

supper. The Indian had plenty of caribou meat with him, and gave me some, which he took from the sledge. After a smoke he began to talk, and said he came from St. Marguerite, which enters the gulf a few miles above Seven Islands. He had a nice little pack of furs with him, more than I had; and the caribou were numerous about seventy miles up the river, but there was a camp of Nasquapees there who were killing them off. After a while, just as it was growing dusk, he asked me if he might bring his sledge into my lodge; "for," said he, "I have a body there, and I am afraid the dogs will eat it if it is left outside."

"He brought the body in and laid it in the coldest part of the lodge, where there was a little snow drifted through a crack.

"Oh!" said the Indian, "if the snow does not melt here the body will take no hurt."

"We sat and smoked together.

"After a while, I said, "Did you bring the body far?"

"Six days up the St. Marguerite: perhaps eight days from there.—I came with some Nasquapees across the country, who had come from the Trinity River, and were following the caribou. The Nasquapees got enough meat, and went back. I came on to go down the Moisie to Seven Islands, and leave the body there till the spring.

"How did he die?" I said at length.

"The Indian looked at the fire and said nothing. I knew that there was some very sorrowful tale to tell, or he would have spoken at once.

"After a long pause the Indian said, "He is my cousin; I am taking him to be buried at the Post. He asked me; I promised him. It is a long journey in winter; but he wished it, and he will soon be there.

"The Indian then began to tell me how it happened. "He and I," he said, pointing to the body—but he mentioned no name—"were hunting together; we came upon the track of a cat."

"By cat you mean lynx, of course," said one of the listeners.

"Yes; we always call them cats: many white folk call them lynx.—It's an animal about the size of a big dog, only lower and stronger, with sharp pointed ears, and a tuft at the end of each."

"Yes, that's the lynx. Go on."

"Well, the Indian said, "We came upon the track of a cat, and followed it. My cousin was first, and he turned round and said to me, 'I'll go round that mountain, if you go up the valley with the dogs, and we are sure to get him.' We separated. In an hour I heard a gun, and then sat down, and I waited long. Night was coming on; I thought I would go and look. I could find nothing, so, as it was getting dark, I fired my gun; no answer. I fired again; no answer. Something, I said, has happened to my cousin; I must follow his track as soon as it is daylight.

"I pulled some sapin, made a bed on the snow, drew some branches over me, and slept well. Next morning I followed the tracks, and before I got half round the mountain I saw my cousin. He was nearly dead—could just speak. Close to him was the cat, frozen stiff. My cousin had slipped into a crack of the rock just after he had fired and wounded the cat, when he was within twenty yards of it. One of his legs was broken. As soon as he fell, the cat sprang upon him, and tore off part of his scalp; he killed it with his knife, but could not get out of the crack on account of his broken leg; he could not reach his gun to fire it off, and let me know. There he must have remained, and have died alone, if I had not chanced to come. I lifted him out of the crack, but his fingers snapped off—they were frozen. He just said to me, 'Nipi! nipi!'—water, water. I quickly made a fire, put some snow in my blanket, held it over the flame, and got him some water. He told me to take him to Seven Islands or the Moisie, and bury him there. He pointed to his gun. I brought it to him; he put it into my hand, turned round his head, and died."

"The Indian sat looking at the fire for many minutes. I did not want to interrupt his thoughts. After a while I filled his pipe, put a coal in it, and gave it to him. He took it, still looking at the fire. Perhaps he saw the spirit of his cousin there, as Indians often say they do. He smoked for a long time. At length he spoke, looking at the body, and pointing to it, saying, "He said last winter that some one would die before the year was out.

"I knew well enough that it was one of their superstitions that had troubled him, for he was a heathen not more than a year ago; So I said to him, "Did he see anything?"

"He came across tracks."

"Tracks?"

"A Wendigo," said the Indian.

"Have you ever seen one?" I asked him.

"I have seen tracks."

"Where?"

"On the St. Marguerite, the Mingan, the Manitou, the Oa-na-na-no, My cousin saw tracks on the Manitou last winter, and he said to me and to many of us, 'Something will happen.'"

"What were the tracks like?" I said to him.

"Wendigoes," he replied.

"Well, but how big were they?"

"He looked at me and said nothing, nor would he speak on the subject again.

"These Montagnais think," continued Pierre, "that the Wendigoes are giant cannibals, twenty and thirty feet high. They think that they live on human flesh, and that many Indians who have gone hunting, and have never afterwards been heard of, have been devoured by Wendigoes. They are dreadfully superstitious in the woods, but brave enough when they got on the coast.

II.

THE WINDING SHEET.—MINGAN.

Five hundred Montagnais had pitched their tents at Mingan, a fortnight before we arrived,—there to dispose of their furs, the produce of the winter's hunt, and to join in the religious ceremonies of the Roman Catholic church under the ministration of Père Arnaud. They had assembled from all parts of their wintering grounds between the St. John's River and the Straits of Belle Isle—some coming in canoes, others in boats purchased from the American fishermen on the coast, others on foot. A large number had already procured their supplies and started for the most easterly of the Mingan Islands and different parts of the coast in consequence of an epidemic which had already carried off ten victims. Others were preparing to start, and only waiting for a favourable wind; a few still lingered in their birch bark lodges, some of these being ill and unable to move. The poor creatures seemed to be attacked with influenza, which rapidly prostrated them.

I went with one of the clerks into the Hudson's Bay Company's Store, where a group of Indians were assembled waiting to obtain their supplies. Among them I observed a woman, who stood aloof until the others were served, and then repeated some words in Indian in a low tone of voice. I found that she asked for a winding-sheet for her husband, whose death she expected at sunset.

I followed her to the beach, and saw her husband lying at the bottom of a boat, with two or three Indians near him waiting for the tide. As we approached he turned his head round, looked at me, then at his wife, then at the winding-sheet, which she carried on her arm. The eyes of the sick man rested for a few moments on his shroud, and then turned to the setting sun. The wife stepped into the boat, and taking her place at the feet of her husband, rolled up the cloth, and placing it upon her knees, sat motionless as a statue. A dog sat on one of the seats of the boat; every now and then he raised his head, and howled low and long as if he were baying at the sun.

I turned away, not wishing to intrude upon the silent sorrows of the poor Indians; and on looking back, when some distance from the shore I saw them still in the same position, and heard again the long low howl of the apparently conscious dog, bidding farewell to the sun, which at that moment dipped below the western waves. Early on the next morning I went to look for the boat, but it was gone: I enquired of some Indians who were just returning with a seal they had shot in the harbour, whether the man was dead; they said, "No, not when they started, but he'll die to-morrow night."

III.

WINTER LIFE ON THE TABLE LAND OF THE LABRADOR PENINSULA.

This is one of the winter hunting grounds of the tribe of Montagnais of which Dominique is chief. No doubt, before the fire occurred three years ago, caribou moss was very abundant, and the deer sufficiently numerous to sustain a few families. How utterly desolate I thought the whole Ashwanipi valley must be, if Dominique preferred living last winter on the shores of the lake before us, with such a wide expanse to the north-east and north to choose from.

He himself killed in this neighbourhood thirty caribou; and yesterday Michel pointed triumphantly to the last lake we had crossed, saying, "Here I killed a caribou last winter." What a life to lead among these rocks and frozen lakes! But no doubt when a pure mantle of white covers rocks, blackened trees, lakes, boulders, and burnt land, the aspect of nature changes, and assumes the same outline as in all other undulating regions where snow falls deep and lasts long. Five or six families wintered on the other side of the low dividing ridge in the valley of the Ashwanipi. They were