

"It may be best to wait a little," suggested the priest. "Thou art very weak now. In a short while, maybe . . ."

"No, listen to me now or—or there may not be time."

And so the old man listened to the whispered words, while the others stood at a distance, respectfully watching through the opened flap of the tent, with their caps held in their hands. For some minutes the slow words that were hurting continued to come. After a time they ceased. The old man looked very grave and sad. His hands were joined together and he looked up as if seeking for guidance from on high. When his eyes fell again he saw Mashkaugan's hand lifted, slowly, and drawn from brow to breast and shoulders, in the sign he had abandoned since the days of early childhood.

"Thy repentance is very great and true, Mashkaugan," he said in a quavering voice. "May the Lord's mercy fall upon thee and ease thy spirit. I shall give thee absolution."

After this there were long minutes of silence, during which the breaths came shallow and pain-