

**THE
PAGAN'S
PROGRESS**

By
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THE PAGAN'S PROGRESS



FLED HOWLING INTO THE NORTH

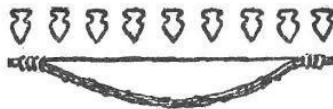
DEDICATION

To M. B. H. and F. B. H.

Under a wide roof, in the midst of flowers, trees, sunshine, horses, dogs, meat, wine, wit, friendly faces and all good things, whither my affection had brought me at the invitation of yours, this violent story of the Pagan born to darkness, and progressing to the first glimmer of light, was written. But you must do me the further kindness to believe that it is with no thought of squaring accounts that I dedicate it to you. Except in the valvy heart, there is no squaring of accounts among friends; except in that lively organ, there is no bringing of the credits and debits of intercourse to an honest balance and a delicate.

It is my pleasure to owe you far more than I can pay ever. In dedicating this story, it may be that I am adding grossly to that debt. If so, I ask your most lenient consideration. If not, I still ask your consideration—not for the dedication of my Pagan, but for the affection with which he is dedicated. For I believe this: that without affection, the world, Pagan and Christian, would become like unto the tottering moon, “staple in desolation.”

G. M.



PREFACE

Those to whom he had been charitable brought the body of the great hunter to his cave, and laid it within. But first they carried out the clubs and the nets and the fish spears and the war spears, and all that was of use, to be divided among them, for the great hunter would not need such things any more.

Dissolution—decay—dust—nothing. It was thus that they conceived the end of man.

No brutish face in that hairy circle looked upward; no eagle eye saw aught but the cadavre, the cave, the weapons and the surrounding forest. The great hunter was dead; the keen eyes closed, the sensitive ears deaf, the nostrils still.

Bring down the roof of the cave and cover him, close up the mouth of the cave and forget him. He is dead and done for. Give his weapons to those that can use them. The great hands are inert; the mighty thighs have lost their springs. He will run no more on any trail. His hunting is over. He has made his last journey to a dark place and a long sleep.

For you, tribesman, a short span wherein to shout the war cry and swing the club, a little sunlight to see by, a few springs of desire, a few rains, a few snows. The longer the better, for after,—all will be at an end. Like the great hunter, insensate and unaware, you will lie in the dark for the ages of ages.

Wail, tribeswomen and beat your breasts! You shall bring life into the world, but you shall not take life away.

The sleep of life is a good sleep, for man awakens therefrom happy and refreshed. But from the sleep of death there is no awakening. Man born to light, dies into darkness.

Thus it was in the forest ten million years ago.

II

There lies to-day, in the midst of a great house, the body of a man awaiting the last honors which can be rendered to it.

A week ago the doings of that man stirred two countries; two countries, to-day, are shaken by the news of his death. The hundreds to whom he was good and generous, mourn it; those who bore him ill-will are shocked by it; the world regrets it. For all join in remembering that the man, human and frail as other men, was still broad, brilliant and fabulous, a choice and master spirit of his age.

There he lies, the great man, in the midst of his earthly treasures. Presently he will be laid in the narrow house, and they will remain behind. Nothing of the man shall go with him out of the world but that which he brought into the world with him. And tho' it may be that there is none so presumptuous as to proclaim where and how the man shall arise, yet there are few indeed so obstinate as to believe that he has perished utterly.

For we know that all things move onward and upward. The cell became the ape, the ape became the man, and the man shall become—what? That we must not know clearly. But we must know that it will be something above man, and beyond.

Who is so beholden to life as not to look upon the idea of death with comfort? Not to-morrow, but in the course of years, services and honors? By all means, when the trumpet calls, let us pass comfortably upward into death. For this death is no descent into darkness, but rather a progress of time and soul; and the body of the barren woman shall be fertile in death, and the soul of the wicked man shall be cleansed. And we that were born to darkness shall die into the light.

Thus it is to-day after the schooling of the ages.

III

Read then, how Sunrise, the pagan, was born in the dark, and having suffered at the hands of death, came to see the light glimmering beyond, and the life.

G. M.

CHAPTER I

ONE EYE

Old One Eye sat in the mouth of his cave and blinked. Though he blinked both eyes, he could see only out of one of them. Years ago, when One Eye was called Swift Foot, and could run down a deer in the open, the other had been pierced by a thorn and destroyed.

It was wonderful when you came to look at him, to think that old One Eye ever could have been a swift runner, for his legs were no longer nor bigger than his arms. His body was long, heavily paunched and massive; his head hung forward on his hairy chest and he sat hunched over like an ape.

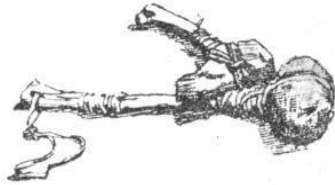
In truth, One Eye looked very much like an ape. His forehead was flat and retreating, his jaw undershot and powerful, and he was covered with matted hair pretty much all over.

His one eye at times was beady black with intelligence, and the next minute it would waver and become plaintive and unreasoning like the eye of a frightened little child. His manner of life was like his eye.

At times he would behave after a cunningly-thought-out schedule, and the next minute he would be doing something that was purely instinctive.

As he sat in the mouth of his cave blinking, and scratching his stomach with a blunt flint, he was revolving a mighty question. One Eye had a daughter.

According to our notions she was very ugly, but the men of the tribe to which One Eye belonged were after her. It was the mating season and she was of suitable age to pair. She looked like her father, but was not so hairy. Her mother had been eaten by wolves when Maku (for that was the girl's name) was only a few years old. And so she had been brought up by her father, who was very fond of her. And now that it was time for them to part, he naturally wanted a considerable compensation for the loss of his daughter. She made him very comfortable.



Strong Hand had offered three very finely balanced clubs. You had only to swing one to be confident of getting your man. And One Eye wanted the clubs very dearly. He loved to fight—and get the best of it. But then, Fish Catch, the renowned maker of nets, had offered him one of his best for the girl. And One Eye, who could not make nets himself, knew that his own private net was so rotted as to be useless, and that in order to live comfortably it was necessary to have a net—for a good net meant good food. So he was sadly torn in his mind.

There had been other offers for the girl, but none so glittering. And One Eye had promised on this very afternoon to decide between Strong Hand and Fish Catch.

When they came up, stooping, hairy, bent of knee, and stealthy, the one bearing the net, the other the clubs, One Eye had not come to any decision.

They sat down before him, without salutation, and for some moments blinked and dug at the earth with their toes. Strong Hand was the first to speak.

“With any of these clubs—” he began.

But Fish Catch broke in.

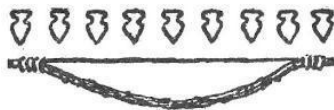
“Clubs!” and grunted. “What are the use of weapons to one that is without means of procuring food. It is well known that One Eye is too old to hunt with success. If he would live he must fish. Now this net—see it is of the best fibre, and knotted as I alone can knot. It will last you twenty years—maybe twenty-five—”

“One Eye,” said Strong Hand, “is first of all a fighter. If he gives me the girl I will see to it that he never wants for food.”

“That is the best talk yet,” said One Eye.

“Then you give her to me?” said Strong Hand.

“Slowly—slowly,” said One Eye. “I must have time to consider. But whom have we here?”



CHAPTER II

NO MAN

The three paused to listen. The intelligent look went out of their eyes, and gave place to the plaintive child look—the animal look.

“That will be No Man,” said Fish Catch presently.

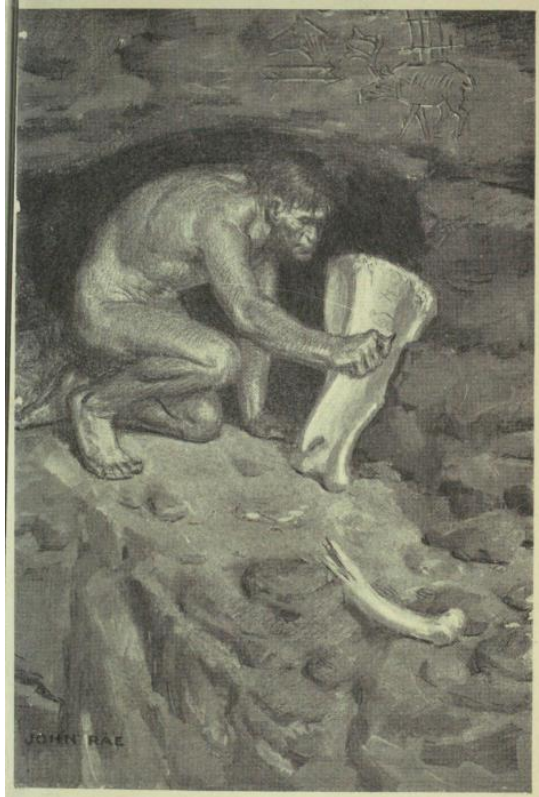
Now if you or I had been in the glade in front of One Eye’s cave, we would not have known that there was anybody but One Eye, Strong Hand and Fish Catch within a hundred miles. But these three men having the acuteness of dogs, had heard footsteps that were half a mile away, and not only that, but they had almost instantly known to whom the footsteps belonged. If the wind had been right, they could have told also by sense of smell.

“He is coming in this direction,” said One Eye.

“He steps stronger with one foot than the other,” said Strong Hand. “He is carrying something heavy.”

“Perhaps No Man wants One Eye’s daughter,” said Fish Catch with an ugly laugh.

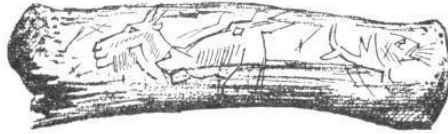
“I wonder what he is carrying?” said One Eye.



HE SCRATCHED PICTURES ON BONE

This No Man was so called, because he would neither hunt, fish, make weapons, nets, or marry. Therefore he was No Man. He lived on charity, and scratched pictures on bone. That was the only thing that interested him. He was suffered to live only because he was mysterious and because the tribe liked to go to his cave and look at the pictures when there was nothing better to do.

Presently he came out of the woods, slope-shouldered and long-armed like the others, but not so heavily built, nor so apishly skulled. He seemed, besides, less stealthy, but more timid.



He had tucked under his right arm a huge flat bone. This he laid before One Eye. It was covered with little etched scenes of the chase and of the fight—throughout which a man, palpably having but one eye, deported himself with the utmost heroism—now strangling a bear, and now beating the life out of an enemy.

“This,” said No Man, “is the whole story of One Eye from the beginning. It is the most beautiful picture bone that has ever been made in the world. Sitting alone in my cave, it befell on a time that a great loneliness came upon me. And the woman whose image rose most often before me, was the daughter of One Eye. Therefore I have wrought the bone, sparing no labor, and now I offer it to One Eye for the loss of his daughter. It is a thing which will keep him company in his old age. For to look upon it is to be reminded of his glorious deeds.”

As One Eye examined the picture bone, the intelligence went out of his one eye. It wavered and became plaintive. Reason told him that nets were more valuable than clubs and clubs more valuable than pictures. But desire, which is a thing apart from reason, clamored for the bone.

“I wish this picture bone,” he said presently. “It is of no use, neither is it of any value. Yet I wish it.”

Strong Hand and Fish Catch looked at one another stealthily and then at No Man. It would be impossible to say which sprang upon him first, nor at whose hands he suffered the most. They so choked, beat and clubbed him that he screamed for mercy. One Eye blinked in the mouth of his cave and chuckled.

“Is it enough?” cried Strong Hand presently, “Filthy-do-nothing—Marrowless-bone.”

“It is enough,” said No Man, and they let him go.

Directly he had gained his feet, he ran from that place with incredible swiftness, and howled as he ran.

“The picture bone,” said Fish Catch to One Eye, “is now ours, but knowing that you desire it, we give it to you to be a solace in your old age. And now it remains for you to choose between those admirably balanced but somewhat antiquated clubs which Strong Hand offers and this invaluable net knotted by myself.”

“Fish Catch—Strong Hand,” said One Eye, “I have thought of a way by which we may all be satisfied. The thought came to me when you fell upon No Man. Let each one of you take a club, and at the word fight, the one who wins shall give me his present and take the girl.”

Fish Catch measured Strong Hand with his eye; Strong Hand measured Fish Catch. They nodded, which meant that what the old man said was good talk.

The latter called over his shoulder into the cave.

“Maku, come out! There will be a fight!”

Maku came at once, eagerly. She was, as we have said, the image of her father, only less hairy. She was considered very alluring by the young men of the tribe.

Meanwhile Strong Hand and Fish Catch had each taken a club and backed away from each other.

“Is it about me?” asked Maku.

“It is.”

She laughed happily.

“Fight!” commanded One Eye.

At the word Strong Hand and Fish Catch sprang forward and fell upon each other with roars and blows. There was no question of fence involved, only the ability to hit hardest and take the most punishment. As they fought they became beasts, yelping, snarling, snapping and foaming—totally unlike articulate men. Blows that would have splintered a modern skull to atoms were given and taken. Now the clubs cracked upon bone and now thudded upon muscle. One Eye and Maku roared with laughter and screamed with pleasure. The fight ended with a blow that broke Fish Catch’s forehead into two halves. But, although he fell as if struck by lightning, he did not die at once; he moaned and his lips twitched. His eyes were plaintive and uncomprehending like those of a frightened child. He blinked, too, as he died.

Strong Hand tossed his club down at One Eye's feet.

"The girl is yours," said One Eye.

Strong Hand's eyes glittered and he looked the girl over. He reached forward a vast hairy hand and took her by the shoulders. But she wrenched loose, half laughing, half screaming, and fled into the cave. Strong Hand followed. One Eye chuckled and thought upon the days of his youth.

In the darkness of the cave there was a sudden fierce struggle, a cry of pain from Strong Hand, and Maku, bounding from the entrance, made swiftly down the slope toward the forest. But Strong Hand, bleeding on the shoulder where her teeth had met, was close behind. Swift as she was, he caught up with her in a few bounds and felled her with a blow on the head. Stunned and motionless she lay at his feet.

Strong Hand twined his left hand in her long black hair and dragged her after him until the trees had closed behind them both.

When One Eye had done laughing, for the whole scene had seemed very humorous to him, he gathered together his treasures and hid them in the cave.

"I now have," he said, "the clubs, the net, the strongest among three for a son-in-law, and also the picture bone. I am, therefore, the richest man in the tribe, save only Moon Face, and than him there is none richer in all the forest."

When One Eye thought about the clubs his eye flashed and he clinched his hands. When he thought about the net he

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