



# THE RIVER of SKULLS

by George Marsh

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WNU SERVICE

**SYNOPSIS**

Alan Cameron, young trapper, Noel, his Indian partner, and Rough, husky Ungava sled dog, look in vain for the Montagnais trappers' camp in the desolate Big River country of Northern Canada. Their supplies destroyed by wolverines, they are forced to subsist on wolf meat until they come, amazed, to a substantial log house in the wilderness of Talking River, where they are greeted by a big blond man with a gun. Introducing himself as John McCord, hunter, the big man makes no clearer the mystery of his identity or reason for his whereabouts. Heather McCord, the daughter, who had come with him to the wilderness, admires Rough.

**CHAPTER II—Continued**

When McCord had finished eating his simple supper of corn bread, caribou stew and tea, he said:

"Daughter, these boys are all worn out and need sleep, so you toddle off to bed, when we've done these dishes."

The brows of the girl almost met in a frown as she studied her father's face, then turning to Alan with a laugh, she said: "That's a bargain, Alan, if you'll hitch Rough to the sled, as soon as he gets his strength back, and give me a ride on the river."

"He's a little lame now, but in a day or two he'll show you what a real sled-dog is," replied Alan, proudly, stroking the head of the sleeping dog at his side.

With a "Good night, all!" the girl went to her room.

McCord moved the table back to the wall, lit his pipe, then turned to the man who was watching him curiously.

"Are you afraid to travel beyond the Sinking Lakes?"

For a space the surprised youth sitting on the stool and the man who approached and bent over him probed each other's eyes. What was this—a challenge? The blood leaped in the veins of the son of Graham Cameron, once known for his daring from Rupert to the Little Whale. Was this stranger with the ice-blue eyes putting his courage to the test?

"You think I'm afraid to go into that country? I tell you it's just a question of common sense—of whether you'll starve out."

The bearded face with its livid scar was thrust closer. The cold eyes snapped with the glitter of challenge. The manhood of Alan Cameron was measured in that long stare.

"Would you go with me—next year?" the giant asked.

In frightened protest Noel cried: "De Land of de Caribou People? Not dere! no, not dere!"

Alan impatiently waved his friend back as he rose to his feet to meet the questioning eyes that searched his. "You're a stranger, Mr. McCord," said the boy, his lean face lit with suppressed excitement. "You've saved our lives. And we owe you much. But I don't go into the bush with a man I don't know. You've asked me a question. Well, I ask you one before I answer. Who are you, and why are you here?"

The man whose piercing blue eyes never left the speaker's face, laughed. "Fair enough," he agreed. "I'm from down Ottawa way but I've spent a good many years in the bush. I'm up here with the idea of doing some trading. They tell me that a big trade of black-and-silver-fox pelts comes down to the coast from these headwaters—black marten, too, and lynx."

But, as he talked, Alan recalled the fighting glitter in McCord's eyes, earlier in the day, when he opened the door of the cabin to the call of starving men—the desperate look of a trapped wolverine. What had brought him to that door fingering the trigger of that black automatic? What mystery was behind all this?

When Heather McCord opened the door shortly after the sun lit the parchment windows of the cabin, she greeted her father's guest with a look of undisguised approval. Shaved, scrubbed and wearing a clean shirt, the embarrassed stranger of the night before was again, thin as he was, the striking youth with bold, regular features and deep-set gray eyes, after whom, when the post was gay with the spring trade, the girls at Fort George, white, half-breed and red, flashed many an admiring glance.

"Good morning!" she said. "Feel better after the food and sleep and," she added with a laugh, "after the shave?"

The blood flooded Alan's dark, frost-burned face. "I'll be as good as new in a few days."

"Why, you look pretty good now." Rough, who had slept indoors as an especial favor to a starved dog, yawned deeply, rose, stretched, shook himself, then walked to the girl who boldly placed her hand on the massive skull. Ears forward, the husky measured her for a space through slant eyes, sniffed, then met her hand with the thrust of a red tongue.

"You've put a spell on him!" exclaimed the surprised Alan. "You're the first stranger he's ever made up to."

"We won't be strangers long." She knelt and calmly took the husky's jaws in her two hands, while his tail swept slowly to and fro as he looked into her face.

"You've got a way with dogs," commented Alan.

She laughed. "I wouldn't take the trouble to make love to most dogs but he's a big dear. Gee, what jaw muscles he's got! You're a darling old bear, aren't you, Roughy?"

As Alan watched her he wondered what could have induced John McCord to bring such a girl into the heart of the Ungava barrens.

A loud yawn from the upper bunk announced the awakening of the giant and soon the room was filled with odors of hot bannocks, frying caribou steak and tea.

During the following days, while the boys and dog were regaining their lost weight and strength and the crust stiffened under the March sun, Alan talked much with McCord. But his direct questions received evasive answers. The mystery of the giant's presence on the Talking River was still unsolved in the minds of the boys. The explanation that he was there to trade with the Indians did not satisfy them.

Nevertheless, in the intimacy of the life together, Alan and Noel gradually surrendered to the magnetism of the man who had saved



"Winter with you?"

them from a wilderness death. They were convinced that behind that bulk and power lay the mettle of a man.

Soon Heather McCord was driving Rough over the crusted river ice hitched to her father's small trapping toboggan. Never before had the Ungava shown interest in anyone except the man he worshiped. But by some secret magic, some occult charm of personality, the girl had reached the heart of the dog.

One day as Alan followed rabbit snares set in the thick willows of the shore reaches above the camp, he heard Heather and Rough skimming over the wind-brushed river ice, the laughter of the girl mingling with the wild yelping of the dog. Finishing his round of the snares, he came out to the shore a mile above the camp and looked up and down stream. The river was deserted. Thinking that they had gone on up-stream, he walked to a bend in the shore. But on the sweep of white river ice before him there was no sled. Then his heart suddenly slowed as he noticed, a quarter of a mile above, near the shore, black objects, low on the ice.

Dropping the rabbits he carried, Alan ran like a caribou hunted by timber wolves.

"If they can only hold on—only hold on!" he prayed, leaping over the wind-scoured crust of the river.

As he approached the two struggling in the suck of the strong current, Alan saw that the girl was holding herself firmly by her arms on strong ice but that the husky was breaking down the ice-edge, churning and clawing with his powerful forelegs to hold himself up against the drag of the sled beneath him.

"Hold on! Hold on, Rough!" he cried, desperate with fear.

Clinging to the ice edge, the white-faced girl gasped: "Get Rough! The sled's—pulling him—under! I'm—all right!"

The spread paws of the frantic dog were slowly slipping on the glazed ice—slipping toward the edge.

"Hold on, Roughy!" she cried. With a last desperate lunge of his powerful fore legs the despairing dog lifted his head and shoulders above the water. The deep throat sent a farewell whine to the master who was coming too late. Slowly, like an anchor, the drag of the sled drew the slipping nails to the edge of the ice and the heroic dog sank beneath the surface.

There was a heavy splash as Alan Cameron threw himself into the water. Hooking one arm on the ice edge, he reached under water and

gripped a trace of the dog who thrashed wildly against the drag of the sled to gain the surface. With a wrench of his powerful arm and shoulder Alan drew the struggling Rough up to the ice edge. Aided by Alan's lift on the trace, the dog hooked his forelegs again on the ice. Alan whipped his skinning knife from its sheath and slashed both traces. The great husky drew himself out of the water, turned and clamping his teeth on the capote of his master, slowly drew him out on the ice.

"Oh, you've saved him—you've saved him!"

With a spring the dog reached the rim of the firm ice where Heather clung with all the strength of her young arms, and seized a sleeve of her duffel capote while the dripping Alan gripped her hand and man and dog drew the half frozen girl from the water.

"Are you all right?" he cried, as Heather half delirious hugged the wildly yelping Rough. "Quick now! We'll wring some of the water out of your clothes! They'll freeze solid. We've got to strike for camp."

Shivering like a man with the ague, Alan wrung what water he could from her clothes.

"We've lost—the sled," she said ruefully.

"We can make another in a day or two! Come on now! No time to talk! Run!" commanded Alan, seizing Heather's arm, while she, half-crying, half-laughing, attempted to explain how she had forgotten her father's warning and had driven Rough into the treacherous ice of the rapids.

Three ice-encrusted figures reached the warm camp to send John McCord, when he returned, into a tirade on the folly of headstrong girls with short memories. Later Alan and Heather, swathed in blankets, drying out before the fire, heard him say:

"What would there be left for me with Heather, you and Rough out there under that ice?"

**CHAPTER III**

March, the southern Montagnais' "Moon of the Crust on the Snow," was drawing to an end. Three weeks of nourishing food had wrought miracles in the two famished boys and the lean, stiff-legged husky who had drifted into out of the jaws of the white death to the cabin of John McCord.

But now there was no time to waste, if the boys were to escape being caught on their way to Fort George by the spring break-up, when the crust goes suddenly soft before the advancing sun and water floods the river ice.

The afternoon before Alan planned to start for the coast, he and McCord, their snowshoes slung from their backs, were returning from a round of the trap-lines in the timber of the river valley. Suddenly, swinging round on the hooded figure of Alan, who walked beside his dog, McCord exploded, almost fiercely:

"I want you to bring back some real dogs—then winter with me!"

"Winter with you?" The pulse of the youth leaped.

"I've watched you alone and with your dog. I've seen you handle an axe and a rifle. I've listened to your talk. I haven't lived forty years for nothing. You're young, but you're the man I looked for and couldn't find—in Ontario and at Moose and Rupert House."

"Huskies you want?" muttered the boy, his straight gaze meeting the look in the other's tense face. His heart beat with pride at what he had just heard. McCord, who had come from a world of many men, far south in the cities, had rated him high among them. Then, in a flash came the vision of the

**Everybody's a Little Crazy; at Least Scientists Make Interesting Deductions**

The line between sanity and insanity becomes vaguer and vaguer, the more psychologists try to draw it, asserts a writer in the Chicago Daily News.

Now come Dr. James Vaughn and Othilda Krug of the University of Cincinnati who tell of giving the Rorschach ink blot test to 43 psychotics with paranoid tendencies and to 52 students at their school and they conclude:

"It is interesting to observe that here and there normal people present original form responses which are probably as indicative of pathology as the original form responses of the psychotics."

"One can hardly escape the conclusion that insanity is a difference in degree and not in kind. The degree seems important."

Their observations were reported recently to the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The ink blot test consists of dropping some ink onto a paper, folding it so that the ink smears into an irregular outline and then letting the patient interpret the outline. It has been demonstrated to the satisfac-

tion of psychologists that the interpretation shows characteristics that may be associated with various types of insanity.

Apparently normal people and psychotics resemble one another in many respects, the two investigators summed up. "They present similarities in degree and kind of adjustment, intelligence, analytical ability and originality, stereotypy, ideas of persecution and grandeur and introversion and extraversion," the report reports.

"The psychotics," the psychologists continued in leading to their conclusion, "present evidence of greater dissociation and less rapport with environment, but it is surprising to find so many apparently normal people presenting similar tendencies."

**Many Noncombatants With Army**

No army is believed to have been accompanied into battle by as many noncombatants as a certain military legion of Bengal, India, in 1859. It consisted of 100,000 individuals, says Collier's Weekly, 85,000 of whom were wives, children, laundresses, valets, porters, hostlers and outers.

face of the girl that had companioned his dreams through the winter—the girl to whom he had bidden good-by that day when hope had died and they were crawling with the last of their strength across the tundra to the valley of the Talking River. What would Berthe say if he spent the early summer on the north coast seeking dogs for John McCord? Would she believe that he still cared for her if he went north at once on his return to Fort George?

"Yes, I want a team like Rough. I'll get only scrubs from East Main if I get them at all."

"But Ungava dogs are hard to get," objected Alan. "There are few for sale. The Huskies want them for themselves."

With a quick movement McCord slipped his hand from the rabbit-skin mitten, slung by a thong from his neck, and wiped the ice formed by his breath from his short, blond beard.

"You're straight as a spruce—or I'm no judge of a face," he said. "I'm—I'm going to trust you, but how about Noel? He's Indian. Can you keep his mouth shut—if they try—to learn something?"

"Noel would die for me," answered Alan, wondering what was coming. "He will not talk."

"You'll get the dogs, then?"

"Why not come to the coast and get them, yourself?"

"I don't want it known at Fort George where I am going to locate to trade with the Indians. That's why I came in by way of Rupert House—to throw them off the scent—to lose myself. Remember you've never seen me. Can Noel keep that locked in his throat?"

Suddenly across Alan's brain there flashed a suspicion. Could this man, facing him here on the river ice, be wanted down in the provinces for crime?

"You saved our lives," was Alan's answer. "They'll never know at Fort George that we met you."

"I believe you, boy," McCord laid his hand on the other's shoulder. "But will you go up the coast for the dogs?"

Alan hesitated. There was Berthe! What would she say? He was saving—saving in the hope that, some day, Berthe—But the money that McCord would pay him might bring that day nearer.

"I'll need plenty of tea, tobacco and sugar to trade for dogs with the Huskies," said Alan, weakening.

"I'll give you plenty of money, but you mustn't show it at Fort George. They'd want to know where you got it. And I don't want them to know this summer that you've met me."

"But what good will that do?" demanded Alan, impatiently. "Your men must have reached East Main before Christmas if they left here in November. Fort George would learn by the Christmas mail that you were in here, somewhere."

McCord nodded. "True, but my men didn't know we were on the Big River headwaters."

"So you don't want Fort George to know just where you are?"

"Exactly. If they learn that you've met me, they might follow you when you come back with the dogs."

"Follow me? Why?" Again suspicion lurked in Alan's mind. "But they may be following your Indians now—if they talked at East Main."

McCord slowly shook his hooded head. "They're not following my Indians."

"You mean you think they've deserted you and—Heather? They'd take your dogs and money and not come back—leave you here flat—without a dog or a man to help you?"

"That's just what I'm saying."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

# WHAT to EAT and WHY

C. Houston Goudiss Describes the Place of Fats in the Diet

Nationally Known Food Authority Compares the Different Cooking Fats and Shortenings

By C. HOUSTON GOUDISS

8 East 39th St., New York City.

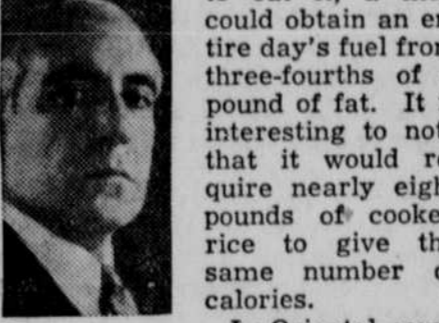
THERE are, perhaps, more false notions concerning fats than any other class of foods.

Some homemakers, considering them as "fattening" only, try to eliminate them entirely from the diet. Others have the impression that foods containing fat are difficult to digest, and for this reason deprive their families of many delicious and healthful foods. Both points of view arise from ignorance of dietary facts.

**Fats Are Necessary to Health**

Fats have a number of important functions to perform. They are a concentrated fuel food, having more than twice the energy value of an equal weight of protein or carbohydrate.

One-half ounce of fat, that is one tablespoon, yields 100 calories, and were he able to eat it, a man could obtain an entire day's fuel from three-fourths of a pound of fat. It is interesting to note that it would require nearly eight pounds of cooked rice to give the same number of calories.



In Oriental countries, where large populations live in great poverty, fat is usually scarce and it is necessary to consume huge quantities of food in order to meet the daily fuel requirements. As a result, most of the people develop distended abdomens.

**Children Must Have Fat**

Because fat is such a compact food, nutritionists agree that for growing boys and girls, and men engaged in strenuous physical exercise, fat is almost essential, if they are to get enough total calories.

There is also experimental evidence that at least a small amount of one or more of the unsaturated fatty acids must be supplied by the food if normal nutrition is to be maintained. And two competent investigators found, experimentally, that the presence of fat in the diet tends to conserve vitamin B in the body.

Some fats, especially those from animal sources, are rich in vitamins A and D, and fats made from vegetable oils may contain vitamin E.

**Fat and Hunger**

Perhaps the greatest service performed by fat is its ability to give "staying power" to the diet—to satisfy hunger. In this respect, it directly affects the disposition and may influence the ability to enjoy life.

The shortage of fats in European countries during the World War graphically demonstrated how a deficiency of this class of foods can destroy the morale of entire nations.

With supplies cut off or very greatly curtailed, the warring countries found it necessary to ration fats closely. As a result, their people were always hungry and dissatisfied, even when their actual needs were satisfied. In this connection, it is interesting to note that a slice of bread and butter or margarine will delay the onset of hunger longer than a slice of bread and jam, even though the number of calories may be the same.

**Different Fats Compared**

As sources of energy, the different food fats are very similar. Thus, the homemaker's choice may be determined by preference, convenience, economy, and the

use to which the product is to be put.

The various forms of edible fats and oils are derived from both animal and vegetable sources. They include butter, margarine, lard, compounds, which are a mixture of animal fats and vegetable oils, hydrogenated fats, and the liquid vegetable oils.

Butter and margarine are used chiefly as a spread, and it is interesting to note that the annual per capita consumption of margarine is steadily increasing, as homemakers have discovered that the use of this less expensive product releases more money for milk, fruits and vegetables. Margarine is interchangeable with butter for dressing vegetables and in doughs containing spices, fruits and chocolate. Its shortening power and keeping qualities are similar to those of butter.

Lards, compounds and other shortening fats are useful not only as a means of increasing palatability and food value, but to add flakiness to baked foods and to produce a crisp coating which seals in the minerals and vitamins of fried foods.

Lard is used chiefly as a shortening for pastry, and a good grade will be found to be white and free from objectionable odors. The highest grade, called leaf lard, is produced from the leaves of fat in the sides of the hog.

When made by a reputable manufacturer, the compounds prepared especially for cake making, for shortening pastry and for deep-frying, are wholesome, highly nutritious and give most satisfactory results. They are a most economical form of shortening.

**Digestibility of Fats**

Because of their ability to retard digestion somewhat and thus give satiety value to a meal, the impression has grown up that fats are "difficult" to digest. This results from confusing the length of time required for digestion and the completeness with which a food is digested.

When "digestibility" is regarded in the popular sense of the ease, comfort and speed with which the

digestive organs carry on their work, it is conceded that fats in general retard the secretion of the gastric juice and thus cause food to remain longer in the stomach.

On the other hand, most fats have such a high coefficient of digestibility, that under normal conditions only about one-twentieth of the fat eaten escapes digestion. Experiments indicate, for example, that the coefficient of digestibility of oleomargarine is 97.55 per cent.

It is sometimes erroneously stated that pastry is indigestible. This statement is without foundation, provided the pastry is made from a high grade shortening and is properly baked. Similarly, fried foods come in for a great deal of criticism that should not be charged to the use of fat, but to incorrect methods of cooking. If food is properly cooked in fat that has a high smoking point, there will be no opportunity for decomposition products to develop.

**How Much Fat?**

Nutritionists have ample evidence that health is best served when 30 to 35 per cent of the total energy value foods is provided in the form of fat. This will include the fat of meat and the fat used in cooking the many delicious fried and baked foods which make eating a pleasure.

Mrs. M. L., Jr.—Dandelion greens make an excellent food. They contain more phosphorus than any other common leafy vegetable, and supply vitamins A, B, C and G.

Miss C. B. R.—It is difficult to compare the iron content of meats because of variations in the amount of fat. It has been established, however, that organ meats, as liver and kidneys, contain more iron than muscle meats, and that pork and lamb contain much less iron than beef.

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