

The Valley of Voices

CHAPTER XVI

By GEORGE MARSH

For two days the watchers of the trail waited in their ambush, but no hunters or search party left the post. Then, one morning, at daylight, from the thick scrub of the shore south of Ogoke, two men looked long through binoculars at the chimneys of the snow-blanketed cabins, and smiled into each other's wind-burned faces when they saw that from more than half there rose no smoke of cooking fires. Of the group of tips of bush Indians which had dotted the clearing in October, but two now remained.

It was the turn of the old Ojibway and two young Indians to stand guard on the trail to the game country. Michel and Steele were too far to the south to overtake Lafamme's men, so they struck straight back to camp, confident of the outcome—for old Wagosh guarded the trail.

That morning, as the stars faded and dawn broke blue and bitter over the eastern ridges, an old man with hate in his heart prayed for the coming of one for whom he had waited long. With hoods pulled over frost-blackened faces from which rose the steaming columns of their breath, Wagosh and his two companions shuffled back and forth on their snowshoes, beating their shoulders with mittened hands, for the stinging cold pierced their caribou capotes.

"It may not be that he will come today," said the old Indian in his native tongue, "but if a Frenchman, short, with legs that curve like a bow, comes with others, they pass and we follow, until they separate to hunt. Then you will take the others, while I follow him alone—for he is mine. Wagosh, the fox, will know what to do."

The Indians nodded. They had heard his story.

But this morning the watchers of the trail had not long to wait. As the lifting sun filtered through the forest, stabbing the blue shadows with lances of light, Wagosh suddenly stopped the whispered conversation with:

"Bisan! shish!"

Crouched in a thicket of young fir, their guns stripped of their skin cases, the three stiffened, listening. Presently to their straining ears drifted the faint click of snowshoes. Pushing aside some low branches the Ojibway peered down the trail in the direction of the sound. After a space of breathless waiting, his companions saw his arm tremble. Then, shivering like a man chilled to the bone, the old Indian turned a face fierce with passion, and whispered:

"Let them pass. He has come!"

Swinging rapidly up the trail moved the stocky figure of Black Baptiste followed by an Indian whose eyes shifted furtively to right and left as he walked. When the two had passed from sight, three shapes, leaving the trail, followed like shadows, on muffled shoes. Two miles beyond, where the fresh tracks of a moose crossed the path in the snow, and the hunters from Ogoke separated, Wagosh left his friends, to pick up the webbed imprints of the larger shoes of his man.

Then two still hunts started through the soundless forest—the stalk of moose, and of man. Over the new snow, as swift and as noiseless as a wolf after ptarmigan, the hunter of Black Baptiste closed in. Evidently in doubt of the direction of the movement of the air, the Frenchman stopped to test it with his bare hand. Then he went on, until the sudden lengthening of the stride in the snow indicated that the moose had scented danger and started to travel.

With a curse the hunter lifted both shoulders in a gesture of defeat. The shifting air had betrayed him. He turned from the trail he had followed and struck out in a new direction. Shortly, as he stopped and knelt on a knee to tighten the thongs of a shoe, a voice straightened him to his feet with a jerk, nervously fingering the trigger of his gun. His shifting eyes searched the inscrutable spruce that waited him in. Trapped, helpless, he flinched from the expected flash of the hidden rifle.

"Drop the gun!"

The fingers of the Frenchman relaxed. The gun slipped to the snow at his feet.

"Marche!" The command snapped on the frosty air like a whiplash.

Slowly the hunter of Lafamme obeyed the order of his concealed enemy. Then a crouching figure, with half-raised rifle, stole from a clump of young growth and followed.

A hundred feet from the gun, Baptiste, shaking with fear and rage, turned desperately on his captor. "What do you want?" he demanded in Ojibway.

The black eyes of Wagosh blazed with exultation. The lean face in the hood was pitiless. At last he looked into the face of his man.

"You know me—Wagosh—from Woman river?" He hit out with the words as a drill bites steel.

The swart features of Black Baptiste went yellow at the words. He remembered the father of the girl at his cabin.

Stuff with fear, his staring eyes watched the black muzzle of the moving death slowly sighted on his heart. Then, as his nerves snapped and he leaped in desperation, toward the crouched figure, there was a loud explosion. With a groan the Ojibway crumpled to the snow.

The dazed Frenchman, stopped short in his rush, rocked on his feet—then stumbled forward, grasping his knife. As he hurried himself, with a downward slash, on the heap in the snow, he met an upward thrust which buried the blade of Wagosh in his body.

Then on the white floor of the forest, a man blinded by flame and powder, and one mortally hurt struck and slashed until strength left their arms and they lay together, hunter and hunted, motionless, on the crimsoned snow.

There Steele and Michel found them.

"Knife fight!" cried the Iroquois. "What happen to Wagosh gun?" He picked up the cheap trade-gun with its burst breech. "Ah-hah! He get snow een de muzzle an' she bust w'en he shoot."

"Too bad, poor old man! He could have shot Baptiste at the ambush, but he wanted to settle it alone—tell him who he was, I suppose."

"Yes, he mak' dis feller drop hees gun—den he stop heem for to talk," said Michel, examining the trail of Baptiste. "W'en Wagosh shoot an' de gun Lust, de Frenchman jump on heem wid de knife."

Michel gently turned over the frozen body of the old Indian, exposing the face, powder-burned and torn, beyond recognition.

"By gar! He fight heem widout hees eyes!"

"Brave old Wagosh!" Steele looked, and turned away, sick at heart. He had liked the simple-hearted Ojibway.

"I tell you dat eet was all right, Old Wagosh watch de trail."

"Yes, the trail was safe with Wagosh. Now he can rest in peace. He did what he came to do."

"I wish heem moch game een de Happy Huntin' Groun'," added Michel. "And the two returned to their camp and sent a sled to bring in the body to be cached under logs until spring, when it could be buried."

Robbed of the joy and solace of her beloved violin; too restless to read, Denise St. Onge sat one evening with her father, her head resting on the back of her chair, her eyes closed. For a half hour the factor had brooded over his future, oblivious of her presence. Then, suddenly aware of her silence, he glanced curiously at the girl's averted face.

From the closed eyes tears traced their way down her cheeks while the sensitive mouth quivered with the misery of her thoughts.

"Denise! You poor child!"

"You must not mind foolish tears," she said. "I miss my violin so."

He shook his head at the subtlety, then voiced the course of his thoughts. "If only they win at Ogoke and rid the country of that scoundrel, this will be a strong post. He will not dare to close it—I will defy you to. Steele has told them in Montreal."

"Yes, but what of me?" she groaned. "I have given him my promise."

The face of St. Onge flushed with passion. "The day you married that man I would shoot him and then myself."

She went to the factor and sitting on the arm of his chair, stroked his bowed head. "No, no; not that, not that, dear," she soothed. "I am not worth it."

He suddenly straightened, and asked: "You will show me that letter?"

"Yes, if you wish it." Denise took an envelope from her desk and handed it to her father, who opened the letter and read:

"Mademoiselle St. Onge: "You may be interested to know that the American, Monsieur Steele, honored us with his presence on his way home to Nepigon in October. As he was drowned in the Jackfish rapids, I am at liberty to say that I found him irresistible and was preparing to accompany him to the railroad, when Monsieur Lafamme surprised us in his cabin. Rose Bernard."



The Dazed Frenchman Stopped Short in His Rush.

Rising, the factor faced the girl, the hand holding the letter shaking from his emotion.

"And you believed this woman—took her word against his?"

"Why not? He admitted that Lafamme surprised them," she answered in a strained voice, avoiding her father's eyes. "What does it matter now? I have given my word."

"Will you tell me this?" he demanded. "You loved this man when he left for home in September? I know, for you were happy."

Her black eyes met his bravely. "When he left here I believed in a beautiful thing—but that, somehow, has died."

"If it died," he answered, "why, when you thought him dead, did you cry night after night—I heard you in your room; I knew from your playing—why was the shock—the joy, so great when he returned to fight for us?"

She did not answer.

"I believe you love him still, in spite of what you say. He has loved you from the first; I could see it. He is sacrificing much for us—proving his love for you every day, and yet you allow this lie of a low woman to poison your mind."

With a gesture of hopelessness, she rose to leave the room, avoiding his eyes.

"I do not know if they can save the post," said St. Onge. "I may have to leave the company—a ruined man. But I tell you this, that the woman who throws away the love of Monsieur Steele will live to be haunted by regret."

She turned a white face at the door, as she said: "You forget that I have given Monsieur Lascelles my promise."

It was a "poudre day" at Ogoke. In the gray dawn a tall figure had left the scrub of the shore, miles below and out of sight of the post, to examine the trail on the lake ice, which led south to the Rouge and the Jackfish. Michel had smiled with satisfaction to find that a sled had passed since the fall of snow two nights before. The mystery which ringed the doomed post, as the forest rings a clearing, was doing its work. Unnerved by the fate of those who had gone downriver and into the hunting country, never to return, the people were slipping away from Ogoke in the night as from a spot plague-ridden. The day of Lafamme was nearing its sunset. There could be few left, now, to drink his whisky. He was finished. The moment for walking in on the trader and Big Antoine was at hand.

As he backedtracked to the camp, the bold features of the Iroquois, in his fur hood, lit with joy as he gazed over the victory they had won—won with the toil and sweat of two months' ceaseless effort. He snatched his lips at the thought of meeting Lafamme—the man who had murdered in cold blood—planned the ruin of Wailing River—who had dared insult Denise, that when he looked into the faces of the pair of cutthroats, Lafamme and Big Antoine.

He swung along over his backtracks, his snowshoes raising the powdery snow like dust, engrossed in plans for the future. As he entered some timber, thick with young growth, a rife flashed on his flank! The man in the trail took a step forward—swayed, as his gun slipped from his hands—then lunged headlong to the snow and lay motionless.

For a space, in the windless morning, the forest was without sound. Then a chickadee called, and curious, sallied down to inspect the still shape in the trail. Presently a moose-bird croaked. Again silence shut in.

After an interval there was a movement in the thicket of young spruce. Branches were parted, to make way for a swart face from which sinister eyes gazed on the stricken thing in the snow.

Gun thrust forward, hammer cocked, the assassin cautiously left his ambush. Standing over the still body, face down, with a knee curiously bent under, he laughed in triumph, as he kicked viciously with the toe of his snowshoe at the back of the hooded head. But at the movement, the lifted foot in his snowshoe was gripped and held, while the head and shoulders of the man at his feet lunged into his legs, carrying him with a cry of surprise backward to the snow.

Hampered by the shoes which trapped and anchored their feet, the two fought; one, desperately for his life; the other, for the settlement of old scores—and this shot from the spruce. But the strength and fury of the raw-boned Iroquois soon wore down the man beneath him who frantically strained and twisted to break the grip on his throat.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Mythical Greek Hero
In Greek mythology Adonis was a beautiful young boy, beloved by Venus and Proserpine. They quarreled about his possession, but the dispute was settled by Jupiter, who decreed that Adonis should annually spend six months with Venus in the upper world and four months with Proserpine in the lower world. Adonis was fatally wounded by a wild boar, during the chase, and was changed by Venus into an anemone. She yearly mourns him on the anniversary of his death. Shakespeare has commemorated the love of Venus for Adonis in a beautiful descriptive poem entitled "Venus and Adonis."—Kansas City Times.

ANIMALS PROVE REAL HEROES IN NEW YORK FIRE

Baboon Rescues Kitten Pal —Monkeys and Canaries Perish.

New York.—Tales of animal heroism were brought from a smoldering building in Cortlandt street by firemen who fought flames that caused the deaths of 5,000 canaries, 150 parrots, 40 monkeys and several cats and dogs.

Several box constrictors lashed about, terror stricken, in their cages, monkeys chattered and parrots shrieked, creating a bedlam of noises such as a jungle explorer might hear in a nightmare. The jungle law of the survival of the fittest prevailed, and the weaker of the imprisoned creatures perished. So frightened were the box constrictors and two wildcats that they were rescued without attempting to attack the firemen.

Outstanding Hero.
The outstanding hero of the fire, as reported by firemen, was a baboon which took his inseparable companion, a kitten in his arms, broke open the door of his cage and escaped to safety with his charge. In another cage firemen said they found a monkey crouched in her cage, choked by



Took His Inseparable Companion, a Kitten, in His Arms and Escaped.

the smoke and her hair singed by the flames. When they removed her they found she was lying on four of her young, protecting them with her own body. The mother later was revived.

A loss of more than \$15,000 was caused by the fire. Most of this was caused by deaths of the animals and birds. The animal store, known as Bartel's pet store, is patronized by circus men, Three anteaters, a South American vulture and many chicks and rabbits, intended for the Easter season, were among the casualties.

Representatives of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals rendered first aid to the animals which it was thought would recover. Those more seriously injured were killed.

Dog Saves Boys From Death by Exposure

Petoskey, Mich.—The faithfulness of a pet dog is believed to have saved the lives of Clinton Shearer, six-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Shearer of Kogonic, and Lynn Edward Hopkins, seven-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Hopkins of Edgewater.

The two lads became lost and spent the zero night in a swamp near Ramona park, where they were found in a serious frozen condition by their fathers. By some instinct of nature the dog seemed to realize the children's predicament and crawled over the two weary bodies in an effort to keep them warm through the night.

The dog showed no ill effects from the cold except that he was ready for breakfast and a real breakfast naturally was his reward.

Must Wear Hats

Philadelphia.—Women must keep their hats on at the trial of David L. Marshall, chiropractor, for murdering Anna May Deltrich. When one spectator uncovered to relieve a headache she was informed: "This isn't a movie; it's a murder trial."

10 Years for 5 Cents

Kansas City, Mo.—For a five-cent robbery, Robert Clark and John Jackson were sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary here. The nickel was taken in a holdup.

Same Serpent

Prince Rupert, B. C.—There's a big sea serpent loose in the Pacific. It raised its head thirty feet out of the water, take it from Capt. C. J. House of the government fishery boat.

Cat Comes Back

East Templeton, Mass.—Billy Sunday, a cat, is back at his old home after traveling 200 miles from South Jefferson, Maine, in a year.

Dogs Collide

Columbus, Kan.—Two valuable hounds were killed when they collided while chasing a rabbit.



WELL WORTH IT

After morning service the family dined, and churches and their procedure came in for criticism. Father criticized the sermon. Mother disliked the blunders of the organist. The eldest daughter thought the choir's singing was atrocious. But the subject had to be dropped when the small boy of the family, with the schoolboy's love of fair play, chipped in with the remark:

"Dad, I think it was a jolly good show for a penny."—Epworth Herald.

MISUSE OF ROPE



Brown—Give a man enough rope and he'll—
Jones (chucking a stump)—Put out a new brand of 5-cent cigars.

Doggy Poem

Nine little doggies
Sizzling on a plate,
In came the boarders,
And then they were ate.

Encouraging Talent

"Josh," said Farmer Cornstossel to his son, "why don't you go ahead and write a play?"

"Who? Me?"

"Yes, I've been to theaters quite some lately. The way I heard you talkin' to that team o' mules shows me you've got some pretty good ideas for dramatic dialogue."—Washington Star.

High Society

Mrs. Waldo (of Boston)—I have a letter from your Uncle James, Penelope, who wants us to spend the summer on his farm.

Penelope (dubiously)—Is there any society in the neighborhood?

Mrs. Waldo—I have heard him speak of the Holsteins and Guernseys. I presume they are pleasant people.—Christian Endeavor.

Grandma Saves the Surface

"Willie, I thought I told you you'd have to stay in the house all day."

"Yessum, you did, but grandma sent me down to the drug store to get her lipstick refilled."

NEW BARBER SHOP



"Going to have it trimmed?"

"No. Just a shave on the back of my neck. Won't be long. Here's the latest number of 'My Lady's Gazette.' That barber on the end does the best jobs."

Practical Application

A facile brush the artist wields,
With purpose grave or comic,
It is the whitewash brush that yields
Results most economic.

Exactly

"Women spend half their time saying that they have nothing to put on their backs."

"And the other half proving it."

Doubtful Discipline

"How's the new jail?"

"Mighty handsome an' commodious," answered Cactus Joe. "The fact is, it's so comfortable we're thinkin' o' offerin' a week's board in it as a premium for good behavior."

Not at All

Mistress—I hear you're rather friendly with the milkman, Emma. Is he serious?

Emma—Serious? Oh, no, ma'am! E's one of the joky sort!

Not Relatives

To speeding motorist who just splashed mud on him:

"Hey, who the Sam Hill do you think you are?"

"Oliver Twist, why?"

"Well, I'm Oliver Mud."—Hogan's Alley.

On Her Hands

Glady—May's fiance is supposed to be a dreadfully bad egg.

Gertrude—I wondered why she didn't like to drop him.



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