

"A New Idea in Fiction"

THE STAR ROVER

by

JACK LONDON



With a sketch of Jack London's
life and a complete descriptive
list of his novels, short stories
and economic writings.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

64-66 Fifth Avenue

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Jack London and His Work

A Sketch of the Life of the Author of
"The Star Rover"



WHEN Jack London writes of the intimate emotions of the people, we know that what he says is a presentation of the result of close association. Born in San Francisco in 1876, the future never was certain for him and always depended upon his own efforts. When he was only eleven years old he left the ranch in the Livermore Valley, where he had spent his early youth, and went to school. But education failed to satisfy the longing for expression that had been growing in him with the growth of his vision of the world, and so he went to Oakland, where his early adventures in the realm of literature, which in this particular instance was the public library, brought him into contact with the romantic influence of such minds as those of Du Chaillu, Ouida, and Washington Irving. In the tales and travels of these writers the ambitious lad read a promise of the future. From that time on he craved contact with the bigness of the world and ever followed beyond the horizon of his earlier life the enthralling trail of experience.

From the days when he used to build Alhambras of his own from whatever materials his imagination found at hand, London carried on into his later youth a strong undercurrent of romance, an irresistible longing for adventure. He left home—he says himself that he didn't run away, but simply left—and joined the oyster pirates in San Francisco Bay. When he had exhausted the excitement of piracy he turned with as ready enthusiasm to the prosecution of it, joining the Fish Patrol, and was entrusted with the arrest of those who were, perhaps, his former comrades. The thrilling tales which were published under the title of "Tales of the Fish Patrol," are a vivid record of London's experiences along the California coast. In them is a wild buccaneer spirit, and the savor of the sea, that grips readers old and young.

No one who has read the "Sea Wolf" can fail to feel that it is written less as a deliberate sea-story than as a passionate expression of the author's estimate of his own experiences before the mast, sealing in Behring Sea, or along the coast of Japan. In its pages one can feel the very wildest breath of adventure in all the wild range of thrilling sea-lore. It is a story of strong and compelling characters strongly told in London's most vigorous style. And no one who remembers the "Sea Wolf" can fail to feel his blood dance again on reading "The Mutiny of the Elsinore." It is the same type of book—descriptive of a life which London knows perhaps better than any living writer and which he pictures more accurately than anyone has done since Dana's

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"Two Years Before the Mast." So long as we cannot round the Horn in person no better vehicle for an imaginary journey than "The Mutiny of the Elsinore" can be found.

Everywhere Jack London has been he has worked, worked among workers. Hard bodily labor has been sanctification and salvation to him. He has worked with the longshoremen and shovelers in San Francisco and from dawn till late at night in a jute factory, and his experiences have given him authority as a portrayer of the ways and feelings of laborers. From his participation in the work of the world he gathered material for his future career as a writer, but it was some time before he found an opportunity of trying his skill in literary work, of translating to his fellowmen his own broad contact with all the voiceless, joyless, elements of humanity. A prize offered by the San Francisco *Call* for the best descriptive article, gave him his first opportunity. At his mother's suggestion he entered the competition and submitted an article on a typhoon off the coast of Japan. Over students from Berkeley and Stanford Universities he was awarded the prize. His success in this competition seriously turned his thoughts to writing.

But so far in his life schools and reading and discussion and ambition had not materially aided London in his quest for literary ability, or rather the recognition of literary ability already acquired. He turned now towards a new opportunity. He tramped from Maine to California, with his sense of appreciation wide open, gathering together the fragments of his faith into a vast understanding of the common man. Out of this experience came "The Road," which is a remarkable record of sympathy with the vagrant poor, and a most absorbing narrative of adventurous journeying.

After his experiences on the road London returned to Oakland and went to school, being then in his nineteenth year. He worked as a janitor by way of paying for his education while he was trying to visualize his past experiences, so that he might write them out for the *High School Magazine*. The strain of overwork, however, was too much for him, and he had to give it up. But he did not give up hope of a University Education, and after three months cramming, in which he did three years work, he entered the University of California. The strain of additional work in a laundry forced him to give up even this before he had completed his Freshman year. Then for a while he worked in the laundry, writing in his spare time, and often falling asleep with his pen in his hand. Three months of this kind of existence convinced him that as a writer he had proved a failure, and with a desperate hope in his heart he left for the then widely-heralded Klondike to seek for gold.

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In the Klondike "nobody talks. Everybody thinks. You get your true perspective. I got mine," he says. After a year of frozen toil in the North, an outbreak of scurvy compelled him to leave. The homeward journey of 1900 miles in an open boat saw him making the only notes of his trip, analyzing his experiences and clarifying his conclusions. London returned home to take up the burden of supporting his family, as his father had died during his absence. He wrote endlessly, and tried for long to get the magazines to accept his stories, ultimately with success, and never again was success beyond his reach.

One can always see in his books the strong influence of his Klondike experiences. "The Call of the Wild," which raised him to brotherhood with Dr. John Brown, the author of "Rab and His Friends," and Alfred Olinphant, who wrote "Bob Son of Battle," is a direct result of his search for gold, and is worth more than whatever wealth the hard hills beyond the Yukon may have yielded him. It is as understanding and sympathetic a study of dog-life as one could find in a life-long search throughout the field of literature, and it is as fine a story as London has ever written. "White Fang" is another tale of the North full of wonderful adventure, through which there sounds an unusual note of tenderness.

In the summer of 1902 Jack London lived in the slums of London, England, gathering material for his book "The People of the Abyss." He found the underworld of that great city beyond his belief—sordid, broken, and without hope, and he wrote of it as he found it. It is a remarkable book and perhaps unique as a presentation of existence below the level of life. The author has written other social studies, "Revolution," and "The War of the Classes," which, because they are so much the voice of authoritative experience in the ever-present problem they discuss, must carry no common weight of evidence to the student of sociology.

In the short story London is, perhaps, at his best. That keen appreciation of the value of intensity which is manifest in all his writings contributes to his short stories precisely the right dramatic feeling, giving them an incredibly accurate balance. Whoever does not appreciate this should read "The Game," "Love of Life," "The Faith of Men," or any one in the numerous volumes of sketches he has published. His "South Sea Tales" are vivid pieces of coloring which well illustrate the author's skill at conveying to the reader a sense of the reality of adventure.

"Martin Eden" is a story that cannot fail to appeal strongly to everyone, the picture of an intellectual Individualist who failed because of his lack of faith in man. It is in a sense London's most thoughtful book.

No one in this present day of toil and doubtful com-

Jack London and His Work

pensation can fail to be stirred at the thought of the horror of child labor, the terrible waste of humanity which is sapping the vitality of our future, and no one who is at all interested in the welfare of mankind can fail to be deeply affected by Jack London's study, "When God Laughs."

"The Valley of the Moon" has been called the most broad-minded and well-balanced story he has written. It is a love-story which never loses sight of the problems of social and economic adjustment and the chief characters are among the best Mr. London has ever drawn. The latest work of this remarkably versatile writer, "The Star Rover," stands alone in the originality of its conception. There is a strange and gripping vitality in its tone which will appeal to a greater audience than London has yet reached and which will touch unexpected chords of sympathy in the imagination of his readers.

"The Master Achievement of Jack London's Imagination"

THE STAR ROVER

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Cloth, frontispiece in colors, 12mo, \$1.50.



URING in its theme and vivid in execution, this is one of the most original and gripping stories Mr. London has ever written. The fundamental idea upon which the plot rests—the supremacy of mind over body—has served to inspire writers before, but rarely, if indeed ever, has it been employed as strikingly or with as much success as in this book. With a wealth of coloring and detail the author tells of what came of an attempt on the part of the hero to free his spirit from his body, of the wonderful adventures this "star rover" had, adventures covering long lapses of years and introducing strange people in stranger lands.

He has hit upon a new idea in fiction and has worked it out with patient, painstaking art.

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The relapse of civilization into barbarism is a theme which, as those familiar with Mr. London's style will at once see, is admirably suited to his powers as a novelist.
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"The Strength of the Strong" is a collection of short stories containing some of Jack London's best work. Besides the title piece there are six tales: South of the Slot, The Unparalleled Invasion, The Enemy of all the World, The Dream of Debs, The Sea Farmer, and Samuel. They are representative London stories—his most mature and interesting work—startlingly original as to theme and masterly as to treatment.

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Descriptive List of Jack London's Writings

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