

Northern Trails, Book I.

William J. Long

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NORTHERN TRAILS

BOOK I

By

William J. Long

WOOD FOLK SERIES BOOK VI

1905

PREFACE

In the original preface to "Northern Trails" the author stated that, with the solitary exception of the salmon's life in the sea after he

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vanishes from human sight, every incident recorded here is founded squarely upon personal and accurate observation of animal life and habits. I now repeat and emphasize that statement. Even when the observations are, for the reader's sake, put into the form of a connected story, there is not one trait or habit mentioned which is not true to animal life.

Such a statement ought to be enough, especially as I have repeatedly furnished evidence from reliable eye-witnesses to support every observation that the critics have challenged; but of late a strenuous public attack has been made upon the wolf story in this volume by two men claiming to speak with authority. They take radical exception to my record of a big white wolf killing a young caribou by snapping at the chest and heart. They declared this method of killing to be "a mathematical impossibility" and, by inference, a gross falsehood, utterly ruinous to true ideas of wolves and of natural history.

As no facts or proofs are given to support this charge, the first thing which a sensible man naturally does is to examine the fitness of the critics, in order to ascertain upon what knowledge or experience they base their dogmatic statements. One of these critics is a man who has no personal knowledge of wolves or caribou, who asserts that the animal has no possibility of reason or intelligence, and who has for years publicly denied the observations of other men which tend to disprove his ancient theory. It seems hardly worth while to argue about either wolves or men with such a naturalist, or to point out that Descartes' idea of animals, as purely mechanical or automatic creatures, has long since been laid aside and was never considered seriously by any man who had lived close to either wild or domestic animals. The second critic's knowledge of wolves consists almost entirely of what he has happened to see when chasing the creatures with dogs and hunters. Judging by his own nature books, with their barbaric records of slaughter, his experience of wild animals was gained while killing them. Such a man will undoubtedly discover some things about animals, how they fight and hide and escape their human enemies; but it hardly needs any argument to show that the man who goes into the woods with dogs and rifles and the desire to kill can never understand any living animal.

If you examine now any of the little books which he condemns, you will find a totally different story: no record of chasing and killing, but only of patient watching, of creeping near to wild animals and winning their confidence whenever it is possible, of following them day and night with no motive but the pure love of the thing and no object but to see exactly what each animal is doing and to understand, so far as a man can, the mystery of its dumb life.

Naturally a man in this attitude will see many traits of animal life which are hidden from the game-killer as well as from the scientific collector of skins. For instance, practically all wild animals are shy and timid and run away at man's approach. This is the general experience not only of hunters but of casual observers in the woods. Yet my own experience has many times shown me exactly the opposite trait: that when these same shy animals find me unexpectedly close at hand, more than half the time they show no fear whatever but only an eager curiosity to know who and what the creature is that sits so quietly near them. Sometimes, indeed, they seem almost to understand the mental attitude which has no thought of harm but only of sympathy and friendly interest. Once I was followed for hours by a young wolf which acted precisely like a lost dog, too timid to approach and too curious or lonely to run away.

He even wagged his tail when I called to him softly. Had I shot him on sight, I would probably have foolishly believed that he intended to attack me when he came trotting along my trail. Three separate times I have touched a wild deer with my hand; once I touched a moose, once an eagle, once a bear; and a score of times at least I have had to frighten these big animals or get out of their way, when their curiosity brought them too near for perfect comfort.

So much for the personal element, for the general attitude and fitness of the observer and his critics. But the question is not chiefly a personal one; it is simply a matter of truth and observation, and the only honest or scientific method is, first, to go straight to nature and find out the facts; and then--lest your own eyesight or judgment be at fault--to consult other observers to find if, perchance, they also have seen the facts exemplified. This is not so easy as to dogmatize or to write animal stories; but it is the only safe method, and one which the nature writer as well as the scientist must follow if his work is to endure.

Following this good method, when the critics had proclaimed that my record of a big wolf killing a young caribou by biting into the chest and heart was an impossibility, I went straight to the big woods and, as soon as the law allowed, secured photographs and exact measurements of the first full-grown deer that crossed my trail. These photographs and measurements show beyond any possibility of honest doubt the following facts: (1) The lower chest of a deer, between and just behind the forelegs, is thin and wedge-shaped, exactly as I stated, and the point of the heart is well down in this narrow wedge. The distance through the chest and point of the heart from side to side was, in this case, exactly four and one-half inches. A man's hand, as shown in the photograph, can easily grasp the whole lower chest of a deer, placing thumb and forefinger over the heart on opposite sides. (2) The heart of a deer, and indeed of all ruminant animals, lies close against the chest walls and is easily reached and wounded. The chest cartilage, except in an old deer, is soft; the ribs are thin and easily crushed, and the spaces between the ribs are wide enough to admit a man's finger, to say nothing of a wolf's fang. In this case the point of the heart, as the deer lay on his side, was barely five eighths of an inch from the surface. (3) Any dog or wolf, therefore, having a spread of jaws of four and one-half inches, and fangs three quarters of an inch long, could easily grasp the chest of this deer from beneath and reach the heart from either side. As the jaws of the big northern wolf spread from six to eight inches and his fangs are over an inch long, to kill a deer in this way would require but a slight effort. The chest of a caribou is anatomically exactly like that of other deer; only the caribou fawn and yearling of "Northern Trails" have smaller chests than the animals I measured.

So much for the facts and the possibilities. As for specific instances, years ago I found a deer just killed in the snow and beside him the fresh tracks of a big wolf, which had probably been frightened away at my approach. The deer was bitten just behind and beneath the left shoulder, and one long fang had entered the heart. There was not another scratch on the body, so far as I could discover. I thought this very exceptional at the time; but years afterwards my Indian guide in the interior of Newfoundland assured me that it was a common habit of killing caribou among the big white wolves with which he was familiar. To show that the peculiar habit is not confined to any one section, I quote here from the sworn statements of three other eyewitnesses. The

first is superintendent of the Algonquin National Park, a man who has spent a lifetime in the North Woods and who has at present an excellent opportunity for observing wild-animal habits; the second is an educated Sioux Indian; the third is a geologist and mining engineer, now practicing his profession in Philadelphia.

ALGONQUIN PARK, ONTARIO, August 31, 1907.

This certifies that during the past thirty years spent in our Canadian wilds, I have seen several animals killed by our large timber wolves. In the winter of 1903 I saw two deer thus killed on Smoke Lake, Nipissing, Ontario. One deer was bitten through the front chest, the other just behind the foreleg. In each case there was no other wound on the body.

[Signed] G.W. BARTLETT, _Superintendent_.

I certify that I lived for twenty years in northern Nebraska and Dakota, in a region where timber wolves were abundant.... I saw one horse that had just been killed by a wolf. The front of his chest was torn open to the heart. There was no other wound on the body. I once watched a wolf kill a stray horse on the open prairie. He kept nipping at the hind legs, making the horse turn rapidly till he grew dizzy and fell down. Then the wolf snapped or bit into his chest.... The horse died in a few moments.

[Signed] STEPHEN JONES (HEPIDAN).

I certify that in November, 1900, while surveying in Wyoming, my party saw two wolves chase a two-year-old colt over a cliff some fifteen or sixteen feet high. I was on the spot with two others immediately after the incident occurred. The only injuries to the colt, aside from a broken leg, were deep lacerations made by wolf fangs in the chest behind the foreshoulder. In addition to this personal observation I have frequently heard from hunters, herders, and cowboys that big wolves frequently kill deer and other animals by snapping at the chest.

[Signed] F.S. PUSEY.

I have more evidence of the same kind from the region which I described in "Northern Trails"; but I give these three simply to show that what one man discovers as a surprising trait of some individual wolf or deer may be common enough when we open our eyes to see. The fact that wolves do not always or often kill in this way has nothing to do with the question. I know one small region where old wolves generally hunt in pairs and, so far as I can discover, one wolf always trips or throws the game, while the other invariably does the killing at the throat. In another region, including a part of Algonquin Park, in Ontario, I have the records of several deer killed by wolves in a single winter; and in every case the wolf slipped up behind his game and cut the femoral artery, or the inner side of the hind leg, and then drew back quietly, allowing the deer to bleed to death.

The point is, that because a thing is unusual or interesting it is not necessarily false, as my dogmatic critics would have you believe. I have studied animals, not as species but as individuals, and have recorded

some things which other and better naturalists have overlooked; but I have sought for facts, first of all, as zealously as any biologist, and have recorded only what I have every reason to believe is true. That these facts are unusual means simply that we have at last found natural history to be interesting, just as the discovery of unusual men and incidents gives charm and meaning to the records of our humanity. There may be honest errors or mistakes in these books--and no one tries half so hard as the author to find and correct them--but meanwhile the fact remains that, though six volumes of the Wood Folk books have already been published, only three slight errors have thus far been pointed out, and these were promptly and gratefully acknowledged.

The simple truth is that these observations of mine, though they are all true, do not tell more than a small fraction of the interesting things that wild animals do continually in their native state, when they are not frightened by dogs and hunters, or when we are not blinded by our preconceived notions in watching them. I have no doubt that romancing is rife just now on the part of men who study animals in a library; but personally, with my note-books full of incidents which I have never yet recorded, I find the truth more interesting, and I cannot understand why a man should deliberately choose romance when he can have the greater joy of going into the wilderness to see with his own eyes and to understand with his own heart just how the animals live. One thing seems to me to be more and more certain: that we are only just beginning to understand wild animals, and it is chiefly our own barbarism, our lust of killing, our stupid stuffed specimens, and especially our prejudices which stand in the way of greater knowledge. Meanwhile the critic who asserts dogmatically what a wild animal will or will not do under certain conditions only proves how carelessly he has watched them and how little he has learned of Nature's infinite variety.

WILLIAM J. LONG

STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT

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WAYEESSES THE STRONG ONE

The Old Wolf's Challenge

We were beating up the Straits to the Labrador when a great gale swooped down on us and drove us like a scared wild duck into a cleft in the mountains, where the breakers roared and the seals barked on the black rocks and the reefs bared their teeth on either side, like the long jaws of a wolf, to snap at us as we passed.

In our flight we had picked up a fisherman--snatched him out of his helpless punt as we luffed in a smother of spray, and dragged him aboard, like an enormous frog, at the end of the jib sheet--and it was he who now stood at the wheel of our little schooner and took her careening in through the tickle of Harbor Woe. There, in a desolate, rock-bound refuge on the Newfoundland coast, the _Wild Duck_ swung to her anchor, veering nervously in the tide rip, tugging impatiently and clanking her chains as if eager to be out again in the turmoil. At sunset the gale blew itself out, and presently the moon wheeled full and clear over the dark mountains.

Noel, my big Indian, was curled up asleep in a caribou skin by the foremast; and the crew were all below asleep, every man glad in his heart to be once more safe in a snug harbor. All about us stretched the desolate wastes of sea and mountains, over which silence and darkness brooded, as over the first great chaos. Near at hand were the black rocks, eternally wet and smoking with the fog and gale; beyond towered the icebergs, pale, cold, glittering like spires of silver in the moonlight; far away, like a vague shadow, a handful of little gray houses clung like barnacles to the base of a great bare hill whose foot was in the sea and whose head wavered among the clouds of heaven. Not a light shone, not a sound or a sign of life came from these little houses, whose shells close daily at twilight over the life within, weary with the day's work. Only the dogs were restless--those strange creatures that shelter in our houses and share our bread, yet live in another world, a dumb, silent, lonely world shut out from ours by impassable barriers.

For hours these uncanny dogs had puzzled me, a score of vicious, hungry brutes that drew the sledges in winter and that picked up a vagabond living in the idle summer by hunting rabbits and raiding the fishermen's flakes and pig-pens and by catching flounders in the sea as the tide ebbed. Venture among them with fear in your heart and they would fly at

your legs and throat like wild beasts; but twirl a big stick jauntily, or better still go quietly on your way without concern, and they would skulk aside and watch you hungrily out of the corners of their surly eyes, whose lids were red and bloodshot as a mastiff's. When the moon rose I noticed them flitting about like witches on the lonely shore, miles away from the hamlet; now sitting on their tails in a solemn circle; now howling all together as if demented, and anon listening intently in the vast silence, as if they heard or smelled or perhaps just felt the presence of some unknown thing that was hidden from human senses. And when I paddled ashore to watch them one ran swiftly past without heeding me, his nose outstretched, his eyes green as foxfire in the moonlight, while the others vanished like shadows among the black rocks, each intent on his unknown quest.

That is why I had come up from my warm bunk at midnight to sit alone on the taffrail, listening in the keen air to the howling that made me shiver, spite of myself, and watching in the vague moonlight to understand if possible what the brutes felt amid the primal silence and desolation.

A long interval of profound stillness had passed, and I could just make out the circle of dogs sitting on their tails on the open shore, when suddenly, faint and far away, an unearthly howl came rolling down the mountains, _ooooooo-ow-wow-wow!_ a long wailing crescendo beginning softly, like a sound in a dream, and swelling into a roar that waked the sleeping echoes and set them jumping like startled goats from crag to crag. Instantly the huskies answered, every clog breaking out into indescribable frenzied wailings, as a collie responds in agony to certain chords of music that stir all the old wolf nature sleeping within him. For five minutes the uproar was appalling; then it ceased abruptly and the huskies ran wildly here and there among the rocks. From far away an answer, an echo perhaps of their wailing, or, it may be, the cry of the dogs of St. Margaret's, came ululating over the deep. Then silence again, vast and unnatural, settling over the gloomy land like a winding-sheet.

As the unknown howl trembled faintly in the air Noel, who had slept undisturbed through all the clamor of the dogs, stirred uneasily by the foremast. As it deepened and swelled into a roar that filled all the night he threw off the caribou skin and came aft to where I was watching alone. "Das Wayeeses. I know dat hwulf; he follow me one time, oh, long, long while ago," he whispered. And taking my marine glasses he stood beside me watching intently.

[Illustration: "The terrible howl of the great white wolf"]

There was another long period of waiting; our eyes grew weary, filled as they were with shadows and uncertainties in the moonlight, and we turned our ears to the hills, waiting with strained, silent expectancy for the challenge. Suddenly Noel pointed upward and my eye caught something moving swiftly on the crest of the mountain. A shadow with the slinking trot of a wolf glided along the ridge between us and the moon. Just in front of us it stopped, leaped upon a big rock, turned a pointed nose up to the sky, sharp and clear as a fir top in the moonlight, and--_ooooooo-ow-wow-wow!_ the terrible howl of a great white wolf tumbled down on the husky dogs and set them howling as if possessed. No doubt now of their queer actions which had puzzled me for hours past. The wild wolf had called and the tame wolves waked to answer. Before my dull ears had heard a rumor of it they were crazy with the excitement.

Now every chord in their wild hearts was twanging its thrilling answer to the leader's summons, and my own heart awoke and thrilled as it never did before to the call of a wild beast.

For an hour or more the old wolf sat there, challenging his degenerate mates in every silence, calling the tame to be wild, the bound to be free again, and listening gravely to the wailing answer of the dogs, which refused with groanings, as if dragging themselves away from overmastering temptation. Then the shadow vanished from the big rock on the mountain, the huskies fled away wildly from the shore, and only the sob of the breakers broke the stillness.

That was my first (and Noel's last) shadowy glimpse of Wayeeses, the huge white wolf which I had come a thousand miles over land and sea to study. All over the Long Range of the northern peninsula I followed him, guided sometimes by a rumor--a hunter's story or a postman's fright, caught far inland in winter and huddling close by his fire with his dogs through the long winter night--and again by a track on the shore of some lonely, unnamed pond, or the sight of a herd of caribou flying wildly from some unseen danger. Here is the white wolf's story, learned partly from much watching and following his tracks alone, but more from Noel the Indian hunter, in endless tramps over the hills and caribou marshes and in long quiet talks in the firelight beside the salmon rivers.

Where the Trail Begins

From a cave in the rocks, on the unnamed mountains that tower over Harbor Weal on the north and east, a huge mother wolf appeared, stealthily, as all wolves come out of their dens. A pair of green eyes glowed steadily like coals deep within the dark entrance; a massive gray head rested unseen against the lichens of a gray rock; then the whole gaunt body glided like a passing cloud shadow into the June sunshine and was lost in a cleft of the rocks.

There, in the deep shadow where no eye might notice the movement, the old wolf shook off the delicious sleepiness that still lingered in all her big muscles. First she spread her slender fore paws, working the toes till they were all wide-awake, and bent her body at the shoulders till her deep chest touched the earth. Next a hind leg stretched out straight and tense as a bar, and was taken back again in nervous little jerks. At the same time she yawned mightily, wrinkling her nose and showing her red gums with the black fringes and the long white fangs that could reach a deer's heart in a single snap. Then she leaped upon a great rock and sat up straight, with her bushy tail curled close about her fore paws, a savage, powerful, noble-looking beast, peering down gravely over the green mountains to the shining sea.

A moment before the hillside had appeared utterly lifeless, so still and rugged and desolate that one must notice and welcome the stir of a mouse or ground squirrel in the moss, speaking of life that is glad and free and vigorous even in the deepest solitudes; yet now, so quietly did the old wolf appear, so perfectly did her rough gray coat blend with the rough gray rocks, that the hillside seemed just as tenantless as before. A stray wind seemed to move the mosses, that was all. Only where the mountains once slept now they seemed wide-awake. Keen eyes saw every moving thing, from the bees in the bluebells to the slow fishing-boats far out at sea; sharp ears that were cocked like a collie's heard every

chirp and trill and rustle, and a nose that understood everything was holding up every vagrant breeze and searching it for its message. For the cubs were coming out for the first time to play in the big world, and no wild mother ever lets that happen without first taking infinite precautions that her little ones be not molested nor made afraid.

A faint breeze from the west strayed over the mountains and instantly the old wolf turned her sensitive nose to question it. There on her right, and just across a deep ravine where a torrent went leaping down to the sea in hundred-foot jumps, a great stag caribou was standing, still as a stone, on a lofty pinnacle, looking down over the marvelous panorama spread wide beneath his feet. Every day Megaleep came there to look, and the old wolf in her daily hunts often crossed the deep path which he had worn through the moss from the wide table-lands over the ridge to this slightly place where he could look down curiously at the comings and goings of men on the sea. But at this season when small game was abundant--and indeed at all seasons when not hunger-driven--the wolf was peaceable and the caribou were not molested. Indeed the big stag knew well where the old wolf dened. Every east wind brought her message to his nostrils; but secure in his own strength and in the general peace which prevails in the summer-time among all large animals of the north, he came daily to look down on the harbor and wag his ears at the fishing-boats, which he could never understand.

Strange neighbors these, the grim, savage mother wolf of the mountains, hiding her young in dens of the rocks, and the wary, magnificent wanderer of the broad caribou barrens; but they understood each other, and neither wolf nor caribou had any fear or hostile intent one for the other. And this is not strange at all, as might be supposed by those who think animals are governed by fear on one hand and savage cruelty on the other, but is one of the commonest things to be found by those who follow faithfully the northern trails.

Wayeeses had chosen her den well, on the edge of the untrodden solitudes--sixty miles as the crow flies--that stretch northward from Harbor Weal to Harbor Woe. It was just under the ridge, in a sunny hollow among the rocks, on the southern slope of the great mountains. The earliest sunshine found the place and warmed it, bringing forth the bluebells for a carpet, while in every dark hollow the snow lingered all summer long, making dazzling white patches on the mountain; and under the high waterfalls, that looked from the harbor like bits of silver ribbon stretched over the green woods, the ice clung to the rocks in fantastic knobs and gargoyles, making cold, deep pools for the trout to play in. So it was both cool and warm there, and whatever the weather the gaunt old mother wolf could always find just the right spot to sleep away the afternoon. Best of all it was perfectly safe; for though from the door of her den she could look down on the old Indian's cabin, like a pebble on the shore, so steep were the billowing hills and so impassable the ravines that no human foot ever trod the place, not even in autumn when the fishermen left their boats at anchor in Harbor Weal and camped inland on the paths of the big caribou herds.

Whether or not the father wolf ever knew where his cubs were hidden only he himself could tell. He was an enormous brute, powerful and cunning beyond measure, that haunted the lonely thickets and ponds bordering the great caribou barrens over the ridge, and that kept a silent watch, within howling distance, over the den which he never saw. Sometimes the mother wolf met him on her wanderings and they hunted together. Often he brought the game he had caught, a fox or a young goose; and sometimes

when she had hunted in vain he met her, as if he had understood her need from a distance, and led her to where he had buried two or three of the rabbits that swarmed in the thickets. But spite of the attention and the indifferent watch which he kept, he never ventured near the den, which he could have found easily enough by following the mother's track. The old she-wolf would have flown at his throat like a fury had he showed his head over the top of the ridge.

The reason for this was simple enough to the savage old mother, though there are some things about it that men do not yet understand. Wolves, like cats and foxes, and indeed like most wild male animals, have an atrocious way of killing their own young when they find them unprotected; so the mother animal searches out a den by herself and rarely allows the male to come near it. Spite of this beastly habit it must be said honestly of the old he-wolf that he shows a marvelous gentleness towards his mate. He runs at the slightest show of teeth from a mother wolf half his size, and will stand meekly a snap of the jaws or a cruel gash of the terrible fangs in his flank without defending himself. Even our hounds seem to have inherited something of this primitive wolf trait, for there are seasons when, unless urged on by men, they will not trouble a mother wolf or fox. Many times, in the early spring, when foxes are mating, and again later when they are heavy with young and incapable of a hard run, I have caught my hounds trotting meekly after a mother fox, sniffing her trail indifferently and sitting down with heads turned aside when she stops for a moment to watch and yap at them disdainfully. And when you call them they come shamefaced; though in winter-time, when running the same fox to death, they pay no more heed to your call than to the crows clamoring over them. But we must return to Wayeeses, sitting over her den on a great gray rock, trying every breeze, searching every movement, harking to every chirp and rustle before bringing her cubs out into the world.

Satisfied at last with her silent investigation she turned her head towards the den. There was no sound, only one of those silent, unknown communications that pass between animals. Instantly there was a scratching, scurrying, whining, and three cubs tumbled out of the dark hole in the rocks, with fuzzy yellow fur and bright eyes and sharp ears and noses, like collies, all blinking and wondering and suddenly silent at the big bright world which they had never seen before, so different from the dark den under the rocks.

Indeed it was a marvelous world that the little cubs looked upon when they came out to blink and wonder in the June sunshine. Contrasts everywhere, that made the world seem too big for one little glance to comprehend it all. Here the sunlight streamed and danced and quivered on the warm rocks; there deep purple cloud shadows rested for hours, as if asleep, or swept over the mountain side in an endless game of fox-and-geese with the sunbeams. Here the birds trilled, the bees hummed in the bluebells, the brook roared and sang on its way to the sea; while over all the harmony of the world brooded a silence too great to be disturbed. Sunlight and shadow, snow and ice, gloomy ravines and dazzling mountain tops, mayflowers and singing birds and rustling winds filled all the earth with color and movement and melody. From under their very feet great masses of rock, tossed and tumbled as by a giant's play, stretched downwards to where the green woods began and rolled in vast billows to the harbor, which shone and sparkled in the sun, yet seemed no bigger than their mother's paw. Fishing-boats with shining sails hovered over it, like dragon-flies, going and coming from the little houses that sheltered together under the opposite mountain, like

a cluster of gray toadstools by a towering pine stump. Most wonderful, most interesting of all was the little gray hut on the shore, almost under their feet, where little Noel and the Indian children played with the tide like fiddler crabs, or pushed bravely out to meet the fishermen in a bobbing nutshell. For wolf cubs are like collies in this, that they seem to have a natural interest, perhaps a natural kinship with man, and next to their own kind nothing arouses their interest like a group of children playing.

So the little cubs took their first glimpse of the big world, of mountains and sea and sunshine, and children playing on the shore, and the world was altogether too wonderful for little heads to comprehend. Nevertheless one plain impression remained, the same that you see in the ears and nose and stumbling feet and wagging tail of every puppy-dog you meet on the streets, that this bright world is a famous place, just made a-purpose for little ones to play in. Sitting on their tails in a solemn row the wolf cubs bent their heads and pointed their noses gravely at the sea. There it was, all silver and blue and boundless, with tiny white sails dancing over it, winking and flashing like entangled bits of sunshine; and since the eyes of a cub, like those of a little child, cannot judge distances, one stretched a paw at the nearest sail, miles away, to turn it over and make it go the other way. They turned up their heads sidewise and blinked at the sky, all blue and calm and infinite, with white clouds sailing over it like swans on a limpid lake; and one stood up on his hind legs and reached up both paws, like a kitten, to pull down a cloud to play with. Then the wind stirred a feather near them, the white feather of a ptarmigan which they had eaten yesterday, and forgetting the big world and the sail and the cloud, the cubs took to playing with the feather, chasing and worrying and tumbling over each other, while the gaunt old mother wolf looked down from her rock and watched and was satisfied.

Noel and Mooka

Down on the shore, that same bright June afternoon, little Noel and his sister Mooka were going on wonderful sledge journeys, meeting wolves and polar bears and caribou and all sorts of adventures, more wonderful by far than any that ever came to imagination astride of a rocking-horse. They had a rare team of dogs, Caesar and Wolf and Grouch and the rest,--five or six uneasy crabs which they had caught and harnessed to a tiny sledge made from a curved root and a shingle tied together with a bit of sea-kelp. And when the crabs scurried away over the hard sand, waving their claws wildly, Noel and Mooka would caper alongside, cracking a little whip and crying "Hi, hi, Caesar! Hiya, Wolf! Hi, hiya, hiya, yeeee!"--and then shrieking with laughter as the sledge overturned and the crabs took to fighting and scratching in the tangled harness, just like the husky dogs in winter. Mooka was trying to untangle them, dancing about to keep her bare toes and fingers away from the nipping claws, when she jumped up with a yell, the biggest crab hanging to the end of her finger.

"Owee! oweeeee! Caesar bit me," she wailed. Then she stopped, with finger in her mouth, while Caesar scrambled headlong into the tide; for Noel was standing on the beach pointing at a brown sail far down in the deep bay, where Southeast Brook came singing from the green wilderness.

"Ohe, Mooka! there's father and Old Tomah come back from salmon

fishing."

"Let's go meet um, little brother," said Mooka, her black eyes dancing; and in a wink crabs and sledges were forgotten. The old punt was off in a shake, the tattered sail up, skipper Noel lounging in the stern, like an old salt, with the steering oar, while the crew, forgetting her nipped finger, tugged valiantly at the main-sheet.

They were scooting away gloriously, rising and pounding the waves, when Mooka, who did not have to steer and whose restless glance was roving over every bay and hillside, jumped up, her eyes round as lynx's.

"Look, Noel, look! There's Megaleep again watching us." And Noel, following her finger, saw far up on the mountain a stag caribou, small and fine and clear as a cameo against the blue sky, where they had so often noticed him with wonder watching them as they came shouting home with the tide. Instantly Noel threw himself against the steering oar; the punt came up floundering and shaking in the wind.

"Come on, little sister; we can go up Fox Brook. Tomah showed me trail." And forgetting the salmon, as they had a moment before forgotten the crabs and sledges, these two children of the wild, following every breeze and bird call and blossoming bluebell and shining star alike, tumbled ashore and went hurrying up the brook, splashing through the shallows, darting like kingfishers over the points, and jumping like wild goats from rock to rock. In an hour they were far up the mountain, lying side by side on a great flat rock, looking across a deep impassable valley and over two rounded hilltops, where the scrub spruces looked like pins on a cushion, to the bare, rugged hillside where Megaleep stood out like a watchman against the blue sky.

"Does he see us, little brother?" whispered Mooka, quivering with excitement and panting from the rapid climb.

"See us? sartin, little sister; but that only make him want peek um some more," said the little hunter. And raised carelessly on his elbows he was telling Mooka how Megaleep the caribou trusted only his nose, and how he watched and played peekaboo with anything which he could not smell, and how in a snowstorm--

Noel was off now like a brook, babbling a deal of caribou lore which he had learned from Old Tomah the hunter, when Mooka, whose restless black eyes were always wandering, seized his arm.

"Hush, brother, and look, oh, look! there on the big rock!"

Noel's eyes had already caught the Indian trick of seeing only what they look for, and so of separating an animal instantly from his surroundings, however well he hides. That is why the whole hillside seemed suddenly to vanish, spruces and harebells, snow-fields and drifting white clouds all grouping themselves, like the unnoticed frame of a picture, around a great gray rock with a huge shaggy she-wolf keeping watch over it, silent, alert, motionless.

Something stirred in the shadow of the old wolf's watch-tower, tossing and eddying and growing suddenly quiet, as if the wind were playing among dead oak leaves. The keen young eyes saw it instantly, dilating with surprise and excitement. The next instant they had clutched each other's arms.

"Oooooo!" from Mooka.

"Cubs; keep still!" from Noel.

And shrinking close to the rock under a friendly dwarf spruce they lay still as two rabbits, watching with round eyes, eager but unafraid, the antics of three brown wolf cubs that were chasing the flies and tumbling over some invisible plaything before the door of the den.

Hardly had they made the discovery when the old wolf slipped down from the rock and stood for an instant over her little ones. Why the play should stop now, while the breeze was still their comrade and the sunshine was brighter than ever, or why they should steal away into the dark den more silently than they had come, none of the cubs could tell. They felt the order and they obeyed instantly--and that is always the wonder of watching little wild things at play. The old mother wolf vanished among the rocks and appeared again higher on the ridge, turning her head uneasily to try every breeze and rustle and moving shadow. Then she went questing into the spruce woods, feeling but not understanding some subtle excitement in the air that was not there before, and only the two Indian children were left keeping watch over the great wild hillside.

For over an hour they lay there expectantly, but nothing stirred near the den; then they too slipped away, silently as the little wild things, and made their slow way down the brook, hand in hand in the deepening shadows. Scarcely had they gone when the bushes stirred and the old she-wolf, that had been ranging every ridge and valley since she disappeared at the unknown alarm, glided over the spot where a moment before Mooka and Noel had been watching. Swiftly, silently she followed their steps; found the old trails coming up and the fresh trails returning; then, sure at last that no danger threatened her own little ones, she loped away up the hill and over the topmost ridge to the caribou barrens and the thickets where young rabbits were already stirring about in the twilight.

That night, in the cabin under the cliffs, Old Tomah had to rehearse again all the wolf lore learned in sixty years of hunting: how, fortunately for the deer, these enormous wolves had never been abundant and were now very rare, a few having been shot, and more poisoned in the starving times, and the rest having vanished, mysteriously as wolves do, for some unknown reason. Bears, which are easily trapped and shot and whose skins are worth each a month's wages to the fishermen, still hold their own and even increase on the great island; while the wolves, once more numerous, are slowly vanishing, though they are never hunted, and not even Old Tomah himself could set a trap cunningly enough to catch one. The old hunter told, while Mooka and Noel held their breaths and drew closer to the light, how once, when he made his camp alone under a cliff on the lake shore, seven huge wolves, white as the snow, came racing swift and silent over the ice straight at the fire which he had barely time to kindle; how he shot two, and the others, seizing the fish he had just caught through the ice for his own supper, vanished over the bank; and he could not say even now whether they meant him harm or no. Again, as he talked and the grim old face lighted up at the memory, they saw him crouched with his sledge-dogs by a blazing fire all the long winter night, and around him in the darkness blazing points of light, the eyes of wolves flashing back the firelight, and gaunt white forms flitting about like shadows, drawing nearer and nearer with ever-growing

boldness till they seized his largest dog--though the brute lay so near the fire that his hair singed--and whisked it away with an appalling outcry. And still again, when Tomah was lost three days in the interior, they saw him wandering with his pack over endless barrens and through gloomy spruce woods, and near him all the time a young wolf that followed his steps quietly, with half-friendly interest, and came no nearer day or night.

All these things and many more the children heard from Old Tomah, and among all his hunting experiences and the stories and legends which he told them there was not one to make them afraid. For the horrible story of Red Riding Hood is not known among the Indians, who know well how untrue the tale is to wolf nature, and how foolish it is to frighten children with false stories of wolves and bears, misrepresenting them as savage and bloodthirsty brutes, when in truth they are but shy, peace-loving animals, whose only motive toward man, except when crazed by wounds or hunger, is one of childish curiosity. All these ferocious animal stories have their origin in other centuries and in distant lands, where they may possibly have been true, but more probably are just as false to animal nature; for they seem to reflect not the shy animal that men glimpsed in the woods, but rather the boastings of some hunter, who always magnifies his own praise by increasing the ferocity of the game he has killed, or else the pure imagination of some ancient nurse who tried to increase her scant authority by frightening her children with terrible tales. Here certainly the Indian attitude of kinship, gained by long centuries of living near to the animals and watching them closely, comes nearer to the truth of things. That is why little Mooka and Noel could listen for hours to Old Tomah's animal stories and then go away to bed and happy dreams, longing for the light so that they might be off again to watch at the wolf's den.

One thing only disturbed them for a moment. Even these children had wolf memories and vied with Old Tomah in eagerness of telling. They remembered one fearful winter, years ago, when most of the families of the little fishing village on the East Harbor had moved far inland to sheltered cabins in the deep woods to escape the cold and the fearful blizzards of the coast. One still moonlit night, when the snow lay deep and the cold was intense and all the trees were cracking like pistols in the frost, a mournful howling rose all around their little cabin. Light footfalls sounded on the crust; there were scratchings at the very door and hoarse breathings at every crack; while the dogs, with hackles up straight and stiff on their necks, fled howling under beds and tables. And when Mooka and Noel went fearfully with their mother to the little window--for the men were far away on a caribou hunt--there were gaunt white wolves, five or six of them, flitting restlessly about in the moonlight, scratching at the cracks and even raising themselves on their hind legs to look in at the little windows.

Mooka shivered a bit when she remembered the uncanny scene, and felt again the strong pressure of her mother's arms holding her close; but Old Tomah brushed away her fears with a smile and a word, as he had always done when, as little children, they had showed fear at the thunder or the gale or the cry of a wild beast in the night, till they had grown to look upon all Nature's phenomena as hiding a smile as kindly as that of Old Tomah himself, who had a face wrinkled and terribly grim, to be sure, but who could smile and tell a story so that every child trusted him. The wolves were hungry, starving hungry, he said, and wanted only a dog, or one of the pigs. And Mooka remembered with a bright laugh the two unruly pigs that had been taken inland as a

hostage to famine, and that must be carefully guarded from the teeth of hungry prowlers, for they would soon be needed to keep the children themselves from starving. Every night at early sunset, when the trees began to groan and the keen winds from the mountains came whispering through the woods, the two pigs were taken into the snug kitchen, where with the dogs they slept so close to the stove that she could always smell pork a-frying. Not a husky dog there but would have killed and eaten one of these little pigs if he could have caught him around the corner of the house after nightfall, though you would never have suspected it if you had seen them so close together, keeping each other warm after the fire went out. And besides the dogs and the wolves there were lynxes--big, round-headed, savage-looking creatures--that came prowling out of the deep woods every night, hungry for a taste of the little pigs; and now and then an enormous polar bear, that had landed from an iceberg, would shuffle swiftly and fearlessly among the handful of little cabins, leaving his great footprints in every yard and tearing to pieces, as if made of straw, the heavy log pens to which some of the fishermen had foolishly confided their pigs or sheep. He even entered the woodsheds and rummaged about after a stray fishbone or an old sealskin boot, making a great rowdydow in the still night; and only the smell of man, or the report of an old gun fired at him by some brave woman out of the half-open window, kept him from pushing his enormous weight against the very doors of the cabins.

Thinking of all these things, Mooka forgot her fears of the white wolves, remembering with a kind of sympathy how hungry all these shy prowlers must be to leave their own haunts, whence the rabbits and seals had vanished, and venture boldly into the yards of men. As for Noel, he remembered with regret that he was too small at the time to use the long bow which he now carried on his rabbit and goose hunts; and as he took it from the wall, thrumming its chord of caribou sinew and fingering the sharp edge of a long arrow, he was hoping for just such another winter, longing to try his skill and strength on some of these midnight prowlers--a lynx, perhaps, not to begin too largely on a polar bear. So there was no fear at all, but only an eager wonder, when they followed up the brook next day to watch at the wolf's den. And even when Noel found a track, a light oval track, larger but more slender than a dog's, in some moist sand close beside their own footprints and evidently following them, they remembered only the young wolf that had followed Tomah and pressed on the more eagerly.

Day after day they returned to their watch-tower on the flat rock, under the dwarf spruce at the head of the brook, and lying there side by side they watched the play of the young wolf cubs. Every day they grew more interested as the spirit of play entered into themselves, understanding the gladness of the wild rough-and-tumble when one of the cubs lay in wait for another and leaped upon him from ambush; understanding also something of the feeling of the gaunt old she-wolf as she looked down gravely from her gray rock watching her growing youngsters. Once they brought an old spyglass which they had borrowed from a fisherman, and through its sea-dimmed lenses they made out that one of the cubs was larger than the other two, with a droop at the tip of his right ear, like a pointed leaf that has been creased sharply between the fingers. Mooka claimed that wolf instantly for her own, as if they were watching the husky puppies, and by his broken ear said she should know him again when he grew to be a big wolf, if he should ever follow her, as his father perhaps had followed Old Tomah; but Noel, thinking of his bow and his long arrow with the sharp point, thought of the winter night long ago and hoped that his two wolves would know enough to keep away when

the pack came again, for he did not see any way to recognize and spare them, especially in the moonlight. So they lay there making plans and dreaming dreams, gentle or savage, for the little cubs that played with the feathers and grasshoppers and cloud shadows, all unconscious that any eyes but their mother's saw or cared for their wild, free playing.

[Illustration: "Watching her growing youngsters"]

Something bothered the old she-wolf in these days of watching. The den was still secure, for no human foot had crossed the deep ravine or ventured nearer than the opposite hilltop. Her nose told her that unmistakably; but still she was uneasy, and whenever the cubs were playing she felt, without knowing why, that she was being watched. When she trailed over all the ridges in the twilight, seeking to know if enemies had been near, she found always the scent of two human beings on a flat rock under the dwarf spruces; and there were always the two trails coming up and going down the brook. She followed once close behind the two children, seeing them plainly all the way, till they came in sight of the little cabin under the cliff, and from the door her enemy man came out to meet them. For these two little ones, whose trail she knew, the old she-wolf, like most mother animals in the presence of children, felt no fear nor enmity whatever. But they watched her den and her own little ones, that was sure enough; and why should any one watch a den except to enter some time and destroy? That is a question which no mother wolf could ever answer; for the wild animals, unlike dogs and blue jays and men, mind strictly their own business and pay no attention to other animals. They hate also to be watched; for the thought of watching always suggests to their minds that which follows,—the hunt, the rush, the wild break-away, and the run for life. Had she not herself watched a hundred times at the rabbit's form, the fox's runway, the deer path, the wild-goose nest? What could she expect for her own little ones, therefore, when the man cubs, beings of larger reach and unknown power, came daily to watch at her den?

All this unanswered puzzle must have passed through the old wolf's head as she trotted up the brook away from the Indian cabin in the twilight. When in doubt trust your fears,—that is wolf wisdom in a nutshell; and that marks the difference between a wolf and a caribou, for instance, which in doubt trusts his nose or his curiosity. So the old wolf took counsel of her fears for her little ones, and that night carried them one by one in her mouth, as a cat carries her kittens, miles away over rocks and ravines and spruce thickets, to another den where no human eye ever looked upon their play.

"Shall we see them again, little brother?" said Mooka wistfully, when they had climbed to their watch-tower for the third time and seen nothing. And Noel made confident answer:

"Oh, yes, we see um again, lil sister. Wayeeses got um wandering foot; go 'way off long ways; bimeby come back on same trail. He jus' like Injun, like um old camp best. Oh, yes, sartin we see um again." But Noel's eyes looked far away as he spoke, and in his heart he was thinking of his bow and his long arrow with the sharp point, and of a moonlit night with white shapes flitting noiselessly over the snow and scratching at the door of the little cabin.

A new experience had come to the little wolf cubs in a single night,—the experience of fear. For weeks they had lain hid in the dark den, or played fearlessly in the bright sunshine, guarded and kept at every moment, day or night, by the gaunt old mother wolf that was their only law, their only companion. At times they lay for hours hungry and restless, longing to go out into the bright world, yet obeying a stronger will than their own, even at a distance. For, once a wild mother in her own dumb way has bidden her little ones lie still, they rarely stir from the spot, refusing even to be dragged away from the nest or den, knowing well the punishment in store if she return and find them absent. Moreover, it is useless to dissimulate, to go out and play and then to be sleeping innocently with the cubs when the old wolf's shadow darkens the entrance. No concealment is possible from wolf's nose; before she enters the den the mother knows perfectly all that has happened since she went away. So the days glided by peacefully between sleep and play, the cubs trusting absolutely in the strength and tenderness that watched over them, the mother building the cubs' future on the foundation of the two instincts which are strong in every wild creature born into a world of danger,—the instinct to lie still and let nature's coloring hide all defenseless little ones, and the instinct to obey instantly a stronger will than their own.

There was no fear as yet, only instinctive wariness; for fear comes largely from others' example, from alarms and excitement and cries of danger, which only the grown animals understand. The old wolf had been undisturbed; no dog or hunter had chased her; no trap or pitfall had entangled her swift feet. Moreover, she had chosen her den well, where no man had ever stood, and where only the eyes of two children had seen her at a distance. So the little ones grew and played in the sunshine, and had yet to learn what fear meant.

One day at dusk the mother entered swiftly and, without giving them food as she had always done, seized a cub and disappeared. For the little one, which had never before ventured beyond sight of the den, it was a long journey indeed that followed,—miles and miles beside roaring brooks and mist-filled ravines, through gloomy woods where no light entered, and over bare ridges where the big stars sparkled just over his ears as he hung, limp as a rabbit skin, from his mother's great jaws. An owl hooted dismally, _whoo-hooo!_ and though he knew the sound well in his peaceful nights, it brought now a certain shiver. The wind went sniffing suspiciously among the spruce branches; a startled bird chirped and whirred away out of their path; the brook roared among the rocks; a big salmon jumped and tumbled back with resounding splash, and jumped again as if the otter were after him. There was a sudden sharp cry, the first and last voice of a hare when the weasel rises up in front of him; then silence, and the fitful rustle of his mother's pads moving steadily, swiftly over dry leaves. And all these sounds of the wilderness night spoke to the little cub of some new thing, of swift feet that follow and of something unknown and terrible that waits for all unwary wild things. So fear was born.

The long journey ended at last before a dark hole in the hillside; and the smell of his mother, the only familiar thing in his first strange pilgrimage, greeted the cub from the rocks on either side as he passed in out of the starlight. He was dropped without a sound in a larger den, on some fresh-gathered leaves and dead grass, and lay there all alone, very still, with the new feeling trembling all over him. A long hour passed; a second cub was laid beside him, and the mother vanished as

before; another hour, and the wolf cubs were all together again with the mother feeding them. Nor did any of them know where they were, nor why they had come, nor the long, long way that led back to where the trail began.

Next day when they were called out to play they saw a different and more gloomy landscape, a chaos of granite rocks, a forest of evergreen, the white plunge and rolling mist of a mountain torrent; but no silver sea with fishing-boats drifting over it, like clouds in the sea over their heads, and no gray hut with children running about like ants on the distant shore. And as they played they began for the first time to imitate the old mother keeping guard over them, sitting up often to watch and listen and sift the winds, trying to understand what fear was, and why they had been taken away from the sunny hillside where the world was so much bigger and brighter than here. But home is where mother is,--that, fortunately, is also true of the little Wood Folk, who understand it in their own savage way for a season,--and in their wonder at their new surroundings the memory of the old home gradually faded away. They never knew with what endless care the new den had been chosen; how the mother, in the days when she knew she was watched, had searched it out and watched over it and put her nose to every ridge and ravine and brook-side, day after day, till she was sure that no foot save that of the wild things had touched the soil within miles of the place. They felt only a greater wildness, a deeper solitude; and they never forgot, though they were unmolested, the strange feeling that was born in them on that first terrifying night journey in their mother's jaws.

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Soon the food that was brought home at dawn--the rabbit or grouse, or the bunch of rats hanging by their tails, with which the mother supplemented their midday drink of milk--became altogether too scant to satisfy their clamorous appetites; and in the bright afternoons and the long summer twilights the mother led them forth on short journeys to hunt for themselves. No big caribou or cunning fox cub, as one might suppose, but "rats and mice and such small deer" were the limit of the mother's ambition for her little ones. They began on stupid grubs that one could find asleep under stones and roots, and then on beetles that scrambled away briskly at the first alarm, and then, when the sunshine was brightest, on grasshoppers,--lively, wary fellows that zipped and buzzed away just when you were sure you had them, and that generally landed from an astounding jump facing in a different direction, like a flea, so as to be ready for your next move.

It was astonishing how quickly the cubs learned that game is not to be picked up tamely, like huckleberries, and changed their style of hunting,--creeping, instead of trotting openly so that even a porcupine must notice them, hiding behind rocks and bushes and tufts of grass till the precise moment came, and then leaping with the swoop of a goshawk on a ptarmigan. A wolf that cannot catch a grasshopper has no business hunting rabbits--this seemed to be the unconscious motive that led the old mother, every sunny afternoon, to ignore the thickets where game was hiding plentifully and take her cubs to the dry, sunny plains on the edge of the caribou barrens. There for hours at a time they hunted elusive grasshoppers, rushing helter-skelter over the dry moss, leaping up to strike at the flying game with their paws like a kitten, or snapping wildly to catch it in their mouths and coming down with a back-breaking wriggle to keep themselves from tumbling over on their

heads. Then on again, with a droll expression and noses sharpened like exclamation points, to find another grasshopper.

Small business indeed and often ludicrous, this playing at grasshopper hunting. So it seems to us; so also, perhaps, to the wise old mother, which knew all the ways of game, from crickets to caribou and from ground sparrows to wild geese. But play is the first great educator,--that is as true of animals as of men,--and to the cubs their rough helter-skelter after hoppers was as exciting as a stag hunt to the pack, as full of surprises as the wild chase through the soft snow after a litter of lynx kittens. And though they knew it not, they were learning things every hour of the sunny, playful afternoons that they would remember and find useful all the days of their life.

So the funny little hunt went on, the mother watching gravely under a bush where she was inconspicuous, and the cubs, full of zest and inexperience, missing the flying tidbits more often than they swallowed them, until they learned at last to locate all game accurately before chasing or alarming it; and that is the rule, learned from hunting grasshoppers, which a wolf follows ever afterward. Even after they knew just where the grasshopper was hiding, watching them after a jump, and leaped upon him swiftly from a distance, he often got away when they lifted their paws to eat him. For the grasshopper was not dead under the light paw, as they supposed, but only pressed into the moss waiting for his chance to jump. Then the cubs learned another lesson: to hold their game down with both paws pressed closely together, inserting their noses like a wedge and keeping every crack of escape shut tight until they had the slippery morsel safe under their back teeth. And even then it was deliciously funny to watch their expression as they chewed, opening their jaws wide as if swallowing a rabbit, snapping them shut again as the grasshopper wiggled; and always with a doubt in their close-set eyes, a questioning twist of head and ears, as if they were not quite sure whether or not they were really eating him.

Another suggestive thing came out in these hunts, which you must notice whether you watch wolves or coyotes or a den of fox cubs. Though no sound came from the watchful old mother, the cubs seemed at every instant under absolute control. One would rush away pell-mell after a hopper, miss him and tumble away again, till he was some distance from the busy group on the edge of the big lonely barren. In the midst of his chase the mother would raise her head and watch the cub intently. No sound was uttered that human ears could hear; but the chase ended right there, on the instant, and the cub came trotting back like a well-broken setter at the whistle. It was marvelous beyond comprehension, this absolute authority and this silent command that brought a wolf back instantly from the wildest chase, and that kept the cubs all together under the watchful eyes that followed every movement. No wonder wolves are intelligent in avoiding every trap and in hunting together to outwit some fleet-footed quarry with unbelievable cunning. Here on the edge of the vast, untrodden barren, far from human eyes, in an ordinary family of wolf cubs playing wild and free, eager, headstrong, hungry, yet always under control and instantly subject to a wiser head and a stronger will than their own, was the explanation of it all. Later, in the bitter, hungry winter, when a big caribou was afoot and the pack hot on his trail, the cubs would remember the lesson, and every free wolf would curb his hunger, obeying the silent signal to ease the game and follow slowly while the leader raced unseen through the woods to head the game and lie in ambush by the distant runway.

From grasshoppers the cubs took to hunting the wood-mice that nested in the dry moss and swarmed on the edges of every thicket. This was keener hunting; for the wood-mouse moves like a ray of light, and always makes at least one false start to mislead any that may be watching for him. The cubs soon learned that when Tookhees appeared and dodged back again, as if frightened, it was not because he had seen them, but just because he always appears that way. So they crouched and hid, like a cat, and when a gray streak shot over the gray moss and vanished in a tuft of grass they leaped for the spot--and always found it vacant. For Tookhees always doubles on his trail, or burrows for a distance under the moss, and never hides where he disappears. It took the cubs a long while to find that out; and then they would creep and watch and listen till they could locate the game by a stir under the moss, and pounce upon it and nose it out from between their paws, just as they had done with the grasshoppers. And when they crunched it at last like a ripe plum under their teeth it was a delicious tidbit, worth all the trouble they had taken to get it. For your wolf, unlike the ferocious, grandmother-eating creature of the nursery, is at heart a peaceable fellow, most at home and most happy when mouse hunting.

There was another kind of this mouse chasing which furnished better sport and more juicy mouthfuls to the young cubs. Here and there on the Newfoundland mountains the snow lingers all summer long. In every northern hollow of the hills you see, from a distance, white patches no bigger than your hat sparkling in the sun; but when you climb there, after bear or caribou, you find great snow-fields, acres in extent and from ten to a hundred feet deep, packed close and hard with the pressure of a thousand winters. Often when it rains in the valleys, and raises the salmon rivers to meet your expectations, a thin covering of new snow covers these white fields; and then, if you go there, you will find the new page written all over with the feet of birds and beasts. The mice especially love these snow-fields for some unknown reason. All along the edges you find the delicate, lacelike tracery which shows where little feet have gone on busy errands or played together in the moonlight; and if you watch there awhile you will surely see Tookhees come out of the moss and scamper across a bit of snow and dive back to cover under the moss again, as if he enjoyed the feeling of the cold snow under his feet in the summer sunshine. He has tunnels there, too, going down to solid ice, where he hides things to keep which would spoil if left in the heat of his den under the mossy stone, and when food is scarce he draws upon these cold-storage rooms; but most of his summer snow journeys, if one may judge from watching him and from following his tracks, are taken for play or comfort, just as the bull caribou comes up to lie in the snow, with the strong sea wind in his face, to escape the flies which swarm in the thickets below. Owl and hawk, fox and weasel and wildcat,--all the prowlers of the day and night have long since discovered these good hunting-grounds and leave the prints of wing and claw over the records of the wood-mice; but still Tookhees returns, led by his love of the snow-fields, and thrives and multiplies spite of all his enemies.

One moonlit night the old wolf took her cubs to the edge of one of these snow-fields, where the eager eyes soon noticed dark streaks shooting hither and yon over the bare white surface. At first they chased them wildly; but one might as well try to catch a moonbeam, which has not so many places to hide as a wood-mouse. Then, remembering the grasshoppers, they crouched and crept and so caught a few. Meanwhile old mother wolf lay still in hiding, contenting herself with snapping up the game that came to her, instead of chasing it wildly all over the snow-field. The example was not lost; for imitation is strong among intelligent animals,

and most of what they learn is due simply to following the mother. Soon the cubs were still, one lying here under shadow of a bush, another there by a gray rock that lifted its head out of the snow. As a dark streak moved nervously by one of these hiding-places there would be a rush, a snap, the _pchap pchap_ of jaws crunching a delicious morsel; then all quiet again, with only gray, innocent-looking shadows resting softly on the snow. So they moved gradually along the edges of the great white field; and next morning the tracks were all there, plain as daylight, telling their silent story of good hunting.

To vary their diet the mother now took them down to the shore to hunt among the rocks for ducks' eggs. They were there by the hundreds, scattered along the lonely bays just above high-water line, where the eiders had their nests.

At first old mother wolf showed them where to look, and when she had found a clutch of eggs would divide them fairly, keeping the hungry cubs in order at a little distance and bringing each one his share, which he ate without interference. Then when they understood the thing they scattered nimbly to hunt for themselves, and the real fun began.

Now a cub, poking his nose industriously into every cranny and under every thick bush, would find a great roll of down plucked from the mother bird's breast, and scraping the top off carefully with his paw, would find five or six large pale-green eggs, which he gobbled down, shells, ducklings and all, before another cub should smell the good find and caper up to share it. Again he would be startled out of his wits as a large brown bird whirred and fluttered away from under his very nose. Sitting on his tail he would watch her with comical regret and longing till she tumbled into the tide and drifted swiftly away out of danger; then, remembering what he came for, he would turn and follow her trail back to the nest out of which she had stolen at his approach, and find the eggs all warm for his breakfast. And when he had eaten all he wanted he would take an egg in his mouth and run about uneasily here and there, like a dog with a bone when he thinks he is watched, till he had made a sad crisscross of his trail and found a spot where none could see him. There he would dig a hole and bury his egg and go back for more; and on his way would meet another cub running about with an egg in his mouth, looking for a spot where no one would notice him.

From mice and eggs the young cubs turned to rabbits and hares; and these were their staple food ever afterward when other game was scarce and the wood-mice were hidden deep under the winter snows, safe at last for a little season from all their enemies. Here for the first time the father wolf appeared, coming in quietly one late afternoon, as if he knew, as he probably did, just when he was needed. Beyond a glance he paid no attention whatever to the cubs, only taking his place opposite the mother as the wolves started abreast in a long line to beat the thicket.

By night the cubs had already caught several rabbits, snapping them up as they played heedlessly in the moonlight, just as they had done with the wood-mice. By day, however, the hunting was entirely different. Then the hares and rabbits are resting in their hidden forms under the ferns, or in a hollow between the roots of a brown stump. Like game birds, whether on the nest or sitting quiet in hiding, the rabbits give out far less scent at such times than when they are active; and the cubs, stealing through the dense cover like shadows in imitation of the old wolves, and always hunting upwind, would use their keen noses to locate Moktaques before alarming him. If a cub succeeded, and snapped up a

rabbit before the surprised creature had time to gather headway, he dropped behind with his catch, while the rest went slowly, carefully, on through the cover. If he failed, as was generally the case at first, a curious bit of wolf intelligence and wolf training came out at once.

As the wolves advanced the father and mother would steal gradually ahead at either end of the line, rarely hunting themselves, but drawing the nearest cub's attention to any game they had discovered, and then moving silently to one side and a little ahead to watch the result. When the cub rushed and missed, and the startled rabbit went flying away, whirling to left or right as rabbits always do, there would be a lightning change at the end of the line. A terrific rush, a snap of the long jaws like a steel trap,--then the old wolf would toss back the rabbit with a broken back, for the cub to finish him. Not till the cubs first, and then the mother, had satisfied their hunger would the old he-wolf hunt for himself. Then he would disappear, and they would not see him for days at a time, until food was scarce and they needed him once more.

One day, when the cubs were hungry and food scarce because of their persistent hunting near the den, the mother brought them to the edge of a dense thicket where rabbits were plentiful enough, but where the cover was so thick that they could not follow the frightened game for an instant. The old he-wolf had appeared at a distance and then vanished; and the cubs, trotting along behind the mother, knew nothing of what was coming or what was expected of them. They lay in hiding on the lee side of the thicket, each one crouching under a bush or root, with the mother off at one side perfectly hidden as usual.

Presently a rabbit appeared, hopping along in a crazy way, and ran plump into the jaws of a wolf cub, which leaped up as if out of the ground, and pulled down his game from the very top of the high jump which Moktaques always gives when he is suddenly startled. Another and another rabbit appeared mysteriously, and doubled back into the cover before they could be caught. The cubs were filled with wonder. Such hunting was never seen before; for rabbits stirred abroad by day, and ran right into the hungry mouths instead of running away. Then, slinking along like a shadow and stopping to look back and sniff the wind, appeared a big red fox that had been sleeping away the afternoon on top of a stump in the center of the thicket.

The old mother's eyes began to blaze as Eleemos drew near. There was a rush, swift and sudden as the swoop of an eagle; a sharp call to follow as the mother's long jaws closed over the small of the back, just as the fox turned to leap away. Then she flung the paralyzed animal back like a flash; the young wolves tumbled in upon him; and before he knew what had happened Eleemos the Sly One was stretched out straight, with one cub at his tail and another at his throat, tugging and worrying and grumbling deep in their chests as the lust of their first fighting swept over them. Then in vague, vanishing glimpses the old he-wolf appeared, quartering swiftly, silently, back and forth through the thicket, driving every living thing down-wind to where the cubs and the mother were waiting to receive it.

[Illustration: "As the mother's long jaws closed over the small of the back"]

That one lesson was enough for the cubs, though years would pass before they could learn all the fine points of this beating the bush: to know

almost at a glance where the game, whether grouse or hare or fox or lucivee, was hiding in the cover, and then for one wolf to drive it, slowly or swiftly as the case might require, while the other hid beside the most likely path of escape. A family of grouse must be coaxed along and never see what is driving them, else they will flit into a tree and be lost; while a cat must be startled out of her wits by a swift rush, and sent flying away before she can make up her stupid mind what the row is all about. A fox, almost as cunning as Wayeeses himself, must be made to think that some dog enemy is slowly puzzling out his cold trail; while a musquash searching for bake-apples, or a beaver going inland to cut wood for his winter supplies of bark, must not be driven, but be followed up swiftly by the path or canal by which he has ventured away from the friendly water.

All these and many more things must be learned slowly at the expense of many failures, especially when the cubs took to hunting alone and the old wolves were not there to show them how; but they never forgot the principle taught in that first rabbit drive,--that two hunters are better than one to outwit any game when they hunt intelligently together. That is why you so often find wolves going in pairs; and when you study them or follow their tracks you discover that they play continually into each other's hands. They seem to share the spoil as intelligently as they catch it, the wolf that lies beside the runway and pulls down the game giving up a portion gladly to the companion that beats the bush, and rarely indeed is there any trace of quarreling between them.

Like the eagles--which have long since learned the advantage of hunting in pairs and of scouting for game in single file--the wolves, when hunting deer on the open barrens where it is difficult to conceal their advance, always travel in files, one following close behind the other; so that, seen from in front where the game is watching, two or three wolves will appear like a lone animal trotting across the plain. That alarms the game far less at first; and not until the deer starts away does the second wolf appear, shooting out from behind the leader. The sight of another wolf appearing suddenly on his flank throws a young deer into a panic, in which he is apt to lose his head and be caught by the cunning hunters.

Curiously enough, the plains Indians, who travel in the same way when hunting or scouting for enemies, first learned the trick--so an old chief told me, and it is one of the traditions of his people--from watching the timber wolves in their stealthy advance over the open places.

The wolves were stealing through the woods all together, one late summer afternoon, having beaten a cover without taking anything, when the puzzled cubs suddenly found themselves alone. A moment before they had been trotting along with the old wolves, nosing every cranny and knot hole for mice and grubs, and stopping often for a roll and frolic, as young cubs do in the gladness of life; now they pressed close together, looking, listening, while a subtle excitement filled all the woods. For the old wolves had disappeared, shooting ahead in great, silent bounds, while the cubs waited with ears cocked and noses quivering, as if a silent command had been understood.

The silence was intense; not a sound, not a stir in the quiet woods, which seemed to be listening with the cubs and to be filled with the same thrilling expectation. Suddenly the silence was broken by heavy

plunges far ahead, _crash! bump! bump!_ and there broke forth such an uproar of yaps and howls as the cubs had never heard before. Instantly they broke away on the trail, joining their shrill yelpings to the clamor, so different from the ordinary stealthy wolf hunt, and filled with a nameless excitement which they did not at all understand till the reek of caribou poured into their hungry nostrils; whereupon they yelped louder than ever. But they did not begin to understand the matter till they caught glimpses of gray backs bounding hither and yon in the underbrush, while the two great wolves raced easily on either side, yapping sharply to increase the excitement, and guiding the startled, foolish deer as surely, as intelligently, as a pair of collies herd a flock of frightened sheep.

When the cubs broke out of the dense cover at last they found the two old wolves sitting quietly on their tails before a rugged wall of rocks that stretched away on either hand at the base of a great bare hill. In front of them was a young cow caribou, threatening savagely with horns and hoofs, while behind her cowered two half-grown fawns crowded into a crevice of the rocks. Anger, rather than fear, blazed out in the mother's mild eyes. Now she turned swiftly to press her excited young ones back against the sheltering wall; now she whirled with a savage grunt and charged headlong at the wolves, which merely leaped aside and sat down silently again to watch the game, till the cubs raced out and hovered uneasily about with a thousand questions in every eye and ear and twitching nostril.

The reason for the hunt was now plain enough. Up to this time the caribou had been let severely alone, though they were very numerous, scattered through the dense coverts in every valley and on every hillside. For Wayeeses is no wanton killer, as he is so often represented to be, but sticks to small game whenever he can find it, and leaves the deer unmolested. As for his motive in the matter, who shall say, since no one understands the half of what a wolf does every day? Perhaps it is a mere matter of taste, a preference for the smaller and more juicy tidbits; more likely it is a combination of instinct and judgment, with a possible outlook for the future unusual with beasts of prey. The moment the young wolves take to harrying the deer--as they invariably do if the mother wolf be not with them--the caribou leave the country. The herds become, moreover, so wild and suspicious after a very little wolf hunting that they are exceedingly difficult of approach; and there is no living thing on earth, not even a white wolf or a trained greyhound, that can tire or overtake a startled caribou. The swinging rack of these big white wanderers looks easy enough when you see it; but when the fleet staghounds are slipped, as has been more than once tested in Newfoundland, try as hard as they will they cannot keep within sight of the deer for a single quarter-mile, and no limit has ever yet been found, either by dog or wolf, to Megaleep's tirelessness. So the old wolves, relying possibly upon past experience, keep the cubs and hold themselves strictly to small game as long as it can possibly be found. Then when the bitter days of late winter come, with their scarcity of small game and their unbearable hunger, the wolves turn to the caribou as a last resort, killing a few here by stealth, rather than speed, and then, when the game grows wild, going far off to another range where the deer have not been disturbed and so can be approached more easily.

On this afternoon, however, the old mother wolf had run plump upon the caribou and her fawns in the midst of a thicket, and had leaped forward promptly to round them up for her hungry cubs. It would have been the easiest matter in the world for an old wolf to hamstring one of the slow

fawns, or the mother caribou herself as she hovered in the rear to defend her young; but there were other thoughts in the shaggy gray head that had seen so much hunting. So the mother wolf drove the deer slowly, puzzling them more and more, as a collie distracts the herd by his yapping, out into the open where her cubs might join in the hunting.

The wolves now drew back, all save the mother, which advanced hesitatingly to where the caribou stood with lowered head, watching every move. Suddenly the cow charged, so swiftly, furiously, that the old wolf seemed almost caught, and tumbled away with the broad hoofs striking savagely at her flanks. Farther and farther the caribou drove her enemy, roused now to frenzy at the wolf's nearness and apparent cowardice. Then she whirled in a panic and rushed back to her little ones, only to find that all the other wolves, as if frightened by her furious charge, had drawn farther back from the cranny in the rocks.

Again the old she-wolf approached cautiously, and again the caribou plunged at her and followed her lame retreat with headlong fury. An electric shock seemed suddenly to touch the huge he-wolf. Like a flash he leaped in on the fawns. One quick snap of the long jaws with the terrible fangs; then, as if the whole thing were a bit of play, he loped away easily with the cubs, circling to join the mother wolf, which strangely enough did not return to the attack as the caribou charged back, driving the cubs and the old he-wolf away like a flock of sheep. The coast was now clear, not an enemy in the way; and the mother caribou, with a triumphant bleat to her fawns to follow, plunged back into the woods whence she had come.

One fawn only followed her. The other took a step or two, sank to his knees, and rolled over on his side. When the wolves drew near quietly, without a trace of the ferocity or the howling clamor with which such scenes are usually pictured, the game was quite dead, one quick snap of the old wolf's teeth just behind the fore legs having pierced the heart more surely than a hunter's bullet. And the mother caribou, plunging wildly away through the brush with the startled fawn jumping at her heels, could not know that her mad flight was needless; that the terrible enemy which had spared her and let her go free had no need nor desire to follow.

* * * * *

The fat autumn had now come with its abundant fare, and the caribou were not again molested. Flocks of grouse and ptarmigan came out of the thick coverts, in which they had been hiding all summer, and began to pluck the berries of the open plains, where they could easily be waylaid and caught by the growing wolf cubs. Plover came in hordes, sweeping over the Straits from the Labrador; and when the wolves surrounded a flock of the queer birds and hitched nearer and nearer, sinking their gray bodies in the yielding gray moss till they looked like weather-worn logs, the hunting was full of tense excitement, though the juicy mouthfuls were few and far between. Fox cubs roamed abroad away from their mothers, self-willed and reveling in the abundance; and it was now easy for two of the young wolves to drive a fox out of his daytime cover and catch him as he stole away.

After the plover came the ducks in myriads, filling the ponds and flashets of the vast barrens with tumultuous quacking; and the young wolves learned, like the foxes, to decoy the silly birds by rousing their curiosity. They would hide in the grass, while one played and

rolled about on the open shore, till the ducks saw him and began to stretch their necks and gabble their amazement at the strange thing, which they had never seen before. Shy and wild as he naturally is, a duck, like a caribou or a turkey, must take a peek at every new thing. Now silent, now gabbling all together, the flock would veer and scatter and draw together again, and finally swing in toward the shore, every neck drawn straight as a string the better to see what was going on. Nearer and nearer they would come, till a swift rush out of the grass sent them off headlong, splashing and quacking with crazy clamor. But one or two always stayed behind with the wolves to pay the price of curiosity.

Then there were the young geese, which gathered in immense flocks in the shallow bays, preparing and drilling for the autumn flight. Late in the afternoon the old mother wolf with her cubs would steal down through the woods, hiding and watching the flocks, and following them stealthily as they moved along the shore. At night the great flock would approach a sandbar, well out of the way of rocks and brush and everything that might hide an enemy, and go to sleep in close little family groups on the open shore. As the night darkened four shadows would lengthen out from the nearest bank of shadows, creeping onward to the sand-bar with the slow patience of the hours. A rush, a startled _honk!_ a terrific clamor of wings and throats and smitten water. Then the four shadows would rise up from the sand and trot back to the woods, each with a burden on its shoulders and a sparkle in the close-set eyes over the pointed jaws, which were closed on the neck of a goose, holding it tight lest any outcry escape to tell the startled flock what had happened.

Besides this abundant game there were other good things to eat, and the cubs rarely dined of the same dish twice in succession. Salmon and big sea-trout swarmed now in every shallow of the clear brooks, and, after spawning, these fish were much weakened and could easily be caught by a little cunning. Every day and night the tide ebbed and flowed, and every tide left its contribution in windrows of dead herring and caplin, with scattered crabs and mussels for a relish, like plums in a pudding. A wolf had only to trot for a mile or two along the tide line of a lonely beach, picking up the good things which the sea had brought him, and then go back to sleep or play satisfied. And if Wayeeses wanted game to try his mettle and cunning, there were the big fat seals barking on the black rocks, and he had only to cut between them and the sea and throw himself upon the largest seal as the herd floundered ponderously back to safety. A wolf rarely grips and holds an enemy; he snaps and lets go, and snaps again at every swift chance; but here he must either hold fast or lose his big game; and what between holding and letting go, as the seals whirled with bared teeth and snapped viciously in turn, as they scrambled away to the sea, the wolves had a lively time of it. Often indeed, spite of three or four wolves, a big seal would tumble into the tide, where the sharks followed his bloody trail and soon finished him.

Now for the first time the wolves, led by the rich abundance, began to kill more than they needed for food and to hide it away, like the squirrels, in anticipation of the coming winter. Like the blue and the Arctic foxes, a strange instinct to store things seems to stir dimly at times within them. Occasionally, instead of eating and sleeping after a kill, the cubs, led by the mother wolf, would hunt half of the day and night and carry all they caught to the snow-fields. There each one would search out a cranny in the rocks and hide his game, covering it over deeply with snow to kill the scent of it from the prowling foxes. Then for days at a time they would forget the coming winter, and play as

heedlessly as if the woods would always be as full of game as now; and again the mood would be upon them strongly, and they would kill all they could find and hide it in another place. But the instinct--if indeed it were instinct, and not the natural result of the mother's own experience--was weak at best; and the first time the cubs were hungry or lazy they would trail off to the hidden store. Long before the spring with its bitter need was upon them they had eaten everything, and had returned to the empty storehouse at least a dozen times, as a dog goes again and again to the place where he once hid a bone, and nosed it all over regretfully to be quite sure that they had overlooked nothing.

More interesting to the wolves in these glad days than the game or the storehouse, or the piles of caplin which they cached under the sand on the shore, were the wandering herds of caribou,--splendid old stags with massive antlers, and long-legged, inquisitive fawns trotting after the sleek cows, whose heads carried small pointed horns, more deadly by far than the stags' cumbersome antlers. Wherever the wolves went they crossed the trails of these wanderers swarming out of the thickets, sometimes by twos and threes, and again in straggling, endless lines converging upon the vast open barrens where the caribou gathered to select their mates for another year. Where they all came from was a mystery that filled the cubs' heads with constant wonder. During the summer you see little of them,--here a cow with her fawn hiding deep in the cover, there a big stag standing out like a watchman on the mountain top; but when the early autumn comes they are everywhere, crossing rivers and lakes at regular points, and following deep paths which their ancestors have followed for countless generations.

The cows and fawns seemed gentle and harmless enough, though their very numbers filled the young wolves with a certain awe. After their first lesson it would have been easy enough for the cubs to have killed all they wanted and to grow fat and lazy as the bears, which were now stuffing themselves before going off to sleep for the winter; but the old mother wolf held them firmly in check, for with plenty of small game everywhere, all wolves are minded to go quietly about their own business and let the caribou follow their own ways. When October came it brought the big stags into the open,--splendid, imposing beasts, with swollen necks and fierce red eyes and long white manes tossing in the wind. Then the wolves had to stand aside; for the stags roamed over all the land, pawing the moss in fury, bellowing their hoarse challenge, and charging like a whirlwind upon every living thing that crossed their paths.

When the mother wolf, with her cubs at heel, saw one of these big furies at a distance she would circle prudently to avoid him. Again, as the cubs hunted rabbits, they would hear a crash of brush and a furious challenge as some quarrelsome stag winded them; and the mother with her cubs gathered close about her would watch alertly for his headlong rush. As he charged out the wolves would scatter and leap nimbly aside, then sit down on their tails in a solemn circle and watch as if studying the strange beast. Again and again he would rush upon them, only to find that he was fighting the wind. Mad as a hornet, he would single out a cub and follow him headlong through brush and brake till some subtle warning thrilled through his madness, telling him to heed his flank; then as he whirled he would find the savage old mother close at his heels, her white fangs bared and a dangerous flash in her eyes as she saw the hamstring so near, so easy to reach. One spring and a snap, and the ramping, masterful stag would have been helpless as a rabbit, his tendons cut cleanly at the hock; another snap and he must come down, spite of his great power, and be food for the growing cubs that sat on

their tails watching him, unterrified now by his fierce challenge. But Megaleep's time had not yet come; besides, he was too tough. So the wolves studied him awhile, amused perhaps at the rough play; then, as if at a silent command, they vanished like shadows into the nearest cover, leaving the big stag in his rage to think himself master of all the world.

Sometimes as the old he-wolf ranged alone, a silent, powerful, noble-looking brute, he would meet the caribou, and there would be a fascinating bit of animal play. He rarely turned aside, knowing his own power, and the cows and fawns after one look would bound aside and rack away at a marvelous pace over the barrens. In a moment or two, finding that they were not molested, they would turn and watch the wolf curiously till he disappeared, trying perhaps to puzzle it out why the ferocious enemy of the deep snows and the bitter cold should now be harmless as the passing birds.

Again a young bull with his keen, polished spike-horns, more active and dangerous but less confident than the over-antlered stags, would stand in the old wolf's path, disputing with lowered front the right of way. Here the right of way meant a good deal, for in many places on the high plains the scrub spruces grow so thickly that a man can easily walk over the tops of them on his snow-shoes, and the only possible passage in summer-time is by means of the numerous paths worn through the scrub by the passing of animals for untold ages. So one or the other of the two splendid brutes that now approached each other in the narrow way must turn aside or be beaten down underfoot.

Quietly, steadily, the old wolf would come on till almost within springing distance, when he would stop and lift his great head, wrinkling his chops to show the long white fangs, and rumbling a warning deep in his massive chest. Then the caribou would lose his nerve; he would stamp and fidget and bluster, and at last begin to circle nervously, crashing his way into the scrub as if for a chance to take his enemy in the flank. Whereupon the old wolf would trot quietly along the path, paying no more heed to the interruption; while the young bull would stand wondering, his body hidden in the scrub and his head thrust into the narrow path to look after his strange adversary.

Another time, as the old wolf ranged along the edges of the barrens where the caribou herds were gathering, he would hear the challenge of a huge stag and the warning crack of twigs and the thunder of hoofs as the brute charged. Still the wolf trotted quietly along, watching from the corners of his eyes till the stag was upon him, when he sprang lightly aside and let the rush go harmlessly by. Sitting on his tail he would watch the caribou closely--and who could tell what was passing behind those cunning eyes that glowed steadily like coals, unruffled as yet by the passing winds, but ready at a rough breath to break out in flames of fire? Again and again the stag would charge, growing more furious at every failure; and every time the wolf leaped aside he left a terrible gash in his enemy's neck or side, punishing him cruelly for his bullying attack, yet strangely refusing to kill, as he might have done, or to close on the hamstring with one swift snap that would have put the big brute out of the fight forever. At last, knowing perhaps from past experience the uselessness of punishing or of disputing with this madman that felt no wounds in his rage, the wolf would lope away to cover, followed by a victorious bugle-cry that rang over the wide barren and echoed back from the mountain side. Then the wolf would circle back stealthily and put his nose down into the stag's hoof-marks for a long,

deep sniff, and go quietly on his way again. A wolf's nose never forgets. When he finds that trail wandering with a score of others over the snow, in the bitter days to come when the pack are starving, Wayeeses will know whom he is following.

Besides the caribou there were other things to rouse the cubs' curiosity and give them something pleasant to do besides eating and sleeping. When the hunter's moon rose full and clear over the woods, filling all animals with strange unrest, the pack would circle the great harbor, trotting silently along, nose to tail in single file, keeping on the high ridge of mountains and looking like a distant train of husky dogs against the moonlight. When over the fishing village they would sit down, each one on the loftiest rock he could find, raise their muzzles to the stars, and join in the long howl, _Ooooooo-wow-ow-ow!_ a terrible, wailing cry that seemed to drive every dog within hearing stark crazy. Out of the village lanes far below they rushed headlong, and sitting on the beach in a wide circle, heads all in and tails out, they raised their noses to the distant, wolf-topped pinnacles and joined in the wailing answer. Then the wolves would sit very still, listening with cocked ears to the cry of their captive kinsmen, till the dismal howling died away into silence, when they would start the clamor into life again by giving the wolf's challenge.

Why they did it, what they felt there in the strange unreality of the moonlight, and what hushed their profound enmity, none can tell. Ordinarily the wolf hates both fox and dog, and kills them whenever they cross his path; but to-night the foxes were yapping an answer all around them, and sometimes a few adventurous dogs would scale the mountains silently to sit on the rocks and join in the wild wolf chorus, and not a wolf stirred to molest them. All were more or less lunatic, and knew not what they were doing.

For hours the uncanny comedy would drag itself on into the tense midnight silence, the wailing cry growing more demented and heartrending as the spell of ancient days fell again upon the degenerate huskies. Up on the lonely mountain tops the moon looked down, still and cold, and saw upon every pinnacle a dog or a wolf, each with his head turned up at the sky, howling his heart out. Down in the hamlet, scattered for miles along Deep Arm and the harbor shore, sleepers stirred uneasily at the clamor, the women clutching their babies close, the men cursing the crazy brutes and vowing all sorts of vengeance on the morrow. Then the wolves would slip away like shadows into the vast upland barrens, and the dogs, restless as witches with some unknown excitement, would run back to whine and scratch at the doors of their masters' cabins.

Soon the big snowflakes were whirling in the air, busily weaving a soft white winding-sheet for the autumn which was passing away. And truly it had been a good time for the wolf cubs, as for most wild animals; and they had grown large and strong with their fat feeding, and wise with their many experiences. The ducks and geese vanished, driving southward ahead of the fierce autumn gales, and only the late broods of hardy eiders were left for a little season. Herring and caplin had long since drifted away into unknown depths, where the tides flowed endlessly over them and brought never a one ashore. Hares and ptarmigans turned white to hide on the snow, so that wolf and fox would pass close by without seeing them. Wood-mice pushed their winding tunnels and made their vaulted play rooms deep under the drifts, where none might molest nor make them afraid; and all game grew wary and wild, learning from experience, as it always does, that only the keen can survive the fall

hunting. So the long winter, with its snow and ice and its bitter cold and its grim threat of famine, settled heavily over Harbor Weal and the Long Range where Wayeeses must find his living.

The White Wolf's Hunting

Threatening as the northern winter was, with its stern order to the birds to depart, and to the beasts to put on their thick furs, and to the little folk of the snow to hide themselves in white coats, and to all living things to watch well the ways that they took, it could bring no terror to Wayeeses and her powerful young cubs. The gladness of life was upon them, with none of its pains or anxieties or fears, as we know them; and they rolled and tumbled about in the first deep snow with the abandon of young foxes, filled with wonder at the strange blanket that covered the rough places of earth so softly and made their light footsteps more noiseless than before. For to be noiseless and inconspicuous, and so in harmony with his surroundings, is the first desire of every creature of the vast solitudes.

Meeting the wolves now, as they roamed wild and free over the great range, one would hardly have recognized the little brown creatures that he saw playing about the den where the trail began. The cubs were already noble-looking brutes, larger than the largest husky dog; and the parents were taller, with longer legs and more massive heads and powerful jaws, than any great timber-wolf. A tremendous vitality thrilled in them from nose to paw tips. Their great bodies, as they lay quiet in the snow with heads raised and hind legs bent under them, were like powerful engines, tranquil under enormous pressure; and when they rose the movement was like the quick snap of a steel spring. Indeed, half the ordinary movements of Wayeeses are so quick that the eye cannot follow them. One instant a wolf would be lying flat on his side, his long legs outstretched on the moss, his eyes closed in the sleepy sunshine, his body limp as a hound's after a fox chase; the next instant, like the click and blink of a camera shutter, he would be standing alert on all four feet, questioning the passing breeze or looking intently into your eyes; and you could not imagine, much less follow, the recoil of twenty big electric muscles that at some subtle warning had snapped him automatically from one position to the other. They were all snow-white, with long thick hair and a heavy mane that added enormously to their imposing appearance; and they carried their bushy tails almost straight out as they trotted along, with a slight crook near the body,--the true wolf sign that still reappears in many collies to tell a degenerate race of a noble ancestry.

After the first deep snows the family separated, led by their growing hunger and by the difficulty of finding enough game in one cover to supply all their needs. The mother and the smallest cub remained together; the two larger cubs ranged on the other side of the mountain, beating the bush and hunting into each other's mouth, as they had been trained to do; while the big he-wolf hunted successfully by himself, as he had done for years. Scattered as they were, they still kept track of each other faithfully, and in a casual way looked after one another's needs. Wherever he was, a wolf seemed to know by instinct where his fellows were hunting many miles away. When in doubt he had only to mount the highest hill and give the rallying cry, which carried an enormous distance in the still cold air, to bring the pack swiftly and silently about him.

At times, when the cubs were hungry after a two-days fast, they would hear, faint and far away, the food cry, _yap-yap-yooo! yap-yap-yoooooo!_ quivering under the stars in the tense early-morning air, and would dart away to find game freshly killed by one of the old wolves awaiting them. Again, at nightfall, a cub's hunting cry, _ooooo, ow-ow! ooooo, ow-ow!_ a deep, almost musical hoot with two short barks at the end, would come singing down from the uplands; and the wolves, leaving instantly the game they were following, would hasten up to find the two cubs herding a caribou in a cleft of the rocks,--a young caribou that had lost his mother at the hands of the hunters, and that did not know how to take care of himself. And one of the cubs would hold him there, sitting on his tail in front of the caribou to prevent his escape, while the other cub called the wolves away from their own hunting to come and join the feast.

Whether this were a conscious attempt to spare the game, or to alarm it as little as need be, it is impossible to say. Certainly the wolves know, better apparently than men, that persistent hunting destroys its own object, and that caribou especially, when much alarmed by dogs or wolves or men, will take the alarm quickly, and the scattered herds, moved by a common impulse of danger, will trail far away to other ranges. That is why the wolf, unlike the less intelligent dog, hunts always in a silent, stealthy, unobtrusive way; and why he stops hunting and goes away the instant his own hunger is satisfied or another wolf kills enough for all. And that is also the probable reason why he lets the deer alone as long as he can find any other game.

This same intelligent provision was shown in another curious way. When a wolf in his wide ranging found a good hunting-ground where small game was plentiful, he would snap up a rabbit silently in the twilight and then go far away, perhaps to join the other cubs in a gambol, or to follow them to the cliffs over a fishing village and set all the dogs to howling. By day he would lie close in some thick cover, miles away from his hunting-ground. At twilight he would steal back and hunt quietly, just long enough to get his game, and then trot away again, leaving the cover as unharmed as if there were not a wolf in the whole neighborhood.

Such a good hunting-ground cannot long remain hidden from other prowlers in the wilderness; and Wayeeses, who was keeping his discovery to himself, would soon cross the trail of a certain old fox returning day after day to the same good covers. No two foxes, nor mice, nor men, nor any other two animals for that matter, ever leave the same scent,--any old hound, which will hold steadily to one fox though a dozen others cross or cover his trail, will show you that plainly in a day's hunting,--and the wolf would soon know surely that the same fox was poaching every night on his own preserves while he was away. To a casual, wandering hunter he paid no attention; but this cunning poacher must be laid by the heels, else there would not be a single rabbit left in the cover. So Wayeeses, instead of hunting himself at twilight when the rabbits are stirring, would wait till midday, when the sun is warm and foxes are sleepy, and then come back to find the poacher's trail and follow it to where Eleemos was resting for the day in a sunny opening in the scrub. There Wayeeses would steal upon him from behind and put an end to his poaching; or else, if the fox used the same nest daily, as is often the case when he is not disturbed, the wolf would circle the scrub warily to find the path by which Eleemos usually came out on his night's hunting. When he found that out Wayeeses would dart away in the long,

rolling gallop that carries a wolf swiftly over the roughest country without fatigue. In an hour or two he would be back again with another wolf. Then Eleemos, dozing away in the winter sunshine, would hear an unusual racket in the scrub behind him,--some heavy animal brushing about heedlessly and sniffing loudly at a cold trail. No wolf certainly, for a wolf makes no noise. So Eleemos would get down from his warm rock and slip away, stopping to look back and listen jauntily to the clumsy brute behind him, till he ran plump into the jaws of the other wolf that was watching alert and silent beside the runway.

When the snows were deep and soft the wolves took to hunting the lynxes,--big, savage, long-clawed fighters that swarm in the interior of Newfoundland and play havoc with the small game. For a single lynx the wolves hunted in pairs, trailing the big prowler stealthily and rushing upon him from behind with a fierce uproar to startle the wits out of his stupid head and send him off headlong, as cats go, before he knew what was after him. Away he would go in mighty jumps, sinking shoulder deep, often indeed up to his tufted ears, at every plunge. After him raced the wolves, running lightly and taking advantage of the holes he had made in the soft snow, till a swift snap in his flank brought Upweekis up with a ferocious snarl to tear in pieces his pursuers.

Then began as savage a bit of fighting as the woods ever witness, teeth against talons, wolf cunning against cat ferocity. Crouched in the snow, spitting and snarling, his teeth bared and round eyes blazing and long claws aching to close in a death grip, Upweekis waited impatient as a fury for the rush. He is an ugly fighter; but he must always get close, gripping his enemy with teeth and fore claws while the hind claws get in their deadly work, kicking downward in powerful spasmodic blows and ripping everything before them. A dog would rush in now and be torn to pieces; but not so the wolves. Dancing lightly about the big lynx they would watch their chance to leap and snap, sometimes avoiding the blow of the swift paw with its terrible claws, and sometimes catching it on their heavy manes; but always a long red mark showed on the lynx's silver fur as the wolves' teeth clicked with the voice of a steel trap and they leaped aside without serious injury. As the big cat grew blind in his fury they would seize their chance like a flash and leap together; one pair of long jaws would close hard on the spine behind the tufted ears; another pair would grip a hind leg, while the wolves sprang apart and braced to hold. Then the fight was all over; and the moose birds, in pairs, came flitting in silently to see if there were not a few unconsidered trifles of the feast for them to dispose of.

Occasionally, at nightfall, the wolves' hunting cry would ring out of the woods as one of the cubs discovered three or four of the lynxes growling horribly over some game they had pulled down together. For Upweekis too, though generally a solitary fellow, often roams with a savage band of freebooters to hunt the larger animals in the bitter winter weather. No young wolf would ever run into one of these bands alone; but when the pack rolled in upon them like a tempest the lynxes would leap squalling away in a blind rush; and the two big wolves, cutting in from the ends of the charging line, would turn a lynx kit deftly aside for the cubs to hold. Then another for themselves, and the hunt was over,--all but the feast at the end of it.

When a big and cunning lynx took to a tree at the first alarm the wolves would go aside to leeward, where Upweekis could not see them, but where their noses told them perfectly all that he was doing. Then began the long game of patience, the wolves waiting for the game to come down, and

the lynx waiting for the wolves to go away. Upweekis was at a disadvantage, for he could not see when he had won; and he generally came down in an hour or two, only to find the wolves hot on his trail before he had taken a dozen jumps. Whereupon he took to another tree and the game began again.

[Illustration: "The silent, appalling death-watch began."]

When the night was exceeding cold--and one who has not felt it can hardly imagine the bitter, killing intensity of a northern midnight in February--the wolves, instead of going away, would wait under the tree in which the lynx had taken refuge, and the silent, appalling death-watch began. A lynx, though heavily furred, cannot long remain exposed in the intense cold without moving. Moreover he must grip the branch on which he sits more or less firmly with his claws, to keep from falling; and the tense muscles, which flex the long claws to drive them into the wood, soon grow weary and numb in the bitter frost. The wolves meanwhile trot about to keep warm; while the stupid cat sits in one spot slowly perishing, and never thinks of running up and down the tree to keep himself alive. The feet grow benumbed at last, powerless to hold on any longer, and the lynx tumbles off into the wolves' jaws; or else, knowing the danger, he leaps for the nearest wolf and dies fighting.

Spite of the killing cold, the problem of keeping warm was to the wolves always a simple one. Moving along through the winter night, always on a swift, silent trot, they picked up what game came in their way, and scarcely felt the eager cold that nipped at their ears, or the wind, keen as an icicle, that strove to penetrate the shaggy white coats that covered them. When their hunger was satisfied, or when the late day came and found them still hunting hopefully, they would push their way into the thick scrub from one of the numerous paths and lie down on a nest of leaves, which even in midwinter were dry as if no snow or rain had ever fallen. There, where no wind or gale however strong could penetrate, and with the snow filling the low branches overhead and piled over them in a soft, warm blanket three feet thick, they would push their sensitive noses into their own thick fur to keep them warm, and sleep comfortably till the early twilight came and called them out again to the hunting.

At times, when not near the scrub, they would burrow deep into a great drift of snow and sleep in the warmest kind of a nest,--a trick that the husky dogs, which are but wolves of yesterday, still remember. Like all wild animals, they felt the coming of a storm long before the first white flakes began to whirl in the air; and when a great storm threatened they would lie down to sleep in a cave, or a cranny of the rocks, and let the drifts pile soft and warm over them. However long the storm, they never stirred abroad; partly for their own comfort, partly because all game lies hid at such times and it is practically impossible, even for a wolf, to find it. When a wolf has fed full he can go a week without eating and suffer no great discomfort. So Wayeeses would lie close and warm while the snow piled deep around him and the gale raged over the sea and mountains, but passed unfelt and unheeded over his head. Then, when the storm was over, he pawed his way up through the drift and came out in a new, bright world, where the game, with appetites sharpened by the long fast, was already stirring briskly in every covert.

When March came, the bitterest month of all for the Wood Folk, even Wayeeses was often hard pressed to find a living. Small game grew scarce and very wild; the caribou had wandered far away to other ranges; and

the cubs would dig for hours after a mouse, or stalk a snowbird, or wait with endless patience for a red squirrel to stop his chatter and come down to search under the snow for a fir cone that he had hidden there in the good autumn days. And once, when the hunger within was more nipping than the eager cold without, one of the cubs found a bear sleeping in his winter den among the rocks. With a sharp hunting cry, that sang like a bullet over the frozen wastes, he called the whole pack about him. While the rest lay in hiding the old he-wolf approached warily and scratched Mooween out of his den, and then ran away to entice the big brute into the open ground, where the pack rolled in upon him and killed him in a terrible fight before he had fairly shaken the sleep out of his eyes.

Old Tomah, the trapper, was abroad now, taking advantage of the spring hunger. The wolves often crossed his snow-shoe trail, or followed it swiftly to see whither it led. For a wolf, like a farm dog, is never satisfied till he knows the ways of every living thing that crosses his range. Following the broad trail Wayeeses would find here a trapped animal, struggling desperately with the clog and the cruel gripping teeth, there the flayed carcass of a lynx or an otter, and yonder the leg of a dog or a piece of caribou meat hung by a cord over a runway, with the snow disturbed beneath it where the deadly trap was hidden. One glance, or a sniff at a distance, was enough for the wolf. Lynxes do not go about the range without their skins, and meat does not naturally hang on trees; so Wayeeses, knowing all the ways of the woods, would ignore these baits absolutely. Nevertheless he followed the snow-shoe trails until he knew where every unnatural thing lay hidden; and no matter how hungry he was, or how cunningly the old Indian hid his devices, or however deep the new snow covered all traces of man's work, Wayeeses passed by on the other side and kept his dainty feet out of every snare and pitfall.

Once, when the two cubs that hunted together were hard pinched with hunger, they found Old Tomah in the twilight and followed him stealthily. The old Indian was swinging along, silent as a shadow of the woods, his gun on his shoulder and some skins on his back, heading swiftly for the little hut under the cliff, where he burrowed for the night as snug as a bear in his den. An old wolf would have known instantly the danger, for man alone bites at a distance; but the lop-eared cub, which was larger than his brother and therefore the leader, raised his head for the hunting cry. The first yap had hardly left his throat when the thunder roared, and something seared the wolf's side like a hot iron. The cubs vanished like the smoke from the old gun. Then the Indian came swiftly back on the trail, peering about with hawk eyes to see the effect of his shot.

"By cosh! miss um dat time. Mus' be powder no good." Then, as he read the plain record in the snow, "One,--by cosh! two hwulf, lil fool hwulf, follow my footin'. Mus' be more, come soon pretty quick now; else he don' howl dat way. Guess mebbe ol' Injun better stay in house nights." And he trailed warily back to hide himself behind a rock and watch till dark in front of his little _commoosie_.

Old Tomah's sleep was sound as usual that night; so he could not see the five shadows that stole out of the woods, nor hear the light footfalls that circled his camp, nor feel the breath, soft as an eddy of wind in a spruce top, that whiffed at the crack under his door and drifted away again. Next morning he saw the tracks and understood them; and as he trailed away through the still woods he was wondering, in his silent

Indian way, why an old wolf should always bring Malsunsis, the cub, for a good look and a sniff at anything that he is to avoid ever after.

When all else fails follow the caribou,--that is the law which governs the wolf in the hungry days; but before they crossed the mountains and followed the long valleys to the far southern ranges the wolves went back to the hills, where the trail began, for a more exciting and dangerous kind of hunting. The pack had held closer together of late; for the old wolves must often share even a scant fox or rabbit with the hungry and inexperienced youngsters. Now, when famine drove them to the very doors of the one enemy to be feared, only the wisest and wariest old wolf was fit to lead the foray.

The little fishing village was buried under drifts and almost deserted. A few men lingered to watch the boats and houses; but the families had all gone inland to the winter tilts for wood and shelter. By night the wolves would come stealthily to prowl among the deserted lanes; and the fishermen, asleep in their clothes under caribou skins, or sitting close by the stove behind barred doors, would know nothing of the huge, gaunt forms that flitted noiselessly past the frosted windows. If a pig were left in his pen a sudden terrible squealing would break out on the still night; and when the fisherman rushed out the pen would be empty, with nothing whatever to account for piggie's disappearance. For to their untrained eyes even the tracks of the wolves were covered up by those of the numerous big huskies. If a cat prowled abroad, or an uneasy dog scratched to be let out, there would be a squall, a yelp,--and the cat would not come back, and the dog would never scratch at the door to be let in again.

Only when nothing stirred in the village, when the dogs and cats had been spirited away, and when not even a rat stole from under the houses to gnaw at a fishbone, would the fishermen know of their big silent visitors. Then the wolves would gather on a snow-drift just outside the village and raise a howl, a frightful wail of famine and disappointment, that made the air shudder. From within the houses the dogs answered with mad clamor. A door would open to show first a long seal gun, then a fisherman, then a fool dog that darted between the fisherman's legs and capered away, ki-yi-ing a challenge to the universe. A silence, tense as a bowstring; a sudden yelp--_Hui-hui_, as the fisherman whistled to the dog that was being whisked away over the snow with a grip on his throat that prevented any answer; then the fisherman would wait and call in vain, and shiver, and go back to the fire again.

Almost every pleasant day a train of dogs would leave the village and go far back on the hills to haul fire-wood, or poles for the new fish-flakes. The wolves, watching from their old den, would follow at a distance to pick up a careless dog that ventured away from the fire to hunt rabbits when his harness was taken off. Occasionally a solitary wood-chopper would start with sudden alarm as a big white form glided into sight, and the alarm would be followed by genuine terror as he found himself surrounded by five huge wolves that sat on their tails watching him curiously. Gripping his ax he would hurry back to call his companions and harness the dogs and hurry back to the village before the early darkness should fall upon them. As the komatik went careering over the snow, the dogs yelping and straining at the harness, the men running alongside shouting _Hi-hi_ and cracking their whips, they could still see, over their shoulders, the wolves following lightly close behind; but when they rushed breathless into their houses, and grabbed their guns, and ran back on the trail, there was nothing to be seen. For the

wolves, quick as light to feel the presence of danger, were already far away, trotting swiftly up the frozen arm of the harbor, following another sledge trail which came down that morning from the wilderness.

That same night the wolves appeared silently in the little lodge, far up the Southeast Brook, where in a sheltered hollow of the hills the fishermen's families were sleeping away the bitter winter. Here for one long night they watched and waited in vain; for every living thing was safe in the tilts behind barred doors. In the morning little Noel's eyes kindled as he saw the wolves' tracks; and when they came back again the tilts were watching. As the lop-eared cub darted after a cat that shot like a ray of moonlight under a cabin, a window opened noiselessly, and _zing!_ a bowstring twanged its sharp warning in the tense silence. With a yelp the wolf tore the arrow from his shoulder. The warm blood followed the barb, and he lapped it eagerly in his hunger. Then, as the danger swept over him, he gave the trail cry and darted away. Doors banged open here and there; dogs barked to crack their throats; seal guns roared out and sent their heavy echoes crashing like thunder among the hills. Silence fell again over the lodge; and there were left only a few frightened dogs whose noses had already told them everything, a few fishermen who watched and listened, and one Indian boy with a long bow in his hand and an arrow ready on the string, who trailed away with a little girl at his side trying to puzzle out the track of one wolf that left a drop of blood here and there on the snow in the scant moonlight.

Far up on the hillside in a little opening of the woods the scattered pack came together again. At the first uproar, so unbearable to a silence-loving animal, they had vanished in five different directions; yet so subtle, so perfect is the instinct which holds a wolf family together that the old mother had scarcely entered the glade alone and sat down to wait and listen when the other wolves joined her silently. Malsunsis, the big cub, scarcely felt his wound at first, for the arrow had but glanced through the thick skin and flesh, and he had torn it out without difficulty; but the old he-wolf limped painfully and held up one fore leg, pierced by a seal shot, as he loped away over the snow.

It was their first rough experience with men, and probably the one feeling in every shaggy head was of puzzled wonder as to how and why it had all happened. Hitherto they had avoided men with a certain awe, or watched them curiously at a distance, trying to understand their superior ways; and never a hostile feeling for the masters of the woods had found place in a wolf's breast. Now man had spoken at last; his voice was a brutal command to be gone, and curiously enough these powerful big brutes, any one of which could have pulled down a man more easily than a caribou, never thought of questioning the order.

It was certainly time to follow the caribou--that was probably the one definite purpose that came upon the wolves, sitting in a silent, questioning circle in the moonlight, with only the deep snows and the empty woods around them. For a week they had not touched food; for thrice that time they had not fed full, and a few days more would leave them unable to cope with the big caribou, which are always full fed and strong, thanks to nature's abundance of deer moss on the barrens. So they started as by a single impulse, and the mother wolf led them swiftly southward, hour after hour at a tireless pace, till the great he-wolf weakened and turned aside to nurse his wounded fore leg. The lop-eared cub drew out of the race at the same time. His own wound now required the soft massage of his tongue to allay the fever; and besides, the fear that was born in him, one night long ago, and that had slept

ever since, was now awake again, and for the first time he was afraid to face the famine and the wilderness alone. So the pack swept on, as if their feet would never tire, and the two wounded wolves crept into the scrub and lay down together.

A strange, terrible feeling stole swiftly over the covert, which had always hitherto been a place of rest and quiet content. The cub was licking his wound softly when he looked up in sudden alarm, and there was the great he-wolf looking at him hungrily, with a frightful flare in his green eyes. The cub moved away startled and tried to soothe his wound again; but the uncanny feeling was strong upon him still, and when he turned his head there was the big wolf, which had crept forward till he could see the cub behind a twisted spruce root, watching him steadily with the same horrible stare in his unblinking eyes. The hackles rose up on the cub's neck and a growl rumbled in his deep chest, for he knew now what it all meant. The smell of blood was in the air, and the old he-wolf, that had so often shared his kill to save the cubs, was now going crazy in his awful hunger. Another moment and there would have been a terrible duel in the scrub; but as the wolves sprang to their feet and faced each other some deep, unknown feeling stirred within them and they turned aside. The old wolf threw himself down heavily, facing away from the temptation, and the cub slipped aside to find another den, out of sight and smell of the huge leader, lest the scent of blood should overcome them again and cause them to fly at each other's throats in uncontrollable fury.

Next morning a queer thing happened, but not uncommon under the circumstances among wolves and huskies. The cub was lying motionless, his head on his paws, his eyes wide open, when something stirred near him. A red squirrel came scampering through the scrub branches just under the thick coating of snow that filled all their tops. Slowly, carefully the young wolf gathered his feet under him, tense as a bowstring. As the squirrel whisked overhead the wolf leaped like a flash, caught him, and crushed him with a single grip. Then with the squirrel in his mouth he made his way back to where the big leader was lying, his head on his paws, his eyes turned aside. Slowly, warily the cub approached, with a friendly twist of his ears and head, till he laid the squirrel at the big wolf's very nose, then drew back a step and lay with paws extended and tail thumping the leaves, watching till the tidbit was seized ravenously and crushed and bolted in a single mouthful. Next instant both wolves sprang to their feet and made their way out of the scrub together.

They took up the trail of the pack where they had left it, and followed it ten hours, the cub at a swift trot, the old wolf loping along on three legs. Then a rest, and forward again, slower and slower, night after day in ever-failing strength, till on the edge of a great barren they stopped as if struck, trembling all over as the reek of game poured into their starving nostrils.

Too weak now to kill or to follow the fleet caribou, they lay down in the snow waiting, their ears cocked, their noses questioning every breeze for its good news. Left to themselves the trail must end here, for they could go no farther; but somewhere ahead in the vast silent barren the cubs were trailing, and somewhere beyond them the old mother wolf was laying her ambush.--Hark! from a spur of the valley, far below on their left, rang out the food cry, singing its way in the frosty air over woods and plains, and hurrying back over the trail to tell those who had fallen by the way that they were not forgotten. And when they

leaped up, as at an electric shock, and raced for the cry, there were the cubs and the mother wolf, their hunger already satisfied, and there in the snow a young bull caribou to save them.

So the long, hard winter passed away, and spring came again with its abundance. Grouse drummed a welcome in the woods; the _honk_ of wild geese filled the air with a joyous clangor, and in every open pool the ducks were quacking. No need now to cling like shadows to the herds of caribou, and no further need for the pack to hold together. The ties that held them melted like snows in the sunny hollows. First the old wolves, then the cubs, one by one drifted away whither the game or their new mates were calling them. When the summer came there was another den on the high hill overlooking the harbor, where the little brown cubs could look down with wonder at the shining sea and the slow fishing-boats and the children playing on the shore; but the wolves whose trail began there were far away over the mountains, following their own ways, waiting for the crisp hunting cry that should bring them again together.

Trails that Cross in the Snow

"Are we lost, little brother?" said Mooka, shivering.

No need of the question, startling and terrible as it was from the lips of a child astray in the vast solitudes; for a great gale had swooped down from the Arctic, blotting out in clouds of whirling snow the world of plain and mountain and forest that, a moment before, had stretched wide and still before the little hunters' eyes.

For an hour or more, running like startled deer, they had tried to follow their own snow-shoe trail back over the wide barrens into the friendly woods; but already the snow had filled it brim full, and whatever faint trace was left of the long raquettes was caught up by the gale and whirled away with a howl of exultation. Before them as they ran every trail of wolf and caribou and snow-shoe, and every distant landmark, had vanished; the world was but a chaos of mad rolling snow clouds; and behind them--Their stout little hearts trembled as they saw not a vestige of the trail they had just made. With the great world itself, their own little tracks, as fast as they made them, were swept and blotted out of existence. Like two sparrows that had dropped blinded and bewildered on the vast plain out of the snow cloud, they huddled together without one friendly sign to tell them whence they had come or whither they were going. Worst of all, the instinct of direction, which often guides an Indian through the still fog or the darkest night, seemed benumbed by the cold and the tumult; and not even Old Tomah himself could have told north or south in the blinding storm.

Still they ran on bravely, bending to the fierce blasts, heading the wind as best they could, till Mooka, tripping a second time in a little hollow where a brook ran deep under the snow, and knowing now that they were but wandering in an endless circle, seized Noel's arm and repeated her question:

"Are we lost, little brother?"

And Noel, lost and bewildered, but gripping his bow in his fur mitten and peering here and there, like an old hunter, through the whirling

flakes and rolling gusts to catch some landmark, some lofty crag or low tree-line that held steady in the mad dance of the world, still made confident Indian answer:

"Noel not lost; Noel right here. Camp lost, little sister."

"Can we find um, little brother?"

"Oh, yes, we find um. Find um bimeby, pretty soon quick now, after storm."

"But storm last all night, and it's soon dark. Can we rest and not freeze? Mooka tired and--and frightened, little brother."

"Sartin we rest; build um _commoosie_ and sleep jus' like bear in his den. Oh, yes, sartin we rest good," said Noel cheerfully.

"And the wolves, little brother?" whispered Mooka, looking back timidly into the wild waste out of which they had come.

"Never mind hwolves; nothing hunts in storm, little sister. Come on, we must find um woods now."

For one brief moment the little hunter stood with upturned face, while Mooka bowed her head silently, and the great storm rolled unheeded over them. Still holding his long bow he stretched both hands to the sky in the mute appeal that _Keesuolukh_, the Great Mystery whom we call God, would understand better than all words. Then turning their backs to the gale they drifted swiftly away before it, like two wind-blown leaves, running to keep from freezing, and holding each other's hands tight lest they separate and be lost by the way.

The second winter had come, sealing up the gloomy land till it rang like iron at the touch, then covering it deep with snow and polishing its mute white face with hoar-frost and hail driven onward by the fierce Arctic gales. An appalling silence rested on plains and mountains. Not a chirp, not a rustle broke the intense, unnatural stillness. One might travel all day long without a sight or sound of life; and when the early twilight came and life stirred shyly from its coverts and snow caves, the Wood Folk stole out into the bare white world on noiseless, hesitating feet, as if in presence of the dead.

When the Moon of Famine came, the silence was rudely broken. Before daylight one morning, when the air was so tense and still that a whisper set it tinkling like silver bells, the rallying cry of the wolves rolled down from a mountain top; and the three cubs, that had waited long for the signal, left their separate trails far away and hurried to join the old leader.

When the sun rose that morning one who stood on the high ridge of the Top Gallants, far to the eastward of Harbor Weal, would have seen seven trails winding down among the rocks and thickets. It needed only a glance to show that the seven trails, each one as clear-cut and delicate as that of a prowling fox, were the records of wolves' cautious feet; and that they were no longer beating the thickets for grouse and rabbits, but moving swiftly all together for the edges of the vast barrens where the caribou herds were feeding. Another glance--but here we must have the cunning eyes of Old Tomah the hunter--would have told that two of the trails were those of enormous wolves which led the pack;

two others were plainly cubs that had not yet lost the cub trick of frolicking in the soft snow; while three others were just wolves, big and powerful brutes that moved as if on steel springs, and that still held to the old pack because the time had not yet come for them to scatter finally to their separate ways and head new packs of their own in the great solitudes.

Out from the woods on the other side of the barren came two snow-shoe trails, which advanced with short steps and rested lightly on the snow, as if the makers of the trails were little people whose weight on the snow-shoes made hardly more impression than the broad pads of Moktaques the rabbit. They followed stealthily the winding records of a score of caribou that had wandered like an eddying wind all over the barren, stopping here and there to paw great holes in the snow for the caribou moss that covered all the earth beneath. Out at the end of the trail two Indian children, a girl and a boy, stole along with noiseless steps, scanning the wide wastes for a cloud of mist--the frozen breath that hovers over a herd of caribou--or peering keenly into the edges of the woods for vague white shapes moving like shadows among the trees. So they moved on swiftly, silently, till the boy stopped with a startled exclamation, whipped out a long arrow with a barbed steel point, and laid it ready across his bow. For at his feet was another light trail, the trail of a wolf pack, that crossed his own, moving straight and swift across the barren toward the unseen caribou.

Just in front, as the boy stopped, a slight motion broke the even white surface that stretched away silent and lifeless on every side,--a motion so faint and natural that Noel's keen eyes, sweeping the plain and the edges of the distant woods, never noticed it. A vagrant wind, which had been wandering and moaning all morning as if lost, seemed to stir the snow and settle to rest again. But now, where the plain seemed most empty and lifeless, seven great white wolves crouched down in the snow in a little hollow, their paws extended, their hind legs bent like powerful springs beneath them, their heads raised cautiously so that only their ears and eyes showed above the rim of the little hollow where they hid. So they lay, tense, alert, ready, watching with eager, inquisitive eyes the two children drawing steadily nearer, the only sign of life in the whole wide, desolate landscape.

* * * * *

Follow the back trail of the snow-shoes now, while the wolves are waiting, and it leads you over the great barren into the gloomy spruce woods; beyond that it crosses two more barrens and stretches of intervening forest; then up a great hill and down into a valley, where the lodge lay hidden, buried deep under Newfoundland snows.

Here the fishermen lived, sleeping away the bitter winter. In the late autumn they had left the fishing village at Harbor Weal, driven out like the wild ducks by the fierce gales that raged over the whole coast. With their abundant families and scant provisions they had followed the trail up the Southwest Brook till it doubled around the mountain and led into a great silent wood, sheltered on every side by the encircling hills. Here the tilts were built with double walls, filled in between with leaves and moss, to help the little stoves that struggled bravely with the terrible cold; and the roofs were covered over with poles and bark, or with the brown sails that had once driven the fishing-boats out and in on the wings of the gale. The high mountains on the west stood between them and the icy winds that swept down over the sea from the

Labrador and the Arctic wastes; wood in abundance was at their doors, and the trout-stream that sang all day long under its bridges of snow and ice was always ready to brim their kettles out of its abundance.

So the new life began pleasantly enough; but as the winter wore away and provisions grew scarce and game vanished from the coverts, they all felt the fearful pinch of famine. Every morning now a confused circle of tracks in the snow showed where the wild prowlers of the woods had come and sniffed at the very doors of the tilts in their ravening hunger.

Noel's father and Old Tomah were far away, trapping, in the interior; and to Noel with his snares and his bow and arrows fell the pleasant task of supplying the family's need when the stock of dried fish melted away. On this March morning he had started with Mooka at daylight to cross the mountains to some great barrens where he had found tracks and knew that a few herds of caribou were still feeding. The sun was dimmed as it rose, and the sun-dogs gave mute warning of the coming storm; but the cupboard was empty at home, and even a little hunter thinks first of the game he is following and lets the storm take care of itself. So they hurried on unheeding,--Noel with his bow and arrows, Mooka with a little bag containing a loaf and a few dried caplin,--peering under every brush pile for the shining eyes of a rabbit, and picking up one big grouse and a few ptarmigan among the bowlders of a great bare hillside. On the edges of the great barren under the Top Gallants they found the fresh tracks of feeding caribou, and were following eagerly when they ran plump into the wolf trail.

Now by every law of the chase the game belonged to these earlier hunters; and by every power in their gaunt, famished bodies the wolves meant to have it. So said the trail. Every stealthy advance in single file across, the open, every swift rush over the hollows that might hide them from eyes watching back from the distant woods, showed the wolves' purpose clear as daylight; and had Noel been wiser he would have read a warning from the snow and turned aside. But he only drew his longest, keenest arrow and pressed on more eagerly than before.

The two trails had crossed each other at last. Beginning near together, one on the mountains, the other by the sea, they had followed their separate devious ways, now far apart in the glad bright summer, now drawing together in the moonlight of the winter's night. At times the makers of the trails had watched each other in secret, shyly, inquisitively, at a distance; but always fear or cunning had kept them apart, the boy with his keen hunter's interest baffled and whetted by the brutes' wariness, and the wolves drawn to the superior being by that subtle instinct that once made glad hunting-dogs and collies of the wild rangers of the plains, and that still leads a wolf to follow and watch the doings of men with intense curiosity. Now the trails had met fairly in the snow, and a few steps more would bring the boy and the wolf face to face.

* * * * *

Noel was stealing along warily, his arrow ready on the string. Mooka beside him was watching a faint cloud of mist, the breath of caribou, that blurred at times the dark tree-line in the distance, when one of those mysterious warnings that befall the hunter in the far North rested upon them suddenly like a heavy hand.

I know not what it is,--what lesser pressure of air, to which we respond

like a barometer; or what unknown chords there are within us that sleep for years in the midst of society and that waken and answer, like an animal's, to the subtle influence of nature,--but one can never be watched by an unseen wild animal without feeling it vaguely; and one can never be so keen on the trail that the storm, before it breaks, will not whisper a warning to turn back to shelter before it is too late. To Noel and Mooka, alone on the barrens, the sun was no dimmer than before; the heavy gray bank of clouds still held sullenly to its place on the horizon; and no eyes, however keen, would have noticed the tiny dark spots that centered and glowed upon them over the rim of the little hollow where the wolves were watching. Nevertheless, a sudden chill fell upon them both. They stopped abruptly, shivering a bit, drawing closer together and scanning the waste keenly to know what it all meant.

"_Mitcheegeesookh_, the storm!" said Noel sharply; and without another word they turned and hurried back on their own trail. In a short half hour the world would be swallowed up in chaos. To be caught out on the barrens meant to be lost; and to be lost here without fire and shelter meant death, swift and sure. So they ran on, hoping to strike the woods before the blizzard burst upon them.

They were scarcely half-way to shelter when the white flakes began to whirl around them. With startling, terrible swiftness the familiar world vanished; the guiding trail was blotted out, and nothing but a wolf's instinct could have held a straight course in the blinding fury of the storm. Still they held on bravely, trying in vain to keep their direction by the eddying winds, till Mooka stumbled twice at the same hollow over a hidden brook, and they knew they were running blindly in a circle of death. Frightened at the discovery they turned, as the caribou do, keeping their backs steadily to the winds, and drifted slowly away down the long barren.

Hour after hour they struggled on, hand in hand, without a thought of where they were going. Twice Mooka fell and lay still, but was dragged to her feet and hurried onward again. The little hunter's own strength was almost gone, when a low moan rose steadily above the howl and hiss of the gale. It was the spruce woods, bending their tops to the blast and groaning at the strain. With a wild whoop Noel plunged forward, and the next instant they were safe within the woods. All around them the flakes sifted steadily, silently down into the thick covert, while the storm passed with a great roar over their heads.

In the lee of a low-branched spruce they stopped again, as though by a common impulse, while Noel lifted his hands. "Thanks, thanks, _Keesuolukh_; we can take care of ourselves now," the brave little heart was singing under the upstretched arms. Then they tumbled into the snow and lay for a moment utterly relaxed, like two tired animals, in that brief, delicious rest which follows a terrible struggle with the storm and cold.

First they ate a little of their bread and fish to keep up their spirits; then--for the storm that was upon them might last for days--they set about preparing a shelter. With a little search, whooping to each other lest they stray away, they found a big dry stub that some gale had snapped off a few feet above the snow. While Mooka scurried about, collecting birch bark and armfuls of dry branches, Noel took off his snow-shoes and began with one of them to shovel away the snow in a semicircle around the base of the stub. In a short half-hour he had a deep hole there, with the snow banked up around it to the height of his

head. Next with his knife he cut a lot of light poles and scrub spruces and, sticking the butts in his snowbank, laid the tops, like the sticks of a wigwam, firmly against the big stub. A few armfuls of spruce boughs shingled over this roof, and a few minutes' work shoveling snow thickly upon them to hold them in place and to make a warm covering; then a doorway, or rather a narrow tunnel, just beyond the stub on the straight side of the semicircle, and their _commoosie_ was all ready. Let the storm roar and the snow sift down! The thicker it fell the warmer would be their shelter. They laughed and shouted now as they scurried out and in, bringing boughs for a bed and the fire-wood which Mooka had gathered.

Against the base of the dry stub they built their fire,--a wee, sociable little fire such as an Indian always builds, which is far better than a big one, for it draws you near and welcomes you cheerily, instead of driving you away by its smoke and great heat. Soon the big stub itself began to burn, glowing steadily with a heat that filled the snug little _commoosie_, while the smoke found its way out of the hole in the roof which Noel had left for that purpose. Later the stub burned through to its hollow center, and then they had a famous chimney, which soon grew hot and glowing inside, and added its mite to the children's comfort.

Noel and Mooka were drowsy now; but before the long night closed in upon them they had gathered more wood, and laid aside some wisps of birch bark to use when they should wake, cold and shivering, and find their little fire gone out and the big stub losing its cheery glow. Then they lay down to rest, and the night and the storm rolled on unheeded.

Towards morning they fell into a heavy sleep; for the big stub began to burn more freely as the wind changed, and they need not stir every half hour to feed their little fire and keep from freezing. It was broad daylight, the storm had ceased, and a woodpecker was hammering loudly on a hollow shell over their heads when they started up, wondering vaguely where they were. Then while Noel broke out of the _commoosie_, which was fairly buried under the snow, to find out where he was, Mooka rebuilt the fire and plucked a ptarmigan and set it to toasting with the last of their bread over the coals.

Noel came back soon with a cheery whoop to tell the little cook that they had drifted before the storm down the whole length of the great barren, and were camped now on the opposite side, just under the highest ridge of the Top Gallants. There was not a track on the barrens, he said; not a sign of wolf or caribou, which had probably wandered deeper into the woods for shelter. So they ate their bread to the last crumb and their bird to the last bone, and, giving up all thought of hunting, started up the big barren, heading for the distant Lodge, where they had long since been given up for lost.

They had crossed the barren and a mile of thick woods beyond when they ran into the fresh trail of a dozen caribou. Following it swiftly they came to the edge of a much smaller barren that they had crossed yesterday, and saw at a glance that the trail stretched straight across it. Not a caribou was in sight; but they might nevertheless be feeding, or resting in the woods just beyond; and for the little hunters to show themselves now in the open would mean that they would become instantly the target for every keen eye that was watching the back trail. So they started warily to circle the barren, keeping just within the fringe of woods out of sight.

They had gone scarcely a hundred steps when Noel whipped out a long arrow and pointed silently across the open. From the woods on the other side the caribou had broken out of a dozen tunnels under the spruces, and came trotting back in their old trails, straight downwind to where the little hunters were hiding.

The deer were acting queerly,--now plunging away with the high, awkward jumps that caribou use when startled; now swinging off on their swift, tireless rack, and before they had settled to their stride halting suddenly to look back and wag their ears at the trail. For Megaleep is full of curiosity as a wild turkey, and always stops to get a little entertainment out of every new thing that does not threaten him with instant death. Then out of the woods behind them trotted five white wolves,--not hunting, certainly! for whenever the caribou stopped to look the wolves sat down on their tails and yawned. One lay down and rolled over and over in the soft snow; another chased and capered after his own brush, whirling round and round like a little whirlwind, and the shrill _ki-yi_ of a cub wolf playing came faintly across the barren.

It was a strange scene, yet one often witnessed on the lonely plains of the far North: the caribou halting, running away, and halting again to look back and watch the queer antics of their big enemies, which seemed now so playful and harmless; the cunning wolves playing on the game's curiosity at every turn, knowing well that if once frightened the deer would break away at a pace which would make pursuit hopeless. So they followed rather than drove the foolish deer across the barren, holding them with monkey tricks and kitten's capers, and restraining with an iron grip their own fearful hunger and the blind impulse to rush in headlong and have it all quickly over.

Kneeling behind a big spruce, Noel was trying nervously the spring and temper of his long bow, divided in desire between the caribou, which they needed sadly at home, and one of the great wolves whose death would give him a place among the mighty hunters, when Mooka clutched his arm, her eyes snapping with excitement, her finger pointing silently back on their own trail. A vague shadow glided swiftly among the trees. An enormous white wolf appeared, vanished, came near them again, and crouched down under a low spruce branch waiting.

Again the two trails had crossed in the snow. The big wolf as he appeared had thrust his nose into the snow-shoe tracks, and a sniff or two told him everything,--who had passed, and how long ago, and what they were doing, and how far ahead they were now waiting. But the caribou were coming, coaxed along marvelously by the cubs and the old mother; and the great silent wolf, that had left the pack playing with the game while he circled the barren at top speed, now turned to the business in hand with no thought nor fear of harm from the two children whom he had watched but yesterday.

Not so Noel. The fire blazed out in his eyes; the long bow swung to the wolf, bending like a steel spring, and the feathered shaft of an arrow lay close against the boy's cheek. But Mooka caught his arm--

"Look, Noel, his ear! _Malsunsis_, my little wolf cub," she breathed excitedly. And Noel, with a great wonder in his eyes, slacked his bow, while his thoughts jumped far away to the den on the mountains where the trail began, and to three little cubs playing like kittens with the grasshoppers and the cloud shadows; for the great wolf that lay so still near them, his eyes fixed in a steady glow upon the coming caribou, had

one ear bent sharply forward, like a leaf that has been creased between the fingers.

Again Mooka broke the tense silence in a low whisper. "How many wolf trails you see yesterday, little brother?"

"Seven," said Noel, whose eyes already had the cunning of Old Tomah's to understand everything.

"Then where tother wolf? Only six here," breathed Mooka, looking timidly all around, fearing to find the steady glare of green eyes fixed upon them from the shadow of every thicket.

Noel stirred uneasily. Somewhere close at hand another huge wolf was waiting; and a wholesome fear fell upon him, with a shiver at the thought of how near he had come in his excitement to bringing the whole savage pack snarling about his ears.

A snort of alarm cut short his thinking. There at the edge of the wood, not twenty feet away, stood a caribou, pointing his ears at the children whom he had almost stumbled over as he ran, thinking only of the wolves behind. The long bow sprang back of itself; an arrow buzzed like a wasp and buried itself deep in the white chest. Like a flash a second arrow followed as the stag turned away, and with a jump or two he sank to his knees, as if to rest awhile in the snow.

But Mooka scarcely saw these things. Her eyes were fastened on the great white wolf which she had claimed for her own when he was a toddling cub. He lay still as a stone under the tip of a bending spruce branch, his eyes following every motion of a young bull caribou which three of the wolves had singled out of the herd and were now guiding surely straight to his hiding-place.

The snort and plunge of the smitten animal startled this young stag and he turned aside from his course. Like a shadow the big wolf that Mooka was watching changed his place so as to head the game, while two of the pack on the open barrens slipped around the caribou and turned him back again to the woods. At the edge of the cover the stag stopped for a last look, pointing his ears first at Noel's caribou, which now lay very still in the snow, then at the wolves, which with quick instinct had singled him out of the herd, knowing in some subtle way he was watched from beyond, and which gathered about him in a circle, sitting on their tails and yawning. Slowly, silently Mooka's wolf crept forward, pushing his great body through the snow. A terrific rush, a quick snap under the stag's chest just behind the fore legs, where the heart lay; then the big wolf leaped aside and sat down quietly again to watch.

It was soon finished. The stag plunged away, settled into his long rack, slowed down to a swaying, weakening trot. After him at a distance glided the big wolf, lapping eagerly at the crimson trail, but holding himself with tremendous will power from rushing in headlong and driving the game, which might run for miles if too hard pressed. The stag sank to his knees; a sharp yelp rang like a pistol-shot through the still woods; then the pack rolled in like a whirlwind, and it was all over.

Creeping near on the trail the little hunters crouched under a low spruce, watching as if fascinated the wild feast of the wolves. Noel's bow was ready in his hand; but luckily the sight of these huge, powerful brutes overwhelmed him and drove all thoughts of killing out of his

head. Mooka plucked him by the sleeve at last, and pointed silently homewards. It was surely time to go, for the biggest wolf had already stretched himself and was licking his paws, while the two cubs with full stomachs were rolling over and over and biting each other playfully in the snow. Silently they stole away, stopping only to tie a rag to a pointed stick, which they thrust between their own caribou's ribs to make the wolves suspicious and keep them from tearing the game and eating the tidbits while the little hunters hurried away to bring the men with their guns and dog sledges.

They had almost crossed the second barren when Mooka, looking back uneasily from the edge of the woods, saw a single big wolf emerge across the barren and follow swiftly on their trail. Startled at the sight, they turned swiftly to run; for that terrible feeling which sweeps over a hunter, when for the first time he finds himself hunted in his turn, had clutched their little hearts and crushed all their confidence. A sudden panic seized them; they rushed away for the woods, running side by side till they broke into the fringe of evergreen that surrounded the barren. There they dropped breathless under a low fir and turned to look.

"It was wrong to run, little brother," whispered Mooka.

"Why?" said Noel.

"Cause Wayeeses see it, and think we 'fraid."

"But I was 'fraid out there, little sister," confessed Noel bravely.
"Here we can climb tree; good chance shoot um with my arrows."

Like two frightened rabbits they crouched under the fir, staring back with wild round eyes over the trail, fearing every instant to see the savage pack break out of the woods and come howling after them. But only the single big wolf appeared, trotting quietly along in their footsteps. Within bowshot he stopped with head raised, looking, listening intently. Then, as if he had seen them in their hiding, he turned aside, circled widely to the left, and entered the woods far below.

Again the two little hunters hurried on through the silent, snow-filled woods, a strange disquietude settling upon them as they felt they were followed by unseen feet. Soon the feeling grew too strong to resist. Noel with his bow ready, and a strange chill trickling like cold water along his spine, was hiding behind a tree watching the back trail, when a low exclamation from Mooka made him turn. There behind them, not ten steps away, a huge white wolf was sitting quietly on his tail, watching them with absorbed, silent intentness.

Fear and wonder, and swift memories of Old Tomah and the wolf that had followed him when he was lost, swept over Noel in a flood. He rose swiftly, the long bow bent, and again a deadly arrow cuddled softly against his cheek; but there were doubts and fears in his eye till Mooka caught his arm with a glad little laugh--

"My cub, little brother. See his ear, and oh, his tail! Watch um tail, little brother." For at the first move the big wolf sprang alertly to his feet, looked deep into Mooka's eyes with that intense, penetrating light which serves a wild animal to read your very thoughts, and instantly his great bushy tail was waving its friendly greeting.

It was indeed Malsunsis, the cub. Before the great storm broke he had crouched with the pack in the hollow just in front of the little hunters; and although the wolves were hungry, it was with feelings of curiosity only that they watched the children, who seemed to the powerful brutes hardly more to be feared than a couple of snowbirds hopping across the vast barren. But they were children of men--that was enough for the white-wolf packs, which for untold years had never been known to molest a man. This morning Malsunsis had again crossed their trail. He had seen them lying in wait for the caribou that his own pack were driving; had seen Noel smite the bull, and was filled with wonder; but his own business kept him still in hiding. Now, well fed and good-natured, but more curious than ever, he had followed the trail of these little folk to learn something about them.

Mooka as she watched him was brim full of an eagerness which swept away all fear. "Tomah says, wolf and Injun hunt just alike; keep ver' still; don't trouble game 'cept when he hungry," she whispered. "Says too, _Keesuolukh_ made us friends 'fore white man come, spoil um everything. Das what Malsunsis say now wid hees tail and eyes; only way he can talk um, little brother. No, no,"--for Noel's bow was still strongly bent,--"you must not shoot. Malsunsis think we friends." And trusting her own brave little heart she stepped in front of the deadly arrow and walked straight to the big wolf, which moved aside timidly and sat down again at a distance, with the friendly expression of a lost collie in eyes and ears and wagging tail tip.

Cheerfully enough Noel slacked his long bow, for the wonder of the woods was strong upon him, and the hunting-spirit, which leads one forth to frighten and kill and to break the blessed peace, had vanished in the better sense of comradeship which steals over one when he watches the Wood Folk alone and friendly in the midst of the solitudes. As they went on their way again the big wolf trotted after them, keeping close to their trail but never crossing it, and occasionally ranging up alongside, as if to keep them in the right way. Where the woods were thickest Noel, with no trail to guide him, swung uncertainly to left and right, peering through the trees for some landmark on the distant hills. Twice the big wolf trotted out to one side, returned and trotted out again in the same direction; and Noel, taking the subtle hint, as an Indian always does, bore steadily to the right till the great ridge, beyond which the Lodge was hidden, loomed over the tree-tops. And to this day he believes--and it is impossible, for I have tried, to dissuade him--that the wolf knew where they were going and tried in his own way to show them.

So they climbed the long ridge to the summit, and from the deep valley beyond the smoke of the Lodge rose up to guide them. There the wolf stopped; and though Noel whistled and Mooka called cheerily, as they would to one of their own huskies that they had learned to love, Malsunsis would go no farther. He sat there on the ridge, his tail sweeping a circle in the snow behind him, his ears cocked to the friendly call and his eyes following every step of the little hunters, till they vanished in the woods below. Then he turned to follow his own way in the wilderness.

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN NAMES

Cheokhes, _che-ok-h[)]e]s'_ , the mink.

Cheplahgan, _chep-lah'gan_, the bald eagle.

Ch'geegee-lokh-sis, _ch`gee-gee'lock-sis_, the chickadee.

Chigwooltz, _chig-wooltz'_, the bullfrog.

Clote Scarpe, a legendary hero, like Hiawatha, of the Northern Indians.
Pronounced variously, Clote Scarpe, Groscap, Gluscap, etc.

Commoosie, _com-moo-sie'_, a little shelter, or hut, of boughs and bark.

Deedeeaskh, _dee-dee'ask_, the blue jay.

Eleemos, _el-ee'mos_, the fox.

Hawahak, _ha-wa-h[ə]a]k'_, the hawk.

Hetokh, _h[ə]e]t'[=o]kh_, the deer.

Hukweem, _huk-weem'_, the great northern diver, or loon.

Ismaques, _iss-ma-ques'_, the fish-hawk.

Kagax, _k[ə]a]g[ə]a]x_, the weasel.

Kakagos, _ka-ka-g[ə]o]s'_, the raven.

K'dunk, _k'dunk'_, the toad.

Keeokuskh, _kee-o-kusk'_, the muskrat.

Keeonekh, _kee'o-nek_, the otter.

Keesuolukh, _kee-su-[ə]l'uk_, the Great Mystery, i.e. God.

Killoolet, _kil'loo-leet_, the white-throated sparrow.

Kookooskoos, _koo-koo-skoos'_, the great horned owl.

Kopseep, _kop'seep_, the salmon.

Koskomenos, _k[ə]o]s'k[ə]o]m-e-n[ə]o]s'_, the kingfisher.

Kupkawis, _cup-ka'wis_, the barred owl.

Kwaseekho, _kwa-see'ho_, the sheldrake.

Lhoks, _locks_, the panther.

Malsun, _m[ə]a]l'sun_, the wolf.

Malsunsis, _m[ə]a]l-sun'sis_, the little wolf cub.

Matwock, _m[ə]a]t'wok_, the white bear.

Meeko, _meek'[=o]_, the red squirrel.

Megaleep, _meg'a-leep_, the caribou.

Milicete, _mil'[]i]-cete_, the name of an Indian tribe; written also Malicete.

Mitchegeesookh, _mitch-e-gee'sook_, the snowstorm.

Mitches, _mit'ch[]e]s_, the birch partridge, or ruffed grouse.

Moktaques, _mok-ta'ques_, the hare.

Mooween, _moo-ween'_, the black bear.

Mooweesuk, _moo-wee'suk_, the coon.

Musquash, _mus'quash_, the muskrat.

Nemox, _n[]e]m'ox_, the fisher.

Pekompf, _pe-kompf'_, the wildcat.

Pekquam, _pek-w[]a]m'_, the fisher.

Queokh, _qu[=e]'ok_, the sea-gull.

Quoskh, _quoskh_, the blue heron.

Seksagadagee, _sek'sa-gae-da'gee_, the Canada grouse, or spruce partridge.

Skooktum, _skook'tum_, the trout.

Tookhees, _tok'hees_, the wood-mouse.

Umquenawis, _um-que-na'wis_, the moose.

Unk Wunk, _unk'wunk_, the porcupine.

Upweekis, _up-week'iss_, the Canada lynx.

Waptonk, _w[]a]p-tonk'_, the wild goose.

Wayeeesis, _way-ee'sis_, the white wolf, the strong one.

Whitoowek, _whit-oo-week'_, the woodcock.

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