

THE CALL

Torqua was fleeing for his life. No idle chase he had been leading for those three days, foodless days, horrible with the fear of pursuit.

Proudly he had set out, brandishing his new gun, loudly swearing to shoot the first living creature he should see.

"Oh sweet little Rhona! What evil God prompted you to leave your father's cabin? There! Don't you hear your mother calling? Turn back—before it is too late."

To the edge of a clearing came the Indian, hoping to shoot a straggling sheep, but none was in sight. Then he saw the happy, smiling child and said:

"I cannot keep my oath! I cannot kill the child!"

Hearing a rustle in the leaves behind him he whirled and came face to face with ancient Unga, chief medicine-man of the tribe.

"Hah! You cannot keep your oath? You are weak! You are a woman! The gods will deal kindly with so miserable a man."

The young Indian aimed at the little girl and fired. Then, overcome by remorse and the horror of the thing he sprang at Unga, and, sobbing and cursing the old man, tore his throat with strong fingers.

In two minutes Torqua had won the fight. He left the two dead bodies in the long grass and ran into the thick woods.

That was three days ago and still Torqua travels westward on tired legs and with an almost total abstinence from food.

Far away to his right a moose-call sounded, and a moose replied. He could resist the need of meat no longer, turning, he began a rapid journey in the direction of the sounds.

For over an hour he travelled through an everchanging panorama of colors, for Autumn was lavish with the woods. Then he heard one of the calls close at hand. Parting some bushes he looked through for his moose. A burst of shot, an echo through the big trees, and Torqua pitched forward with a bullet in his heart.

Carefully through the bush came Dan Elliot, a young pioneer, Rhona's father, looking for his moose. He saw the Indian lying on his face and was filled with horror at his work. He fearfully turned the body over that he might see its face.

"The face of Torqua! The justice of God!" For three days Elliot had been on the trail of the slayer of his child. Feeding on nought but the savage