

AL OF THE WILD by Jack London Chapter I. Into the Primitive "Old longings nomadic leap. Chafing at custom's chain; Again from its brumal sleep Wakens the ferine strain." Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was brewing, not alone for himself, but for every tide-water dog, strong of muscle and with warm, long hair, from Puget Sound to San Diego. Because man, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland. These men wanted dogs, and the dogs they wanted were strong muscles by which to toil, and furry coats to protect them from the frost. Buck lived at a big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. Judge Miller's place, it was called. It stood back from the road, half hidden among the trees, through which glimpses could be caught of the wide cool veranda that ran around its four sides. The house was approached by gravelled driveways which wound about through wide-spreading lawns and under the interlacing boughs of tall poplars. At the rear things were on even a more spacious scale than at the front. There were great stables, where a dozen grooms and boys held forth, rows of vine-clad servants' cottages, an endless and orderly array of outhouses, long grape arbors, green pastures, orchards, and berry patches. Then there was the pumping plant for the artesian well, and the big cement tank where Judge Miller's boys took their morning plunge and kept cool in the hot afternoon. And over this great demesne Buck ruled. Here he was born, and here he had lived the four years of his life. It was true, there were other dogs. There could not but be other dogs on so vast a place, but they did not count. They came and went, resided in the populous kennels, or lived obscurely in the recesses of the house after the fashion of Toots, the Japanese pug, or Ysabel, the Mexican hairless,—strange creatures that rarely put nose out of doors or set foot to ground. On the other hand, there were the fox terriers, a score of them at least, who yelped fearful promises at Toots and Ysabel looking out of the windows at them and d protected by a legion of housemaids armed with brooms and mops. But Buck was neither house-dog nor kennel-dog. The whole realm was his. He plunged into the swimming tank or went hunting with the Judge's sons; he escorted Mollie and Alice, the Judge's daughters, on long twilight or early morning rambles; on wintry nights he lay at the Judge's feet before the roaring library fire; he carried the Judge's grandsons on his back, or rolled them in the grass, and guarded their footsteps through wild adventures down to the fountain in the stable yard, and even beyond, where the paddocks were, and the berry patches. Among the terriers he stalked imperiously, and Toots and Ysabel he utterly ignored, for he was king,—king over all creeping g, crawling, flying things of Judge Miller's place, humans included. His father, Elmo, a huge St. Bernard, had been the Judge's inseparable companion, and Buck bid fair to follow in the way of his father. He was not so large,—he weighed only one hundred and forty pounds,—for his mother, Shep, had been a Scotch shepherd dog. Nevertheless, one hundred and forty pounds, to which was added the dignity that comes of good living and universal respect, enabled him to carry himself in right royal fashion. During the four years since his puppyhood he had lived the life of a sated aristocrat; he had a fine pride in himself, was even a trifle egotistical, as country gentlemen sometimes become because of their insular situation. But he had saved him self by not becoming a mere pampered house-dog. Hunting and kindred outdoor delights had kept down the fat and hardened his muscles; and to him, as to the cold-tubbing races, the love of water had been a tonic and a health preserver. And this was the manner of dog Buck was in the fall of 1897, when the Klondike strike dragged men from all the world into the frozen N tary man, no one saw them arrive at the little flag station known as College Park. This man talked with Manuel, and money chinked between them. "You might wrap up the goods before you deliver 'em," the stranger said gruffly, and Manuel doubled a piece of stout rope around Buck's neck under the collar. "Twist it, an' you'll choke 'm plentee," said Manuel, and the stranger eglured a ready affirmative. Buck had accepted the rope with quiet dignity. To be sure, it was an unwanted performance: but he had learned to trust in men he knew, and to give them credit for a wisdom that outreached his own. But when the ends of the rope were placed in the stranger's hands, he growled menacingly. He had merely intimated his displeasure, in his pride b eieving that to intimate was to command. But to his surprise the rope tightened around his neck, shutting off his breath. In quick rage he sprang at the man, who met him halfway, grappled him close by the throat, and with a deft twist threw him over on his back. Then the rope tightened mercilessly, while Buck struggled in a fury, his tongue lolling out of his mouth and his g great chest panting futilely. Never in all his life had he been so vilely treated, and never in all his life had he been so angry. But his strength ebbed, his eyes glazed, and he knew nothing when the train was flagged and the two men threw him into the baggage car. The next he knew, he was dimly aware that his tongue was hurting and that he was being jolted along in some ki d did they relax till his senses were choked out of him once more. "Yep, has fits," the man said, hiding his mangled hand from the baggage-groom, who had been attracted by the sounds of struggle. "I'm takin' 'm up for the boss to 'Frisco. A crack dog-doctor there thinks that he can cure 'm." Concerning that night's ride, the man spoke most eloquently for himself, in a little she d back of a saloon on the San Francisco water front. "All I get is fifty for it," he grumbled; "an' I wouldn't do it over for a thousand, cold cash." His hand was wrapped in a bloody handkerchief, and the right trouser leg was ripped from knee to ankle. "How much did the other mug get?" the saloon-keeper demanded. "A hundred," was the reply. "Wouldn't take a sou less, so hel p me." "That makes a hundred and fifty," the saloon-keeper calculated; "and he's worth it, or I'm a squarehead." The kidnapper undid the bloody wrappings and looked at his lacerated hand. "If I don't get the hydrophoby—" "It'll be because you was born to hang," laughed the saloon-keeper. "Here, lend me a hand before you pull your freight," he added. Dazed, suffering intol erable pain from throat and tongue, with the life half throttled out of him, Buck attempted to face his tormentors. But he was thrown down and choked repeatedly, till they succeeded in filling the heavy brass collar from off his neck. Then the rope was removed, and he was flung into a cage-like crate. There he lay for the remainder of the weary night, nursing his wrath and w d not know why, but he felt oppressed by the vague sense of impending calamity. Several times during the night he sprang to his feet when the shed door rattled open, exp dle. And each time the joyful bark that trembled in Buck's throat was twisted into a savage growl. But the saloon-keeper let him alone, and in the morning found ged at them through the bars. They only laughed and poked sticks at him, which he promptly assailed with his teeth till he realized that that was what th gan a passage through many hands. Clerks in the express office took charge of him; he was carted about in another wagon; a truck carried him, w eposited in an express car. For two days and nights this express car was dragged along at the tail of shrieking locomotives; and for two days e taliated by teasing him. When he flung himself against the bars, quivering and frothing, they laughed at him and taunted him. They gro e outrage to his dignity, and his anger waxed and waxed. He did not mind the hunger so much, but the lack of water caused him seve to a fever, which was fed by the inflammation of his parched and swollen throat and tongue. He was glad for one thing: the rope t another rope around his neck. Upon that he was resolved. For two days and nights he neither ate nor drank, and during ths urned blood-shot, and he was metamorphosed into a raging fiend. So changed was he that the Judge himself would not ha r men gingerly carried the crate from the wagon into a small, high-walled back yard. A stout man, with a red sweater that a ext tormentor, and he hurled himself savagely against the bars. The man smiled grimly, and brought a hatchet and a crate for a pry. There was an instantaneous scattering of the four men who had carried it in, and from safe perches nto it, surging and wrestling with it. Wherever the hatchet fell on the outside, he was there on the inside, snarling out. "Now, you red-eyed devil," he said, when he had made an opening sufficient for the passage of Buck's b d-eyed devil, as he drew himself together for the spring, hair bristling, mouth foaming, a mad glitter in his bl h the pent passion of two days and nights. In mid air, just as his jaws were about to close on the man, he wa d over, fetching the ground on his back and side. He had never been struck by a club in his life, and did nto into the air. And again the shock came and he was brought crashingly to the ground. This time he en the club broke the charge and smashed him down. After a particularly fierce blow, he crawled to is beautiful coat sprayed and flecked with bloody slaver. Then the man advanced and deliberately site agony of this. With a roar that was almost unlike in its ferocity, he again hurled himself at th renching downward and backward. Buck described a complete circle in the air, and half of anot blow he had purposely withheld for so long, and Buck crumpled up and went down, knocked ally. "Druther break cayuses any day, and twice on Sundays," was the reply of the driver, as e had fallen, and from there he watched the man in the red sweater. "Answers to the name contents." "Well, Buck, my boy," he went on in a genial voice, "we've had our little ruction, the goose hang high. Be a bad dog, and I'll whale the stuffin' outa you. Understand?" As and, he endured it without protest. When the man brought him water he drank eagerly, a en. He saw, once for all, that he stood no chance against a man with a club. He had lea and he met the introduction halfway. The facts of life took on a fiercer aspect; and w in crates and at the ends of ropes, some docilely, and some raging and roaring as h ooked at each brutal performance, the lesson was driven home to Buck: a man with a he did see beaten dogs that fawned upon the man, and wagged their tails, and lick gain men came, strangers, who talked excitedly, wheedlingly, and in all kinds of fa f the dogs away with them. Buck wondered where they went, for they never came , in the end, in the form of a little weakened man who spat broken English and m t one mad bully dog! Eh? How much?" "Three hundred, and a present at that." Perrault grinned. Considering that the price of dogs had been boomed skywar espatches travel the slower. Perrault knew dogs, and when he looked at Buck h prised when Curly, a good-natured Newfoundland, and he were led away by th hal, it was the last he saw of the warm Southland. Curly and he were taken bel half-breed, and twice as swarthy. They were a new kind of men to Buck (of whi Perrault and Francois were fair men, calm and impartial in administering ju hite hand from Spitzbergen who had been brought away by a whaling capita derhand trick, as, for instance, when he stole from Buck's food at the first m e, he decided, and the half-breed began his rise in Buck's estimation. The ot one, and further, that there would be trouble if he were not left alone. "Dave possessed. When Buck and Curly grew excited, half wild with fear, he raise ery like another, it was apparent to Buck that the weather was steadily grow eashed them and brought them on deck. At the first step upon the cold surt curiously, then licked some up on his tongue. It bit like fire, and the next and Fang Buck's first day on the Dyea beach was like a nightmare. Every h and be bored. There was neither peace, nor rest, nor a moment's safety. All f them, who knew no law but the law of club and fang. He had never seen d victim. They were camped near the log store, where she, in her friendly way y's face was ripped open from eye to jaw. It was the wolf manner of fighting tentness, nor the eager way with which they were licking their chops. Curly king huskies had waited for. They closed in upon her, snarling and yelping, he had of laughing; and he saw Francois, swinging an axe, spring into the re limp and lifeless in the bloody, trampled snow, almost literally torn to pie y. Well, he would see to it that he never went down. Spitz ran out his tong r shock. Francois fastened upon him an arrangement of straps and buckles. L y, and returning with a load of firewood. Though his dignity was sorely hurt b nd by virtue of his whip receiving instant obedience; while Dave, who was an d again, or cunningly threw his weight in the traces to jerk Buck into the way h head at "mush," to swing wide on the bends, and to keep clear of the wheeler y afternoon, Perrault, who was in a hurry to be on the trail with his despatches, rent as day and night. Billee's one fault was his excessive good nature, while J Spitz proceeded to thrash first one and then the other. Billee wagged his tail a Spitz circled, Joe whirled around on his heels to face him, mane bristling, ears l was his appearance that Spitz was forced to forego disciplining him; but to cover ld husky, long and lean and gaunt, with a battle-scarred face and a single eye whic cted nothing; and when he marched slowly and deliberately into their midst, even S ck was unwittingly guilty, and the first knowledge he had of his indiscretion was th e last of their comradeship had no more trouble. His only apparent ambition, like Dav at night Buck faced the great problem of sleeping. The tent, illumined by a candle, glo with curses and cooking utensils, till he recovered from his consternation and fled ign older. He lay down on the snow and attempted to sleep, but the frost soon drove him shiv other. Here and there savage dogs rushed upon him, but he bristled his neck-hair, and s own team-mates were making out. To his astonishment, they had disappeared. Again he w would not have been driven out. Then where could they possibly be? With drooping tail a n. Something wriggled under his feet. He sprang back, bristling and snarling, fearful of the un p under the snow in a snug lay, lay Billee. He whined placatingly, squirmed and wriggled to sh ? Buck confidently selected a spot, and with much fuss and waste effort proceeded to dig a hole led and barked and wrestled with bad dreams. Nor did he open his eyes till roused by the noises d. The snow walls pressed him on every side, and a great surge of fear swept through him—the fear of the wild thing for the trap. It was a token that he was harking back through p and so could not of himself fear it. The muscles of his whole body contracted spasmodically and instinctively, the hair on his neck and shoulders stood on end, and with a fero d. The snow walls pressed him on every side, and a great surge of fear swept through him—the fear of the wild thing for the trap. It was a token that he was harking back through p and so could not of himself fear it. The muscles of his whole body contracted spasmodically and instinctively, the hair on his neck and shoulders stood on end, and with a fero

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