

# The Valley of Voices

By GEORGE MARSH

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"Tollers of the Trail"  
"The Whelps of the Wolf"  
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## THE FUR CANOE

**SYNOPSIS.**—With David, half-breed guide, Brent Steele, of the American Museum of Natural History, is traveling in northern Canada. By a stream he hears Denise, daughter of Col. Hilaire St. Onge, factor at Wailing River, play the violin superbly. He introduces himself and accepts an invitation to make the post his home during his stay. He finds the factor worried and mystified. The "log chateau" is a real home.

## CHAPTER I—Continued

"But they missed you!" laughed the Frenchman. "Yes! Our inspector, Monsieur Lascelles, in his desire to get fur ignores the conditions here entirely."

At the mention of the name Lascelles, Steele sensed a swift change in Denise St. Onge. His curious eyes caught a faint color in the girl's temples as she avoided his glance. In a moment she had control of herself but he wondered if this then was the cause of her headache.

"My position is most difficult, you see," continued St. Onge. "Lafamme controls the upper country with his whisky. We get considerable Little Current and Drowning River trade, but Michel and I have to meet them with our goods over at Portage Lake. There are many who fear to come to the House of the Windigo, on the Spirit rapids, as they call it."

"Strange your people at Albany fail to realize this!"

"They will realize it now—this summer, for we have come to an impasse, as we say in French."

"How is that, sir?"

"Why, my Indians, except Michel, who is a hard-headed Iroquois from the Nipissing and laughs at this devil talk, will not now go into the bush alone. They are always seeing and hearing things. Our hunter, Tete-Boule, refuses to leave the post since he found some prodigious tracks in the muskox and heard screaming at night. Monsieur, our people are panic-stricken."

St. Onge gravely shook his head. "And now, as you say in English, the climax is capped."

Steele leaned toward his host, keenly curious of what was coming, as St. Onge finished dramatically:

"Our fur canoe, which I left here early in July, with four men, never reached—Albany!"

"Never reached—Albany?" repeated the astonished listener. "They sent you word, by canoe?"

"Yes, they sent a relief party upriver to find my men who were long overdue. They feared they had lost their boat in the Albany rapids and were following the shore."

"And this search party found nothing?"

"Nothing!" St. Onge lifted shoulders and hands in eloquent gesture. "Men, fur, canoe; gone, wiped out, swallowed up!"

"But there must have been something washed up alongshore," vehemently protested Steele, "the shell of the canoe—small stuff—and a paddle always comes ashore."

"Nothing!" repeated the factor. "They searched the Albany and then the lower Wailing, for they had to pole and track most of the way as you know. Above the Devil's mile they found the first camp of our people, but below, not a body, or paddle, or scrap of canoe—nothing!"

To Steele this was incredible—this mysterious tragedy of the fur canoe. He wished he had known what had happened on the Wailing but a few weeks before, when he and David fought day by day its stiff current on the way to the post.

"It's simply unbelievable, colonel," he vigorously objected. "A swamped canoe, broken up in a big rapid, is bound to throw something on the beach below. We noticed nothing, but we were not on the lookout."

"That there was more to this story Steele was convinced; but what personal hearing could it have on Denise St. Onge?"

"Yet those are the facts, monsieur, and our people are mad with fear. Thank Heaven! Michel had a bad ankle and was not with the boat. He tells the Indians that the canoe and bodies are held in the big eddy, but I doubt it."

Steele stared at the factor, unable to accept the sole inference to be drawn from his host's remark. St. Onge was surely facetious.

"That leaves us the Windigo theory, colonel," he laughed, but to his surprise his pleasantry was met by so grave a face that for an instant Steele was in doubt of the mental balance of the Frenchman, harassed by the misfortunes of the summer. The dark eyes of Denise St. Onge, fixed on the window, were cryptic. Then the factor smiled insensibly as he said:

"Monsieur, I am a fur trader on a river believed to be haunted. It would be a policy most ruinous for me to admit a belief in the supernatural—in this Indian tradition. Is it not so? But," and the speaker glanced at his daughter, "as well believe it the Windigo; what other solution is left? Men and canoe disappear—like that!" and he snapped his fingers.

It was clear that St. Onge was dissembling—for some reason he was loath to give his guest the whole story. But why? What was there in this tragedy of fear and death that a stranger should not know? Why, since St. Onge had so frankly revealed the

crisis he faced at Wailing River—the threatened loss of the trade and abandonment of the post, due to the superstition of the Indians—did he withhold his own solution of the riddle? Certainly there was more, much more, in this strange situation which Steele had accidentally stumbled upon, than the loss of the fur canoe. The furtive glances of father and daughter at Steele's reference to Lafamme, the free-trader; her evident embarrassment at the mention of Lascelles, inspector at Albany; and above all, her mood of despair at the rapids, voiced so poignantly by her violin; these could bear no relation to the tragedy of the fur canoe—to the panic of the Indians at the ill-starred post.

"Were your men trustworthy?" he suddenly asked.

"Absolutely. They could not desert and hope to dispose of the fur. We and the Hudson's Bay people have an agreement. On the Albany at that time they would surely have run into the Fort Hope York boats and the Martin's Falls and Henley House brigades. Besides, two of them left young wives here."

"Still, I'm sure Michel is wrong about the eddy," ventured Steele, hoping to draw out the factor. "The Big Pelican whirlpool, below Lac Seul, the worst I've ever seen, always throws out the stuff sucked into it in the course of a few hours."

St. Onge lifted his heavy eyebrows in a nod of assent. "Oh, Michel is in doubt about it also, but that is what he tells the Indians. A man of parts is Michel, monsieur. He is more than my right hand here."

"Yes, he looks like a good man. Did you notice David, colonel?" Steele's face lighted as he mentioned his swarthy comrade.

"He seemed most intelligent," replied St. Onge, "and looks as if he could pack four hundred over a portage, if he wished."

"He can, colonel." Then Steele gabbled with his host's curiosity. "What worries me is how to keep him from wringing Lafamme's neck when we reach Ogoke—and, aside from getting supplies, we wish to stop at Ogoke, Colonel St. Onge."

The factor was palpably interested. His narrowed eyes seemed to search those of his guest in an endeavor to read his thoughts. Then, leaning forward, elbows on table, he asked tensely:

"I am sorry, but that is David's secret."

"Oh, I see! It is right, then, that you do not tell. But I was curious, monsieur, for today when he reached here, he asked at once how many days' travel it was to Ogoke lake."

That St. Onge should be vitally interested in the man, who, by the use of whisky, was winning the fur trade of the whole headwater country of the Wailing, was natural, but the observant Steele sensed more to the story than mere trade rivalry, in the attitude of the factor. However, he dropped the subject and returned to the lost canoe.

"It's by far the strangest case I have heard of—four men in a loaded canoe, wiped out without leaving a scrap of birchbark or a sliver of spruce as a clue, and a wonderful opportunity for the study of this Windigo superstition at first hand."

"Eighteen thousand dollars in fur!" sighed the factor, whose face was drawn and old, as they left the table.

## CHAPTER II

"Will you come with me to the trade-house, monsieur? For a time my daughter will be busy with the dishes. Then we shall have some music, Denise?"

"If you wish," and addressing Steele she added suggestively: "It will be my music tonight, monsieur. I promise you—in honor of your arrival at the 'House of the Windigo.'"

"But I like your sad music, mademoiselle," he said, "and I am clever at washing dishes, if I could be of service."

There was challenge in her black eyes as she countered: "Ah, monsieur, but you are more clever, I fear, at concealing your thoughts."

As he walked with the factor to the trade-house he wondered precisely to what she had alluded.

St. Onge was writing a lengthy report of the situation at Wailing River to his chief at Albany, three hundred miles downstream, so Steele joined David and Michel seated beside the post canoes on the beach, smoking after-supper pipes. In front of the Indian shacks, a group of shawled women talked in hushed voices. Near them, three men, squatted on their heels, Indian fashion, conversed, heads together. No shrill shouts broke the quiet. Even the play of the dusky children seemed suppressed. Truly, thought Steele, St. Onge had not exaggerated. The air hung heavy with fear. The Indians were in a panic. Dread of the fabled Windigo had wrought its spell. At this rate it would not be long before the foxes would bark in the clearing of the abandoned post—before padded feet would roam at will in what was now a home. And the girl up there—what would become of her?

"Well, David, has Michel told you of the fur canoe?" demanded Steele. David's broad face wrinkled in grin. Taking his pipe from his mouth, he spat deliberately before he answered with another question.

"How long we stop here?"

"I don't know. Why?" Steele was interested.

"Wal, Michel an' Daveed lak to drop down to de beeg strong water. We strike back in seven-eight sleep, maybe."

"What's your idea? It's not just to make another search on a mere chance of finding something. There's something else cooking under that black hat of yours."

But David was noncommittal. "We tak a look at de las' camp fur canoe made, an' shore below, for little piece."

Steele was secretly delighted at the excuse this expedition of David's would give him for prolonging indefinitely his stay at Wailing River. As a student of Indian mythology and worship of the supernatural, the probing of this mystery—the study of its effect on the post Indians—demanded his best efforts. It was a rare opportunity for an ethnologist, a student of folklore, to gather data at first hand. But over and beyond that was the riddle of this girl whose hands of an artist were now busy with the dishes up there in the factor's house.

"But what do you expect to find, Michel? There have been two canoes over the ground. The Windigo have swallowed canoe, fur and men."

The small eyes of the Indian snapped. "Daveed and Michel nevalre see M'sieu Windigo. We lak to hav' look at heem, Tete-Boule," with a gesture toward the three men grouped in front of the shacks, "he hear Windigo one, two, many tam. He fin' track een muskox—ver' beeg. But he hav' fear to tak Michel to de track. Maybe down on de beeg rapids, Daveed an' Michel shake han' wid de Windigo. Maybe we fin' he is hongree—den we feed heem—some lead." And the smile faded, while the swart features of the Indian set stiff with hate.

"Ah, ha!" thought Steele. "These two old foxes have got something in their heads."

But knowing his people, he did not press them for an explanation. Later, alone with David, he would be told. So he filled his pipe and sat down.

"Michel," he asked, "why did the Revillon Freres build this place at the head of these rapids instead of up at Ogoke lake where they could buck Lafamme, face to face, for the trade of the whole country?"

For a space Michel smoked, ignoring the question; then he grunted through the stem of his pipe:

"You see M'sieu Lascelles at Albany?"

"No, I stopped with the Hudson's Bay people. Why?"

"Wal, eef you see M'sieu Lascelles maybe you know why," was the reply. "Where were you before you came here?" asked Steele.

"At Albany."

"You know him, then. But he can't be a good fur man to build here—in the bad-lands, at these Spirit rapids of the Ojibways."

"De man who build dees pos' die, M'sieu Lascelles ees no fool; he not keep eet for fur—he keep eet—for 'noder reason." After which startling statement Michel became a sphinx to Steele's further questioning.

More than ever mystified by what he had heard, he left the men on the river shore, and rejoined his host.

In the warm candle light of the factor's quarters Steele soon lost himself in the playing of Denise St. Onge. There was no trace of the troubled eyes, of the reserve of the girl who had sat mute through the evening meal, listening to the talk of the men, in the gay creature who now conjured with her violin mad dances of the Polish and Hungarian peasants, love songs of Italy, French and German opera. Here was rare temperament, technique, training—all wasted in this wilderness. It was monstrous—inexplicable! What could have brought them here?

"It is superb, mademoiselle—you're playing," he cried impulsively, "you have appeared professionally, of course, in France?"

The culmination of the missing fur canoe is serious for St. Onge. What a mystery!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Jenny Lind, Genial Friend

Jenny Lind came again and yet again to the Taylors' congenial homestead; her kindness, "sensitive, capricious and restless as it is, her humanities and impetuosities" won the affections of mother and boy alike, says the Christian Science Monitor. "Great impulses, a humble Christian heart watching and praying to bring her into subjection of God's will, she is a great addition to my life," wrote Alice Taylor. . . . Nor was it to him (James Spedding) only that the great cantatrice of the world's worship brought her message of beauty and joy. In many a letter of that date we catch glimpses of her shining presence in that quiet home.

### She Didn't Get It

"You kissed me last night and mother didn't like it."  
"How can she dislike what she didn't sample?"



SATISFYING

"Well, Mrs. Johnsing," announced the negro physician, after taking her husband's temperature. "Ah has knocked de fever out of him. Dat's one good thing."

"Sho 'nuff," was the excited reply. "Does dat mean dat he's gwine git well, den?"

"No," replied the doctor, "dey's no hope for him; but you has de satisfaction of knowing dat he died cured."—Country Gentleman.

### Solace

"You have had some sad disappointments in your career?"

"No," said Senator Sorghum. "I have made promises which I could not keep, but the people who wanted appointments have usually proved better off in private business than they would have been in politics."—Washington Star.

### Merciful Judge

Judge—I will be merciful to you. Seven days.

Accused—But I am to be married in a week.

Judge—Then I will be still more merciful. A month.—Stockholm Kasper.

### NOT NOW



"Well, if it isn't Mabel! Is George still paying attention to you?"

"No, indeed, we've been married a year now."

### One Thing They Seldom Lose

Her temper's often lost, But if he had his choice Of things for her to lose He'd surely pick her voice.

### Relations

"What is your idea of the relations of nations?"

"They're a good deal like family relations," answered Senator Sorghum. "They don't think a lot of you unless you're in a position to lend 'em money."

### Oh, That's It

"Jack is such a handy boy, you know. He can bang nails into wood like lightning."

"How splendid."

"Yes, lightning seldom strikes in the same place twice."—Craftsman.

### Too Appreciative

"Has a keen sense of humor, hasn't he?"

"Rather. A banana peel all by itself will make him laugh."—American Legion Weekly.

### No Chance

Lady (to man in booth)—Look here, you've been in there 30 minutes and haven't said a word.

Man—I've been talking to my wife.

—Pitt Panther.

### PERFECTLY USELESS

Wife—Well, my new dress is perfectly useless.

Hubby—What! Get caught in the rain today?

Wife—Of course not! That Jones woman next door has got identically the same kind!

### Fighting

A little fray such wealth may win That life seems half a joke; A prize fight brings much money in, A war leaves nations broke.

### That's Odd

Mistress (to Swedish maid)—Back from the show already, Olga?

"Yes, mum."

"Scaramouche?"

"No, not very mouch."—Notre Dame Juggler.

### Hard to Get Away

Mrs. Jones—I think you'll do very well for a butler, but tell me, why did you stay ten years at your last place if you didn't like it?

Applicant—I busted me die, mum.

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