

## THE MAN AT LONE LAKE

(Continued from page 6.)

"It's the dark of the moon," complained the trapper. "You'll have that bad half-mile portage by the little falls and rapids, and there's no poleing them at night. There's a fierce tangle of thorn about there along the bank."

"Don't worry; I know the place. I'll paddle by starlight and return to-morrow evening."

"Take my canoe and a rifle," insisted the old man, "and Wanota will give you supper."

"Thanks," answered Wynn. "Good-night."

"Good-night; Good-night," he muttered absently. Then, as Wynn reached the door, called to him. "Wait," he said; "come back here boy; reach under the blankets. In the fir boughs at my head—So—It's a box—So—Do you find it?"

"I have it," said Wynn.

"Count out two hundred dollars. Give them to the Mother Superior. Tell her she shall have more, later."

Wynn buttoned the money inside his coat and left him.

## CHAPTER IV.

IN the living-room he found the squaw turning flapjacks in a smoking pan on the sheet-iron stove. The room was rosy with fire-light at that end.

"Kindly make up the bed in the little room next to Mr. McCullough's, Wanota," he said. "There's a pillow, isn't there, and blankets?"

"You sleep?" she asked softly.

"No, I am going to the Mission to bring the old man's grand-daughter; we will return to-morrow."

The inscrutable brown face changed for a second. In the second Wynn fancied the squaw was not pleased.

"Ver' well," she said, and bent over the pan.

Taking down a rifle he went out. In the dusk he almost ran against Francois.

"Where does the old man keep his canoe?" Wynn asked, halting.

"I take you back?" suggested the half-breed.

"No—thanks. I want the old man's canoe."

Francois glanced at him sharply. "Ol' man not yet dead," he commented unpleasantly.

Wynn smiled in the dusk. "No—not yet. He wishes me to paddle down to the Sisters' School and bring back his grand-daughter."

There was a pause. "I rather wondered," went on the careless, pleasant voice, "that he didn't send you, Francois."

The Indian made an inarticulate sound.

"The canoe caged in the black spruce clump yonder," he answered, jerking his head over his shoulder. Then he opened the door of the old man's house and went in.

The man knew the clump of spruce and found the canoe and paddles. Launching it he started down towards the Mission. It was seventeen miles to the trading post, three more on to the Catholic Church of St. Elizabeth and its Mission houses. No distance at all, as distances are counted in the wilds.

He would be going against the stream, which was swift and deep, and safe enough save in one place, where there was a succession of tiny falls, and half a mile of rapid, stone-broken water. Wynn had at different times poled these rapids. To-night he would have to make the portage to be on the safe side, and the safe side is seldom attractive.

The stars were bright as he pushed the canoe out. There were so many that the reflection of them dappled the river with silver.

Now and then he disturbed a belated wading bird. Most of the birds had long gone South, but some few were charmed by the warm days into lingering. Once a diver duck rose sharply, almost from his bow. The reeds where the water was shallow rustled like new silk, and he heard a moose tearing up the lily roots, where they grew thickest in a marsh nearby. Every night sound came to him clear

and sharp pointed, making the following stillness more still. The little canoe answered to his hand like a sensate living thing, for, far more than any other craft, the canoe responds to the guidance of those who love her. He made the circuit around the rapids at midnight, and beyond being maltreated by the brambles and wild-raspberries, which almost interlaced here along the bank, came to no harm. Later he paddled on, drifting into the agency before dawn.

When he had breakfasted and bought his tobacco from the old French-Canadian factor, he went down the river to where the Church of the Jesuit Fathers lifted its cross heavenward. There was a few houses near, and a grey painted building—the schools of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth.

There they gathered orphaned and friendless Indian children, and many wrecks of men and women that the chances and the tragedies of the North had sent adrift, for the building held a hospital ward as well as a school, and it was never empty.

A dozen dark little heads watched Wynn approach, clustering together at the windows. It was so early, the day's school work had not begun.

The man went up a path bordered by faded sunflowers, and rang the Mission bell. It clanged far through the building, and a dozen more heads came to the windows.

A slender grey-robed nun opened the door.

"I have come to see the Mother Superior, and also with a message for David McCullough's granddaughter," began Wynn, after answering the Sister's greeting. "He is ill—though I would not alarm her. He wishes her to return to him at once."

The little nun clasped her hands, her face whitening. "At once!" she cried. "At once! The dear child is to go at once? Oh, sir!—" with sudden effort she stopped. "Pardon me," she said, her voice quieted, "I will speak to the Holy Mother. Pray come in and be seated."

Wynn went with her into a long uncarpeted room. There was a low altar at one end. The chairs were comfortable; on the walls were pictures of the thorn-crowned Christ, and the Mater Dolorosa.

The Mother Superior entered after a moment, solid of figure, cheery, and with common-sense written large upon her. Her rosary and silver crucifix clicked against the house keys that swung from one hand. She came towards him briskly.

Wynn rose and bowed. The smile that had charmed Wanota did not fail to have its effect upon this woman also. She regarded him with a sudden personal interest as one who might be more than a mere messenger from the wilderness, one who might indeed even by chance bring her what, in the depths of her devoted soul she yet longed for—news from the world, a touch of life from the outside. Her youth had been spent in Paris.

"I have heard what you told Sister Mary Philomena," she said pleasantly, "but fear it is quite impossible for me to take the responsibility of letting the child—now in our care—return. I regret that this should be my answer." With cheerful composure she folded her smooth hands over the house-keys, and raised benign eyes to the man's face.

"There are comparatively few things quite impossible, Reverend Mother," returned Wynn gently. "I will take the responsibility in this case and relieve you of it."

The two looked at each other a short half-minute, each measuring the type they must deal with.

"The old trapper is ill," said the man. "Desperately ill. It is by his desire I come for his grand-daughter."

"He will die of this illness you think—and soon?"

"Not soon, perhaps," Wynn returned.

"Ah!" answered the woman softly. "Not soon, perhaps, you say. A trapper's hut is no place for a young girl, sir. The winter will be upon us any day. Though not so very distant from this Mission or the Company's agency,

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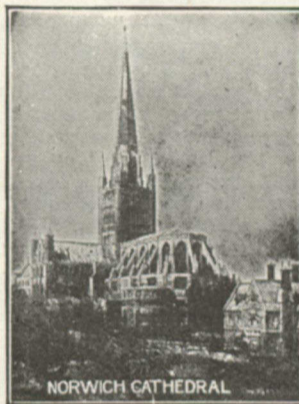
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