



# THE RIVER of SKULLS

by George Marsh

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WNU SERVICE

## SYNOPSIS

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

## CHAPTER II—Continued

When McCord had finished eating his simple supper of corn bread, caribou stew and tea, he said: "Daughter, these boys are all worn out and need sleep, so you toddle off to bed, when we've done these dishes."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Why, you look pretty good now."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



"Winter with you?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Hold on, Rough!"

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

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

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

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## CHAPTER III

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You'll get the dogs, then?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Many Noncombatants With Army**

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

# What to Eat and Why

C. Houston Goudiss Relates the Romance of Wheat and Discusses Flour, the Basic Food

By C. HOUSTON GOUDISS

THE story of wheat flour is the story of civilization. Before man learned to cultivate this golden grain, he was obliged to move from place to place, with the seasons, in search of food to sustain and nourish his body.

Then, on one happy and momentous occasion, perhaps 6,000 years ago, an inspired nomad plucked the kernels clustered at the top of some waving grasses, observed that they had a nut-like taste, and passed along the far-reaching discovery to his fellow tribesmen.

The beginnings of wheat cultivation are lost in antiquity. But we do know that for thousands of years, it has been one of the most important crops in the world—so necessary to man's well being that the supplication, "Give us this day our daily bread," has summed up his most fervent desires.

**Food for the World**

Today, nearly three quarters of a billion people use wheat as food. And modern methods of milling have developed flours of such superlative quality that breads are more appetizing and more attractive than ever before; special flours make cakes and pastries light as the proverbial feather; and there are prepared mixes available for biscuits, waffles, muffins, griddle cakes, pie crust and gingerbread.

**For Energy and Vitality**

The form in which wheat flour makes its appearance on the table is of less importance than the fact that it is and should be an essential item in the family food supply. That is because it offers a rich supply of fuel value at little cost. The different types of flour contain from 61 to 76 per cent carbohydrates, from 11 to 15 per cent protein, and varying amounts of mineral salts and vitamins.

It is necessary to know something of the structure of the wheat kernel and to understand how the various flours differ, in order to select the flour best suited for each purpose. A kernel is made up of several outer layers of bran; a layer of cells high in phosphorus and protein, just inside the bran; the endosperm, composed of cells in which starch granules are held together by proteins; and the germ. The starch cells are so small that one kernel of wheat may contain as many as 20,000,000 granules.

**White and Whole Wheat Flours**

White flour is made chiefly from the endosperm. Whole-wheat, entire-wheat and graham flours are loosely applied terms which refer both to products made by grinding the wheat berry without the removal or addition of any ingredient, and also to a flour from which part of the bran has been removed or to which bran has been added.

One of the most prolonged discussions of the last two decades has involved arguments for and against the use of white or whole wheat flour in making various types of bread and muffins. As a result, many people have been confused and misled—often at the expense of their enjoyment in meals.

Here are the facts: White bread contains important energy values, proteins, some minerals, chiefly potassium and phosphorus, and when made with milk, it also supplies some calcium. It is easily and almost completely digested, tests indicating an average digestibility of 96 per cent.

Bread and other bakery products made from whole wheat flour also contain proteins and carbohydrates, plus good amounts of iron, copper, phosphorus and potassium; and vitamins A, B and G.

The whole grain products are less completely digested than those which are highly refined, however, so some of their nutrients may be lost to the body.

When the two types of flour are considered as sources of protein and energy alone, they are regarded by nutritionists as practically interchangeable. Whole wheat flour is conceded to be richer in minerals and vitamins, but where white bread is preferred, these elements easily can be supplied from other sources.

As a matter of fact, foods made from both types of flour belong in the well-balanced diet, where they add variety and splendid food values at minimum cost. And it goes without saying that for many purposes, only white flour is suitable.

**Broad Versus Pastry Flour**

Different types of wheat differ in their proportions of protein and carbohydrates, and that accounts for the difference between bread

and pastry flours. Bread flour is made from wheat containing a large amount of gluten, which gives elasticity to a dough and helps to make a well-piled loaf. Pastry flour contains less gluten and more starch and has a lighter texture that produces fine-grained cakes. All-purpose flours, as their name implies, are usually a blend of different types of wheat and are designed for general household use.

**A Symbol of Progress**

It is a tribute to American enterprise that the world's largest flour mills are now to be found in this country, and that tremendous staffs of technicians and research chemists supervise every step in the preparation of the flour which may pass through as many as 17 grindings and be subjected to 180 separations.

Experts begin by checking the quality of the grain while it is in transit to the mill. But their work does not end when the flour emerges pure white in color and unbelievably fine in texture, after having passed through silk bolting cloths of 100 mesh or finer. After that, there are baking tests, day after day, to be sure that every sack which is sold is of uniformly high quality.

**Self-Rising Flours**

An interesting development of recent years has been the self-rising flours and other ready-to-use mixtures. Some of these contain only a leavener; others include dried milk and eggs; fat; and baking powder, so that only a liquid is needed. All are planned to save the homemaker's time and maintain her family's interest in their most important energy food—the products of wheat—the foremost cereal grain.

**Questions Answered**

Mrs. F. B. L.—Flour should be stored in a moderately cool, dry, well ventilated place, and should be protected from vermin and insects. It should not be exposed to excessive heat, nor to freezing temperatures.

Miss F. B.—You are right! Rye flour is next to wheat in popularity, though it is usually mixed with wheat in making bread. Flours or meals are also made from potatoes, bananas, soy beans, lima beans, buckwheat, barley and rice, though the percentage is small compared to the amount made from wheat.

**Our Presidents**

Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Van Buren and Buchanan served as secretary of state.

Grant and Taft served as secretary of war, and Hoover as secretary of commerce.

Nine Presidents of the United States were born to very poor families. The others were born in varied circumstances, mostly middle class folks. Washington became one of the great landowners of his day. Abraham Lincoln entered the White House almost penniless, but since the Civil war most of our Presidents have been men of moderate means.

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