



THE RIVER of SKULLS

—by George Marsh—

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WNU SERVICE

CHAPTER XIII—Continued

The eyes of Heather shone like sapphires as Alan reached them. She danced around the fire, her wavy golden hair tossing about her head, while her father reached a big hand to grasp Alan's in a fierce grip.

"All aboard for the caribou, Alan, my boy!" roared the giant. "Now shed those worries of yours! We'll soon have meat and skins for clothes, old kill-joy!"

Even the dogs grew excited at the feverish activity at the camp. Everything left behind was cached safely out of reach of wolverines. Then the impatient Napayo and Noel started with rifles and light packs, while John and Alan waited for the aid of the moonlight to make their way with the canoe and the heavy packs up the trail through the spruce and around the gorge. On up the river in the morning went the canoe, while Heather walked the shore with the dogs for company. In the middle of the afternoon the signs of caribou hair along the water line increased. The deer were passing in greater numbers, but how far upstream? That night the tired poles made camp late in the twilight but there were no signs of the two Indians ahead of them. At sunrise, Heather and Alan went back from the river to sweep the barrens with the glasses.

Rolling away before them reached the white moss hills studded with boulders. Alan handed the binoculars to Heather who focused them on the distant tundra while he held her rifle. As she stood like a statue slowly searching the skyline, his eyes feasted on the tumbled gold of her hair, in its wayward luxuriance, then followed the nape of her strong, round neck to the collar of her patched shirt and the skin coat worn over it. Tall and strong and straight she was in her tattered clothes, as she swept the tundra with the glasses, all unconscious of the silent tribute in the gray eyes of the man beside her. He wanted to touch her—touch the gold that curled at the nape of her neck; wanted to take her in his arms, there on the barren, and kiss the dimples in her brown cheeks.

As she turned and handed him the glasses, her violet eyes, deepened in hue by contrast with her tanned face, caught the warmth of his gaze, and she looked away as she said, "I see no deer."

"If you knew how you looked, standing there—" he began, but she interrupted, hoarsely:

"Why do you say this to me, when you carry her picture? Oh, don't think I'm not sorry for you—leaving her as you did with your heart sad—"

He reached swiftly and placed his hand over her mouth. "I'm not sad, Heather!" he cried. "I'm glad that I'm here with you—glad! Do you hear that! Do you understand? It's you, Heather! Only you who count!"

"Why do you still carry her picture?"

"I went into the fire, long ago. It's you, Heather! You've been carrying in my heart!" He impulsively reached to take her in his arms, but she stepped away from him.

She shivered as if suddenly cold. "It's only because I'm here, with you, Alan. You're lonely—you only think you've forgotten her. If we live—get out of this terrible country, you'd be sorry, if I believed what you say now. No, it's because you're lonely. You'd only be sorry!"

He smiled as his gray eyes met hers. "You mean everything to me! Everything! Getting out with the gold means little to me, now! It's bringing you out, safely, that counts."

Without answering, she started back over the caribou path toward the river. Her moccasined feet seemed uncertain to the man who followed.

Hour after hour, the two men slaved at the poles, pushing the canoe up against the hard running water. Heather was somewhere behind with the dogs when they turned a bend where the river broadened into a long reach of quiet water and Alan shouted, "Look ahead there! We've struck them, John! We've got our meat and clothes, now!"

Above them, splashing the water in all directions, four caribou plunged into the stream and started to cross. Antlered heads, backs, white rumps and tails out of water, the frightened deer dove across the current as if propelled by engines. Seizing his rifle, Alan dropped to a knee, while McCord steadied the boat with his pole, and fired as the deer reached the shallows. Again, as they left the water in a wild panic, he fired and two bucks waded, stumbled and, reaching the beach, fell.

"Red meat for supper!" cried McCord. "That's good shooting, boy! From this distance in a canoe, good shooting!"

"We've struck them, now!" an-

swered Alan. "There go two more above! We'd better camp here and wire up the dogs, John. Noel has probably got plenty of deer above here and the dogs might turn the deer to the west. They'll be coming for days!"

That night Noel and Napayo appeared at the camp. It was only the vanguard of the migration, the Naskapi told them. The big herd would be crossing for days and they could select the fattest for meat and the best fawns and yearlings for clothing as they passed. He and Noel had already shot, dressed and skinned a number from the scattering bands and placed them in a cache upstream.

While the rest of the hungry hunters revelled in deer chops, Noel and the Naskapi roasted the head and tongue, the best part of the animal in the opinion of the Indians.

The following day in small bands the migrating caribou continued to cross the river headed for the protected valleys and wooded country far to the south. Stationed along the river shore at the well beaten paths leading down from the tundra, the hunters chose their deer, avoiding the old bulls whose white manes and great antlers distinguished them from the younger



"There go two more above!"

animals. By night they had enough chocolate-and-white faun skins for their winter clothing and sufficient meat to be cured and brought back to the camp. But Alan and John were anxious to see the main herd which Napayo assured them was following these scattered bands—a compact mass of literally hundreds of thousands of traveling caribou, larger than the mythical buffalo herds that once roamed the western plains. So, leaving the Indians McCord, Alan and Heather went back on the barrens.

As they left the scrub of the valley and came out on the open tundra above, to gaze over the rolling moss-covered plain reaching away mile after mile to dim hills on the horizon, McCord gasped:

"Look at those deer!"

In every direction bands of caribou dotted the white moss tundra, always moving into the light breeze that blew from the west. On the skyline of an adjacent rise in the barren a line of white-maned stags were standing enjoying the breeze that gave them relief from the pest of flies. Everywhere the amazed eyes of the three hunters gazed met moving groups of deer. Does with their parti-colored fawns, yearlings, old stags, all moving up-wind as is their invariable habit.

The three traveled on farther from the river watching the moving deer when suddenly, out of a little valley, rushed a band with their peculiar, high knee-actioned trot, snorting and grunting as they came.

"Hear the click of their hoofs, Heather?" cried Alan. "They always make it when they travel."

"But, don't they see us? Why, they're going to run right over us!" exclaimed the excited girl, as the band of deer approached.

The two men smiled at the girl's apprehension.

"Watch them when they get our scent. You'll see some antics!" replied Alan.

Suddenly, as the band of approaching deer, whose eyesight is poor, crossed the scent of the hunters, they recoiled as if by word of command. Several young bucks rose on their hind legs and pranced back and forth, snorting loudly. The band scattered and retreated, then bunched again, and led by a cow, finally charged across the tainted air that so frightened them, and were off over the tundra.

"Hear their hoofs click, Heather?"

"I should say so! But aren't they beautiful creatures! It's a pity to shoot them, Alan!"

"Yes, but without them the Indians would starve and freeze. And so would we, this fall!"

The two men and the girl watched

the scattered groups of deer heading for the river crossings. Then, in the afternoon, the van of the great herd appeared. As far as they could see with the glasses marched the battalions and regiments of the army of caribou, on their annual journey from the vast highlands west of Ungava Bay to the sheltered valleys of the south—one of the zoological phenomena of the world.

For hours the absorbed McCord, Alan and Heather watched the marching thousands, like great herds of cattle; bulls, cows and fawns, all moving into the breeze. Over them hovered circling ravens and a golden eagle hung high in the sky. On a hilltop off the flanks of the main herd, Alan's glasses revealed for a space the slinking shapes of a family of white wolves watching for a straggling faun or yearling.

For, like ghosts, the wolves follow the migration south and, again north, in the spring. And nearer, from the graveled summit of a ridge, two shaggy animals with long bodies and bear-like heads, a pair of wolverines, the most hated beast in the north, viewed the spectacle.

Then for days the hunters toiled at the camp on the river, preparing the skins and meat to be taken

geese and swan had passed south-west. The "Moons of the Long Snows" had again come to the land of the Naskapi.

Late in September, when light snow blanketed the barrens, Napayo again went on a mission up the Koksoak to look for signs of McQueen or the Naskapi. Fear of an ambush of the dog team on the river ice, later, was constantly with them. A week passed and the Indian did not return. Another week, and each night around the fire in the spruce, the faces of the waiting men and girl grew more grave, for the boy had won his way to their hearts.

"If Napayo does not show by tomorrow," said Alan, "Noel and I'll take the dogs straight over the barren to the Koksoak and follow it up a day or two. The snow is beginning to pack. It's all right for the light load we'll carry."

"Yes, and run into what he's probably met—an ambush!" objected McCord. "No, let's hang together. When we start up the Koksoak, we'll travel like an infantry column with flank patrols out on the shores."

"I've felt it all along!" burst out Heather. "It's McQueen! He's got poor Napayo! It's this terrible gold in the bags there! For two months, Dad, you've thought of nothing but gold! You've been mad-crazed, about it! You want to load the sled down with it until there's not enough food to take us through! You'd kill the poor dogs to carry your gold!"

"Heather, Heather, girl," soothed McCord, "you're tired and worried. You don't mean what you say. We're going back all safe and sound, Honey, and we have a fortune with us. McQueen'll never bother this outfit—if he's alive, but he's not. We'll never see hide or hair of McQueen again. The Naskapi took care of him!"

"The Naskapi may take care of us, too," she objected, winking back the tears her emotion had aroused.

"No, Heather," said Alan. "The Naskapi don't winter in the Koksoak valley, Napayo told me. They're probably in the timbered lake country, hundreds of miles south of here, by now."

"Then were is poor Napayo?" she cried. "You say McQueen is dead and the Indians are not near us, and yet you're going to look for signs of both McQueen and the Indians. Neither of you believe what you say! You're only trying to keep your fears from me!"

In the morning, the river answered Heather's question. When Alan and Noel went down to the shore to the hole they kept broken in the ice for water, they saw something adrift in the swift, unfrozen channel.

"What's that, floating out there beyond the ice in the channel, Noel?" asked Alan. "Couldn't be a deer, could it?"

The Montagnais gazed at the submerged flotsam reaching out from a bar. Slowly Noel's swart features changed color and his face went grave. "We tak' canoe and see," he said. "No deer! Deer float high."

As they ran the canoe out over the shore ice and into the open channel Alan knew that the dread that sickened him as they poled the canoe up to the submerged shape bobbing at the ice edge. They turned over the battered body, floating face down, and looked into the glazed, staring eyes of Napayo.

"They got him, Noel! They got him!" groaned Alan. "Look at that hole in his head and there's another in the back. See? He was shot from the rear! No muzzle loader did that! That was made by a Ross and that Ross belongs to McQueen!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Monte Carlo Is Number Mad; Digits Are Picked at Random to Be Played on Wheel

The roulette wheel has made Monte Carlo perhaps the most number-conscious community in the world. People there have ever-alert eyes for numbers between one and thirty-six; they are always searching for portents, omens, indications from above which will reveal to them which number will be favored by fate at the casino that day. Generally, people bet on the day of the month, the number of the hotel room, or their age, writes David Ewen in the Globe Magazine.

Motor car licenses, when they have a striking repetition of one digit, will frequently inspire people to borrow that number for the day. When, during the last automobile sweepstake race in Monte Carlo, car No. 12 came in first there was a preponderance of betting on that number that evening at the casino; and by a curious coincidence No. 12 appeared frequently on every roulette wheel.

I have known people to sit quietly at the cafe sipping an aperitif when, suddenly, they perceived a number on the lapel of the waiter; without hesitation of a moment, they rose to

their feet and rushed to the casino to make a bet on the number.

One of the most amusing incidents in Monte Carlo concerns this indefatigable pursuit for lucky numbers among Monte Carlo inhabitants. It was noticed at the English church that every Sunday morning the church would be crowded until the preacher announced the number of the hymn to be sung; whenever the number was below 36, the church would instantly become half-empty.

How High Is a Tree? Did you ever want to know how high a tree was without going to the trouble of going to the top with a yard-stick or tape measure? It can be done all from the ground, says Hoard's Dairyman. Set up a stick straight from the ground and measure the length of the shadow it casts. Now measure the length of the shadow of the tree. Multiply the length of the tree shadow by the height of the stick. Divide this figure by the length of the shadow of the stick and you have the height of the tree.

Aunt Tibby's Trunk

By D. J. WALSH
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"BUT, Mazie," remarked Bert Howard to his pretty little wife, "it isn't quite fair that Aunt Tibby should want to come back so soon; it's less than three weeks since she left, and she had been here six months. I have no objections to your aunt; she's a nice old lady, if a bit eccentric, but you always work so hard entertaining her that you wear yourself out. Between worrying over her comfort and fussing about the safety of that old cowhide trunk, home becomes a place of torment for me instead of a haven of rest."

And then Mazie, whose bobbed crown of glory was decidedly of the shade beloved by Titian, and with a temper to correspond, replied thus: "If you were properly interested in the welfare of your family you'd want to keep Aunt Tibby here all the time! Do you fancy that she herself would be so particular about that old cowhide trunk, as you are pleased to call it, if it didn't contain valuables? She told me—no, I won't say she exactly told me, but she gave me to understand, and, I know all the family have the same impression—that in it she carries her stocks and bonds. She has bequeathed the trunk to the one in whose home she happens to die."

"Mazie!" exclaimed Bert, putting his arms around his wife, "waiting for 'dead men's shoes' is sorry business! Do what you can for your aunt without making your family unhappy, but put all such ideas as you've just men-

tioned out of mind; they are unworthy of you!" and Bert stopped to kiss his wife good-by.

The first evening of Aunt Tibby's arrival Mazie began, "Barbara! do sit still! You'll make Aunt Tibby nervous!" or "John! don't walk so heavy!"

Aunt Tibby had been with them several weeks when she came down with a cold. The doctor called pronounced the trouble pneumonia. "Which at her age," said he (Aunt Tibby was 86), "is a serious matter. You had better get a nurse." Aunt Tibby had been so humored by her niece, however, that the nurse could do little to suit her, and Mazie was obliged to fetch and carry, to run up and down stairs until, ten days later, Aunt Tibby sank into her last sleep.

After the funeral the relatives who had gathered from far and near demanded that the will be read at once. So the old cowhide trunk was brought down to the living room and opened in the presence of all. It contained Uncle David's army uniform, a few books, half a dozen packages of old newspapers—and a long letter written by Aunt Tibby herself. This was addressed to her relatives in general and was a sort of confession. In it she stated that her income since Uncle David's death had been limited to a pension of \$6 a month. That in some way the story had been circulated that this old trunk contained valuables and she had never contra-

ditioned out of mind; they are unworthy of you!" and Bert stopped to kiss his wife good-by.

On the Highway

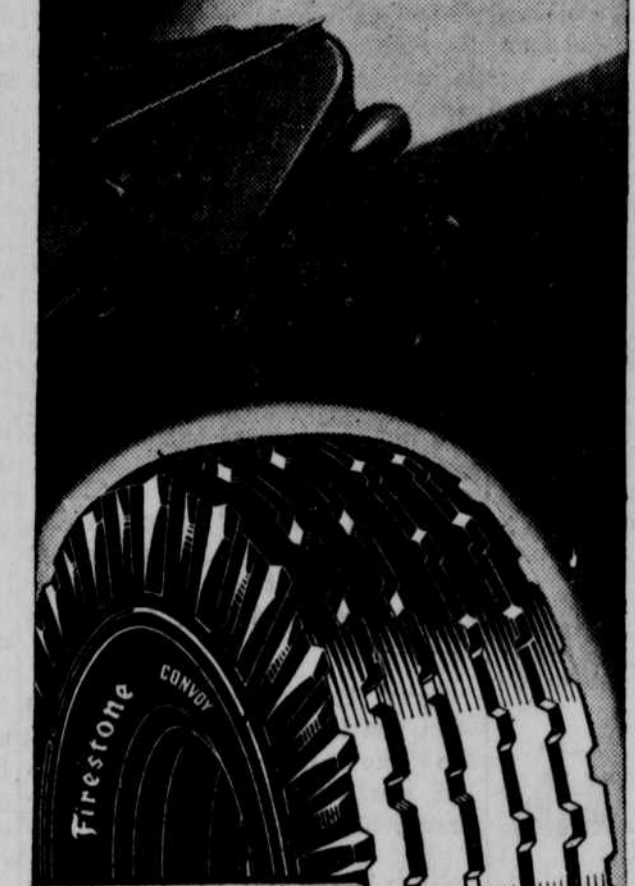
It is a curious trait in human nature that we will take off our hats when a woman enters an elevator, and be most apologetic if we bump into somebody inadvertently; but the instant we get our hands on a steering wheel we damn all mankind—woman and man alike.

Too often, we are inclined to look upon traffic guides and regulations as irritating restrictions designed primarily to keep us from having a good time, when the truth of the matter is, they have been devised solely for our convenience and comfort.

It is true, fearing if she told the truth some one might put her in an old ladies' home, an institution she detested. She trusted her relatives would pardon her and that the old trunk would be kept for her sake; that it might prove a magic casket to the owner, just as it had to her.

The trunk was left with Mazie, as she was the only person who displayed the least desire to possess it. After everyone had departed she threw her arms around her husband's neck and cried, "Oh, Bert, can you ever forgive me?" Judging by the sigh of contentment she uttered Bert's answer was satisfactory.

Aunt Tibby was right; the trunk did prove a magic casket for Mazie. It stood in the upstairs hall where she had to pass it many times a day and whenever she was seized with envy, stubbornness or a desire for finery she could not afford, one glance at the old trunk was sufficient to dispel such feelings in a twinkling.



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