly for Slim's arrest. In the hue and cry that followed Slim took refuge in the tail of the *Shooting Star*, the plane that was to carry Boyd and his party to Buenos Aires, Argentina, the goal of the flight. While hiding there, he overheard Shaley say something inadvertently that led him to associate the old miser with his, Slim's, father's lumber deal.

Then, to the lad's surprise and consternation, the *Shooting Star* rose in the air, and he found himself an unwilling stowaway on the great South American flight.

What thrilling adventures he met with on that voyage, the stern disfavor with which Boyd and his assistants met him when he emerged from his hiding place, the way in which he conquered their respect and admiration by his courage and quick wit in desperate emergencies, his arrest by Shaley on his return and his exoneration; all this is told in the first volume of this series, entitled: "Sky Riders of the Atlantic."

The wrongs he had suffered at the hands of Shaley were in Slim Tyler's mind as he gave vent to his bitter denunciation of the wizened old rascal.

"You'd better look out what you're sayin', you boys had," bristled Shaley. "Them words is actionable at law. You can't go aroun' callin' people names an' not get caught up with, let me tell you."

"Oh, close your face!" exclaimed Jerry, in profound disgust. "Slim knows you're a crook. I know you're a liar. I wish you were younger so that I could take a swing at you. Gosh, Slim," he added as he turned to his comrade, "if I'd known that it was this old rascal in that car I'd never have agreed to come down."

"Well, there's no use crying over spilt milk," said Slim sadly. "We are down, and that's the end of it. Come along and leave this old crab to stew in his own juice. Gee, I hate to face Dave Boyd, but we might as well get the agony over with."

They left Shaley glaring after them malignantly, climbed into the cockpit, and lifted the plane into the air.

"Feel as if I were going to my own funeral," muttered Jerry dejectedly.

"It's a blow right between the eyes," admitted Slim. "But I really don't see what else we could have done. We didn't know that Shaley was going to recover in time to stagger off the tracks. And we would never have forgiven ourselves if, for the sake of money, we'd let a human being be crushed to death, as it seemed likely he would be."

"Of course not," agreed Jerry. "Oh, I'm not beefing because we came down. I'd do the same thing over again under the same circumstances. But I'd rather we'd gone to the help of anyone else in the world than that old miser. And how grateful he was! Thanked us a lot, didn't he? Called us 'lazy lummoxes' because we didn't get that old bunch of junk off the track."

They reached the flying field to find the crowds in a great state of excitement. It was known that the *Lightning Flash* had come down and all were agog to know the reason.

The *Speed King* was still gracefully flying over the field, and Jerry looked at it with eyes bleak with disappointment.

"They win," he said bitterly, "and all because a wretched old crook happened to be in this part of the country at the wrong time. This sure has been our unlucky day!"

Slim brought the plane down to a perfect landing, to be surrounded immediately by a clamoring crowd.

Dave Boyd pushed his way to the side of the plane.

"What in thunder made you come down?" he demanded. "Engine trouble?"

In a few words Slim Tyler explained the cause of the disaster. Boyd's disappointment was bitter, but he bore it like the sportsman he was.

"Of course you had to do what you did," he conceded, when Slim had finished. "It's just a bit of awfully bad luck. And the fact that it was Nat Shaley you did it for adds the finishing touch. We've just got to grin and bear it.

"By the way," he added to Slim, as the young aviator and Jerry climbed dispiritedly out of the cockpit, "speaking of Shaley reminds me that a little while ago a trampish-looking man was around here looking for

you. Said he'd known High Hat Frank."

Slim pricked up his ears.

"Where is he now?" he asked eagerly.

"Haven't the least idea," replied Boyd. "Probably hanging round somewhere. Probably he'll be hunting you up, now that he knows your plane's come down."

He turned to give directions to have the *Lightning Flash* drawn into her hangar, and Slim Tyler made his way wearily through the crowd. The reason for his descent had spread like wildfire, and he received many congratulations for having made such a sacrifice for the sake of saving a life that seemed to be in danger.

These, however, failed to cheer him greatly. His heart was sore. He had entered the race with the highest of hopes. He had hoped to write his name on the scroll of fame. His success would have meant not only money, but reputation. His name and the story of his exploit would have been in every newspaper in the United States. It would have been the opening wedge of a great flying career.

But he had lost! And lost for the sake of whom? That was the bitterest drop in his cup of misery. Lost for the sake of his worst enemy, a man who had cheated him, a man who hated him, a man who had not thanked him, a man who would even chuckle when he read the papers and learned the extent of Slim's loss! It was surely the irony of fate.

He made his way across to Stummel's hot dog stand and dropped wearily on a stool.

The old German spotted him at once and was so agitated that he dropped the cup of coffee he was handling.

"Himmel! It vos Shlim!" he cried, as he hurried toward him. "Vy iss it dot you iss not yet oop in der air alretty? Iss it dot you haf a fall gehabt?"

Slim smiled wryly.

"No go, Carl," he replied. "I had to come down."

"Und dot two tausend dollars iss ausgespielt?" asked Carl, in consternation. "It iss geflopt gangen?"

"All gone," assented Slim. "I don't get a red cent."

"Und I haf lost der fife tollers dot I bet on you," continued Carl. "But dot iss nuddings. It iss for you dot I feel badt. Poor Shlim!"

A rough-looking man on an adjoining stool turned about sharply.

"Are you Slim Tyler?" he asked.

CHAPTER III

THE TRAMP'S NOTEBOOK

Slim Tyler nodded cautiously in answer to the stranger's question. He was not impressed by the man's appearance.

"That's what they call me," he replied. "What can I do for you?"

The fellow leered at Slim over his hot dog. His look became sly and calculating.

"Well, now," he said, "it ain't so much what you can do for me, young feller, as what I may be able to do for you."

Slim grinned.

"All right. I never yet shot a fellow for wanting to do me a favor. What's on your mind?"

The last words gained in interest, for it occurred to Slim that this might be the fellow that Dave Boyd had mentioned, the trampish-looking man that had claimed acquaintanceship with High Hat Frank.

Perhaps the tramp noticed his quickened interest and guessed at the cause. At any rate, when he spoke again it was with increased assurance.

"Well, now, I ain't exactly throwin' my favors round reckless like. There's folks might think that this here favor I've got for you was worth spendin' a few bucks to get."

"I supposed you were after money," said Slim. "Tell me what you have for me and how much you want for it."

The look of cunning grew in the eyes of the tramp.

"Yeah, I should tell you!" he jeered. "And after you got my information I'd like to know how much of a chance I'd have of collecting on it."

Slim turned his back on the fellow.

"Keep your information," he said curtly, and added to Carl Stummel: "One hot dog, please, with plenty of mustard."

"Ach!" replied Carl, his eyes twinkling, "you talk like I don't know alretty how you like dem—me who votched you spreadt on der mustard so dick alretty it iss a vender vot you dond burn oudt your insides yet."

"I like plenty of mustard," grinned Slim. "It kills the taste of the dog."

As he accepted the wienie from Carl's stubby fingers he felt a touch on his shoulder. He turned to find the stranger gazing anxiously at him.

"What, you here yet?" asked Slim, with a fine affectation of carelessness and smothering a yawn.

"I knew High Hat Frank," whispered the fellow, his ugly countenance twisted into an expression of amiability. "It will be worth your while to listen to what I have to say. Take it from one who knows."

Slim eyed the man speculatively.

"How much do you want and what have you got?" he asked.

"I have a notebook that once belonged to High Hat Frank," the fellow replied. "I was in a camp with three other guys, gentlemen of the road like me," with a leer. "One day when all the rest had cleared out I found a notebook. It had High Hat Frank's name on it."

"Well," said Slim, "what has that to do with me?"

"It has your name in it, that's what it's got to do with you," was the reply. "And it has other things in it, this notebook has—things you might like to know."

"Let me see it," demanded Slim.

"For a price," replied the tramp. "My name's Dan Mooney and you can see for yourself that I ain't got much of this world's goods. I'm a poor man, I am, and I got to make my money where I can."

"You don't expect me to buy a pig in a poke, do you?" asked Slim.

"You've got to take a chance on that," replied Mooney. "It'll cost you ten dollars in advance to get a squint at it. Maybe it'll be worth a hundred times that to you. I dunno. But you ought to be willing to gamble that much on it."

Slim himself was of the same opinion. He reached into his pocket, pulled out some bills, counted out a five and five ones and shoved them toward the tramp. Mooney seized them eagerly in his dirty fingers and shoved them into an inside pocket of his ragged coat.

"All right," he said. "Now, you being a sport and me being an honest man, I'm giving you a fair return for your money."

He thrust his hand deep into a back pocket and drew out a shabby old notebook which he handed to the young aviator. The book was so filthy with dirt and grease that Slim handled it gingerly by one corner.

"Looks like you vos got schwindled alretty," observed Carl Stummel, who had watched the proceeding with disapproval. "For sooch a book ich vould nicht ten cents geben, to say nuddings oof ten tollers."

"Go take a back seat, grandpa," remarked the tramp, with a lofty wave of his dirty hand. "Believe me when Mr. Tyler here gets a look at the inside sheets of that there little book he'll think he got it dirt cheap. Now give me two wienies with mustard and make it snappy. I got money now and I want service."

The old German's indignant snort was lost on Slim Tyler, as he rose and strolled away, the notebook still held between thumb and forefinger. He wanted to find a secluded spot where he could peruse High Hat Frank's notebook without fear of interruption.

He found such a spot in the yard back of the hot dog stand. He sat down on a tree stump and opened the greasy notebook.

His fingers shook with eagerness.

How much, if anything, had High Hat Frank known of Nat Shaley and his swindling lumber schemes? How much, if anything, had he known of that Oregon deal in which Slim's own father had been involved?

Almost fearfully Slim Tyler leafed the pages of the book.

The first few pages on which his eye fell held little of personal interest for him. They were memoranda of trips made and people encountered by the dead tramp, of private grudges and vows on the part of the writer to even the score with certain persons unknown to Slim.

The lad was becoming increasingly disappointed when a certain notation caught his eye. He read with eagerness the almost illegible writing that lay scrawled across the pages.

"Guess this is worth ten dollars, all right," he muttered to himself.

The paragraph that so interested him began with some decidedly uncomplimentary remarks concerning the character of Nat Shaley, and continued with some generalities relative to an Oregon lumber deal.

These references were vague and had evidently been jotted down only as aids to High Hat Frank's memory, which was probably becoming dimmed by excessive drinking.

Several names, however, were mentioned that Slim felt might serve him as clues. The real name of High Hat Frank himself, Frank Larrapoo, was the first that Slim came across. Two other men, Hugh Garrabrant and Cameron Flood seemed to have been involved in the deal. The man named Flood, it appeared, had a claim amounting to forty thousand dollars.

There was a notation relative to this last fact which made Slim's pulses quicken:

"Flood and Tyl—" here a bit of the paper had crumpled away—"both swindled. Looks like that crook, Shaley, got all the money while they were left holding the bag."

"Tyl—"! It was maddening that just at that point the paper was crumpled. What had originally been on that missing bit. Was it the syllable "er," completing the name "Tyler?" Slim felt sure of it.

This was all in the book that bore on the Oregon transaction, all, as a matter of fact, that had the slightest interest for Slim Tyler.

However, Slim felt that it was a great deal. It was the first written statement he had yet seen in which Nat Shaley had been accused of swindling. And it was the first time that in writing Slim's father's name had been linked with the transaction.

If only the paper had not worn away just there! If, in addition, the full name "Stillwell Tyler" had been there!

High Hat Frank could have made the identification definite. But High Hat Frank was dead. But, even if he were alive, how far would his evidence have weight?

"He was only a tramp," thought Slim. "Who would have taken his word against that of a man like Nat Shaley, who has the power of influence and money behind him?"

Thinking these thoughts, the first fine edge of Slim's enthusiasm was dulled. He figured that as evidence in court High Hat Frank's dirty, grease-soaked notebook would not be worth the paper in it.

"The judge and jury would laugh," he thought, "and so would Nat Shaley. What I need are facts—facts that the crook can't laugh off. But how I'm going to get them—that's another question."

He consulted the notebook again.

"Hugh Garrabrant and Cameron Flood," he said aloud. "I'd like to meet one or both of them. I reckon they might be able to tell me some interesting things about that transaction—things that High Hat Frank neglected to put down in his notebook."

There was the thunderous rumble of an airplane directly overhead.

Slim Tyler looked up absently, but instantly his attention became fixed.

The plane was the *Speed King*, the last of the four in the contest remaining aloft.

His practiced glance told him at once that the *Speed King* was in trouble and preparing to descend.

"Lots of good that does me, though, now that Jerry and I are out of it," he said to himself bitterly.

He hurried over to the flying field, thrusting the notebook into his pocket.

The plane was flying low. Its engines barked wearily. It dropped and fluttered like a tired bird.

Slim made his way through the crowd to a place beside the Boyd hangar, where Jerry was in earnest conversation with Henry Cusack, the superintendent of the field, and several of Boyd's mechanics.

Jerry waved to Slim and pointed to the plane.

"One of the engines has passed out altogether," he said. "She's got to come down. That knocks out all their chances of breaking the record."

"Yes," replied Slim. "But they've beaten us just the same in the individual contest."

"And got the two thousand berries that would have been ours if it hadn't been for that confounded Nat Shaley," groaned Jerry.

The plane touched the ground, bounded along for several hundred feet, and came to a standstill.

Slim was about to join the crowd that surged about the *Speed King* when a familiar voice caught his ear. He glanced back over his shoulder.

Carl Stummel elbowed and pushed his way through the crowd toward him in a state of great excitement.

"Dere he iss, alretty!" cried Carl. "I tell you dot dis Shlim Tyler, dere iss nuddings dot he candt do vunst. Shlim! Vait a minute yet!"

CHAPTER IV

A SLENDER CHANCE

Slim Tyler whirled about, curious to know what had so stirred his good friend.

Carl Stummel's glasses were pushed far up on his forehead. His hair stood up in bushy wisps about his head as though he had grasped it in some extremity of tragic emotion. His eyes were wild and he was panting heavily.

The German was not alone. By the hand he led a man whose girth was as generous as his own. There, however, the resemblance ended. The stranger had a scholarly, sensitive face with near-sighted eyes that peered uncertainly from steel-rimmed spectacles. He appeared not to see Slim until he was almost upon him.

"Dis iss Shlim Tyler," panted Carl to his companion. "Dere is nuddings he candt do alretty. He vill your leetle poy save. Shlim, dis iss Henry Traut."

The newcomer peered up at the tall young aviator. He clutched at Slim's sleeves.

"Ach, yes, I have heard of you," he said. "Can you once save my little boy, I will be your friend for life."

Slim was touched by the pleading in the father's eyes.

"I'll be glad to do anything I can," he said earnestly. "Where is your boy and what's wrong with him?"

Carl broke in to explain.

"Der leetle poy in an accident it iss dot he vos been alretty. He lif in Ernestville, fifty miles from here it iss. He must an oberation haf kevick. He—he——"

Carl was getting so excited that his friend took up the tale.

"My wife has phoned me," he said in husky accents, "that the doctor there says we must get Dr. Aaron Wills, the specialist who lives here, to perform the operation. I understand he is a wonderful surgeon. But he must come at once. Else my baby will die—my little boy, he is only six years old——"

His voice broke and he wrung his hands distractedly.

"Eef you der doctor could get und fly mit him to Ernestville, Shlim," Carl said pleadingly.

"I'll do it," promised Slim.

He made his way through the press of people toward the row of cars parked about the field.

He knew the famous specialist by sight, and remembered having seen him on the field only a few minutes before.

"It would be too good luck to find him there still," Slim thought to himself. "Just the same, it's possible."

When he reached the farther side of the field he caught a glimpse of the surgeon's car about to pull away to the road.

Slim began to run, his long legs covering the ground swiftly.

"Doctor Wills!" he called. "Doctor Wills! Wait a minute!"

The car was already rolling smoothly along the road and Slim's call was unheard.

Slim set his teeth and sprinted. His legs moved like pistons.

The heavy traffic of vehicles along the road decided the race in Slim's favor. He came up with the doctor's car and flung himself upon the running board.

Doctor Wills looked surprised. Perhaps he thought for a fleeting second that he was the victim of a hold-up.

He recognized the young aviator almost instantly, however, and drew up at the side of the road.

"What can I do for you, my boy?" he asked, a smile transforming features that in repose were serious, almost stern. "You scarcely look as though you needed the services of a doctor."

"Not yet, doctor," replied Slim. "Although it's a lucky fellow in my line of work who doesn't need the services of a surgeon to patch him up now and then."

He explained hurriedly the plight of Henry Traut and the six-year-old child, whose life the skill of Dr. Aaron Wills was depended on to save.

Doctor Wills listened intently, his face growing increasingly serious.

"Ernestville is more than fifty miles away," he observed. "If the child is as badly hurt as you say, we probably couldn't get there in time."

Slim smiled confidently.

"We could make it by plane," he declared.

"Ah!" the stern face relaxed again. Slim's youth and enthusiasm possessed a strong appeal for this man of many cares and ceaseless responsibilities. "I see."

He turned his car in the direction of the flying field.

"Get your plane ready," he said. "While you're doing it, I'll call up my office, tell them where I'm going, and leave directions concerning a few matters with my assistant."

They found Henry Traut where Slim had left him. Carl had been forced to go back to his hot dog stand, for on a day like this business was brisk.

Slim introduced the doctor, and the German grasped his hand convulsively.

"It is so good of you, doctor," he said tremulously. "Our little boy, he is all we have. If he should leave us, I too should die."

"I'll do my best," said the doctor, as he and Traut hastily got into the flying togs that Slim handed them.

A hasty word to Jerry from Slim had apprised him of the state of affairs and he had hauled out a speedy plane from the hangar so that in an incredibly short time everything was ready for the flight.

Carl Stummel rushed over again for a parting word with his friend. There were tears in the eyes of the good old fellow as he wrung Traut's hand.

"It will be alles recht," Carl assured him. "You shoost leave it mit dot Shlim Tyler. He iss vun great poy. He vill get you dere in der jig dime yet."

Slim met the quizzical glance of the famous surgeon and grinned sheepishly.

"Mr. Stummel is an old friend of mine, Doctor," he said. "I'm afraid he has too much confidence in me."

"Any man may count himself fortunate to possess one friend with implicit confidence in his ability," said Dr. Wills gravely. "Besides, I think we're all inclined to share his confidence. Let's see now how quickly you can take us to Ernestville."

"Watch our smoke," said Slim, as he motioned to one of the mechanics to turn the propeller.

The engines sang their song of speed as the plane rushed down the runway and darted upward into the air.

Higher and higher it rose until it was at an elevation of about a thousand feet. Then Slim brought it to an even keel and set its nose in the direction of Ernestville, fifty miles away.

Before Slim's mind rose the vision of a six-year-old child, inert, helpless, dependent for life itself on the speed of the plane and the skill of the surgeon.

"A race with death perhaps," Slim muttered to himself. "But I have a feeling that we'll win."

He gave the plane full throttle and clove the air like a comet. He was racing not for a money prize, not for glory or reputation, but for a life.

He covered the fifty miles in something less than twenty minutes, and came down on a small flying field in the outskirts of Ernestville.

There, through a previous arrangement made over the telephone by Jerry Marbury before the take-off, a car was waiting.

Into this hurried Dr. Wills, followed by Henry Traut and by Slim himself, who had lingered behind just for a moment to give a few directions regarding the plane.

"To my house, quick!" urged Traut.

"No, to the hospital," directed the doctor. "I talked to your doctor before we left North Elmwood and he arranged for the transfer. With the facilities there, a successful outcome to the operation is far more probable than if it were performed at your home. Set your mind at rest. Everything will be done for your child that it is possible to do."

"Ach, Gott!" murmured the stricken father. "I pray that it will be enough."

The car stopped at the hospital, and the doctor hurried up the steps. Henry Traut kept beside him, his fingers twining and intertwining in agonized helplessness.

Slim Tyler brought up the rear, increasingly conscious of being an outsider, yet unwilling to desert the party until he had learned more concerning the fate of the little lad.

Inside the hospital they were greeted by the clean antiseptic odor common to all such institutions.

The great surgeon was met by the nurse in charge, who summoned the head of the hospital, who in turn offered all the facilities of his domain to his distinguished colleague.

Doctor Wills gave a crisp direction and turned toward the stairs. It was evident that he had completely forgotten both the father of his "case" and Slim Tyler, who had been chiefly responsible for bringing him there.

Henry Traut, however, was not willing to be ignored. He followed the surgeon and plucked nervously at his sleeve.

"My boy, I can see him, yes?"

Without pausing in his swift stride, Doctor Wills said over his shoulder:

"Better wait in the reception room with young Tyler. I'll have word sent to you as soon as you can see the boy."

With this small comfort the distracted father was forced to content himself. He walked irresolutely into the waiting room and paced up and down, up and down, his hands behind his back, his glazed stare fixed, his mouth set in a line of pain.

Slim watched him uncomfortably for a few minutes, wondering if he should try to say something comforting, but finally deciding against it.

"How can I say anything consoling when his poor little kid may be dying this minute for all I know? I doubt if he'd even hear me. He has his ears strained for some sound from upstairs."

He turned restlessly to the window and tried to interest his thoughts by the sights of the street.

"The worst fix I ever was in," he muttered to himself. "Who'd think I'd get so cut up about some one else's kid? Wonder what they're doing to the poor little beggar, anyhow."

As though in answer to his question, a soft-footed nurse entered.

"Mr. Traut," she said, "I have come from Doctor Wills. He says that you can see your little boy."

Henry Traut paused in his restless pacing. He regarded the nurse, his face working. He peered at her and gripped her arm with imploring fingers.

"My little boy—my little son," he whispered. "Tell me—will he live?"

The nurse nodded, a smile on her face.

"Doctor Wills says that he is out of danger."

Henry Traut sat down with great suddenness. Slim had the impression that his legs had given out under him. Traut felt in his pocket and drew out a handkerchief, which he applied to his eyes.

"Lieber Gott!" he murmured, "I give thanks."

Slim felt an unaccustomed emotion swelling up in him and turned sharply to the window. He remained there until he was conscious of a presence near him and turned to find the white-garbed nurse beside him.

"Are you Mr. Tyler?" she asked.

Slim admitted his identity.

"I brought Doctor Wills and Mr. Traut here in a plane," he added awkwardly. "I haven't really any business here, but I thought I'd sort of like to hang around until I found out how the little codger was getting along. I—I guess I'll be going now."

"I guess you'll do nothing of the kind," said the nurse smilingly. "Not if I have anything to say about it—or Doctor Wills. You see the little Traut boy has been asking for you—seems he's seen your picture in the papers and heard a lot about your flying—and he won't take no for an answer."

"How does he know I'm here?" asked Slim.

"He heard Doctor Wills speak of you to Doctor Morton the anæsthetist. He must have understood then that you were still downstairs, for you were the first one he asked for when he came out of the ether. You're quite a hero to the little boy, Mr. Tyler."

Slim fidgeted uncomfortably, wondering whether the nurse was laughing at him.

He was ashamed of the suspicion a moment later when very seriously and gently she placed her hand upon his arm.

"You undoubtedly saved the little fellow's life, Mr. Tyler. I heard Doctor Wills say that if he had been half an hour later, he could have done nothing. If you can carry your kindness a little further and come up to see the boy just for a moment. It will keep him from fretting and——"

"I'll be glad to," said Slim promptly. "I'm glad to do anything I can."

The nurse said nothing further, but led the way from the room.

Mr. Traut had already been taken to the room in which his boy lay.

Slim had never been in a hospital before, except on the one occasion when he had visited High Hat Frank. The smell of antiseptics and the rows of narrow beds all had a depressing effect upon him.

"Might as well get used to it, though," he thought. "Here's where I'll come—or to a place like this—after my first crack-up. All the fellows do, sooner or later."

The nurse led him to a room at the far end of the corridor. On the bed lay a little lad, a lad so white and thin that the dark eyes gazing up at Slim seemed enormous in the small face.

Henry Traut had been sitting beside the bed, the child's small hand in his.

Now, at a sign from the nurse, he rose as though to quit the room. He bent over the small figure and the child reached up and patted his face.

As the father retired reluctantly, Slim took his place beside the bed.

"Only a word or two," the nurse whispered. "Then you must go."

The child reached out a brown little hand, and Slim took it with a strange sensation of tenderness. He felt as he had in the waiting room below, a bit choky in the throat.

"You're big flying man," murmured the child. "I saw your picture. You go up in the sky. I like you."

"That's good," said Slim clearing his throat. "I like you, too. And now you're going to hurry up and get well and pretty soon you'll be playing around again."

The little face flushed and the lips moved. Slim bent closer to catch the whisper.

"Will you come again?"

"Sure thing," promised Slim. "When I come again I'll bring you a toy airplane and show you how to fly it."

Slim felt a touch on his arm. It was the nurse.

"Time's up," she whispered.

With difficulty Slim released his hand from the little fellow's grasp. Tears started to the child's eyes, but the nurse soothed him.

Outside in the corridor, it seemed to Slim that he could still feel the pressure of the small fingers. He wanted to go back and reassure him, tell him there was nothing to be frightened about. Gee, it was tough to be flat on your back with all sorts of pains and aches inside of you when you were only six years old!

Doctor Wills emerged from a room where he had been washing after the operation.

"I hear it's all right, Doctor," said Slim.

"Yes," replied the great surgeon. "But it wouldn't have been if you hadn't whisked me here as swiftly as you did. A little while longer and the child would have been beyond help. You've done a good day's work, my boy."

"I'm glad," said Slim simply. "I'll take you back when you're ready, Doctor."

"Thanks," said the doctor. "But I'm going to stay here a few hours to watch developments. I'll have my man bring the car over."

"You surely are not going home to-night, Mr. Tyler," put in Henry Traut. "You must be my guest. My wife would never forgive me if I did not bring you to her so that she can thank you. You must come."

There was really no reason for refusing, and Slim Tyler accompanied his host to the Traut home, where Mrs. Traut, who had been in a state of nervous collapse and was under the care of a trained nurse, received him with joy and gratitude that were beyond all words. They were so insistent on his staying that nearly a week elapsed before they would let him go. Slim yielded the more readily because of his growing attachment to the little fellow, whom he visited daily and who in turn fairly worshipped his deliverer.

The child grew stronger rapidly, and the nurse declared that Slim's visits helped the little lad more than all the medicines.

At last Slim Tyler had to tear himself away. To him who had had so little of home life it was a wrench to go from these kindly people. Yet it was with a thrill of elation that he mounted into the cockpit and felt once more the stick in his hand.

When, after his return flight, he came down on the North Elmwood flying field, Jerry Marbury detached himself from a group and hurried over to him.

"You old stick-in-the-mud!" he called, "where have you been all this time?"

"Didn't Dave Boyd tell you?" asked Slim, in some surprise. "I phoned to him and asked him to pass the word along."

"Dave has been so busy that he's hardly had time to breathe," replied Jerry, "and thereby hangs a tale. Slim, old scout, you and I are out of luck."

CHAPTER V

THE FLIGHT TO THE FROZEN NORTH

Jerry Marbury's statement was uttered so ruefully that Slim Tyler shot a sharp glance at his chum.

"How come?" he asked.

"While you've been away," replied his friend, "Dave has accepted an offer from a group of scientists—oh, you'd know their names fast enough, if you heard them, Franz, Burke, Lewis, a lot of highbrows with all the letters of the alphabet tucked behind their names—to pilot an expedition into the wilds of Greenland. Some sort of exploring expedition."

"My name isn't up as a member of the expedition, I suppose," conjectured Slim wistfully.

"Not that you can notice," returned Jerry, with a gloomy nod. "That's what I meant when I said we were out of luck."

"You're not in it, either?" asked Slim, genuinely surprised.

"Guess there isn't room for me on the trip," was the reply. "I can't expect to be in on everything, you know."

"Who is going with Dave, then?" queried Slim.

"Biff Donovan for one. And I understand that Sardine Brown is going along. If they've got any one else, I haven't heard of him."

Slim Tyler could not help feeling envious of the lucky flyers. He would have given almost everything he owned to have been included in the plans for this expedition into Greenland. But common sense told him that Dave would want only the more experienced flyers for this kind of work.

"My time will come yet," he assured himself, trying to banish the disappointment that he could not help feeling. "There's no use getting sore over nothing."

Aloud he said:

"Does the expedition start from here?"

"I think so," replied Jerry, "although I understand Dave expects to pick up one or two others in Canada on his way to the Far North."

"When do they start?" asked Slim.

Jerry chuckled.

"According to latest reports from the Boyd hangar, in just about thirty-five minutes."

"So soon?" exclaimed Slim. "Things must have been humming while I was away."

"You don't know the half of it. Come with me and I'll show you."

Approaching the Boyd hangar, they found everything in a bustle of preparation.

The plane that was to be used for the expedition, the *Flying Cloud*, was being inspected for the last time in regard to its mechanical perfection, fueling, and provisioning.

The stir and excitement of the scene got into Slim's blood and intensified his sense of disappointment in not being included in it.

He and Jerry forced their way through the crowd that surrounded the hangar and were greeted jovially by Henry Cusack.

"Bet you boys wish you were going along," he remarked.

Slim Tyler grinned ruefully.

"Nothing else but," he agreed.

"Where's Dave?" asked Jerry.

"Around somewhere talking to the scientists. I ain't got any use for those fellers," the rotund boss of the hangar confided in a lowered tone. "Seems they always know so much that ain't so, and in the end they always come around to facts that common folks have known all along."

Jerry Marbury chuckled.

"Once in a while, though, they do succeed in turning up something, Henry. There's Edison. What about him?"

"Oh, well," admitted Henry grudgingly, "he's what you call a practical scientist. I was talking about the kind that go around with their heads in the clouds and never notice whether it's dry or muddy underfoot. That sort makes me tired."

Slim and Jerry found Dave Boyd surrounded by a distinguished group of men—that type of star-gazing scientists of which Henry Cusack so heartily disapproved.

The great aviator greeted the young men cordially.

"How's the little sick boy in Ernestville?" he asked Slim. It was one of the pleasant attributes of the great flyer that, no matter how deeply he might be absorbed in matters of importance, he never failed to keep in mind events that were of interest to his associates. He had a capacity for friendliness that was a never ending source of pleasure to those who admired and loved him.

"Coming along well, thanks," answered Slim. But his mind just then was not on the little Traut boy. He was thinking wistful things of Greenland and what he might do there if he had the chance.

Dave Boyd seemed to divine his thoughts.

"Sorry we haven't room for you and Jerry on this trip," he said. "I was asked to take Biff and Brown. But there will be other trips, and then you will get your chance."

"Much good that does me now," thought Slim to himself, still fighting his disappointment.

He loitered about the hangar during the final arrangements for the start of the expedition. The excitement infected him. The call to adventure was in his blood. He wandered about, nurturing a wild hope that at the last moment someone would be unable to go and he, Slim Tyler, would be called upon to take his place.

This flickering possibility received its death blow when the great plane that was to carry the expedition to Greenland was trundled out and the members of the party began to take their places in it.

One by one Slim counted them. They were all there! No hope of a vacancy at the last moment.

Police were on hand to prevent crowding and to give the plane a fair space for the take-off.

Dave Boyd was the last to board the plane. In the act of settling his heavy goggles in place, he turned to Slim and Jerry and held out his hand.

"Wish us luck, boys," he said. "We will keep you folks back here informed of our progress, as far as it is possible to do so. We have radio along and all the up-to-the-minute appliances. You should hear from us often."

"Good-by, sir," said Slim. "I don't have to wish any expedition luck when you're along," he added, with a smile. "I just wish them Dave Boyd."

The aviator laughed, shook Slim's hand again, and climbed into the plane.

The propeller whirled, the engine hummed, and the great plane swept down the field like a gigantic beetle.

But it did not rise as soon as they expected.

Jerry and Slim watched it with increasing anxiety.

"Too heavily weighted," muttered Slim.

Jerry nodded.

"They may have to ditch some of the duffle," he observed.

"No!" cried Slim. "There she goes! Look at her! See her lift! Now I ask you, what could be sweeter?"

He wandered about aimlessly for a while, trying to chide himself into a more cheerful mood. He was turning a corner of the Boyd hangar when he saw approaching him and evidently about to speak to him the person he most loathed in all the world.

He regarded Nat Shaley frigidly.

"Well," he said, not trying to hide his distaste, "what do you want?"

CHAPTER VI

BALKING A RASCAL

Nat Shaley, undismayed by Slim Tyler's reception of him, tried to force his unpleasant countenance into a look of amiability.

"I figger to have a talk with you, son," said Shaley, in a tone which astonished Slim because it was so friendly and had the effect of putting him instantly on his guard. "I say now, can't we go somewhere where nobody'll be buttin' in to bother us?"

Slim hesitated. He abominated the man and wanted to have nothing to do with him.

On the other hand, he was anxious to find out all that he could about the mysterious Oregon lumber deal in which he now felt certain his father had been swindled by the old miser.

Of course, Shaley would never admit anything. But there was a chance that some unguarded utterance of his might give Slim a clue that could be followed up with profit.

"If you must be private," Slim said brusquely, "come over there with me back of Stummel's hot dog stand. We're not apt to be interrupted there."

Nat Shaley's small eyes gleamed assent. He wore a satisfied smirk.

"All right, son," he said in his new manner. "You lead the way an' I'll follow."

When they had reached the vacant patch of land back of Carl Stummel's place, Slim Tyler turned and faced the man who was his worst enemy and had probably been his father's evil genius.

"Well," he said crisply, "out with it. I'm no friend of yours, Nat Shaley. I won't pretend to be. If you have anything to say to me, say it quickly and get it over with."

"Not so fast, not so fast," protested Shaley, who seemed a bit disconcerted by the boy's uncompromising attitude. "Mebbe when you hear what I have to say, you won't talk so loud about us bein' enemies——"

"All right," Slim interrupted impatiently. "Get on with it. What do you want?"

"I don't want nothin'," said Shaley, his own tone beginning to rasp. "I come here to give you somethin'. Howsomever, if you don't want it, you don't have to take it."

"Give me something!" replied Slim contemptuously. "That doesn't seem to be in your line, Nat Shaley. From what I've seen of you you're the taking, not the giving sort."

For a moment the mask of good nature dropped from the old miser's face and his eyes glowed venomously. He started to speak and stopped with his mouth half open. It was evident that he controlled himself by a gigantic effort.

"You ain't helpin' me to be nice to you," said the old scoundrel, with a leer. "But I got a forgivin' disposition an' I ain't to be turned from my purpose by no hot-headed young feller that don't know what side his bread's buttered on. Now look here, Slim, I got some money for you."

"Money!" Slim's mind leaped to the twenty thousand dollars out of which his father had been swindled. Was it possible? Was a miracle happening? No. The age of miracles was past.

Well, then, what was the old villain up to?

"I got to thinkin' about how I treated you that time at the railroad when you came down thinkin' to save my life," went on Shaley. "You tried to help me, an' I ain't properly thanked you fer it."

Slim was more than ever suspicious. Gratitude was not one of Shaley's outstanding traits.

"Is that what you brought me here for?" Slim asked guardedly. "To say 'thank you'?"

"Well, yes an' no. But there's a more important part. I aim to pay you the back wages you say I owe you."

"Not only what I say you owe me, but what you know you owe me," corrected Slim. "It's about time you dug it up. Knowing you, I'd kissed it good-by."

Again Nat Shaley's face became purple with rage. He reigned in his temper with a great effort.

"What does the old rascal want of me," thought Slim, eyeing his one-time employer keenly. "He isn't loosening up with any forty dollars just for the fun of it—not Nat Shaley."

He stretched out his hand.

"Let me see the color of the money," he challenged.

Nat Shaley drew back. A crafty expression marred the labored amiability of his face.

"All right, all right, I'll give it to you. All in good time. I ain't deceivin' you, even if you seem to think I am. Look here!"

He thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out a big roll of bills. Before Slim's doubting eyes he counted out four, crisp, new tens.

Nevertheless, when Slim again stretched out his hand, desirous to prove to himself that he was not dreaming, Shaley still held the bills clutched in his scrawny fingers.

"Now that you have the proof that I'm tryin' to be your friend, mebbe you won't mind doin' me a little favor."

The suggestion was thrown off carelessly, as though it had no bearing whatever upon the payment of the forty dollars of back wages.

Slim Tyler was not fooled for an instant.

"I knew you wouldn't loosen up on that forty dollars unless you were out to get your money's worth," he said bitingly. "Speak up, Shaley, and let's get this over with. What's on your mind?"

Nat Shaley's face assumed an innocent air which was comical on that villainous countenance.

"It's jest about that there little accident up at the railroad," he said smoothly. "You seen fer yourself how the engine smashed my car. But I can't fix it up to collect damages unless I have a witness to prove that the company was wrong."

Light broke upon Slim Tyler.

"And you want me to be that witness. Is that it?" he asked, with misleading calm.

Shaley nodded. He leered up at Slim hopefully. It was his belief that anything could be bought with money. Had he not just offered Slim Tyler forty dollars?

"Sure," he said. "All you'll have to do is to say that I was drivin' all right till the car seemed to hit somethin' stickin' from the tracks an' turned over. An' you can say, too, that there was plenty of time fer the train to stop before it smashed into the car." He held the forty dollars conspicuously displayed, so that it would be the greater temptation for the young aviator. "What's more, I'm willin' to take your word fer it. All you have to say is that you're sure the accident was the fault of the railroad and—here's your forty dollars."

Nat Shaley had failed to note Slim's ominous quiet. Now the young man spoke, still quietly.

"You low-down skunk!"

Nat Shaley shrank back as though he had been struck. His thin lips fell back from his teeth in a snarl. Fury gleamed in his eyes.

"So that's the way you treat me when I offer you money!" he ejaculated.

"You offer me money if I'll lie for you!" cried Slim, his rage slowly mastering him. It was with difficulty that he restrained himself from leaping at Shaley's throat. "You rat! You thief! Trying to bribe me to do your dirty work for you! Get away from here before I forget myself and give you what's coming to you."

"So that's your line, is it?" snarled Shaley. "Let me tell you that you ain't foolin' me—no, not fer a minute. You ain't so innocent as you try to make me think. You ain't jest got the spunk to pull off the deal, that's all. You never was no good."

"You crook!" Slim was white with rage. "I ought to wipe up the ground with you. Not content to steal twenty thousand dollars from my father, you have to come out here and try to bribe me with your measly little forty dollars back pay that's mine by right. Get out of here, you hound. If you were a younger man, you'd get my fist on the point of your jaw."

At mention of the twenty thousand dollars, Nat Shaley began to back slowly away.

"I never stole a cent from your father," he growled. "You're hipped, that's what you are."

"I suppose you never heard of Cameron Flood either," snapped Slim. "Never heard of Hugh Garrabrant."

A look of fright came into Shaley's eyes.

"You're crazy," snarled Shaley, all the color ebbing from his face. "What fool nonsense is it flingin' them names at me? They don't mean nothin'. Never heerd of 'em."

"You will hear of them plenty of times before I'm through with you," replied Slim. "Now get away from here as fast as your legs can carry you. And if you bring any more of your slimy propositions to me, you'll wish you hadn't."

"You young fool," growled Shaley, as he beat a final retreat. "You'll be sorry some day. Nat Shaley ain't a good enemy to have, an' don't you fergit it."

CHAPTER VII

A HAZARDOUS LANDING

During the days directly following Dave Boyd's departure for the North, news came in daily regarding the Greenland expedition and its whereabouts.

Dave Boyd and his co-pilots had met with favorable weather; they had made even better progress than they had anticipated. So far, so good.

Slim Tyler and Jerry Marbury kept in close touch with the progress of the *Flying Cloud*. Though neither of them had fully recovered from the disappointment of not having been included in the party, they nevertheless drew a vicarious excitement from the story of the doings of Dave Boyd and his distinguished company.

They flew daily, not only because they loved it, but to keep in practice and to test occasional new devices that were constantly coming up for trial in aviation.

"If we get smashed up," said Jerry jokingly, as they were taking a spin one day over the country surrounding North Elmwood, "Dave Boyd will be sorry that he didn't take us along. Two of his most enterprising young aviators gone to waste!"

"You must think we're going to land in the ash heap," laughed Slim.

"That's the chance we're taking every day," said Jerry.

They had made a wide circuit and were returning to the North Elmwood field when, looking down, they saw some of the mechanics and pilots looking up at them and gesticulating wildly.

"What's all the shooting about, I wonder?" asked Jerry in some surprise.

"Search me," replied Slim. "They seem to be urging us not to come down. Don't you see that they're pointing to the sky?"

"I'm not an expert at the sign language," said Jerry. "Why shouldn't we go down? No cops waiting to nab us, I hope."

"I don't know," replied Slim, his bewilderment increasing. "All the same they have some reason. What's Cusack doing there with that big paint brush?"

"Spilling a lot of paint, anyhow," observed Jerry. "Marking down a lot of big letters. Henry's all stirred up about something. And there's Tom Ellsworth running toward his plane. What in thunder is up?"

They saw Tom jump into the cockpit, while Cusack handed to him a bespattered sheet of canvas. Tom gave her the gun and shot up into the air until he was nearly abreast of Slim's plane.

He held out the canvas strip, on which Cusack had painted in sprawling letters:

YOUR LEFT WHEEL IS GONE

Slim Tyler and Jerry Marbury started as though from an electric shock. For the message spoke of terrible danger.

They would have to land on one wheel, and that was a thing that could not be accomplished one time in twenty without a crack-up! Even Dave Boyd himself would have had hard work to do it.

Slim Tyler felt all the blood leave his face. Then he gritted his teeth and set himself to his task.

There was no more gesticulating from the field. The men below stood in anxious silence. They knew that Slim Tyler had read and understood the message. Now it was up to him. No one could help him but himself.

"Think you can make it, Slim?" asked Jerry soberly.

"Can tell better when we hit," returned Slim grimly. "But I'm going to do an awful lot of trying."

He figured that they would hit the ground at the rate of about thirty miles an hour. Then they would have to run along for several hundred feet on that one wheel.

If the wheel were only in the center of the plane, it would be fairly easy to maintain an even keel. But it was on one side, and the tendency of the plane would be to turn over on the unsupported side. That would mean that the wing would strike the ground on that side and the whole thing would crumple up, while the occupants would probably be maimed or killed in the crash.

"Throw everything in the plane that you can move over to the right side, and keep yourself over there too," directed Slim. "We've got to get all the weight there we can."

Jerry did as directed, and Slim, moving in great, sweeping spirals, drew gradually nearer to the ground.

Down, down, he went, seeming to do scarcely more than float.

Down still lower, until the one wheel touched the ground. It dipped a trifle toward the unsupported side, and a groan went up from the anxious spectators.

With a lightning turn of the wrist, Slim Tyler righted her, at the same time throwing the weight of his own body as far as he could to the right. By the most delicate manipulation and balancing, he kept the plane upright on the one wheel until the momentum of the run had spent its force.

The plane came to rest quiveringly, and only then yielded to the force of gravitation and sank gently over on the left wing, so gently that it would not have broken a pane of glass.

A roar of relief and delight went up from the watchers and a rush was made for the plane. Slim Tyler, drenched with perspiration from the awful strain of that struggle, was pulled from the plane and pounded and mauled by his enthusiastic friends until he begged for mercy.

"Gee, that was a wonderful landing!" exclaimed Henry Cusack. "I've been on this landin' field for years and never seen anything like it. Shouldn't wonder if Dave Boyd was right when he said that you were the greatest flyer for your age in the world."

"Great work, Slim!" declared Tom Ellsworth. "I thought you were in for a crack-up, sure. I wouldn't have given a plugged nickel for your chances."

"Such judgment! Such balancing! Such stick work!" applauded Jerry Marbury. "Slim, I take off my hat to you. I was already figuring up whether I had money enough to pay for my funeral expenses."

"Just sheer luck," returned Slim Tyler modestly. "But you bet that the next time I go up, particular attention will be given to the wheels. A few experiences like this would give me gray hairs."

He was leaving the grounds half an hour later when he was accosted by one of the mechanics.

"A couple of letters over at the office for you, Slim," he said. "Better get them before the old stick-in-the-mud in charge there tries to read them through the envelopes."

Slim thanked the young fellow and made straight for the office.

He was looking eagerly for mail these days. Since the notebook containing the entries by High Hat Frank had fallen into his hands, he had written to several places concerning Hugh Garrabrant and Cameron Flood, but so far had received no word in return.

He was exceedingly anxious to hear from one or both of them, for he was hotly embarked now on Nat Shaley's trail and hoped the miser's other victims could aid him in his search for facts.

He waited with scarcely concealed impatience for Anthony Litwell, the gossipy clerk in charge of the affairs of Boyd's office, to sort over the mail and find his letters for him.

He got them at last. One was postmarked from a city in California, where he had written for news of Garrabrant. The other was from a town in Ohio, where he had hoped to obtain information concerning Cameron Flood.

Back of the hot dog stand where some time before he had perused the greasy, thumbled notebook of High Hat Frank, Slim Tyler opened one of his two letters.

This was from the Garrabrants' lawyer and proved a distinct disappointment.

Hugh Garrabrant was dead and had left no heirs as far as could be ascertained. He had left, however, a claim against the Mt. Sunwa Lumber Company which had operated in Oregon and was, Slim felt sure, the one with which Nat Shaley had been connected.

The fact that Garrabrant was no longer living was a sharp setback to Slim's hopes in that quarter. To get into touch with Hugh Garrabrant himself, that was what he wanted, not a talk with a lawyer or an unsatisfactory delving into long past facts.

He put the letter back into its envelope and shoved it into his pocket.

"One lead gone," he said to himself. "Now I'll see what news the other letter gives me. If Cameron Flood is dead, too, I might just as well give up the investigation."

Almost in the first sentence of the letter he was informed that Cameron Flood was indeed dead. However, he had left a son, Cameron Flood, Jr., who would, the lawyer surmised, be glad to meet Mr. Tyler and discuss this matter of mutual interest.

"This is better," crowed Slim. "Now I'm getting somewhere!"

He read on for a paragraph or two and his jubilant expression died.

"Now what do you know about that?" he muttered. "Isn't that just rotten luck?"

The news that had caused Slim's swift change of expression was to the effect that although Cameron Flood, Jr., was alive, he was unfortunately no longer in his home town, but had left the city for upper Canada, where he was about to join an exploring expedition by airplane.

The expedition, the writer went on to explain, was bound for Greenland.

"Can you beat that?" muttered Slim. "He must be one of those two scientists slated to join Dave Boyd in Canada."

Now his disappointment at not being a member of the party was redoubled.

"What a talk Flood and I would have had!" mourned Slim. "We'd have had plenty of time to compare notes and map out a plan of campaign. I sure am the original hard luck kid!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE MISSING AVIATORS

Slim Tyler smothered the bitterness at his heart as well as he could and continued his reading of the letter.

Cameron Flood, Jr., the lawyer went on to explain, had inherited a claim for a large amount against the Mt. Sunwa Lumber Company and a certain Nathaniel Shaley, who seemed to have been the leading figure in the concern.

There had been some grave irregularity and probably actual crime attending the winding up of the company, the writer stated. In fact, Cameron Flood, Senior, had been about to take up the cudgels in a contest that would undoubtedly have had sensational features when death put an end to his activities.

"All very interesting, but not much use to me, now that I won't be able to get in touch with the younger Flood for many months to come," sighed Slim. "Talk about getting the hot end of the poker! I've got nothing else but."

Depression was a frequent guest of Slim Tyler in the days that followed. From the papers he learned that two scientists, one of them Flood, had joined the expedition in upper Canada.

There the *Flying Cloud* had laid up for a couple of days for refueling and supplies.

Then came the news that Dave Boyd and his party had left Canada and embarked on the last and most perilous lap of the journey to the uncharted wastes of Greenland.

Up to that time good weather had been the rule. But now the public, eagerly following the course of the flight by means of the newspapers and radio, learned that the plane was meeting with inclement flying conditions.

Snow and hail and terrible winds prevailed in the regions of the air through which the *Flying Cloud* was painfully forcing its way.

Slim Tyler and Jerry Marbury devouring every scrap of information they could get, agonized together over the possible fate of the flyers.

"Under such weather conditions it's wonderful that the plane could have stayed in the air so long," observed Jerry.

"No one but Dave Boyd could have managed it," said Slim loyally.

Jerry shook his head dubiously.

"Even Dave Boyd can't keep aloft much longer with such odds against him. A forced landing among the ice-coated mountains of Greenland—" he did not finish the sentence, but in his eyes was the premonition of disaster.

A day later a screaming headline in the press informed the public that what it had been dreading had probably occurred.

No word had been received from the Boyd plane for eighteen hours!

This fact, coupled with the increased severity of the weather conditions in the region where the plane had last been heard of, gave rise to the most dire prophecies. In all probability, it was generally thought, the plane had been forced down among the mountain gorges of the desolate land, in which event the situation of the members of the expedition was, to say the least, of the utmost gravity.

With the paper in his hand that gave the disheartening report, Slim Tyler dashed into Jerry's room.

"Look here, old boy!" he exclaimed. "This is rotten news."

"Couldn't be much worse," agreed Jerry gloomily.

He also had been studying the paper.

"Of course the papers may be all wrong," went on Slim, with a desperate effort at optimism. "Because no news has come from the *Flying Cloud* for many hours, they've jumped at conclusions. It may be only that something has gone wrong with the radio."

Jerry looked at his chum curiously.

"I guess you should have read on a little farther, Slim. It says here that two trappers report that they saw a giant plane flying over Greenland, that she seemed to be in distress and was trying to make a landing among the mountains. Didn't you see that?"

Slim shook his head.

"It isn't in my paper. Let me see yours."

The story of the Greenland trappers added to the anxiety that had taken possession of Slim Tyler as to the fate of the man whom he cared for most in all the world.

He put down the paper and looked at Jerry.

"When Dave Boyd took me up," he said, "I was nothing but a poor homeless kid, battered about from pillar to post, with hardly a cent to my name and no future to boast about. Dave Boyd gave me a chance to make something of myself."

"You've more than justified the faith he put in you," returned Jerry.

"That doesn't change the fact that I owe everything to him," Slim persisted. "I tell you, Jerry, if we don't get good news of the plane within the next few days, I'm going after him."

Jerry grinned and thrust out his hand.

"Take me with you, kid?"

"You bet," replied Slim, and they shook hands on it.

Days passed with no news whatever of Dave Boyd and his expedition. The worst was feared and there was much talk about sending out searching planes for the missing flyers.

Then Slim Tyler leaped to the front. He came out boldly with the announcement that he and Jerry Marbury were anxious to go in search of the *Flying Cloud* and its occupants, and asked for a plane and funds to finance the relief expedition.

The response was immediate, and it astonished Slim by its enthusiasm. Nothing could demonstrate better the position Dave Boyd held in the hearts of his countrymen than the promptness with which funds began to pour in from all parts of the nation.

Money was collected by newspapers in the great cities. A plane of the newest type and possessing all the latest mechanical improvements was presented to Slim by one of the largest plane manufacturers in the country.

Slim Tyler himself flew the plane from the Mid-Western manufacturing town to North Elmwood.

He landed amid a heavy downpour of rain, which, however, did not deter a large crowd from assembling to greet him. They pressed close about the beautiful plane and the daring pilot who was about to undertake such a perilous adventure.

Jerry Marbury shoved his way through to Slim's side. His eyes were shining.

"She's a peach, boy! What are we going to name her?"

"The *Hope*," said Slim.

He regarded Jerry steadily and the two young men gripped hands.

"We've got a new recruit," stated Jerry, as, after the plane had been put in its hangar, they started across the field together. "He wants to go on the relief flight with us. I like him and I think you will, too. Suppose you take a squint at him."

"Sure," agreed Slim. "Where is he?"

"Over at Leslie's boarding house. He has taken a room there. He says whether he goes with us or not, he's bound to see the start of the expedition. He's a nice chap, and I think he may make himself useful to us."

At the door of the boarding house they ran into Dick Mylert, the young man in question, who was just coming out.

"Hello!" the latter exclaimed, staring. "Slim Tyler, isn't it? Just the man I want to see."

"Ditto," said Slim smilingly.

"Two souls with but a single thought," grinned Mylert cheerfully. "We ought to get along famously together. Come right in," and he led the way into the sitting room.

"Not beautiful," he said, with a glance around the plainly furnished room, "but clean and comfortable. The hotel was crowded and I had to put up here. Anyway, the landlady serves real butter with meals."

"That's a help," remarked Slim.

"You tell 'em. Now to get down to brass tacks. Do I get a chance to go along with you and Mr. Marbury here on your relief expedition to Greenland?"

"Shouldn't wonder," returned Slim, who had taken an immediate liking to the breezy young fellow. "If you'll just tell me——"

"Sure. You want to know my qualifications for the job. To start with, I'm a newspaper reporter on—" He named the great New York paper that had been chiefly instrumental in raising the funds for the expedition. "I'm white, unmarried, twenty-eight, and have never been convicted of a crime, although traffic cops have sometimes spoken harshly to me."

Following this unconventional self-introduction, Mylert became a bit more serious and gave Slim and Jerry a brief but comprehensive description of his activities up to date. The more he talked, the more Slim liked him.

It appeared that he had had a most varied experience. He had traveled over a great part of the world, sometimes as a sailor before the mast, at others as assistant navigator; had been with a scientific expedition as a geographer; and was conversant with a number of languages. He had even tried flying for a while before settling on a newspaper career.

"So you see I'm qualified in more ways than one to be of use to you on your expedition," the young man remarked. "By the way, I have papers here to prove my statements—if you need any other proof than my open and ingenuous countenance," he ended with a grin.

As a matter of form, Slim looked over the credentials that Mylert handed him. Then he turned them over to Jerry.

"Your open and ingenuous countenance is a good reference," laughed Slim. "But these others seem to be all right, and as far as I am concerned clinch the matter. What do you say, Jerry?"

"It's all right with me," said Jerry heartily. "If it's O.K. with you, Slim, Mr. Mylert will be the third member of the party without any further argument."

"O.K. with me," assented Slim.

The three young men shook hands gravely. Dick Mylert beamed gratification.

"I've always had a terrific admiration for Dave Boyd," he confessed. "When you boys started plans for this relief expedition I had a yearning to go that I couldn't resist. Glad you fellows like me, for I've certainly taken a shine to you."

This important detail settled, preparations for the flight went on with great rapidity. The young aviators kept hoping that every day would bring them news of Boyd's safety and make their trip unnecessary.

But nothing of the kind occurred. Not a signal came from the Arctic wastes to tell that the intrepid adventurers lived.

Slim and Jerry worked day and night with a force of helpers, and in an incredibly short space of time the *Hope* was ready for her flight.

"To-morrow," said Slim, two nights later, "we make our start."

"The weather prophecies from Washington are good," observed Jerry. "That doesn't hurt any."

"It isn't the weather here that bothers me much," replied Slim. "It's what we may run into farther north."

The next day justified the optimistic weather prophecies. The sky was a uniform bright blue. There was no suggestion of fog or threatened storm.

The three members of the relief expedition were in a mood of hope to match the name of the plane. They were eager to be off, and grudged the time that was taken up by the persistent reporters and photographers, all anxious to get stories and pictures for their papers.

There was a confused sound of altercation on the edge of the crowd. Slim Tyler heard a familiar voice.

"I toldt you I got somedings for him alretty. Gif me der room to get dere vonst."

Slim chuckled and faced about as Carl Stummel shoved his way through the crowd.

"Blenty hot togs, alretty," panted Carl, as he handed Slim a large paper bundle. "Cooked shoost der vay you like dem, mit blenty oof mustard. Vere you're going you might maybe haf a hardt dime getting sooch goot vuns, yes?"

"There aren't such good ones anywhere," declared Slim, as he accepted the gift. "Your mustard is hot enough to keep us warm even in Greenland."

"If dey last dot long, den I am a bum cook, alretty," replied Carl. "I betcher dey vill be et before dis night koomt. Goot luck, Shlim! Und bring back dot Dave Boydt."

CHAPTER IX

ON THE WING

As the flyers climbed aboard the plane, a spontaneous cheer arose from the crowd that increased steadily until it swelled into a roar.

Slim Tyler took his place at the controls. A mechanic twirled the propeller, the motors sang, and the *Hope* moved forward, gathering speed as it swept down the long runway.

At two hundred yards it lifted easily, despite the heavy weight it carried, and soared into the air like a bird.

Again arose the thunderous cheering. Hundreds of handkerchiefs fluttered and hats were thrown into the air.

The *Hope* circled once around the field, and then Slim Tyler laid her nose toward the north.

Soon she had passed from the gaze of the multitude, fairly embarked on her long and perilous journey.

At the controls, Slim exulted.

"Flies like a dream!" he exclaimed. "Just listen to those motors! Ever hear sweeter music? And see the way she responds to the least touch of the stick."

For the first few hours the weather was perfect, and the *Hope* ate up space at the rate of a hundred and twenty miles an hour.

Then a haze began gradually to gather and presently shut out the sight of the land below. Before long it thickened into a fog that grew ever denser and denser, until the young pilot was reduced to flying entirely by his instruments.

Dick Mylert, who proved, together with his reputation as a mascot, to be blessed with an excellent appetite, remembered the hot dogs donated by Carl Stummel and suggested that they try them.

Nothing had ever tasted better than those frankfurters. Carl had been generous, but the sandwiches disappeared before the husky appetites of the three young men like magic.

The wind began to rise in fierce gusts that grew ever stronger, and the *Hope* was soon flying in the teeth of half a gale.

"Guess I'll edge off a little to the west and try for altitude," remarked Slim.

"My sentiments exactly," agreed Jerry. "You took the words right out of my mouth."

"Maybe I read your mind."

Slim Tyler pulled the stick and the *Hope* shot upward for a couple of thousand feet. There a quieter strata of air was found and the plane made rapid progress.

But if the *Hope* had escaped the gale, she had not succeeded in freeing herself from the all-enveloping mist.

A roar came from in front.

"Another plane!" cried Jerry, his eyes straining through the darkness. "And it's coming straight toward us!"

Probably the pilot of the approaching plane sensed the presence of the *Hope* at the same moment that Slim Tyler and his companions became aware of their own peril. For in that mist-enshrouded vastness of space began a weird duel, such as the young aviators could never afterward recall without a thrill of horror.

When Slim turned the nose of his plane upward in an attempt to gain altitude swiftly and so avoid a collision, the pilot of the other plane did likewise.

When the *Hope* swooped downward like a swallow, it was evident from the sound that the other plane had also resorted to the same maneuver.

The ghost ship was not yet visible through the enshrouding mist, but Slim Tyler knew that at any second it would tear the veil asunder and charge down on them, a Juggernaut of destruction.

Slim sat grim, determined, rigid as a creation of steel, ready with a lightning movement to send the plane to right or left, up or down, as the emergency might demand.

Like some fabulous monster of prehistoric times, the rival plane loomed up in the fog.

Slim dropped the *Hope* like a plummet, turning sharply to the right.

With a wild throb of engines the ghostly ship swept by overhead, missing the *Hope* by the smallest possible margin.

Slim Tyler's breath whistled through his teeth.

"Gee, that was close!" he muttered. "A few inches less, and there would have been no one left to tell the story."

"Great shift that was of yours, Slim!" exclaimed Jerry. "You could run rings around lightning."

"Do you usually act as quickly as that?" asked Dick Mylert, looking at Slim with an admiration he took no pains to conceal.

"Oh, I don't know," replied Slim, a trifle embarrassed. "In this business you've got to be quick or be dead."

"I wish Dave Boyd could have seen that," remarked Jerry. "He'd have been more than ever proud of his pupil."

As though fate had played its last card and was a bit discouraged, the fog began to lift. Slowly, at first, it shredded away. The earth came into view, the sky became visible, and the young aviators felt as though they had been released from prison, no less a prison because the walls were soft and insubstantial.

One thing that had pleased the young pilot in the episode of the threatened collision had been the nerve displayed by Dick Mylert. In those few awful moments when he knew that death might claim him at any

moment he had not blenched nor made a sound. He was game, Slim decided.

They had crossed the United States border now and were flying over Canada. The air was getting cooler, cold in fact, and the growing change from the temperature toward the frigid zone was met by the young aviators by a consistent increase in articles of wearing apparel.

With every hundred miles they flew farther north, the air grew keener, but no sign of trouble came until Dick Mylert found a snowflake on his hand.

"Snowing," murmured Jerry dubiously. "You know what that means in this part of the country. It may be that before long we'll run head on into a blizzard."

"One little snowflake doesn't make a winter," Dick reminded him. "Wait for a while and see. It may be only a flurry."

Some hours later they found themselves in the midst of a furious snowstorm, which enabled Jerry to say with the condescension of a successful prophet:

"Here's your flurry, Dick. How do you like it?"

"Less abundant, thank you," returned the young journalist unabashed. "Still, it started with a flurry. You have to admit that."

The snow fell heavily, hemming them in. It seemed to form an almost solid white wall, against which the *Hope* drove endlessly. The wall gave way, only to close up again, pressing more relentlessly.

The *Hope* gradually became covered with the clinging white stuff. It weighted the wings, the tail, and the body of the fuselage.

The wings lost buoyancy. The engines began to labor. The plane was no longer a joy to handle. She became heavy, clumsy, responding sluggishly to the hand at the controls.

"I'll let her down," observed Slim, "though we may have to come dangerously near the tops of the trees before we can see the ground."

With the increasing weight of snow on the wings it became absolutely necessary that a landing should be sought. If the aviators did not go down of their own accord, they would be forced down.

Slim Tyler chose the lesser of the two evils.

He flew down gradually in long, sweeping spirals, while Jerry and Dick kept field glasses glued to their eyes.

"Tree tops beneath!" cried Jerry. "'Ware!"

Slim pulled the stick and cleared the threatened peril.

It seemed an almost interminable time before they found a place that could by the remotest possibility answer their purpose.

The district was for the most part heavily wooded. On the rare occasions when clearings presented themselves, they were dotted so thickly with hummocks, underbrush, and the half-rotted stumps of trees that landing was out of the question.

At last Dick Mylert cried out jubilantly:

"There it is, right below us! The very thing we've been looking for! Some sort of frozen lake, I should say at a guess."

"If it's a lake, let's hope that it isn't deep or that the ice is frozen clear through," muttered Slim Tyler. "Else we're headed for a ducking."

CHAPTER X

THE HOWL OF THE WOLF

The lake was small and it was closely surrounded by a ring of guardian trees. In that limited space it would take first class airmanship to make a safe landing.

Slim Tyler encircled the clearing several times, checking the speed of the plane and judging the distance by his eyes.

Then he made up his mind, shifted the controls, and the plane swept downward, the wheels crunching in the snow to the heavy ice beneath.

The *Hope* teetered uncertainly for a moment, righted, and swept on toward the trees on the bank.

For a flashing fraction of a second it seemed that she would rush into the trees and be wrecked. But once more Dave Boyd's faith in his pupil was justified.

With consummate skill Slim Tyler swung the plane around and sped about the lake in a circle, until the momentum lessened and the tired bird came finally to rest.

The young aviators climbed stiffly from the plane, slapping their numbed hands together to restore the circulation. They pounded their feet on the ice, only now beginning to realize how bitterly cold they were.

"A fire would feel mighty good," said Jerry Marbury, brushing the snow from his eyes. "My ears feel frostbitten."

"Same here," echoed Dick. "I'm all for Jerry's suggestion."

"Suits me," agreed Slim. "Only if we have to camp here all night, which seems very likely, it might be a good idea to find a more sheltered place to build our fire."

They tramped off into the surrounding woods, hoping to find a cave or overhanging rocks that would serve as partial shelter from the severity of the storm.

But something better than that was in store for them. They had not gone far before they discovered a tumbledown shack that had probably been occupied at some time by a trapper or a party of trappers.

It was dilapidated enough, in all conscience, but to the cold and weary travelers a palace could scarcely have provided a more attractive sight. It meant at least shelter from the snow and a barrier against the wind.

The hut had a roof, though there were gaping holes in it. The one window had been boarded up. The door hung loosely on its rusted hinges.

"Guess we won't have to knock," observed Slim lightly, as he placed his hand on the knob of the door. "Looks as though there had been nobody at home here for a long, long time."

The door yielded easily.

The young men crowded in, stamping the snow from their boots, and looked around them.

They found that the cabin consisted of one fair-sized room, with a lean-to adjoining; a typical trappers' abode.

Bunks stretched along two sides of the room; beneath the boarded window on the third side was a rough table of logs with a pine top; on the fourth side was a fireplace which looked as though it had been in disuse for a long time and a couple of rude chairs.

The fireplace, in the estimation of the young adventurers, was by far the most important object in the place.

"Now if we can only find some dry wood," observed Dick, "everything will be great."

He pushed open the door at the farther end of the cabin and disclosed a well-stocked lean-to. One end of it was packed almost to the roof with log blocks and smaller pieces of wood.

There were two shelves, upon which were some unopened packages of canned goods.

"Looks as though we'd neither starve nor freeze while we're here," exulted Jerry.

He fell upon the wood, scooping up an armful and carried it into the main room.

His companions followed his example, and it was not long before a comforting fire roared in the fireplace.

"I'll be chef, fellows," said Slim, as he went to the lean-to door. "Come and name your poison."

They decided upon beans and tinned corn beef. The beans they warmed over the fire and ate out of the can. The beef they picked up with their fingers and ate with relish, smacking their lips over the impromptu meal.

The storm was now much less severe than it had been when they first stumbled upon the cabin. The snow had almost stopped, and the heavy clouds in the east had lifted perceptibly.

"I was afraid the *Hope* might be snowed under," Slim remarked. "I guess there's no danger of that now."

They walked back to the lake and found the plane as they had left it, except that the coating of ice and snow on the wings was heavier. They scraped this off and covered the wings with tarpaulins.

They debated starting again at once, but more prudent counsel prevailed. The night had now fully come.

"Bad enough to take off from here in full daylight, let alone at night," judged the young leader of the expedition. "We'll start off at the first streak of dawn if conditions permit."

Slim Tyler came to this decision with the utmost reluctance, for he was consumed with anxiety to reach his destination at the earliest possible moment. But this was a case where caution promised decidedly better results than precipitate courage.

"Better take our guns with us," Slim counseled, as he reached into the plane and drew out his own rifle. "Little likelihood that we'll have to use them, but they're handy things to have."

His companions also secured their weapons, and the little party retraced its steps to the cabin.

The night would have been one of Egyptian darkness had it not been for the faint glimmer of the snow, for the clouds effectively barred the rays of moon or stars.

The forest seemed suddenly a dangerous and menacing place. Behind the trees that stood like gaunt sentinels above the snow, any furtive thing might lurk. There was something sinister and repellent in their very silence.

Once Slim Tyler stopped short and stared at a clump of bushes.

"What's wrong?" asked Jerry.

"There was something behind those bushes. I distinctly saw it move," declared Slim.

Seeing that Dick and Jerry were inclined to scoff, Slim did not insist. In his own mind, however, he was convinced that he had not been mistaken. His eyes had always been reliable, and he saw no reason to doubt them now.

When Dick Mylert paused before the door of the cabin to examine some freshly made tracks in the snow, Slim was not surprised.

"Dog tracks!" cried the young newspaperman.

"Timber wolves!" corrected Slim.

At those ominous words Jerry came up to Slim and Dick, and also bent to examine the tracks in the snow. He gave a long whistle as he straightened up and glanced uneasily about him.

"By Jove, Slim!" he cried, "I believe you're right. Timber wolves, and savage, I'll be bound! This snow has made it hard for them to find game. Probably regard us as a godsend."

"Lucky we brought our firearms along," observed Slim. "We'll be safe enough inside the cabin with the door barricaded."

The interior of the cabin in the flickering of the firelight offered a cheering contrast to the dark and menacing forest that surrounded it.

The young men fitted the rather unstable door into place and dropped the wooden bar that served as bolt. Then they moved the heavy table against the door as an additional barrier.

"That door as a door may not be worth much," commented Dick, "but it would take a life-sized pack of wolves to shove that table away."

"The roof isn't much as a roof, either," added Slim. "But I guess, if it can hold all that weight of snow, it will stand a few extra pounds of wolf, if they should try to get in that way."

"They can't come down the chimney as long as we keep a fire going, and the window is already boarded up," Jerry comforted himself. "All we have to do now is to sit down and wait for the show to commence."

To sit and wait, however, was a more nerve-racking business than they had anticipated. As the darkness settled down more thickly over the forest, the intense silence about the cabin became oppressive. Now and then the sharp crackling of a frost-snapped twig or a slide of snow from the roof would cause them to start involuntarily and then exchange apologetic glances.

"If we could strike a light, it would be a little more cheerful," remarked Jerry.

A lantern depended from a hook on the wall, but upon examination they found that this was innocent of oil.

They searched the lean-to for kerosene and failed to find any, though they did come across two fat tallow candles.

They lighted these, using the drip to fasten them to the rough top of the table.

The light was faint and flickering and seemed to accentuate the shadows in the corners of the room. No one cared to mention the fact, however, for fear of betraying his own restlessness.

"I only hope Dave Boyd to-night is as warm and sheltered as we are," remarked Slim, from whom the thought of his benefactor was seldom absent.

"I suppose there are plenty of poor fellows out in the Arctic night that would give their souls for a fire and a meal of hot food," conjectured Dick. He paused, hand raised.

"What's that?" he cried.

From the depths of the forest came the blood-curdling howl of a wolf!

From a distance the cry of the wolf was answered, now from one direction, then from another.

"The pack is gathering," remarked Jerry Marbury grimly. "Well, let 'em come. We're ready for them."

CHAPTER XI

THE PACK CLOSES IN

The isolated howls of the distant wolves soon swelled into a chorus. The beasts were assembling for the kill.

The noise came nearer, growing more vibrant and eager as it approached the men the wolves had marked for their prey.

But the anticipated victims had other ideas. During the time of waiting they had carefully examined their weapons and made sure that they had an abundant supply of cartridges on hand.

They sat there, intent and determined, fully aware of the danger that was coming on apace and yet with their hearts aflame with high courage.

They had no definite plan of campaign. They could not have. They would have to meet every emergency as it arose.

Then the howls ceased abruptly. In their stead could be heard the rustling made by bodies thrusting themselves through the brushwood, the scufflings of padded feet in the snow. The enemy was massing for the attack.

A long-drawn savage howl just beneath the boarded-up window brought those within the cabin to their feet. At the same moment a heavy body flung itself at the cabin door.

The boards of the door bent inward under the shock, but the heavy table shoved against it prevented them from breaking.

"That was the first gun on their side," remarked Slim Tyler. "Well, here's the first gun on ours."

He fired through the door at a height of about a foot above the floor.

But the yelp that would have told that the brute was struck did not come. The shot had not found a target. Nor had it seemed to intimidate the aviators' assailants, for a moment later not one, but three of the beasts, as though by a preconcerted signal, hurled themselves against the door with a force that made the cabin tremble.

This time one of the planks was splintered, and a wolf thrust his nose in the gap tearing with his claws to enlarge the opening.

Jerry's gun and Dick's spoke at the same instant, and this time a howl of pain told that one or both of the shots had struck. The wolf fell back and a hideous hubbub ensued.

"My wolf," cried Dick, with a grin. "I saw him first."

"You may claim him," replied Jerry. "The main thing is that he's put out of commission."

"He may be only wounded," surmised Slim.

"Then he's as good as dead," declared Dick. "Wolves don't take their crippled companions to a hospital. Listen!"

There was a frightful snarling as the wolves tore their unfortunate companion to pieces.

"That gives us at least a breathing spell," murmured Jerry.

"Not for long," warned Slim. "There'll be nothing of that wolf left in ten minutes but the bones, and the taste of blood will make the pack ravenous for more."

Slim Tyler's prediction proved correct, for the onslaught was soon renewed. This time the boarded window was the target for attack.

Time after time the brutes dashed their heavy bodies against it, and as often as they did so the besieged fired their rifles. But they had to do this by guesswork, and several rounds were fired without any evidence of damage.

"We're wasting ammunition going it blind this way," cried Slim in disgust. "We've got to do now what we ought to have done before and cut loopholes in the sides of the walls. Then we'll have a fair target when we shoot. I'll stand guard while you fellows—Ah, you will, will you?"

The exclamation was caused by the sight of a wolf which threw itself with such force against the hole in the door where his companion had met its fate that not only his head, but his shoulders and front paws protruded into the room.

Almost as he spoke Slim Tyler fired, and the bullet penetrated the animal's brain.

A howl came from the slaving jaws and the head slumped forward.

"That makes two less to worry about!" exclaimed Slim.

"Good work!" commended Jerry. "Don't do that, Dick," he cried, as Mylert made a motion to kick the dead body through the opening. "Let it stay there to plug up the hole. It'll be all the harder for the next one to force its way in."

"The fellows outside will drag the body out, anyway," replied Dick.

"Perhaps they won't know he's dead," conjectured Jerry.

"Trust them," said Dick. "They know a death howl when they hear it. Look, they're at it now!"

There was a fierce tugging at the animal's body, and in a trice it was drawn from the opening and the cannibal feast was renewed.

The pulling and tearing had still more enlarged the opening, and the young aviators viewed it with dismay.

"That last one got halfway through," observed Slim. "The next one may make the whole distance. If he does, he'll be followed by others. A few of them rampaging around inside would give us a tough job."

"And we haven't a thing to bar the hole with!" exclaimed Jerry, as his eyes ranged swiftly around the room.

"I have it!" cried Slim, as he rushed to the fireplace and pulled out a blazing brand. "They're as afraid as death of fire. Let's see how this works."

He hurled the burning torch through the opening.

There was a chorus of frightened snarls as the beasts scurried from the vicinity of the door, abandoning their bloody feast with reluctance, but abandoning it nevertheless.

"Got 'em all right," chuckled Slim. "They don't like it for a cent. We'll give them some more of the same kind. We'll keep the home fires burning, and not one of them will cross the blaze to get at the hole."

They hurriedly threw out some more of the burning logs until there was quite a bonfire in front of the door.

"Lucky we have plenty of wood in the lean-to," exulted Dick, as he hurried to get a fresh supply with which to replenish the fire. "We can keep this up all night, if we have to."

"It will serve a double purpose," put in Jerry. "It will light up the place outside so that we can see what we're aiming at."

"Yes, if they'll only stay in front," replied Dick dubiously. "But they'll soon sense that there's nothing doing in that quarter, and they'll try us on the other three sides."

"All the more reason why we should hurry up with those loopholes," suggested Slim. "Let's hustle now, fellows, so that we can see what's doing on every side of the cabin."

They laid aside their guns for the moment and dug away with their knives with feverish energy until they had made apertures large enough to thrust rifle barrels through and turn them in any desired direction.

During all the time they were working, there had come no sound from without. The lonely forest seemed wholly untenanted.

"Think they've had enough of our game and drawn off?" asked Jerry, the wish father to the hope.

"Not by a jugful!" affirmed Dick. "A couple of dead ones make no difference to them. Judging from the snarling, there must have been twenty at the least. They won't give up as easily as that. Just now they're planning what to do next."

If this were so, there must have been a confusion of counsels, for the silence continued for a long time.

The besieged scanned the space without from every side, but no slinking figures stood out against the background of the snow, no green eyes gleamed from the shadows of the forest.

The tense waiting wore on the besieged ones' nerves.

"Hanged if I don't believe that Jerry was right after all!" conceded Dick Mylert, wiping his brow with his handkerchief, for the fierce fire they were obliged to keep up made the cabin abominably warm. "Looks as if the brutes—Look out, fellows! Look out!" he shouted, as he leaped for his gun.

He aimed it at an open place in the roof and fired.

In Mylert's excitement the shot went wild, and the next instant a great gray body came hurtling through the air and struck the floor with a thud.

Slim Tyler and Jerry Marbury had grabbed their guns at their companion's shout but had had no time to aim.

Like lightning, the wolf sprang at Jerry's throat!

CHAPTER XII

A FEARFUL DILEMMA

Slim Tyler had no time to aim at the savage brute that had launched itself in mid-air in the attack on Jerry Marbury. But his trained muscles acted like lightning.

His rifle, held by the muzzle, described a circle and came down with crushing force on the wolf's head.

There was a sharp crack as the skull caved in, and the beast fell to the floor, rolling over and over in the agonies of death.

The besieged youths had no time to rejoice over the narrow escape, for the head of another brute appeared at the opening.

Before it could spring, Mylert's rifle rang out, and the body came tumbling to the earth floor of the cabin.

It was not mortally wounded and still showed fight, but another shot from Jerry's gun ended its life.

The young men looked at each other, pale and panting.

"A pretty lively time while it lasted," commented Slim, summoning up a wry smile.

"Sure keeps the blood in circulation," admitted Dick.

"And it isn't over yet!" cried Jerry, as his rifle rang out and filled the cabin with echoes.

A third beast at the roof opening fell back with a frightful snarl, and they could hear the body rolling over and over as it slithered along the snowy roof and finally fell to the ground.

"I wonder if they'll come for any more medicine of the same kind," remarked Jerry.

"I don't know," replied Slim. "It certainly takes a long time to get an idea through some fool heads."

It did seem, though, that the savage brutes had at last learned the lesson that the roof was not exactly a health resort for wolves. At all events, a long time elapsed before any move took place on the part of the besiegers that could be interpreted by the occupants of the cabin as an attack.

An hour went by, then two, and still the assault was delayed.

"Guess they've gone off now for fair," surmised Jerry.

"Don't kid yourself," said Dick, from the loophole through which he was peering. "Those fellows hang on like grim death. Why shouldn't they? They probably haven't any pressing engagements elsewhere, and they figure that luck may turn. There! I saw a couple just now slinking through the brushwood. Oh, they're there, all right. Hand me my gun, Jerry. I think I can pot one of them right now."

Jerry passed over the gun and Dick took careful aim and fired.

"Winged him!" he cried exultantly, as a howl of pain and fright followed the shot. "One less to count on. The pack's on him already. A minute more and all his troubles will be over."

Another hour passed and still no sign of attack.

"Getting near morning," remarked Slim, as he looked at his watch.

"And it will never again be so welcome," sighed Jerry. "Those fellows don't like the light and they'll scatter as soon as the sun rises."

"What's that smell of smoke?" asked Dick suddenly.

"Comes from the fireplace, I guess," yawned Jerry.

"Don't you believe it!" cried Slim. "It's more than that. And listen to that crackling! Boys, the cabin's on fire!"

That terrible pronouncement fell on the aviators' ears like the crack of doom. There was no mistaking the fact. Smoke was beginning to eddy in through the hole in the door and wisps of it shredded through the crack in the building. The crackling grew more pronounced, and the space before the building was lighted up with a lurid glare.

"It's those brands we threw outside to scare off the wolves," groaned Slim. "One of them must have dropped so close to the cabin that it's caught fire. Fools that we were! Why didn't we throw them farther away?"

Red tongues of fire now began to sift through the cracks in the logs and fill the cabin with a ruddy flickering light.

Those within looked at each other in consternation. There was no way to put out the fire. They had no water, and even if they had had, there would have been no way to apply it to the outside of the building. The wolves would have been on them in an instant the moment they showed themselves outside the door.

The wolves themselves seemed to realize the predicament in which the besieged were placed. The cunning beasts had gathered in front of the cabin and squatted there, their white fangs showing, their jaws slavering in expectation of a feast.

The young aviators looked at each other.

"The cabin's doomed!" groaned Jerry.

"Just a chance between being roasted or eaten alive," judged Dick gloomily.

"See if there's a back door to the place, Jerry," directed Slim Tyler, whose mind had been working at lightning speed.

Jerry darted into the lean-to and returned in an instant.

"Nothing doing," he reported. "Our only way of getting out is by the front door."

The front door! And in front of that door, only a few yards away, were a dozen or fifteen gaunt, hungry, savage wolves, waiting to launch themselves on their prey!

"There's only one chance, fellows," said Slim Tyler between his teeth, "and I'll admit that it's a desperate one. We've got to depend on surprise. Let's move that table back from the door."

This was done.

"Now," said Slim, "slip your cartridges into your pockets and strap your rifles over your shoulders, so that they won't be in the way of your arms and legs."

Slim's companions obeyed rapidly, not knowing yet what their leader had in mind, but yielding to him without hesitation.

"Pick out your trees," went on Slim. "Choose slender ones that you can climb rapidly and yet strong enough to support your weight. Then when I give the word we'll throw the door open and make for the trees. Each of us will pick out a couple of blazing brands from the fire and throw 'em in the faces of the pack as we run. We'll have the advantage of the surprise, anyway. It may work and it may not. It's a forlorn hope, but it's the only chance we have."

They shook hands solemnly. In the minds of each was the thought that they might never touch hands again. With a blazing brand in each hand they faced the door.

"All ready?" asked Slim.

"Ready," came the answer.

"Go!" shouted Slim, flinging open the door.

They charged down on the savage horde, yelling like Indians and waving their fiery torches before throwing them into the faces of the pack.

The astonished wolves, daunted by the fire, taken by surprise, and bewildered by finding themselves the hunted instead of the hunters, gave way in confusion and scattered in the woods.

Before they could recover themselves, the young adventurers were legging it for dear life toward their chosen trees!

CHAPTER XIII

TREED

Slim Tyler and his companions ran as they had never run before to the trees that offered their only chance of safety. How slim that chance was, no one knew better than themselves.

Had their path been through the deep snow, they could never have made it. But the constant going to and fro of the pack had trodded down the snow and made the running easier.

By this time, the temporary panic into which the beasts had been thrown by the sudden sortie from the cabin had spent its force. The wolves began to realize that their enemies were no longer advancing to the attack, but were themselves racing for their lives.

With gleaming eyes and howls of fury, the brutes turned and rushed in the direction of the fugitives.

The latter had by this time reached their respective trees, and were shinning up them with an agility born of desperation.

Up they went like monkeys, spurred on by the certainty that if they slipped and fell they would be torn to pieces in an instant.

Slim's long legs and arms helped him most, and he was the first to find himself out of reach of the ravening jaws below. He clambered into the crotch of a limb and sat there panting.

Dick had been almost as quick. Jerry, however, was a fraction of a second slower, and that almost proved his undoing.

Two wolves leaped at him at the same time. The jaws of either one of them would certainly have clamped upon a foot that was within easy reach. But the two collided in mid-air and tumbled snarling to the ground.

Before they could renew the attempt Jerry had caught at a lower limb and swung himself to safety.

For a few minutes none of the three young men spoke a word. They could not, if they had tried to. That frightful race for life, when every particle of nerve and muscle had been taxed to the utmost, had left them utterly exhausted.

It was Dick Mylert who at last broke the silence.

"I take off my hat to you, Slim," he said. "That plan of yours was the only possible one, and it worked. You've got a head on your shoulders, old scout."

"Nothing else but," affirmed Jerry. "That brain of Slim's is always on the job."

"We're not out of the woods yet," said Slim. "These fellows have got us treed, and there's no telling how long they'll keep us here."

"Lucky they can't climb," observed Jerry. "If they were bears or panthers now, they'd have us just where they wanted us. We'd be easy meat."

"I think it's about time our rifles got busy," remarked Slim, as he unslung his weapon. "Get yours ready, fellows, and when I give the word we'll let them have a volley."

"Good idea," approved Jerry, as he got his rifle in position. "At such short range it won't be possible to miss. But let's each pick out a separate one. We don't want to waste any ammunition."

At Slim's signal the three rifles cracked simultaneously. Each bullet found its target. Two of the wolves fell dead, and the third rolled over, mortally wounded.

"Once more before they scatter!" cried Slim, and again the rifles spoke, each claiming a victim.

It was too much for the pack. The survivors broke and ran for cover. How far they went the occupants of the trees did not know. They might be lurking in the vicinity or have gone for good.

"Guess that will hold them for a while!" exclaimed Jerry, with a sigh of relief as he settled back in the crotch of the limb. "They don't even stay to eat their dead comrades. They're beating it while the going's good."

"Likely enough," assented Slim. "Still, we'd better not bank on that too heavily. We'll wait a while and see what happens."

The cabin by this time was a mass of flames. The young men contemplated it with a shudder. It might have been their funeral pyre!

"It's serving one useful purpose, anyway," remarked Dick. "It's keeping us warm. We'd be freezing to death in these trees if it weren't for that."

In a little while the darkness began to lift. A pearly gray streaked the heavens in the east, growing brighter and brighter, until at last the sun peeped over the horizon and shot its slanting rays through the forest.

With the light came an upspringing of the young voyagers' spirits. The night of horror was over. Death had reached for them but had not quite clutched them. Now the day was here and their hearts exulted.

"How about it?" asked Dick. "I'm mighty grateful to this old tree, but I don't care for it as a permanent home."

"Same here," chimed in Jerry. "And maybe I'm not hungry."

The youths slid down from the trees. Now, if ever, would be the time for their enemies to show themselves. But no untoward sight or sound came from the surrounding forest. The wolves had gone!

Still exercising caution, the young adventurers made their way toward the plane.

"Gee!" exclaimed Jerry, as a thought struck him, "suppose the wolves have looted the food supplies in the plane."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Dick fervently. "Still, it's possible. There was nothing to prevent them."

Apprehension quickened their steps, until finally they were running at full speed in the direction of the plane. If any such disaster had happened, it would mean a torturing delay in their search for Dave Boyd and his party. They would have to return to civilization, stock up, and start off again. The thought was intolerable.

Slim Tyler reached the plane first and jumped aboard. A glance sufficed.

"Glory hallelujah!" he cried. "Nothing touched! Everything all right!"

"Bully!" jubilated Jerry. "Break out that grub. Here's one wolf that's going to get busy. And how!"

CHAPTER XIV

A CLOSE CALL

The sky voyagers broke out the supplies and fell to with a will, their appetites whetted by their long sojourn in the cold air.

The snow had stopped and the weather had cleared, although there was a cutting wind from the northwest.

"The sooner we get going the better," declared Slim Tyler, on the conclusion of their meal. "The end of this day, if things go well, ought to find us pretty close to Greenland."

"You're going to find it some job taking off from here," observed Jerry, scanning the small area of the lake with anxious eyes. "It was hard enough making a landing, but, take it from me, it will be a mighty sight harder getting this bird into the air."

Slim Tyler's eyes swept round the borders of the lake.

At one place there was a space about a hundred and fifty feet in width that was free from trees. There was a quantity of underbrush, but in that cold region it had not grown thickly and much of it had been trampled down by animals coming to the lake to drink.

"That gives us a hint as to the best way out," said Slim. "It won't take more than an hour's work with knives and axes to make it fairly level for the plane. We'll trundle the *Hope* in there as far as we can and then make our start. By the time we get back to the lake she'll be going pretty fast, and I think we can lift her before she gets to the further shore."

"Perhaps," assented Jerry dubiously. "Even at that it's going to be a tight squeeze."

"I know it," admitted Slim. "But it's the only way out and I think we've got to take the chance."

The young airmen got out their implements and set to work lustily. But the task was harder than they had anticipated, and it was a good two hours before the rude runway was in shape.

They hauled the *Hope* to the farthest possible limit, adjusted their goggles, and Slim and Dick climbed into the cockpit.

"Give her a whirl, Jerry," directed Slim, as his hand settled on the controls.

Jerry started the propellers and the engine began to roar. Then Jerry jumped on board and the plane started down the improvised runway.

By the time it reached the edge of the frozen lake it had attained a fair rate of speed, but not as much as the young pilot had hoped for.

He knew he faced two dangers. One was that the ice of the lake might crack and let them down. The other was that, despite his utmost efforts, he might not be able to clear the trees on the further side.

On he went and on, until he was nearly in the center of the lake. The ice still held, though it was cracking ominously.

The *Hope* quivered, lifted, and rebounded. Then she definitely rose into the air and darted toward the trees.

Tall trees they were, veritable forest giants, and Slim Tyler's heart skipped a beat as he saw how fast they seemed to be rushing toward him.

Could he clear them? Or would he smash?

If he struck, the plane would fall to the earth a crumpled mass, and what would happen to its occupants the pilots did not dare think.

Nearer and nearer!

Slim Tyler's knuckles were white as he gripped the controls, his heart was beating fast, but his brain was cool and his nerves were steel.

The *Hope* was shooting now at the sharpest of angles toward the skies. It seemed almost as though she were rearing upright in the air like a frightened horse.

"He'll never do it," whispered Dick Mylert to Jerry.

"Yes, he will," Jerry whispered back. "You don't know Slim Tyler."

"Even he can't do miracles," murmured Dick.

"No," admitted Jerry. "But he can come mighty close to doing them."

Nearer and nearer! Higher and higher!

Then with a roar of her motors the *Hope* rushed over the tree tops, so close that the highest tips of the branches grazed the wheels.

"Great Scott he's done it!" cried Dick jubilantly.

"What did I tell you?" Jerry reminded him.

Slim Tyler kept the airplane whizzing upward until he had reached an altitude of about two thousand feet. Then he brought her to an even keel and turned around with a grin to his companions.

"You can't complain that you're not getting any excitement on this trip," he said.

"That's too weak a word for it," returned Dick. "My hair was fairly standing on end."

"Wonderful work, Slim," commended Jerry. "You've got this plane so that it'll eat out of your hand."

"I wouldn't have given a thin dime for our chances," avowed Mylert. "I was already seeing the headlines, 'Tyler Relief Expedition Wrecked in a Canadian Forest'."

"Well, a miss is as good as a mile," declared the young pilot. "Our time hasn't come yet."

He turned the nose of the *Hope* toward the north and gradually eased her into three-quarter throttle, keeping her there as a rule, though at times he threw her into full for short distances.

With every hundred miles she reeled off the weather grew colder. They were approaching the regions of almost perpetual ice and snow. The ground had put on its winter garments and the soil was completely hidden from sight.

"We'll have to take off the wheels now and put on the skis," observed Slim. "I'd have done it this morning before we started, but I wasn't sure that the ground would be wholly covered with snow. It's clear now that it will be that way from this time on, and the sooner we get the runners on the better. We'll wait, though, till late afternoon, for I want to take advantage of this good weather to get as far on our way as possible."

The *Hope* clove its way through the air, fairly eating up space. The motors were working beautifully, and Slim Tyler's heart sang with exultation.

Dick slept peacefully, wrapped in his furs, tired out by the ceaseless vigil of the night before. Slim and Jerry also felt the strain, and they relieved each other at the controls at two hour intervals, so that each could catch up on sleep.

"Time now to think of putting on the skis," judged the young leader of the expedition, as the afternoon was waning. "Country seems pretty flat here, and we oughtn't to have much trouble in finding a place to come down. Suppose you boys get out your field glasses and pick out a good spot for landing."

Dick and Jerry applied themselves to the task, but for some time without result.

"I see something that hits me right," Jerry said at length. "Looks almost as level as a floor. Look! Over there a little to the right!"

"Not bad," agreed Slim, after a little scrutiny. "I'll get down a little and we'll take a squint at it at close quarters."

He lowered the *Hope* to within three hundred feet of the ground. Closer examination confirmed the favorable first impression, and Slim came down to an easy landing.

They jumped out, glad to stretch their cramped limbs. Not far off was a patch of woodland, but in all other directions what seemed to be a measureless expanse stretched out as far as the eye could reach.

"Bet there isn't a living creature besides ourselves within a hundred miles," remarked Dick. "Hello, what's this?" and he stooped to pick up something that was half buried in snow.

"By the great horn spoon!" he cried. "A newspaper—or a part of one! How on earth did it ever get up in this desolate spot?"

Slim and Jerry crowded around him as he smoothed out the crumpled, snow-encrusted sheet.

"A New York paper!" exclaimed Jerry, as he looked at the heading. "What do you know about that?"

"Look at the date line!" cried Slim. "The seventeenth! It was the eighteenth when Dave Boyd started on his trip. By Jove, fellows, I see it now! Dave or some member of his party had this paper in his pocket when he left North Elmwood. I'll bet a dollar to a nickel that Dave Boyd camped on this very spot on his way to Greenland!"

CHAPTER XV

SINGING ARROWS

The young voyagers looked at each other with amazement in their eyes. It seemed wholly likely that Slim Tyler's conjecture was true.

Travelers in this region, by air or otherwise, were extremely few. No other expedition in this part of the world was known to be in progress. And the date line, coinciding so closely with Dave Boyd's departure on his trip, deepened their confidence in their conclusions.

"It's almost like a message from him," said Jerry, with a touch of awe in his tone.

"Don't get superstitious, Jerry," laughed Dick.

"Of course," remarked Slim, "it doesn't prove that Dave actually landed here. The paper may have been dropped or blown from the plane. But that the *Flying Cloud* at least passed over this place, I feel sure. We know that this was the general direction he intended to take when he started."

"Seems like a good omen," remarked Jerry. "Makes me feel, somehow, as though we'd got in touch with Dave."

"Same here," agreed Slim. "But now let's get busy with those skis."

They brought the long runners out of the plane together with the necessary tools and set busily to work.

They had taken off one of the wheels and were applying themselves to the other, when Jerry felt a rush of wind over his face, accompanied by a slight stinging sensation in his ear.

"Jehoshaphat! what's that?" he exclaimed, as he straightened up. "Felt as though a bee had stung me."

"You're loco," replied Dick, without looking up. "Bees don't go gadding about in this kind of weather."

"Why, Jerry!" cried Slim, in some alarm, "your ear is bleeding."

"So it is," assented Jerry, as he put his finger to the injured member and brought it away reddened. "Now what in thunder——"

He stopped short and gazed transfixed at the side of the plane.

An arrow was sticking there, still quivering!

"Indians!" yelled the young leader, as he recovered from his momentary stupefaction. "To the other side of the plane, fellows! Quick!"

They darted to the side that was farthest from the woods and crouched in the shelter of the *Hope*.

They were not a moment too soon, for as they did so the air became full of hissing sounds, and they could hear the soft thud of arrows as they buried themselves in the wood.

This was something that had never entered into their calculations. Animal foes they had counted on as a possibility, more than that, a probability. But human enemies, no!

"I never thought of there being Indians in Canada," muttered Dick. "I'd always associated them with the Wild West in our own country."

"There are a few scattered tribes in Canada in the upper part," replied Slim. "But I never thought of them as dangerous."

"I'll say they are," grumbled Jerry, as he touched gingerly his injured ear. "Here's the proof of it. And they can shoot pretty straight, if you ask me."

"Wonder if they'll rush us," observed Dick.

"Probably not till dark, anyway," conjectured Slim. "They won't take any needless risks as long as they think they can pick us off from the shelter of the woods."

The voyagers peered over the side of the plane toward the patch of woods. Not a sound came from there. Not a figure could be seen. If it had not been for those ominous arrows sticking in the side of the plane, it might well have seemed that the young adventurers had that whole region to themselves.

Stealthily, Slim Tyler crept over the side of the plane, got his own rifle and handed other weapons to his companions.

"Might as well do a little shooting on our own account," he said grimly, as he rejoined his mates. "We'll send a little volley into the woods just to let those bozos know we're armed."

At his signal all fired at once, and their bullets went whistling among the trees. No cry of pain indicated that any of them had found a mark. A silence as of death reigned over the darkening woods.

"A little bashful about showing themselves," remarked Dick.

"They're waiting patiently," replied Slim. "They count on the dark as their best friend. Then they'll try to put us out of business and loot the plane."

"If we hadn't taken that wheel off," groaned Jerry, "we could start the old bus going and give these fellows the merry ha ha."

"Lucky there's only one off," replied Slim. "We can put that on in a jiffy. The skis will have to wait till another time. Here's my plan, fellows. As soon as it's too dark for them to see us, we'll slip around to the other side and adjust the wheel. It won't take us more than ten minutes, if we hurry. Of course more arrows may come, but they'll be shot more or less at a venture and we've got to take our chance. In the meantime we'll send them a volley every once in a while, just to warn them that, if they get anything from us, they'll have to fight for it."

They followed this suggestion, shooting at intervals into the woods without eliciting any response from their unseen enemies.

When dusk at last had deepened into dark, the three slipped silently to the other side of the plane and worked with desperate energy at replacing the wheel.

It was ticklish work, for at any moment a host of arrows might come with their messages of death.

It was done at last, however, and Slim and Dick climbed into the plane.

Jerry gave the propeller a whirl and dashed for the cockpit.

At the instant a horde of savages, with blood-curdling yells, broke from the shadow of the woods!

CHAPTER XVI

IN DEADLY PERIL

"Lie low, fellows!" shouted Slim Tyler as the engine broke into a roar.

A cloud of arrows that came from the bows of the natives emphasized the injunction. Some buried themselves in the side of the plane. Others whizzed over the heads of the three young aviators, crouched low behind their defenses. Had they not been as quick in ducking as they had, some or all of them would certainly have been struck.

One of the fleetest of the natives reached the side of the plane before it had fully gathered speed. He grabbed the edge and tried to climb in.

Dick's fist launched out and caught the fellow a tremendous blow in the jaw. The clutching hands loosened and the savage fell back to the ground.

"Plucky beggar!" muttered Dick. "But I'll bet he's lost a few of his teeth."

The *Hope* was now in full swing and zooming down the field at high speed.

"Let's hope she doesn't strike a stump or something," muttered Jerry between his teeth. "I'd not like to be dumped into that yelling crowd."

"Here we go," said the young pilot as he lifted the plane into the air. "They'd have to have wings to get at us now."

Up and up they soared until they were safely beyond the reach of the arrows. Only then did they dare to breathe.

"I'd like to take a pot shot at them," muttered Jerry vengefully. "Look at the way they're all crowded together down there! We couldn't help winging some of them."

"I don't think we'd better," counseled the leader of the expedition. "Hardly seems sporting when the poor beggars haven't a chance to get back at us."

"They gave me a lot of a chance, didn't they, when they nicked my ear with that arrow?" grumbled Jerry. "Anyway, let's give them a scare and send down a few flares."

"That's all right," assented Slim, and a moment later four flares went hissing down into the crowd.

The dazzling lights illumined the scene and showed the fright on the throng of dark faces as the mysterious flares neared the ground. To their untutored minds, it seemed, perhaps, that the white men had plucked the stars from the skies and were hurling them down upon them.

With wild yells of terror, the Indians broke and scurried like rabbits to the shelter of the woods.

"Got that much out of them, anyway," chuckled Jerry, in high glee. "Doesn't pay for my ear, but it helps."

In a few minutes they had left the ill-omened camping place far behind and the *Hope* was roaring swiftly toward the north.

Jerry got out the medicine kit and Dick bathed the wounded ear in iodine. Luckily, the wound was slight, although it was painful enough to keep Jerry constantly reminded of his narrow escape.

"No monotony on this trip, anyway," he remarked later, when an abundant meal had put him and his companions at peace with the world. "First wolves, then Indians. Fate is certainly handing us some heavy jolts. I wonder what will come next?"

"For goodness' sake, don't start worrying about that," Dick Mylert adjured him. "It'll be bad enough when it comes. I'm so thankful now that my scalp isn't drying at some Indian's belt that I'm not inclined to kick about anything—especially anything that hasn't yet happened."

"What about the skis, Slim?" asked Jerry. "It's too bad we couldn't have finished that job while we were about it."

"It sure was," agreed Slim Tyler thoughtfully. "What makes it worse is that we're getting near the coast and will soon be over the water. Then it will be too late to change to the skis before we reach Greenland. Of course we could wait at the coast till morning before we make another attempt to put on the skis. That is, if we think that it's got to be done by daylight. But if you fellows are game, we'll take a chance and go down now and do it as well as we can in the dark. Only this time," he added, with a grin, "we'll choose a place where there are no woods in sight."

"You bet your life!" exclaimed Mylert, with fervor.

"That goes for me, too," echoed Jerry, instinctively reaching for his ear. "But how are we going to find a landing place in the dark?"

"It won't be dark long," replied the young pilot. "The moon will rise in about an hour. I'll fly low and we'll try to find some level place. When we think we've found it, we'll drop some flares to make sure it's all right, and if it is I'll go down."

"Rather risky, don't you think?" asked Dick dubiously.

"A little, but not so much," replied Slim. "You see it's this way. I judge that we'll be at the coast about midnight. Now, if we have to hover about there till daylight to fix the skis, we'll have lost half a dozen hours or so, while if we have them fixed by the time we reach the water, we can keep right on and fly all night. Time is so precious now that I don't want to lose an hour of it that I don't have to. Savvy?"

"I guess you're right," conceded Dick. "Anyway, I'm just a passenger and I don't want to do any back seat driving. Anything that you decide on goes with me."

An hour passed and the moon arose and flooded all that wild world with glory.

Under any other circumstances the flyers would have reveled in the beauty of the scene. But just now the moon was to be admired, not for itself, but for the help that it might be to them in discovering a suitable landing field.

They descried such a place half an hour later. Like all the district over which they had been flying that day, it was covered with a hard crust of snow that had been so beaten upon by the bitter winds that it was packed almost to the consistency of ice.

Taking every precaution, Slim Tyler let the plane down to a successful landing. The moon shining on the snow made everything almost as light as day. There were no woods within sight and nothing else that could possibly shelter an enemy.

Under these conditions the changes they had in mind were easily made. Skis were substituted for the wheels and the latter carefully packed away for future use. In less than an hour everything was in readiness for the resumption of their flight.

They were delighted to find that the skis worked to a charm. When the young pilot started the engines the plane darted along on the runners like a thing of life and soared into the air like a bird.

It had been more or less in the nature of an experiment, for neither Slim Tyler nor Jerry Marbury had ever used skis before. So they were relieved beyond measure when the first test proved successful.

For in the place to which they were going there was practically nothing but ice. The whole of Greenland, except in some strips along the shore and certain other places where weather conditions were unusual, was covered with a solid ice cap. Wheels would be at a discount in that frozen region. Skis were almost indispensable.

So that it was with a feeling of intense elation that they flew on over the desolate wastes of Labrador and approached the shore of Davis Straits, on the other side of which lay Greenland.

Slim gave the *Hope* full throttle, and at about midnight, as he had predicted, the water came in view.

The flyers heard it before they saw it. A thunderous roar blended with the song of the motors. It was the roar of breakers dashing against the rocky shores.

"How does it sound, fellows?" asked Slim, turning toward his companions with a grin.

"Rather fierce, if you ask me," returned Dick.

"As though it were daring us to come on," put in Jerry.

"Well, we're going to accept the challenge," declared Slim, as the raging waves came into full view. "Say good-by to the land, fellows, for it will be a long time before you see land again."

There was a curious feeling in the hearts of all as they said farewell to the American continental mass. Land meant home. It was associated with every experience of their lives. It was secure, stable, solid. While flying over it they had the comfortable feeling that, if anything went wrong, they could come down to safety.

But the ocean, cruel, remorseless, uncaring for human life or pain—that was different.

Now, if they came down, they would come down to death!

CHAPTER XVII

AT RISK OF LIFE

Though the three young adventurers fully appreciated the chances they were taking, their hearts were high and their souls undaunted. They had counted the cost before they had embarked on their enterprise, and they were willing to pay that cost, if an unkind fate should demand it of them.

On they went over the wild sea, flying at an altitude of three thousand feet.

An hour of this, and Slim Tyler relinquished the control of the plane to Jerry Marbury, while he snatched a little sleep.

"How is she going?" he asked, a couple of hours later, when he came to relieve his companion.

"Not very well," returned Jerry uneasily. "She doesn't answer as she should. I was just going to call you and have a talk about it. I'm afraid there's something wrong with the stabilizer."

"The stabilizer!" exclaimed Slim quickly, for all the meaning of that disaster flashed upon him at once. "Here, give me the control and let me get the feel of it."

It took him less than a minute to realize that Jerry was right. The *Hope* was tossing and bucking like a balky mule.

"I know what it must be," declared Slim, after he had run over in his mind all possible reasons for the *Hope's* eccentric behavior. "The streamlined cable brace on the right side of the stabilizer has parted."

"Parted!"

To an experienced airman like Jerry, the word was like the crack of doom!

The young aviators looked at each other. The blood had fled from their faces.

"Unless we fix it, we're goners," declared Slim.

"Of course we are," agreed Jerry. "But how are we going to fix it unless we can come down?"

"I don't know how, but we've got to," affirmed Slim.

"I don't believe it's ever been done on an airplane while in flight," groaned Jerry. "Looks to me, Slim, as though the jig is up."

"What's all the shooting about?" asked a sleepy voice, and Dick Mylert, roused by the excited conversation, came forward and joined the pair.

"Plenty," returned Slim. "The stabilizer brace has given way."

"And that means?"

"It means that unless we fix it promptly we'll get a ducking," replied Slim grimly. "I can't explain it to you now. Let me think."

He needed to think and think quickly, for none knew better than he what was meant by the parting of that brace that put the rudder in jeopardy.

One plan after another chased itself through his mind, to be rejected as impossible.

At last he fastened on one that offered some glimmer of hope, though it was beset with manifold dangers.

"Dick," he commanded, "you'll find some rosin in a bag back there. Break it out."

Mylert hastened to obey.

Slim turned to Jerry.

"Get me a spare brace, Jerry," he directed. "You know where we keep them."

In a minute Jerry was back with the brace, a steel strut about a quarter of an inch thick, an inch wide, and about three feet long.

"Here it is," he said. "What's your plan, Slim?"

"We're going to smash the rear bulkhead," explained Slim. "Then I'm going to crawl to the tail of the ship through the fuselage. I'll take a sharp knife along and slit the fabric on the top of the fuselage. Then I'm going to push my head and shoulders through the hole, so that I can have my arms free."

"But you'll be in the full blast of the propellers!" cried Jerry, aghast. "It will tear you to pieces!"

"I guess not," replied Slim. "Anyhow, I've got to take the chance."

"Let me do it," pleaded Jerry. "My life isn't worth any more than yours. Why should you take all the risk?"

"No," said Slim. "I've got the whole thing mapped out in my mind. I won't be blown away. That's one reason why I asked Dick for the rosin. I'm going to spread it over my suit, so as to give a better grip on the fabric. You stay at the controls, Jerry, and try to keep this bucking broncho steady until I've finished my work. In a little while we'll either be riding pretty or we'll be at the bottom of the sea."

He rubbed his clothes with the rosin that Dick brought, and with the latter's aid broke through the rear bulkhead and slit the fabric until his head and shoulders could emerge.

It seemed that the blast of the propellers, as he came into its full force, would blow his head from his shoulders.

It would have been a delicate piece of work to do, even under the most tranquil circumstances. In this wild roaring and tumult it seemed impossible.

One end of the brace was bent into a hook with a sharpened point. A hole had been drilled below the point of the hook. In the shaft of the strut opposite the hole in the hook was a corresponding hole. At the end of the shaft was another hole, larger than either of the other two.

Slim pulled the hook of the strut through the fabric of the stabilizer so as to hook the outside tubing, which was just on the other side of an interior steel brace.

Then he put a bolt through the two holes and screwed the bolt tightly into place. That proceeding clamped the strut permanently to the stabilizer.

With a heavy pair of pliers he drew the end of the broken brace through the big hole in the end of the shaft of the new strut as tautly as he could. Then he lashed it securely.

It had been a fearful task that would have daunted a lesser soul. The blast of the propeller was tearing at him, taking away his breath, searing his eyes, threatening at any moment to wrench him from his precarious hold and hurl him into the raging waters beneath. His lungs were laboring to the bursting point with his terrible exertions. His hands were so numbed by wind and cold that they had scarcely any feeling left in them.

But he had triumphed! He had saved the plane! The brace was not quite as rigid as he would have liked to have it, but amply so for their present needs.

That it was working well was evident from the fact that the bucking and balking of the plane had ceased. She was once more answering her helm without protest.

Breathing a huge sigh of relief, Slim Tyler drew back into the fuselage, got back into the cabin through the broken bulkhead, and made his way to the control.

Jerry fairly hugged Slim in his delight at his safe return.

"You did it, old boy! You did it!" he exclaimed. "It was a hundred to one chance, but you won! A thing I don't think has ever been done before by a flyer—repairing a stabilizer while in flight. Didn't I tell you this fellow could work miracles?" he demanded of Dick Mylert.

"I'm beginning to believe you," replied the young newspaper man warmly. "Gee, my heart was in my mouth while you were out there, Slim! It looked as though you were up against a hopeless task."

"Nothing is hopeless, unless we admit it is," replied the young pilot. "I'll take a turn now at the controls while you boys finish the job. You'll need a curved needle to sew up the slit in the fabric and then you can repair the broken bulkhead. That will make everything O.K."

Jerry and Dick set to work busily and soon had the repairs made, pending a more complete job when they should be able to land.

It was bitterly cold, and grew still colder as they progressed toward the Greenland coast.

Below them the sea was dotted here and there with huge icebergs, great masses that had broken off from the ice cap and were now floating in stately majesty toward the warmer waters of the south.

With the moonlight reflected from a thousand jagged points, the bergs resembled gigantic diamonds. It was like a scene from fairyland.

But the aviators had not long to enjoy it, for great masses of clouds gradually obscured the moon, and gusts of wind, growing ever fiercer in intensity, presaged a coming storm.

"Something brewing," remarked Jerry. "Looks as if——"

The sentence was never finished.

A terrific blast struck the plane with such irresistible force that it turned turtle!

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE GRIP OF THE STORM

The attack of the wind was sudden beyond all precedent in the experience of the young aviators.

It was as though the demon of the storm had counted on surprise and had hoped to accomplish the destruction of the *Hope* at one blow before the aviators could rally their confused senses to combat it.

One moment the *Hope* had been flying on an even keel. The next, it had completely reversed its position, and the occupants found themselves flying head downward.

The straps that held Slim Tyler in the pilot's seat stretched and strained, but did not break.

His comrades were not so fortunate. Jerry Marbury was for a moment literally standing on his head. Then he fell down heavily, grasping an iron bolt, to which he clung with the tenacity of a drowning man.

Dick Mylert was flung out of the plane and would have gone hurtling to the waters beneath if his hands, flung about wildly, had not grasped the side of the fuselage. There he hung suspended while the wind tore at him, trying to loosen his grasp.

"Hold on, Dick! For the love of Pete, hold on!" screamed Jerry, as his senses cleared and he saw his companion's frightful plight.

He crawled close to his imperiled comrade, clutched his wrists, and by a tremendous effort pulled him in to safety.

Slim Tyler was fighting desperately to regain control of the plane and bring her right side up. It was a herculean task, as she had already started on her downward plunge.

A lesser pilot would have lost his head and his doom would have been sealed then and there. But Slim Tyler kept his nerve, and by consummate craftsmanship finally brought the plane to its normal position.

The first onslaught had been met and repelled, but others followed, and the aviators found themselves in a wild turmoil of the elements. The wind was blowing with all the force of a tornado. It beat and tore at the plane as though it would rend it into shreds. The howling of the storm drowned the roar of the motors. It was a terrible demonstration of nature's unbridled fury.

Yet in that awful welter, Slim Tyler's hand at the control never faltered. His pulses were steady, his heart undaunted.

With masterly skill he jockeyed the plane, driving here, banking there, trying to present the least vulnerable surface to the blow, making the wind at times his ally, again challenging it to do its worst.

He darted upward in an attempt to find a quieter strata of air, but found that he gained nothing by the change. Then he sought lower altitudes, coming down at times so close to the water that he heard its roar and was sprinkled with its spray.

But wherever he went it was the same. The gale was out to find a victim, and it seemed to exercise a demoniac cunning in thwarting every effort of its prey to escape.

To keep on their projected path was of course out of the question. All that mattered now was saving the plane and with it their own lives. If they perished, the course did not matter. If they survived, they could easily find it again.

Over that great angry waste of waters, the *Hope* flew on, a mere speck in immensity, while its imperiled occupants never knew what moment might be their last.

For one thing Slim Tyler was grateful. He had repaired the stabilizer before the storm started. If he had been delayed until the gale was upon them, nothing on earth could have saved them from certain death.

Luckily, there was no lightning. They were too far north for that, and thus they were spared one peril that had so nearly brought to naught the journey to South America.

For more than an hour the storm raged with the greatest fury. Then it began to subside. It died away in fitful gusts that came at longer and longer intervals and finally ceased altogether, although the agitated air rocked up and down like the waves of the ocean after a gale.

Slim Tyler's tense grip on the controls relaxed. Despite the bitter cold, he was drenched with perspiration from the terrific strain he had undergone.

"I've been on many a ship in a gale," breathed Dick Mylert, "but I've never been shaken up and tossed about like this. I feel like a scrambled egg."

"You brought her through wonderfully, Slim," said Jerry, clapping his friend on the shoulder. "Where do you think we are?"

"Search me," replied Slim. "I'll try to figure it out as soon as I can get my breath. If those clouds break away and let the moon shine through again, you can get out your instruments and we'll check up on the figures. I've tried to keep her in an easterly direction as far as I could, but in this hullabaloo she's been dancing round to all points of the compass."

But the clouds obstinately refused to break away. They had contained more than wind. Half an hour had not elapsed before snow began to fall.

The storm came first in scattered flakes, then in a thick cloud, then in blinding sheets. It plastered the windows of the cockpit. It lay in a heavy blanket on the body of the plane. It coated the broad wings, weighing them down.

Every additional ounce that weighted the plane weighted Slim Tyler's heart as well.

For the plane was losing buoyancy and sinking lower and lower with every ten minutes that passed.

She was like an overloaded ship, wallowing in the trough of the sea when she ought to have been cleaving her way through it.

Slim banked and dived and rose and sideslipped in the effort to shake the snow from the wings. Had it been of the powdery variety, he might have succeeded. But it was wet and stuck to the wings like glue.

"Going through a good many stunts, aren't you, Slim?" asked Dick Mylert lightly. He had no idea of the gravity of the situation. "What is this, anyway? A flying circus?"

"Something far different from that," answered Slim soberly. "The wings are carrying so much snow that the *Hope* is getting too tired to fly."

"Is that so?" exclaimed the reporter, his airy manner vanishing instantly. "Does that mean that there's danger of her going down?"

"Exactly that, if the snow keeps falling," affirmed Slim. "I have all I can do now to keep her aloft. There must be half a ton of snow on her wings now. And half a ton is a thousand pounds."

"If this keeps up, we'll have to throw some of our cargo overboard to lighten the plane," declared Jerry.

"Possibly," admitted Slim. "Spare parts, tools, even food, if necessary. Lucky if we keep our shirts. But even that is better than drowning."

As if to emphasize that sinister word, the roar of the waves beneath grew louder.

CHAPTER XIX

THREATENING DOOM

Slim Tyler's quick ears caught an unusual note in that more boisterous roar of the angry waves. *Hope* sprang anew in his heart.

"Notice anything different in this sound from that we've been hearing for the last hour?" he asked his companions.

They listened intently.

"Sounds to me like breakers dashing on the shore!" exclaimed Jerry Marbury, and the newspaper man nodded assent.

"That's what it is, I'll bet!" cried Slim. "If that's true, fellows, it means that we have reached the Greenland coast!"

The words went through them all like an electric shock.

"Thank goodness!" ejaculated Dick Mylert fervently.

"Glory hallelujah!" cried Jerry.

"We don't want to crow too soon," the young pilot cautioned his companions. "Break out those flares, Jerry, and throw a couple of them down."

Jerry obeyed, and the flares went down, leaving fiery trails like the tails of comets in their wake.

"After all," observed Dick dubiously, "what good will they do? The wall of snow shuts out our sight. We can't see whether they fall on the land or the sea."

"Wait," advised Slim.

Perhaps twenty seconds elapsed before the luminous glows left by the passing of the flares disappeared.

"Land!" exclaimed Slim joyously.

"Land!" echoed Jerry with equal jubilation.

"How do you know?" asked Dick wonderingly.

"If water were beneath us, the flares would have been extinguished immediately," explained Slim Tyler. "As it is, you notice that they continued to burn. We've reached Greenland all right. Now if we have to come down, as we probably shall, we'll find land beneath us."

"Or ice," suggested Jerry.

"The same thing as far as making a landing is concerned," replied the young pilot. "As a matter of fact, I shouldn't be surprised if we never see the ground itself as long as we're in Greenland. With a few exceptions, it's a solid sheet of ice from end to end."

"Seems to me it isn't snowing as hard as it was," observed Dick.

"It isn't," affirmed Slim. "If it will only stop altogether now, I can probably keep the plane afloat. But with much more weight on her wings she'll go down as sure as shooting."

Presently the snow stopped falling, and with its cessation an immense load was lifted from Slim Tyler's spirits. The *Hope* still labored heavily, but she was more or less manageable.

It was imperative that they should make a landing as soon as possible. They were in a mountainous region, and if they should suddenly come face to face with a high peak there would be no way of making the heavily weighted plane rise above it.

It was growing lighter now, and the occupants of the plane strained their eyes to see something of their surroundings.

They had left the sea far behind and found themselves flying over a high plateau, sheathed in ice and destitute of all signs of human habitation. It was many miles in area, rugged and uneven and hemmed in on every side by mountains.

At intervals it was cut through by gorges hundreds of feet in depth, with steep, precipitous sides. There were no trees anywhere to break the landscape. The whole scene was one of dreary desolation, and it sent a chill through the veins of the adventurers.

"Nice place to live in—I don't think," muttered Jerry.

"Not many human beings do live in it," replied Slim; "about twelve or fifteen thousand altogether and most of them Eskimos at that, in the milder places scattered along the coast."

"Only fit for polar bears," commented Dick.

"There are plenty of them," replied Slim. "Perhaps we'll get a hack at them before we're through. Or perhaps," he added, with a grin, "it will be they that take a hack at us. Gosh, what made that Dave Boyd expedition come to such a rotten place?"

The sun had risen now, and its rays sent back a thousand dazzling reflections from the ice.

"Keep your eyes peeled for a landing place," Slim adjured his companions. "This bird is trying to come down of her own accord, and I'm having all I can do to keep her in check."

"There's a possible place," sang out Jerry a few minutes later. "Seems to be a depression in the plateau, almost like a valley. There's a long level strip at the bottom that may fill the bill."

"Looks good to me," pronounced Slim after careful scrutiny of the spot that Jerry pointed out. "Here goes!"

He spiraled down into the valley, maneuvering the plane with masterly skill. The skis landed gently on a comparatively smooth surface, skimmed along for a few hundred feet, and gradually came to a stop.

A shout of delight came from the throats of all three as for the first time their feet touched the ice of Greenland. They had reached their destination after enduring frightful perils. They had negotiated the last water jump, during which they had not known but what the next moment might be their last.

But they had triumphed! They had achieved their goal! They were in Greenland! It was with a feeling of irrepressible exultation that, all past perils forgotten, they felt solid footing beneath them.

"Now to find Dave Boyd!" cried Jerry.

"And Cameron Flood," added Slim, from whom, through all the journey, the thought of Nat Shaley and the lumber claim had never been long absent.

"Who's Cameron Flood?" asked Dick Mylert curiously.

"One of the scientists in the party," replied Slim. "There's a matter in which both he and I are interested. But now for a good meal. Then we'll set to work and get the snow off this baby's wings."

They ate with appetite, for all through that terrible night they had been too oppressed and anxious to think of food, and now woke to the realization that they were ravenously hungry.

After the meal was finished they got out scrapers and shovels and removed the snow from the wings of the *Hope* and also from the body and struts of the machine. In many places it had changed to ice and the work was long and arduous, and had to be done with extreme care.

This finished at last, they made a careful inspection of the plane. There were some slight repairs to be made, but considering the conditions she had met, the *Hope* had come through with flying colors. The broken strut was made almost as good as new.

Following this, Slim and Jerry brought out their instruments and took observations of the sun. From these they were able to figure out their approximate position.

"About forty miles inland," mused Slim thoughtfully. "We know at least where we are. But where in the mischief is Dave Boyd? Any idea, Jerry?"

"Not the least," replied Jerry. "Ten to one he's landed somewhere he didn't want to. You know that story of the trappers about seeing the plane forced down."

"Yes, and that story didn't give the location, except that it was somewhere about the center of the island," rejoined Slim. "That's a pretty indefinite indication, for Greenland is more like a continent than an island. Thousands and thousands of square miles to fly over. It's almost like looking for a needle in a haystack."

"Yes," said Jerry sombrely. "Moreover, sometimes I'm afraid of what we'll find if we find them at all. Only their dead bodies, perhaps. The plane may have been smashed to flinders."

"That's a chance, of course," admitted Slim, and a pain stabbed through his heart at the thought. "But we're not going to dwell on that. I think we'll find them, in trouble, perhaps, but still alive and well."

The two aviators were interrupted by a call from Dick Mylert, who, while the others had been making their calculations, had wandered off to the side of a cliff at a little distance.

"Come here, fellows," cried Dick, "and take a squint at these."

He held up some oval objects as they hurried toward him.

"Eggs," he said, as they came up to him. "Lallapaloozers, too. Some of the biggest I've ever seen."

"Where did you get them?" asked Slim, as he and Jerry examined them curiously.

"In the side of the cliff here," replied Dick. "Saw a cleft in the rock and climbed up. Scientific curiosity," he grinned. "We'll take them along and let some of the high-brows in Boyd's party—if we find them—tell us what they are."

"I don't know," said Slim reflectively. "Perhaps it would be wiser to put them back. They're still a little warm."

"What of that?" asked Dick.

"It means that the mother bird hasn't been away from them long and may be back any minute," replied Slim. "When she comes there may be ructions. Better put them back, Dick. We've got trouble enough without

looking for any."

The young newspaper man grumbled a little but acceded. He climbed up the cliffside and was putting back the eggs when there came a sudden whirring of wings.

"Look out, Dick! For the love of Pete, look out!" shouted Slim Tyler.

CHAPTER XX

THE CRASH

Startled by Slim Tyler's cry of warning, in which Jerry joined, Dick Mylert looked up.

Two great birds were swooping down upon him with raucous cries, talons outspread.

Dick started to clamber down, but one of the birds, bigger than an eagle, struck him a heavy blow with one of its wings and he fell for a dozen feet.

His feet slipped out from under him as they touched the icy surface and he fell on his back.

"Cover your eyes, Dick!" screamed Slim, as he saw the creatures making for Dick's face.

Dick, though confused and bewildered, had sense enough left to follow the injunction and threw both arms tightly over his eyes. The angry birds tore at his arms, their beaks drawing blood.

Slim and Jerry launched themselves against the creatures, their arms and fists working like flails. The ferocity of their onslaught drove the feathered assailants back for the moment, but they returned promptly to the attack.

With their left arms shielding their eyes, Slim and Jerry yanked Dick to his feet and the three fought their way back to the plane, while again and again the maddened birds swooped down upon them, beating them heavily with their wings, striking at them with talons, and trying ever to get at their eyes with their beaks.

"Hold them off for another minute," panted Slim, as he leaped over the side of the plane and grabbed a rifle.

The gun cracked and one of the birds fell lifeless. Another shot broke the wing of the other and it flopped helpless to the ground. Slim fired once more and killed it.

Then he rejoined his comrades, who were leaning, gasping, against the side of the plane.

"They haven't touched your eyes, have they?" he inquired anxiously.

"No," panted Jerry. "But it wasn't for the want of trying. I'm bleeding like a stuck pig."

"My eyes are all right," gasped Dick. "But that fall knocked all my teeth loose. I can feel each one of them move as I touch them with my tongue."

"They'll tighten up in a day or two," Slim consoled him. "Gee, but I'm glad that we've got rid of those pirates!" as he viewed the feathered heaps on the ice.

"They were bad medicine," grunted Jerry. "But let's break out the first aid kit and get some iodine and bandages."

They helped to bind up each other's wounds, which were plentiful. But they were so relieved that their eyes were left that they bore the pain with philosophy.

"How about that scientific curiosity of yours, Dick?" asked Slim quizzically.

"Gone! Squelched!" replied Dick emphatically. "I'll never go bird-nesting in the Arctic again. Gee, but those fellows were fierce! What are they, anyway?"

"Auks, I guess, or something of the sort," replied Slim, with a glance at the huge creatures. "Mild enough when they are let alone, but tough bozos when it comes to defending their nests. Can't blame them. I like their spunk, and I'm sorry we had to kill them."

They rested for a few minutes and then prepared for their flight of exploration.

"Just what are your plans, Slim?" asked Dick.

"Simply to keep flying as long as daylight lasts," replied Slim, as he climbed into the cockpit and took his seat at the controls. "While Jerry or I guide the plane, the others will study the ice beneath with the field glasses. We'll be able to cover a good many hundred square miles of territory every day. We'll fly as low as we dare and yet keep out of the way of the mountain peaks. Each day we'll cover a separate section. We'll go over the whole of Greenland as with a fine toothed comb."

"How about the gasoline?" asked Jerry. "We're using up a good many gallons with every day we fly."

"I know," admitted Slim. "That's a problem. But we'll keep aloft as long as we can, and when the supply runs low we'll make for one of the Danish towns along the coast, where we can replenish. I hope, though, that it won't come to that."

They made an excellent take-off and mounted into the skies.

The sun was still shining brightly as Slim Tyler headed toward the center of the island. The visibility was fine, and they had no difficulty with their glasses in seeing the landscape beneath.

For hours and hours they flew on their quest without detecting any signs of human life. Animal life there was, reindeer, foxes, ermines, hares and musk oxen, though how some of them could find a living in those ice-covered wastes it was hard to imagine. From time to time these could be seen as mere dark specks on the ice-clad surface.

"If a fellow were lost here and had his rifle, he might live on game," remarked Jerry.

"A slim chance," returned Dick. "There'd be no cover, and he couldn't get close enough for a shot without being seen. No, this is anything but a hunter's paradise. If a fellow got stranded here, his best bet would be to streak it to some of the settlements along the coast."

Time wore on until mid-afternoon with not a sign of anything human to reward their quest. Then a haze began to rise and obscure their sight.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Slim suddenly, just as he was about reluctantly to put aside his glasses. "I thought I saw something then that looked like a camp."

"Where?" asked Jerry, who at the moment was guiding the plane.

"Down there," replied Slim, pointing to a deep valley a little to the right. "Hang it, it's fading away now as this fog grows thicker. We'll have to wait till it lifts. But keep circling around in this vicinity, Jerry, so that we shan't get away from this spot."

"Why couldn't the fog have waited a little longer?" grumbled Dick. "It's maddening to have it come up just now."

"What did the thing look like, Slim?" asked Jerry eagerly.

"Oh, it was vague enough," admitted the young aviator. "But there seemed to be a lot of things scattered around and I thought I could see some figures moving."

"Moving!" repeated Jerry, with huge satisfaction. "That's cheering. Movement means life."

"Of course, we don't want to let our hopes rise too high," cautioned Slim. "It may have been a party of Eskimos or Danish trappers."

"Even that would be something," put in Dick. "We might get some valuable information from them as to the whereabouts of Boyd and his party."

"That's true," agreed Slim. "Gee, fellows, I feel happier now than at any time since we landed in Greenland!"

The fog grew thicker. It soon wrapped the plane as in a pall. The *Hope* seemed like a ghost wandering through the darkness. The wet, clammy folds penetrated through everything, even the heavy clothing of the young aviators.

Slim Tyler bent over Jerry and consulted the instruments.

"Better lift her a little higher, Jerry," he said, with a touch of uneasiness. "These mountains around here _____"

A huge black mass loomed up in front of them. There was a crash, and everything went black before Slim Tyler's eyes!

CHAPTER XXI

LOST

How long it was before he came back to consciousness, Slim Tyler never knew.

He woke to find himself lying on his back, with dense darkness all about him. For a long time his dazed senses failed to take in the situation in which he found himself.

"Wonder how long I've been sleeping?" he asked himself confusedly. "Why hasn't Jerry waked me up? He needs sleep as much as I do. He's been having a long spell at the controls. Time I relieved the old boy."

He tried to rise, but sank back with a groan of pain.

"Must be those auk bites," he murmured. "Hope there wasn't any poison in them. Thought I used plenty of iodine, though. Gee, but this bed is cold!"

He put out his hand and felt ice. The shock aroused him.

"What in thunder!" he exclaimed, as he felt about him for some of the familiar objects of the plane.

His hands encountered only empty air.

Then in a flash it all came back to him—the study of the instruments, his suggestion to Jerry that they rise higher, the black mass looming up, the crash!

They had struck, then. Hit the mountain side and gone down. The *Hope* was gone. And Jerry! And Dick! Good old Jerry and Dick! Where were they? Slim Tyler groaned in anguish.

His own awful plight for the moment hardly interested him. It was the fate of his companions that tore at his soul. He was at least alive. But they?

"Lying dead, perhaps," he moaned. "Or, still worse, perhaps maimed for life."

So this was the end of the expedition on which he had placed such high hopes, in the working out of which he had encountered and overcome so many perils!

All wasted! Sheer waste! The bitter sarcasm of it! Coming on a mission of rescue and now himself a derelict!

But Slim Tyler did not spend long in these soul-searing reflections. His indomitable will awoke and stirred him to action.

How did he know that his companions were dead? he asked himself. He himself had escaped with life. Might not they have had equal luck? He must look for them, and at once.

By a tremendous effort he brought himself to a sitting position. He could not repress a groan as he did so. He was bruised and sore all over.

He flexed his arms, though the operation caused him intense agony. But at least they obeyed his will. They were not broken.

He felt his legs gingerly. No broken bones there!

A surge of hope thrilled through his veins. He was not crippled, doomed to freeze or starve until death should come to his relief!

With infinite pain and effort he managed to get upon his feet. Then he applied himself to rubbing himself vigorously until the numbness left his limbs and he was able to move about, though haltingly.

Even though he could move about, he had not found freedom of action. For the night wrapped about him like a blanket. He could hardly see his hand before his face. For all he knew, he might be on the brink of a precipice. The first step forward might hurl him down into a chasm hundreds of feet deep.

Inaction was maddening, but it would be sheer insanity to attempt to move forward in that darkness. There was no alternative. He must wait till daylight broke.

How long would that be? He had not the slightest idea how long he had lain there unconscious. He took out his watch and held it to his ear. It had stopped.

He summoned all his stoicism and steeled himself to the hardest task in the world—to wait!

In those dreary hours of waiting he had plenty of time to take stock of his situation. The inventory was depressing.

As far as he knew, he was alone—alone in thousands of square miles of uninhabited, ice-clad territory.

Even if his strength held out, he might wander over it for months without coming in contact with a human soul.

But how could his strength hold out? He had no food and no way of getting any. Already the pangs of hunger were assailing him.

There were of course provisions in the *Hope*. But where was the *Hope*? Perhaps at the bottom of some inaccessible chasm. Perhaps it had caught fire in the crash and been consumed. It might have gone down one slope of the mountain, while he himself had been cast down another.

While he was immersed in these gloomy reflections the night wore itself away. With the first glimmer of light that came from the east, Slim Tyler looked with straining eyes about him.

He found himself on an icy plateau at the bottom of a mountain slope. Not ten feet in front of him was a yawning crevasse leading down to an unknown depth. Similar gorges were in evidence everywhere. A more forbidding, dreary, desolate landscape could not have been imagined.

Nothing familiar met Slim's eyes. No Jerry Marbury! No Dick Mylert! No plane!

He was lost! Lost in Greenland!

CHAPTER XXII

THE SHOT

Slim Tyler had cherished the hope that daylight would reveal the plane, or what remained of it after its collision with the cliff. Even if wrecked, he might recover from it provisions to keep himself alive for a time and weapons with which to secure game later on.

The fact that he could discern no trace of it was at first a bitter disappointment. Yet, as he pondered the matter, there came a slight upspringing of hope.

How did he know that the plane had smashed? Might not Jerry, despite the damage it must have sustained, have managed to keep it aloft?

The shock, to be sure, had been violent enough to throw him, Slim Tyler, out of the fuselage. But his companions might have had better luck, and the *Hope* itself might have survived. If this were true, he knew that they would search for him unceasingly until they found him.

This was the bright side of the picture. Down deep in his heart he felt almost certain that the *Hope* had gone down.

But if so, where was it? Why had it not fallen at practically the same spot in which he found himself?

The answer might be found in the great gorges that seamed the plateau. He shuddered as he looked at them. At the bottom of one of them the *Hope* at this moment might be lying, far from human sight, a crumpled mass with the dead bodies of Dick Mylert and Jerry Marbury in the wreckage.

How had he himself survived? Why had he not been killed by his fall?

A glance at the mountain side gave him the answer. He had not fallen like a plummet through space. He had been flung out on an icy slope, through which protruded at frequent intervals clumps of bushes and shrubbery that had flourished during the brief summer season.

These, no doubt, had broken his fall. His progress down the slippery slope had been checked at intervals until he had finally brought up at the bottom, horribly bruised and sore, but with all his bones intact.

The tufts of shrubbery gave him an idea. They might serve as hand holds and enable him to make his way to the top. From there, on the other side of the mountain, he might discern some traces of the catastrophe.

He girded himself for the effort and began to climb. In his condition it was a frightful task. For every three feet he went up, he slipped back at least one. Every muscle of his body clamored its weariness and pain.

But the stuff of which heroes are made was in Slim Tyler, and at last he reached the coveted summit.

From there he could see for many miles in every direction. It was a scene of magnificent grandeur that met his eyes. As far as the eye could reach were ice-capped mountains, valleys and gorges, gleaming in the

morning sun.

But its sublimity made no appeal to Slim Tyler in his present state of mind. To him it was only a magnificent tomb, in which he might find his eternal rest, as perhaps his cherished comrades had already found it.

He strained his eyes for some sign of the *Hope*, But the region was a sealed book. There was nothing in it that he could read. If the mountains and gorges knew anything, they kept the secret.

Bitterly disappointed, Slim Tyler left his point of vantage. The cliffs on the other side of the mountain were almost perpendicular. He must return by the way he had come.

Reaching once more the plateau, Slim tied a handkerchief to a clump of bushes so that its fluttering might attract attention, in case one of his companions or a wandering trapper should come that way. To it he pinned a page of his notebook, on which he scribbled a few lines, telling of the disaster and urging that search should be made for him and his companions.

Then he set out on his journeyings. He had no plan of action. Under the circumstances he could have none. One path was as good as another. All he knew was that he must keep moving.

Otherwise he would freeze. In motion there was hope. It would engross his mind, keep him from going mad. And there was always the chance that he might stumble on some traces of Jerry and Dick.

Then, too, there was that camp that he thought he had discerned just before the fog closed in on the plane.

Was it really a camp? Or was it a mere figment of his imagination? And if it existed, in what direction did it lay?

He had not the least idea. It might be east, west, north, or south from where he was at present. Every step he took might be bringing him nearer to it or taking him farther from it. It was a pure gamble, in which he had one chance out of four.

He progressed but slowly. At times he had to make wide detours to get about the crevasses in the ice that criss-crossed the plateau in all directions. The utmost care was necessary, for the slightest misstep on the slippery ice might send him into the yawning mouth of an abyss.

Hours passed, and still Slim Tyler plodded on. He had eaten nothing since the noon before, and the fast of twenty-four hours had made him ravenously hungry.

He searched his pockets in the faint hope that he might find a bit of biscuit or of chocolate. But there was not a crumb. He plucked some leaves and twigs from withered shrubbery and chewed on them in the hope of alleviating the gnawing pangs. But they seemed only to aggravate his hunger.

At times he stood still and shouted, in the hope that his voice might carry to some human ears in that vast solitude. The mountains echoed back the shout, but no other voice replied.

Night fell and he perforce had to stop. He was growing dizzy and lightheaded. But he did not dare sleep. Even that solace of the miserable was denied him. He knew that, if he once closed his eyes in that freezing atmosphere, he would never open them again.

He had no matches, or he might have gathered withered shrubs enough to make a tiny fire. That at least would have brought some semblance of cheer.

All night long he tramped to and fro in a narrow space that he had selected because it was free from crevasses. When morning came he set out again on his quest.

He still kept shouting at intervals, though his voice was weaker now.

It was after one of those quavering calls that he stopped abruptly.

What was that? An answering call? No! He must be getting delirious. He had been fearing that. Now it had come!

But no—yes—there it was again! No mistake this time! A voice that was not his own and that had a familiar ring in it!

Slim Tyler summoned up his remaining strength and hurried around a near-by bend in the cliff. And there was Dick Mylert running to meet him!

Dick! Good old Dick! Not his ghost, but Dick in the flesh! Dick, whom he had feared he would never see again!

The two fairly hugged each other in the exuberance of their delight, babbling incoherently.

"And Jerry?" asked Slim, when they had somewhat recovered their composure.

A shadow came over Mylert's haggard face. He shook his head sadly.

"Don't know," he replied. "The shock came and the next thing I knew I knew nothing. I was just chucked out and found myself alone when I woke up. Ever since I've been looking around for you and him."

They exchanged experiences, which had been very much alike. They had rolled down different slopes and so had become separated.

"Not a scrap to eat," mourned Dick. "Gee, I'd like to come across those auks we killed!"

"Same here," echoed Slim. "But now, if we starve, we'll have the poor comfort of starving together."

"Poor is right," said the young reporter, with a grimace. "But let's hope it won't come to that."

They set out again on their apparently unending tramp. Two hours passed, and they were steadily growing weaker. Growing more hopeless, too, though each kept up a brave front.

"Don't know where we're going, but we're on the way," remarked Dick, with a game but feeble attempt at joking. "Geewhillikens! what's that?"

The "that" was a shot that rang out crisply in the icy air!

At the same moment a bird that had been flying overhead came whirling down to earth!

CHAPTER XXIII

A JOYOUS REUNION

A shot!

That meant that a human finger had touched the trigger. Men were at hand! Trappers, hunters—it mattered not who they were, they were men! The starving wanderers were no longer alone in this vast icy wilderness.

Slim Tyler and Dick Mylert looked at each other in wild rapture. Then they broke into as rapid a run as their weakened state permitted.

Staggering, but still running, they rounded an icy hummock and came into view of a camp.

Half a dozen figures were in sight, most of them busily engaged in various tasks.

Nearest to the newcomers was a man working at a plane. He looked up at the sound of running feet and jumped up with a startled exclamation when he saw the staggering figures coming toward him.

Slim Tyler's heart leaped as though it would leave his body.

The man was Dave Boyd!

"Dave! Dave!" shrieked Slim in wild delight, almost falling in his effort to reach him.

Dave Boyd rushed forward and caught the youth in his arms.

"By the great horn spoon!" yelled the older aviator in amazement, hardly able to believe his eyes. "Slim! Slim Tyler! How did you get here? Did you drop from the skies?"

"Just that," replied Slim, smiling weakly as Dave Boyd folded him in a bear's embrace. "Plane went flooey and I dropped. So did my friend here, Dick Mylert. Dick, this is Dave Boyd."

The men exchanged handclasps. By this time all the members of the camp had come running and surrounded the newcomers with expressions of wonder and welcome. There were Biff Donovan, for once genial and smiling, Sardine Brown, and the scientists, Franz, Burke, Lewis, Thompson and another upon whom Slim looked with keen interest, Cameron Flood.

Exclamations and questions tumbled over one another until Boyd intervened.

"Why, you're just a rack of bones, Slim!" he exclaimed.

"Not much wonder," put in Dick. "He hasn't had anything to eat for two days. Neither have I."

"What?" yelled Dave. "Lay off that questioning, you fellows. Not another word till we fill these boys up. Break out some of that canned soup, Biff. Sardine, get some coffee going. Starved, are you? You poor fellows! But we'll soon fix that."

He led Slim and Dick to a shack that the party had constructed and snuggled them under a pile of blankets. Then, when the soup and coffee were ready, he fed them with his own hands, taking care that they got no more than was good for them in their present weakened condition.

"Now get to sleep," he ordered them. "No, not a word," he commanded, as Slim was about to speak. "I'm burning up with curiosity as to how and why you're here, but you get your sleep first."

"But I must speak," persisted Slim. "It's Jerry——"

"What about Jerry?" asked Dave Boyd quickly.

"He was with us," replied Slim. "He was guiding the plane when it crashed. He may be wandering around as we were. I don't know."

Dave Boyd's face paled. He was very fond of Jerry Marbury, who had accompanied him on many of his flights.

"Jerry!" he exclaimed. "Poor lad! We'll start a hunt for him at once, every man jack of us. And we won't let up till we find him alive—or find him dead. Trust us now and go to sleep."

Slim and Dick could not have disobeyed, if they had tried. Through the rest of the afternoon and all that night they were wrapped in the sleep of utter exhaustion.

Their youth and vitality stood them in good stead, and the next morning they woke up enormously refreshed and almost their usual selves.

A glance at Dave Boyd's grave face told Slim without asking that the quest for Jerry Marbury had been in vain.

"No," said Dave. "We went in different directions, looking for him and firing off guns at intervals to guide him to where we were. At night we shot off Very pistols and sent up rockets in hope that he'd see the lights. With no success so far. We'll go out again to-day as soon as we've had breakfast."

Slim sighed, but made no comment.

"Now," said Dave, as they sat down at the rude table a little later, "tell us what we all want to hear, Slim. What brought you to Greenland?"

"You," replied Slim simply.

"What?"

"You," repeated Slim. "We got worried when your messages ceased. We got more worried when the report came that trappers had seen a plane in trouble forced down in the mountains. So we raised funds, got a plane, and started out to look for you."

"We," said Dave dazedly. "Whom do you mean by 'we'?"

"Jerry and I," replied Slim. "Dick came along to get stuff for his newspaper."

Dave Boyd was not an emotional man, but tears started to his eyes.

"Let me get this straight," he said huskily. "You mean that you and Jerry of your own volition got up this expedition and risked your lives just to rescue me, if you should find me in trouble?"

"Why not?" replied Slim. "You're the best friend I have in the world."

Dave Boyd thrust his big hand across the table.

"Shake, Slim! Shake!" he said, as he grasped the lad's hand. "You're there, Slim! You're all there!"

A murmur of assent rose from all at the table, as, with eyes full of admiration, they looked at Slim Tyler.

"You were right in thinking we were in trouble," resumed Dave Boyd, when he had released Slim's hand. "It's a wonder that we're not all dead. We got caught in a frightful blizzard that forced us down. By sheer luck we were able to make a landing——"

"Luck, nothing!" interrupted Biff Donovan from the other end of the table. "It was because you were handling the controls. No other aviator in the world could have made that landing."

"Nonsense!" disclaimed Boyd. "You could have done it just as well. As it was, we escaped with our lives. But the radio was smashed and the plane pretty badly cracked up. Biff and Sardine and I have been pretty busy since patching it up. Our scientists here haven't done so badly. They've got all kinds of information about the meteorology of Greenland, the precipitation, the mountain ranges, and goodness knows what else."

"You're right in that," put in Cameron Flood, and the other scientists nodded their heads. "It's been a fruitful opportunity, far surpassing our expectations."

Slim Tyler studied the speaker closely. What he saw pleased him.

Cameron Flood was a tall, handsome young man of perhaps twenty-eight, frank and open in expression, with a humorous glint in his eyes. He had a straight, strong nose and a jaw that bespoke determination. Slim judged that he would be a valuable ally in the tracking down of Nat Shaley.

"Now," said Boyd, as he shoved back his chair, "we're off to look for Jerry. Everything around here has got to stop until we find him. We'll divide into parties and keep in touch with each other by frequent rifle

shots. Flood, suppose you go with Slim and Dick. You know this district well by this time."

Armed with rifles, the groups scattered in different directions.

Slim Tyler and his companions had been traveling about an hour when Slim grabbed an arm each of Dick and Flood and yanked his astonished comrades down behind an ice hummock.

"What's up?" demanded Dick, struggling to rise.

"S-sh!" warned Slim. "Look!"

Dick and Flood peered cautiously around the corner of the hummock.

A huge polar bear was lumbering toward them!

CHAPTER XXIV

AT GRIPS WITH A MONSTER

That the bear had not discovered the presence of the searching party was evidenced by the leisurely and unperturbed way in which he came swinging along.

But their immunity could not last. The creature was coming directly toward the hummock behind which they lay concealed. A minute more, and he would have reached it. Then discovery would be inevitable.

"Looks like a fight," remarked Cameron Flood coolly, as he gripped his rifle tightly.

"That's what," assented Slim Tyler. "And it's always a good plan in a fight to get in the first blow. Let's give him a volley."

"Whenever you say the word," agreed Dick Mylert.

The bear stopped abruptly. Its air of serenity vanished. It had caught the scent of man. It growled savagely, rose on its hind legs and sniffed the air, looking about for its enemies.

"A sockdolager!" breathed Dick. "Eight feet tall, standing up, if it's an inch!"

"Ready, fellows?" whispered Slim.

His companions nodded.

"Now!" shouted Slim.

They sprang to their feet and fired.

Standing up as it was, the bear offered a good target, and all the bullets struck. With a frightful roar of rage and pain the animal staggered and toppled over.

The shouts of triumph that rose from the throats of the marksmen died in their birth. None of the bullets had struck a vital spot and the monster scrambled to its feet and rushed at its enemies with a speed surprising in so large a creature.

The bear was no more than twenty feet away and coming toward them like an express train.

They fired again, but failed to stop the charging beast.

"Scatter!" yelled Slim, "and plug him when you get a chance."

They fled like the wind in different directions.

The melting away of the group disconcerted the polar bear for an instant, but for an instant only. The next moment it singled out Slim Tyler and made for him.

If Slim's long legs had ever stood him in good stead, it was then. He ran as if his feet had wings, spurred on by the certainty that death was pursuing him.

Had he been on bare ground, he might have twisted and doubled and possibly escaped, though in the long run the superior endurance of the bear would probably have told.

But he was handicapped because he was running on ice. Again and again he slipped and almost fell, and the struggle to regain his footing checked his speed. The bear's paws were made for ice, and the creature was at no disadvantage on that account. Slowly but surely the bear was gaining on the fugitive.

Shots rang out, and Slim Tyler knew that his comrades were doing all they could to stop his pursuer.

Then his blood froze with horror, for he saw before him a yawning crevasse in the ice field! It was fully twenty feet across. He could not leap it. He was trapped! Before him the abyss! Behind him the bear!

Slim Tyler whirled about like lightning. The bear reared itself up to grasp him with a hideous growl of triumph.

Flinging his rifle to his shoulder, Slim fired.

The bullet entered the monster's eye and penetrated to the brain.

Slim dodged as the huge body came tumbling down and narrowly escaped the dreadful claws.

The great bulk slid to the edge of the crevasse and went whirling over and over to the bottom, hundreds of feet below.

The young aviator sat down suddenly, gasping for breath, utterly exhausted, scarcely daring to believe in his narrow escape from an awful death.

Dick and Flood came running up to him.

"Are you hurt?" asked Dick anxiously.

"No," panted Slim, "but—all—in."

"No wonder!" exclaimed Flood. "You'll never be nearer death than you were a minute ago and live to tell about it. My heart was in my mouth. I thought it was all over with you."

"It was a case of touch and go," admitted Slim, as he rose to his feet. "Merest luck that shot got to the brain. I didn't aim for the eye. Just let fly at the head, hoping it would get him somewhere."

"Pity we lost the hide," remarked Dick. "It would have made a splendid rug for your room when you got back."

"I don't want it," replied Slim. "It would have given me the willies every time I looked at it. Let's be getting on."

"And let's keep a sharp lookout for the mate of that fellow," cautioned Flood. "They usually travel in pairs."

The precaution proved needless, as no other bear appeared.

All the morning and well into the afternoon they searched plateaus and valleys and mountain slopes, shouting at intervals and firing their rifles, without eliciting a response or finding a trace of the missing one. With every hour that passed their hearts grew heavier.

They had paused to rest at the edge of a long slope that extended far down into a valley.

There came a cracking sound and a yell from Slim.

"Jump back, fellows!" he shouted. "Jump back!"

Too late!

A huge segment of the ice on which they were standing gave way. The next moment they went whirling down the steep slope in a wild medley of waving arms and legs!

CHAPTER XXV

DOWN THE SLOPE

Sliding, rolling, tumbling, their senses as well as their bodies in a whirl, the three adventurers kept on in their headlong flight down the slippery slope, reaching out wildly in the hope of grasping something that would check their dizzy speed but clutching nothing but empty air.

As far as they could think of anything in the tumult of their minds, they feared what would be at the end of that long slide.

It might be a precipice over which they would be hurled to instant death. Or they might bring up against an ice hummock or some other obstruction with a force that would break every bone in their bodies.

As they neared the bottom, however, the slide lost its steepness and gradually merged into a gently rolling slope. This served to moderate their speed, so that they had almost stopped rolling when they brought up against some object that halted their flight.

They were dazed and breathless, and for some moments lay motionless in a heap, their predominant feeling one of intense thankfulness that they were still alive. Then they began slowly to untangle themselves and assume a sitting position.

"I—I don't know whether I've got my own legs or somebody else's," gasped Dick, as he extricated those useful members from those of his companions.

"We are pretty well scrambled," admitted Slim, "and that goes for brains as well as legs. My head is spinning like a top. Either of you fellows hurt?"

"Feel as though I'd been drawn through a cement mixer," vouchsafed Flood. "Think I'll take my meals standing up for a while. But none of my bones seem out of whack."

"No more such coasting parties for me!" declared Dick. "That is, if I'm consulted about it beforehand. Gee, what a dizzy whirl!"

"What is it we brought up against at the end, anyway?" asked Flood.

"Don't know," replied Slim, groping behind him, for at that great depth it was almost impossible to see anything. "Feels like——"

He broke off suddenly and sprang to his feet with a yell.

"It's a plane!" he shouted. "It's the *Hope!* Do you hear me, fellows? It's the *Hope!*"

"What?" cried Dick. "You're dreaming!"

"It is, I tell you!" reiterated Slim, almost crazy with excitement and delight. "Feel it! Go over it! Give me your flashlight, Flood."

The young scientist handed it over, and Slim Tyler shot its rays over the object.

The *Hope!* It stood revealed from nose to tail, broken here, bent there, a propeller twisted, the undercarriage awry, but by no means an utter wreck, as Slim Tyler's eye noted at once. If it hadn't been so big, Slim would have hugged it.

There was the *Hope*. But where was Jerry Marbury?

With dread in his heart, Slim Tyler moved slowly toward the cockpit. He was afraid to flash the light into it. What might that light reveal?

But he had to know. With a desperate lunge, he flung the rays into the cockpit, swept the fuselage and the cabin.

His heart leaped. What he had feared to see was not there!

"He wasn't killed when the plane cracked up," exulted Slim, "or his body would be here."

"That's something to be thankful for," replied Dick. "Still, it doesn't really prove anything. He may have been thrown out as the plane came down."

A shout from a little distance made the three adventurers jump.

"Hello! Hello there!" came in a familiar voice that set Slim's and Dick's hearts to beating wildly.

"It's Jerry! Jerry!" cried Slim.

He started running in the direction of the shout, flashing the light ahead of him, his companions close on his heels.

Into the light came Jerry, good old Jerry, hobbling as fast toward them as a bandaged foot would let him!

Slim and Dick swept him into their arms, pounding him, embracing him, mauling him, fairly delirious with relief and rapture.

"Alive! Alive!" cried Slim. "Jerry, old boy, I wouldn't exchange this minute for a million dollars!"

"You'd get stung, then," grinned Jerry, though his eyes were moist from the warmth of the welcome. "I'm not worth that much, living or dead. But I feel the same way about you fellows. When you were thrown out of the plane I was afraid I'd never see you again."

"You stuck to the old ship, though," said Dick, "like the brick you are."

"No credit to me," disclaimed Jerry. "My straps held me in my seat. As soon as I got over the shock, I tried to handle the old bus so that she'd stay aloft. It was no go, though, and she came down at last where you see her. Came down more slowly than I thought she would, and yet hard enough to put one of my legs out of commission."

"It isn't broken, is it?" asked Slim quickly.

"Not as bad as that," was the reply. "But the knee was twisted and the ankle sprained so that this is the first day I've been able to stand on it. Otherwise, you can bet your life, I'd have been out hunting for you. But how did you fellows ever get down to the bottom of this gorge?"

"Tumbled down, and brought up plunk against the plane," laughed Slim. "And we've found Dave Boyd, Jerry."

"Glory be!" cried Jerry. "Is he all right?"

"Perfectly," replied Slim. "So are the rest of his party. Forced down, but nobody hurt. They're patching up the plane now." Then Slim introduced Cameron Flood.

"This sure is my lucky day!" ejaculated Jerry.

"There's one thing in which you were luckier than we were when we were chucked out," put in Dick. "You've had plenty of grub."

"Yes," grinned Jerry. "What's more, I sure have made a hole in it."

"Well, now to get out of here and back to our camp," suggested Flood. "The others will be worried if we don't turn up."

"More easily said than done," said Dick, looking ruefully up the slope down which they had rolled. "We can't go back the way we came, especially Jerry with his crippled leg," and he pointed to the top, where the segment that had broken away had left an overhanging cliff.

"Sure enough," muttered Slim. "That makes it bad."

"I was just coming back from a little scouting expedition when you fellows met me," put in Jerry eagerly. "I found something that seemed to lead out into the open—a sort of a narrow ice bridge it looked like from a little distance. Maybe we could turn the trick with that."

"We'll try anything once," decided Slim Tyler. "Let's get moving. Suppose you fellows," addressing Dick and Flood, "give Jerry an arm each and I'll handle the flashlight."

Following Jerry's directions and moving slowly because of the latter's injured leg, they came before long in sight of the bridge of ice.

It was a natural formation stretching for perhaps two hundred feet over a deep gorge and seemed at the farther end to emerge into open country.

In places it was thick; in others it had been hollowed out beneath by thaws so that its thickness could be measured only by inches. In no place was it wide enough for two to go abreast.

Dick Mylert eyed it dubiously as Slim flashed the light upon it.

"Easiest place in the world to fall from," he commented. "And if one should fall—" He glanced at the yawning gulf below.

"Mighty risky," agreed Slim. "But I'm ready to chance it if the rest of you are."

There was no dissent, and Slim Tyler led the way with his flashlight.

"Come close behind me, Jerry, and hang on to my shoulder," Slim directed. "I'll go slowly."

With the utmost precaution they set their feet on the slippery surface, not lifting one foot till the other was firmly planted. They had to proceed at a snail's pace. The slightest misstep would prove fatal. It was a nightmarish journey.

The voyagers' apprehensions were not lessened by the ominous cracking that made itself heard when they trod on the thinner places of the structure.

More sinister still in threat was the rumbling that grew ever louder from the ice cliffs on either side. This presently assumed tangible form when splinters of ice began to fall.

They were soon more than splinters, large pieces detached from the cliffs falling about the adventurers and at times narrowly missing them.

Every impulse urged hurry. But to hurry might itself mean death.

"Steady, boys, steady!" gritted Slim Tyler between his teeth.

At last, after what seemed ages, Slim reached the plateau on the other side. He gripped Jerry's arm and yanked him to safety.

A hideous rending roar sounded from above.

"Quick, fellows, quick!" yelled Slim.

Dick jumped to the plateau. Flood, who was last, gathered himself for a spring.

A tremendous mass of ice and rock came down from above.

The ice bridge broke!

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BRINK OF THE ABYSS

A huge piece of the cliff had struck the bridge and the structure, never too strong at the best, collapsed under the blow.

As Cameron Flood felt the bridge give way under him, he made a desperate spring for the plateau.

The distance was too great. He struck the side of the plateau with his chest, his outstretched hands clutching some withered grasses growing near the edge on the surface above, to which he clung with the tenacity of despair. There he hung, swinging to and fro over the fearful chasm hundreds of feet in depth.

It had been said of Slim Tyler that his thinking processes could run rings around lightning. A fond exaggeration of his friends! But he proved his quickness now.

In a flash he had seen that Cameron Flood could not clear the space from the sinking bridge to the plateau. Simultaneously with Flood's spring, Slim had thrown himself flat on the ground.

"Sit on my legs," he roared to Dick and Jerry.

The grasses that Flood had clutched gave way almost immediately beneath his weight. But before they had completely yielded, Slim Tyler's hands had closed on Flood's wrists with a grip of steel.

"I've got you!" he cried. "Don't struggle. I'll pull you up."

Flood obeyed, and inch by inch Slim Tyler hauled him up.

It was a terrific task, for Flood had had the breath knocked out of him by his impact against the side of the plateau and was a dead weight.

Slim felt as though his arms were being wrenched from their sockets. If it had not been for the weight of Dick and Jerry on his legs, he would have been pulled over the edge, and he and Flood would have gone down to the depths together.

Strainingly, Slim Tyler drew his burden up until Flood could rest his elbows on the edge of the plateau. That helped. Then another heart-breaking pull until Flood could throw one leg over. One final tug and Slim had drawn him to safety.

The young aviator rolled over on his back, panting, gasping, utterly exhausted from the terrible mental and physical strain. The fervent thanks of Flood, the admiring exclamations of Dick and Jerry, seemed to come to him from far away. It seemed as though he could never get breath enough into his laboring lungs. Fully five minutes elapsed before he could speak. Then he sat up and smiled faintly.

"Guess we'd better be getting on," he said.

"Just like that!" exclaimed Dick. "Just done the quickest, nerviest, pluckiest thing I ever saw, and thinks no more of it than just to remark that he thinks 'we'd better be getting on.' You just can't make a hero of that boy. He won't let you. Put him on a pedestal and he kicks the pedestal over and comes down."

"Oh, shucks!" deprecated Slim. "The chance just came to me and I took it. Nothing to write home about."

"He's hopeless," pronounced Jerry, shaking his head.

"You saved my life, Slim," said Cameron Flood earnestly, "and I'll never forget it. It was a wonderful exhibition of coolness, courage and swift action. I shall be your debtor as long as I live."

"I'm mighty glad I had the chance," replied Slim. "How are you feeling now? All right?"

"Rather battered, but still in the ring," replied Flood, as he rose with the rest to continue their journey.

"I think," said Slim, "it would be a good idea to fire the three shots in succession that we agreed upon in case Jerry were found."

The suggestion was followed, and as sound carried far in that silent region, it was not long before answering shots told that the rest of the searchers were hurrying in their direction.

Dave Boyd with his group was the first to reach them, and it was with a wild cry of delight that Dave recognized Jerry and rushed forward to fold him in his arms.

"Thank heaven!" he cried. "Jerry, my boy, I'd almost given you up. Those three shots were the sweetest music I ever heard. Now we've got all the old bunch together again. This Greenland trip would have been utterly spoiled for me if anything had happened to any one of you."

"Two more might have been missing from the list every easily," remarked Dick. "A polar bear nearly nabbed Slim and Mr. Flood came within an ace of falling into a gorge. But luck was with us."

"I should say that Slim Tyler was with us," amended Flood. "He shot the bear through the brain, making an almost impossible shot, and he saved me from dropping into the chasm. Apart from that, he didn't do anything much."

"Trust that lad to be always on the job," observed Dave Boyd. "It was a lucky day when I met him. But let's get along to the camp before it grows too dark to see."

It was a jubilant party that gathered about the supper table that night and went over the events of the day. A fearful weight had been lifted from the minds of all. What was painful in the past had been wiped out. The present was serene. The future could take care of itself.

No opportunity had yet been afforded Slim to speak to Cameron Flood about the lumber deal in which the father of each had been concerned. In the anxiety about Jerry Marbury, that had been shoved to the back of Slim's mind. But after supper, as he was sitting next to Flood before a roaring fire that had been built outdoors, the young aviator broached the subject.

"Mr. Flood," he said, "have you ever heard of Nat Shaley?"

Flood started.

CHAPTER XXVII

SPEEDING HOMEWARD

"Nat Shaley?" exclaimed Cameron Flood in answer to Slim Tyler's question. "You bet I've heard of him, worse luck! What on earth brought that old rascal to your mind?"

"Rascal is right," agreed Slim. "I see you have him sized up. I've had him in my mind for a long time. I think he swindled my father out of twenty thousand dollars."

"Shake!" said Flood extending his hand. "Our fathers were brothers in misfortune. I have reason to think that he swindled my dad to the tune of forty thousand."

"Have you any definite proof of that?" asked Slim eagerly.

"None too definite, I'm afraid," replied Flood meditatively. "A virtual certainty, but perhaps not a legal one. There seem to be some links missing in the proof. So, at any rate, our family lawyer seems to think."

"Yes, I got a letter from him," declared Slim.

"You did?" asked Flood curiously. "What prompted you to get in touch with him?"

"This," replied Slim, taking the thumbed, greasy notebook of High Hat Frank from his pocket.

He told Flood of the way in which the notebook had come into his possession, and the two went over it with the keenest interest.

"That broken word 'Tyl'," said Slim, putting his finger on it. "I'm sure that it refers to my father."

"I know it does," asseverated Flood emphatically. "I can remember my father speaking of a Mr. Tyler who was at one time associated with him in business. What was your father's first name?"

"Stillwell," replied Slim.

"That's it!" cried Flood. "I remember thinking of it at the time as an unusual name. What a queer coincidence it is that has thrown us together!"

"It is, for a fact," agreed Slim. "Doesn't it mean, perhaps, that we're to be partners in tracking down Nat Shaley?"

"Certainly looks like it," assented Flood. "And I'm with you in that till the cows come home. But it will be no easy task. That old fox has probably covered his trail pretty well. But there's a weak point somewhere in every villain's plans, and you and I will do our best to find it. Gee, I'd like to put the screws on the old scoundrel!"

"Same here," declared Slim. "Not only has he cheated my father, but he's done me dirt in every way he could. Robbed me of my wages, had me arrested on a false charge, lied to me, tried to bribe me. I have a heavy score to settle with him."

"I'll stir up my lawyer as soon as I get back," promised Flood, "and see if we can't get action. Don't worry about the funds. I'm fairly well fixed financially, and all the money we need will be forthcoming. Sooner or later we'll bring Nat Shaley to book and make him pay back every dollar he stole."

"That will suit me right down to the ground," said Slim. "Here's hoping!"

The next morning, Dave Boyd, accompanied by Slim Tyler and Biff Donovan, went over to the valley where the *Hope* had come down. It took hours of searching before they found access to it through a pass in the mountains.

"Not so bad," pronounced Dave, after the three had made a careful examination of the plane. "We have spare parts enough, and she can be put in prime condition without too much trouble."

"But she can never rise from here," remarked Biff. "No runway for a take-off."

"I was coming to that," said Dave. "We'll have to disassemble her, carry the parts out piece by piece, take them to our camp, and put them together again. It'll be a whale of a job, especially with the motors, but a block and tackle will work wonders."

It took nearly a week of hard work before the parts were all transferred to the scientists' camp, and nearly two weeks more, with their lack of machine shop facilities, before the plane could be put in condition to fly. But with Slim and Jerry it was a labor of love, and the other aviators joined in whole-heartedly, until at last the *Hope*, as good as ever, stood ready for the homeward flight.

In the meantime the scientists had fully achieved the objects of their expedition. They had accomplished more than they had dared hope and were in high feather over the results.

The *Flying Cloud* also had been fully repaired, with the exception of the radio sets, of which all the tubes had been smashed, including those designed for replacements.

This had been a source of keen regret to Dave Boyd, and to the others as well, especially to those who had families. No messages could be sent, and the outside world was wholly in ignorance as to the fate that had befallen the party. For all that the world knew, the voyagers of both the *Flying Cloud* and the *Hope* had perished.

One person in the party, however, had no regrets at the radio failure. Dick Mylert, in his own words, was "riding high and sitting pretty."

"Peaches and cream for me!" jubilated the young newspaper man, the instinct of his profession uppermost. "Exclusive story by an eye-witness of the great Greenland Expedition! Thrilling details! I'll write the whole thing up on the way home and be ready to put it hot on the wire the moment we land. The other papers will be crazy. And maybe my boss won't be tickled pink! I'll be the cream in his coffee. Big jump in salary! Bonus! Promotion! Blessings on that smashed radio!"

"Go to it, old scout," laughed Slim Tyler. "You've surely earned it."

A slight change was made in the grouping of the voyagers on the return flight, Cameron Flood going in the *Hope* with Slim and Jerry, while Dick Mylert was transferred to the *Flying Cloud*.

Boyd was the first to take off, and a few minutes later Slim Tyler lifted the *Hope* into the air.

"Good-by, Greenland!" waved Jerry.

"And Hail, Columbia!" added Flood, as the plane straightened out for home.

CHAPTER XXVIII

NAT SHALEY GETS A JOLT

The start of the homeward flight was auspicious. Fate, that had been so harsh to the voyagers on their outward trip, made amends by the fair winds and favorable weather that accompanied them on their flight over Davis Straits to the mainland of the American Continent.

The voyagers had planned to make their first stop at Montreal for two reasons. One was to replenish their stock of gasoline, which was running low in each plane and would not suffice for the entire trip.

Another was to drop off Dick Mylert so that that enterprising young man could rush to the telegraph office and send his great exclusive news story over the wires to his New York paper before the rest of the world should have any inkling that the intrepid Greenland adventurers were safe and sound and on their way home.

For the greater part of the flight over the Canadian wilds the planes kept each other in sight. Twice they were separated, once in a fog and again in a storm of moderate violence, but they managed to rejoin each other and came down to refuel at Montreal only a few minutes apart.

"Not a word now to anybody," implored the young newspaper man, as he bade his companions a cordial farewell before hastening to the telegraph station.

"We'll be as dumb as oysters," promised Dave Boyd, and the rest nodded assent. "Wouldn't spoil your story for anything. If it isn't going to take you too long, we'll wait here for you."

"Thanks just the same," replied Dick. "But there's no knowing how long it will be before I can get a clear wire for a story of this length, and you'd better go along. I'll take a train for New York as soon as I get through."

"Run up to North Elmwood as soon as you get a chance," urged Slim.

"If you don't, we'll come down and kidnap you," added Jerry.

"You bet I'll come!" promised Dick. "And out of that jump in salary I'm going to get I'll blow you to the best dinner that your hotel there can furnish."

"Or better yet, we'll clean out Carl Stummel's hot dog stand," laughed Slim.

"That wouldn't be so bad either," replied Dick, chuckling. "The memory of his hot dogs lingers."

The newspaper man hurried off with a wave of his hand, and Slim Tyler and Jerry Marbury looked after him with keen regret at losing him. He had been a staunch, courageous comrade, always bright, always jolly, a "regular fellow" in the fullest sense of the word.

The party had to parry many questions from the mechanics and pilots on the field while the planes were being refueled, but they avoided revealing their identity, and when they rose again into the air for the final lap home Dick Mylert's secret was still his own.

"In Uncle Sam's country once more!" exclaimed Slim a little while later, as the *Hope* swept over the Canadian border.

"It sure looks good to me!" ejaculated Jerry. "There have been times on this trip when I wouldn't have given a plugged nickel for my chance of ever seeing it again."

It was with a thrill of exultation impossible to describe that, at about noon on the next day, they found themselves hovering over the old familiar field of North Elmwood.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jerry in amazement. "Here we thought we'd take them by surprise, and the field is black with people."

"So it is," replied Slim. "Dick got his story through all right, and after his paper got the first hack at it I suppose the news was flashed all over America."

As indeed it had. The big New York newspaper had electrified the world by its great first-page story with screaming headlines about the finding of the Greenland adventurers, and instantly the press associations had sent the news to every town and hamlet of America and to the capitals of Europe.

Long before, the voyagers had been given up for lost and now it was like a return from the dead. It was the sensation of the day, and from every part of the country reporters in shoals and the populace by thousands were hurrying to North Elmwood.

So it was a tremendous reception that was accorded the daring explorers when the planes descended like weary birds to the home field. The voyagers were fairly mobbed by the crowds, whose enthusiasm could not be held in check.

There was glory enough for all, but Dave Boyd and Slim Tyler were the special heroes of that great homecoming, Boyd because of the admiration in which he was held as the greatest aviator in the world and Slim Tyler because of his intrepid daring in leading the mission of rescue.

But better than all the applause and admiration showered on Slim was the meeting with his old friends. They were all there, rotund Henry Cusack, his face beaming like a full moon; Tom Ellsworth, who nearly wrung his hand off; Henry Traut, with his little boy whose life Slim had saved, well and rosy now, who squealed with delight as Slim took him up in his arms; and Carl Stummel, good old Carl, who fairly blubbered as he threw his arms about Slim.

"Und it vos deadt dot I beleefed you vos, alretty!" he exclaimed. "Und here you iss alife yet!"

"You couldn't kill me with an axe," declared Slim. "I'm——"

He broke off suddenly, for he saw a familiar figure edging away through the crowd.

"Just a minute, Carl," he excused himself. He turned to Cameron Flood, who had been standing by, smiling. "Come with me a minute, Cam." He had long dropped the more formal "Mr. Flood." "You'll meet a mutual friend of ours."

The two slipped away in the wake of the retreating figure.

"It's Nat Shaley," Slim explained, as they hurried along. "I want to give him a shock by introducing you. He may let slip something that will help us."

They overtook Shaley just after he had turned into a side street, passed him and turned about, blocking his path.

The old rascal started violently as he recognized Slim Tyler.

"How are you, Mr. Shaley?" said Slim. "I'm back again, you see."

"What's that to me?" snarled Shaley. "I wouldn't have keerd if you'd never come back."

"I don't doubt it," replied Slim. "You might have been saved a lawsuit later on. Speaking of lawsuits, I want to introduce you to a friend of mine."

"I don't want no truck with you nor your friends," growled Shaley.

"I'm surprised," returned Slim. "Don't you want to meet Mr. Cameron Flood?"

The name struck Nat Shaley like a blow. He turned pale and looked with fear in his eyes at the stranger.

"You seem to know the name," said Flood. "Yes, I'm the son of Cameron Flood, who was associated with you at one time in the Mt. Sunwa lumber deal."

Nat Shaley staggered. He licked his lips, tried to speak.

"Never heerd of him," he managed to get out at last. "Never heerd of that outlandish Mount somethin' or other you're gabbin' about. Never wuz in Oregon——"

"Who said anything about Oregon?" asked Flood quickly.

Shaley could have bitten his tongue off for the slip. He took refuge in bluster.

"If you fellers is tryin' any blackmailin' on me, you'd better look out," he fumed. "There's laws ag'inst that kind o' thing an' don't you fergit it."

"There are laws against many things," agreed Flood. "One of those things is swindling. My father had a claim against you for forty thousand dollars. Mr. Tyler had another for twenty thousand. That's sixty thousand in all, and the interest to date will be almost as much more. Those claims are going to be pressed, Mr. Shaley—do you get that? pressed—and you'll pay every cent!"

"You ain't got proof," Shaley was beginning, when a throng of departing spectators from the field came round the corner and Shaley, thankful for the opportunity, lost himself in the swirl.

"Gave him a jolt, anyway," remarked Slim.

"He'll get more of a jolt before we're through with him," averred Flood, setting his jaw hard. "We'll press this thing to the limit, and I'm pretty sure that we're going to win."

That night for the first time in many weeks Slim Tyler slept between sheets. It had been a crowded day, full of glory and triumph, and he was still tingling with the excitement of it as he slipped into bed.

"That was the top notch," he murmured to himself. "Afraid things are going to be rather dull after this."

But he was mistaken. Other thrilling experiences were in store for him, and what they were will be told in another volume, entitled: "An Air Cargo of Gold; or, Slim Tyler, Special Bank Messenger," in which we shall meet Slim in some of the most daring adventures of his life.

A breezy night letter from Dick Mylert reached Slim the next morning.

"Did you read my story? Wasn't it a knockout? And, say, didn't it hit the boss hard! He all but gave me the business. I'm the salt in his gravy. Doubled my salary! Five thousand bonus! Biggest scoop in years! And he thinks you're the ace of all aviators. Told him how your endurance flight was knocked cock-eyed by that Shaley fellow. He's going to offer a big prize for beating the present refueling endurance record. There's your chance and Jerry's. Go in and win."

There was more of the same tenor, but Slim's special interest was caught and held by the publisher's offer. What he and Jerry did regarding that offer is another story.

"Vell, Shlim," said Carl that night, as the two were hobnobbing over the hot dog counter, "ain't id about time dot you vos down settling? Vot mit der wolfs und der bolar pears, und der shtorms in der skies und der smashin' der mountains against, ain'd it dot you haf enough ockcitement got alretty?"

"I'll never have enough excitement," replied Slim. "Excitement is life. I can't do without it. I thrive on it. I eat it up."

"Veil, eat id on der groundt den, vere you can put your feets down," urged Carl. "Gif up dot flying."

"Give up flying?" cried Slim Tyler, his eyes shining. "Never, Carl! Never! The air is my home!"

THE END