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hood have several unpleasant hours before they give up the ghost.

"No, killing an animal does not worry me; but to hurt it would keep me awake at night. That's where my conscience gets in its work, and that's just the plain difference between your conscience and mine."

"An' the ol' man's," sneered the Indian. "He trap."

"Obviously," answered Wynn. His mind was busy with the old man even while he talked to Francois. He seemed to see him laid low, the man he had come to look upon as the very embodiment of mature vitality, or hardy age, untouched by infirmity or weakness of any sort, and enriched by wisdom; as the type of the best that was to be got physically out of the simple life. In the eighteen months that he had lived here in the wild country, he had seen much of David McCullough—"the old man," as Francois had called him. Possibly the name had been given by reason of McCullough's hair, which was white, white as the winter pelage of the ptarmigan, the wild hare, or the weasel—for there was no other excuse for it. McCullough had been as straight and strong as a popular sapling, and could tire out any two half-breeds, with all their inherited and boasted endurance.

The old man's comparative nearness had made life at Lone Lake a possible thing to Wynn. Many an hour had he spent in McCullough's hospitable shack, and he had learned of his past, and the things that had conspired to drive him out of the world of men into the silent places of the mysterious North Land. Learned much and given little. The old man said the North had always called him, and when he had become caught in a tangle of circumstances, too much knotted and twisted to unravel with even a life-long patience, he had cut the tangle and left. He had had no one depending upon him but a son who was at college. The boy had no taste for the life of Northern Canada. Neither the golden Manitoba prairies, the plains and ranch lands of Saskatchewan, nor the timbered foothills of Alberta meant anything to him but the abomination of desolation. He would have none of the Rockies, or the land beyond. So McCullough had left him. Later the boy had taken to the stage as a profession, and had married a popular and pretty little actress.

The old man had pictures of both fastened up on his shack wall; pictures cut from old magazines, and faded photographs. They must have been a good-looking pair of young people. Wynn had often thought how charming and how incongruous to their surroundings the pictures were. In one, young McCullough was photographed as Romeo, his eager love-impassioned face alight even yet on the discoloured paper; and the pretty little actress smiled down at them as Peg Woffington. Somehow he was always glad for McCullough's sake, that they had stuck to the legitimate and not side-stepped.

In all the pictures there was a touch of lightness and joy, as though life were good to them and full of flavour. It hadn't lasted so very long. Both had died of a contagious fever within a few days of each other, and they had left as legacy to the old man, Nancy, their little daughter of twelve. He had gone after her to the distant city, and it had seemed to him, long used to the stillness of unpeopled places, like a hideous maelstrom of unblest confusion. With swiftness and dispatch he had found his little grand-daughter and borne her back to the wide and quiet space that he desperately desired to regain.

Strange and most wonderful to the old man was the adaptability of the child to her surroundings. She had loved the peace, the freedom and the silence. Therefore, a perfect content had entered into McCullough's life, and an element of gladness he had not counted on—and it lasted four years.

Often he had retold the story of those four years the child had been with him. Wynn knew it by heart.

It ended abruptly with the day that Nance had gone to the Sisters' School at the Mission, just beyond the Com-

pany's nearest trading post.

The old man had never said why she had gone, and Wynn had never asked.

Now, as he paddled behind Francois over the rose-red water, his mind was busy with many things McCullough had related; half-forgotten tales of summer days and winter evenings, in which his little grand-daughter had been the central figure. He remembered fragments of sentences that held her name, tenderly spoken as the old man spoke that name alone. Wynn wondered vaguely what kept her at the school. Whether she would care if she knew her grandfather was ill, whether she would return; who would carry her word—whether any word would be sent. For the first time the girl appealed to him as a vivid personality; hitherto she had been quite as unreal and hardly as interesting as her parents whose pictures hung on the log wall. "Perhaps," he concluded regretfully in his mind-searching, "perhaps I have not given those stories of the old man more than the merest polite attention." He realized now he had never been very keen about hearing them. They had not had the snap and swing that carried along some of his tales of winter adventure, or summer sojourn among the Indians.

The paddles still dipped; now they entered the marsh where the river carried its waters into the lake that again emptied into the little Smoky River, itself only a branch of the far-winding Peace.

They went against the current here, but when the last bit of yellow had melted into the violet-gray of twilight, the half-breed swung the nose of the canoe shoreward, landing near a spruce thicket.

The open was reached in a few minutes, and the men came upon two shacks about a hundred yards apart. One was the common shack of the trapper, the other in the gloaming loomed large and almost imposing. For two summers McCullough had laboured upon it, sparing neither himself nor the unwilling Francois. For several weeks during each spring he had pressed into service three young Indians—Muskegons or Woodcrees, as they called themselves—who had come down a long way from the Driftwood Mountains, sinewy and tough as popular-saplings from their winter's discipline.

Though they had regarded the old man as quite mad, they had followed his wishes, for he paid them well, and they were hungry and very poor.

They who scorned to use an axe for themselves, had cut lodge-pole pine-logs for him, and shaped and piled them. Francois and McCullough did the rest.

The house, like "Nonsuch" House of old London Bridge, was put together without nails. Where nails might have been used they drove wooden pegs. The chinks between the walls were filled with a blue clay. There were three rooms, and in the living-room a fire-place.

The fire-place and chimney had been built of stones cemented with the clay belt that in firing grew hard as brick. The floor throughout was of hardened clay covered with wolf and bear-skins. A bark-covered verandah went across the front of the house, and poplars grew near it.

The fame of the old man's new abode spread through camp and reservation, for the three Wood Crees had seen enough to furnish forth a tale, and as they were of a Nomadic tribe who still clung to teepees of birch-bark or the tanned skin of moose, the story was the subject of doubt and derision.

The Company's trading posts, the Indians knew. The Mission school-house and churches they accepted with wide toleration, but that a trapper with open sky above him, and the good healing earth and forests for his habitation should want more than a tent or shack which was indeed a necessary evil in time of storm or cold, seemed to them foolishness.

When the new log house was finished the old man moved into it, while Francois lived in the shack, and, against his inclination, kept it in the order McCullough demanded.

(To be continued.)

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