

THE SILENT PLACES

OR

THE TRAIL OF JINGOSS

By STEWART EDWARD WHITE

Author of "The Blazed Trail," etc.

XIV

DURING the days that ensued a certain intimacy sprang up between Sam Belton and the Indian girl. At first their talk was brief and confined to the necessities. Then matters of opinion, disjointed, fragmentary, began to creep in. Finally the two came to know each other, less by what was actually said than by the attitude of mind such confidences presupposed. One topic they avoided. Sam, for all his shrewdness, could not determine to what degree had persisted the young man's initial attraction for the girl. Of her devotion there could be no question, but in how much, it depended on the necessity of the moment lay the puzzle. Her demeanor was inscrutable. Yet Sam came gradually to trust to her loyalty.

In the soft sweet open-air life the days passed stately, in the manner of figures on an ancient tapestry. Certain things were each morning to be done—the dressing of Dick's cuts and contusions with the healing balsam, the rebandaging and adjusting of the splints and steadying buckskin strap; the necessary cooking and cleaning; the cutting of wood; the fishing below the rapids; the tending of traps; the occasional hunting of larger game; the setting of snares for rabbits. From certain good skins of the latter May-may-gwin was engaged in weaving a blanket, braiding the long strips after a fashion of her own. She smoked tanned buckskin, and with it repaired thoroughly both the men's garments and her own. These things were to be done, though leisurely, and with slow ruminative pauses for the dreaming of forest, dreams.

But inside the wigwam Dick Herron lay helpless, his hands clenched, his eyes glaring red with an impatience he seemed to

hold his breath to repress. Time was to be passed. That was all he knew, all he thought about, all he cared.

"It'll be October before we can get started," he growled one evening.

"Yes," said Sam.

"You wait till I *can* get out!" he said on another occasion, in vague threat of determination.

At the beginning of the third week, Sam took his seat by the moss and balsam pallet, and began to fill his pipe in preparation for a serious talk.

"Dick" said he "I've made up my mind we've wasted enough time here."

Herron made no reply.

"I'm going to leave you here and go to look over the other hunting districts by myself."

Still no reply.

"Well?" demanded Sam.

"What about me?" asked Dick.

"The girl will take care of you."

A long silence ensued. "She'll take everything we've got and get out," said Dick at last.

"She will not! She'd have done it before now."

"She'll quit me the first Indians that come along."

Sam abandoned the point.

"You needn't take the risk unless you want to. If you say so, I'll wait."

"Oh, damn the risk!" cried Dick promptly. "Go ahead."

The woodsman smoked.

"Sam," said the younger man.

"What?"

"I know I'm hard to get along with just now. Don't mind me. It's hell to lie on your back and be able to do nothing. I've seemed to hinder the game from the first. Just wait till I'm up again!"

"That's all right, my boy," replied Sam. "I understand. Don't worry. Just take,



"Listen, Little Sister," said he; "now I go on a long journey."

Drawing by Philip K. Goodwin.

it easy. I'll look over the district, so we won't be losing any time. And Dick, be decent to the girl."

"To hell with the girl!" growled Dick, lapsing abruptly from his expansive mood. "She got me into this."

Not another word would he speak, but lay, staring upward, chewing the cud of resentment.

Promptly on the heels of his decision, Sam Bolton had a long talk with May-may-gwán, then departed carrying a little pack. It was useless to think now of the canoe, and in any case the time of year favored cross-country travel. The distances, thus measured, were not excessive, and from the Indian's descriptions Sam's slow-brooding memory had etched into his mind an accurate map of the country.

At noon the girl brought Dick his meal. After he had eaten she removed the few utensils. Then she returned.

"The Little Father commanded that I care for your hurt," she said simply.

"My leg's all right now," growled Dick. "I can bandage it myself."

May-may-gwán did not reply, but left the tent. In a moment she reappeared carrying forked switches, a square of white birch-bark, and a piece of charcoal.

"Thus it is," said she rapidly. "These be the leg bones, and this the bone of the ankle. This bone is broken, so. Thus it is held in place by the skull of the Little Father. Thus it is healing, with stiffness of the muscles and the gristle, so that always Eagle Eye will walk like wood, and never will be run. The Little Father has told May-may-gwán what there is to do. It is now the time. Fifteen suns have gone since the hurt."

She spoke simply. Dick, interested in spite of himself, stared at the switches and the hasty charcoal sketch. The dead silence hung for a full minute. Then the young man fell back from his elbow with an enigmatical snort. May-may-gwán assumed consent and set to work on the simple yet delicate manipulations, massages and flexions which, persisted in with due care lest the fracture slip, would ultimately restore the limb, to its full usefulness.

Once a day she did this; thrice a day she brought food. The rest of the time she was busy about her own affairs; but never too occupied to loop up a section of the

tepee covering for the purpose of admitting fresh air, to bring a cup of cold water, to readjust the sling which suspended the injured leg, or to perform an hundred other little services. She did these things with inscrutable demeanor. As Dick always accepted them in silence, she offered them equally in silence. No one could have guessed the thoughts that passed in her heart.

At the end of a week Dick raised himself suddenly on his elbow.

"Some one is coming!" he exclaimed in English.

At the sound of his voice the girl started forward. Her mouth parted, her eyes sparkled, her nostrils quivered. Nothing could have been more pathetic than this sudden ecstatic delight, as suddenly extinguished when she perceived that the exclamation was involuntary, and not addressed to her. In a moment Sam Bolton appeared, striding out of the forest.

He unslung his little pack, leaned his rifle against a tree, consigned to May-may-gwán a dog he was leading, and approached the wigwam. He seemed in high good-humor.

"Well, how goes it?" he greeted.

But at the sight of the man striding in his strength, Dick's dull anger had fallen on him again like a blanket. Unreasonably, as he himself well knew, he was irritated. Something held him back from the utterance of the hearty words of greeting that had been on his tongue. A dull, apathetic indifference to everything except the chains of his imprisonment enveloped his spirit.

"All right," he answered grudgingly.

Sam deftly unwound the bandages, examining closely the condition of the foot.

"Bone's in place all right," he commented. "Has the girl rubbed it and moved it every day?"

"Yes."

"Any pain to amount to anything now?"

"No."

"Pretty dull work lying on your back all day with nothing to do."

"Yes."

"Took in the country to southeast. Didn't find anything. Picked up a pretty good dog. Part 'husky.'"

Dick had no comment to make on this. Sam found May-may-gwán making friends with the dog, feeding him little scraps,

patting his head, above all wrinkling the end of his pointed nose in one hand and batting it softly with the palm of the other. This caused the dog to sneeze violently, but he exhibited every symptom of enjoyment. The animal had long, coarse hair, sharp ears set alertly forward, a bushy tail and an expression of great but fierce intelligence.

"Eagle Eye does well," said the woodsman.

"I have done as the Little Father commanded," she replied, and arose to cook the meal.

The next day Sam constructed a pair of crutches well padded with moss.

"Listen, Little Sister," said he. "Now I go on a long journey, perhaps fifteen suns, perhaps one moon. At the end of six suns more Eagle Eye may rise. His leg must be slung, thus. Never must he touch the foot to the ground, even for an instant. You must see to it. I will tell him, also. Each day he must sit in the sun. He must do something. When snow falls we will again take the long trail. Prepare all things for it. Give Eagle Eye materials to work with."

To Dick he spoke with like distinctness.

"I'm off again, Dick," said he. "There's no help for it; you've got to lay up there for a week yet. Then the girl will show you how to tie your leg out of the way, and you can move on crutches. If you rest any weight on that foot before I get back, you'll be stiff for life. I shouldn't advise you to take any chances. Suit yourself; but I should try to do no more than get out in the sun. You won't be good for much before snow. You can get things organized. She'll bring you the stuff to work on, and will help. So long."

"Good by," muttered Dick. He breathed hard, fully occupied with the thought of his helplessness, with blind unappeasable rage against the chance that had crippled him, with bitter and useless questionings as to why such a moment should have been selected for the one accident of his young life. Outside he could hear the crackle of the little fire, the unusual sound of the Indian girl's voice as she talked low to the dog, the animal's whine of appreciation and content. Suddenly he felt the need of companionship, the weariness of his own unending revolving thoughts.

"Hi!" he called aloud.

May-may-gwain almost instantly appeared in the entrance, a scarcely concealed hope shining in her eyes. This was the first time she had been summoned.

"Ninny-moosh—the dog," commanded Dick coldly.

She turned to whistle the beast. He came at once, already friends with this human being who understood him.

"Come here, old fellow," coaxed Dick, holding out his hand.

But the half-wild animal was in doubt. He required assurance of this man's intentions. Dick gave himself to the task of supplying it. For the first time in a month his face cleared of its discontent. The old winning boyishness returned. May-may-gwain, standing forgotten in the entrance, watched in silence. Dick coaxed knowingly, leading by the very force of persuasion, until the dog finally permitted a single pat of his sharp nose. The young man, smoothly and cautiously, persisted, his face alight with interest. Finally he conquered. The animal allowed his ears to be rubbed, his nose to be batted. At length, well content, he lay down by his new master, within reach of the hand that rested caressingly on his head. The Indian girl stole softly away. At the fireside she seated herself and gazed in the coals. Presently the marvel of two tears welled in her eyes. She blinked them away, and set about supper.

XV

WHETHER it was that the prospect of getting about, or the diversion of the dog was responsible for the change, Dick's cheerfulness markedly increased in the next few days. For hours he would fool with the animal, whom he had named Billy, after a hunting companion, teaching him to shake hands, to speak, to wrinkle his nose in a doggy grin, to lie down at command, and all the other tricks useful and ornamental that go to make up the fanciest kind of a dog education. The mistakes and successes of his new friend seemed to amuse him hugely. Often from the tent burst the sounds of inextinguishable mirth. May-may-gwain, peeping, saw the young man as she had first seen him, clear-eyed, laughing, the wrinkles

of humor deepening about his eyes, his white teeth flashing, his brow untroubled. Three days she hovered thus on the outer edge of the renewed good feeling, then timidly essayed an advance.

Unobtrusive, she slipped inside the tepee's flap. The dog sat on his haunches, his head to one side in expectation.

"The dog is a good dog," she said, her breath choking her.

Apparently the young man had not heard.

"It will be well to name the dog that he may answer to his name," she ventured again.

Dick, abruptly gripped by the incomprehensible obsession, uneasy as at something of which he only waited the passing, resentful because of the discomfort this caused him, unable to break through the artificial restraint that enveloped his spirit, lifted eyes suddenly dead and lifeless to hers.

"It is time to lift the net," he said.

The girl made no more advances. She moved almost automatically about her accustomed tasks, preparing the materials for what remained to be done.

Promptly on the seventh day, with much preparation and precaution, Dick moved. He had now to suffer the girl's assistance. When he first stood upright, he was at once attacked by a severe dizziness which would have caused a fall had not May-may-gwain steadied him. With difficulty he hobbled to a seat outside. His arms even seemed to him pithless. He sank to his place hard breathed, exhausted. It was some minutes before he could look about him calmly.

The first object to catch his eye was the cardinal red of a moose maple, like a spot of blood on velvet green. And thus he knew that September, or the Many-caribou-in-the-woods Moon, was close at hand.

"Hi!" he called.

May-may-gwain came as before, but without the look of expectation in her eyes.

"Bring me wood of mashkigiwáteg, wood of tamarack," he commanded; "bring me mokamon, the knife, and 'tschi-mókamon, the large knife; bring me the hide of ah-tek, the caribou."

"These things are ready, at hand," she replied.

With the *cutseau croche*, the crooked knife of the north, Dick labored slowly, fashioning with care the long tamarack strips. He was exceedingly particular as to the selection of the wood, as to the taper of the pieces. At last one was finished to his satisfaction. Slowly then he fashioned it, molding the green wood, steaming it to make it more plastic, until at last the ends lay side by side, and the loop of wood bowed above in the shape of a snow-shoe raquette. The exact shape Dick still further assured by means of two cross-pieces. These were bound in place by strips of the caribou-skin rawhide wet in warm water, which was also used to bind together the two ends. The whole was then laid aside to dry.

Thus in the next few days Dick fashioned the frame of six snow-shoes. He adhered closely to the Ojibway pattern. In these woods it was not necessary to have recourse to the round, broad shape of the rough boulder hills, nor was it possible to use the long swift shoe of the open plains. After a while he heated red the steel end of his rifle cleaning-rod and bored holes for the webbing. This also he made of caribou rawhide, for caribou shrinks when wet, thus tightening the lacing where other materials would stretch. Above and below the cross-pieces he put in a very fine weaving; between them a coarser, that the loose snow might readily sift through. Each strand he tested again and again; each knot he made doubly sure.

Nor must it be imagined that he did these things alone. May-may-gwain helped him, not only by fetching for him the tools and materials of which he stood in need, but also in the bending, binding and webbing itself. Under the soft light of the trees, bathed in the aroma of fresh shavings and the hundred natural odors of the forest, it was exceeding pleasant accurately to accomplish the light skilled labor. But between these the human beings, alone in a vast wilderness, was no communication outside the necessities of the moment. Thus in a little the three pairs of snow-shoes, complete even to the buckskin foot-loops, hung from the sheltered branch of a spruce.

"Bring now to me," said the young man "poles of the hickory, logs of giñik, the cedar; bring me wigwass, the birch-bark, and the rawhide of mooswa, the moose."

"These things are at hand," repeated May-may-gwán.

Then ensued days of severe toil. Dick was of course unable to handle the ax, so the girl had to do it under his direction. The affair was of wedges with which to split along the grain; of repeated attempts until the resulting strips were true and without warp; of steaming and tying to the proper curve; and finally of binding together strongly with the tough *babiche* into the shape of the dog-sledge. This too was suspended at last beneath the sheltering spruce.

"Bring me now," said Dick, "rawhide of mooswa, the moose; rawhide of ah-tek, the caribou; wátab, the root for sewing."

Seated opposite each other, heads bent over the task, they made the dog harness, strong, serviceable, not to be worn out, with the collar, the broad buckskin strap over the back, the heavy traces. Four of them they made, for Sam would undoubtedly complete the team, and these, too, they hung out of reach in the spruce tree.

Now Sam returned from his longest trip, empty of information but light of spirit, for he had succeeded by his simple shrewdness in avoiding all suspicion. He brought with him another "husky" dog, and a strong animal like a Newfoundland; also some tea and tobacco, and an ax blade. This latter would be especially valuable. In the extreme cold, steel becomes like glass. The work done earned his approval, but he paused only a day, and was off again.

From the inside of the tepee hung many skins of the northern hare which May-may-gwán had captured and tanned while Dick was still on his back. The woven blanket was finished. Now she lined the woolen blankets with these hare skins, over an hundred to each. Nothing warmer could be imagined. Of caribou skin, tanned with the hair on, she and Dick fashioned jackets with peaked hoods which, when not in use, would hang down behind. The opening about the face was sewn with bushy fox's tails, and a puckering string threaded through so that the wearer could completely protect his features. Mittens they made from pelts of the muskrat. Moccasins were cut extra large and high, and lined with fur of the hare. Heavy rawhide dog whips and

buckskin gun cases completed the simple winter outfit.

But still there remained the question of sustenance. Game would be scarce and uncertain in the cold months.

It was now seven weeks since Dick's accident. Cautiously, with many pauses, he began to rest weight on the injured foot. Thanks to the treatment of massage and manipulation, the joint was but a little stiffened. Each day it gained in strength, Shortly Dick was able to hobble some little distance, always with the aid of a staff, always heedfully. As yet he was far from the enjoyment of full freedom of movement, but by expenditure of time and perseverance he was able to hunt in a slow, patient manner. The runways where the caribou came to drink late in the evening, a cautious float down stream as far as the first rapids, or even a plain sitting on a dog in the hope that game would chance to feed within range—these methods, persisted in day after day, brought in a fair quantity of meat.

Of the meat they made some jerky for present consumption by the dogs, and of course they ate fresh as much as they needed. But most went into pemmican. The fat was all cut away, the lean sliced thin and dried in the sun. The result they pounded fine, and mixed with melted fat and the marrow, which in turn was compressed while warm into air-tight little bags. A quantity of meat went into surprisingly little pemmican. The bags were piled on a long-legged scaffolding out of the reach of the dogs and wild animals.

XVI

DICK began to walk without his crutches a very little at a time, grimly; all his old objectless anger returned when the extent of his disability was thus brought home to him. But always with persistence came improvement. Each attempt brought its reward in strengthened muscles, freer joints, greater confidence. At last it could be no longer doubted that by the Indian's Whitefish Moon he would be as good as ever. The discovery, by some queer contrariness of the man's disposition, was avoided as long as possible, and finally but grudgingly admitted. Yet when at last Dick confessed to himself that his complete recovery was come, his mood

suddenly changed. The old necessity for blind, unreasoning patience seemed at an end. He could perceive light ahead, and so in the absence of any further need for taut spiritual nerves he relaxed the strain and strode on more easily. He played more with the dogs—of which still his favorite was Billy; occasionally he burst into little snatches of song, and the sound of his whistling was merry in the air. At length he paused abruptly in his work to fix his quizzical narrow gaze on the Indian girl.

"Come, Little Sister," said he, "let us lift the nets."

She looked up at him, a warm glow leaping to her face. This was the first time he had addressed her by the customary diminutive of friendship since they had both been members of the Indian camp on the Missinabie.

They lifted the net together, and half filled the canoe with the shining fish. Dick bore himself with the careless good-humor of his earlier manner. The greater part of the time he seemed unconscious of his companion's presence, but genuinely unconscious, not with the deliberate affront of a pretended indifference. Under even this negative good treatment the girl expanded with an almost luxuriant gratitude. Her face lost its stocial mask of imperturbability, and much of her former arch beauty returned. The young man was blind to these things, for he was in reality profoundly indifferent to the girl, and his abrupt change of manner could in no way be ascribed to any change in his feeling for her. It was merely the reflex of his inner mood, and that sprang solely from joy over the permission he had given himself again to contemplate taking the Long Trail.

But Sam Bolton, returning that very day from his own long journey, saw at once the alteration in May-may-gwán, and was troubled over it. He came into camp by the river way, where the moss and spruce needles silenced his footsteps, so he approached undiscovered. The girl bent over the fire. A strong glow from the flames showed the stronger glow illuminating her face from within. She hummed softly a song of the Ojibway language:

"Mong-o doog-win
Nin dinaidoon—"

"Loon's wing I thought it was
In the distance shining.

But it was my lover's paddle
In the distance shining."

Then she looked up and saw him.

"Little Father!" she cried, pleased.

At the same moment Dick caught sight of the new-comer, and hobbled out of the wigwam.

"Hello, you old snoozer!" he shouted. "We began to think you weren't going to show up at all. Look at what we've done. I believe you've been lying out in the woods just to dodge work. Where'd you steal *that* dog?"

"Hello, Dick," replied Sam, unslinging his pack. "I'm tired. Tell her to rustle grub."

He leaned back against a cedar, half-closing his eyes, but nevertheless keenly alert. The changed atmosphere of the camp disturbed him. Although he had not realized it before, he preferred Dick's old uncompromising sulkiness.

In accordance with the woods custom, little was said until after the meal was finished and the pipes lit. Then Dick inquired:

"Well, where you been this time, and what did you find?"

Sam replied briefly as to his journey, making it clear that he had now covered all the hunting districts of this region with the single exception of one beyond the Kenógami. He had discovered nothing; he was absolutely sure that nothing was to be discovered.

"I didn't go entirely by what the Injuns told me," he said, "but I looked the signs along the trapping routes and the trapping camps to see how many had been at it, and I'm sure the number tallies with the reg'lar Injun hunters. I picked up that dog over to Leftfoot Lake. Come here, pup!"

The animal slouched forward, his head banging, the rims of his eyes blood-red as he turned them up to his master. He was a powerful beast, black and tan, with a quaintly wrinkled anxious countenance, and long pendent ears.

"Strong," commented Dick, "but queer-looking. He'll have trouble keeping warm with that short coat."

"He's wintered here already," replied Sam indifferently. "Go lie down!"

The dog slouched slowly back, his heavy head and ears swinging to each step, to where May-may-gwán was keeping his peace with the other animals.

"Now for that Kenógami country," went on Sam; "it's two weeks from here by dogs, and it's our last chance in this country. I ain't dared ask too many questions, of course, so I don't know anything about the men who're hunting there. There's four families, and one other. He's alone; I got that much out of the last place I stopped. We got to wait here for snow. If we don't raise anything there, we'd better get over towards the Nipiesing country."

"All right," said Dick.

The older man began to ask minutely concerning the equipment, provisions and dog food.

"It's all right as long as we can take it easy and hunt," advised Sam, gradually approaching the subject that was really troubling him, "and it's all right if we can surprise this Jingoss or ambush him when we find him. But suppose he catches wind of us and skips, what then? It'll be a mighty pretty race, my son, and a hard one. We'll have to fly light and hard, and we'll need every pound of grub we can scrape."

The young man's eyes darkened and his nostrils expanded; with the excitement of this thought.

"Just let's strike his trail!" he exclaimed.

"That's all right," agreed the woodsman, his eyes narrowing, "but how about the girl then?"

But Dick exhibited no uneasiness. He merely grinned broadly.

"Well, *what* about the girl? That's what I've been telling you. Strike's me that's one of your troubles."

Half-satisfied, the veteran fell silent. Shortly after he made an opportunity to speak with May-may-gwán.

"All is well, Little Sister?" he inquired.

"All is well," she replied; "we have finished the parkas, the sledges, the snowshoes, the blankets, and we have made much food."

"And Jibiwánisi?"

"His foot is nearly healed. Yesterday he walked to the Big Pool and back. Today, even this afternoon, Little Father, the Black Spirit left him, so that he has been gay."

Convinced that the restored good feeling was the result rather of Dick's volatile

nature than of too good an understanding, the old man left the subject.

"Little Sister," he went on, "soon we are going to take the winter trail. It may be that we will have to travel rapidly. It may be that food will be scarce. I think it best that you do not go with us."

She looked up at him.

"These words I have expected," she replied. "I have heard the speech you have made with the Ojibway men you have met. I have seen the preparations you have made. I am not deceived. You and Jibiwánisi are not looking for winter posts. I do not know what it is you are after, but it is something you wish to conceal. Since you have not told me, I know you wish to conceal it from me. I did not know all this when I left Hankemah and his people. That was a foolish thing. It was done, and I do not know why. But it was done, and cannot be undone. I could not go back to the people of Hankemah now; they would kill me. Where else can I go? I do not know where the Ojibways, my own people, live."

"What do you expect to do, if you stay with me?" inquired Sam curiously.

"You come from Conjuror's House. You tell the Indians you come from Winnipeg, but that is not so. When you have finished your affairs, you will return to Conjuror's House. There I can enter the household of some officer."

"But you cannot take the winter trail," objected Sam.

"I am strong, I can take the winter trail."

"And perhaps we may have to journey hard and fast."

"As when one pursues an enemy," said the girl calmly. "Good. I am fleet. I too can travel. And if it comes to that, I will leave you without complaint when I can no longer tread your trail."

"But the food!" objected Sam still further.

"Consider, Little Father," said May-may-gwán. "Of the food I have prepared much; of the work I have done much. I have tended the traps, raised the nets, fashioned many things, attended Eagle Eye. If I had not been here, then you, Little Father, could not have made your journeys. So you have gained some time."

"That is true," conceded Sam.

"Listen, Little Father; take me with

you. I will drive the dogs, make the camp, cook the food. Never will I complain. If the food gets scarce, I will not ask for my share. That I promise."

"Much of what you say is true," assented the woodsman, "but you forget you came to us of your free will and unwelcomed. It would be better that you go to Missinâibie."

"No," replied the girl.

"If you hope to become the squaw of Jibiwânisi," said Sam bluntly, "you may as well give it up."

The girl said nothing, but compressed her lips to a straight line. After a moment she merely reiterated her original solution:

"At Conjuror's House I know the people."

"I will think of it," then concluded Sam.

Dick, however, could see no good in such an arrangement. He did not care to discuss the matter at length, but preserved rather the attitude of a man who has shaken himself free of all the responsibility of an affair, and is mildly amused at the tribulations of another still involved in it.

"You'll have a lot of trouble dragging a squaw all over the north," he advised Sam critically. "Of course we can't turn her adrift here. Wouldn't do that to a dog. But it strikes me it would even pay us to go out of our way to Missinâibie to get rid of her. We could do that."

"Well, I don't know—" doubted Sam. "Of course—"

"Oh, bring her along if you want to," laughed Dick; "only it's your funeral. You'll get into trouble, sure. And don't say I didn't tell you."

It might have been imagined by the respective attitudes of the two men that actually Sam had been responsible for the affair from the beginning. Finally, laboriously, he decided that the girl should go. She could be of assistance; there was small likelihood of the necessity for protracted hasty travel.

The weather was getting steadily colder. Greasy-looking clouds drove down from the northwest. Heavy winds swept by. The days turned gray. Under the shelter of trees the ground froze into hummocks which did not thaw out. Cold little waves lapped against the thin fringe of shore ice that crept day by day from the banks.

Strange birds, swirling down wind like leaves, uttered weird notes of migration. The wilderness hardened to steel.

The inmates of the little camp waited. Each morning Dick was early afoot, searching the signs of the weather; examining the ice that crept stealthily from shore, waiting to pounce upon and imprison the stream; speculating on the chances of an early season. The frost pinched his bare fingers severely, but he did not mind that. His leg was by now almost as strong as ever, and he was impatient to be away, to leave behind him this rapid that had gained over him even a temporary victory. Always, as the time approached, his spirits rose. It would have been difficult to identify this laughing boy with the sullen and terrible man who had sulked through the summer. He had made friends with all the dogs. Even the fierce "huskies" had become tame, and liked to be upset and touselled about and dragged on their backs, growling fierce but mock protest. The bitch he had named Claire; the hound with the long ears he had called Mack, because of a fancied and mournful likeness to McDonald, the Chief Trader; the other "husky" he had christened Wolf, for obvious reasons; and there remained, of course, the original Billy. Dick took charge of the feeding. At first he needed his short heavy whip to preserve order, but shortly his really admirable gift with animals gained way, and he had them sitting peacefully in a row awaiting each his turn.

At last the skim ice made it impossible longer to use the canoe in fishing on the river. The craft was therefore suspended bottom up between two trees. A little snow fell, and remained, but was speedily swept into hollows. The temperature lowered. It became necessary to assume thicker garments. Once having bridged the river, the ice strengthened rapidly. And then, late one afternoon, on the wings of the northwest wind, came the snow. All night it howled past the trembling wigwam. All the next day it swirled and drifted, and took the shapes of fantastic monsters leaping in the riot of the storm. Then the stars, cold and brilliant, once more crackled in the heavens. The wilderness in a single twenty-four hours had changed utterly. Winter had come.

(To be continued.)