

In the Northland

Jacques and I at last decided to set out on the following day on that long delayed hunting trip into the wilderness of Northern Alberta. It was winter and extremely cold. We loaded our sled with provisions and, taking two of our best horses, set out.

"How about Phil?" said Jacques.

"I was talking to him yesterday and he seemed very eager to come," I answered.

"That's jake-a-loo. We'll call and get him," said Jacques.

Phil was a neighbor boy whom he had decided to take as cook because—well, as for me I had never even boiled water and Jacques, he couldn't cook at all.

On the evening of the fifth day of our journey we were halted by an impassable barrier of trees.

"Up with the tent," said Jacques, as he tied the reins to the sled and jumped off.

We shot up the canvas and made up our minds to proceed no further. Late in the evening, as we were prowling about in the vicinity, we heard the baying of a pack of wolves. Terrified, I grabbed Jacques by the arm and asked him what we should do.

"Be quiet, be quiet! They are on a trail," was his calm reply. "Let's beat it to shelter."

We rushed up to the tent. My heart beat fast as I heard the pack draw near. What a dreadful hush! We could hear our hearts thump. Phil was prepared with gun in hand to meet the worst that might come. Nearer and nearer they came. Soon I saw a large form darting through the trees. It was a moose. I raised my rifle, but Jacques stopped me.

"The wolves are in pursuit," he said. "and if you shoot

the deer, they will devour him and then attack us."

In a few seconds on came the pack in hot pursuit. They rushed by, each striving to be the leader. Again I raised my gun and again Jacques prevented me from shooting, telling me that if I shot one the remainder would stop to have vengeance on us. Very reluctantly I obeyed. But one wolf apparently almost exhausted, came struggling along. He was about fifty yards behind the others.

"Now's my chance," I said to myself, and a third time I raised my gun.

"Don't shoot!" shouted Jacques, just as I pulled the trigger.

He was too late. The monster howled, turned a somersault, and lay dead.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"We are going to have trouble now," said Jacques with a horrified look. "I told you twice not to shoot and now look what you've done. The pack will come back just as sure as I'm alive. Let us stay inside and see what they will do."

His words were too true. The pack heard the crack of the rifle and the yell of their fallen companion. They stopped and sent up a cry which deafened our ears.

"My God!" whispered Jacques to himself, "I wish that we were anywhere but here!"

"Load up the guns to their capacity," he then whispered to me. "I think I know what they are going to do. Hunters have told me that it is their custom to circle about anything they intend to devour and gradually to close in upon it."

What a dreadful loathing I had for that word 'circle'! I was so terrified that I could not speak. Oh yes, it was too true. A circle was still about us. We could hear the dull noise of their feet. Jacques looked into the forest and then turned to me.

"I can see their eyes. Look!" he said, pointing with

his hand. They were on all sides of us. Desperately we raised our rifles. We could now see the long drooping bodies of the terrible brutes. They were nearing the horses which were now nearly frantic.

"Fire!" whispered Jacques and bang! bang! bang! went the rifles. Instantly a fierce howl went up. The wolves seemed to rush upon one another.

"They are tearing the wounded ones," whispered Jacques.

We fired without ceasing. Our danger dispelled our fears. The howling was now terrifying. They were evidently struggling desperately among themselves, sometimes rolling almost against the tent. All the while we kept pouring shots among them, increasing their fury. Suddenly to our great surprise one of the beasts rushed into the forest and was soon followed by the pack. Could it be that they were gone? We could not believe it. Every moment we waited for a fresh attack. In the morning we ventured out to view the results of the combat. No less than fourteen of the monsters lay dead about the tent. The very sight of them terrified me. I had had enough of this life. Even Jacques agreed that a change would be to our best interests. Needless to say we got ready with all possible haste. Nightfall found us many miles nearer home.

Vernon J. Smith '24.