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tience, subtilty, and cold-blooded cunning.

He snapped his slender fingers and laughed a little in his throat. Then he put on his beaver coat, strapped his snow-shoes on clumsily enough with his left hand, and in the same fashion loaded a rifle and swung it across his shoulder. It was a good rifle and belonged to the absent trapper. When he has made ready he started over the hills.

THE moon was bright and high as he half-breed tramped across the ground that had been old David McCullough's, and went up to the little shack below the log-house.

A candle burned within and the stove glowed red. Wanota sat on the floor, her shawl pulled over her head. If she heard the shuffling thud of the snow-shoes on the snow crust, and the opening of the door, she made no sign.

Francois went over and touched her shoulder. The exhilaration of the liquor had gone out of him, and his face was dark with passion and bitter purpose.

"Wanota," he said.

She raised her inscrutable eyes to his, and searched swiftly for some trace as to what he knew or suspected. If he knew—if he suspected—what would come would be swift and quickly over.

No—her hour had not yet come. Apparently he did not dream that she had aided in the escape. He simply took it for granted she had followed Nance.

"Wanota, how far did you follow her?" he asked huskily in Indian. "Where has she gone? Tell me what you know, and be quick."

"There is a double trail of snow-shoes along the river bank—and the old man is dead," she answered.

Francois nodded.

"So! They go to the Mission—" he commented, his mind heedless of the old man. "They go to the Mission, Wanota. The priest will marry them then. By God—No! Not if I get there first! I will follow! They are not done with Francois yet. What more do you know? Speak, I tell you—then give me food."

THE squaw gave him another swift furtive glance. "No—he did not even faintly suspect her part in that fight." His mind revolved about two figures only. She rose stiffly.

"I watch them go along the river," she answered, and bent to lay more wood on the fire.

"At what hour?" he asked.

"Three hours past sunrise."

"So!" he said through his teeth.

"They have a long start. But I will overtake them—and then..." A short laugh broke from his lips and the veins on his throat and forehead swelled suddenly. "And then—that man from Lone Lac! I will kill him! Wanota! Make haste—I must eat and go."

He ate as a wolf eats, and afterwards thrust some bannock into his pockets. His snow-shoes were still on and his coat unloosened. When he finished eating he rose, and adjusted the rifle more easily across his shoulder.

The squaw watched him. He touched the gun significantly.

"I can draw de trigger with ma lef hand pretty damn-quick maybe!" he said in English.

She did not answer, but watched Francois swing out the door and over the moon-lit snow. She lifted the candle high, and still watched.

He did not look back. Then, with a low cry as of a wounded animal, she ran back into the room where her snow-shoes lay upon the floor. With shaking fingers she strapped them on her moccasined feet and tied the babiche strings. Catching up a dark blanket she wrapped it around her and drew the red shawl over her head. Then she snuffed out the candle and went out into the night. Francois sped along the river-bank, following the double track of snow-shoes, and his shadow fell like black velvet upon the silvery radiance of the white ground. Wanota followed silently as another shadow.

(To be continued.)

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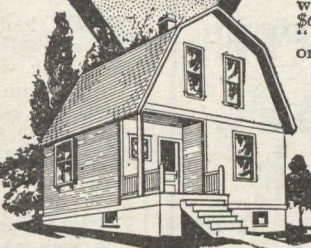


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