The Western Home Monthly

Have You Had the Remark Made to You

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her to his cabin, where she lay for two weeks in pain ar! fever. A bullet had pierced the wall of one lung and for days her life hung in the balance. The surgeon from York, together with careful nursing, had carried her over the crisis into safety, however. During all of this time the red woman watched the movements and occupations of the pale faces with those shrewd, inscrutable black eyes that glittered from her dark, stoical countenance like twin beads, and few words escaped her. Yet she cherished gratitude nevertheless, as was evinced on her departure. Drawing a savage-looking knife from her belt, she seized a faggot from the hearth-box and commenced to whittle it into the form of an arrow. Fascinated, Martha Blake and her daughter and sister, Mistress Ogilvie, watched her. Wichita cut a single notch

"Plenty maize. Indians quiet-if I

in the end and held it up, saying:

Then cutting a second notch beside the first, she raised the stick above her head, as though brandishing a toma-

"How so? What could happen in this quiet spot? Things are peaceable to what they have been in years gone byonly-well, only for the Indians' threats."

"Ah-the Indians! Aye, Martha, the red-skinned devils are on the warpath at last, I fear."

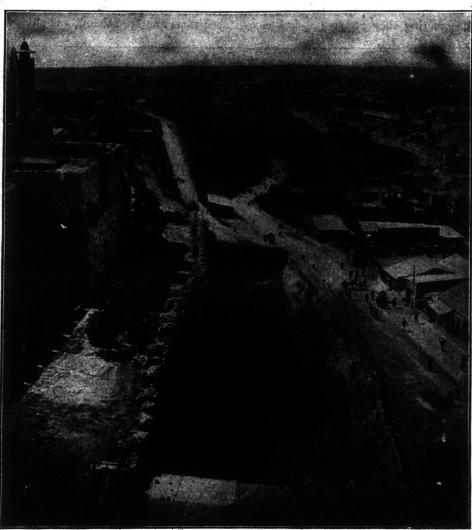
"They're quiet and peaceful just now,

"Aye, aye—but the corn's a poor crop! The maize was black-rolled this harvest. Game has been scarce. If hunger hits them hard enough—well, hunger is the last and best argument. Like time and tide starvation waits upon no court of appeal, and necessity knows no law."

Martha was silent.

"Ha! I do hear steps, woman!" cried the Captain suddenly. "If they be only ghostly ones this time I shall deem my mind bewitched. Harken!"

"Hillo, neighbor! Hillo, Blake!" called a familiar voice, and the door burst unceremoniously open, revealing the stout, rotund form and ruddy face of one, John sesborough, te of His Majesty's Irish



The Road to Bethlehem

"Iroquois on warpath, when snow flies. Burn, scalp! Paleface run, run for life!"

For some time the white women could scarcely comprehend this cryptic overture, but as summer passed and September came in, they found the one-notch arrow twice sticking tightly in the pine wood of the cabin door. After that they had completely forgotten the occurrence. The crops had not been abundant, and there was little game, yet the pioneers in and about the small colony cherished no fear of threatened Indian uprisings that came to the ear from time to time, from the lips of hardy hunters who had penetrated far north and west above York. The threat was hoary. They had heard it so often that they had come to look upon its import as most improbable; though, of course, quite possible, in spite of official vigilance at the Fort. "Come, let us eat," said the Captain. "I'm rarely hungry to-night, though I doubt much if I can do justice to the meal whilst the child is abroad."

The pair partook of the supper in silence, their ears ever on the alert for the sound of the coach wheels. Soon the old man returned to his bench at the

hearth and began puffing at his pipe. "Seems to me, Martha, like's if something's happened or about to happen that we didn't quite figger on," he said, after a few moments.

His wife cast a sharp glance at him from the table-side.

Fusiliers, but now a farmer-settler in the Canadian forest. "Welcome, welcome! Come to the fire,

John!" cried Blake. "Hast heard the news?" demanded the

"News? Nay! No British mail has come to port these five weeks gone. The

storm's at sea...." "Tis not of England I speak man, 'tis of affairs at our very door! The Indians

-damn 'em-are out at last!"
Mistress Blake's hands flew up, and the Captain's pipe clattered to the floor. "Aye, 'tis but too true! The rascals have cut off our communication with the Fort. Part of the bridge 'tween here and there is burnt away, and they're gathered at one of their devilish powwows up the river. Looks like they mean business, I've got all e farmers

gathered at my home and we've turned it into a block-house."

"We must get word to the Fort!" cried Blake. "The river can be forded. I've already sent a messenger, man. 'Twas that strange hermit fellow, that black avised villain that rides abroad only at nightfall-for his health evidently, for he never robs or steals, as I've heard of, anyway. I found him riding eastward an hour agone, and he undertook the mission. But what's a score of guns when arrows are flying from those demons in ambush!"





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