

The Valley of Voices

By GEORGE MARSH

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

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"MY VALLEY"

STOONIE—WITH DAME, half-breed guide, Brent Steele of the American Museum of Natural History, is traveling in northern Canada. By a stream he hears Dames, daughter of Col. Steele, St. Onge, factor at Walling River, say the words mysteriously. He introduces himself and attempts an initiation to make the past his home during his stay. He finds the factor worried and mystified. The "dog chateau" is a real home. From St. Onge he learns of the mysterious creature of evil, the "Windigo," and the disappearance of a canoe and its crew, with the slight the "Windigo" gives a weird performance. Brent Steele is mystified. David, Steele's Indian, and Michel, St. Onge's half-breed, join for the scene of the mysterious disappearance in an attempt to solve the mystery.

CHAPTER III

As the days passed at Walling River, and the dread voice failed to break upon the crisp September nights with a recurrence of its horror, the people timidly took up the old order of their days. The night noises in the forest were again visited and re-visited by the women, who traveled in pairs for mutual encouragement, and one day Teta-Bouie was prevailed upon by the factor to go out with another Indian after moose, for the forest needed fresh meat. As he left, the Ojibway gruffly shook the hands of the fearful women and children gathered on the shore, hiding their look upon him for the last time, for by night he and his comrades would be mangled flesh in the jaws of the Windigo.

"Did you hear that foot?" Steele asked St. Onge, standing near him on the beach.

"This thing has ruined him as a hunter," replied the factor, "he will never recover from it."

"I think I'll run upstream to the riffles this morning and catch some deer for supper," said the younger man as they returned to the trade-house.

Later, a second canoe quietly left the post, but when the boat reached the riffles, a mile above, the occupant did not stop to fish but continued upstream following the shore. And when the flash from the paddles of the craft above ceased, and the spot on the river which was the canoe, moved to the shore, the boat following, also turned in, and was lifted and hidden in the alders. Then the premonition of Teta-Bouie attained a partial fulfillment, for on the shore of the Walling started a man hunt; but the incentive in the hunter was not a craving for human flesh, but a mild curiosity.

Before sunset the safe return to the post of Teta-Bouie and his partner was heralded with joy, although they had failed in their hunt. But it was well after dark before the second canoe slid silently in to the stony beach.

"You had no luck this afternoon, monsieur, you caught nothing," laughed St. Onge as Steele appeared for supper.

"As a matter of fact, Colonel, I went hunting, but the game was too tame for sport."

St. Onge's black brows lifted.

"You are cryptic, monsieur."

"Well, to confess, I was interested to see how much hunting your men would really do—and I found out."

"You followed Teta-Bouie's canoe?"

"Yes, I watched them for a few hours, but as they showed no sign of taking to the bush, I traveled over to those ponds Michel told me about. Tomorrow, if you have a man who will help me pack the meat, I'll get a moose."

"And Teta-Bouie never left the river?"

"Not while I watched him."

The factor shrugged significantly. "He's bush shy" now and will not hunt. But what is there to do?"

"Have you thought that he might be shamming to avoid work? Is he lazy?"

"No, he always was a good packer and hunter. It's the Windigo."

In the week past, Steele had seen all too little of the girl whose personality had so vividly aroused his interest, whose moods, defying analysis, only added to her charm. Convinced that beyond a dread of the ugly alternatives which the future might present to her choice, beyond any possible fear of the manifestations of the supernatural which the post had witnessed, there lurked a tangible cause for anxiety, his active mind had been ceaseless in its groping for a clue to its nature. Two days following the night of terror, he had spent searching the big ridge for sign of wolverine, lynx or wolf, had produced nothing in explanation of the mysterious cries, but while his eyes swept the dry floor of the forest to right and left, his thoughts had dealt with the reiterated query: "Whom did she fear at the rapids? What was she about to tell me when St. Onge interrupted? She had said, 'But you do not know the danger! and there are so many.' Many what? Clearly there was something more than the Windigo in this warning. But what could it be?"

So Steele returned from his profitless search of the ridge to wait for the return of David and Michel, when

a definite plan of campaign could be framed.

On a morning when the warm September sun, lifting the low-lying river mist, rolled them back on ridges, here and there already flecked with the yellow and gold of a frost-painted birch or poplar, Denise St. Onge appeared at breakfast in white and heavy boots. Steele stared in surprise at the change in her dress and manner of her hostess. The ghost of worry had left her eyes, which shone with high spirits. Her mood of silence had given way to a gayer foreign to his knowledge of her.

"This beautiful morning, monsieur, Charlotte and I go to wave on an excursion to the summer which passes." "Charlotte is to be envied," he replied, charmed with the note of cheerfulness.

Her eyes lighted with amusement. "It is possible that it might be arranged that we take with us a body-guard," she said archly. "Of course, it is not for ladies to demand the presence of cavaliers."

"Take me, oh fair lady, as thy knight!" he begged.

"Laggard though you are, you may escort us to my watch tower, where Charlotte and I go to play the spring north, and to wave a bon voyage to the rest of the posse."

"It is charming of you, mademoiselle, to allow me to go," he said, delighted at having the girl to himself in her gay mood.

Accompanied by the stolid Charlotte, carrying a birch bark basket containing the lunch, and whose smart face

betrayed misgivings she dared not voice, Denise St. Onge appeared at the trade-house.

"You will not go without your rifle, monsieur?" queried St. Onge as Steele joined them.

"Is the Windigo dangerous in broad daylight?" facetiously asked Steele.

The bronze face of the factor reddened.

"The Windigo may strike in the day or night, monsieur. Who knows? It is well you go armed." And he handed the Mannlicher to the American, who took it, mystified, irritated, that the man to whom he had offered his services should withhold his confidence.

Led by the girl, hardly recognizable in her sudden metamorphosis from a creature of reticence and aloofness to one quick with life, vibrant to the magic of the sunlit September hills, they took the trail to an isolated ridge about a mile back from the river.

The watch tower was aptly named, for unlike most of the high land of the country, the hill was capped by a bare brow of rock commanding a little valley studded with a chain of miniature lakes. Beyond, a sweep of rolling forest faded into the haze of the southern horizon.

"Is it not beautiful—my valley, monsieur?" she asked with a wide sweep of her arm.

"Beautiful!" he repeated. "And you come here often?"

"Yes—that is, we used to come here; but lately—" She caught herself up sharply, then continued, "This valley, monsieur, I call my Vale of Tempe. It is enchanting to watch the spring slowly sweep it with its magic—point in, here and there, the soft green of the young birch leaves, the silver of poplar, and the red of the willow buds. And the first flowers of the forest—hepatica, purple and pink and white; violets and wood anemone and trillium—"

She paused, the dark eyes grew wistful—the voice throaty, as she continued: "Once there was no terror in these green forests; once we searched, unafraid, Charlotte and I, for the flower treasures they possessed. Come and find us!" they called, and daily we sought them and brought them home to transplant in our garden, but now—"

"But now?" he repeated, wondering if he were, at last, to know—to be made a sharer in her secret.

But she eluded him. "Charlotte and

I often came here to dream and play away the day—that is, I did," she laughed. "Poor Charlotte at times was bored, oh, so bored! Was it not so, Charlotte?"

"Bored, yes!" mumbled the Ojibway woman, who sat at a rock apart from the two, her restless eyes sweeping the scrub below them.

"Charlotte is not bored now; she's scared to death," suggested Steele with a laugh.

"Has she not reason, monsieur?" protested Denise. "But we have not been here, she and I, since midsummer. And I miss it so."

"You fear to come here now—because in this thing?" He welcomed the opportunity to put the question directly.

The dark eyes frankly met his. "Is there not good reason, monsieur, for fear in a woman? After the fair canoe—and that night?"

Natural as had been her reply, Steele instinctively sensed that she was dissembling—to avoid his inevitable questioning was willing to have him believe that she, too, was a victim of the general superstition. But she had betrayed herself the morning her father cut short her half-attended warning. Well, the day was young and he feared to press her then for an explanation of what she presently desired to avoid. So with a nodded assent to her question, he changed the subject.

"We are to have a gay music today, mademoiselle. You remember, for four in a woman? After the fair canoe—and that night?"

"Yes, today the violin shall sing of joy; it is too beautiful here to be sad. Even though the first gray goose of the year pass south, I shall send them no message."

"And this message—is it a secret?"

"A secret, monsieur! What secrets can a woman cherish in these forests? Her reply had been spontaneous, innocent of subterfuge; then, in his lifted eyebrows and humorous curl of lip, she caught the reflection of the double implication of her question, and her face flushed to the temples.

"Have you ever longed to journey south with the passing geese?" he quickly asked, gallantly covering her embarrassment. "As you play them down the skies, do you not wish to join them?"

"Why, Monsieur Steele, you have stolen my dreams," she cried, radiant with surprise. "Always, as they pass, I stand here calling to them to lend me wings to follow—follow into the south. I try to lure them back with my violin—but no, they pass. So I send them down the wind to a mad quick-step—my bon voyage, my farewell—until spring pipes them north."

She had risen. And her eyes, shining with emotion, her face, vivid with the color of her thoughts, strangely stirred the man who listened. The lines of her straight body, from shoulders to trim feet, held his eyes.

Watching her, Steele asked himself what this strange girl, tense as the strings of her violin, with her moods of aloofness and silence, followed by swift changes to whimsical gaiety and lightness of spirit, was coming to mean to him. As her eyes again met his he wondered what memories he should carry down to Nepigon in October.

"And the message you send with the geese?" he asked. "There is homeliness in it for your France—your Touraine?"

"Ah," she sighed. "Is it not natural, monsieur? I do long for the roses and the poppy fields—the warm sun on the white roads and the laughter of the people. There is no laughter at Walling River—now." She raised her hands in eloquent gesture. "The winter here is so long—so cold. The eternal wind in the spruce—does it not speak to you, too? To me there are always the voices—voices of hunger and pain—and death."

"Yes, summer or winter," he said, "the voices are everywhere, in the white-waters, the spruce, the hills. And often, in the breeze, the forest becomes one great orchestra."

"You have heard it, too?" she cried. "The sweep of the violins, the moaning of the cellos?"

"I always hear them in the summer, from a river; with the drumbeat of rapids as accompaniment."

"Ah, there is much of the post in you, monsieur." And for an instant there was a light in the girl's eyes which set wild thoughts stirring in his brain. "But our winter is beautiful, also, in moods," she went on. "The quiet days with the sun on the snow—I love then to walk in the forest. And the winding snowshoe trails; do they not call you to follow?"

Evidently Steele has fallen in love with the beautiful French girl. And her feelings?

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Flat Feet and Rheumatism

Many persons think they have rheumatism in the legs or back when they have flat feet or broken arches, according to Dr. Solomon Strouse in Hygeia Magazine.

A young man fell as he was escorting his lady down the aisle of a theater. Much embarrassed and fearing himself a victim of serious rheumatism he stayed in bed nursing his illness. When he finally called on a physician, his flat feet were discovered and his illness disappeared in a pair of properly adjusted shoes.



TOMBSTONE BARGAIN

At the annual sale of articles seized by the San Francisco police a white-tombstone, without epitaph, was knocked down to a woman in a red suit for \$5.50. Two policemen helped load it in her car.

"Frosty cheap," remarked the buyer, who refused to give her name. "It's for my father-in-law."

Eloquence

"Would you consent to run for the legislature?"

"No," answered Farmer Corntossel. "Why not?"

"I can't afford it. I'd like to make speeches for the benefit of my country and my fellow citizens. But any eloquence I am master of has got to be used just now in persuading some friends not to foreclose the mortgage."

—Washington Star.

A Tip

Tailor—Married or single? Customer—Married. Tailor (to cutter)—One pocket concealed in lining of coat. Customer—Eh? What's that? Tailor—To hide your change, you know, at night. I'm married myself.—Tit-Bits.

Men Must Stand Together

Assistant—Lady out there with a flashy necklace wants to know whether it's pure diamond or not. Jeweler—Look like a married woman?

"Yes."

"Tell her it is. No use makin' trouble for poor husbands these hard times."—Stray Stories.

WOULD TAKE IT ALONG



Reggie—Hope I won't leave a new vacancy by going just now—Miss Sharpe.

Miss Sharpe—I think you'll take it with you, Mr. Sapp.

You Sure Are!

There ain't no use to argue, There ain't no use to pout; The ump's the guy that calls 'em. When he says "You're out," you're out.

Might Help

"What do they mean by senatorial courtesy?"

"Under no circumstances will one senator say anything mean about another senator. We could easily apply it to life in general."

Her Striking Power

"I hear that Polly Peck is applying for a position as policeman."

"Well, Polly would arrest attention, if nothing else."

APPRECIATED THE CINCH



The Post—Nowhere in nature can such coloring as adorns thy cheek be found.

The Girl—And I'm not telling anybody of the only store in town that keeps it in stock, either.

This Is Queer!

I've often stopped to wonder At fate's peculiar ways; For nearly all our great men Were born on holidays.

His Fault

"Sir, your daughter has promised to become my wife."

"Well, don't come near me for sympathy. I knew something like that would happen to you hanging around the house five nights a week."

Mean Thing

Hospitable Host—Won't you have some more duck, Miss Stommer? Rashful Guest—No, thank you! "Oh, do Here's a nice little leg. Just your size."

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—Columbus State Journal.

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Pup Afraid of Dark

An alretdale pup at Evansville, Ind., crawled into a sewer. Touched by its pitiful howls three hose-house crews worked for half a day in rescuing it. Now the pup is so afraid of the dark that he will not sleep in a room unless the light is burning.

Wonderful

"Just think, 3,000 seals were used to make fur coats last year!"

"Ain't it wonderful what they can train animals to do nowadays?"

Britain's Meat Imports

Of the total meat consumption of Great Britain, only about two-fifths is produced from home-bred animals.

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Platinum in Colombia

Although before the revolution Russia was the greatest platinum-producing country in the world, Colombia is now one of the greatest producing centers. Before Russia lost its place as head of the list, Colombia was second. In the Transvaal, South Africa, there are also great platinum deposits. The present contribution of the United States is less than 1,000 ounces a year, most of this coming from California. Science has succeeded in producing platinum from scrap ores that appear to contain only traces of other metals.

Wife Some Healer

Blake—Did your wife hear you when you came home late last night? Briggs—Did she? Why, man, she wakes up when the thermometer falls.—Life.

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Where He Fell Down

"What are you in for?" "Slow driving, sir." "What? Arrested because you drove slow?" "Yes, sir, I stole a car and didn't get away fast enough."—Boston Transcript.

Wholly Undesirable

"Do you think we are descended from monkeys?" "Certainly not," answered Miss Cayenne. "Monkeys have had neither the wealth nor the distinction to encourage us to claim them as ancestors."

Just Common Practice

The Girl—Don't some people get offensive when they own a car? The Man—Well, some certainly do get a habit of running other people down.

Franklin's View of Dress

Fond pride of dress is sure a very curse; ere fancy you consult, consult your purse.—Benjamin Franklin.

Not Enough to Bother

"Noah's family must have enjoyed the ark." "Why?" "Only two mosquitoes on board."

Many people imagine that Worms or Tapeworms cannot be expelled entirely. A single dose of "Dead Shot" proves that they can. 312 Pearl St., N. Y. Adv.

Don't lock the garage door after the car is stolen. Maybe the thief will repent and bring it back.