

THE MAN AT LONE LAKE

(Continued from page 14.)

"Ah! Le Bon Dieu! She well nevar love Francois—Nevar!—" He fell back, his eyes closed.

The Factor knelt beside him and muttered prayers and told his beads between anathemas towards all men that this thing should have happened beneath the roof of his erst-while peaceful house.

He had sent his squaw for the priest, and the children, awed and curious, peered in at the door.

The half-breed looked up again, and caught the Factor's hand in an aching grip.

"That man from Lone Lak!" he said. "I would have killed him, mark ye,—But," with a little shrug. "Wat it matter?" "Nothing matters, mon ami—jus nothing. He is gone. Ver well, Francois also goes. So! Wish him—Bon Voyage!" The words passed and the light in his eyes; his limbs straightened a trifle and were quiet.

At the door was the squaw with the old priest. A woman brushed past them and entered first. A little Indian woman, blanketed and with a red shawl covering her hair.

With a cry she crouched beside the dead half-breed, and then lifted his head and gathered him against her heart.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OPPAPAGO the runner was not a cheerful Cree at best, but hard luck had dogged his steps since the first snow-fall of this winter, and to-day he considered the task of having to carry his load of Musquash skins on to Blue Rocks as decidedly the last straw.

He had consented most ungraciously to give Nance a place on his sleigh, and allow Dick Wynn to travel beside him.

Oppapago was a red man of the red men, and one in whom was ingrained the race prejudice of the early Indian. Still, time had taught him that not all of the ways of the white man were bad—on occasion he had been forced to admit that they knew how to extract comfort and pleasure out of life, as none of his own people could extract it, and that existence with them was an easier thing—at least for their women and children.

Along with his prejudice, therefore, had grown up a certain respect for the dominant race, though he made small concession to it, and spoke and understood its language but indifferently.

A feeling of dull resentment against all white men burned as a slow fire in the pagan heart of Oppapago the runner. He would have none of them. He would not take his sick to them to be healed, nor his children to them to be taught, and further, he would not have their God for his God.

Now, through the blue white of the morning, his dog-team meat-fed and rested, pulled the sleigh briskly while he went beside them at the swift tireless trot that had earned him his name.

Wynn, a few paces behind, swung along as swiftly, talking and laughing in the way that was his own, and that often went from Philosophy to nonsense with seeming inconsequence. No Indian mind could follow such rapid change of voice and face without serious risk of losing its perfect balance.

Oppapago had so small a knowledge of English that he did not grasp even the fringe of the conversation that drifted to him. But one talent he possessed in great degree, and that was an ability to follow the fine shading and color of sounds and tones.

He knew now that joy was the key note of what he heard; that delight rippled and ran through the girl's voice when she spoke, and his keen ear detected and caught the soft undertone when sometimes the words broke, or a sentence was left unfinished.

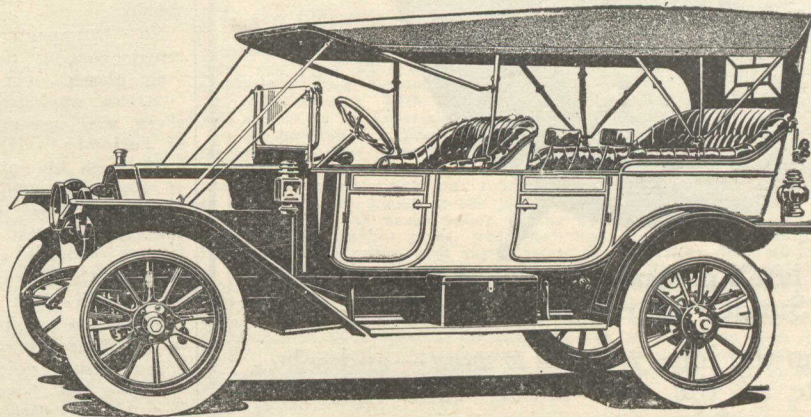
There was a little squaw up in his teepee in the hills, whose voice at times took just such tones. Moreover, Oppapago had heard the birds in the Spring, and had learned much that they alone can teach. There was indeed no wild thing in all the North whose voice he could not understand and interpret.

Still, when this Englishman spoke, he did not catch the essence of his meaning easily—no brave he had ever

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