



A SUNNY temper gilds the edges of life's darkest cloud.  
—Guthrie.

## The Heart of the Desert

(Continued from last week.)

RHODA struck his hand feebly. "Don't touch me!" she cried hoarsely. "Don't touch me, you beast! I loathe you! I am afraid of you! Don't you dare to touch me!"

At this Kutle imprisoned both her cold hands in one of his warm palms and held them despite her struggles, while with the other hand he smoothed her tumbled hair from her eyes.

"Poor frightened little girl!" he said, in his rich voice. "I wish I might have done otherwise. But there was no other way. I don't know that I believe much in your God but I guess you do. So I left you, Rhoda, that by your faith in Him, you are absolutely safe in my hands."

Rhoda caught her breath in a childlike sob while she still struggled to recover her hands.

"I loathe you!" she panted. "I loathe you! I loathe you!"

But Kutle would not free the cold little hands.

"But do you fear me, too? Answer me! Do you fear me?"

The moon had risen and Rhoda looked into the face that bent above hers. This was a naked savage with hawklike face. Yet the eyes were the ones that she had come to know so well, half tragic, sombre, but clear and, towards her, tender, very, very tender. With a shuddering sigh, Rhoda looked away. But against her own volition she found herself saying:

"I'm not afraid now! But I loathe you, you Apache Indian!"

Something very like a smile touched the grim mouth of the Apache. "I don't hate you, you Caucasian!" he answered quietly.

He chafed the cold hands for a moment, in silence. Then he lifted her to her saddle. But Rhoda was beyond struggle, beyond even clinging to the saddle. Rhoda caught her as she reeled.

"Don't tie me!" she panted. "Don't tie me! I won't fight! I won't even scream, if you won't tie me!"

"But you can't sit your saddle alone," replied Kutle. "I'll have to tie you."

Once more he lifted her to the horse. Once more with the help of his silent companion he fastened her with blankets. Once more the journey was begun. For a little while, distraught and uncertain what course of position and motion, in silence. Then the pain was too much and she cried out in protest. Kutle brought the horses to a walk.

"You certainly have about as much spirit as a chicken with the pip!" he said contemptuously. "I should think your loathing would brace you up a little!"

Stunned by the insult to a sudden access of strength, as the Indian had intended her to be, Rhoda answered, "You beast!" but as the horses swung

into the trok she made no protest for a long hour. Then once more her strength failed her and she fell to crying with deep-drawn sobs that shook her entire body. After a few moments of this, Kutle drew close to her.

"Don't!" he said huskily. "Don't!" And again he laid his hand on her shoulder.

Rhoda shuddered but could not cease her sobs. Kutle seemed to hesitate for a few moments. Then he reached over, undid Rhoda's fastenings and lifted her limp body to



The Settler's First Crop.

One of the first things the settler in New Ontario does, is to get out his crop of pulp wood, for which he receives as high as \$10 a cord. Herewith may be seen a goodly supply of this pulp wood and also a group of healthy school children, who will be the future farmers of the New Lakehead District.

the saddle before him, holding her against his broad chest as if he were coddling a child. Then he started the horses on. Too exhausted to struggle, Rhoda lay sobbing while the young Indian sat with his tragic eyes fastened steadily on the mysterious distances of the trail. Finally Rhoda sank into a stupor and, seeing this, Kutle doubled the speed of the horses.

It was daylight when Rhoda opened her eyes. For a time she lay at ease listening to the trill of birds and the trickle of water. Then, with a start, she raised her head. She was lying on a heap of blankets on a stone ledge. Above her was the boundless splendour of the sky. Close beside her a little spring bubbled from the blank wall of the mountain. Rhoda lay in helpless silence, looking about her, while the appalling nature of her predicament sank into her consciousness.

Against the wall squatted two Indian women. They were dressed in rough short skirts, tight-fitting calico waists and high leather moccasins. Their black hair was parted in the middle and hung free. Their swarthy features were well cut but both of the

women were dirty and ill kept. The younger, heavier squaw had a kindly face, with good eyes, but her hair was matted with clay and her fingers showed traces of recent tortilla making. The older woman was lean and wiry, with a strange gleam of malignancy and ferocity in her eyes. Her forehead was elaborately tattooed with symbols and her toothless old jaws were covered with blue tribal lines.

Kutle and his friend of the night lounged on a heap of rock at the edge of the ledge. The strange Indian was well past middle age, tall and disfigured. He was darker than Kutle, his face was thin and aquiline. His long hair hung in elf locks over his shoulders. His toilet was elaborate compared with that of Kutle, for he wore a pair of overalls and a dilapidated flannel shirt, unbuttoned and fluttering its ends in the morning breeze. As if conscious of her gaze, Kutle turned and looked at Rhoda. His magnificent height and proportions dwarfed the tall Indian beside him.

"Good-morning, Rhoda!" he said gravely.

The girl looked at the beautiful naked body and reddened.

"You beast!" she said clearly.

Kutle looked at her with slightly contracted eyes. Then he spoke to the fat squaw. She rose hastily and lifted a pot from the little fire beside the spring. She dipped a steaming cup of broth from this and brought it

their seamstress gave Rhoda a vague sense of protection. They in turn gazed at the tangled glory of her hair, at the hopeless beauty of her eyes, at the pathos of the drooping mouth, with unfeigned curiosity.

Kutle still was watching the desert. The madness of the night before had lifted a little, leaving Rhoda with some of her old poise. After several attempts she rose and made her staggering way to Kutle's side.

"Kutle!" she said, "perhaps you will tell me what you mean by this outrage?"

The young Indian turned to her. White and exhausted. They sat in confusion, Rhoda still was lovely.

"You seem to have more interest in life," he said, "than you have had since I have known you. I thought the experiment would have that effect!"

"You brute!" cried Rhoda. "Can't you see how silly you are? You will be passed and lynched before the day is passed!"

Kutle smiled.

"Pshaw! Three Apaches can outwit a hundred white men on the trail!" Rhoda caught her breath.

"Oh, Kutle, how could you do this thing! How could you! I am disgraced forever! Let me go, Kutle! Let me go! I'll not even ask you for a horse. Just let me go by myself!"

"You are better off with me. You will acknowledge that yourself, before I am through with you."

"Better off!" Rhoda's appalled eyes cut the Indian deeper than words.

"Better off! Why, Kutle, I am a dying woman! You will just have to leave me dead beside the trail somewhere. Look at me! Look at my hands! See how emaciated I am! See how I tremble! I am a sick wreck, Kutle. You cannot want me! Let me go! Try, try to remember all that you learned of pity from the whites! O Kutle, let me go!"

"I haven't forgotten what I learned from the whites," replied the young man. He looked off at the desert with a quiet smile. "Now I want the whites to learn from me!"

"But can't you see what a futile game you are playing?" John DeWitt and Jack must be on your trail now!"

There was a cruel gleam in the Apache's eyes.

"Don't be too sure! They are going to spend a few days looking for the foolish Eastern girl who took a stroll and lost her way in the desert. How can they dream that you are alone?"

Rhoda wrung her hands.

"What shall I do?"

"What an awful, awful thing to come to me! As if life had not been hard enough! This catastrophe! This disaster!"

Kutle eyed her speculatively.

"It's your prejudice, you know. I have the education of the white with the intelligence and physical perfection of the Indian; DeWitt is nowhere near my equal."

Rhoda's eyes blazed.

"Don't speak of DeWitt! You're not fit to!"

"Yet," very quietly, "you said the other night that I had as good a brain and was as attractive as any man of your acquaintance!"

"I was a fool!" exclaimed Rhoda.

Kutle rose and took a stride or two up and down the ledge. Then he folded his arms across his chest and stopped before Rhoda, who leaned weakly against the boulder.

"I am going to tell you what my ideas are," he said. "You are intelligent and will understand me no matter how bitter my words may make you at first. Now look here. Lots of

walks me are in love with you. Even Billy Porter went off his head. But I

(Continued on page 17.)