THE CONFLICT BETWEEN INDIVIDUALISM AND SOCIALISM

IN THE LIFE AND NOVELS OF JACK LONDON

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The fact that Jack London's novels seem to fall into two classes—those which he wrote for money and those which he wrote to deliver a social message—has led to this study of his life and novels. It is the aim of this thesis to show that his life was one of conflict between individualism and socialism and that this conflict is reflected to a varying degree in his novels.

The two chief sources for biographical material have been Irving Stone's Sailor on Horseback and Joan London's Jack London and His Times. Both books are based upon studies of London's personal papers, notes, correspondence, account books, and library, as well as interviews with people who knew London. Occasional references have been made to periodicals, but a study of the periodicals has revealed that they contain little information that is not included in one of the above biographies. In addition to the foregoing books Philip S. Foner's Jack London: American Rebel has been found a valuable reference for London's social and revolutionary writings.
Since Jack London occupies only a minor place in American literature, few critics have sought to analyze his works. The opinions and evaluations in this study are almost entirely the opinions of this author, formed by having made a study of all of Jack London's novels. The conflict has been treated implicitly through a study of characters, themes, and the turn of events as well as explicitly through conversation and direct explanation in the novels.

The term socialism has been interpreted as a theory of social organization based upon regard for and interest in the masses. Incidents which indicate adaptability to environment, brotherhood of men, sympathy for the working class as opposed to the capitalists have been interpreted as socialistic in nature. Individualism is treated as the antithesis of socialism, being indicated by greed, self-interest, race prejudice, and a desire to dominate others.

In order to point out the conflict in London's life as related to the conflict in his novels, this subject has been divided into four principal chapters arranged chronologically. The second chapter deals with the influences which tended to shape the conflict during the plastic years of London's life. The third chapter treats the beginning of London's career as a socialist and a writer. The climax of his career as a socialist and the novels produced during
those years are the subject of the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter is a study of the novels written during the latter part of London's life when individualism became the dominant force and his socialism remained only as a nostalgic dream.
CHAPTER II

INFLUENCING FACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF LONDON'S IDEAS

Parents and Early Home Life

Jack London was the son of Flora Wellman, spiritualist, and William Henry Chaney, itinerant Irish astrologer. Heredity and environment during London's formative years produced conflicts in his life which were later reflected in his novels.

At the age of twenty-five Flora Wellman, ambitious, independent, welcoming anything that was new and scorning the steadying influences of her childhood environment, left her wealthy Ohio family and fled west to San Francisco. Having done an astonishing thing for a young unmarried lady, she cut herself completely from her parents. Through the remainder of her life she never communicated with them, nor they with her.

Flora Wellman had been given all the advantages available to young girls of those days. She had been trained in sewing, music, reading, language, and manners. Of her family Irving Stone writes:
As the daughter of the wealthy Wellman family she could have taken her choice of husbands and settled down, as did her brothers and sisters, to a prosperous and solid life. But somewhere the machinery slipped a cog; clever inventor that he was, Marshall Wellman could not think up a device to keep his daughter in line. She was said by her friends to be a clever and intelligent young woman but a neurotic, a woman of unstable emotions who had difficulty in holding herself to any given discipline or direction. The attack of typhus she suffered at the age of twenty is said to have left her mind in a disorderly state.  

Jack London seems to have inherited many traits from his father, whom he never saw—a man who never admitted his parenthood. Early in life Chaney's antipathy to farm work and his indignation over circumstances which he believed unjust led him to leave home. There followed many years of restless wandering from place to place. Seas and ships attracted him, and for two years he sailed with fishing schooners. Later he joined the navy.

Although he is reputed to have been a temperamental man who eventually quarrelled with all of his acquaintances, at times he considered himself a humanitarian. He saw an urgent need for reformation and set himself upon a course which would alleviate conditions. He was interested in writing and lecturing and spoke often on socialism, the struggle against class distinction, and the causes of and remedies for poverty. He worked for a while as a staff-member of the Common Sense magazine, which claimed to be the

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1Irving Stone, *Sailor on Horseback*, p. 2.
only "Free Thought" magazine west of the Rockies. Two of his articles appearing in this magazine were "The Cause and Cure of Poverty" and "What Is To Be Done with the Criminal"—subjects upon which his son later wrote.\(^2\)

A study of Chaney's articles reveals a clear, forceful, and pleasing literary style, an authentic erudition, courage to speak his mind, a sympathy for the mass of humanity, and a desire to teach them to better themselves. His point of view is modern and progressive; in his article on crimi-

ology he writes that certainty rather than the severity of the punishment is what deters the criminals, and in another article proposes that the Philomathians organize a Brotherhood and Sisterhood of men, women, and children to hold weekly meetings in which the adults will write and discuss theses, and the children will practice music, composition, and criticism so that they may continue to improve the race until in a few genera-
tions vice and crime will almost entirely disappear.

At many points the writing, the attack, the attitudes, the enthusiasm, the very turning of a phrase is so similar to the writings of Jack London that the reader rubs his eyes in amazement.\(^3\)

Having searched vainly for some modern, progressive philosophy to cling to, Chaney became an enthusiastic con-
vert to astrology, one of the oldest beliefs in the world. He ardently studied the mechanics and theory of the subject and for many years continued to give well-attended lectures to attentive audiences. He advocated astrological mating as an effective method for world improvement. Prospective parents, through a study of astrological charts and careful forecasting, would be enabled to produce a potentially superior being.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 6. \(^3\)Ibid., p. 7.
In September, 1876, Flora married John London, a kind and considerate man with two motherless girls. London not only accepted the boy, but gave him his name and reared him as he might have reared his own son, displaying an interest in his problems and a faith in his success.

During the early years of Jack London's life the family moved frequently in a futile struggle to achieve the success that always seemed just beyond their grasp. John London worked for a while as a carpenter and later as a canvasser for a sewing machine company, but neither job proved very lucrative, and the family decided to leave the city for the farm. They moved across the bay, where for a time they tried farming, wandering from one place to another carrying out Flora's many money-making schemes. Here the child received impressions which were to play an important role in his life for many years. Their vineyard in Livermore Valley was surrounded by Irish and Italian immigrants. His mother clearly impressed it upon Jack that they were the only Americans in the vicinity and consequently superior to the neighbors.

Living in the country and having parents who often left home to attend séances, the child spent long hours in solitude. Turning his thoughts to self and being precocious, he soon formed the habit of reading and pursuing hobbies rather than playing with other children. He had few close friends during childhood.
London's later interest in the temperance movement dates back to his early childhood. In *John Barleycorn* he tells of his experiences at this time with drink. He was five years old. Carrying a bucket of beer to his father, plowing in the field, Jack became curious about this drink which other people found enjoyable. He quenched his thirst and knew for the first time the feeling of intoxication. His second experience occurred two years later when he attended a picnic at the invitation of a neighbor. This time it was fear, fear of the Italian host with flashing eyes and an insistent manner, that persuaded Jack to accept the wine and to allow the glass to be refilled.

When Jack was ten, John London gave up forever his dream of farm life and moved back to Oakland. Here the family located near the California Cotton Mills. Flora boarded the girls who worked at the mill. Encouraged by the success of her new enterprise, she bought a second house, which brought increased profit for a while. Her emotional instability, however, overcame her. Her interest in the project waned; she began spending, and when the payments for the house came due, there was no money with which to pay them. The bank took the mortgaged buildings, and the Londons moved to a poorer section of town.4

Jack London's mind was like a seismograph that recorded every slight tremor about him . . . and

4Ibid., p. 22.
tremors there were aplenty, for the next thirteen years of the family's life were spent in poverty and defeat. He often said that he had had no childhood, that his first memories of life were pinched by poverty, and that the pinch of poverty had been chronic.\(^5\)

In order to help the family eke out a living, Jack delivered papers and did any other odd jobs that he could find. The paper route broadened his knowledge, for he took every opportunity to observe people and places that were new to him. Although Flora pocketed most of the money, he was allowed to keep some of it. This factor and the idea that he was helping to support the family contributed to a feeling of independence.

Another instance of his growing independence is shown in an experience he related concerning his mother, who symbolized wisdom and knowledge to him, until one day she punished him for something of which he was not guilty. Being a child who spent much time alone and brooded over things, he began to realize that his mother's knowledge was limited and her decisions therefore unjust. Relating the incident he said, "I can well remember that I absolved her from any deliberate intention to hurt me, but henceforth I decided for myself as to the right and wrong of things."\(^6\)

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\(^5\)Ibid.

The next few years of his life were difficult ones. Working for ten cents an hour at a steady job in a salmon cannery, slaving in a jute mill, and later feeding coal to the furnace in the power plant of the Oakland Street Railway for a thirteen-hour day and a wage of less than eight cents an hour, he gained an understanding of the struggles of the proletariat and a deep sympathy that greatly influenced his life.  

His desire for personal gain, however, sometimes grew strong; tired of being a work beast, he would thrust aside his home responsibilities. Obeying the urge to be independent, he became for a while an oyster pirate, making money by the skillful handling of a boat, evading the watchful eye of the fish patrol, and raiding the oyster beds before the other fishermen could arrive. He signed on a whaling vessel headed for Japan and was away for a year. The same urge for adventure again entered his life when after his return he read in the newspaper of Coxeys Army of the Commonwealth. Although his interest from the beginning may have been selfish, his experience on the road and his talks with other unemployed men taught him a lesson. He realized that he was a member of the working class and that there were many like him who relied upon selling muscle.

power or skill to earn a living. He realized that there were millions of other young people who like him desired a richer, fuller life. He was determined to find a means of escape not only for himself but for all.8

Reading

Among the books which Jack London read as a child on the farm, four seem to have remained in his mind for a long time. These were a life of Garfield, an account of Paul du Chaillu's African travels, Washington Irving's *The Alhambra*, and Cuida's *Signa*. Linking himself with *Signa*, an Italian peasant boy of his own age who was surrounded by circumstances similar to his own, he was determined to rebel against the hardships of life and a society which could not provide for all its members.9

During the family's residence in Oakland, Jack became acquainted with the public library. He was an avid reader, and with the interest and help of the librarian he was speedily broadening his horizon.

Jack dated his spiritual birth from the moment that he stood, cap in hand, in the doorway of the wooden building, his eyes wide with unbelieving that there could be so many books in the world. From that day on, though he would suffer much, though he would undergo agonies of the brain and soul, though he

would be beaten and despised and cast out as a
pariah, never again would he be alone. 10

Obtaining cards for the entire family, Jack checked out
many books and eagerly swallowed the material for which he
had been starving. Books of adventure, travel, and sea
voyages were first among his discoveries.

Fellow traveling companions in later years influenced
him to read books of science and philosophy. One companion
introduced him to The Communist Manifesto. Here in Karl
Marx he found the answers to his searching questions and
recorded the material in his notebook. He discovered in his
reading a method for achieving the socialist state and
forcing its acceptance. He found that this philosophy
demanded state ownership of all wealth except consumer's
goods. The means of production, communication, and trans-
portation were to be owned collectively. In the book London
underscored with pencil the call to the workingmen to unite
that they might overthrow the prevailing forces. 11

The winter that London spent in Alaska while on his
search for gold gave him more time for reading the books he
had brought along. He studied Darwin's Origin of Species,
Spencer's Philosophy of Style, Marx's Capital, and Milton's
Paradise Lost. The main topic of conversation around the
fires during that winter was socialism. 12

10 Stone, op. cit., p. 24. 11 Ibid., p. 66.
12 Ibid., p. 86.
When Jack returned from his Alaskan expedition, he found that the library in Oakland had undergone a change. Its director was a young Canadian gentleman named Bamford who called himself a Christian-Socialist. He had increased the reference department of the library and was eager to assist Jack in his quest for truth and understanding. He suggested that London read books by Ruskin, Carlyle, Arnold, and Morris, men whom Bamford mistakenly considered disciples of Marx. Jack followed his advice. By minimizing his hours of sleep and applying himself to long hours of study, he explored the field of socialism.¹³

At the beginning of his writing career Jack realized that a knowledge of history, evolution, economics, and other branches of learning was a requisite to writing. Realizing that he must have a philosophy of life, he turned to Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, Malthus's *Theory of Population*, Ricard's *Theory of Distribution*, Bastiat's *Theory of Economic Harmonies*, and John Stuart Mill's *Wealth in Distribution*. He read Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and Mill. Turning then to metaphysics, he read Hegel, Kant, Berkeley, and Leibnitz. He re-read Darwin, Huxley, and Wallace for a better understanding of biology.¹⁴

¹³*Joan London*, op. cit., p. 96.

¹⁴*Stone*, op. cit., p. 105.
Although it is difficult to determine the extent to which he was influenced by his reading, Irving Stone believes that Darwin, Spencer, Marx, and Nietzsche were his greatest intellectual influences. Stone also says that "his meeting with the mind of Herbert Spencer was perhaps the greatest single adventure in a life fraught with adventure."\(^{15}\) Spencer took the vague ideas, the fragments, and the generalizations and organized them to show the inescapable law of the universe and the relation of man to all other things.

From Nietzsche, London discovered the theory of the superman, who was stronger and wiser than his fellowmen. Jack was not disturbed, however, by the fact that Nietzsche detested socialism as a form of government. Speaking of these conflicting ideas, London's biographer says:

> All his life he remained an individualist and a socialist; he wanted individualism for himself because he was a superman, a blond-beast who would conquer . . . and socialism for the masses who were weak and needed protection. For a number of years he was to be successful in riding these two intellectual horses, each of which was pulling in an opposite direction.\(^{16}\)

The turn of the century found London reading from the authors whose theories paralleled the path he had chosen to follow. Brewster's *Studies in Structure and Style*, Saint Amand's *Revolution of 1848*, Jordan's *Footnotes to Evolution*, Tyrelle's *Sub-Arctica*, Bohm-Bawerk's *Capital and Interest*,

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 106. \(^{16}\)Ibid., p. 108.
Oscar Wilde's *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, and William Morris's *The Socialist Ideal--Art* were among the books which he studied and annotated.\(^{17}\)

**Friends**

In addition to the books that London read, the many people who came into his life left an indelible impression upon him, stimulating his thinking and molding his philosophy. It was not until his adolescence that his gregarious instinct developed. The first of the many characters that were to come into his life were the men of the water-front. He was fascinated by their strength, power, blustering speech, and adventurous spirit. He saw in them the superman idea that he later discovered in the writings of Nietzsche. He soon realized, however, that life for these daring oyster pirates was short and disastrous. It was only a few years until the ones with whom he had associated had met death. Scratch Nelson had been shot, Clam and Whisky Bob stabbed, and Nicky the Greek and Spider had been sentenced to San Quentin.\(^{18}\) Jack London realized, too, that to lift himself from this struggling labor group he must have an education.

He entered high school to cram into his head the knowledge which would free him from being a work beast and

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 126.  \(^{18}\)Ibid., p. 36.
prepare him to be a "brain merchant." The only school activity which interested him was the debating society. Joining this organization brought about his friendship with some of the other students, among whom was Edward Applegarth. Soon he was invited to the Applegarth home. Being unaccustomed to the furnishings of a middle-class home and the manners and speech of these people, London felt awkward and embarrassed; but when he forgot himself in the lively conversation, his confusion fled. His visits to the home became regular. Friends were invited in to take part in the discussions, and a club was organized to discuss the current problems. On the subject of socialism, however, Jack found his friends indifferent. He had made his way into the middle class, but he was not content; his sympathies remained with the laborers. Gradually he drifted away from the Applegarth home.

Attending socialists' meetings and lectures, London met Anna Strunsky, a brilliant student at Stanford University. Between the two a friendship developed that lasted for many years and resulted in the publication of The Kempton-Wace Letters. Her differing opinion of socialism made her a disturbing factor in Jack's life. She opposed his socialism "for the benefit of 'certain kindred races,' his belief that woman was inferior to man, that war was justifiable, that
might made right, and his determination to use his talents for the sole purpose of making money. "

The three men who probably wielded the most influence over London at this time were Frank Strawn-Hamilton, George Speed, and Austin Lewis. It was Strawn-Hamilton who was in a sense Jack's first teacher. Educated in the universities of the East, he was said to have been far superior to the average college professor of that day. He could have given London a complete course in philosophy. While Jack read philosophy sometimes hastily, not understanding the theorists thoroughly, Strawn-Hamilton, being a profound thinker, could give meaning to these matters. Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin he could analyze with ease without losing his own perspective. Had London not become successful at this time in selling some of his works and given up studying, Strawn-Hamilton might have cleared some of the confused ideas that Jack had. Readers of London recognize Briassenden, the friendly philosopher and teacher of the fictional Martin Eden, as Frank Strawn-Hamilton.

George Speed, proletarian-socialist, had an unshakable faith in the ultimate victory of socialism. Although he and London were not very close friends, their ambitions for their class were identical. "In Speed and in Speed's way Jack

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20 Ibid., p. 181.
21 Ibid., p. 186.
recognized the hearts and guts of the movement he believed he believed in.” While London through his talent was able to lift himself out of this class, George Speed kept his powers and energies at the disposal of the working class to the end of his life. Jack's distaste for physical labor and the allure of the socialist intellectuals brought about the break between these two; later Jack preferred to forget him.

Austin Lewis, a lawyer and revolutionary leader, was one of the organizers of the Socialist movement on the Pacific coast. He knew the history and the theories of the socialists, and his skill as a speaker enabled him to explain it so that the working class could understand. Well-known lawyer that he was, he could have worked for the capitalists and lifted himself out of poverty, but he preferred to remain loyal to his convictions and dedicated himself to the cause as a socialist-labor lawyer. Like Strawn-Hamilton he was a profound thinker and student of Marxism. He, too, early took an interest in London and helped to explain some of the theories to him.  

Speaking of this group of socialist intellectuals and their influence upon London at the beginning of his successful career, his daughter, Joan, wrote:

He never learned much socialism, it is true, and politically he remained an ignoramus, but he gained a perspective which was to prove more valuable than

22 Ibid., p. 182.  
23 Ibid., p. 188.
he knew. The experience of these years contributed so richly to his development that their vitality was not exhausted until long after replenishment from the source had ceased.24

Historical Background

Not only man's immediate environment but also the social and economic development of the country plays its part in shaping man's philosophy and forecasting his future. Jack London was born in 1876, in what has been called one of the most spectacular periods in American history. It was the period when the scene was rapidly changing. At the close of the 'seventies the old industries of mining and ranching in California were being replaced by agriculture. Federal land grants gave impetus to the expansion of the Western frontier. California had increased its diversified farming. Orange groves, peach and prune orchards, vineyards, chicken ranches, and bee farms sprang up over the country. News of prosperity spread, bringing scores of immigrants into the land.25

With the expansion came the destruction of the one-time isolation of the West. The pressure of industrial development could not be withstood indefinitely. There were many new inventions—the telephone, typewriter, new and powerful

24 Ibid., p. 190.

engines, and gigantic machines. Methods of printing were improved, thus widening the circulation of books, newspapers, and magazines. Chemistry produced better methods of mining and processes for canning food. Factories, textile mills, canneries, and warehouses sprang up. People on farms began moving into the cities to gain employment in the factories. With the division of labor and standardizing of machines came mass production. Small business gave way to corporations.26

When the panic of 1893 came, banks everywhere closed their doors, commercial firms failed, railroads went into receivership, and unemployment was acute. J. L. Morgan reaped excessive profits from a loan of gold to pay government bonds. Thus capital profited from the crash. More than ninety-nine per cent of the wealth was owned by one per cent of the people.27

The depression, low prices, unemployment, a growing hatred of the capitalists, and a lack of faith in the government were rapidly causing a revolution in public opinion. The people who had come west were filled with a strong sense of individualism and unaccustomed to group life, but now they were beginning to feel the need of organization.28

26Harold Rugg, A History of American Civilization, pp. 464-482.


The railroad strike in Pittsburgh in 1877 found many sympathizers among Western labor. At this time Dennis Kearney organized the Workingmen's Party, a strong political force for a brief time. It aimed to destroy low wages and unemployment. A contributing factor to the growth of this organization was the fact that it was anti-Chinese. The Chinese, who had migrated by the scores of hundreds, worked for less money than other workers thus causing increased unemployment. In December the Workingmen's Party became the Socialist Labor Party.29

By the spring of 1894 the ranks of the unemployed were increasing every week. Strikes of exploited workers were spreading over the nation, and farmers were protesting the low prices of farm commodities. Congress seemed unaware of the horrible conditions being experienced by the unemployed. While a feeling of unrest swept the country, an army of men led by Jacob Schleier Coxey was making its way across the nation to appear before Congress. Two bills aimed to increase the nation's road-building program and give employment to many citizens had been introduced into Congress. This army, which gained momentum as it made its way along, was to petition Congress for the passage of the bills. In California Charles T. Kelly had recruited an army to join Coxey's men. Among those who made up the California

29Ibid., pp. 19-21.
contingent was Jack London. Upon his arrival in Washington, Coxe with two other officials was arrested for disturbing the nation, and many who were following him turned back to their homes without reaching the capital.\footnote{Philip S. Foner, \textit{Jack London: American Rebel}, pp. 15-20.}

The majority of the American writers of this period were still clinging to romantic love and the sentimental stories in which brave gentlemen made love to beautiful ladies on magnolia-surrounded verandas. The poor boy who went to the city might meet and marry the boss's daughter and become a business partner in the firm. Few writers gave a true picture of the chaos and social unrest of the times. A few books which attempted to give a picture of the harsh, sordid, real life were \textit{The Silent Partner} by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, \textit{A Traveler from Altrurial} by William Dean Howells, and \textit{Looking Backward} by Edward Bellamy.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 4.} \textit{Looking Backward}, one of the most sensational books to make its appearance in American fiction, is a utopian account of the operations of a cooperative commonwealth in the United States in the year two thousand. Patterned after a military army, Bellamy's industrial army maintains an ideal community where everyone follows the occupation or profession of his choice and there is no such thing as unemployment. His ideas are so simple it is not surprising that they appealed so strongly
to the working class. Clubs for promoting the socializing of industry were formed everywhere. The Nationalist movement, as it was known, was short-lived, but for many Americans it served as an introduction to socialism. Many of the Nationalists later joined the Socialist Labor Party.\textsuperscript{32}

Since scientific socialism had been introduced into the United States by German immigrants, the Socialist Labor Party at first was based mainly upon the foreign-born working class. This caused much criticism and limited somewhat the growth of the movement. It was Daniel DeLeon, a former Nationalist, who, as editor of the party's paper and as a national lecturer, helped to integrate the movement among the American masses.\textsuperscript{33} It was during this transformation period when the newspapers of the country were carrying messages of revolution against class struggle and urging the people to unite for the common good, that Jack London became a member of the Socialist Labor Party, contributing to its growth through speeches and writings. Although London never showed much interest in politics, it was from the socialists and their zealous discussions that many of his concepts of philosophy were molded.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 23. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{33}Ibid. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{34}Ibid.
CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNING OF LONDON’S CAREER

Evidences of Conflict in London’s Life
From 1896 to 1902

By the time Jack London was in high school he was demonstrating his interest in socialism. He had already obtained from The Communist Manifesto the fundamental concepts of his socialism—the belief in class struggle, the opposition to private ownership of the means of production for the majority of the people, and confidence in the final triumph of socialism.¹

London joined the Socialist Labor Party of Oakland in April, 1896, and soon became an active member. He volunteered as a speaker in order to test the threats which the mayor had made against outdoor meetings of the Socialist Labor Party. The threats were carried out. He was arrested and charged with speaking without a permit. After a sharp reprimand, he was released. The Oakland papers the next day in calling him "The Boy Socialist" gave him a name which he kept for many years.²

²Ibid., p. 27.
In school he was presenting his socialist theories in *The Aegis*, the school's literary magazine. His essay "Optimism, Pessimism and Patriotism" accused the ruling class of denying the masses an education fearing that it might arouse in them a spirit of revolt. "He pointed to the evils of capitalism, the long hours and low wages and the social and moral degradation that flowed from these evils, and urged 'ye Americans, patriots and optimists to awake! Seize the reins of a corrupted government and educate the masses.'"³

As a member of the debating team speaking at a high school graduation, he again attacked the existing social order. He declared that the time for action had come and that he was willing to use any means for the destruction of existing conditions.⁴

For the next few years London was not so active in the socialist movement. Although he attended the University of California for one semester, there is no record of his having submitted any material to *The Occident*, the literary publication of the university.⁵

With the responsibility of supporting his family weighing heavily upon him, Jack was forced to leave college. He decided to try writing. He hoped to use some of the material

³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. 28. ⁵Irving Stone, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
which he had been studying, reading, and discussing for five years. He tried writing, too, because he hoped to earn more money that way than by a manual-labor job which paid only one dollar a day.\(^6\)

In 1897 Jack London joined the great rush of gold-seekers journeying to the Klondike in search of wealth. Accounts of London’s life in Alaska point to the fact that he was not so much interested in gold as he was in adventure. On his way to Alaska he had told a companion on the Umatilla that he was not going to Alaska to mine, but to gather material for books.\(^7\) London was fascinated by the life of the frontier. For long hours he listened to the adventures of men in their great quest for wealth. The ancient battle for survival, the struggle against nature just to keep alive, was interesting to him and later found its way into many of his stories.\(^8\) He noticed that the Indian shared both poverty and wealth so that no one in the tribe benefited at the expense of others. He appreciated the fact that the necessities of frontier life developed a community conscience among the individualistic miners. These were men who worked hard and fought hard but had none of the spirit of covetousness that he had noticed in civilization. Being a student

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 81. \(^7\)Ibid., p. 89. 
\(^8\)Joan London, op. cit., p. 149.
of social and economic problems, he feared that these virtues of the frontier would perish under capitalism. 9

Unable to find steady employment upon his return and eager to make use of his Alaskan experiences, London turned again to writing. Week after week he mailed stories to publishers all over the country only to have them returned. So determined was he that continual rejection of his work did not deter him. Compensation for his efforts was finally realized, however, when on the same day he received notice from two publishers of the acceptance of a story. London is reported to have said that the receipt of forty dollars from The Black Cat for one story was the determining factor in his decision to continue writing.10

London's action at a later date indicates that his motive in writing was not purely to obtain money. He must have felt that he was put here to create and to contribute great stories to literature, or he would not have rejected an appointment to work at the post office.11 Acceptance of the postal appointment would have meant a steady job for the remainder of his life. He would have been able to afford books and magazines, to take care of his mother, and to marry Mabel Applegarth, whom he had loved since his high school days. He was willing to endure all the privations of

9Foner, op. cit., p. 31.
10Stone, op. cit., p. 101. 11Ibid., p. 103.
an artist "because he would be taking a primal ecstasy from his work which would make all other possible pleasures, such as eating and possessing material objects, seem dull and inconsequential."\(^{12}\)

When Ann Strunsky accused London of not being a true socialist because he was writing and trying "to beat the capitalist at his own game," he insisted that it was not only for personal gain that he was writing, for he was confident that he was rendering "the Cause" a great service. He assured her that being a successful writer would prove to the capitalist that "Socialists were not derelicts and failures."\(^{13}\)

While London was struggling to gain recognition as a writer, he again became active in the socialist movement, attending lectures and turning out essays. One of these essays was "The Question of the Maximum," which was purchased by an Eastern magazine but never published. He later used the essay as the basis for a lecture before the Socialist Labor Party in Oakland. He declared that the industrialized nations were disposing of surplus commodities among the backward nations, but that these same backward nations were slowly becoming industrialized and would eventually have a surplus. He predicted that the struggle over markets and colonies would eventually lead to war. The

\(^{12}\)Ibid. \(^{13}\)Foner, op. cit., p. 39.
people, he believed, would revolt, capture the means of production and distribution, and put an end to the economic rivalries which led to war.\textsuperscript{14}

Impressed with London's ability to analyze complex problems and his confidence in the emergence of socialism, the party members asked him to lecture each Sunday night. Although London was working long hours to earn a living as a writer, he accepted the invitation. Somehow he managed to find time to deliver lectures, for which he neither asked nor received any remuneration.\textsuperscript{15}

Austin Lewis, a socialist and one of London's closest friends, made the following observation of the young lecturer:

"In 1899 Jack London was young, vigorous, with a sure sense of emotional values and a mind which was beginning to show marks of cultivation and development. One would have predicted for him a wholesome, beautiful existence. But even then there were other concepts and theories of life attracting him, seducing him, destroying him, really. . . . But 1898 and 1899 are the two eminently beautiful years of his life, for then he stood upright, and could wear that inimitably beautiful smile of his without a touch of insincerity."\textsuperscript{16}

In 1901 the Oakland Socialist Party, the newly-organized party which resulted from a conflict within the Socialist Labor Party, nominated Jack London for mayor. In accepting the nomination, London said:

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 37. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{15}Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{16}Joan London, op. cit., p. 191.
"It is we, the Socialists, working as a leaven throughout society, who are responsible for the great and growing belief in municipal ownership. It is we, the Socialists, by our propaganda, who have forced the old parties to throw as sops to the popular unrest certain privileges."17

About the same time that London was running for mayor, his story "The Minions of Midas" appeared in *Pearson's Magazine*. Foner points out that this story is the antithesis of the proletarian theory and that it shows London's limitations as a socialist. The Minions of Midas, a class-conscious group of wage-slaves, instituted a reign of terror because they believed in their own superiority and wanted to share the profits with the capitalists. There is no indication that the money they are fighting for will be used to right social evils. "The Minions of Midas refer to themselves as a 'new force' in society, but they have nothing in common with the real forces emerging at this time represented by the labor and socialist movements."18

Almost from the beginning of his study London had fused the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon with his conception of socialism. He defined the Anglo-Saxon as anyone who spoke English and was in form and tradition more English than anyone else. To Cloudesley Johns, a friend of his, London wrote:

"I do not believe in the universal brotherhood of man. . . . I believe my race is the salt of the

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17 Foner, *op. cit.*, p. 45.  
earth. I am a scientific socialist, not a utopian, an economic man as opposed to an imaginative man." And again, "An evolutionist, believing in Natural Selection, half believing Malthus' 'Law of Population,' and a myriad of other factors thrown in. I cannot but hail as unavoidable the Black and Brown going down before the White." 19

Through the summer and fall of 1901 London continued to give lectures, write articles on socialism, entertain his widening circle of friends, and work on his first novel. The publication of Son of the Wolf, a collection of Alaskan stories, had met with such success that McClure offered to pay him a salary of one hundred twenty-five dollars a month for five months so that he could be free to work on a novel. 20

**A Daughter of the Snows**

Early in 1902 A Daughter of the Snows was completed and mailed to the publisher. Both London and McClure were disappointed in the book. McClure decided against publishing it but sold it to J. B. Lippincott and Company of Philadelphia. 21

Though A Daughter of the Snows teaches no great lesson and lacks the emphasis on socialism found in some of his later works, it is important in revealing certain trends in London's writing.

Frona Welse, the heroine of the book, returns to Alaska after an absence of several years while she has been receiving her education in the United States. On her way up the Dyea trail to Dawson she is forced to spend the night in Happy Camp, while her outfit, less fortunate than she in crossing a stream, lags behind. Here she meets Vance Corliss, who shares his tent, blankets, and food. Corliss is new in the country, very skeptical of women on the trail, and not even interested enough in her to find out her name. It is only when Frona leaves and invites him to visit in the Welse home when he is in Dawson that Corliss becomes interested.

Jacob Welse, Frona's father, is a giant trader and monopolist who controls the supplies and food for all people in the Klondike. He is known and respected by all men in that region.

Not long after Frona's return to Dawson Vance Corliss accepts the invitation received on the trail and visits Jacob Welse and his daughter. Jacob Welse recognizes the strong qualities of this young man and is glad for him to visit. Soon he is coming frequently. The conversation is often based upon sociological problems and race supremacy.

During the winter Gregory St. Vincent, a reporter, arrives in Dawson. His popularity spreads rapidly, and he, too, is soon coming to the Welse home. He quickly wins
Frona's admiration by telling of his experiences in Eastern Asia with the Sea Men, a barbaric tribe which held him captive for several months. It was only through his bravery, his quick thinking, and his fighting that he was able to escape. Frona is charmed by his strength and his fighting qualities. "His healthful, optimistic spirit pleased her, while he corresponded well to her idealized natural man and favorite racial type. Her first doubt—that if what he said was true—had passed away."

Frona begins to see less of Vance Corliss and more of Gregory St. Vincent.

Having been advised by Del Bishop, sage of the Klondike, to marry young and shut out all competition, Corliss finally decides to ask Frona to marry him. She refuses, telling him that she admires him and wants him to remain a friend but she can not become his bride.

It is not until spring, when she comes upon the scene of a trial, that Frona realizes that it is Corliss, not St. Vincent, who is the strong, red-blooded man that she wants. St. Vincent is being tried for murder. He is declared guilty, but just before he is hanged, a dying Indian reveals the true story. The Indian had murdered John Borg and fled, while St. Vincent, sleeping in the tent when the murder occurred, had been too cowardly to get up and fight. He, too, had fled.

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Frona is now thoroughly disgusted with St. Vincent. When she sees him some time later, she does not congratulate him upon his escape, but condemns him:

"Shall I tell you why, Gregory St. Vincent? Tell you why your kisses have cheapened me? Because you broke the faith of food and blanket. Because you broke salt with a man, and then watched him fight unequally for life without lifting your hand. Why, I had rather you had died in defending him; the memory of you would have been good. Yes, I had rather you had killed him yourself. At least, it would have shown there was blood in your body."23

In Jacob Welser, London reveals his belief in a community controlled by superior people for the benefit of all. Welser is a kind, wise trader with a deep interest in everyone's welfare. Nowhere in the book is he guilty of doing any wrong. His decisions are always just. Having deep insight into the character of men, he realizes long before Frona does that Corliss is the ideal man for her.

On an island in the Bering Sea, Jacob Welser established a great distributing station, put ships on the North Pacific, and kept offices in Seattle and San Francisco. London describes him as follows:

A captain of industry and a splendid monopolist, he dominated the most independent aggregate of men ever drawn together from the ends of the earth. An economic missionary, a commercial St. Paul, he preached the doctrines of expediency and force. Believing in the material rights of man, a child himself of democracy, he bent all men to his absolutism. Government of Jacob Welser, for Jacob Welser and the

23 Ibid., p. 333.
people, by Jacob Weise, was his unwritten gospel. Single handed he had carved out his dominion till he gripped the domain of a dozen Roman provinces.24

He bore the country on his shoulders; saw to its needs; did its work. Every ounce of its dust passed through his hands; every post-card and letter of credit. He did its banking and exchange; carried and distributed its mails. He frowned upon competition; frightened out predatory capital; bluffed militant syndicates, and when they would not, backed his bluff and broke them.25

London's love of the community spirit on the frontier is voiced by Jacob Weise when a famine threatens the miners. To Melton, who is greedily trying to get more than the share of food, Weise says:

"You are working for your own stomach. I am working for the stomachs of twenty thousand."26

After some argument Weise ends the conversation by saying:

"A Bonanza property, or a block of Bonanza properties, does not entitle you to a pound more than the oldest penniless 'sour dough' or the newest baby born. Trust me. As long as I have a pound of grub you shall not starve. Stiffen up. Shake hands. Get a smile on your face and make the best of it."27

In contrast to this high level of social thinking London descends to his theory of Anglo-Saxon supremacy. When Corliss and Frona discuss race supremacy, London allows Frona, who upholds the Anglo-Saxons, to win the argument. Called upon to prove that the Anglo-Saxons are superior to other races, Frona says:

24Ibid., p. 55.  
25Ibid., p. 60.  
26Ibid., p. 65.  
27Ibid., p. 66.
"We are a race of doers and fighters, of globe-
encirclers and zone-conquerors. We toil and
struggle no matter how hopeless it may be. While
we are persistent and resistent, we are so made
that we fit ourselves to the most diverse condi-
tions. Will the Indian, the Negro, or the Mongol
ever conquer the Teuton? Surely not! The Indian
has persistence without variability; if he doesn't
modify he dies, if he does try to modify he dies
anyway. The Negro has adaptability, but he is
servile and must be led. . . . All that the other
races are not, the Anglo-Saxon, or Teuton if you
please, is. All that the other races have not,
the Teuton has."28

When the captain of the police enters the argument, he
agrees with Frona and cites instances in which the white man
has proved himself superior to the Indian. The gold-seekers
who came into the country were soon carrying greater loads
over longer distances than was the Indian, who had packed on
his back for generations. The captain maintains that the
white man excelled in working, in hunting, and in fishing.29

Not only does London permit Frona to win the argument,
but some time later the reader finds Corliss voicing the
same opinion.

"Yes," he considered, "I am my father's son,
and the life goes back to the sea--kings who never
slept under the smoky rafters of a roof or drained
the alehorn by inhabited hearth. There must be a
reason for the dead status of the black, a reason
for the Teuton spreading on the earth as no other
race has ever spread. There must be something in
race heredity, else I would not leap at the sum-
mons."30

28 Ibid., p. 83.  
29 Ibid., p. 85.  
30 Ibid., p. 146.
The opinion of the dominant race spoken by the leading characters in his novel is the opinion of Jack London as expressed in a letter to his friend Cloudesley Johns. It is the voice of Nietzsche spoken through Kipling to pervert Karl Marx.31

31Stone, op. cit., p. 149.
CHAPTER IV

THE HEIGHT OF LONDON'S CAREER AS A SOCIALIST

London's Participation in the Socialist Movement from 1902 to 1907

During the years from 1902 to 1907 when London was most actively engaged in the socialist movement, he was writing novels which reflected his enthusiasm for the Cause. This is the period during which he reached the height of his career as a socialist and during which he produced The Iron Heel, his greatest socialist novel. Even then the individualism which later became the dominating force in his life was present, reflecting itself to a certain degree in his life and in his novels.

On July 21, 1902, London received a telegram from the American Press Association asking him to go to South Africa. The Boer War had terminated seven weeks earlier, and the press wanted to run a series of articles on postwar conditions. One week later London sailed from New York on his way to Liverpool.¹

In a letter written to Ann Strunsky while he was sailing for England, London revealed his optimism over the socialist

¹Joan London, op. cit., p. 239.
movement. He had discovered in talking with men during the trip that they were ignorant of the forces working to create revolt. They had grown bitter toward the working class, whose growth and power was endangering them, but they were unconscious of the movement. In the same letter London indicated his intention to observe the coronation of King Edward from the viewpoint of the slum people.²

Upon his arrival in England, London received a cablegram from the American Press Association announcing cancellation of the South African series. This afforded an opportunity for London, interested in humanity and social problems, to make a study of the conditions in the slums of East London.

Buying some used clothing and renting a room in the East End, London passed as a stranded American sailor while he set out to investigate the slums. To obtain his information, London subjected himself to the hunger, the rain, the bitter cold, the filth, and all the sordidness in which the lower class existed. Taking him for one of them, the workmen and loungers on the streetcorners talked freely with him.³

London visited the workhouses where an estimated twenty men bathed in the same water. They ate food unfit for human consumption, slept on narrow cots, and were forced to do

²Foner, op. cit., p. 48.
back-breaking work in return for their lodging. London's task, which was considered one of the best, was scavenger work in an infirmary. After the day's work he was sent into the basement, where he was served tea and a huge platter of scraps—refuse from the fingers and mouths of sick and diseased people.⁴

As London talked with the derelicts, he tried to discover the reason for their being in the slums. Most of them were there, he discovered, not through laziness, but because of old age, disease, or accidents which had reduced their labor value. He saw in this abyss human potentialities which under proper conditions might develop great heroes and masters.⁵

Being a socialist, London was not content to report the deplorable conditions and to give factual data. In the latter part of The People of the Abyss he drew conclusions, reproached the ruling class for mismanagement, and suggested a solution to the problem. He contrasted the life of the primitive Alaskan Indians and that of the slum-dwellers in London. In the uncivilized world of the Indian when there was famine, all suffered; when there was plenty, all shared. In civilized England during prosperous times one man had a surplus while others starved.

⁴Ibid., p. 110. ⁵Ibid., p. 47.
The miserable and despised and forgotten, dying in the social shambles. The progeny of prostitution—of the prostitution of men and women and children, of flesh and blood, and sparkle and spirit; in brief, the prostitution of labor. If this is the best that civilization can do for the human, then give us howling and naked savagery. Far better to be a people of the wilderness and desert, of the caves and the squatting-place, than to be a people of the machine and the Abyss.\(^6\)

The cause of all the misery, London explained, was mismanagement; the solution, a socialist commonwealth. Society must be organized on a basis of production for use rather than profit. The destruction of capitalist mismanagement, London believed, would eliminate the evil of the slums.

For seven weeks London lived in the slums, diligently laboring for "the Cause." In a letter to Ann Strunsky he had written:

"My stomach will never forgive me for all the filth I have put into it since coming here, and my soul for all the despair. . . . I am worn out and exhausted, and my nerves are blunted with what I have seen and the suffering it has cost me."\(^7\)

In later years he said that of all his books, he loved The People of the Abyss most, because it had called for the greatest sacrifice.\(^8\)

After his return from England, London continued writing, turning out fiction in order to pay his mounting expenses and contributing without pay to socialist publications. His

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 295.

\(^7\)Joan London, op. cit., p. 240.

\(^8\)Ibid.
articles published in The Comrade and International Socialist Review, socialist publications, were spreading his fame. From all parts of the country he received letters beginning "Dear Comrade" and ending with "Yours for the revolution." Using these same phrases, London answered every letter himself. 9

Two of his articles, "The Scab" and "The Class Struggle," first given as lectures to the Oakland Socialists, illustrate London's ability to simplify a difficult subject and to apply Marxism to American conditions. 10

In "The Class Struggle" London attempts to refute the capitalists' idea that there is no class struggle in America. He maintains that the disappearance of the frontier has forced even superior workmen, who might have risen from their class, to remain in the working class. Soon these workmen learn that as individuals they cannot combat the system which exploits them, and the organization of labor results. The fact that trade unions demand higher wages and capital demands greater profit, London argues, is proof of the struggle between the two classes. He expresses his belief that the working class will win the struggle and take control of the government. He concluded that trade unions

9Stone, op. cit., p. 177.
10Foner, op. cit., p. 55.
with correct political ideology would achieve a new social order in America.\textsuperscript{11}

Concerning "The Scab," which also stresses the existence of a class struggle, Foner writes the following:

Unfortunately, as the essay develops, its power dwindles. London's definition of a scab takes in so much territory that one cannot be sure just what he has in mind. A scab, he argues, "is one who gives more value for the same price than another." He differentiates, to be sure, between the scab who is utilized by employers to break strikes and a laborer who does more work for the same wage than another. But the difference is somewhat glossed over in the discussion, and the reader is led to the conclusion that almost everybody scabs in a society where men struggle with one another for food and shelter--worker against worker, capitalist against capitalist, and nation against nation. . . .

In addition to the loose terminology, London's essay also suffers from a failure to analyze sufficiently the reasons why men scab on their fellow workers. While he points out that the employers use scabs to destroy the organized power of labor, he leaves the impression that their aim is to get low-paid workers, thus overlooking the fact that professional strike-breakers were being paid more for a month's work than men on strike received during the entire year. Nor does he point out that the refusal of the craft unions to organize Negro and women workers often lead them to scab against their will.\textsuperscript{12}

London's activities during the Russo-Japanese War indicate his conflicting ideas between the brotherhood of man and race prejudice. Having accepted an offer from Hearst, he sailed for Yokohoma in January, 1904. As a socialist, he

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 56.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
was interested in the struggle between the two capitalist countries for possession of Manchuria. 13

London's untiring efforts to obtain reports from the scene of action proved ineffectual. The Japanese government was firm in its conviction that correspondents were not welcome. London's experience led only to scorn and loathing of the Japanese. In a letter to Charmian Kittredge he wrote:

"The only compensation for these months of irritation is a better comprehension of Asiatic geography and Asiatic character. Only in another war, with a white man's army, may I hope to redeem myself. It can never be done here by any possibility." 14

Edmundo Peluso, who attended a socialist lecture soon after London's return, recalls having heard London express his views of the Japanese. When London openly criticized the yellow race, his fellow socialists, embarrassed by his remarks, reminded him of a portrait of Marx and the slogan "Workers of all countries, unite!" London retorted that he was first of all a white man and only then a socialist. 15

After this episode London appears to have confined his expression of dislike to his friends and to have kept the socialist perspective in public. The following spring in a lecture he quoted from a letter that the Japanese working class had addressed to the Russian working class. It had stressed that the enemies were not the Japanese people, but

14 Ibid., p. 283.
15 Ibid., p. 284.
the militarists and so-called patriots. The letter further explained that for the socialists there were no boundaries, race, or nationality; they were all comrades with no desire to fight.\textsuperscript{16}

The year 1905 was an important one in London's life as a socialist. In January he was invited to speak at the University of California. Being one of the popular authors of the time, he was expected to speak upon some phase of literature. Instead he shocked his audience by speaking on "The Revolutionary Spirit of the American Proletariat." He described the existing conditions in the slums of London, informing his audience that two million people were living in poverty in the British capital. He quoted from Robert Hunter's \textit{Poverty}, a study of social conditions in the United States, showing that even in prosperous years ten million people were not properly fed and clothed. He pointed to the increasing number of women and children who were forced to become wage earners. Such conditions as these, he claimed, brought about revolutions. He reaffirmed his belief that the capitalist system should be overthrown and the socialist system put in its place. He concluded his address with a challenge to all university students to awake and take part in the revolution.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 285.
\textsuperscript{17}Foner, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 67.
Soon after his speech at the University, news of the revolution in Russia reached this country. London quickly identified himself with the working class of Russia. His name appeared on the list of socialists who pledged themselves to collect and send money to their comrades engaged in the fight against capitalism.\textsuperscript{18} When London spoke before a business men's club in Stockton, he remarked that the Russian revolutionists who had assassinated some tsarist officials were his brothers. The newspapers immediately announced that London had called the Russian assassins his brothers, and some even threatened prosecution for treason unless he retracted his statement. London held, however, that it was inevitable that there should be bloodshed in such a revolution, and that as a revolutionary socialist he was in sympathy with the working class.\textsuperscript{19}

The publicity that London was receiving from his participation in the socialist movement brought about his nomination a second time for mayor of Oakland. Again he was defeated.\textsuperscript{20}

In April of this same year Macmillan released London's \textit{War of the Classes}, a collection of essays on socialism. These revolutionary articles aroused so much interest that the book was reprinted in June, October, and November. Jack

\textsuperscript{18}Joan London, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 289.

\textsuperscript{19}Foner, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 68.

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 69.
London was becoming an influential figure in the rise of socialism; people were admitting that he had converted them to socialism. 21

Upton Sinclair, who had graduated from the College of the City of New York without having learned anything of the Socialist Party, decided that some effort should be made to insculpt among college students an understanding of socialism. Educators and well-known writers were asked to sponsor the organization. 22 At a meeting held in New York City, September 12, 1905, the Intercollegiate Socialist Society was formally established, and Jack London was elected its first president. 23

In October he started a series of lectures for the newly-organized society. Defending the Russian revolutionists, London addressed a capacity audience at Harvard. From Cambridge he went to New York City, where he addressed a group of capitalists. He shocked and enraged his audience by accusing them of mismanagement and shouting threats of a revolution by the socialists. 24 This lecture was followed by one at Yale, where he used as a basis for his address "The Revolutionary Spirit of the American Proletariat," which he had used a year before at the University of California. Again he accused the capitalists of being

21Stone, op. cit., p. 209.  
22Foner, op. cit., p. 69.  
23Ibid., p. 70.  
24Ibid., p. 72.
inefficient and stupid and pointed to the numbers of hungry and unsheltered laborers existing in a land which had adequate means of production for all.\textsuperscript{25}

London continued his tour until February 3, 1906, when he became ill while in St. Paul. Cancelling his tour, he returned to his home never to resume his lectures.

While London was by no means the only Socialist to popularize the Cause among college students, he, more than anyone, was the college man’s idol and his lectures brought many of them closer to the movement. He himself felt that the work of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society was of great importance and disagreed sharply with those in the party who believed that the organization should be disbanded. . . . He admitted that not everyone who joined the Society was a full-fledged Socialist, but he was convinced "that the majority of the members will be hammered into Socialism."\textsuperscript{26}

After returning from his lecture tour, London contributed to the growth of socialism through his article "What Life Means to Me." In this autobiographical essay London traced his experiences up to the time he gained a true perspective on life—the time he accepted the philosophy of socialism. He wrote of his working at every conceivable job, in a struggle to climb out of his class. By working hard as a "brain merchant" he was able to climb out of the pit, but here he found there was an air of hypocrisy. He returned to his comrades willing to fight for the revolution. With the following dramatic words the essay is concluded:

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., p. 74. \quad \textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p. 78.
There I am content to labor, crowbar in hand, shoulder to shoulder with intellectuals, idealists, and class-conscious working men, getting a solid spy now and again and setting the whole edifice rocking. Someday when we get a few more hands and crowbars to work, we'll topple it over, along with all its rotten life and unburied dead, its monstrous selfishness and sodden materialism. Then we'll cleanse the cellar and build a new habitation for mankind, in which there will be no parlor floor, in which all rooms will be bright and airy, and where the air that is breathed will be clean, noble, and alive.

I believe that spiritual sweetness and unselfishness will conquer the gross gluttony of to-day. And last of all my faith is in the working class. As some Frenchman has said, "The stairway of time is ever echoing with the wooden shoe going up, the polished boot descending." 27

Individualism in London's Personal Life

Even during the period of London's greatest enthusiasm for the socialist movement there were indications of the spirit of individualism at work in his life. He was still searching for the things which would bring him happiness—that would satisfy his ego. The love of the home that he had made with Bess and his two daughters was overshadowed by his attraction for a new woman, Charmian Kittredge. Before he had left for Japan, Jack had told Bess that he was leaving her. When he returned, he learned that Bess had begun divorce proceedings. He went to Piedmont to see Bess and his two girls in order to settle their business. The fact that he was disturbed by the situation is indicated

in a letter written to Charmian Kittredge in which he said:

"It has taken all the resolution I could summon to prevent my going back, for the children's sake. I have been sadly shaken during the last forty-eight hours--so shaken that it almost seemed easier to sacrifice myself for the little ones." 28

Instead of sacrificing himself, however, he went to Glen Ellen, rented a cottage, and waited for Charmian to join him. Afraid of the scandal her return would create, she refused to come. 29

On November 18, 1905, while London was in Chicago on a lecture tour, he received word that Bessie's final divorce decree had been granted. The next day he married Charmian Kittredge. His hasty marriage brought ridicule from the press and criticism from his fellow socialists. Many people commented that it was strange that a man who could not regulate his own domestic affairs should set himself up as a teacher of humanity. 30

London's conduct brought severe criticism of the socialists. The capitalist press, utilizing the weapon at hand, pointed to socialism as a philosophy that would let a man desert his wife and babies. Socialist comrades accused London of retarding the revolution in America by five years. 31 While London was on his lecture tour, he was

28 Stone, op. cit., p. 201.  
30 Ibid., p. 215.  
31 Ibid., p. 296.
always accompanied by his Korean valet. It seems rather inconsistent that a man who represented the working class and called himself a proletarian should carry his own servant about the country with him.\textsuperscript{32}

London's motive for accepting the invitation to lecture in the East was not entirely unselfish. He had just bought one hundred twenty-nine acres of land near Glen Ellen in Sonoma County. He soon found that in his program for developing the place into a home he had exhausted his income and was deeply in debt. He therefore welcomed the opportunity to lecture for the socialist cause, for he realized that it would be possible at the same time to lecture to the various women's clubs, collecting generous fees which he might use in the expansion of his ranch.\textsuperscript{33}

\textit{The Call of the Wild}

In addition to the numerous activities which London engaged in during this period, he found time to write six novels--\textit{The Call of the Wild}, \textit{The Sea Wolf}, \textit{White Fang}, \textit{The Game}, \textit{Before Adam}, and \textit{The Iron Heel}. Although \textit{The Iron Heel} was not published until 1908, he began work on it in 1906 during his enthusiasm over the Russian Revolution. Unlike his other books it required several years study before its completion.

\textsuperscript{32}Joan London, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 298.

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 296.
London set out in 1903 to write a companion story to "Batard," a dog story which he had published a few months earlier. Almost before he realized it, his story was developing into a full length novel—the experiences of a dog in the Klondike as he adjusted himself to a new environment.

In *The Call of the Wild* London seems to have forgotten his revolutionary principles, the equalitarian doctrines of Marx, and created a story of success achieved by overcoming obstacles of environment and exploiting one's fellow creatures. Buck, the hero of the story, is not satisfied until he is the leader, dominating his pack.

The first four years of Buck's life were happy ones because of his freedom. He was a large dog, a cross between a Saint Bernard and a Scotch shepherd, and ruler over all the other dogs on Judge Miller's place in the Santa Clara Valley. There were other dogs that resided in the kennels or lived obscurely inside the house, but the whole realm was Buck's. He went hunting with the judge's son, escorted the judge's daughter on their walks, or sat at the judge's feet before the fire in the winter. "He was king—king over all creeping, crawling, flying things of Judge Miller's place, humans included."35

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All this happiness suddenly terminated, and a life of struggle began when the Chinese gardener put a rope around Buck's neck and loaded him into a baggage car which took him to San Francisco. Here he was placed in a cage and transferred to another train where he rode for two days and nights. The torture Buck was experiencing wounded his pride and created a feeling of resentment toward his environment.

In Seattle he learned his first lesson in adaptation. When he was taken from the train, he was given to a man wearing a red sweater and carrying a club. Intent upon winning his freedom when the cage was opened, Buck sprang furiously at the man in the red sweater. After a fierce struggle, he was finally overpowered by the club.

He was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken. He saw, once for all, that he stood no chance against a man with a club. He had learned a lesson, and in all his after life he never forgot it. The club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the reign of primitive law, and he met the introduction half-way.36

From Seattle Buck was carried on a boat into the Klondike, into a new kind of life to which he must adjust himself. Being an intelligent dog, Buck soon learned the way of life. He learned that there was no fair play when he watched his first dog fight. The dog that was loser was pounced upon and destroyed by all the onlooking huskies. Buck determined then that he would never go down.

36 Ibid., p. 30.
Many were the lessons that Buck learned in his new life. Placed in the harness as a part of the dog team, he soon learned the peculiarities of the other dogs and how to manage the traces, to care for his feet, and to make a bed in the snow. He learned to exercise his native, but previously dormant, cunning. In getting food, he learned to eat fast, and when his master's back was turned, to steal from the others.

This first theft marked Buck as fit to survive in the hostile Northland environment. It marked his adaptability; his capacity to adjust himself to changing conditions, the lack of which would have meant swift and terrible death. It marked, further, the decay or going to pieces of his moral nature, a vain thing and a handicap in the ruthless struggle for existence. It was well enough in the Southland, under the law of love and fellowship, to respect private property and personal feelings; but in the Northland, under the law of club and fang, whose took such things in account was a fool, and in so far as he observed them he would fail to prosper.37

Buck was not satisfied with his position in the team; he wanted to be leader. As the team made its way through the frozen territory, the clash for leadership became inevitable. Buck continually interfered between Spitz, the lead dog, and the other huskies, breaking down the discipline of the team. The opportunity for winning the place of leadership presented itself when Spitz and Buck both lunged for the same rabbit. Buck proved his superiority by killing the

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37 Ibid., p. 53.
rabbit and then winning the fight against Spitz. Thus by browbeating his inferiors into submission and killing his most powerful and persistent enemy, Buck became the leader of the team.

Leadership achieved, Buck demonstrated his capacity for cruel toil when he was bought by three gold-rushers who were ignorant of the ways of the trail. Being new upon the trail, these owners overloaded the sled, thus necessitating very slow travel. Several of the dogs died from exhaustion, while those that remained were forced to live on a meager supply of food. After days of toil and hunger Buck with the few remaining dogs staggered into camp.

In this camp Buck met John Thornton, who became his new master. Thornton, who understood and loved dogs, saved Buck's life, watched over him, and cared for him while Buck was recovering from exhaustion. For the first time since his arrival in the Klondike, Buck knew the meaning of love.

Irresistible impulses, the call of the wild, seized Buck. He began roaming the forest and making friends with the wolves. He began sleeping out at night and sometimes staying away from camp for days. He was restrained only by the love for his master. When he returned to camp one day and found that his master had been killed, there was nothing for Buck to do but answer the call and take his place as the leader of the wolf pack.
After *The Call of the Wild* was published and critics began commenting upon the human allegory in the dog's struggle to adapt himself to a hostile environment, London re-read the book. He was astonished to find that the critics were right, and he admitted that he had not intended to leave that impression.\(^{38}\) Later some of his friends who criticized his philosophy were surprised when he defended it and dropped the subject.\(^{39}\) It seems that while London was arguing socialism, his nature argued individualism. C. Hartley Grattan, who believes that London was not happy unless he dominated, said that *The Call of the Wild* epitomized London's ideals and inspirations.\(^{40}\)

The doctrine of white supremacy found in *A Daughter of the Snows* and in many of London's later novels is not present in *The Call of the Wild*. "In fact, it is interesting in the light of his phobia about mixed breeds that London's brave and dignified hero should be a mongrel!"\(^{41}\)

### The Sea Wolf

Contradictory to the theme of *The Call of the Wild* is London's next novel, *The Sea Wolf*, which is an attack upon individualism. In creating the remarkable character, Wolf

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\(^{41}\) Foner, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
Larsen, captain of the Ghost, London presents a perfect example of the Nietzschean superman.

Humphrey Van Weyden, a writer who was rescued from drowning and forced to stay aboard the Ghost, becomes the narrator of the story. It is through his description of Wolf Larsen that the reader learns of the unusual strength of the captain. Larsen is pacing the deck when Van Weyden first sees him.

His height was probably five feet ten inches, or ten and a half, but my first impression, or feel of the man, was not of this, but of his strength. And yet, while he was massive of build, with broad shoulders and deep chest, I could not characterize his strength as massive. It was what might be termed a sinewy, knotty strength, of the kind we ascribe to lean and wiry men, but which, in him, because of his heavy build, partook more of the enlarged gorilla order. Not that in appearance he seemed in the least gorilla-like. What I am striving to express is this strength itself, more as a thing apart from physical semblance. It was a strength we are wont to associate with things primitive, with wild animals, and the creatures we imagine our tree-dwelling prototypes to have been—a strength savage, ferocious, alive in itself, the essence of life in that it is the potency of motion, the elemental stuff itself out of which the many forms of life have been molded.42

Humphrey Van Weyden repeatedly describes the strength of the superman. His face, his eyes, his hands, and his entire body exhibit physical strength. Van Weyden describes Larsen's face as having large features and strong lines and appearing massive at first sight, but like his body, hiding a strength that lay in the depth of his being. "The jaw,

the chin, the brow rising to a goodly height and swelling heavily above the eyes,—these while strong in themselves, unusually strong, seemed to speak an immense vigor or virility of spirit that lay behind and beyond and out of sight."43

Not only does Wolf Larsen have the appearance of a strong man, but his actions prove that he is a superman. He can jump nine feet across the deck, and with the swing of one hand lift a deck hand off his feet.44 By putting his hand around Van Weyden's arm and applying a steady pressure, he all but paralyzed the arm, leaving it useless for several days and sore for weeks.45 Trapped in the forecastle and attacked by seven mutinous sailors, Larsen with the strength of a giant fights his way across the floor to the ladder.

Step by step, by the might of his arms, the whole pack of men striving to drag him back and down, he drew his body up from the floor till he stood erect. And then, step by step, hand and foot, he struggled up the ladder.46

In addition to being a physical giant Wolf Larsen is an intellectual giant. When Van Weyden is sent to clean Larsen's stateroom, he discovers a rack filled with books by Shakespeare, Tennyson, Poe, DeQuincey, Tyndall, Proctor, and Darwin. There are Bulfinch's Age of Fable, Shaw's History of English and American Literature, Johnson's Natural

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43 Ibid., p. 25. 
44 Ibid., p. 114. 
46 Ibid., p. 136.
History, and several books of grammar. On the bed is an opened copy of the complete works of Browning.\footnote{Ibid., p. 48.}

Through the arguments of Larsen, a materialist, and Van Weyden, an idealist, London's reader becomes acquainted with the brutal captain's philosophy. In answer to Van Weyden's statement of his belief in immortality, Larsen argues:

"I believe that life is a mess. It is like yeast, a ferment, a thing that moves and may move for a minute, an hour, a year, or a hundred years, but that in the end will cease to move. The big eat the little that they may continue to move, the strong eat the weak that they may retain their strength. The lucky eat the most and move the longest, that is all."\footnote{Ibid., p. 50.}

Continuing the argument the next day, Wolf Larsen contends that according to the principle of supply and demand life is the cheapest thing in the world.\footnote{Ibid., p. 68.} The only value in life, he continues, is the value which life places upon itself, and that value is overestimated because man is prejudiced. As an example he reminds Van Weyden of a sailor who the day before had struggled desperately to save his life while he was hanging precariously to some ropes above the deck. It was not his value to the world, Larsen explained, but the value he placed upon himself that made the sailor want to live.\footnote{Ibid., p. 69.}

To Wolf Larsen might is right. "It is pleasurable to be strong, because of the profits; painful to be weak
because of the penalties." 51 He recalls Spencer’s theory that altruism is imperative to high ideals and that the highest, the right conduct for man is the act which at the same time benefits man, his children, and his race. With the following argument Larsen refutes Spencer:

"I wouldn’t stand for that. Couldn’t see the necessity for it, nor the common sense. I cut out the race and the children. I would sacrifice nothing for them. It’s just so much slush and sentiment, and you must see it yourself, at least for one who doesn’t believe in eternal life. With immortality before me, altruism would be a paying business proposition. I might elevate my soul to all kinds of altitudes. But with nothing eternal before me but death, given for a brief spell this yeasty crawling and squirming which is called life, why, it would be immoral for me to perform any act that was sacrifice. Any sacrifice that makes me lose one crawl or squirm is foolish—and not only foolish, for it is wrong against myself and a wicked thing." 52

Wolf Larsen’s actions are consistent with his philosophy of individualism. He shows no feeling for anyone; he is concerned with nothing but his own pleasure. At the beginning of the voyage when Van Weyden first encounters the captain, Larsen is standing over a dead man blaspheming him for having been so inconsiderate as to die at the beginning of the journey, depriving the captain of a seaman. 53 From Louis, a crew member, Van Weyden learns that two years before, Larsen had shot four of his men in a row and killed one man by a blow with his fist. 54 Larsen is happy when he

51 Ibid., p. 79. 52 Ibid., p. 81. 53 Ibid., p. 20. 54 Ibid., p. 56.
locates his brother's ship, the *Macedonia*, and manages to capture its boats and hunters. Burying his ship in a fog, Wolf Larsen escapes with only one regret—

"I'd give five hundred dollars, though, just to be aboard the *Macedonia* for five minutes, listening to my brother curse."  

Having created Wolf Larsen, a Nietzschean superman, London gradually destroys him, thereby presenting his message that individualism ends in destruction.

Larsen's breakdown begins with severe attacks of headaches accompanied by blindness. In one of his early attacks he is forced to ask Van Weyden, whom he has always classed as a weakling, to assist him. During his suffering Larsen almost admits being afraid and weak when he says:

"Humph, I must get into my bunk. Lend me a hand. I'll be all right in a little while. It's those damn headaches, I believe. I was afraid of them. I had a feeling--no, I don't know what I'm talking about. Help me into my bunk."  

During this attack Humphrey Van Weyden and Maud Brewster, a journalist who had also been rescued and placed aboard the *Ghost*, make their escape in a small boat. They eventually land on a small uninhabited island, where they live in a primitive manner. Some time later the *Ghost*, splintered and dismantled, washes ashore with Wolf Larsen its only occupant. Larsen, now nervous and broken, tells of his defeat. His brother had returned and captured the hunters;

Wolf's crew deserted, and he was left marooned on the ship. The mutinous crew had sought revenge by damaging the ship as they escaped.

Larsen stays with his ship the few remaining days of his life while his attacks become more violent. He grows completely blind, loses his voice, and is partially paralyzed when the fatal stroke comes. Wolf Larsen, individualist, is destroyed; Van Weyden, altruist, wins Maud Brewster's love and Larsen's ship to carry him back to civilization.

**White Fang**


*The Game* was followed by *White Fang*, another dog story, in which London reverses the idea used in *The Call of the Wild*. It is socialist in that it shows adaptation to environment.

White Fang is of mixed breed, his mother having been a dog that broke away from civilization to join the wolf pack. As White Fang develops mentally and physically, he learns to adjust himself first to the outdoors. He discovers that the water in the streams quenches his thirst, that certain animals are dangerous, and that birds and other forms of wild life are valuable food.
Gray Beaver, an Indian, discovers White Fang and takes him to live in camp. Here the dog learns rapidly as Gray Beaver teaches him to be a sled dog. After having been punished with beatings from Gray Beaver, White Fang learns that the right to punish is something the gods reserve for themselves and deny the lesser creatures under them. 57 Another step in his adjustment is his acceptance of service to man.

The possession of a god implies service. White Fang's was a service of duty and awe, but not of love. He did not know what love was. He had no experience of love. Kiche [his mother] was a remote memory. Besides, not only had he abandoned the Wild and his kind when he gave himself up to man, but the terms of the covenant were such that if he ever met Kiche again he would not desert his god to go with her. 58

After receiving training as a sled dog, White Fang is sold to "Beauty" Smith, a cruel master who imprisons the dog, beats him, and uses him as a fighter in his gambling scheme. Weedon Scott rescues White Fang from this brutal treatment and becomes the dog's first true master.

Love for his master is the motivating force in White Fang's final step in adaptation. He is taken from his native Northland to Scott's home on the outskirts of San Jose. Here White Fang proves his intelligence and loyalty by killing an escaped prisoner who slipped into the Scott

58 Ibid., p. 170.
home, makes friends with the other dogs on the ranch, and leads a life of contentment among his new companions.

Before Adam

Before Adam reveals the influence upon London of Darwin and the idea of the survival of the fittest. Telling the story in first person, London used a dream device in which he wove together the events of his imaginary dreams to form a story. These dreams were racial memories of his existence during the Mid-Pleistocene period.

London shows three levels of society in existence during this period. Big-Tooth, who tells the story, was a member of the tribe of Tree-Folk. Big-Tooth’s first memories are those of his home life in the trees. Having been frightened by a wild boar, Big-Tooth screamed and brought his father to the rescue. He described his father as follows:

He was not an extremely prepossessing father, as fathers go. He seemed half man, and half ape, and yet not ape, and not man. I fail to describe him. There is nothing like him to-day on the earth. He was a large man in his day, and he must have weighed all of a hundred and thirty pounds. His face was broad and flat, and the eyebrows overhung the eyes. The eyes themselves were deep-set and close together. . . .

The forehead slanted back from the eyes, and the hair began right at the eyes and ran up over the head. The head itself was preposterously small and was supported on an equally preposterous, thick, short neck.

59 Jack London, Before Adam, p. 31.
There was an elemental economy about his body. . . . The chest was deep, it is true, cavernously deep; but there were no full-swelling muscles, no wide-spreading shoulders, no clean-limbed straightness, no generous symmetry of outline. It represented strength, that body of my father's, strength without beauty; ferocious, primordial strength, made to clutch and grip and rend and destroy.60

From the forest, his first home, Big-Tooth wandered into the open spaces, where he discovered another horde. This group he called the Folk. The Folk were more highly developed both mentally and physically; they lived in the protection of caves and drove away their enemies by throwing stones at them. Here among the Folk Big-Tooth grew up and took a mate, the Swift-One.

The happiness of the Swift-One and Big-Tooth was of brief duration. The village was invaded by a stronger and more intelligent tribe, the Fire-Men, so-called because they had learned to build fires. With their bows and arrows the Fire-Men killed or drove away the Folk. Only the strong and the swift escaped to find a new home. Big-Tooth and the Swift-One found refuge near the edge of a swamp. Here they remained and reared a family. The author implies that it is from such as these that modern man is descended.

**The Iron Heel**

During the same period in which London wrote and published *Before Adam* with its suggestion of individualism, he

was at work on *The Iron Heel*, one of his greatest contributions to the literature of socialism.61

The *Iron Heel* purports to have been derived from a manuscript by Avis Everhard, the wife of Ernest Everhard, leader of the First and Second Socialist Revolutions. Although he was killed before the Second Revolt, it was through his planning and organization that the work of the revolution was achieved.

The footnotes, which were drawn from London's files of newspaper clippings and government documents, are intended to interpret certain obsolete references for readers living under socialism. Through these satiric indictments of capitalism London presents his application of Marxism to American conditions.62

The hero, Ernest Everhard, is introduced to the reader as he is having dinner in the home of John Cunningham, a professor in the University of California. Cunningham and his daughter, Avis, are entertaining a group of ministers. During the conversation of the evening Ernest accuses the ministers of being a group of metaphysicians who have done nothing for mankind.63 He continues his accusation by saying that the ministers know nothing of the truths about the working class because the capitalist class controls the

61 Foner, *op. cit.*, p. 84.  
church. The capitalists pay the ministers, and in order to keep his job, the minister must preach what pleases the capitalist. With the following remarks Ernest closes his attack:

"So I say to you, go ahead and preach and earn your pay, but for goodness' sake leave the working class alone. You belong in the enemy's camp. . . . Be true to your salt and your hire; guard, with your preaching, the interests of your employers; but do not come down to the working class and serve as false leaders. You cannot honestly be in two camps at once. The working class has done without you. Believe me, the working class will continue to do without you. And, furthermore, the working class can do better without you than with you."

In a later visit to the Cunningham home Ernest traces the development of the industrial system in which families left their land to go into the villages and work in factories. Women and children were put to work; family life ceased. While the capitalists were beginning their domination, the church made no protest. Then Everhard challenges Morehouse, a bishop, to go for a visit among the laboring class to see if the church has not ignored its command of "Feed my lambs."

The same evening Everhard challenges Avis to investigate the case of Jackson, a former employee of the Sierra Mills, in which the Cunninghams have investments.

Morehouse's visit to the homes of the working class convinces him of the failure of the church, and he determines to preach the message of truth. His first socialist message

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64 Ibid., p. 21. 65 Ibid., p. 34. 66 Ibid., p. 41.
is delivered to an organization known as the I.P.H. He tells
that his sympathy for the working class has led him to invite
some unfortunate old women to share his wealthy home in one
of the loveliest sections of San Francisco and that he plans
to use his mansion as a hospital for other unfortunates.
Morehouse accuses the church members of having wandered from
the Master's teachings.

The following Sunday Morehouse delivers a similar mes-
sage to his congregation. After this episode the newspapers
report that Morehouse has left town for a much-needed rest.

At the end of his vacation he returns to his church and
preaches the kind of sermons his members want to hear.
After a few weeks he disappears, leaving no trace of his
whereabouts. Avis discovers him some time later in the slum
district of the city. He explains that he had decided to
become a true minister to the poor. He had sold his beauti-
ful home with all its fine furnishings and was using his
money to feed and clothe the needy.

The newspapers finally report that the bishop has been
discovered. He is judged insane and placed in a hospital
for the mentally ill.

Meanwhile Avis has been investigating the Jackson case.
She visits the Jackson home, the lawyers who had handled
Jackson's suit for damages, the foreman and the superintend-
ent of the mill. She learns that Jackson had lost his arm
in an effort to save some machinery from being damaged. He had not been careless, as the court witnesses had testified, but being tired from working long hours, he had lacked the strength and resiliency of muscle to escape the grinding machine. In court Jackson's lawyer was too inferior for the company's expert lawyers. The testimony of the witnesses had been given according to the instructions of the mill superintendent, who was protecting himself and the stockholders.

When Avis writes an unrestrained, dispassionate account of the Jackson case, omitting any charges against the men she has interviewed, she finds that the papers will not print her article. The capitalists control the newspaper; their advertisements pay the operating expenses of the press.

Through her study of the Jackson case Avis becomes a socialist. She realizes that there are many cases similar to Jackson's and that the class of which she is a member is responsible for the deplorable conditions among the laboring class.

Ernest Everhard is invited to speak before the Philomath Club, an organization of wealthy businessmen. This incident is based upon London's experience in addressing a group of wealthy men and women of New York City during his lecture tour.67 In a scathing attack upon the upper classes, Ernest

67 Foner, op. cit., p. 71.
traces his rise in society from the time of his work in the mill until he becomes one of the upper class. He describes his disillusionment upon finding life grossly materialistic and cites examples of hypocrisy in the men he has met.

"This man, talking soberly and earnestly about the beauties of idealism and goodness of God, had just betrayed his comrades in a business deal. This man, a pillar of the church and heavy contributor to foreign missions, worked his shop girls ten hours a day on starvation wage and thereby directly encouraged prostitution. This man, who endowed chairs in universities and erected many magnificent chapels, perjured himself in courts of law over dollars and cents."68

Dissatisfied with the life of the bourgeois, Ernest had joined the socialist movement.

Then he tells of the revolution. He warns that the working class is going to take control of the government which the capitalists have mismanaged. The productive force of the United States, he declares, can provide a decent standard of living for all, but as a result of mismanagement fifteen million people are not properly fed and sheltered.69

Everhard finishes his address with this challenge:

"A million and a half of the men of the working class say that they are going to get the rest of the working class to join with them and take management away from you. This is the revolution, my masters. Stop it if you can."70

The room is a scene of confusion after the speech. One after another the capitalists question Everhard in futile

69 Ibid., p. 86.
70 Ibid., p. 87.
effort to demolish his argument. They demand to know how the working class can gain control of the government.

Everhard's answer is that the working class will win by the power of ballots on election day. The capitalists maintain that their class shall remain in power.

"We will grind you revolutionists down under our heel, and we shall walk upon your faces. The world is ours, we are its lords, and ours it shall remain."

Ernest is next invited to address a group of middle-class business men whom he calls "Machine Breakers." To this group he gives the warning that its class is perishing between the two stronger forces of labor and capital and advises his listeners to join the socialists in a battle to overthrow the trusts that are now controlling the machines. Then he gives a lesson on Marx's theory of surplus values, showing how capitalism under its own contradictions will break down and give way to socialism. Under the capitalist system of industry a country produces more than it can consume because the laborer has little purchasing power. To dispose of its surplus, this country is forced to export. Eventually every country will have developed its resources and will have its own surpluses. Then will the capitalist system break down and labor will gain control of the machines. Finally Everhard warns the "Machine Breakers" of the consequences they may suffer if the trusts should win control of the machines.

71 Ibid., p. 97. 72 Ibid.
"Then you, and labor, and all of us, will be crushed under the iron heel of despotism as relentless and terrible as any despotism that has blackened the pages of the history of man. That will be a good name for that despotism, the Iron Heel."

Soon the oligarchy begins to repress the forces of socialism. John Cunningham's resignation from the University of California is demanded upon the publication of his book, Education and Economics, which accuses the capitalists of dominating education. Socialist publications are barred from the mill, strikes are being broken and strikers placed in concentration camps, and the mass of population is gradually being enslaved.

In spite of Ernest's warning of the Iron Heel, the socialists still believe that they will win through the power of the ballot. Ernest is nominated by the Socialist Party and elected to go to Congress in the fall of 1912.

He and Avis, who is now his wife, go to Washington. In the first meeting of Congress a bomb is thrown while Ernest is speaking. The Plutocracy, who are still in the majority, say that the Socialists are responsible and place them in prison. Avis is arrested as a suspect and held for six months. It is not until 1915 that Ernest along with other members of his party makes his escape.

London's prophecy of the world events occurring in the years intervening between Everhard's arrest and escape is

73 Ibid., p. 152.
interesting when compared with the history of the period and the rise of Fascism.

In 1913 a depression causing a great decrease in consumption finds Plutocracy with a surplus on its hands. In trying to dispose of it abroad, the Plutocracy clashes with Germany. A war seems inevitable. The capitalists want a war in order to reduce the number of unemployed men menacing the country, to dispose of many national surpluses, and to substitute "the issue, 'America versus Germany,' in place of 'Socialism versus Oligarchy.'"\(^{74}\)

The Oligarchy is struggling to gain control of the country. The members of this group are educated to believe that it is their duty to rule the masses. They believe themselves to be superior, and they teach their children that the Oligarchy alone maintains civilization.

On December 5, 1913, both Germany and the United States declare war, but the socialists in both countries declare a strike. All laborers cease work, paralyzing the United States and Germany. There are no factories in operation, no newspapers, no trains, no electricity; for a week the strike continues. At the end of this time the declaration of war is cancelled, and the population of both countries returns to work.

\(^{74}\)ibid., p. 211.
The socialists continue to work in secret, organizing and strengthening their forces for revolution.

A revolution breaks out in Chicago in 1917. After days of intense fighting the city is left in shambles, and the socialists, in spite of their brave efforts are defeated.

The Everhard manuscript ends with this first revolt, but this does not indicate the end of socialism, for other revolts are planned. There is an expression of optimism in Ernest's remark to Avis as they leave the scene of the Chicago revolt.

"For this time lost, dear heart, but not forever. We have learned. To-morrow the Cause will rise again, strong with wisdom and discipline."  ^75

^75 Ibid., p. 351.
CHAPTER V

THE TRIUMPH OF INDIVIDUALISM

Evidences of the Conflict in London's Life from 1907 to 1916.

From the termination of his lecture tour until his death in 1916 Jack London, individualist, was gradually replacing Jack London, socialist. No single event marked the end of his socialism; in fact, he clung stubbornly to his socialistic ideas long after his active participation in the Cause had ceased.

That London was compromising with the conflict in his life is illustrated by an incident which occurred immediately following his lecture tour. An Eastern magazine made him a tempting offer to investigate and report the child-labor situation in the Southern cotton mills. His interest in socialism and class struggle should have influenced him to accept, but he refused. He realized that it was a muckraking job, and with his resentful memories of his own exploitation his writings would be indictments against the system which demanded and enforced such exploitation. If the magazines printed his articles, he was afraid that capitalist pressure would demand a boycott of all magazines.
for which he wrote and his income would be cut off. He could not afford to take the risk, for his ranch expansion program and the boat he was planning to build were expensive undertakings. With a plea of being overworked to complete material already contracted, he refused.¹

Regretting the action he had taken, he later wrote "The Apostate," the story of a child worker. This story shows how a child overworked by the machines develops into an insensible being interested only in self-preservation.²

In April of 1907 Jack London sailed for Hawaii in the Snark, a forty-five-foot sailing vessel in which he had planned to make a seven year's voyage around the world.³ From the start the building of the Snark had been disappointing. Having been built during the period of fantastically high prices following the San Francisco earthquake and fire, it had cost an enormous amount. London had instructed the builders to put the most expensive materials into the boat. He was determined to have the finest and strongest boat that could possibly be made. From Puget Sound he ordered the most expensive planking for the deck. Each compartment was built water-proof. He sent to New York for a costly, seventy-horse-power engine, built a bow which cost a small fortune, and installed an expensive bathroom. Before it was half

finished, London had already spent ten thousand dollars on the Snark.\(^4\)

In addition to the expenses of building a boat, London was supporting his mother in a house he had bought for her, Bessie and his two daughters in a house he had had built for them, Roscoe Eames, and in part, Ninetta Eames and Edward Payne. On his ranch he had a foreman and hired men busily working while he continued buying equipment and materials.\(^5\) With all these expenses London found himself needing more and more money. He wrote anything he could think of that would supply the money he needed. He turned out Moon Face and Other Stories; a play, Scorn of Women; and The Road, a collection of his tramp experiences, as well as numerous other short stories and articles.\(^6\) London wrote to magazine editors asking for advances on articles he was writing. The Cosmopolitan advanced him one thousand dollars for articles he was to write on his voyage in the Snark and then advertised that they were sending Jack London around the world to write stories for them.\(^7\)

Besides the wasteful expense of the Snark the prolonged delays were upsetting. Sailing dates were postponed so often that newspapers began publishing satiric rhymes about

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 227. \(^5\)Ibid.

\(^6\)Foner, op. cit., p. 85.

\(^7\)Stone, op. cit., p. 229.
London's folly, and friends were collecting bets against every sailing date. The Snark had been so long in building that it was breaking down faster than it could be repaired. By the time it was completed, it had cost London twenty-five thousand dollars.\(^8\)

As he sailed for Honolulu, he realized that his boat was a failure; he had been swindled by practically everyone. The deck leaked so that it flooded the bunkrooms and ruined the tools in the engine room. The sides and bottom of the Snark leaked, and every gadget in the bathroom was out of order within twenty hours. Some of the food, having been put on for an earlier sailing date, had spoiled. Roscoe Eames, whom London had hired to navigate, had failed to learn anything about navigation. Jack dug out his navigation books and charts and took charge.\(^9\)

After twenty-eight days of sailing London arrived in Honolulu. There he spent much of his time mingling with the elite of the islands. Tom Hobron, a friend of the Londons', placed a cottage on the Island of Hilo at their disposal.\(^10\)

The editors of the Star and Pacific Commercial Traveler gave a dinner honoring the Londons; they were invited to a reception for Prince Kalamanaole and Her Majesty, Liliuokalani. Jack fished with the prince, attended native feasts, swam in

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\(^8\)Ibid., p. 232.  
\(^9\)Ibid., p. 234.  
\(^10\)Ibid., p. 237.
the moonlight, and lived on the Holeakala Ranch, where he viewed the great crater of the extinct Holeakala.11

At least Jack London was consistent in his habits of work. On board the Snark and after his arrival in Hawaii, he had continued his writing, turning out his usual one thousand words a day. He was writing the novel Martin Eden as well as short stories and magazine articles. One week he spent on Molokai Island, gathering material for the article "The Lepers of Molokai."

While Jack was adventuring in the South Seas, Ninetta Bames was managing his affairs at home. In the first week of 1908 Jack learned that so much of his money was being squandered that he had only sixty-six dollars left, even though the month before he had received nearly six thousand dollars.12

Sailing from Tahiti on the S.S. Mariposa, London returned to San Francisco to straighten out his chaotic affairs. From Macmillan he was able to obtain an advance against Martin Eden. With this money he paid the most pressing debts, put his affairs into a semblance of order, and returned to Tahiti, leaving behind scores of scorning socialists.13

11 Ibid., p. 238.
12 Foner, op. cit., p. 98.  
13 Ibid.
The Bookman commented: "While the Socialists are gloating over the gruesome picture of the impending struggle that Jack London painted in The Iron Heel, and the powers that be are fixing his status once for all in the class of undesirable citizens, the irresponsible London himself appears to be taking matters very calmly. The accompanying photograph does not indicate that he is spending his days in brooding over the cataclysm. On the contrary, he looks remarkably well-fed, happy and contented--for a Socialist. But there are Socialists and Socialists."14

London's conduct in the South Seas is one of the most interesting contradictions in his life. In the Fiji Islands, the Marquesas, Samoa, and Hawaii, wherever he could gather a group of white men together, he gave lectures on the class struggle and the battle for socialism.15 Yet on Malaita he joined a group of friends and went recruiting with them among the bushmen for slave labor for their plantations.16 When London sold the Snark for three thousand dollars, it was put to use recruiting slave labor among the Solomon Islands--a rather ironic end for a ship built by one of the nation's leading socialists.17

London's life of adventure was proving too much for him. First he had an attack of malaria which kept him in bed for weeks. Later he became the victim of a strange disease which no one could diagnose. He spent five weeks in

15 Pomer, op. cit., p. 98.
16 Stone, op. cit., p. 247.
17 Ibid., p. 254.
a hospital in Sydney, Australia, under the care of Australian specialists. Five months more he remained in Sydney, sick and discouraged. Yet during his illness he wrote for the Star an article on socialism in which he contrasted strike methods in the United States and Australia. Like London's other articles it carried an indictment against capitalism for mismanagement and predicted the triumph of labor.\textsuperscript{18}

Two and one-half years after London had left California, he returned to the task of righting his business affairs and re-establishing his reputation as a writer. He recalled all his manuscripts from the market, and for a period of three months he made no more contributions. During this time he was following the rigid schedule of work he had imposed upon himself as a beginner—nineteen hours of work a day, seven days a week. The heavy pressure of debts was the driving force which kept him working.\textsuperscript{19}

Proving that he had lost none of his powers, London in 1910 wrote four of his best South Sea tales and \textit{Burning Daylight}, a novel of the Klondike. Confident that he had been reinstated in the public's favor, he decided to build a house.\textsuperscript{20} As an individualist he determined to build the greatest mansion in this country; as a socialist he planned

\textsuperscript{18}Foner, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{19}Stone, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 256.
\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., p. 258.
to devote more than half of the twenty-three rooms to guests and to give employment to many laborers.

He was willing to spend an enormous amount of money in order to have the strongest, most beautiful home in America. It was to be constructed from the red stones and aged redwoods from his ranch and located in the canyon on a spot surrounded by redwoods, manzanita, vineyards, and prune orchards. London planned to have a library for his four thousand books and his files of pamphlets and newspaper clippings, a room for his souvenirs, his games, and his puzzles. He planned guest rooms with running water and electricity in them, a huge playroom for men, a music room for Charmian and her friends, and a dining room which would seat fifty guests. He would call his home Wolf House.21

Since he had heard the Indians of Alaska calling the conquering white man "Wolf," London had liked to apply that name to himself, even signing his letters to George Sterling with "Wolf." Jack London, individualist, liked to think of himself as the conquering Wolf.22

To Forni, an Italian who supervised the building of Wolf House, London gave orders that no man applying for work should be turned away until he had worked three or four days. If he were good, he was to be kept. Convicts in prison wrote asking for employment so that they might be paroled. As long

21 Ibid., p. 259.  
22 Ibid.
as there was sleeping space, London usually informed the prison authorities that he would give the paroled man a job.\textsuperscript{23}

In the spring of 1910 London's business affairs were further complicated by his purchase of eight hundred acres of land adjoining his ranches. At thirty thousand dollars the land had seemed a bargain, and since it would connect his other two ranches and make him monarch over all he surveyed, he had bought it even though he did not have the money to pay for it.\textsuperscript{24} Again the voice of individualism was crying out.

Money consciousness seemed to touch every phase of London's activities. Increasing demands for money compelled him to write, whether or not he had a message. By the summer of 1910 he was buying plots from Sinclair Lewis, rejecting those which did not suit his temperament or required too much research. The quality of his work no longer mattered; it was only money that mattered.\textsuperscript{25}

In a letter written to Upton Sinclair the next year, London expressed his growing hatred for his work.

"I loath the stuff when I have done it. I do it because I want money and it is an easy way to get it. But if I could have my choice about it I never would put pen to paper--except to write a Socialist essay to tell the bourgeois world how much I despise it."\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., p. 283. \textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 261. \textsuperscript{25}Foner, op. cit., p. 110. \textsuperscript{26}Ibid.
Later in the year London was even blaming socialism for costing him money. To a business man with whom he was dealing, London wrote:

"I have been boycotted and blacklisted by stupid capitalists on account of my socialism, and made to lose more money on account of my socialism to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars. I tell you the foregoing because this is the day of dollars. I interpret my actions to you in terms of dollars. . . ."27

It was this same year that London publicly voiced his revolutionary sentiments for the last time.28 To the Mexicans who had revolted against the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, London wrote a stirring letter which was published by the socialist press. He subscribed himself as a revolutionist heartily approving the action of his comrades and wishing for more heroic people like those sacrificing themselves in Mexico.

"We socialists, anarchists, hobos, chicken thieves, outlaws, and undesirable citizens of the United States are with you heart and soul in your efforts to overthrow slavery and autocracy in Mexico. You will notice that we are not respectable in these days of the reign of property. All the names you are being called, we have been called. And when graft and greed get up and begin to call names, honest men, brave men, patriotic men and martyrs can expect nothing else than to be called chicken thieves and outlaws. . . ."29

In a newspaper interview a few weeks later London expressed his sympathy for the revolutionists and his opposition to

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28Ibid., p. 338.  
29Foner, op. cit., p. 112.
American imperialism in Mexico. He stated that he had hoped the American people would resent the sending of troops to Mexico, but he feared that they would not, since the American government regarded dollars, not democracy. He believed that sending of troops into Mexico might end the revolution, but it could not crush the revolutionary spirit there.30

London's sympathy for the revolutionists also found expression in a short story written about this time and later published in the Saturday Evening Post. "The Mexican," which reveals how closely London had followed the progress of the revolt, is the story of a youth who became a prize fighter to raise money for guns for the Revolution.31

Three years passed. Jack London wrote no more of the Mexican Revolution. He increased his earnings, enlarged his ranch, became an employer of labor and a host to hordes of admiring guests.

Realizing in 1911 that his Wolf House would not be completed for at least two more years, London had bought an old ranch house which he converted into a comfortable, informal home. Part of the old barn was made into nine guest rooms for his friends. George Sterling, Cloudesley Johns, and other socialist friends had been living with London for some time, but now with his adequate accommodations London was inviting everyone who came West to be his guest.

His home became a mecca for people from all walks of life.\textsuperscript{32}

When Jack wanted to get away from his family, his work, and his guests, he would get into his buggy and drive down to Glen Ellen, a sporting village whose main street was lined with saloons. There he would go from one saloon to another, buying drinks for the crowd, telling his yarns, and asking for opinions about his latest work. Occasionally he drove to Santa Rosa and engaged in similar activities.

About the only indication that London was still clinging to socialism is found in his arguments with the men around the saloons. One of his drinking partners in Santa Rosa estimated that eighty-five per cent of London's conversation at the bar was about socialism.\textsuperscript{33}

London's ranch presented a challenge to its owner, who enjoyed making a success where others had failed. His individualism was expressing itself in his undertaking to make a fortune where at least eighteen farmers had lost money.\textsuperscript{34}

Convinced that prohibition would become effective within a few years, London had his men to tear out seven hundred acres of vines and replant the fields with eucalyptus trees. By increasing his tree planting each year, he finally had one hundred forty thousand trees which he thought would be

\textsuperscript{32}\textit{Stone, op. cit.}, p. 267. \textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 277.

\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 280.
worth a fortune as hardwood for building. He bought the finest horses, cattle, pedigreed pigs, and angora goats. To accommodate his growing stock, he built new barns and pens and had a complete blacksmith shop in operation. By the time his ranching activities reached their height, he was providing for nearly one hundred men and their families at a cost of approximately three thousand dollars a month. In his experimental farming he thought of himself as a saviour of Californian agriculture.

Everything had to be the biggest and best: The Wolf House, the stone wall, the alfalfa and corn, the Shire horses, the cows, the dogs, the goats ... always his vigorous and full-blooded Rex complex made him feel he must be a king among men; and his equally vigorous Messianic complex made it necessary for him to use American literature, American economics, and now American agriculture from destruction and decay.

By August, 1913, the Wolf House at a cost of more than eighty thousand dollars was completed. To his socialist friends who accused him of being a capitalist, Jack replied that he was not guilty, for it was through his own labor that he was able to have such a home. But like London's other dreams, living in the Wolf House never became a reality. During the night of August 13, after the workmen had cleaned the place and left, the magnificent Wolf House burned to the ground. Many of the socialists viewed the tragedy as a judgment from heaven against a comrade who

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36 Ibid., p. 285.
would spend so much money selfishly when the Party was desperately in need of funds.  

Three years after Jack London had expressed his solidarity with the Mexican revolutionists, he was sent to Mexico by *Collier's Weekly* to report the "war." The United States government had intervened in the revolution and had sent battleships and troops to occupy Vera Cruz. However, by the time London arrived, the United States had withdrawn its forces; the Huerta government had apologized, saluted the American flag, and the menacing war was over.  

Left without a war to report, London spent his time writing human interest articles. These articles, like his experience in Japan, reveal his racial chauvinism. Contrary to his opinion as expressed in 1911, London looked upon the American intervention as a beneficial act "to save Mexico from 'the insignificant portion of half-breeds who are causing all the trouble.'"  

When Jack London returned from Mexico in the summer of 1914, ill and disillusioned, he turned his interests again to his land. According to an interview published by Emanuel Julius in *Western Comrade*, a socialist publication, London admitted:

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"I am weary of everything. I no longer think of the world or the movement (the social revolution) or of writing as an art. I am a great dreamer, but I dream of my ranch, of my wife. I dream of the beautiful things I own up in Sonoma County. And I write for no other purpose than to add to the beauty that now belongs to me. I write a book with no other purpose than to add three or four hundred acres to my magnificent estate."40

London was no longer the gay, adventurous person who enjoyed having people about him. He became soured on everybody and everything. Cloudesley Johns, who lived with London, said that he frequently had periods of mental depression and it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to write.41 In 1915 London published only one short story and one novel.42

When Charmian insisted that some of his socialist friends be moved from the ranch, London objected, saying:

"I get more sheer pleasure out of an hour's talk with Strawn-Hamilton than all of my inefficient Italian laborers have ever given me. He pays his way . . . the laborers never have. . . . What all the various ones who have worked on it [the ranch] have lost for me in cash is a thousand times more than the few meals and beds I've given my bums. I give these paltry things of paltry value out of my heart. I've not much heartthrob left for my fellow beings. Shall I cut this out, too?"43

Seeking an escape from the bitterness of life and hoping to regain his health, London sailed for Hawaii in

41 Stone, op. cit., p. 310.
42 Ibid., p. 322.
43 Ibid., p. 312.
February of 1915. In the warm sunlight his health improved and he was able to write one novel, *Jerry of the Islands*. By summer he had completed the book and returned to Glen Ellen, where he remained until January of 1916 before sailing again for Hawaii.\textsuperscript{44}

It was during this last trip to Hawaii that London decided to cut himself off completely from the Socialist Party and sent his resignation to the Oakland local. London, who had long been an advocate of revolutionary socialism, claimed that he was disappointed in the Party's failure to emphasize class struggle.\textsuperscript{45} His letter said in part:

"I was originally a member of the old revolutionary up-on-its-hind-legs, a fighting, Socialist Labor Party. Since then, and the present time, I have been a fighting member of the Socialist Party. My fighting record in the Cause is not, even at this late date, already entirely forgotten. Trained in the class struggle, as taught and practiced by the Socialist Labor Party, my own highest judgment concurring, I believed that the working class, by fighting, by never fusing, by never making terms with the enemy, could emancipate itself. Since the whole trend of Socialism in the United States during recent years has been one of peaceableness and compromise, I find that my mind refuses further sanction of my remaining a party member. Hence, my resignation."\textsuperscript{46}

This reasoning was rather inconsistent for a man who in Mexico had deserted the Socialist Cause and had fallen in

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 322.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
line with the capitalists protecting their oil interests there. It was inconsistent, too, for a man who in an interview some time earlier had said:

"I feel that I have done my part. Socialism has cost me hundreds of thousands of dollars. When the time comes I'm going to stay right on my ranch at Glen Ellen and let the revolution go to blazes." 48

London's attitude toward the World War is another indication of his rejection of socialism in his last years. The Socialist Party in August, 1914, and again in December expressed its opposition to the war which it believed to be motivated by capitalists and caused by imperialism and commercial rivalries, lack of democracy, and powerful armament interests. From the beginning of the war, however, London had refused to believe that it was a capitalist war. 49 London, whose lectures, novels, and essays for the socialist press had a few years earlier carried such scathing attacks upon capitalism for its mismanagement, was now in agreement with the capitalists. While the Socialist Party was sending messages of sympathy to the European laborers and assuring them that there was no quarrel among workers, London was publicly announcing his support of the allies to overthrow Germany. As London saw it, the war was "being fought to determine whether or not men in the future may continue in a

47 Foner, op. cit., p. 118.
48 Ibid., p. 119.
49 Ibid., p. 125.
civilized way to depend upon the word, the pledge, the agreement, and the contract." 50

Like Martin Eden, the leading character in his autobiographical novel, London drifted aimlessly along with no desire to live after he had given up socialism. A trip to Hawaii in 1916 could no longer cure him. Returning home, ill and discouraged, he was found on the morning of November 22, 1916, in a state of unconsciousness from which he never recovered. Doctors attributed his death to an overdose of morphine, deliberately taken. 51

Martin Eden

In the last nine years of his life London wrote, in addition to several collections of short stories, twelve novels. Many of them were hack work, turned out for no other reason than the money they brought. In Martin Eden, John Barleycorn, The Star Rover, and The Valley of the Moon there are indications that London had not lost all of his power as a social messenger and propagandist. Of all the novels of this period Martin Eden is the only one of which the primary purpose was to popularize socialism. Like The Sea Wolf it is an attack upon individualism.

Although Martin Eden was written while London was cruising on the Snark, it reflects an earlier period in his

50 Ibid., p. 126.  
51 Ibid., p. 128.
life when his enthusiasm for socialism was still alive. The title character in this autobiographical novel is Jack London, with one exception—the socialist in the novel is Brissender; the individualist, Martin Eden. The story deals with the self-education of a sailor, his struggle to become a writer, and his final success as an author. These were the experiences of Jack London.

Martin Eden, having saved the life of Arthur Morse, is invited into the Morse home, a place of wealth and culture. Unaccustomed to life among the upper middle-class families, Martin is at first crude and embarrassed. Ruth, the only daughter of the Morse's, feels an attraction for the strong, adventurous being and inspires Martin to educate himself and become a cultured individual. With an insatiable desire to learn, Martin reads Darwin, Kant, Huxley, and Marx.

Martin frequently visits the Morse home, where he finds himself depending upon Ruth's advice and criticism, for she had received a Bachelor of Arts degree in literature. Stimulated by his love for Ruth, he decides to become a writer. He and Ruth become engaged but decide not to marry until Eden has a substantial income.

Living in a small room, cooking his own meals, sleeping five hours a night, Eden devotes a year of gruelling labor and self-denial to the task of writing. He receives an
appointment for a position as postal clerk, but still believing he is a writer, rejects the offer.

Conversation in the Morse home often centers around politics and philosophy. The Morse friends, who are more interested in amassing a fortune than understanding the meaning of life, demonstrate superficial knowledge. Eden soon proves himself the only intellectual in the group. Upon being accused of leaning toward socialism, Martin replies:

"As for myself, I am an individualist. I believe the race is to the swift, the battle to the strong. Such is the lesson I have learned. As I said, I am an individualist, and individualism is the hereditary and eternal foe of socialism."

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It is during one of his visits to the Morse home that Martin Eden meets Brisender, a consumptive poet and cynic, who recognizes Eden's talent and tries to persuade him to join the socialist movement. He invites Eden to a meeting of the local socialists and suggests that he participate in the lively discussions.

"Discussion is what they want, and what you want, too. You see, I'd like to see you a socialist before I'm gone. It will give you a sanction for your existence. It is the one thing that will save you in the time of disappointment that is coming to you."

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53 Ibid., p. 327.
Martin is puzzled that Brissender, a lonely man who does not like crowds, is a socialist. Then Brissender explains with remarks typical of London's ideas expressed in his lectures and socialist essays.

"As for me, you wonder why I'm a socialist. I'll tell you. It is because socialism is inevitable; because the present rotten and irrational system cannot endure; because the day is passed for your man on horseback. The slaves won't stand for it. They are too many, and willy-nilly they'll drag down the would-be equestrian before he even gets astride. You can't get away from them, and you'll have to swallow the whole slave-morality. . . . You are antediluvian anyway, with your Nietzsche ideas." 54

An erroneous newspaper report describing Eden's participation in the socialist meeting is too humiliating for Ruth, whose faith in Martin has already been shaken because he is unable to sell any of his stories. She writes a letter breaking the engagement.

It is not long after this that Martin begins to receive acceptance slips and contracts from various publishing companies. He is overwhelmed with requests for material. The same stories which were rejected two years before are being accepted. For the first time in his life he has a bank account. With money and fame come invitations to dinner in the wealthiest homes. Ruth returns to renew their relationship, but Martin refuses.

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54 Ibid.
Lonely even in his success, Martin attends a bricklayer's picnic to mingle again with the working class but realizes that here he is a misfit.

He had developed into an alien. . . . He was too far removed. Too many thousands of opened books yawned between him and them. He had exiled himself. He had travelled in the vast realm of intellect until he could no longer return home. . . . He had found no new home. 55

As Brissenden had predicted before his death, success comes to Martin Eden, and he needs something to cling to in his loneliness. Eden refuses to write, closes his business, and sails for the South Seas. On the ship he is overcome by the weariness of life and slips through the porthole to commit suicide. If he had accepted socialism, he would have had a reason to live and would not have taken his own life.

**Burning Daylight**

*Burning Daylight*, published in 1910, is a success story with a happy, fairy-tale ending. Although the hero is an individualist, a superman, London weaves some socialism into the middle part of the book. London does not preach socialism or become a propagandist as he did in *The Iron Heel*; the socialism is rather a part of Daylight's observations and conclusions about the local scene.

The setting for the first part of the novel is in the Klondike. Here Daylight, whose real name is Elam Harnish, 55

proves his strength, his wisdom, and his superiority over other men. "He was a man's man primarily, and the instinct in him to play the game of life was strong."56 As the story opens, it is the night of Daylight's thirtieth birthday; the place is the Tivoli, the saloon and central gathering place for the people of Circle City. Daylight challenges all the men to come outside for a fight, boasting that he can knock down every man there. The challenge is accepted, and he wins, just as he had boasted that he would.

Graduates of the hardest man-handling schools, veterans of multitudes of rough-and-tumble battles, men of blood and sweat and endurance, they nevertheless lacked one thing that Daylight possessed in a high degree—namely, an almost perfect brain and muscular coordination. . . . His nerves carried messages more quickly than theirs; his mental processes, culminating in acts of will, were quicker than theirs; his muscles themselves, by some immediacy of chemistry, obeyed the messages of will quicker than theirs.57

Daylight further proves his strength by making a trip to Dyrea with the mail in record time. It was a long, dangerous trip—one where only a man like Daylight could succeed.

Daylight strikes a rich vein of gold on his claims along the Bonanza Creek. By hard work and wise management he becomes wealthy and returns to the states. Still desirous of playing the game with highest stakes, he goes to New York, where he narrowly escapes the clutches of the great

57 Ibid., p. 27.
financiers. The trip is a revelation to Daylight. Back again in his California home, he expresses his generalizations upon industry and society.

Society as organized was a vast bunco game. There were many hereditary ineptistics—men and women who were too weak enough to be confined in feeble-minded homes, but who were not strong enough to be aught else than hewers of wood and drawers of water. Then there were fools who took the organized bunco game seriously, honoring and respecting it. They were easy game for the others, who saw clearly and knew the bunco game for what it was.

Work, legitimate work, was the source of all wealth. That was to say, whether it was a sack of potatoes, a grand piano, or a seven-passenger touring car, it came into being only by the performance of work. Where the bunco came in was in the distribution of these things after labor had created them. . . . By tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands men sat up nights and schemed how they could get between the workers and the things the workers produced. These schemers were the business men. When they got between the laborer and his product, they took a whack out of it for themselves. The size of the whack was determined by no rule of equity, but by their strength and swinishness. It was always a case of "all the traffic can bear." He saw all men in the business game doing this.58

Continuing his analysis he sees the super business men as robbers with no code of right or wrong. These robbers, who even robbed each other, were well organized and practically controlled the political machinery of society so that they could even pass laws giving themselves the privilege to rob.

The superman's chiefest danger was his fellow-superman. The great stupid mass of the people did not count. They were constituted of such inferior clay that the veriest chicanery fooled them.59

58 Ibid., p. 158. 59 Ibid., p. 161.
Daylight becomes a successful financier, a slave to the office and the money machine. It is Dede Mason, his secretary, who becomes more to him than a typist and letter-writer, that persuades Daylight to give up the life of the city and office to settle on a ranch in Sonoma Valley. When Dede refuses to marry Daylight because he is wealthy and, in her opinion, a robber, Daylight closes his office and gives up his money. Together Dede and Daylight find happiness as they work and plan improvements for their home and ranch in the beautiful Valley of the Moon.

There is no indication that Daylight gave up his wealth because of any sympathy for the masses; he remains an individualist, seeking his own happiness. When he realizes that he cannot continue as a financier and have Dede, too, he sacrifices money for her love.

John Barleycorn

The idea for writing John Barleycorn was an outgrowth of London's trips to the saloons of the neighboring villages during his residence in the Valley of the Moon. An autobiographical novel of 1913, it was written to show the horrors of alcoholism in a hope that prohibition would be enacted. That it served its purpose well is illustrated by its popularity among the prohibitionists.

60 Stone, op. cit., p. 277.
Educators, politicians, newspaper and magazine men, lecturers, organizations that would not be linked together for any other cause on earth, joined hands over John Barleycorn to fight the liquor interests. A motion picture was made of the book, which distilleries offered huge sums to have suppressed. . . .

John Barleycorn, because of the new and focused energy it released, was one of the leading factors in bringing Prohibition to the United States in 1919.61

The conflict between individualism and socialism in London's life is clearly revealed in this novel. Written because of his love for people and his desire to lift society to higher levels, it nevertheless reflects his desire to satisfy his ego.

London, in telling of his early experiences with John Barleycorn during his life on the waterfront, blames the convenience of the saloon for his frequent drinking bouts. The saloon offered a meeting place for boys who had no home or any place to loaf during leisure hours, and besides, it offered companionship and tales of glamour, romance, and adventure.62 To Jack drinking offered a chance to demonstrate his superiority. He delighted in being able to drink as much as or more than any one else. "I felt myself a pretty tough individual in a group of pretty tough men," he admitted.63

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61 Ibid., p. 278.
63 Ibid., p. 130.
Years later he was invited by some young revolutionists to a "beer bust."

When I found myself with them, and the situation dawned on me, up rose my queer man-pride. I'd show them, the young rascals. I'd show them who was husky and chesty, who had the vitality and the constitution, the stomach and the head, who could make most of a swine of himself and show it least. These unlicked cubs who thought they could out-drink me!\(^{64}\)

When the meeting was over he was still able to control his speech, his brain, his muscles, though he had drunk as much as any.

And I was proud of myself for the achievement. Darn it, I am still proud, so strangely is man compounded.\(^{65}\)

This episode, London says, marked the end of his drinking for show. He continued to drink for companionship, but he never drank when alone. Still later when London passed through periods of pessimism and contemplated suicide, it was not John Barleycorn that restored him, but faith in people.

I meditated suicide coolly, as a Greek philosopher might. My regret was that there were too many dependent directly upon me for food and shelter to quit living. But that was sheer morality. What really saved me was the one remaining illusion--the PEOPLE.

The things I had fought for and burned my midnight oil for, had failed me. Success--I despised it. Recognition--it was dead ashes. Society, men and women above the ruck and the muck of the waterfront and the forecastle--I was appalled by their unlively mental mediocrity. . . .

From the foregoing it can be seen how very sick I was. I was born a fighter. The thing I had fought for had proved not worth the fight. Remained the PEOPLE. My fight was finished, yet something was left still to fight for—the PEOPLE. 66

Continuing the story of his life, London shows how John Barleycorn, even after years of being mastered, finally becomes master. London’s years of drinking for companionship were followed by a desire to drink alone and regularly. For a while he waited until his writing for the day was finished, but he soon found himself craving a stimulating cocktail to enable him to write. In a striking chapter on "White Logic," London shows how continual drinking affects the mind and fills the brain with monstrous dreams and obsessions.

London admitted that he had been hurt, though not destroyed, by drinking, that he would not like to see future generations endangered by alcohol, and that the solution to the problem lay in making liquor inaccessible. 67

The Valley of the Moon

The Valley of the Moon, written in 1913, is London’s masterpiece in proletarian writing. Like Burning Daylight it is a back-to-the-land escapist novel, but it sympathetically portrays Saxon, a laundry girl, and Billy, a teamster.

Saxon works as an ironer in a drab laundry, watched over by a belligerent forewoman who sees that not a minute's

66 Ibid., p. 254. 67 Ibid., pp. 334-337.
time is lost. At home, too, life is unpleasant, for Saxon lives in a small, ill-kept house with her brother and his wife, who is always in a rage and is jealous of Saxon with her three pairs of shoes.

When Saxon meets Billy Roberts at a bricklayer's picnic in Weasel Park, it is a case of love at first sight. They soon marry and settle down to homemaking in a small cottage on Pine Street. Saxon shows a great deal of pride in decorating and furnishing the home to please Billy, who is proud of his wife and treats her with kind consideration. Billy receives good wages for a while and is able to have a savings account, to pay installments on the furniture, and to have good food and spending money.

Socialism is introduced through conversation when Billy and Saxon are having dinner with Mary and Bert, their friends and neighbors. Tom, Saxon's brother who is also visiting, is a socialist. He points to the fact that organized labor is making progress by obtaining better wages and hours for the laborers. He invites Bert and Billy to attend the socialist meetings hoping that they will decide to vote the socialist ticket at the next election.68 Tom is the peaceful, optimistic socialist who believes that capitalism will be defeated at the polls. Bert, although he says he is not a socialist, is a pessimistic, emotional laborer,

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who preaches revolution and hatred of capitalism. Bert explains in this manner:

"We've ben robbed. We couldn't mark cards, deal from the bottom, an' ring in gold decks like the others. We're the white folks that failed. You see, times changed, and there was two kinds of us, the lions and the plugs. The plugs only worked, the lions only gobbled. They gobbled the farms, the mines, the factories, an' now they've gobbled the government. We're the white folks an' the children of white folks, that was too busy being good to be smart. We're the white folks that lost, that was too busy being good to be smart. . . ."69

Bill's reason for not being a socialist is that the party is controlled by Germans, Russians, and Jews who cannot speak English.70

A few weeks later a strike comes in the railroad shops. Gloom pervades Saxon's neighborhood, where many of the shopmen live. The neighbor who had taken three pints of milk daily now takes only one; the children who had run in the streets between meals with thick slices of buttered bread now have thin slices or none at all; the strikers beat up men in the neighborhood who start to work. Street fighting becomes a common occurrence.

The teammates strike, too, and Billy is out of work. He spends his time fighting "scabs." He becomes a cynical, savage brute, begins drinking, and often comes home late at night, beaten and bruised. Saxon realizes that this Billy is not the Billy she had loved. Just when she is wondering

69 Ibid., p. 174. 
70 Ibid., p. 170.
if it will be possible to continue living with this changed man, she receives a note from Billy asking her forgiveness and explaining that he has been put in jail, where he will have to remain for thirty days.

Saxon suffers from loneliness and hunger while Billy is imprisoned, but her pride will not permit her to ask the union for aid. One day as she is wandering along the beach, a young lad preparing to go fishing in his sailboat invites Saxon to join him. Having nothing else to do, she goes with him. From this lad, who is Anglo-Saxon and very proud of it, Saxon takes a lesson which changes her entire future. To him life is exciting, and there is much to be explored. To him "Oakland is just a place to start from."71 On her way home Saxon decides that it is a good place to start from and that she and Billy will leave when he is released. Her people had been farm people and so had Billy's; perhaps in the country away from strikes and union trouble they can find happiness.

The remaining portion of the book is the story of the young couple's journeying through the country, visiting first one neighborhood and then another in search of an ideal location. Billy works for the farmers along the way and accumulates enough money to invest in land when they

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71 Ibid., p. 268.
reach Sonoma Valley and find the kind of place they have been dreaming of.

London's race prejudice appears in the section describing the couple's journey. Billy and Saxon discover that many sections of the country are controlled by foreigners. Billy explains to Saxon how the Americans have let the Japanese move in and gain control of a rich valley. First, the Japanese drift in as fruit pickers. They give better satisfaction than the Americans. Then as they grow stronger, they organize unions and drive out American labor. Their next step is to refuse to pick for the fruit grower. Being helpless, the fruit grower then permits Japanese labor to contract for the crop. With the Japanese controlling the labor market, the only solution for the American is to sell out to the Japanese.\textsuperscript{72} Other races following the same procedure are replacing the American farmer. Saxon and Billy find whole villages of Portugese, Chinese, Italians, Swiss, Hindus, Koreans, and Norwegians.\textsuperscript{73}

\textbf{The Star Rover}

The \textit{Star Rover}, which London completed just before going to Mexico in 1914, was his last attempt at a serious work. In this book he compresses into episodes notes originally intended for full-length novels.\textsuperscript{74} Like his father,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{72}Ibid., p. 367.
\item \textsuperscript{73}Ibid., p. 437.
\item \textsuperscript{74}Jean London, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 362.
\end{itemize}
William Chaney, London was interested in improving the prison system, and he wrote this novel to reveal to the public the horrible conditions existing in the California prisons.

The Star Rover is so-called because the leading character, a prisoner in San Quentin, during moments of extreme torture is able to will his spirit to be freed from his body and relive the other lives that he has known in ages past. In Darrell Stading's wandering through time and space, his star roving, he enjoys many interesting experiences. In Paris he was a Count Guillaume de Sainte-Maure, who was killed in a duel after having killed his three opponents.75 At another time he was Jesse, moving westward with his family across the great desert. He was killed when the Mormons and Indians attacked the wagon train.76 In still another life he had been Adam Strange, living in the Pacific and later marrying a Korean princess.77 As Rognar he was captured by the Romans and worked his way up from a slave to a freeman, citizen, and then soldier. From Rome he journeyed to Alexandria and from there to Jerusalem. There he met Miriam, a woman whom he grew to love. He knew Pilate; he saw Christ and witnessed the crucifixion.78

76 Ibid., pp. 126-153.  
78 Ibid., pp. 214-250.
Underlying these episodes is the theme—the appalling condition of the prisons. Darrell Standing, a former professor of agronomics in the University of California, is sentenced to life imprisonment for having murdered another professor. In San Quentin Standing is known as an incorrigible, though in reality he is much more intelligent and human than the brutal guards and the warden of the prison.

For years Standing is punished severely as a result of a rumor started by one of the prisoners who claimed that dynamite had been smuggled into the prison and hidden by Standing. There had never been any dynamite, but the stupid warden and stubborn guards are determined to torture Standing until he tells where the dynamite is hidden. Brought before the warden for questioning, Standing is beaten with chairs until they are demolished.

I do not know how many chairs were broken by my body. I fainted times without number, and toward the last the whole thing became nightmarish. I was half-carried, half-shoved and dragged back to the dark. 79

In the dungeon he suffers the pain of thirst and cold, but the most horrible of his sufferings is seeing fellow prisoners who had once been strong and healthy now broken and bruised, crying for water and raving in their delirium. 80

The unrelenting warden finally has Standing placed in solitary.

79 Ibid., p. 25.  
80 Ibid., p. 27.
It was very lonely, at first, in solitary, and the hours were long. Time was marked by the regular changing of guards, and by the alternation of day and night. Day was only a little light, but it was better than the all-dark night. In solitary, the day was an ooze, a slimy seepage of light from the bright outer world.

Never was the light strong enough to read by. Besides, there was nothing to read. One could only lie and think and think. And I was a lifer, and it seemed certain if I did not do a miracle, make thirty-five pounds of dynamite out of nothing, that all the years of my life would be spent in the silent dark.

Even in solitary Standing's torture is increased by the jacket. In order that society may know how terrible is the agony of the jacket, Standing describes this experience.

Have you ever seen canvas tarpaulins or rubber blankets with brass eyelets set in along the edges? Then imagine a piece of stout canvas, some four and one-half feet in length, with large and heavy brass eyelets running down both edges. The width of this canvas is never the full girth of the human body it is to surround...

This jacket is spread on the floor. The man who is to be punished... is told to lie face downward on the flat canvas. If he refuses, he is man-handled. After that he lays himself down with a will, which is the will of hang-dogs, which is your will, dear citizen, who feeds and fees the hang-dogs for doing this thing for you.

The man lies face downward. The edges of the jacket are brought as nearly together as possible along the center of the man's back. Then a rope, on the principle of a shoe-lace, is run through the eyelets, and laced in the canvas. Only he is laced more severely than any person ever laces his shoe... On occasion, when the guards are cruel and vindictive or when the command has come down from above, in order to insure the severity of the lacing the guards press with their feet into the man's back as they draw the lacing tight.

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81 Ibid., p. 32. 82 Ibid., p. 53.
It is while Standing is in the jacket that he imposes self-hypnosis, becomes insensible to pain, and wanders into interstellar space.

Finally Darrell Standing is sentenced to be hanged, not for the murder he has committed, but because he makes a guard's nose bleed; at least that is the evidence. In California it is a written law that a prisoner who strikes a guard is guilty of a capital crime.83 Before going to be hanged, Standing writes a scathing attack upon society for permitting such cruelty.

I have told you what I have endured in the jacket and in solitary in the first decade of this twentieth century after Christ. In old days we punished drastically and killed quickly. . . . But we were not hypocrites. We did not call upon press, and pulpit, and university to sanction us in our savagery. What we wanted to do we went and did. . . . and we faced all reproach and censure on our legs upstanding, and did not hide behind the skirts of classical economists and bourgeois philosophers, nor behind the skirts of subsidized preachers, professors, and editors.84

He upbraids the state of California for its absurd laws and declares:

No, I have little respect for capital punishment. Not only is it a dirty game, degrading to the hang dogs who personally perpetrate it for a wage, but it is degrading to the commonwealth that tolerates it, votes for it, and pays the taxes for its maintenance. Capital punishment is so silly, so stupid, so horribly unscientific.85

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83 Ibid., p. 30. 84 Ibid., p. 326.
85 Ibid., p. 327.
Minor Novels

It is significant that in the last few years of his life London wrote seven novels which were nothing more than hack writing. No longer did London strive to teach lessons in socialism. The zeal and enthusiasm reflected in early books was gone. Nearly all of his leading characters are individualists, people concerned only with the search for their own happiness. His racial chauvinism and the idea of the survival of the fittest reappear.

Adventures, published in 1911, was an outgrowth of London's voyage in the South Seas. It is the story of Sheldon, a plantation owner in the Solomons, and Joan Lackland, whose whale boat was left upon the beach after a storm. Sheldon is a man who is not even remotely interested in women, but by the end of the story Joan has changed his mind, and he asks her to marry him.

London's race prejudice is clearly demonstrated throughout this novel. Until Joan's arrival Sheldon is the only white person on the plantation. In every way he is superior to the two hundred slaves on his place. When dysentery strikes the plantation, the cowardly slaves make no effort to live. Once they are down, they believe they are going to die; but Sheldon, who is also stricken with the disease,
manages to stay on his feet, to give medicine to the others, and to control plantation affairs.86

When Joan objects to the cruel discipline on the plantation, Sheldon tells her that she does not understand the situation.

"In the first place, the blacks have to be ruled sternly. Kindness is all very well, but you can’t rule them by kindness only. . . . These boys are Melanesians. They’re blacks. They’re niggers—look at their kinky hair. . . .

"They possess no gratitude, no sympathy, no kindliness. If you are kind to them, they think you are afraid. And when they think you are afraid, watch out, for they will get you."87

Joan is convinced that Sheldon is right in his estimation of the slaves. Gogomy, one of the savages, threatens Joan and demands that she pay him for his brother’s life. She was shocked to learn that anyone could be so ungrateful, for she had given the brother medicine and had sat with him until his death.88 At another time Joan learns of their treachery when she uncovers a plot to kill Sheldon.89

One of Joan’s most pleasant adventures is a recruiting trip. Buying an old ship in Sydney, Australia, she has it repaired and sails for some cannibal islands where she buys her slaves.90 Jack London, one-time exponent of socialism and the brotherhood of men, permits his leading characters

87 Ibid., p. 98.
88 Ibid., p. 143.
89 Ibid., p. 308.
90 Ibid., pp. 246-268.
to make slaves of the island natives and to be proud of their achievement in recruiting more slaves.

In 1913 London published The Abyssal Brute, a novelette of little consequence, the plot of which had been bought from Sinclair Lewis. The hero is Pat Glendon, a prize fighter, another of the blond supermen. Glendon grew up in the northern woods of California, living close to nature and keeping a strict moral code. He is described as a man of magnificent frame with clear-looking eyes, a fine forehead, and short crop of blond hair. In all of his fights he is successful, but he gives up his fighting career when he learns of the gambling and cheating that is connected with the game. Marrying a lady newspaper reporter who had once interviewed him, he returns with her to his native woodlands.

The Mutiny of the Elsinore, written in 1913 and published the following year, is a long novel of the sea. Again London's idea of white supremacy is reflected. The story clearly points to the fact that the main character because of his race superiority is the hero, while the crew, composed almost entirely of other races, is unsuccessful in its attempts to gain control of the ship. Near

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91 Joan London, op. cit., p. 327.
93 Stone, op. cit., p. 299.
the beginning of the book the description of characters reveals to the reader the Anglo-Saxon superiority. The first and the second mates are both blonds.

They were potent. They were iron. They were perceivers, willers, and doers. They were as of another species compared with the sailors under them.  

In contrast to these are the members of the crew.

There was something wrong with all of them. Their bodies were twisted, their faces distorted, and almost without exception they were undersized. The several quite fairly large men . . . were vacant-faced.  

Pathurst, a writer who has been given permission to sail on the coal-carrier Elsinore, makes an interesting discovery as he studies the crew.

Ninety per cent of our crew is brunette. Aft, with the exception of Woda and the steward, who are our servants, we are all blonds. What led me to this discovery was Woodruff's 'Effects of Tropical Light on White Men,' which I am just reading. Major Woodruff's thesis is that the white-skinned, blue-eyed Aryan, born to government and command, ever leaving his primeval, overcast and foggy home, ever commands and governs the rest of the world. . . .

As the Elsinore makes its way from Baltimore around Cape Horn, many changes occur. The captain and two mates die; the ship runs into many dangerous storms; seven members of the crew are murdered; three more are thrown overboard to drown. Pathurst, the only person aboard who is accustomed

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95 Ibid., p. 291.
96 Ibid., p. 148.
to the sea, becomes the captain and the winner in the mutiny. He also wins the love of Margaret, daughter of the former captain.

Elasted over his good fortune, Pathurst exclaims:

And over this menagerie of beasts, Margaret and I, with our Asiaties under us, rule top dog. We are all dogs—there is no getting away from it. And we, the fair-pigmented ones, by the seed of our ancestry rulers in the high place, shall remain top dog over the rest of the dogs.97

Near the end of the book Pathurst views the defeated mutineers and repeats his belief in the theory of white supremacy.

And as I looked down upon the poor wretches from the break of the poop, standing there in the high place, the vision of my kind down all its mad, violent and masterful past was strong upon me. Already, since our departure from Baltimore, three other men, masters, had occupied this high place and gone their way... I stood here, fourth, no seaman, merely a master by the blood of my ancestors; and the work of the Elsinore in the world went on.98

The Little Lady of the Big House, written after London's return from Mexico in 1914, is an agricultural novel which develops into a love triangle.99 Through Dick Forrest, millionaire rancher in the Sonoma Valley, London sets forth his ideas for a model ranch and the rehabilitation of Californian agriculture. The ranch, like London's own place, becomes the mecca for philosophers, musicians, and

97 Ibid., p. 349.  
98 Ibid., p. 373.  
99 Stone, op. cit., p. 310.
artists. The philosophy of these pleasure-seeking individualists is truly expressed in Dick's remark to one of the visitors.

"Paula and I have one magic formula: Damn the expense when fun is selling. And it doesn't matter whether the price is in dollars, hide, or life. It's our way and our luck. It works."100

The Scarlet Plague, another novelette, is in reality nothing more than a fantastic tale showing how man reverts to his primitive nature. The book, which was published in 1915, describes a scarlet plague which supposedly swept the country in the year 2013, leaving only a few inhabitants. The story is told by an old man, the only living person who remembers the days before the plague, as he sits reminiscing with his grandchildren. London's final pessimism concerning the achievement of a socialistic world is reflected in Granser's satirical explanation of community life.

"We were very wise. A few men got the food for many men. The other men did other things. . . . Our food-getters were called freemen. This was a joke. We of the ruling class owned all the land, all the machines, everything. These food-getters were our slaves. We took almost all the food they got, and left them a little so that they might eat, and work, and get us more food. Any food-getter who would not get food for us, him we punished or compelled to starve to death."101

Granser climaxes his story with advice to the young ones but decides it is useless for him to try to teach them.


"And of what profit will it be? Just as the old civilization passed, so will the new. It may take fifty thousand years to build, but it will pass. Only remain cosmic force and matter, ever in flux, ever acting and reacting and realizing the eternal types—the priest, the soldier, and the king. . . . Some will fight, some will rule, some will pray; and all the rest will toil and suffer sore while on their bleeding carcasses is reared again, and yet again, without end, the amazing beauty and surpassing wonder of the civilized state. It were just as well I destroyed those cave-stored books—whether they remain or perish, all their old truths will be discovered, their old lives lived and handed down. What is the profit—"

London’s last two novels were inferior dog stories, written during the last years of his illness and published posthumously. Both are adventure stories of a dog’s search for a true master, and both stories reach their climax with the finding of the ideal master. In Jerry of the Islands and Michael—Brother of Jerry are reflected London’s South Sea experiences. As in his other South Sea novel, Adventure, the white men, who are superior to the native blacks, engage in slave recruiting. This making slaves of the darker races is an accepted practice; even the dogs understand that the slaves are inferior. Both dogs are admired by their masters for their "nigger chasing."

102 Ibid., p. 178.

103 Foner, op. cit., p. 128.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The conflict between individualism and socialism which early entered London's life and later led him to a mass of confusion and contradiction was reflected in his novels. London wrote too much, and in the end too hurriedly; but early in his career, when he was most enthusiastically concerned with the problems of the working class and in laying a foundation for building a better society, he contributed greatly to American socialist writings. When he forgot his prejudices and his desire for money and fame and wrote as a true socialist, he demonstrated an understanding of the fundamental issues of his time and an ability to portray sympathetically proletarian society. With the exception of The Call of the Wild London's best novels were those which contained his social messages. In The Sea Wolf and Martin Eden, both attacks upon individualism, London showed that those individuals who were blind to the welfare of those about them, those who were concerned only with their own success, were doomed to failure and defeat. In The Iron Heel London demonstrated his ability to explain the capitalist system, to apply the Marxist theory, and to
anticipate with remarkable accuracy the future. Although his other novels do not reach the heights attained in the foregoing novels, *John Barleycorn*, *The Star Rover*, *Burning Daylight*, and *The Valley of the Moon* reveal the fact that London had not lost all of his power as a social messenger.

As London's interest in socialistic activities waned and he drew farther from the working class and working class ideals, he lost his ability to write valid literature. His last books added nothing to his literary stature. His supermen heroes, his race prejudice, the doctrine of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, and the theory of the survival of the fittest appear in all his last novels. Only *The Call of the Wild* was successful as a novel based upon individualism, and it was written during the period of London's active participation in the socialist movement.
APPENDIX

In doing research for this thesis, the author found no available bibliography of Jack London's works. For this reason the following canon has been prepared. It is arranged according to types and chronologically from what is believed to be the first date of publication.

Collections of Stories

The Son of Wolf, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900.
The God of His Father, New York, McClure, 1901.


South Sea Tales, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1911.
The Son of the Sun, Garden City, Doubleday Page and Co., 1911.
The House of Pride, Garden City, Doubleday Page and Co., 1912.


Non-Fiction Books


The Road, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1907.


Novels


Plays


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