

"What ab'ut coming home with a fortune and all that?"

"Yep. We can't go home without it."

"Well, I guess we shan't find it up here. It was blame poor judgment ever coming into the Yukon."

"Sure, but we aren't the only ones who made the mistake. I tell you, every ten cents worth of dust that came out of Dawson cost a dollar. We were wise to chuck gold hunting and take to trapping, anyway."

"It seems so," observed Henry ironically. "A whole season gone for five hundred dollars' worth of marten and wolverine pelts. Why, it hasn't paid expenses."

"Not this trip because we've had bad luck, but there is fur in this country and plenty of it. We'll strike it rich next time, you see."

For a long time they were silent, then Henry said: "William, I don't mind telling you, I'm homesick. I want to see the wife and kiddies. I want to see Teddy—my boy."

"That's only natural," William agreed, realizing that he was talking to a sick man. "But you can't go home without money."

"Why not?" enquired Henry. "I better go home without money than die up here. I'm not so young as I used to be, and—"

"Oh, you're sick," said William comfortingly, though he realized with a pang that his partner was a changed man.

wolves must have been running him, 'cause he near fell into Jim's legs. Jim killed him with the whip."

"Gosh, that was lucky!" quoth Henry.

"Lucky! I told you our luck would change with Christmas. The wind's veered right round behind us; we've been traveling glare ice all afternoon and Starlight's lameness has gone off."

Never did hungry men enjoy a meal more thoroughly than the two white men and their Indian guide that night. As darkness fell, however, they were brought to the realization that they were not yet out of the wood. More than once the Indian quietly took up the rifle and glanced all round him. Finally he said: "Keep big fire to-night. Wolves blame hungry."

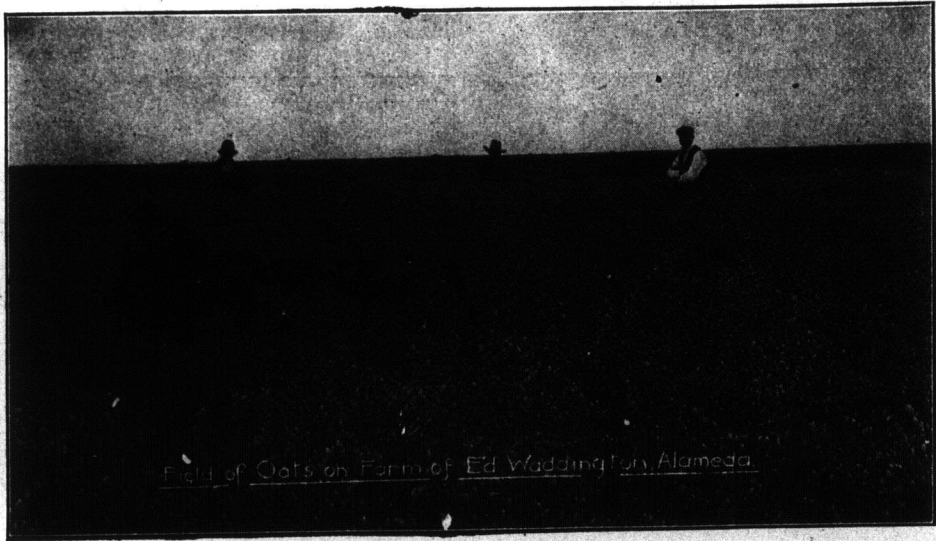
"There ain't much meat in this camp for them," William observed.

"They can smell the rabbit. That's what they're after."

The Indian nodded sagely. "That black wolf heap queer bug," he stated, and William knew then that the Indian too had heard of the Lessing tragedy.

"What I'm scared of," he whispered to the Indian, "is that the brute will attack Henry while we're asleep. We'll sleep alongside the sled to-night, near enough for Henry to waken us if he sees it."

They did so, and being well fed for once, they fell asleep immediately. Some time later William was awakened by the touch



(Photo Western Photo Co., Napinka, Man.)

"I know, but I wouldn't be the only one who's left the Yukon, and failed. There are thousands of others. It isn't as though we hadn't tried. William, it's all a matter of luck up here. A few of them strike it lucky and go out with their thousands. Others toil and struggle and go out with nothing. It isn't because they're failures. It's all a matter of luck."

"Luck seems to have steered clear of us," said William, "and it isn't because we haven't tried."

Both men were on the point of breaking down. That they possessed high ambitions, and further that they had struggled hard for success, was proved by the fact that they had penetrated so far in the lean and desolate northland. The thought that they were to return empty handed after they had struggled so hard was a bitter blow to each. Yet the fact remained—Henry was breaking up, and even if he recovered successfully from his present illness, he was not in a fit state to endure the many hardships which those who travel the northland must suffer.

"It's Christmas Eve," said William at length. "I tell you our luck will turn with Christmas. It's turning already. See how the trail's taking up! In a week now we'll be through to Fort Musququim; then while you get better, I'll go back for the furs. After that we can lay our plans."

Henry fell asleep, and it was not till they had made camp that he wakened. "Say," he called to his chum, "I had a glorious dream. I dreamt I was at home, spending Christmas Eve with the kiddies. I dreamt that we'd made good and come out of the Yukon with a fortune. There was all sorts of things for dinner. Seen any more of the wolves?"

"Nope."

Henry sniffed loudly, for his nostrils had caught a savory odor floating in the air. "What's that you are cooking?" he enquired.

"It's our Christmas dinner," stated William with a grin. "We cooked it straight off, 'cause we was too hungry to think about it. It's a snowshoe rabbit. The

of Henry's fingers on the hood of the sleeping bag. Very cautiously he unbuttoned the flap, and slipped out his hand for the rifle. Not till his fingers had closed upon it did he venture to uncover his head, and what he saw filled him with a strange, uncanny sensation.

It was a huge black wolf, sitting at the other side of the fire, and returning the malicious stare of the dogs with an expression of calm wistfulness. Behind it, some yards distant, could be distinguished the gaunt figures of other wolves—some of them lying down, others pacing backwards and forwards. The whole pack had crept up to within a few yards, without a sound.

As William watched, Cracker rose to his paws, fangs exposed, mane on end. His threatening attitude absorbed the attention of the black wolf, and William seeing his opportunity, somehow brought the rifle to his shoulder and fired.

The black wolf shot straight into the air and dropped without a sound. Instantly the assembly in the rear scattered, while William fired shot after shot into the middle of them.

"That's fixed him, anyway," shouted the young woodsman with a joyous laugh, and rising, he dragged the dead wolf under the sled so that the dogs could not harm the pelt.

William wakened the camp next morning with a cheery shout that it was Christmas Day. He had been up some time, and already thawed out and skinned the dead wolf. "Look at this pelt," he cried, holding it up for the inspection of his two companions. "It isn't black, it's silver-tipped all over!"

Henry and Jim looked at it. Henry gave a low whistle, and Jim uttered a covetous "Ugh!" The pelt was perfect, save that the tip of one ear was missing. Moreover it was not an ordinary wolf pelt, for it was soft as that of a beaver, while it's depth and gloss bore no resemblance to any ordinary wolf pelt.

Now occasionally it happens that the animals of the woods interbreed with most extraordinary results, and the hybrid specimens produced differ from their fel-



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lows not only on appearance, but in character. It was clear that the black wolf, though his father and mother may have been ordinary wolves in appearance, had "thrown back" to some early generation, when his ancestors had interbred with the foxes of the north. Thus, in body he was a wolf of most extraordinary size and character, while his coat bore no resemblance to that of his kindred. One glance at the pelt was sufficient to satisfy each of the men that it was priceless—not only on account of its beauty, but on account of its extreme rarity.

"Told you our luck would change with Christmas," cried William. "I tell you, there ain't another fur like this on the market, and the Fur buyers will go crazy when they see it. Say, what old Lessing missed by not finishing that wolf before it finished him."

"Luck runs in streaks," observed Henry. "And if it isn't Christmas bells I'm hearing, there's a sled coming up the creek towards us."

William and the Indian ran to the bend in the river. "It's the Jesuit missionary," shouted William, waving his arms. "He's

got two sledges, and enough grub to feed an army. Say, Henry, I guess we'll get south by the first boat out, after all. And we won't be broke neither."

Mr. Jones was an excellent man, prosperous in his business and modest in his ways, but not distinguished for anything in particular. His wife, however, Mrs. Smith-Jones, was a woman of rare accomplishments. She was an artist of more than ordinary ability, a brilliant pianist, and possessed a voice of remarkable sweetness and power.

At a large party one evening, at which she and her husband were present, her singing captivated a stranger who was one of the guests, and he asked to be introduced to her. His request was granted. After a few minutes' conversation the hostess came and took him away.

"You musn't monopolize her, Mr. Simmons," she said. "I want you to meet Mr. Jones."

"Who is Mr. Jones?"
"He is her husband."
"What is he noted for?"
"Why, for—for his wife!"