

fine trapper, Dick. You want to come back to this country soon as you get first sniff of frost in the air."

"We won't make any plans now," said Dick, smiling. "But I think you are right. I think I'll join you for one more winter."

The days slipped by, some bright and some cloudy but all warm with the breath of spring. The ice went out of the lake and out of the river — out of thousands of rivers, churning and crashing — and at last a few battered cakes of it drifted into salt water. Now all the snow was gone save where ghosts of the deepest drifts still lay in the darkest hollows of the forest. The canoe lay at the edge of the lake; the furs, done up in a compact bale with a moose hide laced tightly around it, lay on a dry log beside the canoe. And the partners, too, were ready. They had left half the sugar, a pound of tea, and two of the four remaining plugs of tobacco with Joe. Their provisions for the long journey consisted of a little tea, flour and salt, about forty pounds of smoked trout and moose-meat and a few pounds of maple sugar.

Sam lifted the canoe and slid it into the water; and while Dick held her steady by one gunnel he placed the pelts and provisions amidships, with