

For two successive evenings in camp Melville had 'deaved' us—as the Scotch say—with "screeds" of systematic theology, much, as I could plainly see, to Grew's disgust; and, the third evening, Jim fairly took to the woods to escape listening to the very dry bones out of which the young theologian was elaborating a system of iron-clad dogma, purely intellectual and strictly logical, but with the slightest possible bearing on the manners and morals of an every-day life in a work-a-day, world.

To be candid, I was, myself, very weary of the harangues, but I did not care to venture even on a hint to Melville to "let up," especially as he was what the Australians call "a new chum," and I had not known him long enough to feel justified in choking him off. to use a somewhat slangy metaphor. As it happened, however, I was spared the necessity, for Grew, the next evening, put an effectual stop to Master Melville's lectures, and he did it, if not by "taking up his parable," by the not dissimilar method of telling a yarn.

We had disposed ourselves that evening, after supper, in attitudes more comfortable than picturesque around the fire, and Melville was just beginning to make a start to discuss the tenets peculiar to the Supralapsarians, or some such sect of heretics, when Jim jumped to his feet, and in language that showed hardly a trace of the influence of the West—for he was fairly educated, and, considering his opportunities, a well-read man—spoke as follows:—

"Mr. Melville, sir, I want to tell you something. I've been listening to what you have been telling us for the last two evenings, and I take for granted that you have learned most of it at the college where you are preparing to become a preacher. Now, it may be necessary, or it may not, that you should learn all these things in order to be a good preacher. I am not capable of judging. But this I will say to you, when you start in preaching to lost sinners, to turn them to seek safety from the wrath to come in the love of our Father through his Son, our Saviour, don't preach to them the kind of stuff you have been giving us.

"What should you preach? Well, it is, perhaps, presumption in an old trapper and hunter, a vagabond of the forest and prairie, to give advice to a learned man like you, so I'll just put my counsel in the shape of a story of something that happened to me once—it is a good many years ago now—on the north shore of Lake George in Ontario.

"It was in the winter-time, and, of course, the lake was frozen over. I was doing some trapping and a little shooting for food and peltry on the shore of the lake,

having built myself a fairly comfortable log shanty to winter in.

"I may mention that in those days I was perfectly at home on skates. Indeed, I was decidedly above the average of skaters, even in Eastern Canada, where everybody skates, and I was, most of all, skilled in what is called 'fancy' skating.

"Now, Mr. Melville, if you'll excuse me for saying so, this talk that you have been giving us, for the last two evenings, seems to me to be the 'fancy skating' of religion, and not the thing to help any of us in a pinch. Something very different is needed by those who would escape the judgment, it seems to me. Let me explain what I mean by telling you of an adventure of mine on the skates where fancy skating would have been the sheerest madness, and where I had to 'put' for all I was worth to reach the only place of safety for me in all that wide stretch of ice-sheeted lake and snow-covered forest. I think you will understand what I mean.

"One day I had skated over the lake, a distance of about ten miles, to visit some traps which I had set in a likely spot on the shore, and had met with very fair luck. I tied up the pelts in a goodly sized bundle, lashed it on to a rough, light sled which I made with the hatchet I always carry in my belt, and prepared to start, with a light heart, for home.

"It had taken me quite a long time to make the rounds of the traps and secure the skins, so the short winter day was closing when I set out to cross the long stretch of ice that lay between me and my cabin.

"I did not much mind the distance, for the full moon rose early, and there was no mistaking the way. So I put on my skates, secured the thong of the sled to my belt and started.

"I skimmed over the ice at a good gait, the sled and its load causing me scarcely the slightest inconvenience, for the route was straight, and I confidently counted on being home in good time.

"Hardly had I gone a couple of miles, however, when a faint sound struck my ear that made me slacken speed for a minute to listen for its repetition in order to make sure if the suspicion it suggested was correct. I was not long left in doubt. Again it came up the wind distinctly enough to leave no doubt that it was the howl the gaunt, grey wolf gives when he is on the hunt for a meal.

"From the sound I readily realized that there was a pack of him in full cry after me, running "up the wind" quite confident of speedily overhauling me and making a meal of me.