them had enough at hand to pay the proper value of the skin; but that he would agree to pay three hundred "skins," and that Standing Wolf could collect the balance from the company at any time. Although the Indian felt that he was being underpaid, his superstitious dread made him accept the offer without haggling. So all the furs, except the silver fox skin, were sold, the greater number going to the Hudson Bay Company.

Gibeault was enraged at having secured so few furs, and doubly so at having lost the black fox skin. He sat staring sullenly at the fire, and when Spencer intimated his intention of returning to the fort that afternoon, he did not answer him. About three o'clock, Spencer packed his sled, and by four had bidden the Indians farewell. He intended traveling a few hours that night by moonlight. As both had to go in the same direction, Standing Wolf was surprised that they did not travel together for companionship; and when Gibeault expressed his desire to remain with him all night, he wondered why he wished to stay. Imagine his surprise when, on his return from visiting some snares, he found Gibeault harnessing his dogs and eager to be off.

At parting, Standing Wolf shook hands with the halfbreed, but that seemed only to increase his awkwardness of demeanor.

The following evening, while the Indian was at supper, Spencer staggered into the lodge, with his face cut and bruised and smeared with blood. When the women had dressed the trader's wounds, Standing Wolf heard his story:

"During the night I was overtaken by Gibeault. Some noise he made must have roused me; for I woke from a deep sleep, to see him in the very act of going through my furs, evidently in search of the black fox skin. I got upon my feet and rushed to grapple with him, but slipped and fell. He seized a heavy stick and knocked me senseless. Fortunately he had no firearms, for we traders carry none. When I recovered consciousness, I found that he had taken not only the black fox skin, but all my other furs, and even the dogs and the sled. Worse still, he had smashed my snowshoes in order to prevent pursuit."

When he had told his story, Standing Wolf continued for a little while gazing at the fire, and smoking meditatively. Then he knocked the ashes from his pipe, and said, "My brother, this is a bad business. I will go and speak with Gibeault."

Turning to the boys, he said, "My sons, I will set out at once. As I am going to travel light, you must follow with the dogs at their best speed. Be watchful, and you will read your instructions as you run."

Rising, he at once made ready for the chase. Going to the "rogan" in which he kept his valuables, he put a fresh supply of tobacco into his fire bag; then, wishing to take a last look at his silver fox skin, he reached to draw it out. It was gone. He knew at once who had taken it, and resentment filled his heart. "The dog who would be my brother has stolen it!" he cried with fury. He hung a small tea pail at his side, tightened his sash about him, slipped a little bag of tea, some bannock, and some dried caribou meat within his capote, and, gun in hand, set out in pursuit of the thief.

Already the moon had risen. Taking up the trail of the thief, he sped across Spirit Lake on his way to Bear River. The freshness of the hard packed trail made easy going, and hour after hour he ran along. Away up above the trees, the Dance of the Dead Men flickered, and once again two shadows pursued the hunter. But, intent upon the chase, he had little thought for other things.

Entering a thick grove of heavy timber, he paused for a moment to read the signs that told him where Spencer had camped for the night, where Gibeault had ransacked the furs, and where the two men had fought. Then on he sped. All night long he traveled, and all the following day.

Soon he noticed that he was gaining on the thief, for the track was constantly growing fresher. He realized now that it was only a matter of a few hours before he would overtake his quarry. The halfbreed's progress was becoming slower, since he had to go ahead now and beat a new track for the dogs to follow. Judging that he would come up with the thief that night, he had already left the hurry up sign upon several trees for his boys to see. He now blazed again; but with three cuts instead of two upon each tree, so that the boys would press forward faster. Farther on, as the signs of the thief grew fresher, he cut a long blaze and tore it off to let his sons know that he was now closer to his quarry, and expected to come upon him at any moment. To tell the boys how far he was ahead, and at what time he had passed, he drew a bow and arrow on the snow, with the tip of the arrow pointing in the direction of the sun at the time of making the blaze. To show that it was day time, he drew in front of the arrow a circle with rays radiating from the center, to represent the sun. If it had been night time, he would have drawn a crescent moon.

With the coming of dusk, Standing Wolf increased his circumspection. Shortly after crossing a lake in the moonlight, he heard the barking of dogs ahead. He took hold of two saplings, one on either side of the track, and bent them over and fastened them together so that anyone following would have to stoop to pass under. This was a signal to the boys that danger was at hand, and for them to move forward warily and with their guns in readiness.

His advance became momentarily slower. It was more than an hour before he detected the glare of firelight ahead. He left the trail, and, keeping to the lee of the fire lest the dogs should scent him, stealthily approached. The first glimpse of the dying fire showed him that all was still. The halfbreed lay wrapped in his hare skin robe upon a mattress of balsam brush. In the shelter of the undergrowth the dogs were curled in the snow, shivering still, though sound asleep.

Priming his gun afresh, Standing Wolf cocked it, and, silently stepping within the glare of the firelight, called upon Gibeault to surrender. The startled halfbreed sprang to his feet, and, seizing his ax, struck wildly at the Indian; who, in the very act of firing, leaped aside to save himself, and so missed his shot. Again the halfbreed swung his ax, and again Standing Wolf escaped the blow. Then, seeing his chance, he struck Gibeault with the butt of his gun and knocked him down. As he strove to rise, Standing Wolf dealt him a blow that stretched him motionless upon the snow. Stooping down, he felt the heart of the unconscious halfbreed. He was not dead. As Standing Wolf reloaded his gun, he pondered whether he should kill the thief or hand him over to the mounted police. Unable to decide, he bound him hand and foot, dragged him back upon the brush, and covered him with his robe.

"It Takes a Strong Man to Beat a Track."

Drawing the sleds nearer to the fire, he searched their loads, and found the silver fox skin in Gibeault's dunnage bag. The sight increased his thirst for revenge. A gust of wind blew the coals into feeble life again and reminded him that the fire was dying. He rose and chopped wood enough to last all the night through. Then he sat down to smoke and reflect upon the course he should pursue. The growling dogs, still bristling, slunk away to curl themselves up again on their frosty beds. The breeze, departing, left the trees motionless. All was still, save the ever flickering light of the Dance of the Dead Men far overhead. But Standing Wolf did not look toward the sky, for his mind was on the unconscious figure before him. Should he kill him now? Drawing his knife, he rose to do the deed; but a burning log rolled from the fire, and, sheathing his knife again, he thrust the stick into place. Then, squatting in the warmth of the fire, he fell to thinking. Hour after hour the night dragged through; pipe after pipe was smoked; until at last he began to drowse.

For sometime he slept. When, startled by the sound of movement, he awoke, he found the halfbreed glaring at him. Neither spoke. Again Standing Wolf added fuel to the coals; again he squatted beside the fire, with his gun across his knees, and watched his prisoner. Presently, the thief began struggling to free his hands, and, finding that the knots were too well tied, cursed Standing Wolf vilely. As the Indian heeded him not, the halfbreed grew tired of his profanity, and, rising to a sitting posture, snarled:

"Well, what do you intend doing with me?"

"Dog I would not have your blood upon my knife; so I will give you to the Redcoats," Standing Wolf replied.

Gibeault, growing defiant, scoffed at the idea of being taken to the police by Standing Wolf.

"It will be easy. My sons will be here in the morning," retorted the Indian.

For sometime the halfbreed stared vacantly at the fire, as though racking his brains for some means of escape. He became disheartened at last, dropped back upon his couch, and fell asleep. Both men had traveled hard and fast, and were in sore need of rest. Soon Standing Wolf was attacked by an overpowering fit of drowsiness, and succumbed.

It was only for a brief time that he slept; yet, while he slept, he dreamed that he was traveling upon the Spirit trail to join his departed friends in the Dance of the Dead Men. Awaking with a start, he caught sight of the brilliant, flickering glare of the northern lights above the treetops, and wondered how soon he should join in the dance up there. The thought depressed him, and he tried to dismiss it from his mind. So he rose and paced to and fro before the fire. Then, thinking that the boys might be drawing near, he decided to mount the neighboring hill and view the trail where it crossed the lake. Quietly slipping his feet into his snowshoe thongs, he began the ascent. On gaining the summit, he stood looking at the lake below; but there was no sign of his sons.

Soon dawn began to break. The hills and rivers and lakes took shape. Still he lingered; for, with the coming of light, he thought of his youth, of the time when he was as young as the day, and he and his people were prosperous and happy, because all that vast region belonged to them. The remembrance kindled in his heart resentment against the white men. As he meditated upon the way in which they had wronged his people, how they had broken an endless trail of destruction across his country, and had left disease and starvation in their wake, he grew indignant toward them. Along with this feeling came an emotion of compassion for the thief, who, he remembered, was, after all, a half brother of his own people. Should he deliver up one of his own blood to the hated whites? Why should he not take his own revenge?

Just then he saw the boys coming out of the forest on the distant shore of the lake. So he hurried down the hill, harnessed the dogs to Spencer's sled, and, quietly cutting the bonds that held the sleeping thief, left him to his slumber and to his freedom.

When his sons met him on the lake beyond, they questioned him as to the fate of the thief; but Standing Wolf evasively replied:

"Last night he saw the Dance of the Dead Men."

# HOUSEKEEPING IN THE MINT

It has been said that no miser guards his treasure more religiously than Uncle Sam watches the precious metal that passes through his mints. Moreover, precautions against waste are almost innumerable. Every evening in each of the mints of this country the floors of the melting rooms are swept cleaner than a good housewife's kitchen. The dust is put carefully aside, and about once in two months the soot scraped from every flue is transferred to the same precious dust heap. This is then burned, and from its ashes the Government derives no inconsiderable income. The earthenware crucibles used in melting are employed no more than three times. Then they are crushed beneath heavy rollers, and in their porous sides are found flakes of the precious metal.

In the melting room, when the casters raise their ladles from the melting pots, a shower of sparks fly from the molten surface of the metal. For the most part they are bits of incandescent carbon, but clinging to the carbon is often a minute particle of metal. Lest such particles should escape, the ashes and clinkers below the furnaces are gathered up at night. This debris is ground into powder by means of a steam crusher, and then is sold to a smelter, like ordinary ore, at a price warranted by the assayer.

The ladles that stir the precious metal, the big iron rods, the strainers, and the dippers, all are tested in a most curious fashion. After considerable use, they become covered with a thin layer of oxidized silver, closely resembling a brown rust. The implements are then laid in baths of a solution of sulphuric acid, which eats away the iron and steel and leaves the silver untouched.

Gradually the ladle, or whatever the implement is, will disappear, and in its place remains a hollow silver counterpart of the original, delicate as spun glass. These fragile casts reproduce the ladle with perfect accuracy in all its details, although their surfaces are perforated with innumerable little holes. Scarcely have they been molded, however, before they are cast into a crucible, to become in time dollars, quarters, and dimes.

In one corner of the melting room there is a large tank, into which newly cast silver bars are dropped and left to cool. Infinitesimal flakes of silver scale off and rise to the surface of the water, which acquires the metallic luster of a stagnant pool. Here is silver that must not be lost; so beneath the pipe through which the tank is emptied is banked a thick layer of mud. As the water filters through it, the mud retains the precious residuum. Four times a year this mud is removed, and each experiment discloses the fact that some fifty dollars has been saved.