THE ALAMANCE GLEANER.

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Mrs. Georgia T. Boddie, of Louisburg, has the honor of furnishing four sons, all she has, for the service of her country.

The board of aldermen has empowered the city of Durham to employ a whole-time sealer of weights and measures and 5,000 copies of the ordinance are being printed for distribution.

Pay checks are being delivered this week to members at Spencer of the four brotherhoods—Engineers, Conductors, Firemen and Brakemen—for back time during the month of January. In the face of the checks it is stated that this is for time made under the Adamson eight-hour law.

Itch relieved in 20 minutes by Woodford's Sanitary Lotion. Never fails. Sold by Graham Drug Co.

KAZAN

by JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—Kazan, the wild sledge dog, one-quarter wolf and three-quarter "husky," distrustful of all men because of their brutal treatment of him, learns to love his master's wife when she is kind to him in new and strange surroundings.

CHAPTER II—He shows snarling enmity to McCready, who is to accompany Thorpe and his wife to the Red River camp.

CHAPTER III—Kazan knows that McCready is a murderer. McCready stealthily caresses Isobel's hair and Kazan attacks him. Thorpe whips Kazan. McCready tries to murder Thorpe and attacks Isobel. Kazan kills him and then, fearing the club in punishment, runs away into the forest.

CHAPTER IV—Torn between love of his mistress, the fear of his master's club and the desires of the wolf nature in him, he at length sends forth the wolf cry.

CHAPTER V—Kazan runs with the wolves, fights their leader, becomes master of the pack, and mates with Gray Wolf.

CHAPTER VI.

The Fight in the Snow.

They found shelter that night under thick balsam, and when they lay down on the soft carpet of needles which the snow had not covered, Gray Wolf snuggled her warm body close to Kazan and licked his wounds. The day broke with a velvety fall of snow, so white and thick that they could not see a dozen leaps ahead of them in the open. It was quite warm, and so still that the whole world seemed filled with only the flutter and whisper of the snowflakes. Through this day Kazan and Gray Wolf traveled side by side. Time and again he turned his head back to the ridge over which he had come, and Gray Wolf could not understand the strange note that trembled in his throat.

In the afternoon they returned to what was left of the caribou doe on the lake. In the edge of the forest Gray Wolf hung back. She did not yet know the meaning of poison-baits, deadfalls and traps, but the instinct of numberless generations was in her veins, and it told her there was danger in visiting a second time a thing that had grown cold in death.

Kazan had seen masters work about carcasses that the wolves had left. He had seen them conceal traps cleverly, and roll little capsules of strychnine in the fat of the entrails, and once he had put a foreleg in a trap, and had experienced its sting and pain and deadly grip. But he did not have Gray Wolf's fear. He urged her to accompany him to the white hummocks on the ice, and at last she went with him and sank back restlessly on her haunches, while he dug out the bones and pieces of flesh that the snow had kept from freezing. But she would not eat, and at last Kazan went and sat on his haunches at her side, and with her looked at what he had dug out from under the snow. He sniffed the air. He could not smell danger, but Gray Wolf told him that it might be there.

She told him many other things in the days and nights that followed. The third night Kazan himself gathered the hunt-pack and led in the chase. Three times that month, before the moon left the skies, he led the chase, and each time there was a kill. But as the snows began to grow softer under his feet he found a greater and greater companionship in Gray Wolf, and they hunted alone, living on the big white rabbits. In all the world he had loved but two things, the girl with the shining hair and the hands that had caressed him—and Gray Wolf.

He did not leave the big plain, and often he took his mate to the top of the ridge and he would try to tell her what he had left back there. With the dark nights the call of the woman became so strong upon him that he was filled with a longing to go back, and take Gray Wolf with him.

Something happened very soon after that. They were crossing the open plain one day when up on the face of the ridge Kazan saw something that made his heart stand still. A man, with a dog-sledge and team, was coming down into their world. The wind had not warned them, and suddenly Kazan saw something glisten in the man's hand. He knew what it was. It was the thing that spat fire and thunder, and killed.

He gave his warning to Gray Wolf, and they were off like the wind, side by side. And then came the sound—and Kazan's hatred of men burst forth in a snarl as he leaped. There was a queer humming over their heads. The sound from behind came again, and this time Gray Wolf gave a yelp of pain, and rolled over in the snow. She was on her feet again in an instant, and Kazan dropped behind her, and ran there until they reached the shelter of the timber. Gray Wolf lay down, and began licking the wound in her shoulder. Kazan faced the ridge. The man was taking up their trail. He stopped where Gray Wolf had fallen, and examined the snow. Then he came on.

Kazan urged Gray Wolf to her feet, and they made for the thick swamp close to the lake. All that day they kept in the face of the wind, and when Gray Wolf lay down Kazan stole back over their trail, watching and sniffing the air.

For days after that Gray Wolf ran lame, and when once they came upon the remains of an old camp, Kazan's teeth were bared in snarling hatred of the man-scent that had been left behind. Growing in him there was a desire for vengeance—vengeance for his own hurts, and for Gray Wolf's. He tried to nose out the man-trail under the cover of fresh snow, and Gray Wolf circled around him anxiously. At last he followed her sullenly. There was a savage redness in his eyes.

Three days later the new moon came. And on the fifth night Kazan struck a trail. It was fresh—so fresh that he stopped as suddenly as though struck by a bullet when he ran upon it, and stood with every muscle in his body quivering, and his hair on end. It was a man-trail. There were the moccasin prints in the sledge, the dog's feet, and the snowshoe prints of his enemy.

Then he threw up his head to the stars, and from his throat there rolled out over the wide plains the hunt-cry—the wild and savage call for the pack. Never had he put the savagery in it that was there tonight. Again and again he sent forth that call, and then there came an answer and another and still another, until Gray Wolf herself sat back on her haunches and added her voice to Kazan's, and far out on the plain a white and haggard-faced man halted his exhausted dogs to listen, while a voice said faintly from the sledge:

"The wolves, father. Are they coming—after us?"

The man was silent. He was not young. The moon shone in his long white beard, and added grotesquely to the height of his tall gaunt figure. A girl had raised her head from a bearskin pillow on the sleigh. Her dark eyes were filled beautifully with the starlight. She was pale. Her hair fell in a thick shining braid over her shoulder, and she was hugging something tightly to her breast.

"They're on the trail of something—probably a deer," said the man, looking at the breech of his rifle. "Don't worry, Jo. We'll stop at the next bit of scrub and see if we can't find enough dry stuff for a fire. Wee-ah-h-h-h, boys! Koosh—koosh—" and he snapped his whip over the backs of his team.

From the bundle at the girl's breast there came a small wailing cry. And far back in the plain there answered it the scattered voice of the pack.

At last Kazan was on the trail of vengeance. He ran slowly at first, with Gray Wolf close beside him, pausing every three or four hundred yards to send forth the cry. A gray leaping form joined them from behind. Another followed. Two came in from the side, and Kazan's solitary howl gave place to the wild tongue of the pack. Numbers grew, and with increasing number the pace became swifter. Four—six—seven—ten—fourteen, by the time the more open and wind-swept part of the plain was reached.

It was a strong pack, filled with old and fearless hunters. Gray Wolf was the youngest, and she kept close to Kazan's shoulders. She could see nothing of his red-shot eyes and dripping jaws, and would not have understood if she had seen. But she could feel and she was thrilled by the spirit of that strange and mysterious savagery that had made Kazan forget all things but hurt and death.

The pack made no sound. There was only the panting of breath and the soft fall of many feet. They ran swiftly and close. And always Kazan was a leap ahead, with Gray Wolf nosing his shoulder. When at last he saw a moving blotch far out on the plain ahead of him, the cry that came out of his throat was one that Gray Wolf did not understand.

Three hundred yards beyond that moving blotch was the thin line of timber, and Kazan and his followers bore down swiftly. Halfway to the timber they were almost upon it, and suddenly it stopped and became a black and motionless shadow on the snow. From out of it there leaped that lightning tongue of flame that Kazan had always dreaded, and he heard the hissing song of the death-bee over his head. He did not mind it now. He yelped sharply, and the wolves raced in until four of them were neck-and-neck with him.

A second flash—and the death-bee drove from breast to tail of a huge gray fighter close to Gray Wolf. A third—a fourth—a fifth spurt of that fire from the black shadow, and Kazan himself felt a sudden swift passing of a red-hot thing along his shoulder, where the man's last bullet shaved off the hair and stung his flesh.

Three of the pack had gone down under the fire of the rifle, and half of the others were swinging to the right and the left. But Kazan drove straight ahead. Faithfully Gray Wolf followed him.

The sledge-dogs had been freed from their traces, and before he could reach the man, whom he saw with his rifle held like a club in his hands, Kazan was met by the fighting mass of them. He fought like a fiend, and there was the strength and the fierceness of two mates in the mad gnashing of Gray Wolf's fangs. Kazan wanted to reach the man who held the rifle, and he freed himself from the fighting mass of the dogs and sprang to the sledge. For the first time he saw that there was something human on the sledge, and in an instant he was upon it. He buried his jaws deep. They sank in something soft and hairy, and he opened them for another lunge. And then he heard the voice! It was her voice! Every muscle in his body stood still. He became suddenly like flesh turned to lifeless stone.

Her voice; the bear rug was thrown back and what had been hidden under it he saw clearly now in the light of the moon and the stars. In him instinct worked more swiftly than human brain could have given birth to reason. It was not she. But the voice was the same, and the white girlish face so close to his own blood-reddened eyes held in it that same mystery that he had learned to love. And he saw now that which she was clutching to her breast, and there came from it a strange thrilling cry.

In a flash he turned. He snapped at Gray Wolf's flank, and she dropped away with a startled yelp. It had all happened in a moment, but the man was almost down. Kazan leaped under his clubbed rifle and drove into the face of what was left of the pack. His fangs cut like knives. If he had fought like a demon against the dogs, he fought like ten demons now, and the man—bleeding and ready to fall—staggered back to the sledge, marveling at what was happening. For in Gray Wolf there was now the instinct of matehood, and seeing Kazan tearing and fighting the pack she joined him in the struggle which she could not understand.

When it was over, Kazan and Gray Wolf were alone out on the plain. The pack had slunk away into the night, and the same moon and stars that had given to Kazan the first knowledge of his birthright told him now that no longer would those wild brothers of the plains respond to his call when he howled into the sky.

He was hurt. And Gray Wolf was hurt, but not so badly as Kazan. He was torn and bleeding. One of his legs was terribly bitten. After a time he saw a fire in the edge of the forest. The old call was strong upon him. He wanted to crawl in to it, and feel the girl's hand on his head, as he had felt that other hand in the world beyond the ridge. He would have gone—and would have urged Gray Wolf to go with him—but the man was there. He whined, and Gray Wolf thrust her warm muzzle against his neck. Something told them both that they were outcasts, that the plains, and the moon, and the stars were against them now, and they slunk into the shelter and the gloom of the forest.

Kazan could not go far. He could still smell the camp when he lay down. Gray Wolf snuggled close to him. Gently she soothed with her soft tongue Kazan's bleeding wounds. And Kazan, lifting his head, whined softly to the stars.

CHAPTER VII.

Joan.

On the edge of the cedar and spruce forest old Pierre Radisson built the fire. He was bleeding from a dozen wounds, where the fangs of the wolves had reached to his flesh, and he felt in his breast that old and terrible pain, of which no one knew the meaning but himself. He dragged in log after log, piled them on the fire until the flames leaped up to the crisping needles of the limbs above, and heaped a supply close at hand for use later in the night.

From the sledge Joan watched him, still wild-eyed and fearful, still trembling. She was holding her baby close to her breast. Her long heavy hair smothered her shoulders and arms in a dark lustrous veil that glistened and rippled in the firelight when she moved. Her young face was scarcely a woman's tonight, though she was a mother. She looked like a child.

Old Pierre laughed as he threw down the last armful of fuel, and stood breathing hard.

"It was close, ma cherie," he panted through his white beard. "We were nearer to death out there on the plain than we will ever be again, I hope. But we are comfortable now, and warm. Eh? You are no longer afraid?"

He sat down beside his daughter, and gently pulled back the soft fur that enveloped the bundle she held in her arms. He could see one pink cheek of baby Joan. The eyes of Joan, the mother, were like stars.

"It was the baby who saved us," she whispered. "The dogs were being torn to pieces by the wolves, and I saw them leaping upon you, when one of them sprang to the sledge. At first I thought it was one of the dogs. But it was a wolf. He tore once at us, and the bearskin saved us. He was almost at my throat when baby cried, and then he stood there, his red eyes a foot from us, and I could have sworn that he was a dog. In an instant he turned, and was fighting the wolves. I saw him leap upon one that was almost at your throat."

"He was a dog," said old Pierre, holding out his hands to the warmth. "They often wander away from the posts, and join the wolves. I have had dogs do that. Ma cherie, a dog is a dog all his life. Kicks, abuse, even the wolves cannot change him—for long. He was one of the pack. He came with them—to kill. But when he found us—"

"He fought for us," breathed the girl. She gave him the bundle, and stood up, straight and tall and slim in the firelight. "He fought for us—and he was terribly hurt," she said. "I saw him drag himself away. Father, if he is out there—dying—"

Pierre Radisson stood up. He coughed in a shuddering way, trying to stifle the sound under his beard. The fleck of crimson that came to his lips with the cough Joan did not see. She had seen nothing of it during the six days they had been traveling up from the edge of civilization. Because of that cough, and the strain that came with it, Pierre had made more than ordinary haste.

"I have been thinking of that," he said. "He was badly hurt, and I do not think he went far. Here—take little Joan and sit close to the fire until I come back."

The moon and the stars were brilliant in the sky when he went out in the plain. A short distance from the edge of the timber line he stood for a moment upon the spot where the wolves had overtaken them an hour before. Not one of his four dogs had lived. The snow was red with their blood, and their bodies lay stiff where they had fallen under the pack. Pierre shuddered as he looked at them. If the wolves had not turned their first mad attack upon the dogs, what would have become of himself, Joan and the baby? He turned away, with another of those hollow coughs that brought the blood to his lips.

A few yards to one side he found in the snow the trail of the strange dog that had come with the wolves. He had turned against them in the moment when all seemed lost. It was not a clean running trail. It was more like a furrow in the snow, and Pierre Radisson followed it, expecting to find a dog dead at the end of it.

In the sheltered spot to which he had dragged himself in the edge of the forest Kazan lay for a long time after the fight, alert and watchful. He felt no very great pain. But he had lost the power to stand upon his legs. His flanks seemed paralyzed. Gray Wolf crouched close at his side, sniffing the air. They could smell the camp, and Kazan could detect the two things that were there—man and woman. He knew that the girl was there, where he could see the glow of the firelight through the spruce and the cedars. He wanted to go to her. He wanted to drag himself close in to the fire, and take Gray Wolf with him, and listen to her voice, and feel the touch of her hand. But the man was there, and to him man had always meant the club, the whip, pain, death.

Gray Wolf crouched close to his side, and whined softly as she urged Kazan to flee deeper with her into the forest. At last she understood that he could not move, and she ran nervously out into the plain, and back again, until her footprints were thick in the trail she made. The instincts of matehood were strong in her. It was she who first saw Pierre Radisson coming over their trail, and she ran swiftly back to Kazan and gave the warning.

Then Kazan caught the scent, and he saw the shadowy figure coming through the starlight. He tried to drag himself back, but he could move only by inches. The man came rapidly nearer. Kazan caught the glisten of the rifle in his hand. He heard his hollow cough, and the tread of his feet in the snow. Gray Wolf crouched shoulder to shoulder with him, trembling and showing her teeth. When Pierre had approached within fifty feet of them she slunk back into the deeper shadows of the spruce.

Kazan's fangs were bared menacingly when Pierre stopped and looked down at him. With an effort he dragged himself to his feet, but fell back into the snow again. The man leaned his rifle against a sapling and bent over him fearlessly. With a fierce growl Kazan snapped at his extended hands. To his surprise the man did not pick up a stick or a club. He held out his hand again—cautiously—and spoke in a voice new to Kazan. The dog snapped again, and growled.

The man persisted, talking to him all the time, and once his mittened hand touched Kazan's head, and escaped before the jaws could reach it. Again and again the man reached out his hand, and three times Kazan felt the touch of it, and there was neither threat nor hurt in it. At last Pierre turned away and went back over the trail.

When he was out of sight and hearing, Kazan whined, and the crest along his spine flattened. He looked wistfully toward the glow of the fire. The man had not hurt him, and the three-quarters of him that was dog wanted to follow.

Gray Wolf came back, and stood with stiffly planted forefeet at his side. She had never been this near to man before, except when the pack had overtaken the sledge out on the plain. She could not understand. Every instinct that was in her warned her that he was the most dangerous of all things, more to be feared than the strongest beasts, the storms, the floods, cold and starvation. And yet this man had not harmed her mate. She sniffed at Kazan's back and head, where the mittened hand had touched. Then she trotted back into the darkness again, for beyond the edge of the forest she once more saw moving life.

The man was returning, and with him was the girl. Her voice was soft and sweet, and there was about her the breath and sweetness of woman. The man stood prepared, but not threatening.

"Be careful, Joan," he warned.

She dropped on her knees in the snow, just out of reach.

"Come, boy—come!" she said gently. She held out her hand. Kazan's muscles twitched. He moved an inch.—two inches toward her. There was the old light in her eyes and face now, the love and gentleness he had known once before, when another woman with shining hair and eyes had come into his life. "Come!" she whispered as she saw him move, and she bent a little, reached a little farther with her hand, and at last touched his head.

Pierre knelt beside her. He was proffering something, and Kazan smelled meat. But it was the girl's hand that made him tremble and shiver, and when she drew back, urging him to follow her, he dragged himself painfully a foot or two through the snow. Not until then did the girl see his mangled leg. In an instant she had forgotten all caution, and was down close at his side.

Fought Like Ten Demons Now.

"He can't walk," she cried, a sudden tremble in her voice. "Look, mon pere! Here is a terrible cut. We must carry him."

"I guessed that much," replied Radisson. "For that reason I brought the blanket. Mon Dieu, listen to that!"

From the darkness of the forest there came a low wailing cry.

Kazan lifted his head and a trembling whine answered in his throat. It was Gray Wolf calling to him.

It was a miracle that Pierre Radisson should put the blanket about Kazan, and carry him in to the camp, without scratch or bite. It was this miracle that he achieved, with Joan's arm resting on Kazan's shaggy neck as she held one end of the blanket. They laid him down close to the fire, and after a little it was the man again who brought warm water and washed away the blood from the torn leg, and then put something on it that was soft and warm and soothing, and finally bound a cloth about it.

All this was strange and new to Kazan. Pierre's hand, as well as the girl's, stroked his head. It was the man who brought him a gruel of meal and tallow, and urged him to eat, while Joan sat with her chin in her two hands, looking at the dog, and talking to him. After this, when he was quite comfortable, and no longer afraid, he heard a strange small cry from the furry bundle on the sledge that brought his head up with a jerk.

"I Guessed That Much."

Joan saw the movement, and heard the low answering whimper in his throat. She turned quickly to the bundle, talking and cooing to it as she took it in her arms, and then she pulled back the bearskin so that Kazan could see. He had never seen a baby before, and Joan held it out before him, so that he could look straight at it and see what a wonderful creature it was. Its little pink face stared steadily at Kazan. Its tiny fists reached out, and it made queer little sounds at him, and then suddenly it kicked and screamed with delight and laughed. At those sounds Kazan's whole body relaxed, and he dragged himself to the girl's feet.

"See, he likes the baby!" she cried. "Mon pere, we must give him a name. What shall it be?"

"Wait till morning for that," replied the father. "It is late, Joan. Go into the tent, and sleep. We have no dogs now, and will travel slowly. So we must start early."

With her hand on the tent-flap, Joan turned.

"He came with the wolves," she said. "Let us call him Wolf." With one arm she was holding the little Joan. The other she stretched out to Kazan. "Wolf! Wolf!" she called softly.

Kazan's eyes were on her. He knew that she was speaking to him, and he drew himself a foot toward her.

"He knows it already!" she cried. "Good night, mon pere."

For a long time after she had gone into the tent, old Pierre Radisson sat on the edge of the sledge, facing the fire, with Kazan at his feet. Suddenly the silence was broken again by Gray Wolf's lonely howl deep in the forest. Kazan lifted his head and whined.

"She's calling for you, boy," said Pierre understandingly.

He coughed, and clutched a hand to his breast, where the pain seemed rending him.

"Frost-bitten lung," he said, speaking straight at Kazan. "Got it early in the winter, up at Fond du Lac. Hope we'll get home—in time—with the kids."

In the loneliness and emptiness of the big northern wilderness one falls into the habit of talking to one's self. But Kazan's head was alert, and his eyes watchful, so Pierre spoke to him.

"We've got to get them home, and there's only you and me to do it," he said, twisting his beard. Suddenly he clenched his fists.

His hollow racking cough convulsed him again.

"Home!" he panted, clutching his chest. "It's eighty miles straight north—to the Churchill—and I pray to God we'll get there—with the kids—before my lungs give out."

He rose to his feet, and staggered a little as he walked. There was a collar about Kazan's neck, and he chained him to the sledge. After that he dragged three or four small logs upon the fire, and went quietly into the tent where Joan and the baby were already asleep. Several times that night Kazan heard the distant voice of Gray Wolf calling for him, but something told him that he must not answer it now. Toward dawn Gray Wolf came close in to the camp, and for the first time Kazan replied to her.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Message.

Kazan's howl awakened the man. He came out of the tent, peered for a few moments up at the sky, built up the fire, and began to prepare breakfast. He patted Kazan on the head, and gave him a chunk of meat. Joan came out a few moments later, leaving the baby asleep in the tent. She ran up and kissed Pierre, and then dropped down on her knees beside Kazan, and talked to him almost as he had heard her talk to the baby. When she jumped up to help her father, Kazan followed her, and when Joan saw him standing firmly upon his legs she gave a cry of pleasure.

It was a strange journey that began into the north that day. Pierre Radisson emptied the sledge of everything but the tent, blankets, food and the furry nest for baby Joan. Then he harnessed himself in the traces and dragged the sledge over the snow. He coughed incessantly.

"It's a cough I've had half the winter," lied Pierre, careful that Joan saw no sign of blood on his lips or beard. "I'll keep in the cabin for a week when we get home."

Even Kazan, with that strange beast knowledge which man, unable to explain, calls instinct, knew that what he said was not the truth. Perhaps it was largely because he had heard other men cough like this, and that for generations his sledge-dog ancestors had heard men cough as Radisson coughed—and had learned what followed it.

More than once he had scented death in tepees and cabins, which he had not entered, and more than once he had sniffed at the mystery of death that was not quite present, but near—just as he had caught at a distance the subtle warning of storm and of fire. And that strange thing seemed to be very near to him now, as he followed at the end of his chain behind the sledge. It made him restless, and half a dozen times, when the sledge stopped, he sniffed at the bit of humanity buried in the bearskin. Each time that he did this Joan was quickly at his side, and twice she patted his scarred and grizzled head until every drop of blood in his body leaped riotously with a joy which his body did not reveal.

This day the chief thing that he came to understand was that the little creature on the sledge was very precious to the girl who stroked his head and talked to him, and that it was very helpless. He learned, too, that Joan was most delighted, and that her voice was softer and thrilled him more deeply, when he paid attention to that little, warm, living thing in the bearskin.

For a long time after they made camp Pierre Radisson sat beside the fire. Tonight he did not smoke. He stared straight into the flames. When at last he rose to go into the tent with the girl and the baby, he bent over Kazan and examined his hurt.

"You've got to work in the traces tomorrow, boy," he said. "We must make the river by tomorrow night. If we don't—"

He did not finish. He was choking back one of those tearing coughs when the tent-flap dropped behind him. Kazan lay stiff and alert, his eyes filled with a strange anxiety. He did not like to see Radisson enter the tent, for stronger than ever there hung that oppressive mystery in the air about him, and it seemed to be a part of Pierre.

Three times that night he heard faithful Gray Wolf calling for him deep in the forest, and each time he answered her. Toward dawn she came in close to camp. Once he caught the scent of her when she circled around in the wind, and he tugged and whined at the end of his chain, hoping that she would come in and lie down at his side. But no sooner had Radisson moved in the tent than Gray Wolf was gone. The man's face was thinner, and his eyes were redder this morning. His cough was not so loud or so rending. It was like a wheeze, as if something had given way inside, and before the girl came out he clutched his hands often to his throat. Joan's face whitened when she saw him. Anxiety gave way to fear in her eyes. Pierre Radisson laughed when she flung her arms about him, and coughed to prove that what he said was true.

"You see the cough is not so bad, my Joan," he said. "It is breaking up. You cannot have forgotten, ma cherie? It always leaves one red-eyed and weak."

It was a cold, bleak, dark day that followed, and through it Kazan and the man tugged at the fore of the sledge, with Joan following in the trail behind. Kazan's wound no longer hurt him. He pulled steadily with all his splendid strength, and the man never lashed him once, but patted him with his mittened hand on head and back. The day grew steadily darker, and in the tops of the trees there was the low moaning of a storm.

Darkness and the coming of the storm did not drive Pierre Radisson into camp. "We must reach the river," he said to himself over and over again. "We must reach the river—we must reach the river—" And he steadily urged Kazan on to greater effort, while his own strength at the end of the traces grew less.

It had begun to storm when Pierre stopped to build a fire at noon. The snow fell straight down in a white deluge so thick that it hid the tree trunks fifty yards away. Pierre laughed when Joan shivered and snuggled close up to him with the baby in her arms. He waited only an hour, and then fastened Kazan in the traces again, and buckled the straps once more about his own waist. In the silent gloom that was almost night Pierre carried his compass in his hand, and at last, late in the afternoon, they came to a break in the timber line, and ahead of them lay a plain, across which Radisson pointed an exultant hand.

"There's the river, Joan," he said, his voice faint and husky. "We can camp here now and wait for the storm to pass."

TO BE CONTINUED.

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