GRAHAM, N. C., THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 1912.

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PROLOGUE

A face, beautiful and clear cut as a cameo, seen in the shimmering starlight—a face alluring and half pleading — is the magnet that draws Jack Howland, engineer, into a series of thrilling, absorbing and interest gripping adventures in arctic wilds, where beneath the light of the aurora borealis a strange vengeance is planned, where mysterious plotters encompass him, where assas sins lie in wait along the danger

CHAPTER I.

THE GIRL OF THE SKOWS.

OR perhaps the first time in his life Howland felt the spirft of romance, of adventure, of sympathy for the picturesque and the unknown surging through his veins. A billion stars glowed like yellow, passionless eyes in the polar cold of the skies. Behind him, white in its sinuous twisting through the windows of which he could look out on the street and across the frozen Saskatchewan, with a few scattered lights visible where Prince Albert, the last outpost of civ-

Faintly in the grim silence of the winter night there came to his ears the
soft blissing sound of the aurora borealls as it played in its age old song
over the dome of the earth, and as he
watched the cold flashes shooting like
pale arrows through the distant sky
and listened to its whispering music
of unending loneliness and mystery
there came on him a strange feeling
that it was beckoning to him and callling to him, telling him that up there
very near to the end of the earth lay very near to the end of the earth lay all that he had dreamed of and hoped for since he had grown old enough to begin the shaping of a destiny of his

own.

He shivered as the cold nipped at his blood and lighted a fresh cigar, haif turning to shield himself from a wind that was growing out of the last. As the match flared in the cup of his hands for an instant there came from the black 'gloom of the balsam and spruce at his feet a wailing, hungerful cry that brought a startled breath from his lips. It was a cry such as Indian dogs make about the tepees of masters who are newly dead. He had never heard such a cry before, and yet he knew that it was a wolf's. It impressed him with an awe which was new to him, and he stood as motionless as the trees about him until from out the gray night gloom to the west there came an answering cry and then from far to the north still another. "Sounds as though I'd better go back of his hands for an instant there cam

"Sounds as though I'd better go back "Sounds as though I'd better go back to town." he said to himself, speaking aloud. "By George, but it's lonely?"
Jack Howland was a Chicago man. For fifteen of his thirty-one years he had been hustling. Since he could ensuly remember he had possessed to a large measure but one ambitton and one hope. With a persistence which one hope. With a persistence which had left him peculiarly a stranger to

the more frivolous and human sides of His he had worked toward the achieve-ment of this ambition, and tonight because that achievement was very near at hand he was happy. He had never been happier. There flashed across his mental vision a swiftly moving picture of the fight he had made for success. It had been a magnificent fight. Without vanity he was proud of it, for fate had handicapped him at the beginning, and still he had won out. He saw himself again the homeless little farmer boy setting out from his Illinois village to take up life in a great city. As though it had all happened but yesterday he remembered how for days and weeks be had nearly starved, how he had sold papers at first and then by lucky chance became errand boy in a big drafting establishment. It was there that the ambition was born in him. He saw great engineers come and go—men who were greater than presidents to him and who sought out the ends of the earth in the following of their vocation. He made a slewe of himself in the nurturing and strength-

of their vocation. He made a slave of himself in the nurturing and strengthening of his ambition to become one of them—to be a builder of railroads and bridges, a tunneler of mountains, a creator of new things in new lands. Voluntarily he had kept himself in bondage, fighting ceaselessly the obstacles in his way, triumphing over his handicaps as few other men had triumphed rising slowly, attentily, resist-

handicaps as few other men had triumphed, rising slowly, steadily, resistlessly, until now— He fung back his
head and the pulse of his beart quickened as he heard again the words of
Yan Horn, president of the greatest
engineering company on the continent.
"Howland, we've decided to put you
in charge of the building of the Hudson Bay railroad, it's one of the wildest jobs we've ever had, and Gregson
and Thorne don't seem to catch on.
They're bridge builders and not wilderpass men. 'We've got to lay a single
line of steel through 300 miles of the
wildest country in North America, and
from this bour your motto is 'Do it or
bust?' You can report at Le Pas as
soon as you get your traps together."

Scientific Himerican.

A handsoverly limitrated weakly. Lerent delation of any electric per northes. It sold by all revealed to the first months. It sold by all revealed to the first months. It sold by all revealed to the first months. It sold by all revealed to the first months. It sold by all revealed to the first months. It sold by all revealed to the first months. It sold by all revealed to the first months and be walked for first months. It sold by all revealed to the sold by the walked down the come has a street of Prince Atbert, puffing out edorous elected of smote from his cigar, every fiber in him tingling with the new joy that had come into his life. Another in light would see him in Le Pas, the lift de outpost sirty miles farther east on the Saskatchewan. Then a hundred the most wonderful blemish cure known, Sold by Graham Drug Co.



men were already at work clearing

ness, lay the ley Saskatchewan, with a few scattered lights visible where Prince Albert, the last outpost of civilization, came down to the river half a mile away.

But it was into the north that Howland looked. From the top of the great ridge which he had climbed he gazed steadily into the white gloom which reached for a thousand miles from where he stood to the Arctic sea. Faintly in the grim silence of the windows and proffered it to one of

man with quiet terseness. "V

"Whew!" Howland shrugged his shoulders. Then he volunteered, "I'm going north myself tomorrow."
"Post man?"
"No; engineer. I'm putting through
the Hudson Bay railroad."

He spoke the words quite clearly, and as they fell from his lips the balf breed, partly concealed in the gloom behind him, straightened with the alert engineer met those of the balf breed. Not until the half breed had turned and was walking swiftly away did Howland realize that he wanted to speak to him, to grip him by the hand, to know him by name. He watched the slender form of the northerner, as lithe and as graceful in its movement as a wild thing of the forests, until passed from the door out into the

night.
"Who was that?" he asked, turning to the man with whom he had spoken.
"His name is Croisset. He comes from the Wholdaia country, beyond Lac is Ronge."

"French?"
"Haif French, half Cree." After a little his companion shoved



ALL THAT HE SAW WAS THE PACE. night. The others followed him, and a few minutes later the engineer was

left alone before the windows.
"Mighty tunny people," he said half aloud. "Wonder if they ever talk." He leaned forward, elbows on knees. his face resting in his hands, and stared to catch a sign of moving life outside. In him there was no desire



noveless in his astonishmeta, and in another breath the face was gone. "The deuce, but she was pretty!" Howland said to himself. "And those

eyes"— Suddenly be checked himself. There had been more than the eyes, more than the pretty face. Why had the girl paused in front of the window? Why had she looked at him so intentway and she looked at him so intentity as though on the point of speech? The smile and the flush left his face as these questions came to him, and he wondered if he had failed to comprehend something which she had meant him to understand. After all, might it not have been a case of mistaken iden tity? For a moment she had believe that she recognized him; then, seeing her mistake, had passed swiftly down the street.

He walked casually to the door. At the end of the street, a quarter of a mile distant, a red light burned feebly over the front of a Chinese restaurant. and in a mechanical fashion his foot-steps led him in that direction. "I'll drop in and have a cup of tea."

be assured himself.

he assured himself.

He stopped and turned his eyes again into the north. He wondered as he still stood gazing into the infinity of that other world beyond the Saskatchewan if romance was really quite dead in him. Always he had laughed at ro-mance. Work—the grim reality of ac-tion, of brain fighting brain, of cleverness pitted against other men's clever ness—had almost brought him to the point of regarding romance in life as a peculiar illusion of fools—and women. But he was fair in his concessions, and tonight be acknowledged that he back enjoyed the romance of what he had n and heard. And, most of all, his od had been stirred by the beauti ful face that had looked at him from out of the night.

He passed through the low door of the restaurant and entered a large room filled with tables and chairs and egnant with strange odors.

"A pot of tea," ordered Howland. He sipped his ten leisurely, listen with all the eagerness of the new sense of freedom which had taken pos-session of bim. The Chinaman had stant a low word of surprise almost leaped from his lips. Hesitating for a moment in the doorway, her face staring straight into his own, was the girl whom he had seen through the hotel window.

duckness of a cat. He leaned for-ward eagerly, his black eyes gleaming, and then rose softly from his seat. His moccasined feet made no sound as he came up behind Howland. For a mo-ment the upturned eyes of the young ment the upturned eyes of the young that had never taken more than a in a cool, dispussionate way, judging them, when the judged at all, as he might have judged the more material workmanship of his own hands. But this face that was framed for a few to him and stirred ap interest within him which was as new as it was

The girl turned from his gaze and The girl furned from his gaze and drawn seated herself at a table, so that he in the caught only her profile. The change at the delighted him. From the float in her ded, so the kis eyes traveled critically to the rich glow of the light in her shin. "I w ng brown hair, which swept talf over her ears in thick, soft wates, caught in a heavy coll low on her neck. Then for the first time he noticed her dress. It puzzled him. Her turban and must were of deep gray lynx fur. of the same material, ther bands were immaculately gloved. In every fea-ture of her lovely face, in every point of her dress, she bore the indisputable mark of refinement. The quizzical smile left his lips. The thoughts which at first had filled his mind as quickly disappeared. Who was she? Why was she here?

With catlike quietness the young Chinaman entered between the screens and stood beside her. On a small tablet which Howland had not before ob

served she wrote her order. It was He pouted his last half cup of tes He poured his last half cup of tea and when he lifted his eyes he was surprised to find that the girl was looking at him. For a brief interval her gaze was steady and clear, then the flush deepened in her cheeka, her long lashes drooped as the cold gray of Howland's eyes met hers in un-flicating challenge, and she turned to flinching challenge, and she turned to her tea. Howland noted that the hand which lifted the little Japanese pot was trembling slightly. He leaved for-ward and, as if impelled by the move-ment, the girl turned her face to him

sarred to catch a sign of moving life outside. In him there was no desire beart quickthe words of the greatest at a sign of moving himself a night bird, nut sentom had he been more wakeful than on this night. The leation of his triumph, of his success, had not yet worn itself down to a normal and reasoning satisfaction, and his chief longing was for the day, and the day after that, and the next day, and the day after that, and the next day, and the day after that, and the next day, when he would take the piace of Greglay a singleson and Thorne. Every muscle in his body was vibrant in its desire for acmerica, and is 'Do it or 'Looked at his watch. It was only 10 o'clock. Since supper he had smoked almost ceaselessly. Now he to ene of the windows.

Taintiy he caught the sound of a step on the board walk outside. It was a light, quick step, and for an inhe was sure 'writtly, with his pocked.'

Taintiy he caught the sound of a step on the board walk outside. It was a light, quick step, and for an inhe was sure 'writtly, with his pocked.'

The first read his name, amiled across the table at him and, with a pretty gesture, motioned him to bring his cup and share her tea with her. He returned to his tobic, and when he came have deny the figure of a woman stopped his main, street out odorous clear, every the new joy fee. Another 'Race, white in the white night—a fee. Another 'Race, white in the shimmering starlight fiel as it was lifted to his gaze, the field has it was lifted to his gaze, the field has the sale was an antipart of the swindow. How she was feel, another clear or a woman stopped his main, street out odorous clear, every the new joy feel. Another 'Race on which the shimmering starlight fiel as it was lifted to his gaze, the field has it was lifted to his gaze, the field has it was lifted to his gaze.

The was sure the field has the sale was a sure well the sale of the table. "I saw you from the botel window well have beautiful, as clear cut as a cameo, with a bundled has would be on whic

The girl's eyes traveled swiftly about "I didn't know," she wrote quickly

and hesitated. "I am a stranger, too." she added, "I have never been in this place before. I came because"— She stopped, and the catching breath in her throat was almost a sob as she looked at Howland.

"I came because you came."
"Why?" he asked. "Tell me—why?"
He read her words as she wrote hem, leaning ball across the table in

his eagerness "I am a stranger," she repeated. want some one to help me. Accidentally I learned who you were and made



NEITHER HEARD THE QUIET PALL OF MOO

up my mind to see you at the go in. Then I saw you in the window. After a little you came out and I saw you enter here, I didn't know what kind of place it was and I followed you. Won't you please go with me to where I am staying, and I will tell

She left the sentence unfinished, he eyes pleading with him. Without a word he rose and seized his hat.
"I will go, Miss"— He laughed frankly into her face, inviting her to write her name. For a moment she smiled back at him, the color brightening her cheeks. Then she turned and hurried down the stair. Outside Howland gave her his arm.

"It's a giorious night!" be excialmed.

The girl nodded, and smiled up at him. Her face was very near to his shoulder, ever more beautiful in the

white light of the stars.

They did not look behind them. Neither beard the quiet fail of moccashed feet a dozen yards away. Neither saw the gleaming eyes and the thin, dark face of the property of the control of the white light of the stars. face of Jean Croisset, the half-breed, as they waiked swiftly in the direc-tion of the Saskatchewan.

CHAPTER IL.

THE MYSTERIOUS ATTACK. HOWIAND was glad for a time there was an excuse for his silence. It began to dawn on him that this was an extraor one of the greatest engineering tasks on the continent and who was due to take a train for the seat of his operations at 8 o'clock in the morning.
He looked down at his companion saw the sheen of her hair as it ripple out from under her fur turban, studied

the soft contour of her cheek and chin without himself being observed and noticed incidentally that the top of the bewitching head beside him came just to a level with the cigar which he was smoking. He wondered if he were making a fool of himself.

Where the river ferry was half

drawn up on the shore, its stern frozen in the ice, he paused and looked down at the girl in quiet surprise. She nodded, smiling, and motioned across the "I was over there once tonight." said

Is that where we're going? Her white teeth gleamed at him, and

against his arm as the girl substitute that they were to cross. His perplexity increased. On the farther shore the forest came down to the rivers edge in a black wall of spruce and balsam. Beyond that edge of the wilder. sam. Beyond that edge of the wilderness he knew that no part of Prince Albert intruded. It was possible that across from them was a squatter's chimad yet, it this were so and the girl was going to it why had she told him that she was a stranger in the town? And why had she come to him for the, assistance she promised to request, of him instead of seeking it of those whom she knew? whom she knew?

"You told me you were a stranger," he said. "You seem pretty well ac-quainted over here. Where are we go

Ing?'
This time she responded with an emphatic negative shake of her head, at the same time pointing with her free hand to the well defined trail that wound up from the ferry landing into the forest. Earlier in the day Howland had been told that this was the Great North trail that led into the vast wildernesses beyond the Saskatche-wan. Two days before the factor from Lac Bein, the Chippewayan and the Lac Bein, the Chippewayan and the Crees had come in over it. Its hard crust hore the marks of the sledges of Jean Croisset and the men from the Lac ia Ronge country. Since the big snow, which had fallen four feet deep ten days before, a forest man had now and then used this trail on his way down to the edge of civilization, but none from Prince Albert had traveled it in the other direction. traveled it in the other direction. Howland had been told this at the hotel, and he shrugged his shoulders in candid bewilderment as he stared down into the girl's face. She seemed to understand his thoughts, and again her mouth rounded treel' into that bewitching red O, which gave to her face an expression of tender entreaty, of pathetic grief that the soft lips were howevers to rotes the words which pathetic grief that the soft lips were powerless to voice the words which she wished to speak. Then soddenly she darried a few steps from Howland and with the toe of her shoe formed, a single word in the surface of the show that things were twisting about him and that there was a strange weakness in also limits. Dumbiy, he raised his hands to bis head, which burt him until he felt as if he must cry out in his timits. The girl"—he gasped weakly.

"The g

ed that he understood ner. Tuere was something so childishly sweet in her face, in the gladness of her eyes, that face, in the gladness of her eyes, that Howland stretched out both his hands to her, laughing alond. "You!" he exclaimed. "You, camping out here!" With a quick little movement she came to him, still laughing with her eyes and lips, and for an instant he held both her hands tight in his own. Her lovely face was dangerously near to him. He felt the touch of her breath him. He felt the touch of her breath on his fare; for an instant caught the sweet scent of her hair. Never had he seen eyes like those that glowed up at him softly, filled with the gentle starlight; never in his life had he dreamed of a face like this, so near to dreamed of a face like this, so near to him that it sent the blood leaphing through his veins in strange excite-ment. He held the hands tighter, and the movement drew the girl closer to him until for no more than a hreath he felt her against his breast. In that and - practical, unromantic, master builder of milroads; forgot everything but this presence of the girl, the warm pressure against his breast, the lure of the great brown eyes that had come so unexpectedly into his life. in another moment he had recovered him-self. He drew a step back, freeing

the girl's hands
"I beg your pardon," he said softly.
His cheeks burned hotly at what he had done, and, turning squarely about, he strode up the traft. He had not taken a dözen paces when far ahead of him he saw the red glow of a tire. Then a hand caught his arm, clutching

"What is it?" be cried. "Tell me"-He caught her hands again, startled by the look in her eyes. Quickly she pulled herself away. A dozen feet be-hind her in the thick shadows of the forest trees something took shape and There was no time for him to lear aside, no time for him to reach for the revolver which he carried in his pocket. In such a crisis one's actions are invol-untary, machinelike, as if life, hovering by a thread, preserves itself in its own manner and without thought or For an instant Howland neither

thought nor reasoned. Had he done so he would probably have met his mysterious assailant, pitting his naked flats against the knife. But the very mainspring of his existence, which i self preservation, called on him to do otherwise. Before the startled cry his lips found utterance he sung h self face downward in the snow. move saved bim, and as the other stumbled over his body, pitching head long into the trail, he snatched forth his revolver. Before he could fire there came a roar like that of a beast from behind and a terrific blow fell on his head. Onder the weight of a second assailant be was crushed to the snow his pistol slipped from his grasp and two great hands choked a despairing cry from his throat. He saw a face over him, distorted with passion, a huge neck, eyes that flamed like augry garnets. He struggled to free his pin-loned arms, to wrench off the death grip at his throat, but his efforts were like those of a child like those of a child against a gisnt. In a last terrible attempt be drew up his knees inch by inch under the

weight of his enemy. It was his only chance, his only hope. Even as he felt the fingers about his throat sinking like hot iron into his fiesh and the breath slipping from his body, he retaught to him by the rough fighters of the inland seas, and with all the life that remained in him he sent it crushing into the other's abdo

It was a moment before he knew that it had been successful, before the film cleared from his eyes and he saw his assailant groveling in the snow. He rose to his feet, dazed and staghe was conscious of a warm pressure gering from the effect of the blow on whispered the words to himself. They have a the circle signified his head and the murderous grip at appealed to him now with a signifihis throat. Half a pistol shot the trail he saw indistinctly the twist-



up smilling out of the white gloom. drawing a small table close beside the For a moment Howland did not see bed. "Good thing Croisset was with him—scarrevip neuro into word. Wildly you" be looked about nim for the girl. She "Yes—(t-was—a-bad—fall." he re-

and there was a commanding firmness in the grip that fell- on the young engineer's arm. Howisind was conscious that things were twisting about him I can see."

Ronge country a hundred miles north; goes back today. No apparent reason that things were twisting about him I can see."

along twenty min to the direction

along tessels min in the direction of Prince Albert.

And yet as he went, only half conscious of what he was doing and leaning more and more heavily on his companien, he knew that it was more than the girl's disappearance that he wanted to understand, for as the blow had fallen on his head he was sure that he had heard a woman's scream, and as he may in the snow, dazed and choking, spending his last effort in his struggle for life, there had come to him as if from an infinite distance. to him as if from an infinite distance to him as it from an infinite distance a woman's voice, and the words that it had ultered pounded in his tortured brain now as his beard dropped weakly against Croisset's shoulder.

"Mon Dieu, you are killing him—killing him."

"I must eagry you. M'sour How-land," Jean said. And as he staggered

iand. Jean said. And as he staggered out on the few with his innatinate burden he spoke softly to himself. "The saints preserve me, but what would the sweet Melcese say if she knew that Jean Croisset had come so near to losing the life of this m'seur le en-

gineer?"
In only a subconscious sort of way.
was Howland cognizant of anything
more that happened that night. When he came back into a full sense of his existence he found himself in his bed at the botel. There was a dull, aching pain in his head and neck, and when he raised an inquiring hand it came in contact with a thick bandage.

Soon there came a sound at the door, and he twisted his head, grimneing with the pain it caused him Jean was looking in at him.

"Ab, m'seur ees awake," be said. "Is it bad, Croisset?"
"So bad that you w

"So bad that you will be in bed for a day or so, m'seur. That is all." a day or so, m sett. That is all."
"Impossible!" cried the young engineer. "I must take the 8 o'clock train in the morning. I must be in Le Pas"—
"It is 5 o'clock now." Interrupted Jean softly. "Do you feel like going?"
Howland straightened himself and

fell back suddenly with a sharp cry.
"The devil;" he exclaimed. After a
moment he added, "There will be no
other train for two days." As he raised a hand to his aching head his other closed tightly about Jean's fithe brown fingers. "I want to thank you for what you did. Croisset. I don't know what happened. I don't know who they were or why they tried to kill me There was a girl I was going with

He dropped his hand in time to see the strange fire that had leaped into the half breed's eyes. In astonishment he half lifted bimself again, his white face questioning Croisset.

"Do you know?" he whispered eager ly. "Who was she? Why did she lead me into that ambush? Why did they attempt to kill me?"

With a guick movement the balf breed drew away his hand and moved toward the door. Halfway he paused

and turned.
"M'seur, I have come to you with swarning. Do not go to Le Pas. Do not go to the big railroad camp on the

Wekusko, Return into the south. Per-haps you will understand when I tell you this warning is sent to you by the little Melese."

Before Howland could recover from his surprise Croisset had passed swift-ly through the door. For a long time he lay with his eyes closed trying to clear for himself the mystery of the preceding night. The one thought which obsessed him was that he had which obsessed him was that he had been duped. His lovely acquaintance of the preceding evening had ensaared him completely with her gentle smile and her winsome mouth, and he grit-ted his teeth grimly as he reflected how easy he had been. Deliberately she had lured him into the ambush which would have proved fatal for him had it not been for Jean Croisset was tightest about his throat there had come to him that terrified cry, "Mon dieu, you are killing him-killing

cance which he had not unde first. He was sure that in that cry there had been real terror; almost, he fancied, as he lay with his eyes shut fight that he could still hear the shrill note of despair in the voice. If the girl had calmly led him into the am-bush why in the last moment when success seemed about to crown her du-plicity had she cried out in that agony

of terror?
Was it possible that face and eyes like those could have led him into a death trap? Despite the evidence of what had happened he found himself filled with doubt. And yet, after all, she had lied to him, for she was not a mute.

mute.
Vainly as he watched and waited he racked his mind to find some reason for the murderous attack on himself. Who was "the little Meleese," whom Croisset declared had sent the warning? So far as be could remember he had never known a person by that name. And yet the half breed had uttered it as though it would carry a yital meaning to him. "Ferhaps you will understand." he had said.

as be stared one of the objects came toward bin.

"Do not fire, M'seur Howland," be bard a voke cail. "It ees. I.—Jean Croisset, a friend: Blessed saints, that was—what you cail beem—close cail?

The balf breed's into

fee.
"Bad fall you had." he greeted,

was gone.
"I happened here—just in time—with a club." continued Croisset. "Come. "Gone. He left an hour ago with his we must go."

The smile had gone from his face Came in yesterday from the Lac la

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stomach may rest and recuperate.

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