



AN effort made for the happiness of others, lifts us above ourselves.  
—L. M. Child.

## God's Country and the Woman

(Continued from last week.)

AS the blows of his axe cut deep into the birch, Philip knew that so long as there is life and freedom and a sun above it is impossible for hope to become a thing of char and ash. He did not use logic. He simply lived! He was alive, and he loved Josephine.

The muscles of his arms were like sinews of rawhide. Every fibre in his body was strung with a splendid strength. His brain was as clear as the unpolluted air that drifted over the cedar and spruce. And now to these tremendous forces had come the added strength of the most wonderful thing in the world: love of a woman. In spite of all that Josephine and Jean had said, in spite of all the odds that might be against him, he was confident of winning whatever fight might be ahead of him.

He not only felt confident, but cheerful. He did not try to make Jean understand what it meant to be in camp with the company of a woman for the first time in two years. Long after the tents were up and the birch-fire was crackling cheerfully in the darkness Josephine still remained in her tent. But the mere fact that she was there lifted Philip's soul to the skies.

And Josephine, with a blanket drawn about her shoulders, lay in the thick gloom of her tent and listened to him. His far-reaching, exuberant whistling seemed to warm her. She heard him laughing and talking with Jean, whose voice never came to her; farther back, where he was cutting down another birch, she heard him shout out the words of a song between blows; and once, sotto voce, and close to her tent, she quite distinctly heard him say "Damn!" She knew that he had stumbled with an armful of wood, and for the first time in that darkness and her misery she smiled. That one word alone Philip had not intended that she should hear. But when it was out he picked himself up and laughed.

He did not meddle with Jean's cook-fire, but he built a second fire where the cheer of it would light up Josephine's tent, and piled dry logs on it until the flame of it lighted up the gloom about them for a hundred feet. And then, with a pan in one hand and a stick in the other, he came close and beat a din that could have been heard a quarter of a mile away.

Josephine came out full in the floodlight of the fire, and he saw that she had been crying. Even now there was a tremble of her lips as she smiled her gratitude. He dropped his pan and stick, and went to her. It seemed as if this last hour in the darkness of camp had brought her nearer to him, and he gently took her hands in his own and held them for a moment close to him. They were cold and trembling, and one of them

that had rested under her cheek was damp with tears.

"You mustn't do this any more," he whispered.

"I'll try not to," she promised. "Please let me stand a little in the warmth of the fire. I'm cold."

He led her close to the flaming birch logs and the heat soon brought a warm flush into her cheeks. Then they went to where Jean had spread out their supper on the ground. When she had seated herself on the pile of blankets they had arranged for her, Josephine looked across at Philip, squatted Indian-fashion opposite her, and smiled apologetically.

"I'm afraid your opinion of me isn't getting better," she said. "I'm not much of a—a sport—to let you men get supper by yourselves, am I? You see—I'm taking advantage of my birthday."

"Oul, ma belle princesse," laughed Jean softly, a tender look coming into his thin, dark face. "And do you remember that other birthday, years and years ago, when you took advantage of Jean Croisset while he was sleeping? Non, you do not remember?"

"Yes, I remember."

"She was six, M'sieur," explained Jean, "and while I slept, dreaming of one grand paradise she cut off my moustaches. They were splendid, those moustaches, but they would never grow right after that, and so I have gone shaven."

In spite of her efforts to appear cheerful, Philip could see that Josephine was glad when the meal was over, and that she was forcing herself to sip at a second cup of tea on

their account. He accompanied her back to the tent after she had bade Jean good-night, and as they stood for a moment before the open flap there filled the girl's face a look that was partly of self-reproach and partly of wistful entreaty for his understanding and forgiveness.

"You have been good to me," she said. "No one can ever know how good you have been to me, what it has meant to me, and I thank you." She bowed her head, and again he restrained the impulse to gather her close in his arms. When she looked up he was holding something toward her in the palm of his hand. It was a little Bible, worn and frayed at the edges, pathetic in its raggedness.

"A long time ago, my mother gave me this Bible," he said. "She told me that as long as I carried it, and believed in it, no harm could come to me, and I guess she was right. It was her first Bible, and mine. It's grown old and ragged with me, and the water and snow have faded it. I've come to sort of believe that mother is always near this Book. I'd like you to have it, Josephine. It's the only thing I've got to offer you on my birthday."

While he was speaking he had taken one of her hands and thrust his precious gift into it. Slowly Josephine raised the little Bible to her breast. She did not speak, but for a moment Philip saw in her eyes the look for which he would have sacrificed the world: a look that told him more than all the volumes of the earth could have told of a woman's trust and faith.

He bent his head lower and whispered:

"Tonight, my Josephine—just this night—may I wish you all the hope and happiness that God and my Mother can bring you, and kiss you—once—"

In that moment's silence he heard the throbbing of her heart. She seemed to have ceased breathing, and then, slowly, looking straight into his eyes, she lifted her lips to him, and as one who meets a soul of a thing too sanctified to touch with hands, he kissed her. Scarcely had the warm sweetness of her lips thrilled his own than she had turned from him, and was gone.

### CHAPTER SEVEN.

For a time after they had cleared up the supper things Philip sat with Jean close to the fire and smoked. When he had finished his pipe he rose and went to the tent which he was to share with Jean. At last he found himself not unwilling to be alone. He closed the flap to shut out the still

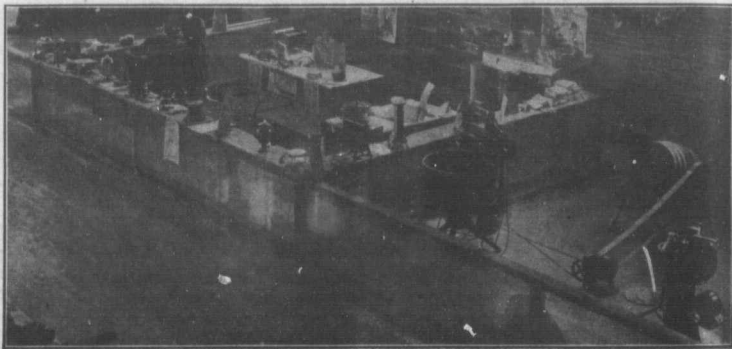
brilliant illumination of the fire, drew a blanket about him, and stretched himself out on the top of his sleeping bag. He wanted to think.

He closed his eyes to bring back more vividly the picture of Josephine as she had given him her lips to kiss. This of all the unusual happenings of that afternoon seemed most like a dream of him yet his brain was afire with the reality of it. His mind struggled again with the hundred questions which he had asked himself that day and in the end Josephine remained as completely enshrouded in mystery as ever. Yet of one thing was he convinced. The oppression of the things under which Jean and the girl were fighting had become more acute with the turning of their faces homeward. At Adare House lay the cause of their hopelessness of Josephine's grief and of the gloom under which the half-breed had fallen so completely that night. Until they reached Adare House he could guess at nothing. And there—what would he find?

In spite of himself he felt creeping slowly over him a shuddering fear that he had not acknowledged before. The darkness deepening as the fire died, the low wailing of a wind growing out of the north roused in him the unrest and doubt that sunshine and day had dispelled. An uneasy hummer came at last with this quiet. His mind was filled with awful dreams. Again he was back with Radisson and MacTavish, listening to the foxes out on the barrens. He heard the Scotchman's moaning madness and listened to the blast of storm. And then he heard a cry—a cry like that which MacTavish fancied he had heard in the wind an hour before he died. It was this dream-cry that roused him.

He sat up, and his face and hands were damp. It was black in the tent. Outside even the bit of wind had died away. He reached out a hand, groping for Jean. The half-breed's blankets had not been disturbed. Then for a few moments he sat very still, listening, and wondering if the cry had been real. As he sat tense and still in the half daze of the sleep it came again. It was the shrill laughing carnival of a loon out on the lake. More than once he had laughed at comrades who had shivered at that sound and covered until its echoes had died away in moaning walls. He understood now. He knew why the Indians called it *moakwa*—"the mad thing." He thought of MacTavish, and threw the blanket from his shoulders, and crawled out of the tent.

(To be continued.)



A Taste of Glorified Housekeeping—Part of the Exhibit of household appliances shown by the Hydro Electric at the Markdale Fair, Grey Co., Ont., in 1915.