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The Valley of Voices

By GEORGE MARSH

Author of "Tollers of the Trail" "The Whelps of the Wolf"

CHAPTER XX

One bitter day in the middle of January six lean dogs, heads down, limped painfully across the clearing at Walling River.

"We have worried much, Michel and I," said the factor, as Steele and David thawed out before the trade-house stove.

"Man, man! How did you get it?" he gasped. Steele described his meeting at Albany with Laeselle.

"But if she cares? I feel, in her heart, that she does," protested St. Onge.

"She must be a free agent," insisted Steele. "I go south as soon as the dogs are rested. I shall talk to her first."

"I'm sorry, but as you wish it, I shall not tell her." That night, after what, to the hungry Steele, was a sumptuous meal...

"You have never told me, monsieur, why you took that terrible journey to Albany," she said, after a silence in which her black brows were drawn together in evident abstraction.

"No, you will hear—tomorrow." "But, tomorrow—you go?" "Yes."

"There are some things without price," he said gently. "What I have done, I have not done—for reward. I know—that I have your gratitude—is enough."

driven by a strange Indian arrived at Walling River. To the surprised questions of the factor the driver answered that he had come from Nepigon station with a package and a letter addressed to Mademoiselle Denise St. Onge.

"A letter for me?" she said, a wave of color sweeping her face, while St. Onge watched her curiously.

"But what is it?" "Read for yourself, father," and the stunned girl walked to a window and gazed with dry-eyed emorse out on the white valley.

"All I desire—all," she said, turning from the window. "But you are wrong when you think I did not know why he went to Albany—I knew. And I knew I was free the night before he left, when I tried to tell him that I loved him."

Unchecked tears slowly gathered in the eyes of the overjoyed old man. "My boy," he said brokenly. "It would be the proudest day of my life. You still care for her, don't you?" he demanded anxiously.

"You know I care for her," Steele gently answered, "but I went to Albany for her—not for myself. You must promise me that she hears nothing of this until I have left."

"But if she cares? I feel, in her heart, that she does," protested St. Onge. "She must be a free agent," insisted Steele.

"I found—that I was a mind reader," he answered with a smile. "It is a very great secret" she asked with a wistful look in the dark eyes that searched his.

"No, you will hear—tomorrow." "But, tomorrow—you go?" "Yes."

"There are some things without price," he said gently. "What I have done, I have not done—for reward. I know—that I have your gratitude—is enough."

Late in February, long after the last of the fur caught at the Stopping had been traded with St. Onge, a dog team

revisited the valley of the Walling. It knew the way and his friends there would live for that day.

"Dear Monsieur Steele: A violin—and a Nicolo Amati! Your generosity and your thought of me make these words but feel things."

"Denise St. Onge." If only the letter had given him a sign that she wanted him—needed him, instead of dwelling on her gratitude...

"At the edge of the scrub, below the bare brow of the hill, Steele stopped, with a heart which jangled him with its beat."

She finished, and as the last of the sock passed overhead, waved her bow. "Goodby! goodby," she called, as the wanderer faded into the north.

"You think this gratitude?" she murmured at length. "No—paradise!"

"At last—my spring—has come north," she sighed, "after the long snows."

It was May, and Brent Steele had been hard at work at the museum for three months.

"No Mail for Him" The postal service is laughing at the story of a post-office inspector who went into the hills of Arkansas to check up on a village post office.

Many and Various Are "Graveyards" of Books When a book languishes, unread, unlooked at and unasked for on the shelves of a library...

was recently revealed that they are sent out to the Seychelles islands where one book is as good as another.

LIFE'S LITTLE JESTS IN THE ALTOGETHER

The director of music at Boise high school had been earnestly explaining to pupils that an opera is presented in costume, but that an oratorio is not given in costume...

HE REMEMBERED She (deeply interested)—And, of course, your rich uncle remembered you in making his will!

Cause of Demise Full many a man both young and old, Has gone to his sarcophagus, By pouring water for cold Down a red-hot esophagus.

Formal "I think I heard the bell," said a mistress to her new parlor maid. "Yes, it was the bell," replied the maid.

Trespassers "You told me you hadn't any mosquitoes," said the summer boarder reproachfully.

Doubted It Gray—They say a man's first thousand dollars is the hardest to get.

PNEU TO HIM Professor—Every had pneumatics? Student—What kind of lung disease is that?

Searched With a Light Said a foolish young lady of Water: "An odor of gas now prevails."

An Expert Circus Manager—So you want a job as a snuff-blower? Much experience along that line?

Taking No Chances Harding—Why don't you sell people that you are a good mechanic? Murphy—Yes, and have my neighbors forever wanting me to come over and tinkering with their cars?

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Too Much. "Do you play golf?" "Just enough to explain the game to those who wish to learn."

Needs It. Hub—What on earth do you want a larger allowance for? Wife—I'm saving up for a divorce.

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