

around the end of a stick, served as a swab with which I spread the hot pitch over the canvas until it was completely covered. I worked out some oars, and my boat was complete.

While I was still hard at work on my boat two heavy falls of snow almost buried my camp. Soon, however, the snow disappeared; and one beautiful Sunday morning, while still in my blankets, a robin near camp roused me with his bright, familiar song. I sprang up and dressed as quickly as I could, fearing that the little fellow would fly away before I could get a sight of him, but he continued to cheer me with his sweet notes all the morning.

While thus occupied, I observed very regular habits. I rose at five, breakfasted at six, and before going to work on my boat, prepared the skins of whatever small rodents my traps had captured during the night. I lunched at twelve, and, after a six o'clock dinner, took a run with Zilla, for our mutual good, which he seemed to enjoy quite as much as I. At one time I was threatened with pneumonia for nearly a week, but I tried to work on as though perfectly well, convinced that if I allowed myself to give way I should be seriously ill. At all times I used the greatest precautions while chopping, for the reason that, with my life depending entirely upon my own exertions, I could not afford to cripple myself.

My nights were somewhat restless. The awful strain of the long solitude was harder to bear than the dangerous presence of the Indians, and sometimes I wished for their return. In spite of my hard work I ate very little. I could not obtain much variety of food; and to cook the same thing over and over again, and eat it all alone, became very tedious. My isolation would have seemed less oppressive if I could have seen any prospect of a companion, but my anticipation of a lonely and difficult trip down the great unknown river,* in my untested, improvised, canvas boat, depressed my spirit. I had frequently heard the effects upon the mind of such loneliness

discussed, and many a tragic story came back to sadden me. Although I kept as busy as I could, and made a companion of Zilla, talking with him and running with him on the beach, my sensations during those solitary weeks were indescribable. I regard this period as the most trying ordeal of my life. In that one month of April I lived a lifetime.

On the fifth day of May, while at work, I heard a peculiar long-drawn swishing noise in the direction of the river, and, running to the bank, saw a tongue-like strip of water boring its way through the ice down the middle of the stream. Some distance below it stopped for a time, then began again. Sounds as though the mountains were tumbling down came from upstream. With mingled fear and joy I realized that the river ice was breaking, and that soon I should be released from the awful prison where I had been held for over thirty days. Was I freed only to find a watery grave in this mad, unknown river? The crushing, breaking ice roared louder and louder, until in front of me the ice of the whole river suddenly lifted and broke into huge, floating masses which began to move down stream. Then a great swell from above piled ice upon ice many feet high. So deafening was the battering of millions of tons of monster ice cakes that I could hardly control my nerves or my thoughts. For the three days during which this awful grinding continued, I obtained very little sleep. Then the ice began to move down stream, and at the end of five days most of it had disappeared, and I decided to launch my boat.

I crawled under it, knocked away the frame, and, lifting it from beneath with my shoulders, managed to work it forward inch by inch over the edge of the bank to the sand beach below. Once there, I found difficulty in extricating myself. If I lifted up one side, I could not get my body half-way out without finding myself held fast in such a position that I could not hold up the boat, which, with its heavy spruce bark, canvas, and pitch, probably weighed five hundred pounds. Luckily I

* The Mackenzie