



The Iron Heel

Jack London (1876 - 1916)

Read by:	Matt Soar	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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The Iron Heel, published in 1908, is considered the earliest of the novels in the modern dystopian genre. Set in the distant future, the book is based on a fictional first person narrative by a woman named Avis Everhard that chronicles the rise of an oligarchic tyranny, the “Iron Heel” in the United States in the early twentieth century along with parallel developments in Asia, India, Europe and elsewhere. The Iron Heel consists of the largest monopoly corporations who force smaller businesses into bankruptcy and squeeze farmers and the middle class into poverty and serfdom. A privileged class of laborers in essential industries arises along with a military caste. The Oligarchy lasts for three centuries until overthrown by the Revolution. The “Everhard

Manuscript” was written during the First Revolt and tells of Avis’ privileged childhood, her marriage to socialist revolutionary Ernest Everhard, the fall of the Iron Heel and the years of underground resistance. It includes an introduction and numerous footnotes by scholar Anthony Meredith made long after the fact in about 2600 AD. Jack London’s socialist views about politics and society are very much on display. *The Iron Heel* was a forerunner of later soft science fiction novels and an important influence on George Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, stating that London made a “very remarkable prophecy of the rise of Fascism”.

John Griffith “Jack” London (January 12, 1876 – November 22, 1916) was an American writer and journalist best known for his novels “The Call of the Wild” and “White Fang” set in the Klondike Gold Rush. He was an early comer to the world of commercial magazine fiction and made a large fortune and gained worldwide celebrity from his work.

Born out of wedlock, London was raised in the San Francisco area by his mother Flora Wellman and stepfather John London. He went to work in a cannery at age 13, then became an oyster pirate before signing on to a sealer bound for Japan at age 17. Returning during the Panic of 1893 he became a tramp and did 30 days for vagrancy in Buffalo, NY. He returned to Oakland, finished high school and attended the University of California at Berkeley with the financial aid of bartender John Heinhold, the owner of Heinhold’s First and Last Chance saloon, London’s refuge and study hall. Financial difficulties forced him to withdraw and he left for the Klondike in 1897, where he developed scurvy and gained the experiences that inspired his earliest work. Having socialist leanings, he was convinced conventional work was a trap and resolved to escape by “selling his brains” through writing. His ambition coincided with the rise of popular magazines and he prospered. His penchant for adventure never abandoned him, propelling him through two marriages, journalistic assignments in the Far East and in Hawaii, and as the proprietor of the Beauty Ranch in Sonoma County, California, where died at age 40 of a combination of ailments.