



# THE RIVER of SKULLS

—by George Marsh—

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WNU SERVICE

## CHAPTER I

Billowing away, like the mighty waves of a white sea, to a horizon wiped clear of haze by the intense cold, the naked tundra glittered under the March sun.

Slowly over the Ungava wastes that lifted above the timbered valley of an ice-locked river crawled three dark shapes, like crippled ants crossing white earth. Twice within a mile as they labored over the naked ridge toward the valley the two hooded figures slumped to the hard snow beside the dead dog. When they rose to go on, rawhide thongs, slipped over their shoulders and made fast to the almost empty sled, aided the dog.

Far back on their trail, unnoticed by the three, slunk four skeleton shapes. When the two men and the dog stopped to rest, the four gray wraiths also lay down, slaving tongues lolling from red jaws rimmed with icicles.

After a space the larger of the two men raised his hooded head and pushed up his wooden eye-shields, pierced by slits, from frost-blackened features. It was the face of a boy of twenty, cracked skin tight on the bones of strongly modeled jaw and cheeks, deep-set gray eyes bright from starvation.

"If we don't find the Montagnais camps—today—tomorrow—"

For an instant he buried his face in the thick black ruff of the dog that lay beside him, then sat up and gazed intently over their back trail. "Noel!" he said, quietly. "Did you ever eat wolf? If I can keep my sights lined we're going to eat some tonight, or they're going to eat us."

"What you see, Alan?" The other hooded figure got stiffly to his feet, pushed back the eye-shields and the long wolf-hair fringe of his hood and stared at the sky-line behind them. The face was that of an Indian.

"By gar!" he cried. "We boil de kettle tonight. You nevaire eat wolf but you eat wolf tonight!"

The breeze had shifted and the great dog, following his master, painfully got to his feet, testing the air with dilating nostrils.

Swaying giddily on his feet while he rested a rabbit-skin mitten on the black-and-white skull of the husky, Alan Cameron pointed to the four wolves in the distance.

"See them, Rough?" he said to the excited dog.

The hair on the husky's back and neck rose. A deep rumble came from the hairy throat as the gaunt frame stiffened.

With shaking hands Alan drew his rifle from its skin case, where it lay lashed on the sled.

"You go on with Rough, Noel! They'll follow the trail up. I'll play dead on the snow and try for a shot. It's the only way we'll get one!"

The Indian crouched, slowly shaking his head. "Dose are white wolf from de nord—starved out! Dey see you lie on de snow, here, dey weel rush you! Suppose you miss dem, Rough and I weel be too far for to help."

"They won't come close in on us until dark I tell you. The only way we can get a daylight shot is to do as I say!" the other insisted. "Here's a chance for some meat—to keep us alive, man! If these spots will stop dancing—in my eyes, I can get one—from an elbow rest."

Reluctantly, with much shaking of his head, the Indian acquiesced. "Marche, Rough!" commanded Alan. "You go with Noel. D'you hear me?"

The gaunt husky stood stubbornly in his traces gazing up at his master with uncomprehending, slant eyes. There were enemies back on the trail and Alan was ordering him to leave him.

Bending over the bewildered husky Alan spoke sharply into a hairy ear: "You go with Noel! Marche! Y'understand?"

A low, protesting whine and the raising of a white muzzle as the dark eyes of the great dog searched his master's scowling face was the answer. Lifting his nose, his great throat rumbled in bitter protest as he slowly started the sled.

Harassed by uncertain vision and weakness, Alan settled himself on the snow to wait for the approach of the arctic wolves. Lying flat on the crust, his body shook with the pounding of his heart, but the fear that gripped him, as he practiced lining his sights on the slinking gray-white shapes, was that his uncertain eyes and jumping nerves would cause him to miss when food for Rough and Noel and himself lay within his reach. Without food they would never have the strength to reach the trappers' camps—two days, perhaps more, beyond them. So the youth who was already known at the fur-posts along the East Coast as a better shot than even his dead father, Graham Cameron, once Hudson's Bay factor at Fort George, lay hoping against hope that when the time came the rifle in his hands would hold true.

As Alan lay waiting the cautious

approach of the four assassins of the tundra his thoughts turned back to his home at Fort George far to the west on the coast of the great bay. If he and Noel and Rough never returned with the rest of the trappers for the spring trade, how long would his name linger in the memory of black-eyed Berthe Desane? That sleek Arsene Rivard, clerk at the Revillon Freres, would win her over with his tale of life down at Quebec and Montreal. She'd soon forget Alan Cameron whose bones lay somewhere in the nameless tundra country of the Big river headwaters. And his cabin at the post, with the few earthly possessions his mother and father had left him, who—

Suddenly the man lying on the snow stiffened; the four white wolves were approaching at a slow lunge. On they came until, a short rifle shot away, they separated and



Hit lightly, one of the snarling wolves paused a moment.

began to circle the still shape on the crust, until the scarcely moving air had given them the strange man scent. The starved beasts squatted on their haunches and, pointing their noses at the sky, sent the wailing cry of the wolf pack, close to the kill, out over the white tundra to where a man and a dog were making their reluctant way toward the frozen river.

Suddenly, not fifty yards from the man on the snow, the skulkers stopped their stealthy circling and swiftly bunched together.

They were coming! They started their charge! The rifle roared! It roared again!

With a yelp the lead wolf somersaulted in the air—then slid limp along the crust, followed by a second who rolled over and over, frantically snapping at his bleeding flanks. Behind them the remaining two, mad with the sight of blood, fell upon their wounded mates, savagely ripping and tearing at their throats with slashes of powerful tusks.

Again the whip-lash crack of a rifle waked the tundra. The man on the snow got stiffly to his feet and reeled toward the two blood-maddened brutes slicing their kin to ribbons. He stopped, took deliberate aim at the milling beasts and fired. But, in his increasing weakness, his rifle barrel swayed like a branch in the wind. Hit lightly, one of the snarling wolves paused a moment and then loped stiffly away on three legs, followed by the fourth. Firing again and missing, Alan turned to see a great black-and-white dog coming at a painful, stiff-legged lunge over the tundra, slipping and falling, in his weakness, rising again to struggle on, on to the master who was battling alone back on the trail. Be-

hind the dog, stumbling forward in a half-trot, came Noel, rifle in hand.

"Bless their hearts!" panted the excited boy. "They sneaked back to help old Alan!" Then turning to the fast freezing carcasses in the snow, he cried deliciously: "But to-night we eat! Not much on their bones, but there's enough to keep us alive—alive! Wolf stew—a feast for a king! Wolf stew! Food for us all and—bones for Rough to gnaw!"

For two days the famished boys and the dog rested in the shelter of a windbreak of timber beside the frozen river while the wind drove the fine snow before it like smoke over the crusted tundra. Wise in the lore of the "bush," they ate frequently but little at a time while their weak stomachs gained strength. But the nourishment afforded by the leathery thaws and sinews of the two starved wolves was limited. While Rough, with the marvelous vitality of the Ungava bred on Hudson Straits, was fast gaining strength, Alan and Noel were still weak and unsteady on their feet when, on the third morning, the three set off up the river valley toward the Sinking Lakes in search of the camps of the Montagnais trappers.

It was morning of the third day of their march up the valley. They had stopped to rest on the river ice, the two men sprawled on the wind-packed snow beside the husky.

"Three days now," sighed Alan, "and the river has narrowed little."

"We are still long piece from de lac," groaned the Indian.

"One more thin stew of wolf—that's all, Noel."

"Ah-hah! I go wan—two sleep more—an' den de fox an' de carcajou chew our bones."

Alan reached over to his recumbent dog and, dropping the rabbit-skin mitten which hung from his neck by a rawhide thong, rubbed the massive muzzle. His heart shined out of his eyes, the dog lifted his head, and with a staccato intake and expulsion of breath through his nostrils, gave what Alan called Rough's "love-snuffle."

For a moment the man buried his face in the thick, black ruff of the dog's neck, then sat up and gazed far up the valley where a stand of spruce and poplar occupied the flat country between the river and the lifting shoulders of the tundra. His eyes wandered aimlessly; then, of a sudden, his mittened hand brushed back the wolf-hair rim of his hood

as his gaze focused on the timber, blue in the distance.

Scrambling to his feet, he cried to the man on the snow beside him: "Look, Noel! Look at the timber up there on the shore!"

The Indian rose to his knees. "What you see?"

"In that black spruce up the river, Noel!" Alan pointed with a shaking mitten. "My eyes are tricky. Is that haze or smoke?"

"Smoke! Dat ees smoke! De Montagnais!"

"D'you hear, Rough?" cried Alan to the dog who had risen and was shaking himself. "Fish tonight for a hungry dog and two men. Maybe tea and—flour, bannock! Maybe caribou!"

His great brush of a tail sweeping the crust in his excitement, Rough fidgeted in his harness, impatient to be off, while the arms of the men circled each other's shoulders in a delirious hug. Standing over his dog, two tears slowly froze on his frost-cracked cheeks, as Alan choked: "We eat—food—real grub! Tonight we eat, Rough! Marche, boy! Marche on!"

The crust offered good footing and with snowshoes on the sled and with what strength remained in their uncertain legs Noel and Alan followed the dog over the river ice up the valley.

Turning in shore at the water hole in the ice they followed a beaten trail back into the timber.

"Someth' ver' strange here," said the puzzled Indian, shaking his hooded head. "Dis ees no Montagnais camp. Were are de dog sign?"

"No, there are no signs of dogs, no signs of—well, look at that!"

"By gar, white men on de Talking Riviere!"

Thrust beside the husky whose throat rumbled as he suspiciously sniffed the air while the hair of his mane and back slowly rose, Alan and Noel gazed in amazement at the substantial log building, banked high with snow, which stood in the center of the clearing that opened before them.

"White men on the Talking Riviere!" Alan repeated, his curious eyes noting the size of the log cabin with its large mud-plastered chimney, the huge platform cache evidently piled with supplies which were covered by canvas, the two pairs of snowshoes and the toboggan sled stuck in the snow beside the door, and close by, the ample remains of what had evidently been an enormous wood-pile in the autumn.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## Flooding of Illinois Coal Mine Many Years Ago Developed a Boiling Spring

The flooding of a mine near Pinckneyville in 1880 caused a temporary phenomenon in the nature of a true geyser, probably the only occurrence of this kind in the recorded history of Illinois. Research workers of the Federal Writers' Project, WPA, have found an account of this event in a Pinckneyville newspaper of the time, notes a correspondent in the Chicago Daily News.

Flood waters on Landcup creek had covered a tract of land above the coal mine of Bernhard Blume. A break in the roof of the mine suddenly admitted the flood water in great volume, "for a short time almost diverting the current of the swollen creek, carrying away whole sections of the rail fence which stood near a bank of the creek, many of the rails as well as other timber and driftwood being caught in the maelstrom and whirled down the capacious throat of the gaping crevasse."

"The sudden inrush of the water compressed the air in an extraordinary degree, and the rebound was

such that the descending flood was forced back as in the action of a geyser, and for several minutes' time heaved skyward in vast quantities to the height of at least 100 feet."

This upheaval of water, dirt and drift was succeeded by a few minutes of quiet, during which the floods again poured down the tunnel. The air was again compressed and again the geyser-like reaction occurred, higher than before. This process was twice more repeated before the mine had been entirely flooded.

All but one of the miners had escaped before the break in the roof occurred. The Blume mine remained flooded for nearly 39 years. In 1918 the body of Joseph Neising, who had been preserved by the mineral-laden water, was finally recovered.

"It lay face down on the floor of his room and conditions indicated that he had his working place in order. A sack of tobacco and a small clay pipe, with a 'heel' of tobacco tapped tightly in it, were found in the pockets."

# WHAT TO EAT AND WHY



C. Houston Goudiss

Discusses the NEED FOR IODINE

## Key Substance of the Thyroid Gland--Tells How to Avoid Iodine Starvation

By C. HOUSTON GOUDISS

6 East 39th St., New York City

THE discovery of our vital need for iodine is one of the most thrilling chapters in the long history of scientific research.

Many investigators contributed to our understanding of iodine hunger, but special credit is due to Dr. David Marine

and his co-workers; and to Dr. E. C. Kendall of the Mayo Clinics at Rochester, Minn.

Today we know that although it constitutes only about one part in three million parts of the body weight, iodine is so essential that its absence from the diet may have the gravest consequences.

**Thyroid—The Gland of Glands**  
Iodine is necessary for the normal functioning of the thyroid gland, situated in the front part of the neck. The thyroid is so important that it is often regarded as the throttle which governs the human locomotive, and when it fails to function normally, the body machinery may be thrown out of balance.

Thyroid disturbance during childhood may affect mental and physical development, and many children have been accused of laziness who are suffering from thyroid deficiency. Thyroid disorder may be a complicating factor in obesity, and specialists have found that it is associated with many stubborn skin diseases. It is also claimed that iodine starvation influences mental make-up and emotional tendencies.

**Disfiguring Goiter**  
Simple goiter is a common disorder of the thyroid gland. At one time the very mention of this disease terrified girls and women, who feared the unsightly lump in the neck which disfigures the victim. Now, thanks to dramatic experiments, we know that simple goiter is an iodine deficiency disease.

**Animal Experiments Point the Way**  
In 1916, it was estimated that a million young pigs died annually in Wisconsin. Investigation disclosed that their thyroid glands were abnormally large and abnormally low in iodine. When iodine was administered to the mothers, the young pigs were born normal.

Scientists reasoned that if goiter could be prevented in animals, it could be prevented in humans, and undertook the now famous census in Akron, Ohio. A study was made of the thyroid glands of all school girls from the fifth to the twelfth grades. Almost 50 per cent were found to have enlarged thyroid glands.

The girls were given small doses of sodium iodide dissolved in drinking water at given periods over 2½ years. At the end of that time, investigators found that of 2,000 pupils, only 5 developed thyroid enlargement. Of the same number not treated, 500 showed enlargement.

**Danger Periods**  
This demonstration aroused the interest of the scientific world and

Send for This FREE CHART Showing the Iodine Content of Various Foods

YOU are invited to write C. Houston Goudiss for a chart showing the foods rich in iodine and those which are poor in this substance. It will serve as a valuable guide in preparing balanced menus. Just ask for the Iodine Chart, addressing C. Houston Goudiss, at 6 East 39th Street, New York City. A post card is sufficient to carry your request.

## Have You a Question?

Ask C. Houston Goudiss  
C. Houston Goudiss has put at the disposal of readers of this newspaper all the facilities of his famous Experimental Kitchen Laboratory in New York City. He will gladly answer questions concerning foods and diet. It's not necessary to write a letter unless you desire, for post card inquiries will receive the same careful attention. Address him at 6 East 39th Street, New York City.

diet, especially in goiterous regions, is through the use of iodized salt. In Detroit, a city-wide test of iodized salt reduced the prevalence of simple goiter from 36 per cent to 2 per cent. Similar figures have been cited for other localities. Iodized salt costs no more than ordinary table salt and is an excellent safeguard against simple goiter.

## Iodine in Drinking Water

Even in early times, it was believed that there was some relation between goiter and drinking water, and recent evidence has disclosed that there was a sound basis for this belief. Two investigators found that the water in a large part of the northern half of the United States falls into a low-iodine classification.

Several communities have given consideration to the prevention of goiter by the addition of iodine to the water supply. This method is commendable, but it must be borne in mind that wherever iodine is taken in forms other than food, careful supervision by the physician or the public health authorities is necessary.

To those homemakers interested in planning the best possible diet for their families, I shall gladly send lists showing which foods are rich in iodine and which are poor in this substance.

## Questions Answered

Miss S. G.—There is no justification for serving toast at every meal instead of bread. It is true that proper toasting changes some of the starch to dextrine which is quickly and easily digested. But laboratory experiments reveal that the proteins of toasted bread and crusts have a lower digestibility, and animals gain less weight when fed on them than on the untoasted bread and the inside crumbs of the loaf.

Mrs. B. R. S.—The average meal leaves the stomach within four hours, though a large meal may stay for five hours. However, the length of time food remains in the stomach is only a fraction of that required for the entire digestive process, which varies in normal individuals from 12 to 47 hours. Carbohydrates leave the stomach most quickly, proteins are next, and fats require the longest period.

Miss C. T.—Agar-agar is a non-irritating, indigestible carbohydrate. As it is not digested, its caloric value is zero, and it could not possibly be fattening.

Mrs. M. S. F.—I do not approve of the strictly vegetarian diet because it is unbalanced. One who desires to omit all animal foods from the diet must also omit the top-notch products, milk and eggs. It is doubtful if adequate protein could be supplied without milk, eggs or meat. Good health is best maintained on a balanced diet, and is such a priceless possession that I cannot understand why anyone should risk the consequences of consuming a one-sided diet.

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## HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONS

For a Flakier Crust.—Half teaspoonful of vinegar, added to the water when making pie crust, will assure a flakier crust.

Improving Fudge.—If you will add a small spoonful of cornstarch to the next batch of fudge you make, you will be amazed at the improvement in flavor.

Butter Marshmallow Fork.—When toasting marshmallows to prevent them from sticking to stick or fork when toasted, have handy a cube of butter so the toasters can thrust their stick or fork into it before putting the marshmallows on.

Stoning Raisins.—To stone raisins easily, first place them in boiling water for a short time.

Cooking Cauliflower.—Cauliflower will remain a beautiful white and be most delicate in flavor if cooked in a mixture of half milk and half water. For some reason this method practically eliminates any odor during cooking.



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