

# SPIRIT LAKE



Arthur Herring









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"Standing Wolf seized his opponent by the hair, and tried to wrench his knife-hand free."

# SPIRIT LAKE

BY

ARTHUR HEMING

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR*

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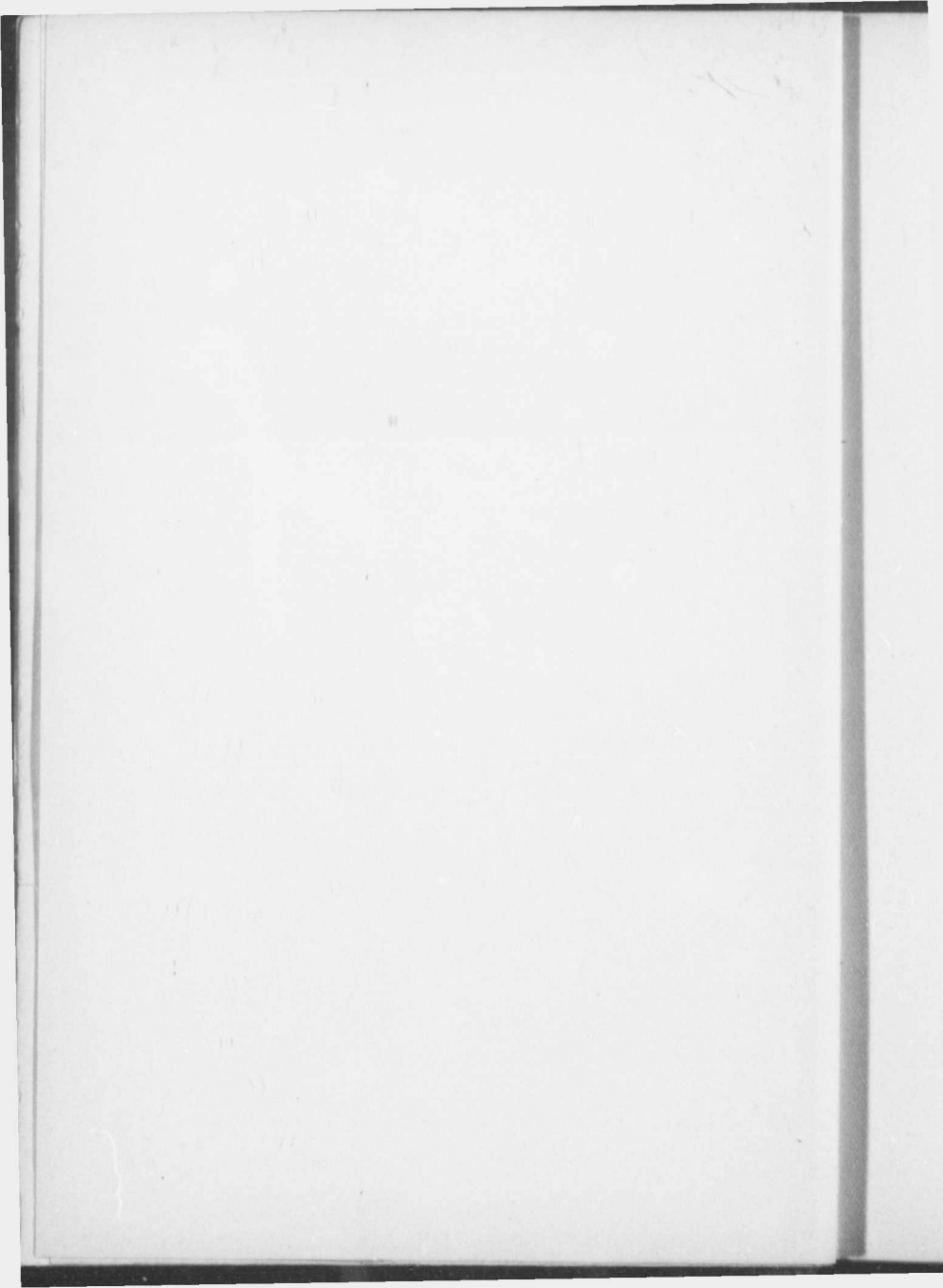
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To

MY FATHER AND MOTHER  
FROM WHOM I LEARNED TO LOVE  
BOTH NATURE AND ART



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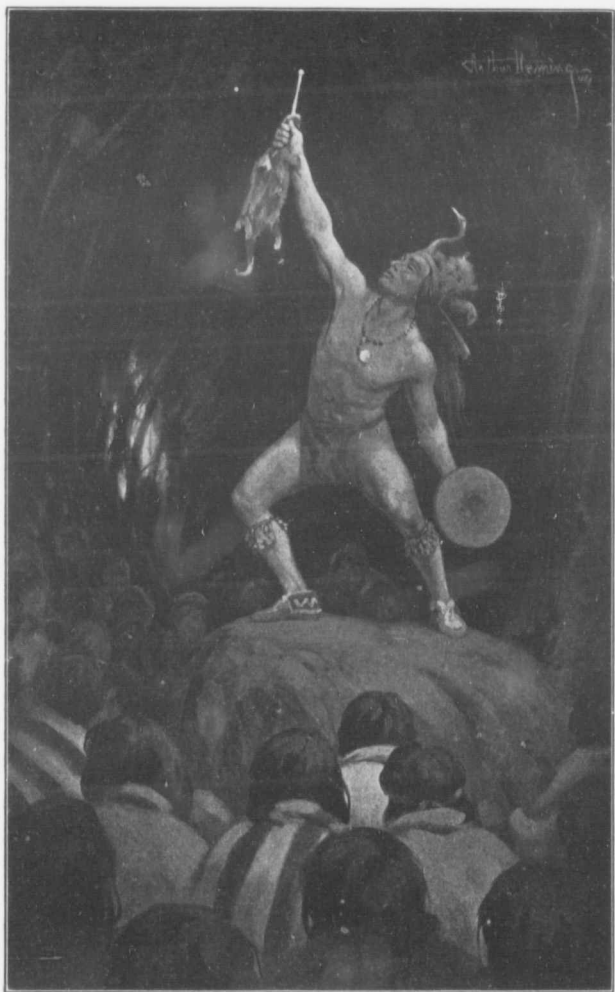
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THE SPIRIT WOLF









"Still the conjurer kept his pose."

# SPIRIT LAKE

## CHAPTER I

### THE SPIRIT WOLF

IN silent expectation they sat outside the conjurer's lodge. A dry leaf, falling free, rustled audibly down. The leaping of a fish broke the placidity of the lake. At last from within the lodge shrilled forth a loon's unearthly call, sent echoing back by the forest and the lake. The door-skin flapped aside, and out sprang the naked form of Wab-ud-ow, the conjurer. He leaped upon a boulder and stood with his tawny limbs wide apart, his right arm outstretched towards the sky, and his head thrown slightly back. Crowning his loose

hair was a leather cap, decorated at the front, on the back, and on either side, with the heads of an eagle, a loon, a crane, and an owl; and with an eagle's tail spreading fanlike behind. In his right hand he grasped a medicine bag and a drumstick; with his left he held a drum. He stood motionless. The smokers among the men, women, and children squatting before him, puffed away at their tobacco — all save a boy of six, who withdrew his pipe from his mouth and held it aside while he refreshed himself from his mother's breast.

Still the conjurer kept his pose. The Indians, knowing why, threw another skin upon the heap of "presents" before him. Perhaps it was enough. Wab-ud-ow would see if the gifts were sufficient to persuade his good spirit to help him to drive out the evil spirit that had entered into Mi-na-ce. With his arms still outstretched, he slowly

bowed to the north, to the east, to the south, and to the west. The door-skin flapped again as the conjurer disappeared within.

The Indians leaped to their feet and began to dance around the medicine lodge. Faster and faster they circled about it. Louder and louder they drummed and shouted. Wildly and more wildly they whirled about. An ear-piercing noise as of hissing steam was heard from within. From the top of the lodge dense volumes of vapor rose and floated away among the overhanging branches. Above the din swelled the cries of wolf and eagle, owl and bear, fox and loon; and then, as though in chorus, sounded all the voices of the forest. Amid the turmoil strange utterances of unknown men were heard. The lodge began to rock and sway and the dancers grew more excited than ever. Presently, from sheer exhaustion, they dropped out of the dance one by

one, and the discordant sounds from within gradually died away.

Another flap of the door-skin, and again out bounded Wab-ud-ow, the conjurer, beating upon his drum with frantic gesticulation. His body reeked with perspiration and his eyes were widely dilated. Suddenly he stopped. "My brothers," he whined, "it is bad news I have to bring you. Mi-na-ce, the daughter of Standing Wolf, must die. Even now she is about to walk upon the spirit path. I, Wab-ud-ow the great conjurer, may yet save her life, but only if her friends and relations open their hearts to give more presents and thus secure the power of a good spirit to help me to overcome the evil one within her."

Again he waited. More skins were thrown upon the pile. He waited still. An old gun was handed forward and tossed upon the heap. It was enough. He bowed again

to the four points of the compass, dived into the lodge, and resumed the interrupted ceremonies. Again the Indians drummed and shouted and danced.

The lodge was oval-shaped, about ten feet long by seven wide and eight high. The upright poles were of poplar interwoven with willow. All the wood was green. A deerskin tent was draped about the poles. Inside the enclosure burned a fire from which heated stones were rolled into a hole in the earth close beside a large "rokan" — birch-bark vessel — of water for producing steam. The conjurer skipped about the semi-nude, recumbent figure of the sick girl, imitating, as he moved, the calls of the birds and beasts of the wilderness. Louder and louder grew the din, while the lodge shook more violently than ever. Again the hissing of steam was heard, and once more the various charms in the medicine-bag were brought into play.

Then the door-skin flapped open, and Wab-ud-ow, the conjurer, appeared.

"My brothers," he cried, "it is better news that I bring. My spirit says that Mi-na-ce may yet recover, but only on condition that the friends and relations of Mi-na-ce dissuade her father, Min-gin-e-co-po — Standing Wolf — from going to his hunting-grounds at Spirit Lake; and persuade him to hunt upon the lands of his wife's family instead.

"Many years ago," continued Wab-ud-ow, "when Standing Wolf was but a young man, he avenged his father's death by killing the great grizzly bear, War-sa-ka-chark — The Mischief Maker. When War-sa-ka-chark died, his spirit roamed about for many years in search of a body worthy of it; but all in vain, until at last it found a great gray wolf, into which it entered. Now that wolf has grown greater still in size and strength, and my good spirit tells me that



this formidable beast has found the hunting-grounds of Standing Wolf, and is even now living there for the sole purpose of avenging the death of War-sa-ka-chark, who was killed among the Big Hills that stand in a distant land, beyond the Athabasca, even beyond the River of Peace.

"My spirit tells me also that if Standing Wolf goes to his hunting-grounds this autumn, he will be torn to pieces by the Spirit Wolf; for upon it neither his knife nor his axe will avail, and from it his bullets will glance aside.

"Do you wish Mi-na-ce to live? Do you wish Standing Wolf to live also? Then, my brothers, do not let him go to Spirit Lake. I have spoken."

The throng grunted their approval. The conjurer bade them carry out the girl. Kindling a small fire beside her, he squatted down, seized her arm, and sucked it violently.

After innumerable flourishes, he withdrew something from his mouth. He then explained that, with the assistance of his good spirit, he had mastered her evil spirit, and that he had taken the demon from her in the shape of a small frog. He held the tiny frog in his outstretched hand.

After all had examined it, he cast it into the flames. For three days and three nights the women took charge of Mi-na-ce, and in relays crooned incessantly beside the ailing girl.

Standing Wolf was a *Saulteaux*. The *Saulteaux* are the greatest fur hunters in Canada. They are a branch of the *Ojibways*. The *Ojibways* are the most important and numerous tribe of the formerly great *Algie*, or *Algonquin*, family. They were called *Saulteaux* by the early French fur traders who came upon them at *Sault Ste. Marie*.

This name is still applied to those Ojibways, of late years separated from the main body of their people in the neighborhood of Lake Superior and the Lake-of-the-Woods, who have migrated as far west as the Rocky Mountains, and as far north as the Mackenzie River. The Saulteaux are the most intelligent, the most provident, the most stalwart, the most cleanly, and the bravest of all the tribes in northwestern Canada. They have travelled farther, have adapted themselves more readily to strange places, and have assimilated with strange people more freely than any other Indians except the Iroquois.

The Saulteaux are equally resourceful whether living on the Plains, on the Barren Grounds, in the Mountains, in the Strong Wood Country, or on the shores of the Big Lakes. Their thoughts and their habits are more elevated than those of other tribes. Among them are many noted conjurers

and medicine-men; and they possess an unusual knowledge of primitive surgery and of healing and toxic herbs. Their language is full, expressive, idiomatic, musical, and poetic. Their oratory is studied, and their harangues are vigorous, eloquent, and picturesque. Their actions are measured, stately, and dignified. They are slow to speak, quick to act. Never do they forget an insult or an injury; seldom do they allow it to pass unavenged.

When Standing Wolf returned from his journey, upon which he had acted as guide-in-chief to the Fur Brigade, he was besieged by his relations and friends and warned of the fate that would surely befall him should he venture that winter upon his hunting grounds at Spirit Lake, which for the last three years he had refrained from visiting, in order that the game and fur animals might increase.

Being a wise man, he listened to all and said little. Being a brave man, he determined not to be turned aside. Being a suspicious man, he came to the conclusion that Wab-ud-ow must have some personal reason for uttering such a prophecy; and, being an astute man, he pretended that he would go only as far as the grounds of his wife's family, and hunt there all that winter. Although in his inmost heart he believed the words of the medicine-man and dreaded an encounter with the Spirit Wolf, nevertheless his courage overbore his fear.

The hunting-grounds in the possession of the Indian tribes of "The Strong Wood" zone — that broad belt of timber which crosses Canada from east to west — has been for centuries subdivided and allotted, either by bargain or battle, to the main families of each band. In many cases these hunting-grounds have remained in the undisputed

possession of the same families for generations. Usually they have natural boundaries, such as hills, valleys, rivers, or lakes; usually, too, they take the form of wedge-shaped tracts, radiating from common centres. From the intersection of the converging boundary lines, the common centres become the hubs of the various districts. The district hubs mark convenient summer camping-grounds for the reunion of families after the arduous work of the long winter hunting season.

The tribal summer camping-grounds are not only situated upon the natural highways of the country — the principal rivers and lakes — but also mark excellent fishing stations. There, too, the Indians have their burial-grounds. Often these camping-grounds are the summer headquarters for from three to eight main families; and each main family may contain from five or six to

fifty or sixty hunting men. Intermarriage between families of two districts gives the man the right to hunt on the land of his wife's family as long as he "sits on the brush" with her,—is wedded to her,—but the children do not inherit that right; it dies with the father. An Indian usually lives upon his own land, but makes frequent excursions to the land of his wife's family.

In the past, the side boundaries of hunting-grounds have been the cause of many family feuds, and the outer boundaries the occasion for many tribal wars. The past and the present headquarters camping-grounds of The Strong Wood Indians lie one hundred and fifty miles apart. The praise bestowed upon the pioneer fur traders for the excellent judgment shown in choosing the sites upon which trading posts have been established throughout Canada, has not been deserved;

the credit is really due to the Indians. The fur traders erected their posts or forts upon the tribal camping grounds simply because they found such spots to be the general meeting places of the Indians, and not only situated on the principal highways of the wilderness, but accessible from all points of the surrounding country, and, moreover, the very centres of excellent fish and game regions. Thus, in Canada many of the ancient tribal camping-grounds are now known by the names of trading posts, of progressive frontier towns, or of important cities.

Upon one of these ancient camping-grounds on the beautiful shores of God's Lake, in the very heart of the wilderness, stands a square stockade enclosing a cluster of poplars that shade a small clapboard log house. There, in charge of the Post, lives a factor of the Hudson Bay Company.



Beyond a little lawn protected by a picket fence stands the storehouse, with a trading room on its lower story and a fur loft above. Behind is seen a number of shanties, then a large building in which dog sleds and canoes are stored. Farther away is a large open shed under which the big six-fathom canoes are built; then a few small huts where some half-breeds live. With the exception of the factor's house, all the buildings are of rough-hewn logs plastered with clay. Two small cannons, mounted upon dilapidated carriages, guard the flagstaff planted near the big gateway, whose arch is decorated with seventeen gaudily painted letters spelling "Fort Determination." Around the sweeping bend of the lake is a village of tepées, in which the Indian fur hunters and their families spend the midsummer. Crowning a knoll in the rear stands a quaint little church with a small tin spire capped

by a cross. On the hill in the background the time-worn pines sway their shaggy heads and softly whisper to this the first gentle touch of civilization in the wilderness.

On a clear, sunny September morning, when an early frost was quietly loosening the rich autumnal mantle of the trees, and a gentle breeze was leisurely strewing it in tiny, rustling fragments of brown and red and yellow to form a new carpet for the forest, a score of Indians and half-breed trippers were unloading freight from a couple of six-fathom birch-bark canoes down at the Company's landing. Eager men and boys were good-naturedly shouldering packs and hurrying away with them to the storehouse, while a number of idlers were lounging around and applauding the bearers with the largest loads. Over by the log huts a group of Indian women squatted in the shade talking to the half-breed interpreter's wife. In

and out of the lodges dirty, half-clad children were romping, and savage dogs were prowling in search of food. The deerskin or canvas covers of most of the lodges were raised a few feet to allow the breeze to pass under. Women and children in little groups idly reclined in the shade or smoked and chatted the hours away. Here and there women, more industrious, were cleaning fish, mending nets, making moccasins, washing clothes, or standing over steaming kettles. Many canoes were resting upon the sandy beach, and many more were lying bottom up beneath the shade of the trees.

That morning a half-breed servant, who had been on the lookout, observed three dark objects with glittering silver wakes on the lake, and ran to tell Hu-ge-mow, or the Master — the Hudson Bay factor — who took down his telescope to examine the shimmering waters.

"Ou, aye! I hae them noo," he said. "I doot it'll be Waub-o-geeg, or, mebbe, Ma-mong-e-se-da. Na, it's no they. It might be thon deevle Wab-ud-ow; but it canna be his femly wie him, an' yitt I oucht te ken yon stroke."

After a pause the factor broke forth again:—

"Guid preserve me! I sud ha' kenned them afore. It's Min-gin-e-ca-po's outfit comin' aifter their advances."

When Min-gin-e-ca-po, or Standing Wolf, had landed, the Indians about the Fort went down to greet him as he stalked up to the gateway, where he was welcomed by the factor. Together they strode to the store, while Standing Wolf's family pitched camp upon the beach.

Upon three sides of the trading room there was a U-shaped counter; and in the middle of the intervening space stood a fireless

box stove. On the shelves and racks upon the walls, and from the hooks in the rafters, rested or hung a conglomeration of the goods proffered in trade to the wilderness people. There were flints and steels, tobaccos and candies, guns and axes, frying-pans and pain-killer bottles, calico dresses and copper tea-pails, Hudson Bay blankets and colored beads, excellent tea and sow-belly. It was, on a small scale, a department store with the departments all jumbled together, except the millinery section. This last, a late addition, was contained in a large lidless packing case, against the side of which stood a long steering paddle for the clerk's use in stirring about the varied assortment of white women's ancient head-gear, should a fastidious squaw request to see more than the uppermost layer.

Standing Wolf stood long in silence. At last he began to speak slowly in the Saul-

teaux dialect, although he could have spoken in English: —

“Hu-ge-mow, I will make big hunt this winter. I am going to a land where moose and caribou, bear and beaver, marten and mink, are plentiful. Accordingly, I want liberal advances. Hu-ge-mow knows that I always pay my debt.”

“Ou, aye!” grunted the factor, “an’ hoo will ye manage to mak’ sick a big hunt? There’s no sae muckle fur at the Caribou Hills, an’ I canna unerstan’ wat for ye went there last winter. Noo, if ye were gaun on yer auld groons on Speerit Lake, that wad be deeferent, an’ I cud afford to be a deal mair jinerous.”

“Ah, Hu-ge-mow does not know! How could he? But if Hu-ge-mow will keep it to himself, I will tell him,” replied Standing Wolf.

“Weel, fat is’t? I’ll no say anything.”

“It is this way,” Standing Wolf went on,

"Wab-ud-ow has made bad medicine. He declares that if I hunt at Spirit Lake, I will die. But I am not afraid of either Wab-ud-ow or his words. Therefore, I go to hunt at Spirit Lake, even though his bad medicine kill me."

"That's guid," replied the trader, "I'm gled to hear't; but look oot for yon deil Wab-ud-ow."

"Then the Master will be liberal?" questioned Standing Wolf.

"Aye, weel, I'll no be haird on ye," grumbled the factor; "fat is't ye want?"

Being a trader of great experience, Factor Mackenzie treated the Indian generously, and by way of the customary peace offering, gave him gratuitously a plug of tobacco, a paper of matches, quarter of a pound of tea, half a pound of sugar, two pounds of flour, and half a pound of pork. An Indian invariably asks for twice as much as he

expects to get; the trader, in turn, advances to the hunter goods to the value of about one third of his average annual hunt.

As soon as Standing Wolf had learned that the factor would give him credit to the value of one hundred "skins," he went off to consult his family. A "skin" is equivalent to one dollar in the Mackenzie River and Hudson Bay districts, but represents only fifty cents in the region of the Athabasca.

On his return, Standing Wolf was accompanied by his eldest son Wa-pis-tan, or The Marten, a lad of fourteen; and by At-tick, or The Caribou, a sixteen-year-old adopted boy, whom he was teaching the ways of the hunting trail. The trader handed him one hundred marked goose quills — the equivalent of that number of skins. The Indian divided the bunch, giving twenty to At-tick to hold in reserve for ammunition, tobacco, and hardware; and twenty to his son to keep



for buying an outfit for his mother and sisters. He then began to trade; but long before he had procured all he wanted, his sixty quills were exhausted. He then drew the twenty quills held by At-tick, but they were not enough. He subtracted ten from his wife's twenty, but even these were insufficient. Then he took five more, and finally the remaining five. Still he lacked many things which he considered essential.

As though in deep thought, the hunter stood with his arms folded and with a look of depression on his face — for the Indian, when he chooses, is just as good an actor as the white man. The factor, taking compassion on him, pitched ten more quills upon the counter to the evident delight of Standing Wolf, who thereupon finished his trade, at least for the time being. Altogether, he had purchased a muzzle-loading gun, two pairs of trousers, two shirts, a suit of under-

wear, six assorted traps, twine for nets and snares, tea, tobacco, powder, gun caps, bullets, shot, files, knives, axe, pails, frying-pan, matches, candy, soap, needles, thread, belt, and waistcoat.

Then Standing Wolf began to lament that there was nothing for his wife or his daughters unless he lent them both his shirts. By this time the wife had appeared upon the scene. Together they persuaded the trader to advance her ten skins' worth of goods. Holding out both hands with all the fingers extended, she began to bargain for her advance. First, she chose a three-point blanket worth five skins; and, when it was handed her, closed the five fingers of her left hand, and dropped it. Next, she decided upon a three-skin piece of print for a dress, and closed three fingers. Finally, picking out a neck shawl, she closed the other two fingers, and dropped her extended hand.

Just then the baby began to cry, and the mother remembered that they had nothing for the papoose. After a good deal of talk, the trader handed over five more quills, which returned to him in as many minutes. Then the squaw whispered to her husband that they had nothing for the boys. The hunter then told the trader that he must have something for At-tick; but the trader protested that he had already been too liberal. The Indian replied, —

“Well, if you are niggardly, why, never mind, the goods are yours.”

It dawned upon the trader that the Indian had him in a tight place; for, should he displease him, he would trade his winter's catch to the free trader, or sell his prime furs to the opposition, and bring only his common furs to the Hudson's Bay Company; or, perhaps, he might keep the Company waiting several years for payment.

"Weel, hoo many things mair div ye want?" grumbled the trader.

"The boy," replied the Indian, "can kill at least twenty skins' worth of —"

"Hoot-toots, mon! I'll gie him ten," impatiently replied the factor.

When the boy had finished, the trader put his book under his arm, and went to the door in the hope that the Indians would leave; but still they lounged about, with never a thought of the open door. For the last hour the trader had been telling all his funny stories, endeavoring to keep the Indians in good humor. Now, however, his blood boiled as he thought of the advances he had made, and yet he was afraid to tell them to go. A couple of hours earlier the Indian might have been kicked by the trader without resenting it; but with his advances in his possession, he felt independent and ready to take offence at the merest trifle. At last the trader

hinted that it was growing late, and the Indians agreed with him, but made no move.

"Weel, are ye no daen yitt? Fat is't ye want the noo?" roared the exasperated trader. Haughtily the Indian replied, —

"Here is my son; there is nothing for him, and yet he can kill as much as At-tick."

It was finally decided that the factor should give The Marten advances to the extent of ten skins, and open an independent account for him. Before doing so, however, the factor harangued the boy, telling him that his father was not only a great hunter, but also an honest man, who always paid his debt. Now The Marten's name was to be placed upon the Company's books; he, too, should strive to become a famous hunter, so that, even after he was dead, every one would point to his name, and say what a great hunter he had been. He advised him to choose wisely, because from henceforth he

would be personally responsible for everything he bought, and must pay "skin for skin" (the motto of the Hudson's Bay Company).

To begin with, the boy chose a trap. That pleased the factor mightily, and he told the lad that he was glad to see him buying an article so useful. Next, he picked out a silk handkerchief; then, two printed flannel shirts, some scented soap, a box of pomatum, a silver ring, a pipe, some tobacco, and candy. As the boy picked up his "outfit" and moved to the door, the trader glared angrily at him on account of the worthless things he had chosen. After a moment's hesitation at the door, the boy returned, handed back the trap, and chose instead some ribbons, braid, buttons, and a mouth organ.

While waiting for his son, Standing Wolf remembered that he had neither flour nor

grease. Once again the trader had to surrender. Then the thought struck the Indian that he had bought no medicines.

"You know I am not very strong, and I may fall ill," he said. "My wife — she is not very strong, and she may fall ill, also. My boys —"

But the trader, glaring at him, cut him short with — "A'richt! This'l dae for yir innerts, I've nae doot," at the same time handing him some salts, peppermint, pain-killer, and sticking-plaster — the usual stock-in-trade of the wilderness medicine-chest, supposed to be able to cure everything that can befall a bushman.

At length the hunter perceived that it was getting late. On taking leave, he remarked that Standing Wolf's heart was now pleased; that he considered the trader to be as good as an Indian, and that he was now going to work hard to make a big hunt and bring

all his furs to Hu-ge-mow for the Great Company.

The following day, Noo-koom, the mother of Standing Wolf, and his remaining children received their advances; then the women set out upon a begging expedition, visiting the trader's wife as well as the priest and the nuns. The hunter and his family spent that evening in gossip with their copper-colored friends.

When the sun appeared next morning, it shone upon dense clouds of mist that rose from the lake, twisting and turning as they mounted skyward. A gentle breeze struck them, and they went rolling along the shore, up the bank, over the stockade, in and out among the buildings, until at last the Fort was entirely enveloped, and, along with the highest hills, blotted from the scene. Nothing but a great, mysteriously moving shroud of pearly gray remained. Then the sun,



gaining strength as it rose above the trees, struck the clouds of cold, gray vapor with all the power of its dazzling rays, and dissolved the mist into ghostly forms of silver-gray that danced aimlessly hither and thither. As these thinned out, the Fort gradually became distinguishable, and stood high above the misty wreaths, like a fairy castle without foundation. Far down below, where the moat of the castle should be, three silhouetted forms of darker gray silently floated in space. Presently, as they began to shape themselves into definite forms, a fourth figure joined them. It was Wab-ud-ow, paddling alone in his canoe. He had overtaken the three canoes of Standing Wolf's party as they were leaving Fort Determination.

"Quay, quay!" sung out the conjurer.

"Quay, quay!" replied the hunter. Then the canoes bunched together.

"I have come to bid my brother farewell. Which way do you go? To Caribou Hills, or to Spirit Lake?" questioned Wab-ud-ow.

"To Caribou Hills," answered Standing Wolf. "I have no desire to die just yet."

"It is well. I am glad my brother is not going to Spirit Lake, for I have not forgotten the terrible thing my good spirit revealed to me that I might warn you from a miserable death," said the conjurer.

They shook hands. Their canoes parted, one fading away into the misty screen, the others gliding into sunshine.

All day long they paddled, stopping only to infuse some tea. When evening overtook them, God's Lake was far behind, and for the night they turned their canoes upside down upon the banks of the Bear River. While the women cooked supper and erected the shelters, Standing Wolf set a gill-net for fish, and the boys shot a few ducks and a

beaver. Early next morning the dunnage and dogs were fitted with greater care into the canoes, and to each person was assigned the proper position for the trip. Standing Wolf, alone in his little two-fathom hunting canoe, led the way. Next came the three-fathom canoe with old Noo-koom, or The Happy One, Standing Wolf's mother; Min-na-ce, or The Berries, his oldest daughter, a girl of twelve; The Snow Bird, a girl of ten, and The Mink, a boy of eight. Then followed the three-and-a-half-fathom canoe containing Ko-ko-hay, or The Perfect Squaw, the wife of Standing Wolf, with her three youngest children and her oldest son, The Marten, and At-tick, or The Caribou, a youth of sixteen.

Day after day they voyaged up the winding river. The current was sluggish at first, but in a few days they came to a series of shallow rapids, up which they decided to pole

and track. Going ashore they cut a number of poles seven or eight feet long, and while Standing Wolf was able to pole his way up the rapids, the others were obliged to resort to tracking. At-tick took a tracking line which he fastened to the thwarts of his canoe and looped around the bow, and made his way along the bank towing the canoe, while The Marten stood in the bow and worked with the pole, and his mother sat in the stern and plied the paddle. The roughness of the river bank made the work hard for At-tick as he scrambled from boulder to boulder, or swung around an overhanging tree. Once he fell head foremost into the foaming water; but after much toil he at last gained the quiet waters above the rapids.

He went back to help Mi-na-ce, who was tugging away at her tracking line without making much headway. By their combined

efforts they made better progress, and had almost hauled the canoe clear of the rapids, when the line suddenly snapped in two. Every one was dismayed except the old grandmother, who was standing in the bow of the unlucky canoe, and poling with all her strength, when the accident happened. As the canoe began descending, she dropped her pole, sat down and seized a paddle. The force of the rushing water sent the frail craft plunging among the sharp-edged rocks and threatened to capsize it. The old woman remained perfectly calm, with her pipe gripped tightly between her gums, and her paddle swiftly and skilfully working to save the precious living freight. Down, down they rushed, here shipping the crest of a swell, and there grazing the edge of a boulder by a paddle's breadth. The frightened children, crouching on the bottom of the canoe, helped to ballast it, as the old

woman dexterously guided it stern foremost through the seething waters. When the brave craft finally came to a standstill beside the bank below the rapids, Standing Wolf and At-tick went to her assistance with a stouter line, and soon the runaway was hauled up to the quiet river above.

Embarking above the rapids, the family once more continued their way. The dogs were put ashore and, from sheer joy at recovering their liberty, ran helter-skelter along the river bank. In a minute they had disappeared among the trees; and soon a great clamor of barking and yelping was heard.

"My sons, something stands at bay," cried Standing Wolf; "go and trail the dogs while I follow in my canoe."

At-tick and The Marten jumped ashore and ran off in hot pursuit. They found that the dogs had treed a full-grown black bear.

Excited and out of breath, they shot wildly and only wounded the brute. Snorting with rage and frantic with pain, it rapidly descended and made a rush for the boys, who ran away at their utmost speed. The dogs attempted to turn the bear, but it thrust them savagely aside and pursued the boys, and was almost upon them when Standing Wolf fortunately came up and sent a bullet through its heart.

"My sons," growled the hunter, "why do you act like fools? Don't you know that you endanger your lives when both of you empty your guns at once?"

The grandmother, who had heard the firing, now appeared upon the scene, bringing with her a pail and a package of salt. She proceeded to bleed the bear, sprinkling salt upon the blood as it ran into the pail. Then, while the others were busy making camp, she skinned the bear and cut it up. Having

washed the entrails in the running water, she mixed oatmeal with the clotted blood, and stuffed the mixture into the entrails to make blood puddings.

Next day being Sunday, — a day on which the Strong Wood Indians neither hunt nor travel, — they occupied themselves with stretching and drying the bear's skin over a smouldering fire of punk; with preparing jerked meat by cutting the bear's flesh into long, thin strips, and smoking them over another fire; and with filling the entrails with rendered fat.

The following day they encountered heavy rapids, around which they were compelled to portage their entire outfit. While the hunter and the boys carried the canoes, and the others took what loads they chose, the grandmother shouldered the heavy deer-skin lodge covering, weighing nearly one hundred pounds. Though she was respon-



sible for its safe and dry keeping, and for putting it up and taking it down, she never had the privilege of resting beneath it; for she and her granddaughter Mi-na-ce slept by themselves under a deerskin wind-break. Among the Indians of the Strong Woods it is customary for girls who have reached adolescence to live apart from their brothers. On the portage the dogs were called into service, and made to carry packs, so that in two trips everything was transported.

Two days later they came to an expansion of the river — known as a lake — where the way to the Caribou Hills branches off from that leading to Spirit Lake. Here Standing Wolf headed the canoes for a creek that comes down from the hills and — taking advantage of a favorable wind — bunched them and braced them together with paddles lashed from thwart to thwart across the gunwales. He rigged up a mast and set a four-point

blanket to a stern breeze that drove the canoes rapidly along with much lapping and gurgling of white-crested waves through a labyrinth of islands. While they sailed, all drowsed excepting the Perfect Squaw, who did the steering.

At the mouth of Caribou Creek the hunter took care to leave plenty of signs to indicate the route he had taken. Beside the ashes of their camp-fire there stood a tall pine, which Standing Wolf made into a "lop-stick" in honor of the beginning of his son's hunting career. A "lop-stick" is a tall, straight tree denuded of all its branches excepting those at the very top. It is utilized to commemorate the starting-point of a young man's career as an independent hunter, or his first voyage with the Fur Brigade, or to mark his grave. Lop-sticks usually occupy conspicuous places so as to be visible many miles away.

Late one afternoon it happened that while Mi-na-ce and her grandmother were picking berries, the other canoes passed out of sight. When they had filled their rogans, they embarked and hastened to overtake the rest of the party. As they rounded a bend in the river, Mi-na-ce in the bow suddenly stopped paddling, and — without turning her face toward her grandmother in the stern — excitedly whispered, "Muskwa! muskwa!"

The old woman caught sight of a dark object fifty yards away, and uttered a few hurried commands. Both fell to paddling with all their might. With straining backs, stiffened arms, and bending blades, they fairly lifted the canoe at every stroke; and the waters gave a tearing sound as the slashing blades sent little whirlpools far behind. The lapping and gurgling beneath the plunging bow seemed martial music

to their ears. Their hearts were fired with the spirit of the chase, and — though their only weapons were their skinning knives — they felt no fear. On they raced to head the bear, who was swimming desperately to gain the shore. They overhauled him. He turned at bay. Mi-na-ce soused a blanket in the water and threw it over his head. The grandmother in the stern reached over as the canoe glided by, seized him by an ear as he struggled blindly beneath the smothering mantle, and drove her knife into his throat. A broad circle of crimson colored the water round the blanket. The canoe was quickly brought about; the old woman slipped a noose over his head, and in triumph they towed the carcass to their camp.

Next day the party proceeded up the turbulent little creek. On coming to a chain of lakes, Standing Wolf changed his course. He told his astonished family that instead of

settling for the winter among the Caribou Hills, he would cross by way of the lakes and a convenient stream to his old hunting-grounds at Spirit Lake. He told them, also, that he had little faith in Wab-ud-ow; and, now that he had duped the conjurer, he would hunt upon his own lands where game was plentiful. So they journeyed on to Spirit Lake. Day after day they labored with paddle or tracking line, pole or tump strap, occasionally spreading their blankets as sails to favorable winds. On they went, shooting a bear here, a moose there, and sometimes securing a mink, a beaver, a fisher, or an otter. Snow flurries came and went; ice formed and thawed; dry leaves rustled upon the floor of the forest. The weather was exhilarating: days of glorious sunshine and nights of hard frost. They toiled over portages leading across steep hills, through wild, rocky gorges, and into

rank muskegs, before they struck the headwaters of Lonely River, a beautiful little stream that empties into Spirit Lake. With glad hearts they reëmbarked and propelled their canoes swiftly now to the tune of paddle-handles bumping gunwales, swishing blades, swirling water, and gurgling wakes. They glided on, here under overhanging trees, or past a moose-marked beach; there down a wild rapid, or close to a bear-worn bank, — and ever through a panorama of enchanting scenery. On they sped. At last they came to the end of their voyage and pitched their camp upon a sandy beach where Lonely River lost itself in Spirit Lake. There — the Indians say — strange animals come down to drink, and phantom hunters roam the surrounding woods. It was there, at a secluded end of the lake, about fifteen miles from the camping-places used during former seasons, that Standing Wolf decided to erect



"They pitched their camp upon a sandy beach where Lonely River lost itself in Spirit Lake."

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his lodge for the coming winter upon a sheltered spot among the trees on the north bank of Lonely River.

Work was at once begun. Green spruce poles about twelve feet long and four inches thick at their butts were cut down and hauled to Standing Wolf, who split them with wedges. Three larger poles, about seventeen feet long, were tied together near their tops and erected in the form of a tripod with their butts spread about twelve feet apart. About three feet below the apex, bars were fastened from one pole to another. Against these the split poles were placed close together, with their butts describing a circle upon the ground. The chinks between were stuffed with moss; mud was banked against the foot of the poles; and the deerskin covering, tightly stretched over the cone-shaped structure, was fastened together and pegged down around the bottom. An

opening two feet wide and five feet high was left for a doorway, and a block of wood was placed at the bottom to keep the snow from drifting in. Over the opening a caribou skin was hung, with a bar across the lower edge to keep it in place. In the centre of the lodge six sticks of wood, pegged down in the form of a hexagon and banked with mud, formed the fireplace. The fire was built in the Ojibway fashion. As an Indian's tribal relationship may be learned from the cut of his moccasins, the shape of his snowshoes, or the lines of his canoe, so it may be ascertained from the manner of his building a fire. The Ojibways, or Saulteaux, for instance, build their lodge fires cone-shaped, with the wood standing up on end. Thus, from the charred embers of a dead fire a woodsman may discover to what tribe the man who built it belonged.

A rack for smoking meat was hung over

the fire, out of reach of the flames. The opening above acted as a vent for the smoke. The floor of the lodge was covered with spruce brush, upon which was spread a layer of rushes, the whole being topped with a heavy coating of the tips of balsam boughs laid shingle-fashion with the stems downwards.

Housekeeping was now begun in earnest. According to custom, the wife took up her position on the right of the entrance just beyond the pile of firewood. On her right Standing Wolf had his seat; and the baby reposed between them. The younger girls occupied the space opposite the doorway on the far side of the fire; while the boys claimed the left side of the entrance. Should a visitor arrive, he would be given the place of honor on the warmest side of the fire, opposite the door. The grandmother's lodge was similar in shape, though smaller in dimensions; and — instead of being covered

with deerskins—it was thatched with moss, mud, and birch bark.

For several days the north wind blew and stilled the rivers and the lakes. A thick, white mantle slowly descended upon the frost-locked waters and the whispering pines; and soon, when the sun came out again, it shone upon a scene of dazzling splendor.

The camp having been completed, a portion of outdoor work was allotted to each. Ko-ko-hay alone remained at home to attend to the sewing, mending, and cooking, and to care for the smaller children. Noo-koom, the grandmother, and the older girls devoted their time to visiting the snares set for hare and grouse, and the gill-nets set for fish, and to gathering firewood.

As the time had now come for Standing Wolf to lay out his trapping paths, or fur trails, and, as he had decided to take with him the boys whom he was teaching the ways

of the hunting trail, he cautioned the women:—

“Be on the alert for wolf tracks. Should you see any signs, let me know on my return; for I want to discover what manner of beast this Spirit Wolf is that Wab-ud-ow, The Conjuror, has foretold will drive me from my hunting-grounds.”

Though he scoffed at the idea of its existence, he could not dismiss from his mind the fear that, after all, there might be such a brute.

Early next morning Standing Wolf, At-tick, and The Marten were up and away. They drove three dogs, hitched tandem-wise to a sled, or rather a toboggan, on which their trapping and camping kits were packed. They were prepared for a week's absence. Their outfit consisted of three muzzle-loading single-barrelled guns, two hare-skin robes, a copper tea-pail, three tin cups, steel traps of assorted sizes, snares for hare

and lynx, bait sticks already baited, a crane's wing, an awl, a file, two axes, a crooked knife, extra moccasins, and deerskin to mend them with, duffel socks, pemmican, dried white fish, and caribou meat, grease, and tea. In the firebags at their belts each carried matches, flint and steel, touchwood, tobacco, smokeweed berries to mix with it, a pipe, and a jack-knife. They carried, also, hunting-knives, powder-horns, shot and bullet pouches, gun caps, and wads of willow bark. Their guns were loaded with shot, because to ram down a ball upon a charge of shot when coming suddenly upon big game is easier than to extract a bullet and reload with shot when coming upon small game.

The first signs that Standing Wolf found were those of foxes; for the country had now become fairly open, and marked with signs of the hare, or rabbit, as it is miscalled. It was just the spot for foxes. There Standing

Wolf showed the boys how to set fox traps. The day before leaving camp he had carefully boiled all his traps in a kettle containing pine brush. He did this in order to remove the man and the iron smells, and substitute the smell of pine — of which no animal is afraid — and, also, to soften, to some extent, the temper of the metal, and thus lessen the chances of the trap breaking when sprung in very cold weather. He had also taken the precaution to heat his axes until they came to a slight bluish tinge, and then dip them in fish oil in order to prevent them from chipping when chopping frozen wood.

“My sons,” he said, addressing the boys, “each tribe of hunters has a different way of setting traps; but — though I have travelled and have trapped with many noted hunters of other bands — I have yet to learn of a better way than that of our own people. The first thing to do is to select a suitable

place. This rise of snow will do. I have often shown you how to set your traps, but you are young and I will show you once again."

Procuring a pole about six feet long and two inches thick, he drove the chain ring of the trap over the thin end, and then split and wedged it to prevent its being pulled off. He buried the pole tightly in the snow, took his knife, and, cutting a hole in the snow crust exactly the size and shape of the open trap, set it in so that it was barely half an inch below the surface. Then he opened a gun-cap box that contained a most evil-smelling concoction of oil of aniseed, asa-fetida, rotten eggs, soft grease, and glands taken from the female fox; and with a stick daubed a little of the mixture on the plate of the trap. He never once removed his mittens. When setting traps, he always wore a special pair so that no man-smell might cling to the trap.



Next, he placed over the trap a piece of birch bark scarcely thicker than wrapping-paper, and so cut as barely to fill the space between the open jaws. To mark the exact position of the trap, he took a branch about four feet long, marked the snow about a foot from the trap, measured the distance with the stick, notched it accordingly, and placed it in a natural position in the mark in the snow. It stood due north of the trap, so that when making his rounds he could tell exactly where it lay, and could see from a distance whether or not it had been tampered with. Then, with the crane's wing, he lightly dusted snow upon the trap, chain, and pole, so that the snow showed no sign of having been disturbed. As a finishing touch he scattered little bits of rotten fish upon the snow round the hidden trap.

"My sons," said Standing Wolf, "never use more than one stick to mark your trap.

A single stick attracts a fox just as a single tree attracts a dog. Of course, as you know, there are many other ways of setting traps and deadfalls for foxes, each differing according to the season and the locality. But the same may be said of traps for all kinds of animals."

As they snowshoed along, Standing Wolf tried to impress upon the boys the immense importance of being observant:—

"My sons, if you are to become great hunters, you must be forever studying your surroundings in order that you may understand every sign of nature. Be observant, and you will become wise. Now, listen. Once I set a trap for a wolverine that had caused me much trouble. Three days later the brute was caught by the hind leg in my trap. Though it was held securely, it tried many ways to gain its freedom. At first, it endeavored to break the chain;

then to gnaw the pole in two; and, finally, to unscrew the nuts from the trap. While it was thus engaged, three wolves came along. The wolverine, in terror, worked itself down low in the snow and close against the pole to which the trap was fastened; and then, as the wolves drew near, pretended to be dead. On seeing the wolverine, the wolves circled three times round the trap with the utmost caution. Then they squatted upon their haunches in the snow and waited. The wolverine made no move. Growing braver, they circled round again, and drew nearer to the wolverine, and waited. The wolverine never moved. At last, the leader of the wolves, convinced that the captive was dead, rushed forward and planted his fore feet on its back, and was about to sink his fangs into the expected feast when, like lightning, it turned upon its back, clutched the wolf with its powerful fore legs,

bit into the throat of its enemy, and at the same time ripped open the wolf's belly with the claws of its hind feet. The other wolves, on seeing their leader killed, ran away."

"Did you see the fight?" asked At-tick.

"No, my son, for I did not arrive until the following day," replied Standing Wolf.

"Then how do you know what happened?" questioned the boy.

"Because," answered Standing Wolf, "the story of the whole affair was written upon the animals, the trap, the pole, and the snow. What further proof could you want?"

Standing Wolf went on to tell the boys that it was best to set marten traps in a hilly country timbered with spruce or pine, where there was not a great deal of underbrush; that in swampy regions, or where there were small creeks and small lakes, the beaver, mink, muskrat, fisher, and otter were to be found; that the most likely spot for

lynx was in a district overgrown with willows interspersed with poplars.

For five days they continued setting their traps and snares and deadfalls, and carried on the work of laying out their fur trails. When their task was completed, they set out for home. On the way they came across moose tracks, and Standing Wolf told the boys that he would take them moose hunting in a week or two.

When the hunter and the boys arrived at camp, the women made merry over the fact that the conjurer's Spirit Wolf had as yet vouchsafed no sign of existence.

Late one night when Standing Wolf and the boys were absent on their rounds of the fur trails, Ko-ko-hay was nodding beside the dying fire, and the children were sleeping back among the quivering shadows. Outside, the wind moaned and roared; the snow sifted and drifted; the dogs whined and

snarled. Suddenly Ko-ko-hay threw up her arms and screamed in terror: "The Spirit Wolf, the Spirit Wolf!" as the dogs bolted into the lodge followed by a gaunt timber wolf of giant size. The dogs turned and grappled with their snarling, snapping foe. Noo-koom, the grandmother, rushed in, seized a billet, and furiously attacked the beast. Ko-ko-hay snatched up the baby, threw a blanket over her, ran outside, and without an instant's hesitation plunged her in the snow. Then she rushed back and joined the others in their fierce struggle. The lodge rocked about. It seemed filled with a whirlwind of snarling, snapping, panting, howling, biting, clawing dogs and wolves, clubbing women, and screaming children. Firebrands were shooting everywhere; pots and pans clattered about; blankets tangled the feet of the women as they blindly clubbed dogs and wolf alike. One dog already

lay dead, and the fight had grown desperate, when Noo-koom, seizing her chance, dealt the wolf with all her might a crushing blow upon the small of the back. Relaxing its fangs from a mangled dog, the wolf bolted from the lodge and disappeared.

At once the wind dropped, and within an hour Standing Wolf and the boys returned. While eating his supper, the hunter listened gravely to the story of the Spirit Wolf. As he turned into his blanket, he calmed the excited women a little by saying, "Tomorrow I will hunt the Spirit Wolf."

As a faint gray light crept through the upper branches of the eastern trees, and warned the denizens of the winter wilderness of approaching day, the door-skin flapped aside, and a tall figure stepped from the cosy fire-lit lodge into the outer sombreness of the silent forest. It was Standing Wolf. His swarthy form, clad in wolf-skin cap,

blanket leggings and capote, made a picturesque silhouette of lighter tone against the darker shadows of the woods, as he stood for a moment scanning the starry sky. Going to the star-chigan, or stage, he took down his five-foot snowshoes, slipped his moccasined feet into the permanently knotted thongs, and — with a moose-skin-coated gun resting in the hollow of his bear-skin bemitted hand, his blanket and his tea-pail on his back, — strode off through the vaulted aisles between the boles of the evergreens; while, through a tiny slit in the wall of his deer-skin home, two loving eyes watched his stalwart figure vanishing into the forest gloom. On he went. Only the faintest whisper of scuffling snowshoes and scrunching snow could be heard; the sound of the occasional snapping of a twig came as a startling report compared with the almost noiseless tread of the hunter. A little cloud



of powdery snow rose above the dragging heels of his snowshoes; and, whirling about, covered the back of his leggings with a coating of white. Onward he strode, twisting through the tangled scrub, stooping under a fallen tree, stepping over a snow-capped log, or pacing along a winter-locked stream. Never for a moment did he turn aside from the trail of the Spirit Wolf.

Two hours later, when Standing Wolf came out upon a lake, the light in the eastern sky had broken into a glorious flood of sunshine. Half over the distant trees, along the horizon, the sun was shining; and the whole eastern sky seemed aflame with bands and balls of fire. A vertical ribbon of gradually diminishing lustre, scarcely wider than the sun, was rising into the heavens to meet a vast semicircle of rainbow beauty arched above the natural sun. Where the strange halo cut the vertical flame and the horizon

on either side, three mock suns marked the intersection, and four other suns studded the vertical band at equal distances from one another.

The hunter stood gazing with awe at the splendor before him, and wondering what strange fate it foreboded. He had seen many sun dogs during his lifetime, but never one like that. He pondered, but could not interpret the meaning of the omen. Did it promise good, or did it threaten evil? Then he wondered if Wab-ud-ow, the conjurer, could read such a sign. As he watched the sun rise higher, he grew afraid. Superstitious terrors shook him, hinting at the approach of some terrible catastrophe. He could not turn away; for the sight fascinated him. Through watery eyes he stared at the sun — brilliant still, though shrouded in haze. Presently the mock suns grew dim; the arch faded away; the band lost



"The hunter stood gazing with awe at the splendor before him."



its color; the true sun rose high above the trees; and then Standing Wolf turned aside and trudged on, following the Spirit Wolf's trail. Toward noon he halted to eat. His hunger appeased, he again set out. As he passed through the open timber, marten tracks, or, rather, the impressions of their bodies, dotted the snow; and the active little creatures peered at him from behind a branch or a bole. As he struggled through a tangle of undergrowth, mild-eyed hares stared at him. As he swished through the tall, dry grass among the hummocks in a muskeg, a silver fox scurried away unmarked. Always the wild kindred of the wilderness watched from a safe distance their arch-enemy, the hunter.

How the woods varied as he strode along! Here tall pines with branchless boles stood a little apart from one another with scarcely any undergrowth between. There rose a

dense mass of tamaracks, the living interlocked with the dead. On swampy ground a matted tangle of gnarled and twisted cedars suggested jungle growth. A little farther on, a grove of birches clustered together in bunches of from three to ten, their ragged coats rustling in the gentle wind. Over all hung a heavy, soft mantle of gray, dotted here and there with patches of sparkling white, where the sun's rays penetrated the forest canopy. Trees, logs, and bushes were all decorated with huge festoons, pompons, bosses, wreaths, and arches of snow. The thick, fluffy carpet of the woods was enriched with delicate imprints made by the passing of otter, marten, mink, fisher, hare, ermine, and grouse. It was all an open book to the Indian. What fairy land could be more beautiful?

As Standing Wolf entered a dense thicket of tall, slender, second-growth spruce, scarcely

thicker than a man's wrist and standing so close together that he was compelled to turn his snowshoes on edge in order to pass between them, a cloud passed over the sun and a heavy shadow enveloped the forest and saddened the heart of the hunter. He struggled on, groping among the mass of little trees, until he came to the open woods again, just as the sun was going down. Spying a man's trail before him, he stood for a moment like a graven image. Then he wondered whose the trail could be. What man dared hunt upon his lands? It was not the trail of a passing hunter, but the deep-beaten path of a trapper going his rounds. Last night's storm, indeed, had partly drifted it over; but there it lay like a gutter through the forest, and in it ran the trail of a great wolf. In wrath the hunter searched the trail as he ran along; and, on coming to a succession of baited traps and dead falls,

he became infuriated and determined to kill the poacher. Looking to the priming of his gun, and feeling for his knife, he hurried on. Dusk had fallen upon the land, and the hares had begun to run, but the hunter paid no attention to the leaping and bounding of the fluffy little creatures as they darted about him. In his rage he had forgotten even the great gray wolf. His whole mind was upon the poacher. Darkness crept rapidly through the forest and upon the hunter. Realizing the danger of further pursuit, he prepared to bivouac.

He felled a few dry trees for fuel, and cut a heap of small fir branches. Having scraped the surface snow aside with a snowshoe, he laid the evergreens upon the spot, shingle fashion, and beside his brush couch built a fire to cook his supper. Before he had wrapped his blanket about him for the night, the tree-tops began to whisper and then to



roar, as the wind swelled into a gale. All night the storm raged, until the hunter lay half buried beneath a drift. But next morning, nothing daunted, he pursued his way. Shortly after daybreak, sunshine cheered him, intent once more upon the poacher's trail. In many places it was obliterated by the storm. The footprints of the Spirit Wolf had completely disappeared. As he pressed ahead, his wrath was continually fanned aflame by the sight of signs of the stranger's traps and dead-falls. But his caution kept pace with his anger, and he forged ahead with ever increasing care. From time to time he paused to study the wind and the lay of the land, just as if he were tracking some wary beast.

Presently, as he looked ahead, his quick eye caught a slight movement on one side of the trail. As he peered among the twigs and branches, he discovered the head of a

great wolf protruding from a snow bank upon the shore of Spirit Lake. His first thought was to shoot the animal; but, while carefully creeping up to get a better aim, he remembered the poacher and lowered his gun. To fire for the sake of killing a wolf would be folly. After steadily watching the beast for some minutes, he came to the conclusion that it was held prisoner by a trap. As he went forward, the wolf spied him and at once became a demon of fury. With eyes gleaming wildly, it snapped and snarled and lashed about in the vain attempt to be free. The wolf had evidently been caught the day before, and last night's storm had drifted and packed the snow about it. Putting down his gun and throwing aside his blanket, Standing Wolf drew his axe and stepped within striking distance. As he swayed backward and forward upon his springy legs, with his axe raised in read-

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iness, and measuring the distance with his eye, he began to talk to the wolf as it glared at him from the hole in the white wall of its prison:—

“Good day, my brother, so you are the great Spirit Wolf of Spirit Lake who has come to dispute with me these hunting-grounds. Well, my brother, I do not think you to be so great a hunter as they say, otherwise you would now be free to fight me. Turn your eyes away, my brother, for I am going to kill you.”

A few blows from the back of the axe despatched the wolf. Covering its head with snow to conceal it from the notice of prowling beasts that might injure the skin, Standing Wolf again took up the trail of the poacher.

After an hour's walk, the hunter came upon a by-path marked with the print of snowshoes that had passed that very morning.

He examined the fresh signs and followed them. Every little while he paused to peer about and listen. At times he sniffed the air, as a beast would, for the scent of man. With his gun half raised and always on the cock, he put his feet down as noiselessly as a lynx. Again he halted. What was that? He sniffed again, half convinced that he smelled smoke. Another long, anxious spell followed as he crept forward with greater care than ever. Again he stood peering among the trees in front of him. At last he made out a thin column of smoke rising above a dense clump of trees. He left the trail, made a circuit, and obtained a glimpse of the camp he was seeking from the dense undergrowth alongside an old by-path. Setting his bundle down, he crept a little farther ahead. Now he could command a view of the dozing figure of a man seated beneath a brush wind-break. Again he moved for-





"Raising his gun, he took a steady aim."



ward. Raising his gun, he took a steady aim. But curiosity took sudden possession of him. Still covering the man with his gun, he stepped boldly forward until he had gained the little opening. The sleeper awoke with a start, and faced the muzzle of the gun. Standing Wolf recognized him as Wab-ud-ow, The Conjurer.

"Not a move, dog, or I will shoot you," began the vengeful hunter. "So, with a tale of a Spirit Wolf, you tried to frighten me away from my hunting-grounds, that you might rob me of my furs. No, dog, I will not shoot you, I will give you a chance for your life, because, they say, you saved my daughter. Draw your knife."

Standing Wolf rammed the butt of his gun into the snow, laid his axe aside, drew his knife, and slipped his snowshoes off. Wab-ud-ow uttered no word, but faced his antagonist.

Fiercely they watched each other as they sprang from side to side, seeking an opening. They slashed and thrust at each other until both were winded. Then the conjurer, seeing a chance, stabbed Standing Wolf in the shoulder. The wound stung him to fury, and slashing with all his might he sank his knife into the right arm of Wab-ud-ow. Another slash, and the knife fell from the almost severed fingers of the conjurer's right hand. At once they grappled. Standing Wolf seized his opponent by the hair, and tried to wrench his knife hand free from the grasp of the other's left, so as to bury his knife in him. In the struggle both fell upon the snow, but Standing Wolf's right hand was free, and his knife was at the conjurer's throat. Breathing heavily, he rose to his feet: "Now I can kill you, thieving dog," he said grimly, "but I remember my daughter Mi-na-ce: I will let you live."

THE TALKING MOOSE



## CHAPTER II

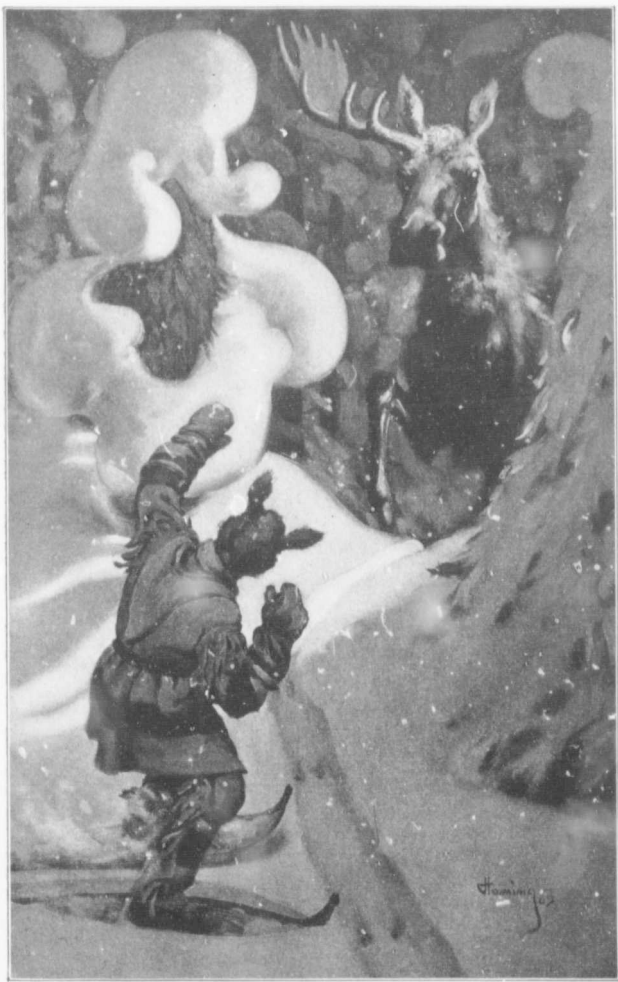
### THE TALKING MOOSE

It occurred just before sunset. At-tick on his weekly round of the trapping path had stopped to make camp for the night. While pausing a moment in his task of chopping down a dry tree for firewood, he was startled by a strange barking or grunting, not unlike the sound of distant chopping. Was it the echo of his own axe strokes? That could not be, for the sound continued. Was it the steady calling of a bull moose? But this was not the mating season. The sound was drawing rapidly nearer. He listened, thrilled with a vague alarm.

But alarm speedily gave place to curiosity, and he strode forward. The scuffling

noise of his snowshoes against the underbrush would surely frighten the unseen vocalist away. It seemed, however, to produce the opposite effect, for the mysterious sound advanced with greater rapidity toward the crest of the ridge up which he was climbing. On gaining the summit, just where it was marked by an otter's trail, his attention was momentarily attracted by a little evergreen tree circled and capped by a curious formation of snow. A loud snort was heard. At-tick looked aside and beheld a bull moose with but a single horn. He gave a yell, and — as the moose wheeled — bounded wildly down the slope without so much as a single backward glance.

In his flight he left behind him his sled, though it contained his trapping kit and the frozen carcasses of several valuable animals taken from his traps. He ran on and on for miles before he dared slacken his



"At-tick looked aside and beheld a bull moose with but a single horn."





speed. Darkness overtook him, but, believing that he was still pursued, he never halted until he had reached home. There they were all gathered, comfortably smoking and chatting round the fire. Surprised though they were, they did not question him about his sudden return until he had eaten his supper.

"My son," began Standing Wolf, "you have returned sooner than we expected. Has any evil befallen you?"

The boy was squatting before the fire with his head bent forward and his eyes straining intently at the flames. For some minutes he neither moved nor spoke. Again Standing Wolf questioned him. At last he stammered out, —

"I have seen the Talking Moose, and he pursued me."

An awed silence fell upon the party. For a while nothing but the crackling of the fire

and the whining of the dogs was heard, but soon the children began to whimper, for they, too, understood the meaning of the omen.

Knocking the ashes from his pipe, Standing Wolf began:—

“My son, it has always been the belief of our people that every bull moose is possessed by the spirit of some great chief and that the bull caribou contains the spirit of a lesser chief, and so on down through all animal life. Therefore, women should never eat of the head of a bull moose; nor should the head of a bull moose be placed on a sled upon which a woman has sat or is going to sit; for, if that is done, bad luck will follow the hunter, and it is the Talking Moose that brings the word.

“My son, your grandfather knew of a hunter who did that very thing, and a bull moose barked and brayed at him whenever he went unarmed. Soon all the beasts of

the forest, and even the birds of the air, learned what the man had done, and with one accord determined on revenge. Whenever he armed himself for the chase, the forest creatures hid themselves from him. Whenever he set his traps and snares, they avoided them. One day they found him travelling without his gun, and they followed him, until at last they killed him.

“My son, the Talking Moose contains the spirit of one of your ancestor’s enemies, and he has come to cast some evil spell upon you. There is but one thing, therefore, for you to do, and that is to kill the Talking Moose. Only a brave man can grapple with misfortune successfully. Be not cast down, then, lest you sap your courage and your strength. You will need both. Know this also that, should you fail to kill the Talking Moose, good luck will never again follow your trail. I would gladly undertake the

task myself, but, even though I succeeded, it would avail you nothing. You yourself must kill the Moose, or the evil will not be turned from your path. If you fail, come to me for advice."

Next day At-tick set out at dawn, full of courage and determined to overcome his enemy.

It was a beautiful morning. The sun rose as he hurried along. His heart was light, though his face was tingling with the cold. When the long, slanting rays peered in among the trees and began to dance upon the soft white carpet, the hoar-frost that had formed upon his eyebrows and eyelashes and upon his cap and coat melted away, though his breath still rose in vapor as he moved. He had not travelled far before he found to his consternation that trap after trap had been sprung and robbed of its bait. In some instances the tightly closed steel jaws held

tiny tufts of the fur of the marten or the mink or the fisher. Twenty yards away he found the frozen bodies of the once captive animals, and the fur torn from their ruined skins covering the snow. Here a deadfall had been sprung, there a snare had been set off, but never a thing did he find worth carrying away. All along his trapping path he read the tell-tale trail of that little demon and trouble-maker, the wolverine.

On coming to his sled he found that the wrapper had been torn open, and that the furs of the frozen foxes he had removed from his traps the day before were utterly ruined. Though sunshine played among the trees and drove away the forest gloom, the woods held but little cheer for him now. Gathering his scattered possessions together, he repacked his sled, and trudged onward.

Two evil beings had now crossed his path — which should he first destroy?

When he came to the tracks of the Talking Moose, he knelt down and examined them carefully. He observed that the print of the off forefoot left a small ridge upon the snow. The discovery pleased him. Now he could identify the Talking Moose, not only by its single horn — for it was the antler-shedding season — but also by its trail wherever met with. Pressing forward, he trailed the Moose with precaution. Hour after hour he followed it. By two o'clock the air had become charged with rime, which in an hour changed to fine snowflakes that continued falling the rest of the day.

At dusk he halted beside the trail. While he was preparing his camp, night came on. Soon his fire grew into a glorious blaze that sent its golden sparks and rays dancing in and out among the bushes, and up and over the tall, motionless trees that stood heavily wrapped in trailing mantles of gray. Though

wolves howled near, he slept soundly, wrapped in the light folds of his hare-skin robe, and woke next morning to find himself covered with a heavy blanket of snow.

When day broke, the wind rose and drifted the snow, disheartening him. He decided to postpone the pursuit until the storm had abated. Home he trudged on a heavy trail. There he found that Standing Wolf and The Marten had gone off on a hunt and would not return that night. In the evening the wind died down. About midnight Ko-ko-hay was roused from sleep by the dogs making a great uproar. She looked out and caught a glimpse of an animal upon the stage — a platform supported by poles at a height of seven or eight feet from the ground, used as a larder and storehouse to preserve food from prowling beasts. She shook At-tick out of his heavy slumber and bade him get his gun as quick as the Master of Life

would let him. Leaping out of his blanket he caught up his gun and rushed outside in time to see a wolverine sliding down from the stage. Owing to the uncertain light and to the confusion produced by the suddenness of his awaking, his aim was bad. He killed two of the dogs, indeed, but the wolverine escaped unharmed. This was a disastrous night for the family. Two of their best sled dogs lay dead. Their scanty stock of provisions was strewn on the snow. Most of it was ruined — befouled by the wolverine.

But while gathering the scattered treasures, At-tick's spirits began to rise. Though the meat was spoiled for their own use, it was still worth preserving. Why should they not keep it until the "fur-runner" came from the Fort, and barter it to him for the use of the Trader and his family? The idea of the white man's household unsuspectingly din-



ing off the fouled meat was the source of such merriment that the loss of the dogs was soon forgotten.

Next day At-tick set out to hunt the wolverine; for — now that the brute had found his trapping-path — he must kill it, or it would destroy his whole catch of fur. He trailed it all the morning — so fresh were the signs — but never once caught sight of it. In the afternoon the wind sprang up and drifted the snow in swirling heaps, burying the trail. Vainly he searched for it until darkness overtook him. Then he camped for the night. Slipping off his snowshoes, instead of hanging them up out of harm's way as usual, he thoughtlessly stood them up in the snow. Then he chopped a supply of firewood, cooked his supper, and turned into his blanket early. As the night was still and clear, he did not trouble himself to build a brush shelter.

He rose before daylight, filled with new energy and animated by the hope of soon overhauling the mischief-making beast.

After a hurried breakfast he began packing up in preparation for the trail. To his astonishment, he could find only one snowshoe. The coming of daylight turned his bewilderment into exasperation, for he discovered that the wolverine had paid him a visit during the night and had dragged his shoe away. At first he did not realize his plight. He felt confident that he would soon come upon the missing shoe. Ramming the muzzle of his gun through the toe of the remaining shoe, he swung it over his shoulder, and plunged through the deep, soft snow in eager search. The trail was easy enough to follow until the wind arose. Then he lost it here and there beneath the drifts. Every step he took, he sank above the knee. Instead of finding the shoe near camp, he trailed

it for hours without success. No sooner would he find the trail than he would lose it again, and spend perhaps half an hour in picking it up. Growing tired of the heavy going, he thought it might be easier if he used the single shoe remaining; so he slipped it on. With it he could travel a little faster, it is true, but the exertion of raising and then lowering his body a couple of feet between each step was most exhausting, so he took it off and slung it over his shoulder again. At last he lost the trail altogether. Weariness had seized him long before noon. As he still struggled on, every branch seemed to reach out and clutch at his capote or at the snowshoe at his back. Again and again he had to stop to rest, or to infuse tea to quench the thirst that seemed unquenchable. Many a time he thought of turning back, but the hope of soon finding the lost shoe held him to his task. Round and round he staggered,

silent in the frozen silence; tired, thirsty, persistent.

Evening was almost come when, with a keen thrill of delight, he espied the toe of the stolen shoe protruding above the drifted snow. He floundered forward and grasped at it as eagerly as though he feared it might make its escape. Then his heart sank within him. The shoe was damaged beyond repair. Falling down on the snow, he sat staring stupidly at the wreck before him. It was dark when he rose and made a fire and cooked and ate his last morsel of food.

Noticing the tracks of hares about, he set a few snares in the hope of catching one for breakfast. Before turning in, he hung what remained of his snowshoes high in a tree, and stood his gun in the snow out of reach of the heat of the fire, lest the frost upon the metal should melt and rust it. Winding his blanket about him, he lay down upon the

balsam mattress to let sleep charm away for a few hours the remembrance of his misfortunes.

When he awoke next morning, he felt stiff and sore from yesterday's hard tramp; and, on sitting up, he found that snow was falling. After starting the fire, he went to look at his snares. Near where one had been placed he saw a tuft of rabbit hair, and rejoiced in the anticipation of a good meal. But a moment later his delight changed to dejection. The snare was not only broken, but the hare had been dragged away, and wolverine tracks told the tale. The robber's track, he found, circled his camp several times and then led to an impression in the snow where something had been pulled over and dragged away. While he stood looking at the hole, it flashed upon him that that was where he had left his gun standing over night. By this time he was so downhearted that he simply followed the trail of the gun

for some fifty yards; then, remembering his experience of yesterday, he gave up and returned to the fire. His only salvation lay in making a new snowshoe; so he set to work. Taking a long willow wand, he bent it into a circle and fastened the overlapping ends together. Then, squeezing it into an oval shape, he adjusted a single bar, and finally restrung the deerskin lacing from the broken shoe into the new one. It was fashioned after the "bear paw" shoe, the easiest to make in an emergency. In a couple of hours the work was done. Then with his blanket and his tea-pail slung upon his back, he set out to find his gun.

He was prepared for a long trail, but he had gone scarcely a hundred yards when he stumbled upon the object of his search. At the first glance he saw that its coat had been removed. But there was worse to come. On picking up the gun, he found to his dismay

that it was not only badly gnawed, but that the trigger guard had been wrenched aside, and the trigger broken. He stood staring at the useless weapon with rage in his heart at the thought of how the wolverine had mastered him. His traps had been robbed, and his gun was broken. There was nothing to do but return home. Feeling thirsty as well as hungry, he returned to the fire and melted some snow to drink. Then he drew from his belt his fire-bag, took out pipe and tobacco and laid the fire-bag carefully upon a log while he settled himself for a smoke.

As he pondered over his mishaps, it occurred to him that by cutting straight through the forest, regardless of the winding trail he had followed, he might be able to reach home before dusk. Rising, he tightened his sash, slipped his axe into its place, swung his pack upon his back, and taking up his useless gun, set out for home.

At first, the difference in the shape and weight of his snowshoes gave him considerable trouble, but presently he became accustomed to the difference. Though hungry and thirsty, he kept on his way until about one o'clock. Then he halted to make a fire and melt some snow. After chopping some wood, he tore a piece of birch bark from a tree close by, knelt down, and reached for his fire-bag. It was gone. When and where had he left it? He stood wondering whether to go back and look for it, or to go on without it. He was not sure of the distance he had yet to travel. He might have to spend the night in the woods. He must go back and find it. Wearily he trudged back with his eyes upon the trail. Mile after mile he footed on, but never a sign of his fire-bag. Despair stalked beside him. Fatigue weighed upon him. Hunger gnawed at him, and thirst gripped his throat. He



was breaking down, but still he pressed forward. He dared not slake his thirst with snow; for he well knew what would follow.

Suddenly he remembered having left his fire-bag upon the log beside the fire. The remembrance gave him strength. He hurried on. The trail was growing heavier with drifted snow, but he staggered forward. At last he saw the dismal, charred sticks of his dead camp-fire half blanketed with snow. Expecting to find the fire-bag, he eagerly brushed the snow aside; but the bag was gone. Looking around, he espied in the shelter of the log fresh tracks of an animal, and then he understood. That trouble-maker, the wolverine, had stolen his fire-bag. Utterly disheartened, he sank upon the log, crying like any child.

In misery he sat, his mind full of the cause of all his misfortunes — the Talking Moose. The mere recollection of the awful thing

made him rise and look about. He wondered, too, what Mi-na-ce would think of him as a hunter.

Dusk was coming on; night would soon descend. He set six or eight snares, and then turned to making a wind-break to protect him from the storm. When all was in readiness for the night, he set out for a small lake a few hundred yards away. There he chopped a hole through the ice and quenched his thirst. On returning to camp, he carefully stowed all his belongings beneath the shelter, wrapped himself in his blanket, and fell asleep.

Several times during the night he awoke with the impression that something was prowling about, and in the morning he found fresh signs of the wolverine. On examining the snares, he found them empty. Quenching his thirst once more at the lake, he set out for home. All day long he tramped,

tramped, tramped across bleak barrens and rough muskegs. About sundown he reached home.

When he had eaten his supper, Standing Wolf questioned him, and on hearing his sad tale gently chided him for his carelessness and his lack of woodcraft.

"My son," he said, "now that you have failed to kill the Talking Moose, I will tell you how to succeed. First, the spirit of the Moose must be appeased, then you shall learn how a moose should be hunted. To satisfy the spirit that possesses the Talking Moose, some friend of yours who is not under the ban must secure the entire skin of a female fawn. The skin must be stuffed, and set up on some high point in such wise that the figure may resemble a young moose looking toward the spirit trail. Then a maid who has not yet entered womanhood must stand off at the regular hunting distance

and shoot five successive arrows into the image. The shooting must take place upon a moonlight night. Should one shot fail, it means that the spirit has rejected the girl. Another must be found, but she must not shoot during the same moon. If she is successful, then the hunter may go again upon the trail with the assurance that all is well, and that he may now kill the Talking Moose. This is the belief of all our people."

Next morning Standing Wolf set out upon the hunt, and returned the second day with the complete skin of a moose fawn. The women stuffed the skin and mounted it upon a point overlooking the lake. Standing Wolf, in the meantime, accompanied At-tick on the round of his trapping trail to help him to reset his traps and deadfalls. That night Standing Wolf, while fixing a trap, caught a glimpse of a fox as it passed the outer



"Standing Wolf, while fixing a trap, caught a glimpse of a fox as it passed the outer glare of the firelight."



glare of the firelight. This he hailed as a good omen. As the boy's woodcraft had been unequal to the task of capturing and killing the wolverine, Standing Wolf showed him how to make pellets of pounded glass mixed with grease. These the old hunter dropped here and there in likely places. When At-tick's traps were all in order, Standing Wolf returned to camp.

Next night, when all was in readiness, and the moon was at the proper height, old Noo-koom arose, and taking The Snowbird with her bow and arrows, set out to find the fawn that was looking toward the spirit trail. Half-way up the hill, Noo-koom dropped behind, while the child continued to follow an imaginary trail. Catching sight of the image of the moose-calf, she crept cautiously within easy range, raised her bow and sent five successive arrows through the skin. Then she returned.

At the first streak of daybreak, Standing Wolf addressed The Marten:—

“My son, as the spirit is now appeased, I am going to take At-tick and show him how to hunt the Talking Moose. While we are on the trail, I want you to go the rounds of his trapping paths; and, as it is dangerous now to take the dogs, Noo-koom will accompany you with my hunting sled. Camp to-night at the southern end of Lynx Lake, so that I may get our sled, should our hunt turn out well.”

Then Standing Wolf with At-tick set out to hunt the Talking Moose. He had seen the animal's trail in the Moose Hills the day before. Straight to the spot he headed, and in less than two hours was tracking the deer. While halting beside the trail for a second breakfast, Standing Wolf took great care not to make any noise; he even denied himself the luxury of a smoke, so



that there should be as little man-smell as possible.

Pressing on again for two or three miles, they came upon the place where the moose had slept the night before. They knew now that their quarry might be within a distance of anywhere from a hundred yards to a mile. Henceforth they must proceed with greater caution; for the object of their quest might be either feeding or resting. In order to advance as easily and as quietly as possible, both left their packs beside the trail.

The very fact that the moose is so wary, and takes such precautions against attack, renders it possible for a clever hunter with a knowledge of its ways to make a kill with comparative ease. Before lying down to sleep or to rest after feeding, the moose invariably circles to leeward of the trail, and lies down at a little distance from it,

in order — without being observed — to avoid the pursuer when he passes a certain point. At the same time the moose lies down, facing to leeward. Consequently, it is guarded on the windward side by scent, on the leeward side by sight, and on all quarter by its acute sense of hearing.

Leaving the moose's trail, which was running southward, the hunters made a semicircular *détour* on the eastern side — for the wind was coming from the southwest. When they next cut the trail, they found it still pointing in a southerly direction. So they circled to leeward once more, and this time found the tracks heading northward. Knowing from the signs that their quarry was about to lie down after feeding, they circled again. This time they made a smaller *détour* northward, and eventually cut their own tracks beside the moose trail, when it was heading north. Now they knew

that the moose was within the compass of their last *détour*. Standing Wolf faced the south, and, warning At-tick by a sign to greater caution, slowly led the way.

The hunters knew that they were within less than fifty yards of their prey, and that their only chance of success lay in their being able to avoid being scented, seen, or heard. Stooping low as they slowly placed their feet, they moved forward without making the slightest sound, while their eyes keenly searched the silent forest.

Patiently they crept forward from screen to screen, sometimes spending five minutes in gaining ten yards. Presently Standing Wolf became rigid. After a little wait, he motioned with one hand behind him for At-tick to come on. The boy crouched abreast of the hunter, and saw through a matted tangle of underbrush the single antler of a moose. Standing Wolf's wood-

craft had triumphed. They had come within distance of the deer exactly half-way between the direction toward which it was looking and the direction from which the wind was coming. As its shoulder was hidden, their position was an awkward one from which to shoot. Standing Wolf, therefore, motioned the boy to gain a better vantage.

As he crept forward, Standing Wolf critically watched his every move. After a long, anxious interval, At-tick gained a little bunch of snow-capped evergreens that formed an excellent screen. Shoving the muzzle of his gun through the brush, he took careful aim and fired. The moose flinched violently, and bounded away out of sight among the trees. The men rushed forward; but when Standing Wolf saw the dark color of the blood upon the snow, he halted and bade At-tick follow up the game, while he





"He . . . fired just as the moose reared to strike him."

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made his way to the trapping path for his sled. So they parted.

Reloading his gun, At-tick continued in pursuit. Before he had gone a quarter of a mile, he found the moose lying down beside an open spring at the edge of a small lake. Believing it to be dying, he approached carelessly, and took off his snowshoes to be ready for the skinning. But the moose was not nearly so dead as it looked. With a savage squeal it leaped up and made for him. The startled boy took aim and pulled the trigger, but the gun missed fire. So he turned to flee. Being without his shoes, he floundered deeply, and fell headlong in the snow. Turning quickly, he cocked his gun again and fired just as the moose reared to strike him. The ball entered its heart. It fell heavily, and in falling its horn struck the boy on the head as he was rolling aside, and crushed him into the snow.

When the sun had withdrawn the shadow that the trees threw over the two motionless figures, and when the wind had begun to bury them with drifting snow, a wolf came out of the woods, made three spiral circles round them, and hesitated a moment as though in fear of some one's approach. Then, lowering head and tail, it trotted off.

Presently Standing Wolf and Noo-koom came upon the scene. The old woman caught sight of the boy's foot protruding above the snow, and gave a piercing scream. She rushed forward and began frantically digging away the snow, while Standing Wolf dragged and tugged at the moose's heavy head. When Noo-koom felt the boy's cold face, she sank back despairingly, and, while Standing Wolf was raising the body up and placing it on his sled, began to wail the death chant.

Standing Wolf cut off the head of the







"Where the charred and limbless trunks of a once dense forest stood like a multitude of black-enshrouded mourners."

"Where the charred and limbless trunks of a once dense forest stood like a multitude of black-enshrouded mourners."

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moose, and slung it upon his back. Then, bidding Noo-koom rise and haul the sled, he went ahead to beat the path.

Slowly they entered the forest and took their tortuous way in and out among the trees, and over and under the fallen timber. They crossed a lake and came upon a strip of burnt country, where the charred and limbless trunks of a once dense forest stood like a multitude of black-enshrouded mourners, as the pitiful little funeral passed on its way.

At the trapping path they found The Marten, and near him a heap of frozen animals taken from At-tick's trapping trail. Among them Standing Wolf noticed the carcass of the wolverine, and set the head of the Moose down beside it.

He busied himself unlacing the sled on which the body of the unfortunate At-tick lay, while the others dispersed in search of

poles for a scaffold upon which to place the remains. Then he withdrew a little distance and waited, making stern efforts to command his sorrow. Suddenly he heard behind him the sound of a voice. Turning swiftly he beheld At-tick sitting up and rubbing his eyes, and staring dazedly at the Moose's head and the dead wolverine. Then Standing Wolf heard him cry, —

“Oh, Ke-che-mu-e-do, there is the head of the Talking Moose I slew; now you have changed my luck!”

THE SNOW-WETIGO



## CHAPTER III

### THE SNOW-WETIGO

It was late in the afternoon when Mi-na-ce, or The Berries, arrived at the net. As she chopped away the ice, the wind kept drifting the snow into the cutting. For the fifth time she stooped down to scrape the hole clear, and at last the blade went through and the water rapidly began to rise.

She had laid the axe aside and was reaching for her ice-chisel, when she caught sight of a gray, cloudy form coming toward her. At first it seemed to run along the shore — the light hue of its ever changing shape contrasting strongly against the gloomy silhouette of the sighing forest. Then the strange figure rushed away from the bank, and with

a whirling movement advanced rapidly toward her. Mi-na-ce waited breathlessly. Ever nearer raced the shape, gaining speed and bulk with every bound. When within a canoe's length of her, it seemed suddenly to raise its head, and the frightened girl, thinking she saw the hollow eyes of Death, cried out, —

“Holy Mother, save me from the Wetigo !”

A blast of wind and snow struck her in the face, and she closed her eyes, gasping for breath. In a moment it was gone. Turning her head, she saw it scurrying along the lake like a whirlwind of drifting snow. As she gazed after it with awe, the Thing seemed to increase its speed, until at last it disappeared in the forest on the far side of the bay. The child — she was only twelve — still kneeling beside the fishing hole and trembling with apprehension, began to wail : —

“Oh, Holy Mother, some one is going to die !



Some one is going to die! Oh, it must not be any of our people! Oh, Ke-che-mun-e-do (Master of Life), spare them all!"

Burying her face in her hands, she sobbed aloud. When she looked up again, she saw that the sun was sinking fast. Hurriedly she worked away with her chisel. As soon as the pole that held the net was free, she reached down, unfastened the net, and attached a long line with which to reset it. Going to the other end of the net, — marked by an upright stick, — she chopped another hole, cleared away the slush with her slush scoop, and hauled out the net as quickly as her icy fingers could free the gills of the fish from the meshes. It was cold — so cold that the hole at which she was working kept narrowing — and she had scarcely restrung the net in the water below the ice, before a glassy film closed the opening. Happening to glance around, she beheld, to her

dismay, a great three-legged wolf watching her.

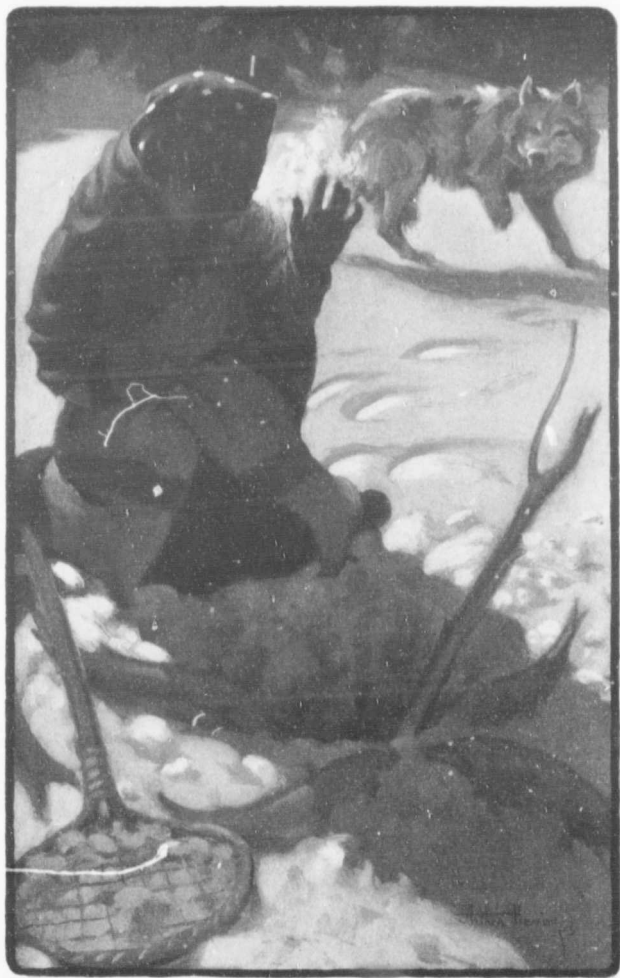
"Oh, my brother," she cried, "how you frightened me!" Then, bethinking herself that she should have concealed her alarm, she went on, —

"You know, I thought it was At-tick."

Hastily she gathered her fish into a bag, threw it upon her back, and, for a moment, stood wondering what she should do. As she hesitated, she saw two other wolves trot out from the woods and join their three-legged companion. Hoping to drive them away, she advanced, swishing her ice-chisel in the air, and addressing them in a gentle voice, —

"Good day, my brave brothers; I do not want to hurt you, but if you block my way, my father, Standing Wolf, the great hunter, will surely kill you."

Instead of retiring, however, as the girl approached, the three-legged wolf advanced



“ ‘Oh, my brother,’ she cried, ‘how you frightened me!’ ”



a few paces toward her, halted, and again moved forward. Mi-na-ce, alarmed, stood still. The three-legged wolf began leaping from side to side and sniffing the half-filled snow-shoe prints. With ears thrown back he glared defiantly, champing his teeth and growling. Then he began "making himself brave" — as the Indians call it — by rubbing his forequarters in the tracks the girl had made, as though to cover himself with the scent of his prey. Mi-na-ce, fearing the worst, turned to make her escape. The three-legged wolf sprang after her. As he came on, she struck desperately at him. Circling, he joined his companions in the distance and again bolted past her. Again and again he repeated the manœuvre, and again and again she struck vainly at the brute as he went flying by. The viciousness of the whole pack seemed centred in the three-legged beast, who apparently aspired to the

post of leader. Years ago he had lost a leg in a trap, but by ever increasing cunning he had hitherto defeated the craft of Standing Wolf. Encouraged by his boldness, the others began to snarl at the girl. Grown desperate, she broke into a run. The three-legged brute bounded after her. Poising her chisel in readiness and watching the wolf's charge from the corner of her eye, she wheeled suddenly, and, as the beast swerved past, hurled the chisel, javelin fashion, with all her strength. The blade pierced his side, and he rolled upon the snow, howling with pain. Mi-na-ce quickened her pace. The two other wolves halted for a moment to watch their companion as he struggled to rise. The girl was making for a rock upon the opposite shore. With her back against that, she might for a time, at least, hold the wolves at bay. Before she had covered half the distance, they were close upon her

heels. Remembering the fish, she snatched one from her bag and tossed it to them. They stopped to fight for it while she sped on. Again and again she threw them a fish to check their pursuit. As she neared the rock, she saw to her surprise a snowshoe track leading into the bush, and recalled that it was upon that very trail that the Snow-Wetigo had entered the forest. Breathlessly she followed the drifted tracks, floundering here and there where tangled undergrowth caught her shoes. Twice she fell. Often she glanced behind. At times she halted and listened. Once she caught sight of a slinking shadow following her, and, dropping another fish, hurried on. Exhaustion was cramping her stride, and despair was clutching at her heart. She sank upon a log and tried to slake her thirst with snow. Again a gray, fluffy mass flitted among the darker shadows of the forest.

Should she stand and fight, or should she run? She struck her axe against a tree, realized her weakness, and resumed her flight. Deeper, deeper, ever deeper she penetrated into the silent gloom. She could no longer see the marks in the snow. She followed the trail only by the feel of her foot. Night, creeping through the forest, seemed to mass the trees into one vast, circular prison wall. Her strength was gone. Slipping off her snowshoes, she climbed slowly into a jack-pine and crouched among its branches. The cold benumbed her, and she began to drowse. Suddenly her senses became alert again. What was that? She listened. Surely it was the sound of breaking branches. What could it mean? Whence came that faint scratching sound? What was that red flare shooting up among the trees ahead? It was fire. With all her might Mi-na-ce sent a shrill call echoing through the bush.



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"Under a brush wind-break she discerned an Indian wrapped in a hareskin robe."

"Quay, quay !" came a hoarse reply, from the region of light.

Down the tree she slid without even a thought of answering, slipped on her shoes, and stumbled forward among the fantastic shadows that danced about the welcome glare. There, under a brush wind-break, she discerned an Indian wrapped in a hare-skin robe, resting upon his elbow as he fed the flames. On realizing the presence of a protector, joy almost overwhelmed the child.

"Quay, quay !" repeated the man, as he shaded his eyes and watched the girl enter the glowing circle.

"Quay !" timidly responded Mi-na-ce.

A long silence ensued. She could not recognize the man, for his hood partly hid his face. Again he fed the fire, and she noticed that his hands were bandaged. A feeling of faintness came over her, and she looked away. The Indian lay back with a groan and demanded :—

"Are you alone?"

She was too frightened to reply, for she thought she knew the voice. Had she stumbled on the camp of her father's worst enemy? Was this the thief whom her father had once sworn to kill, and whose life he had compassionately spared? She trembled.

"Why don't you answer?" grumbled the man.

"Yes, I am alone," she said timidly. "Wolves drove me here." Then, without waiting for his reply, she went on:—

"To-day I saw the Snow-Wetigo, and upon your trail it entered the woods."

"Mine!" cried the man, rising to a sitting posture. As he did so, his hood fell back and the firelight shone on his face. The girl shrank back. Yes, it was he, Wab-ud-ow, the conjurer and the thief. Her first thought was of flight, but, as she turned on her shoes, she remembered the wolves. The man stared

up at the Northern Lights and remained silent. Mi-na-ce squatted upon some brush and looked about her. The camp was destitute — not a sign of anything to eat or even of wood to burn. The story of her father's fight with the conjurer came back to her, and she felt sure that the man's wounds had rendered him helpless. Perhaps he was even starving. Pity dwarfed her fear. She rose and strode off among the shadows. Soon her axe rang steadily against a dry tamarack. When she saw the upper brush trembling against the stars, she drove the blade deep into the notch and pried hard against the tree. Slowly and quietly it stooped at first, with just a little creaking sound, followed quickly by the noise of cracking branches, then by a crashing roar which ended in a mighty boom as the tree fell full length amid a cloud of flying snow. In a few minutes Mi-na-ce had a roaring

fire and wood enough to keep it going until the following day. While she melted snow and cooked fish for him, the man questioned her about the Wetigo of Spirit Lake. She laid the fish and the water within his reach, slipped her feet into her snowshoes, and said:—

“Lend me your gun, and I will bring help to-morrow.”

“Take it,” replied Wab-ud-ow; “I cannot hunt.”

She put on the powder-horn and the bullet pouch, took the gun, and departed. When she reached the lake, she found the Northern Lights flickering so brilliantly that they cast a stronger shadow than the full moon did; and now, dragging two shadows behind her, she hurried away. She had not travelled far before she was met by At-tick. Mi-na-ce's delay had caused anxiety at the camp, and At-tick had volun-

teered to trail her. Instead of hurrying home, however, the two lingered by the way. Mi-na-ce told At-tick about the wolves, about Wab-ud-ow, and about the awful Wetigo. At-tick caught the contagion of her fear and, espying in the moonlight a little whirlwind of drifting snow scurrying across the lake, trembled for a moment lest it should be the dreaded Snow-Wetigo.

The boy and the girl walked abreast at every opportunity, and so close together that they tripped each other at times by the overlapping of their shoes. While two hands of unequal size lay hid in a single mit, the owners could think but little of the time of night or of the roughness of the trail. At last they saw the sparks flying above the lodges; and, as the dogs began to bark, At-tick kissed Mi-na-ce.

Standing Wolf had just returned from the round of his traps, and was changing his

moccasins before the fire when Mi-na-ce came in. Supper was being prepared, and the children were romping over one another in the investigation of the sled load of furred and feathered creatures which their father had brought home. There were three martens, a lynx, a fisher, an otter, several minks, a score of hares, an owl, and some grouse — all frozen into grotesque shapes to the great delight of the children. They stood the lynx on its hind legs against the wall of the lodge, and laughed aloud as they saw it collapse into a sitting posture under the hot breath of the fire. They tossed the rabbits from hand to hand, until one of the lads with an air of importance seized a big knife and chopped off their legs. When tired at last of throwing the legless bodies at one another, they took the other frozen creatures and held them up one by one before the baby's face. The little tot,



laced in her bed of moss, cooed with delight, while the others screamed with laughter.

When Standing Wolf had finished his supper and lit his pipe, Mi-na-ce told of her encounter with the wolves: how they ate her fish, and how they drove her to the camp of Wab-ud-ow. For some time Standing Wolf sat staring into the fire in silence, then he growled:—

“The dog! Why did I let him live? Even now he stays upon my lands when he knows I shall surely kill him.”

“It is not his fault,” pleaded Mi-na-ce; “he is helpless and starving. Anyway, he is going to die; for to-day I saw the Snow-Wetigo of Spirit Lake following his trail.”

A dead silence followed. The mere mention of that awful Thing hushed the laughter of the children.

Next morning and for many mornings after, Standing Wolf sent At-tick with

food to the conjurer; and, in her father's absence on the hunting trail, Mi-na-ce slipped away with the boy. Wab-ud-ow's wounds soon healed and he grew rapidly stronger. With returning strength came his old-time talkativeness, and beside his camp-fire At-tick and Mi-na-ce listened to many a strange tale. Every day Mi-na-ce grew in the conjurer's favor, and every day she and At-tick made love together. Every night At-tick beat his drum and sang his love-songs while he shivered in the wintry forest. Whenever he had made a good hunt, he hung some dainty morsel — a piece of fat, or a gut full of blood — above the doorway of the lodge where Mi-na-ce lived with her grandmother. And he always kept a pile of firewood within easy reach of the old woman. From the way in which the blood and fat and firewood disappeared, he speedily arrived at the conclusion that the old

squaw favored his suit. One night he mustered up courage to call upon his sweetheart.

As there are no cosy corners in a wigwam, it is the Saulteaux custom for a maiden to converse with her suitor under cover of a blanket which screens the young lovers from the gaze of the other occupants of the lodge. But old Noo-koom, or The Knowing One, was well able to judge from the general contour of the blanket just how the courtship was progressing. Early in the evening the blanket always hung in a dignified way, as though draped over two posts set a little apart. Later, however, the posts often lost their balance and swayed about in such a manner as to come dangerously near collision; and, if Noo-koom did not cough or poke the fire, the blanket would sometimes show that one support had given way. One night, when Noo-koom woke up from

a nap, she found that both the supports of the blanket were in immediate danger of collapsing. Seizing the hindquarters of a frozen fox by the ankles, she leaped up and belabored the blanket so severely that it lost no time in recovering its proper form.

One morning At-tick, on his return from his daily visit to Wab-ud-ow, told Standing Wolf that the conjurer was now well and ready to depart; that his heart was glad; that before he left the district he would like to make some return for the help he had received, and that to show his good-will he would for the next two months hunt meat or fur for Standing Wolf.

"At-tick, my son," said Standing Wolf, gravely, "Wab-ud-ow is a good hunter, but he is also a thief and a bad man. But I will give him another chance. We are in need of meat; tell him to go to my Caribou Hills, and show me his good-will. And listen,

my son; in a couple of days I am going on a moose hunt, for we need both the meat and the skins. Then, on our return, if all is well, I will take you and The Marten on a long trip to the Buffalo Hills and show you how to hunt buffaloes."

Two days later Standing Wolf set out with At-tick and The Marten on a moose hunt. When the first moose was killed, Standing Wolf took care that the head and horns should be properly disposed of, so that the spirit of the moose should not be offended by their leaving the head exposed to carnivorous animals. Before returning to the camp, therefore, he chopped the horns free, hoisted them upon his own shoulders, and ordered At-tick and The Marten to haul the head home upon the sled. When a little more than half a day from the lodges, Standing Wolf came upon a cross-fox skin half buried in the snow, and knew that some

one had been robbing his traps. Exasperated, he hurried home, intent upon trailing the thief and either driving him out of the country or killing him. On reaching camp, however, he found, to his alarm, the women and children wailing because Mi-na-ce was missing. During the absence of the two older women, who had gone upon the trapping paths, leaving Mi-na-ce in charge of the children, Wab-ud-ow had made his appearance, packed up the choicest of Standing Wolf's furs, harnessed his best dog team, and carried off Mi-na-ce.

Wab-ud-ow had a little more than a day's start. After a hurried preparation, Standing Wolf and At-tick swung out upon his trail. At-tick, who had won his name The Caribou by his swiftness of foot, led the way as "track beater." The trail had completely vanished from the open places, a snow-storm having passed the night before.

Nevertheless, At-tick followed the invisible trail without slackening his pace. He judged by the feel of his foot the solidity of the snow under his shoe. It is in this way that in northern Canada they follow obliterated winter trails. In this way the sled dogs, too, are able to keep the trail when sight and smell are both useless.

To throw off pursuers, Wab-ud-ow, instead of taking the shortest road to Fort Determination, had turned up Lonely River. For hours the two men sped forward on a never flagging dog trot. Their heavy breathing and the swish, swish, swish of their snowshoes were the only sounds they heard. At times the invisible trail left the frozen waterway, and, running through the woods, cut off long elbows of the river's winding course. In the dense forest, untroubled by the wind, the trail came to sight again and told the trackers news that made them hurry on.

In the snow they read that the dogs had stepped upon the shoes of the weary captive and had tripped her. They read, too, that Wab-ud-ow had made the stolen girl break the trail in order to lessen her chances of escape. From a jumble of shoe prints and from a broken branch near by, they learned that the conjurer had run past the dogs, and had beaten her to make her set a faster pace. The trailers searched in vain for some woodcraft message from her. Evidently she had been watched too closely.

As soon as the hares had had their dusk-light frolic, night came quickly. Away up in the northern sky the spirits of departed hunters began their jocund dancing. All night long the trackers hastened on. From the snow among the trees they read that here Wab-ud-ow had stopped to "spell the dogs one smoke," and there he had made tea and bivouacked for the night. At-tick read these



last signs with jealous rage, for there was only one brush mat upon the snow. On they sped, until the spirits in the sky had ceased their dancing and departed; until dawn crept slowly through the silent forest; until the sun-dogs had vanished, and until the sun looked down upon a dog train, a girl, and a man who had halted to "spell" the dogs beside an open rapid on Lonely River.

Standing Wolf and At-tick immediately left the river and skirted through the woods, taking care that neither Wab-ud-ow nor the dogs should see, scent, or hear them.

When Standing Wolf had gained a suitable spot within easy range, he uncovered his gun, cocked it, and, raising it to the shoulder, whispered: —

"At-tick, my son, leave Wab-ud-ow to me."

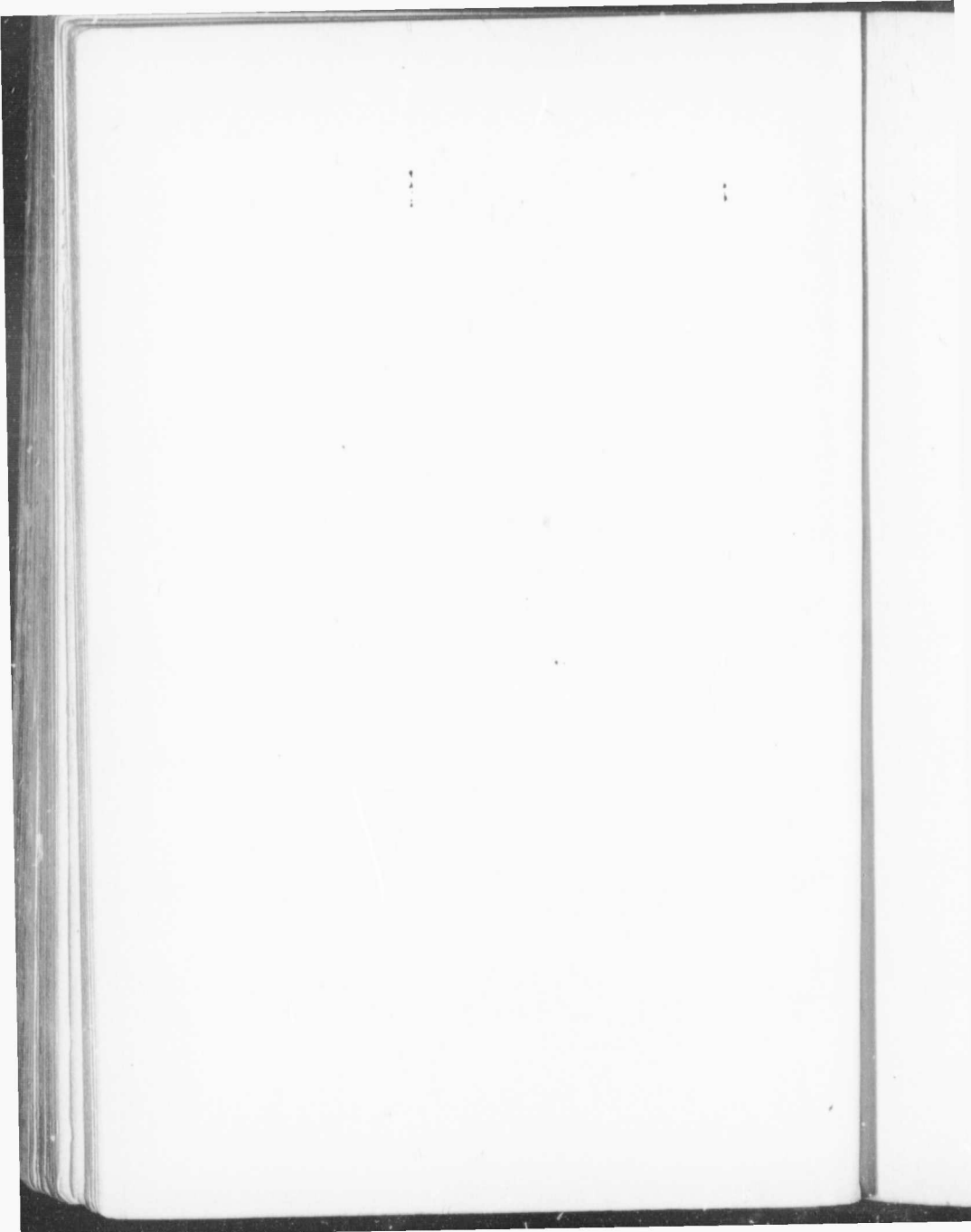
At the very moment when the gun sight was rising against the figure of the conjurer, Mi-na-ce screamed, jumped up from where

she had been resting in the snow, and ran toward the distant bank. Wab-ud-ow sprang after her. At-tick, terrified by what he looked on, exclaimed, "The Wetigo, the Wetigo!"

Standing Wolf lowered his gun. He saw a whirlwind of flying snow race down the river, overtake Wab-ud-ow, enfold him in its dense spirals, and hover a moment above the black waters of the open rapid.

When it had passed, only the whining dogs and the girl remained. Standing Wolf examined the snowshoe tracks of the missing conjurer. He discovered where his course had swerved when struck by the blinding whirlwind. The broken ice at the edge of the yawning rapid marked the ending of Wab-ud-ow's trail. "Mi-na-ce, my daughter," said Standing Wolf, "it is well. The Snow-Wetigo has given the thieving dog to the Spirit of Lonely River."

THE BUFFALO SPIRIT



## CHAPTER IV

### THE BUFFALO SPIRIT

"THERE, my sons, are the Buffalo Hills," said Standing Wolf, addressing At-tick and The Marten.

"In the old days," he continued, "no hunter dared sleep in that region because of the Wetigoes — evil spirits roaming the hillside forest — and in my time many Wetigoes have been seen in these woods. Often have hunters gone forth never to return.

"Oo-koo-hoo, your grandfather, who was killed when I was but a boy, told me that once when he was hunting buffalo in these

very hills, a great storm compelled him to spend the night in the Wetigo woods. When dusk came to warn him of the night's approach, he set to work to build a brush wind-break as a shelter from the blast. While scraping away the snow, he was startled by a whispering voice among the swaying trees, and awe held him listening. Judging the voice to be the voice of a good spirit, he became fearless, and began to talk with it. It was the voice of the great Buffalo Spirit. It told him that if he wished to tarry over night among the hills, he should pitch his camp beside its resting-place, and no harm should befall him.

"At once he began to search the woods, lest darkness should overtake him before he had found the abiding-place of the Buffalo Spirit. Just as night was creeping up the hillside, he found a great rock shaped like a sleeping buffalo. Beside it he gladly made

his camp. The roar of the storm kept him from turning in; and, while he sat beside the fire drowsily smoking his pipe, the Buffalo Spirit told him many things.

"It told him that it was there to watch over the last of the buffalo, and to turn aside the white men who were ever bringing evil among our people, and who had ruthlessly destroyed the buffalo of the prairies. It told him, too, that as our people had always shared the country with the buffalo, we could still hunt them, provided that due respect were paid to the slain.

"On that trip my father had great success; no evil thing crossed his trail.

"It is true, my sons, that this little band, and a larger band beyond the Athabasca and the River of Peace, are the last of all the buffalo. The Great White Father, to redeem the folly of the Long Knives (Americans), has set his Redcoats (Mounted Police)

to guard the few that remain. For white men it is a good law; let them keep it. For us it is different. To us the buffalo belong. We will hunt them as our fathers did; and if the Redcoats follow our trail, we shall show them that when white men travel in the Strong Wood Country, they are but as children.

"Now, my sons, it is growing late. We must push on, if we are to sleep to-night among the Buffalo Hills."

Down the slope they went. Standing Wolf, as trail beater, led the way; The Marten, immediately preceding the dogs, followed his father at a little distance; At-tick, holding back upon the trail line, brought up the rear. At the steepest part of the descent, At-tick found it difficult to control the sled. A curly root caught the toe of one of his shoes. The trail line gave a sudden jerk. He lost his balance and



tumbled down the bank headlong. The sled, freed, plunged upon the dogs. They rushed frantically down and overran The Marten's shoes. In a moment, four dogs and one boy — in a struggling heap, crowned with an upturned sled and almost buried in the snow — lay at the bottom of the slope.

At-tick went to the rescue, pulled The Marten out, and then both set to to give the dogs a beating.

When the harness had been disentangled and the sled repacked, when the cracking of whips and the yelping of dogs had ceased to echo round the lake, the party moved on once more in single file. Two hours later the sun went down. Before its glow had faded from the sky, the dusk crept silently through the forest, and found the Indians halted beside the resting-place of the Buffalo Spirit. Upon one huge boulder rested another, almost as huge, that looked like a

buffalo lying down. Facing this, Standing Wolf reverently addressed it, and placed upon it tobacco from his fire-bag, as an offering to the Buffalo Spirit. This done, all turned to making their camp. Standing Wolf went off in search of dry trees for firewood. The Marten busied himself shovelling away the snow with a snowshoe. At-tick cut down a number of green spruce trees, stripped off the branches to build an open shelter with, and spread upon the cleared ground a heavy, springy carpet of the smallest twigs for beds. When enough dry wood had been brought in, and the shelter was finished, the dogs were unharnessed, and soon there was a roaring fire made of logs about ten feet long, laid in parallel lines so that, without being in one another's way, each might have room enough to eat his supper, dry his moccasins, and smoke his pipe before the flames. Four whitefish, that had been thaw-

ing before the fire while the men cooked and ate their supper, were fed to the dogs.

Though it was growing late, the boys were in no mood for turning in. The thought of spending the night among these haunted hills drove sleep away. So they coaxed Standing Wolf to tell them a story.

"Wab-ud-ow, the conjurer, once spoke of the great fight you had with War-sa-kachark, The Mischief Maker," ventured At-tick, "but I have never heard the story. Will you tell it to us to-night?"

"My sons," began Standing Wolf, "that is a story of the long-ago. It began with the death of your grandfather, Oo-koo-hoo, The Owl. One day when I was hunting with my father, I happened to become separated from him for a little while. Presently I heard the report of his gun. As I wanted to ascend a hill first, I did not make an immediate effort to join him. But when I

did find him, I gave a cry of horror as I beheld three forms lying on the ground. There were stretched the carcasses of a moose and a bear; and between them lay the body of my father. He lived only long enough to tell me the tale of his disastrous encounter.

"He had shot the moose and was in the act of skinning it, when he heard behind him a snort. Turning, he saw not ten paces away a grizzly bear making for him. When he shot the moose, he had foolishly neglected to reload his gun. More foolishly still, he had left his gun standing against a tree; and between him and the tree was the bear. Undismayed, he clenched his knife and stood his ground. As the monster rose above him, he lunged with all his might, striving to bury his knife in its heart. The blow was stricken aside, and a terrible struggle ensued, terminating in the sad spectacle before me.

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“ ‘I beheld three forms lying on the ground.’ ”



"After listening to my father's last words, I called upon the Master of Life to witness my vow that I would trail every grizzly I should ever after find; to avenge my father's death, I would kill or be killed. From that hour I felt no fear of death; for whenever I struck a grizzly trail, I always heard the spirit of my father encouraging me.

"At that time we lived in the mountains beyond the River of Peace, and it was as an avenger that for many years I unrelentingly pursued the grizzly bears among the hills where my father met his death. While fulfilling my vow, I supported my mother by selling the skins of the grizzlies I killed. When I was only fifteen, I traded at Hudson's Hope in one year no less than five small and twelve large grizzly skins. To the trader who asked me how I got so many, I replied: 'Mother helped me. Some we caught in traps, others in snares; but most

we killed either with father's gun or with his "dag."

"It was upon the dag that I depended most. Unlike the gun — an old, single-barrelled, flint-lock affair — my dag never missed fire. A dag, you know, is a steel spear-head, with a blade half again as long and quite as broad as your hand, fastened to a stout staff about the length of a man. To-day the dag has been set aside only by grizzly bear hunters possessing rifles. Yet, even at the present time, there is no weapon more useful than the old muzzle-loading, percussion-capped trade gun. Not only is it more generally carried throughout the Strong Woods Country, but more game is brought down by it than by all other arms together. When a hunter has to make a long journey on foot and must depend for food upon what he shoots, there is no more useful weapon than the muzzle-loader, owing both



to the light weight of its ammunition and to the variety of the charges that may be used.

"As time went on, I learned much of the ways of bears, not only from my mother and from the many skilful hunters I came in contact with, but also from my own experience. When hunters trail grizzly bears, they generally go in twos and threes, but I never had any one except my mother for my hunting partner, and often I went alone. I knew that when a grizzly turned to attack, it would always rise before striking. That gave me an opportunity to use my dag. The moment the bear rose upon its haunches, I would drop upon one knee, plant the butt of the dag on the ground under my left foot and slant the point obliquely toward the heart of the animal. Then I would throw myself back as far as possible without letting go the dag. Taking the dag to be a

harmless stick, the bear would drop upon it, and by its own weight would drive the blade deep into its body. I would then leap aside and either hamstring it or stand ready to shoot it.

"For years I steadfastly adhered to my vow of revenge. To assist me in my work of extermination, I procured a double-barrelled, muzzle-loading percussion gun. Grizzly after grizzly I slew, until three, and only three, remained.

"I had then reached manhood. Though I had employed to the utmost all my skill and endurance, I had failed over and over again to kill the last three bears. Of the three, the one I had stalked most frequently was a gigantic male. It had years of cunning to its score. Often had I seen it; several times I had wounded it, — but it had always made its escape at the last. Sometimes I would lose sight of it for months at

a time, and then, suddenly, I would come unexpectedly upon it. There was no mistaking its tracks for those of any other bear, because it had lost a toe, in the jaws of a trap, from its off hind foot. Moreover, I could easily recognize it when I saw it, for it had lost an ear. Off and on for years I had hunted War-sa-ka-chark, The Mischief Maker, as I called it. Time and again I had moved my camp, hoping more easily to trail and kill the giant grizzly. It had evaded me so often, and for periods so long, that — had it not been for an occasional sign — I would have believed that it had either died or left the country. But no matter how long it might take, I was fully resolved to fulfil my vow. I would either kill that bear or be killed by it. The two other bears were females, mates of The Mischief Maker.

“On a certain sunny afternoon in early winter, when I was riding through the tall

grass in that beautiful country, the Iroquois valley, I discerned in the middle distance the three grizzly bears eating berries on a hillside. Dismounting and dropping my muzzle-loader into the hollow of my left arm, I went cautiously forward, zigzagging from one boulder or bush or tree to another, all the while keeping well to leeward. Presently, coming to the last screen, I watched the animals through the rustling branches and decided to creep through the long, waving, dry grass to make good my approach. I covered two-thirds of the distance so stealthily that the bears neither saw nor heard me. But as I arose to cross a little brook, the nearest bear noticed me, and sat bolt upright. Instantly I stood motionless. A moment later, assuming that I was only the stump of a storm-shattered tree, the bear went on contentedly eating among the berry bushes.

"I had been watching the bears so intently while creeping through the grass, that I failed to notice that I had dropped my powder-horn. Knowing that it was against the bears' keen sense of scent and hearing that I must guard, rather than against their power of seeing, I again moved rapidly forward. Presently, perceiving that the bear nearest to me was about to sit up again, I halted and stood perfectly still. It dropped on all fours, and began to move away. Realizing the restlessness of my quarry, I ran quickly forward. When the first bear sat up again to obtain a better view, the two others did likewise. I dropped upon one knee and, while taking aim, said in a quiet tone: 'Good day, brothers; my father was killed by one of your family. I am come to avenge his death.'

"Then I fired at the nearest bear. I took aim again, and gave the second bear the

ball from the other barrel. I thus killed one and slightly wounded the other. Before the smoke was free of my gun, the two living bears charged me. To reload, I reached for my powder-horn. Then, for the first time, I discovered my loss. My horse being half a mile away, I realized that I was dependent solely upon my buffalo-knife. My first thought was to separate the bears. Swiftly I ran to gain the brink of a coulée; but the bears, being at almost an equal distance from it, rushed to cut me off. As I ran, I remembered a precipitous clay slope where the overhanging edge of the bank had slid away, and where in one long, almost perpendicular descent the side of the coulée joined the brink of the valley to its very bottom. To reach the coulée first, I turned and tried to enrage the now halting bears by pelting them with sticks and stones, and by jeering at them and taunting them;

for the bears held back while I stood at bay.

“‘Ah, my brothers,’ I cried, ‘you may be very smart, but I am smarter, for I have killed one of you and have wounded you of the limping gait. No, you are not brave enough to fight me singly, so you must try to rush me, two at once. Perhaps I ought to let you kill me, for then you could grow brave by eating my heart! Why do you stand there, timid brothers, and let me keep you off with nothing but little stones?’

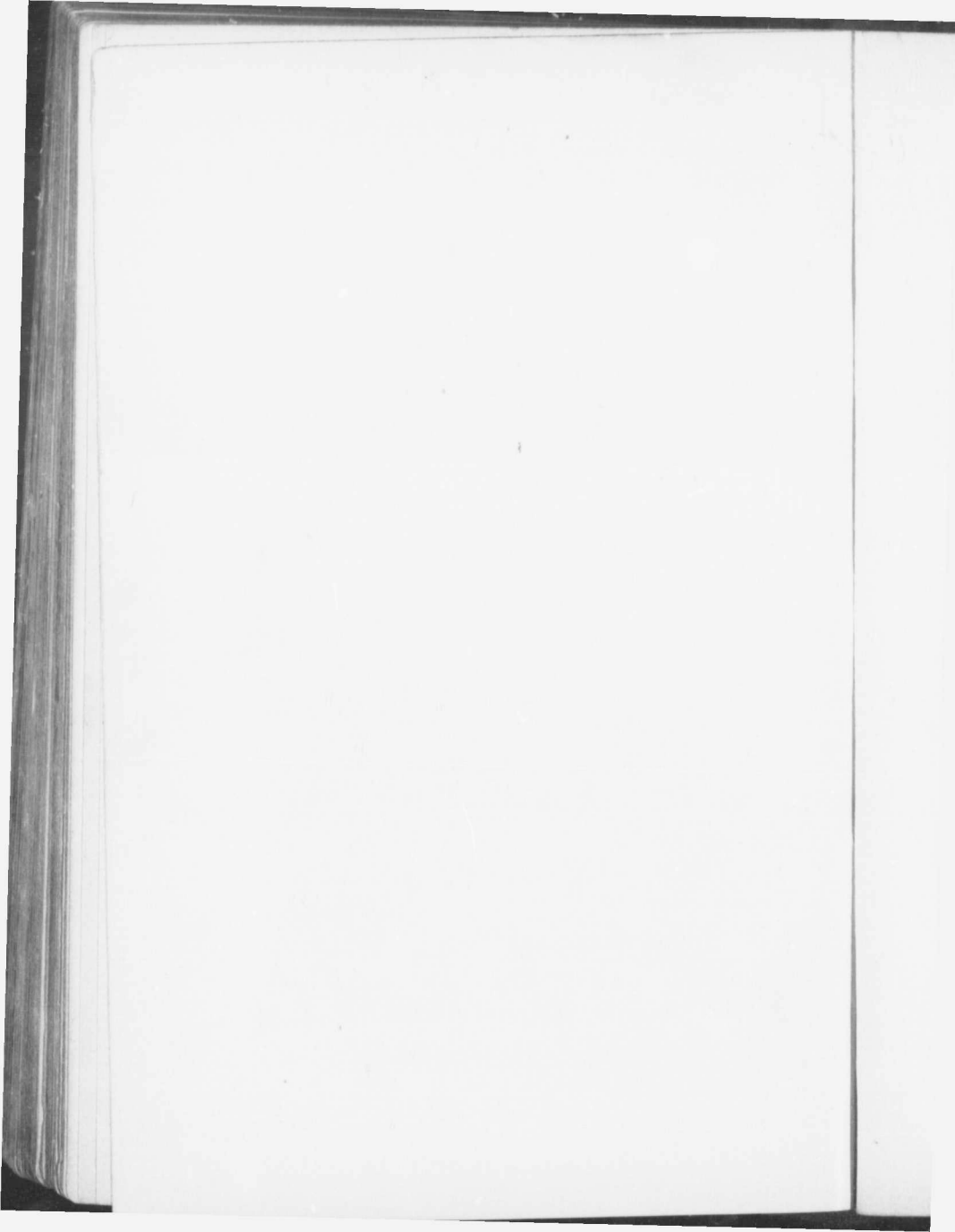
“Talking in this way, I hurled a stone at the head of the wounded female. With a snort of rage, the brute came for me. I waited till the last moment and then leaped over the edge of the precipice. Turning in the air, with my hands tightly gripping my knife, I landed on the steep incline and struck the blade deeply into the giving clay. Down, down I went, twenty

man-lengths or more, before the blade found resistance enough to check my fall. The bear, in blind rage, sprang after me and came slipping down the slope just clear of me. With all its might it clutched at the slippery bank; but to no purpose, for every hold gave way. About half-way down, where the bank became more nearly perpendicular, it altogether lost its grip and whirled head-over-heels. Bounding like a ball, it shot out into space, and dropped among the tangled willows that grew on the coulée bottom. I glanced down to see how the foolish beast was faring. I saw it away down below slowly raise its head and peep up at me. Looking above, I discovered the other bear, The Mischief Maker, peering over the treacherous brink.

“With an active bear above and a wounded one below, my better chance was gradually to slide down to the bottom. My greatest







danger lay in the too hasty realization of my only desire. To rest my aching arms, I tried, one foot at a time, to kick toe-holes in the sun-baked bank. But in vain; I wore away my moccasins endeavoring to scrape a niche to give my feet some purchase. How long I had been hanging there, I could not remember; but my weary arms tried to persuade me that it must have been for countless days. I slightly tilted the knife-blade to ease its hold in the tough clay, and in little jerky slides dropped some distance down. Then, at last, the toe of my moccasin touched a tiny ledge and gained a doubtful foothold. In that position I decided to rest my arms alternately. Still grasping with one hand the embedded knife, I slowly withdrew the other hand and allowed the bulk of my weight to rest upon the slight footing I had gained. The tiny ledge crumbled instantly away, and my full

weight fell upon the arm that held the knife. Before I could get my other hand upon the handle, the blade lost the proper angle and, with that, its grip; and faster and ever faster I descended. Just where the incline took a sudden dip, and where the rapidity of my descent increased, I felt my body slowly toppling outward into space. A moment later I was whirling through the air.

"Some time afterward my eyes slowly opened. Overhead I saw broken branches and a sky that seemed the home of many long-tailed shooting stars. My eyes closed again. A little later I raised my head, but could not, for the life of me, think where I was, or how I had come there.

"After a little while, when the shooting stars had gradually dissolved, I remembered the bears and — fearing lest the wounded one might be at hand — felt for my knife.

It was gone. Listening long, and peering around, I made sure that the bear had either died or moved away. Though every bone in my body ached, I got upon my feet and staggered about in search of my lost weapon. With cut and bleeding hands I felt among the leaves and grasses and interwoven willows. I found it at last, after a long, tiresome hunt, a considerable distance away. Once more armed, I took my way down the coulée bottom.

"I had not gone a hundred paces before I found the female grizzly lying dead beside a bush. But I was in no mood to skin it. Continuing my way down the ravine, I at last found an easier incline, up which I clambered and hurried off, as best I could, in search of my cayuse. I found it grazing unconcernedly. As I rose stiffly into the saddle, I thought I heard a noise close by. The pony wheeled its head and stared,

wild-eyed, at a clump of bushes. Looking in that direction, I saw the huge, one-eared grizzly rushing toward me. I drove my heels into the flanks of my mount, jerked its head about, and rained a shower of blows upon its ribs. Never a move would the little brute make. It stood trembling and sweating, paralyzed with fear. While trying to start my pony, I found myself dragged from the saddle and thrown violently to the ground. Then at last the cayuse found strength to move, and bolted. I rose to my feet, and seized my knife to face the charging bear. With one tremendous blow it knocked me dazed to the ground, and the knife fell far aside. Then the beast began to maul me. It would have killed me outright, had I not had the presence of mind to feign death, an easy enough thing for an almost lifeless man to do. After a while, the bear, with many doubts and misgivings, shambled





"It turned and saw the strange silhouette of my frantically shying pony."



away. Badly mangled and bleeding freely, I rose to my feet once more and staggered away in search of my cayuse.

“Following a long and exhausting trail, I found it, and dragged myself into the saddle. As I was about to ride away, I caught sight of my lost powder-horn. I picked it up, and, mindful of my vow, reined my pony about and rode back to the spot where I had dropped my gun. I reloaded with the utmost care, and saw to my knife. Though I lacked my dag, I made my way resolutely back to trail the great Mischief Maker. Riding hard in pursuit, I caught sight of it going down to the river-bottom. I galloped headlong down the slope, in order to cut off the grizzly before it could escape among the tangled willows on the flats. At the sound of my approach, it turned and saw the strange silhouette of my frantically shying pony looming large against the brilliant sunset.

The vision seemed to fill it with sudden fury: it gave a snort of rage, and, champing its ugly jaws, rushed at me.

"It is the way of all wild animals to attack more viciously during the twilight glow when even familiar objects shape themselves into unusual forms. Calming my pony, I dismounted and selected my battle-ground as the bear came loping up. Then I knelt down upon one knee and said weakly, 'Good day, brave Mischief Maker, you thought you had killed me, but now it is my turn.'

"I took aim and fired at short range into the open mouth of the bear. My shaggy foe halted and for a second or two clawed wildly at its wounded mouth. I waited a moment for a glimpse of some better spot. As the bear turned its head, I fired; but my aim, because of my weakened condition, was not true. Instead of hitting the grizzly behind

the ear, the ball went crashing into its neck. With the glare of the sun in its small, venomous eyes, and coughing hoarsely from its bleeding throat, the great beast came for me. As it reared upon its haunches, I swung aloft my gun and dealt it a crushing blow upon the muzzle. The brute staggered back a pace. Again I swung my gun and brought it down with all my might; but this time the grizzly with a sudden, powerful side-stroke knocked the gun from my hands. Drawing my knife, I made several feints; then, when the brute was off its guard for an instant, plunged the blade deep into its chest. Before I could withdraw the weapon, the grizzly seized me in its fierce grasp and buried its fangs deep in my shoulder. I wrenched the knife free and stabbed the animal again and again, but apparently to no purpose. My head dropped back and I swooned away. When con-

sciousness returned, I found The Mischief Maker dead by my side.

"Thus I avenged my father's death by killing the last grizzly born among the mountains which overshadowed my father's grave."

When Standing Wolf had finished his story, the boys were still wide awake; and it was quite late before sleep finally overtook them, for — even while trusting implicitly to the protection of the Buffalo Spirit — they dreaded the awful Wetigoes believed to haunt those woods.

Next morning, at the first sign of dawn, Standing Wolf left the boys and the dogs resting by the fire and set out to trail the buffalo. He wanted to locate the game in order to determine whether he had better move his camp before beginning the kill. Passing westward between the hills, he circled the base of the northernmost before turning south. Not until he had rounded the eastern

end of the southern hill did he see signs of his quarry. The tracks were old, and he passed on until he had discovered fresher signs. Then, feeling sure of finding game next day, he turned and headed straight for camp, which he reached as darkness was setting in. After supper all squatted before the fire, smoking their pipes and talking about the morrow's hunt.

"My sons," began Standing Wolf, "the way of hunting buffalo is unlike that of hunting moose or caribou; and it is easier. The buffalo — on account of his short legs — is a heavy walker. He breaks through ice or crust that a moose of the same weight passes over. Snow to the depth of a child's knee, though it troubles not the moose at all, makes hard travelling for the buffalo. When the snow is thickly crusted, he makes little attempt to escape, and easily — especially with dogs — can he be run down.

"My sons, do not fire head on. Our guns

are smooth-bores, and the balls may glance aside. Wait for a chance to get a rear or a broadside shot."

Next day, as they had decided to move camp, the Indians had eaten a hasty breakfast, packed the sled, and harnessed the dogs before the Northern Lights had gone to rest. They swung out upon the track that Standing Wolf had beaten on his return from the sunny side of the southern hill. They were under way nearly two hours before dawn rose through the upper branches of the eastern trees, and sunrise found them examining some broad tracks that ran like a trench through the forest.

"The fresh signs are still some distance away," said Standing Wolf, "and, as this place is not too near, it will be good to camp on. Make no noise, my sons; for, though the wind is right, sound travels far through the winter forest."

He decided to leave the dogs behind. To prevent them from gnawing themselves free, he tied each by the collar to one end of a stout stick, the other end of which was made fast to a tree. To keep them from barking, he muzzled them.

They had gone but a scant mile when they came upon a trail that had been broken the day before. A little farther on they found tracks made that very morning. Standing Wolf, when trailing an animal, always took care not to disturb the tracks, in order that — should occasion arise — he could back-track the trail, and by studying the signs determine exactly what to expect from his quarry. Before continuing his advance now, he back-tracked the trail for some distance, and, on coming to a sheltered spot, found in the snow eleven imprints of various sizes, showing where the buffalo had lain during the previous night.

The wind being favorable, the hunters moved forward, taking the utmost care to approach silently.

Fresher signs began to appear. At an opening in the wood they saw where the buffalo had been feeding. The snow had been tossed and pawed about in search of buffalo grass — a grass which cures naturally upon the stem and becomes an excellent hay, eatable throughout the whole winter.

Keeping to the timber, the hunters made a slight détour to gain a better view of the prairie. Cautiously they crept through the underbrush, uncovering their guns, and cocking and priming them as they went. When the trees began to thin out, avoiding the open places, they moved silently on in the shadows of the evergreens. Suddenly Standing Wolf stood still, and gazed through the branches of a spruce at something just ahead. The boys, following close behind,



with their eyes on their leader, paused, too, for a moment, and then — assured that they were not observed — crept forward.

There, in a field of dazzling white, was a small herd of the little known "wood-bison." The bulls were quietly feeding, while the cows and calves lay basking in the sunshine. They were handsome creatures, somewhat larger than the prairie bison, and — probably owing to the fact of their sires having lived for a century, at least, in the subarctic timber — their coats were darker and richer in color than those of their kindred of the prairie.

Cautiously whispering to The Marten, Standing Wolf said: "Abide here, my son; At-tick and I will work round. When we fire, the buffalo may run this way; and, perhaps, you may have a second chance for a broadside shot. Don't get excited, my son; take steady aim. Remember we want the

skins, not to sell to the trader, but to use as robes. Try first for the cows and calves, since their hair is the softest. Don't fire at an old bull unless you have missed the others."

"Which shall I shoot first?" asked The Marten.

"Try for the standing cow," replied his father; "creep up a little closer, but don't fire until I do."

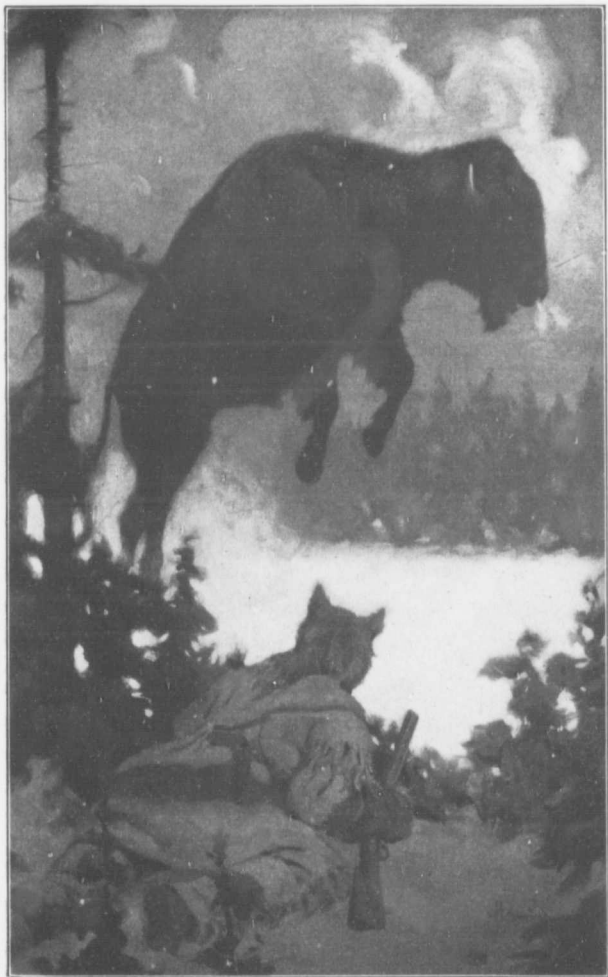
Standing Wolf and At-tick turned and passed silently among the denser growths until they had found another point from which they could approach the game. There Standing Wolf left At-tick and pushed on a little farther to the right. Slipping off his snowshoes, he crouched low and wound his way from tree to tree until between the quarry and himself only one intervened. Taking careful aim the while, he addressed the buffaloes in kindly tones too low-pitched for them to hear.

"Good day, my big brothers; I am Standing Wolf of Spirit Lake. My family needs robes, and I have journeyed far to ask you for yours."

He fired. The report of At-tick's gun and, a moment later, that of The Marten followed. While the sounds went crashing from side to side of the opening, one cow fell over without even rising; another, leaping up, wheeled suddenly, ran a few yards, and sank slowly down. For a moment the startled herd snorted and gazed about in wonderment. A second later they galloped for the shelter of the woods.

Hastily recharging his muzzle-loader with powder, Standing Wolf dropped a ball into the barrel and, without adding a wad or ramming the bullet home, struck the butt of his gun against the hard snow and slipped a cap upon the nipple. Leaping up, he dodged quickly back among the bushes, ran to a

clump of trees that stood a little farther out on the barren; then, throwing himself upon the snow, crept upon hands and knees to a tree that stood alone. The sound of hoofs beating heavily upon the hard snow grew louder. As he glanced round his evergreen screen, he saw a wild-eyed bull galloping toward him. On it came, slashing its huge head from side to side, and snorting and bellowing with rage. When it was almost upon him, and before he could bring his gun to his shoulder, he heard At-tick fire. The great beast gave one leap into the air, and then fell heavily to the ground. Jumping to his feet, Standing Wolf stood with his gun in readiness; but, seeing the bull to be mortally wounded, as the herd swept by, he brought his weapon to bear upon a two-year-old and killed it. Then he stepped up to the bull. It was dead, but still its savage gaze was fixed upon him. Stooping



"The great beast gave one leap into the air."



down, he drew the edge of his knife across its eyes, for he dared not skin the carcass while the glassy orbs were staring at him. He, with the rest of his tribe, believed that each of the larger and wiser animals of the forest embodied the spirit of some departed brave, and that the spirit could not take its leave until the eyes had lost their lustre.

At-tick soon joined him; and, wondering what had become of The Marten, both set out to find him. His tracks told that he had gone off at full speed in pursuit of buffalo. As they hurried along, they heard another shot; and, when at last they overtook the lad, they saw him peering over the brink of a snow-drift at a wounded bull that lay rolling in the snow, feebly struggling to rise.

The boy was saying in a gentle undertone, "My brother, be not angry, for it is the Master of Life who is calling you."

With the last word he fired, and the bull lay dead.

Their hunt having proved a success, they hastened to skin the animals and cut out the choicest parts of the meat, lest the carcasses should freeze before their task was finished.

Next day they broke camp, and, before leaving the hills, visited the resting-place of the Buffalo Spirit, and once more placed upon the stone an offering of tobacco. Then they began in earnest their long homeward journey. For five days they plodded on without incident. On the morning of the sixth day they smelt smoke. Standing Wolf went ahead to investigate. He found two white men in a half-starving condition. During a snow-storm they had lost the packet trail and had stumbled upon Standing Wolf's trail. This they were following in the belief that they had regained the right



road. Two of their dogs had starved to death. Taking compassion upon them, Standing Wolf gave them liberally of his buffalo meat and, bidding them follow him, soon set them upon their true course. He showed them, also, how to follow an unseen trail by the feel of the foot; so that, should another storm arise, they might not again lose their way. Moreover, he gave them a rough map of the region, drawn upon birch bark, and then bade them farewell.

As the northern trend of the packet trail lay for nearly a day's travel in his direction, Standing Wolf followed it. That evening he came upon a camp of Wood Crees, old friends of his, and decided to remain with them for a few days. About four o'clock next afternoon the yelping of dogs was heard to the south, and the Indians quickly hid the buffalo skins in the woods. A half-breed came running through the forest. It was

Kipling, the famous runner, who was breaking the trail for the Mackenzie River packet (mail), and who was a friend of Standing Wolf. He informed the hunter that the Mounted Police were upon his track; that two white men had told the Redcoats that they had seen three Indians with fresh buffalo meat and green buffalo hides in their possession.

At once the camp was all excitement. Each man lent a hand at harnessing the dogs, packing the sled, or cooking a hurried snack for Standing Wolf and his sons. The distant cracking of a dog whip almost threw them into a panic; but when Kipling had assured them that his partner had promised not to let the police train pass his dogs, they quieted down and waited until the other half-breed hove into sight.

"Now, At-tick, my son," said Standing Wolf, "show me that you are not unworthy

of your name. Let your pace be as fast as that of the caribou. Go ahead and beat the trail."

Having bidden his friends adieu, Standing Wolf was turning to go when Ka-kaik, or The Hawk, addressed him: —

"My brother, we know that you are not only a great hunter and a strong runner, but a wise man, too. We are sure that the Red-coats will never find the buffalo skins in your possession. The white dogs are nothing but a pack of liars and thieves who rob us of our land, and then try to imprison us for hunting the game that the Master of Life has given us. But you, my brother, are well named Standing Wolf; to you we say farewell without a grain of fear."

A few hasty hand-shakes, a crack of the whip, and they were off. When darkness came on, the moon shone out, and — as if in rivalry — the Northern Lights appeared.

Long double shadows clung to their heels as they strode through the desolate muskegs. From afar the prowling beasts of the night watched them speeding over the snowy expanse.

On nearing the edge of the forest, Standing Wolf looked back over the lake they had just crossed and beheld, far behind, a fire. Spelling the dogs just inside the timber screen, the Indians rested upon the sled and watched the flickering light upon the distant hill. It was blinking at irregular intervals. It was a signal-fire. Their old friend, Ka-kaik, was passing a blanket in front of the flames to spell a warning to them that the police had again set out upon their trail.

They resumed their journey at once. After a couple of hours' run, they halted in the heavy timber to infuse some tea. Refreshed, they again took to the road. Midnight saw them upon their old trail — the

one they had made during the westward journey. The going was now easier, and they settled down to a steady pace. All night long they travelled. Dawn found them still under way. When they had reached the eastern shore of a lake some five miles wide, Standing Wolf bade At-tick climb a neighboring hill to see if the police were in sight. Driving the dogs behind the hill, the hunter stopped to cook breakfast, while The Marten unharnessed and fed the weary "geddies" — as sled dogs are called in that part of the country.

At-tick returned with the news that he had seen three men and a dog train come out upon the lake.

Harnessing the dogs, they resumed their flight. On they went through heavy timber where the wind rarely penetrated, and where the snows had sifted gently down among the trees, decorating the forest with

beautiful white forms. All that day the fugitives put forth their best speed. Upon crossing a lake, they were surprised and mortified to find that the police were only a couple of miles behind. As Standing Wolf urged the dogs on, he thought of what his life would be in the white man's prison. He wondered whether he ought to ambush his pursuers? But that would endanger the man who was driving the police train, and perhaps he was a half-breed and a friend.

The dogs had great difficulty now in keeping up their usual gait. By midnight they were on the point of exhaustion. They had now been about two weeks upon an unbroken trail, while the police dogs had not only started comparatively fresh, but had had a well-beaten path to follow.

Standing Wolf halted the train and told the boys to feed the dogs, while he ascended Bear's Head peak.

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“ He stood for a long time with his head bowed reverently towards the northwest, for he was communing with the Buffalo Spirit.”



The night was brilliant with the glory of the Northern Lights. On the summit he stood for a long time with his head bowed reverently toward the northwest; for he was communing with the Buffalo Spirit. The boys had finished their supper when he returned to the fire and told them that he had been talking with the Buffalo Spirit, and that it had advised him to change his course.

"My sons," continued he, "be not afraid. The Buffalo Spirit has shown me how we may gain an advantage over the Redcoats, and how the old black bear, now lying in his 'wash' near Moose Horn Lake, will not only help us to prove that the white man is nothing but a child when he travels the Strong Wood Country, but will also help us to turn the Redcoats from our trail."

Once more they started. Now Standing Wolf led the way. Turning from the old path, he broke a new trail to Long Lake —

a lake running for twenty miles or more almost parallel to the trail they had just abandoned. By sunrise they had reached it, and then Standing Wolf explained why he had turned so far out of his way to travel upon the open.

"My sons, the Buffalo Spirit advised me to leave the old trail that runs through the shadowed woods and to travel upon this lake instead. Have we not small dogs and big snowshoes? When the sun rises higher, the crust will be weakened and we shall have the advantage over them: our big shoes will bear up our weight and our little dogs will leave the crust unbroken; but the Red-coats and their dogs will be forever floundering through.

"Now, my sons, strike out with a light heart, for the sun is rising higher and the old bear is waiting to help us to fool the Red-coats."

As the warmth of the sun increased, Standing Wolf sent The Marten, the lightest of the party, to run before the dogs while he and At-tick ran on either side of the sled to lessen the chances of breaking through. All day long they plodded steadily over the vast field of snow, whose dazzle threatened them with snow-blindness. This was the hardest day of all; for, though they had on their large hunting shoes measuring from five to six feet in length, they frequently broke through. Fortunately, their dogs, on account of their light weight, were spared this ordeal.

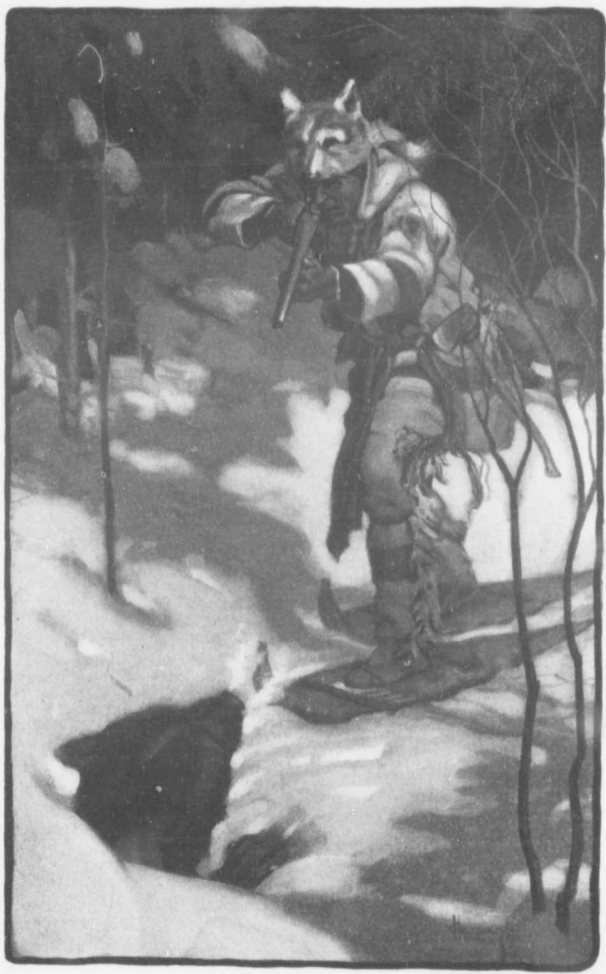
By two o'clock in the afternoon they had reached the lower end of Long Lake, and were then about six miles ahead of the police. After a short run through the woods, they came to Moose Horn Lake. Upon entering the forest on the farther side, Standing Wolf halted the train close to where the old black

bear was hibernating. In a few minutes he found the exact spot. A frosty formation about a little hole told where the bear was lying in its "wash."

Breaking away the icy rim, he jabbed his axe-handle into the hole, and vigorously prodded the bear to awaken him. Presently the drowsy beast began to bestir himself. When he had poked his snarling head out of the hole, Standing Wolf raised his gun and, taking aim, said:—

"Good day, my brother; I am going to trouble you. The Buffalo Spirit told me that you would help us to escape the white man's law. I need your paws. Turn your head away, my brother, for I am about to kill you."

When the bear was dead, he told the boys to light a fire and unpack the buffalo skins, while he skinned the bear. After removing the skin and claws from the bear's paws,



“ ‘Good day, my brother! The Buffalo Spirit told me you would help us to escape the white man’s law.’ ”



he directed The Marten to draw the skin of the fore paws over the toes of his moccasins, and then to pad the empty spaces with moss. Stretching the skin of the hind feet over his own moccasins, he took a tump-line and loaded most of the buffalo hides upon his back; while At-tick assisted The Marten to load himself with those that remained.

"My son," he said to The Marten, "be careful to tread only upon your toes. Your footprints are to represent those of the fore feet of a bear, while mine are to represent those of the hind feet. Now lead the way, and remember that if we fail to deceive the Redcoats, we shall spend many moons in the white man's prison."

Away they went, cautiously picking their steps here and there among the bushes and turning in and out among the trees, but all the while taking care to tread where the snow was firmest, the more easily to outwit the

police. They played the game with zest. From time to time they halted to scratch here and there among the undergrowth, to turn over a rotten log, or to paw up the soft snow, after the manner of bears in search of roots or mice. In a word, they left faultless signs of the passing of a hungry bear.

About a quarter of a mile from the trail they found a suitable spot in which to *cache* the robes. When they had disposed of them, they made a little *détour*, and returned to where they had left At-tick cutting up the carcass. To complete the mystification, they walked about the bear's "wash" with careless steps; and, finally, Standing Wolf put on his snowshoes and trod upon the bear tracks to make them look as if they had been there before the Indians had arrived upon the scene. When all this had been done to their satisfaction, they loaded the sled with as much meat as the dogs could haul, headed



straight for home, and in less than an hour reached their lodges.

There they found three Indians who had halted in their northern journey to spell their dogs and drink a cup of tea with Standing Wolf's women. They were young men, sons of Standing Wolf's friend, Muk-wah, on their way to hunt caribou many miles north of Spirit Lake. Without waiting to join them in a cup of tea or a smoke, Standing Wolf addressed them:—

“My sons, I see you are travelling light, and that your dogs are fresh. That is well, for the Buffalo Spirit told me that the sons of my old friend Muk-wah would be ready to do me a service. We have been to the Buffalo Hills and have had a successful hunt. The Redcoats are upon our trail, yet they do not know our names, nor have they seen the men whom they pursue. You, my sons, are great runners and brave men.

You will be glad to lead the Redcoats on a fruitless chase, especially when you know that you will be helping your father's friend. I ask you to trade sleds with me, and to wear our snowshoes instead of your own. As a present, I give you the skin and the meat of the bear I have just killed. There is little danger, my sons, for the Redcoats have been without sleep or rest for several days, and by now their dogs must be nearly exhausted."

The young men, ready for any adventure, acquiesced at once. The exchange was soon made. Muk-wah's dogs were hitched to Standing Wolf's sled without its having been moved from the track on which it came from the Buffalo Hills. The three young men slipped their feet into the thongs of the others' shoes, and, chuckling at the thought of outwitting the white men, set off upon their Northern journey.





"Soon they recognized them to be members of the Mounted Police."

Muk-wah's sons were little more than out of sight when Standing Wolf and the boys made out three men coming up the lake. Soon they recognized them to be members of the Mounted Police. On their arrival, Standing Wolf invited them in to supper. After the meal and an interchange of tobacco, all smoked in silence. When at last the pipes were out, the sergeant, through his half-breed interpreter, told Standing Wolf that he was trailing three Indians who had been killing buffalo. As the trail from the Buffalo Hills led to his lodge, he advised him to hand over the skins, and save further trouble.

"I am not aware that any of my people have ever brought buffalo skins to this camp," replied the hunter.

"Then," said the sergeant, "I must search your lodges."

"You may," assented the hunter, with a courteous inclination of the head.

The police hunted high and low without discovering any trace whatever of either buffalo robes or fresh bear's meat or skin. They were more bewildered than ever upon finding that the trail they had followed from the Buffalo Hills continued beyond the camp in a northerly direction, and that another new trail from the south had been made by the very snowshoes and sled lying there before their eyes.

Darkness put an end to the search. At daybreak the police again examined the trails about the camp, but their investigation only added to their bewilderment. To their questioning Standing Wolf replied: —

“Why do you pale-faced children question a man whom you do not trust? Cannot you read the signs in the snow? If you look a little sharper, you will find that the trail of three men, who came from the west, passed through here yesterday, and that it

leads off again to the north. They did not tell me that they had been hunting buffalo. They came to invite me to go with them on a caribou hunt, and they are now on their way to the edge of the Barren Grounds. I doubt if you can overtake them, for I see that both you and your dogs stand in need of rest. Moreover, the hunters have a night's start ahead of you. They told me that they would not sleep until this evening; they and their dogs are in condition."

The police consulted together. The sergeant asked Standing Wolf the nearest way to Fort Determination.

"I will show you," he answered, "if you pay me."

An order for the amount having been handed to him, he led them to the head of Bear Creek, and gave them a roughly drawn map of the route to follow.

The constables went ahead to break the

trail. Jourdain, the half-breed who was driving the dogs, lingered a moment to bid Standing Wolf good-by. Holding out his hand, he said:—

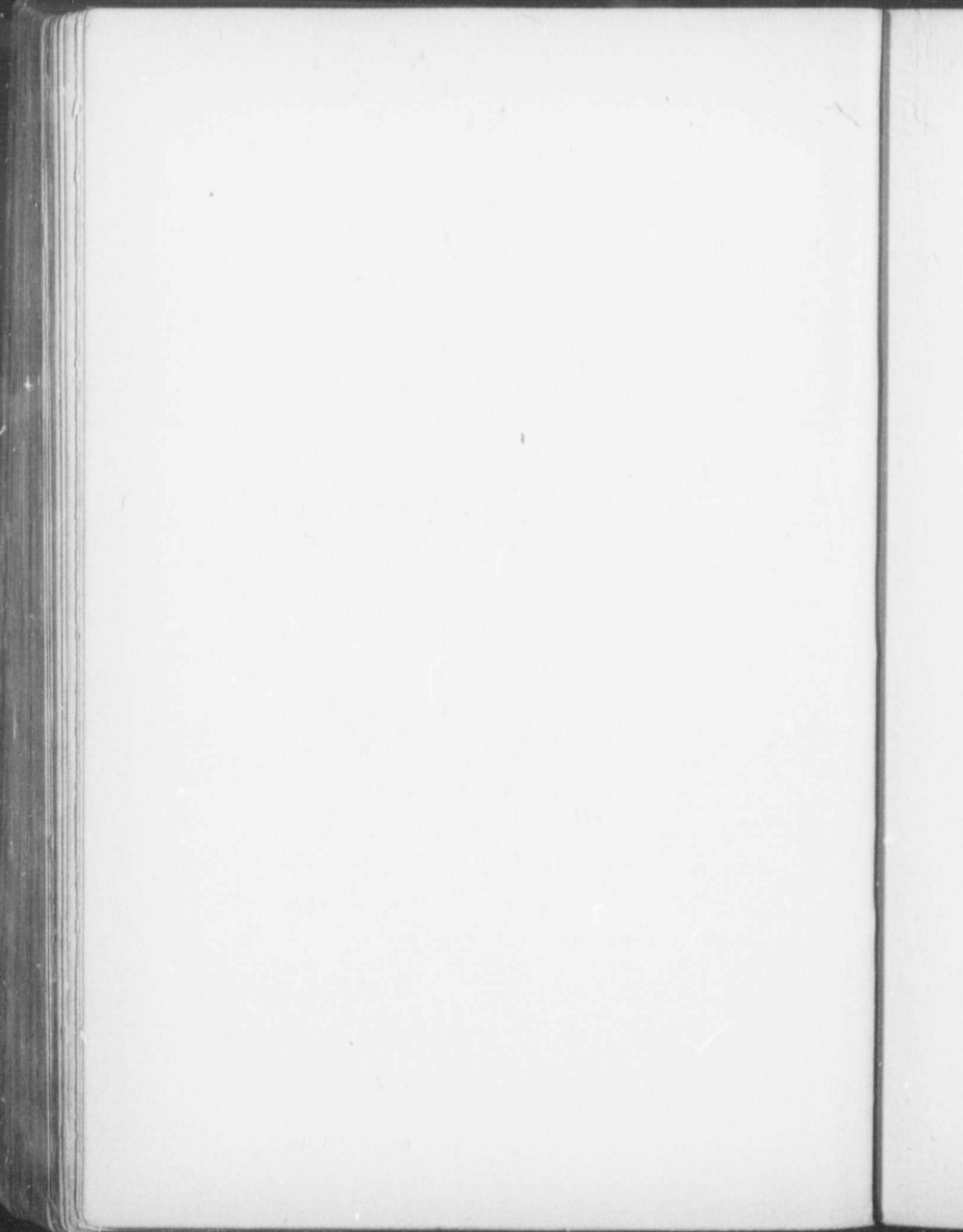
“I am your half-brother and your friend; tell me, who helped you out of the hole? I will not give you away.”

Shaking the half-breed's hand, Standing Wolf replied, —

“The Buffalo Spirit.”



THE DANCE OF THE DEAD  
MEN



## CHAPTER V

### THE DANCE OF THE DEAD MEN

TUGGING at the weight of the frozen carcasses, Standing Wolf slowly hauled the sled in and out among the grave-like mounds of the muskeg. Now and again he slightly turned his head to listen. There were strange sounds in the night air. Sometimes he imagined for a moment that the grotesquely frozen bodies had come to life again, and were dancing on the snow. Once he paused to look around, but all he saw was two great man-shadows lying on the snow with long, outstretched legs that reached toward him and touched his feet. To him the sight was no unusual one. Often, when the Northern Lights and the moon were shining,

as he hurried through the muskegs or over the silent lakes, he had been pursued by monstrous figures that seemed forever trying to tread upon his heels. So on he trudged. It was hard work. The prow of his toboggan continually overran the hummocks. When he turned to pull it aside, gnarled roots reached out to catch at his snowshoes, and willow wands stung his frost-bitten face. At last, just as he was leaving the muskeg behind and was nearing the forest that loomed ahead across a wide strip of gleaming snow, he stopped suddenly. What was that? He stood staring at the snow. Were his eyes playing him false? Could it be true? He jerked the tump-line off his head and threw it back upon the sled. Then he stepped aside and knelt down to examine the tracks in the snow, while his two shadows mockingly did the same.

"Ah, Kus-ke-tie Ina-ca-sis," exclaimed

the Indian with glee. True enough, it was the track of a black-fox, an animal whose skin brings a greater price than that of any other found in the northern wilds. Already that winter Standing Wolf had secured a splendid silver-fox, which in value ranks second only to the black-fox. To see the trail of a black-fox on his hunting-grounds was an event so unusual that he could scarcely believe his eyes. In his delight he examined the tracks again, lest he might have been deceived. Yes, there were the round footprints of the black-fox. Well he knew that its tread makes a print more rounded in outline than that of any other fox. Next in roundness comes the footprint of the silver-fox; then that of the cross-fox; that of the red-fox being the most elongated of all.

Cautiously rising, Standing Wolf charged his gun, and leaving his sled behind followed

the trail of Kus-ke-tie Ina-ca-sis. There was but one more trap to examine, and the trail ran toward it. The wind was in his favor. As he moved forward, he imitated the cry of a mouse, and occasionally broke into a gentle chant; for, like all his brethren, he believed that he could in that way charm a fox. All the while he was on the alert for the slightest glimpse of any moving thing. When he had covered about a quarter of a mile of winding trail, he found that the track circled to the left. Looking ahead, he discovered another and a smaller circle running in the same direction. Knowing that his trap lay just beyond, he went on with greater care. As he peeped round a clump of trees, he saw Kus-ke-tie Ina-ca-sis huddled there. The next instant the fox saw him, too. In a frantic effort at escape, it leaped into the air, but was thrown by the clanking chain violently upon its back. On the snow, within the chain's

length, was recorded the story of its desperate and vain struggle for freedom.

Standing Wolf, setting his gun aside, approached slowly with a stick in his hand, and in kindly tones addressed the trembling animal, —

“Good day, my little brother; I am sorry, but I need your beautiful coat; so I must kill you.”

He stunned the fox by a blow on the snout, and then gently pressed the toe of his moccasined foot over the creature's heart until it stopped beating. In this manner he killed all the foxes he caught in traps; for the slightest blow upon the body would mark the skin.

Opening the jaws of the trap, he laid the fox upon the snow, and stood gazing at it with supreme satisfaction. It was the most beautiful black-fox that he had ever seen. It was a perfect specimen. Its entire coat,

both inner and outer, was of the deepest blue-black, except for a tiny spot of white upon the breast, and a few white hairs at the tip of its magnificent brush. A bushy collarette surrounded its neck. Its forelegs were covered down to the feet with silky, wavy fur that suggested heavily fringed leggings. The black-fox, though not so beautiful as the silver-fox, is much rarer. It commands a first price of anywhere from one hundred to one thousand dollars. Sometimes it is sold at retail for from two to three thousand dollars. But, notwithstanding its great value, it is considered to be of evil omen. Misfortune, according to Indian belief, accompanies the wealth it brings.

Though Standing Wolf felt elated over his astonishing luck, he had already begun to fear the evil that must surely follow. There he stood with gloating eyes fixed upon the lifeless object at his feet, yet hesitating to



carry off his prize. A faint rumble as of distant thunder fell upon his ears; and, a moment later, a sound as if made by the waving of whips and the swishing of silken garments. A vague sense of awe took possession of him. Looking up, he beheld the broad expanse of the heavens afire with vast arcs of moving figures arrayed in garments of light. In the unaccustomed brilliance of the Northern Lights, he recognized another omen of ill. To have taken the life of Kus-ke-tie Ina-ca-sis while the Dance of the Dead Men was in progress, must add to the evil already in store for him.

For some time he stood hesitating. He knew that the skin would more than pay the debt that he and his family owed, yet the thought of what was to befall him filled him with dread. At last, summoning all his courage, he picked up the fox, hurried back to his sled, placed it carefully within the

wrapper, and set out for home. All along the way fear stalked beside him. Even on his arrival he could not shake it off. So, when he had exhibited his great catch to his astonished family, he turned to At-tick, his adopted son, saying:—

“At-tick, my son, the fur runner is coming soon. To-morrow do you and The Marten take the dogs and break a two days’ trail on Bear River in order to hasten his coming.”

Fear of impending disaster was the real cause of his anxiety to ease the approach of the trader. So eager was he to safeguard himself against possible ill-fortune, that he was willing even to sell the skin at a sacrifice.

Next morning the boys set out to break the trail. When they camped on Bear River on the afternoon of the second day, they *cached* in the river ice some fish for the trader’s dogs. They chopped a hole and, after placing the fish in, filled it up with

water, which they allowed to freeze, with the tail of a single fish protruding, in order to show the trader what was *cached* below. To mark the spot, they planted a pole with its butt in the hole, and rigged up a tripod of sticks to support it. At the top of the pole they tied a little bag of tea and a choice piece of meat for the trader. At the bend of the river below, where he would surely pass, they erected another pole with a bunch of dried grass attached, for the purpose of attracting his attention to their tracks.

On their return home they found Standing Wolf sorting his furs in anticipation of the trader's arrival. Before him lay the skins of the black-fox and of the silver-fox, turned inside out upon stretchers. On the boys' entering the lodge, Standing Wolf addressed his whole family, saying:—

“Do not mention the silver-fox to the fur runner. Since it, at least, will bring us no

harm, I intend keeping it until I go to the Post, in the hope of making a better bargain there. Now sort your skins, and set aside those you wish to give in payment on your debt to the Great Company."

During the afternoon of the following day Spencer, the fur runner for the Hudson Bay Company at Fort Determination, arrived with his dog train. He shook hands with Standing Wolf and the boys, and kissed the women and the girls, as the custom of the traders is. It being late in the day, Standing Wolf decided not to begin trading until next morning. So they spent the evening in spinning yarns around the fire. Shortly after breakfast, strange dogs were heard. The boys looked out and saw an unknown half-breed approaching. When the newcomer had eaten, and had joined the others in a smoke, Standing Wolf questioned him:—

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"My brother, you are a stranger in this country; so I have given you fire and food and tobacco in friendship. Tell me now why and from whence you come."

The half-breed replied:—

"My brother, I come from the Border Lands, — where the plains and the forests meet, — and my name is Gibeault. I have come to trade regularly in the region between Fort Determination and Fort Defiance. You will do well to encourage opposition to the Great Company, and thus raise the price of furs.

"My brother, the white man stands apart. I am of your own kin. We are of the same blood. So I have come to remove the burden which the Great Company has laid upon my blood-brothers, the Indians. I have come to show you how the white man has been robbing our people for hundreds of years. I have come to . . ."

Spencer, glaring across the fire, could contain himself no longer. Turning to Standing Wolf, he said:—

“My brother, you are a wise man. You know the difference between truth and lies; between strong men and old women. You know that I have brought goods to your camp, and traded with you for many years. You know that when your family starved, the Company fed them. You know you owe the Company debt. You know that it takes a strong man to beat a track, but any old woman can follow it. You know a man when you see one. My brother, we have been friends from of old.”

Standing Wolf kept silence for a while; then, with his eyes fixed upon the fire, he said,—

“My brother, I will not forget to look at my debt; but I am master of my furs.”

So saying, he handed to Spencer the

bundles of furs which he and his family had set aside to pay on their debt. These were accepted unopened, since they were for the factor at Fort Determination. Then he drew a cross-fox skin from behind him, and threw it down, saying, —

“How do my brothers look at that?”

It was a challenge to the rival traders. In a few minutes they had opened their packs and spread out a conglomeration of useful and of useless goods and trinkets upon gaudy blankets on either side of the fire. The half-breed, manifestly ignorant of the ways of his professed business, allowed the white man to outbid him from the very start, and so lost favor with the Indian, who, growing suspicious of his flowery promises, said, —

“My brother, you have travelled in vain: you had better go back unless you can give more than the white man.”

At that moment Spencer handed the Indian a present of tobacco, and he continued:—

“When I visit the Great Company, even if I do not trade, they give me presents of tea, flour, grease, and tobacco, in order to seal our friendship. But you have not shown a generous hand; so I will still trade with the Great Company.”

Without another word he threw down the beautiful black-fox skin. The two traders were completely taken aback at the sight of such a prize. The bidding rose rapidly, until Gibeault had exceeded the value of his whole outfit. Knowing this, Spencer told Standing Wolf that neither of them had enough at hand to pay the proper value of the skin, but that he would agree to pay three hundred “skins,” and that Standing Wolf could collect the balance from the Company at any time. Although the Indian



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felt that he was being underpaid, his superstitious dread made him accept the offer without haggling. So all the furs, except the silver-fox skin, were sold; the greater number going to the Hudson's Bay Company.

Gibeault was enraged at having secured so few furs, and doubly so at having lost the black-fox skin. He sat staring sullenly at the fire, and when Spencer intimated his intention of returning to the Fort that afternoon, he did not answer him. About three o'clock Spencer packed his sled, and by four had bidden the Indians farewell. He intended travelling a few hours that night by moonlight. As both had to go in the same direction, Standing Wolf was surprised that they did not travel together for companionship; and when Gibeault expressed his desire to remain with him all night, he wondered why he wished to stay. Imagine his surprise when, on his return from visiting

some snares, he found Gibeault harnessing his dogs and eager to be off.

At parting, Standing Wolf shook hands with the half-breed, but that seemed only to increase his awkwardness of demeanor. The hunter long stood watching the half-breed's figure fading among the trees, and wondering at the change in his manner.

The following evening, while the Indian was at supper laughing and jesting with his family, Spencer staggered into the lodge with his face cut and bruised and smeared with blood. For a few moments all was excitement. When the women had calmed down and dressed the trader's wounds and given him tea, Standing Wolf heard his story:—

“During the night I was overtaken by Gibeault. Some noise he made must have roused me, for I woke from a deep sleep to see him in the very act of going through my

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furs, evidently in search of the black-fox skin. I got upon my feet and rushed to grapple with him, but slipped and fell. He seized a heavy stick and knocked me senseless. Fortunately he had no firearms, for we traders carry none. When I recovered consciousness, I found that he had taken not only the black-fox skin, but all my other furs, and even the dogs and the sled. Worse still, he had smashed my snowshoes in order to prevent pursuit. What could I do but make the best of my way through the deep snow to your friendly lodge?"

When he had told his story, Standing Wolf continued for a little while gazing at the fire, and smoking meditatively. Then he knocked the ashes from his pipe and said:—

"My brother, this is a bad business. I will go and speak with Gibeault, while you remain here."

Turning to the boys, he said:—

"My sons, I will set out at once. As I am going to travel light, you must follow with the dogs at their best speed. Be watchful, and you will read your instructions as you run."

Rising, he at once made ready for the chase.

Going to the rogan, in which he kept his valuables, he put a fresh supply of tobacco into his fire-bag; then, wishing to take a last look at his silver-fox skin, he reached to draw it out. It was gone. He knew at once who had taken it, and resentment filled his heart.

"The dog who would be my brother has stolen it," he cried with fury.

He hung a small tea-pail at his side, tightened his sash about him, slipped a little bag of tea, some bannock, and some dried caribou meat within his capote, and gun in hand set out in pursuit of the thief.

Already the moon had risen. Here and there brilliant patches of snow decorated the sombre carpet of the forest. Among the open trees he went, and then out upon the silent river, and, taking up the trail of the thief, sped across Spirit Lake on his way to Bear River. The freshness of the hard-packed trail made easy going, and hour after hour he ran along. Away up above the trees, the Dance of the Dead Men flickered, and once again two shadows pursued the hunter. But, intent upon the chase, he had little thought for other things.

Entering a thick grove of heavy timber, he paused for a moment to read the signs that told him where Spencer had camped for the night, where Gibeault had ransacked the furs, and where the two men had fought. Then on he sped. All night long he travelled, and all the following day. During the morning he found that the half-breed had left

Spencer's incoming trail from Fort Determination and had turned across country in the direction of Fort Defiance. So, following the new trail, he hurried along.

Soon he noticed that he was gaining on the thief; for the track was constantly growing fresher. He realized now that it was only a matter of a few hours before he would overtake his quarry. The half-breed's progress was becoming slower, since he had to go ahead now and beat a new track for the dogs to follow. Judging that he would come up with the thief that night, Standing Wolf had already left the hurry-upsign upon several trees for his boys to see. He now blazed again, but with three cuts instead of two upon each tree, so that the boys would press forward faster. Farther on, as the signs of the thief grew fresher, he cut a long blaze and tore it off to let his sons know that he was now closer to his quarry, and expected

to come upon him at any moment. To tell the boys how far he was ahead, and at what time he had passed, he drew a bow and arrow, pointing in the direction of the sun at the time of making the blaze. To show that it was day-time, he drew in front of the arrow a circle with rays radiating from the centre, to represent the sun. If it had been night-time, he would have drawn a crescent moon.

With the coming of dusk, Standing Wolf increased his circumspection. Shortly after crossing a lake in the moonlight, he heard the barking of dogs ahead. He took hold of two saplings, one on either side of the track, and bent them over and fastened them together so that any one following would have to stoop to pass under. This was a signal to the boys that danger was at hand, and for them to move forward warily and with their guns in readiness.

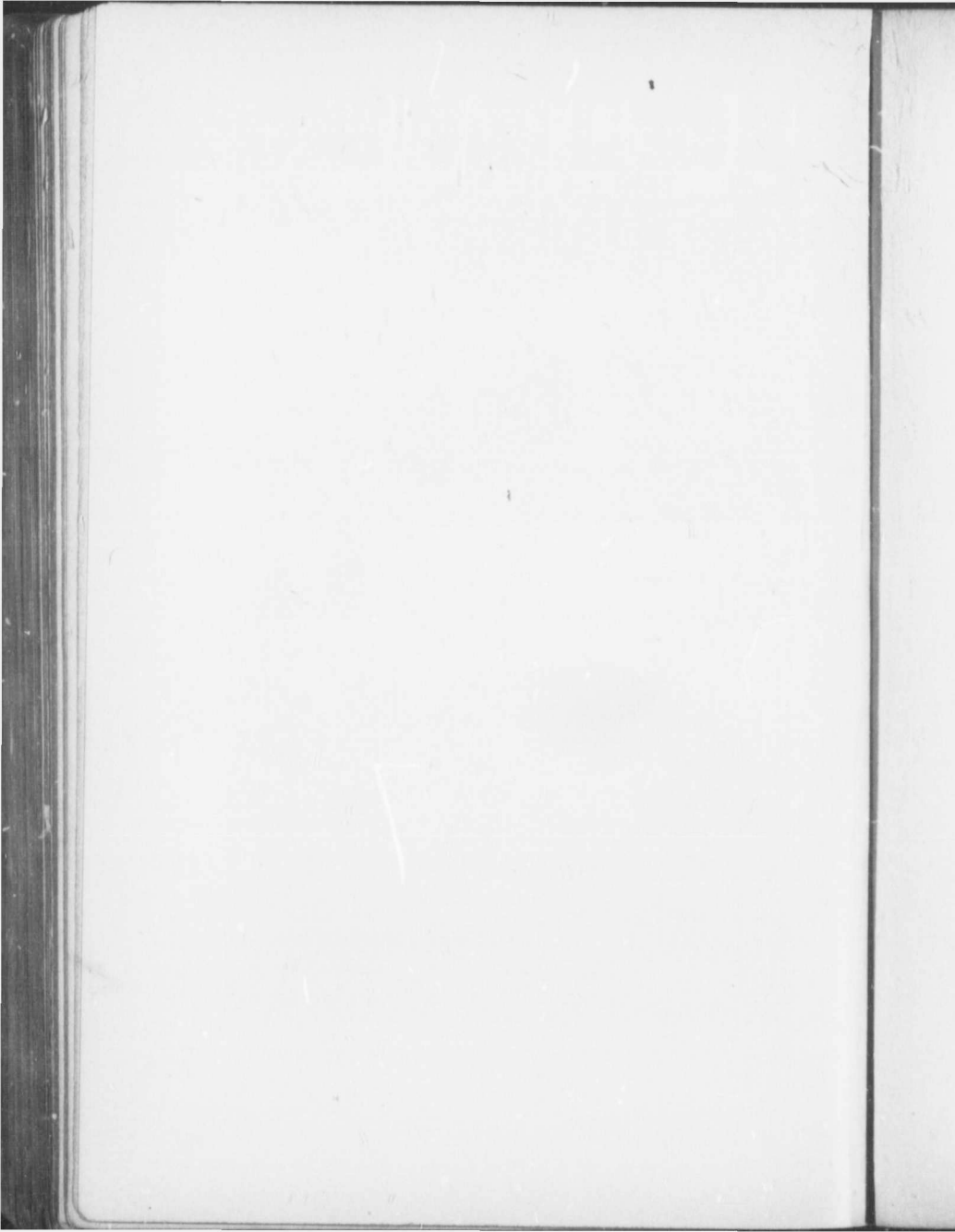
His advance became momentarily slower. It was more than an hour before he detected the glare of firelight ahead. He left the trail, and keeping to the lee of the fire, lest the dogs should scent him, stealthily approached. The first glimpse of the dying fire showed him that all was still. The half-breed lay wrapped in his hare-skin robe upon a mattress of balsam brush. In the shelter of the undergrowth the dogs were curled in the snow, shivering still, though sound asleep.

Priming his gun afresh, Standing Wolf cocked it, and silently stepping within the glare of the firelight called upon Gibeault to surrender. The startled half-breed sprang to his feet, seized his axe, and struck wildly at the Indian, who, in the very act of firing, leaped aside to save himself and so missed his shot. Again the half-breed swung his axe, and again Standing Wolf escaped the





"The startled half-breed struck wildly at the Indian."



blow. Then, seeing his chance, he struck Gibeault with the butt of his gun and knocked him down. As he strove to rise, Standing Wolf dealt him a blow that stretched him motionless on the snow. Stooping down, he felt the heart of the unconscious half-breed. He was not dead. As Standing Wolf reloaded his gun, he pondered whether he should kill the thief or hand him over to the Mounted Police. Unable to decide, he bound him hand and foot, dragged him back upon the brush and covered him with his robe.

Drawing the sleds nearer to the fire, he searched their loads and found the silver-fox skin in Gibeault's dunnage bag. The sight increased his thirst for revenge. A gust of wind blew the coals into feeble life again and reminded him that the fire was dying. He rose and chopped wood enough to last all the night through. Then he sat down to

smoke and reflect upon the course he should pursue. The growling dogs, still bristling, slunk away to curl themselves up again on their frosty beds. The breeze, departing, left the trees motionless. All was still, save the ever flickering light of the Dance of the Dead Men far overhead. But Standing Wolf did not look toward the sky; for his mind was on the unconscious figure before him. Should he kill him now? A single shot would do the work. Or, why waste powder and ball when a knife-thrust would serve as well? Drawing his knife, he felt its edge. It was keen enough. He gripped the handle and rose to do the deed; but a burning log rolled from the fire, and, sheathing his knife, he thrust the stick into place. Then, squatting in the warmth of the fire, he fell to thinking. Hour after hour the night dragged through; pipe after pipe was smoked; stick after stick was tossed

upon the flame, until, at last, he began to drowse.

For some time he slept. When, startled by the sound of movement, he awoke, he found the half-breed glaring at him. Neither spoke. Again Standing Wolf added fuel to the coals; again he squatted beside the fire with his gun across his knees and watched his prisoner. Presently the thief began struggling to free his hands, and, finding that the knots were too well tied, cursed Standing Wolf vilely. As the Indian heeded him not, the half-breed grew tired of his profanity, and rising to a sitting posture snarled, —

“Well, what do you intend doing with me?”

“Dog, I would not have your blood upon my knife, so I will give you to the Red-coats,” Standing Wolf replied.

Gibeault, growing defiant, scoffed at the

idea of being taken to the police by Standing Wolf.

"It will be easy. My sons will be here in the morning," retorted the Indian.

For some time the half-breed stared vacantly at the fire, as though racking his brains for some means of escape. He became disheartened at last, dropped back upon his couch and fell asleep. Both had travelled hard and fast and were in sore need of rest. Soon Standing Wolf was attacked by an overpowering fit of drowsiness, and — though he realized his danger and strove to stave it off — eventually succumbed.

It was only for a brief time that he slept, yet while he slept he dreamed that he was travelling upon the Spirit trail to join his departed friends in the Dance of the Dead Men. Awaking with a start, he caught sight of the brilliant, flickering glare of the Northern Lights above the tree-tops, and wondered

how soon he should join in the dance up there. The thought depressed him, and he tried to dismiss it from his mind. So he rose and paced to and fro before the fire. Then, thinking that the boys might be drawing near, he decided to mount the neighboring hill and view the trail where it crossed the lake. Quietly slipping his feet into his snowshoe thongs, he began the ascent. On gaining the summit, he stood looking at the lake below, but there was no sign of his sons.

Soon dawn began to break. The hills and rivers and lakes took shape. Still he lingered; for, with the coming of light, he thought of his youth, of the time when he was as young as the day, and he and his people were prosperous and happy, because all that vast region belonged to them. The remembrance kindled in his heart resentment against the white men. As he meditated upon the way in which they had

wronged his people; how they had broken an endless trail of destruction across the country, and had left disease and starvation in their wake, he grew indignant toward them. Along with this feeling came an emotion of compassion for the thief who, he remembered, was, after all, a half-brother of his own people. Should he deliver up one of his own blood to the hated whites? Why should he not take his own revenge?

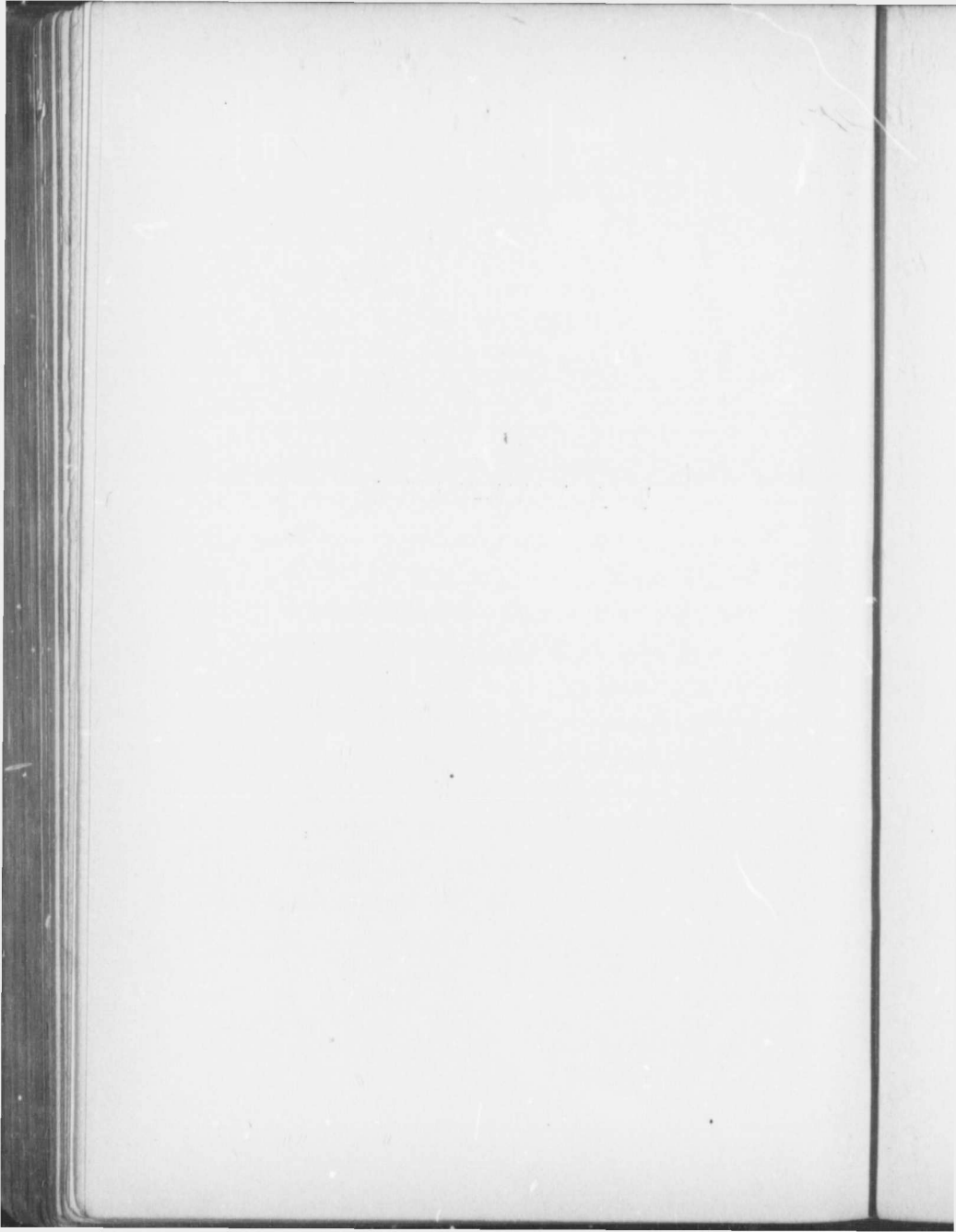
Just then he saw the boys coming out of the forest on the distant shore of the lake. So he hurried down the hill, harnessed the dogs to Spencer's sled, and quietly cutting the bonds that held the sleeping thief, left him to his slumber and to his freedom.

When his sons met him on the lake beyond, they questioned him as to the fate of the thief, but Standing Wolf evasively replied,—

“Last night he saw the Dance of the Dead Men.”



THE LOVE-DANCE



## CHAPTER VI

### THE LOVE-DANCE

PERCHED high among the upper branches of a pine, young At-tick was relieving the monotony of his drumming by occasionally chanting a love-song. At the foot of the thickly wooded hillside upon which the pine stood, the swift waters of Lonely River hurried by to lose themselves in Spirit Lake. On the bank near the river mouth was pitched Standing Wolf's camp of two lodges; but the family seemed to be absent, for the dogs were mounting guard.

Again the boy beat his drum; louder and louder he sang his love-song, until his soft, rich voice broke into a wail. Presently the door-skin of the smaller lodge was gently

pushed aside, and Mi-na-ce stepped indolently forth.

It was springtime. A soft breeze from the south sighed among the tree-tops; and, though patches of snow still lingered on the shady hillside, here and there the forest carpet was flecked with splashes of golden sunlight. Tender grasses were thrusting their tiny blades from under last year's leaves, and the buds were already bursting; for Spring travels fast in the Northland.

Shading her eyes with her hand, the girl gazed at the hillside, but failed to discern her lover in the tree-top. She listened awhile and then, upon hearing once more the love-song above the beating of the drum, yielded to the dictates of her heart and began to climb the hill. At-tick saw her coming, ceased his drumming, and slid down to hide behind the tree trunk.

A faintly marked woodland path led close

by, and along it Mi-na-ce was advancing. As she came abreast of the tree, the boy, in fun, gave a shout, and the maid — pretending bashful alarm — took to flight.

Though fleet of foot, she suffered him to overtake her soon, and catch her by the arm, and hold her while she feigned to struggle desperately for freedom. That won, she turned away with a laugh, sat down upon a bank of wild flowers and, with shyly averted face, began plucking them. A moment later she bounded to her feet, startled by a distant sound of some one drumming.

“At-tick, what is that?” she asked eagerly. Could it be that another lover was seeking to attract her attention? At-tick divined her thought, and jealousy kept him from enlightening her.

Again the air throbbed with the sound.

“Let us go and see who it is. You’ll come, won’t you?” she coaxed.

With feigned reluctance At-tick consented and led the way.

As they penetrated into the wood, they heard the sound more distinctly. The source of it suddenly dawned upon Mi-na-ce, and she exclaimed with delight, —

“It’s the love-dance! Come, let us hurry!”

On they sped, picking their way in and out among the trees and undergrowth, and tip-toeing here and there, lest their moccasined feet should break a fallen twig and alarm the dancers. As the drumming sound increased in volume, their caution became greater. Soon they deemed it prudent to go down upon their hands and knees, and thus be more surely screened by the underbrush as they stealthily approached. Creeping on toward the sound slowly and with infinite precaution, they discovered that they were not the only ones going to the dance; for the whirring of wings frequently rustled overhead as

ruffed grouse skimmed past them in rapid flight. Once Mi-na-ce felt the wind from a hawk's wing, as it swooped low from bush to bush, as though endeavoring to arrive unheralded. Twice the girl's sharp eyes caught sight of a fox silently and craftily stealing along. Once she saw a lynx — a soft, gray shadow — slinking through the underbrush ahead. It seemed as if all the forest dwellers were going to the love-dance too, and she began to feel afraid. But she was devoured with curiosity; and, besides, was not At-tick with her? Why need she fear?

When they came to the foot of a ridge, the drumming sounded very near. With utmost wariness they crawled from bush to bush, pausing every now and then, and crouching low. Then, judging the way still clear, on again they went, and finally gained the top of the ridge. With thumping hearts

they rested a moment in a crouching posture, for they had at last arrived upon the scene. Slowly and breathlessly raising their heads, they peered through the leafy screen and beheld the love-dance in full swing.

On a clear, sandy opening in the wood twenty or thirty partridge hens (ruffed grouse) were dancing in a semicircle, in the centre of which, perched upon a rotten log, a beautiful cock-partridge drummed. He was standing with his small head thrust forward upon a finely arched neck which was circled by a handsome, outstanding black ruff fully as wide as his body. His extended wings grazed his perch, while his superb tail was spread out horizontally.

"Chun — chun — chun — chun-chun-nnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn," he hissed slowly at first, but with steadily increasing rapidity. His bill was open; his bright eyes were gleaming; his wings were beating at such



a rate that the forest resounded with the prolonged roll of his drumming. Again and again he shrilled his love-call, and again and again he beat his wondrous accompaniment. Every little while the whirring of swiftly moving wings was heard overhead as other hens flew down to join in the love-dance. To and fro strutted the cock bird in all his pride of beauty — his wings trailing upon the log, his neck arched more haughtily than ever, his ruff rising above his head, and his beautiful, fanlike tail extending higher still.

Meanwhile the hens, too, were strutting up and down, and in and out among their rivals; some, with wings brushing upon the ground; others, with a single wing spread out, against which they frequently kicked the nearest foot as they circled round each other. A continuous hissing was kept up, along with a shaking of heads from side to side, a ceremonious bowing, and a striking of

bills upon the ground. But — though the cock was doing his best to dazzle them with the display of his charms — the hens appeared unconscious of his presence and indifferent to his advances.

At-tick and Mi-na-ce were gazing in silent admiration at the scene before them when — without the slightest warning, and as though dropped from the sky — another cock landed in the midst of the dancers. Immediately the cock of the dance rushed at the intruder and fiercely attacked him.

The newcomer was ready. Bills and wings clashed together. In a moment feathers were flying and blood was running. But the hens never paused in their love-dance. Again and again the feathered gladiators dashed at each other, only to drop apart. Then, facing each other with drooping wings, ruffled plumes, extended necks, lowered heads, and gaping bills, they would

gasped for breath. A moment later they would spring into the air and strike viciously at each other with bill and wing, then separate again. The sand was soon strewn with feathers and sprinkled with blood; yet the belligerents kept renewing the deadly conflict. Unconcernedly, all the while, the stupid hens tripped to and fro in the evolutions of their love-dance.

Already the intruder's scalp was torn; the left wing of the cock of the dance was broken; and both were bleeding copiously. Evidently the combat must soon come to an end. At the next rush the intruder knocked the cock of the dance down, and, leaping upon him, drove his bill into his skull, killing him.

After a brief rest to recover breath, the victor jumped over his late rival's body, took a short leap into the air, gave a back kick of contempt, flew up upon the log, and

looked round as though seeking for female applause. But the hens, with apparently never a thought of him, still kept up their dancing. Presently he, too, sounded his love-call and drummed his accompaniment. Then, strutting up and down, he inspected the dancers. When he had made up his mind as to which was the belle of the ball, he made a rush for her.

At that very moment a lynx sprang through the air, seized him by the neck, and bounded off with him among the bushes just as the report of a gun was heard. Turning in the direction of the sound, At-tick and Mi-na-ce saw Standing Wolf step out from among the trees.

"My son, how dare you bring my daughter here?" demanded the angry hunter, addressing his adopted son. "Don't you know," he continued gravely, "that now an evil fate will surely mark you for this folly?"

He turned to examine the dead lynx and cried, —

“Be off, the both of you, lest ill luck pull you down before you reach home!”

Without waiting for another word, the young culprits dashed away helter-skelter through the woods until they had left their father well in the rear. Then they slowed down to a walk. At-tick was burdened with superstitious fears, and Mi-na-ce was crying by his side. With tenderness At-tick strove to comfort his companion; for he was deeply in love with her. True, he was only sixteen and she was a child of barely twelve, but their ages mattered little; for the people of the Strong Woods marry young.

All winter At-tick had urged his suit. The grandmother had favored it; in every way she had shown him that she wanted him to marry her granddaughter. But, like the hens in the love-dance, Mi-na-ce

had always pretended utter indifference to him and his attentions; nay, before her grandmother she had sometimes spurned the boy. But now she was weeping for fear of the unknown evil that was about to befall her lover through her fault. At-tick, however, did not venture to imagine that her tears were falling for him.

That night, when she and her grandmother had lain down to sleep under the hare-skin robe, she began to cry again, and, as the old woman petted her, confided to her sympathetic ear the tale of the day's adventure and the thoughts that troubled her.

"My child," said the grandmother, "there is but one way to offset the evil that will surely overtake At-tick, and that is for you to consent to sit upon the brush with him" (marry him).

On learning of a means to save her lover, the spirits of Mi-na-ce revived, and she

asked why the partridges danced that way.

"My child, once in the great long-ago, even before it was the custom of our people to marry, there lived an old chief who used oftentimes to go away alone into the woods and mount upon a high rock and sing his love-song and beat his drum. Since he was much in favor, many women would come and listen to his song; also, they would dance before him.

"Now, it came to pass on a certain day that a young chief of another tribe happened by chance upon that way. Hearing the drumming, he resolved to find out what it was about. Deep into the heart of the wood he followed the sound and came upon an open glade wherein were many women dancing before a huge boulder. Wondering with great admiration, the young chief gazed upon their graceful movements and comely figures, and determined to rush in and cap-

ture the most beautiful of them. Turning thought into act, he bounded in among the dancers and, to his amazement, discovered the old chief, who, at sight of him, dropped his drum, grasped his war club, and, leaping down from his rocky eminence, rushed upon the young interloper in a frenzy of jealous fury. The women made no outcry; for, like the female moose or caribou, they used to love only the victor. So, to the accompaniment of the men's hard breathing and the clashing of their war clubs, they went unconcernedly on with their love-dance. In the end the young chief slew the older one, and departed in triumph with the women. But when the Master of Life learned what had happened, he was exceeding wroth, inso-much that he turned the young chief and the women into partridges. That is why the partridges dance the love-dance even to this day."



In the morning Standing Wolf sent At-tick on the round of one of his fur-paths to examine the traps and to bring home whatever they might contain. As the boy left the lodge, dawn was breaking in the eastern sky, though the shadows of night still lingered in the dark aisles of the forest. Picking up the small hunting canoe, he carried it down to the bank, launched it, and, kneeling in the fragile craft, paddled down Lonely River and out upon Spirit Lake. Not a ripple was astir. The trees upon the shore stood reflected topsy-turvy in the still waters.

But before the boy had paddled half-way across, the lake became veiled in a thin film of vapor that rose from its surface. Away toward the western shore he saw misty figures dancing above the water. A gentle breeze began to blow from the southwest and waft the ghostly dancers toward him. They hurried along as though eager to over-

take him, and others rose from the depths and joined them. The numbers grew until the whole lake seemed covered with dismay-ing multitudes, and presently he was completely encircled by a misty screen. Shipping his paddle, he rested awhile. It was useless to continue on now; for the wind had shifted and he had lost his bearings. In half-an-hour's time, however, the sun peeped over the eastern trees; the mist began to disperse as rapidly as it had risen, and soon the lake was once more clear. Cheerily At-tick plied his paddle again. Skirting the eastern beach, he went ashore here and there to examine the traps that lay hidden in the forest. Others he was able to inspect without disembarking. Then he paddled up Snake River, and continued his work until about noon, when he went ashore to visit a deadfall set for black bear. On nearing the trap, he ascertained from the

signs among the dry leaves that a bear had been there the night before. On further examination he saw that the bait had been disturbed, and that the syrup which Standing Wolf had rubbed on the deadfall had been licked off.

Tired and hungry, he decided to eat his lunch before resetting the trap. So he filled his copper tea-pail with water from the river, and hung it over the fire which he had just kindled. While waiting for the water to boil, he changed his mind, and determined to rebait the deadfall before breaking his fast. Instead of removing the uprights at the back of the deadfall and entering from behind, as is the usual way, he lazily took advantage of the opening in front and crept in on his hands and knees. He adjusted the bait and was backing carefully out when, just as he was almost clear of the opening, the bait-stick slipped and the heavy timber,

weighted with logs and stones, came down upon his left arm with crushing force, pinioned him to the sill-log, and held him there with the grip of a mighty vise. The pain was almost unbearable, but the thought of his predicament was even harder to bear; for he was held a prisoner without prospect of escape. He lay there on the point of swooning with pain, faint with hunger and parched with thirst; while just beyond his reach, to tantalize him, the water was boiling away and the caribou steak was shrivelling to a crisp.

Remembering his hunting-knife, he felt at his back and found it in its sheath. Hope sprang aflame in his breast; for now he could cut his way to freedom. Determinedly he set about the almost impossible task, and with the keen-edged blade began whittling at the big, dry log. At first he made fair progress, but his cramped position handicapped

him seriously; for he could cut only from one angle, and so had to do much more work than would otherwise have been necessary. He had been hacking scarcely half an hour before he found himself compelled to stop and rest. While resting, he happened to glance around and was horrified to see that the fire was spreading. In a few minutes it must reach the deadfall, set fire to its dry timbers, and roast him alive. In desperation he swung his legs about, scratched the ground with his moccasined feet, and managed to scrape the leaves aside and roughen the earth to such an extent that when the fire reached the spot, it divided, passed on either side of him, and died down without doing any harm.

Again At-tick resumed his task, and again pain and fatigue compelled him to stop. So the afternoon dragged through. Dusk came on and he was laboring still, but his

hand was terribly blistered, and exhaustion was overtaking him. He rested again while he watched the hares taking their evening frolic. He was listening all the while, keenly alert for the slightest sound of approaching succor. But upon reflection he remembered that he would not be missed, at least until the following night. So he had little hope of being rescued in time.

Once more he set to work shaving and hacking at the dry, bone-like log that held him fast and kept him tortured. But now he made so little progress that his efforts seemed almost thrown away.

Night settled down at last and he ceased his exertions, wondering what would befall him before the daylight came. The chill air searched him through and through. His clothes became damp with the falling dew, and he shivered as he lay. About ten o'clock the full moon rose. Its long, slant-

ing rays, peering through the bare branches, cast here and there patches of silver light upon the forest's carpet of dead leaves. At every sound he strained his eyes to look, lest something dreadful should appear. Though he strove to keep awake, drowsiness came upon him, and by midnight slumber for a time gave him a happy release.

But it was not for long. While he slept, the bear that had visited the deadfall the night before, arrived in search of more syrup and, coming suddenly upon the motionless figure lying across its path, with a snort of surprise rose upon its haunches. At-tick, awakened by the sound, gave a scream, but the animal did not run away. In a frenzy of fear he screamed again and again, and the bear, as though he liked the sound, cocked his head to one side to listen as he watched the boy. Louder and louder At-tick yelled in the hope that the noise

would drive the bear away, but Bruin simply squatted down, as though determined to sit the concert out, while At-tick was afraid to stop shouting, lest the bear should attack him. For hours he screamed and shouted, and it seemed to him as if daylight would never come. At last the dawn appeared, and with its coming the bear took his departure.

During the greater part of the morning At-tick toiled, but with diminishing strength and with insignificant results. His thirst was grown excruciating. To quench it, if possible, he dug into the soil in hope of finding at least a handful of earth that contained some moisture; but he could find none. He spent the day sometimes working, sometimes crying, sometimes dozing, sometimes raving. The loneliness was appalling. When a mink or a fisher or any living thing came near, he would talk to it



and coax it to stay and keep him company. At times he would talk to Mi-na-ce as though she were present. During the afternoon a wolverine crept into sight and stared at him, but he was not afraid; fear had left him now. He seemed no longer to care for freedom; for he had ceased his efforts at escape. Every moment he was expecting to hear the approaching footsteps of Standing Wolf or The Marten; but they did not come. He shouted, but no one answered.

Again dusk came through the woods; once more the hares played about until the on-coming night hid them, and the rising moon brought them into view again. The black bear, too, arrived; but this time the boy did not scream. He talked to it in a kindly way and entreated it to stay with him because he was so lonely. When he was tired of talking to it, he sang bits of hymns and recited scraps of prayers; and

the bear remained with him until nearly dawn. Soon after sunrise he became unconscious.

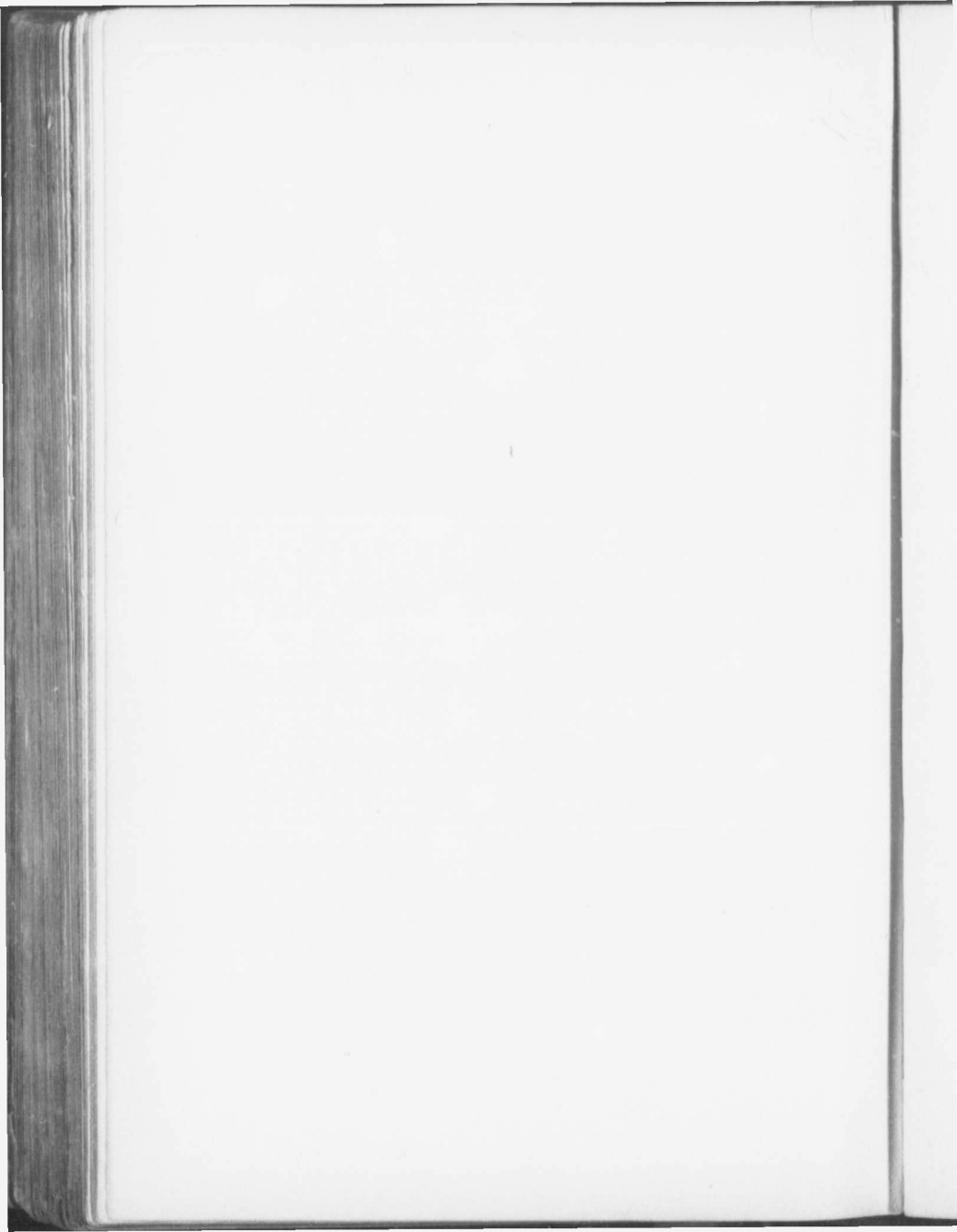
About noon there was a slight grating sound upon the river bank. A moment later Standing Wolf came from between the trees. As he rounded the deadfall, he stopped suddenly and gazed in horror at the sight before him. Then he sprang forward, heaved aside the stones and logs that weighted down the drop timber, released the boy's arm, and stooped down to feel his heart. It was still beating. His eye fell upon the chips and fragments of wood and bark, and he saw that the boy had almost succeeded in cutting his way to freedom; another half-hour's labor would have sufficed. Picking up the limp form of the lad, Standing Wolf carried him to the river bank, and, after cutting away the middle thwarts and tilting the canoe on edge, rolled At-tick into it.

Upon Standing Wolf's arrival at camp

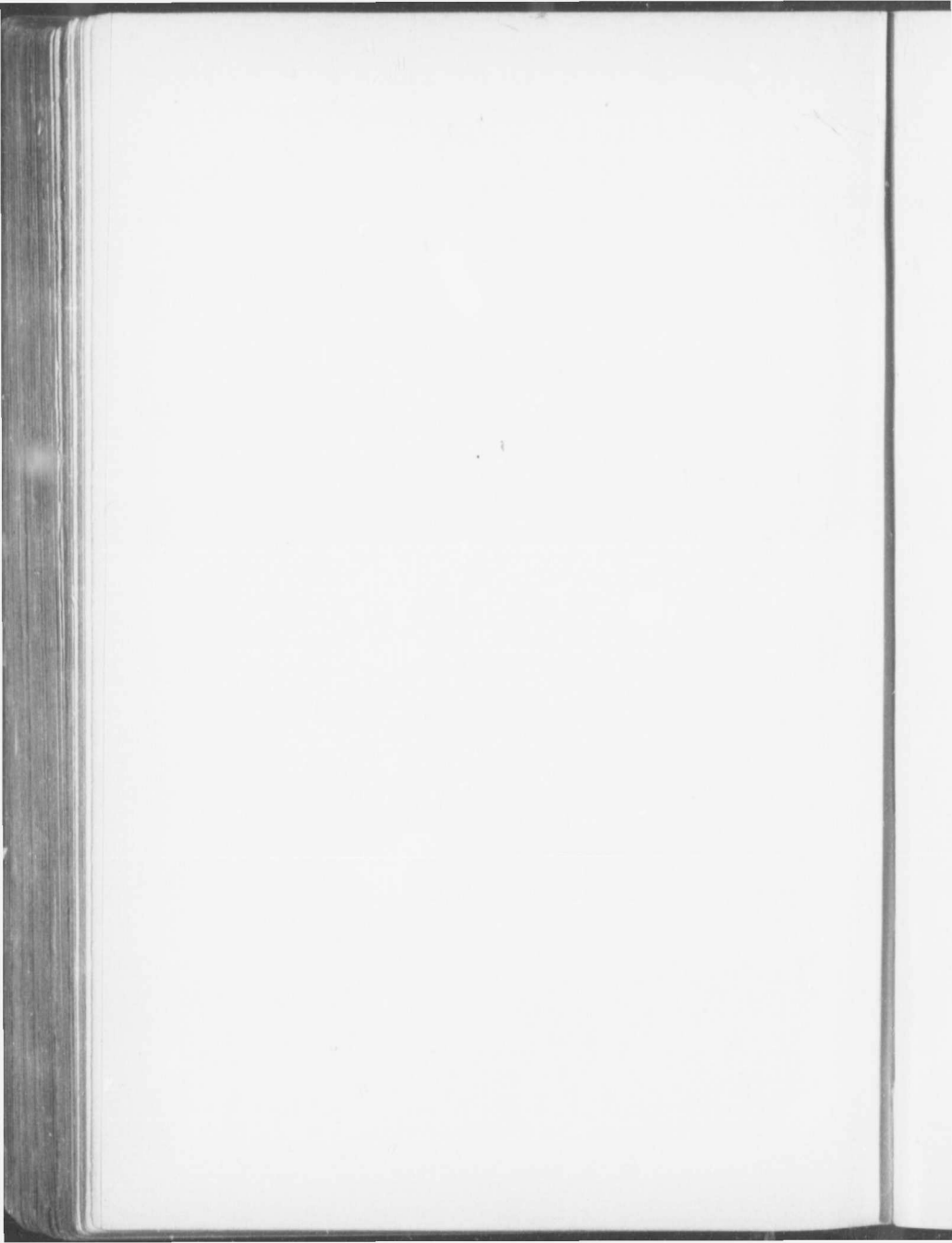
with his sad burden, the women were greatly alarmed. Poor Mi-na-ce was convulsed with sobs at the sight of her lover still lying unconscious. When Ko-ko-hay, her mother, severely told her that it was all her fault, and that At-tick would probably die, the tender little maid felt as if her heart would break with sorrow and remorse. The boy was carefully wrapped in warm blankets and fed some broth; and then Noo-koom, the grandmother, set about dressing his wounded arm, and bathing it with the liquor of boiled juniper brush.

Next day, while the others were away at their work, Mi-na-ce watched over the boy, who was still delirious; and, as she sat beside his bed, moaned aloud, —

“Oh, At-tick, it is all my fault, I know; but perhaps it is not too late yet; so, if you will only live, I will promise to sit upon the brush with you.”



THE ROUTING OF THE  
RAIDERS







At-tick.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE ROUTING OF THE RAIDERS

AT-TICK soon recovered. While lounging about camp for a few days before taking up his regular work again, he continued to court Mi-na-ce. Every evening they sat together under the blanket. One night old Noo-koom, convinced that the lovers had sat under the blanket long enough, decided that it was time they sat upon the brush together, or were married. Accordingly, she talked the matter over with Standing Wolf and his wife Ko-ko-hay. They agreed with her. Said Standing Wolf:—

“It is well that At-tick and Mi-na-ce should be married according to the custom of our people, but it is also well that we should

retain the friendship of the priest and of the nuns. On our return to the Post, therefore, the children must be married again 'in the face of the Church.' We must not forget that when we arrive at the Post the Redcoats will be there also; and — as they will endeavor to capture the buffalo killers — they will search our outfit for the buffalo skins. We need the buffalo skins; moreover, they belong to us; so I will not part with them. There is but one way to escape detection, and that is through the friendship of the nuns. I charge you all not to let any one at the Post know that At-tick and Mi-na-ce have already been married after the custom of our people. It is well that we should live according to the ways of our forefathers, and it is also well that we should seem to adopt the ways of the white man. Now call Mi-na-ce, and let me hear what she has to say."

When the girl came in, her father told her that At-tick was a good boy; that he would certainly make a successful hunter; and that, if she would sit upon the brush with him, they would give her plenty of marrow grease for her hair and some porcupine quills for her moccasins. They might even buy her some ribbon, beads, and silk thread for fancy work. Furthermore, At-tick would be given enough moose skins to make a lodge covering.

Mi-na-ce chewed meditatively upon the large piece of spruce-gum in her mouth, while she listened with averted eyes and drooping head.

Noo-koom, supposing the child to be in doubt, interposed:—

“You must sit upon the brush with him, because I have promised that you would. Did we not eat the fat and the blood, and use the firewood he left at our door?”

The remembrance of all that dainty eating decided the child, and she gave her word that she would sit upon the brush with At-tick if they would promise to buy her a bottle of perfume when they returned to Fort Determination.

When Mi-na-ce had left the lodge, Standing Wolf called At-tick in, and said to him:—

“Listen, my son; Noo-koom tells me that you have been sitting under the blanket with my daughter Mi-na-ce. She is a good girl and will make you happy; for she can make good moccasins.”

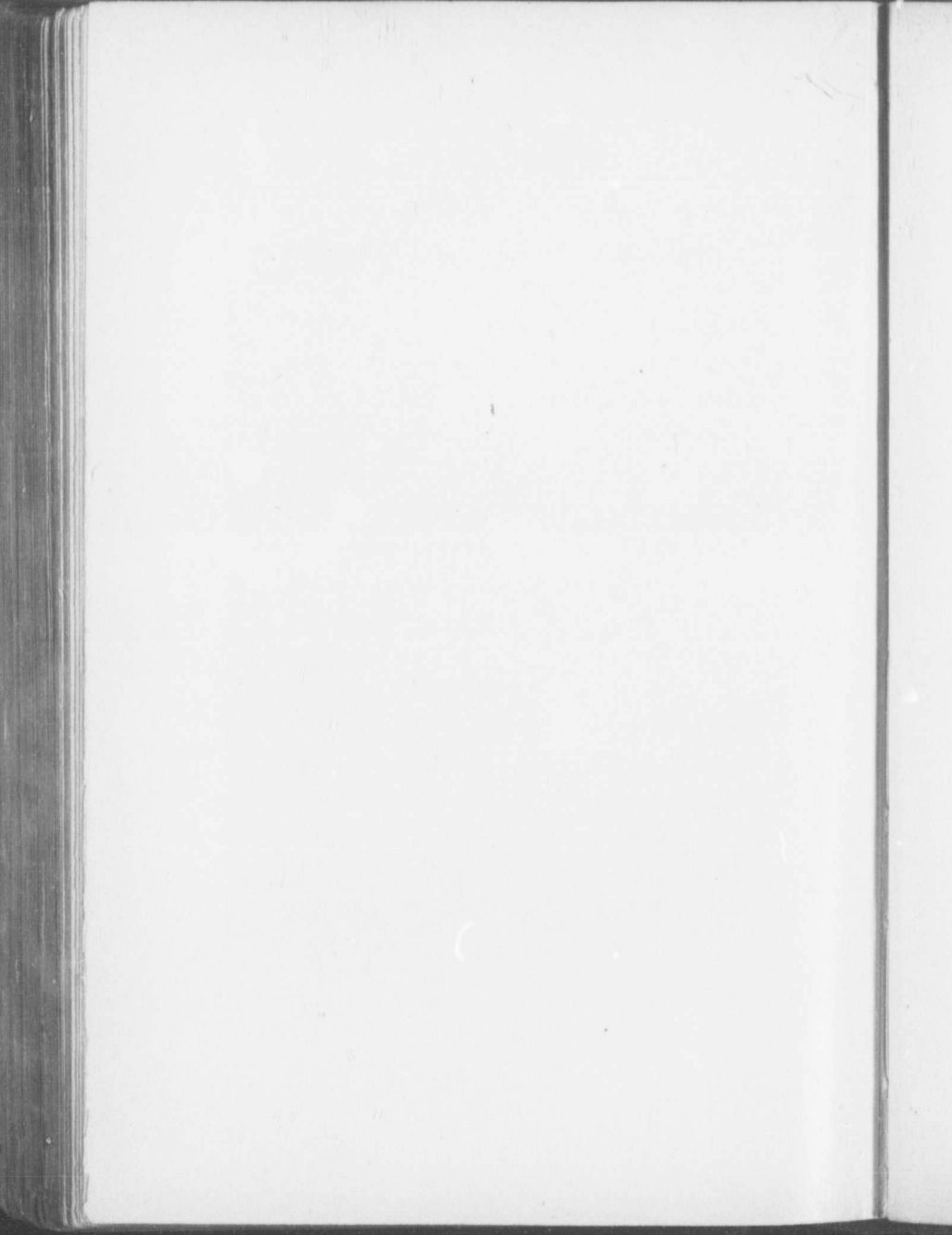
“Yes,” replied At-tick, “I know the girl, and I want her.”

“To-morrow, then,” said Standing Wolf, “you must sit upon the brush with her. I will tell the women to prepare the feast.”

By daybreak next morning Mi-na-ce was sitting beside the fire greasing her hair, her supple, girlish figure glowing in the ruddy



"Her supple, girlish figure glowing in the ruddy light."



light. She was now, for the first time in her life, to wear the badge of womanhood; for she was about to reverse her dress and button it up in front instead of at the back. It is the Saulteaux custom for girls to button their dresses behind, and for married women to button theirs in front. In the absence of a new gown for her wedding, the bride-to-be simply reverses the old one.

Late in the morning At-tick bedecked in all his finery entered Noo-koom's lodge, seized Mi-na-ce by the hair of her head, and dragged her out. The girl's struggles to escape from the grasp of her abductor were edifying in their propriety. Her shrieks were heartrending — or would have been had they not alternated with delighted giggles. The wedding march had begun.

The struggling lovers led the way; the children, bubbling with laughter, followed; and the old people brought up the rear of

the joyous procession. The happy couple tussled with each other until they reached a spot in the bush where At-tick had cleared a space and laid a carpet of balsam brush beside a fire. There the groom deposited his bride. With a final shriek she accepted the new conditions, and at once set about her matrimonial duties, while the others returned to their lodges to put the finishing touches to the wedding breakfast. How the child bride's face glowed with pleasure at the thought of now really possessing a hunter, and being endowed with all his worldly goods!

Beside a great fire built in the open there was laid a carpet of brush, in the centre of which a blanket was spread, and upon it the feast. There were hares, grouse, and fish roasted upon sticks. In one pot boiled fresh moose and caribou meat. In another simmered lynx entrails, bear fat, and moose



steak. In a third stewed ducks and geese. In a fourth bubbled choice pieces of beaver, muskrat, lynx, and skunk. Besides, there were caribou tongues, beaver tails, bear meat, and foxes' entrails roasted upon the coals. Strong tea in plenty, fresh birch syrup, forest-made cranberry wine, a large chunk of dried Saskatoon berries served with bear's grease, frozen cranberries, and a little "bannock" made of flour, water, and grease, completed the bill of fare.

Mi-na-ce sat beside At-tick and ate out of his dish. She even used his pipe for an after-dinner smoke. An interval of rest followed, and then dancing began.

The Saulteaux woman, like her civilized sister, is the willing slave of fashion. Her code of etiquette prescribes a special costume for the marriage feast. Possessing, as a rule, but one dress, she cannot afford to cut the top of it off; she, therefore, simply

unbuttons it down to the waist, and is at once ready for the ballroom.

At Mi-na-ce's wedding the women, of course, appeared in "evening dress." Equally, of course, the dancing had to be vigorous in order to keep Jack Frost from becoming too familiar. To the measured beating of a drum the dancers began circling the fire. Round and round they moved in silence. Then, breaking into a chant, the men faced the women, and from time to time solemnly revolved. But the women never turned their backs upon the fire. It was a slow, monotonous measure, only relieved by the women and children throwing feathers at one another. Between each dance the company partook of refreshments, and so the festivity proceeded until daylight.

Next day Standing Wolf gave the young couple some wholesome advice and took occasion to announce that, as he had had a

profitable winter's hunt, he would leave on the following Monday for Fort Determination, where, as usual, they would spend their summer. He and the boys had already finished their beaver and muskrat hunting, and had gathered in all their steel traps and had sprung their snares and deadfalls. The women had made their birch syrup, and pressed the winter's catch of furs into rainproof packs. By the end of the week all was in readiness for the voyage, and Sunday was spent as a day of rest.

On Monday morning, before the breaking of dawn, the camp was astir. After a hasty breakfast, the canoes, which had been thoroughly overhauled several days before, were gummed afresh; the covering of the big lodge was taken down, and — along with the rest of the outfit, the children and the dogs — packed in the canoes. The older ones stepped aboard, and away they all

paddled down Lonely River and out upon Spirit Lake. Every one was happy; for they were leaving behind the toil and the solitude of their winter life. Soon they would be spending the balmy summer with old friends at the Post, where there would be few cares to disturb their joyous, lazy days upon the tribal summer camping-ground.

A favorable breeze arising, Standing Wolf had the two smaller canoes lashed on either side of the larger one, and rigged a "three-point" blanket for a sail. Masses of ice were still floating on the lake, and—while the rest of the party reclined, smoking and chatting—Ko-ko-hay was kept busy wielding the steering paddle. It was a beautiful May morning and summer was fast coming in; for geese and loons and ducks were sporting upon the sparkling lake, while overhead a few white clouds were drifting lazily along on a southern breeze.

Soon after entering Bear River, Ko-ko-hay turned the canoes to the western bank at a point near one of their old camping-grounds. There she left the others, and took her way among the trees on the hillside till she gained the summit at a small opening in the wood. Here stood two little crosses that marked the graves of two of her children — one a stillborn girl, and the other a boy who had died at the age of three. Upon the boy's grave she placed some food and a little bow and arrows, and bowed low over it and wept aloud. But at the grave of her stillborn child she forgot her grief and smiled with joy as she placed upon the mound a handful of fresh flowers, a few pretty feathers, and some handsome furs. Sitting there in the warm sunshine, she closed her eyes and fancied she heard the little maid dancing among the rustling leaves and singing to her. Like all Indian women of the Strong

Woods, she believed that her stillborn child would never grow larger or older; that it would never leave her; that it would always love her, though she lived to be a great-grandmother; that when sorrow and pain bowed her low, this little maid would laugh and dance and talk and sing to her, and thus change her grief into joy. That is why an Indian mother puts pretty things upon the grave of her stillborn child, and that is why she never mourns over it.

While Ko-ko-hay was visiting the graves, Noo-koom and The Snow Bird went off to a muskeg to gather moss. The Snow Bird, while passing a clump of trees that stood upon a mound, noticed a hole beneath the roots in the side of the bank. Stooping down to look within, she heard a noise inside and beckoned her grandmother. The old woman came hurrying along. No sooner had she peeped into the hole than she turned

about quickly, pulled up her skirt, and sat down on the opening so that her broad figure completely blocked it. Tucking her skirt about her so as to shut out every vestige of light, she told The Snow Bird to run as fast as the Master of Life would let her, and tell her father to come at once and kill a black bear.

The old woman's action in thus blocking the hole was not so perilous as one might suppose; for, understanding the ways of bears, she well knew that, if the light were completely shut off, the bear would make no effort to escape.

Standing Wolf with the boys and the dogs came up on the run. The hunter drew near with his gun in readiness; the old woman rolled aside, and out rushed the bear. The Indians made short work of him, and soon had his skin and meat stowed away in the canoes.

About noon they reëmbarked and continued on their way down the river. Standing Wolf travelled well in advance of the others, so as to have a better chance to surprise any game he might see. During the afternoon, he perceived a beaver swimming in an eddy and, near by, another sunning itself upon a drift log. The latter he secured. Later on, as he was about to round a bend in the stream, he heard a splash just beyond the turn. Quietly rounding the point, he stopped his canoe beneath a screen of overhanging branches, and, after watching awhile, descried an otter fishing in the river. A moment later, he beheld a beaver, evidently a female, swimming just beyond the otter, and pursued by two male beavers. The males, perceiving the otter swimming in the direction of the female, probably came to the conclusion that he was about to pay his court to her; for they suddenly



swerved from their course and attacked the innocent otter. He dived to escape his assailants, and they dived after him. When he rose for breath, they came up, too, and made after him; so he dived again. Evidently, they were trying to wind their quarry; for whenever he came up for breath, they endeavored to reach him before he got it. In a short time they had so exhausted him that he refused to dive again before he gained his breath. He made for the shore. The beavers rushed after him, overtook him, and, just as he gained the bank, ripped his throat open. Standing Wolf shot one of the beavers and tossed it into his canoe along with the otter.

About an hour before sunset on the third day out, the canoes being bunched together and the family busy talking and laughing, they drifted close to the eastern bank at a place where a huge ridge of ice, perhaps fifty

yards long and six or eight feet thick, overhung the opposite river bank. Without the slightest warning, the great mass, containing hundreds of tons, gave way, and, falling into the water, sent a wave across the river of such magnitude and force that it carried the canoes high up the sloping bank, and left them stranded in the mud and filled with water. For the next few minutes there was a scramble to save the furs before the water had time to soak beneath the wrappings. After emptying the canoes, they resumed their journey.

When the time came to disembark, Standing Wolf found so much ice along the banks of the river that he decided to continue on in search of a more desirable camping ground. After about an hour's paddling, they drew close to the head of a rapid, and found the river blocked with ice. The easiest thing to do was to push the canoes in among the

willows and spend the night in them. The water had risen to such a height that the banks were flooded and the jam of floating ice prevented their landing. So they fastened the canoes together among the trees. The Marten climbed up into a large lightning-shattered poplar, and, chopping off some dead branches, built a fire in an upper crotch of the dead tree, and boiled the water for their tea.

During the night, old Noo-koom woke up, and in alarm called the others; for the canoes were all hung up on an incline against the trees, and threatened to capsize at any moment. The ice-jam had gone out some hours before, and had allowed the water to recede three or four feet. Untying the canoes, they worked them away to deeper water, and the grandmother kept watch until daylight.

Next morning, after a paddle of about a

quarter of a mile, they landed at the head of the portage, and, as the rapid was not a dangerous one, Standing Wolf determined to run it, and went ashore to see if the main channel was free from ice. On his return, he instructed the others to follow his lead about four canoe-lengths apart, so that in case of mishap they could help each other. Down the canoes plunged one after the other. The children wielded their little paddles, screaming with delight as they swiftly glided through the foaming spray past shores lined on either side with walls of ice fully ten feet high.

As the canoes rounded a sharp bend in the rapid, Standing Wolf descried a black bear walking on the ice that overhung the eastern bank. The animal seemed as much surprised as any of them, and, instead of making off, rose upon its haunches and gazed in amazement at the passing canoes.

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There was no time to land, so Standing Wolf, quick as a flash, seized his gun, and, firing, hit the bear in the shoulder. For a moment the brute tore at the wound; then, apparently thinking that the canoes were to blame, galloped along the ice-ridge after them. At the foot of the first rapid the hunter killed the bear with a second ball fired from his canoe. Then they went ashore to skin and cut up the carcass.

While they were thus engaged, several Chipewayan Indians suddenly appeared. Hearing the firing, they had set out from their camp to learn the cause of it. They told Standing Wolf that over forty of their families were camped on the river bank below. They had grown dissatisfied with the trader at Fort Defiance, and had come down to trade at Fort Determination. On their invitation Standing Wolf decided to spend the rest of the day with them.

About sundown, while Standing Wolf's family were pitching their camp near the Chipewayans, a canoe was seen descending the rapids. It came abreast of the camp and stopped in mid-stream. Presently it was joined by another canoe, and still another, until in less than fifteen minutes there was a flotilla of some seventeen canoes manned, apparently, by Wood Crees. After a little parleying, the Crees landed on the opposite bank, and a few of the old men came over to pay the Chipewayans a visit, while their women erected their lodges for the night. True enough, they were Wood Crees, old friends of Standing Wolf, who regularly spent their summers at Fort Determination. They, too, were returning from their winter's hunt, and had a quantity of furs with them.

About half a mile below, there was a series of dangerous rapids. Through one

of these it was possible to run the canoes partly loaded. Two others followed where it was necessary to lighten the canoes completely, and where much skill was required to navigate successfully. Below these there was still another rapid, the most dangerous of all, around which canoes were always portaged; for no man had ever yet dared to shoot that perilous descent. Tales were told of how men had ventured too near and how, before they had time to realize their danger, their canoes had been seized by the demon of the rapids, carried helplessly to the brink and hurled to destruction in the seething caldron below. As the Spirit of Death was said to hover there always, the Indians called the rapids "Death's Rapids."

Early next morning, the Crees and the Chipewayans began shooting the lesser rapids and portaging their outfits to the foot of the more dangerous of them. The men of each

tribe emulously contended as to which possessed the strongest packers and the most skilful "white-water men." On the portage each man strained to the utmost to carry the biggest load; and the women, and even the children, exhibited the same spirit. While running the rapids, the men strove to show their skill in handling their canoes in dangerous places. The excitement grew so keen that, had not some of the head men commanded that no two canoes should start at the same time, there would have been some risky jockeying, ending, probably, in disaster; for, it must be remembered, there was an ancient enmity between the Crees and the Chipewayans that needed but little provocation to become a deadly strife. Each side claimed to have the best canoeemen; but nothing came of the claim except wrangling. Standing Wolf, being a neutral, was appealed to. For a time



he was at a loss as to a decision; then he said:—

“My brothers, there is but one way to decide. Let your best canoemen prove their courage and their skill by daring to run Death’s Rapids.”

Since no man among them had the courage to undertake such a venture, they scoffed at Standing Wolf, and asked him why he did not prove his own skill by doing that which he called upon them to do. Instead of answering them, Standing Wolf went over to his son-in-law, who was out of hearing of the others. and said quietly:—

“At-tick, my son, I have often observed your work with the paddle, and, though you are but young, I consider you a better canoeman than any of these boasters. Our people have never known the day when the Wood Crees or the Chipewayans could show us how to paddle. I ask you, then, have you

the heart to venture with me the run of Death's Rapids?"

"Yes," replied the youth, without hesitation, "I will take my chance with you."

So Standing Wolf told the Chipewayans and the Crees that, since none of them had the courage to try their skill in Death's Rapids, the boy At-tick and he would show them how to do it.

Standing Wolf and the boy set out to examine the channel by walking along the side of the gorge through which the rapids plunged. After carefully noting the positions of the rocks and the working of the currents, they returned to the head of the portage.

Standing Wolf's announcement had created so much interest that the people of both camps had crowded to the foot of Death's Rapids to witness the attempt to make the perilous run. Several of his friends tried to dissuade him from such rashness, but his

pride was stirred and he was determined to retain his prestige as the most skilful canoe-man in that region of the Strong Woods. The fact that for the last fourteen years he had been annually selected to fill the position of guide-in-chief to the Fur Brigade, gave him a reputation that he wished at all hazards to preserve. He knew, too, that the success of the venture would procure for At-tick the most envied position in the great canoes of the Fur Brigade, — that of bowman.

While At-tick and The Marten turned their best canoe upside down and greased its bottom, Standing Wolf looked to the paddles, carefully examining and testing them until he had chosen the four best suited to his purpose. When all was in readiness, he stepped aboard and took the position most important in a canoe about to run white-water, — that of bowman. At-tick knelt down in the stern. They had just enough ballast

on board to trim and steady the craft. Each selected a paddle and laid one of the other two within easy reach in case of accident.

They squatted down upon their heels. Standing Wolf gave the word, and At-tick gently shoved the canoe from the bank. Out into the current they glided, and, on reaching the centre of the stream, At-tick turned the bow for the head of the rapids. Long before they sighted white-water, the roar of the cataract was humming in their ears. Presently, Standing Wolf stood up and scanned the river. Dark, ominous water raced ahead for a hundred yards, and then disappeared, leaving nothing but a great, surging mass of white that leaped high and dropped out of sight in the apparently forsaken river-bed. Then At-tick stood up, too, and Saulteaux words passed between them. Every moment they were gaining impetus and always heading for the

highest crest of foam. At last, just as they were twenty-five yards from the end of dark water, Standing Wolf gave the word to paddle. With a wild shout they drove their paddles home. The canoe trembled a little at first, as their work was somewhat ragged; but a moment later they settled into an even stroke and swept buoyantly among the tossing billows. Like a race-horse, the canoe started down the slanting course, and tore along faster and faster. Foam flew from its outstretched head and flecked its heaving sides; while a long, waving tail of white floated from its stern as it plunged down, down, and ever down. Now before them ran a strange, wild river of seething white, lashing among great, gray-capped, dark-greenish boulders that blocked the way. High, rocky banks, standing close together, squeezed the river into a tumult of fury. Swiftly they rushed down the racing current

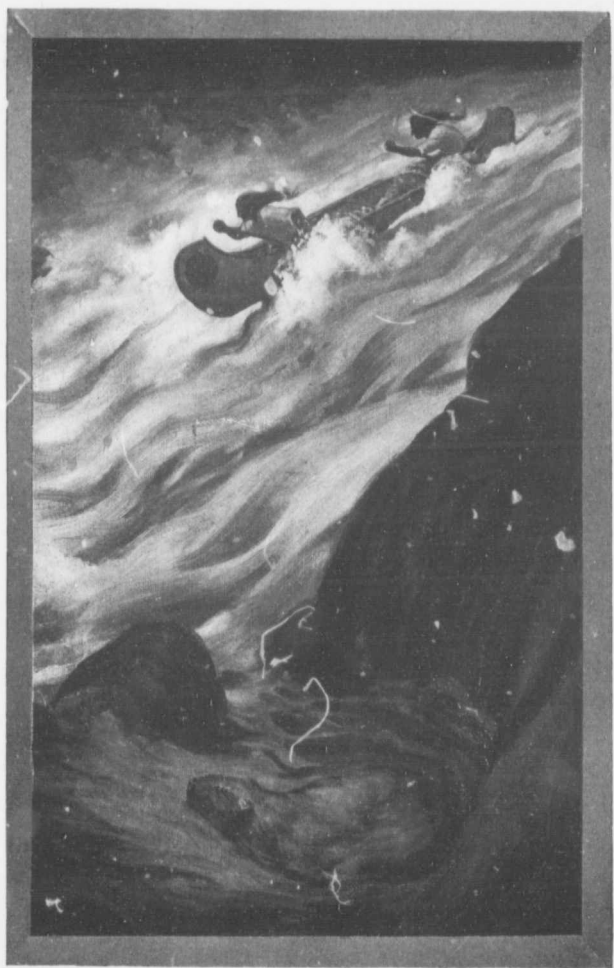
and plunged through the swirling waters. Jagged rocks thrust at them through the flying spray; massive boulders lay in wait for them beneath the shallow foam. It was dismaying work. Death hovered above them. They paddled hard to force the canoe ahead of the current. With increasing speed they plied and bent their paddles. Standing Wolf with eyes alert keenly watched the whirling waters for indications of rocks hidden below. The roar of the waters drowned his orders. At-tick closely noted and followed every move his father made. Down they swept, riding upon the very back of the river where the waters formed a vast ridge rising four or five feet above the water-line on either shore. To swerve a hair's breadth meant sure destruction. With terrific speed they reached the brink of a violent descent. For a moment, it seemed, the canoe paused, steadied itself, then dipped its

head as the stern upheaved, and down they plunged among more rocks than ever. Right in their path the angry torrent was waging battle with a giant boulder that disputed the way. The frantic river hissed and roared and lashed at it; yet it never budged; it did but frown destruction upon all that dared approach it. How Standing Wolf labored! How his paddle bent! Deep into the water he jabbed it, and close under the left side of the bow. Then with a mighty heave he lifted the head around. The canoe swung as if upon a pivot; for was not At-tick doing the very opposite at that precise moment? They sheered off. The next instant the paddles were working on the opposite sides; for Standing Wolf had detected signs of a water-covered rock not three yards from the bow. With a lunge he strove to lift the bow around, but his paddle snapped like a rotten twig. Instantly he grasped the other;

but a grating sound ran along the whole length of the heaving bottom. The next moment he was working the new paddle. A little water was coming in, but their craft was running true. The rocks now grew fewer, but there was another pitch ahead. Again the bow dipped as they rushed down the incline. Spray mounted in clouds that drenched them to the skin as they plunged through the "grand swell" and then shot out among the leaping and tumbling billows that threatened to engulf them. Escaping these, the canoe rode upon the backs of the "white horses" that reared and plunged between the whirlpools, and rose and fell, rose and fell, as they fought their way through. At last, breathless and exhausted, they emerged into calmer water, where there greeted them the welcome sight of old Noo-koom bobbing about alone in her canoe, hovering at the foot of the rapids to pick them up in case of accident.







"Shooting Death's Rapids."

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The next moment a wild yell from either bank, drowning the roar of the waves, hailed them as the first men who ever lived after shooting Death's Rapids.

When they stepped ashore at the foot of the portage, there was much talking, laughing, and hand-shaking, but never another boasting word as to paddling from either the Crees or the Chipewayans. The latter decided to celebrate the event by a feast; so their women bustled around in preparation, and the Crees were invited. After the repast many speeches were made, in which Standing Wolf and At-tick were highly lauded. Then, as often happens at such gatherings in the forest, a game of chance was suggested. Out came the drums at once, and blankets were spread for the players. Sides of ten men each were chosen, and Ke-dug-a-beshew, or The Speckled Lynx, was elected to lead the Chipewayans, while Me-gizzee,

or The Eagle, was chosen by the Wood Crees.

The players squatted in an oval-shaped ring; their hair drawn over their faces to hide the expression of their emotions, and their knees covered with blankets. Each team was supplied with ten small sticks. The game began by a Cree leader calling upon his opponent to match him. As the latter held his stick in the wrong hand, he lost. And so the game went on. Bets were made on the chance of every play, and the stakes were thrown into the centre of the oval. A set of drummers played for each side alternately, — evidently to confuse players, — and all the while there was loud chanting. In that simple fashion they speedily gambled away much of their belongings. There was cheating, of course. If a player was caught in the act, he was accounted a rogue; but if he escaped detection, he was

lauded for his smartness. By evening it was seen that the Chipewayans were gaining steadily, and, in the hope of changing their luck, the Crees tried to persuade Standing Wolf to take a hand on their side; but he feigned fatigue, and withdrew to his camp, which was pitched below that of the Chipewayans. There he was joined by the boys, and, as they all squatted round the lodge fire, he whispered, for some one might be prowling about:—

“My sons, I do not want to delay here any longer. We have much fur to trade, and it is well that we should be first to arrive at Fort Determination. The moon will soon be up; so I want to break camp at once. We will spend the night on the way.”

In a quarter of an hour they were all aboard the canoes and paddling silently down-stream under cover of the shadow of the river bank. As they glided along, they

heard the wrangling of the gamblers above the beating of the drums, and Standing Wolf felt relieved that he was quitting the scene; for there was sure to be trouble between the Chipewayans and the Crees before morning.

After running for a couple of miles under cover of the bank, they lashed the canoes together and headed them out into mid-stream, where the current was running about three miles an hour. Standing Wolf and the boys took turns at steering, while the others slept beneath their blankets. Soon the moon came out, and they drifted all night long. Just before daybreak, Standing Wolf saw three moose swimming across the river; but, as he was not in need of meat, he let them go.

At dawn the party went ashore for breakfast, after which they trusted no longer to the current, but all resumed paddling. At sunrise a stern wind hurried them along.

That day they covered over sixty miles before they entered an island-dotted lake an hour or two before sundown.

Seeing smoke rising ahead, Standing Wolf steered for it, and, on landing at one of the larger islands, found three Crees whom he knew, squatting about their fire. While he was chatting with them, they told him that they had spent the morning gathering eggs. On their arrival at the lake they had separated to hunt for eggs upon the various islands, and all had agreed to return to the present island at noon in order to set out for home together. But the fourth of their party, Uj-e-jauk, or The Crane, had not returned, and they were anxious about him.

"My brothers," asked Standing Wolf, "why do you not search for the missing man? No doubt he has met with some mishap."

One of the Crees, Ne-kah, or The Goose, replied: "Don't worry. The Crane is well.

He will surely return, and with more eggs than any of us has gathered."

But Amik, or The Beaver, who seemed to be the leader of the little party, thought otherwise.

"My brother," he said, addressing Standing Wolf, "we had better follow your advice. His canoe may have drifted away."

"If anything has happened to The Crane," remarked The Goose, "he would have signalled with his gun."

"How," inquired Standing Wolf, "could he fire his gun, if his canoe had drifted away? Would not his gun be in his canoe?"

So they all boarded their canoes, and, by request, Standing Wolf accompanied them; for all Indians, no matter of what tribe, respected the counsel of Standing Wolf and accounted him one of the wisest men among them. After paddling among the islands for a mile or more, they saw The Crane's



canoe adrift. They overhauled it: the missing man was not to be seen; but, sure enough, his gun was aboard. Towing the stray canoe after them, they landed on the island where they had seen The Crane in the early morning gathering eggs. Over and over again they shouted for The Crane, but nothing answered save the echo, which sounded so loud and strange that it awed them.

"Perhaps," suggested Amik, "The Crane is lying asleep somewhere; let us go and awake him."

"But the island," replied Standing Wolf, "is small; therefore, it is not likely that he could sleep all through our calling. No doubt The Crane is dead by now; we must search for his body."

They divided and went in various directions, examining the shore-line. When they met again, they turned inward and carefully looked over the intervening space, but found

no trace of the missing man. The Crees, after a long discussion, came to the conclusion that The Crane must have gone to some other island.

"My brothers," said Standing Wolf, mildly, "why do you talk like loons? Has not the wind blown steadily from the north all day? Are not the other islands to the south of this one? Did we not find the canoe drifting on the south side of this island? Is not this island the most northerly one? It is true that The Crane is not now upon this island, nor is he upon any other island; yet we shall find his body not far away."

"How can you prove that?" asked Amik.

"All day," replied Standing Wolf, "the wind has been blowing from the north; so The Crane, being wise, would not act like a white man and land upon the north side, neither would he land upon the east or the

west side; but he would land upon the sheltered side, that on the south. I must now look for the spot where he rested his canoe upon the shore."

"But you cannot find the place," retorted Amik, "for it is true that The Crane was not so foolish as a white man, and, therefore, he would not drag his canoe upon the rocks."

"True, my brother," exclaimed Standing Wolf, "but wherever the bow of his canoe rested, there I shall find a trace of the gum. First, I shall examine the moss on the rocks for some sign of The Crane's tracks."

This Standing Wolf did and soon ascertained, within fifteen or twenty feet, where the canoe must have rested upon the rocky shore while The Crane was carrying to it the eggs which he had gathered. Then he examined the rocks, and, in time, found the white marks of gum which told where the

bow of the canoe had rested upon the slanting rock.

The Crees stooped to examine the marks, and then asked Standing Wolf where he expected to find the body of the missing Crane.

Standing Wolf pointed to the water and replied : —

“There. When The Crane was about to board his canoe, he slipped upon this smooth rock and, in falling, stunned himself and rolled into the water. Cannot you see that there was nothing to prevent him from slipping in?”

Standing Wolf went for his canoe, paddled round to the spot, and, on peering down into the deep, clear water, found that the rock slanted steeply into the lake for twenty feet or more beyond the shore-line; and there, at the foot of the great rock, he saw the body of the unfortunate Crane lying.

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While the Crees gazed in awe at the lifeless body of their late companion, Standing Wolf went ashore, cut a pole about twenty feet long, and returned to the spot. To one end of the pole he fastened his gunworm, reached down with it and screwed it into the clothes of the dead man and hauled the dreadful burden to the surface. Being, like all Indians, in mortal dread of touching a dead body, Standing Wolf fastened a noose about the neck and pulled the corpse ashore. Removing the eggs from the dead man's canoe, they shoved sticks under the body and lifted it into the canoe. They then carried canoe and all to the highest point on the island, and left the remains of The Crane there in their frail but fitting birch-bark sepulchre.

While the Crees went to break the news to the bereaved relatives, Standing Wolf returned to his family. Instead of camping

for the night as he had intended, he decided to continue the journey; for he did not like the thought of sleeping so near to the lifeless body of The Crane. So the family made for the river again, and in a couple of hours were once more floating down with the current.

Next morning, soon after dawn, when they went ashore for breakfast, there was a flutter of pleasant excitement among the little party; and by the time the sun appeared and the meal was over, everybody was laughing and talking; for they had made such progress during the night that they expected to reach Fort Determination by ten o'clock that forenoon. Quickly they boarded the canoes again, and away they paddled. In less than an hour the beautiful expanse of God's Lake was spread out before them. When they sighted the old Fort, a joyous shout rang out; paddles were waved over-

head, and tears of joy rose to the eyes of the women.

Going ashore, they quickly made their toilets, donning their very finest in order to make a good appearance on their arrival at the Fort. Bear's grease was employed with lavish profusion. Standing Wolf and the boys arranged their hair in braids which hung, one on either cheek, just forward of the ears. The women wove their tresses into a single elongated structure which hung down behind. The men put on their fancy, silk-worked moccasins; tied silk handkerchiefs about their necks, and beaded garters round their legs; while the women placed many brass rings upon their fingers, bright plaid shawls about their shoulders, gay silk handkerchiefs over their heads, and beaded leggings upon their legs. When thus arrayed, they wasted no time in completing the last stage of their long voyage. Within

an hour they were rounding the point upon which stood Fort Determination.

As the canoes ranged side by side, their gracefully curved bows came in line, and instantly a race was on for the landing. "Dip, swirl, thud; dip, swirl, thud," sounded all the paddles together. But soon the alignment was broken; for, like contending chargers, forward the canoes bounded at every stroke. Vigorously they plied their paddles, stiffening their arms and curving their backs as they bent the blades. Every muscle was strained. The sharp bows cleaved the sparkling water, sending it gurgling to the paddles that slashed it and whirled it aside. On they went. Now Standing Wolf's canoe was gaining. As the little craft gradually forged ahead, its swift-running wake crept steadily along the sides of the other canoes. Presently it was sounding, "Whif, whif, whif," as the bows crushed



it down. Then, at last, it broke free and scurried away, leaving the other canoes to follow in its broadening wake. The pace was exhausting; the canoes strung out; but still the narrow blades slashed away, for the landing was close at hand. With reckless speed the canoes rushed abreast of the little wharf, and, just as one expected disaster, the paddles backed water, and the canoes came to a standstill with their gunwales grazing the landing.

On stepping ashore, Standing Wolf and his family were greeted by a swarm of their copper-colored friends who had rushed down to meet them. Making his way through the press, the hunter strode up to the trading room to shake hands with Factor Mackenzie.

While Standing Wolf was thus engaged, old Noo-koom and Mi-na-ce slipped away from the throng, and paddled round another

point to the place where the nuns lived. Leaving Mi-na-ce in charge of the canoe, Noo-koom walked up to the nunnery to call upon the Sisters. Owing to her sterling qualities, she was always a welcome visitor. With transparent simplicity she laughed and talked about everything under the sun except the errand she had come upon. But just as she had bidden the nuns adieu and was retracing her steps to the canoe, she turned and asked Sister Mary, who was still standing in the doorway, if she might leave one of their moose-skin lodge coverings in the storeroom for a few weeks while Standing Wolf was away with the Fur Brigade. Permission having been willingly granted, Noo-koom and Mi-na-ce carried a big skin bundle up to the attic of the nunnery, where it was stowed carefully away.

As the Factor walked with Standing Wolf toward the great gate, they passed the canoe

shed, where skilled hands were finishing two handsome six-fathom canoes for the use of the Fur Brigade. They stopped to examine them. The building of a six-fathom or "north" canoe generally takes place under a shed erected for the purpose, where there is a clear, level space and plenty of working room. Two principal stakes are driven at a distance apart of thirty-six feet, the length of the craft to be. These are connected by two rows of smaller stakes diverging and converging so as to form the shape of the canoe. The smaller stakes are five feet apart at the centre. Pieces of birch bark are soaked in water for a day and no more, sewn together with wat-tap, — the root of cedar gathered in spring, — placed between the stakes with the outer side down, and then made fast. The well-soaked ribs are then put in place and, as soon as they are loaded with stones, the bark assumes its

proper form. The gunwales, into which the ends of the ribs are mortised, are bound into position with wat-tap. The thwarts are next adjusted. The stones and stakes are then removed; the seams are covered with a mixture of one part grease to nine parts of spruce-gum; the craft is tested, and is then held in readiness for its maiden voyage.

On parting with the Factor at the gate, Standing Wolf felt relieved at not having seen any of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police about. Returning to the canoes, he found the women and children making camp; for they intended finishing their trading before going to the summer camping-grounds. He told the women that Hu-ge-mow, or the Great Master, as the Indians call the Hudson Bay Company's factor, was very anxious to begin trading at once. But he thought that he would first go over and call upon Hu-ge-ma-sis, or the Small Master,

by which name the opposition or free-trader is known who comes every summer to compete with the Hudson's Bay Company for the trade on God's Lake. Sometimes the Indians call the free-traders "White Tobacco men," because they sell "T & B," a light-colored tobacco; while the Company sells a black tobacco.

The women, leaving the camp in charge of the children, called upon the Factor's wife and presented her with a handsome work-bag made of beautifully marked skins from the necks of loons, and with the well-tanned skin of a moose calf.

As the free-traders usually have spies about the Hudson's Bay posts, Johnson, the opposition trader, already knew of Standing Wolf's arrival, and of his having brought with him a quantity of valuable furs. Therefore, when Standing Wolf approached his store, Johnson did not stand upon ceremony,

but rushed out to greet the hunter and invite him in. He presented Standing Wolf with several plugs of "T & B," some matches, tea, sugar, flour, and a piece of "sow-belly." For some time the hunter stood holding a little fresh-cut tobacco in his hand, until Johnson, taking notice, asked him why he did not smoke it.

"The Great Company always gives me a pipe on my return," replied Standing Wolf.

The free-trader, not to be outdone, gave him a pipe. He wanted to talk business at once, but thought it wiser to wait until the hunter broached the subject himself.

"I suppose," began Standing Wolf, "that your heart is glad to see me back again."

"Yes," replied Johnson, "and I want to get some of your fur."

"That is all very well, but I will see which way you look at me," returned Standing Wolf.

"Have you much fur?" asked Johnson.

"I have paid my debt," was the hunter's short reply.

"Yes, I know, but you have some left, and I want to do business with you; so bring your packs over and I will treat you right."

"That sounds well," remarked Standing Wolf, "but you must remember that though the Great Company charges more, their goods are the best goods, while yours are all cheap rubbish."

The hunter then asked for a drink of water, knowing well that the trader would have to give him something better than that. Johnson brought him a cup of tea, some bread and butter, and jam.

Thinking the opportunity a favorable one, the trader assumed an air of friendly solicitude and said:—

"The Company has cheated your people

for so many hundred years that they are now very rich. No wonder they can afford to give you high prices for your furs. I am a poor but honest man. It is to your great advantage to trade part of your furs with me in order to make it worth my while to come here every summer. As you know, my presence here compels the Company to pay full value for your furs, and so you are the ones that reap the greatest benefit."

"That is partly true," answered Standing Wolf, "but I must be loyal to the Company. You are here to-day and away to-morrow; but the Company is here forever. When famine or illness comes among us, who is it that relieves our wants? It is the Great Company. And it has always been so, even away back in the long-ago when my great-grandfathers' great-grandfathers lived. But I will not be hard on you; I will come again just to see how you look at me."



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Soon Standing Wolf returned with some furs, and spreading a bear skin upon the counter, waited to hear what the trader would say. As the trader offered him only the usual price, the hunter let him have the skin, but gathered up his other furs and stalked out of the store. He then called upon the Factor, who was vexed because he had already been to see the free-trader.

"I see fine," began the Factor, "noo that there's anither trader here, it's easy for ye to forget yir auld freens. The free-trader comes an' gaes. Gie him yir furs, an' he caresna whither ye dee the morn's mornin'. Wi' the Company it's nae like that. The Company cam' first among yir people, an' sin' syne it has been a father tae a' yir people an' tae yirsel as weel. Wheniver yir forebears were smitten wi' hunger or disease, wha lookit aifter them? It wasna the free-

trader; it was the Company. Wha sells ye the best goods? It isna the free-trader; it's the Company. Wha gave ye yir debt last fall an' med' it possible for ye te hunt last winter? It wasna the free-trader; it was the Company. Aye, ma brither, an' ye hae nane te thank but the Company, that ye're alive this day."

With a grunt of disapproval, Standing Wolf sullenly replied:—

"The Priest says it is God we have to thank for that. I am sure that the Commissioner of the Great Company is not so great as God. It is true you give us good prices now, but it is also true that you have not given us back the countless sums you stole from our fathers and grandfathers and all our people before them; for did you not wait until the coming of the free-traders before you would give us the worth of our furs? No wonder you are now great masters;

it seems to me that it takes great rogues to become great masters."

The angry Factor, to save a quarrel, bit his mustache, smiled faintly and, presenting the hunter with a tin of syrup, said, —

"Dinna fash yirsel, ma brither, ye're an unco smairt man!"

Without replying, Standing Wolf accepted the can so eagerly that he jerked it out of the Factor's hand. That pleased the Factor; for he well knew that that was the only way an Indian has of expressing appreciation of a gift.

Standing Wolf walked out of the shop and returned to camp to talk matters over with the women. He told them that he intended selling most of his furs to the Company, but that he thought it wise to stay away from the Factor until next day. Noo-koom suggested that, as they would have to get Father Montigny to marry Mi-na-ce and

At-tick, Standing Wolf should call upon him.

Though Standing Wolf was not in the least interested in the white man's many religions, nor in the priest, nor in the English Church clergyman who visited the Post for a week or two every summer, yet he paid the call; for he wanted to air his grievances to somebody. When he told the priest that neither the factor nor the free-trader would raise the price of fur, the priest consoled him and added:—

“My son, that was a beautiful black-fox you sold the Company's fur runner last winter. I, myself, would have paid you well for it.”

“Would you look as well upon a silver-fox?” asked Standing Wolf.

“Yes. Have you one?” questioned the priest, in surprise.

“I have never seen a finer,” replied the hunter.

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"But do either of the traders know you have it?" asked the priest.

"No," answered Standing Wolf, with a shake of the head.

When the priest saw the skin, he was delighted with it and a bargain was soon made. Standing Wolf was to get one hundred "skins" for the silver-fox, and he was told to call next day. But, after returning to camp, he grew impatient and went back to the priest to demand his pay. The priest said he would give him a tent and a rifle worth more than fifty skins, and that he would say ten masses for him and his family, which would be a very generous equivalent for the other fifty skins. The Indian, suddenly flaring up, began to storm at Father Montigny, and demanded the silver-fox back. But the priest sternly motioned for silence with upraised hand, and whispered: "This is God's House. There

must be no noise or anger here." And without another word he withdrew to get the rifle and the tent. When he returned with an old tent and a second-hand rifle, Standing Wolf would not deign to touch them. Without more ado, he turned on his heel and walked away.

On reaching camp, he learned from the children that the women had gone to pay a visit to the nuns; so he followed them and, without even speaking to the Sisters, ordered the women to come home. On the way, he eased his wrath by telling them that never again would he buy prayers or masses from the priest with silver-fox skins, and that if they ever wanted masses, he would pay for them with nothing but the skins of rats and skunks. He did not see why he had to pay for masses, anyway, when the free-trader had made them a standing offer of all the prayers they wanted free of charge, pro-

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vided that he, Standing Wolf, would trade with him. He added that he had half a mind to accept Johnson's offer, just to spite the priest.

After meditating for a while upon the subject of white men in general, Standing Wolf came to the conclusion that any fool of an Indian was better than a white man, and that the only good white men were the dead ones. Finally, an idea struck him; so he went to call upon the free-trader.

He told Johnson what a splendid silver-fox he had, and how the priest had already offered him a hundred skins for it.

"I'll give you a hundred and ten for it," eagerly exclaimed Johnson, and the old reprobate added, "and I'll throw into the bargain half-a-dozen prayers for the women."

The offer was at once accepted. On handing over the goods, the trader asked where the silver-fox was, and was told that it

was in the keeping of the priest. Without losing a moment he hurried off to obtain the skin. When the priest learned how Standing Wolf had stolen a march on him, he was righteously indignant; but he dared not complain, since he was not supposed to deal in furs. There was nothing to do but hand over the magnificent skin to the free-trader, although he knew right well that in London or Paris it would bring ten times the price paid for it.

Next day the women came crying to Standing Wolf and complaining that the priest had refused to officiate at the wedding on the day agreed upon. The nuns had told them that his refusal was due to his determination to discipline him for his rudeness and irreverence. This seemed to worry the hunter considerably; for, though he cared nothing for the priest's benediction, he did want the wedding to come off upon the day he



had appointed. It touched his pride to be balked in his plans. He had already invited all the Indians at the Post to the ceremony. Great preparations were being made. If the wedding were put off for even a single day, everybody would be curious to know why; and sooner or later it would be known that he had had to bow to the will of the priest. The thought rankled. So he went to the factor and told him the whole affair.

"Ma brither," said the factor, "we are auld freens; it is weel that we sud staun' thegither. If ye wull trade a' yir furs wi' me this day, I'll get the meenister o' the English Kirk tae mairry yir dochter. He'll be here in plenty o' time; an', mair, he'll be gled eneuch tae gie Father Montigny a clour by mairryin' twa o' his fowk. Sell me yir furs, an' I'll warrant ye ye'll hae the laff on Father Montigny."

That settled it. Factor Mackenzie got all the furs Standing Wolf and his family possessed. The factor and the hunter were now the best of friends, and they even went so far as to exchange presents. That afternoon, a little before sunset, a canoe-express arrived with word that the factor was wanted at once at one of the "flying posts" of Fort Determination, — the one at Old Woman's Lake. By sunrise next morning four canoe-men were paddling the factor on his way, and the Fort was in charge of Brown, the clerk.

About ten o'clock a flotilla of canoes was observed coming across God's Lake. Standing Wolf soon recognized them as the party of Chipewayans he had left at the foot of Death's Rapids. When they landed, they were bragging how they had won in their gambling with the Crees, and had left them with little more than the clothes they wore.

The Chipewayans boasted of their victory to such an extent that the Crees at the Post became exasperated. Nor were their irate feelings soothed by the arrival of their defeated brethren. There had been much quarrelling upon the river; several fights had taken place; it was a wonder that no blood had been shed. Now the Crees had two strong grounds for anger: first, the insulting manner of the Chipewayans; and, secondly, their trespassing upon the Cree tribal camping-grounds. A breach of the peace was clearly imminent.

Standing Wolf, though he belonged to neither tribe, sided with the Crees; for they were not only old friends of his, but were a peaceable band, nor were they now the aggressors. On the other hand, the Chipewayans had once brought his courage into question, and he had never forgotten it. That, chiefly, was why he had ventured to

run Death's Rapids. He was still waiting for a further opportunity of demonstrating to them what manner of man he was; and when it came, he would take advantage of it to the full. The Crees did not want to fight, but if driven to it they would prove to be no laggards. The hunter, being considered a neutral, and being respected by both factions, was requested by Brown to intervene. This he willingly did, and harangued the Chipewayans to such purpose that he succeeded in quieting them down. It looked as if the trouble was at an end, and the men of both tribes began trading with Brown and Johnson.

Everything was going well until in an evil moment Speckled Lynx, the leader of the Chipewayans, who was then trading with Johnson, wanted to buy a copper tea-pail. As Johnson had sold the last one he had, Speckled Lynx went over to the Fort to get one there. Just as he entered the Com-

pany's store, he heard Brown tell The Eagle, the chief of the Wood Crees at the Post, that the copper tea-pail which he was offering him was the last he had in stock. Without more ado, Speckled Lynx strode up to The Eagle and snarled out,—

"Don't touch that pail; I am going to have it."

"If you are a man, you will take it; but if I am a man, I will keep it," growled The Eagle, as he defiantly held the pail toward the Chipewayan.

As the latter reached for it, The Eagle, like a flash, drew his knife, lunged at his rival, and buried the blade in him to the haft. The Chipewayan fell to the floor dead.

"Lie there, dog!" contemptuously cried The Eagle. He looked at his bloody weapon and added, "I hate to have dog's blood upon my knife," and, stooping, he wiped the blade upon the dead man's capote.

The Chipewayan squaws about the Fort instantly began screaming out that the Crees were slaughtering the Chipewayans, and at once the Chipewayans came running from far and near.

The Eagle coolly took up the pail, and, as he passed in front of the scowling Chipewayans, paused a moment and said with calm insolence: "If you want to fight, you know where I am camped; I shall be ready for you. But if you dogs know what is good for you, you will keep away." And he went on his way toward his lodge.

The Chipewayans were wild with rage. Intent upon avenging the death of Speckled Lynx, they hastened to their camp to array themselves for the affray. There they discovered that they had scarcely any powder left from their winter's hunt. They sought the free-trader to fill their powder-horns; but, as good luck would have it, he had sold

his last grain; and they made him prove it.

When Brown, the Company's clerk, heard that the Chipewayans were coming to buy powder, he was in a quandary. He knew that he ought not to let them have any, yet he could not hold them off single-handed. The factor was away; Spencer, the fur runner, was away; there was not even the factor's wife to help him, for she was ill in bed. He dared not betray his weakness by calling the opposition trader to his aid. His only hope lay in the priest; so he sent for him.

The free-trader's limited stock of goods was about sold out. In case of an outbreak he had little to lose; for he could pack up and be off in a couple of hours. The danger in which Fort Determination stood, instead of arousing his sympathy, filled him with secret satisfaction. The Indians knew — for he had told them himself — that the Company had on hand several cases of guns

and many kegs of powder. To loot the Company's store and seize the munitions of war would, he knew, be the first aim of each of the battling tribes. Well, it was no affair of his; he would not lift a finger to help his rivals.

The priest had scarcely reached the store when a deputation of Chipewayans arrived to purchase powder. Brown, of course, refused to sell them any. The Indians became abusive and threateningly demanded it. Father Montigny talked kindly to them, and pleaded with them to leave the whole affair to be settled by the Mounted Police, who would see to it that there was no miscarriage of justice. The good man did his best to calm and soothe them, and, though they were not of his faith, he did, at last, succeed in extracting from them a promise to hold a pow-wow that night and to decide next morning as to their further action.



The Crees, in the meantime, had taken the precaution of sending their women and children away, and by sundown had entrenched themselves behind a barricade of fallen trees. That night the great gate of the old Fort was closed for the first time since the Riel Rebellion; the two small cannons were loaded, and the half-breed servants of the Company, few enough in number, were mustered for sentry duty.

Shortly after dawn, the Chipewayans sent word that they had determined to avenge the death of Speckled Lynx by wiping out the Crees to the very last man. They asked for powder and announced that, should it be refused, they would raid the Fort. Brown declined to accede to their request. When the envoy had withdrawn, he turned to Father Montigny and said:—

“Well, Father, God help us if they come; for we cannot hold the Fort against them.

Whether they buy the powder or steal it, makes but little difference; for when the fight begins, the Fort will be looted."

"That is true, my friend," replied the priest, "but there is hope still; for there is one man at hand who, I believe, can save the Fort from destruction, if we send for him at once."

"And who is he, pray?" eagerly questioned the clerk.

"He is the only man who is feared by the Chipewayans and the Crees alike; and he is a man whom we all respect," answered the priest; "he is the lion-hearted Standing Wolf."

Brown sent a runner for Standing Wolf immediately; and, just as the Chipewayans were approaching, he reached the store. The affair was hurriedly explained to him, and he was entreated to prevent the Chipewayans, if possible, from getting the powder.

He grasped the situation at once, and told the white men what he would do if they left the matter entirely in his hands. His offer was gladly accepted; the gates were unbarred; the sentries were withdrawn, and the storeroom door was thrown wide open. Inside, Brown, Father Montigny, and Standing Wolf awaited the coming of the raiders.

The Chipewayans swarmed into the trading room. Their leader demanded powder. When Brown again refused to sell them any, he swore that they would take it by force. Then Standing Wolf motioned for silence. He told them that, since they must have the powder, he would deal it out to them and see that no man carried off more than his share: he would go into the other room and get it ready for them.

The Chipewayans took him at his word and waited. Brown and the priest, in the meantime, hurriedly left the building.

On entering the room where the guns and ammunition were stored, Standing Wolf unheaded a large keg of powder, stood it upon the floor beside five other kegs of equal size, and covered it with a blanket. Then he shouted to the Chipewayans to come in.

Eagerly they crowded into the room and saw several stacks of guns against the wall, and five large kegs of powder before them. The sight pleased them mightily. But when they noticed the cool, determined face of Standing Wolf, they hesitated. He was sucking steadily at his pipe and eying them with disdain.

"Now, you cowardly dogs," he sneered, "once you questioned my courage. We shall see presently who is bravest. There is the powder you want, and I dare the bravest among you to come and take it."

The Chipewayans stared stupidly at him. What did he mean? What was he about

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to do? Each waited for some other to be the first to act. Again Standing Wolf's harsh voice challenged them: —

"Don't stand there like a lot of old women. Is there not a man among you brave enough to take my dare?"

At the last came one of them a step forward, and said, "I think I will take some of that powder."

"Come on, if you think you are brave enough," snarled Standing Wolf.

The Chipewayans pressed forward in a body.

Standing Wolf jerked the blanket off the open keg, thrust his smoking pipe to within an inch of the sixty pounds of exposed powder, and cried, —

"Now, take it if you dare, and we will all go on the Spirit trail together!"

Instantly, a frantic rush was made for the windows and for the only door, and in twenty

seconds there wasn't a single Chipewayan within the Fort.

When Standing Wolf quietly emerged from the trading room, he was greeted with such peals of laughter from the clerk, the priest, and the Company's servants that the humorous side of the affair began to dawn upon him; and he, too, could not refrain from joining in the merriment. The clerk, who with the priest had a moment before sought refuge behind the factor's house, now convulsed with laughter, came forward as best he could with outstretched hand to heartily thank Standing Wolf for his bravery and for the ingenuity of the stratagem by which he had so completely and ignominiously routed the raiders. Jolly Father Montigny was leaning languidly against the fur-press in the middle of the yard, exhausted after his outburst of laughter. Every now and then he would break in with a graphic word of

description as the clerk endeavored to describe to Standing Wolf the ludicrous performances of the panic-stricken and nimble Chipewayans in their rapid and unanimous flight from the storeroom. In the wild and hearty rush to escape, the small outer doorway of the trading room had become for a moment so jammed that many of the raiders had sought safety and fresh air by plunging through the windows and carrying glass and sashes with them. One, a little fat man, had raced for the gateway with such earnestness and determination that he did not halt even to throw off the broken window sash that hung about his neck.

For over an hour the business of the Post was completely demoralized. Every little while one might hear from some unexpected quarter a sudden burst of laughter of so hearty a volume that all within ear-shot would catch the contagion and hold their

sides again, while tears rolled down their cheeks.

In the midst of one of these fits of hilarity, a gunshot was heard from the lake. Brown called for the telescope, and presently announced that Factor Mackenzie was returning with the Rev. Mr. Jones and two members of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police. When he lowered his glass, he discovered, in the other direction, the whole band of Chipe-wayans making off as fast as their canoes would carry them. In a moment there was a great to-do, everybody at the Post busily endeavoring to get things into order. The Company's flag — a Union Jack in the upper left-hand corner of a red field, with the letters H.B.C. in white in the lower right-hand corner — was quickly run up on the flagstaff. When the canoes had come abreast of the landing, all the people about the Post were there ready to greet the new arrivals and tell



them what had happened. As soon as the police had heard of the affair, Sergeant Wright sent Constable Morson ashore to take The Eagle into custody, while he and his half-breed interpreter hastened after the escaping Chipewayans to question them and to arrest the ringleaders.

The factor could not thank Standing Wolf enough for his bravery. Remembering his bargain, he asked the Rev. Mr. Jones to marry At-tick and Mi-na-ce on the morrow, the very day set for the wedding. But Father Montigny, as soon as he had learned what was on foot, made it up with Standing Wolf, explained the affair to the Rev. Mr. Jones, and consented to officiate at the wedding ceremony.

That night the police searched the entire Indian camp for some clew to the buffalo killers; but their efforts were fruitless; for old Noo-koom had stored the skins away

in the attic of the nunnery under the guise of a lodge covering; and, of course, they never dreamt that the innocent nuns had the skins in their keeping.

At ten o'clock the following morning, a motley mass of natives clothed in many colors crowded about the little church, which, for lack of space, they could not enter. Presently the crowd surged back from the door and formed on either side of the path, leaving an opening down the centre. A tall half-breed with a shock of wavy black hair resting upon his shoulders, stepped from the doorway, raised his violin, and, adjusting it into position, struck up a lively tune to the accompaniment of the wailing of a broken concertina played by another half-breed who preceded the newly married couple. Mi-na-ce wore a silk handkerchief over her head, a light-colored cotton dress open at the throat, a silk sash over one

shoulder, and a short skirt revealing beaded leggings and moccasins. Standing Wolf and The Marten came next in order, and were followed by Noo-koom, Ko-ko-hay, and the children. Behind the children came the relations and friends; while the priest and the clergyman brought up the rear. As the little procession moved along, the young men, lined up on either side of the path, crossed their guns over the heads of the wedding party and discharged a *feu-de-joie*.

On reaching a certain log-house, the procession broke up. The older people went in to partake of the wedding breakfast, while the bride and groom went over to one of the warehouses and amused themselves dancing with their young friends until they were summoned to the second table of the marriage feast. Everybody at the Post had contributed something towards either

the feast or the dance. Out of respect for Standing Wolf, and as some reward for his bravery in preventing the looting of Fort Determination, the factor had furnished a liberal stock of groceries and had, in addition, granted the free use of the buildings. The clerk had sent in a quantity of candies and tobacco. The priest had given potatoes; the clergyman had supplied the silver-plated wedding-ring for the bride, and had also given her a copy of the Bible in syllabic characters. The nuns had presented a supply of skim-milk and butter. Mr. Johnson had provided jam, coal-oil, and pickles. The Mounted Police contributed five dollars to pay for the "band" — the fiddle and the concertina — and ammunition enough for the *feu-de-joie*. The friends and relations had given a plentiful store of fresh, dried, and pounded fish; and had also furnished a lavish supply of moose, caribou, and bear

meat; as well as dainty bits of beaver, lynx, muskrat, and skunk.

The bridal party having dined, they and their elders opened the ball officially. The first dance was — as it always is — the Double Jig. Then came in order, the Reel of Four, the Double Reel of Four, the Duck Dance, the Reel of Eight, the Red River Jig, the Rabbit Dance, the Hug-Me-Snug, the Drops of Brandy, the Saskatchewan Circle, and — last but not least — the Kissing Dance. After a frolic of several hours' duration, some of the dancers grew weary and returned to the banquet room for refreshments. And thus for three days and three nights the festivities continued.

During a lull in the dancing on the afternoon of the wedding day, At-tick's sister, who had arrived at the Post a few hours before, went up to him and said, "Brother, may I kiss you? Are you ashamed?" He

answered, "No." She kissed him, took his wife's hand, placed it in his with her own over both, and addressed the young wife, —

"As you have taken my place, do to him as I have done; listen to him; work for him; and, if need be, die for him."

Then she lowered her head and began to cry.

The Marten went up to At-tick and asked, —

"Are you man enough to work for her, to feed her, and to protect her?"

"Yes," replied the new-made husband.

The Marten put the husband's hand on his sister's hand and — looking him straight in the eyes — shook his clenched fist at him and said in a threatening tone, "Beware!"

In the midst of one of the dances, Standing Wolf walked up to the "band" and knocked up the fiddle to command silence. Pulling his capote tightly about him, he assumed a





Standing Wolf.



dignified attitude, slowly looked round the room to see that he had the attention of all present, and began to address the assembly:—

“The step which At-tick has taken is a very serious one. Now he will have to think for two. Now he must supply the wants of two. Now he will realize what trouble is. The One who made us, made us right. The man has his work to do, and the woman has hers. The man must hunt and kill animals, and the woman must skin and dress them. The man must stand by her, and she by him. The two together are strong, and there is no need of outside assistance. Remember, you are starting out together that way.”

To illustrate his meaning, he held up two fingers parallel, and added:—

“If your tracks fork, they will soon be as far apart as sunrise is from sunset, and you will find many ready to come in between.

Carry on in the way you have begun; for that is the way you should end. And remember that if your tracks once fork, they will never come together again."

When several of the guests had spoken, Ko-ko-hay rose to address her daughter. Overcome with nervousness, she pulled her shawl so far over her face as to leave only a tiny peep-hole through which to look. Hesitatingly she began:—

"My daughter, you never knew what trouble is, now you will know. You never knew what hard work is, now you will soon learn. Never let your husband want for anything. Never allow another woman to do anything for him; if you do, you are lost. When you have children, my daughter, and they grow up, your sons will always be sons to you, even though they be gray-headed. But with your daughters it will not be so; when they marry, they will

be lost to you. Once married, they are gone forever."

She stepped up to her daughter, kissed her, and sank to the floor, weeping copiously.

Once more Standing Wolf rose to speak. He beckoned to his daughter. She advanced and knelt down, holding the fringe of his legging while he addressed her:—

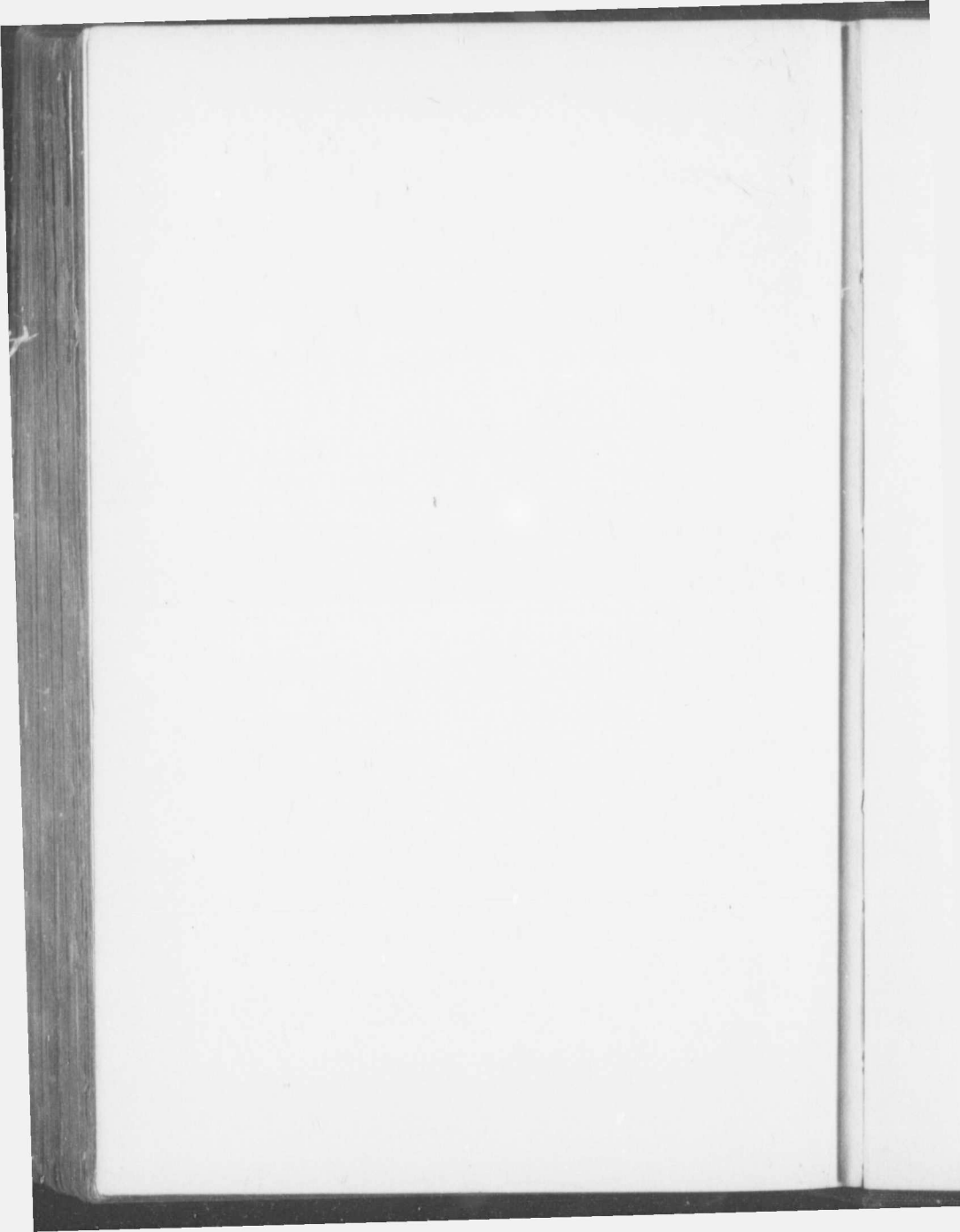
"Mi-na-ce, my daughter, you have taken this man. Be good to him; work for him; live for him; and, if need be, die for him. Kiss me, Mi-na-ce, my daughter, kiss me for the last time."

She kissed him, and he added, —

"You have kissed me for the last time; henceforth never kiss any man but your husband."

Raising his hand with untutored dignity, he pronounced the words, —

"Remember, I have spoken."



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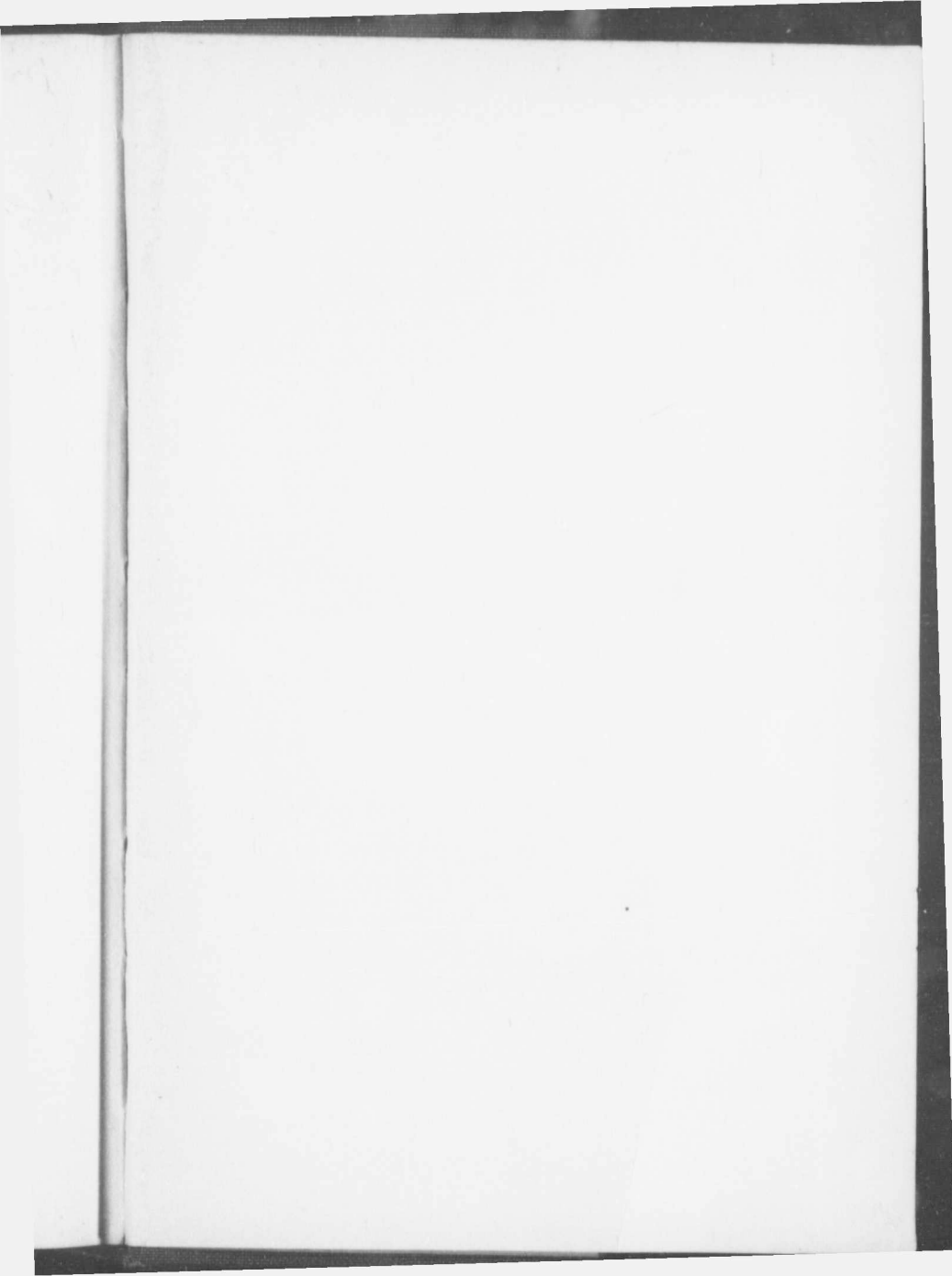
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