

Stanley Waterloo



*A Son of the Ages:
The Reincarnations
and Adventures
of Scar, the Link*

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A Son of the Ages: The Reincarnations and Adventures of Scar, the Link

A Story of Man From the Beginning



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INTRODUCTION

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A waste of waters heaved sullenly beneath a dismal canopy. Thin, slimy masses floated here and there about the shallows of a little cove or clung to its sodden beach. The cove led into a bay, which opened, in its turn, upon a vast and soundless sea. But a single reach of land, gray, flat, and lifeless and encircling partially the cove, was all of earth there was in sight.

Close above and all about the huge and silent mystery and extending outward far into space, was a steaming world of vapour, condensed into enormous clouds beyond, an enshrouding curtain over all beneath. And ever this was smitten fiercely by the distant sun, whose rays could not yet fairly pierce the tremendous depths, yet shone through wanly here and there upon the sombre scheme, sombre in its awful lifelessness and silence, but with a promise, indefinable and yet assured, of life and light to come in the tremendous future.

And eons followed eons. Man had not yet measured time. The dateless ages passed. The vibrating waves of light, of heat, of electricity, of magnetism, the forces of attraction and repulsion, all the agencies and mysteries of nature's law, laboured ceaselessly within and without the forming world, making for life. The dense exuding vapour became a warm yet ever present mist, through which the sun's rays drove or filtered and reached the earth abundantly. The world had shrunken, yet the outlines of the bay, and even of the little cove, were there, though otherwise the scene had

changed. The floating protoplasmic fragments had developed into a higher and far-extended life. No longer lay the waters flat and motionless; no longer was the land a dead and drear expanse. There were waves upon the seas and movements showing life there, and the land was green with an infant vegetation.

And the new planet rolled through its allotted orbit while upon it were wrought the endless processes of growth and transformation. The constellations of the heavens slowly changed and shifted into the forms and places which were in coming ages to be marked and named by the sons of earth. Suns flamed and faded while this globe strained toward its prime. Life advanced with an overwhelming rush. There might be check but never pause to the plunging growth from the primal cells which had floated by the sea until they had developed a looming vegetation and almost brainless monsters in that lush and growing time.

The warm waters teemed with the myriads of life. Strange creatures swarmed the seas devouringly or nosed and hunted along the shores, and others of other forms ranged and floundered and fought in the depths and glades of the gigantic fernlike forests. It was a time of heat and moisture and of fierce development, terrible, vast, imposing.

The time, uncounted, yet brought relentlessly its transmutations. The mottled, changing ages still trod upon each other's heels, and reaction and condensation came into even the law of life. The warm seas became in area, though not in place, much as they are to-day. On land, the vast fernlike forests lay buried deep beneath the covering surface made by another and different vegetation. The

reptilian monsters of the sea and land had almost gone, and in their place ranged the great creatures of another sort and type, as well of more timid life, the grass-eaters, upon whose bodies fed the savage beasts of the new epoch. At night the leaves rustled beneath the tread of murderous things; the air resounded with the roar of the great cave tiger, the growl of the cave bear or the cries and snarls of hyenas and the yelpings of the wolf packs. The green plains were dotted with herds of little wild horses, the aurochs, the urus, the ancient elk, and a host of other grazing things; wild hogs were in the thickets. All was life, as before, but life of another kind, one of pursuers and pursued, fierce, strenuous, bloody, but with more to the brute intelligence.

There were vast upheavals and fiery rendings, but life insisted, persisted. Gnawed by tooth of glacier, seamed and ridged by abysses and upheavals, the planet reeled through space. Life, animal and vegetable, retreated or advanced as Nature played or laboured with the crust she was fashioning and refashioning into its present shape, even as she still makes and unmakes continents or islands or blots them out at her will.

But life went on. New creatures, tree-climbing, ape-creatures had developed from one of the lower stems of the dim past and had become distinct from all other living things. Without expression, save by scream or roar or chuckle, helpless, as yet, as against the dangerous beasts, they still developed, and one group among them, by some mysterious happening, outstripped the rest. Of all the creatures, those tree-climbers, far from the strongest, possessing not greatly more than instinct, were yet the

most perceptive. Mind was in growth, slowly, uncertainly, but still in growth. Reason fluttered within dull brains; the climbers could think a little. Nature had begun upon her Masterpiece!

A SON OF THE AGES

CHAPTER I

THE LINK

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I had broken my thumb. It was a long fall and not only was my thumb broken, but the fingers on the same hand were crushed backward and so sprained that they were useless, and when I tried to climb the tree again, to renew the fight, I could not. I do not know what made me slip and fall, for there were few among the treetop people more certain upon a limb than I. But that upon which I had stood was old and it may be that the one to which I clung was rotten, and so I fell, though I was gripping the other hardly with the fingers of both my feet.

The Brown One—I call him that now, to distinguish him, though we had no names—was a strong creature, the biggest ape in all the forest, but it could not have been possible for him to throw me from the limb, even when its slighter upstanding branch which I was clutching with one hand proved weak and faithless as I lurched and slid. I should have clung easily with my other hands—those I now call my feet—and up-twisted myself and grappled him about the legs. Yes, it must be that the bark came away. That was why I fell far, head downward, with arms outreaching to break my fall, and that, so, my thumb was broken and my fingers on one hand bent backward and sprained into hurting uselessness.

It had been the start of a good fight. It was all because of It, as I will call her, the she thing who was the child of an old pair who had a nest in the fork of the tree with the noisy leaves. We both wanted her, the Brown One and I, and so we fought for her on the big limb while she screamed shrilly in the branches above, and her father and mother crouched chattering together in the nest of sticks and leaves in the great crotch of the tree. He was very old, the father of It, and could no longer climb well for either fruit or nuts. He was forced to eat such ripened things as fell to the ground, and the grasshoppers and the little creatures which came out of holes. But he was most crafty and still could climb the tree with an effort, and so continued to live. He was not quick, though, and, some day, one of the hungry, growling creatures of the forest must catch him on the ground and that, it seemed, must be the end of him.

My own tree, with its nest, was in an open glade of the wood, by the river, not very distant from the tree of the Old One of whom I have told, and before this time I could have taken It, had I but known, for she was full grown, as was I, and once when I had met her in a treetop we had chattered together and she had not appeared to be afraid. I gave her fruit, and she ate. I could have taken her with me then. I wonder why I did not?

Then, days later, I went howling through the treetops toward the home of the father of It, for the hunger for companionship had grown upon me. My own kith and kin were dead and I was grown big and strong and I wanted this one she thing to be mine and in the nest with me.

It was a very good nest. I had made it carefully and solidly with sticks laid across and interwoven with tough withes where big limbs joined the tree trunk until they were quite a platform with a deep hollow in the middle, and I had brought twigs and leaves to cushion the hollow, in which I could curl myself down and sleep most comfortably, far out of the reach of prowling beasts which came beneath at night. The tree stood alone in the glade, and this was good, for no creature could reach its top save by coming up its trunk. All we feared in the top of a tree which stood by itself, was the rare great serpent, which could climb and could even pass from one tree to another, though not so swiftly as we. But, sometimes, he would surprise one of us asleep, and what happened then was something of which I do not care to tell.

So, my nest was a fine one and the tree was near a great river and in a wood in which were fruit and nuts and many birds and where the roots of weeds in the ground were sweet and tender, and where the wild ducks and geese laid eggs in nests by the water, where all about were many things to eat. But the she thing hunger came upon me and I wanted it. I went through the forest to get her.

I scrambled on all fours from the trunk of my own tree and from the glade and so up into the treetops and swung from limb to limb toward the house of the Old One, where I could find my mate. As I neared the place I checked myself, clinging to a limb and listening, for I had heard from afar that which I did not like. There came from where stood the tree of the Old One sounds which told their story well. There was a combined roaring and whimpering and squalling, and

I knew that the squalling came from It. I could not tell where was the roaring. I was in the tree itself before I learned. It was the big Brown One who was roaring in anger because he was baffled in what he sought. My It stood upon a limb of the tree, clinging to a branch beside her, while he clutched another and strove to tear her away. In the nest the Old One and his mate were crouching whimperingly. The Old One could not fight. He was too weak.

I was strong, very strong. Once when the dun jackal—the half-wolf thing which follows the big tiger and bear and leopard and gnaws the red bones after they have killed and eaten, went mad, as he sometimes does, fearing nothing, though a coward at other times—sprang at me when I was on the ground, I caught him by the throat as he leaped and, with the other hand gripped on him, tore away one of his forelegs, shoulder and all, clear from his body. He raged no more, and it was good for all of the creatures of the forest, since all feared him when he went mad. Yes, I was strong, but I was not stronger than the Brown One. I did not know that yet.

The rage which came upon me when I saw the Brown One trying to carry away the she thing I wanted is something of which I do not know how to tell. I would have her myself and I would kill him! I roared and bellowed, and clambered downward until I dropped upon the limb whereon he and It were struggling. He turned in a second and came snarlingly toward me, while It, still squalling for a moment, then chattering wildly, fled upward among the branches and then into another tree and so out of sight deep into the forest. We were alone to fight it out.

We did not wait. His eyes were flaming and his teeth shone white and whetting as he swung toward me, and we met each with one hand grasping the nearest branch for support and the other free with which to fence and clutch and tear. I caught him fairly by the skin on the back of his neck, at last, and pulled his head toward me and with my teeth tore away one ear and a strip of skin and flesh, though he bit me deeply and tore me on the shoulder. I should have rent at his neck and killed him before he could have hurt me had all gone as it should have done. But the slight limb clutched by my supporting hand broke at its base and I was swirled off and hanging by my unprotected feet. In an instant he was down upon the limb, biting and tearing at them. They were slipping and I could not lift myself and it was beyond endurance. My grip relaxed in agony and I fell far to the ground—fell to tear a deep gash in my face from eye to jaw, to leave a ghastly, lasting scar, to crush my arms beneath me and lie there stunned and with the fingers of one hand helpless, as I have told, and the thumb so broken that it lay flat and distorted across the palm of my hand.

The Brown One did not come down to finish me. He scarcely looked at me. He clambered higher up the tree and leaped into the next one and was off into the forest crying out triumphantly. He was in the chase of It.

I lay helpless for a long time. The Old One and his mate paid no attention to me, but crouched there, frightened and gibbering foolishly in their nest. At last I tried to rise, and got to my feet with many liftings and stood by a little tree, supporting myself with my uninjured hand. Then it came to

me that I must get back to my own tree and nest at once, and I tried to climb, so that I might travel through the treetops, but I could not do it. My injured hand was still so weak and lame that I could not use the fingers. The blood flowed through the great gash in my cheek. But I must get to my own tree, somehow, else I might be killed. I started on my hind legs, bending and supporting myself by my well arm and hand, but it was not easy, for I was sorely bruised and, though all of my kind walked sometimes upright, or even ran for a distance leapingly, it was not our common mode of travel. Through the treetops we could pass most easily and swiftly. I do not know why it was, but I think that I had somehow acquired the habit of walking erect more frequently than any other ape I knew, though forelegs and clasping feet—or arms and hands as I call them now—were sure and the treetops were a splendid highway, while upon the ground it was rarely safe.

I reached my tree at last, almost crawling, and weak and sore, and tried again to climb, but it was useless. I could not grasp the trunk and lift myself, though at other times it had been but play to clamber up to where the great limbs and my nest were. I became afraid. Any of the fierce beasts of the night might find me lying there and kill and eat me. I crawled to the shore of the river and crouched beside it and let my maimed hand dangle in the cold water. That seemed to make the pain less. Then the darkness came, and with it I was more afraid. I crawled to where there uprose a mighty heap of tumbled, broken rocks and wedged myself in one of the deep, narrow hollows, where I could not well be seen from the outside, and where none of the great devouring

things could reach me save the big serpent and, it might be, the slender leopard. A bear came smelling about and growled in his hunger, but the passage between the rocks was too narrow for his huge bulk. Finally, tired and suffering, I went to sleep.

I must have been near to death from exhaustion, for when I awoke the sun was shining and the birds were singing. There were many birds. The prowling night things must have gone away, I knew, and I crept out into the light and stretched myself. I was very sore, but my hand did not pain me so much, and, after I had drunk deeply and held my hand in the water again, I felt a little of my strength come back. I started slowly toward my tree and on my way found berries, which I ate. I tried to climb the tree again, but failed at first. I waited and then I growled and crunched my teeth together and forced myself to use the fingers of my injured hand, though it hurt sickeningly, and gained my nest at last. I was safe, but I could not rest nor lie still in my refuge. My broken thumb was throbbing and full of pain. It still lay crushed across my palm and was swollen and distorted. I licked it carefully and tried to press it back into its place, but it would not go. I sat upright in my nest and was afraid and suffering and weak—I, who had been so strong!

My ears were strained for any sound. There was little to fear, for only the great snake or the Brown One, should he seek me, could harm me where I was. But all the time I listened, and it seemed to me that there were many things about. I think now that I may have heard sounds that were not, for my head was queer. Still, I listened all the while, and at last I heard that which I knew was real. There was a rustle

among the leaves and the breaking of a twig in a treetop across the glade. I peered forth anxiously to see what could have made the noise. I did not like it. I did not know what it might be. At last I saw something. A face was looking at me from between the leaves. It had big eyes.

Then the face disappeared and I waited long and watched for it and, at last, it came again, and in another place. The light reached it more clearly now and I could see the face of It. Then something happened that was very strange. I forgot my aching thumb, my head was clearer and I was no longer afraid of anything. I was suddenly glad and brave and almost like myself again. I do not know why that feeling came.

I called aloud to It, making the sound we all did when we wanted another one to come. She did not answer at first, but stayed where she was, peering upward and backward through the wood. Then she called softly but still clung to her safe place, still looking and searching back and above and all about her. At last she seemed assured, and then the slim creature swung from her perch and slipped to the ground and ran across to my tree and was in the top so swiftly that it was wonderful. I could not climb like that. There was no other ape in all the woods who could catch her in the treetops, where the slender branches intermingled.

She was there in my own tree and near me, but she did not come to the nest. She ran up and peered down at me from a great limb above. I tried to climb to her and could not, and crawled back into my nest again and licked my swollen thumb and mumbled sickly. She sat perched there and looked down at me and said nothing, but her eyes—

they seemed so much larger than the eyes of others of us—opened more widely still. Then she made sounds like those I had been making and went back slowly to the body of the tree and came down to the limbs where my nest was, and raised herself and stood there with one hand on the tree and looking at me where I lay so nearly helpless.

It came but dimly to me, but I knew then, more than ever, that in all the forest and in all the hills there was no other she thing ape like her. I had never thought of that before. Her hair was short, but brown and glossy, and she was oddly slender, with a less protruding stomach than had we other apes. It was her head, though, which was most unlike the others. Her ears were not much outstanding nor were they ever twitching and turning, her under jaw did not protrude so much, and her upper lip was not a bank of a thing extending downward from almost no nose at all. My own big jaw did not protrude so much as did the jaws of many of my kind, and my upper lip was not so huge and wide, but I was a monster compared with it, and my upturned face, I think, more like the glaring countenances which we saw when the big swimming beasts in the river sometimes thrust their nozzles out of the water.

And her eyes, the big eyes, were as dark and deep, I thought, as the water in the spring with ferns about it behind a rock where I often drank, and, when she chuckled and chattered at anything, there came lights and twinkles in them, just as there came to the deep spring water when the breeze blew upon it and made it ripple and change in the sunlight. Of course I did not dream this out very clearly—I did not know enough—but, even before this, the eyes of it

had made me think of the spring by the rock. I do not know why this was so. Our eyes were not like the water. I once saw an ape poke a sharp stick into the eye of another and the eye went away. But I had poked sticks into the water and it did not go away. Why should the eyes of It make me think of the deep spring by the rock?

She was never gloomy nor sat and moped as did many of us when the cold and mist sometimes came suddenly, and we others but crouched and huddled in our nests for warmth. Ever alert and alive, when it was cold, she still sought nuts and the dropping fruits and other things we ate, and brought them to her home nest. It was well for her father and mother, who were so very old. They were dead, even now, but I did not know that, nor did It.

So I wanted It for my mate, and it was not because she was so swift and wise and could gather so well the nuts and fruits and the shell things which clung to the rocks beside the river and which, when we had cracked the shells with stones, were good to eat. I did not consider that. I wanted her, I think, as I have said, because her eyes were like the spring by the rock, but that must have been a foolish reason. I had wanted her much, and now, as she stood there, I wanted her more than ever, sick and crippled as I was.

She looked at me but made no sound, though I mumbled and called and beckoned to her and reached out for her to come. She was still for a while, but at last there came that look into her eyes like the ripples I have told about, and then I knew that she would be my mate. She came out slowly along the limb and sat on the edge of the nest and

reached out and stroked my thumb very gently. She lifted the hand and looked at it and then licked it and looked up at me and made a clucking, sighing sound. We could not talk, we apes, then, but we could make many different sounds that we understood, and I knew that she was trying to tell me that she pitied me. I tried to tell her, too, that I was glad, and she understood me surely. I put out my well arm and drew her into the nest with me and held her close, and she cuddled there contentedly. We were mates now, and I was very proud and nearly well again. So she stayed beside me for quite a time, I stroking her smooth back, and then she looked up and laughed, in our way, and chattered and then suddenly broke from me and ran to the tree trunk, and the sounds she made meant food. She was down in an instant and slipped into the forest, but she was not gone long. When she came back she had a branch which she carried between her teeth as she climbed, and on it was much fruit, which I ate, for again I was weak and hungry. And again and again she went and brought me many things to eat, more fruit and soft round roots, and, at last, by great fortune, a large bird she had caught upon its nest. It was what I needed. My strength came back. Then, we cuddled down together. Those were great days while I was growing well, with It beside me. She cared for me faithfully and soon I could clamber down the tree, though not yet swiftly. I have the memory of those fair days yet. But they were few.

There came, one afternoon, wild howling from the forest, not more than four or five trees away, and I could see the Brown One coming toward us. He had found the refuge of It and was coming for her! I must fight him now, weak as I

was. I rose in front of It and grasped the upright limb and was ready, but it did not count. My mate slipped by me and ran to the trunk and was on the ground and running for the forest on the other side of the glade and in the treetops there almost before I knew that she was gone. She knew that I was not yet fit to fight the Brown One. She called from far aloft and I knew that she would come back to me when she could. As for the Brown One, he did not stop to climb my tree, and try to kill me, though I gibbered and roared at him challengingly. He swung through the tops circling the glade and I could hear his threatening cries as they died distantly away in the forest beyond. He was in chase of my It again. Somehow, I did not fear for her. As well pursue the silly shadows which fly across the treetops when the white things up in the sky came floating across the fire ball there. One so light and slender and sure-handed could pass along the slender outreaching branches where none heavier could follow. But I gnashed my teeth, for I wanted to follow the Brown One and try to kill him.

I slept at last, and when I awoke I was like another creature. I was almost well. I scarcely ached, and my fingers were all strong. The thumb lay stiffly and pressed crookedly down upon my palm, as it had been broken, but the thing was hardening and knitting. Well was it for me that we apes recovered quickly from our wounds. When hurt, we either died or were soon ourselves again.

I had none to help me now, and it may be it was good for me. I clambered down from the tree and wandered forth and found a little food and came back and waited for the return of It, but she did not come. I waited and it seemed to me

that in my craze I was some other creature. I climbed down and ran about in the forest senselessly. Then, at night I came back again to the nest and slept. I seemed to know more in the morning. I had my senses. I went down beside the river and ate many of the shell things and I ate fruit I found. I would find It now. I searched the forest; I even went to the nest of the Old One, but it was vacant and the gnawed bones of the Old One and his mate lay on the ground beside his tree. I could find It nowhere. I did not believe that the Brown One could seize her in the treetops, but he might have chased her far away. I did not know what to do. So the days passed. Meanwhile, I became all my mighty self. My injured thumb was strong though crooked forward against my hand. Then, one day, a strange thing happened:

I had wandered far along the river bank and was sitting foolishly upon a rock and playing with a piece of wood which had floated down and stranded. It was a stout thing, larger at one end than the other, and very heavy. The crook of my broken thumb, as it lay pressed against the palm, left a space beneath, and through this space I idly thrust the small end of the wood. Thus my fingers were above on one side of the club and my thumb upon the other, bearing hardly when I chose, for I could press the thumb down strongly, though I could scarcely raise the end. It was a new sensation which came to interest me suddenly. I could clasp the stick with my fingers clutching the other side and I could do things with it. I whirled the club about my head and smote the bushes and broke them easily. It was wonderful! Never before had fingers and thumb of ape accomplished a grip

together! The club was hard and heavy, yet in my strong grasp it was but a plaything. It delighted me. I would take it with me. That was well.

I started toward my glade, for night was coming and I had eaten enough. I took a path which ran through hollows and beside a long rocky upheaval in which were many abruptly ending defiles where, sometimes, I had caught small animals which could not climb the smooth, steep sides. I heard a rustling in one of these and thought that I had some prize assured. The entrance was but a few feet wide and the passage, as I knew, ended in a sheer height. I followed the defile to the end, but could find no living thing. The sound which had attracted me may have been made by some large bird which had flown before I entered. I turned toward the entrance again, but stopped with fear in my heart, from what I saw. I knew that death was close to me. I yelled aloud at first in my terror and then became suddenly quiet. That was the way with most of us big males of the apes in great emergencies. We became, when fatally at bay, sullen, desperate things. I would die fighting. The hair upon me bristled.

It was the great wolf. A gaunt and fearful creature was the wolf of the time, one we tree people fled from when we met him in the forest; and when he and others of his kind gathered sometimes and ran in packs, even the urus or the mighty aurochs ran fast and far, for few animals, even among the greatest, could face the onslaught of the pack. As for one of us apes, when he met a wolf singly, grapple as he might and tear with his shorter teeth, the wolf's jaws ever, somehow, found the neck, and that was the end. For

me there was no escape. The great wolf rushed upon me and leaped high at my throat.

I know not why nor how I did it. In the past I would have tried but blindly to seize upon the grisly brute, and so die grappling and seeking to bite, but some new and sudden impulse, some fierce, unconscious repetition of what I had just been doing in mere wantonness, impelled my tautened nerves and muscles and, even as he sprang, I swung the club with all my recovered strength, and, there in mid-air, it crashed down upon the fearsome head. It crashed as do the trees when the winds break them, and the big body dropped as it came hurtling against me and felling me—but the jaws seized not. I leaped to my feet for flight, but the monster only lay there heaving. Then I went mad, mad as the sick jackal. I swung the club again and again and brought it down upon the evil head until the skull was crushed to pulp. I was my old self no more. I ran out from the gorge and leaped up and down and howled across the waste and the river and toward all the forest in wild triumph. I was the king of the apes! I could kill as never ape had killed before! There were fewer things to fear in all the world. I had learned to use the club! It was wonderful. I howled daringly all the way homeward to my nest, and smote many things with my great weapon as I passed. I climbed the tree carrying it in my teeth, and could scarcely sleep for exultation. I was a new creature. I had found that which made me so.

I came down in the morning, bearing my club with me. Ever after that I carried it, and I may tell now, that as time passed, since I could not hold it constantly in my mouth, this club-carrying made me walk more and more on my hind

legs until it became, unconsciously, a habit with me. Now I went more recklessly about my food-seeking. I met a herd of the wild hogs, a big sow with pigs, and ran among them and slew a pig with my club and then leaped into a tree, for the charging mother was too fearsome for me, even with my weapon. Then she and her living litter went away and I came down and ate my breakfast from the pig. It was good. So, for days, I ranged through the wood and by the river, but all was not yet well. Something sank within me. Now I know what it was. I wanted it.

Still, I was jubilant over my club. I was vain and drunken with the power I had. Another ape rose in the path ahead of me, an ape as big as I was, and I roared and ran at him, I know not why. I was not angry and did not want to hurt him, but I wanted to smite something alive. It had been good to hit the wolf. The ape stood his ground until I was almost upon him, then, amazed and alarmed by the whirling of the club, he leaped for a tree trunk and I struck him furiously on the haunches as he scrambled upward. He fled shrieking through the treetops.

But there came, stronger than ever, the hunger for it, and I ranged through the forest for many days and into places strange to me. Food I discovered in abundance. So I wandered restlessly until I passed, one afternoon, across a wide, bare space, almost a plain, where there stood a grove of trees, up one of which I climbed, and slept there in its great crotch.

In the morning something made me turn again toward my own region. I was nearing there when I heard a distant cry, and I knew in a moment what it meant. My It had

returned to seek me and was again in peril. I bounded forward and saw it all. In a great treetop was my It, and beneath her was the Brown One. I did not know it then, but he had killed her old father and mother, even before he found her with me, and when she fled from our nest he had chased her far away, but vainly. After days of flight and hiding she had eluded him and had come back seeking me, and he had come back as well, thinking, in his dim way, thus to find her. He had found her, indeed, but he was about to find, too, what was not well for him.

She was above him, where the branches were weak and where he could not clamber to her easily, but she was shrieking loudly, as well she might. I made no sound at first. I ran to the tree and climbed, with my club between my teeth, until I reached a limb on which was fighting room, and then I roared aloud. The screaming of It changed in an instant to shrieks of joy. The Brown One glared downward and saw me and scrambled downward with a snarling roar, to the limb upon which I stood. He ran close, and we stood as we had in the other fight, scarce a yard apart, each sustained by the grip of our long toes and with one hand clutching an upright branch, leaving the other free. In his free hand was nothing; in mine was the club. He thrust forward to clutch and pull me to him.

It was his end! I swung my club aloft as he lurched toward me savagely, and smote down fairly upon his head with all my maddened strength. Like clay, his brute skull caved in, for the blow was devilish. He did not even scream. His fingers and toes clung to the limbs for an instant, and then he dropped silently far to the ground. He drew his arms

and legs together quivering once or twice and then lay still. He was dead!

I danced upon the limb and roared and yelped and mocked. The Brown One was dead! In all the world there was none other so great and wise as I. What other knew the club?

My mate came to me wonderingly and chattering, and we caressed each other. We went down the tree and I beat the head of the Brown One as I had that of the wolf, but there was no need. Already the little insects were running over him. He was dead. In the night something would come and eat him.

We sought our own tree and our nest and were unafraid. We brought more leaves and soft grasses and mosses and coiled our arms about each other when the darkness came each night and were warm and happy. We were mates, and sometimes we would snuggle our heads together and make a soft sound like "Wee-chew, wee-chew, wee-chew." There is a bird which makes a mating sound like that to-day, only, of course, more musically than could we apes.

Sometimes we went far from the tree, for always I had my club, and It imitated me by walking on her hind legs and, at last, carried a little club herself, though she could not use it very well at first. We had adventures and sometimes scant escapes, but my club was heavy and I was strong, and, when too hard pressed, there were always the treetops for our refuge. But we did not venture far out on the great plains where were the grass-eaters and the fierce things which devoured them, nor did we venture forth at night. Sometimes, for I feared none, we visited the nests of other

apes and they came to visit us. And, because of this, a great change came.

There had been rare quarrels with other apes and I had smitten them sorely with my club and they had wondered at it and feared it. They saw my boldness, too, and how I killed for food things which I crept upon and which I could not have killed with my bare hands, and soon they, too, sought clubs and tried to imitate me, for imitation is ever the way of apes. They could not do as well, for they had no such grip as I with my maimed thumb, but, even with its use by their finger grip alone, the thing became a weapon and soon our kind, of whom there were not great numbers—there were other apes of other kinds whom we hated, because they were so like and yet so unlike us—carried each a club and so began to walk erect as I did. And we learned to band ourselves together, even more wisely than the wolves, and we could surround one of the wild horses in a gorge or beside a bluff and so get much meat at one time for all of us. We acquired new sounds and cries, too, with our increasing need for speech, and soon all began to recognize them. There was one wild cry sent out in emergency which meant “Club! Club! Bring your Club!” and so it was with other calls. We had no names yet, but something like the beginning of a language was at hand, a tongue of clucks and cries and yelps, but yet the seed of language. All our world was becoming different. The other creatures began to fear us. The smaller, once unafraid, now fled when we appeared, but the great flesh-eaters sought us more fiercely than ever, since we were more careless and conspicuous.

But, if we were more daring, we had become more cautious also, and they seldom caught us.

And there came, before all this, a time when It stayed in the nest and I brought her food. And, one day, when I came back with eggs from the nest of a river duck, she held in her arms a tiny ape which was our child. It thrived amazingly, for well cared for were the child and It, my mate. And as a child, my young one ran about erect and smote things with his little stick. So it was, in a way, too, with the children of other apes of our kind. They also learned, though more slowly, to run about on their hind feet and to wield the little clubs they carried.

But sometimes all we apes were in mortal terror, not of the bears and tigers and other dread things of the wood, but of that which came suddenly and made even the fierce beasts themselves fly whining to their dens and hiding-places. Nothing could help us in those awful hours, for there would be rumblings and growlings in the earth beneath us and it would lift itself up in vast, heaving waves, and would sometimes burst open in long rents, and flames and deadly fumes would issue, and great reaches of the forest would disappear and all within them perish, and, when the thundering and roaring ceased, the look of all the world about us would be changed. But these things would pass, though there would be left great fissures through which came sheets of fire which burned continuously; and when the cold came, as it did at times, we could go as near the fire as we dared, and then the cold would seem to go away.

And the days went well for It and me, and other children came and were soon full grown, as was the way, and they

took mates and there were many homes in the treetops. We became a strong people, my family and its kind, for we alone had the club. We yet lived much on fruits and nuts and roots and eggs and the shell-fish, but we ate more flesh now, for, as I have said, we had learned to hunt together and that brought an abundance.

But there was ever the thing we should have dreaded more. Away to the north high mountains upreared themselves toward the sky, and through a mighty gorge in these the river came. Beyond the mountains was a vast lake. Sometimes the mountain crests would redden and they would vomit up fire when the upheavals we so feared came and the ground lifted up and split and the forests fell. Then, afterward, would come great storms and the river would be wider and deeper and darker and rush down fiercely, bearing tree trunks and the floating carcasses of wild things. But still we thought little of all this. We lived for each day, as it came, unknowingly.

It was late one afternoon in the hot time when the leaves were heaviest and I was in the nest with It, for there was still another child, and we had done much climbing throughout the day and were curled down and resting, half asleep. Something at last aroused me and I looked about. The air was heavy, but soon there began a rustling of the leaves and then a shaking, but it seemed to come from far away and only the tremor of it to reach us.

Then, all at once, the sky darkened and the earth heaved. It sprang up screaming, with the child held to her, and we both clung desperately to the limbs beside us, as the trees threshed back and forth. Then came the fearful,

thundering, blasting sound we knew so well, and flames burst from the distant mountains as they seemed themselves to lift and sway in air. Then followed a roar as of all the sounds of earth together, and I saw the great walls torn apart and rise and fall again, by the light of the awful flames in the darkness far away. The earthquake ceased, but not the dreadful roar, stunning and deafening from afar, but coming nearer and nearer with each instant. Something enormous, black, with a great white foaming crest, uprose and lifted higher than all the forest. The mountain had parted and the great lake was so hurled down upon us! It came, itself a mountain. I saw it, for a moment, with the child held in one arm, then something struck her and she fell. I could see the crest of the coming mountain towering far above me, then I was swept from the limb and, stunned, gasping, strangling, was carried away in the black waters.