

At the Market's Price

Written for The Western Home Monthly By Francis J. Dickie

ABOUT to enter his cabin, Etienne Fassoneure turned quickly, staring through the fading daylight toward the top of a near rise. Silhouetted against the skyline a trotting animal, low set, doglike, showed for a long minute, in its jaws a limp rabbit.

Heart bounding with a great joy, Etienne stood gazing at the top of the ridge where a moment ago the animal had been. He had seen a black fox and the dead rabbit it carried told eloquently that somewhere near was a den of puppies. So Etienne, half breed trapper in the great wilderness of Northern Canada, was made happy by the very thought that the sight of this mother black fox had raised. For the black fox, of all the fur bearing animals of this wilderness, was the most prized. One skin alone of it brought often a price that equalled and sometimes exceeded the amount gained from all the other varied pelts of a season's catch.

Too, on his Spring provision buying trip to Wabiscaw, a Hudson's Bay Company Post lying thirty miles to the south, he

Mile by mile, slowly, toilfully, man and dog covered the nearby territory, working in a great circle that brought them back to the cabin with fading daylight, tired but empty-handed.

More toilsome days followed till Etienne despite the fortune that awaited the successful termination of the search, began to grow weary.

Evening of the seventh day was drawing to a close. Etienne, on his way home, was just entering a little draw within a quarter of a mile of the cabin when the hound ahead of him suddenly gave tongue. The bark of the dog quick-fired the man's drooping spirits. He went forward at a half run. On the side of the draw, so close to his cabin that he had heretofore overlooked the spot from very nearness, he found the entrance of the den. At the mouth the mongrel was pawing frantically but the opening, though large and roomy for a fox, denied the bulkier animal entrance. Leaving the dog guarding the hole, the man hurried to his cabin, re-



Allies Landing their Turkish Prisoners in the Dardanelles
When the Allies landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula they found the Turks who had surrendered in a pitiful condition, due to rations which were so meagre that it was strange how they kept body and soul together. The Turkish prisoners were happy at the thought of being saved from starvation at the hands of the "Christian Dogs." The photo shows a boatload of prisoners being landed on territory taken by the Allies. A body-guard of British soldiers is guarding them.

had heard six weeks previously from the lips of the Factor of a new, strange demand for black foxes.

"Take them alive," the Factor had said.

The news service of the silent places, the "moccasin telegraph," had brought this news from Northtown, a fast uprearing metropolis on the edge of the fur territory a thousand miles away.

So Etienne, as he bought his supplies, had learned of this new demand that had come from the world outside. And that four thousand miles to the eastward on a little island of the Dominion men had been raising similar animals in captivity and supplying the fur market with them for nearly twenty years till now, from continuous in-breeding this stock had declined in strength, which reason brought buyers from that distant place to Northtown to procure from the wild creatures of the same kind with which to infuse new blood into the animals on those distant farms. A thousand dollars was the price the Factor had mentioned he was willing to pay for prime black fox puppies alive; incidentally, showing that he was a real furman, this was only two thousand dollars less than the price his head office at Northtown had quoted in their quarterly letter to him, received some weeks previously.

Thus it was that Etienne, about to enter his cabin at sundown, thrilled at the sight of the mother fox; and, as he went within to prepare supper, resolved on the morrow to take up the search for the fox's den.

Faintest dawn found him upon the trail, listlessness and inherent laziness vanished with this prospect of a fortune. With him went a lean mongrel of mixed antecedents, half wolf, half hound, which, drawing from both ancestors, was a wonder on the trail.

turning in a few minutes with an ancient rusty shovel and a gunny sack.

The long Spring twilight of the Northern regions had almost drawn to a close when the half breed reached his prizes—five soft black little creatures they huddled, whimpering at the bottom of the hole. With threatening shovel he drove back the hound intent on destruction, as he did so dropping the furry babies into the gunny sack. Then shouldering his burden he departed homeward.

Under ordinary circumstances, his catch once secured, Etienne would have hiked straightway to the Hudson's Bay Post and turned over his booty to the Factor. But now, for once, that part of him which was white overcame the red-blooded inheritance which called for allegiance to the Hudson's Bay. If, reasoned the breed, the Factor at Wabiscaw was willing to pay a thousand dollars for each of these captives, might not the rich white buyers in Northtown from that far away Island give far more for these precious beasts.

He pondered the question long that night. He had never been to Northtown but passing travellers, overnight guests at various times in his cabin, had told wonderful tales of this place which lay beyond the wilderness. Though their stories of the city had varied much in details, in one particular had they always agreed—out there was endless quantities of whiskey blanc; the white men had great buildings in which it alone was sold.

This, clear-cut, vivid, had remained fixed in the mind of the half breed. During many long nights he had lain and thought of this wondrous fact, determining to some day journey to that place and see for himself the wonders of the white man



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