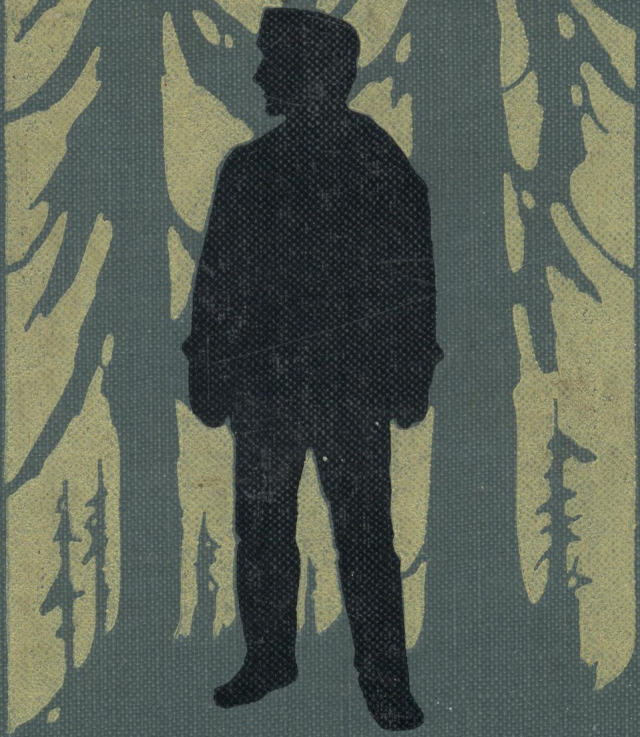
The TESTING of JIM MACLEAN



DILLON WALLACE

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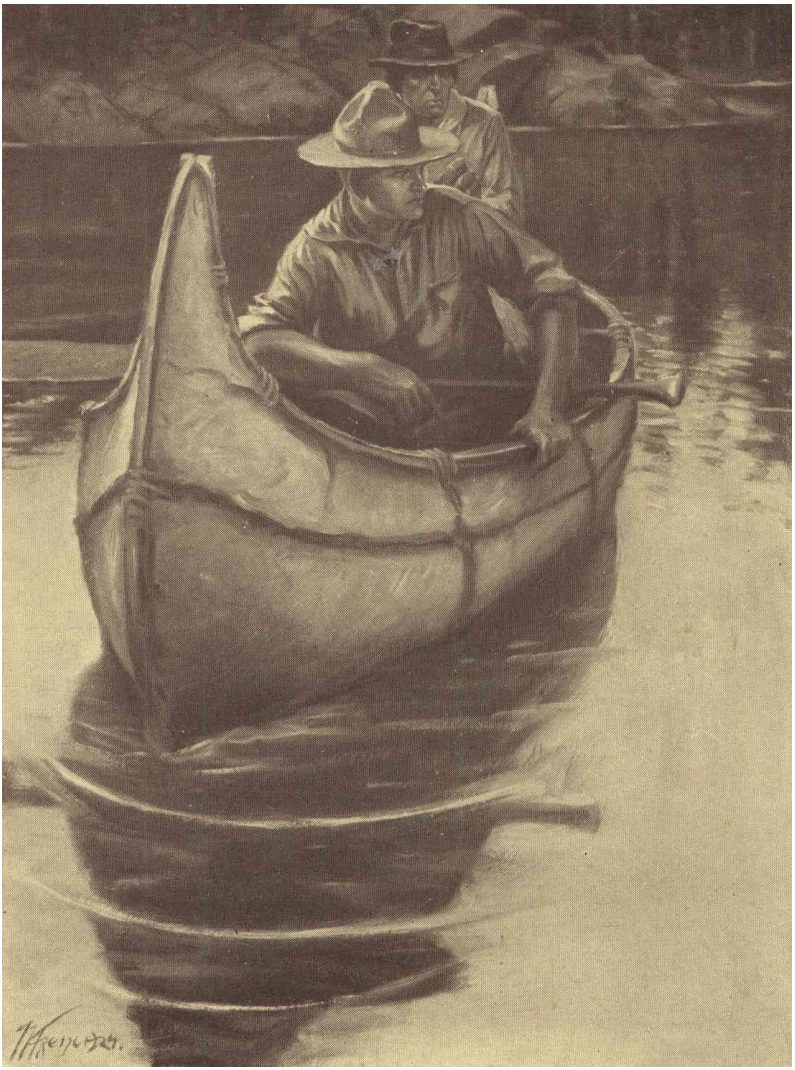

A LITTLE WAY UP THE SHORE THEY ENTERED THE MOUTH OF THE KENAMOU RIVER.

The Testing of Jim MacLean

A Tale of the Wilds of Labrador

By
DILLON WALLACE
Author of "Grit-a-Plenty," "The Gaunt Gray Wolf," etc.

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Contents

The Testing of Jim MacLean

I

A LETTER

"Do you know what this letter contains, Mr. Jagger?" Jim MacLean lifted his eyes from the typewritten sheets that had held his attention for ten minutes and looked across the flat-topped mahogany desk into the smug, round face of the lawyer.

"Yes," answered the attorney, who had been watching Jim narrowly as he read. "At the time your late father executed his will, and shortly before his ill-fated departure for the north, he delivered me a copy of the letter for my personal guidance as executor of his will."

"Well, he appears to have cut out my work for me!"

"No, he merely expresses a *wish* in that letter as to the course you should take in case of his demise. You are free to follow that wish or not as you *elect*. In other words, he has put it up to you."

"That's plain enough. He asks me to quit college and go into the woods to work as a lumberjack! He says he wants me to learn the lumber business from 'the ground up' "—Jim glanced for a moment at the letter which he held in his hand—"and prepare myself to step into his shoes."

"*Ex-act-ly, ex-act-ly*, my boy."

"Give up college! That's a hard pill to swallow! Dad speaks here of my poor record in college. I did have one condition last year, but I pulled everything else off. I made up the condition and had a good standing in every subject I carried this year, and on top of that I've made both the 'varsity baseball and football teams, and won the college boxing championship. The junior and senior years are the big ones, and I've got to miss them!"

"No, my boy," patronized the lawyer, "you have an *election*."

"Don't call me 'my boy,' nor 'my man'!" Jim broke in irritably. "I'm neither your boy nor a servant! Call me by my name."

"Oh, very well. Shall I call you Mr. MacLean or James? Which is your pleasure?" asked the lawyer ironically.

"Call me 'Jim' as you always have," the young man exploded. "Now let's get down to business. Explain the situation, please."

"You have the *posi*tiveness and di*rect*ness of your late father, which is a virtue," observed the lawyer. "What would you have me explain?"

"I beg your pardon, if I have been rude, but things—things have sort of upset me—the sudden report of Dad's death—," Jim paused for a moment to swallow a lump that was forcing itself up into his throat, "—and now here's this letter asking me to go away from everybody I know! Three years ago Mother died, now Father is gone, and on top of it I'm to go to a strange land where I have no friends, and abandon all my plans for the future."

"I will admit it is an unhappy state of affairs," remarked the lawyer coldly.

"Well, I'll not trouble you again with my personal feelings. I beg your pardon. I may as well meet things as they come, first as last," said Jim with assumed cheerfulness. "Dad says in this letter that you will explain to me the condition of his financial affairs."

"The condition is this." Jagger, the lawyer, resting an elbow upon each arm of his swivel chair, placed the tips of his fingers together, and leaning his head back assumed a thoughtfully judicial air. "The only assets of your late father's estate that I have been able to discover, are, first, his home on Prospect avenue, which he leaves to you free and clear of all indebtedness, but with the restriction that you are not to dispose of it or any of the hereditaments pertaining to it, which includes furnishings and other chattels, until you have reached the age of twenty-five, when you will be at liberty to do as you please with the property. Do you understand? Nothing in the meantime is to be sold."

"Yes, I understand. I heard you read the will, and I recall this provision, and that Dad set aside a sum of money to keep the property up and to pay the wages of old Sandy Dumphry and Margaret, who are to be retained by me as servants. This sum was also to be drawn upon to pay my expenses in college."

"Ex-act-ly. The sum of money set aside by the will was *twenty* thousand dollars, which would have been ample to pay taxes and insurance and care for necessary repairs, as well as the wages of the servants and maintenance of yourself. But I find only *eight* thousand dollars in the bank, and no other

available assets. This eight thousand dollars is the second of my list of assets of the estate."

"Only eight thousand dollars!" exclaimed Jim in amazement. "I can't understand it! I can't believe it!"

"Nevertheless it is a fact. There are no other *available* assets." The lawyer paused impressively. "The third on my list is the logging camp and sawmill in Labrador, of which you are to come into possession at the age of twenty-one, two years hence. Fourth, and last, there is a fund placed in trust with the Bank of Montreal to finance the logging camp and mill during these two years, when you will reach your majority. Any balance then remaining is to be paid over to you. This trust fund can only be drawn upon by me as executor, you understand, and only to meet the necessary expenses of the Labrador business, and for no other purpose."

"I understand. Go on."

"It was your late father's expectation that within this two-year period the Labrador enterprise, with proper management, would become self-sustaining and at the end of that time prove a highly profitable investment. I am free to say that I have never shared this optimistic view."

"Do you mean to say that the Labrador property, the eight thousand dollars and our home here are all there is?" Jim asked in amazement.

"*That is all*," said the lawyer positively.

"I can't understand it!" Jim looked skeptical. "Since Mother died three years ago Dad has talked over his affairs a good many times with me. Just before he went to Labrador he told me that he had two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in gilt-edged securities—bonds or something—that he intended for me and would never part from! And what became of his wholesale lumber business—the money he received for it? You and John Snook paid him cash for it when you bought it, didn't you?"

"I am as much puzzled over these things as yourself," assured Jagger, eyeing Jim keenly. "I have searched in every conceivable place for these securities and for additional assets, but have failed to find them. I hoped that your late father might have taken you into his confidence in this matter, though it was his custom to consult me in even the most trivial matters connected with his business. We must conclude that he disposed of the securities and probably lost the money they represented in some unfortunate venture."

"There's something strange about it! I can't understand it!"

“Is there no secret place about your house where your late father might have placed papers for safe keeping?” suggested the lawyer, keeping his sharp eyes on Jim’s face.

“None that I know about,” and there was no doubt of Jim’s sincerity.

“Peculiar. Let us say peculiar. Decidedly so. The conditions as they exist are most puzzling.”

“Now it’s up to me to decide whether I shall accept Dad’s suggestion and go to Labrador and work as a lumberjack or not. If I decide not to go, what then?”

“You may complete your college course, and your expenses will be paid out of the eight thousand dollars in bank.”

“And after paying my college expenses, servants’ wages, taxes, and upkeep expenses of the property there wouldn’t be much left.”

“You need not let that question interfere with your decision to return to college. No, indeed, no. It will be a pleasure, a great pleasure indeed, my boy, if I am privileged to personally advance you funds to meet your college expenses, and to assist you in carrying the property until such time as you are in position through your own earnings to meet the expense yourself, or until your twenty-fifth year, when you will be free to dispose of it.”

“And take a mortgage on the property?”

“You will not be in position to legally encumber the property with a mortgage until you are twenty-five years of age. You will naturally desire that our dealings be on a business basis. You may give me your personal notes for such advances as I may make, and I will rely upon your honour to renew such notes upon your reaching your majority. When you reach your twenty-fifth year you may give me a mortgage on the property, if you wish, in liquidation of the notes,” explained the attorney ingratiatingly.

“I see the point. Well, I’m going to Labrador,” said Jim decisively.

“Do not be too hasty in your decision,” suggested Mr. Jagger, soothingly. “Perhaps I should go into greater details. As I have said, we have eight thousand—to be exact, eight thousand two hundred thirty-six dollars in the bank. The servants are paid $1,200 a year salary, and we also pay their marketing and fuel bills. Adding to this expense taxes and insurance, we have an annual cost of about three thousand dollars to carry the property. Taxes have been paid this year, and none will fall due until next July, and there will be no insurance falling due for nearly two years. With these

deductions from the annual expense we shall be able to carry the property for about three years. Then you will need money, and you will need it badly. I do not anticipate any material income will be realized by you from the Labrador property. Your earning powers will be much greater if you continue in college now and graduate. Your college diploma will assist you in getting upon your financial feet quickly. The conditions I have explained were not realized by your father at the time he expressed that wish that you go to Labrador. If he were here now I am sure he would make no such request. I still urge that you accept my offer to advance you funds."

"It's mighty kind of you to make the offer to advance me money, Mr. Jagger, but I've got to decline it," said Jim positively. "Dad usually knew pretty well where he stood financially, and he must have had some good reason for wishing me to go to Labrador. Anyhow, he expressed a decided wish that I go to the logging camps, and his wish is sufficient to decide me. It's the last thing he ever asked me to do, and I'll never be happy unless I go."

"I would suggest that you take two weeks in which to consider the matter," cautioned the lawyer.

"I don't need any time to consider it. I'm going," repeated Jim with an air of finality. "Because Dad wished it, I'd go anyhow, even if I had all the money I expected he'd leave me."

"Your position is most commendable, but," suggested Jagger, "are you sure you understand *all* the conditions? I will interpret them to you, and then I would suggest you take a fortnight in which to consider the matter further."

"Fire away," said Jim, "I'm listening."

"You are to go into the lumber camps, should you elect to go, on exactly the same plane as any other employee. Dawes, the superintendent, will assign your work——"

"Dawes!" interjected Jim. "I thought Pat McCarthy was superintendent?"

"I have deemed it necessary to supersede McCarthy," explained the lawyer. "Fleming Dawes is now superintendent——"

"But Pat McCarthy has been with Dad for years!" interrupted Jim. "He has spent all his life in logging camps! He was superintendent for Dad up in the Quebec camps before Dad sold them!"

“He became too officious, and declined to obey instructions. Dawes is both a practical lumberman and a trained forester,” volunteered the lawyer. “At any rate, I have appointed him superintendent and this appointment is final.

“You will work under Mr. Dawes in any position in which he places you. Your relationship to your late father will give you no authority or standing. You will succeed or fail upon the quality of your service. If your work is not done satisfactorily, or if for any other reason Mr. Dawes deems it wise or necessary for the best interests of the business, he may dismiss you, as he would dismiss any unprofitable employee.”

“And then what?” asked Jim.

“If you are dismissed, or if for any reason you leave the employment of your own volition, you will be thrown upon your own resources.”

“Is this man Dawes to be the sole judge as to what is good cause for dismissal?” Jim asked with asperity.

“Certainly. He is a responsible man and a man of judgment.”

“There is nothing in this letter that indicates anybody is to have power to dismiss me from my own property,” declared Jim with some heat, after hastily scanning the typewritten sheets. “Dad says ‘go into the camp and work as an employee and learn the business from the ground up.’ He don’t say that I’m not to use my brains and not to make suggestions if I see things going wrong.”

“That phrase you quote, ‘as an employee,’ is the crux of the matter. Mr. Dawes, our superintendent, is a logging and sawmill expert. He will know whether things are going wrong or otherwise, and he will not be inclined to accept instructions from one of his employees, particularly from a college boy who is wholly inexperienced and has everything to learn about the business. It is his duty to see, and he *will* see, that things go right. As executor of your father’s will I am manager of the estate. As manager I have appointed Mr. Dawes to his position and I will not interfere with him in his administration of the camp. Any interference on my part might lead to a failure that would result in serious financial loss to the business. The superintendent has the power to discharge, at his option, any employee, and you will be an employee. I have told you this that you may understand the situation thoroughly before making your election.”

“Dad never meant that I should be discharged in that way at anybody’s whim!” declared Jim defiantly. “But I am going. I have decided.”

“Permit me to urge again that it will be well if you weigh the matter carefully for a fortnight at least——”

“But I’ve decided,” interrupted Jim. “I’m going. It’s settled.”

“I was about to remark,” continued the lawyer, “that it is a matter of considerable importance to you. Once you have gone to Labrador there will be no turning back and resuming college. You will recall that the court has duly appointed me your legal guardian. As your guardian it is my duty to advise you what I deem the best course for you to take, both to conserve your present and future interests. I warn you against ignoring this advice. I am under no obligation to advance you personal funds to make it possible for you to complete your college course or for any other purpose. I have done this because of my desire to have you shape your life for success. Should you now see fit to ignore my advice, I cannot again renew the offer to assist you financially. In case you go to Labrador you will consider the offer finally withdrawn. As I have said, I am taking this position wholly with your future in view.”

“I’ll certainly be burning the bridges behind me,” Jim grinned.

“Yes, and you will find life in a logging camp distasteful and the labour exceedingly hard. Indeed, it is the hardest kind of physical labour, and you are not accustomed to work with your hands.”

“Well, I’ll burn the bridges,” said Jim, taking his hat from the lawyer’s desk, where he had placed it upon entering. “I don’t care to be a mollycoddle. I’ve never done any real work, and I guess it’s time to begin, and the sooner I get hardened to it the better.”

“Very well,” said the lawyer, coldly, “it is your election?”

“Yes.”

“When will you be prepared to leave?”

“Next week. Shall I get my transportation expenses from you?”

“Yes, your passage will be paid from the trust fund.”

“All right. I’ll be here one week from to-day.”

Jim rose to his feet as he spoke, deep-chested, broad-shouldered, big-boned, he towered like a young giant above Jagger, the lawyer, who had also risen. A smile lighted his face as he tossed his head to throw back a thick lock of red hair from his forehead, which suggested to the lawyer a lion’s mane.

“I beg your pardon again, sir, for my rudeness.”

“That is all right—quite all right,” assured the lawyer, extending a fishy, flabby hand and wincing under the pressure of Jim’s big palm. “You have the week in which to change your mind, you know.”

“All settled!” said Jim with a snap of his square jaws. “I’m going to get down to business. It appears to be what Dad wished. See you in a week.”

II

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JAMES MacLEAN

"Some jolt!" Jim exploded, as he reached the street. "Two reasons why I've got to give up college and go to the camp. Dad asked me to go in that letter, and Dad usually knew what he was doing. That's one mighty good reason. Jagger *don't* want me to go, and that's another mighty good reason why I should go. I wouldn't trust that man around the corner. He's as crooked as a snake's trail. Any advice he gives me is to help himself get his talons on Dad's property, and not for my benefit."

He strode up Main street with a long, swinging gait, turned into High street, and finally halted where High street crossed Prospect avenue at the summit of the hill.

For several minutes Jim stood in silence, gazing out over the gleaming waters of Lake Ontario toward the distant horizon where water and sky line met. Beyond his vision lay the Canadian shore, and somewhere out there to the northward the limitless wilderness that reached, unbroken and unpeopled, save by wandering Indian hunters, to the faraway logging camps in eastern Labrador where he was presently to go and struggle for a place in the world of work and business.

"Me a lumberjack!" He held up his hands and surveyed them with a grin. "Fine pair of hands you are for a lumberjack to own. You're big and strong, but never did a stroke of really hard work in your life, did you? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! Well, you're due for some work now, and this time next year you'll be adorned with a fine set of callouses, or I'm a poor guesser. You'll be as hard as steel, too. Rather sudden, but serves you right. You've been a pair of big loafers! When Dad was here he asked you to work in the sawmill during summer vacations so that you'd learn how, but you always begged off. Now you're in for it good and plenty, and you've got to learn the best way you can through hard knocks! Serves you right!"

The business section of the town lay below him, reaching down to the lake front. His eyes rested on the wharves and great wholesale lumber yards, formerly owned by his father, but the previous year sold to Jagger and Snooks. Two or three schooners were loading cargoes of lumber.

“Something strange about that deal,” said Jim. “Dad sold the business for one hundred fifty thousand dollars, and not a cent of it to be found! Now I recall it, Jagger didn’t answer me when I asked if he and Snooks had paid Dad cash for the business. I’ve got to be careful in my dealings with Jagger and keep my eyes open every minute. Wish Dad had told me more about his affairs! Jagger would like to get our house, too. Wants to lend me money to go to college and get me bound down with a debt to him. Thinks he’ll tie me up in that way and get the house in the end! It’s the best house in Highville, and he wants to live in it.”

Jim ruminated on many things as he walked slowly up Prospect avenue. His father had gone to Labrador in the spring of the previous year to look over timber lands that he had recently acquired, and to supervise the establishment of logging camps and the erection of a sawmill. He was to have returned on the last coastal steamer before ice closed navigation in the fall, leaving Pat McCarthy, his superintendent, in charge of the winter logging operations. He did not return, and though Jim had no word from him he rested in the assurance that his father had decided at the last moment to spend the winter in camp, and had failed to mail a letter announcing the fact in time to catch the last boat. It was not until the middle of June, when Jim returned from college, that Jagger told him of his father’s death, though a letter, reaching Jagger in March, had informed the lawyer of the fact and given details.

“Why didn’t you tell me of this at the time?” Jim asked, when he had recovered from the first shock.

“I feared that it might interfere with your work in college, and I was also hopeful that better news might come to us in the spring. It would not have helped matters in the least, or been any satisfaction to you to have been told earlier, and it certainly would have operated as a serious setback to you,” was the lawyer’s plausible excuse.

The letter, written in December, by Pat McCarthy, the superintendent, stated that Mr. MacLean, with two Indian guides, had gone into the wilderness on a hunting expedition in the middle of August, expecting to return in two weeks, and in season to take passage on the coastal mail boat. Several weeks later one of the guides returned to camp stating that Mr. MacLean and the other guide had disappeared. Searchers had been sent out, but no trace of the missing men had been discovered.

The letter had made no suggestion of suspicion of foul play against the guide that had returned, but Jim, upon reading it, suggested to Jagger that it

seemed to him there were grounds for such suspicion, and Jagger agreed with him.

Jim declared that he would go to Labrador immediately and organize an expedition to make a personal search for his father and investigation of the scene of his disappearance, but Jagger opposed and discouraged such an undertaking. He assured Jim that everything had been done to find his father that wilderness experts could do, and that he, as Jim's legal guardian, could not give his consent. He further pointed out that such an expedition would entail the expenditure of a considerable amount of money, and even though it were warranted, as he felt it was not, the will must be probated and he must receive authority from the court before he could draw upon bank deposits for necessary funds to finance it.

And so two months had passed since Jim's return from college and the day when Jagger had broken the news of his father's death to him. It was now the middle of August, and after this lapse of time, without previous hint of its existence, Jagger had called Jim to the office and presented him with the letter written by his father more than a year earlier. The letter and the disclosures of the attorney had caused him, as we have seen, to revise all his plans for the future and had changed his outlook upon life.

Jim turned up the walk that led to the house and entered the dining room through a side door. There he found old Margaret Dumphry laying the table for tea.

"Margaret," said Jim, throwing himself into a chair, "behold a pauper who is henceforth to earn his bread and butter as a lumberjack. I'm leaving for Labrador next week to work in the logging camps."

"Noo, lad! Noo!" she exclaimed. "Ye'll never be doin' that!"

"True as gospel. Jagger gave me a letter to-day that Dad left with him last year, and in it Dad asks me to go, so I'm going. Anyhow, Jagger tells me all the money is gone except this house and enough to keep it running for two or three years, and there's nothing left for me but to go to work. Where's Sandy?"

"In the kitchen, lad. I'll call him."

Margaret and her husband Sandy had been with the family as long as Jim could remember. Margaret, indeed, had been his nurse through his baby and boyhood years. The two old servants had almost a parental interest in him, and he, on his side, took his confidences and his troubles to them for the sympathy he knew would never fail him.

When Margaret a moment later returned with Sandy, Jim related to them the occurrences of the afternoon, while the two nodded their old heads knowingly to each other, interjecting: “I tould ye so!” “Ye poor laddie!” “Jasper Jagger is a cute mon, now!” “He’s a rascal, is that lawyer!”

“So you see,” said Jim, in concluding, “I must go to the camps and go to work, and give up college.”

“Aye, ye must go to the camps, lad, and I’ll warn ye to look oot for that mon Dawes,” said Sandy. “He’ll be Jasper Jagger’s mon. Hould cloos to Pat McCarthy. He’ll stand by ye, lad.”

“I don’t like Jagger, I’ll admit,” agreed Jim, “but he was Dad’s lawyer, and Dad seemed to trust him. He may be playing fair. I can’t understand, though, why he waited two months before telling me of Dad’s death, and then another two months before giving me the letter.”

“I’ll tell ye,” volunteered Sandy. “When Jasper was a young mon just starting in the practice of law, and your father was a young mon just building up his lumber business, he let Jasper attend to his legal matters to help the young lawyer get started. Jasper was honest them days, but he’s grown to be grasping and a bit beyond honesty when he sees a chance to get anither’s property without getting heemsel in trouble. Of late Meester MacLean had suspicions of heem, and he had a close watch when he was dealing with Jasper, and Jasper was keen enough to keep straight with Meester MacLean while Meester MacLean lived, and there was no cause to go to another lawyer, for Jasper is a good lawyer and it may be as honest as most of them, for I’m warnin’ ye, lad, they all need watchin’.”

“But why did Jagger wait two months before telling me of Dad’s death?” asked Jim, “and then why did he keep that letter another two months before he gave it to me?”

“ ’Tis beyond my ken,” admitted Sandy. “The mon was here day in and day out searching every nook and cranny. He warned Margaret and me to write ye no word of yer father’s death, laddy, sayin’ it would spoil yer college. I have a confession to make to ye, lad, and to Margaret. There’s not much I’m ever able to keep from Margaret, and this I did keep from her.” There was a twinkle in Sandy’s eye as he paused for a moment to glance at his wife. “I knew about the letter, and Jasper was standing by when Meester MacLean told me aboot it, and told me he was askin’ you in it to go to Labrador. There’s something wrong in the mon holding the letter so long. I ha’ my suspicions he’d never given it to ye if he’d been left to his own

actions, but I stopped in his office last evenin' and asked if he'd given it to ye yet, and he made a pretence he'd forgotten it."

"I see!" said Jim. "That proves that there's some reason why he don't want me to go north. He never would have given me the letter if you hadn't asked him about it, and he was afraid I'd learn about it through you."

"Noo wait a bit lad. I have something for ye."

Sandy retired to the kitchen to return presently with a sealed envelope, which he handed to Jim, explaining:

"Here is a letter ye'r father directed me to deliver to ye after ye'd read the letter Jasper Jagger gave ye to-day and had said ye'd be goin' to Labrador. 'Twas because of this and ye'r sayin' nothin' that I spoke to Jasper last evenin'."

With eager fingers Jim broke the seal. This letter might clear the mystery concerning the disappearance of the assets! Unfolding the letter with reverence, for it was doubtless the last communication he would ever receive from his father, Jim read:

"My dear Son:

"It is well that you have decided to go to Labrador, as I have wished you would, and as I requested in the letter already delivered you by Mr. Jagger. It is definitely settled that you are to go, or Sandy Dumphry would not have given you this. It is a great disappointment to you to leave college, but remember that we must begin young in life to accept disappointments cheerfully; and for every disappointment there is recompense.

"You will have your way to make in the world, and it is better that you begin humbly, as a workman, at the bottom. It is my wish that you profit by your failures, and rise by your own strength of brain and muscle above the many difficulties and discouragements that you will be certain to meet now and in the years to come. Then, and only then, will you be able to appreciate the successes and the good things that I hope and trust life will bring you. Heretofore you have had no burdens to carry. Henceforth you will have to travel the road of life alone, and stand squarely upon your own feet.

"To take from you the temptation that might come to you to dispose of your home should you be pressed for funds, I have

provided that you shall not sell or encumber it with a mortgage until you have reached the age of twenty-five. There is sufficient money in bank to meet the necessary expenses of maintaining it, and to pay the wages of Sandy and Margaret Dumphry, whom I wish you to retain. It is my hope that before you reach that age you will have established yourself.

"It is also my wish that you retain Pat McCarthy as superintendent of the Labrador operation. He will be your teacher. You will soon grasp the details of the business, and McCarthy will assist you. You may place absolute confidence in him, and for the present, at least, be guided by his advice. He is familiar with my methods and with my plans concerning the development of the property.

"It is to be regretted that circumstances compel you to leave college. Your course there in forestry, however, will now take a wholly practical turn. You will be able to apply what you have learned. You will not be too old three or four years hence to complete the course and earn your degree. Secured through your own unassisted efforts it will have a value for you that it would not otherwise possess. I hope you will resolve to resume your studies, when circumstances permit, and graduate. I trust that you will, in the meantime, and on the actual field of labour, apply, so far as possible, what you have already learned.

"I am taking these precautions to guide and help you in the event that accident befall me. Life is uncertain at best, and particularly so in a far wilderness such as I am about to visit.

"Whatever happens, be brave, honest, true to yourself and your trusts, and put forth the best that is in you. I have the utmost confidence in you, my son. You are all I have in the world since Mother left us, and my one thought is of you, and my chief desire is for your happiness.

"Your loving father,
"JAMES MACLEAN."

"Dear old Dad!" said Jim, brushing a tear from his eye, as he folded the letter and placed it in his pocket.

"Did he tell ye anything about what happened to his money, laddie?" asked Margaret.

“No, not a word. But he says that McCarthy is to continue as superintendent. Jagger had no right to send that man Dawes up.”

“When you reach the camp tell Dawes to get oot,” suggested Sandy. “Say naithing to Jasper till ye’ve seen McCarthy.”

“I think I’ll do as you suggest, Sandy. I feel it in my bones there’s going to be trouble when I reach camp.”

III

THE PILOT OF THE GRAY GOOSE

When Jim, in accordance with the arrangement made with Jasper Jagger at the time of the conference, presented himself at the lawyer's office one week later he learned that Jagger had arranged passage for him to Labrador on the lumber company's ship, the *Gray Goose*, and that the vessel was then at Montreal, loading cargo for the logging camps.

"I will advise you her sailing date in ample time for you to join her," said Jagger, adding, "but the more I consider the matter the more firmly I am convinced that you have made a mistake in your election to go to Labrador. I would *suggest*, I would *urge*, that you remain in college and complete your education. I will advance, as you are aware, the necessary funds to defray your expenses."

"Thank you, Mr. Jagger," said Jim, with a note of irony. "You are most considerate and kind, but I have firmly decided to go."

It was good news for Jim that he was to make the voyage direct, rather than by the roundabout rail route to St. John's and thence by mail boat. The *Gray Goose* was a sturdy little steamship of nine hundred tons burden. His father had purchased her at the time he established the camps and mill in Labrador. Her mission was to carry supplies to the camps and to freight finished lumber from the mill to market. She was one of the logging camp assets, and Jim looked upon her, therefore, as his own property, though under the terms of the will he could exercise no control over her until the expiration of the trust period, two years hence.

"He's getting pretty anxious for me to stay away from Labrador," said Jim to himself as he walked home. "I wonder what's up anyhow! I'll find out, I suppose, soon enough. He never would have given me that letter of Dad's if Sandy hadn't asked him if he'd given it to me."

Another week passed before Jim again heard from Jagger, when the lawyer called him on the telephone one afternoon to notify him that the *Gray Goose* was to sail from Montreal the following day.

Jim barely had time to catch the last train, by which, with two intermediate changes, he could connect at Malone with the early train the following morning, which was due to reach Montreal shortly before eleven

o'clock. At each changing point there was a long wait, the Montreal train was late, and when finally he reached the wharf where the *Gray Goose* was docked she was casting off her lines.

Captain Hugh Dobbs, on the bridge, recognized Jim rushing down the wharf, and held the *Gray Goose* in her berth until Jim and his baggage were aboard.

"Had a letter from Mr. Jagger last evening saying you might be with us, but he thought it doubtful, and directed me not to hold the ship," said Captain Dobbs, shaking Jim's hand heartily, when Jim joined him on the bridge after the vessel had swung out from her moorings and was standing down the St. Lawrence. "I did hold her for an hour, though, to give you time to get down from the train. Had given you up."

"Thank you for waiting, Captain, the train was late," Jim explained. "Jagger didn't notify me you were sailing until just before the last connecting train left Highville. I had to do some hustling."

"Telegraph next time. I'd have held her a week for you." The round, red, jolly face of the Captain beamed good-naturedly as he gave Jim's hand a final hearty grasp, his rotund figure shaking like a bowl of jelly as he laughed. "Mr. Jaggar wrote to bunk you for'ard with the gang of lumberjacks we're taking down to the camps, but I wouldn't treat you that way, Jim. There's an extra berth in my cabin, and you just make yourself to home there. The steward will fix you up."

"Thank you," and the young giant, standing a full head above the Captain, grinned as he added: "Jagger might not approve of your favouring me this way, but I appreciate it. You know I'm just one of Jagger's lumberjacks now."

"Huh!" grunted the Captain. "I guess you're something more than a lumberjack on your own ship."

Jim gave a sigh of relief as he went aft in search of the steward. He was on his way at last! Every pulsation of the engines thrilled him. The spirit of adventure was in his blood. He was going out into the world to build a career. He instinctively felt that his road was not to be an easy one. He would be called upon to battle for his rights, and to uphold his father's confidence in him. He would glory in a fight, if fight he must! The harder the struggle the greater the satisfaction in final success!

Standing in groups about the deck, Jim observed some fifteen or twenty men who were evidently not members of the ship's crew. He had no doubt

they were the lumberjacks Captain Dobbs had mentioned. These, then, were some of the men destined to be his companions during the coming winter. They were the hardest, toughest looking specimens of humanity he had ever seen.

"Jagger must have scoured the slums to get that bunch together," he observed to himself. "They don't look like any lumberjacks I have ever seen. Lumberjacks are decent, even if they are rough. This looks like a bunch of thugs. Good men must be scarce if Jagger has to hire this sort."

He found the steward, and was soon settled in the Captain's cabin. His quarters, at least, were to be comfortable for the voyage. The steward also advised him that he was to eat aft at the officers' mess, another attention for which he was profoundly grateful to Captain Dobbs. Ordinarily he would have enjoyed the mess forward, but he had no relish for mixing, until he should be compelled to do so, with the class of men the ship carried.

Captain Dobbs during the succeeding days proved a congenial companion. His round, jolly, smiling, red face was a tonic and inspiration to see. Jim compared Captain Dobbs' face to a big, shining, red apple with a smile on it. Captain Dobbs was genial with everyone, including the humblest member of his crew, though he could be sharp enough when things went wrong and necessity demanded; and with all his geniality he was a strict disciplinarian.

"What is there about this new superintendent; Dawes, I think his name is? Took him down first voyage this summer. What they doing with Pat McCarthy?" the Captain asked Jim one day when they were in the cabin.

"I don't know," said Jim. "Jagger didn't give me any satisfactory reason for the change. He simply told me he had made it."

"Well, you look out for that chap Dawes," warned the Captain.

"Why?" asked Jim. "What is there wrong about him?"

"You'll know when you meet him." The Captain changed the subject abruptly. "Something strange about your father's disappearance. I don't like the look of it. Glad you're going down to the Labrador."

"What do you know about it?" asked Jim, eager for additional details.

"Not much. Went into the woods on a fishing and hunting trip with an Indian and a half-breed over a year ago. McCarthy said he was expected out in a week or ten days. Didn't come. After six weeks, one of the Indians—a half-breed they call Indian Jake, a fellow I wouldn't trust myself with a

minute—came out alone. Said your father sent him scouting for caribou one day, and when he went back to camp that evening the camp was gone, and so were your father and the Indian, and he couldn't find hide nor hair of them. No place for a white man cruising up in that wilderness. Leave it to Indians, I say. I'll stay on the sea where it's safe."

"Didn't the Indian say he tried to trail them and find where they went? Where is the man now?" asked Jim.

"He never talks much. Told his story and shut up," said Captain Dobbs. "He stayed around the mill for a week, and then went off trapping. Didn't even stay to go with the searching party that went in to look for your father. They say he had plenty of money after his trip in with your father, and paid up a back account at the trading post in cash, and paid cash for his winter trapping outfit. Was always in debt before that and never had any money. Looks queer to me."

"Do you believe there was foul play? Do you believe this half-breed had a hand in Father's disappearance?" asked Jim. "That's a theory I had from reading McCarthy's letter, though McCarthy didn't suggest it."

"Looks bad. That Indian Jake fellow looks as though he might do such a thing. Bad business somewhere."

"Hasn't anything been done about it? Hasn't anybody tried to follow it down?"

"Can't get natives to do anything. Even McCarthy said there was no use trying to follow it up. Like looking for a rowboat in the Atlantic to try to find your father in the mountains. Just disappeared and lost. No evidence. It seems the courts don't admit anybody's been killed until the remains are found. That's one hitch. The other is, there's no court in Labrador."

Here was new food for thought. Jim registered a mental resolution to make a thorough investigation upon his arrival at camp. McCarthy would help him. Something must be done—everything possible—to solve the mystery, and bring to justice this fellow Indian Jake if he were found guilty. Then a suspicion flashed across his brain! Had Jagger anything to do with it? Had he engineered it as a part of a scheme to gain possession of the property?

The *Gray Goose* was six days out of Montreal when she anchored one morning at Fort Pelican Post of the Hudson's Bay Company. Intermittent fogs had rendered the passage slow along the eastern coast. Ghostly icebergs looming out of the fog, and now and again, as the mist lifted, far glimpses of

grim, gray, storm-scoured rocks were all Jim had seen of sea or land for several days.

He went on deck with the rattle of anchor chains. It was scarcely full daylight. The fog had cleared in the night, and the morning was crisp and snappy. A breath of the perfume of spruce and balsam met his nostrils. On the nearby shore was a line of a half-dozen low, white buildings, and reaching away over a hill behind the post buildings a dark outline of forest.

This was his land of endeavour! In this land he was to prove himself worthy or unworthy of the confidence his dead father had placed in him. He stretched his arms toward the hills and the forest and silently vowed to put forth the best that was in him, and to accept whatever fell to his lot with courage and fortitude.

"We'll have breakfast and then go ashore," announced Captain Dobbs, suddenly appearing at his side. "The mill is a hundred miles up the inlet. Have to pick up a native here to pilot the ship. I'm not sure of the channel myself. No chart of these waters."

When Jim and Captain Dobbs put off in the jolly boat a half-hour later the sun had risen. It was a glorious morning. From the top of a flag pole, which stood midway of the buildings, the Hudson's Bay Company colours waved in the breeze, unfurled by the factor as a token of courtesy and welcome to the visiting ship. The factor himself was on the jetty to greet them, while a half-dozen native trappers stood at a respectful distance in the rear.

Sturdy, bronzed men these were, and Jim was attracted to them at once. They were men who had no fear of storms or winter's gale. They lived lives of constant adventure, laughing at dangers and obstacles and conquering them.

Captain Dobbs introduced Jim to Mr. MacFane, the factor, and the three turned up the jetty to the factor's office. One of a score of great Eskimo dogs skulking about showed his ugly fangs and snarled as the men passed. The factor immediately paused and called to one of the natives:

"Give that dog a beating, Mark!"

Continuing toward the office, MacFane explained:

"We can't afford to let them do that. If I were to let a dog snarl at me without punishment it would soon get bold enough to attack with the whole pack at its back. They're wolves, you know; domesticated wolves, with all the instincts of their wild and savage progenitors."

As they entered the office the howls of a distressed dog came to their ears, indicating that Mark, the post servant, was doing his job well.

"Anybody here I can get to pilot us up the bay?" asked Captain Dobbs when they were seated.

"David and Andy Angus came in last night for some outfit. David can pilot you. He knows Eskimo Bay like a book. They live over at The Jug, across the bay from your mill," suggested the factor. "David is a young chap, but I'll recommend him."

"That's good," said Captain Dobbs. "Afraid I'd have to wait over a day to get some one in. I'll take Angus if you recommend him."

"Will you call David Angus in?" Mr. MacFane asked one of the clerks.

A few moments later, in response to the call, David entered. He was a wiry, muscular lad of eighteen or thereabouts. He stood straight as an Indian, and Jim noticed with admiration his square, broad shoulders, his well poised head, and his naturally graceful movements. He wore a trapper's short drill jacket, white moleskin trousers, knee-high sealskin boots or moccasins into the top of which his trousers were tucked with the boot tops drawn together below the knee and tied with a buckskin thong. On his head was a peakless cap, which he respectfully removed and held in his hand upon entering. His rough clothes were clean and neat, and his hair carefully brushed.

"Did you call for me, sir?" he asked, addressing Mr. MacFane.

"Yes, David. Captain Dobbs here wishes some one to pilot his ship to Grampus River; would you like the job?" asked the factor.

"Twenty dollars for you if you don't stick her in the mud," broke in Captain Dobbs, a merry twinkle in his eye, "and another twenty to pilot her back after we've discharged cargo."

"I can pilot she, sir. I'll not stick she in the mud," answered David confidently. "I knows the channel."

"Done!" grinned the Captain. "It's a bargain. When will you be ready?"

"Andy and I were wantin' to get some outfit, sir," said David. "As soon as we gets un we'll be ready. We'll need to take our boat in tow and take the outfit aboard, sir."

"Very well," agreed Captain Dobbs. "Hurry it up all you can. Want to get up to the mill to-night. Jim and I are going aboard now. Come as soon as you are ready and we'll get started."

Captain Dobbs and Jim pulled back to the *Gray Goose* in the jolly boat, and an hour later David and his younger brother Andy, a lad of sixteen, followed in their boat, David sculling at the stern with a long oar.

No time was lost. Simultaneously with the hoisting aboard of David's outfit, anchor was weighed, and immediately the *Gray Goose* was in motion, threading her way through the Narrows, presently to burst out into the broad waters of Eskimo Bay.

"There are the Mealy Mountains," said Captain Dobbs during the afternoon, indicating a range of snow-capped peaks rising to an altitude of thirty-five hundred feet, and bounding the southern shore of Eskimo Bay. "The camps are at the upper end of the bay, on the lower slopes of the mountains. It was up into a pass through that range that your father went with the Indians when he was lost."

The grim white peaks immediately had a new and intense interest for Jim, and he gazed at them for a time in silence. Then he asked:

"Do you suppose David Angus, our pilot, knows the half-breed Indian Jake?"

"To be sure he does," answered Captain Dobbs. "Knows everybody in the bay. There aren't over a hundred natives, big and little, living along these shores, and everybody knows everybody else."

"I'm going to have a talk with him," said Jim. "I'm going to follow this thing down until I learn all there is to it. I have never yet been able to think of my father as really gone. He was in perfect health. He knew the ways of the wilderness like an Indian, and he knew how to take care of himself."

"When dear ones are taken from us, it is always hard for us to realize that they are really gone, at least for a long time," consoled Captain Dobbs. "Time is the great healer of all sorrow, and as time heals we become reconciled to the fact that those who are taken are gone from us forever and are a good deal happier in the other world than we are here, though we're all anxious enough to stay here as long as we can. Something happened to your father up there in those mountains, and I'm afraid we'll never even know what it was."

"Yes," said Jim, "reason tells me that, but I'll always be expecting him to step up behind me and to feel the slap of his big hand on my shoulder, and hear him ask, 'How goes it, my boy?' as he used to do. Anyhow, I'm going to learn what I can concerning his disappearance, and solve the mystery if it is possible to do so."

Jim joined David and Andy, who were standing by the steersman directing his course, and after introducing himself, asked:

"Do you know the half-breed, Indian Jake?"

"Aye," answered David, "we knows he. Andy and I were trappin' with he winter before last, and he traps with Pop last winter."

"What kind of a man is he?" asked Jim.

"A fine man! We finds he honest, and he's wonderful fond of doin' fine things for those he likes," eulogized David.

"You've heard, of course, what is said of him concerning my father's disappearance?" suggested Jim.

"We hears un talked about," said David, "but I'm not doubtin' Indian Jake tells what's true. He's always speakin' straight, *what*ever. He were never doin' evil to Mr. MacLean, sir."

"*He* never were, *what*ever," echoed Andy, ready to stand up for his friend. "He's knowin' no more than he's sayin' about what were happenin' to Mr. MacLean, sir."

"I am glad to hear your good opinion of him," said Jim. "I've been told that Indian Jake had no money and was in debt when he went into the mountains with my father, and that when he returned he had money enough to pay his debts and to spare. My father always carried a considerable amount of money with him. Under the circumstances, can you account for the fact that Indian Jake so suddenly came into possession of funds?"

"I'm not knowin', sir, where Indian Jake gets the money he has, but however 'twere I'm not doubtin' 'twere an honest way, *what*ever," persisted David. "I'm thinkin' 'twere paid he by Mr. MacLean for workin' for he, sir."

Jim looked upon this as a most unsatisfactory explanation of Indian Jake's suddenly acquired wealth. It was highly improbable that his father had paid so high a price as several hundred dollars for a few days' service of a guide, and in any case he would not have paid the man until the services were completed, and upon his return to the mill. Circumstantial evidence was strongly against Indian Jake.

David and Andy Angus were doubtless thoroughly honest in their defence of the half-breed. For some reason they believed in him. Jim had no doubt of their sincerity, and though he did not in the least agree with them, he admired them for their defence. He had no doubt that they, at least, were frank and open, and too ready to believe that others were the same.

“Those two fellows are so straight that they’re blind to the obvious, when it happens to be a friend of theirs that’s gone wrong,” was his estimate of David and Andy as he paced the deck. “They wouldn’t for the world do a dishonest act themselves and they believe others are as honest. They are the sort that will never believe wrong of a friend, no matter what other people think, until he’s actually proven guilty. That Indian is guilty, and I’m going to prove it before I’ve finished with him.”

It was past eleven o’clock that night when the *Gray Goose* dropped anchor at Grampus River. The mill and adjacent buildings, the forest behind, and the grim white peaks of the Mealy Mountains, bathed in the subdued light of a full moon, formed a picture of primitive, entrancing beauty and mystery.

A dog howled in the distance, and immediately a chorus of howls came across the water to mingle with the rattling of anchor chains. Jim stood at the rail watching the shore where he was presently to land and begin his life work, when suddenly a canoe shot out from the shadows.

“ ’Tis Indian Jake!” exclaimed David Angus, who, now that his work was finished, had joined Jim at the rail to await Captain Dobbs. “I knows Indian Jake by the stroke of his paddle, sir. ’Tis a shorter and quicker stroke than a white man makes.”

“Then I’ll meet him to-night?” asked Jim.

“Aye, you’ll meet he to-night, sir. He’s comin’ aboard.”

With more than ordinary interest Jim watched the canoe, shooting like a phantom across the moonlit waters. It held the man that he had no doubt was responsible for his father’s death. He was now to meet this man face to face, and he promised himself that before he was through with the fellow he would know what was what.

IV

INDIAN JAKE, THE HALF-BREED

Jim admitted that he could not hope or expect to wring a confession from Indian Jake, but he would have his story at first hand, and then trace down, to verify or refute, every detail of the account. Apparently nothing of this kind had been attempted, despite whisperings and suspicions against the half-breed. It was this apparent indifference and inactivity on the part of Jagger and the authorities, if there were any authorities, that made Jim fume and boil within. And Pat McCarthy had been in command here for months before he had been superseded by Dawes. Why had McCarthy done nothing? Why had *he* not put the half-breed under arrest? Pat McCarthy, the man whom his father had trusted, had seemingly been as indifferent as any of them.

The canoe passed under the shadow of the ship, and in an incredibly short time Indian Jake, as silent as a ghost, appeared on deck, his moccasined feet touching the wood as softly as the padded paws of a cat.

The full moonlight fell upon the half-breed's face, and from his point of vantage Jim had an excellent view of it. The skin was the colour of copper. The face, with keen, black, restless eyes above a beaked nose, suggested a hawk. The features indicated a mixed ancestry; the predominating characteristics, however, were decidedly Indian, accentuated by the Indian's coarse, straight black hair worn half way to the shoulders. The man was tall, wiry, sinewy and graceful in his every movement as a cat is graceful.

Indian Jake swept Jim with a fleeting glance, but in the glance the young man knew that he had taken in every detail from head to feet, and there was an uncomfortable feeling that the hawk-like eyes had looked him through and through, reading his innermost thoughts.

Ignoring Jim's presence, quite as though he were not within earshot, Indian Jake turned to David and Andy Angus with a pleasant smile that Jim observed mellowed and transformed his countenance.

"Ugh! You come from Fort Pelican on the ship?"

"Aye," answered David, proudly, "we were pilotin' she from Fort Pelican. I'm wonderful glad to see ye, Jake."

"Ugh!" grunted the half-breed.

“We brings our outfit up, and Andy and me’ll take un over to The Jug with daylight. Pop’ll be leavin’ for the trails in a fortnight, whatever, and we were goin’ early to be back with he a bit whilst he bides home. Will you be goin’ ahead of he, or bide at The Jug and go with he?” asked David.

“I won’t go to the trails this winter,” said Indian Jake. “Stay in bay. Maybe work around lumber camps. Maybe hunt deer for camps.”

“Why, Pop’s expectin’ you’ll be trappin’ with he!” exclaimed David in astonishment.

“Changed my mind about trappin’,” explained Indian Jake. “He don’t need me. Micah Dunk go with him or maybe you or Andy.”

“I’m thinkin’ to bide home and hunt Pop’s old trail up from The Jug, and Andy’s thinkin’ to drive dogs for Doctor Joe. He’s wantin’ Andy to drive for he.”

“Ugh!” acknowledged Indian Jake. “Your father knows why I stay in bay and don’t go with him. You hunt old trail. That’s fine. Be home nights with Margaret and Jamie. Some bad men in camps this winter.” He glanced at several of the new lumberjacks who lingered on deck. “Andy drive dogs for Doctor Joe. Doctor Joe away most of time doctoring sick folks. Micah Dunk hunts with your father. I stays at lumber camp.”

“Micah’s a fine hunter,” broke in Andy.

“Fine hunter,” echoed Indian Jake.

“Have you been seein’ Micah?” asked David.

“Ugh!” answered the half-breed. “I see him. He likes to go. Your father likes to have him. I talk to your father this morning. Tell him I may have to stay in bay. Ask him will he like to have Micah go in my place. He knows why I stay. He says ‘yes.’ I ask Micah will he go if I has to stay in bay. Micah says ‘yes.’ Now I stay in bay. Micah goes.”

“That’s a fine way to fix un,” agreed David, and then turning toward Jim, who stood a dozen feet away and had been observing Indian Jake as he talked with the two boys, he introduced him. “This is Mr. MacLean, Jake. He’s comin’ on the ship to be in the camp this winter, and he’s wantin’ you to tell he about what’s happenin’ to his father last year.”

“Ugh!” acknowledged Indian Jake, who had followed David and Andy over to join Jim.

"I've heard about you," said Jim, "and I would like to have a conference with you."

"We can have a talk." Indian Jake eyed Jim narrowly. "Too late to-night. I go ashore now. Have a talk on shore in morning. Meet you there when you come."

"Very well," agreed Jim stiffly. "In the morning, ashore."

Jim went below to his berth. There was no doubt in his mind that Indian Jake had been on the lookout for the ship, and that he had boarded her on a scouting expedition. The half-breed had certainly not expected to meet David and Andy Angus. He had not tarried to meet Captain Dobbs, and had spoken to no one but David and Andy Angus and himself. It must have been then that Indian Jake's mission was to learn whether he had arrived on the ship.

"But why," Jim asked himself, "was he so interested in my arrival? The fellow evidently changed his plans for the winter, too, when he saw me. He had arranged to trap with Angus, and suddenly decided not to trap, but to send some one else in his stead. And he is going to work at the camps! That is suggestive, at least. This arrangement seems to have been made on a contingency, and it looks as though that contingency had been my arrival. If I hadn't appeared he'd have gone off to trap with Angus for the winter. When he saw me he decided not to go. What does it all mean?"

Jim lay awake in his berth for a long while turning the question over in his mind, and finally came to the conclusion that Dawes had engaged the half-breed to watch him.

"But why should Dawes have me watched?" he pondered. "I've no doubt it's some idea of Jagger's. He tried to prevent my coming. He'd probably written Dawes that he'd try to keep me away from the camps by inducing me to return to college. But in case he failed, and I should appear here Dawes was to have me watched. I can't understand why, for I'll always be under pretty close supervision in camp.

"Anyhow, he has Indian Jake on the job. I'm glad it's this half-breed, for the closer he sticks to me the more I'll see of *him*, and the more I'll learn about him. I'm more certain than ever that this fellow was responsible for Dad's disappearance, and I'm going to sift the thing to the bottom before I'm through with it."

V

THE CAVE IN THE MOUNTAINS

It was near sunrise when Jim awoke. He tumbled out of his berth, dressed quickly, and hurried on deck. It was to be an interesting and eventful day. He was to see McCarthy and learn from him the condition of affairs in camp. He would meet Dawes for the first time. And there was the conference he was to have with Indian Jake! That conference would start his investigation of the suspicious circumstances surrounding his father's disappearance, and that, at present, was the most important business in hand.

Lighters from the camp were already alongside loading with cargo from the ship's hold. A big man with a bulldog face, covered with a week's growth of beard, standing amidships with Captain Dobbs, was overlooking the work. He wore a broad-brimmed soft hat, blue flannel shirt open at the throat, a mackinaw jacket, dirty moleskin trousers tucked into the tops of felt leggings, and lumbermen's heavy rubber shoes.

Jim knew instinctively that this was Dawes. He walked over at once to meet him.

"Morning, Jim," greeted Captain Dobbs. "This is Mr. Dawes, the superintendent, Mr. MacLean."

"How'd do," acknowledged the superintendent. "Mr. Jagger wrote me you might be down, but he didn't know for sure. The Captain here just gave me a letter from him. Said if you showed up to put you to work."

"Yes, I've come to work," acknowledged Jim. "I'm expected to learn as much as I can about the logging and sawmill business."

"You'll learn something about the work end of the business, I guess. Work's about all we're concerned with here," Dawes grinned. "You'll be with Number Three outfit. Start in swampin'. I reckon you can't use an ax much, but you'll learn."

"Very well," Jim accepted.

"Better take a week off to look around and get acquainted with the country before you go to work, Jim," the Captain suggested.

"I would appreciate a breathing spell and time to get my land legs," said Jim, turning to Dawes.

“All right. Take what time you want,” agreed Dawes, adding with an unpleasant laugh, “I guess it won’t make much difference with the work if you ain’t on it. You society fellows ain’t likely to be much help in a loggin’ outfit anyhow. But if you ain’t workin’ I don’t want you loafin’ around camp. It makes the men think they can loaf, too, whenever they feel like it.”

“In view of the fact that I am the owner of the camp and the mill, although I am not at present in possession, I feel that I have some rights and privileges here,” Jim retorted. “When I go to work I think I’ll do my share.”

“You’re big enough,” grinned Dawes. “Far as ownin’ the outfit is concerned, I don’t know and I don’t care anything about that. I’m hired by Mr. Jagger. He’s my boss, and I’ve got to answer to him for what’s done here. I’ve got my orders from him, and those are the orders that go with me. That’s all I’ve got to say about it, only that while I’m here I’m boss and runnin’ the outfit, and nobody else is goin’ to butt in.”

“Very well, we won’t discuss the matter *now*,” said Jim with dignity. “I have no doubt Mr. Jagger has mapped out your course for you, and we’ll let it go at that, for the present.”

“Yep, that’s it,” Dawes still wore his aggravating grin, “I know my business and we’ll let it go at that, as you say.”

“Jim, it’s breakfast time. Come below and we’ll eat,” suggested Captain Dobbs. “Mr. Dawes says he’s had his breakfast.”

“What insolence!” exclaimed Jim as he and the Captain took their seats at the breakfast table. “I can see storms ahead. I won’t stand for much of that sort of thing. He’s a tool of Jagger’s to put something over, and he’s going to make me as uncomfortable as he can.”

“Yes, I’m afraid you’re in for a bad time with that fellow, Jim,” said Captain Dobbs. “The only argument he will respect is a canthook handle. He may be a big bluff. That kind usually are. But he has the power, and it is likely he’ll use it without mercy. Look out for him. Get along with him if you can. It’s to your interest to do so.”

“I’ll try to,” agreed Jim, “but it’s going to be mighty hard.”

“I expected to be here a week discharging and taking on cargo, but the mill hasn’t turned much lumber out since Dawes came on the job, and there isn’t half a cargo to take out. We’ll be here perhaps three days, and while we’re here you had better eat and sleep on the ship, Jim.”

"Thank you," said Jim gratefully. "I'll see how things are ashore. I may have to accept your invitation."

"You're welcome. You'd better do it too, and not mix up with the camp until you have to do so."

Directly after breakfast Jim pulled ashore with Captain Dobbs, who wished to "stretch his legs on land." Jim went at once to the store, where he found Billy Hand, the storekeeper, opening cases from the first consignment of goods sent ashore from the *Gray Goose*. Billy was an old employee of the MacLeans, and his face lighted when he saw Jim, whom he had known from boyhood.

"Well, by gum, if it ain't Jim MacLean," he exclaimed with beaming face, hastily wiping his hands on a burlap bag, and grasping Jim's hand in a hearty shake. "You're face is like a glint of sunshine after stormy weather."

"I'm glad to see you, Billy," Jim grinned. "You look well and husky."

"I'm pretty good except my liver," Billy admitted. "I'm taking Doctor Kurem's Liver Reliever, and it seems to help some."

"Your liver?" asked Jim. "The last time I saw you I thought it was your kidneys, or was it your heart?"

"I don't just remember," said Billy. "I thought once it was my heart and then my kidneys, but I made up my mind it was my liver. I was takin' heart medicine for a while, and then I started in on Homer's Kidney Compound, and now I've switched to Doctor Kurem's Liver Reliever. I guess they all helped me some. I always was delicate in health, you know."

"You look it!" laughed Jim, surveying the big, brawny man. "Where's Pat McCarthy?"

"Pat's up at Number One camp, and he'll be tickled to death to see you," explained Billy. "You know he was taken off the Supe's job, and Dawes gave him the choice of gettin' through or takin' the job of boss at Number One. He'd have quit, but for his loyalty to you, and if it hadn't been for him all the old men would have quit too. We got together to talk it over. McCarthy told us he was goin' to stick to it to save what he could for you, and asked us to stand by you and him, and here we are on the job, every mother's son of us."

"McCarthy's a brick! and so are all of you!" exclaimed Jim. "I don't know how to thank you all. It was fine of you. How can I find McCarthy? I'd like to see him at once."

"Number One camp is up the tote road about three miles. You could go with the tote team to-morrow morning, or walk up to-day. The walkin' is pretty good."

"I think I'll walk. How have things been going around here, Billy?"

"Its been heck and the deuce to pay ever since Dawes hit camp. He stopped the mill with the skidways and boom full of logs, and started to put in new machinery he brought with him. They'll have to get those logs out of the boom before freeze-up or they'll never save 'em. If they're frozen in they'll go out with the break-up in the spring and be scattered all over the bay, and they never could pick 'em up again. I don't know what it all means."

"Why don't Dawes take 'em out?"

"Ask him! Nobody else knows. Looks as though he wants to lose 'em."

"I'll go up to-day and have a talk with McCarthy. Have you seen the half-breed they call Indian Jake around to-day?"

"He's outside there now," said Billy, nodding his head toward the rear. "I don't like that feller. He's the last one ever saw your father alive, unless it was One-Eared Charley, the Indian that disappeared with him. I ain't sayin' what Indian Jake done or what he didn't do. I never talk about folks behind their backs."

"What sort of a fellow was this One-Eared Charley?" asked Jim. "I haven't heard much about him, only that he disappeared with Dad."

"A peaceable, quiet feller that minded his business. They called him One-Eared because a lynx chawed off part of his left ear once in a fight. Maybe you haven't heard about the papers?"

"No, what papers?" asked Jim.

"Of course you haven't heard about 'em, because you just got here. Well, your father kept a bunch of papers in the safe here in the store, and about a week before he went off with One-Eared Charley and Indian Jake he took 'em out and went up to Camp Number Three. One-Eared Charley went along with him. One-Eared had been tellin' him about a cave up in the mountains back of Number Three somewhere, where the Indians used to hang out in the old days before the white men came into the country. It was kind of a gatherin' place for 'em when they were gettin' together to raid the Eskimos. You know the Indians and Eskimos used to fight each other. There

was plenty of Eskimos them days, though there's none left in the bay now, exceptin' a half-dozen families in a little settlement down near Fort Pelican.

"One Ear was the only one around here that knew where the cave was, though I kind of suspect Indian Jake could find it if he was a mind to.

"Well, your father and One Ear started out early one mornin' from Number Three to go see the cave. The cook up there said the papers were in the side pocket of your father's huntin' jacket when he left. It was a pretty bulky package and made the pocket stick out. When he and One Ear got back just before dark they went right into the kitchen, and your father had his pockets crammed full of pa'tridges he'd shot. He pulled the birds out and told the cook to fry 'em for supper. The papers wa'n't there, and he didn't have 'em with him or the cook would have seen 'em, which he didn't.

"You see it wa'n't usual for him to take papers into the mountains, and the cook couldn't help wonderin' why he did it, and what he did with 'em when he didn't bring 'em back. Of course he left 'em in that cave.

"There was some talk about it, and Dawes heard the talk when he got here, and he's had men up there huntin' for the cave. I don't believe they found it though. He's been down here goin' through all the papers in the store, and he seems to be lookin' for something special. I reckon it's them papers your father took to the cave."

"This is tremendously interesting and important!" exclaimed Jim. "Do you suppose Indian Jake really knows where the cave is?"

"I've a notion he could find it. Dawes has been chummin' with him and got him hangin' around camp. He's up to somethin'. Maybe he's goin' to take Dawes up, when the ship is gone, to hunt for the cave. If it ain't that, it's some dirty work. You look out for that half-breed, Jim."

"Thank you, Billy," said Jim appreciatively. "I'm pretty well able to take care of myself. I'm going to find out what the Indian has to say for himself. So long. I'll be back in a little while."

"Good luck to you," said Billy, as Jim left him to interview Indian Jake.

VI

A SUSPICIOUS CHARACTER

"Mornin'," greeted Indian Jake, who with his crooked knife was shaving down sticks to the proper dimensions for snowshoe frames.

"Good morning," Jim acknowledged.

"Now we have talk?" asked the half-breed.

"Yes," said Jim, "I've come over to have a talk with you."

"Come to tent."

Indian Jake gathered up his sticks and led the way through the forest to the eastward. Neither spoke as they walked. Jim, in the rear, observed with admiration the graceful poise, and the agile, rapid movements of the half-breed, stepping with certain but silent tread, and he instinctively compared the man with a panther.

They had gone perhaps three hundred yards when they suddenly came upon a small cotton tent in the lee of a thick grove of spruce trees. In front of, and below, the tent the wide mouth of a brook emptied into the bay. A canoe, turned upon its side, lay on the mossy bank above the water.

"Come in," Indian Jake invited, holding open the front of the tent. "Warm inside. Have our talk here."

Jim entered and seated himself on a thick bed of fragrant balsam and spruce boughs, which formed the floor. Indian Jake placed a handful of birch bark into a little sheet-iron stove which stood at the right of the entrance, in front, arranged wood on top of the bark, and applied a match. The morning was keen and frosty, and the genial glow of warmth that at once pervaded the tent was pleasant.

The fire kindled, the half-breed seated himself in front of the stove, produced from his jacket pocket a plug of black tobacco, and drawing his sheathknife shaved some of the tobacco into his left palm. Restoring the knife to its sheath, he returned the plug of tobacco to his pocket and brought forth a pipe. After rubbing the shaved tobacco between his palms he stuffed it into his pipe, selected a splinter of wood, lifted the stove lid and lighted the splinter at the fire, and, applying the blaze to his pipe, puffed contentedly. Then, turning to Jim, he suggested:

"Now we have our talk."

"What I want from you first is a full account of your trip into the mountains with my father—the trip when he was—lost."

"Ugh!" grunted Indian Jake. "Not much to tell. Your father talk to One-Eared Charley about trip. Tell One Ear been working hard all summer. No time to hunt or fish. Going away soon and wants a hunting trip and fish some before he goes. One Ear says he goes with him. Then he talks to me. Wants me to go with him too. I say yes, I go. One Ear takes his canoe. I take my canoe. Plenty grub and outfit. Two tents, One Ear's and mine.

"We go up Kenamou River. Not much signs deer. Your father catches few fish, but too cold for good fishing with hook and line. Many potagans—long carries. Your father fine with tumpline. Big and strong. He carried with tumpline before, I can tell. He carries big pack like Indian. He says he has good time, and we keeps goin' farther in country. He don't want to turn back. Wants to find deer.

"One day we come to big lake on height of land. Other lakes beyond, and water runs other way from them toward St. Lawrence River. I cross over to St. Lawrence River once, three, four years ago. I know where St. Lawrence River is.

"Mr. MacLean has big talk with me and One Ear about country. Asks all about rivers and lakes. We tell him. One Ear been over the country there many times. He knows much about it.

"This lake a good place for deer. He is pleased with it. Says we camp on this lake and hunt."

"How long was that after you left here?" asked Jim.

"Maybe ten days, maybe two weeks. We hurry but find slow going. Long potagans. Carry too much grub and outfit. Heavy packs."

"Yes, and then what happened?"

"We camp by lake in evenin'. Mr. MacLean says to me, 'Jake, you go early in mornin' and look for deer.'

"Before daylight in mornin' I takes my rifle and goes. I see some fresh deer footin', then snow comes. I make lean-to and put on fire and camp. Fine to hunt deer when there's fresh snow. Snow stops in night. Not much on ground. I starts out and hunt. Sun comes warm and snow most gone by noon. I see deer, but don't shoot. I say I take Mr. MacLean where deer are

and he shoot. It is most dark when I gets back to lake. No camp. I look all over. Camp gone. One Ear and Mr. MacLean gone."

"Were there any tracks in the snow?" broke in Jim.

"Snow most gone. Little patches some places. Snow is all gone where the camp was. No snow close by lake to make tracks."

"And then what did you do?" asked Jim.

"My canoe and my tent both there. One Ear's canoe and tent gone. I see where other canoe was put in water. I think maybe they see deer on other side of lake and go shoot 'em, and camp on other side lake. I look for smoke. No smoke anywhere. Too late to go on that night, and I camp. In morning I look some more. No smoke. I take canoe and paddle across lake. I finds no signs. Look a long time, look till dark. Lake too big to look everywhere. I go back to camp and think I'll move camp across lake next day and look more. Snow comes in night, and then I know I can't see signs where they camp or leave lake. Snow covers all signs up. Then I go hunt deer, and kill two. I bring in the meat to dry. Say I'll wait at camp, and maybe they'll come back soon.

"I stay two weeks. Dry meat and hunt. They don't come. Then ice begins to make on lake. They don't come yet. No good to wait any longer. I know they won't come now. Can't paddle canoe with ice on lake. I come back to bay before river freezes. That's all."

Jim had been eyeing Indian Jake closely while the half-breed related his experience, and he was certain that while Indian Jake had spoken with apparent frankness some important details had been omitted, and persistently, as he listened, the question arose in his mind: "Had the two guides, acting in collusion, disposed of his father, robbed him, and separated?" One-Eared Charley could easily have continued on down the eastern slope to the St. Lawrence, while Indian Jake returned to Eskimo Bay. It would have been difficult for them, had the two returned together, to have explained his father's absence satisfactorily.

"How did you come by all the money you had?" Jim asked. "I understand you had considerable when you got back here—enough to pay your debt at the Hudson's Bay Company's store and to buy your winter outfit."

Indian Jake peered at Jim through squinting eyes for a full minute before replying to this, apparently, unexpected question. His face looked more a hawk's than ever.

“That’s my money. I earn him.”

“But how did you earn the money in so short a time? You did not have it, apparently, before you started into the country on that trip.”

“I earn him. That’s all,” and not another word of explanation could Jim wring out of Indian Jake. Finally he asked:

“What is your theory of what became of my father and One-Eared Charley?”

“I don’t know. They go away. They leave camp and don’t come back. I don’t know where they go.”

“Are you willing to take me in to see the place you have described?” Jim asked finally.

“Ugh, I take you in.”

“When can we start?”

“In the morning at daylight.”

“Very well. We’ll go.”

“We go light to travel fast, and get back before freeze-up. I get outfit together to-day. Don’t take much. You sleep here in tent to-night, then we get early start, soon as we can see.”

“I’ll do it,” agreed Jim, rising. “Get whatever you need from Billy Hand at the store, and I’ll pay for it.”

“Ugh, I get him,” agreed Indian Jake.

Jim left the half-breed and strode back along the trail to camp. He had not learned much that was new beyond minor details. There was something that the half-breed was holding back, he was satisfied of that. He would go to the place himself and see with his own eyes what there was to be seen. And while they were together on the trail he would examine and cross-examine Indian Jake. He would catch him off his guard at some time!

“Well, that’s arranged,” said he to himself. Now for a trip to Number One camp to see McCarthy. Perhaps he will have some suggestions to make.

VII

A WARNING

The store door stood open and Billy, unpacking a case of clothing, hailed Jim as he came up from Indian Jake's tent:

"Did your pow-wow bring ye anything?"

"Nothing new," answered Jim, pausing.

"He's a slick cuss. I didn't expect it would," and Billy nodded knowingly.

"I'm going in with him to-morrow. He's going to take me to the place where Dad was lost," Jim announced. "And, by the way, I wish you'd let him have any outfit we'll need for the trip, and I'll pay you for it. I told him to come here for it."

"You don't mean to tell me, Jim, you're goin' in with that feller! Just you alone!" exclaimed Billy.

"Yes, why not?" asked Jim. "You see I want to look the ground over for myself. I won't be satisfied until I've done that."

"All I can say is that you may's well jump into the bay right here and drown yourself, or commit suicide any other way that may seem pleasant and comfortable to you." Billy shook his head helplessly. "You'll never come back, Jim. Drop in and say good-bye to me before you leave. I never expect to see you again." Billy paused and looked thoughtfully into space for a moment. "Say, Jim, I'm goin' with you. My liver's pretty bad, but I guess I can make it. If there's two of us one can keep watch all the time and that feller won't have a chance to do any of his tricks. If you're alone with him he'll have a chance to knife you while you're asleep."

"You're a cheerful prognosticator," Jim grinned. "There's absolutely no danger to me so far as he is concerned. He wouldn't dare do me any harm. There's suspicion enough attached to him already, and he'll bring me back safely just to let you people see that there is no ground for the suspicion. All his interests are here, and he never could come back if anything happened to me. Don't you see, Billy? I'm safe enough. And anyhow I'm pretty well able to take care of myself. Thank you for offering to go as my protector, but you stay on your job in the store. If you leave here for the trip Dawes'll fire

you. That won't do. I want you here to take care of the store. I know it will never be looted with you on the job."

"I'll get my outfit ready to go with you," persisted Billy. "You won't be safe with that feller alone. He won't lose much by gettin' out of here."

"Don't you do it!" Jim objected positively. "Don't you mention it to Dawes either! I know it's for my sake, but I don't want any one to go with us. I'll do better alone."

"Well, don't you ever throw it up to me if you get killed by that half-breed!" Billy's voice reflected injured feelings. "I've warned you, and I'll go in a minute if you'll let me."

"If I get killed up there I'll never once mention it," Jim laughed. "And I'll promise my ghost will never haunt you, Billy. Where does the tote road start in?"

"You can't miss it. Starts in just west of the mill. Foller the river up," directed Billy, adding to himself, as Jim thanked him and strode away, "Headstrong, and likes to take chances just like his father. I wouldn't go into those mountains alone with Indian Jake, not for the hull camp and the mill thrown in and a million dollars to boot!"

Jim had no difficulty in finding the tote road. It was the only road in the whole wilderness. This was the road over which supplies were hauled to Camps Numbers One, Two and Three. It was little else than a trail that had been cleared of trees and brush to sufficient width to permit the passage of the freighting team. It was corduroyed over marshy places, but otherwise no attempt had been made to smooth or level it. During the short summer it was seldom used. In winter the hard-frozen ground would be covered by snow to a depth of several feet, and constant use would keep the roadway packed hard and solid and smooth enough for the heavy bob sleigh.

On the right of the road the Grampus River, a narrow, turbulent stream, poured down from the mountains to empty into the sheltered cove where the *Gray Goose* lay at anchor. On the shores of this cove stood the sawmill, store, a cook and bunkhouse and two or three cabins which housed native mill workers and their families.

The air was sweet with the odour of balsam and spruce. Here and there a tamarack, the foliage turned golden yellow by September frosts, or the snowy trunk of a white birch, gave brilliant contrast to the dark green spruce and fir.

A half-dozen spruce grouse were startled from the road by Jim's approach, and with great rush of wing took refuge in a tree to look down at the intruder wonderingly. Impudent Canada jays scolded him in their harsh notes, and the "chick-a-dee-dee" of the brown-capped Labrador chickadee was constantly in his ears. A three-toed Arctic woodpecker was working industriously on a dead tree, and as he passed an open space he startled a mixed flock of snowflakes and Lapland longspurs. In the distance he heard the chatter of a red squirrel. He had always looked upon red squirrels as a pest. But now, on this lonesome trail in this strange land he hailed the chatter of the squirrel as the voice of an old, familiar friend. He paused to listen, and as he stood a lynx stepped out into the road a dozen yards ahead of him. The great cat, with its tufted ears cocked forward, paused boldly to look at him, then noiselessly, on padded feet, passed from view.

"Slinks around like Indian Jake," observed Jim, striding forward.

Presently he heard the strokes of axes, and a moment later came upon a clearing with a long, low log building in the center, and above it another, but smaller, log house. The latter he recognized as the camp stable. Smoke was issuing from a pipe protruding above the roof at one end of the former, and this he knew was the cook and bunk house.

Jim entered, and found himself in the combined kitchen and mess room of a logging camp, a partition separating it from the bunk or sleeping compartment. A tall, cadaverous man was stirring with his right hand the contents of a big pan. The man turned a sorrowful gaze toward Jim, and with his left hand removed a pipe from between his teeth, spat deliberately upon the floor, and greeted:

"How do, stranger?"

"How are you?" said Jim. "Is this Camp Number One?"

"You've propounded correct the fust time," nodded the cook, still stirring his dough industriously. "This is Number One outfit, and I'm Tim Davis, the cook. Did you lose an outfit somewheres?" he asked seriously.

"Not exactly," grinned Jim, "though I'm looking for this one and for Pat McCarthy. Do you happen to know where I'll find him? I'm Jim MacLean."

"Be you the son of our old boss? I'm tickled to death to see you. I'd shake, but I'm all gummed up." He lifted his dripping hand from the mixture and gazed at it mournfully. "Pat'll be tickled more'n I am. He's been hopin' you'd show up this fall. You just wait till I get this puddin' in a bag and over to boil, and I'll lead you to where McCarthy is at."

“Very well,” said Jim, “I’ll wait.”

The cook drew his hand from the dough mixture, wiped it on his trouser leg, and began searching among an indiscriminate pile of cloths. Apparently unsuccessful in his quest, he reached for a hand towel that was hanging upon a peg over a wash basin. He held the towel up for inspection. It gave evidence of having been used to some extent since it had last been in the laundry.

“I guess it’ll do,” he remarked, and spreading it on the table, and dumping the mixture into it from the pan, he drew the edges of the towel together and tied them securely with a string, thus converting it into a pudding bag. “The boys have been teasin’ me to make ’em a boiled puddin’ and I’m makin’ it for ’em to-day as a little treat,” he said, dropping the towel and its contents into a kettle of boiling water that steamed on the stove. “Come along now, and we’ll find McCarthy.”

“Do you make such treats for them often?” asked Jim with a broad grin.

“I do now and again. Kind of intermittin’,” said Tim, turning his mournful eyes upon Jim. “I have to fix up good things for ’em to keep ’em continuous in appreciatin’ me. A cook in a loggin’ camp ain’t like to be over happy unless he gives the men good grub. He can’t do it by fits and starts. It’s got to be continuous like. They like this duff and I give it to ’em every Sunday regular, and sometimes between times, like I’m doin’ to-day.”

The cook slipped a jacket over his rolled-up sleeves, donned a nondescript cap and led the way out, while Jim pondered, as he followed, on the way of camp cooks, and mentally decided that he would not care for pudding that day, at least.

A little distance above the camp they suddenly came upon McCarthy directing a gang of swampers. He was a typical man of the lumber woods, big and muscular, rough and reckless in appearance. He had the head, chest and fists of a fighter, and the bearing of a man born to lead. Bulldog courage and determination were the dominant characteristics of his features. Jim as a boy had been a pet of McCarthy, and on his part he had held the big Irishman in a degree of veneration. McCarthy was one of his heroes, a man of action and deeds.

McCarthy’s face broke into a broad smile as he beheld Jim.

“Well, if it ain’t Jim MacLean!” he exclaimed, grasping Jim’s hand in his own big, horny palm. “When did yez come, me lad? And it’s me that’s glad to see yez! Sure it do be good for sore eyes to see yez, Jim!”

“The *Gray Goose* anchored at midnight,” said Jim, grinning at the cordial reception. “I had a talk with Indian Jake, and then came right up to see you. How are you, Pat?”

“Me body’s well and hearty and able to eat what Tim puts before me, but me mind sure do be throubled at the way things be goin’. Did yez see Dawes?”

“Yes, I saw him this morning. I’m to work at Number Three, but I’m going into the mountains first for a trip with Indian Jake to see the place where Dad’s camp was pitched when the half-breed claims he disappeared.”

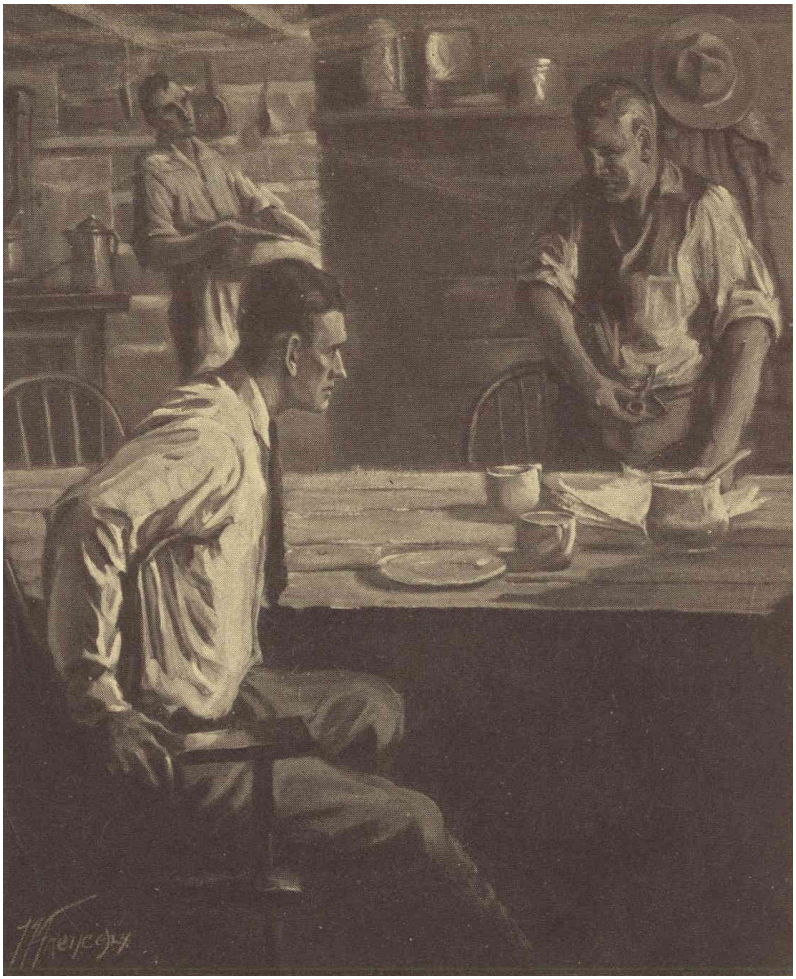
“Goin’ into the mountains with Indian Jake, be yez? By the saints above, yez has nerve! But I always said yez was the thrue son of James MacLean, and I was lookin’ for yez to do just that. Afther what’s happened most lads would be afraid to be makin’ a thrip like that with a man o’ his reputation. But let me tell yez, Indian Jake’s all right and he’ll niver harm a hair of your head. Whin are yez leavin’?”

“To-morrow morning early. I can’t see that I’m running any particular danger with Indian Jake. There wouldn’t be any object for him to harm me. I haven’t a great deal of money with me, and what I have I’ll leave at the store in Billy’s care for safe keeping. I’ll be safe enough.”

“Yez be well able to take care of yezself, Jim.” McCarthy looked his big companion over admiringly. “I’ve no fear of that, b’y. Come on over to the cook house now and we’ll have a bit of a talk before the men come in to dinner.”

McCarthy and Jim followed Tim down to the cook house, and the two seated themselves at the end farthest from the stove where Tim was again busy with his duties, assisted by a cookee, a young man of twenty or thereabouts, who was placing enamelled dishes on the table preparatory to dinner.

“They’re all right if they do be hearin’ what we say,” assured McCarthy. “They’re old min I hired and brought here meself, but with us at this end they’ll not be hearin’ much.” Proceeding to fill and light his pipe, he asked, “Now what’s been happenin’ to yez, Jim?”



“THAT JAGGER IS TRYIN’ TO DO YEZ DIRT, ME B’Y,” EXCLAIMED McCARTHY.

Jim related briefly his experiences with Jagger, his meeting with Dawes and his interview with Indian Jake, while McCarthy puffed at his pipe and interjected comments.

"That Jagger is thryin' to do yez dirt, me b'y!" exclaimed McCarthy, when Jim had finished. "He's a miserable skunk. He was afther thryin' to keep yez in college so yez wouldn't know what was takin' place here. He's a robber, and he's makin' his plans to rob yez of this timber operation.

"Yez father disappeared a year ago, and whin a man disappears in this wilderness that's the ind of him, and it's no use lookin' for him. He's gone and yez may as well take it at that. Jagger had nothin' to do with Mr. MacLean's disappearin', but he's thryin' to make profit by it now.

"He sinds down Dawes, and if that man knows annything about loggin' and sawmill business he's not usin' the brains God gave him. If he do be usin' thim it's in tryin' to make the operation a failure. I was handlin' fair wurrukin' crews on thim camps and had men enough to keep the mill goin' on a good profit-makin' basis.

"James MacLean knew his business, and he trusted me, even if it is meself as says it. He hired me on a conthract to hold for two more years. That's why Jagger didn't fire me. Jagger gave me the option to quit, but I promised yez father I'd see the thing through, and by all the saints I will, and me min'll stick by me, ivery blissed wan of thim.

"Dawes made me a crew boss whin he comes to take me job as superintindent, but I'm keepin' me eyes on things. I'm itchin' to beat that man Dawes up and take back the operation. I've been waitin' for yez to come, lad, and say the wurrud, and I give warnin' now I'll not be sthandin' the like of him bossin' me for long.

"Dawes shut down the mill with the skidways piled with logs, and the boom full, and sent in a lot of new machinery that we didn't need to buy till we could buy it out of profits later on. He's plannin' under orders from Jagger to stop income from lumber whilst expinses go on. They do be plannin' to eat up the trust fund yez be tellin' me about in that Monthreal bank, and run the operation in debt so it'll have to be sold. He's expectin' to fix up the sale so he'll be buyin' it for a song, and rob yez of it, me lad. I see through his dirthy schemes, and I'm tellin' yez.

"Dawes brings with him a gang of useless men whin he comes. Niver wan of thim iver used an ax before, unless it was to split somebody's head. About half of me crew here in Number One is made up of thim, and it's the

same at Number Two and Number Three. With thim that just came in on the last ship, there'll be about three of these no-good lads to ivery two of our old min. It's dirthy wurruk, Jim, they do be afther doin'. With two to three against us, they do be countin' on a safe balance with thim in a fight, if war starts between us."

"What can we do to save the property?" asked Jim in some consternation at the well-nigh hopeless picture McCarthy had painted.

"Kick thim out and take hould of it ourselves." McCarthy brought his big fist down on the table with a thud.

"If we do that," Jim objected, "the wages and supplies will stop. Jagger has the upper hand. He has possession of the funds, and the courts at home with him."

"Kick thim out!" repeated McCarthy. "I'll niver be able to hould me temper through the winter. I'll be breakin' Dawes' head some day. If I iver get afther him I'm thinkin' there'll be a case of murther here."

"I hope you won't have to do it," said Jim. "Perhaps we can persuade him to play the game straight, and work for the interests of the business instead of against them."

"Niver!" explained McCarthy. "His intherests are in ruining the business. He's as crooked as the sthripes on a barber's pole. See here now, Jim." McCarthy spoke earnestly in a confidential undertone, his voice charged with emotion. "I've been waitin' for yez to come. Here yez be, and now I'm waitin' for orthers. I do be lookin' to you as me boss, and I'll be afther doin' what yez tells me to do. If yez do be wantin' Dawes to stick on to the super's job where Jagger puts him and ruin the business, I'll stay where I be as boss at Number One, or wheriver I'm put. If yez says for me to go back to me rightful job as superintindent, I'll be afther makin' Dawes and his gang of alley toughs admit I'm superintindent, or I'll break the heads of ivery blissed wan of thim. Me old min'll stand by me. It doesn't mather if Dawes do be havin' three min to our two, we can do it, lad. Be thinkin' it over whilst yez be in the mountains with the half-breed."

"Thank you, Pat," acknowledged Jim, "but that would start a war, and I'm afraid that before it ended the property would be destroyed. In fact, you know, I have no legal authority. I'm to be just a greenhorn lumberjack working for wages with no privileges."

"But yez father do be sayin' differint in that letter Sandy Dumphry gives yez," objected Pat.

“That was my first thought, too, but that’s just a letter Dad wrote me,” explained Jim. “It gives me no legal authority. This camp is run under a trust created by Dad’s will, and Jagger, as executor of the will, is trustee. He has all legal authority, and he is the only person that can draw money from the trust fund to meet expenses. I have no more to say about it, until I become of age, than you have, and we would have no standing in court.”

“And whin’ that time comes there’ll be no property to be legal about,” argued McCarthy, feelingly. “ ’Twas only intinded he’d handle the money and pay it over as we’d be needin’ it to run the business, and to put all money comin’ from the business into the fund for yezownself and to pay the cost of runnin’ the property. The loggin’ and sawmill was niver intinded for the likes of Jagger to run, hirin’ and firin’ min. That’s me own job. That’s why yez father put me on conthract till the time yez would be of age and take it over yezself. Can’t yez see, b’y?”

“I’m afraid the courts wouldn’t look at it that way,” insisted Jim. “Jagger has the courts behind him and he knows it better than anyone else.”

“The court do be queer things sometimes,” observed McCarthy hopelessly. “But they’d niver stand for his wastin’ the property.”

“I’ll think about it while I’m in the mountains, and we’ll have another talk when I get back and decide what we’d better do,” said Jim. “Do you know anything about Dad leaving some papers, presumably in a cave?”

“That’s what I hears. Your father wint up wan day from Number Three, takin’ a package of papers, One-Eared Charley goin’ with him, and comin’ back in the evenin’ without thim. Whin Dawes comes here he hears about it, and he’s had min lookin’ for that cave all summer. They do be sayin’ that Indian Jake could be findin’ the cave if he wants to, and Dawes has hired him to hang around the camp this winther, and maybe he thinks he’ll get Indian Jake to show him where it is, but it’s my opinion Indian Jake’ll niver do it. That half-breed don’t tell all he knows.”

“Then there’s something to it, or Dawes thinks there is?”

“Yes, there is that. He took the papers and came back without thim. There’s a cave somewheres, and I do be thinkin’ the papers are hid in it.”

“I’ve heard so many things to-day, Pat, my head is full and my hands seem to be tied,” said Jim. “I’ll have time while I’m away with Indian Jake to think matters over and decide what to do. Perhaps I’ll get some information from Indian Jake, and I’ll see you again as soon as I get back.”

“Yez’ll be gettin’ niver a wurrud from that half-breed. He’s tould yez iverything he knows, and he’s tould yez the truth, or he’s the biggest rascal I iver met.” McCarthy arose. “Here come the min to dinner, and there’ll be some of the Dawes gang amongst ’em that’ll be spyin’ on us. Just be thinkin’ over what I’m tellin’ yez, Jim. Come up to the other ind of the table and sit with me.”

Distributed at intervals the length of the table were great dishes of baked pork and beans, boiled corned beef, boiled potatoes, bread and doughnuts, and pitchers of steaming coffee. And Jim did justice to all while he listened to the general badinage and arguments and rough jokes among the lumberjacks.

“Where’s that puddin’ you promised?” someone called to Tim Davis, the cook, who, Jim observed, they addressed as “Happy.”

“Puddin’!” exclaimed Tim, as though in great astonishment, and maintaining his habitually sorrowful expression. “You fellers’ll drive me to my grave with pesterin’ me for delicate eatin’. Next thing I know you’ll want lobster a la Newburgh and I’ll be so mortified because I can’t produce it I’ll not be able to look you pore starvin’ men in the face.”

“Puddin’! Puddin’!” went up the call around the table.

“I’ve got the puddin’ all right,” announced Happy, with much solemnity, proceeding to serve down one side of the table while Buck Taggs, the cookee, served the other side. “One slice for a man and no hoggin’,” he protested as a lumberjack attempted to acquire two slices for his personal use.

“No harm meant, Happy,” said the man, grinning. “They kinder stuck together.”

Jim had seen the pudding bag and he discreetly declined a helping, insisting, when he was urged, that he had eaten so much of everything else he was sure pudding in addition would not agree with his digestion.

“Now, me lad, think over what I’ve been tellin’ yez,” urged McCarthy, when Jim was leaving directly after dinner to return to the ship. “ ’Tis a man’s duty to fight for what’s rightfully his when dirthy thieves are afther cheatin’ him. ’Tis a pathriotic duty to stop thievin’.”

“All right, Pat,” Jim laughed as he shook his friend’s hand. “We’ll see how things work out.”

VIII

ADIEU TO CIVILIZATION

Jim had quite enough to occupy his thoughts as he retraced his steps down the tote road to the mill. Billy's suggestion in the store that morning that Dawes was mismanaging the property, followed by McCarthy's charge that the mismanagement was a deliberate attempt to wreck the logging and mill operation, came to him as a decided shock.

From the day when Jagger had delivered him that letter in which his father had asked that he enter the camps as a lumberjack and work his way to a knowledge of the business, and, contrary to his father's expressed wish, Jagger had attempted to dissuade him from entering the camps, Jim had felt instinctively that the lawyer's object in taking this course was to conceal something from him. In the light of what McCarthy had told him, Jagger's reason for wishing to keep him out of Labrador would seem transparent enough.

But was not McCarthy prejudiced? He had been superseded by Dawes as superintendent, and quite naturally harboured resentment against his successor. While Jim agreed that McCarthy apparently had excellent reasons for his deductions, this suggestion of personal prejudice and bias intruded itself. It would be quite possible to misconstrue the new superintendent's methods and motives and construct a plausible argument against them.

This reasoning was suggested by the thought, ever present in his mind, that it was his father who had placed Jagger in control of the business. His father was a practical lumberman and also a keen business man. He was a good judge of human nature and careful in the selection of the men that he placed in confidential positions. He must have had excellent reasons for trusting the lawyer and implicit confidence in the man.

These considerations led Jim to ask himself what grounds he had, after all, to suspect Jagger's motives. The increased number of men sent into the camps would reasonably suggest an increased output and larger income from the property. The character of the men, however, that Jim had seen on the ship, and McCarthy's report of those that Jagger had previously sent, was not reassuring.

It might well have been that McCarthy, jealous of his administration of the camps, had declined, in his bulldog manner, to work an increased force.

McCarthy was old-fashioned in his methods, and perhaps he had not been willing to accept those that were newer and up to date. The shutting down of the mill was presumably to remodel it for the introduction of newer and more modern machinery.

Before Jim had reached the end of the tote road at the mill he had concluded that he might well have been over-suspicious and resentful of Jagger.

"When I get back from this trip with Indian Jake," he decided, "I'll go into Number Three and work as Dad wished. I'll tell McCarthy to keep his hands off for the present, at least, and I'll keep my eyes open. It is possible I've been all wrong, and that McCarthy's all wrong. Dad most always knew what he was about. I'll not interfere with any of his plans unless I find I have to. Dad's will placed Jagger in legal charge of the property and the funds to keep the business going, and he can stop the whole operation by holding up money and supplies. Whether he is straight or not he has the upper hand, and I'll keep my hands off unless something turns up that proves to me beyond doubt McCarthy is right."

He looked in at the mill for a moment where a gang of men were busy remodelling and setting up machinery, and then turned down to the store. Billy was still unpacking, marking and arranging goods that had arrived on the *Gray Goose*.

"Hello, Jim," he greeted. "I didn't expect you back so soon. Did you find McCarthy?"

"Yes, I saw him. I'll have to get my outfit ashore this afternoon, and I came right back after dinner," Jim explained.

"How did you find things?" asked Billy, reaching for a bottle labelled "Dr. Kurem's Liver Reliever," and taking a gulp of the contents. "I have to keep takin' medicine for my liver all the time."

"Everything seemed to be going well enough. Of course I hadn't time to look around, and I wouldn't have learned much if I had. I'm a complete greenhorn. Did Indian Jake come for our outfit for the trip?"

"Yes, he was here and got some things—grub mostly. But you'd better not make that trip alone with him, Jim. Let me go along with you."

"I'll be all right. I think you're looking for a chance to get out of the store, and I'd enjoy your company, but your liver is in such bad shape," Jim grinned, "I'd be afraid to have you along. You'd better stay here on your job or Dawes will fire you."

"I'm talkin' about what I know," Billy bristled. "I don't want to take the trip, but you're takin' a big chance goin' alone with that half-breed. You need somebody to look after you. It wouldn't be any easy job lookin' after you either, but I'm willin' to tackle it. Back home there's a law against folks committin' suicide, and they fine 'em or lock 'em up or somethin', and I kinder feel like I ought to keep you from breakin' the law."

"I'll be all right," Jim grinned. "I'm not taking the risk you think I am, Billy. I appreciate your motive just the same. Now I'd like to get aboard the ship. Where can I get a boat?"

"Come along, and I'll put you aboard."

Jim followed him, and Billy requisitioned a flat-bottomed rowboat drawn up on the shore, and fifteen minutes later Jim climbed up the ladder to the deck of the *Gray Goose*, while Billy pulled back to resume his duties in the store.

It was after tea aboard ship, and the moon was up, when Jim said good-bye to Captain Dobbs, and a ship's boat manned by two sailors rowed him and his belongings ashore. The two men helped him carry his trunk and camp bag to the store. Here, with Billy's assistance and advice, he selected such small personal equipment as he would require on the trail—a warm blanket, a change of woolen underclothing, a half-dozen pairs of woolen socks, an extra pair of shoepacks, toilet articles and ammunition for his rifle. These were packed in a waterproof duffle bag, with which he had provided himself.

"That coat you're wearin' won't be much use to you in this country," said Billy, bringing forth a hooded garment of moleskin cloth. "Take this adikey and leave your coat in your trunk here. It's a sort of shirt with a hood on it that Eskimos and other natives wear, and it beats a coat all holler for keepin' a feller warm. I had a native woman make this one for McCarthy. I guess it'll fit you."

"Thank you," said Jim. "You know the game and I'm a greenhorn. Anything else wrong?"

"Shed the hat." Billy went behind the counter and produced a round, peakless cloth cap with ear and neck protector, and a pair of wool-lined buckskin mittens. "Put the cap on and cache your hat and gloves in your trunk. They don't fit this country, and folks don't wear anything here for show. You'll be gettin' into nippy weather before you get back—if you ever do come back, and I don't expect you will."

“You’re a cheerful prophet,” laughed Jim. “Thank you for fixing me up.”

Billy looked Jim over from head to foot, taking in details—shoepacks, moleskin trousers, woolen outer shirt, cap and belt, with sheathknife.

“You’ll do,” said he. “It’ll be a bit tough on you at first, but you’ll soon harden up to it. Don’t hurry away now. Sit down and tell me the news from home.”

It was nearly two hours later when Jim shouldered his pack, took his rifle in his hand and said good-bye to Billy. He paused for a moment before the store to look out over the placid waters of the bay, which glistened in the light of the full moon like a sheet of polished silver. The *Gray Goose*, at anchor in the offing, rose in silhouette above the sparkling waters. She was his last connecting link with civilization and the outer world at least for many months. He felt a sudden sense of loneliness with the thought that he was now an exile completely cut off from his lifelong friends and companions. McCarthy and Billy and some others of his father’s old employees were staunch and loyal friends, to be sure, but they were different from the friends at home and in college. They were rough and ready and generous, but in spite of their big hearts they had no appreciation of the finer things of life that had meant so much to him, and had little in common with him aside from the work that he was soon to be engaged in.

“Good for me, I suppose,” he finally said, turning his back upon the bay and the *Gray Goose*, and striding down the trail toward Indian Jake’s tent. “That old life is all behind me, and I may as well adapt myself to the new, and the sooner I do it the happier I’ll be. Life is made up of changes, and a fellow must learn to accept them as they come if he ever expects to make anything of himself. Perhaps some day I may go back to college and finish my course, but it will never be the same with the fellows that I knew there all gone.”

The night was crisp and frosty, and the air filled with sweet odours of the forest. Jim took deep breaths as he walked, and all too soon Indian Jake’s little tent appeared before him. Smoke was rising from the stovepipe, which protruded through the top, and a flicker of candle-light told him that the half-breed was waiting.

Parting the canvas in front, he discovered Indian Jake squatted before the stove, puffing stolidly at his pipe.

“Good evening,” Jim greeted.

“Ugh!” the half-breed grunted, making way for Jim to pass in with his bag. “You sleep back. I sleep this side by stove. I get up early and put on fire to boil kettle.”

“All right,” said Jim, proceeding to unpack his bag and spread his blankets on the fresh and fragrant bed of spruce and balsam boughs which Indian Jake had prepared.

“Fine night,” he remarked, as he rolled, presently, into his blankets.

“Ugh, fine night,” grunted Indian Jake, staring straight before him and evidently not wishing to talk.

For a half-hour Jim lay awake enjoying the cozy snugness of the tent. A fire crackled in the stove. A stick driven into the ground, and the upper end split to form a vise, held the nearly burnt-out end of a sputtering candle. By its dim, flickering light Jim studied the figure and profile of his companion crouching before the stove and silently smoking. The bronzed face with its beaked nose had a sinister and forbidding look. Jim felt a sudden sense of apprehension.

“That man,” he said to himself, “is capable of anything. I’ll have to keep on guard every minute. But I’m safe enough for the present.”

And turning over he was soon lost in the unconsciousness of dreamless sleep.

IX

TOILING ON THE RIVER TRAIL

When Jim opened his eyes a fresh candle, standing upright in the end of the split stick, softly illumined the interior of the tent. A frying pan, sizzling on the stove, filled the air with the appetizing odour of frying bacon. Mingled with this was the aroma of coffee, which doubtless had its origin in a tin pail sitting on the ground and close to the stove where it would remain hot. Indian Jake, puffing his pipe, was crouching before the stove, turning the bacon in the frying pan with the point of his sheathknife.

Jim's sleep had been unbroken and dreamless. His brain was clear, and he felt marvelously carefree, and happier than in many weeks. Preliminaries were past, and action and work were begun. The best antidote in the world for restlessness and unhappiness is activity and work. He became conscious immediately of a consuming appetite crying for attention and satisfaction.

"Good morning," said he, sitting up and throwing back the blankets. "I was sleeping so soundly that I didn't hear you around. How long have you been up?"

"Mornin'," answered Indian Jake cheerfully, without turning his eyes from the bacon which he was manipulating. "Not up long. You sleep sound. Sleep is good for man on trail."

"Slept like a log, and I feel ready for anything," declared Jim, hurrying into his clothes. "I'll be ready in a jiffy."

Stars were still shining. The air was crisp and snappy, and the moss-covered ground was white with hoar frost. He bathed hands and face in the cold waters of the brook, and when he returned to the tent felt like one treading on air.

"We go early," announced Indian Jake, as he placed the pan of bacon between them, and poured coffee from the tin pail into a new enameled cup and passed the cup to Jim. "Goin' to have long, hard trail, and snow comes soon. Days gettin' short now. Travel all time it's daylight."

"I feel fine and fit for it," said Jim, lifting some bacon with his sheathknife from the pan and transferring it to a small enameled plate, which Indian Jake had placed on the ground before him, and helping himself to bread and butter. "It seems to me I never was so hungry in my life!"

“Good to be hungry,” observed Indian Jake agreeably.

“I hope you have a good supply of bacon on hand for the trip,” suggested Jim. “Bacon is always good, but out here it’s simply great!”

“Some bacon. Plenty fat pork, no lean in it,” said Indian Jake. “When we get on trail fat pork is better. We don’t take much coffee. Coffee too heavy. Plenty tea. Have to put more coffee in kettle than we do tea. Little tea goes good ways. Little coffee don’t last long. One pound tea lasts us four weeks. One pound coffee lasts us four days. We just take little coffee because I think maybe you like it. Little surprise for you. Myself, I don’t care. Like tea just same as coffee.”

“Thank you. I appreciate your thoughtfulness. I seldom drink tea, but I’m fond of coffee, though I have no doubt I’ll learn to like tea pretty well on the trail,” said Jim appreciatively. “I’ve often wondered why tea instead of coffee is always carried on a long trail where it is necessary to go light. Now I understand.”

“When we get on trail you find tea very good.” Indian Jake sopped his bread in the bacon grease remaining in the pan. “Put your bread in it like this,” he suggested. “Grease very good to eat. Better than butter on trail. We don’t take much butter. Don’t want him much on trail. Plenty pork grease is good.”

“Thank you, but it’s a little too greasy for me,” Jim declined with a grin.

“Bimeby you’ll like him. Marmalade?” Indian Jake drew forth a small jar of marmalade from a bag, and offered it to Jim.

“That’s fine!” Jim accepted, helping himself liberally. “Thank you, Jake.”

“I bring two little jars. He helps you get used to trail. I think maybe you like him. Nice surprise. We don’t take much marmalade on trail. He’s too heavy on potagan.”

It was quite natural that Jim should ask himself the meaning of these little preliminary attentions on the part of the half-breed. The man must certainly have been aware that he was under suspicion. Was it his object to disarm Jim and quiet his suspicions? It was quite probable. The beaked nose, the keen black, small eyes that saw everything, the soft, cat-like tread, the easy, graceful movements that were never wasted, constantly reminded the young man, now of the swooping hawk, now of the panther crouching and ready to spring upon its victim or stealthily stalking its prey.

Before he had seen Indian Jake, Jim had convicted him of having destroyed and robbed his father. The half-breed's personal appearance and characteristics had only served to strengthen this judgment of conviction. Nevertheless he had not, he was fully aware, sufficient evidence upon which to base a charge or prove the man guilty before a court of law. This consideration led him to decide that it was policy, for the present at least, to accept the man's attentions quite as though there was no doubt in his mind of Indian Jake's honesty and sincerity. This was the game he would play until the time for direct accusation should arrive.

The last stars were fading when they broke camp. Silently the canoe was launched, and loaded with their equipment, for the long journey into the deep wilderness. It was a journey that was to try Jim's grit and fortitude to the utmost.

"You take bow," said Indian Jake, holding the stern of the canoe steady while Jim crept forward to his position.

Indian Jake gave the canoe a gentle push, as he stepped, light as a feather, into the stern. They dipped their paddles, and the little vessel shot out into the stream. As they passed from the mouth of the brook into the broader waters of the bay, a flock of wild geese honked overhead. Indian Jake pointed to them.

"Geese coming south. Stop here for two, maybe three weeks to feed in meshes. Winter comes soon when geese show up."

"I wish we might get some of them," suggested Jim.

"Maybe we do in the country," promised Indian Jake.

A little way up the shore they entered the broad mouth of the Kenamou River. Presently Indian Jake pointed to some white, feathery foam floating down to meet them, with the remark:

"Rapids soon now."

Ten minutes later they reached them, and just below the swift water made a landing. Indian Jake produced two tumplines, and proceeded to tie up two packs, with the tumplines adjusted for carrying them. One of the packs was a stupendously large and heavy one, the other much smaller and lighter.

"You carry light pack now. Make him heavy bimeby. Have to get used to him," he announced.

He assisted in mounting the lighter pack and settling it into a comfortable position on Jim's back. There were no shoulder straps, and its only support was a broad band of leather across the forehead.

"If you slip twist your head one side and pack falls off. Then you don't get hurt," Indian Jake advised, as he turned to the heavy pack, and with the ease of the experienced voyageur swung it to his back. Then to Jim's amazement he stooped and lifted a fifty-pound bag of flour, raised it over his head and dropped it upon the pack where it would rest across the nape of his neck. Then he set forward, his rifle in his right hand, leading the way upward through spruce brush and tangle.

Jim started off bravely enough, but presently it seemed to him that his neck would break with the pull of the strap from the forehead. Only Indian Jake, trudging stolidly ahead with three times the weight, kept him going.

"I'll stick to it as long as he does," Jim muttered. "He's a good deal smaller and lighter than I am. If he can do it, I can."

At length Indian Jake halted, and putting down his pack turned to relieve Jim of his lighter, though what seemed to him then, crushing load.

"Does he ride easy?" asked the half-breed.

"Well, as easy as I can expect it to, I suppose," answered Jim, with a stretch of his neck, as he seated himself upon a rock.

"You find him heavy to-day and to-morrow maybe. Then he gets easier. Take little rest here."

Jim was thankful for the brief respite. In five minutes Indian Jake arose, assisted Jim to mount his pack, resumed his own great load and silently trudged on with no other halt until, at the end of a mile, the packs were dropped on the river bank at the head of the rapid.

"I go now and get canoe. You wait. We track awhile from here."

"Can't I help you bring the canoe up?" asked Jim.

"No, I bring him alone. You wait. Get rested some. Plenty hard work every day till we reach height of land."

The tireless half-breed slipped away through the brush to reappear a half hour later with the canoe turned over his head and balanced upon his shoulders.

Without delay the canoe was floated in the water and reloaded. When this was done, Indian Jake attached an end of a rope to its forward thwart,

with a half hitch around its upturned prow. He then selected a stiff sapling pole, cut and trimmed it and lashed one end of the pole to the forward thwart of the canoe.

"You take other end of pole," he directed. "I take rope and pull canoe up river. You hold pole and steer canoe. We have to walk in water some."

There was another portage where the water was too swift for tracking, as Indian Jake called hauling the canoe with the rope, then another short carry and it was midday.

"Now we boil kettle," announced the half-breed when they lay down their packs at the end of the last carry.

It was a welcome announcement to Jim. For nearly four hours he had been floundering over slippery boulders in icy water often to his knees, sometimes nearly to his hips, or forcing his way through brush with a pack on his back. He sat down upon his pack and watched Indian Jake.

In a moment the half-breed had a fire blazing—too small a fire Jim thought. Then he cut a stiff pole, sharpened the butt with his ax, forced the sharpened end into the soft ground with the pole in a slanting position over the fire, and filling the kettle with water from the river hung it upon the pole in a position that brought it directly over the blaze.

Bringing forth a piece of fat salt pork from one of the bags, he drew his sheathknife, cut several thick slices of the pork and proceeded to fry it in the pan over the coals. Already the kettle was boiling, and removing it from the fire he threw into it a generous portion of tea. Then he placed a loaf of bread on a stone where either could reach it and cut from it as he wished.

"Grub," announced Indian Jake laconically.

Jim seated himself and proceeded to eat with a keen appetite and relish. The fat pork, not cooked enough to suggest browning, the coarse bread and tea were satisfying. Neither spoke until Indian Jake had sopped up the last bit of grease from the frying pan with a piece of bread. Then, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, he asked:

"You feel much tired?"

"A little tired," Jim admitted, "but this rest is setting me right again. I was pretty hungry. Now I've eaten I feel fresh and ready for work."

"Ugh, good to eat."

Shaving tobacco from a plug, the half-breed filled his pipe, transferred a red coal from the fire to the bowl of the pipe, puffed industriously until a volume of smoke issued from the pipe bowl, flipped the coal back into the fire, and settled himself for a brief season of profound enjoyment.

"You goin' to make good packer," he presently remarked. "Start off fine for first time you ever pack. Hard work first day. Second day stiff and sore. Neck very stiff to-night from tumpline. Few days all the stiff is gone. Then you find packing easy. Carry big load then. Big as me maybe, bimeby."

"I hope I shall work into it all right," said Jim. "It is hard, though, in the beginning."

"Ugh. Make you good and tough for lumber woods when you get back. Lumber woods won't be hard for you then. You find him easier work than packing."

Once in the afternoon when they were on a long portage, four spruce grouse arose noisily in front of Indian Jake, who was leading, and alighted in a tree. He lay down his pack deliberately, with the remark:

"Maybe pa'tridge for supper."

Jim put down his own load, thankful for the respite. Indian Jake cut a straight, slender pole, trimmed it with his jackknife, and drawing from his pocket a piece of stout twine tied it to the tip of the pole. On the other end of the twine he formed a slipnoose.

With the noose spread open in a circle, he lifted the pole gently, dropped the noose over the head of a grouse and touched the back of the bird with the tip of the pole. It flew from its perch and the noose tightened around its neck. Indian Jake drew it in, wrung the bird's neck, and proceeded to capture the three remaining grouse in the same manner.

"Indian way," he grinned as he plucked the feathers from his game. "Don't waste ammunition on spruce pa'tridges. Don't have to. He's a fool bird. Pa'tridge for supper to-night, dinner to-morrow."

It was after sunset when Indian Jake announced that they would camp. Jim was sure he had never been so weary in his life. He was wet to his waist, and glad of the prospect of a warm fire and bed. But they had made a good day's travel—better, Indian Jake said, than he had hoped the first day—and there was satisfaction in this.

"Maybe you put up tent," suggested Indian Jake. "I put on fire and cook supper. Outside fire to-night. Cook quicker."

“All right,” agreed Jim. “I’m hungry as a bear.”

While Jim pitched the tent, Indian Jake lighted a fire, put over a kettle of water, and dressed two of the grouse, cutting them into sections and dropped the sections into the kettle of boiling water, following them with some slices of pork.

This done, he dipped some flour into a pan, added a little salt and some baking powder, and with water mixed a stiff biscuit dough. He now sprinkled some flour into the frying pan, and cutting some dough from the mass with his sheathknife, moulded it into a cake to fit into the pan and about a half-inch thick. Raking some hot coals a little distance from the fire with a stick, he placed the frying pan containing the dough over the coals, inclining it at an angle of about sixty degrees, in such position that the top of the cake would receive the direct heat of the fire and the bottom of the pan that of the coals that he had raked out. A stick under the handle braced the pan and held it in place.

He now filled the tea pail with water and suspended it over the fire as he had done at midday.

“Hot bread,” he announced with a grin, as Jim, who had completed the setting of the tent, joined him at the fire.

“That’s bully!” exclaimed Jim.

“Stand by fire now. Dry clothes,” suggested Indian Jake.

Jim obeyed willingly, while he watched with interest the preparation of the meal. He was blessed at all times with an ample appetite. Now he was ravenous.

In ten minutes the lower half of the upper crust of the loaf, which had risen to three times its original thickness, took on a delicate brown. Indian Jake removed the pan, slipped the loaf around so that the browned half would be above, and replaced it. Presently the whole top was browned to his satisfaction. Lifting the frying pan from its position, he turned the top of the loaf into the palm of his left hand, and then slipped the loaf back into the pan with the bottom up and again returned it to its place before the fire.

Now, cutting some of the unused dough in the mixing pan into pieces an inch square he dropped them into the kettle of boiling grouse, quickly covering the kettle. The water in the tea pail was boiling industriously. He lifted it off, placed it near the fire where it would simmer, and threw into it two generous handfuls of coffee.

“Supper most ready,” he announced to Jim. “You hungry for him?”

“Hungry!” Jim sniffed the aroma of coffee, grouse and hot bread. “I’m famished! I never was so hungry in my life!”

“Trail makes for hunger.” Indian Jake grinned. “We have fine supper.”

Youth recuperates quickly, and but for lame neck muscles and joints Jim would have felt quite rested when he had eaten. He enjoyed his meal to the utmost, and declared he had never eaten a banquet so delicious and satisfactory—two cups of rich broth from the kettle, a whole grouse, two thick slices of boiled fat pork, hot bread and coffee followed by another hot loaf right from the pan, which Indian Jake baked as they ate, with marmalade and more coffee.

The camp fire, its size increased after the meal was cooked, was ample recompense for all the hard work of the day, as were the camp fires to be in the evenings that followed.

While they were still eating, weird shafts of light sprang up in the northern heavens, quickly extending from east to west and reaching the zenith. Presently the whole northern hemisphere of the heavens was aglow. Like mighty searchlights, constantly changing colour—brilliant white, saffron yellow to deep orange, red to purple—they moved back and forth across the sky. It was the most wonderful display of the aurora Jim had ever witnessed, and nowhere in the North are there displays so brilliant as in Labrador. For a long while he sat and watched, with awe and wonder, the northern lights.

Indian Jake took advantage of the illumination to break boughs and lay a fragrant bed in the tent. When Jim offered to assist he declined:

“Bimeby when you get used to packing. Rest by fire and dry clothes. I don’t mind him.”

Presently the moon arose. Indian Jake, who had returned to the fire and had been smoking his pipe in silence and contentment, arose.

“Time to turn in,” he suggested. “Hard day to-morrow.”

And Jim, his clothing dried now, followed to the tent.

X

THE LAKE OF TRAGEDY

Onward they toiled day after day toward the top of the divide, where the big lake lay, and beyond which they would find the water running to the southward. Every day was much like every other day—tracking, portaging, now and again a little paddling as a relief to the steady and terrible grind of toil. Each night was much like every other night—pitching camp in the gathering twilight, cooking and eating the evening meal, and the blessed hour or two of relaxation, and enjoyment, of the cheerful camp fire before sleep.

The evening camp fire was always ample recompense for the hours of daylight toil. Here the day's hard work passed into a misty recollection of experiences half forgotten—ethereal and unreal as the experiences of a dream. College, home, the places and people that he had known seemed to Jim to belong to another world and to have been connected with some pre-existence through which he had passed and could but faintly recall. He had to accept all that on faith.

In the beginning Jim was appalled by the silence. There was no hum or chirp of insect, no croak of frog, no sound of living thing. Silence reigned as absolute as the silence of the tomb, save when, perchance, a great northern loon would startle the night with its weird, uncanny laugh, or there was the honk of wild geese in their southward flight, or, on one or two occasions, the distant howl in the night of prowling wolves. On each occasion when the wolves were heard, Indian Jake remarked:

"Wolves follow caribou. No caribou, no wolves. No wolves, no caribou. We knock some caribou over bimeby. Fresh meat go fine when we camp on lake at height of land."

As Indian Jake predicted, Jim's muscles soon hardened to the task of the trail. He could carry a man's pack now, and swing it upon his back with some ease, though he could not carry so heavy a pack as the half-breed, who had learned the trick in childhood. He soon became hardened to the cold water of the river. He awoke now with Indian Jake's first movement in the morning, and would go out with him to assist in preparing breakfast, and, though hoar frost lay thick upon the ground, seldom troubled to dress his

feet until the fire was blazing and the kettle over, preferring to do the preliminary morning chores barefooted.

Jim was quick to learn the art of cooking before the open fire, and he was soon able to lay a bed of boughs quite as well as Indian Jake. In fact, he was rapidly becoming accustomed to the wilderness and its rugged life. It has been said that a white man will turn from the refinements of civilization and accept the nomadic, primitive life of the Indian as readily as a duck, long confined to land, will accept water as its element when it is shown water. Give man a wholesome taste of the open places, and he will accept them as his native element. It is a going back to nature, the call of the blood of primordial ancestors, coursing through every man's veins.

There were days of snow and rain, but the voyageurs never permitted storms to interfere with their progress. Whether it stormed or not they were, in any case, wet from morning until night with wading in the river or through marshes. That was an incident of the trail. On stormy or windy nights they used Indian Jake's little sheet-iron stove in the tent. It lacked the romance of the open fire, but when the wind howled through the forest, or rain or snow beat down upon the tent, it gave their flimsy shelter an atmosphere of warm coziness and snug protection, and it permitted them to dry their wet garments and eat in comfort.

Indian Jake was a good hunter, and without apparent effort or loss of time he managed to keep them supplied with fresh meat and fish—porcupines, ducks, geese or grouse, and once a toothsome stew of muskrat. Occasionally a small gill net, which he carried in his outfit, was set in the river of an evening, and the following morning it was certain to produce more whitefish and trout than they could use.

The half-breed proved a congenial traveling companion. While he had now and again days of silence when he spoke only in monosyllables, he never lost his temper; and no matter what difficulties confronted them, or how hard the labour, he never complained. With him it was a matter of ordinary experiences, and all in a day's work. In spite of his preconceived prejudice against the man, Jim was beginning to like him.

But the fact remained that Indian Jake, previously without funds, had appeared at the post, after the expedition when Jim's father disappeared, well supplied with money. That was something that had to be explained, and until it was explained Jim could neither accept the man's friendly advances nor trust him. Indian Jake had given no satisfactory explanation. Jim had broached the subject on two or three occasions as they sat by their evening

camp fires, with always the same brief and incomplete statement, followed by Indian Jake's silence. The money was paid him for work. That was all he would say about it. Reference to the matter was invariably succeeded by a day of brooding, during which time, though cheerful enough, he answered questions in as few words as possible and volunteered no conversation.

Had it not been for this unexplained circumstance, Jim would almost have been willing to disregard his suspicions and accept Indian Jake's account of what had happened. Men of the wilderness, eating, sleeping, working together, sharing the same hardships, the same enjoyments, the same tasks, and sitting night after night at the same camp fire, are invariably drawn together in a bond of brotherhood. Indian Jake never neglected consideration of Jim's comfort, even at the expense, sometimes, of considerable self-denial, and he never, even under the most trying conditions, complained. Jim recognized this, but there was always the one barrier between them that failed confidence and friendship.

It was the evening of the twentieth day after their departure from Eskimo Bay that suddenly a broad lake spread out before Jim's gaze as he threw down his heavy pack at the end of a particularly hard portage. Indian Jake had given no hint of the proximity of the lake. As he lay down his own pack, he extended his arm toward the water, and said:

"Here he is. The last potagan. Made him a surprise for you. Here your father make his last camp before him and One-Eared Charley go away and leave me."

Jim stood speechless for a little, gazing out over the heaving waters of the lake to its distant shore. It was a rugged, rockbound lake. On every side, beyond the grim boulders of its shore, lay the dark forest of spruce, with naked hills, rising like stern sentinels, high above the tree tops. Here his father had last been seen alive! Here, in this bleak solitude, he had passed forever from all human knowledge!

Jim bent his head in awesome reverence. He felt himself standing upon sacred ground. Now was to begin his search for any possible signs that might unveil the mystery. Whether the tragedy was to be solved or not, he would soon know. At any rate he resolved to leave no stone unturned.

"Where was my father's tent pitched?" he finally asked, turning to Indian Jake.

"Here," and Indian Jake pointed to a space covered with withered boughs that had once served as a bed, and not far away the charred coals

where a camp fire had once burned. “There,” and he pointed to another but smaller bed of withered boughs, “is my camp when they go away and leave me.”

Jim made a cursory survey of the surroundings, but closing darkness required that he postpone a more thorough investigation until the following morning, and while Indian Jake cooked the evening meal he pitched the tent and laid the bed. Then the two sat down to eat in silence boiled ducks, hot bread and tea. Coffee and marmalade were already memories.

When they had finished and washed the few dishes that served them, Jim settled himself by the camp fire, half reclining against a duffle bag, occupied in thoughts of his father, who had sat here before a similar fire a year before. Indian Jake busied himself cleaning his rifle. This done, he lay the rifle by his side, filled his pipe, lighted it with a red coal from the fire, and settled himself a little way to the left of Jim. Neither spoke and neither moved, save once when the half-breed refilled and relighted his pipe and replenished the fire.

There was no moon now, and outside the circle of light cast by the fire the spruce forest was engulfed in black, impenetrable darkness. There was no sound but the rhythmic lap, lap of waves upon the boulder-strewn shore of the lake, and the crackling of the fire.

For an hour they had sat thus, when suddenly Indian Jake removed his pipe from his lips and listened intently. Turning his head and body slowly he peered into the blackness to the right and directly behind Jim.

Then, cautiously, noiselessly, as a cat stalking its game, with almost imperceptible movement, his right hand stole down until it touched his rifle, which lay at his side. And so silently and cautiously did he draw and cock the piece and aim it that Jim, less than ten feet distant, was unaware of the movement until there came a blinding flash and crash of discharge.

XI

"CONFESS OR CLEAR YOURSELF!"

Jim sprang to his feet and almost into the fire, startled for an instant into speechlessness. Gaining his voice in a moment, he nearly shouted at Indian Jake:

"What! What! Are you trying to kill me?"

"I show you," said Indian Jake, quietly, laying down his rifle and rising to his feet. "Come with me. I show you what I shoot."

"Pardon me," Jim's self-possession regained and ashamed of himself for having been betrayed into voicing an expression of distrust. "I—guess I was half asleep," he added lamely.

He followed Indian Jake to the edge of the dark forest, directly beyond the fire's circle of radiance. A dozen paces from the fire the half-breed pointed to a long gray object lying prone among the trees. He touched the thing with his toe. The beast was dead and limp. Assured of this, he reached down, and seizing it by a leg dragged to the fireside the carcass of a great Labrador wolf.

"How could you see well enough to shoot it out there in the dark?" questioned Jim, excitedly, as he viewed the big beast.

"He stays in dark, but he looks at us by fire," explained Indian Jake. "The light of fire shines on his eyes like on two glass balls. They look like two burning coals from fire. I know they are the eyes of a wolf, and I shoot. They make good mark to shoot at."

"How did you know the wolf was there?" asked Jim in wonderment. "I didn't hear a sound. I didn't even hear or see you pick up your rifle."

"Three wolves follow us all day," explained Indian Jake. "Wolves are big cowards. Keep off where I can't get good shot, so I wait. Wolf, he's afraid. He never comes close to hurt a man in day time unless he's in big pack. He's always big coward. Three wolves do us no hurt, so I say nothing and wait. I know he comes to our fire to look and try to steal when we go to sleep. So I listen and keep looking. I bring my rifle to fire and clean him. Then I have him ready when wolf comes. You keep still and I keep still. I hear one step. I look and bimeby I see the eyes. I reach slow for my rifle. I

do not want to scare him. So slowly I reach for my rifle you do not see. Then I shoot. One wolf is dead. Other two run away and do not come back again. They good and scared."

"I thought you were sitting there smoking till you fired and scared me stiff. You fired right past my back, and I thought you were after me!"

"Ugh!" Indian Jake grunted. "You think I hurt your father. You're afraid I hurt you. I know. I always know what you think."

"Haven't I reason to think so?" asked Jim in some heat.

"My tongue speaks straight to you. No need why you be afraid of me. I would not hurt you. I'm your father's friend. I like him. He's fine on the potagan. He's a good friend to me. He trusts me always. He knows men to trust. Because I like him I come with you. I finds you good on potagan too. I'll be your friend too, maybe, sometime when you know me to trust me. You don't trust me now. You're kind of man I like. You're good man to travel with. You don't know yet. Some time you do. Then you say I don't hurt your father. I come on trail to help you because I like your father."

"I'm glad you said that, Jake. It's more than you've ever said about this thing before to me, or any one else I believe." Jim's voice was intense and serious. "My heart tells me you are all right. My head tells me you know more about this thing, and what became of my father, than you have ever told me or any one else. I feel that you could explain my father's disappearance if you would. But you won't, or at least you haven't. It is natural that I should connect you with it. You have left nothing for me to do but accuse you of the deed.

"Either you did away with him and One-Eared Charley, or you and One-Eared Charley did it together and then One-Eared Charley left the country to escape, or One-Eared Charley did it when you were hunting and ran away before you returned, taking the outfit with him. But the fact that you had all that money when you got back raises a strong inference that amounts to little short of proof that you did away with my father and robbed him. If this is not true, speak the truth and clear yourself. Clear yourself or convict yourself here on the ground where the deed was done!"

"I have said the truth. My tongue always speaks straight." Indian Jake, with a sphinx-like countenance looked Jim straight in the eye. "Some day you will know. I say no more. I work for you and help you, but I say no more. Maybe we find something to-morrow, or day after. I help look. My tongue speaks straight."

Indian Jake ceased to speak, as though he were finished, and then, as an afterthought, continued:

"I know the way you feel. When my father dies I feel bad. When your father goes away and never comes back you feel bad. You want to know why he don't come back. If you go on trail with my father and come back alone and say you don't know where he is, I think you do know but won't speak. I think you know where he goes. You don't say anything more because you don't know. I think you do know.

"Same way when I go with your father and I come back alone and he don't come back. I know you think I do him harm. I want to show you all I can. I help you all I can. I make this trip to show you. My tongue speaks straight. My heart is warm for your father. I do the best I can for you. I want to please your father. I want him to say, 'Jake did best he could for my son.' "

"Jake, if you could explain how you got that money I'd believe you."

"I get him for work. I am paid that money for work I do. I do the work for your father, and he pays me."

With an air of finality Indian Jake turned from Jim and proceeded to skin the wolf.

For several minutes Jim watched the deft movements of the half-breed. The man made no false motion. Every cleft of the knife, every turn, counted. He was an expert through long practice, and his work a lesson in efficiency through training.

Jim was torn with doubts. If the possession of that money could be explained satisfactorily! Indian Jake was hiding something from him. He had no doubt that the man could tell much more than he had told. If he found evidence to support his theory of the man's guilt, he would be pitiless and ruthless in his prosecution. If his suspicions, on the contrary, proved to be groundless, he would apologize for them and offer every possible recompense to atone for them.

But for Indian Jake's unexplained possession of the money, he would, with what he had already seen, feel quite satisfied that One-Eared Charley were alone responsible for what had happened. But he had only begun his investigations, and something important might develop. He resolved to ignore the charge he had made against Indian Jake and treat the man as though he were innocent and maintain that attitude until there should be found sufficient evidence to convict.

“How much would that fellow weigh?” he presently asked.

“Hundred fifteen, maybe twenty, pounds,” answered Indian Jake, quite as though nothing had happened between them. “Wolf grow big in this country.”

“It’s surely a monster,” agreed Jim. “Do you think the others will be back?”

“No, they go.”

“How did you know they were following us? I didn’t see them or hear them.”

“I see signs when I go back for canoe on first potagan this morning. I see wolf once. No chance to shoot. I know they follow all day. Caribou in country here. Caribou brings wolf.”

“Maybe we can get some caribou. I’d like some caribou meat. I never ate any.”

“Ugh. Maybe we knock one over. Caribou meat good. Best kind of meat.”

The wolf was skinned. Indian Jake had removed the pelt whole, and he held it up for inspection, with the flesh side out. It was nearly as long as himself.

“Now I stretch him to dry,” he said.

Throwing some fuel on the fire to increase the blaze and area of light, his eye fell upon a tall, slender birch sapling. With his ax he cut it down and trimmed it. He now filled the cooking kettle with water from the lake, and placed the kettle over the fire to boil. These preparations completed, he sat down by the fire, and with his crooked knife proceeded to shave down the stick and shape it to his needs.

The kettle was boiling when he had finished, and holding the center of the trimmed sapling over the steam for several minutes, he began with much care to bend and manipulate it. Presently the sapling was bent into a bow, with the bend narrow enough to be forced into the head of the pelt. A little below the bend a cross stick was fitted to hold it in place, half way between this and the ends of the sapling another, and a third joined the two ends, all lashed into place with buckskin thongs. The pelt, with fleshy side turned out and fur side in, was now forced over the stretching frame, until it was drawn almost as taut as a drumhead. Small punctures were made in the pelt along the edge at the opening at the hind legs. Buckskin thongs were passed

through these and lashed securely to the crosspiece connecting the two ends of the sapling. This was to prevent the pelt slipping down on the frame as it dried.

"There he is," Indian Jake remarked, surveying his work with satisfaction. "Now I scrape him."

With his sheathknife he went over the skin, carefully scraping away all fat and clinging flesh until it was as clear as vellum. Then he lighted his pipe and sat by the fire smoking silently.

Jim, wearied with the day's toil, had already retired to the tent and his blankets. The front of the tent was open, and for a long while he watched the silent half-breed smoking by the fire. He saw Indian Jake, at length, reach for his rifle where he had laid it after shooting the wolf, clean it, and place it carefully in the sealskin case in which he carried it on the trail.

When Jim awoke the following morning it was broad daylight. Indian Jake had already arisen. Jim hurried out. The fire had burned to embers. A fried ptarmigan was in the frying pan near the coals where it would remain warm, and keeping it company was a kettle of tea and a half-dozen cakes of fresh-baked camp bread. Indian Jake was nowhere to be seen.

"Must have got up early. Wonder where he's gone?" said Jim to himself.

He ate his breakfast, and when he had cleaned the dishes discovered that one of their two kettles, together with other articles of cooking utensils, were missing. Further investigation disclosed the fact that a duffle bag, Indian Jake's blanket, an ax and the canoe had vanished.

Jim was puzzled. Indian Jake had gone, and the provision he had made for his departure indicated that he was not likely to return at once. Had the half-breed abandoned him here in the midst of the wilderness? Jim was suddenly overwhelmed with a sense of helplessness and loneliness. He looked about him in a daze.

XII

THE LEATHER WALLET

Jim's eye fell upon the wolf skin, on the stretching frame Indian Jake had made for it the evening before, suspended from the limb of a tree.

"That explains it!" he exclaimed. "Indian Jake said when he killed that fellow that wolves followed caribou, and that there wouldn't be wolves if there weren't caribou about, and he'd go after them and get some fresh meat. He'd never have taken the trouble to cook my breakfast and bake the bread for me if he'd been going to leave me. He'll be back in a day or two with his canoe loaded with fresh meat."

With this explanation of Indian Jake's disappearance, Jim was relieved from anxiety. There was no cause for alarm or concern. It was doubtless the half-breed's natural instinct to reticence had led him to go as he had without an explanation. He had doubtless supposed that Jim would understand that he was hunting caribou.

Jim carefully extinguished the embers, as had always been the custom of Indian Jake before leaving a fire. Then he proceeded to make a survey of the lake shore. He admitted to himself that a year's weathering would, in all probability, have obliterated any ordinary signs. He did not know what he might find, but his heart was filled with the dread of some awful discovery. If his father and One-Eared Charley had met their death here, he wished to find the bodies, yet he shrank from the horror of such a discovery. It was his duty to bend every effort to find them, and his wish to take the remains of his father home, if they lay here uncared for, and give them a Christian burial, the last act of affection and respect that he could return for a lifetime of love and devotion. If the bodies had been thrown into the lake, as he believed they had been, there was strong probability that they would later have risen to the surface and been washed ashore. It was a gruesome and revolting task, but Jim steeled his heart to it and set out upon it resolved to search every yard of ground that the time at his disposal would permit.

A minute exploration of fully six miles of shore discovered nothing. Jim had no doubt that the tragedy had taken place in camp, and probably while his father and One-Eared Charley were sleeping. Indian Jake would not have taken the trouble, he was sure, to bury the bodies. He would either have thrown them into the lake or dragged them a short distance away and hidden

them in brush where searchers would be unlikely to find them. It would have been much easier to have thrown them into the lake. If he did this, it was to have been expected that they would have been washed ashore within the range he had searched, as prevailing winds during the weeks preceding winter blew toward this shore.

It was mid-afternoon when he returned to camp. He had expected, with an expectation that amounted almost to certainty, to find something that at least would have helped him in unravelling the mystery of the disappearance of the two men. He acknowledged that it was a relief that no ghastly evidence of the tragedy had confronted him. At the same time he was disappointed that he had discovered nothing to assist him in any way in his continued search, nor, indeed, any sign to indicate that any human being had ever been here before him, other than the obvious signs of the old camp ground.

He lighted a fire and put the kettle over to boil. When he drew from the food bag the pork to slice for frying he made an inventory of the supply of pork, and found that Indian Jake had taken but a small piece with him and very little of anything else. This satisfied him that the half-breed's absence from camp was to be a short one. He fried some pork, brewed some tea, and with a piece of the bread that Indian Jake had so considerately baked for him completed a satisfying meal.

Before setting out upon his afternoon's search of the surrounding brush, Jim walked down to his father's old camp ground, and for several minutes gazed in silent reverence upon the withered boughs which he had no doubt had been the last bed upon which his father had ever slept. Suddenly his eye fell upon something lying half concealed under the edge of the dried sticks. He reached for it, and excitedly drew forth his father's leather wallet.

With trembling hands Jim opened the wallet. It contained no money, but there were some papers. Returning to his fire he seated himself, and unfolded and examined them. The first was marked:

"Memorandum of contract entered into with Patrick McCarthy, July 15, 19—. My copy of contract posted to Sandy Dumphry, on mail boat of July 30th, to be placed by him in strong box, with other papers, for safe keeping."

Then followed, in the lumberman's small, exact hand, a summary of the terms of the contract:

"In consideration of $1,200.00 per year and 20 per cent of net profits of Labrador logging and mill operation, McCarthy to assume full charge and

responsibility of property for period of three years from date.

"McCarthy to draw on me, or, in case of my demise, upon fund deposited in Montreal Bank and set aside for purpose, to meet wages of men and general expense of operation until on paying basis. All income from property to be deposited in said fund. In case of my demise, Jagger, as provided in will, acting as trustee of fund, is to honour McCarthy's drafts for support of operation. Stipulated that Jagger's trusteeship of fund does not extend to logging operation or mill or interference with McCarthy, but is limited to depositing income from property into fund and paying out moneys from it only upon McCarthy's drafts or vouchers, and for the maintenance of the steamship *Gray Goose* to be used in connection with and as part of equipment of operation. Captain Dobbs, however, and not McCarthy, to draw upon fund to meet ship's expenses.

"Contract definitely stipulates McCarthy to be deemed partner of concern for period of three years, his sole interest to be that above named, and to cease at end of three-year period unless renewed by further agreement with my son, to whom property will then pass by deed of gift or, in case of my demise, by terms of will."

With suppressed excitement Jim read and then reread the memorandum.

"That fixes it!" he exclaimed. "Jagger had no authority to send Dawes or any of those men here. Why didn't McCarthy tell me of this? Like as not he never read the contract, but accepted it on faith from Dad, though it's likely Dad read it to him. That was Dad's way. Jagger has bamboozled McCarthy in some way into believing that he had to turn everything over to Jagger. Thought that McCarthy was too ignorant to know the difference and that I didn't know about this, and tried to take advantage of us. That explains one reason why he didn't want me to come here! I wonder what Sandy did with the contract? Why didn't he say anything to me about it? If the 'strong box' he mentions was the safe in the house, and I suppose it was, Jagger has got possession of the contract. McCarthy must have his copy though, and when I get out we'll show Dawes his place, and we'll show Jagger where he stands later."

With trembling fingers Jim unfolded a paper marked:

"Memorandum of Mealy Mountain Depository of Papers."

It was brief, and Jim read:

"Due S. from S. E. corner Camp No. 3 for distance of about three miles to face of cliff. E. along base of cliff ¼ mile. S. E. one mile to brook in

gulch, which cuts mountain. Follow up brook about three miles to large white spruce leaning over brook. Up side of gulch due W. 40 rods—stiff climb. Entrance masked by thick spruce growth. Depository of papers in concealed niche."

Jim's heart was beating fast now. Here was undoubtedly the key to the location of the cave. His father had, as Billy surmised, deposited papers there. What papers were they? Would they explain what had been done with the balance of the fortune?

Other memoranda referred to log cuts, changes to be made in the mill, and the probable first year's output of lumber. Jim read them all, and then reread the memorandum of the contract with McCarthy.

"How did I fail to see this last evening?" he suddenly asked himself. "It wasn't dark enough to miss it. The wallet lay out in plain view, and I looked that ground over pretty thoroughly."

Then he turned the old leather wallet over in his hand.

"Why this could never have lain out there all winter!" he exclaimed. "It doesn't look as though it had ever been wet! And the papers would have been all stuck together and almost unreadable if they'd been out in the rain and snow of a year! That's strange!"

He hurried over to the bed of withered boughs, and carefully inspected the surroundings. There was nothing there that he had not seen the previous evening, and he was satisfied the wallet could not possibly have been there at that time and escaped his attention.

"It has never been out in the weather or been wet," he finally decided. "There's only one way it could have got there, and that was through Indian Jake. He put it there this morning before he left. This proves that he robbed Dad, and took the money out of it. Likely as not he can't read, and the papers meant nothing to him. He's been carrying the wallet ever since, and didn't take the trouble to destroy the papers. After what took place last night he decided to put it back there and let me find it and think Dad lost it where I found it, and that it had lain there undisturbed ever since.

"Pretty thin, but he probably reasoned that I'm green in the wilderness and that it would never occur to me that the wallet couldn't have lain out all year and been so well preserved. When he comes back to camp he'll have something to explain to me! It's about all the proof I need that he robbed Dad. Now I've got to find out what he did with him and One-Eared Charley."

All that afternoon and all the next day Jim crossed and cris-crossed the surrounding country, and when he returned to camp after the second day's search he admitted to himself that there was no probability of making further discovery unless it were to extend his search of the lake shore.

"Indian Jake will probably be back to-night," he said, "and when he comes I'll have a showdown with him."

But Indian Jake did not return, and early the following morning Jim set out in the face of a stiff wind to extend his search around the eastern end of the lake.

For many days the weather had been clear and crisply cold. The gray lichen, or caribou moss, that carpeted the earth everywhere in lieu of grass was as dry and brittle as dead sticks, and crackled and crunched under his feet.

A mile from camp Jim halted upon a high bluff to view the scene of rugged, primitive beauty spread out before him—the dark spruce forest with naked, storm-scoured, rocky mountains rising above it, the wide stretch of water, now beaten into choppy, white-capped waves by the strong wind, and the distant outline of western shore lying in a mysterious blue haze.

"And no human life anywhere," murmured Jim, "but Indian Jake, somewhere out there, and myself. It makes me feel as though I were the only man alive in all the world."

Suddenly a sound of crackling dry moss fell upon his ears. He listened intently. Something was approaching! He crouched behind a great boulder, from which he had a view of his surroundings while he himself remained concealed.

Nearer and nearer came the sound. He cocked his rifle and waited.

XIII

THE BLIZZARD

Jim knew that the approaching sounds were made by slowly traveling animals of some sort. He had visions of a pack of wolves, or possibly a bear and her cubs. He was surprised, therefore, when three caribou, sauntering leisurely toward the lake and browsing upon the moss, appeared at the edge of the woods. He was on the lee of them, and in the strong wind they had not scented his presence.

Jim had never hunted big game, and here was an opportunity to secure a much needed supply of fresh meat. This was great luck. In the lead was a fine big buck, with a wide spread of antlers. Jim's hands trembled as he raised his rifle and drew a bead upon the buck. It was an exciting and tense moment. He waited for the animals to approach a little nearer. Then he fired.

The three caribou raised their heads, startled, but uncertain in which direction lay the threatened danger. Jim, to his astonishment, had made a clean miss, though the buck at which he had fired stood less than seventy-five yards distant. He fired again, and again he missed.

Then the animals wheeled for a retreat, and as their stampede began Jim sent a third bullet after the buck. The big fellow stumbled, lurched forward, arose to its knees, and fell again. This time the bullet had found its mark.

The other two caribou had already disappeared into the timber, and Jim in a state of wild excitement ran forward to the fallen buck. The animal, threshing about, unable to regain its feet, was badly wounded, and another bullet at close range was necessary to dispatch it.

In his inexperience, Jim found the work of skinning and dressing the animal long and tedious. But before midday the task was completed, and with a hind quarter on his shoulder he hurried back to camp to fetch his tumpline to assist him in carrying the remainder, and in two loads transferred it to camp.

He now cut a stiff pole and laid it with the ends resting in the crotches of two convenient trees, and with pieces of rope suspended the meat from the pole, between the trees. Here it would be safe from marauding animals, and would keep cool and fresh and sweet.

The wind had been steadily increasing in velocity, and was now blowing half a gale. The lake was in turmoil, and great waves were rolling in and breaking in wild fury upon the boulder-bound shore. No canoe could stem the wind or live in the sea that was running, and Jim knew that he could not expect the return of Indian Jake until the wind and lake subsided. The weather, too, had grown decidedly colder and the spray that showered the shore rocks was freezing and coating them with a glaze of ice.

It was too late and too uncomfortable in the open to continue that day his explorations, and he set up the stove in the tent and, lighting a fire, prepared for a feast. He put over the kettle to boil for tea and then cut some thick, luscious steaks for the pan. Presently the tent, now cozily warm, was filled with the odour of frying steak and brewing tea. Jim had eaten nothing since early morning, and, always blessed with a good appetite, he was now famished and ravenous. He was sure he had never eaten such tender, juicy steaks in all his life, and supplementing the meat with the last of Indian Jake's bread and several cups of tea, he feasted as only a hungry, healthy man, living the vigourous life of the open can feast.

"Indian Jake seems to have gone a long distance to get caribou," he remarked with self-complacency, as he washed and dried the dishes. "He'll be surprised when he hears that I knocked one over right close to camp, and without even going to look for it. It came near getting away though. I guess I was pretty lucky to get it, but I won't tell him that."

With darkness the wind developed into a full gale. It shrieked and howled through the tree tops. The lake, seething with foam, was smashing and pounding against the shore rocks and sending spray a half-hundred feet into the air. Jim tightened the tent pins and ridge rope. He was thankful that the tent had been pitched between two sturdy trees and in the shelter of the forest. Had it been in the more open space nearer the lake shore he was quite sure no pins or ropes would have been sufficient to hold it or have prevented it from being swept away.

When all was made snug and secure he returned to the tent and sat for a long while listening to the roar of the breakers rising above the shriek of wind. Finally he filled the stove with wood, closed the drafts and rolled into his blankets, and quite satisfied and happy with his day's work, and a sense of snug security, was soon asleep.

Two or three times during the night Jim was awakened by cold. It was evident that there had been a decided drop in temperature. On each occasion he refilled the stove with wood, and the comforting warmth soon sent him

again into sleep. At dawn he arose and discovered snow drifting under the front of the tent. He looked out, and was met by a cloud of swirling, blinding snow. He could not see ten feet away. Snow had apparently been falling for several hours, and the wind had not abated since the previous evening.

When he presently went to the lake for water, the drift was so dense that he could scarce breathe, and the wind so strong that he could only keep his feet with the greatest difficulty. Returning, he lost his way, and he was several minutes groping about in the blinding drift before he found the tent.

Jim breathed with relief when he was within the warm shelter again. He had never before in his life experienced such a storm, and the thought that Indian Jake was somewhere out there in the forest, and perhaps exposed to all the fury of the blizzard, made him shudder.

"But I guess he's all right," he said. "This is his country. He's been weathering such storms as this and worse all his life, and he knows how to take care of himself. He's likely built some sort of shelter where he'll be safe and snug enough till the storm passes."

All that day snow fell and the blizzard blew without abatement. It was so terrific, indeed, that Jim did not again venture to the lake for water, but resorted to the expedient of melting snow for his needs. To venture even that short distance was to take a dangerous risk.

But with the stock of venison secured the day before, there was plenty of good food, and Jim relaxed and feasted. It was, indeed, the first rest and relaxation he had permitted himself since he and Indian Jake left the bay. He cooked himself a delicious breakfast of caribou liver and bacon, and banqueted at noon and in the evening on steaks.

"I've been letting myself worry about what I might find here or might not find, and I was pretty tired all over. I guess a day or two of loafing won't do me any harm," he said, when he rolled in his blankets that night. "I certainly feel a lot better for it."

The following morning dawned clear and calm, but there was a new bite of frost in the air that was disconcerting. Winter had come. There was no doubt of that. In the forest the snow lay nearly knee deep where the trees had protected it from the force of the driving gale. The wind, however, had swept the naked shores of the lake and the barren reaches clear as a floor, save where gullies and rocks formed lodgment for great drifts.

Still Indian Jake did not return. Day after day Jim scanned the waters of the lake in the vain hope that he might see the canoe approaching. Each

night darkness fell with disappointment.

With passing days anxiety grew into deep concern. Had the half-breed perished in the storm? Could any man in the open and shelterless have survived it? Then Jim's thoughts slipped back to the manner of Indian Jake's going, silently and without a word of explanation. Perhaps he had never intended to return. Perhaps he had accepted Jim's challenge, given on the night of their arrival at the lake after Indian Jake had shot the wolf. Jim had challenged him then to convict himself upon the ground where the crime of a year ago had been committed, if he were guilty, or to clear himself with a convincing explanation of the manner in which he had come into possession of the money which he had paid out at the trading post upon his return to the bay. Could this be the answer to that challenge?

Jim decided finally that it was. Indian Jake's failure to return, he reasoned, was undoubtedly the half-breed's method of defiantly confessing his guilt. He placed the wallet on the bed of withered boughs, before his departure, and in a conspicuous place where he was quite sure Jim could not fail to discover it. He had placed it there as a token of his confession.

"That's it," said Jim. "It's as plain as if he had said, 'I am guilty. I killed your father and robbed him. Here is the wallet from which I took his money. Take the wallet and make the most of it.' Then he ran away, or sneaked away, to avoid arrest. He's through with the bay. He's hidden himself in the wilderness where he is perfectly at home, but where he knew well enough I could not follow him or find him. He played safe in that respect. After all he had little to lose by not returning to Eskimo Bay. He can settle himself anywhere else in this country just as well, where he won't be known. The wide wilderness has always been his home, and it doesn't matter much what part of the wilderness he settles in.

"That's the explanation. He didn't take much grub or outfit with him because he wanted to travel fast and didn't want to hamper himself with weight. He's likely gone down the southern divide to some trading post on the St. Lawrence, where he'll take up his quarters as a trapper. It's likely he has some of the money yet that he took from Dad, and with a few dollars he can buy another tent and outfit to take the place of what he left behind. He could kill all the game he needed. He's certainly a fine hunter."

Thus Jim reasoned to a plausible conclusion as he sat in the tent one night ten days after his arrival at the lake. With the realization that Indian Jake had deliberately deserted him in the midst of the wilderness, he was suddenly overwhelmed with a sense of helplessness.

Jim arose and went out into the starlight. He looked about him, on the snow-clad wilderness, in a daze. Winter had come. He had no canoe. His delay, in waiting these days for Indian Jake, might prove fatal. Why had he delayed? He might have known, he told himself, that when the half-breed did not return immediately after the blizzard that he would not return. His journey out of the country on foot with a necessarily heavy pack would be slow. Already the snow lay nearly knee deep in the forest, and other storms would certainly overtake him to increase his difficulties before he could reach Eskimo Bay. The nearest human habitation was two hundred miles away.

He recalled Billy's warning that Indian Jake would take advantage of him. Billy knew the half-breed and the dangers of the country, and he should have listened to the warning and permitted Billy or some one else to come with him. But he had been headstrong and conceited. He had believed that he could take care of himself anywhere, but as compared to Indian Jake he was as helpless in the wilderness as a little child. The man had not harmed him, to be sure, but on the contrary had looked after his comforts to a much greater extent than he had had any reason to expect—had not harmed him directly. But in abandoning him he had doubtless relied upon the wilderness and the elements to do the thing he had not actually done himself.

Jim returned to the tent to sit and plan, and a new thought presented itself to him with the suddenness of a shock. What would the people of the settlement say when he returned alone and in possession of Indian Jake's tent and outfit? Would they believe him when he told them that Indian Jake had abandoned him, and left his property behind him? Was it reasonable for them to believe that any native of the country would willingly do that? Everyone in the bay knew, or would know, the feeling of suspicion and antagonism that he entertained toward Indian Jake upon entering the wilderness. He was sure that no one would believe that the half-breed would have deliberately abandoned his tent and outfit.

There would be no evidence in support of his story. Suspicion would at once be directed toward him. It was quite natural that the people would accuse him of having murdered the man to avenge his father's death, even though they suspected Indian Jake to have been guilty of murdering his father. His possession of the tent would be strong circumstantial evidence to support the charge. To be sure, they would have no *corpus delicti*, no body to produce to support the charge, and without that he could not be convicted in a court of law. But it was a thing that would follow him all his life. Men would believe it and look upon him with abhorrence, and his friends would

shun him. Dawes would make the most of it, not only here in Labrador, but at home.

He had to think. He felt stifled, and he arose again and leaving the tent walked down to the lake shore. The ice-clad boulders glistened in the starlight. The snow squeaked under his tread. The surroundings had assumed a new and uncanny aspect. For half an hour he paced up and down the shore. Suddenly spreading his arms toward the water, he exclaimed:

"Lake of Tragedy! Why have you sent so much trouble into my life?"

There was no time to be lost. To remain here would be to perish. He had already delayed his departure many days longer that he should have done. He knew that he must return to the settlement and return at once if he was to escape the deep snows soon to come.

Jim turned his back upon the lake, and transferred some of the venison from the pole between the trees to the tent. By the light of a candle he stripped it from the bones with his sheathknife, throwing the bones out as unnecessary weight and packing the meat ready for his tumpline.

There still remained a few pounds of flour, some salt and a little pork. These were placed in a duffle bag into which he could also pack the frying pan and cup after he had eaten in the morning. The meat and the duffle bag containing these provisions and cooking utensils, together with his blanket, a suit of underclothing, some extra socks, the wolf skin, which was light and would add warmth to his bed, the light tent, the tent stove, his ax and his rifle would make a heavy load for the long trail, but he felt that all were necessary for his existence.

The remaining odds and ends of equipment he placed in an empty flour bag, tied it securely and hung it on the pole with the balance of the meat, which he was to abandon.

Jim prepared and ate his breakfast long before daylight the following morning. In the cold starlight he broke camp, completed his preparations for departure, and with the first hint of gray dawn swung his pack upon his back and set out upon the trail to Eskimo Bay. It was a trail that was to try his grit, his fortitude and his manhood as they had never been tried before. To an extent that he would have believed, indeed, beyond the limits of human endurance. It is a wise provision of the Great Father that we cannot read the future or know what lies before us.

XIV

THE STRUGGLE DOWN THE TRAIL

The morning was cloudless. Rime hung in the air like a mist, and quickly covered Jim's adikey with a film of crystals. The brush was thickly coated with them, and a covering lay upon the snow. Presently the sun rose, and the light filtering through the mist of rime transformed it into a veil of silver. Every bush and shrub shone as though encrusted with diamonds.

Never had Jim witnessed such a wondrous winter setting. The marvelous beauty of it all was beyond compare. The wilderness was in a fine mood. It was great to live in such a beautiful world! It was great to be alive and strong! The joy of life welled up within him.

There were two lakes and a range of hills lying between the Lake of Tragedy, as Jim had called it, and the small lake in which the Kenamou River had its rise and turned down into its narrow valley. With no canoe to carry him across these lakes, Jim suddenly realized that it would be necessary to detour around the shores. This would increase the distance at least one-third and add several miles to his journey.

This thought, which came to him at the end of the first half-hour when he threw off his pack to rest, was a bit discouraging and brought him back to a realization of the stern conditions which he faced, and in it he forgot the beauties of the morning that had so enthralled him.

Traveling through the snow was harder than he had expected to find it, and he was all at once overwhelmed by the loneliness and desolation of his surroundings. He remembered now only the fact that he was alone in this vast, trackless solitude. What if another severe storm should overtake him before he could reach the settlement? Walking then would be well-nigh impossible.

He had reached the edge of a frozen marsh, and a breeze which had sprung up, sweeping over the marsh, cut like a knife. The whole face of the country had been changed by the snow. There was no landmark that he recognized, and he was by no means sure that he was on the right trail. A slight variation to the eastward or the westward might cause him to miss the first lake, and if he missed it he would be lost!

He shouldered his pack and trudged out over the frozen, open waste. Here the gale that had accompanied the storm had carried away the mass of snow, leaving only a thin crust, and he found the walking much easier than in the forest. Beyond the marsh he entered a narrow fringe of forest, and emerging on the opposite side was surprised and delighted to behold the now partly frozen lake glimmering before him. His heart leaped with joy at this assurance that he was on the right course. He had covered the distance of the last portage he and Indian Jake had made going inland.

TRAVELING THROUGH THE SNOW WAS HARDER THAN HE EXPECTED.

Here he recognized for the first since setting out a definite landmark, a flat rock upon which they had made their landing and unloaded the canoe, and where, he recalled, they had boiled the kettle before beginning the portage.

Jim sat down upon the rock to rest briefly. To the right of him, partly covered with snow, was the charred wood where they had extinguished their fire before leaving it. This reminder was like a grim ghost rising out of the past to mock him. It had been but eleven days since he and Indian Jake sat by that fire and lunched, but so much had happened in those eleven days that it seemed to him that it had been months before. All at once he found himself wishing that Indian Jake were traveling with him now, not for the help that he would give him, but for companionship.

But the days were growing short, and there was no time to dawdle in retrospect and contemplation, and after five minutes' respite he set forward again with fresh hope and confidence. One point on the trail where there had been danger of going astray was passed, and that thought brought relief.

That night Jim reached the farther side of the second lake. He and Indian Jake had made the entire distance from the river to the Lake of Tragedy in a single day's travel. But the fact that he had not been able to accomplish so much now did not cause him anxiety. In skirting the lakes he had been compelled to travel many miles farther than they had traveled with the canoe.

The following day Jim crossed the hills, naked, windswept, desolate. Here above the tree limit the silence was even more profound than in the wooded country below. It was startling in its density. Down there he had occasionally encountered a Canada jay or a chickadee. Here there was neither movement nor sound, not even the whisper of wind through the tree tops; and as he looked about him he could see for miles in every direction an endless expanse of snow-clad forest or barren waste, and everywhere the silence of the tomb. Again the thought forced itself upon him that in all that wide sweep of country, and for endless miles beyond the range of his vision, no human creature lived or moved but himself. A dead, unnatural calm prevailed. The atmosphere seemed permeated with mystery, and the world, with bated breath, to await some dread cataclysm.

Jim hurried down the slopes and into the valley. He breathed easier when he again entered the forest. It spread about him like a protecting cloak, and gave him a sense of security. He felt also a vast relief that he had at last

reached the river valley in safety. It would be easy enough now to keep his course with the river by his side to guide him.

That night he traveled until twilight settled, and hurriedly made camp in the gathering dusk. It seemed to him that he had never before known the full extent of physical weariness that the human body can endure. When he had lighted a fire in the stove he threw himself down for a respite before preparing his evening meal. His legs throbbed, and every bone and muscle in his body cried for rest.

He lay back with his head pillowed upon his duffle bag, too weary to prepare food. The stove sent forth a luxurious glow of warmth, and in a moment he slept. It was hours afterwards when he awoke shivering with cold and famished with hunger. The stove was cold. A candle which he had left burning had consumed and extinguished itself, and the tent was in darkness.

Groping about, he found another candle and lighted it, and kindling a fresh fire in the stove, went out with the kettle to fill it at the river for tea. It was snowing heavily. Already a considerable depth had accumulated.

Returning with the water he cooked a substantial meal of venison and drank some hot tea. The tent was again warm and cozy, and the meal revived his spirits. The consternation that he had felt upon discovering the snow, gave place to hopefulness and reassurance. He was in the river valley. In the country between the Lake of Tragedy and the river had lain his greatest peril. That dangerous stretch of country was behind him, and there was no longer any real cause for worry. There was no possibility now that he might lose his way. Even though the trail to the bay was long, he would conquer it! He might have to lighten his pack and cache some of his outfit, but he could, in a pinch, do well enough with less.

At any rate, he decided, there was no advantage to be had from worrying about the snow and the future, and if he permitted himself to worry he would lose his morale. He must maintain his morale at all costs, for that was more than half the battle, and without it he would fail. The half panic that had seized him during the day and had remained with him until now was wholly the result of a too active imagination.

The work before him would be hard, to be sure, but he was strong and well, and for the present had enough to eat. He would not permit his imagination to get the better of him again. He recalled that his father often said that half the troubles people bear are anticipated troubles, born of imagination, which never materialize in fact, or if they do materialize it is

because the victim is led into them by imaginative suggestion. *He* would not again permit himself to imagine troubles that might never befall him. He would do his best each day, and let each day take care of itself. In some manner, come what might, he would fight his way to the settlement and to safety in spite of the falling snow outside. He would not lose his head.

And so Jim, much rested by his sleep and stimulated by a good substantial meal, fell into a happier and less anxious frame of mind.

It occurred to him that if the meat were dried its weight would be considerably reduced while its quality of sustenance would not be materially impaired. He proceeded at once to cut the meat into slabs one-half inch thick. These he suspended along the ridge of the tent, where the heat from the stove would act upon them quickly. The wind was rising, and before morning a blizzard would be in progress that would keep him a prisoner in the tent until it subsided. "Anyhow," he said to himself, "the meat will be drying and my pack will be lighter when I can travel again."

He drew forth the precious wallet, and reread the memoranda that it contained, and planned the course that he should take with Dawes upon reaching the mill. He recognized the fact that he, himself, had no authority to depose Dawes, but McCarthy, as a partner in the enterprise, had full authority to do so. He would lose no time in seeing McCarthy upon his return.

Why, he asked himself, had the Irishman backed down and handed supervision of the operation over to Dawes? That was a question that puzzled him. McCarthy was a lumberman of the old school and normally inclined not only to stand on his rights but to fight for them.

McCarthy, too, had spoken well of Indian Jake, and indeed defended him. Why had he been so certain that there was no cause to fear the half-breed? Was McCarthy growing old and losing his judgment of men and his grip upon things? Jim admitted to himself that it was all a mystery that he could not solve. Finally he put away the wallet and rolled into his blankets.

All that night and the next day a blizzard raged, and any attempt to travel would have been fool-hardy. When another day dawned, clear but cold, Jim broke camp and resumed his journey. The snow was well above his knees, and the labour of travel was vastly increased. He did not spare himself, however, but floundered forward bearing his heavy pack. It was a constant struggle, and when he camped that night he was on the verge of exhaustion though he was sure he had put less than ten miles behind him.

It was evident he must lighten his pack. If more snow came, as undoubtedly it would, before he could reach the bay, travel would become well-nigh impossible. Greater speed must be made even at a considerable sacrifice of comfort, and to do this it would be necessary to abandon every ounce that would not be absolutely essential to safety.

With a lighter pack he calculated that he could travel a third faster, and should reach the settlement in fifteen days at the farthest. His provision supply was now the heaviest item. This would be reduced by daily consumption. The drying expedient had lessened the weight of the meat by nearly one-half. A pound or so of sugar, a little salt, some tea, a small piece of pork and about thirty pounds of flour remained of the original supplies taken into the wilderness. He decided to abandon one-half of the flour, together with odds and ends from his duffle bag, including extra underclothing, but retaining two extra pairs of woolen socks. He discovered to his delight that these eliminations made a material reduction in the weight of his pack. With much satisfaction he placed the articles to be abandoned in one of his bags and suspended the bag from a limb of a tree.

The weather grew steadily colder. The snow no longer thawed or softened under the midday sun. Fortunately during the next week no snow fell, and with his lighter pack Jim made much better progress. Except where there were rapids, the river was now frozen solidly near the banks, and by taking advantage of this and walking upon the unobstructed new ice he was able to avoid much of the labour of floundering through deep snow.

One day, venturing too near a rapid, he broke through the ice, and was immersed to his waist. Upon reaching shore his clothing froze stiff and hard, but it was mid-afternoon and he did not halt to light a fire and dry himself until his usual camping time in the evening. Then when a fire was lighted in the stove and he removed his outer garments, his feet, exposed to the heat, cried out with pain. An examination revealed the fact that both feet were severely frost-bitten.

Walking the next morning was painful, but Jim gritted his teeth and pushed on. Presently his feet became numb, and during the afternoon gave him little discomfort.

That evening, however, when he made camp and the stove began to throw out its heat, the pain was quite as severe as on the evening before. Removing his moccasins he discovered that the stockings on both feet were clotted to the flesh by blood. This was decidedly discouraging. His feet had

been more severely frosted than he had supposed, and in several places the skin had sloughed off.

Jim had no means of dressing and bandaging. He greased his wounds with caribou tallow, and drew on fresh stockings. He would have to grin and bear it.

The sky was overcast with leaden-gray clouds when Jim broke camp and limped painfully away down the valley. The trail seemed endless. He had lost all record of time. He had long since forgotten the day of the week or the month. He felt like one doomed to wander forever and forever through limitless wastes of snow. Not a breath of wind stirred. There was no movement, no sound anywhere. Not even a jay broke the silence with its harsh cry. The solitude and loneliness were complete, desperately complete and maddening.

A few flakes of snow fluttered silently down through the trees. Steadily the snow increased until presently it was falling in a silent, dense cloud. Jim trudged doggedly on. By mid-afternoon he was floundering forward with the greatest difficulty, sinking sometimes nearly to his hips. At length, exhausted with the effort, he surrendered to the elements, and halting in the shelter of a grove of spruce trees, near the river bank, pitched his tent.

For four days and nights the snow fell unceasingly, relentlessly. Inch by inch, foot by foot, it piled itself up upon the frozen world, building about Jim a prison from which there was no escape. The evil tempered winter had come into its own to rule the world and crush into oblivion any who opposed its reign.

Then came the wind. For a day and a night it roared and shrieked through the tree tops. Lying awake in the tent at night, listening to it, the weird fancy obsessed Jim's brain that it was the hopeless cry of the souls of men who had perished in the wilderness, and he was glad when the morning light came to clear his mind and his vision. In the open spaces no man could have lived an hour in the withering, blighting cold and blinding clouds of drifting snow. In the sheltered forest Jim found it possible, with much labour, to beat a path the short distance to the river to fill his kettle with water as he required it, and to cut, near the tent, sufficient wood for his needs.

Further travel now without the aid of snowshoes was impossible. This was the end of his trail. It was hard to comprehend it. No effort that he could make now could save him. The settlement was hopelessly beyond his reach,

and there was nothing that he could do but accept the fact as courageously as possible, and meet his fate as a brave man should.

XV

THE END OF HOPE

Jim made an inventory of his provisions. There were three full days' rations remaining. By cutting this into an allowance of one meal a day instead of three he would have something to eat for nine days. He would even be able, by cutting down this daily allowance, to make it serve him for a longer period. In any case, he determined to live as long as possible. With the stubborn tenacity and purpose of his Scotch ancestry he resolved never to surrender. It was his duty to God and to himself to live as long as he could keep the breath of life in his body. If he was to die here he would at least die like a man, fighting to the last for life.

"It looks pretty bad for me," he confessed. "I'm in a hole, and there doesn't seem to be any way of climbing out of it. Only a miracle can save me, and the day of miracles is past. But, anyhow, I'll stick it out as long as I can."

Jim's feet were so badly swollen and so painful that he moved about to do his daily tasks with the greatest difficulty. Nevertheless, with grim purpose, he took advantage of his strength, which he realized would wane with a diminished ration, to cut and store wood and make preparation for the days of helplessness that he knew would eventually overtake him. Work made him forget himself and his desperate situation, and he worked as he had never worked before.

The food which he allowed himself each day, Jim divided into two parts. One of these he ate in the morning, the other in the evening. At midday he stimulated himself with strong tea. With this he was fortunately well supplied, thanks to Indian Jake and to his own decision to cache none of it. He was always hungry, ravenously hungry. Food was uppermost in his thoughts. He recalled good meals that he had eaten in the past—at home, on the ship, and even since he had been on the trail. He laughed as he recalled the pudding, boiled in a soiled towel at Number One camp, when he had visited McCarthy. He had rejected it then, but give him a chance at it now! He would never complain against the quality of food again! If he could get out of this scrape by any means, he would eat anything that might be set before him and appreciate it. With vain regret he remembered the caribou meat that he had cached at the Lake of Tragedy, and the flour that he had so recently left in the cache by the river.

He was growing more gaunt and weak every day. A feeling of lassitude was stealing over him and he found himself daily less able to shake it off. Whenever he sat down his knees gave way suddenly. He had a greater desire to sleep than previously. He observed the symptoms with grim regret. At first he fought against them, but when he found he could not overcome them, accepted them as one accepts the inevitable, with resignation.

A day came when he ate the last of his food, though he still had some tea, and it always proved an excellent stimulant. It was two or three days later that his eyes fell upon his cowhide moccasins. His feet were now so swollen and sore that he could not wear them. Why not eat them? He eagerly drew his sheathknife and cut one of them into narrow strips and these strips into little squares, and placing the pieces in the kettle, boiled them for an hour. Removing the kettle from the stove, he discovered that the water in which the leather was boiled was greasy. He poured some of it into a cup and drank it. It contained some sustenance, he was sure. Then bit by bit he ate what he considered a fair ration of the leather for one day. The balance he put away and hoarded like a miser hoards his gold, and for three days he munched moccasin leather, as he doled it out to himself at stated intervals. The nutriment was little, but it provided something to eat and he ate both of the moccasins to the last morsel.

"I've heard of people fasting for thirty or forty days," Jim smiled grimly. "Now I'll have a chance to try it. But I'm starting with a big handicap. Those fellows began with full stomachs. I'm empty as a drained hogshead, and getting weaker every minute."

He held up his hands and surveyed them critically. The skin was drawn tightly over the bones. He had tightened his belt several inches. His clothing, ragged and torn by brush, hung loosely upon his frame.

But the first pangs of hunger had passed. The fearful craving for food that he had experienced when eating a little every day no longer tortured him. It was growing daily harder to move about, and he had a desire to doze a great deal. It was not an unpleasant feeling, and had it not been for the trouble his frozen feet caused him, he would have suffered no pain.

Several times in the days that followed he fancied that he heard men shouting, and he went out of the tent, hope running high, to shout in answer. But the shouting men were children of his fevered imagination, and only the empty forest echoed back his call.

Whenever he slept he dreamed of home. He was always a little boy again in his dreams, and it was always springtime. The lilacs in the back

yard of their home were in bloom, and he could smell the sweet fragrance. His mother was usually with him, and sometimes his father would join them. Or it was bedtime, and he was kneeling at his mother's knee to say his evening prayer, and he felt her gentle hand upon his head. Then she would tuck him into bed, and brush back the locks from his forehead as she stooped to kiss him. At this point he would always awake, and sometimes reach up to take his mother's hand in his, before he was aroused to the realities of his desolate camp. It was a sweet dream, and soothing, for his tired brain.

With much thought of her, he fell to hearing her voice and feeling the touch of her hand in his waking hours. Finally his fevered imagination made her presence real. Though he could never see her, he heard her voice, and she was always telling him to be brave and keep up his fight for life and in the end all would be well with him. All this brought him comfort and a daily renewal of hope that in some manner he would be able, at last, to extricate himself from the wilderness.

Then came a morning when he discovered his legs would no longer permit him to move outside the tent. He tottered to the entrance of the tent, and, too weak to walk farther, crouched there while he drew within some of the last of the supply of wood he had cut in his stronger days. How long ago that seemed!

He gathered some snow in the kettle, placed it on the stove to melt, and with the snow water brewed tea. In a disconnected way he was thankful that he had carried an ample supply of tea. He drank some of it and felt better.

Then he lay down and rolled into his blankets, and with the thought that he must keep alive to see the light of one more day, consciousness faded in blessed sleep.

XVI

BILLY HAND GIVES AN ALARM

It was the end of the second week in November. Winter had set in in earnest. October had been a stormy month, and the snow lay more than three feet deep in the sheltered forest, where there had been no drift. One could not take a dozen paces from the door without the assistance of snowshoes, and in the forest travel without them had been quite impossible since the second week in October. Uncle Ben Rudder, of Tuggle Bight, declared he had never seen November begin with so much snow, and Uncle Ben was one of the "oldest inhabitants."

Already the inland lakes and streams were hard frozen, not to be released again from their ice shackles until the winter's break-up should come the following June. The restless waters of Eskimo Bay, however, were still free, though they were "smoking," and any morning might find them fast bound for the winter. The sheltered harbour at The Jug was still open to boats, and Roaring Brook, pouring down through its rocky gorge in its haste to join its waters with those of the sea, still defied the winter's cold. But Roaring Brook was so swift and tumultuous that it was quite able to defend itself against the grasp of the ice king's ruthless fingers until the very depth of winter, long after the rest of the world, and even Eskimo Bay, had been crushed into submission and frozen into silence.

In mid-September, Thomas Angus, accompanied by Micah Dunk, a young lad of Snug Cove, had departed for his trapping trail, far into the interior, not to return until the long winter had passed, and the lakes and streams had cleared themselves of ice.

David Angus, during his father's absence, was the head of the house, while he trapped his father's old hunting grounds in the forest at the very edge of which stood the cabin at The Jug. Presently, when the sea froze, Andy was to drive the dog team for Doctor Joe when Doctor Joe made his long sledge journeys visiting the cabins of the coast to heal the sick, and at these times Jamie would be Margaret's companion and do the chores about the cabin, and snare rabbits in the nearby woods for Margaret to cook.

Margaret kept the house. She was now nineteen, and had mothered the boys and been her father's housekeeper since the mother died when she was a little lass of twelve, and Jamie, the youngest, was a wee lad of five.

Thomas and Doctor Joe both declared there was no tidier little housekeeper than Margaret on the whole coast. The cabin was, indeed, always neat and clean and spotless, and Margaret was herself a model of tidiness.

Doctor Joe, when not away visiting the sick, was to spend the winter with Margaret and the boys at The Jug. His home was at Break Cove, three miles below The Jug, where he lived quite alone in summer. He was their nearest neighbour.

He was not a native of the country, but had appeared on the coast a stranger, a year or two after the death of Mrs. Angus. He came penniless, destitute and a homeless derelict. Thomas Angus, big-hearted and sympathetic, took him in and befriended him, helped him to build his cabin at Break Cove and taught him the art of trapping. He told Thomas that his name was Joseph Carver, but because of his skill in dressing wounds and setting broken bones and caring for the sick, everybody about the bay, including Thomas, soon began to call him "Doctor Joe," and Doctor Joe he had been to them ever since.

It was now two years since Jamie, then a lad of ten years, complained of a mist in his eyes. The mist thickened, and in a few weeks so completely shut out the light that he became almost blind.

Then it was that Doctor Joe confessed to Thomas that he had once been a great eye surgeon in New York, but that strong drink had broken his health, left him penniless and forced him to abandon the practice of his profession. Homeless, helpless and alone in the world, he fled to Labrador. Removed from temptation, and living the wholesome life of the wild, open country, he had lost his desire and taste for the liquor which had dragged him down. He had regained his health and his manhood and his steady hand and eye, and he asked that he might operate upon Jamie with the hope that he might restore the lad's sight.

Thomas gave permission. Doctor Joe performed an unusual and marvelous operation, and Jamie's vision was restored. The operation was so successful, indeed, that Jamie's eyes were now quite as keen as ever they were.

And so it came about that the folk of the bay learned that Doctor Joe was indeed a real doctor, and a fine one, too; and Doctor Joe himself discovered that he had lost none of the skill that had once made him famous.

This it was that led Doctor Joe to return to New York that he might resume the practice of his profession. He had been able to make a living as a

trapper, but at best it was a precarious and uncertain living, and he felt the need to provide for his later years. And so one day he said good-bye to Thomas and Margaret and the boys, and sailed away from Fort Pelican on the mail boat.

But at the end of six weeks Doctor Joe was back again. He explained that an investment that he had made in the old days of his prosperity, and supposed to have been a failure, had proved a great success, and had accumulated a fortune for him during the years he had been in Labrador. Through this investment he had enough to support himself in comfort, and even in luxury if he desired. There was no longer need that he practice surgery in order to earn a living and accumulate a competence for his old age. He was free to go where he pleased and live where he wished to live.

He was restless and discontented in New York. The narrow streets and high buildings shut out the horizon and cramped him. There was not air to breathe freely. The crowds and the noise, the glare and the tinsel jarred him. Either he had changed or New York had changed in the years that he had been away. He could find no contentment there. The ostentation, the blatant show of wealth, the frivolity, the insincerity and the selfishness that he met on every hand disgusted him. On one side was luxury and appalling wastefulness, on the other direst poverty and distress.

He had not been in New York a week until he found himself longing for the freedom of the wide, open spaces. Down on The Labrador a man was a man. In the great city he was a mere atom in the human mass. He felt like a homeless wanderer in New York. In the years that had passed he had been forgotten, and he would, if he remained, have to begin anew and build a place for himself.

Down on The Labrador they needed him. He felt keenly the debt of gratitude that he owed Thomas Angus and the other good people of Eskimo Bay through whose generous hospitality and kindness and sympathy he had been restored to health and manhood. There were others to do the work that he might do in the city. There was no physician or surgeon in Eskimo Bay, and no one upon whom the people could call to care for their physical welfare in case of need. Jamie Angus would have been blind for life had he not been there to operate upon the lad's eyes at the right time. He felt that God had guided him there, and had shown him that he could be more helpful there than anywhere else in the world, and it was his duty to remain there.

He confessed also that he missed the quiet, gentle home life of the cabins, and the affectionate regard and sincere friendship of neighbours. The

call of the wilderness, the rugged coast and the wholesome free life was irresistible. And so, one day he packed up his belongings and sailed back to The Labrador.

"That's the way I saw it, Thomas," said he, "and I've come back to stay. I'm going to give my services to all that need me, without money and without price. When I decided to do this a feeling of vast and profound contentment came to me. I'll confess that I'm a bit selfish in returning, and I'm afraid you dear, good people here will be called upon to give me a good deal more than I can ever give you in return, just as you always have been doing in the past."

It was a year, now, since Doctor Joe's return. Winter and summer he had answered every call to visit the sick. And he had not forgotten the boys who were not sick. He had heard while in New York a great deal about the splendid things Boy Scouts were doing, and one of his first acts upon returning to the bay was to organize the lads into a troop of boy scouts. This troop was known as Troop One of The Labrador.

Of course David and Andy Angus were his earliest recruits, and David, now eighteen, had since been appointed assistant scoutmaster. Peter Sparks, of Let-In-Cove, a big, brawny lad of seventeen, was patrol leader, while the other members were Peter's brother Lige, Seth Muggs of Tuggle Bight, Obadiah Button and Micah Dunk of Snug Cove, and lastly Jamie Angus, who had just passed his twelfth birthday. This winter Micah Dunk was trapping in the wilderness with Thomas.

It was a small troop, to be sure, but an active and enthusiastic one, and the boys, bred to the life, were experts in the open. They knew the wilderness like a book. They knew the tracks and the habits of the animals. They could call the birds by name. Not many species of trees grew here, but the scouts knew every one of them. Even Jamie could build a shelter and cook nearly any sort of a meal over the camp fire. And they had always known boats and could tie knots and throw hitches like sailors.

Doctor Joe was proud of his troop, as well he might have been, and whenever there was an opportunity he gathered them together for work or play. This was not often, for they were widely scattered. But each fellow for himself or working in pairs they were constantly doing good turns for their neighbours.

They acted as messengers to summon Doctor Joe when he was needed in sickness, and they served as his assistants. He trained them particularly to render first aid to the injured, and often enough there was need for this.

When the men of the bay were in the wilderness trapping, and the women and little ones were alone, as often happened in winter, they made snowshoe trips of ten or fifteen or even twenty miles to learn how those thus alone fared, and would sometimes take a treat of game they had killed, and always do some chores about that the women could not do. There was always a chance to lend a hand at this or that.

This winter, as we have seen, Doctor Joe was to make his home with the Anguses, at The Jug. Thomas had invited him to do so.

" 'Twill be a bit lonely for you bidin' over at Break Cove between your cruisin' trips," suggested Thomas. "You'd be findin' The Jug livelier, and I'd feel better if I were knowin' you'd come over to The Jug to bide whilst I'm away to my trappin' path. David'll be sleepin' out in his tilts three nights a week whatever, and if you'd be stoppin' at The Jug when you're not away cruisin' you could have an eye to things, and 'twould be a wonderful lot o' company for Margaret and the lads."

"You *will* be bidin' with us now, won't you, sir?" urged Jamie, eagerly.

"Oh, now, but 'twill be wonderful fine, and you does, sir!" Margaret broke in, her face reflecting her pleasure in the anticipation.

"How can I refuse!" laughed Doctor Joe. "It does get a bit lonesome over at Break Cove with no one for a chap to talk to but himself, and I find myself pretty tiresome company sometimes. If I didn't come now, after your invitation, I'd be thinking of Margaret's fine bread, and baked partridges, and stewed rabbit every time I sat down to eat the poor things I'd cook myself, and the comparison would make me so unhappy I'd be coming over at unexpected times and pretty often anyhow, so I think I'll have to accept your invitation. Nobody cooks quite as well as Margaret. No, I can't refuse such an invitation to enjoy good company and good cooking. I'll come."

"I'm so glad! And I'm glad you likes my cookin', too. I'll cook things the way you likes un, sir," and Margaret's cheeks flushed with pleasure.

"But I'll only come on one condition," said Doctor Joe, seriously, "that you permit me to buy at least half of the winter provisions for the house."

Thomas protested, but Doctor Joe would have it no other way, and so it was finally settled.

David had set up his traps at the end of October, and Andy had been making the rounds with him while he waited for the bay to freeze and Doctor Joe to set out upon his first sledge journey. In the meantime, Doctor

Joe and Jamie had made everything snug about the cabin for the winter, and were each day hunting grouse and attending to Jamie's rabbit snares.

It was after dinner on a Sunday afternoon. The dishes had been cleared away, and Margaret had tidied everything up. David and Andy had come in the evening before from the third week's round of David's traps. Jamie had asked Doctor Joe for a story, and they had all settled around the big wood stove for a pleasant afternoon when David, glancing out of the window, exclaimed:

"There's a boat! 'Tis Peter and Lige Sparks, and the storekeeper from the lumber camps."

Everyone except Margaret hastened out and down to the jetty to meet and welcome the visitors, as their boat pulled alongside the jetty and made fast.

"I'm wonderful glad to see you," greeted David, as the three climbed out upon the jetty. "Come right up to the house and have a cup o' hot tea."

"We're comin' after you and Doctor Joe and Andy," announced Peter, a big, square-shouldered fellow, while everyone shook hands. "They's been somethin' happenin' to Indian Jake and young Mr. MacLean. They're not comin' back yet from the height o' land trip."

"Somethin's happened to Jim MacLean all right," broke in Billy Hand. "I guess it's about what I told him would happen. Indian Jake's up and knifed him, like he did his father, and then cut stick. That's him. He's a bad un."

"What leads you to think Indian Jake knifed him?" asked Doctor Joe, as they walked up to the cabin.

"Natural expectation. He's a bad un," said Billy positively. "He's a bad un! That's him!"

"Indian Jake never knifed anybody, sir," objected David. "'Tis somethin' else been happenin' to un."

"Indian Jake's a wonderful kind man, sir," broke in Jamie with a show of indignation. "*He'd* never be hurtin' Mr. MacLean, whatever."

"No, sir, he'd never hurt he, sir," echoed Andy, joining in defence of their friend.

"Step right in, sir," invited David, opening the cabin door.

“It’s quite possible one of them has been injured,” suggested Doctor Joe, when they were within and the visitors were removing their adikeys. “Has any one gone to search for them?”

“Nobody to go,” said Billy, seating himself. “That’s what we come here for. Leastways nobody that would know where to hunt for ’em. I’m willin’ to go, but my liver is pretty bad most of the time. There’s nobody around the mill but some greenhorns Dawes brought in last summer. McCarthy and all the old men have been sent up to Number Three camp, where I can’t see ’em. Dawes sent ’em up there a purpose. I spoke to Dawes about sendin’ some one to look for Jim, and he said he guessed Indian Jake knew how to take care of himself, and he couldn’t spare any men to go on a fool hunt, and when Indian Jake and Jim got ready to come out they’d come.”

“Set in, sir, and have some tea,” David invited. “Margaret’s got un ready.”

“Did you send word to McCarthy or any of the old men?” asked Doctor Joe, as Billy and Peter and Lige drew up to the table in response to David’s invitation. “McCarthy seems like a pretty fine chap.”

“No, I didn’t, because I knew Dawes wouldn’t let ’em out. I just went over last night to Let-In-Cove, which ain’t far, and saw the Sparks boys here, knowin’ they’re your boy scouts and that they know the country here better’n any of us fellers in the loggin’ camp does. They said we’d better come for you, and so here we be. If anybody’ll show me the way I’ll throw up my job in the store and go myself. Even if my liver is bad I c’n travel pretty well on snowshoes. I’ve lived in a loggin’ camp here and there most all my life, and I ought to know how. It’s just my liver kinder holds me back all the time from doin’ things I might be doin’ but can’t do ’em easy.”

“They were going up the Kenamou River,” suggested David. “Indian Jake told me ’twere to the height of land.”

“Something has surely happened,” said Doctor Joe. “Indian Jake would never have been caught in the country unprepared when the freeze-up came if everything was right with them. I take it for granted they had no snowshoes?”

“No, they didn’t have snowshoes,” Billy explained between mouthfuls of stewed rabbit. “They was expectin’ to be out ahead of the snow. Say, this rabbit is fine. I never et any better.”

“Well, scouts,” said Doctor Joe, “here’s a real job for us. We’ve got to go in and look for those men, and the sooner we get off the better. Even if the

lumbermen could go, we can do it better than they. It's our business, and we're trained for it.

"David, you and Andy get your outfits ready for light and fast traveling. We'll go right back in the boat and run in at Tuggle Bight and Snug Cove on the way and pick up Seth Muggs and Obadiah Button. Peter, you and Lige better go over home as soon as we get across the bay and get your outfits ready. It'll be dark before we get fixed up, but we'll be ready to start as soon as we can see in the morning."

"Will I be goin' too?" asked Jamie, expectantly.

"Your legs are a bit short for fast and hard traveling yet," said Doctor Joe. "You'll be doing good scouting by staying here with Margaret. It would never do to leave her all alone."

"All right, sir," agreed Jamie cheerfully, though it was a disappointment to him to be denied a part in the expedition. "I'll be bidin' home, an' you thinks 'tis best."

"I'm thinkin' now," said David, "we better be takin' flatsleds. I'll be takin' one over in the boat, and Peter and Lige can bring one when they go home for their outfits. You and Peter and me better go ahead with one, not packin' heavy, so we'll be travelin' fast. Andy and Lige and Seth and Obadiah can carry more grub and extra outfit of some clothes and sleepin' bags. 'Tis likely Indian Jake and Mr. MacLean has no warm clothes with un. And I'm thinkin' now maybe Seth or Obadiah better bring a flatsled too, and then the load'll be lighter on each than if 'twere all packed on one."

"Fine!" exclaimed Doctor Joe. "Your idea is a good one. Then we three will travel fast with our lighter loads and get to the men sooner, if we are to find them, and the others follow more slowly with their heavier loads as a support."

"Aye, sir, that's what I thinks," said David.

"I'm afraid one of the men has been badly injured, and the other is probably standing by him," suggested Doctor Joe. "It may be that we shall have to haul an injured man out on one of the toboggans, so that makes it more necessary to have three."

"Well," remarked Billy, with a satisfied air, pushing back from the table as David and Andy busied themselves assembling their outfit, "I feel better. That's better cookin' than we get in the camp."

“Yes,” agreed Doctor Joe, “there’s no better cook in this country than Margaret. We’ll be going as soon as the lads are packed up, but before we go I would like to hear about that liver trouble you complained of, Billy.”

He proceeded to ask Billy questions. Then he put him through a searching examination, and finally, looking Billy in the eye, asked:

“Billy, what have you been doing for this liver trouble?”

“I’ve been takin’ Dr. Kurem’s Liver Reliever reg’lar,” answered Billy anxiously.

“It won’t cure you,” and Doctor Joe shook his head seriously. “It won’t reach your case at all. You had other trouble of some sort before your liver trouble began. What was it?”

“My kidneys,” confessed Billy, now on the verge of panic. “Is my liver so bad it can’t be cured, Doctor?”

“I thought you had other trouble! I thought so!” Ignoring Billy’s question, Doctor Joe shook his head gravely. “And before your kidneys you had other trouble?”

“My heart,” gulped Billy.

Doctor Joe nodded his head as though he understood perfectly, and with a twinkle in his eye arose and went to the cupboard, where he surreptitiously put some sugar in a bottle, added enough quinine to give the mixture a decidedly bitter taste, but not enough to rob it of its harmless qualities, filled the bottle with water, and shaking it well returned with it to Billy.

“JAMIE’LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOU, MARGARET, AND DON’T GET LONESOME.”

“Here, Billy,” he advised, “take a tablespoonful of this three times a day after meals. Your kidneys and heart, I believe, are now perfectly sound, and this will cure your liver trouble. I can guarantee that your liver will be as sound as any man’s in Labrador before you’ve finished the bottle.”

“And quit takin’ Doctor Kurem’s Liver Reliever?” asked Billy, regretfully. “I’ve got six bottles of it on hand, and it’ll all be wasted if I don’t take it up. Won’t it help out some?”

“It won’t help you in the least. Certainly do not take it,” said Doctor Joe emphatically. “It isn’t suited to your case at all.”

“How about my eatin’?” suggested Billy. “I’ve been dietin’ some accordin’ to directions.”

“Eat anything the cook sets before you,” advised Doctor Joe. “It won’t hurt you in the least. It’ll do you good.”

“That’s fine now,” said Billy with manifest pleasure. “Here I’ve been turnin’ down doughnuts, and pies, and other things I like.”

“Don’t turn them down! Don’t by any means!” exclaimed Doctor Joe with concern. “You should eat doughnuts and pie in moderation. Your case, Billy, is one of imaginitis of the liver. You take the medicine as directed, and remember my guarantee that it will positively cure you. There is more than enough in that bottle to cure you.”

“I’ll take some now?”

“Certainly, by all means.”

Billy took a dose and made a wry face.

“Kinder bitter,” he commented. “The Liver Reliever was syrupy and nice to take.”

“That was one trouble with it,” said Doctor Joe impressively. “Not what your case demands at all, not at all. Your liver needs this bitter tonic, and not a syrupy medicine.”

“I think I’m feelin’ better already,” declared Billy. “I feel the medicine all the way down.”

Doctor Joe had drawn on his adikey as he talked. The boys were ready, and Billy, with a new lease upon life, drew his adikey over his rotund figure.

“Jamie’ll take good care of you, Margaret, and don’t get lonesome!” Doctor Joe called cheerily as he donned his snowshoes at the door and

followed the others to the boat.

XVII

TROOP ONE MAKES A RESCUE

David led the way. He was a better traveler in the wilderness than Doctor Joe, and a better pacemaker; and Peter, in the rear, hauled the toboggan, or flatsled, as they called it, upon the trail beaten down by the snowshoes of David and Doctor Joe.

At the end of an hour David and Peter changed places, and David hauled the flatsled, and thus all day they took turns about that neither should become over weary with his task of trail breaking or hauling. Not once did they pause to rest, save at midday when they made a half-hour halt to boil the kettle and hurriedly eat a bite. None of them knew what grim tragedy might lie before them, but all felt that the greatest possible haste must be made. They wasted no breath in words, but bent every muscle to the task, advancing with the long, sweeping stride of the woodsman. None of them had ever before been in the valley of the Kenamou, but it was a narrow valley, and with the frozen river as their guide there was no possibility that they would go astray.

None of them attempted to guess what manner of accident or misfortune had overtaken the men to whose rescue they were going, but each felt that something unusual had happened to detain them. A gun might have exploded and wounded one of them, a leg might have been broken, or any one of a hundred accidents might have occurred. They knew that nothing but some accident or serious misadventure could have prevented their return in advance of the heavy snows and the freezing of the river. There was the possibility that the canoe had been wrecked in the rapids, and both men drowned, and they knew that, had this come to pass, there was little probability that they would ever find them or a trace of them. They knew the depths of misery that those black forests and windswept wastes, up beyond the mountain pass through which the Kenamou River forced its way, held for the unprepared, and they knew that these men were unprepared. That Indian Jake had deserted Jim MacLean, or that the two had separated and Jim had been left to face the wilderness trail alone, occurred to none of them. Men of that land stand by each other, and such a contingency was too improbable to be given even a passing thought.

That day they advanced thirty miles up the valley of the Kenamou, and only the early falling darkness halted them. The treacherous character of the

ice prevented them traveling upon the river, and the trail along shore was rough and rugged, often clogged with underbrush or boulders. The following day an equal distance was laid behind them. It was near sunset on the third day when David raised his nose and sniffed the air.

"I smells smoke," he announced. "See if you can't smell un."

Peter sniffed and Doctor Joe sniffed.

"Not a whiff," declared Doctor Joe. "Your imagination is active, David. There's no smoke."

"I smells un, sir," Peter declared in verification of David.

They all put their noses up and drew in the air.

"I smells un wonderful plain, sir," said Peter. "Can't you smell un now?"

"No, not a whiff, but if both you chaps smell smoke there's surely smoke to smell," Doctor Joe acknowledged. "Your noses are a bit keener than mine for forest smells. From which direction does it come?"

"From the s'uth'ard, sir," said David with unconcealed excitement. "The wind's down the river, and the smoke's above us. She's right handy, sir. The wind's too light to drive un far."

Without another word David forged forward at a half trot, with Doctor Joe and Peter at his heels. They had gone a half mile when Doctor Joe announced:

"I smell it now. You chaps were right, as you usually are. Fire your rifle, David, to let them know we're coming."

David fired three shots, and with accelerated speed hurried on. Another half mile, and David, who was in advance, shouted:

"I sees un! There's Indian Jake's tent! The smoke's comin' from the stove pipe."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Doctor Joe. "They're safe and in camp. But they'll be glad to see us."

David gave a great whoop, to announce their coming, and Peter and Doctor Joe joined him in another. No one appeared, and as they hurried toward the tent they shouted again. Still there was no response.

"They's no footin' anywhere about," David announced, as they approached. "That's wonderful queer, now."

He parted the front flaps of the tent, and the three peered in. A creature in the image of a man was standing in the rear swaying unsteadily on wabbly legs. It seemed incredible that the emaciated human wreck before them could be alive. It was a skeleton clad in rags hanging loosely upon the bony frame. Above a straggly beard of some weeks' growth appeared two deep-sunken eyes. The skin, drawn tightly over cheek bones and forehead, tanned and dried and smoked by wind and sun and camp fire, had the texture and appearance of that of a mummy. Long, unkempt hair, hung half way to the shoulders. The hands were shrivelled to talons. The feet were covered only by socks, stained and clotted with blood.

David did not recognize the apparition as the big, broad-shouldered, athletic Jim MacLean whom he had met on the deck of the *Gray Goose*. But here was Indian Jake's tent and tent stove. This was a stranger in possession of them, and he did not remotely connect this stranger with either of the men they were looking for, or, indeed, with any one he had ever known.

Jim, on his part, saw his visitors through a haze. It was as though a veil was hanging between them and himself, and for several minutes he gazed at them trying to distinguish their features through the veil, and trying to recall himself to a world in which he had once lived in what appeared to him another existence. Slowly his dulled vision outlined David's face and his dulled brain was stimulated to recognition. He spoke the name, as one speaking to himself:

"David Angus, the pilot."

"Aye," said David, stepping forward and grasping Jim's shriveled, bony hand, "I'm David Angus, but I'm not knowin' you, sir. Here's Doctor Joe and Peter Sparks along with me."

"I'm Jim MacLean. I met you on the ship."

The human touch of David's hand went through Jim like an electric spark. It recalled him to realities and brought back his weary, wavering spirit to earth, though even yet he could scarce credit his senses. He half expected that in a moment the men would prove to be wraiths and dissolve from view. He feared they were as unreal as had been the shouting men in the forest whom he had answered, but who never came to him.

"Be you bidin' here in the tent alone?" asked David. "Where's Injun Jake?"

"Gone! Gone! He went away and left me long ago," answered Jim. "A long, long time ago. He went away and left me alone to perish."

"Were anything happenin' to he?" asked David.

"No, he was in camp at night, and when I woke up in the morning he was gone with the canoe. He never came back and I never saw him again," said Jim.

"We'll ask no questions now," said Doctor Joe quietly, as he assisted Jim to be seated. "David, stir up that fire in the stove and put over a kettle of water for tea and another for cooking. Peter, unpack the flatsled and get some of those partridges ready that David shot this morning. We must make some broth for Mr. MacLean at once. When you have the fire going and the water over, David, help Peter to dress the partridges. I'll bring in the other things."

"Are you really men come to help me or are you angels from Heaven?" asked Jim. "Mother told me to take care of myself and I would be all right. Did she send you?"

"Who?" asked Doctor Joe.

"My mother," answered Jim simply. "She died when I was a boy, but she came back here to talk to me."

"Yes, yes, I understand," Doctor Joe said soothingly. "We came from the bay to look for you and help you. We're men of the bay. We'll take care of you now. You'll be all right. Sit there and rest. We'll have something ready for you to eat in a jiffy. Don't talk, but rest."

Every one hurried. Tea was soon ready, and Doctor Joe gave a steaming cup to Jim to sip, followed by a small piece of toasted bread to eat, and presently some hot broth.

"Not much solid food at first," said Doctor Joe. "Drink the broth, and after awhile you may have some more, and another small piece of toast."

Jim, when he had taken the nourishment permitted, wished to talk a great deal, but Doctor Joe would have none of it. He insisted upon his patient lying down quietly, and when he and David and Peter had eaten they set up Doctor Joe's more commodious and better tent alongside the other. A thick covering of boughs was laid as a floor, and over the boughs a waterproof ground cloth was spread for a carpet, and upon this a bed of blankets.

A fire had been lighted in David's tent stove, the tent was warm and Jim was removed to the more comfortable quarters. David and Peter volunteered to sleep in Indian Jake's tent, while Doctor Joe kept Jim company in the other.

While Peter held a candle, and David with a basin of warm water ready for use, assisted in removing Jim's socks, Doctor Joe examined Jim's feet, and cleansed the wounds.

"A bad frost burn," said Doctor Joe as he dressed the wounds. "The skin is pretty well rubbed off of them. You had grit, young man, to keep moving on those feet. You'll have to keep off of them for the present, but we'll soon have them as useful as ever they were. It'll give you a chance to loaf and rest while you're building up your strength."

Jim was sick that night. The introduction of even the small amount of tea and toast and broth into the contracted stomach was more than it could accept without protest. But the following morning found him decidedly better. His brain had cleared, his old cheerfulness had returned, and there was already developing a desire to eat more than Doctor Joe thought would be well for him.

His feet bandaged and encased in fresh duffle slippers and a pair of Doctor Joe's big, roomy buckskin moccasins, Jim declared that he was as comfortable as any man could be, and Doctor Joe removed the restraint upon his talking.

When breakfast was eaten Jim narrated in minute detail the story of his experiences. He told of the shooting of the wolf and his accusation of Indian Jake; how Indian Jake had silently stolen out of camp without a word the following morning, never to return; how he had found the wallet containing important memoranda; the killing of the caribou; the vain waiting for Indian Jake's return; the first blizzard; his struggle to reach the bay; and the last days of desperate effort to keep life in his body in spite of an overpowering desire to pass into a sleep that would be eternal.

"To die then would have been like going to sleep when a fellow is about as tired as he can be," said Jim. "The thought of death didn't have a terror. I thought of it just as I'd think of lying down at night to go to sleep."

"The Almighty provides for that when He takes us," said Doctor Joe reverently. "He prepares us for death, and when our time comes to go He takes from it all the fear we feel for it when we're in normal health."

"I know after my experience that you're right," agreed Jim.

They all examined closely the wallet when Jim brought it forth.

"That was never exposed to a winter's and a summer's weathering," Jim declared. "It was never wet. Neither were the papers. Before Indian Jake deserted me that morning he placed it there for me to find."

"It was surely never exposed to weather," agreed Doctor Joe, "and there's no other explanation than yours—that Indian Jake placed it there. But I cannot understand his motive."

"Why," said Jim, "that seems plain to me. He took me at my word. I told him to either explain to me satisfactorily how he got the money, or to make a confession that he robbed Dad, and clear his conscience on the ground where he did the deed. This wallet was his confession. He confessed by leaving it, and then ran away."

"I'm not believin' Injun Jake robbed or hurt your father, sir," David protested, still loyal to his friend in spite of nearly conclusive evidence against him. "I'm not sayin' they's not somethin' strange about un, leavin' the wallet and leavin' her there that way. But I knows Injun Jake, and *he'd* never rob or hurt anybody, *whatever*."

"There 'tis, Davy," Peter broke in. "The's no doubtin' Injun Jake had un and left un there for Mr. MacLean here to find, and how'd he get un if he didn't steal un? Mr. MacLean's father never gave un to he. He stole un, and he took the money out of un that were Mr. MacLean's father's, and he were usin' the money to pay his debt to the Company."

"I'm not knowin' how 'twere," insisted David. "But Injun Jake never takes un wrongfully. What be *you* thinkin' about un now, Doctor Joe?"

"It's a mystery," said Doctor Joe. "I don't want to think that Indian Jake did anything wrong, but I must admit that it looks bad for him. I'm afraid our confidence in him has been misplaced, David."

That afternoon the reserves under Andy's leadership appeared with the two toboggans loaded with supplies, sufficient to keep the party in comfort until Doctor Joe should deem it wise for Jim to undertake the journey back.

Andy and his party pitched their tent, and when they had made it comfortable a conference was held in Doctor Joe's tent. David expressed his belief that some accident had happened to Indian Jake, and Andy was as firm in his confidence in the integrity of the half-breed as was David. David suggested that search should be made for Indian Jake, but no one knew the direction he had taken after leaving Jim at the lake, and it was decided, upon consideration, that the probabilities of finding him were too remote.

"If he is alive," said Doctor Joe, "he knows how to take care of himself. If he is not, there is not one chance in a thousand that you could locate him."

"I'm thinkin' you're right," admitted David.

Jim recuperated rapidly, and two days later Doctor Joe announced that his patient was well enough and strong enough for the return journey to the bay.

“We’re likely to have snow at any time, and it will make the traveling harder,” said Doctor Joe. “We can travel by easy stages so as not to tire you. You will be packed in one of the sleeping bags and lashed on a flatsled, and we’ll haul you out, Mr. MacLean.”

“Pretty soft for me,” Jim grinned. “If I’m riding on a flatsled I can stand it if you fellows can.”

“Not so soft as you think,” laughed Doctor Joe. “You’ll wish you were on snowshoes before we get through with you, but we’ll make it as comfortable for you as we can.”

“All right,” said Jim, “I’m game for it. I want to get out of here too badly to complain at any transportation.”

As Doctor Joe predicted, the journey was anything but a pleasant experience for Jim. The weather was searchingly cold when they set out the following morning, and he chafed in his cramped position, and the journey seemed endless to him.

When on the evening of the fifth day the wilderness voyageurs drew up before the lighted store at the lumber mill Jim’s heart swelled with the joy of the new life to which he had returned. There was a fight before him, and he was anxious to get into it. McCarthy must be restored to his rightful position.

“Now,” said he to himself, “we’ll see what’s to happen, and there’s going to be a-plenty happen as soon as my feet will let me get around.”

XVIII

BACK FROM THE DOOR OF DEATH

Billy was alone in the store. He heard the voices outside, and swinging open the door, stood silhouetted against the glare of light within.

"Hello, Billy!" Jim called.

"Is that you, Jim MacLean?" answered Billy, with a note of excitement in his voice, as he hurried out to the flatsled where Doctor Joe and David were in the act of unlashing Jim.

"It is," laughed Jim, "and I'm mighty glad it isn't just my remains. A part of me is here anyhow. It's good to get back, Billy!"

"Well, by gum!" exclaimed Billy, grasping Jim's hand. "I never expected to set eyes on you again! What's happened to you, Jim?"

"Oh, I've been dieting against my will. I frosted my feet a little, too, and the Doctor won't let me use them for the present."

"You ain't very bad, be you?" asked Billy with much concern. "You ain't goin' to lose your feet, be you?"

"He'll soon be all right," said Doctor Joe. "You can't kill a chap with just starving and freezing when he's got the kind of grit Jim has. He's just a little the worse for his bout with the country."

"Come right straight in the store, all of you," directed Billy, leading the way.

"My God!" exclaimed Billy, as Doctor Joe and David sat Jim in a chair, and with the hood of his adikey thrown back, the light fell upon his emaciated face and revealed his gaunt figure. "This ain't Jim MacLean! This ain't you, Jim, is it now?"

"Yes," grinned Jim, "I'll vouch for my identity. The country back here in the mountains treated me a bit roughly, and I suppose I've come back looking like a pretty tough character. I haven't had a look into a mirror lately. But as tough as I look, I'm harmless, Billy."

"Harmless as a kitten," laughed Doctor Joe. "Billy should have seen you as you looked when we found you. You've developed into a pretty lively and respectable appearing chap since then."

“Jim! Jim! I can’t believe it’s you! I can’t believe it’s Jim MacLean come to this!” Billy’s voice nearly broke with emotion.

“A living example of the depths to which a man may fall,” grinned Jim. “I’m famished, Billy, and I’m sure the Doctor and his scouts are hungry too. Can’t you dig up something to eat?”

“You look like you need some good eatin’.” Billy, who had been gazing at Jim in a half-dazed stare, was scarcely yet able to realize that this was the big, athletic Jim MacLean, who had left him in such good spirits so short a time before. “You just set there and I’ll stir up the cook over in the cook house and fetch over some grub right off. Doctor Joe, you stay with Jim, and I’ll fetch somethin’ for you too. I guess you scouts better come with me, and the cook’ll fix you up in the cook house.”

“Just bring some bread and butter,” directed Doctor Joe. “I’ll boil the kettle and broil some partridges we have, on your stove here, and when you bring the bread I’ll toast some of it. Mr. MacLean isn’t on full rations yet.”

“Doctor, I’m as hungry as seven bears!” Jim plead. “Won’t you let me have a square meal to-night?”

“And then have you suffering all night? You must be careful, young man.” Doctor Joe shook his head.

“Everything I eat hurts me anyhow. I may as well eat enough to make it worth while.”

“Toast and tea and a little broiled partridge! That’s the ultimatum! I’m quite stubborn,” laughed Doctor Joe.

“All right,” Jim agreed. “But just wait till I can get around and be my own boss again! I’ll eat my weight in grub five times a day. I’ll devote myself to eating! It seems to me I’ll never be able to eat enough to satisfy me.”

“I’ll fetch the things,” said Billy. “You other fellers come along with me now and grub up.”

“Oh, but it’s good to be back!” sighed Jim, when Billy and the scouts had gone, and he and Doctor Joe were alone.

“Yes,” said Doctor Joe, putting the kettle on the stove, “back from the grave. Perhaps you don’t realize it, but you wouldn’t have lived another day if we had failed to find you when we did. You should thank God for inspiring Billy to send us in.”

"I do—I do thank God!" Jim acknowledged, reverently, while he watched Doctor Joe prepare the grouse for broiling. "I thank Him a hundred times a day, and I thank Him in my prayers at night. It seems to me that I have been spared to do some work in the world. And I'm going to do it! I've been restored to life, and I'm going to do my best to make the life that has been given me a useful one in the world."

"Fine!" exclaimed Doctor Joe. "That's an ideal that makes big men. We can't all of us climb to the top, but we can climb a long way toward the top, if we aim for it and try for it, and keep trying."

Jim silently watched Doctor Joe preparing the grouse until presently the door opened and Billy appeared bearing two gigantic loaves of bread, a package of tea, a bowl of jam, a pie and some doughnuts.

"The cook made me bring the pie and doughnuts and jam to you fellers," explained Billy. "It's a prune pie, and he says it won't hurt anybody."

"Good for you and the cook, Billy," acknowledged Doctor Joe. "Our patient may have some of the jam and some of the filling from the pie, but none of the piecrust goes with it."

"Thank you!" It came from Jim's heart. "That *will* be a treat! I've had no desserts or sweets since some marmalade Indian Jake took into the country, and that didn't last long."

"Why didn't you fellers go into my livin' quarters?" asked Billy. "There's a fire in there. Come along now. I'll fix up the table so you can eat off'n it."

"We didn't know you had any other quarters," said Doctor Joe.

"Right in here," and Billy opened a door leading to the rear. "I clean forgot to tell you about it, I was so took back by the way Jim looks."

Billy lighted a lamp, revealing a room about twelve by sixteen feet in size. A large oblong wood stove occupied the center. There was a cot bed at one end, a table covered with a red and white checked cloth, four easy chairs, home-made but comfortable, a home-made settee, evidently manufactured by Billy himself, and spread upon the floor to serve as rugs were two caribou and five Eskimo dog skins. Upon a wall shelf several old magazines and a half-dozen books with lurid, wild-west cowboy titles were arranged.

There was already a fire in the stove, and Billy renewed it with a fresh supply of wood from a box, while Doctor Joe carried Jim into the room and

deposited him into one of the big chairs.

"This is my quarters," explained Billy, closing the stove door. "I fixed up some extra chairs for when Pat McCarthy and some of the fellers dropped in evenin's to see me last winter. I ain't had much company this year. I sleep on the cot."

"This is cozy," Jim commented. "It surely is a comfortable place here, Billy."

"I kinder fixed it up to be that way," admitted Billy proudly.

"Better coals and less blaze in the store stove," suggested Doctor Joe. "I'll broil the birds out there. Perhaps you'll toast some bread on the stove while I'm doing it, Billy? I suppose Jim here will be breaking loose if we don't get something before him to eat in a hurry."

"All right, I'll do the toastin' and make the tea," agreed Billy, "and I'll get the table sot."

In a little while Doctor Joe appeared with a tin plate loaded with nicely buttered broiled grouse. Billy had another plate piled high with toast, and had set the table for three with plates, cups, knives and forks, with the bowl of jam, the prune pie, and a dish of butter in the center.

"I'm goin' to eat a snack with you," said Billy, as they sat down.

"You see from the amount of grouse I broiled I prepared for it," laughed Doctor Joe. "We're your guests to-night. Will you serve?"

"I'll pour the tea if you'll hand around the grub," suggested Billy. "I'm afraid I'd give Jim more'n he ought to eat, I'm so plumb sorry for him."

"Thank you," agreed Doctor Joe. "Jim would be likely to bamboozle you into indiscretion. We have to watch him."

"Now I want to hear about the trip, Jim, and what happened. I've been waitin' till we et to hear about it, and I'm kinder curious to hear what made you look like this, and where Indian Jake is," Billy suggested when they had eaten and he had placed two large kettles of water on the stove to heat. "Them kettles of water are for a bath for you, Jim," he explained. "I know you're wantin' a bath, and anyhow you sure look like you need one. I'm goin' to cut your hair now and shave you, and you can just go ahead and talk while I'm doin' it. Where's Indian Jake?"

"He deserted me," said Jim, as Billy tucked a towel under his chin. "That's what brought me into trouble. But I'd better tell you the whole story

from the time we left here."

"Deserted you!" exclaimed Billy. "Well, I said he'd do somethin'. You're lucky he didn't knife you, Jim. But go ahead and tell me all that happened right from the start off."

With the towel tucked under Jim's chin and another draped over his shoulders, Billy proceeded to snip at hair and beard with his scissors, while Jim told his story. Now and again Billy paused in his work to indignantly interject remarks, chiefly expressions of his opinion of Indian Jake's character.

While Jim displayed the wallet, and permitted Billy to examine it, he made no reference to the contents of the memoranda it contained, other than exhibit the papers to Billy as evidence that they had never lain out in the rain. He had decided that he would see McCarthy and learn his attitude before revealing to Billy or any one else the fact that McCarthy had a partnership interest in the logging and mill operation. He believed that Billy was prone to talk too much. He might also let fall a word that would reach Dawes concerning the location of the cave.

"It was just like I said it would be," reiterated Billy, as he stropped his razor preparatory to shaving Jim. "That half-breed is a bad one. Now, Jim, you'll have to quit talkin' while I shave your face."

In due time Billy's tonsorial effort was completed to his satisfaction. He now brought forth a large galvanized iron washtub, and placed it near the stove. Retiring to the store, he presently reappeared with a pair of new moleskin trousers and a blue flannel shirt, which he laid on a chair. Then, indicating the washtub, he announced:

"This here's my bathtub. The water on the stove is bilin'. I'll go fetch a towel and washcloth and soap, and a couple of buckets of cold water. There's your trunk over there by my bed, and everything is in it just the way you left it when you cached it with me before you went on your trip. I guess you've got all the sox and underclothes and things you need to have in that."

"Thank you, Billy," said Jim gratefully. "A bath will just fix me up."

When Billy presently brought the cold water, he joined the boys, who had returned from the cook house, in the store, while Doctor Joe remained with Jim to assist him and care for his wounded feet.

"Now you're lookin' a little bit like yourself," said Billy appraisingly, a half-hour later when Doctor Joe opened the door into the store and announced that the bathing ceremony was completed. "I ain't sure, though,

that I'd just be sure who you were if I met you anywheres else. Your as thin as a white cedar pole, and your clothes fit you about as snug as they would a cedar pole, but I guess you'll fill 'em out when you've had a little time and some good eatin'."

"If the Doctor will let me have enough to eat I'll agree to fill out," laughed Jim.

"You're going over to The Jug with David and Andy and me, and stay there until those feet are properly healed," Doctor Joe announced. "We'll go in the morning. The bay is frozen, and Peter will take us over with his dogs, won't you, Peter?"

"Aye," agreed Peter, "I'll be takin' you, sir."

"The bay fastened over the day you fellers left here to look for Jim, and they say the footin' is fine for dog travel, but," suggested Billy, "I kinder thought maybe Jim would stay here with me. Can't he?"

"No," Doctor Joe objected, "you're too tender-hearted. You'd be giving him too much to eat and things he shouldn't eat. He should eat often and not much at a time. We'll let Margaret look after that over at The Jug, and I must watch his feet to prevent infection. They'll be all right and he'll be free to eat as he pleases in a month."

"I'm thinkin' now, sir, and you don't mind, that Lige and me'll go over home to-night to be gettin' things ready," suggested Peter. "We'll be here with the dogs early in the marnin'."

"That's a good plan," agreed Doctor Joe.

When the two boys had said good night and passed out, Doctor Joe turned to Billy:

"How about your liver, Billy? I haven't heard you mention it this evening."

"That medicine you gave me, Doctor, is just the stuff," Billy answered enthusiastically. "Every time I take it I feel the bitterness helpin' me. I haven't felt my liver once since I started in takin' it, and I'm eatin' everything the way you said to do. I'm just feelin' fine all the time now, and as strong as a hoss."

"I thought that would fix you! I was sure it would!" Doctor Joe nodded his head wisely, after the manner of doctors everywhere. "And now for rest. Jim is tired and we're all tired."

Billy insisted upon Jim occupying his cot, and against Jim's protest Doctor Joe supported Billy, who made his own bed upon the box couch when Doctor Joe declined it upon the ground that it would not accommodate his length, and he would be more comfortable in his sleeping bag on the floor with the boys.

Before retiring Jim wrote a note to McCarthy, asking him to report at The Jug at the earliest possible date, and to bring his contract with him. Billy agreed to send the letter to McCarthy with the next trip of the tote team, which would be made two days later.

Jim lay awake a long time that night making plans for his campaign. He determined that at all costs Dawes and his gang should be deposed, and McCarthy reinstated. This might mean war, and probably would, and it might result in destruction of property. But if Dawes were not deposed, Jagger would eventually involve the operation so deeply in debt that a forced sale would be necessary, and then Jagger would buy it in at his own figure.

XIX

THE WELCOME AT THE JUG

There were nine dogs in Peter's team—nine great beasts, which, if found wandering in the forest or barrens, might easily have been mistaken for wolves, but for the fact that their tails curled up over their backs instead of hanging straight out behind, as the tail of the wolf does. But they had the great head and jowls, the small, straight, pointed ears, the powerful shoulders and fore legs, and the mane of the wild wolf. They howled like the wolf, which was their progenitor, and they bared their great evil fangs when they snarled.

But Peter's dogs were docile enough when he brought them to halt before the store door with an "Ah!" in sharp command, shortly after daylight, and standing over them with his thirty-five-foot-long walrushide whip, compelled them to lie down in harness until the sledge should be packed.

Peter's sledge, or komatik as it is called in this land where Eskimo implements sometimes retain their Eskimo names, was twelve feet long and two feet wide, with runners six inches high, each runner thick and strong and hewn out of a single piece of timber. The top of the sledge was composed of crosspieces each about four inches in width, which, with a quarter-inch space between them, were secured to the runner by sealskin thongs passing through holes bored in the crosspieces and through the upper side of the runners. The ends of the crosspieces extended a little beyond the runners on each side, the corners rounded and the ends notched on each side of both ends to permit the passing of a line around them to aid in lashing the load in place. The runners were shod with thin strips of whalebone polished to a glossy smoothness. Not a nail or screw was used in the construction of the komatik, for iron, contracting in the arctic cold of midwinter, would quickly have worked loose in travel over rough ice.

Connecting the runners in front was a slack sealskin thong. To the center of this was attached one end of another thong about eight feet in length, called the "bridle." At the free end of the bridle was a loop. Attached to the harness of each dog was a single individual trace, also of sealskin. The end of each dog's trace was passed through the loop in the bridle and securely tied.

The traces were of varying length, that of “Captain,” the leader, being the longest that he might keep a position in advance. The traces of the next two dogs were a little shorter, and those of each pair behind a little shorter than those of the preceding pair, with the traces of the pair nearest the komatik shortest of all. Thus in traveling the team spread out in fan shape, according to the Eskimo method of harnessing dogs, which these men of The Labrador cling to to this day, preferring it to the white man’s tandem method used in Alaska.

Jim came out with the assistance of Doctor Joe and Billy to take his place on the sledge. He had never before seen dogs in harness, though he was familiar with illustrations of Alaskan teams traveling tandem. After greeting Peter, curiosity led him to ask an explanation.

“ ’Tis the way everybody harnesses un,” said Peter. “If a dog’s a bit lazy his trace hangs slack and I touches he up with the tip o’ the whip to make he spry. ’Tis wrong I’m thinkin’ for any o’ the dogs to loaf while the others pulls and leave the pullin’ to the others. We has no use for a dog that don’t pull his part.”

“Just as it is with a scout troop,” remarked Doctor Joe. “It’s team work with every fellow doing his share of the pulling that makes things move. That’s the reason I’m so proud of my troop. I haven’t a slacker or a lazy one in it.”

“How’s the footin’ for the dogs?” asked David, who, with Andy’s assistance, was lashing the duffle in place on the komatik.

“Wonderful fine,” answered Peter. “I never saw un better, except in the spring when we gets a freeze-up after the first mild.”

On the rear end of the komatik Peter had lashed what he called a “traveling box.” It had a bottom, a high back and low sides, and into this Jim was tucked and wrapped in blankets, with a caribou skin over his feet and legs.

“We uses un, sir, when we takes the women cruisin’,” explained Peter. “I were thinkin’ ’twould be fine for you, not usin’ your feet yet.”

“Thank you for your thoughtfulness,” Jim acknowledged gratefully. “You’re all too kind to me.”

Lige Sparks, Obadiah Button and Seth Muggs were to return to their homes, and as they shook hands with the sledge party Jim again thanked them for their part in his rescue.

“ ’Twere fine we were handy so we could do un, sir,” said Obadiah.

“Yes,” agreed Jim, “but people don’t always do the fine things they might do, especially when it calls for hardship or sacrifice on their part.”

“Break her loose, Peter, we’re ready,” directed Doctor Joe.

The dogs were already on their feet, jumping in their traces and howling in their eagerness to be off. Peter seized the front of the komatik, pulled it smartly toward him, and shouted:

“Oo-isht! Oo-isht!”

The runners, which had been frozen to the snow, were released by Peter’s pull, and the dogs, at his call, started forward at a mad run, while Doctor Joe, David and Andy jumped upon the swaying sledge, and Peter, with a firm grasp upon the runners in front, and half running, half lying upon the komatik pulled it this way or pushed it that, to avoid obstructions, shouting at the same time:

“Ouk! Ouk! Ouk!”

This meant “turn to the right,” and Captain, leading at a gallop, swerved to the right and guided the pack out upon the smooth ice of the bay.

Now upon their journey the dogs settled down to a sober trot, and David and Andy and Doctor Joe left the sledge, to lighten the load and to keep themselves warm running by the side. One or the other would ride now and again for a short distance, while Peter, giving his attention to the dogs, sometimes rode and sometimes ran. Jim, confined to the traveling box on the sledge, wished that he, too, might join the others, for it is tedious and cold sitting for long upon a sledge.

The sky was blue, the air keen and cold, but clear as crystal. It was a stimulant, and Jim’s heart beat high with the adventure and the joy of life. Presently the sun arose over the snow-clad Mealy Mountains and lighted the ice field and the distant forest with its glorious brilliance. Grim and cold as it was, the world was beautiful, and Jim breathed a prayer of thanks that he had been spared to live and work in it and enjoy its beauty. It seemed to him that life had never held so much of pleasure and of promise as now. It is always so with one brought back to life who has looked over the brink into eternity, as Jim had looked.

Three hours brought them to the entrance to The Jug. As the dogs rounded the point that protected the little harbour, and the cabin fell into view, the dogs broke into a mad run with the komatik bouncing and swaying

whenever a runner came into contact with a bit of rough ice. Jim clung to his seat desperately, expecting every moment to be overturned. But Peter was a good driver, and they made the passage without accident.

"Rah-der!" shouted in quick succession a dozen times turned Captain to the left. They shot safely past the end of the snow-covered jetty and into the trail that led to the cabin, and a moment later came to a stop before the door. The Angus dogs were out to meet them, and Jamie, with a dog whip, vainly trying to drive them back, was shouting at the top of his voice. David ran forward to assist, and Peter with the butt of his whip as a club joined the tangle of fighting, snarling beasts, until presently the rival teams were separated and quiet restored without damage.

Margaret and Jamie had sighted the approaching komatik the moment it turned the point. Margaret was at the door to meet them, and though neither she nor Jamie had ever before seen Jim, they welcomed him quite as warmly as though he had been an old friend.

"I'm so glad you comes. 'Tis fine to have visitors," Margaret assured, as she bustled about when all were seated, preparing a pot of hot tea and a luncheon. "There, now, 'twill stay your hunger whilst I cooks dinner."

The cabin at The Jug was built of logs, and faced the south. The sun was cheerfully streaming through two front windows. These and another window in the rear were draped with snowy white muslin curtains. The room was simply and primitively furnished, but the home-made table, four home-made chairs, the chests which served both as storage places for clothing and as seats, and the uncarpeted floor were scoured clean and white with sand and soap, as was a closet where Margaret stored dishes and food.

A big box stove, which would accommodate great billets of wood, crackled cozily. A clock ticked cheerfully upon the shelf. At one side of the clock three polished brass candlesticks were arranged in a row, with candles ready for lighting. On the other side lay a Bible. Against the north wall and in the rear of the room was a commodious bunk built against the wall, resembling a ship's bunk, in front of which hung curtains, now draped back. In spite of its crude furnishings, an indescribable atmosphere of comfort pervaded the cabin.

Originally there was no other room than this and the enclosed lean-to porch or shed on the western end, which served both as a storm porch at the entrance and also for the storage of firewood, dog harness, and odds and ends. But when the children came Thomas Angus built an addition on the east end, which he partitioned into two rooms. One of these Margaret

occupied. The other, containing three built-in berths, was given over to the boys. The bed in the living room was occupied by Thomas when he was at home, and during his absence by Doctor Joe. It was now arranged that Jim should sleep in it, and Doctor Joe should use Andy's bed while Andy and Jamie should sleep together.

"Plenty of room," insisted Doctor Joe, when Jim protested that he would sleep on the floor in his sleeping bag. "You're an invalid and a guest."

"Andy and I likes to sleep together, sir," volunteered Jamie. "I likes un wonderful well, and we likes to have Doctor Joe sleep in our room."

"That settles it," declared Doctor Joe. "Now you can't object."

When dinner was eaten Peter left them to return home, and when he was gone they all gathered about the cheerful stove for a cozy afternoon, while Jim narrated his adventure, and Jamie asked no end of questions. Tears came into Margaret's sympathetic eyes when Doctor Joe and the boys described Jim's condition at the time they found him.

"You were havin' grit, now, sir!" exclaimed Jamie. "Grit and a stout heart, too, like Pop says a man must be havin' when he gets in hard places."

"Thank you," said Jim. "That's a compliment."

"I'm fearin' now somethin's been happenin' to Injun Jake, sir. He'd never been leavin' you whatever unless somethin' were happenin' to he," suggested Margaret anxiously.

"No," said Jamie positively, "he'd never been leavin' you, sir, *what*ever."

These good people were evidently all loyal friends of Indian Jake, and Jim decided never to hurt their feelings by criticizing the half-breed in their presence.

In the days that followed Jim recovered strength rapidly under the care of Margaret and Doctor Joe, and the unremitting attentions of Jamie. Jim had at once assumed the proportions of a hero in Jamie's eyes, and the lad never failed of an evening to demand a story from him. David and Andy, when they were not trapping, and Margaret, too, were tireless listeners to his tales of college life, and particularly his descriptions of hard-fought football and baseball contests in which he had taken part. He must needs describe the games to them, and how the games were played, with much detail.

In a week Doctor Joe permitted Jim to walk, and in ten days to go with Jamie when the lad visited his rabbit snares.

“You’re doing so nicely that I can leave you in the care of Margaret and Jamie now,” said Doctor Joe upon the occasion of Jim’s first outing with Jamie. “I must see every one around the bay before Christmas. Andy and I will leave in the morning. Are you game for it, Andy?”

“Aye, sir,” responded Andy eagerly. “ ’Twill be fine to go cruisin’.”

“I’ve been here ten days,” said Jim, “and McCarthy hasn’t appeared yet. If you’re going across the bay, would it be convenient for me to go with you? It is quite important that I see McCarthy and get matters straightened out over there.”

“McCarthy won’t be here for another three weeks,” laughed Doctor Joe. “I didn’t tell you before, but I sent him a line with yours explaining that you should have at least until Christmas for rest and recuperation before you would be in condition to take part in any logging camp activities. I advised him to postpone his visit until then. I had a premonition, from what I heard of your talk with Billy Hand, that you and McCarthy were to get together to plan a coup. You must be physically able before you get into any such mess as that will stir up.”

“I feel pretty able now,” protested Jim.

“Do you feel you are strong enough to meet one of those big lumberjacks, or possibly Dawes, for example, in a go?” asked Doctor Joe, with a twinkle in his eye.

“Well, no, not just yet,” admitted Jim, recalling Dawes’ powerful frame and bulldog face.

“From what I infer you are likely to have differences with him the day you and he meet,” said Doctor Joe. “Don’t go to the camp until you are sure you are ready. Dawes is no lamb in disposition, and he is pretty free with his fists and knows how to use them. He is a slugger, and a bad man with whom to have a controversy. I’ve been called over several times since he took the camps to patch up men with whom he’d had differences, or with whom he was displeased. He don’t argue with any one. He knocks them down, and then his favourite method is to kick them unmercifully while they are down.”

“It’s hard to wait so long, but I’m not in condition yet,” admitted Jim. “Perhaps you are right.”

“Yes, I’m right,” said Doctor Joe. “You’d better stay here and get more of your weight back, with Margaret to feed you and Jamie to help train you

out in the woods. He can run on snowshoes like a rabbit, and when you can stay with him on the trail your legs will be in better shape for foot work."

"Very well," agreed Jim, "I'll take your advice. It's so comfortable here I'll confess I don't care to leave."

Jim was himself no novice in the art of snowshoeing, and presently he and Jamie were taking long hunting trips together. His appetite was enormous, and his frame was daily filling out and returning to its normal proportions. With a well-nourished body he regained muscular vigour also. Twice every day he put himself through a routine of gymnastics and setting-up exercises. Jamie was keenly interested in this, and Jim invited him to join in the drill. He also gave Jamie lessons in boxing, and taught him footwork and guarding, and Jamie was so apt a pupil that Jim declared he would make a real boxer of the lad, of which Jamie was proud indeed.

Peter and Lige Sparks drove their dogs over one day and brought Jim a letter from McCarthy. In this letter he stated that he was happy to learn of Jim's escape.

Dawes, he stated, had taken the logs out of the boom before the freeze-up, and had saved them. He had established three new camps on Deep Creek, four miles to the westward of Grampus River. To these new camps the greater number of the new men had been transferred, leaving the old camps, Numbers One, Two and Three, manned chiefly by McCarthy's own men. The few that were left were spies, he had no doubt. Certainly they were not of much use in the logging operation. The only exceptions were millwrights and mechanics engaged, still, in the work of remodelling the mill.

In closing McCarthy announced that he would definitely arrive at The Jug on the day before New Year's day. After the usual custom that day, New Year's day and the day following would be holidays in the camp. He would bring his copy of the contract with him, and then Jim could decide what he wished done.

"He seems to be putting the whole thing up to me!" Jim exclaimed with some irritation. "If he would only read it he would find that his contract makes him a partner and requires him to manage the whole operation. I'd like to know what more he wants! He appears to be letting Dawes run things with a free hand, and don't even make a protest. But I suppose it's partly my fault. He wanted to depose Dawes last fall when I called at Camp Number One to see him, and I protested that we couldn't do it legally, because I

didn’t understand then the conditions and knew nothing about the contract. He’s standing on that, I suppose.”

But on the whole it was a most gratifying letter. Things were, apparently, not going so badly as he had expected. The new men and the thugs had, for the most part, been removed and segregated in camps by themselves, and even though they did little in the way of output, they must, of necessity, do something. With them away the old men would work better and more contentedly. And, if there were to be a fight to depose Dawes and reinstate McCarthy, matters could be handled to much better advantage with the factions in separate camps.

McCarthy would come at New Year’s! Jim was impatient for the day to arrive. He was now in such excellent physical condition that there could be no objection to his returning with McCarthy to the camps. They would meet Dawes and tell him what was what, and then they would see what would happen.

XX

A STARTLING REVELATION

Doctor Joe and Andy returned from their cruise one week before Christmas. Doctor Joe was amazed when he saw Jim, who was again almost the young giant he had been when he first came to The Labrador.

"You'll do for the logging camp," declared Doctor Joe. "You certainly look fit and as hard as nails. But even yet you had better keep out of a personal scrap with Dawes. He's a heavier man than you, his work has toughened him, and he knows how to fight, as I had occasion to observe when I was over there last week."

"He thinks I'm just a little college boy and won't do much work," Jim grinned. "He said so, and he inferred that he might even take me across his knee and spank me if I wasn't real good."

"He'd have an armful," Doctor Joe laughed. "But let me warn you, he's a bad man with whom to have trouble, and he *might* spank you, figuratively, pretty hard. So don't be too confident of yourself. You can't match him."

"I'm going to avoid trouble if I can," said Jim seriously, "but I'm going to stand back of McCarthy in his fight for his place as superintendent, and, after all, it's my fight, too. Perhaps Dawes will be reasonable when he hears the facts. I hope he will, but it's doubtful."

Jim had made one round of the trapping trail with David, but otherwise had not been absent from The Jug since his arrival, and when Doctor Joe announced a day or two after his return that he was leaving the following morning for a visit to the Hudson's Bay Company's post, and invited Jim to accompany him, Jim accepted eagerly.

It was Sunday, and David was at home. Andy volunteered to take a turn at David's traps, that David might visit the post also to make some necessary purchases.

"Margaret and Jamie might go along, too, for the cruise," suggested Doctor Joe. "How would you like to go, Margaret? You haven't been away from home for half a year, have you?"

" 'Tis half a year, whatever! I'd like wonderful well to go!" and Margaret's cheeks flushed with pleasure.

“Good! We’ll spend the night there, and come back the following day,” promised Doctor Joe.

“Girls where I come from,” said Jim, “would think they were buried alive if they had to keep so closely home. It’s a shame, Margaret, that you don’t get away oftener.”

“I don’t mind bidin’ home, sir, but ’tis fine to get away now and again.” Margaret smiled happily. “I were havin’ a cruise to Fort Pelican in the boat last summer. *That* were a wonderful fine cruise, sir.”

All day Margaret hustled and bustled about, getting the house tidy and making herself ready for her journey of twenty miles, and that night she was so excited at the prospect that she could scarcely sleep at all. And the following morning, when she was tucked snugly into the cruising box on David’s komatik, her cheeks were pink with pleasure.

It was near noon when they turned East Point, and the line of low white buildings of the post, snug and inviting, came into view. A half hour later David halted the dogs before the cottage of Zeke Hodge, the post servant, and Kate Hodge, his daughter, and Mrs. Hodge came out delighted to discover Margaret on the komatik, and to welcome and lead her within.

Mr. MacCreary, the factor, was in the shop, and when Doctor Joe and Jim presented themselves, and Jim was introduced, he invited them to join him at his residence, which was a rather more pretentious building than the others of the post.

“We’re going to spend the night with you,” said Doctor Joe, as they entered the factor’s comfortable little sitting room. “We’ve invited ourselves, and we hope you’ll find it convenient.”

“So much the better. I’m glad to have you at any time, and glad to make Mr. MacLean’s acquaintance,” Mr. MacCreary welcomed. “Make yourselves at home. Bachelor quarters, you know. No ceremony.”

During the afternoon Doctor Joe and Jim spent an hour in the store with Mr. MacCreary making purchases. Jamie came to join them, but Doctor Joe warned him away.

“This is a private foraging party. Be gone, you rascal!” and Doctor Joe assumed a severe look, at which Jamie laughed and departed.

“I want to get something for Margaret and the boys for Christmas,” he explained. “That lad is too curious.”

“It will be a fine chance for me to show a small part of my appreciation for all they’ve done for me,” said Jim. “I hadn’t given Christmas a thought. I’ve tried to pay David and Andy and Margaret separately, and not one of them could I induce to accept a cent of money, and even the suggestion seemed to hurt them.”

“Yes, give them each something,” agreed Doctor Joe. “They’ll appreciate it, though they expect nothing, and would not feel happy if they thought you gave it in way of payment, they’ll value it highly as a token of friendship.”

Jim entered into the spirit of the occasion, and when the two returned with Mr. MacCreary to the factor’s house, they carried several disguised and mysterious bundles. Jim suggested that they have a Christmas tree, and Doctor Joe accepted the suggestion as a good one that he was sure would prove a novelty to the young people.

That evening, after they had eaten and were chatting in the sitting room, and after he had drawn from Jim an account of his adventures, Mr. MacCreary suddenly turned to Jim with the question:

“Are you and your superintendent, Dawes, on good terms?”

“He’s not legally our superintendent,” answered Jim with asperity. “As soon as I get over to the camp that fellow will be relieved from duty. McCarthy is superintendent, or should be. I never met Dawes but once.”

“I simply wished to warn you that he is not loyal to you,” explained Mr. MacCreary. “I felt that you should understand his attitude.”

“What did he do particularly to suggest it?” asked Jim. “Do you mind telling me?”

“Not in the least,” answered Mr. MacCreary. “He was here a fortnight ago making purchases for the camp—”

“Purchases!” interjected Jim. “Don’t sell him a thing on the camp’s credit! No one but McCarthy has authority to buy for the camp. I have no authority myself. In two years I shall have, but Dawes hasn’t authority now and never will have.”

“I’m glad you warned me. He purchased heavily in flour, pork and other provisions and supplies for the new camps he has been building. He’s to have the goods hauled over after the New Year, and I’m holding them for him until he sends for them. With your warning he won’t get them without cash or McCarthy’s order.”

"That's good," Jim acknowledged with satisfaction.

"Referring to his disloyalty," resumed the factor, "it is rather personal than to the business, but a man disloyal to the owner of a business will not work for the best interests of the business. He has taken occasion to speak slightingly of you on several occasions when here, and when he made his last visit recently he said he had no doubt you had disposed of Indian Jake. When I asked him what he meant, he said you suspected Indian Jake of having murdered and robbed your father, and that you induced the half-breed to go into the country with you, and when you had him well out of reach had doubtless shot him in revenge.

"I had never met you, and had only heard second-hand through the natives a garbled account of your experiences, and he half induced me to believe his accusation, if I may call it such. Now that I've met you and heard your story at first hand, and knowing Indian Jake as I do, let me assure you, sir, that I have the utmost confidence in you and the truth of what you have told me."

"Thank you," acknowledged Jim gratefully.

"The worst of it is," continued Mr. MacCreary, "Dawes has poisoned the minds of the natives against you. They look upon you as a murderer. As much as they dislike Indian Jake, and in spite of the fact that they believe he was guilty of murdering and robbing your father, they are deeply prejudiced against you, and feel that you are in the same class with Indian Jake. They are afraid of you. The only exceptions to this, I understand, are the lads who were in your rescue party. They appear to be loyal to you and to have the utmost confidence in you.

"I understand that this feeling toward you has taken root among the lumberjacks. While some of them loyally defend you, and believe in your innocence, others of them denounce you boldly and openly, and threaten to quit work if you go into the camps. I've warned you of this that you may be on your guard."

Jim was stunned. While this was a condition that he had anticipated, the reality of its existence came to him as a decided shock. When he and Doctor Joe had retired to the room which they were to occupy in common, Doctor Joe attempted to cheer Jim and to make little of what the factor had told him.

"Don't let it worry you, Jim," he counselled. "I heard it when on my cruise. You should have heard Andy Angus defend you in nearly every cabin where we stopped, and all of my scouts are standing behind you loyally, and

they have influence. None of the Angus family will believe a thing against you, and they are about the only friends Indian Jake ever had in the bay.

"I visited the lumber camps to look after two or three cases that required attention, and one of them was a man McCarthy had pounded unmercifully because of a remark concerning you such as MacCreary spoke of. It is only because he does not want to precipitate trouble, he told me, until you gave the word, that he hasn't taken Dawes in hand and settled him. He's loyal to the last ditch, and I believe all of his old men are also. It is only among the new men Dawes brought in last summer that any of the feeling toward you or disbelief in you exists, and I am sure that in most cases it is feigned for effect, and to back up Dawes."

"But every one at home will believe it," said Jim dejectedly. "Dawes and Jagger will see to that. I can't prove my case. My old friends will hear the story and shun me as a man with hands stained by human blood!"

"But your conscience is clear. That's the big thing after all. No friend will believe it that is worthy of your friendship. Don't worry about that."

"And it will make my work in the camp almost impossible. How can I work side by side, day after day, with men that believe that of me?"

"Don't cross bridges till you come to them," counselled Doctor Joe. "I doubt if there is one of your old lumberjacks that believes it, even if the new ones do, or pretend to."

But hope had gone out of Jim's heart. He was sure that he was forever to be marked as a murderer, and the thought steeped his soul in bitterness and resentment against the world.

XXI

PREPARING FOR BATTLE

It was late when Jim fell asleep to dream that the whole world had placed him in coventry. No one spoke to him. Everyone avoided him except Dawes. Wherever he turned he saw Dawes' bulldog face transformed into that of a demon and wearing a demoniac grin. It followed him, mocking and deriding him.

Suddenly Jim awoke from his horrid dream to hear Doctor Joe moving about the room and singing in a low tenor voice:

"Old Worry's my foe, and he always brings woe,
And he follows about wherever I go.
He's always on hand, and he makes the world blue,
And all about troubles that never come true.

"The worst of my foes are worries and woes,
And all about troubles that never come true—
And all about troubles that never come true.
The worst of my troubles are worries and woes,
And all about troubles that never come true.

"I'll put them behind me, and be a real man,
And I'll smile and be cheerful, as anyone can;
For it's foolish to fret, and worry, and stew,
And all about troubles that never come true."

It was morning, though still dark, and Doctor Joe was dressing by candle-light. Jim lay watching him while he sang, and when he ceased, sat up in bed.

"Good morning, Jim," Doctor Joe greeted cheerily. "Did I wake you with my noise? I should have been more careful."

"I'm glad you did," said Jim. "I was having a nightmare, and your singing saved my life."

"There's no hurry about getting up," suggested Doctor Joe, "but I came to at the usual hour, and started a fire in the stove and didn't go back."

"What time do they have breakfast here?"

“Not till daylight. You have a full hour yet. I’m going to get David to take a run up with me to a cabin just above the post to see how a woman with a houseful of youngsters is getting on while her man is away trapping. Some of them are usually ailing. I’ll be back at break o’ day.”

“All right. I won’t hurry then.”

Doctor Joe went out whistling the refrain of his song, and Jim settled down in bed again to think over the revelation of the evening before.

“That song is all right,” said he, rising with the first hint of dawn, “but I’m not worrying about troubles that never come true. My troubles have arrived sure enough, and plenty of them, too. But I’ll have to keep my worry under my hat. If I show it, Margaret and the boys and everybody else will think I really did kill Indian Jake, and that I’m worrying because I’m afraid I’m found out. They’ll never be able to understand my point of view.”

With this resolution he made his toilet and went down to breakfast.

It was a cold journey back that afternoon. The sky was heavily clouded, a keen northeast wind blew down to meet them, and snow began to fall as they turned in at The Jug.

“Just in time,” said Doctor Joe. “We’re due for an old snorter of a blizzard.”

Andy had not returned from the trail and the cabin was cold. Doctor Joe kindled and lighted a fire in the stove, while David and Jamie fed the dogs and Jim carried in the bundles. In a little while the room was warm, and when the candle was lighted, Jim thought it a haven of rest and shelter. Here in this little isolated cabin in the wilderness none looked at him with eyes askance, as he was sure everyone in the world he had always known would do henceforth. How could he ever go back there, and live the life of an outcast! His pill of bitterness was tinctured with self-pity. It is never well for one’s peace of mind or happiness to permit one’s self to descend to self-pity.

Margaret was bubbling over with the joy of her little cruise. What a small thing made her happy, Jim thought, watching her glowing, smiling face, as she moved quickly about preparing the evening meal and chattering gaily of the gossip she had heard of the folk of the bay. No doubt she had heard gossip enough about himself! But she gave no sign of it, and for this he was grateful. And she talked with him, as she did to Doctor Joe, quite as though he were one of them, and as interested in it all as she was herself.

“ ’Twill be a nasty night, a wonderful nasty night,” David observed as he and Jamie entered and drew off their adikeys.

" 'Tis time Andy were back an hour ago," said Margaret. "I'm wonderin' what keeps he."

"I were thinkin' o' that." David hung his adikey upon a peg. "Andy leaves yesterday marnin' before we starts for the post. He were countin' on makin' the far tilt before dark, and sayin' he'd be home and have the fire on and the kettle bilin' before we gets home this evenin'."

"Andy's all right," broke in Jamie. "He's fine on the trail. He's not fearin' to travel in the dark. Andy has plenty o' grit, and a stout heart like a man's."

"Grit!" thought Jim. "That's the thing that wins—grit and a stout heart like a man's—a *man's* heart. I've got to have grit and face the world with a stout heart, and fight for my place in it, and for success, so long as I keep my hands clean and my conscience clear. I'll try to brace up, and have grit and a stout heart, and rise above innuendo and slander."

Andy arrived presently with his flatsled loaded with venison.

"I knocked un over by Long Mesh this marnin'," he explained. "It were takin' quite a spell to skin and dress un, and with a heavy load 'twere slow travelin'."

As David and Doctor Joe had predicted, the worst storm of the season raged for three days and nights. It was well, perhaps, for Jim, that the storm came at this time. It confined everyone to the house, and the lads gave him no opportunity to brood and moon over his troubles. While the wind howled and shrieked about the house, and beat the snow against the window-panes, they sat in a circle, warm and snug, around the stove. And while Margaret sewed, and the lads busied themselves mending dog harness and webbing snowshoes, Doctor Joe and Jim told them stories of the great world outside.

On the afternoon of Christmas eve the sky cleared, and Jim went out and cut a suitable Christmas tree. This he secreted behind the cabin, and when all had retired but himself and Doctor Joe he brought it in, and the two set it up and trimmed it with streamers and loops of coloured ribbons purchased for the purpose at the post store. Then they went out, and in the moonlight broke spruce and balsam branches with which they decorated the living room walls and overhead beams, introducing colour through the use of red ribbons. When this was completed to their satisfaction they placed the packages of gifts, which they had purchased at the store, beneath the tree.

The two conspirators were the first out of bed on Christmas morning. When David presently appeared to light the fire, as was his custom, he was

greeted by a warm room and a cheerfully crackling fire. He opened his eyes in amazement. He did not know the place, and could scarce believe his senses. Then came Andy and Jamie and Margaret. Every one of them exclaiming with delight. Tears of happiness stood in Margaret's eyes, as she said:

" 'Tis *so* pretty! I never saw anything so pretty before! I just loves un!"

"It's Jim's idea," laughed Doctor Joe. "He wanted to do it. I never would have thought of such a thing."

"No," said Jim, "it's my mother's idea. She always had a Christmas tree, and trimmed the house with evergreens for me, while she lived. Dad never had the heart to do it after she left us. I wanted my pal here to have a Christmas tree like I used to have," and he put his big hand on Jamie's shoulder, "and for all of you. I was selfish, too, perhaps, for I wanted it for myself in memory of my mother."

Jamie's arm stole around Jim and squeezed an appreciation, and all of them thanked him. But that little squeeze Jamie gave him went to his heart, and did more than anything else that day to make him forget his troubles. No matter what others said of him this lad and these people believed no ill of him.

" 'Tis so wonderful fine lookin' I just wants to stand and look at un all the time," Margaret declared.

"After breakfast," suggested Doctor Joe, "we'll see what is in those bundles. Jim and I are famished."

"Coffee this morning!" exclaimed Jim. "I found that Mr. MacCreary had a stock for his own private use, and I induced him to let me have some of it. I'll make the coffee myself."

That was a luxury, as was also the condensed milk Jim brought forth, and orange marmalade produced by Doctor Joe. Andy brought in some caribou steaks, and as Jim declared as he drank his fourth cup of strong coffee, it was a breakfast fit for a king.

Then they gathered around the tree while Doctor Joe played Santa Claus, and handed out the packages. From Jim there was a double barreled shotgun for David and one for Andy, and a forty-four carbine for Jamie, and a watch for Margaret, and candies and raisins for everybody. Doctor Joe's gifts were all of clothing, including a fine woolen sweater for Margaret. Then Margaret presented Jim and Doctor Joe and each of the boys, without discrimination, with bead-embroidered moccasins that she had made with her own hands.

For dinner there were two roast geese, which David had shot late in the fall, and kept frozen and fresh. And there was a great plum pudding made by Margaret from ingredients purchased at the post store by Doctor Joe. And after dinner was cleared away, a cozy gathering around the stove while Doctor Joe read aloud Dickens' "Christmas Carol," which he had among his books.

Christmas day and the companionship of the days preceding it were a boon to Jim. They led him away from his thoughts and deadened the first blow of his trouble. Neither Margaret nor any of the boys so much as hinted, by word or action, that they were aware of the suspicion that Dawes had created against him in the community.

On New Year's eve there was to be dancing at the Hudson's Bay Company's post, and on New Year's day shooting matches and games and dancing in the evening. Many of the trappers who had entered the wilderness in early fall were to return at this time to visit their families and to barter pelts for fresh supplies. David and Andy were planning to go to the festivities, and after some persuasion, Margaret, too, consented to join them and take Jamie, though Margaret declared that she felt as though she was doing too much "gaddin' about." Jim was glad to have none but Doctor Joe there when McCarthy should arrive, and he was relieved when Margaret and the boys departed early on the morning of the last day of December. He was torn with anxiety as to the influence that Dawes' stories might actually have had upon the camp, and particularly upon McCarthy.

It was near noon, and Doctor Joe was preparing caribou steaks to cook for dinner, and Jim, who had mixed biscuits with Doctor Joe's help, was placing the biscuits in the oven to bake, when Peter and Lige Sparks drove their dogs up to the door with McCarthy as a passenger.

"You're just in time," greeted Jim, meeting them at the door. "Pat, there's no one in the world that I'd rather see just now than you, and it has required patience to wait for you."

"And it's yezself I'm just as glad to see!" exclaimed McCarthy, grasping Jim's hand in a hearty greeting. "And I'm overjoyed to see the fine caribou meat the Docther there do be gettin' ready to cook. Give me yez hand, Docther, and the saints help yez if yez don't cook enough for ten min. I haven't seen the loikes o' that caribou meat the whole winther, and I'm starvin' for a bit o' fresh meat. Put plenty o' fat with it, Docther."

"We'll try to satisfy you," laughed Doctor Joe, as he shook McCarthy's hand.

“There’s no wondther the lad here do be lookin’ so foin and fit with such eatin’,” McCarthy remarked, as he drew off his adikey. “Jim, me b’y, ’tis good for sore eyes to see yez. I was expectin’ from what Billy Hand tould me to find yez thin as a cedar pole and walkin’ with a stick, and here yez be as big and spry as ever.”

“They’re taking good care of me over here, Pat.”

“Yez look it, b’y, ivery inch of yez. Now I’m goin’ to have a real shmoke. It’s so could travelin’ that me pipe froze up whin I thried to shmoke, and I’ve had nary a whiff since I left the store this marnin’.”

McCarthy filled his pipe with tobacco that he shaved with his jackknife from a black plug, and settled back comfortably to smoke and chat. Jim felt decidedly relieved. Whatever the others might think of him, McCarthy evidently had not lost faith in him.

Peter and Lige came in after settling the dogs outside, and when they had hung up their adikeys and washed their hands, assisted, at Doctor Joe’s suggestion, in setting the table while he cooked the meat and Jim made a pot of coffee. And when they had eaten, Peter announced:

“Lige and me’ll be cruisin’ on now to the post, Mr. McCarthy, and you’re not needin’ us, sir. We’ll be comin’ back the marnin’ after New Year’s.”

“Go on, lads, and have a good time,” agreed McCarthy. “Shake a heel with the gurruls to-night. ’Twill do yez both good. I’m goin’ to settle down here meself and enjoy all the comforts of home as long as the Docther and Jim’ll let me.”

“I think I’ll take a run over to Break Cove,” Doctor Joe announced when the Sparks boys had gone. “You two are to have a business conference, I believe, and you won’t need me.”

“Don’t go because of that,” Jim hastened to assure. “You’ll not interfere in the least. Neither of us will mind your hearing all we have to say.”

“Some medicines and bandages over there that I need,” said Doctor Joe, drawing on his adikey. “It is kind of you to ask me to stay, but it is really necessary that I go.”

“When will you be back?” asked Jim, as Doctor Joe was passing out of the door.

“In two or three hours. I’ll be back in time to eat.”

"Do!" urged McCarthy. "I'll be wantin' yez to cook me some more of that foin deer's meat."

"All right," laughed Doctor Joe. "You may depend upon me and the deer's meat."

"I've heard that Dawes is spreading a story that I shot Indian Jake," said Jim, when the door closed upon Doctor Joe. "Of course he's invented the story to suit his end, and it is wholly untrue. But I would like to know if he has made our men believe it?"

"Not wan of thim believes it," assured McCarthy. "Not wan of our min, though some of those toughs of his own are sayin' they do. Our min all say Indian Jake skedoodled and left yez, though 'tis me own feelin' an accident overtook him. Don't worry about that story, Jim. Now about the conthract."

"Did you bring the contract with you?" asked Jim.

" 'Tis just a conthract for wurruk, for wages and a twinty per cent bonus, with the parthy of the first part and the parthy of the second part, and the saids and aforesaids schprinkled through it," said McCarthy, drawing it from his pocket and handing it to Jim.

"Don't you realize that you're a partner in the business?" asked Jim, when he had read the agreement through.

"Something of the koind," answered McCarthy, a bit reluctantly, Jim thought. "But what help is that to the likes o' me? Jagger is a lawyer, and he wrote that Misther MacLean's will put him in full charge of the operation, and he was makin' Dawes superintindent in me place."

"But that contract makes you a partner, and don't you see," Jim emphasized a little impatiently, "it states definitely that Jagger has nothing to do with the operation aside from his trusteeship of the fund. He cannot draw on that fund except to pay your drafts and vouchers. He cannot hire or fire a man. He does not even have the marketing of the lumber you turn out. Captain Dobbs has that in charge. All Jagger can do is deposit money in the fund received from Captain Dobbs or other sources, and pay out money on voucher or your draft."

"Jagger do be writin' me the will changed all that," insisted McCarthy, "and here's the letter."

"The will couldn't change it," said Jim, reading the letter. "Jagger doesn't appear by this letter to know the terms of the contract, except that you are employed under contract for two years. And even if he did know

about it, that would make no difference. A contract is a contract, and a will cannot alter or change it."

"Misther MacLean were givin' me a conthract before I came here. Misther Jagger drew it for him. This wan was made to take its place," McCarthy explained. "It says here in it that all other conthracts are cancelled, and that means the old wan I had."

"Then Jagger didn't know about this one?" asked Jim.

"Misther MacLean brought this wan whin he came in the summer. I came a month ahead of him, and had the first wan before I came. I thought it was Jagger drew this wan the same as he drew the first wan."

"Evidently not," said Jim. "If he did, he's trying to bluff you. Now what are you going to do about it, Pat?"

"I'll do just what yez wants me to do, Jim. I do be tellin' yez what I want to do before yez were goin' in the counthry with Indian Jake. I wanted to start in by breakin' the head of Dawes by way of beginnin'. 'Twas yezself, Jim, tould me to be patient, and the likes of me patience iver since was niver equalled by Job. The operation is to be comin' to yezself when yez come of age, and I'd not be doin' annything now that would not be suitin' yez. That's why I didn't fire Dawes out, as was me right. It'll mean fightin' and riskin' disthruction of property.

"If yez be willin' now to risk that, and gettin' into a bit of a scrap yezself, Jim, to get the rights due yez, I'll be wan happy man and start the proceedin's with joy. But if yez want Dawes to hould on for the sake of not makin' throuble, I'll start nothing and I'll keep me hands off."

"Now that I know we're in the right, I want you to go to it. You are superintendent here by your right under the contract. I'm willing to risk any destruction of property that may take place. If we don't do something Jagger will run the property in debt and force a sale and buy it in for himself. I'd rather have it all destroyed than let him get it. I'm with you, Pat."

"The saints be praised! Put it there!" exclaimed Pat, jumping up and seizing Jim's hand. "I'm proud of yez, Jim! That's what I've been hopin' I'd be hearin' from yez iver since yez came to The Labrador! And here I was thinkin' that maybe yez hadn't the grit to stand and fight for the rights that belong to yez! James MacLean would be proud of his son. I was misjudgin' yez, Jim."

McCarthy walked the length of the room and back, and sat down laughing.

“I do be laughin’, Jim, at the way we’ll surprise Dawes. Will yez go back with me, Jim, and see the fun start?”

“Of course I will! And here I’ve been thinking you’d lost your grip on things, Pat, because you let Dawes in.”

“We’re quits now, lad! I was thinkin’ ’twas yezself had no grit! We’re quits on it, Jim. Now let me tell yez about the new camp, Jim. ’Tis just beyond our lines, and no claims were iver filed by us on Deep Creek, though we had thim surveyed intindin’ to file claims for thim later. Dawes knows it. He’s layin’ his durthy plans to spind the money, and have no lumber for Captain Dobbs to take out for income. We’ll start the mill sawin’, and we’ll pay Dawes and his gang niver wan cint of wages. We’ll make Jagger pay thim himself for his durthy wurruk.”

Again Jim referred to the accusation Dawes had made against him.

“Put it out of yez head, Jim. No wan at home will iver believe Jim MacLean is guilty of murther. Mark me wurrud for that, Jim,” assured McCarthy. “And I’m not worryin’ about Indian Jake. ’Twould be hard for a storm to get the best of him, and he’ll be comin’ out safe. He niver left yez unless throuble came to him, though. If he were drownded, the saints rist his soul. If he’s livin’ and comes out, he’ll have a fair explanation.”

“I can’t help believing that everybody in Labrador except my few friends here believes I killed him. But I’m decided to let that take care of itself. There’ll be enough else for us to think about. We’re going to have a little war on our hands. I must find the cave, too, and those papers, as soon as possible.”

“No wan could iver find that cave now,” suggested McCarthy. “The intrance would be covered with snow and too well hidden. Whin the snow goes off yez might have a look. Wait till then.”

“Perhaps you’re right,” agreed Jim.

“Whin the lads come back with the dogs day afther to-morrow, we’ll both cross to the store, and we’ll find Dawes there, and we’ll show him who’s superintindent of our operation.”

“Will he back down when we explain about the contract?” asked Jim.

“Niver a back! He’ll niver back an inch,” asserted McCarthy with a grin. “He’s a thug and a fighter, but I’m a bit of a fighter meself whin’ it comes to that.”

“How did you tell me last fall that we compare as to the number of men we can depend upon to stand by us with those Dawes has?”

“He do be havin’ forty-two min, not countin’ himself, to our thirty, not countin’ me and yezself and Billy Hand.”

“We’ve quite a handicap.” Jim looked troubled. “What if they get the best of it?”

“I niver throubles throuble till throuble throubles me,” quoted McCarthy. “ ’Twill be a beautiful fight, and I’m itchin’ to get into it.”

XXII

THE CHALLENGE

They heard Doctor Joe, singing as he approached, and a moment later he entered.

"Frosty out," he said, as he removed his adikey, and standing by the stove picked the ice from his beard. "Forty below. It'll be fifty by morning. You fellows look as though you're enjoying yourselves."

"The foinest afthernoon I've spint the whole winther," declared McCarthy, removing his pipe from between his teeth. "Jim here and meself have been plannin' a bit of a scrap, and the thought of it fills me heart with joy."

"Planning work for me!" Doctor Joe laughed. "A scrap betokens broken heads to be mended, but if it's in a good cause I'll gladly mend the broken heads. My walk gave me an appetite. Light a candle, Jim, and we'll boil the kettle and have a cup of tea."

"May the saints iver bless yez, Docther," Pat grinned. "Me own insides do be needin' renewed nourishment too, but I'm so retirin' and timid in me disposition I was too bashful to ask for annything to eat. I haven't done wan turn of exercise this whole afthernoon, but talk with Jim here, if that may be called exercise, but me stummik do be cryin' for food. May I ask now, is this cup o' tea designed to get me mind off the deer's meat? If it is, I give yez fair warnin' 'twill niver succeed."

"Not at all! Not at all!" Doctor Joe assured, laughing. "You shall have all the deer's meat you can eat. I'll have to cook some to satisfy my own craving for substantial food. I'll put a piece in the oven to roast."

"Ah-h!" Pat lay back his head and closed his eyes ecstatically. "I do be schmellin' and tastin' it now! If we only had some potaters to go with it, biled with the jackets on, we'd be havin' a feast fit for the Prisident. All the potaters we had at the camp were gone a month ago, and since then it's been pork and beans and salt horse three times a day, and niver a schmell o' cabbage to go with the salt horse, which is not right or befittin' the grub that gintlemin should eat. Next fall I'll have Captain Dobbs bring in wan full cargo of potaters and cabbage."

The roast venison, which came in due time, was quite equal to Pat's expectations. The evening with Doctor Joe and McCarthy was a particularly pleasant one for Jim, and the world and his future looked brighter to him when he went to bed that night.

An hour before noon on the day after New Year's day David and Peter appeared with their dog teams, bringing Margaret and the boys. They were all excited and happy. There had been dancing at night, and sports for the boys during the day. David had won a snowshoe race, and a pair of Indian-made snowshoes as the prize, offered by Mr. MacCreary.

Jim had already packed his duffle and completed his preparations for departure to the lumber camp, and immediately after dinner Peter and Lige made their sledge ready, and Jim's bags were carried out and lashed into place.

" 'Twill be wonderful lonely when you goes, sir," said Margaret, when Jim was ready and offered her his hand.

"I haven't words to thank you and Doctor Joe and the boys, Margaret, for all the fine things you've done for me," said Jim feelingly. "I came here a stranger, and sick. You all accepted me as one of your family. You nursed and fed me. But best of all, you made me feel that this was home, and I shall always think of it as my Labrador home. I'm going to miss you all, and the home life here, more than you can possibly miss me. I wish I might do something in return for all you have done for me."

" 'Twere fine to have you here. Come whenever you finds a chance and make un your home," said David, and they all echoed the invitation.

"We'll see you soon," Doctor Joe assured. "Andy and I will be over to your camp to mend broken heads, and we may have to bring you back with us."

"The foin cookin', I'll promise, will be bringin' Jim back, and I'll be comin' with him to share it," suggested McCarthy. "Margaret, lass, yez sure do be a foin cook, and Docther Joe only wan lap behind yez."

"I'd rather come back to enjoy Margaret's cooking than to have my head mended by Doctor Joe," laughed Jim, as they went out followed by the whole family to say a final farewell and see them off.

The day was stinging cold, but clear and beautiful. The snow was hard-packed upon the ice, and the dogs jogged along at a good gait, but the days were short, and darkness had settled before they turned into Grampus Cove. Lights flickered in the windows of the store and the bunk and cook house. It

seemed a long time to Jim since the night when the *Gray Goose* anchored in the now frozen harbour and he first met Indian Jake. What a flood of experience had been his since then!

But there was no time for retrospection. The dogs saw the lights, and with usual eagerness upon approaching a building, broke into a run, and Jim scrambled to a place on the komatik.

Billy was overjoyed to welcome Jim. He was expecting them, and at the howl of the dogs as they galloped up before the store he swung open the door.

"I'm sure glad to see you, Jim!" he exclaimed, as the travelers entered. "I never saw you lookin' so fit, either. You've got back most all you lost on the trip into the country, too. How be your feet?"

"Fine!" said Jim. "They're as well as ever. Is Dawes around?"

"Yes, he was in here a spell ago. Kind of cranky to-day. I guess he's over in the bunk house. What you goin' to say to him?"

"Not much," Jim grinned, "and Pat will say what little there is to say."

"I'm just bilin' the kettle in my quarters. You fellers come in there and have a cup o' tea and a snack to stay you. It's only four o'clock, and supper won't be ready in the cook house till six. It'll get you warmed up and feelin' better before you meet Dawes. I want to go along, too, and see what's goin' on."

"That's an illigint idea, now," agreed McCarthy. "We'll shtay for the tea, Jim, and the snack, and thin we'll all go over and have our conference with Dawes, and wan of us, Dawes or me, will have a foine time, and me opinion is Dawes will be cranky in body as well as in mind whin we're through our conference."

"The tea'll be ready right off," promised Billy.

Peter and Lige, anxious to reach their home, which was a half-hour's drive with the dogs beyond the mill, bade the others good evening and departed. Then the three had their tea and snack, while Jim and McCarthy enlightened Billy as to their proposed course of action. Billy was delighted that, at last, McCarthy was again to assume control of the operation. He was so delighted, indeed, that he sprang up from the table and danced a jig, and slapped McCarthy with a big hand.

"I'm right with you, boss!" he exclaimed. "All of us old men have been hopin' we could help to stop the waste, and get things goin' right again."

“Now that Jim has said the wurrud we’ll do it,” grinned McCarthy. “I’ve been only waitin’ for Jim to tell me.”

“It’s nearly five o’clock. Suppose we go over,” suggested Jim.

“I’m sayin’ the same,” and McCarthy arose.

The three filed out, and following the path to the bunk house, a hundred yards to the westward, entered the long, low building. A dozen men were lounging around the stove, smoking, while they awaited the cook’s call to supper. All of them were new hands brought in by Dawes the previous summer. They were millwrights, or other skilled mill workers, and on the whole superior to the lumberjacks whom Jim had observed on the steamer.

“Hello, Pat,” one of them greeted. “I thought you were up at Number Three?”

“Sometimes I do be there and sometimes I ain’t,” answered McCarthy. “Where’s Dawes?”

“In the kitchen,” said the man. “It’s warmer there than it is here, and he likes to keep warm and mingle with his own society.”

At that moment the door leading to the kitchen opened and Dawes himself appeared in the doorway. As his eyes fell upon Jim his face broke into the unpleasant, mocking smile that Jim had observed when he met him on the deck of the *Gray Goose*.

“Got back, did you, young feller? Had quite a lay-off,” he greeted. “Ready to go to work now?”

“That’s what I’m here for,” said Jim.

“Did your job all right with Indian Jake, I hear. Fine place back in the mountains for them jobs. Nobody ever finds any corpses left up there.” Dawes moved down into the room.

“What do you mean to insinuate?” asked Jim, his face flushing.

“Oh, you know well enough what I mean.” Dawes winked, while the grin continued.

“If you mean to insinuate that I did any harm to Indian Jake,” exclaimed Jim, “it’s false, and you know it’s false! I’ve heard something of the stories you’ve been circulating, and they must stop.”

“That’s just what I insinuate,” grinned Dawes. “I guess I’m about right in sayin’ it too, and I don’t take ‘must’ from any man.”

“You know when you say it,” Jim’s voice was tense, “that it is untrue! You are deliberately saying what you know is false!”

“I don’t take that from any man neither that’s workin’ for me or from anybody else!” Dawes glared at Jim angrily. “I’m goin’ to give you the worst lickin’ you ever had, young feller, for sayin’ it. And just because you won’t be in any condition to hear what I’ve got to say when I get through lickin’ you, I’ll tell you now that you ain’t goin’ to work on this operation, and the sooner you get out of camp the healthier it’ll be for you.”

Jim had recovered his composure, and looking Dawes in the eye, smiled defiance. Then Dawes, like a blast from a cyclone, hurled himself at Jim. The men at the stove sprang to their feet. McCarthy and Billy stepped forward to interfere. Dawes struck for Jim’s face, and simultaneously came the sharp spat of a fist in contact with flesh.

XXIII

THE FIGHT IN THE BUNK HOUSE

It all occurred so quickly that not a man there could have told how it came about. Every one expected to see Jim crumpled under the sledgehammer blow dealt by Dawes. But there Jim stood, while Dawes was stretched upon the floor. Dawes had aimed his fist at Jim's face, and the aim had apparently been straight enough; but Jim's face was not where it should have been, or where Dawes expected it would be, when the fist arrived, and Jim's left, in a lightning uppercut, had caught Dawes on the chin.

The men around the stove were talking wildly. Billy, who was aware of Jim's ability as a boxer, grinned with satisfaction. McCarthy, quite beside himself with excitement, was shouting at Jim, as though Jim were deaf, though he stood at his elbow:

"Let me finish him, lad! It's me own job, lad! Give me a whack at the durthy thug!"

"Keep out of this, Pat!" Jim warned.

"Finish him up! Give him all he's been afther! He was sphoilin' for a fight! Give him his belly full! If yez can't do it I will! 'Tis yez own fight, but let me at him!" yelled McCarthy wildly.

"When he's on his feet and ready I'll take care of him alone, unless he's had enough," said Jim, quietly. "This is my fight."

It would have been lumberjack tactics for him to have followed up his advantage by pummelling Dawes while he was down. But Jim's ethics in the ring demanded that his opponent be on his feet in a position of defence, before he should attempt to strike again.

Men like fair play. Even the most depraved admire courage. When Jim knocked Dawes down, he, as well as McCarthy and Billy, expected that Dawes' men would attack them. But while they were men that Dawes had employed, they were artisans, quite superior to the gang of thugs Jagger had sent to the woods as lumberjacks. They were men trained in a rough school, but they were men of honour.

Jim had fearlessly faced Dawes, who every man in the camp, save McCarthy, feared. When he knocked Dawes down he did not take advantage

of the fact by beating him while he was down. Here was fair play and courage. By a single stroke, Jim had won the respect and admiration of them all, and with one accord they kept their hands off.

Dawes, bellowing like an angry bull, was up, and like a wild animal he hurled his great body at Jim again. Every one expected Jim to be swept down by the rush. McCarthy, quivering with emotion, both fists clenched, held himself in leash with the greatest effort. Billy was hopping about excitedly, yelling at Jim: "Give it to him! Give him the left hook!" In spite of Jim's size, Dawes had decidedly the advantage of weight, and his life in the lumber woods had made him as hard as iron.

But again Jim was not where Dawes expected he would be, and a straight right, delivered on Dawes' mouth, stopped a fluent flow of oaths, and caused Dawes to spit out two teeth. Dawes was a slugger, who fought by the force of weight and strength. He knew nothing of guarding, and depended upon his cyclonic rushes to overcome his opponent.

"Make her a square fight for a knock-out!" suggested one of Dawes' men, while Dawes occupied himself spitting blood. "Pat, you be referee. I'll be your second, Mr. Dawes, and Billy you be second for the kid."

"That suits me," said Jim, turning toward the man.

Dawes saw Jim turn, and an opening. Quick as a cat, he struck at Jim's head. Jim caught the movement out of the corner of his eye, and ducked, but he was too late to wholly miss the blow. Dawes' right caught the top of his head. He staggered back, and stumbling upon a rough plank, fell.

Dawes, like a maniac, sprang at him and kicked viciously at his ribs. Jim flopped, and hitched forward, as the kick was delivered. The movement saved his body, but the kick, with partially spent force, caught him below the thigh.

Hank Grump, one of Dawes' men, leaped forward and caught Dawes by the collar, jerking him back, shouting as he did so:

"No kickin', boss! We'll have a fair fight here!"

Dawes, angry as a caged lion, swung about and struck the man squarely in the face, and, half whining, followed the blow with a string of oaths.

Jim was already on his feet. Dawes drove at him with a great iron fist. Jim ducked. Dawes charged, flailing with big fists. Jim dodged. Dawes was playing for his face, but the face was never in the expected place. Suddenly, taking advantage of an opening, Jim's right shot out and caught Dawes

directly above the belt. It happened so quickly that none saw exactly how it was done. There was an uh-ssh and gurgle. Dawes' tanned and blood-spattered face turned a sickly ashen-gray, and he collapsed with the breath knocked out of him.

Dawes did not offer to rise. It was a complete and final knock-out. Pat McCarthy, with a grin, seized Jim's hand:

"Foine wurruk, Jim! And I was thinkin' when yez hit him first off I'd have to finish the job for yez! I never knew yez could fight, Jim! Yez sure do be a wondther!"

"I wasn't scared about Jim!" broke in Billy, taking Jim's hand from McCarthy. "He's a trained boxer! He's a real champeen! Didn't you know that?"

"I niver saw the likes of it!" declared McCarthy jubilantly.

"I'm not so much of a boxer, but I learned a little about it at college. Dawes don't know anything about boxing," Jim grinned. "I did make the boxing championship in college, but just among the boys. That's what Billy means."

"If that's what they teach in college," said McCarthy enthusiastically, "ivery man should have a college iducation."

Each of the men, in turn, shook Jim's hand. Brawn and courage were their idols. Jim had won not only their admiration, but their friendship and loyalty.

Hank Grump, the man Dawes had struck down, was bitter in his expressions against Dawes. Jim thanked him for preventing the infuriated Dawes from probably breaking his ribs with the attempted second kick.

" 'Twa'n't nothin'," declared Grump through swollen lips. "What I ought to have done to the beast was to smack him in the head first off. I suppose he'll try to fire me out of camp now, when he comes to, and maybe the hull lot of us that's here, and set us out in this God-forsaken land for not poundin' the hull three of you up. That's what he expected of us. But I don't care. I'll make out without him. He told us when he hired us that he wanted us to fight the old gang that was here ahead of us when he got ready to kick you fellers out. We were ready to fight fair, but not his kind of fightin'."

"Yez niver will be sint out whilst I'm superintindent," announced McCarthy. "I'm a partner in the operation, and from this day I'm

superintindent. I'm back on me job in that capacity, because Jim here tells me I am.

"I have a conthract signed by Misther MacLean, and duly delivered to me, before he wint and got lost in the mountains. The conthract makes me partner and superintindent for two years more.

"I stepped out first off whin Dawes came thinkin' Jim here, who is the real owner and me real boss, sint him, or wished him here in me place. Whin Jim said 'no' he didn't want him, and tould me so day before yisterday, that satisfied me. I came here to-night to lick Dawes and take back me job. Jim done the lickin' and took the pleasure of doin' it meself from me. But now I'm superintindent of the operation, and if anny man here denies it, let him say so to me face."

None of them denied it. On the contrary each of them separately acknowledged McCarthy as their superintendent from whom they would take future orders. McCarthy grinned appreciatingly.

"In the marnin', Hank Grump," McCarthy directed, "yez may go over to the new camp and tell the min there that I'm superintindent and boss of things hereabouts from henceforward. And tell thim that whin things are set runnin' to me likin' here and at the old camps, I'll be droppin' in to see thim."

"Very well, boss, I'll go," acknowledged Grump.

"And Sam Coon," he addressed the mill boss, "I'll go over with yez in the marnin' to see what's takin' place in the mill."

Dawes, whose knock-out had lasted five minutes, sat up as a result of Jim's efforts to restore him. He had evidently had his senses and his ears open for some time, and had been simulating unconsciousness.

"What's this you're saying?" he asked, as he arose upon wabbly legs. "I'm superintendent here yet! Even if I did get knocked out by trickery, I'm boss here!"

"Yez sure do be lookin' ivery inch of it!" McCarthy guffawed, as Dawes' swollen and bloody face fell under the lamplight. "Go wash yezself, and thin I'll be tellin' yez what I'll be doin' with yez if yez promise to be good from now on hinceforward."

"You're discharged!" roared Dawes. "You'll get out of camp with this fellow to-night!" indicating Jim with a contemptuous wave of the hand. "And Hank Grump, you go too! You other men, fire these three out at once!"

Not a man moved, or gave outward evidence of having heard.

"Aisy now! Be aisy, me man!" McCarthy leaned back upon his seat. "I'd niver demean meself by lickin' a groggy man, though yez deserves another lickin', and 'tis meself should administher it. But I'll take the throuble to explain instid just where we stand.

"I'm superintendent and a partner in this operation. Jagger do be having no supervision of me by law or otherwise. Me conthract was duly signed and delivered by Misther James MacLean before he disappeared. I've learned what me rights may be, and from hinceforward on I'll stand by thim.

"All the wages due yezself and the min Jagger sint here be due yez all from Jagger personally, and not from the operation. Yez do be an intherloper, if yez know what that means. If I let yez shtay, 'twill be by sufferance, and because I'd feel sorry for the community, and what yez might do to the poor people of the bay, if I turned yez loose to shift for yezself.

"I'll make a bargain with the crowd of yez, and keep yez on till the ship comes, but ivery mother's son of yez will have to wurruk."

"I guess you will!" blustered Dawes. "If that's the way of it, and you have a valid contract, which I don't believe, you can't put me or my men out of the new camps. MacLean never filed a survey of that section, and it's no part of this operation. It's mine and Jagger's. I don't believe you have a contract, and if you haven't you'll sweat for this. You've got the best of me here, but my men over in my camps will stand by me."

"I have the conthract, and iny man that wants to see it in good faith may see it iny time he comes to me. If thim new camps belongs to yezself and Jagger, there's a bill forthcoming herewith for provisions delivered to thim. Do yez understand that, me man?"

"You'll have a good time collecting it," Dawes growled.

"We'll collect it, and don't let that throuble yez slumbers wan bit." McCarthy grinned. "Now git out of here and wash up for supper. We're all feelin' a call from our insides for nourishment, and if yez wants to eat with respectable min, go and make yezself respectable lookin'."

Dawes made no reply. He sullenly lingered for a few moments, and then passed through the door leading into the kitchen and mess room.

"Some of the men won't stay by him," remarked Sam Coon, "but the most of them came here to fight and not to work, and if he finds a way to

feed them, he'll hold them. I guess he's transferred enough grub over there to feed them. You'll have trouble on your hands from now on."

"I niver throubles throuble till throuble throubles me," said McCarthy. "We'll wait and see."

"It'll trouble you all right," predicted Coon, "and there'll be plenty of it, unless you make a prisoner of Dawes and hold him here while you have him."

"I'll make no prisoner of anny man. We'll let him go whin he chooses, and tell him to stay away."

XXIV

A FIRE AND A ROBBERY

"Say, Dawes has lit out!" Isaac Mills, the camp cook, was in the door. "He didn't wait to eat. Supper's ready."

"Which way did he go?" asked Billy anxiously, rising to his feet.

"I didn't notice," said Isaac. "He just put on his things and went, and didn't say a word."

"I'll bet he's gone over to the store! He'll clean the cash out'n the safe! He knows the combination!" And Billy rushed for the door, followed by McCarthy and Jim.

They ran down the trail to the store, and were just in time to see a light flare up in the window. Upon entering, they found Dawes, with a lamp on a chair by his side, kneeling at the safe and working the combination.

"Thryin' to rob the Sthore, be yez!" blurted McCarthy. "Is robbin' the business yez were in before Jagger sint yez here?"

Dawes sprang to his feet and faced them. For a moment he said nothing. Then he almost shouted:

"I'm the rightful superintendent of this operation! You are the robber! There's money and papers in that safe that belong to me! I'm going to take them!"

"I'm the rightful superintindent here," said McCarthy. "What's in that safe do be property and papers belongin' to the business and not to anybody else. If by chance Billy finds annything belongin' to yez, Dawes, he'll be lettin' yez have it. No wan but Billy and meself can look into that safe."

"I demand my property!" insisted Dawes. "I demand it now. There's wages due me, and there's money in there that belongs to me personally. It's my own personal property. My personal papers are there. I demand to have the papers and money now."

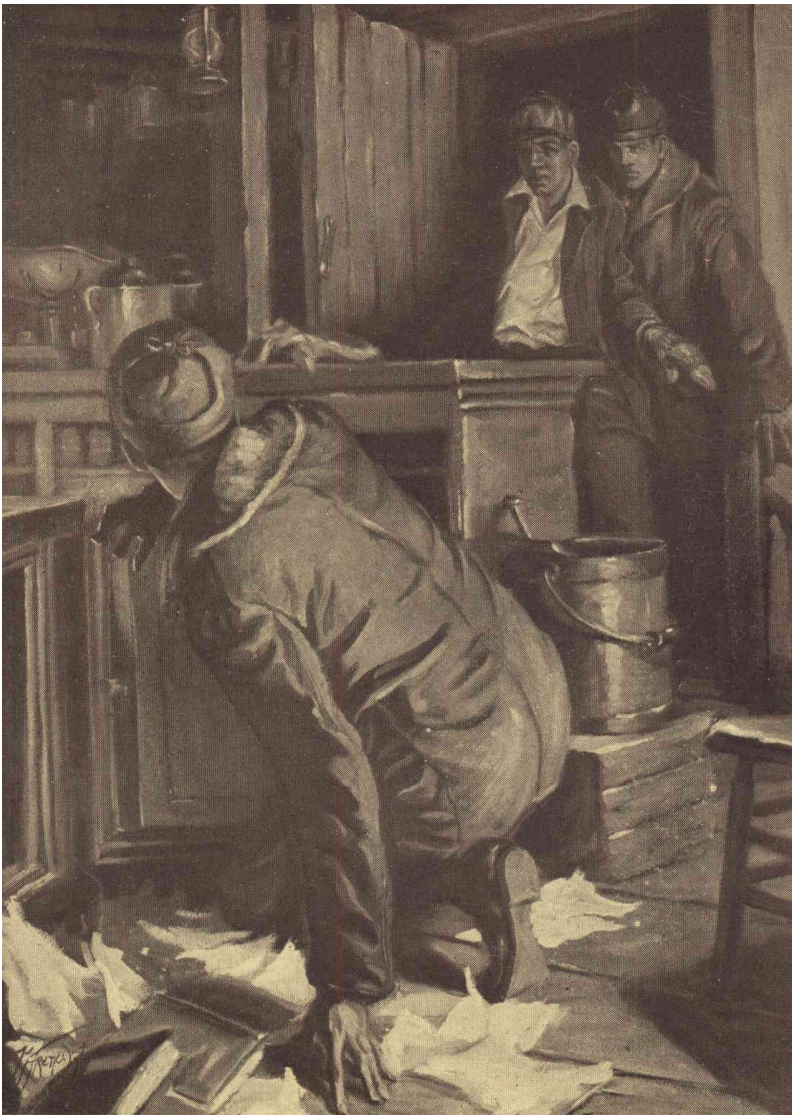
"Yez'll not be gettin' wan thing now, but if we find annything there that belongs rightfully to yez, we'll give it all to yez. Now begone out from here!" thundered McCarthy, adding in a milder tone: "Yez washed up, I see, and we'll be lettin' yez eat with us. The cook says grub's ready. Now go over to the cook house and eat peaceably."

“You can’t keep my property,” growled Dawes, as he reluctantly moved out of the door, and to the cook house, with the others following.

No one spoke to Dawes, and he ate his meal silently and sullenly, and when he was through he sat alone and smoked his pipe. In spite of all that had happened, McCarthy felt sorry for the man, and before he left with Billy and Jim to spend the night with them in Billy’s quarters, he said:

“In the marnin’, Dawes, we’ll have a talk, man to man, and maybe we can come to an understhandin’ that will make yez feel bether about it. I’m not a hard man, though I demand me rights.”

Dawes stared into space, and neither spoke nor gave evidence of having heard McCarthy, and McCarthy left him.



UPON ENTERING, THEY FOUND DAWES KNEELING AT THE SAFE.

An examination of the inner compartment of the safe, which they were compelled to force open, for Dawes had the key, disclosed cash to the amount of twenty-two thousand dollars. This was evidently reserved for wages. In an unsealed package marked "personal" was an additional four hundred dollars. McCarthy, accompanied by Jim, took this to the bunk house and delivered it to Dawes, who accepted it without comment and thrust it into his pocket.

Numerous papers were discovered. There were copies of the surveys of the property, together with important memoranda concerning the work, which McCarthy had delivered to Dawes, when the latter took possession. But of chief interest were a half-dozen letters from Jagger to Dawes. They were so carefully worded that none was of a character that could be directly used against the writer as incriminating evidence if he were charged with malfeasance in the administration of his trust. Dawes was directed in all of them to make an unremitting search for the papers supposed to have been secreted in the cave. In the letter of latest date, Jagger wrote:

"If you find this package, and if it contains the papers of which I told you at the time of our final conference in my office before your departure for Labrador, as I have no doubt it does, there will be a reward of five thousand dollars for you."

Another letter urged that Dawes "make every effort to bring about the turn of affairs concerning the logging camps and mill that was desired." In this letter he reminded Dawes that it was to his advantage to work for this end as he was to be admitted as a partner "in a future enterprise," with a one-third interest if he "proved himself competent in his present position."

In a letter dated two days earlier than Jim's departure from home, Jagger stated that Jim might arrive on the ship, though it was to be hoped that he would decide to remain in college. It directed that if Jim appeared, he was to be put at work as a lumberjack, and to be shown no favours and granted no privileges that other men did not enjoy, and if the least reason arose to do so, he was to be discharged and evicted from the property. It further urged that Dawes find cause, as early as possible, to dismiss McCarthy and those of the old men who might cause trouble, "because these men, as well as young MacLean and McCarthy, might interfere with the administration of the business as we have planned it, and success demands no interference."

"The durthy scoundrel!" exclaimed McCarthy. "We all know now that what we suspicioned is thrue."

"Well, we seem to have headed them off," said Jim, "unless they've already done enough to sink the business."

"Rest aisy on that, Jim," assured McCarthy. "We'll have a full cargo of sawn lumber for Captain Dobbs whin he comes in the spring."

"I wonder what those papers can be that Jagger is so anxious about?" suggested Jim.

"There's no tellin'," said McCarthy, "but be aisy on that too. Misther MacLean niver put anny papers of value in anny place of that sort."

"I'm not sure about that," and Jim shook his head dubiously. "There are a lot of papers and securities missing."

Dawes was gone when they went to the cook house before daylight in the morning. He had eaten a hasty breakfast, the cook announced, and departed before the men were about.

"Hank," said McCarthy, "there'll be no wisdom in yez goin' to Dawes' camps on Deep Creek to tell the min, as I directed last evenin'. If yez shows yez face there Dawes'll have mincemeat made of yez."

"I was kinder expectin' a scrap if I went," admitted Hank with evident relief.

Dawes was ominously silent during the weeks that followed. He did not return to visit either the mill or the camps. During February three of his men appeared and asked McCarthy to give them work; and early in March four more appeared with a like request. These men complained of poor food in Dawes' camp, and reported two or three cases of scurvy. They were some of the best men Dawes had, and McCarthy employed them.

Jim had been assigned to Number One camp, situated on the Grampus River and three miles above the mill. He insisted upon receiving no favours.

"Dad asked me in his letter to learn the business from the ground up," he told McCarthy. "That means working as a lumberjack, with no privileges. I'm for it."

He began as a swamper, then he was on the log-haul and on the brow, and by the middle of February he had become a chopper. He was tanned as brown as an Indian, his hands developed the callouses he had predicted for them that day as he stood on the hill in Highville, and body and muscles had developed until he was as hard as iron. His brain, too, was busy. He knew how to figure and estimate timber, and he was absorbing much other useful information about logging operations.

McCarthy was busy. The half-hearted, slipshod methods that were in vogue in the camps when he assumed control in the beginning of January, at once gave place to almost feverish energy. The woods rang with the strokes of axmen. He found chaos in the mill, with machinery dismantled and in confusion. Before the first of March everything was in order and the mill working at capacity.

Thus things ran smoothly until the beginning of May, when the midday sun was growing warm and softening and settling the snow. The days were growing long, and it was Jim's custom now and again to snowshoe down to the store on a Saturday evening, when the week's work was finished, and spend the night and Sunday with Billy Hand, and McCarthy sometimes joined them.

It was on one of these occasions, on a Saturday evening in the beginning of May, that Jim suggested to McCarthy that he would like a few days leave from camp that he might make a search for the cave.

" 'Twill be all right, b'y. Yez have earned the lay-off, and 'twill make yez aisier in moind," agreed McCarthy. "But yez can't go alone, and I have no min now I can spare to go with yez. The thrappin' is indeed for the winther, and I would suggest that yez hire Pether Sparks and David Angus to go with yez. Pether and Lige do be over in the bunk house now, listenin' to the yarns of the min. Have them go to The Jug to-morrow with their dogs to fetch David, and then yez can make the sthart for the cave on Monday marnin'. The tote team can take yez all up to Number Three."

"Thank you," said Jim, "I'll do it."

Jim found Peter and Lige in the bunk house, and the arrangement was made. Both boys were anxious to take part in the adventure, and both offered to accompany him and to get David to join them also.

"We'll be goin' for David in the marnin' and have he here in the evenin'," promised Peter.

Jim returned to the store, and he and McCarthy and Billy were discussing his proposed trip a half-hour later, when one of the men burst in upon them, shouting:

"The mill's on fire!"

They ran out and over to the mill, where they discovered the fire in the western end. The mill men, using poles as battering rams, were knocking the blazing boards from the studding. A half-hour's work succeeded in extinguishing the fire, with no serious damage to the building.

There were undoubted evidences that the fire had been deliberately started. Rubbish had been piled against the end of the building and lighted. This was the end farthest from the bunk house, and ordinarily the fire would have attained such headway before discovery that no effort could have saved the mill from destruction. Fortunately, Sam Coon had gone to the mill for something he had left there upon discontinuing work that evening, and discovering the fire had given the alarm.

"Some of the durthy wurruk of that man Dawes!" said McCarthy, wiping the perspiration from his forehead with his sleeve. "Set a guarrud, Sam, and niver leave the mill again without a guarrud."

"Dawes seems to be getting restless," said Jim, as he returned to the store with McCarthy and Billy. "It's getting better weather, and he's starting in to show us that he's still on the job."

"He's afraid to foight in the open!" said McCarthy. "His camp is in bad shape with poor grub, and he's short of funds to pay his min, or to buy more grub, and with thim that left him to come to us, he's short handed."

Billy opened the store door, and as he entered, almost shouted:

"Robbed!"

The safe was open and some of its contents were scattered upon the floor. A hasty examination revealed the fact that the money which it contained, Jagger's letters and the copies of the surveys were missing.

XXV

THE LUMBERJACKS BATTLE

"Run over, Jim, and tell Sam Coon what's happened, and ask him to sind some min here at once, with snowshoes," McCarthy directed, "and tell thim to bring a lanthern."

Jim ran to the bunk house, to which all the men except the guard had returned, and delivering his message hastened back, followed by Coon and ten men.

"Some of you take the lanthern and see which way the robbers wint," directed McCarthy. "The snow will lave a clear trail. We'll follow thim."

"Four men," reported the men with the lantern. "They've gone to the west'ard."

"I thought so," said McCarthy. "They've made for Deep Creek and the camp where Dawes makes his headquarters, I'll be bound. If Dawes has all his min in wan camp there'll be but twinty with himself, as I make me calculation. Takin' out you and your gang, Sam, and the min that staid here and those that came over aftherward, from his original forty-two that's what I make it. Is that right, Sam?"

"That's about it," agreed Sam after some calculation.

"Here's fourteen av us," McCarthy counted. "We'd bether leave the cook to guard the mill, and Billy bether shtay here and watch the sthore, though I'm not expectin' anny wan will be back to-night to throuble us. We've got to recover that money and the papers. That was the money and all we had to pay the min's wages, and we'll have to get it back. And the papers are important."

"I want to get in on any scrap," Billy complained, "and not be left back here suckin' my thumb. There's goin' to be a scrap all right, for Dawes won't give back our money without a fight. You'll need everyone of us. The store will be safe enough if I go."

"Hi, there, and who's thim! Pether and Lige Sparks! The saints bless yez, b'ys! Whin did yez come? I thought yez wint home."

"We were just starting sir," explained Peter, "when we heard the men yellin' about the fire, and we comes back."

“Pether, you and Lige shtay in the sthore, and thin Billy can come along with us and have the joy of sharin’ in catchin’ thim robbers in their cave. And see to it yez keeps the sthore safe, whilst we’re all away.”

“We’ll be doin’ our best, sir,” promised Peter.

“And if yez be attacked,” said McCarthy jocularly, “there’s me own huntin’ rifle in the sthore, and Billy’s is there too. But yez’ll be seein’ no wan,” he added to relieve the boys of any anxiety his suggestion might cause.

“Now,” continued McCarthy, addressing the men, “we’ll go back to the mill and arrum ourselves with canthook handles or anny good clubs we may find. We’ll not throuble to look for the tracks the robbers made. We’ll be goin’ straight to the camp on Deep Creek, and there we’ll find the gang we’re afther.”

In the mill Jim and Billy, as well as McCarthy and every man of them armed themselves with the best weapons they could lay their hand upon. The cook was directed to do sentinel duty in the mill, and with McCarthy in the lead the party threaded away toward Deep Creek on snowshoes, traveling in single file. A belated moon was just rising, to light the forest, as they left the mill, and in the moonlight they discovered the fresh snowshoe tracks of four men, leading toward the mill.

“Here’s how the durthy firebugs and robbers came,” remarked McCarthy. “They’ve likely gone back another way. We’ll find thim in camp. They had a good start, and they’ll be there ahead of us.”

“Wisht!” warned McCarthy, when they had been nearly two hours on the trail. “There’s the camp. We’ll sneak up and burrust in on thim. There’s a light burnin’.”

The moon was well up now, and the clearing around the camp was nearly as light as day. Cautiously and noiselessly they approached the bunk house door. Here McCarthy halted and waited for his men to close in and take off their snowshoes as they entered the area in front of the building, where the snow was packed hard by trampling feet. His hand was upon the door, ready for the rush inside, when from each end of the building, men armed like themselves, sprang at them.

It was plain that McCarthy’s raid had been expected. Pickets had been posted by the Dawes men, and an alarm given, with the result that the Dawes men were ready and waiting, and McCarthy and his men were

ambushed and taken at a disadvantage. They had barely time to spread and take the defensive.

Three of McCarthy's men were down before they could disentangle themselves. McCarthy himself, yelling with the joy of battle, wielded his club right and left. Billy Hand was little less noisy and little less terrible.

It was evident from the beginning that the Dawes men were centering their attack upon McCarthy and Jim. While McCarthy and Billy Hand, backed against the building and side by side were in a fairly good position for defence, Jim found himself separated and surrounded by half a dozen of his enemies. He was much quicker on his feet than they, and this alone made it possible for him to keep them at bay for a time, as he fought silently and desperately, as he believed, for his life. Presently the end of a club grazed his forehead and broke the skin. He could feel the warm blood trickling down his cheek. Then a terrific blow caught him upon the left arm, and only a timely charge against his assailants by Sam Coon and two of the mill men saved him.

The Dawes men were apparently without a leader, and presently began to draw off, each man for himself, with McCarthy and his men after them, when some one called for quarter.

"We'll let up on yez," answered McCarthy, "if yez turn Dawes over to us for proper chastisement. 'Tis meself wants to get me hands on him for thryin' to burn our mill, and he must turn over the money and papers he stole from the sthore!"

"He ain't here," shouted the spokesman of the Dawes gang. "He ain't come back yet. He said he was goin' over to your place to start something', and told us to be on the lookout for you fellers, and if you showed up to get you and the young feller."

The parley continued for several minutes, and, finally, by blandishments and promises to do them no harm, the men agreed to lay down their clubs and enter the bunk house.

Here, after much questioning, McCarthy drew from them a statement of Dawes' plans. He was to fire the mill, and during the excitement that followed, rob the safe and then, with the three men he had taken with him, make a feint at returning to Deep Creek.

It was expected that McCarthy would gather every available man, as he had done, and follow to Deep Creek. When McCarthy and his men were well out of the way, Dawes and his three assistants were to return to the

store, remove to a safe place and secrete as much of the stock, particularly much needed clothing, as they could carry away in an hour, and then fire the store and other buildings.

"Houly saints!" exclaimed McCarthy. "They'll get the best of Pether and Lige in the sthore, and the cook over in the mill, and have the whole place burruned up before we can get there.

"Jim, you and Billy and two other min of you come along with me! Sam Coon, you and the others of you foller along with our injured min and get thim back to camp as soon as you can, though I'm not expectin' to find iny camp there."

McCarthy and his followers hurried out, donned their snowshoes and ran on the back trail toward Grampus River.

XXVI

THE RAID ON THE STORE

When the men had gone, Peter and Lige examined McCarthy's and Billy's rifles. Firearms were always of particular interest to them, as they were to their father, and are to every man who earns his living by hunting. Billy's rifle was a thirty-thirty, just like Doctor Joe's. They had fired Doctor Joe's rifle many times, and were familiar with it.

But McCarthy's took their attention. It was a larger gun, and had a box magazine, and was a much more powerful gun than the other. On the barrel was stamped ".30 U. S. Model 1903."

" 'Tis a new kind and a big un," remarked Peter. "She'll shoot wonderful hard, now. I'd like to try un on a deer, *what*ever."

"She'd be fine for white bear," suggested Lige.

"The best gun I ever saw for white bear!" agreed Peter.

The boys were standing at the rear end of a long counter that extended the length of the store, and was at the left of the door, reaching from the door to the rear, with a passageway around each end. The thirty-thirty rifle was leaning against the wall behind them, at the rear end of the counter.

"The fire's needin' wood, Lige. Put un on, will you?" suggested Peter.

The stove was in the center of the room. Lige left Peter admiring the big rifle, while he renewed the fire. He opened the door of the big box stove, threw in some billets of wood, and had just closed it when the store door opened, and there stood Dawes and his three men.

Dawes was armed with a rifle, and was evidently surprised to find the two boys in possession of the store, and they were quite as surprised to see him and his men.

Lige stood where he was, by the stove, and stared. Peter, in a twinkling, kneeling behind the counter, had Dawes and his men covered by the big rifle.

"Drop the gun you has, and put up your hands!" commanded Peter.

Dawes did not move.

"Drop un!" commanded Peter. "If you don't drop un, I'll shoot!"

Still Dawes, well knowing that any attempt to raise his rifle would be fatal, but reluctant to obey, made no move.

"Would you kill a man who has done nothing to you?" asked Dawes.

"I'd kill you and you makes a move!" Peter's voice was tense.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Dawes, fencing for time. "We ain't done you any harm."

"We're guardin' the store," said Peter. "You robbed un to-night, and I'm not doubtin' you're comin' now to do more harm."

"We took what belonged to us, and what was taken from me by force, and that was all," Dawes argued. "I'm the rightful superintendent, and I'm goin' to have what's mine."

"You were settin' fire to the mill, and honest men don't burn buildin's," Peter charged.

"I didn't set fire to the mill," Dawes lied.

"No talkin'!" commanded Peter. "Put down that gun before I shoots!"

"You wouldn't shoot, now?" Dawes parleyed.

"I'll be shootin', and you keeps on talkin' and don't put down the gun!" declared Peter with an earnestness that was impressive.

Dawes stared at Peter in silence.

"I'll be countin' twenty," said Peter, "and if you're not puttin' the gun down when I says 'twenty' I'll shoot!"

Still Dawes and the three men stood like statues.

"One-two-three-four-five," Peter counted in quick succession.

"You wouldn't, now, would you?" interrupted Dawes.

"Aye, sure I'll shoot. Six-seven-eight-nine-ten. This is a wonderful strong shootin' gun! 'Twill blow a big hole in you!" Peter paused to observe the result of this statement.

Dawes stood, with an insolent grin on his face, and with no show of fear.

"Eleven-twelve—" Peter was counting more slowly now. "Thirteen-fourteen! Stop that or I'll shoot before I counts twenty!"

Dawes had made a slight movement toward raising his rifle.

"Fifteen-sixteen—"

“You fool livyere!” roared Dawes. “Do you think you’re scarin’ me?”

“Seventeen-eighteen-nineteen! And when I says twenty, I shoots!” Peter’s face was drawn and tense.

“Stop!” yelled Dawes, who saw the look of stern purpose. “I’ll give the gun to Lige!”

“Take un, Lige!” Peter directed, with evident relief.

Lige stepped forward to receive the gun.

In an instant, quick as a panther, Dawes grabbed Lige in his arms, and holding him as a shield to his own body, yelled:

“Drop, men!”

The three men with Dawes dropped in front of the counter, and were there out of range of Peter’s rifle. Lige struggled valiantly in Dawes’ arms, but his efforts to free himself were futile in the powerful, iron grasp.

Beads of cold perspiration stood out on Peter’s forehead. He was beaten. He could not shoot without endangering Lige.

“Take a chance, Peter, and shoot un!” yelled Lige as he struggled. “Shoot un! I ain’t afeared! Shoot!”

But Peter would not shoot. The risk was quite too great, for Dawes held Lige high enough to prove a complete shield for his body and head.

One of the men crawled stealthily forward, with the counter as a shield, to hide his movements. In a moment he had Peter at close quarters, where Peter could not use the rifle upon him. A brutal blow of the fist knocked Peter down, and the two boys were quickly bound with ropes.

“Goin’ to shoot me, was ye!” Dawes looked down upon his captives, where they lay upon the floor. He wore his demoniac grin, as he continued: “Well, now, I’ll tell you what I’m goin’ to do with you fellers. I ain’t goin’ to do any countin’. When we get what we want out of this here store we’re goin’ to burn it up and leave you two fellers to burn along with it. Then that Irishman and his gang’ll think you fellers got it on fire and got burned in it. You’re goin’ to have a nice warm time.”

The four men lost no further time on the boys. They went feverishly at work ransacking Billy’s stock.

XXVII

THE SILENT INDIAN

A silent, tall, lithe figure, hauling a flatsled, and with a rifle resting in the hollow of his arm, moved like a phantom through the forest, across bright splatches of moonlight and deep shadows, toward the store. The man came from the eastward, and as he approached the clearing, where the snow was hard-packed, he kicked off his snowshoes and tucked the slings under the lashings of his flatsled. In moccasined feet, treading with the silence and grace of a cat, he dropped his hauling rope, slid up to the window and peered through the glass.

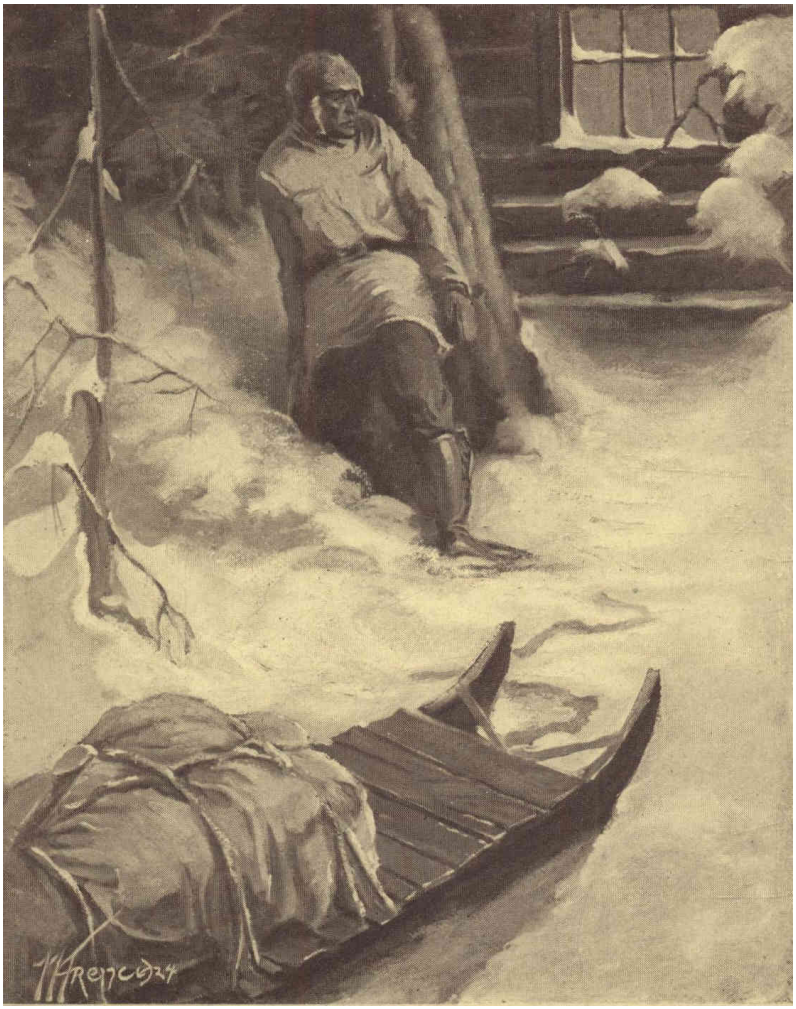
Stepping suddenly backward, the Indian brought the muzzle of his rifle down, and cocked the piece. Stealthily he stepped to the door, threw it open, and with rifle raised to his shoulder covered Dawes and the three men:

"Put up your hands!" he ordered curtly. "No foolin'! I shoot!"

The keen black eyes peering along the barrel of the rifle, the beaked nose, the hawk-like, sinister face, left no doubt that he would shoot, and the eight pairs of hands went up with alacrity.

Indian Jake kicked the door shut behind him without taking his eyes from the men.

"Go around end of counter by door!" he commanded.



HE DROPPED HIS HAULING ROPE AND PEERED THROUGH THE GLASS.

The four went around the counter and lined up against the wall, where there were no shelves.

“Face wall, and keep hands up!” he ordered.

Dawes’ arms sagged at the elbow, as he and the men obeyed, and Indian Jake poked him in the small of the back with the muzzle of his rifle, with a sharp:

“You keep hands up!”

Backing down the store, where Peter and Lige lay bound, but keeping his eyes and rifle on the men, he reached with his left hand, and drawing his sheathknife leaned down and severed the cords that bound Peter’s wrists.

Dawes made a sudden movement, and a bullet crashed into the woodwork above his head.

“Keep still and keep hands up! Next time I shoot for head!” Indian Jake threatened.

Dawes straightened up. It was a salutary lesson. Indian Jake was not a man to be trifled with.

With his hands free, Peter seized the sheathknife Indian Jake had dropped, and severed the cords that bound his legs. Then he released Lige, and the two secured McCarthy’s and Billy Hand’s rifles.

“How do, Peter. How do, Lige.” Indian Jake grinned. “Lige, you take gun and if men move you shoot. Peter, you get rope.”

Indian Jake and Lige moved nearer the men.

“See here, Indian Jake,” asked Dawes. “What you goin’ to do to us?”

“Tie you up.” Indian Jake gave a low laugh.

“I ain’t done anythin’ to you,” pleaded Dawes.

“You do plenty to my friends here, Peter and Lige.”

“Tell you what I’ll do. Let us fellers go and I’ll give you a thousand dollars and each of the kids a hundred dollars apiece. I was just foolin’ with the kids, to scare ’em and tied ’em up for fun. I’ve got the money right here to pay you.”

“Then you got other reason why you want me to let you go. I don’t do it till I find out,” Indian Jake declined.

“He were robbin’ the store!” broke in Peter. “He’s wantin’ to give us money belongs to the store!”

“Ugh!” grunted Indian Jake. “We tie you up, Dawes. Don’t want money, not me.”

“I’ll make it two thousand,” pleaded Dawes.

“Don’t want money. Like to see Peter tie ye, and see him and Lige have fun scarin’ ye, like you have fun scarin’ them.”

“It’s right here in cash,” parleyed Dawes. “I’ll give ye yer price. How much do ye want?”

“Put yer hands down behind ye,” ordered Indian Jake, ignoring Dawes’ offer, and at the same time poking Dawes in the small of the back with the muzzle of his rifle.

Dawes obeyed.

“Tie his arms tight, Peter,” directed Indian Jake.

Peter was an expert with knots, and when he had finished, Dawes’ arms were as securely tied as though held in a vise.

“Now his legs,” said Indian Jake, and Peter made an excellent job of the legs also.

The other men begged and pleaded to be left unbound, and to be permitted to depart, claiming that they were there under orders from Dawes, who they supposed was superintendent of the operation, with authority to take anything from the store he wished to take. But Indian Jake was adamant to all pleas.

The four men, with hands tied behind them, and arms lashed to bodies, and legs securely bound, were placed in a row on a bench, and to make them doubly secure a rope was passed behind and under the bench and tied to the leg and arm band of each, in such manner that none could stand unless all stood, and then the bench would hold them together, precluding individual movement.

Indian Jake now made a thorough search of every man. Dawes, with many oaths, protested, but his protests were disregarded and futile. From his pockets were removed the money and papers stolen from the safe. Nothing further of importance was discovered, beyond dangerous knives, which each man carried, and a revolver, hanging in a holster under Dawes’ left arm.

Indian Jake placed the plunder on the counter, drew his pipe and a plug of tobacco from his pocket, and proceeded to shave the tobacco and fill his pipe quite as though nothing unusual had occurred.

"Now I have good smoke," he remarked, as he lighted a shaving at the stove, and applying the blaze to his pipe puffed contentedly and seated himself in a chair. "Where's Billy, Peter?"

Peter explained what had happened, and told of the expedition to Deep Creek.

"Big fight, then," remarked Indian Jake. "Maybe somebody hurt."

"I were thinkin' that, and we're like to be needin' Doctor Joe," said Peter. "I were thinkin' Lige and me better get the dogs, and be goin' for Doctor Joe now. 'Tis what Doctor Joe would be wantin'."

"Ugh!" grunted Indian Jake. "You go for Doctor Joe. I wait here."

Peter and Lige hastened away. It was a three-mile walk on snowshoes to Let-In-Cove.

" 'Tis near midnight," said Peter, as he and Lige hurried along. "If we is spry now we'll be gettin' home and havin' the dogs harnessed and startin' on our cruise by half-past one, whatever. With the fine footin' for the dogs, we'll be at The Jug by four, and Doctor Joe'll be gettin' back here by seven."

"Aye," agreed Lige, "we'll hurry fast as we can."

McCarthy, with Jim and Billy Hand and the men following, covered the distance from Deep Creep camp to the mill in record time. Every moment they expected to see the sky lighted by flames of the burning mill. It was half-past three, and morning twilight was breaking, when they reached the clearing at the mill. They were relieved when they found it as they had left it, and the cook on guard sleepily greeted them.

"Annything happen?" asked McCarthy anxiously.

"Nothin'," the cook yawned. "Been quiet, and nobody showed up. I heard a shot a spell ago, but I kinder reckoned it was you fellers."

"We took no guns with us," said McCarthy. "Come on b'ys, over to the sthore."

“I guess then Peter and Lige ain’t been bothered neither,” remarked Billy, as they approached and saw the light burning in the store window. “Like’s not they’re both asleep.”

“They do be havin’ company.” McCarthy paused as he observed Indian Jake’s flatsled. “ ’Tis an Indian outfit.”

“Some Indians in from huntin’,” observed Billy. “They come in the spring and it’s about time for ’em to show up. This time of year they travel some at night, when it’s moonlight like it is now.”

“By the howly saints!” exclaimed McCarthy as he entered. “If it ain’t me old frind Indian Jake! And there’s me frind Dawes and some of his foine min! And where’s Pether and Lige, Jake?”

“Went for Doctor Joe. Think maybe somebody get hurt at Deep Creek,” explained Indian Jake, sitting in his chair, quite as though he had not been away, and displaying no emotion or excitement. Motioning with his pipe toward the counter, he added: “Money and papers on counter. Dawes had ’em.”

“Sure there do be the loot, and I’m glad Pether and Lige wint for Docther Joe. And I like the way yez tied up me frinds here to keep thim out of mischief!” McCarthy grinned appreciatively.

“Peter tied ’em. Lige held gun. I helped,” explained Indian Jake modestly.

“Indian Jake!” Jim, who was behind, had just come in. He stared, scarcely knowing whether to believe his eyes.

“How do, Jim,” Indian Jake grinned. “Have good trip out?”

“No,” announced Jim, “but what happened to you?”

“Canoe smashed in big wind. Me, I bent over ankle. Hurt him bad. Couldn’t pack with bad foot. Couldn’t walk much. I make camp and wait for ankle to get better so I can walk. Snow come deep. I make snowshoe and flatsled while I wait. Lakes freeze. Maybe four, five weeks I wait. When I walk, I go to your camp. Find cache. You gone long time. No use looking for where you go to. Think maybe you get back all right. Easy trip out, and you good on trail. I go to Mingen on St. Lawrence. Just get back.”

“It wasn’t easy for me,” said Jim, and while McCarthy and Billy examined the recovered money and papers, and restored the more or less dismantled store to order, Jim told Indian Jake briefly of his experiences,

and finally of the suspicion Dawes had created that he had murdered Indian Jake.

"Ugh!" Indian Jake grunted with contempt, glancing at Dawes. "He think any man could hurt me?" Then he grinned. "People think same about you that you think about me."

"How about that wallet you left at the camp the morning you went away?" Jim asked suddenly. "Where did you get it? I think I can believe your story after what has happened, but I can't understand that."

"Bimeby you know. Maybe soon now." Indian Jake grinned enigmatically.

Dawes and his three men were sent to the bunk house, and put under guard.

"We'll dispose of your case during the day," said McCarthy, as Dawes was taken out.

An hour later the injured men arrived. One had a broken arm. The others were more or less bruised and cut about the body. Jim, whose left arm was badly bruised and swollen as the result of the blow he had received in the fight, nevertheless accompanied McCarthy to the bunk house and assisted him in rendering first aid to the injured, and making the men as comfortable as possible until Doctor Joe should arrive.

"I'm dead tired," said Jim, when he and McCarthy had returned to the store. "I think I'll lie down on Billy's bed and rest until breakfast is ready."

Suddenly they heard voices outside. Fearing treachery, and a return attack by Dawes' men, Jim and Billy sprang to their feet.

"It's thim now," said McCarthy, turning to Indian Jake with a broad grin.

"Ugh," grunted Indian Jake.

The door opened and a big, bearded man, followed by an Indian, the upper part of whose left ear was missing, entered.

XXVIII

THE MYSTERY CLEARED

"Dad!" exclaimed Jim. "Oh, Dad!"

"Yes, Jim, I'm back again." Mr. MacLean held Jim's right hand in his, and with a left hand on Jim's shoulder, asked: "How goes it, my son?"

"He's made good, Misther MacLean," grinned McCarthy. "He's not afraid of wurruk, sir, and he's not afraid to fight either. Yez may be proud of havin' the loikes of him for a son. He licked Dawes, single handed, in January, whin Dawes attacked him. He's wan of me best min in the woods, and yez should have seen him slather the min on Deep Creek to-night with his club. 'Twas illigant!"

"Dad!" exclaimed Jim, disregarding McCarthy's eulogy. "Dad, I've mourned you as dead! Every one thought you were dead! Oh, I can't express myself, Dad!" Jim's voice choked with emotion, and he put an arm affectionately over his father's shoulder. "Oh, Dad, am I dreaming, or is it really you?"

"No dream about it, Jim. I'm here safe and sound, and glad to be here with you again." Mr. MacLean laughed happily.

"What happened to you, Dad? Where have you been? Tell me about it. I've been accusing Indian Jake of murdering and robbing you!" He turned impetuously to Indian Jake, and offered the half-breed his hand. "Jake, I ask your forgiveness! I've treated you pretty tough! Will you forget it?"

"That's all right." Indian Jake laughed as he took Jim's hand. "I don't care. I know that some time bimeby you know I didn't hurt your father. I can't tell you that your father pay me to go in country with you when you come here, if you want to go. And he pays me some money to do what Mr. McCarthy wants me to do. That's how I get money. But I can't tell you. Your father and Charlie go off when I go hunting deer. I know maybe they go while I'm away. I don't know where they go to. I just tell you they go off, and I tell you your father pays me money for work. I tell truth. Your father gives me pocketbook with papers in. He tells me to leave him where you find him. I forget he never get wet. You find him where I leave him in camp, and you know your father never lose him there because he never been wet,

and you know I put him there that morning for you to find. I forget to wet him first. I remember after I go. That makes me laugh."

"Yes, it was all arranged," said Mr. MacLean. "Indian Jake, Pat McCarthy and Sandy Dumphry were the only people that knew my plans, or that I was alive, except Charlie, here, who was with me. Pat and Sandy knew my reasons for going as I did.

"I was afraid I had spoiled you, Jim, by supplying you with too much money to spend and permitting you to go too much your own way. I asked you to work in my Canadian mill the summer before I came here and before I sold that property. You begged off, and spent the summer vacation having a good time.

"Then the first year in college you flunked some of your examinations, and I feared you were not taking the work seriously or taking advantage of your opportunities, but, like a great many sons of well-to-do parents, were going to college because you thought it was the thing to do and for the good time you got out of it, with very little thought to the benefits. A great many young men whose fathers supply them with all the money they wish, fail to take advantage of the opportunity of their life. They slip through college somehow, and all they seem to have learned is to consume quantities of cigarettes, play cards, dance, and be so-called sports. They are zero quantities, so far as usefulness to the world is concerned.

"I didn't want you to be that kind. I wished your life to be a useful and happy one. Happiness comes only to men who accomplish worth-while things in life. Every wasted hour, when one should be busy preparing oneself for one's life work, lessens the possibility for success in after years.

"The man who gets the best possible out of his college course has ten times the chance for big success that the man has who never goes to college. Whether he gets the best possible out of his course depends wholly upon his personal application and interest. If he is a slacker in college, and gets through in a slipshod manner, his course doesn't do him much good.

"Jim, I don't want you to be a slacker. I decided to put you squarely up against the problems of life in the hope that I might wake you up to an appreciation of their realities. I asked you to come here and work as a lumberjack that you might learn to know what physical work is, and to hold your place with other men of brawn. I'm glad you came and have shown the grit and stuff that is in you.

"I doubted Jagger's honesty and I wished to test it. Therefore I told him nothing of my plans. I returned to Highville in the early part of the winter, and when I met Jagger I knew there was something wrong. He left the accounts with me, and excused himself on the plea of an important business engagement. I found enough to startle me, and a further investigation discovered to me that he had drawn a considerable amount from the trust fund and applied it to his own account. In the meantime he had disappeared, and he is now a fugitive from justice.

"When I sold the lumber business at Highville to Jagger and Snooks, Snooks paid me cash, but Jagger paid his share in notes, which I accepted. His search for papers was largely in the hope that he would discover these notes and destroy them. They are in a bank vault. Sandy Dumphry knew their whereabouts, in case you had required them. The securities of which I told you, Jim, as well as other assets are with them. I also carry two personal bank accounts of which Sandy is aware, but of which Jagger knew nothing."

"I was sure there was something wrong with Jagger from the first day he called me in to see him," said Jim. "But where have you been all this time, Dad?"

"When Charlie and I left the height of land lake we went down to the St. Lawrence. I went then to St. Johns and secured a concession on the Deep Creek surveys."

"Glory me!" interrupted Pat. "And yez got the concession?"

"Yes, that's all fixed, Pat. Then I went to South America to look up lumber markets, and when I came back I did some lumber-looking on the north shore of the St. Lawrence. Sandy Dumphry kept me posted as to what you were doing, Jim. Last fall, late, as I told you, I went to Highville. Indian Jake had a telegram which Pat gave him to send to Sandy Dumphry, advising about Dawes. I had intended to wait and come on the ship later, but the telegram brought me down to the Saguenay at once, and I travelled with dogs from there to Mingen, where Indian Jake and Charlie were waiting to bring me across.

"Indian Jake wished to come in last night, and meet you as a surprise before I came. So Charlie and I camped just above here, and came this morning after daylight."

"What papers were those you left in the cave?" asked Jim.

"Oh, the cave!" Mr. MacLean chuckled. "No papers of any importance. I wished to visit the famous cave, and I took a package of old papers there and

left them, just to create a diversion for you, Jim. I thought a search for them would help to keep your mind occupied. Gossip carried the fact to Jagger's ears, and he doubtless supposed the package contained the notes and other securities. That is the reason he was so anxious to find it."

"He certainly was anxious," said Jim. "There are several interesting letters here that he wrote Dawes concerning it."

"They will be interesting," Mr. MacLean laughed. "Indian Jake told me that he had been making continued search for the cave, and that he tried to employ Indian Jake to guide him to it."

"I asked for a day or two off, and intended to go up Monday to look for it," said Jim.

"We'll wait till the weather gets better, and I'll go along," suggested Mr. MacLean. "What did Dawes do to you here and to the operation?"

"What was done," chuckled McCarthy, "Jim did to Dawes. We'll be sittin' in Billy's quarthers, and I'll tell yez."

Back in Billy's room the whole story of the happenings in camp from the time of Mr. MacLean's disappearance to the fight the previous evening was recounted by McCarthy, while Jim told of his own experience with Jagger; the latter's efforts to induce him to return to college and disregard his father's wish that he work in camp; the effort to delay him, that the *Gray Goose* might sail without him; his going into the country with Indian Jake, and his adventurous return and rescue, and subsequent occurrences.

"I wished, as I have told you, to test Jagger's honesty, for I must have an attorney that I can trust," said Mr. MacLean. "But I had no expectations he would go the lengths he did, or endeavour to wreck the property here financially in order to gain control of it.

"I may say there's a warrant out for Dawes, and an officer from Montreal will arrive on the first mail boat to arrest him as an escaped convict. In the meantime we must keep him under guard, and take care of his men."

There was the noise of arriving dog teams, and Jim went out to welcome Doctor Joe, with David and Andy Angus, and Peter and Lige Sparks. Mr. MacLean knew them all. He thanked Doctor Joe and the scouts for the assistance they had given Jim and the many services they had rendered the camps, and begged the privilege of equipping the boys with new complete outfits as a token of appreciation, an offer which Doctor Joe accepted.

“And don’t be afther leavin’ out Margaret,” said McCarthy. “She do be a *foine* cook!”

“We’ll surely remember her,” laughed Mr. MacLean.

“And now,” said Pat, “ ’tis toim to go to the cook house for breakfast, and me insides do be cryin’ for nourishment.”

“Jim,” said Mr. MacLean as they walked to breakfast, “you’ll go back to college next fall. I’m satisfied that I have nothing to fear for you, and that you will make the most of your college course.”

“Thank you, Dad,” said Jim happily. “I have a new vision of life.”

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

[The end of *The Testing of Jim MacLean--A Tale of the Wilds of Labrador* by Dillon Wallace]