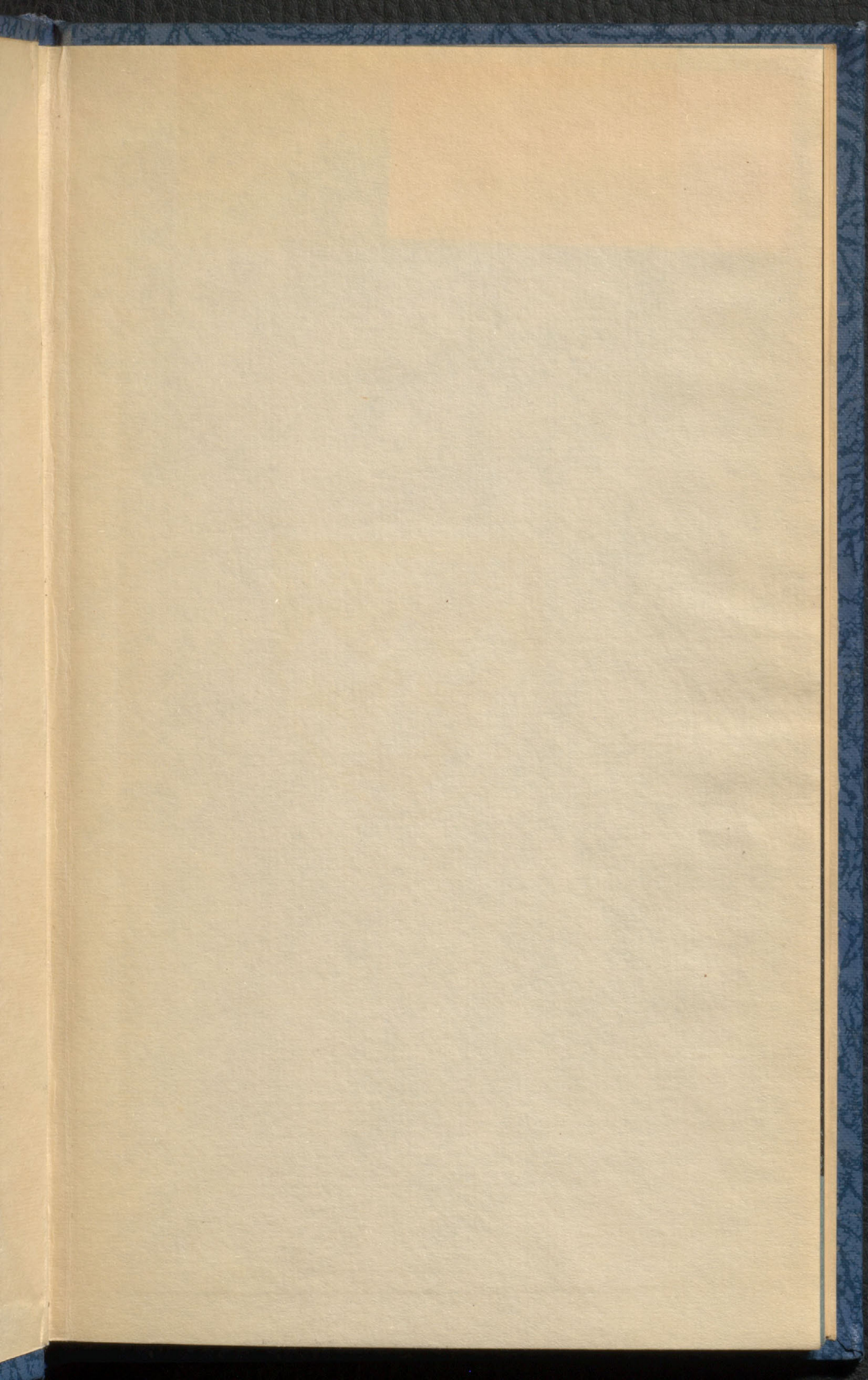


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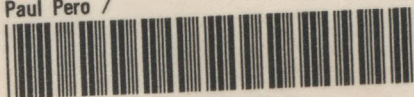
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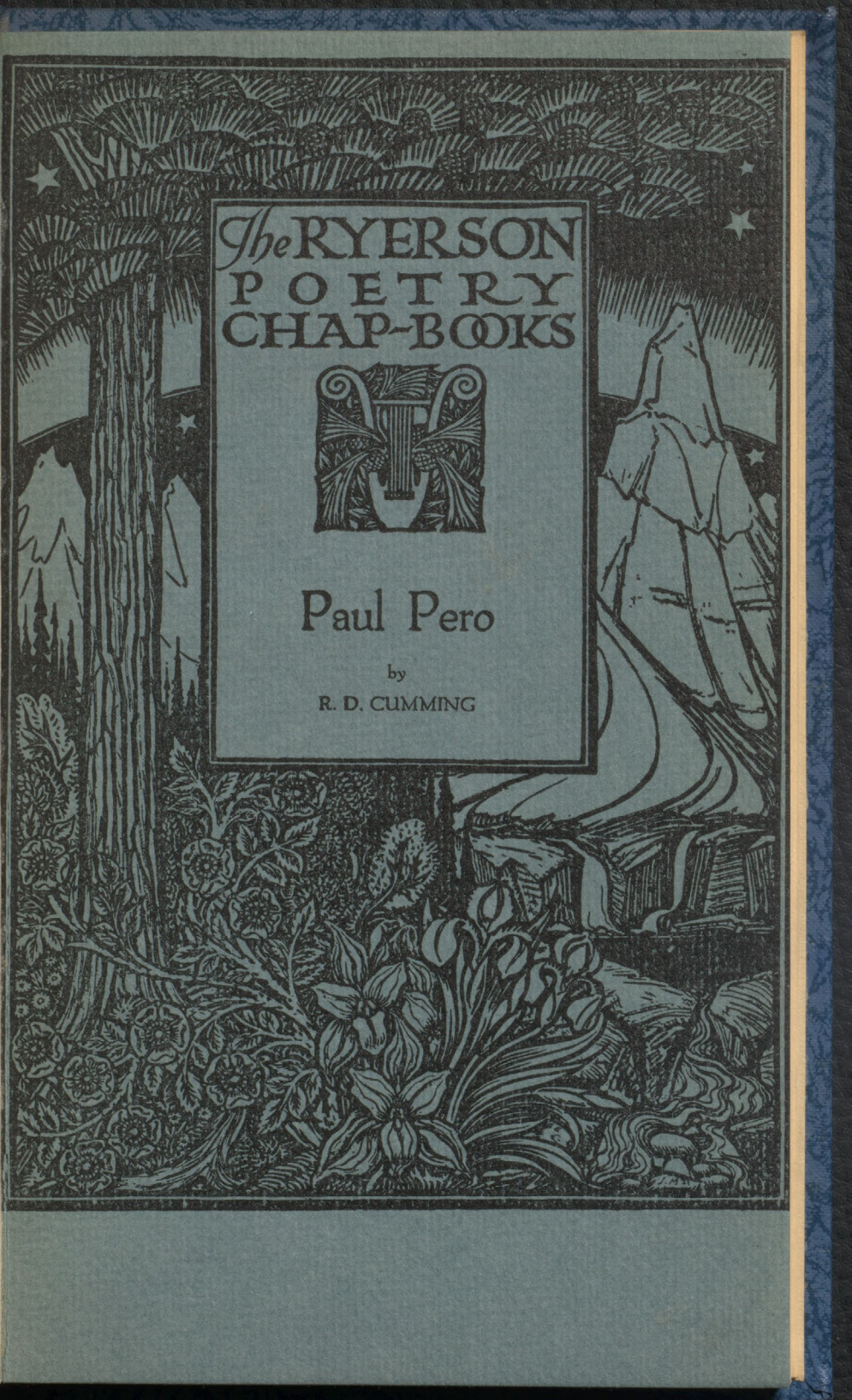
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Paul Pero /



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Paul Pero

by

R. D. CUMMING

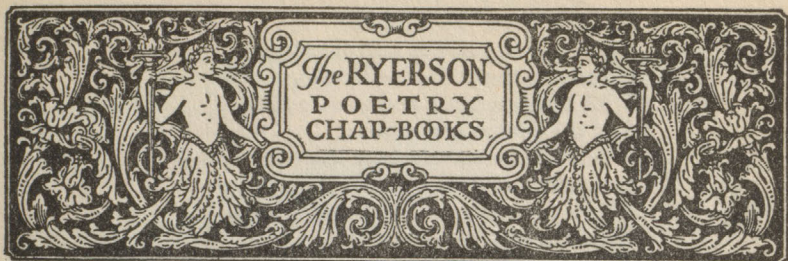
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Mr. R. D. Cumming was born in Glasgow, Scotland, and came to Canada with his parents in 1885, spending a number of his early years in close contact with the Indians of the Lillooet district, British Columbia. He understands much of that dialect, besides speaking Chinook freely. Mr. Cumming has followed journalism since 1912 and has published two books.

1848



Paul Pero

By R. D. Cumming

THE OUTLAW

MINE is not an Indian legend,
Nor a song of Hiawatha
And the curling smoke of wigwams;
It is but a modern story
Clothed in no such ancient garments—
Some is fact, though much is fiction.

Once in these parts not far distant,
On a mountain named Chil-il-ta
By the natives of the district,
When the sun was sinking slowly
In a golden glow of glory
Down among the distant snow peaks,
Like a camp fire in tradition
Of the gods and chiefs assembled,
Fled the kultus (bad) Paul Pero,
Fled the hias, kultus kook-pi.

High above the thirsting sage brush,
And the pale, anæmic wormwood,
And the yellow-bell and cactus,
And the benches and the bunchgrass,
Fled the Kook-pi from the blood hounds.

One

Up among the huckleberries,
And the bitter sap-o-lal-ies;
Up among the spruce and pine-trees,
Up among the jack-pine forests,
With the porcupine and smoom-tum,
And the cougar and coyote;
Where the sheep stands on the rock-peak—
Stands the wild sheep of the mountain—
Where the bear, the black and grizzly,
Chew the bitter sap-o-lal-ies—
Through a densely wooded valley
Fortified by spruce and pine-trees,
On a mountain named Chil-il-ta,
In the district of Stat-le-umlth,
Fled the fugitive from justice,
Followed close by his pursuers.

Came he to a clump of willows
In a friendly way inviting.
Swift he darted to their shelter
And concealed himself among them;
Silent, motionless and breathless
Lay ensconced from his pursuers.
They, deceived and unsuspecting,
Hastened by his place of hiding.

Long he lay concealed, exhausted,
With his head upon a rootlet
And his knees drawn up before him.
Long he mused, sick soul and body,
Thinking of his past and present,
Framing visions of the future,
Hearing things the priest had told him,
Seeing things the priest had shown him.
Then, his conscience thus tormented,
Slumber came with all its promise.

But his sleep, though worn and weary,
Did not bring him rest and freedom;
For he dreamed of hounds and hunters,
Dreamed of heaven—the hereafter—
Dreamed of things that were not earthly,
And awoke another person.

Pero's heart, though steeled to error
In the impulse of the moment,
Was not tuned to iron hardness.
Pero killed a man; tradition
Prompted; was it wilful murder?
Pero killed in helpless passion—
Killed a white man who, polluted,
Wrecked his home, defiled his kloodchman,
Caused her death a short time after.
Could we class the ancient justice
As a crime against society?

Many mountain sounds familiar—
Nature's voices of the timber—
Through their wireless channels reached him.
But the last sound he remembered
Was the chirping of a squirrel
Overhead among the branches
Of a tall and spreading spruce tree.
Then all earth sounds ceased their music,
And his mind gave way to fancy
In a dream that cured his madness.



THE DREAM

EVEN in sleep he failed to master
Sorrow from his guilty conscience.
Pero dreamed he woke from slumber,
Rose in trembling, looked about him,
Parted back the matted branches.
Out around, the hills and valleys—
All the friends he had remaining—
Beckoned him with unfeigned welcome.

Then he knew he was in hiding
With the brutal crime of murder
Hanging like a pall upon him;
That a bounty of great value
Had been offered for his capture
Dead or living; like a cougar
For destruction he was slated;
That the Province in its anger
Was in hot pursuit against him.
Over trails half hidden, trackless—

Trails made only by the friction
Of the feet of casual wild things—
Keen to earn the price, the white man,
With determined will pursued him,
In the thought of gain rejoicing;
Of his fate untouched, unheeding.
For he heard their stealthy footsteps,
And the proud, unwelcome voices;
Heard the barking hounds; their sniffing,
Heated breaths he fancied touched him,
Mocking even his soul in slumber;
Heard his renegade relations,
Hunting with their hearts of iron,
All tradition cast behind them.
Did they honor more the bounty
Than the filial blood that bound them?

“Why seek freedom, why continue,
When my very kin forsakes me?”
Cried the Indian in his anguish.

While he stood thus, wild-eyed, waiting,
Looking from his place of hiding
In a dream so realistic,
Watching for the mounted rifles,
Yelping hounds and Indian trackers,
Voices from the courts of justice
Lurking near his place of hiding—
Lo! instead, he saw a fairy,
Or a woman of great beauty,
Ambling on the glossy dry grass,
Mimicking the birds and chipmonks,
Like an echo from the mountain;
Picking blossoms from the flower stocks,
Pinning them upon her bosom
And devouring their sweet fragrance.

As he watched the airy antics
Of the woman of great beauty,
Or the fairy, or the angel,
She, with fragile fingers, captured
Fragile butterflies swift passing,
Kissed them, gave them back their freedom.

Then his fear gave way to friendship.
Here was one he would confide in.
Paul was certain that an angel
Stood before him in the timber;
That this person had commission
From the Father to escort him
To the realms of the Hereafter,
Even as the priest had spoken.
For the priest had often told him
Of the rare enchanting beauty
Of the angels, and the promise
They might bring from God the Father.

With an arm he clove the willows;
Like a lynx sprang from among them
Daring, fearless, unprotected,
All unconscious that some rifle
Might be pointed at his bosom
From the innocent environs.
Once again he was a freeman
In the land of his forefathers.

When the woman saw the branches
Part, and saw the man behind them—
Saw the danger that was near her—
She, with lips unlike a mortal,
Lisped a scream; and, was it fancy?
Seemed inclined to flee, but Pero
Caught a hem about her garment,
And, with bold, detaining fingers,
Drew the fairy form towards him.
With a gentle remonstrance,
Pulling feebly at the clothing,
Pero's angel sought her freedom;
Failing, then became his captive.

"Kee-ka, from the great Hereafter,"
Spoke in priestly words this siwash,
"Fear me not, for I am harmless
As the smoom-tum of the mountain,
As the squee-itch of the valley.
Angel, be you so, from Heaven,
Trust in me, for though my buckskins

Speak the costume of an outlaw,
Underneath there flows a pil-pil
Warmer than the stove in winter.
I am crazed with hate and hunger,
For the White-Man seeks to kill me.
If you are direct from Heaven
Lead me to its happy places;
Take me where no thirst, no hunger
Can be known, and where no sorrow
Can abide, where all is gladness."

Spoke the angel then: "Oh, siwash!
You are flesh, and blood, and mortal;
You are stained with Earth's corruptions;
You must die to reach High Heaven."

"Hush!" cried Pero. "See yon smoom-tum
Stealing through the great tall timber?
You remain, for I must shoot him,
That I may not die of hunger."

"No, you must not!" And the angel
Laid a hand upon his shoulder.
"Smoom-tum life is just as precious
As the life of man or smoot-latch.
And then, God, the Ko-cha Kook-pi,
Made the red-deer not for slaughter."



KILLING OF THE RED DEER

DOWN the mountain to the valley
Came a red-deer faster, faster,
Till it reached a little creeklet
Creeping through the grassy valley,
Threading down among the long-grass,
Harping unrecorded music
To the willows, spruce and pine-trees;
Telling to the air its story.

Here the red-deer paused a moment—
Stood a moment undecided—
Stooped to drink the cooling water,
Raised its head and looked about it,
Looked to eastward and to westward,
Looked to northward and to southward,
Sniffed the air with heated nostrils,
Sniffed the air that menaced danger,
Startled, stood erect, stiff-legged.

Then the thunder of a rifle
Broke the silence of the timber,
Echoed here and echoed yonder;
For a hunter, hot pursuing,
Raised his rifle, pulled the trigger,
And a bullet pierced the body—
Pierced the vitals of the red-deer.
Then it dropped upon its haunches,
Then upon its knees fell forward,
Then upon its side it tumbled
To the earth, unconscious, dying,
Almost hid among the long grass.

Thus the red-deer fell a victim
To the murderous sport of mankind,
To the hunter's sense of justice,
Slaughtered for its flesh and buckskin,
Or the sport there was in killing.
Then the ski-ooch, then the hunter,
Swooped upon it like a cougar,
Or an eagle from the tree-top.

Then the angel to the kook-pi:
"Are you then the siwash outlaw
Whom they seek with hound and rifle
In the valley, on the mountain,
In the forest, by the river?
Are you he who shot the white man
In a bitter quarrel with him
On the rocky, ragged hillside,
On the slopes of Mount Chil-il-ta?"

And the Chief, the crime admitting:
"Yes, I am the wild coyote
Sought by police, and hound, and rifle.
In revenge I shot the white man
For the murder of my klootchman,
I have no regrets, repent not
That I took his life for her life.
Woman, if you are from Heaven,
Free me from the white man's vengeance,
From the rifles, hounds and hunters;
Free me from my kith and kindred.
Take me to some other forest,
To some other distant mountain,
Take me if you will to Heaven.
Bring my wife that I may see her
In the soul or in the body."

Then his angel: "Pero, Pero,
Patience, I will bring her to you."

Down the valley near the creeklet,
Half concealed among the dry grass,
Through the branches of the forest,
Could be seen the blood-stained Nimrod
Carving at the reeking carcass;
And the siwash, though he heard her—
Heard the angel give such promise—
Watched the movements of the hunter;
Watched him carve the steaming mow-itch,
Strip the buckskin from the body,
Tear the reeking flesh assunder,
Pile it in a heap in quarters,
Throw the hide upon a tree-branch;
On the carcass place a garment,
Guard against the prowling night things—
Owls and cougars, wolves, coyotes;
Stoop, and from the running water
Drink to satisfy his craving,
Wash his fingers in the creeklet,
Throw his gun across his shoulder,
Disappear among the timber.

Long the Indian stood and watched him,
For the vision of the deer-meat
Served to whet his mortal hunger,
Rendered him an uncouth savage.

When the hunter had departed,
Sprang the Indian like a cougar
Eyes and mouth and nose dilated,
From the side of his companion;
Would have left the welcome shelter
Of the friendly clump of willows,
Had not something strange detained him,
Had not someone caught his shoulder.



THE IMMORTAL

TURNING like a beast frustrated,
Like a self-defending grizzly,
Lo, behold! His fair companion
Of a moment since had vanished;
And instead, in all her glory,
Stood the earth-wife of his bosom,
Mantled like an ancient picture,
Garments draping from the shoulder;
Fairer, in her soul-clad virtues—
Stood his faithful wife Li-lu-la,
Stood his earth-born, murdered klotchman,
She whom he had wooed and wedded.

For a moment stood the Indian
Undecided, half bewildered,
Knowing her, but scarce believing.
Could his eyes be seeing falsely?
Could this surely be Lilula?
She, the sweetheart of his choosing,
She who was abducted—stolen
When a bride a short time only—
Taken from his home and bosom
In the springtime of their passion?
She who had been wronged and ravished
In the cabin of Paul Pero,
In his cabin clean and private?

Indian rights are seldom sacred;
All the laws their klotchmen look to
Are their strength of will and muscle,
Are their powers of self-resistance
From the bestial, brutal cravings
Of the stranger and the tribesman.

"Pero, Paul!" cried the immortal,
"Do not risk your life and freedom
Down the valley in the clearing,
Risk not rifle, hound or hunter,
Not until you have repented,
Till you beg for love and mercy—
Beg the Ko-cha Kook-pi's pardon.
I have brought you food and clothing;
Eat and dress, then I will show you."

On the ground was quap and basket
Filled with bread, and beans, and bacon,
Filled with crackers, fish, o-lal-ies;
But the siwash saw no food-stuffs
In the presence of his klootchman.

With a cry of wild emotion
Pero's arms encircled round her—
Hugged her in his crazy madness
To his heaving, panting bosom.
Oh, the joyous resurrection!
Then he took her hands in his hands,
Kissed her lips, and cheeks, and forehead,
Gripped her form with savage crudeness
Till he would have crushed and damaged
Every bone within her body
Had she been a mortal woman.

Then he took the food she brought him
And devoured it like a cougar—
Like a grizzly that had fasted
Through the long and frozen winter
Till its hunger drove it crazy—
Gorged himself but still was hungry.

Then he dressed among the willows
In the garments she had brought him.

Though the sticks, and stones, and brambles
Had his body half denuded;
Though before, his clothes were ragged
And his body scratched and bleeding;
Now, in garments she had brought him,
He was dressed in buckskin trousers,

Buckskin vest and buckskin jumper,
Fringed around from back to breast-bone,
Fringed from wrist-band to the shoulder,
Fringed from ankle to the waist-line,
Like a wealthy Indian hunter.

Then the husband to Lilula:
"Kee-ka, how came you so timely?
What brought you so opportunely?
Who told you that I was hungry,
That my clothes required renewing,
That my life was in great danger?"

Then the shade of dead Lilula:
"I am from the Ko-cha Kook-pi.
God, in all His love and wisdom,
Sent me on an errand of mercy;
Knew my aching heart, in pity—
In the strength of His compassion—
Sent me where my heart still lingered,
Sent me to the earth to save you,
Plead, and show the way to Heaven."

"Lead on, kee-ka; I am ready,"
Spoke the dreamer to the klootchman.
"We have met again, and never
More shall we be torn asunder.
Tell me first, oh, dead Lilula,
Have you been content and happy
Since the spirit left your body,
Since we placed you in the cold clay?"



THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN

"I HAVE been to Heaven the golden,"
The immortal spoke in answer,
"For the priest has spoken truly.
There I might have peace and plenty,
Might be happy and contented
But for one unbroken sorrow.
Pero, leave the earth and follow
Through the clouds where I may lead you.
Pero, Pero, listen, listen!
I am here to lead you thither;

Choke your mortal pride and follow;
 Go, give up to jail and justice,
 Own the murder you committed
 And repent before the altar,
 Die if need be on the scaffold,
 Pray for mercy, live forever
 Where we both can be so happy—
 Happy in each other's presence—
 Happy past all understanding.
 Those are the conditions; take them,
 And be happy ever after.
 By refusing, you forfeit me;
 I return broken hearted
 To the land of the Hereafter.
 Think of our great love, oh, Pero!
 Bow before the Ko-cha Kook-pi,
 For my message is from Heaven.



THE MORTAL REPLY

PERO'S body, frail, unpolished,
 Shook with terror at the answer;
 For his native heart, supported
 Solely by its mortal schooling,
 Could not understand such virtue.
 He had asked for bread; she gave him
 Food his stomach could not relish.
 He had asked for aid; she, coldly,
 Cast him on his own resources,
 Cast him into prison wholly
 To await the white man's vengeance.

Turning to his sweetheart, Pero:
 "Woman, would you have me murdered,
 Strangled on the white man's scaffold?
 Would you have me sell my freedom
 For a vague and doubtful future,
 And at such a cost? Believe me,
 Never while a drop of pil-pil
 Races up and down my body.
 Never while my legs and muscles
 Can outrun the hound and hunter.
 Cease such cheerless, friendless chatter.

I had hoped for love and mercy,
Since you came with peace and promise.
Save me, save me, oh, Lilula!
Take me as I am to Heaven."

Then Lilula, the Immortal:
"In the flesh no human being
Yet has entered the Hereafter.
And the all-wise Ko-cha Kook-pi
Sifts the dross from out the golden.
First you must be purged—created
In the form God recognizes;
Have your soul washed in repentance,
Have your mortal sins forgiven"

Then the siwash, interrupting:
"Hush, I hear the hound and cayuse!
See, they come across the valley
Hid among the pines and spruce trees.
Hear the bark of the sas-ka-cha,
And the voices of the posse!
Look, the bushes stir, they see us!
Come, retreat with me to safety
Lest they shoot us dead," in horror
Cried the siwash, squeeitch-hearted.

Then the smootlatch, less a coward:
"Nay, it is a smoomtum creeping
Through the forest shy and fearful
Looking for its mate late slaughtered."

Then the chief his wail continued:
"Little conscience has the red-deer.
Craves he not the padre's pardon,
Dies, unquestioned is accepted.
Why is man alone to answer?
All the birds that in the willows
Sing their unrecorded music;
All the beasts that in the timber
Live their unrecorded stories;
All the fish that in the rivers
Fin an unrecorded passage,
Know no orders that restrain them.
Why are we alone conscripted,
Bound by laws of soul and body?"

Kill me on the spot, Lilula,
Save from this corrupted body,
That which is to you so precious—
Take me as I am to Heaven.

“Who is this unwelcome white man
With his fables of repentance,
With his tales of sins unnumbered,
With his laws, and jails, and justice,
With his police, and prisons and handcuffs,
Who has come unasked among us?
Why must we bow down before him,—
He who stole our fish and mowitch,
Feeds us with his own religion?
E'er he came our homes were happy,
And we lived without a conscience—
Lived in freedom, died in freedom,
Feared no future, sin or sorrow,
Dying, went rejoicing thither,
Not a question being spoken.”

Heaved the wild breast in its anger,
Stung with anguish real or fancied;
Surged a heathen storm within him
That a murder should be punished.

“Kee-ka, kee-ka,” then he pleaded:
“Hide me in some cave for safety
Where I may be undiscovered,
Where I may be unmolested,
Dead to all the world about us.
There alone you feed and clothe me,
There you call upon me daily.
Or, if this can not be granted,
Take me as I am to Heaven.”



ENCHANTMENT

STEPPED before him the Immortal,
Took she both his hands in her hands,
Gazed they in each other's faces
Speaking love to one another—
Spoke two souls together wordless.
Then Lilula to the mortal:
“Come, and I will show you further.”

Like a child she led him forward,
She with arm across his shoulder,
He with arm around her waist-line;
Like two persons bound by nature,
Walked they off into the timber.
Pero followed her, enchanted,
Knowing in his trust and rapture,
Any road might lead to Heaven.

They emerged once from the forest,
And before them, like a mirror,
With the sky, and trees, and mountains
Mirrored underneath the water,
Slept a lake of emerald beauty.
By its margins, where no rock cliff
Stood abruptly from the water,
Grew the willows and the birches,
Grew the maples and the alders,
Grew the dog-wood and choke-cherry.
And the willows dipped their branches
Deep in the transparent ko-ah,
Like the thirst-craved deer, the smoom-tum,
Drinking half submerged in water.
Down the mountain crept the timber
On all sides—the firs and pine trees—
Till they neared the sleeping waters;
Then they gave the poplar species,
And the bush, the wild choke-cherry,
And the shrub, the service-berry,
And the clinging wild raspberry,
And the squatting wild gooseberry,
And the creeping wild strawberry,
Freedom on the spongy margin.

But the mortal and immortal,
Lost to every world emotion,
Independent of all earth-things
Save the love that burned within them,
Saw no beauty in the setting.

Pero's heart beat joy unbridled
That his trembling, fragile earth-clay
Had been cast aside forever;
That no longer fear and horror
For the blood hounds gave him torture—
He was on his way to Heaven.

For a moment stood the lovers
Looking out across the water,
Not a harp string in their bosoms
Touched by what they saw before them.
For the balm of love surrounded
Every atom of their persons.

Out of somewhere, built of birch-bark,
Summoned by the fair Immortal,
Came a light canoe toward them
Fully rigged with oar and paddle.

Into this Lilula guided
Pero, stepping in behind her.
Then the leader plied the paddle,
Sitting at her labor aftward.
Pero, sitting idly midships,
Watched the magic strokes and wondered
At the glory of Lilula.

Out across the lake she paddled,
On the right side, then the left side,
Till they reached the farther landing—
Left a scar upon the water
From the one end to the other.

Here the guide, with more conjuring,
Standing on the lake-shore pebbles
(Pero, wondering still, behind her),
Pushed the birch-bark gently backward
Out upon the friendly ko-ah—
Lo! Like magic then, it vanished.

Then the two resumed their journey—
One of earth and one of Heaven—
Through the forest, down the valley;
While the lake, again in slumber,
Healed the scar upon its bosom.
Still enchanted, Pero followed
Deer-trails leading to the water,
Winding through among the timber,
She still leading. Paul went forward
On his dreamy way to Heaven.
Neither spoke; there was a sacred
Nearness to the blessed environs.
There was awe as well as beauty
In the madness of their passion.

THE CAVE

SHORTLY came they to a cave-mouth
Half obscured by clinging creepers.
Here the fair Celestial leader
Moved aside the tangled network
And revealed a narrow entrance:
"Come," she whispered, entering boldly.
And the siwash followed gladly
In implicit faith and rapture,
Thinking this a gate to Heaven.

All was dark in the interior,
But with magic will the leader
Wished illumination; darkness
Lifted from the gloom surroundings,
And the cave became as daylight.

Very narrow was the entrance,
Very spacious the interior.
Eyes could reach no wall or ceiling,
Mind conceive no length or ending.
But Lilula wandered forward
Calmly, like a dreamer walking,
Conscious not of danger; as one
Knowing all the cave traditions,
And the sacred road to Heaven.

Arm in arm they wandered inward
For some distance; then Lilula
Paused and sat upon the cave-floor,
Raised her eyes towards the siwash,
Took his wicked hand in her hand,
Beckoned him to sit beside her.

Nothing savored yet of Heaven;
But the kook-pi, still obedient,
Sank upon the rock beside her.
So he sat that in the distance
Plainly could be seen the exit
To the dreaded open spaces
Of the world he feared and hated.

Then Lilula, the Immortal,
Breaking of the long enchantment:
"Pero, I have brought you hither."—

And her language was more pleading,
As though knowing and suspecting
That she sought a heart to soften
That was granite, that was iron;
That her patience might be broken
Knocking, knocking for admission
At a door that would not open,
At a wigwam that was empty.

"Sit beside me, Pero, closely;
Pass your arm around me thusly.
Listen, do as I have ordered;
Ask the priest for absolution,
For I cannot show you Heaven—
For I cannot take you thither
Till your soul is purged and cleansèd
Of its earth-corrupted poisons.
Give your body to the ashes
Out of which it sprang in sorrow;
Give it even if given in anguish,
Or in agony for a moment.
For the sacrifice that's greatest,
And the soul that suffers deepest,
Reaps the more reward in Heaven."

"Hush! I hear the crack of rifles!"
Spoke the siwash in alarm:
"Hear the barking of the blood hound!
They are coming! They are coming—
I can hear them! I can see them!
Save me kee-ka, save me, save me!"
And he stood upon the cave-floor
Trembling like a vimless squee-itch.

Then Lilula: "Peace, Paul Pero.
It is nothing but the red-deer
Stepping on a twig in leaping
Through the timber; or the night wind

Ambling past the cave mouth, touching
With its nectar-laden treasure
Leaves and buds and flowers responding."

Paul, restored, with more assurance,
Dropped again beside Lilula,
Kissed the lips that gave him comfort—
Lips that fain would give him healing;
Kissed the eyes that brought enchantment—
Eyes that pierced his soul's recesses.

Then Lilula, then the kee-ka:
"Plead you were beguiled too early,
That the truth that is dear-born
Had not lifted you from darkness.
Ask the Shamma to forgive you;
And, if not, then stand a hearing;
Make confession to the Justice;
Die, the pain is but a moment;
Come to me in soul remodeled,
Come to Heaven, I will await you.

"I befriended when all others—
When all earth had turned against you.
I have shown you love, compassion;
And the love I gave in marriage
Burns with greater fire in Heaven.
I have brought you food and clothing;
Others bring the hound and rifle.
What is earth-life when a bounty
Hangs with mountain weight upon you?
Aim for Heaven, for time is fleeting.
Heed my message. I have shown you.
You can gain those precious blessings
Yonder, just where I have pointed.
Pero, Pero, I am waiting;
I am waiting, watching, weary.
Come, because I love you madly."

Then the siwash, still unmelted,
In the crudeness of his nature,
Sprang in anger from the cave-floor,
Thundering with his heart of iron,
Standing like a bear beside her:

“Oh, Lilula, you have fooled me—
Told me you would lead to Heaven;
Now you want me to surrender
To the White Man, to the Shamma,
He who robbed us of our country,
He who mocks our own religion.
Rather would I seek the river,
Perish in its slimy waters;
Rather eat the earth in hunger,
Chew the green bark from the spruce trees;
Rather eat the rotten salmon
Strewn along the Fraser river;
Rather sleep above the snow line,
Feast to-day and starve to-morrow;
Rather be a wild coyote.
Oh, Lilula, take me, take me,
Take me as I am to Heaven!”

Here he paused abruptly, staring
At Lilula on the cave-floor;
Looked to her as though for answer;
But the precious lips were silent,
And no answer made Lilula,
For she lay, her face toward him,
Fast asleep, her lips half parted,
Hands across her heaving bosom.

Leaning over her, the siwash
Touched her gently on the shoulder,
Called her name; she would not waken:
“Oh, Lilula! Oh, Lilula!”

Then he kissed the sleeping eyelids,
And the fragile lips half parted—
Gave a burning kiss of anguish.
Then he rose and gazed upon her,
Fed his eyes upon her glory—
Glory past his understanding—
Watched the heaving bosom; features
Clothed in beauty, and unequalled
From a mortal point of vision;
One he lost, but might recover
But in barter for repentance,
On the rocky floor beneath him.

THE RESOLVE

STANDING by the fair Immortal,
By the side of dead Lilula,
Strange emotions fired his tum-tum,
Stirred his heart with thoughts unearthly
Like a magic spell around him,
Like a voice from dead Lilula
Urging in the right direction.

In a fit of deep emotion
And a voice from his internals,
Pero shouted: "I will do it!
It is worth a thousand tortures,
Worth the shame upon the scaffold,
Life eternal with Lilula.
One touch from those angel fingers,
One caress upon her bosom,
One look from those eyes of virtue;
One confession that she loves me,
Can be more than compensation
For a brief but painful moment.

"Live and be a hunted cougar,
Die and win a prize so precious.
It is worth it—worth repentance,
Worth a death upon the scaffold!
Here you blood hounds, siwash, hangman;
Here you judges, jails and juries,
Drag me to the mocking gallows!"

And he dashed in crazy madness
From the shade of dead Lilula,
Lying prone upon the stone-floor,
Out towards the open cave-mouth,
Plunging into danger wildly,
Heeding nothing, fearing nothing,
Anxious only for repentance,
Eager only for the gallows.

When he reached the narrow entrance
Back he pushed the clinging creepers,
Leaped out blindly, careless, fearless,
To the open unprotected.

Nature seemed inviting, friendly;
And, in distant isolation,
Roamed the moon in sullen silence
Far above him, and its shadows
Stood like sentinels majestic
Reaching out into the timber.
In the sky the stars were calling—
Stars that whispered half their secrets
With their soft, exotic twinkles.

Pero saw the distant mountains
With their summit lines serrated
Outlined on the starry sky-space.
All about him seemed to slumber
In a peaceful hibernation.
Nature rested clean in conscience.
Mind bewildered, Heart rebelling,
Course uncertain, stood the siwash—
Stood with arms outstretched before him
Like a priest at benediction,
And in silent meditation
Bade a last farewell to Nature,
Blessed the mountains, creeks and valleys,
Bade adieu the trails and timbers.

Then his arms dropped limp and powerless
And he staggered backward, forward,
Trembling heart, and soul and body.



THE SHAMMA

OUT UPON the rocks before him—
Like as though the earth had opened
With a mocking yawn beneath him,
Tapping the internal regions—
Stood a figure, stern, colossal,
Ghost-like and Satanic, awful—
Stood the austere, stately Shamma,
Stood the hated, dreaded White-Man,
Mantled in a cloak of justice,
In one hand a black-bound lawbook,
In the other was a rifle—
Stood the White-Man, moral, god-like,
One he feared above all others.

Spoke the mantled Apparition—
Spoke the awful voice of Justice,
In a tone both stern and icy,
Chilling Pero to the marrow:

“Pero, throw your arms above you!”
And a rifle touched his body
As his arms shot up like rockets.
“In the name of King and Country,
I arrest you for White’s murder.
Come, prepare to follow quietly
Handcuffed to the courts of justice.”



THE WILD SHRIEK

IN A trance remained Paul Pero
For a moment; in sheer terror
Would have given himself to justice;
But, just then, ah! from behind him,
In the cave depths late vacated,
Came a shriek of wild proportions,
Like a woman’s soul-wrung anguish,
Like one overpowered and struggling—
Dying in the throes of torture.

Paul remembered the Immortal
Sound asleep upon the cave-floor.
Could it be that some vile creature
Sought to murder or maltreat her?
Could it be some fiend, some demon,
Finding her alone, unguarded,
In the glory of her pureness,
Were conveying her a victim
To the darkness of his dungeon?
Or, perhaps in fiendish glory
Slandering, owing to her virtues,
Just because she was of Heaven?

Pero recognized the summons,
Knew the voice of her he worshipped,
Thought of one thing, one thing only,—
How to save her, how to rescue,
How to render her assistance,
How to save her from the demons.

Down his arms fell from above him;
Turned he from his stern pursuer,
Dashed he madly through the cave-mouth,
Fearing nothing; hearing nothing
But the scream of one he worshipped—
But the call of the Immortal.

Then he saw the rifles gleaming,
Saw them pointing to his bosom,
Heard the voices of the Shamma,
Saw them standing stern and callous,
Saw them standing guard Lilula,
Silent now, as though their captive,
Or a hostage for her lover.
And behind each Shamma posted
On the right side, on the left side,
Right behind them, all about them
Stood the dreaded Indian trackers,
Blood of his blood; in tradition
One, through many unknown ages.

And before them on the cave-floor
Lay Lilula, the Immortal,
Lay the woman whom he worshipped,
Lay the woman of all women,
One among the many millions.



THE MANY RIFLES

STOP!" commanded many voices
In the different tongues and language.
"Move another step and perish."

Pero heeded not the warning,
Heard he not the many voices,
Saw he not the many faces,
Heeded not the many rifles
Pointed at his trembling vitals.
He was fearless in his madness.
He was reckless in his blindness.
Fair Lilula sought protection;
Heaven or earth could not detain him.

Like a beast, whose young molested,
Springs to death in savage fury,
Knows no mandate, hears no order;
So Paul Pero in his frenzy
Knew no law that would detain him
While Lilula was in danger.
Sprang he like a famished cougar
On the carcass of the smoom-tum,
On the carcass of the red-deer;
Sprang he forward like a heathen
In the impulse of the moment,
With the instinct of the savage.

But, before he reached the figure
Spread inanimate before him,
Spoke a hundred fiery rifles,
And a hundred bullets pierced him—
Pierced the body of Paul Pero.

With a superhuman effort—
One last spring that seemed unearthly,
Seemed beyond the power of mortal—
Sprang the siwash like a wild-cat,
Reached the spirit of Lilula
Lying prostrate on the cave-floor;
Fell across the lifeless body
On the bosom of his sweetheart—
Fell, forgetting all his horror,
All his joy and all his sorrow—
Woke to face real hounds and Shammas.



THE AWAKENING

BACK to earth with its suspenses
Came Paul Pero in an instant—
Back to earth among the pine-trees,
Back to world things and their dangers,
To the haunted caves and passes,
To the tracking hounds and hunters,
From his dream the Chief was summoned.

From the unreal, full of glory,
To the real of hate and horror;
Out of Heaven into Hades,
Out of pleasure into sorrow,
Out of love and into hatred,
Out of daylight into darkness
Came the siwash in an instant.



THE EARTH SOUNDS

SPRANG the Indian from the tree-root
That had lent its friendly comfort,
Peered between the willow branches
That had given their kindly shelter,
Listened from his place of hiding.
All he heard was Nature's wild sounds—
Nature's many-throated wood-songs.
Through the timbers of the forest,
Through the branches of the spruce-trees,
Sighed an unrecorded zephyr,
Speaking in its sylvan language
Words as ancient as the ages.

On the branches high above him
Chirped a squirrel at its labor.
To the ground there came a pine-cone,
Then another and another,
As the rodent, busy, gathered
Stores against the coming winter.
Bees were buzzing in the sunshine,
Birds were singing all about him,
And a butterfly went flitting
Zigzag through the air's resistance.
A red-hooded, lone woodpecker
At a hollow tree went tapping.

Past Paul's friendly place of hiding
Whizzed a mountain grouse, low flying,
Clumsy, through the grass and bushes,
Striking with her wings and feathers
Tangled undergrowth obstructing;

Lighted, sang her mother cackle
To her brood of frightened young ones
Waiting, hiding in the thicket.

Spoke a rifle to the echoes,
Which, responding in the distance,
Spoke each other then were silent,
Listening for another echo,
Just as they have watched and waited
Listening down the many ages.

Cracked a dry twig down the valley
Broken by a deer or grizzly,
Broken by a bear or smoom-tum
On their daily quest, slow moving,
Browsing from the fragile herbage.
Nature seemed content and happy;
All seemed well on Mount Chil-il-ta.

Pero's heart and soul responding,
Caught the spirit of contagion.
But the rifle shot alarmed him,
For it spoke of his pursuers.
Then a sound more dread and frightful
Radiated through the forest,
Rose above the mountain music;
'Twas the yelp of the sas-ka-cha,
Of the blood hounds hot pursuing,
And the neighing of the cayuse.



THE ARREST

PERO parted back the branches,
Gazed in horror down the valley,
Saw the posse, saw it coming,
Saw the Indian and the White Man,
Saw the gleaming of the rifle,
Saw the keenness of the blood hound,
Saw his eager Indian kinsmen,
Saw the unrelenting Shamma,
On the backs of their cayuses.

But the murderer waited breathless,
Waited till they were beside him,
Then, emerging from his shelter,
Boldly vulted to the open,
Stood before them unprotected,
Stood with face and breast uncovered,
Stood defenceless, stood unarmèd
Like a hero at court-martial.

When they saw him, every rifle
Went spontaneous to a shoulder.
Many rifle barrels pointed,
Threatening at his face and bosom.

When they saw he was unarmèd,
Slowly dropped the rifles downward.
Cautiously they moved towards him
Calling back the hounds advancing.
Many Indians closed around him
While the white men watched and waited,
Standing guard lest he deceive them.
Then his hands were handcuffed, pinioned:
"Come!" they ordered, and the journey
Jailward led them through the forest,
Took them through the spruce and pine trees,
Took them through the brush and dry grass,
Led them through the winding valley,
Led them down the rocky mountain,
Down the steep side of Chil-il-ta,
Slowly on their solemn mission.

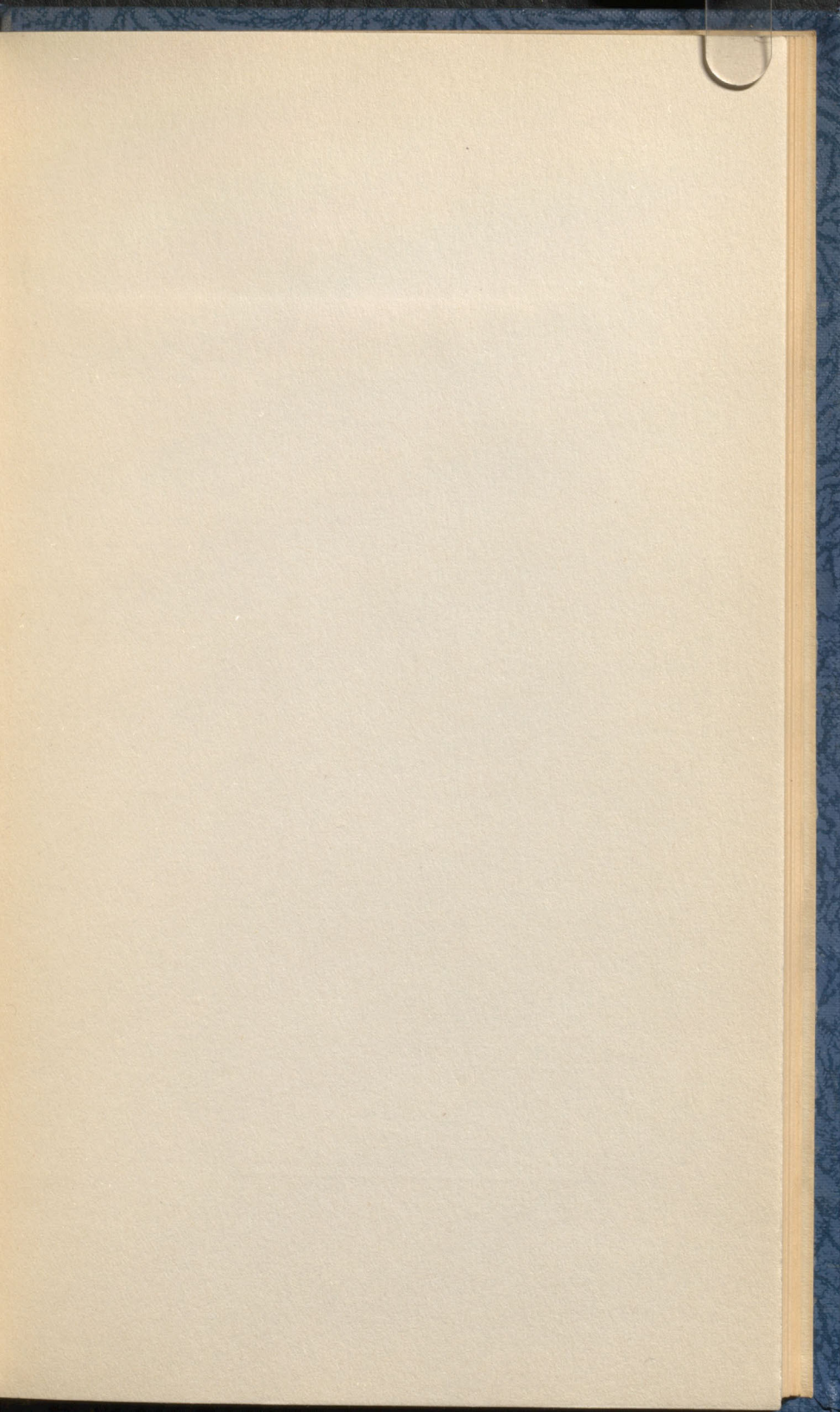
Pero followed meek and silent,
Reticent and unresisting—
Went submissive like a woman,
Thinking only of Lilula,
Whom he hoped to meet in Heaven.

Thus he gave himself to justice,
To the White Man, to the gallows;
To his Indian kith and kindred,
Who, with Indian wit and cunning,
Had outclassed the hound and hunter
During many months of chasing,
During many months of tracking.

Thus his kith and kin betrayed him,
Thus the white man made him captive,
Up among the huckleberries,
Up among the sap-o-lal-ies,
Up among the spruce and pine trees,
Up among the bears and smoom-tum,
And among the waving dry grass,
And among the wilds of nature,
On the mountain of Chililta,
In the district of Stat-le-umth,
Where he had been bred in darkness
Up from boyhood into manhood,
With the raw, and wild, and crude things—
Crude, descended from his fathers.

GLOSSARY

Kultus.....	<i>bad.</i>
Hias.....	<i>big.</i>
Kookpi.....	<i>chief.</i>
Sapolalies.....	<i>a species of berry (plural).</i>
Smoomtum.....	<i>deer.</i>
Tumtum.....	<i>thought or mind.</i>
Siwash.....	<i>Indian men.</i>
Klootchman.....	<i>Indian woman.</i>
Keeka.....	<i>girl.</i>
Pilpil.....	<i>blood.</i>
Smootlatch.....	<i>woman.</i>
Kocha-Kookpi.....	<i>God.</i>
Skiooch.....	<i>man.</i>
Mowitch.....	<i>deer meat.</i>
Soquas.....	<i>salmon.</i>
Olaly.....	<i>berry.</i>
Salt chuck.....	<i>ocean.</i>
Saskacha.....	<i>dog.</i>
Shamma.....	<i>white man.</i>
Squeeitch.....	<i>rabbit.</i>
Koah.....	<i>water.</i>
Statleumlth.....	<i>Lillooet district Indians.</i>
Quap.....	<i>Sack.</i>
Skookum.....	<i>strong.</i>
Cayuse.....	<i>horse</i>



7P

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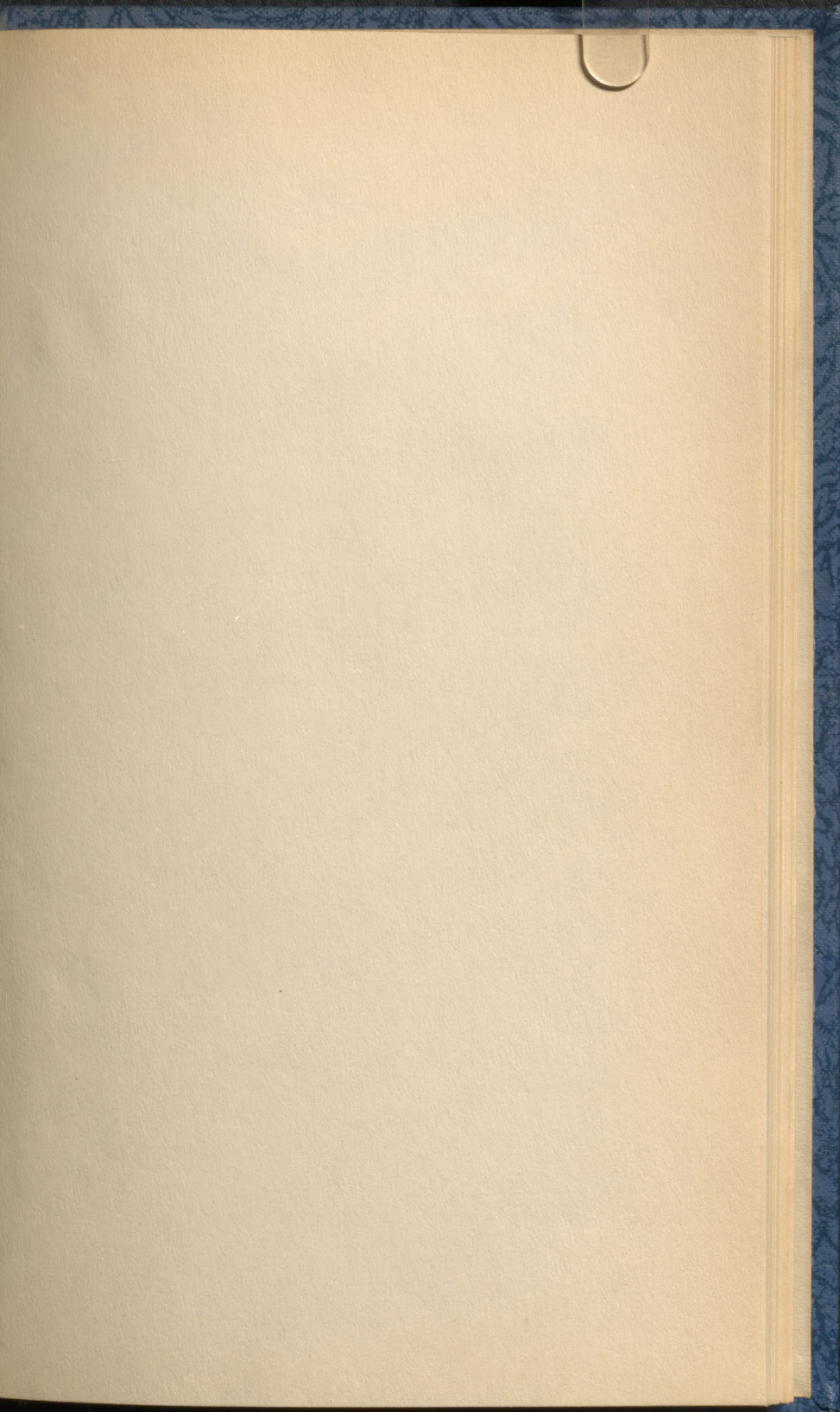
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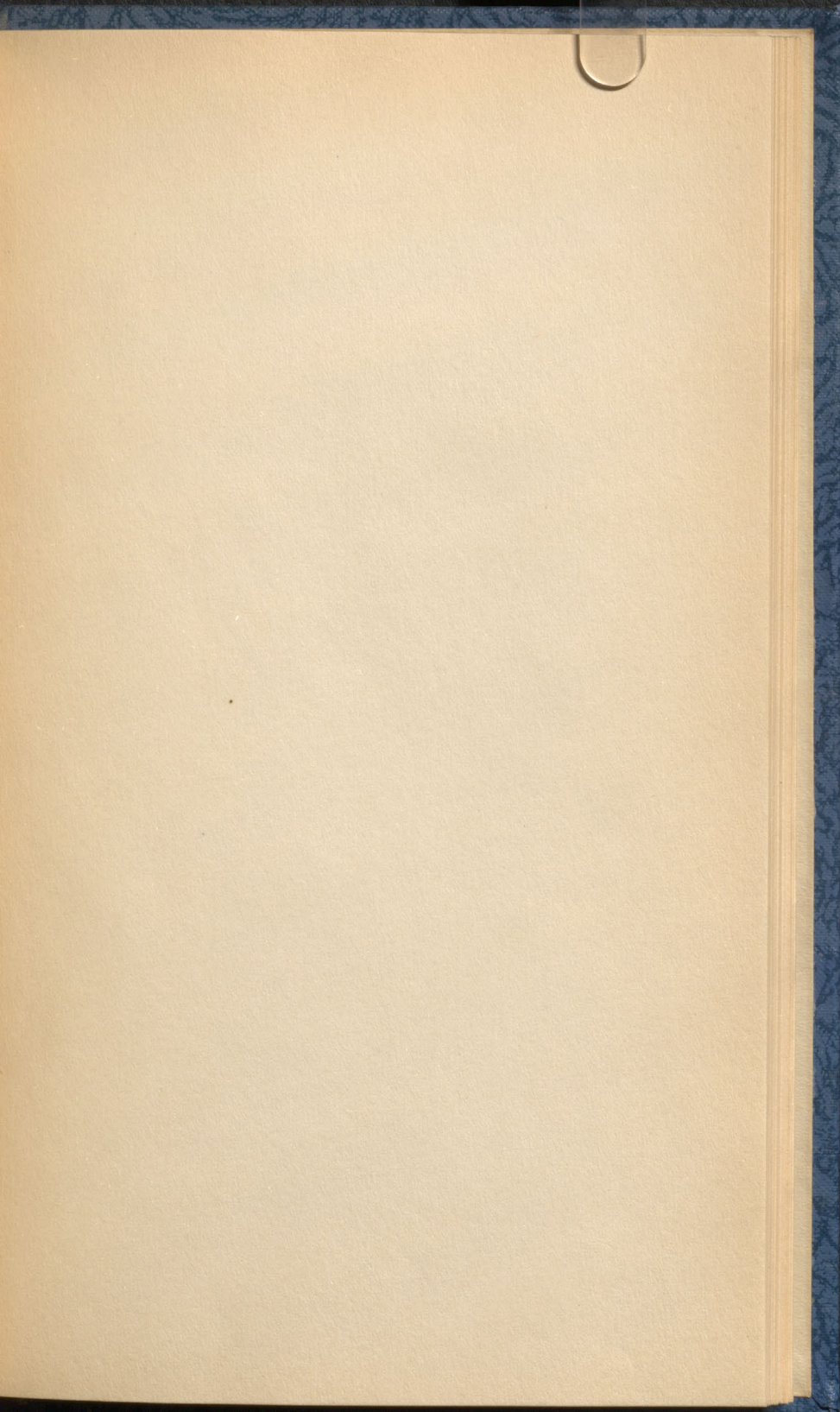
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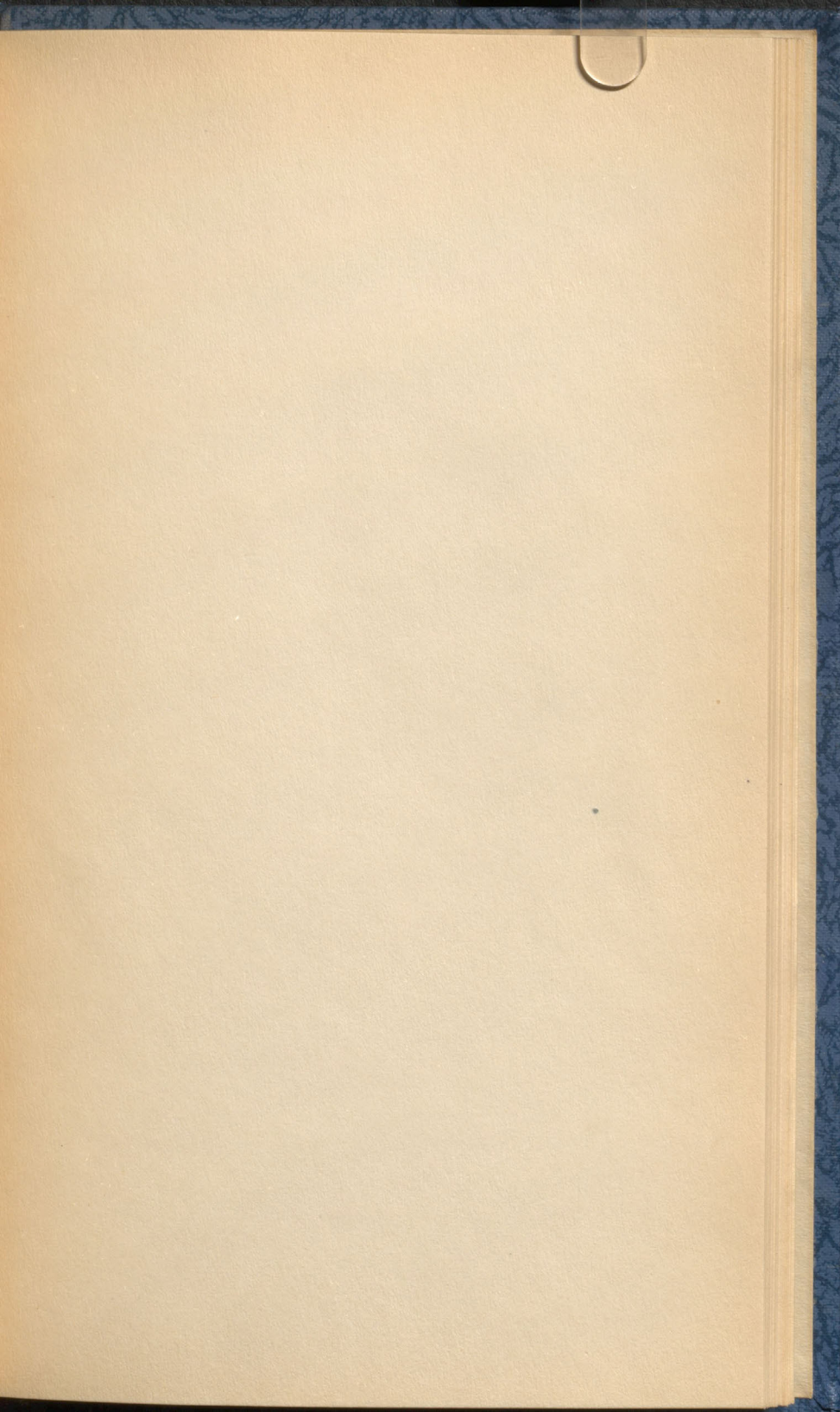
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