

# BAREE

## Son of Kazan

By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

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WNU Service

"You poor devil!" he repeated. There was no fear in the way he put forth his hand. It was the confidence of a great sincerity and a great compassion. It touched Baree's head and patted it in a brotherly fashion, and then—slowly and with a bit more caution—it went to the trap fastened to Baree's forepaw. In his half-crazed brain Baree was fighting to understand things, and the truth came finally when he felt the steel jaws of the trap open, and he drew forth his maimed foot. He did then what he had done to no other creature but Nepeese. Just once his hot tongue shot out and licked Carvel's hand. The men laughed. With his powerful hands he opened the other traps, and Baree was free.

For a few moments he lay without moving, his eyes fixed on the man. Carvel had seated himself on the snow-covered end of a birch log and was filling his pipe. Baree watched him light it; he noted with new interest the first purplish cloud of smoke that left Carvel's mouth. The man was not more than the length of two trap-chains away—and he grinned at Baree.

"Screw up your nerve, old chap," he encouraged. "No bones broken. Just a little stiff. Mebbe we'd better—get out."

He turned his face in the direction of Lac Bain. The suspicion was in his mind that McTaggart might turn back. Perhaps that same suspicion was impressed upon Baree, for when Carvel looked at him again he was on his feet, staggering a bit as he gained his equilibrium. In another moment the outlaw had swung the pack-sack from his shoulders and was opening it. He thrust in his hand and drew out a chunk of raw, red meat.

"Killed it this morning," he explained to Baree. "Yearling bull, tender as partridge—and that's as fine a sweetbread as ever came out from under a backbone. Try it!"

He tossed the flesh to Baree. There was no equivocation in the manner of its acceptance. Baree was famished—



The Meat Was Flung to Him by a Friend. He Curled His Teeth in It.

and the meat was flung to him by a friend. He buried his teeth in it. His jaws crunched it. New fire leaped into his blood as he feasted, but not for an instant did his reddened eyes leave the other's face. Carvel replaced his pack. He rose to his feet, took up his rifle, slipped on his snowshoes, and fronted the north.

"Come on, Boy," he said. "We've got to travel."

It was a matter-of-fact invitation, as though the two had been traveling companions for a long time. It was, perhaps, not only an invitation but partly a command. It puzzled Baree. For a full half minute he stood motionless in his tracks gazing at Carvel as he strode into the north. A sudden convulsive twitching shot through Baree; he swung his head toward Lac Bain; he looked again at Carvel, and a whine that was scarcely more than a breath came out of his throat. The man was just about to disappear into the thick spruce. He paused, and looked back.

"Coming, Boy?"

Even at that distance Baree could see him grinning affably; he saw the outstretched hand, and the voice stirred new sensations in him. It was not like Pierrrot's voice. He had never loved Pierrrot. Neither was it soft and sweet like the Willow's. He had known only a few men, and all of them he had regarded with distrust. But this was a voice that disarmed him. It was lureful in its appeal. He wanted to answer. He was filled

with a desire, an at once, to follow close at the heels of this stranger. For the first time in his life a craving for the friendship of man possessed Baree. He did not move until Jim Carvel entered the spruce. Then he followed.

That night they were camped in a dense growth of cedars and balsams ten miles north of Bush McTaggart's trap-line. For two hours it had snowed, and their trail was covered. It was still snowing, but not a flake of the white deluge sifted down through the thick canopy of boughs. Carvel had put up his small silk tent, and had built a fire; their supper was over, and Baree lay on his belly facing the outlaw, almost within reach of his hand. With his back to a tree Carvel was smoking luxuriously. He had thrown off his cap and his coat, and in the warm fireglow he looked almost boyishly young. But even in that glow his jaws lost none of their squareness, nor his eyes their clear alertness.

He rubbed his hands together, and held them out toward the fire. Baree watched his movements and listened intently to every sound that escaped his lips. His eyes had in them now a dumb sort of worship, a look that warmed Carvel's heart and did away with the vast loneliness and emptiness of the night. Baree had dragged himself nearer to the man's feet, and suddenly Carvel leaned over and patted his head.

"I'm a bad one, old chap," he chuckled. "You haven't got it on me—not a bit. Want to know what happened?" He waited a moment, and Baree looked at him steadily. Then Carvel went on, as if speaking to a human, "Let's see—it was five years ago, five years this December, just before Christmas time. Had a dad. Fine old chap, my dad was. No mother—just the dad, an' when you added us up we made just One. Understand? And along came a white-striped skunk named Hardy and shot him one day because dad had worked against him in politics. Out an' out murder. An' they didn't hang that skunk! No, sir, they didn't hang him. He had too much money, an' too many friends in politics, an' they let 'im off with two years in the penitentiary. But he didn't get there. No—s'elp me God, he didn't get there!"

Carvel was twisting his hands until his knuckles cracked. An exultant smile lighted up his face, and his eyes flashed back the firelight. Baree drew a deep breath—a mere coincidence; but it was a tense moment for all that.

"No, he didn't get to the penitentiary," went on Carvel, looking straight at Baree again. "Yours truly knew what that meant, old chap. He'd have been pardoned inside a year. An' there was my dad, the biggest half of me, in his grave. So I just went up to that white-striped skunk right there before the judge's eyes, an' the lawyers' eyes, an' the eyes of all his dear relatives an' friends—and I killed him! And I got away. Was out through a window before they woke up, hit for the bush country, and have been eating up the trails ever since. An' I guess God was with me, Boy. For He did a queer thing to help me out summer before last, just when the Mounties were after me hardest an' it looked pretty black. Man was found drowned down in the Reindeer country, right where they thought I was cornered; an' the good Lord made that man look so much like me that he was buried under my name. So I'm officially dead, old chap. I don't need to be afraid any more so long as I don't get too familiar with people for a year or so longer, and 'way down inside me I've liked to believe God fixed it up in that way to help me out of a bad hole. What's your opinion? Eh?"

He leaned forward for an answer. Baree had listened. Perhaps, in a way, he had understood. But it was another sound than Carvel's voice that came to his ears now. With his head close to the ground he heard it quite distinctly. He whined, and the whine ended in a snarl so low that Carvel just caught the warning note in it. He straightened. He stood up then, and faced the south. Baree stood beside him, his legs tense and his spine bristling.

"After a moment Carvel said: 'Relatives of yours, old chap. Wolves.'"

He went into the tent for his rifle and cartridges.

Baree was on his feet, rigid as hewn rock, when Carvel came out of the tent and for a few moments Carvel stood in silence watching him closely. Would the dog respond to the call of the pack? Did he belong to them? Would he go—now? The wolves were drawing nearer. They were not circling as a caribou or a deer would have circled, but were traveling straight—dead straight for their camp. The significance of this fact was easily understood by Carvel. All that afternoon Baree's feet had left a blood-smell in their trail, and the wolves had struck the trail in the deep forest, where the falling snow had not covered it. Carvel was not alarmed. More than once in his five years of wandering between the Arctic and the Height of Land he had played the game with the wolves. Once he had almost lost, but that was out in the open Barren. Tonight he had a fire, and in the event of his firewood running out he had trees he could climb. His anxiety just now was centered in Baree. So he said, making his voice quite casual, "You aren't going, are you, old chap?"

If Baree heard him he gave no evidence of it. But Carvel, still watching him closely, saw that the hair along his spine had risen like a brush, and then he heard—growing slowly in

Daree's throat—a snarl of ferocious hatred. It was the sort of snarl that had held back the Factor from Lac Bain, and Carvel, opening the breech of his gun to see that all was right, chuckled happily. Baree may have heard the chuckle. Perhaps it meant something to him, for he turned his head suddenly and with flattened ears looked at his companion.

The wolves were silent now. Carvel knew what that meant, and he was tensely alert. In the stillness the click of the safety on his rifle sounded with metallic sharpness. For many minutes they heard nothing but the crack of the fire. Suddenly Baree's muscles seemed to snap. He sprang back, and faced the quarter behind Carvel, his head level with his shoulders, his inch-long fangs gleaming as he snarled into the black caverns of the forest beyond the rim of firelight. Carvel had turned like a shot. It was almost frightening—what he saw. A pair of eyes burning with greenish fire, and then another pair, and after that so many of them that he could not have counted them. He gave a sudden gasp. They were like cat-eyes, only much larger. Some of them, catching the firelight fully, were red as coals, others flashed blue and green—living things without bodies. With a swift glance he took in the black circle of the forest. They were out there, too; they were on all sides of them, but where he had seen them first they were thickest. In these first few seconds he had forgotten Baree, awed almost to stupefaction by that monster-eyed cordon of death that hemmed them in. There were fifty—perhaps a hundred wolves out there, afraid of nothing in all this savage world but fire. They had come up without the sound of a padded foot or a broken twig. If it had been later, and they had been asleep, and the fire out—

He shuddered, and for a moment the thought got the better of his nerves. He had not intended to shoot except from necessity, but all at once his rifle came to his shoulder and he sent a stream of fire out where the eyes were thickest. Baree knew what the shots meant, and filled with the mad desire to get at the throat of one of his enemies he dashed in their direction. Carvel gave a startled yell as he went. He saw the flash of Baree's body, saw it swallowed up in the gloom, and in that same instant heard the deadly clash of fangs and the impact of bodies. A wild thrill shot through him. The dog had charged alone—and the wolves had waited. There could be but one end. His four-footed comrade had gone straight into the jaws of death!

He could hear the ravening snap of those jaws out in the darkness. It was sickening. His hand went to the Colt .45 at his belt, and he thrust his empty rifle butt downward into the snow. With the big automatic before his eyes he plunged out into the darkness, and from his lips there issued a wild yelling that could have been heard a mile away. With the yelling a steady stream of fire spat from the



A Steady Stream of Fire Spat From the Colt into the Mass of Fighting Beasts.

Colt into the mass of fighting beasts. There were eight shots in the automatic, and not until the plunger clicked with metallic emptiness did Carvel cease his yelling and retreat into the firelight. He listened, breathing deeply. He no longer saw eyes in the darkness, nor did he hear the movement of bodies. The suddenness and ferocity of his attack had driven back the wolf-horde. But the dog! He caught his breath, and strained his eyes. A shadow was dragging itself into the circle of light. It was Baree. Carvel ran to him, put his arms under his shoulders, and brought him to the fire.

For a long time after that there was a questioning light in Carvel's eyes. He reloaded his guns, put fresh fuel on the fire, and from his pack dug out strips of cloth with which he bandaged three or four of the deepest cuts in Baree's legs. And a dozen times he asked, in a wondering sort of way, "Now what the deuce made you do that, old chap? What have you got against the wolves?"

All that night he did not sleep, but watched.

Their experience with the wolves broke down the last bit of uncertainty that might have existed between the man and the dog. For days after that, as they traveled slowly north and west, Carvel nursed Baree as he might have cared for a sick child. Because

of the dog's hurts, he made only a few miles a day. Baree understood, and in him there grew stronger and stronger a great love for the man whose hands were as gentle as the Willow's and whose voice warmed him with the thrill of an immeasurable comradeship. He no longer feared him or had a suspicion of him.

**ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE**  
Having been appointed Administrator of the estate of

ADELAIDE THRAILKILL, deceased, late of Chatham county, N. C., I hereby notify all persons having claims against the estate to present them duly proven to the undersigned on or before the 11th day of August, 1927, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to the estate are requested to make immediate payment. This the 11th day of August, 1926. L. F. THRAILKILL, Administrator. W. P. Horton, Attorney.

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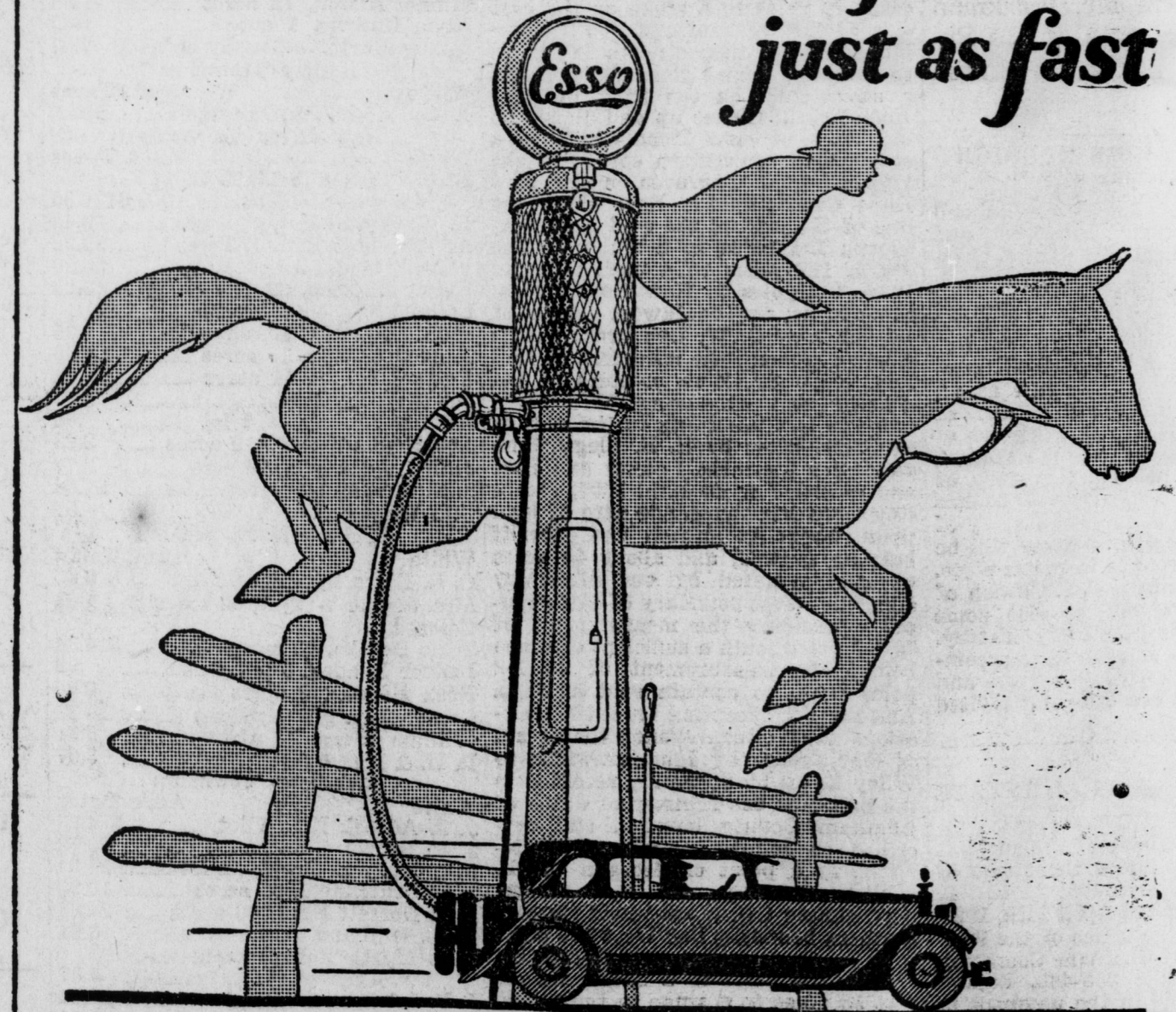
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