

the dark stems of the trees appeared only like a long dark blur on the edge of the ice. Still the gaunt, grey demons kept gaining on me, and their devilish howling sounded clearer and sharper as they came nearer and nearer.

"Possibly my fears exaggerated their speed, and the rapidity of their approach. My fears certainly added vigor to my muscles and wings to my flight. Suddenly it struck me that I was rapidly nearing my cabin, and with a leap of the heart I saw that I had more than a fighting chance to reach it before I could be overtaken.

"But worse was to come. All at once I seemed to hear the howling and snarling of my pursuers echoed from a point to my right and ahead of me. Was it only an echo? I was not long left in uncertainty.

"From the shore, and about a couple of hundred yards in front of me, I saw three or four—I could not be sure of the exact number, nor, indeed, did it much matter—dark, grey figures racing to meet, me, or rather, to head me off. It was from them the answering howls had come, and my heart stood still with another spasm of terror as I saw their object and realized that, in all probability, the game was up.

"You see, Mr. Melville, those devils, like another devil you and I wot of, will do anything rather than give up the prey.

"I confess that I felt, at that moment, like giving in, but the instinct of self-preservation and the horror of the idea of being torn to pieces by those ravenous brutes prompted me to make one more desperate effort to escape.

"I'll give you a run for it yet, you devils," I said to myself, and swerving off to the left, I put all my remaining strength into a spurt, diagonally across and towards the middle of the lake. I thus drew both packs gradually together. Then a plan occurred to me which if I succeeded in carrying it out, would, I believed, enable me to reach my cabin and safety.

"Why the idea did not occur to me sooner I can hardly tell, for the trick was by no means a new one for a slatter to play the wolves, but, on the contrary, was familiar to every one who had lived for any length of time in the woods around the great lakes. Probably I did not think of it before because, until I had got within reasonable distance of the only available place of refuge—the cabin—it would hardly have done me any good to have adopted it. I would only have deferred the inevitable result until I fell exhausted in the race with my relentless and untiring pursuers. Now,

however, I saw that it might serve my turn, and I determined to adopt it.

"Accordingly, I gradually relaxed my speed and allowed my pursuers to get closer and closer together, until at last, I could distinctly hear their breathing.

"Ugh!" and the old man shook himself, with something like a shudder, as he uttered the guttural interjection of the Indians with whom he had been so long and so intimately associated. "I shall never forget while I live the effect on my nerves of that sound and the click of their teeth as they snapped at each other in their eagerness to be the first in at my death.

"A glance over my shoulder showed me that the moment had come to carry out the manoeuvre I had planned. The leading wolf was within measurable leaping distance, and another bound or two, at most, would land him upon me.

"With my hunting knife I cut the deer-skin thong by which the sled was fastened to my belt, and, at the same time, wheeled sharply to the right and struck out for the cabin, which we had by this time passed by about half a mile. The sled, of course, shot off in the direction in which I was going before turning, and the wolves, being unable to stop themselves, followed it, the leader just missing me as he shot past.

"It was the closest call I ever had in my life, and yet I have been in some very tight places, too.

"You may readily imagine that I skated my hardest towards the cabin, and I reached it just in time to slam the door in the faces of the wolves, who had, of course, turned and resumed the pursuit as soon as they were able to stop their involuntary chase of the sled. I accounted for four of them with my rifle from the little loophole that served as a window to my cabin before they admitted defeat and slunk away into the shadow of the woods.

"I found my sled and pelts the next day, on the ice, unharmed, the wolves having evidently not thought it worth noticing while a more toothsome supper was in prospect.

"You will, perhaps, wonder why I did not let the sled go sooner. Well, to tell the truth, I never thought of doing so till the last moment, when it occurred to me that it would materially interfere with the sharpness of the turn I proposed to take. Indeed, I am almost sure that, even if it had occurred to me to drop it, I should have hesitated to do so, so long as there was the slightest hope of escape. The skins, you see, were valuable, and a trapper—especially if he is Scotch, as I am—hates to lose anything of the results