"Ahead! You have found many obscure trails before. Remember the vow!"

And he obeyed, though he knew that not much beyond three days without food could his old sinews hold to the trail. By noon he had completed a big circle, and, finding no signs of his quarry, he struggled off again on a smaller, inside circle. At about mid-afternoon, as he topped the crest of a small ridge, he beheld an object below him. It was plainly the blue wolf, curled up at the edge of a little swale.

A thrill passed through the weakened frame of the old Indian. Once more he felt himself the hunter. After examining the priming of his rifle, he stole stealthily forward, keeping himself well hidden from view. But the wolf had his eye on the back trail. Soon he rose decrepitly, cast a look full of malice and hatred toward his pursuer, and then shrunk into the shrubbery.

Thus the third day wore away, with Kashawamp struggling doggedly onward. The sight of his quarry had given him renewed muscle. Once again he saw him. The big wolf was evidently wearing out. He limped heavily, and it was plain that in the terrible game of pursuer and pursued it was simply a question of which one could endure the longer.

That terrible night seemed longer than the three preceding days. To the figure at the fire, sleep was impossible. An intense craving, amounting to frenzy, had possessed him. Food, food! was nature's awful demand. Eat he must. The cold made him drowsy and weak; but when for a moment he dozed from sheer exhaustion the gnawing pangs gripped like huge talons at his stomach and strange and horrible sounds rang in his ears.

Morning brought no change. In an endeavor to appease his ravenous pangs, he gathered some cones and swallowed the flaky seeds. He chewed willow and poplar buds, though they were bitterer than gall, and he gnawed the bark of the hazel shrubs. Two acorns discovered in a stump were more precious than gold nuggets. Then, as there was nothing better for him to do, he struck off savagely once more.

The trail now led him through the intricacies of a tamarack swamp; and he often staggered among the windfalls and fell, only to rise and tumble onward. By and by he came to some partridges, and one more stupid than his comrades stood rigid on a log and watched the great two legged creature that floundered about in the snow.

Kashawamp cut a long, heavy sapling, poised it over his head, and then, steadying himself for one last effort, he struck. Fortune favored the stroke, and the next moment the famished wretch was in the snow sucking the warm blood from the neck of the luckless bird. Half of it was eaten raw. The remainder he saved for future need. He could not delay the feast longer than to pluck off a few feathers. Then he kindled a fire and singed off the remainder. Even the smell of the burning feathers was pleasant to his hungry nose. Never before had a partridge seemed so small, and the Indian recalled seasons of plenty when he had consumed two or three at a meal. Of that bird nothing was wasted.

For sometime he rested, and when his hunger was appeased he felt very sleepy. Two whisky jacks came to him, attracted by the feathers and the prospect of food. Kashawamp decoyed them close to him, and made a vicious stroke with a willow. But they were too quick for him, and retired out of reach to vent their impotent wrath in catcalls and bird profanity.

Soon he took up the trail again, and by noon had traversed the swamp. From here the wolf had entered upon a large flat, timbered with a heavy growth of forbidding, dark spruces. The silence and gloom beneath the great giants weighed heavily even upon the stoicism of the Indian. It seemed a suitable abode of evil ghosts and death shadows; and he trudged stealthily through the glades, fearful of snapping a twig to break in upon the uncanny bush and darkness of the day time. Several pair of broad bladed antlers protruded here and there through the snow, and Kashawamp felt that there were others about.

Back and forth through the big expanse of shadow went the pursuer and the pursued. Here, evidently, in his fancied stronghold, the big wolf thought to make his last stand; for darkness came on and he was still within its borders.

Long ere Kashawamp built his fire and crouched beside it for the weary night, the pangs of hunger seemed again devouring his vitals. It would be better, he knew, to sleep now and eat in the morning; but it cost him a mighty effort to comply. A dozen times during the unnatural darkness of that dreadful night he started from his fitful slumber of exhaustion, with strange and awful sounds in his ears. Dreams and visions chased each other with panoramic regularity through his unbalanced brain. A sufferer demented from thirst dreams of the clearest, coolest water; a body perishing of starvation has a mind that sees the choicest food in abundance. Such visions had Kashawamp. He lived again in a tepee on the banks of the White Mud, where, as in days gone by, they caught big pike in abundance, with their hands in the riffles, or picked the big fellows off with a spear.

The delicious scent of the broiled fish would be in his nose when he would waken. Oh, it was terrible! Other nights he had smoked a great deal; but now the tobacco was gone, and the want of it was maddening.

In the morning he devoured the rest of the partridge. The head and feet, though, he reserved to chew and suck as he traveled. It was harder now than any other previous morning to straighten up for the tramp. He did not seem able to lift his snow shoes as before, and several times he stumbled. For an hour after sunrise he traversed the heavy woods; then the trail led him out to the more open country again, and straight away to the southward. Filled with new vim at the change, the pursuer struggled forward.

All the day the track led directly toward the settlement, and Kashawamp, in his hazy mind, guessed the cause: the Blue Wolf was starving, too. With what strength remained in his wasted, crippled body, he was trying to return to fulfil the one ravenous demand of his whole being, the insistent and terrible craving for food.

Of that night Kashawamp remembered little. He camped somewhere. He shivered, dozed, and suffered alternately, and the morning found him struggling mechanically onward. Sometimes he vacantly wondered where he was and why he was trailing so persistently. He wasn't hungry now, but very weak. His rifle felt very heavy, his snow shoes were as lead, and when he rested his weight upon one leg in crossing logs he felt that it was likely to give way. About noon he saw his quarry toiling ahead. The sight gave him renewed vigor; and many times during the afternoon he came up with the wolf; but never close enough for a sure shot; for his hand was unsteady, and his eyes pulsating as though they were going to leave their sockets, and he knew he could not shoot true.

Once he came very close. The Blue Wolf glared fiercely back from a little knoll, not fifty yards away. In vain the old Indian tried to steady the quaking barrel. In vain he prayed for strength, just a little of that which had once been his own. He took a long, deep breath, himself steadied vainly—but that one ball was precious. That evening they were as companions, in sight of each other. All too well Kashawamp knew that should he drop on the trail his bones would line the stomach of the ravenous beast ahead.

Across His Legs Lay the Huge Body of the Blue Wolf.

In the night as he lay by his fire he sometimes felt that the wolf was not far off. But the greater part of the time his memory was blank, and in his vivid moments he wondered vaguely why he was there. One of his feet fell in the fire during his drowsings. The pain and the smell of the burning moccasin roused him from what otherwise would have been his last long sleep.

In the morning he went on. His mind was clearer again, but he was very, very weak. He gazed at the surrounding woods, looked at the sun, prayed again for aid, and then said, "This day Kashawamp will make his last trail. Great Spirit help me, that Bright Eyes shall be avenged!"

Then he tottered onward, and by noon had again overtaken the big wolf. They were getting back now toward the settlement, as they had returned in a much more direct course than they had gone. Several times Kashawamp was tempted to fire, but his Indian nature withheld him. He hoped now to goad the brute to desperation in close quarters, and at very close range to kill him to a certainty. Hour after hour the famine scourged creature dragged his blasted body a little farther, and after him came his feeble pursuer, now resting, now bracing himself with his rifle or against a sapling, but always forward, with one desire and purpose in his life and heart.

McLellan had, three different days, skirted the northern border of the settlement, in hope of carrying out his plan in regard to Kashawamp and the big wolf. A week had gone by, and he was taking his final hunt. Toward evening he saw an animal on a ridge to the northward, and he quickly took up a position to leeward, looked to his rifle, and waited. Soon he discovered another object behind the first. The foremost he made out to be a big, dark colored wolf, that staggered along in a desperate three legged hobble, as though one front leg was useless and the other not much better. The thing behind, he could not name; but an idea, a possibility of something, crept upon him, and sent a thrill through his body that he never before experienced.

They crept and stumbled forward. It took half an hour for them to cover the ridge. Then the rear figure came into better view, and McLellan realized the full significance of his former surmise. Just then the big wolf turned and bristled up defiantly at his pursuer. Nearer, and still nearer, came the faltering Indian. His snow shoes were in his hand now. He stood them upright in the snow, braced himself with them, and took aim. McLellan held his breath in expectation of the puff of smoke and report; but it did not come; and the wolf floundered ahead and stopped as before.

"Blank him! Why doesn't he shoot?" said the impatient Scot. "One fifty," he continued, adjusting his sights. "I guess he's mine yet, if that old redskin doesn't hustle. Here's for the Blue Wolf!" and he raised his rifle.

Just then he remembered the trail, a week old now, striking northward, with an old man in pursuit. Here he was before him; and at the thought of the thing he was about to do, he felt worse than a common robber. Down came his rifle.

"The spoils of the victor are surely his," he said; "but it looks as if I'll have a double load to take out of here. Hut! you old fool, why don't you shoot?"

For the Indian was edging closer and closer to the wolf, which had again come to bay and was half crouching in the scrub. They seemed only a few feet apart. At last the rifle spoke. McLellan saw the smoke spit spitefully at the crouching beast. He sprang up, bit savagely at his wound, and then launched himself upon his persecutor. With his snow shoes on his left arm in the fashion of a buckler, the Indian met the onslaught bravely; but he went down like a feather before a gale. As he fell, there was a glint of steel above his head, as he struck with his right hand. Then both combatants disappeared from McLellan's view.

With a guilty fear at his heart, the white man flung himself with tremendous strides across the opening, toward the foot of the ridge. There in the snow lay the grizzly Kashawamp on his back. Across his legs lay the huge body of the Blue Wolf, gasping out his last choking gurgles through a ghastly slash in the side of his neck. The trap was still on his front foot, and the leg swollen to three dimensions told of his terrible journey. The long chase was over; here was the end of the trail.

At first McLellan thought that the withered old hulk before him was dead. Many a dead man looked more like a live one. But a little spark of that life, which had held so tenaciously to his frail body, yet remained; and the sturdy Scot kept it aflame till he got him back to the settlement.

When he delivered his charge to the doctor's care, the latter shook his head doubtfully and muttered something about the patient being in a hopeless state. Nevertheless, in a week Kashawamp was sitting up again, smoking big puffs and grunting alternately; and to the doctor's inquiries he told his story.

It was in a very abbreviated form, and jerked out in a few sentences of bad English with a spice of French and Cree; but even yet the doctor laughs over the Indian who "Tramp seven days, freeze seven night," and who fared on "Wan leetle partridge, an' wan *petit souris*," all for one wolf.

Kashawamp stayed just long enough, after he got well, to share the celebration at Dad McTavish's, in which the beautiful skin of the Blue Wolf figured as a highly acceptable wedding present. Then the old Indian left for the West, to spend his remaining days with his relatives. He would hunt no more, for his mission was fulfilled. He had seen the end of the long trail.