



# THE RIVER of SKULLS

—by George Marsh—

© PENN PUBLISHING CO.

WNU SERVICE

CHAPTER XI—Continued

A half mile below, three men and a girl waited for the return of McCord. After dark he worked his way cautiously down to them. The story of his narrow escape disquieted them.

The following day the valley steadily widened. The hills to the west of the Koksoak entirely flattened out and in the afternoon they reached their goal—the mouth of the River of Skulls. The western slope of its valley rose in a succession of spruce clad terraces to merge with the white moss tundra beyond. It was unmistakable. Eyes moist with emotion, McCord gazed up the valley of the branch. Here was the picture that Aleck Drummond had indelibly etched in his memory. The thousand-mile traverse of forests, lakes and roaring rivers was behind him. He had kept his trust with the spirit of Aleck. He had reached the River of Skulls.

"There she is!" he cried, his voice husky with feeling. "Just as Aleck described it a thousand times. The western shore terraced for miles, and cast your eyes on that rusted limestone over there!" He pointed upstream with his paddle. "Plenty of iron there, boys!"

"Well, here goes for the River of Skulls!" shouted Alan, carried away by McCord's excitement as he swung the bow of the Peterboro from the main stream. "Heather, you'll soon be picking gold nuggets right out of the sand!"

Heather smiled bravely back at the sternman but her eyes were haunted by fear. Although the men had refused to talk, she had guessed what had happened back at the gorge, what had driven them down river through the night. Again the Naskapi had struck at the white men entering their country. All through the summer and fall would hang the menace of sudden death to the gold hunters. And later, somewhere on the long trail back over the river ice and snow, McCord and his halfbreeds would be waiting. She smiled gallantly at the bronzed sternman whose gray eyes so reassuringly met hers, but in her heart there was a lurking fear.

The actions of Noel in the bow drew the attention of those behind him.

"What d'you see, Noel!" asked Alan, as the bowman squinted at the long gravel point piled with boulders forming the tongue of the fork.

"Someth'ing een de edee ovaire dere," replied the Indian. "We have a look."

The canoe approached the drifting object caught in an eddy, inshore, which had held Noel's sharp eyes.

"A broken paddle! White man's, too!" cried Alan.

"Ah-hah! McQueen lose dat paddle," commented Noel, lifting the broken blade from the water. "By gar, she ees split by a bullet!" he went on excitedly. "Look!"

He passed the shattered paddle back to McCord.

"True as you're born!" grunted the giant, showing the paddle to Alan. "They've been shot at by the Naskapi, above here! That was made by the ball from a muzzle loader."

"Maple paddle, that's McQueen's," agreed Alan. "He had two he brought with him to Fort George. I saw them coming up the river. That's his paddle! And it was dropped in the river below the last lake, or it would have grounded there. I'll bet the Naskapi ambushed McQueen at the long rapids of the gorge, John."

The giant laughed loudly. "That would save us a heap of trouble if they had. I didn't figure he was so close on our heels."

"Neither did I! Did you, Noel? They're only average river men and we—"

"You two are the best white-water men I've ever seen and I've seen plenty," interrupted McCord. "I don't see how they came so fast." Then the big man shook the broken blade savagely at the valley through which the Peterboro had come. "Come and take it, McQueen!" he roared. "If you're still alive, come and get our dust after we've slaved for it! But when you do, have your guns in your hands!"

"Golly, dad! that was pretty dramatic, wasn't it?" said Heather with a forced smile that belied the uneasiness in her eyes.

"Uh-huh!" grunted the giant, studying Drummond's sketch map. "Mr. McQueen has asked for drama. He's going to get it! That right, boys?"

Alan and Noel nodded. Late the following afternoon, as the four men were poling around a bend, Napayo suddenly held his pole suspended in air, standing as though carved from wood, his head thrust forward, listening.

The slight breeze blowing down stream brought to the ears of the waters. The uneasy Naskapi called to Noel.

"Deet ees de gorge. Napayo say

he feel ver' bad," Noel announced. Alan reached and patted the shivering Indian, who stood in front of him holding his pole. "We will not go to the Gorge of the Spirits, Napayo," he said in Montagnais. "We will camp below. We will not let the spirits harm you."

Before them, for a mile or more, stretched an alluvial flat filled with sand-bars where the river, leaving the gorge above, suddenly widened to flow slowly through a basin flanked by sandy shores. Above and beyond the shores extended wooded terraces to lift at last into barren hills.

"Here it is, Alan!" cried McCord excitedly, "just as Aleck described it! These sand-bars and gravel beds have been washed down here for centuries! We're going to find gold here, boy, gold!"

"There's the spruce to build the sluice boxes!" cried Alan infected with John's excitement, pointing to the wooded terraces.

"Most of those bars can be free panned without the trouble of handling so much gravel by sluicing. That's where Aleck got most of his nuggets—big as cranberries!"

"Gosh, dad! I'm excited!" laughed Heather. "Think of it, gold



"True as you're born!"

in those sand-bars! If we only get back with it!"

Napayo's black eyes shone with a hidden fear as he stared through his mop of hair at the distant narrowing of the river where the stream left the gorge and spread out over the shallow bars. He was approaching the Gorge of the Spirits, tabu among his people for two generations. The wrath of the spirits of the Naskapi and the Eskimos whose bones lay on these sandy shores would vent itself on these white men and on the girl with hair like the sun. But these people were his friends—had saved his life. With terror-filled eyes, he took up his paddle and followed the others up the slower water of the wide flat.

So great was the evident distress of the Naskapi, and so grave the dark features of Noel, that a half mile below the foot of the gorge, Alan turned in to the gravelly shore. On the first timbered terrace above the river, they made camp in the spruce. After supper he took the Naskapi and Noel aside for a talk while John McCord paddled the canoe among the sand-bars examining with his prospector's eyes the nature of the alluvial deposit brought down by the river.

Alan impressed upon the two Indians the fact that the Naskapi who had brought gold nuggets to Chimo had escaped the bad medicine of the spirits because they had not gone near the gorge. Napayo would not be asked to go near the gorge. He would hunt caribou, spear salmon and make snowshoes and clothing. They would camp where they were safe from the danger of the demons.

Napayo seemed somewhat relieved, then Alan put an arm over Noel's shoulder, led him to one side and talked to him as a brother. The moaning in the gorge, he explained, was nothing but the confused sound of the wind and of broken water. The Talking River had been named because of the same peculiar sounds in the little canyon Noel knew and was not afraid to pass. And he was familiar with the Singing Rapids on the Great Whale, the famous Wailing Water of the East Main and the Whispering Hills over on the Conjuror. All named because of sounds made by wind or water, or both. This gorge, here, had been filled with the same noises long before the battle—the same sounds and noises. Was he, Noel, Lepoul, the blood brother of Alan Cameron? Or was he a poor, ignorant bush Indian, full of superstition and belief in the foolish talk of the medicine man?

Into Noel's smart features crept a look of pride. He reached and took Alan's hand in his sinewy fingers.

"I not 'tink of dat. You spik true, Alan. De same sound was

here before de battle! Ah-hah! De same soun! Eet ees ole man's talk. I feel bettair, now."

But Alan smiled to himself as he joined the others at the supper fire, for he knew Noel would never overcome much of his Montagnais belief in a spirit world.

Later that evening, leaving Noel and the Naskapi squatted whispering at the fire, Alan started with Heather and her father up the river shore. Ahead of them the four dogs raced over the gravel, sand and boulders of the lower shore.

"Where did they find the skulls, Dad?" asked the girl. "Where was the fight?"

"Aleck said he ran into bones and skulls for quite a distance below the gorge. You see they've been buried deep in sand and gravel by the high water and silt washed down in the spring and the animals must have carried away a good deal."

"What's the matter, Heather? You feel spooky?" asked Alan. "You look as if you'd seen a ghost already."

She shrugged her shoulder in a little shiver as she looked upstream at the opening of the gorge where the racing river burst from the limestone and granite walls which

big rivers remained open until later, but he knew that the water of the River of Skulls would be so cold and carry so much slush and young ice from above that it would block their sluices and make panning most difficult in the early part of the month. So two short months were all the prospectors could count on, in which to wash from the sands the gold dust and nuggets they had come so far and toiled so hard to reach.

Having lived largely on fish coming down the Koksoak they were now ravenous for red meat. Therefore Noel and Napayo were to start at once on a hunt into the barrens.

For Alan and John there was much to be done; spruce to be cut and split into slabs for sluice boxes through which to wash the river sand for the fine gold it held; sea trout netted and salmon speared and smoked when the run from the salt water began; and when the hunters had sufficient chocolate-and-white skins of the pie-bald, faun caribou, there were winter parkas, shirts and leggings, smoke-tanned moccasins and mittens to be made, for the men were all in rags from the hard portages of the Koksoak. Then, because they had rightly anticipated an absence of large birch on the big river, the three birch slabs they had carried all the way down on the floor of the Peterboro, must be thinned, steamed at one end for the curved bow and lashed to cross pieces, to make the long toboggan sled which was to carry the hundreds of pounds of food for themselves and the dogs, together with the gold, if they hoped ever again to reach the cache at the head of the river.

Until the ice in the river blocked the sluicing and the sands and gravel began to freeze, there would be little rest in the camp below the Moaning Gorge. And all the time over the heads of those who toiled with the rifles at their sides would be the constant menace of the Naskapi who now hotly resented to cross the dead line on the Nipiwi to reach the Koksoak—all the time, the knowledge that Jim McQueen, if he were still alive, was waiting for their return over the river ice.

Industrious prospecting of some of the bars in the river by John and Alan with the miner's pan and the help of the shovel, fitted with a long birch handle, proved the truth of Aleck Drummond's story.

"Look at that color, boy!" shouted McCord, one morning, when, standing with breeches rolled above his knees beside a hole they had dug on a gravel bar, he had rotated a pan full of river sand and gravel until the two men stared at the sediment of black sand and dull, yellow flakes remaining.

"Boy, we're rich!" he yelled in his excitement. "Look at the coarse gold there! And look at that nugget—big as a pea!"

Alan stared in open-mouthed wonder at the dull yellow grains of coarse gold in the pan. So this was the stuff that men for centuries had fought and killed and died for; gold, that would buy what the heart desired. He ran it curiously through his fingers.

"We've got over two months before the ice to pan these bars! We may not have to use sluices if it runs this way, nor that pint of mercury I carried, either! Shake, partner!" The giant danced a jig on the gravel, holding the pan high above his head. "This is a bonanza, boy! It was the River of Skulls or bust!" he cried. "Well, we're there! Boy, we're there!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## Cheyenne Gun Collection Spans Century; Traces History of Most Modern Weapons

A collection of guns which would thrill the youngsters of the "Indian and cowboy" period or old-timer who remembered the "bad days" of the old West is owned by Jesse Hansen of Cheyenne, writes a Cheyenne United Press correspondent in the Chicago Daily News.

This history of the modern gun is traced in the collection. First came the blunderbuss, then the percussion cap and ball gun in which a cap was used instead of flint for igniting the powder in the barrel. This cap was placed over a projection underneath the hammer with a small hole in the projection carrying the fire to the powder and discharging the gun.

The breech-loading Maynard came in 1855. It fired the shell with a roll of caps much on the order of the Fourth of July caps used in toy pistols. This gun was next in line to the modern cartridge and gun.

The oddest piece in Hansen's collection is an 1837 pistol with a revolving cylinder of six barrels instead of the regulation cylinder holding six cartridges and the one barrel of today.

The gun was designed primarily for use at close range and served admirably when a gambler found

it necessary to convince someone across the table that the game was on the "up and up." The hammer on the gun is a long affair on the top and falls down sharply to discharge the shell. The gun was known as the "pepper box."

A cap and ball pistol of 1845, probably used for dueling purposes, is another feature of the collection. It is of Colt make and has the rear sight on the firing point of the hammer. The sight can be used only when the hammer is cocked.

Another oddity of the collection is a century-old muzzle-loader that is superior to modern rifles in accuracy, according to Hansen. Hansen has the original wooden ramrod used to load the gun. Powder for it is kept in a regulation powder horn that is about 100 years old and shot is served into the gun from a leather pouch that has a four-pound capacity. The gun and equipment came from the Ozark mountains.

Hansen says only the horn on the right side of an animal could be used as a powder horn since it was to be slung over the shoulder. Horns from the left side would not hang properly.

The collection includes Indian arrowheads and tomahawks in addition to guns from all over the world.

## Floyd Gibbons' ADVENTURERS' CLUB

HEADLINES FROM THE LIVES OF PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELF!



### 'The Nurse and the Thug'

By FLOYD GIBBONS  
Famous Headline Hunter

HELLO EVERYBODY: Here's a holdup story with a different twist—almost a tragic one, for, we learn from Augusta C. Gores of Glendale, L. I., "The gunman confessed to Judge Savarese that he was about to assault me." Had it not been for the curious coincidence related below, Augusta's adventure might have had a different ending.

Augusta, who is a nurse, was attending an invalid patient in Glendale, and on the night of April 4, 1936, at 11:20 p. m., she alighted from the Metropolitan avenue trolley a block and a half from the house at which she was employed.

The road at that point happens to be very lonely, inasmuch as Saint John's cemetery is but a block away. Augusta felt rather creepy for that reason as she was walking that distance from the trolley.

Suddenly, ahead of her, she saw a lengthened shadow, traveling in the same direction. SOMEONE WAS COMING ALONG BEHIND HER.

She looked back to make certain, and, sure enough, a man was hurrying along toward her. Augusta felt the man might be following her, so she figured she would cross to the opposite side of the road in order to see whether the man would actually follow her.

He did. Augusta looked back once more as she was crossing, and as she did, the man crossed also. He, too, was looking back to see whether the road behind him was clear. "I was not mistaken," Augusta says.

### No Chance to Escape by Running.

Fear came over her. Fighting for control, she realized in mounting panic, that she must suppress her blind desire to outrun the man. No hope lay in that course, she must use her wits instead.

Behind her the footsteps grew louder. At last, unable any longer to restrain herself, Augusta turned. Not a foot away from her was the man. She attempted to turn back to the avenue, as there were several cars going through, but the fellow prevented her from doing so by telling



The drunken thug was getting rough, and Augusta began to tremble.

her to go on ahead of him and obey his orders as he had her covered with a gun and would use it on her if she screamed or made any attempt to call for help.

At the same time, Augusta says, the man pressed his body up against hers so that she might feel that he had a gun.

The man wore a leather jacket, and had his hand in the breast pocket, concealing the weapon. This was enough for Augusta. All thoughts of flight vanished. She knew she must somehow talk her way out of this situation. But she knew in the next instant that she didn't have a choice. The man was under the influence of liquor, and he was past the reasoning stage.

### Augusta Invented a Husband.

As the man began getting rough, Augusta told him desperately that she expected her husband along any minute, and that her husband was a police officer. "You'll be in for an awful lot of trouble!" she warned the persistent annoyer, hopefully.

Augusta adds in parentheses: "I happen to be a widow."

She thought by manufacturing this story the man might go away and let her alone, but, on the contrary, he seemed inflamed by this threat. He became rougher, boasting that he could handle the situation, and Augusta, seeing now how drunk the fellow was, began to tremble inwardly.

And despite her rising panic, she knew that her one hope lay in just one thing—SHE MUST NOT LET THIS FELLOW KNOW HOW FRIGHTENED SHE WAS OF HIM.

To scream was useless; there was no one who would have heard her cries. Augusta's one hope lay in holding off her annoyer until someone should happen along.

The man was powerful, and Augusta was powerless against his drunken strength. In vain she wrestled to free herself from his grip. He was just about to overpower her when, turning down the road, Augusta saw the headlights of a car.

### Her Savior Was a Policeman.

The thug had his back turned. Augusta, recalling her feeble threat of a few moments back, cried out: "Here he comes now!"

The instant's attraction was enough. While the thug wheeled to face, as he thought, the approaching police officer (Augusta's fictitious husband) she pulled away from him and threw herself into the range of the headlights!

The car was traveling at a pretty good clip, and the driver told Augusta afterward that he did not see her until he was almost on top of her, and actually came very close to running her down.

Augusta leaped on the car's running board, begged the driver, a man, to help her, explaining that she was the victim of a holdup.

By this time the thug was making his getaway. He was making good headway, WHEN SUDDENLY AUGUSTA HEARD A SHOT!

And here's the strange coincidence. The very man Augusta had stopped in the car proved to be a police officer in plain clothes, who was coming home from a prize fight. He was a total stranger to Augusta, but he must have been just as effective as if he had been the imaginary husband she had tried to scare the thug with. Because the next scene in this drama shows the thug up before the judge. Augusta was commended by the court upon being able to hold the man off long enough for help to come.

Copyright.—WNU Service.

**Apes Test Coins**  
As protection against the wave of counterfeit coins in Siam, merchants of Bangkok and other cities have installed large apes as coin testers. Every coin received is given to the ape, which puts it in its mouth. If it is good, the animal drops it into a receptacle behind him. If it is bad he throws it on the floor, chattering loudly. How they know the difference is a mystery, but they are said always to be right.

**Honored With "Great Graves"**  
Among certain tribes of Indians in Colombia and Ecuador not long ago, the depth of a person's grave was gauged by his former standing and influence, says Collier's Weekly. While ordinary individuals only rated an eight-foot burial, important men such as chiefs, witch doctors and rainmakers were honored with "great graves," often sixty feet deep.

**Park's Fame Due to Voice**  
South Dakota is unique in its possession of the only national park whose fame is due to its voice. Wind cave was first found because of the strange whistling noise that is caused by the passage of air in and out of its original entrance. The phenomenon is believed to be due to changing temperatures outside the cave, as the direction in which the wind blows through the entrance depends upon atmospheric conditions.

**Mount Rainier Third in Height**  
Washington's Mount Rainier, 14,408 feet high, is the third mountain in height in continental United States, being topped only by Mount Whitney in California and Mount Elbert in Colorado. Rainier is the loftiest of the huge extinct volcanoes which dominate the Cascade range of mountains. Its nearest rival, Mount Shasta in northern California, is 250 feet lower.

## A Stitched Sampler In Floss That's Gay



Come in the evening  
Come in the morning  
Come when you're looked for  
Come without warning

Pattern 6128.

Want some color interest for your room? Then embroider this cheery sampler. It is in easy cross stitch with the flowers in other simple stitches. Pattern 6128 contains a transfer pattern of a panel 11 3/4 by 15 inches; color chart and key; materials needed; illustrations of stitches.

To obtain this pattern, send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) to The Sewing Circle, Household Arts Dept., 259 W. 14th St., New York City.

Please write your name, address and pattern number plainly.

## Favorite Recipe of the Week

### COCONUT CAKE

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 cup of butter           | 1/2 teaspoon soda         |
| 1 1/2 cups sugar          | 2 teaspoons baking powder |
| 3 egg yolks               | 1/2 teaspoon salt         |
| 1 cup coconut             | 3 cups cake flour         |
| 3 cups cake flour         | 1 cup orange juice        |
| 1/2 teaspoon vanilla      | 3 egg whites              |
| 1 teaspoon orange extract |                           |

Cream shortening thoroughly. Add sugar gradually. Add well beaten egg yolks, then coconut. Sift flour; measure, add soda, baking powder, and salt, and sift three times. Add to first mixture alternately with orange juice. Add extracts. Fold in stiffly beaten egg whites last. Bake in two nine-inch layer cake pans 30 minutes at 375 degrees. Frost with boiled frosting.

### The Spirit Blooms

The world is not respectable; it is mortal, tormented, confused, deluded forever; but is shot through with beauty, with love, with glints of courage and laughter; and in these the spirit blooms timidly, and struggles to the light among the thorns.—George Santayana.

## NERVOUS?

Do you feel so nervous you want to scream? Are you cross and irritable? Do you scold those dearest to you? If your nerves are on edge and you feel you need a good general system tonic, try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, made especially for women. For over 60 years one woman has told another how to go "smiling thru" with reliable Pinkham's Compound. It helps nature build up more physical resistance and thus helps calm quivering nerves and lessen discomforts from annoying symptoms which often accompany female functional disorders. Why not give it a chance to help YOU? Over one million women have written in reporting wonderful benefits from Pinkham's Compound.

### Power a Blessing

Power, when employed to relieve the oppressed and to punish the oppressor, becomes a great blessing.—Swift.

## Watch Your Kidneys!

### Help Them Cleanse the Blood of Harmful Waste

Your kidneys are constantly filtering waste matter from the blood stream. But kidneys sometimes lag in their work—do not act as Nature intended—fail to remove impurities that, if retained, may poison the system and upset the whole body machinery. Symptoms may be nagging backache, persistent headache, attacks of dizziness, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes—a feeling of nervous anxiety and loss of pep and strength. Other signs of kidney or bladder disorder may be burning, scanty or too frequent urination.

There should be no doubt that prompt treatment is wiser than neglect. Use Doan's Pills. Doan's have been winning new friends for more than forty years. They have a nation-wide reputation. Are recommended by grateful people the country over. Ask your neighbor!

## DOAN'S PILLS

WNU—U 36—38

## Bargains YES!

You find them announced in the columns of this paper by merchants of our community who do not feel they must keep the quality of their merchandise or their prices under cover. It is safe to buy of the merchant who ADVERTISES.