



# 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 wolves, 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 asks Alan if he dares go with him next year to the River of Skulls beyond the Sinking Lakes, where no man is said to have been before. Heather McCord, the daughter, who had come with him to the wilderness, wins the immediate devotion of Noel. On the eve of Alan's departure for Fort George, McCord suddenly tells him to bring him back some dogs, and to keep his mouth shut to questions. He gives the boy money, warning him not to show it at Fort George, and promises to explain all later. Returned to Fort George, Alan meets McCord and Slade, Provincial police, with Arsene Rivard, clerk, and Alan's rival for Berthe Dessane, with whom he is in love. The two police are looking for a guide to the Big River wilderness. Accidentally Alan drops one of McCord's bills.

## CHAPTER III—Continued

When the door of the trade-room closed behind Pierre, Noel turned to Alan. "Why you drop that money?"

"I've done it, Noel," groaned the other. "I forgot I got that bill in my pouch when I had the tobacco."

"Mebbe dey not see eet," comforted Noel.

"They saw it; they couldn't help it! Pierre didn't see from where he stood but Rivard and the others—they saw."

"Dei spik togedder; mebbe dey not see."

"If they did see it, how am I going to account for it? They'll learn that I drew no money here last summer—never touched our balance with Gabriel or the Hudson's Bay. Nobody takes money into the bush so they're bound to suspect we met somebody. He trusted me and this is how I repay him."

The long-lashed lids of her black eyes winked hard as she smiled back at him. "You know I do—Alan. I'm so glad—you've come back—so early."

"Thanks for what you told me, Berthe! I'm going to Pierre's house—for supper," he said at the door.

No, he reassured himself, as he walked away through the wet snow, Rivard hadn't poisoned her mind yet.

Over the hot supper at Pierre's the two boys talked with their host of the winter on the headwaters.

"Pierre," said Alan, at length, as he pushed back his chair and lit his pipe, "you are my friend and will tell me. What did Rivard say when he came back with those strangers to the trade-room?"

A smile lit the broad face of the head voyager. His small eyes twinkled as he answered: "He pull dose polece ovaire een de corner and whisper. He know Pierre sees your fr'en."

"So they're Provincial Police from Quebec? Who are they after?"

Pierre shrugged. "I do not know; M'sieu Dessane tell dem you know de headwater country, you and Noel, so dey want you to guide dem."

"How did they get here?"

"Yesterday dey come een ovaire de shore ice by dog-team. Ovaire got that money?"

"I got that money from Neil Campbell, at Whale River, two years ago."

With a shrug and a smile of impotency McCord turned to Slade. "Guess we'd better let these boys get some sleep," he said good-naturedly. "They're tired and cross, need plenty of rest and grub—then we'll have a talk with them."

"You'll have plenty of time to talk," said Alan, winking at the stiff-faced Noel. "After the ice from the upper river passes, the river will run high with snow water for weeks. You'll have plenty of time."

"Well, good-night, boys, no hard feelings! See you later!"

Alan stood motionless in the doorway until the two callers disappeared in the gloom, then closed the door and turned to Noel.

"I've got to see Neil Campbell before anyone else from Fort George reaches him. As soon as the ice clears the coast we head for Whale River."

Alan yawned, then calmly surveyed the exasperated McQueen from head to foot. "When you show me what business it is of yours, I may tell you."

McQueen's pale eyes flamed with anger. "We're Provincial Police! Didn't you know that? You'd better keep a civil tongue in your head, young man!"

"Why didn't you tell me who you were?" countered Alan, revelling in the discomfort of the thick-set officer. "Rivard didn't say a thing about it when I met you, and neither did you! I suppose you've got something to prove it?"

McQueen threw open his outer and inner coats, displaying a badge of German silver on his heavy shirt. "That satisfy you? I'm a sergeant of Provincial Police, Province of Quebec. I thought they'd told you. Slade, here, is a corporal."

"I haven't seen Gabriel since I got in and Rivard said nothing about your being police," avoided Alan, truthfully. He realized the danger of further antagonizing his callers. They had wide powers in the hinterlands when in pursuit of wanted men. They might even force him to accompany them to the headwaters. But remorse over his carelessness flared in a whip flects a harness-sore dog.

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"His Indians came out at East Main in December—deserted him," continued Dessane. "He had hired them to go in with him to trade for furs. They came out to get dogs and supplies but he wanted them to go into the interior, this summer, and they were afraid to go. That was his plan—to lose himself in the interior. That was why the police were suspicious when you dropped that bill you got from Neil Campbell," the stunner Alan heard Dessane say, as if from a distance.

"They know there's no money used in the back country and they suspected you might have run into him."

Alan's level eyes met the friendly gaze of the factor as he replied: "Yes, I understand. But I don't go up river with these police. I've got to get some good dogs from the Huskies. That will take me weeks."

"Well, I'll tell Sergeant McQueen that you must get your dogs from the Eskimos first, if he insists on taking you to the headwaters instead of some of our Indians."

But while the laggard spring touched the East Coast slowly with its magic, to Alan who chafed at the delay, harassed by his problem, there was one great consolation in his enforced idleness. Berthe, far away, indeed, seemed the man and the girl on the Talking River, when he sat with the small Manon on his knees while he watched the busy fingers of her sister at her sewing. But equally far seemed the day when Alan Cameron, humble trapper of fur, could take this black-eyed girl in his arms and tell her his love.

So the days passed while Alan and Noel made frequent trips to the mouth of the river to watch the condition of the floe-ice along the coast. Then, one day, they learned from Andrew Christie, Hudson's Bay factor, that McCord had hired a York boat. That meant that the police were going to try to slip up the coast to Whale River to check his story.

"Noel," said Alan, as the two sat in Alan's cabin, "ice or no ice, we leave for Whale River tonight! We must beat McCord to Neil Campbell and they will know we met John McCord and compel us to take them to the headwaters."

"You t'ink Neil weel tell dem he geeve you de monee?"

"He'd die for me, Noel. I pulled him out of the river here when he was clerk at the Hudson's Bay."

Early that evening Alan walked with Berthe along the high shore of the river near the Revillon Freres post. He would not see her again in weeks for his quest for dogs would take him far north of the Whale.

"It won't be long, now, Berthe, before we can start," he said, watching the breeze whip a plume of her black hair across her face.

"But father says the coast is not clear!" she protested. "It would be very dangerous for you to start in a canoe in all that drifting ice."

"I may have to go to Richmond Gulf, Berthe, before I reach the Eskimos. They won't meet the Whale River until too late. I've got to find them, you know, if I want to get good dogs."

She laid her hand on his arm. "There's something I want to tell you, Alan. The police are going to Whale. I heard Arsene tell father."

"Yes, I know that. They don't believe I got that money from Neil and are going to find out."

"But I believe you, Alan, and so does father."

"I know you believe me, Berthe. You're a wonderful friend—you don't know what that means to me. And I can't sneak away without saying good-bye. I may not see you—again—for weeks."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

# JUST JESTS



### Gone Forever

They were both wearing letters, but suddenly hubby stopped and looked worried.

"What's the matter, dear?" asked his wife.

"Why—or—I had it on the tip of my tongue and now it's gone."

"Never mind," she said, "just think hard and it's bound to come back."

"Thinking won't bring this back. It was a stamp," said hubby.

### Spring Daze

Mrs. Easley—Three moves are as bad as a fire.

Mrs. Harder—Yes, and one visit of the paper hangers beats a cyclone.

### A Substitute

Willie—While mother was sleeping the baby got sick licking the paint.

Caller—Off a toy?

Willie—No, off mother.

### When she thinks he's perfect, she's in love. When she makes up her mind to improve him, she means marriage.

### Willing to Wait

The tiny brother of the bride was given a piece of wedding cake to put under his pillow. The following morning his mother said to him, "Well, Bobbie, did you sleep with the wedding cake under your pillow and dream of your future wife?"

"No, mummie," replied the boy. "I ate the cake, 'cause I wanted my wife to be a surprise."

### One day a neighbor came over and wanted to borrow Grandpa's new rope. Said Grandpa: "No, I've got to use that rope today to tie up some sand."

### Madness?

Kulper—What reason have you for marrying my daughter, young man?

Fogmore—No reason at all, sir; I'm in love with her.

### After the neighbor had left a friend said: "Grandpa, you know you can't tie sand with a rope!"

"Remember, my boy," replied the old man, "you can do pretty near anything with a piece of rope if you don't want to lend it."

### An Operator's Dream

"I'm sorry I gave you the wrong number," said the operator.

"Don't mention it," replied the caller, "I'm sure the number you gave me was much better than the number I asked for, only it just happened I wasn't able to use it."

### Send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) for this pattern to The Sewing Circle, Needlecraft Dept., 82 Eighth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Please write your name, address and pattern number plainly.

### The following appeared some years ago in a wedding report: "Among the gifts of the bride to the bridegroom was a gorgeous dressing gown."

### Send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) for this pattern to The Sewing Circle, Needlecraft Dept., 82 Eighth Ave., New York, N. Y.

### Going Down

Two cronies met at lunch.

"How's things?" one asked.

"How are they? Rotten, old boy. Honestly, if they keep on like this it looks as though my last income tax return will be just about correct!" said the other, gloomily.

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### Improving Cookies.

The flavor of cookies is improved and they stay moist longer if one tablespoonful of jam or jelly is added to the cookie dough.

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### Cream Cheese Substitute.

Cottage cheese may be used in place of cream cheese if it is pressed through a fine sieve to remove the moisture.

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### Line the Clothes Basket.

Clothes baskets can be kept clean by lining them with washable material, such as oilcloth, muslin, or heavy paper may be used.

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### Mealy Baked Potatoes.

To make baked potatoes dry and mealy, when they are tender put a fork at least twice into each potato to let the steam escape.

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### Try This and Please Hubby.

A tablespoon of borax in the water in which white collars are washed will take away that ugly yellow tint and make them as white as new.

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### Soft Pillows.

One housewife washes all the discarded silken articles of the household, cuts them into tiny pieces and uses them to fill pillows. They are very soft and fluffy, besides costing nothing.

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### Slow Oven for Sponge Cake.

Sponge and angel-food cakes should be baked in a slow oven so that the air which has been beaten into them has a chance to expand and lighten the cake before the eggs set and give the cake a shape.

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Pattern 1745.

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Send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) for this pattern to The Sewing Circle, Needlecraft Dept., 82 Eighth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Please write your name, address and pattern number plainly.

## Reason for Popularity: Keep Notes on Fair Sex

A senator from the Southwest has revealed the secret of his popularity among the ladies. He keeps notes on everyone he meets at lunches, dinners and receptions, indexed according to the date and place. After the name of each lady he notes an item concerning what she wore or how she dressed her hair. Then when he meets her again, he can say, "Yes, indeed, I remember you perfectly, you wore a stunning yellow dress with blue gloves!"

No wonder the ladies all vote for him at election time. Any man who yearns to be liked by the fair sex can profit by using the solon's system.—Liberty Weekly.

## AROUND the HOUSE

### As You Iron.

Stack your clothes in piles according to the rooms in which they will be put away. Then when you are finished the clothes are sorted and need not be handled twice.

### Pick Up Sharp Objects.

A vacuum cleaner should not pick up pins, broken glasses, tacks or other sharp metal pieces, for they may poke holes in the dust bag, or chip or throw out of balance the fan blades.

### Strange Facts

Movies Catch Fire-Rain

### Outdoor Fireplace.

Backyard fireplaces are easily constructed and provide a center for family recreation during summer months; steak roasts, corn roasts, and a few of the many reasons for building one.

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Clothes baskets can be kept clean by lining them with washable material, such as oilcloth, muslin, or heavy paper may be used.

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2. Complete this sentence in 10 words or less: "THE ONE THING I LIKE BEST ABOUT FLA-VOR-AID is . . ."
3. Attach entry to wrapper from 5c package of FLA-VOR-AID or facsimile.
4. Add the Name and Address of Grocer where you bought FLA-VOR-AID.
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