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W. N. U., San Francisco, No. 44-1925.

The Valley of Voices

By **GEORGE MARSH**

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

THE TRACKS

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 Walling 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. From St. Onge he learns of the mysterious creature of evil, the Windigo, and the disappearance of a canoe and its crew, with the season's take of furs. Then at night the Windigo gives a weird performance. Even Steele is mystified. David, Steele's Indian, and Michel, St. Onge's head-man, leave for the scene of the canoe's disappearance in an attempt to solve the mystery. St. Onge tells Steele that Lascelles, the company's manager at Fort Albany, seeks his ruin in order to compel Denise to marry him to save her father. Steele and Denise fall in love.

CHAPTER III—Continued

—7—

"Like the white roads of your Touraine?" he replied. "I think I prefer the northern winter to the summer, but, of course, it is often grim and lean for the families of the hunters—for the women and children."

Her eyes clouded. "It is always so, for the women and children—they find life hard—here—in the north." For a long interval she was silent and he knew that her personal problem again haunted her thoughts.

Then the music-hungry Steele handed the bag containing the violin to its owner, with: "Please, anything you care to play that is not sad. Today, you know, you were to forget," and she smiled significantly.

Stretched at length, with hands behind head and closed eyes, Steele listened as the violin of the girl ran the gamut of the composers. Rhapsodies, love songs of many peoples, fragments of melodies he had never heard, mad dances of the Slavs, of the plains of Hungary, serenades of Spain and Italy, a riot of love and joy, redolent of moonlight and fragrant gardens, of ivied towers and old romance, she conjured for the enchanted ears of the man lying on a Canadian hilltop. For two hours the violin sang on the height above the forest.

And as he watched and listened, Steele often compared this girl he had known but days, to other women, who in the past had caught his fancy; and to his surprise, as he conjured them up, and contrasted them with the vivid personality of Denise St. Onge, the memories of the former blurred to insignificance. Slight as was his knowledge of her, the quality which was so patently a part of her—the mystery of personality, had wrought its spell.

At length she ceased playing, and asked: "Now would you like to hear something of my own?"

"It would be delightful!"

"I call this, 'When Spring Comes North.'" And she broke into a gay melody filled with the rush of the brooks, the soft wind in the young birch leaves, the love songs of the returning birds.

"You have caught it all—the spring!" he applauded. "Please play it again!" But she shook her head.

"Now I am to break my promise by playing 'Farewell.' We were to be gay today; if you do not care to hear it—?"

"Please play it! You mean farewell to summer?"

Her face darkened as she replied with a characteristic shrug: "Farewell to summer—to everything!"

"Oh, you cannot mean that!"

Without replying she drew her bow across the strings in a low minor and swiftly lost herself in a stark revelation of grief and despair.

As he listened he heard again the moaning of a heart without hope, the anguish of a tortured soul, which had first met his ears at the rapids. Seemingly she was voicing through her violin what she could not express in words, and the sympathy of his quick

understanding went out to the lonely girl with her unknown burden.

She ceased as swiftly as she had begun, and stood gazing out on the tranquil valley. He respected her mood by his silence, his brain active with conjecture, his emotions dangerously out of hand. Then the warning of the low sun called the girl from her brooding. She turned a wistful face as she said:

"I have broken my promise and have been very sad, monsieur."

"You have been telling me much, in your 'Farewell,' mademoiselle. I only wish you could trust me—that I could help you." There was momentarily in her eyes that which whipped the blood to his face as she said: "It was because you have the heart of a poet that I played my 'Farewell.' And I do trust you, Monsieur Steele, some time you may know—"

"Why some time, why not now, if I am to aid you?" he demanded impulsively.

But she only shook her head.

Carrying the violin and rifle, Steele led the way down the trail to the post. They had reached a hollow at the foot of the ridge where the soil was spongy and moist, even in September, because of the springs beneath. Here and there in the forest mold, flowers vividly blue and fringed, bloomed on graceful stems beside the trail.

"Here are my gentians, monsieur!" cried Denise. "Are they not beautiful? I cannot make them grow so lovely at home, it is not damp enough."

She bent and touched the petals of a flower, and looking up said: "I think I love them more than the other autumn—!" she suddenly checked herself, her eyes widening. The man was staring at the trail beyond them.

"Monsieur!"

He turned to her, his puzzled look shifting to a smile. "Pardon me, your gentians are beautiful—but we should hurry or we shall be late at the post, and your father will wonder," he said, and started briskly up the trail, followed by the bewildered girl. He had walked but a few yards when a scream stopped him. With the lunch basket at her feet, fallen from shaking hands, Charlotte swayed in the path behind them, her face gray with terror.

"Oh, what is it, Charlotte?" cried Denise St. Onge, as Steele strode past her, and seizing the palsied Ojibway by the arm, half carried her forward to her mistress.

"Please, mademoiselle," he insisted, "hurry along! I'll take care of Charlotte. It's nothing. She thinks she sees something, but it's only imagination." And he started with the moaning Indian, numb with fright.

"Nia! Nia!" wailed the Ojibway, finding her feet. "De trail! I see trail, m'am'selle! Run! Run!" And with feet spurred by fear, Charlotte led the way back to the post.

"What was it that you tried to hide from me?" demanded Denise, as she walked rapidly at his side, "I saw your face. There was something."

"It was nothing. It looked like a bear trail, only a bear trail, Charlotte is full of Tete-Boule's myths and was stampeded. She's been uneasy all day."

The doubtful eyes of the girl searched his as they walked.

"It is kind of you, monsieur," she said, "but you must not deceive me, I have to face this thing."

"You are not afraid—you do not believe in—"

"Afraid!" she cried passionately, "yes, I am afraid, of, oh, so many things. You do not realize—it is so hopeless!"

He was walking close to her, over-conscious of her nearness. Her shoulder touched his, and his pulse leaped at the contact. A loose strand of her hair brushed his cheek, and he felt the blood in his face. He was perilously near rash action, but he coveted her good will—and he feared the mystery in her—and the dignity.

"But is there no way out?" he managed to say, fighting for mastery of himself.

"Way out?" she repeated in a strained voice, "There is no way out—for the lost," and as she quickened her pace, the heightened color of her face betrayed her. Like the strings of her violin she had vibrated to his emotion. Beyond the mystery and the despair, there was the woman, and he followed her swift feet over the trail with an elation he had never before known; with the resolve to fight through to the root of this mystery if it meant a winter on the snow.

"No way out for the lost," she had said, and she smiled as he repeated to himself, "But the lost has been found; the lost has been found." Mystery, Windigo, intrigue at Albany, were as nothing now that he had seen the blood leap to her face at his touch.

He did not follow up her strange words. It would have profited little and his mind was full of what he had seen beside the trail—unmistakable tracks in the mud, mammoth and strange, beyond his experience.

Shaped they were, somewhat resembling bear tracks, with deep indentations of claws, but the weight was not distributed as in the track

of a bear, and there were separated pad marks, like the track of feline. Yet no lynx or cougar ever owned feet so misshapen and huge. He would return at daylight and follow them up. Here at last was something tangible to work on. In the meantime, Charlotte would have the post people mauling with fear. It would be a bad night for Walling River.

As they entered the clearing, Steele saw a knot of men gathered before the trade-house. With a swift goodbye, Denise hurried to her kitchen while Steele joined the factor, who announced:

"Good evening, monsieur. It seems our friends have returned." From the head of the portage moved a canoe, above the familiar legs of David. Following him came Michel, doubled under a heavy load slung from his tump-line.

"What have they got?" queried St. Onge.

"Give it up; maybe some of the fur!" hazarded Steele.

"We shall never see that again," muttered the factor.

Near them the post people discussed the safe return of the search party in awed whispers. Then, as Michel approached, Steele grinned. "Meat!" he announced drily.

"Good, we need it!" added St. Onge with a sigh of relief.

Swinging the canoe from his shoulders, David wiped his brow with his sleeve and grinned into Steele's questioning face as the latter gripped his hand.

"Back safe and sound, David?" Steele looked hard into the snapping eyes of his friend.

"Ah-hah! Safe an' sound! Bo-jo! Meester St. Onge!" and the Ojibway took the proffered hand of St. Onge.

"Well, Michel, you found moose, if you didn't strike anything else," Steele said to the inscrutable Iroquois. "Don't see any signs of teeth on you; you must have run too fast for the Windigo," he suggested, but the head man glanced significantly at the post Indians and made no reply.

Steele drew David from the group, congratulating Michel on his escape from a hideous death down river and asked: "Any luck, David?"

"We fin' noding of canoe, but we see some sign. Ver' strange sign, boss."

"What was it?"

"Wal, we fin' de las' camp of fur-cano, but no sign of cano' or men. Den we follow river shore an' noding there. Den we circle back from de camp an' two smokes into de muskeg we fin'—" David stopped short to scowl past Steele into the face of a hovering Indian, who quickly advanced with extended hand.

"Bo-jo! bo-jo! Daveed," greeted Tete-Boule as David seized his proffered hand.

"Bo-jo, Tete-Boule!" and the iron grip which was known from Nepigon to Lac Seul closed on the unsuspecting interloper.

"Ough! Ough!" cried Tete-Boule doubling with pain over his crushed fingers. "Why you shak' de han' so hard?"

The broad face of David wrinkled in amusement as he surveyed the writhing victim of his handshake.

"Wat de trouble wid you, Tete-Boule? When I ver' glad to see you, I give de good shakehand."

As Tete-Boule left them nursing his fingers, Steele muttered: "He won't forget that soon. Trying to hear what you are saying, was he?"

"Ah-hah! De nex' tam eet weel be hees neck."

"But what was it you found in the muskeg?"

"In the muskeg we fin' ver' beeg track of somet'ing. We nevalre see such strange sign before." The Ojibway shook his head. "But de rain wipe eet out."

"Then I found more, staying here, than you did down the river."

"Wat you see?"

"Well, David, I've seen the trail of the Windigo, and I've made another little discovery. We've got a Wabeno at the post and I let you guess who it is."

"A Wabeno!" echoed the surprised David. Then with a grimace he added, "I tink dat Wabeno got a sore han' now, but de Windigo trail—were you fin' eet?"

"I'll tell you and Michel what I know after supper; they are calling me now." And the two friends parted.

Evidently the Windigo is sufficiently real to make a hideous noise and leave a huge track. What is the thing?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

First Technical Dictionary

The first English technical dictionary was published in England in 1704 by John Harris, an English clergyman and scientific writer. The work was entitled "Lexicon Technicum," or a Universal English Dictionary of Arts.

Famous Chair a Fixture

The coronation chair in Westminster abbey was made in 1296. It has only been outside the abbey once since that date.

A Nervous Breakdown

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Niagara Falls

The water that flows over Niagara has flowed from the four great lakes and the hundreds of rivers that flow into them, more than one-half of the fresh water of the world, according to one authority. The fact that evaporation and precipitation in the form of rain and snow are continually going on in the enormous areas of the Great Lakes region renders it unlikely that the Great Lakes will ever be drained in this manner.

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South African Whaling

Remarkably big catches have been made recently by the whaling fleets of Durban, Union of South Africa. For one 24-hour period 42 whales were taken, weighing approximately 1,800 tons. One whaling company alone had landed 15 whales while two of their boats were steaming into Durban with catches of four and five whales each.—Commerce Reports.

Old Timers

Artist—"Did you see the jokes I left this morning, sir?" Editor—"I did—before you were born."

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