

In the course of the next two hours he came upon several similar traps. Usually the snow above the hidden pools had a sunken, candied appearance that advertised the danger. Once again, however, he had a close call; and once, suspecting danger, he compelled the dog to go on in front. The dog did not want to go. It hung back until the man shoved it forward, and then it went quickly across the white, unbroken surface. Suddenly it broke through, floundered to one side, and got away to firmer footing. It had wet its forefeet and legs, and almost immediately the water that clung to it turned to ice. It made quick efforts to lick the ice off its legs, then dropped down in the snow and began to bite out the ice that had formed between the toes. This was a matter of instinct. To permit the ice to remain would mean sore feet. It did not know this. It merely obeyed the mysterious prompting that arose from the deep crypts of its being. But the man knew, having achieved a judgment on the subject, and he removed the mitten from his right hand and helped tear out the ice-particles. He did not expose his fingers more than a minute, and was astonished at the swift numbness that smote them. It certainly was cold. He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest.

At twelve o'clock the day was at its brightest. Yet the sun was too far south on its winter journey to clear the horizon. The bulge of the earth intervened between it and Henderson Creek, where the man walked under a clear sky at noon and cast no shadow. At half-past twelve, to the minute, he arrived at the forks of the creek. He was pleased at the speed he had made. If he kept it up, he would certainly be with the boys by six. He unbuttoned his jacket and shirt and drew forth his lunch. The action consumed no more than a quarter of a minute, yet in that brief moment the numbness laid hold of the exposed fingers. He did not put the mitten on, but, instead, struck the fingers a dozen sharp smashes against his leg. Then he sat down on a snow-covered log to eat. The sting that

followed upon the striking of his fingers against his leg ceased so quickly that he was startled. He had had no chance to take a bite of biscuit. He struck the fingers repeatedly and returned them to the mitten, baring the other hand for the purpose of eating. He tried to take a mouthful, but the ice-muzzle prevented. He had forgotten to build a fire and thaw out. He chuckled at his foolishness, and as he chuckled he noted the numbness creeping into the exposed fingers. Also, he noted that the stinging which had first come to his toes when he sat down was already passing away. He wondered whether the toes were warm or numb. He moved them inside the moccasins and decided that they were numb.

He pulled the mitten on hurriedly and stood up. He was a bit frightened. He stamped up and down until the stinging returned into the feet. It certainly was cold, was his thought. That man from Sulphur Creek had spoken the truth when telling how cold it sometimes got in the country. And he had laughed at him at the time! That showed one must not be too sure of things. There was no mistake about it, it *was* cold. He strode up and down, stamping his feet and threshing his arms, until reassured by the returning warmth. Then he got out matches and proceeded to make a fire. From the undergrowth, where high water of the previous spring had lodged a supply of seasoned twigs, he got his fire-wood. Working carefully from a small beginning, he soon had a roaring fire, over which he thawed the ice from his face and in the protection of which he ate his biscuits. For the moment the cold of space was outwitted. The dog took satisfaction in the fire, stretching out close enough for warmth and far enough away to escape being singed.

When the man had finished, he filled his pipe and took his comfortable time over a smoke. Then he pulled on his

TO BUILD A FIRE

The man is a keen observer and notices every change in the creek, the curves, the bends. He puts every step with caution. Once, he startles and curves away from the place as he feels the ice moving. Though the creek is fully frozen, there are streams running along under the snow with ice on top. There are hidden pools of water under the frozen surface that might be three inches or three feet. These unexpected places are dangerous because breaking through the snow into one of those shallow pools can cause the man to get wet to the waist. This would cause a delay in his journey. He used the dog as an instrument to discover such hidden dangers. Because if he gets into one such pool, his body parts are going to get frozen. This might cause severe damage to his body. To avoid such danger further, he stands and studies the place meticulously. He comes to the decision that the flow of water comes from the right. The mention of the concealed springs evokes an impression of the unavoidable circumstances. It hints at the unknown dangers lurking in the darkness of which the man is unaware.

During the next two hours, the man comes across similar traps. Once, sensing danger he compels the dog to go in front. Though the dog hesitates at the beginning, the man shoves it forward. The dog falls through the ice but quickly crawls out on the other side. It wets its forefeet and legs and immediately turns to ice. The dog licks the ice off its legs and bites out the ice. The dog does this out of a certain instinct, not because of any rational thinking. The man removes his ~~own~~ gloves to help the dog but is astonished to find

his fingers - numb and frozen.

The man's decision to send the before him suggests no love and affection between them. The dog's inherent instinct saves him from the snow though he falls through it. He is -protected by his instincts that over powers the man's sense of judgement.

At half-past twelve, the man arrives at the forks of the creek. He is pleased to have reached this point after struggling hard. He anticipates joining the boys by six. He settles down on a snow-covered log to eat. However, the ice around his mouth prevents him from eating. He chuckles at his foolishness to have started eating without ~~fire~~ building fire. He realises the importance of building fire and quickly gets prepared for the task. He wonders if his toes are numb or warm. He stands up and is frightened. He stamps up and down till the feeling returns.

At this moment he remembers the old man at Sulphur Creek who had advised him how cold the area could get at this time of ^{the} year. He feels that the man had spoken ^{the} truth. The old man being experienced and wise, understands the natural world.

The man takes out a match and proceeds

to make a fire. Once the fire is lit, he ~~thaws~~
thaws the ice from his face and eats the biscuits.
The dog lies near the fire, enjoying its warmth.
The man fills his pipe and takes a comfortable
smoke. After enjoying a short break, the man
resumes his walk. The dog follows him reluctantly.
There exists no bonding between the man and his dog.
The dog is treated as a slave.