

The Trail to Salvation

By H. C. Haddon, Gray Creek, B. C.

THE mine manager first saw her on one of his trips north, and because she struck his fancy, he paid her Indian owner just what he asked for her, and Oya, the husky puppy, came south with her new master.

Now Oya is Indian for perfection, which fact you may not know—and know you also that she was certainly a pretty puppy. Picture her, if you like, still ungainly with her puppy ways, and yet already showing her clear cut lines, almost delicate in their daintiness—and all this, mind you, without losing one atom of her first impression of strength. Had she been a horse, you would have known at once that she was a true-blooded racer, but being a dog instead, and a husky dog, too, at that, you exclaimed instantly, "How like a wolf she is."

Had you enquired further you would have found that her mother was a husky bitch, with generations of dog-blood behind her, while her father was some big male wolf that had come down out of the wilds to leave his offspring in bondage.

It is a fairly common habit among some of the Indians to stake their bitches out in the woods during the mating time, and in the far North, where dogs are practically the only beasts of burden used, many teams contain animals with more or less wolf blood in their veins. A dog so related gains nothing in fidelity or affection, but much in stamina and endurance. And since all life in that land of snow is but a survival of the fittest, and a perpetual pitting of the puny forces of man against the heart-breaking desolation of Nature, sentiment can play no part at all. A man does not expect his dogs to like him. He does not pet them or treat them with any kindness at all, except in rare cases of an old leader, tried and found true on a hundred winter trails. The dogs are ruled with an iron hand, and perforce, owing, as I have told you, to the frequent presence of wolf-blood, this is the only method to adopt. Once let the dogs think that there is any relaxing in the grip of your authority and it becomes next to impossible to do anything at all with them. I knew a man once—but that is another story, and this is not a lecture.

Oya first saw the light with her half-dozen litter mates in a nest her mother had made among the willows that fringed the Indian camp. As soon as she was old enough, she toddled on short ungainly legs into the little tented village and here she passed her early puppy-hood, fighting with other husky puppies, older and younger than herself, for the odd bits of meat and fish that her liege lord and his family condescended to throw her.

She grew quickly, necessity knowing no other law, for the winter comes early in the Northland and all things weak or delicate must perish in its awful severity.

But Oya was fated not to have to pass through its rigorous tests, for the mine manager looked on her and found her good, and together with his traps and duffel, and sundry heads to tell of good hunting, she journeyed far by strange boats and trains to a little valley in Southern British Columbia. At the first attempts of her new master to fondle her, she snapped at him viciously and resentfully, receiving in such cases a most thorough whipping. Not yet broken to harness—so far she had only known Indian fingers—which, in her experience, had always been swift and skillful to hurt her. Like all Indian dogs, she had been an accomplished thief, and detection had always meant a beating. So, she had come to connect the touch of human hands, firstly with her capture, followed by the inevitable thrashing. Love, or even tenderness, except from her mother, she had never known and it played no part in her make-up at first. But her new master persevered and in time she undoubtedly came to hold some kind of liking for him.

Feared him she most certainly always did—but then fear had been inbred in her and her kind for untold generations. This was true of both her lines of descent, and dual natured as she was, it seemed as if fear and submission were the two chief traits of her character. I have tried to tell you that all malamutes or huskies

must be ruled by fear—and as for her paternal ancestry wolves have feared men ever since the time when the first flint workers lived in caves and covered their bodies with skins.

The men of the settlement, not being dog mushers, and having no knowledge of huskies, held her in wholesome respect, nor would she ever allow them to touch her. With the mine manager she was entirely different, but then she realized that he was her master and as such she obeyed him. He always fed her himself and she was undoubtedly glad to see him, though she was never demonstrative. Just what his idea was in keeping her I cannot tell you, but I think he wondered if it were possible ever to wholly tame her and by love to receive from her the wonderful fidelity that we have grown to accept as a right from our dogs.

color. Stand a few feet away from her and you would say that her coat was almost red. Walk up closer and when you approached her you would find only gray, darker on the back and shoulders to be sure, but still gray. Yet the impression you gained was that she was red tinted, but when you tried to hold that tint it slipped away from you, something intangible, and you could find only gray.

The mine manager was immensely proud of her, albeit he must have been very disappointed in her in some respects. Still, when he was away late at nights, he had the satisfaction of knowing that with Oya in the yard or on the veranda, his wife and home would be perfectly free from molestation.

Then, just when it seemed as if his efforts would be rewarded with success and that she would give and show a dog's affection—she vanished. Just that and no more. Since there was no dog in the neighborhood large enough to kill her, she must have left on her own

terror stricken onto one corner of the meadow, their sides panting with exhaustion, the white rims of their eyes showing their desperate straits. For a few minutes they stood there gazing at the men, nostrils dilated, undecided whether to face this new danger or to retreat along their own back trail.

Because they were out after bigger game than deer, neither man used his rifle, and both, being curious, remained perfectly still. At this the doe stamped her forefoot repeatedly, which is an old trick of the deer's, as you probably know, and is intended to make you start or move and so show what you are.

While they were looking at one another, animals and men, three slim gray wolves slipped out from a little knoll of timber. As soon as they saw the men, they, too, stopped and while they hesitated they were joined by a fourth.

At the sight of this last arrival the timekeeper raised his rifle.

"Look at the color of that wolf," he whispered, but the mine manager stopped him.

"Don't shoot it," he said.

And then before the eyes of the astonished timekeeper he laid down his rifle and walked out onto the meadow. Three of the wolves instantly retreated. The fourth sat on her haunches, quietly watching him. The deer moved off in the opposite direction, their terror apparently all gone.

When the man was about thirty yards from her the red wolf got up and was about to slink away, but the man's voice stopped her.

"You, Oya," he commanded, "come here!"

Instantly her tail slipped between her legs, though she made no effort to come any closer to him.

"Come here!" said the mine manager again.

This time she moved a little nearer him, and then stopped and finally lay down, watching him.

The manager walked right up to her, and, taking a piece of cord from his pocket, tied it round her neck. As he moved off she felt the cord tighten, and at the feel of it she was inclined to show fight. At this the man stopped and looked round at her. Their eyes met.

"Come on," he said, and tail still between her legs she got up and followed him.

"Don't tell me," said the timekeeper, afterwards, "because I saw him do it. Most men usually shoot wolves, but this fellow just walks right up to them and catches them alive."

"He'll get caught himself yet," the audience replied—and added as an afterthought, "these wise guys always end that way."

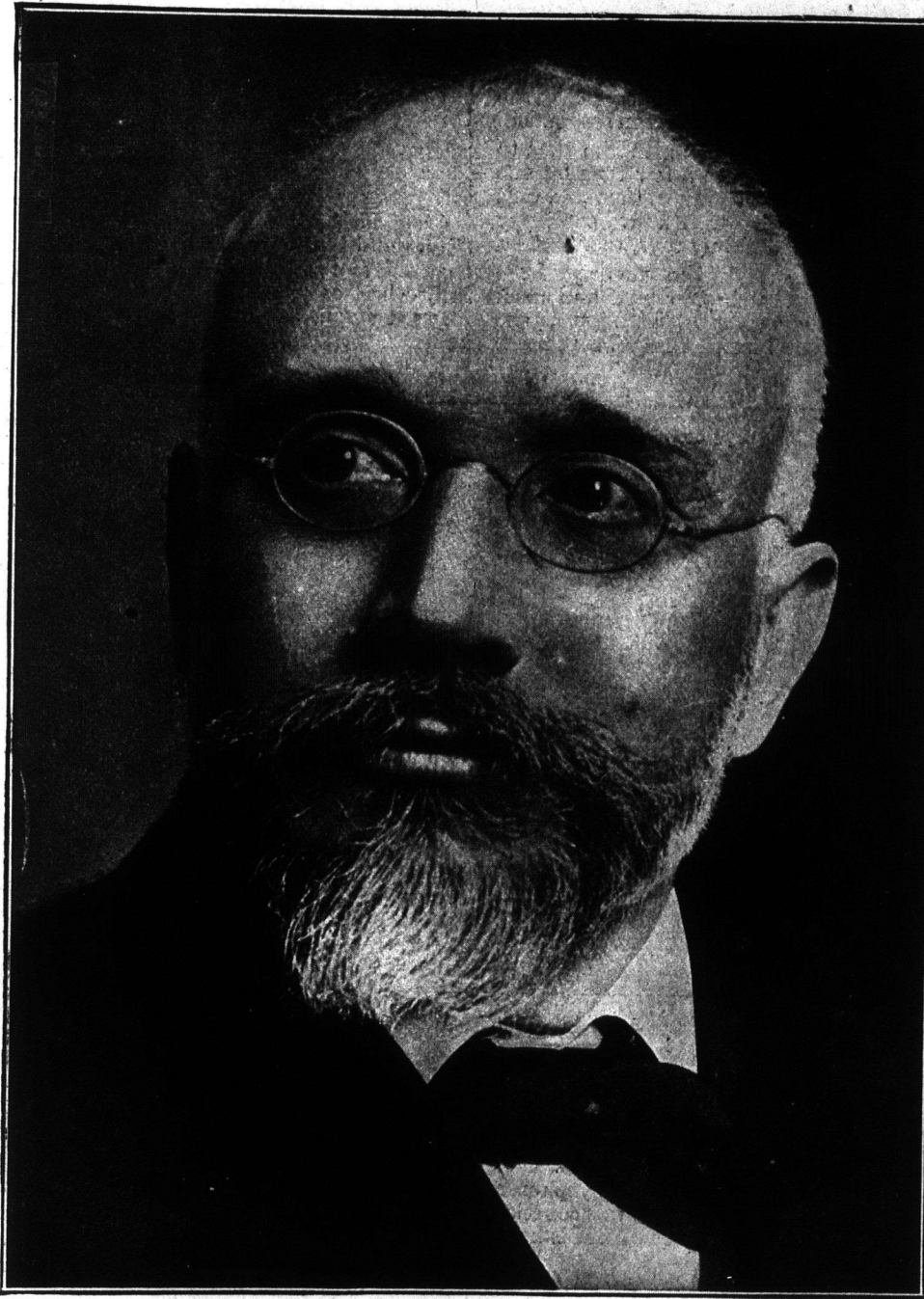
So, after nearly a year spent in the mountains running foot loose with the wolf pack, Oya was brought back into bondage again. From the time up on the mountain meadow when she had looked into the mine manager's eyes, she realized that he was her master and despite the fact that her father had been a wolf, that it was her lot in life to obey. Before she had heard and answered the call of the blood, there had been many times when her master had petted her, fondling her and rubbing her behind the ears. Such treatment she accepted calmly, and apparently she liked it, for all that it appeared alien to her nature, but from behind the wall of her reserve she never showed any demonstration of returned affection. Since she was brought back from the mountains, however, this treatment was refused. Instead, the mine manager treated her with nothing but severity, and demanded absolute obedience, and this he received, though it was given grudgingly and sulkily.

Despite the advice of his friends, he continued to keep her. Said the timekeeper one evening:

"Why in thunder don't you get rid of that wolf of yours? She'll show her hand one of these days and hurt somebody, and then there'll be old Harry to pay."

"I'm going to tame her," replied the mine manager, "and maybe I'm a crank on the subject, but I honestly believe I'll make her give me affection and faithfulness. Sometimes it seems as if she has no love to give, but it's got a regular hobby with me now and I want to tame her."

So far, since her return, she had not been given her freedom. However, one day, after several weeks spent at the end



This is a new and heretofore unpublished photograph of ex-premier M. Venizelos of Greece, the strong man of his country, who champions the cause of the allies

If such were his plans, there must have been many times when he was discouraged. Obedience he demanded and received, but affection seemed a thing she would not or could not give. In a way she had her uses, for roaming loose at night around her master's house, her very name and reputation became enough to keep away any two-legged prowlers—and as for the other kind, they would have stood but a poor chance against this half wild husky.

So she lived till she was two years old. By now she had changed vastly from the puppy that had sprawled among the smoky Indian tents. In build she retained all the wolf features, and her keen pointed nose gave a hint as to her ancestry, and if this were not sufficient, her very frame and limbs were finer and lighter boned than the usual husky.

A very lightning flash of quickness, a mercilessly speedy slayer of other and softer dogs, she was rapidly gaining the reputation of being safe only when left alone. Her weight was around a hundred pounds—but every ounce of it was wiry bone and muscle. The most elusive thing about her, though, was her

accord. Sick with his wasted efforts, the mine manager promised her nothing better than a rifle bullet should he ever see her again.

Half a morning's climbing had brought them up to and through the timber out onto a series of little flat natural meadows. Here the two men rested a while, though they dared not satisfy their craving for tobacco, for they expected to run onto the caribou herd at any time.

Above them still towered a few scattered peaks, though only scantily timbered now. Wild grasses and little mountain flowers and ferns and wild strawberry leaves covered the ground in matted confusion.

Back in the timber a red squirrel chattered sleepily; right at their feet a mouse shot across an open space like a wind-blown shadow. Far up in the blue of the sky a hawk whistled, sailing on motionless wings, his keen eyes searching every foot of the ground below him.

Then suddenly, with an exclamation, the mine manager was on his feet, cocking his rifle as he rose.

A white tailed deer, closely followed by her six months' old fawn, bounded