

put the gad to their dogs, and started with a jump. As he slept with the dogs in harness hitched together as they ran this trick was easily executed.

He crawled out of the sleeping bag, and examined his sled. Everything was just as he had left it in the evening before he went to sleep; nothing was missing but the dogs. It was about forty degrees below zero. The trail was in good condition, everything favorable for travel, but what would he do without dogs? Should he abandon his winter's purchase of furs, and start without the sled with a few day's grub on his back? If he did, with rifle, cartridges, and grub to carry he couldn't run fast enough to reach the fort before the grub ran out, for he had figured on only enough for the time it would take him to run the distance with the dogs hauling everything. "No matter what I do," he said to himself, "it's a chance. There is no sure way out." He stood looking at the rawhide strap with each end fastened to the sled which fitted across his shoulders and under his arms when he helped the dogs out of a deep snow drift, or up an unusually steep bank. Mechanically he picked it up, and fitted it to his shoulders. He had no definite plan. "I'll take a chance," he muttered, "if it's me to the wolves it may as well be with the pack



The Countess of Rothes, a survivor of the great "Titanic" disaster, who showed conspicuous bravery at that time.

as without it." He trudged along, dragging the sled at a slow, disheartening pace. When he had traveled in this way for about an hour he stopped and looked back from a half unconscious impulse to measure the distance he had come. As he turned, his heart gave a thump which almost choked him. A runner was coming up on his trail at the greatest pace he had seen so far in all the North country. As he came up he proved to be a man standing about five feet ten, lean, but strongly muscled. His dogs were medium in size, fleet, wiry, and long winded. They followed him as he sped along the trail, the leader just behind his heels.

He held out his hand as he came up. "Is your name Minturn?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mark, as they shook hands. "May I ask yours?"

"Minturn," said Bob. "We seem to be a pair, but where are your dogs?"

"They ran off with some half breeds."

"As I expected. I've got to get 'em. We'll visit when I get back. How far are they ahead of you?"

"About two hours."

Bob took a pound of pemican and a dried apple wafer from his sled, and said to Mark: "Put your sled behind mine, get in front with the dogs, and make what time you can till I get back."

"Aren't you going to take your rifle?" Mark asked.

"No," said Bob, "it's too heavy, and those fellows aren't the shooting sort. I have a handy thirty-two for close work if there is any, but there won't be. Don't you worry about me," and he was off even faster than he had come up from behind.

The half breeds were just making noon camp when he overtook them. Their dogs were lying on the snow with tails curled over their feet, hitched to the sleds just as they traveled. Mark's dogs were lying by themselves in harness, but with no sled. "Where did you get the extra team?" asked Bob.

"They ketch up behind, mus' run away from some feller."

"I passed him back a ways pulling his sled by hand. It will be all right if I take them back to him, won't it?"

"Sure, sure," said the half breeds all at once. They were anxious to be rid of the dogs, and very sorry that they had them. They were not afraid of Mark's overtaking them, worn out for lack of sleep as he was. They had not figured on a fresh runner, and were travelling leisurely to keep an eye on the back trail till Mark was played out.

Without discussing the matter with the half breeds Bob hurried back with Mark's team. When they met there was still a little daylight left, and hitching each team to its own sled they traveled till camping time. When the camp fire was lighted Bob said: "So you've grown to be a man, and thought you would try the fur trade?"

"Yes, there's good money in it, plenty of adventure. I've liked it immensely until this trip. I'll confess that till you came up I hadn't enjoyed it much this time."

"They were out for your pack, all right."

"But why did they take the dogs, and leave the furs?"

"I was asleep; they could have taken the furs as easily as the dogs."

"And leave you with dogs and grub? Not those boys. They know the game too well. The law has a long arm even in this unsettled frozen country. They must keep on the safe side, you know. They had it figured out properly, but you see you didn't follow the usual programme. As the game is usually played you should have awakened suddenly to see your dogs led away from you; then you should have gotten excited, scrambled out of the sleeping bag, and after them without grub or making any preparations. You had been for two nights without sleep, and slept so soundly when you finally did go to sleep that they got breakfast quietly without waking you. They had slept and eaten regularly, and were older runners, more hardened to the trail. You could not have overtaken them, but to do the thing according to rule you should have chased them till you were exhausted, and then, played out, without grub or sleeping bag, you should have lain down in the snow, and frozen to death. The wolves would have eaten you, just your bones would have been found torn to shreds, and the furs missing; hungry wolves will chaw up furs, you know. But for an accident which turned me this direction no one would have come this way till the snow had fixed the trail, so that it would have told no tales. It would have been found that your dogs had left you in the night, and the rest would have been the natural result."

"What turned you this way?"

"I happened to hear your name mentioned at the post, and was anxious to know who was carrying my name around the fur country. I should have taken a more direct route to the fort than this. The half breeds purposely took this round about way to make sure that other runners could not follow their trail."

"I knew they had an eye on my pack before I left the post, but I couldn't see any way to avoid them. If I had waited for them to go on, they would have waited too. I tried to start early be-

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