

OUR FARM HOMES



GENIUS and abilities are given as lamps to the world, not to self.
—Sir Egerton Brydges.

God's Country and the Woman

(Continued from last week.)

"A H, Mignonne. No, there is neither man nor beast in the world that would leave her. The dogs are chained out in the deep spruce that they not tear down her doors in the night to come near her. The whole world loves my Josephine. The Indians make the Big Medicine for her in a hundred tepees when they learn she is ill. They have trimmed five hundred job-stick trees in her memory. Mon Dieu, in the Company's books there are written down more than thirty babies and children grown who bear her name of Josephine! She is different than her mother. Miriam has been always like a flower—a timid wood violet, loving this big world, yet playing no part in it away from my side. Sometimes Josephine frightens me. She will travel a hundred miles by sledge to nurse a sick child, and only last winter she buried herself in the shack filled with smallpox and brought six souls out of it alive! For two weeks she was buried in that hell. That is Mignonne, whom Indian, French, and white man call L'Ange. Miriam they call La Fleuriste. We are two fortunate men, my son!"

A dozen questions burst on Philip's lips, but he held them back, fearing that some accidental slip of the tongue might betray him. He was convinced that Josephine's father knew absolutely nothing of the trouble that was wrecking the happiness of Adare House, and he was equally positive that all, even Miriam herself, were fighting to keep the secret from him.

That Josephine's motherhood was not the sole cause of the mysterious and tragic undercurrent that he had been made to feel he was more than suspicious. A few hours would tell him if he was right, for he would ask Josephine to become his wife. And he already knew what John Adare did not know.

Miriam was not sick with a physical illness. The doctors whom Adare had not believed were right. And he wondered, as he sat facing her husband, if it was fear for his life that was breaking her down. Were they shielding him from some great and ever-menacing peril—a danger with which, for some inconceivable reason, they dared not acquaint him?

In the short time he had known him, a strange feeling for John Adare had found a place in Philip's heart. It was more than friendship, more than the feeling which his supposed relationship might have roused. This big-hearted, tender, rumbling-voiced giant of a man he had grown to love, and he found himself struggling blindly now to keep from him what the others were trying to conceal, for he knew that John Adare's heart would crumble down like a house of cards before the truth. He was thinking of the baby, and it seemed as if his thoughts flashed like fire to the other.

Adare was laughing softly in his beard.

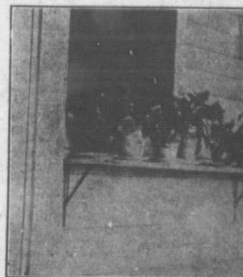
"You should have seen the kid last night, Philip. When they woke 'im he stared at me for a time as though I was an ogre, then he grinned, kicked me, and grabbed my whiskers! I've just one fault to find. I wish he was a dozen instead of one. The little rascal! I wonder if he is awake!"

He half rose, as if about to investigate, then repeated himself.

"Guess I'd better not take a chance of waking him," he reflected. "If Jean should catch me rousing Josephine or the baby he'd throttle me."

"Jean is—a sort of guardian," ventured Philip.

"More than that. Sometimes I think he is a spirit," said Adare impressively. "I have known him for twenty years. Since the day Josephine was born he has been her watch-dog. He came in the heart of a great storm, years and years ago, nearly dead from



Begonias Blooming in Profusion at the Home of Mrs. Beemar, Durham Co., Ont.

—Photo by an Editor of Farm and Dairy.

cold and hunger. He never went away, and he has talked but little about himself. See—"

Adare went to a shelf and returned with a bundle of manuscript.

"Jean gave me the idea for this," he went on. "There are two hundred and eighty pages here. I call it 'The Aristocracy of the North.' It is true—and it is wonderful!"

"You have seen a spring or New Year's gathering of the forest people at a Company's post—the crowd of Indians, half-breeds, and whites who follow the trap-lines? And would you guess that in that average foregathered wilderness people there is better blood than you could find in a crowded ballroom of New York's millionaires? It is true. I have given birth to hungry half-breeds in whose veins flows the blood of royalty. I have eaten with Indian women whose lineage reaches back to names that were mighty before the first Astors and the first Vanderbilts were born.

The descendant of a king has hunted me caribou meat at two cents a pound. In a smoke-blackened tepee, over beyond the Gray Loon waterway, there lives a girl with hair and eyes as black as a raven's wing who could go to Paris to-morrow and say: 'I am the descendant of a queen,' and prove it. And so it is all over the Northland."

"I have hunted down many curious facts, and I have them here in my manuscript. The world cannot sneer at me, for records have been kept almost since the day away back in the seventeenth century when Prince Rupert landed with his first shipload of gentlemen adventurers. They intermarried with our splendid Cree—those first wanderers from the best families of Europe. They formed the half-Cree half-breed. Prince Rupert himself had five children that can be traced to him. Le Chevalier Gros-seller had nine. And so it went on for a hundred years, the best blood in England giving birth to a new race among the Cree, and the best of France sowing new generations among the Alpeyians on their way up from Quebec."

"And for another hundred years and more the English-Cree half-breed and the French-Chippewyan half-breed have been meeting and intermarrying, forming the blood of the best of the Northland scarce a man or a woman cannot call back to names that have long become dust in history."

"From the blood of some mighty king of France—of some splendid queen—has come Jean Croisset. I have always felt that, and yet I can trace him no farther than a hundred years back, to the quarter-strain wife of the white factor at Monsoon. Jean has lost interest in himself now—since his wife died three years ago. Has Josephine told you of her?"

"Very little," said Philip.

Other's unbounded faith, his happiness, the idyllic fulness of his world as he found it, were things which tumbled to the heaviness and fear at Philip's ear. Of these things he was almost a part. A voice kept whispering to him with maddening insistence that he was a fraud. One by one John Adare was unmaking for him hallowed pictures in which Jean had told him he could never share possession. He desired to see Josephine again was almost a madness, and he knew he must hide from Adare. So when Miriam's eyes rested upon him in a momentary glance, he turned away.

"Last night Jean and I were standing beside her grave. It seemed dead as though he would have been happy if he had lain near her—under the cross."

"You are wrong," said Adare quietly. "Death is beautiful when there is a perfect love. If my Miriam should die, it would break if she should go, but she would be replaced by something else, like another soul. For it must be so, for death is to be over-watched by an angel's foot, and sent to the window, and with a queer thickening in his throat Philip stared at his broad back. He thought he saw a moment's quiver of his shoulders. Then Adare's voice changed."

"Winter brings cold to our den, the one unpleasant feature of the country," he said, turning to light a second cigar. "Thirty-five miles to the north and west of the Indian Agency, the Indians call 'Muchenumut' Nest—Devil's Nest. It's a Free Trade House. A man down in Montreal by the name of Lang owns a string of these, and his agent over at the Devil's Nest is a scoundrel of the first water. His name is Thoreau. There are a score of half-breeds and whites in the crowd, and not a one of them with an honest hair in his head. It's the criminal rendezvous I know of in this North Country. Bad Indians have lost credit at the Hudson Bay Company's post—go to Thoreau. Whites and half-breeds who have broken the laws are harbored there. Dozen trappers are murdered each winter for their furs, and the assassins are among Thoreau's men. One of these days there is going to be a big clean-up. Meanwhile, they are unpleasant company. There is a deep swamp between our house and Thoreau's, so that during the open seasons it means we are a hundred miles away from them by canoe. When winter comes we are only thirty miles, as the sledge-dogs run. I don't like it. You can snowshoe the distance in a few hours."

"I know of such a place far to the west," replied Philip. "Both the Hudson's Bay Company and Revelle Freres have threatened to put it of business, but it still remains. Perhaps that is owned by Lang, too."

He had joined Adare at the window. The next moment both men were staring at the same object in a mutual surprise. Into the white snow space between the house and the forest the dead walked swiftly the slim, red-clad figure of Josephine. Her face turned to the forest, her hair falling in a long braid down her back.

The master of Adare chuckled silently.

"There goes our little Red Bird," he rumbled. "She'll be here after all, Philip. She is going after the dogs!"

Philip's heart was beating wildly. A better opportunity for seeing Jean than he had had for years was before him. He feared that his voice might betray him as he laid a hand on Adare's arm.

(Continued on page 15.)

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