CHAPTER XXI

Pascal somewhere says: "In viewing the march of human evolution, the philosophic mind should look upon humanity as one man, and not as a conglomeration of individuals."

I sit here in Murderers' Row in Folsom, the drowsy hum of flies in my ears as I ponder that thought of Pascal. It is true. Just as the human embryo, in its brief ten lunar months, with bewildering swiftness, in myriad forms and semblances a myriad times multiplied, rehearses the entire history of organic life from vegetable to man; just as the human boy, in his brief years of boyhood, rehearses the history of primitive man in acts of cruelty and savagery, from wantonness of inflicting pain on lesser creatures to tribal consciousness expressed by the desire to run in gangs; just so, I, Darrell Standing, have rehearsed and relived all that primitive man was, and did, and became until he became even you and me and the rest of our kind in a twentieth century civilization.

Truly do we carry in us, each human of us alive on the planet to-day, the incorruptible history of life from life's beginning. This history is written in our tissues and our bones, in our functions and our organs, in our brain cells and in our spirits, and in all sorts of physical and psychic atavistic urgencies and compulsions. Once we were fish-like, you and I, my reader, and crawled up out of the sea to pioneer in the great, dry-land adventure in the thick of which we are now. The marks of the

sea are still on us, as the marks of the serpent are still on us, ere the serpent became serpent and we became we, when pre-serpent and pre-we were one. Once we flew in the air, and once we dwelt arboreally and were afraid of the dark. The vestiges remain, graven on you and me, and graven on our seed to come after us to the end of our time on earth.

What Pascal glimpsed with the vision of a seer, I have lived. I have seen myself that one man contemplated by Pascal's philosophic eye. Oh, I have a tale, most true, most wonderful, most real to me, although I doubt that I have wit to tell it, and that you, my reader, have wit to perceive it when told. I say that I have seen myself that one man hinted at by Pascal. I have lain in the long trances of the jacket and glimpsed myself a thousand living men living the thousand lives that are themselves the history of the human man climbing upward through the ages.

Ah, what royal memories are mine, as I flutter through the aeons of the long ago. In single jacket trances I have lived the many lives involved in the thousand-years-long Odysseys of the early drifts of men. Heavens, before I was of the flaxen-haired Aesir, who dwelt in Asgard, and before I was of the red-haired Vanir, who dwelt in Vanaheim, long before those times I have memories (living memories) of earlier drifts, when, like thistledown before the breeze, we drifted south before the face of the descending polar ice-cap.

I have died of frost and famine, fight and flood. I have picked berries on the bleak backbone of the world, and I have dug roots to eat from the

fat-soiled fens and meadows. I have scratched the reindeer's semblance and the semblance of the hairy mammoth on ivory tusks gotten of the chase and on the rock walls of cave shelters when the winter storms moaned outside. I have cracked marrow-bones on the sites of kingly cities that had perished centuries before my time or that were destined to be builded centuries after my passing. And I have left the bones of my transient carcasses in pond bottoms, and glacial gravels, and asphaltum lakes.

I have lived through the ages known to-day among the scientists as the Paleolithic, the Neolithic, and the Bronze. I remember when with our domesticated wolves we herded our reindeer to pasture on the north shore of the Mediterranean where now are France and Italy and Spain. This was before the ice-sheet melted backward toward the pole. Many processions of the equinoxes have I lived through and died in, my reader . . . only that I remember and that you do not.

I have been a Son of the Plough, a Son of the Fish, a Son of the Tree.
All religions from the beginnings of man's religious time abide in me.
And when the Dominie, in the chapel, here in Folsom of a Sunday, worships God in his own good modern way, I know that in him, the Dominie, still abide the worships of the Plough, the Fish, the Tree--ay, and also all worships of Astarte and the Night.

I have been an Aryan master in old Egypt, when my soldiers scrawled obscenities on the carven tombs of kings dead and gone and forgotten aforetime. And I, the Aryan master in old Egypt, have myself builded my

two burial places--the one a false and mighty pyramid to which a generation of slaves could attest; the other humble, meagre, secret, rock-hewn in a desert valley by slaves who died immediately their work was done. . . . And I wonder me here in Folsom, while democracy dreams its enchantments o'er the twentieth century world, whether there, in the rock-hewn crypt of that secret, desert valley, the bones still abide that once were mine and that stiffened my animated body when I was an Aryan master high-stomached to command.

And on the great drift, southward and eastward under the burning sun that perished all descendants of the houses of Asgard and Vanaheim, I have been a king in Ceylon, a builder of Aryan monuments under Aryan kings in old Java and old Sumatra. And I have died a hundred deaths on the great South Sea drift ere ever the rebirth of me came to plant monuments, that only Aryans plant, on volcanic tropic islands that I, Darrell Standing, cannot name, being too little versed to-day in that far sea geography.

If only I were articulate to paint in the frail medium of words what I see and know and possess incorporated in my consciousness of the mighty driftage of the races in the times before our present written history began! Yes, we had our history even then. Our old men, our priests, our wise ones, told our history into tales and wrote those tales in the stars so that our seed after us should not forget. From the sky came the life-giving rain and the sunlight. And we studied the sky, learned from the stars to calculate time and apportion the seasons; and we named the stars after our heroes and our foods and our devices for getting food; and

after our wanderings, and drifts, and adventures; and after our functions and our furies of impulse and desire.

And, alas! we thought the heavens unchanging on which we wrote all our humble yearnings and all the humble things we did or dreamed of doing. When I was a Son of the Bull, I remember me a lifetime I spent at star-gazing. And, later and earlier, there were other lives in which I sang with the priests and bards the taboo-songs of the stars wherein we believed was written our imperishable record. And here, at the end of it all, I pore over books of astronomy from the prison library, such as they allow condemned men to read, and learn that even the heavens are passing fluxes, vexed with star-driftage as the earth is by the drifts of men.

Equipped with this modern knowledge, I have, returning through the little death from my earlier lives, been able to compare the heavens then and now. And the stars do change. I have seen pole stars and pole stars and dynasties of pole stars. The pole star to-day is in Ursa Minor. Yet, in those far days I have seen the pole star in Draco, in Hercules, in Vega, in Cygnus, and in Cepheus. No; not even the stars abide, and yet the memory and the knowledge of them abides in me, in the spirit of me that is memory and that is eternal. Only spirit abides. All else, being mere matter, passes, and must pass.

Oh, I do see myself to-day that one man who appeared in the elder world, blonde, ferocious, a killer and a lover, a meat-eater and a root-digger, a gypsy and a robber, who, club in hand, through millenniums of years

wandered the world around seeking meat to devour and sheltered nests for his younglings and sucklings.

I am that man, the sum of him, the all of him, the hairless biped who struggled upward from the slime and created love and law out of the anarchy of fecund life that screamed and squalled in the jungle. I am all that that man was and did become. I see myself, through the painful generations, snaring and killing the game and the fish, clearing the first fields from the forest, making rude tools of stone and bone, building houses of wood, thatching the roofs with leaves and straw, domesticating the wild grasses and meadow-roots, fathering them to become the progenitors of rice and millet and wheat and barley and all manner of succulent edibles, learning to scratch the soil, to sow, to reap, to store, beating out the fibres of plants to spin into thread and to weave into cloth, devising systems of irrigation, working in metals, making markets and trade-routes, building boats, and founding navigation--ay, and organizing village life, welding villages to villages till they became tribes, welding tribes together till they became nations, ever seeking the laws of things, ever making the laws of humans so that humans might live together in amity and by united effort beat down and destroy all manner of creeping, crawling, squalling things that might else destroy them.

I was that man in all his births and endeavours. I am that man to-day, waiting my due death by the law that I helped to devise many a thousand years ago, and by which I have died many times before this, many times.

And as I contemplate this vast past history of me, I find several great and splendid influences, and, chiefest of these, the love of woman, man's love for the woman of his kind. I see myself, the one man, the lover, always the lover. Yes, also was I the great fighter, but somehow it seems to me as I sit here and evenly balance it all, that I was, more than aught else, the great lover. It was because I loved greatly that I was the great fighter.

Sometimes I think that the story of man is the story of the love of woman. This memory of all my past that I write now is the memory of my love of woman. Ever, in the ten thousand lives and guises, I loved her. I love her now. My sleep is fraught with her; my waking fancies, no matter whence they start, lead me always to her. There is no escaping her, that eternal, splendid, ever-resplendent figure of woman.

Oh, make no mistake. I am no callow, ardent youth. I am an elderly man, broken in health and body, and soon to die. I am a scientist and a philosopher. I, as all the generations of philosophers before me, know woman for what she is--her weaknesses, and meannesses, and immodesties, and ignobilities, her earth-bound feet, and her eyes that have never seen the stars. But--and the everlasting, irrefragable fact remains: Her feet are beautiful, her eyes are beautiful, her arms and breasts are paradise, her charm is potent beyond all charm that has ever dazzled men; and, as the pole willy-nilly draws the needle, just so, willy-nilly, does she draw men.

Woman has made me laugh at death and distance, scorn fatigue and sleep. I have slain men, many men, for love of woman, or in warm blood have baptized our nuptials or washed away the stain of her favour to another. I have gone down to death and dishonour, my betrayal of my comrades and of the stars black upon me, for woman's sake--for my sake, rather, I desired her so. And I have lain in the barley, sick with yearning for her, just to see her pass and glut my eyes with the swaying wonder of her and of her hair, black with the night, or brown or flaxen, or all golden-dusty with the sun.

For woman is beautiful . . . to man. She is sweet to his tongue, and fragrance in his nostrils. She is fire in his blood, and a thunder of trumpets; her voice is beyond all music in his ears; and she can shake his soul that else stands steadfast in the draughty presence of the Titans of the Light and of the Dark. And beyond his star-gazing, in his far-imagined heavens, Valkyrie or houri, man has fain made place for her, for he could see no heaven without her. And the sword, in battle, singing, sings not so sweet a song as the woman sings to man merely by her laugh in the moonlight, or her love-sob in the dark, or by her swaying on her way under the sun while he lies dizzy with longing in the grass.

I have died of love. I have died for love, as you shall see. In a little while they will take me out, me, Darrell Standing, and make me die. And that death shall be for love. Oh, not lightly was I stirred when I slew Professor Haskell in the laboratory at the University of

California. He was a man. I was a man. And there was a woman beautiful. Do you understand? She was a woman and I was a man and a lover, and all the heredity of love was mine up from the black and squalling jungle ere love was love and man was man.

Oh, ay, it is nothing new. Often, often, in that long past have I given life and honour, place and power for love. Man is different from woman. She is close to the immediate and knows only the need of instant things. We know honour above her honour, and pride beyond her wildest guess of pride. Our eyes are far-visioned for star-gazing, while her eyes see no farther than the solid earth beneath her feet, the lover's breast upon her breast, the infant lusty in the hollow of her arm. And yet, such is our alchemy compounded of the ages, woman works magic in our dreams and in our veins, so that more than dreams and far visions and the blood of life itself is woman to us, who, as lovers truly say, is more than all the world. Yet is this just, else would man not be man, the fighter and the conqueror, treading his red way on the face of all other and lesser life--for, had man not been the lover, the royal lover, he could never have become the kingly fighter. We fight best, and die best, and live best, for what we love.

I am that one man. I see myself the many selves that have gone into the constituting of me. And ever I see the woman, the many women, who have made me and undone me, who have loved me and whom I have loved.

I remember, oh, long ago when human kind was very young, that I made me a

snare and a pit with a pointed stake upthrust in the middle thereof, for the taking of Sabre-Tooth. Sabre-Tooth, long-fanged and long-haired, was the chiefest peril to us of the squatting place, who crouched through the nights over our fires and by day increased the growing shell-bank beneath us by the clams we dug and devoured from the salt mud-flats beside us.

And when the roar and the squall of Sabre-Tooth roused us where we squatted by our dying embers, and I was wild with far vision of the proof of the pit and the stake, it was the woman, arms about me, leg-twining, who fought with me and restrained me not to go out through the dark to my desire. She was part-clad, for warmth only, in skins of animals, mangy and fire-burnt, that I had slain; she was swart and dirty with camp smoke, unwashed since the spring rains, with nails gnarled and broken, and hands that were calloused like footpads and were more like claws than like hands; but her eyes were blue as the summer sky is, as the deep sea is, and there was that in her eyes, and in her clasped arms about me, and in her heart beating against mine, that withheld me . . . though through the dark until dawn, while Sabre-Tooth squalled his wrath and his agony, I could hear my comrades snickering and sniggling to their women in that I had not the faith in my emprise and invention to venture through the night to the pit and the stake I had devised for the undoing of Sabre-Tooth. But my woman, my savage mate held me, savage that I was, and her eyes drew me, and her arms chained me, and her twining legs and heart beating to mine seduced me from my far dream of things, my man's achievement, the goal beyond goals, the taking and the slaying of Sabre-Tooth on the stake in the pit.

Once I wan Ushu, the archer. I remember it well. For I was lost from my own people, through the great forest, till I emerged on the flat lands and grass lands, and was taken in by a strange people, kin in that their skin was white, their hair yellow, their speech not too remote from mine. And she was Igar, and I drew her as I sang in the twilight, for she was destined a race-mother, and she was broad-built and full-dugged, and she could not but draw to the man heavy-muscled, deep-chested, who sang of his prowess in man-slaying and in meat-getting, and so, promised food and protection to her in her weakness whilst she mothered the seed that was to hunt the meat and live after her.

And these people knew not the wisdom of my people, in that they snared and pitted their meat and in battle used clubs and stone throwing-sticks and were unaware of the virtues of arrows swift-flying, notched on the end to fit the thong of deer-sinew, well-twisted, that sprang into straightness when released to the spring of the ask-stick bent in the middle.

And while I sang, the stranger men laughed in the twilight. And only she, Igar, believed and had faith in me. I took her alone to the hunting, where the deer sought the water-hole. And my bow twanged and sang in the covert, and the deer fell fast-stricken, and the warm meat was sweet to us, and she was mine there by the water-hole.

And because of Igar I remained with the strange men. And I taught them

the making of bows from the red and sweet-smelling wood like unto cedar. And I taught them to keep both eyes open, and to aim with the left eye, and to make blunt shafts for small game, and pronged shafts of bone for the fish in the clear water, and to flake arrow-heads from obsidian for the deer and the wild horse, the elk and old Sabre-Tooth. But the flaking of stone they laughed at, till I shot an elk through and through, the flaked stone standing out and beyond, the feathered shaft sunk in its vitals, the whole tribe applauding.

I was Ushu, the archer, and Igar was my woman and mate. We laughed under the sun in the morning, when our man-child and woman-child, yellowed like honey-bees, sprawled and rolled in the mustard, and at night she lay close in my arms, and loved me, and urged me, because of my skill at the seasoning of woods and the flaking of arrow-heads, that I should stay close by the camp and let the other men bring to me the meat from the perils of hunting. And I listened, and grew fat and short-breathed, and in the long nights, unsleeping, worried that the men of the stranger tribe brought me meat for my wisdom and honour, but laughed at my fatness and undesire for the hunting and fighting.

And in my old age, when our sons were man-grown and our daughters were mothers, when up from the southland the dark men, flat-browed, kinky-headed, surged like waves of the sea upon us and we fled back before them to the hill-slopes, Igar, like my mates far before and long after, leg-twining, arm-clasping, unseeing far visions, strove to hold me aloof from the battle.

And I tore myself from her, fat and short-breathed, while she wept that no longer I loved her, and I went out to the night-fighting and dawn-fighting, where, to the singing of bowstrings and the shrilling of arrows, feathered, sharp-pointed, we showed them, the kinky-heads, the skill of the killing and taught them the wit and the willing of slaughter.

And as I died them at the end of the fighting, there were death songs and singing about me, and the songs seemed to sing as these the words I have written when I was Ushu, the archer, and Igar, my mate-woman, leg-twining, arm-clasping, would have held me back from the battle.

Once, and heaven alone knows when, save that it was in the long ago when man was young, we lived beside great swamps, where the hills drew down close to the wide, sluggish river, and where our women gathered berries and roots, and there were herds of deer, of wild horses, of antelope, and of elk, that we men slew with arrows or trapped in the pits or hill-pockets. From the river we caught fish in nets twisted by the women of the bark of young trees.

I was a man, eager and curious as the antelope when we lured it by waving grass clumps where we lay hidden in the thick of the grass. The wild rice grew in the swamp, rising sheer from the water on the edges of the channels. Each morning the blackbirds awoke us with their chatter as they left their roosts to fly to the swamp. And through the long

twilight the air was filled with their noise as they went back to their roosts. It was the time that the rice ripened. And there were ducks also, and ducks and blackbirds feasted to fatness on the ripe rice half unhusked by the sun.

Being a man, ever restless, ever questing, wondering always what lay beyond the hills and beyond the swamps and in the mud at the river's bottom, I watched the wild ducks and blackbirds and pondered till my pondering gave me vision and I saw. And this is what I saw, the reasoning of it:

Meat was good to eat. In the end, tracing it back, or at the first, rather, all meat came from grass. The meat of the duck and of the blackbird came from the seed of the swamp rice. To kill a duck with an arrow scarce paid for the labour of stalking and the long hours in hiding. The blackbirds were too small for arrow-killing save by the boys who were learning and preparing for the taking of larger game. And yet, in rice season, blackbirds and ducks were succulently fat. Their fatness came from the rice. Why should I and mine not be fat from the rice in the same way?

And I thought it out in camp, silent, morose, while the children squabbled about me unnoticed, and while Arunga, my mate-woman, vainly scolded me and urged me to go hunting for more meat for the many of us.

Arunga was the woman I had stolen from the hill-tribes. She and I had

been a dozen moons in learning common speech after I captured her. Ah, that day when I leaped upon her, down from the over-hanging tree-branch as she padded the runway! Fairly upon her shoulders with the weight of my body I smote her, my fingers wide-spreading to clutch her. She squalled like a cat there in the runway. She fought me and bit me. The nails of her hands were like the claws of a tree-cat as they tore at me. But I held her and mastered her, and for two days beat her and forced her to travel with me down out of the canyons of the Hill-Men to the grass lands where the river flowed through the rice-swamps and the ducks and the blackbirds fed fat.

I saw my vision when the rice was ripe. I put Arunga in the bow of the fire-hollowed log that was most rudely a canoe. I bade her paddle. In the stern I spread a deerskin she had tanned. With two stout sticks I bent the stalks over the deerskin and threshed out the grain that else the blackbirds would have eaten. And when I had worked out the way of it, I gave the two stout sticks to Arunga, and sat in the bow paddling and directing.

In the past we had eaten the raw rice in passing and not been pleased with it. But now we parched it over our fire so that the grains puffed and exploded in whiteness and all the tribe came running to taste.

After that we became known among men as the Rice-Eaters and as the Sons of the Rice. And long, long after, when we were driven by the Sons of the River from the swamps into the uplands, we took the seed of the rice

with us and planted it. We learned to select the largest grains for the seed, so that all the rice we thereafter ate was larger-grained and puffier in the parching and the boiling.

But Arunga. I have said she squalled and scratched like a cat when I stole her. Yet I remember the time when her own kin of the Hill-Men caught me and carried me away into the hills. They were her father, his brother, and her two own blood-brothers. But she was mine, who had lived with me. And at night, where I lay bound like a wild pig for the slaying, and they slept weary by the fire, she crept upon them and brained them with the war-club that with my hands I had fashioned. And she wept over me, and loosed me, and fled with me, back to the wide sluggish river where the blackbirds and wild ducks fed in the rice swamps--for this was before the time of the coming of the Sons of the River.

For she was Arunga, the one woman, the eternal woman. She has lived in all times and places. She will always live. She is immortal. Once, in a far land, her name was Ruth. Also has her name been Iseult, and Helen, Pocahontas, and Unga. And no stranger man, from stranger tribes, but has found her and will find her in the tribes of all the earth.

I remember so many women who have gone into the becoming of the one woman. There was the time that Har, my brother, and I, sleeping and pursuing in turn, ever hounding the wild stallion through the daytime and night, and in a wide circle that met where the sleeping one lay, drove

the stallion unresting through hunger and thirst to the meekness of weakness, so that in the end he could but stand and tremble while we bound him with ropes twisted of deer-hide. On our legs alone, without hardship, aided merely by wit--the plan was mine--my brother and I walked that fleet-footed creature into possession.

And when all was ready for me to get on his back--for that had been my vision from the first--Selpa, my woman, put her arms about me, and raised her voice and persisted that Har, and not I, should ride, for Har had neither wife nor young ones and could die without hurt. Also, in the end she wept, so that I was raped of my vision, and it was Har, naked and clinging, that bestrode the stallion when he vaulted away.

It was sunset, and a time of great wailing, when they carried Har in from the far rocks where they found him. His head was quite broken, and like honey from a fallen bee-tree his brains dripped on the ground. His mother strewed wood-ashes on her head and blackened her face. His father cut off half the fingers of one hand in token of sorrow. And all the women, especially the young and unwedded, screamed evil names at me; and the elders shook their wise heads and muttered and mumbled that not their fathers nor their fathers' fathers had betrayed such a madness. Horse meat was good to eat; young colts were tender to old teeth; and only a fool would come to close grapples with any wild horse save when an arrow had pierced it, or when it struggled on the stake in the midst of the pit.

And Selpa scolded me to sleep, and in the morning woke me with her chatter, ever declaiming against my madness, ever pronouncing her claim upon me and the claims of our children, till in the end I grew weary, and forsook my far vision, and said never again would I dream of bestriding the wild horse to fly swift as its feet and the wind across the sands and the grass lands.

And through the years the tale of my madness never ceased from being told over the camp-fire. Yet was the very telling the source of my vengeance; for the dream did not die, and the young ones, listening to the laugh and the sneer, redreamed it, so that in the end it was Othar, my eldest-born, himself a sheer stripling, that walked down a wild stallion, leapt on its back, and flew before all of us with the speed of the wind. Thereafter, that they might keep up with him, all men were trapping and breaking wild horses. Many horses were broken, and some men, but I lived at the last to the day when, at the changing of camp-sites in the pursuit of the meat in its seasons, our very babes, in baskets of willow-withes, were slung side and side on the backs of our horses that carried our camp-trappage and dunnage.

I, a young man, had seen my vision, dreamed my dream; Selpa, the woman, had held me from that far desire; but Othar, the seed of us to live after, glimpsed my vision and won to it, so that our tribe became wealthy in the gains of the chase.

There was a woman--on the great drift down out of Europe, a weary drift

of many generations, when we brought into India the shorthorn cattle and the planting of barley. But this woman was long before we reached India. We were still in the mid-most of that centuries-long drift, and no shrewdness of geography can now place for me that ancient valley.

The woman was Nuhila. The valley was narrow, not long, and the swift slope of its floor and the steep walls of its rim were terraced for the growing of rice and of millet--the first rice and millet we Sons of the Mountain had known. They were a meek people in that valley. They had become soft with the farming of fat land made fatter by water. Theirs was the first irrigation we had seen, although we had little time to mark their ditches and channels by which all the hill waters flowed to the fields they had builded. We had little time to mark, for we Sons of the Mountain, who were few, were in flight before the Sons of the Snub-Nose, who were many. We called them the Noseless, and they called themselves the Sons of the Eagle. But they were many, and we fled before them with our shorthorn cattle, our goats, and our barleyseed, our women and children.

While the Snub-Noses slew our youths at the rear, we slew at our fore the folk of the valley who opposed us and were weak. The village was mud-built and grass-thatched; the encircling wall was of mud, but quite tall. And when we had slain the people who had built the wall, and sheltered within it our herds and our women and children, we stood on the wall and shouted insult to the Snub-Noses. For we had found the mud granaries filled with rice and millet. Our cattle could eat the thatches. And the

time of the rains was at hand, so that we should not want for water.

It was a long siege. Near to the beginning, we gathered together the women, and elders, and children we had not slain, and forced them out through the wall they had builded. But the Snub-Noses slew them to the last one, so that there was more food in the village for us, more food in the valley for the Snub-Noses.

It was a weary long siege. Sickness smote us, and we died of the plague that arose from our buried ones. We emptied the mud-granaries of their rice and millet. Our goats and shorthorns ate the thatch of the houses, and we, ere the end, ate the goats and the shorthorns.

Where there had been five men of us on the wall, there came a time when there was one; where there had been half a thousand babes and younglings of ours, there were none. It was Nuhila, my woman, who cut off her hair and twisted it that I might have a strong string for my bow. The other women did likewise, and when the wall was attacked, stood shoulder to shoulder with us, in the midst of our spears and arrows raining down potsherds and cobblestones on the heads of the Snub-Noses.

Even the patient Snub-Noses we well-nigh out-patienced. Came a time when of ten men of us, but one was alive on the wall, and of our women remained very few, and the Snub-Noses held parley. They told us we were a strong breed, and that our women were men-mothers, and that if we would let them have our women they would leave us alone in the valley to

possess for ourselves and that we could get women from the valleys to the south.

And Nuhila said no. And the other women said no. And we sneered at the Snub-Noses and asked if they were weary of fighting. And we were as dead men then, as we sneered at our enemies, and there was little fight left in us we were so weak. One more attack on the wall would end us. We knew it. Our women knew it. And Nuhila said that we could end it first and outwit the Snub-Noses. And all our women agreed. And while the Snub-Noses prepared for the attack that would be final, there, on the wall, we slew our women. Nuhila loved me, and leaned to meet the thrust of my sword, there on the wall. And we men, in the love of tribehood and tribesmen, slew one another till remained only Horda and I alive in the red of the slaughter. And Horda was my elder, and I leaned to his thrust. But not at once did I die. I was the last of the Sons of the Mountain, for I saw Horda, himself fall on his blade and pass quickly. And dying with the shouts of the oncoming Snub-Noses growing dim in my ears, I was glad that the Snub-Noses would have no sons of us to bring up by our women.

I do not know when this time was when I was a Son of the Mountain and when we died in the narrow valley where we had slain the Sons of the Rice and the Millet. I do not know, save that it was centuries before the wide-spreading drift of all us Sons of the Mountain fetched into India, and that it was long before ever I was an Aryan master in Old Egypt building my two burial places and defacing the tombs of kings before me.

I should like to tell more of those far days, but time in the present is short. Soon I shall pass. Yet am I sorry that I cannot tell more of those early drifts, when there was crushage of peoples, or descending ice-sheets, or migrations of meat.

Also, I should like to tell of Mystery. For always were we curious to solve the secrets of life, death, and decay. Unlike the other animals, man was for ever gazing at the stars. Many gods he created in his own image and in the images of his fancy. In those old times I have worshipped the sun and the dark. I have worshipped the husked grain as the parent of life. I have worshipped Sar, the Corn Goddess. And I have worshipped sea gods, and river gods, and fish gods.

Yes, and I remember Ishtar ere she was stolen from us by the Babylonians, and Ea, too, was ours, supreme in the Under World, who enabled Ishtar to conquer death. Mitra, likewise, was a good old Aryan god, ere he was filched from us or we discarded him. And I remember, on a time, long after the drift when we brought the barley into India, that I came down into India, a horse-trader, with many servants and a long caravan at my back, and that at that time they were worshipping Bodhisatwa.

Truly, the worships of the Mystery wandered as did men, and between filchings and borrowings the gods had as vagabond a time of it as did we. As the Sumerians took the loan of Shamashnapishtin from us, so did the Sons of Shem take him from the Sumerians and call him Noah.

Why, I smile me to-day, Darrell Standing, in Murderers' Row, in that I was found guilty and awarded death by twelve jurymen staunch and true. Twelve has ever been a magic number of the Mystery. Nor did it originate with the twelve tribes of Israel. Star-gazers before them had placed the twelve signs of the Zodiac in the sky. And I remember me, when I was of the Assir, and of the Vanir, that Odin sat in judgment over men in the court of the twelve gods, and that their names were Thor, Baldur, Niord, Frey, Tyr, Bregi, Heimdal, Hoder, Vidar, Ull, Forseti, and Loki.

Even our Valkyries were stolen from us and made into angels, and the wings of the Valkyries' horses became attached to the shoulders of the angels. And our Helheim of that day of ice and frost has become the hell of to-day, which is so hot an abode that the blood boils in one's veins, while with us, in our Helheim, the place was so cold as to freeze the marrow inside the bones. And the very sky, that we dreamed enduring, eternal, has drifted and veered, so that we find to-day the scorpion in the place where of old we knew the goat, and the archer in the place of the crab.

Worships and worships! Ever the pursuit of the Mystery! I remember the lame god of the Greeks, the master-smith. But their vulcan was the Germanic Wieland, the master-smith captured and hamstrung lame of a leg by Nidung, the kind of the Nids. But before that he was our master-smith, our forger and hammerer, whom we named Il-marinen. And him we begat of our fancy, giving him the bearded sun-god for father, and

nursing him by the stars of the bear. For, he, Vulcan, or Wieland, or Ilmarinen, was born under the pine tree, from the hair of the wolf, and was called also the bear-father ere ever the Germans and Greeks purloined and worshipped him. In that day we called ourselves the Sons of the Bear and the Sons of the Wolf, and the bear and the wolf were our totems. That was before our drift south on which we joined with the Sons of the Tree-Grove and taught them our totems and tales.

Yes, and who was Kashyapa, who was Pururavas, but our lame master-smith, our iron-worker, carried by us in our drifts and re-named and worshipped by the south-dwellers and the east-dwellers, the Sons of the Pole and of the Fire Drill and Fire Socket.

But the tale is too long, though I should like to tell of the three-leaved Herb of Life by which Sigmund made Sinfioti alive again. For this is the very soma-plant of India, the holy grail of King Arthur, the--but enough! enough!

And yet, as I calmly consider it all, I conclude that the greatest thing in life, in all lives, to me and to all men, has been woman, is woman, and will be woman so long as the stars drift in the sky and the heavens flux eternal change. Greater than our toil and endeavour, the play of invention and fancy, battle and star-gazing and mystery--greatest of all has been woman.

Even though she has sung false music to me, and kept my feet solid on the

ground, and drawn my star-roving eyes ever back to gaze upon her, she, the conserver of life, the earth-mother, has given me my great days and nights and fulness of years. Even mystery have I imaged in the form of her, and in my star-charting have I placed her figure in the sky.

All my toils and devices led to her; all my far visions saw her at the end. When I made the fire-drill and fire-socket, it was for her. It was for her, although I did not know it, that I put the stake in the pit for old Sabre-Tooth, tamed the horse, slew the mammoth, and herded my reindeer south in advance of the ice-sheet. For her I harvested the wild rice, tamed the barley, the wheat, and the corn.

For her, and the seed to come after whose image she bore, I have died in tree-tops and stood long sieges in cave-mouths and on mud-walls. For her I put the twelve signs in the sky. It was she I worshipped when I bowed before the ten stones of jade and adored them as the moons of gestation.

Always has woman crouched close to earth like a partridge hen mothering her young; always has my wantonness of roving led me out on the shining ways; and always have my star-paths returned me to her, the figure everlasting, the woman, the one woman, for whose arms I had such need that clasped in them I have forgotten the stars.

For her I accomplished Odysseys, scaled mountains, crossed deserts; for her I led the hunt and was forward in battle; and for her and to her I sang my songs of the things I had done. All ecstasies of life and

rhapsodies of delight have been mine because of her. And here, at the end, I can say that I have known no sweeter, deeper madness of being than to drown in the fragrant glory and forgetfulness of her hair.

One word more. I remember me Dorothy, just the other day, when I still lectured on agronomy to farmer-boy students. She was eleven years old. Her father was dean of the college. She was a woman-child, and a woman, and she conceived that she loved me. And I smiled to myself, for my heart was untouched and lay elsewhere.

Yet was the smile tender, for in the child's eyes I saw the woman eternal, the woman of all times and appearances. In her eyes I saw the eyes of my mate of the jungle and tree-top, of the cave and the squatting-place. In her eyes I saw the eyes of Igar when I was Ushu the archer, the eyes of Arunga when I was the rice-harvester, the eyes of Selpa when I dreamed of bestriding the stallion, the eyes of Nuhila who leaned to the thrust of my sword. Yes, there was that in her eyes that made them the eyes of Lei-Lei whom I left with a laugh on my lips, the eyes of the Lady Om for forty years my beggar-mate on highway and byway, the eyes of Philippa for whom I was slain on the grass in old France, the eyes of my mother when I was the lad Jesse at the Mountain Meadows in the circle of our forty great wagons.

She was a woman-child, but she was daughter of all women, as her mother before her, and she was the mother of all women to come after her. She was Sar, the corn-goddess. She was Isthar who conquered death. She was

Sheba and Cleopatra; she was Esther and Herodias. She was Mary the Madonna, and Mary the Magdalene, and Mary the sister of Martha, also she was Martha. And she was Brunnhilde and Guinevere, Iseult and Juliet, Heloise and Nicolette. Yes, and she was Eve, she was Lilith, she was Astarte. She was eleven years old, and she was all women that had been, all women to be.

I sit in my cell now, while the flies hum in the drowsy summer afternoon, and I know that my time is short. Soon they will apparel me in the shirt without a collar. . . . But hush, my heart. The spirit is immortal. After the dark I shall live again, and there will be women. The future holds the little women for me in the lives I am yet to live. And though the stars drift, and the heavens lie, ever remains woman, resplendent, eternal, the one woman, as I, under all my masquerades and misadventures, am the one man, her mate.