

God's Country and the Woman

(Continued from page 14.)

the room. Adare had taken his wife to her room, and when they entered she was sitting in a chair, staring and speechless. And now Josephine turned to Philip, taking his face between her two hands, and her soul looking at him through a blinding mist of tears.

"My Philip," she whispered, and drew his face down and kissed him. "Go to him now. We will come soon."

He returned to Adare like one in a dream—a dream that was grief and pain, with its one golden thread of joy. Jean was there now, and the Indian woman; and the master of Adare had the still little babe huddled up against his breast. It was some time before they could induce him to give it to Moanne. Then, suddenly, he shook himself like a great bear and crushed Philip's shoulders in his hands.

"God knows I'm sorry for you, Boy," he cried brokenly. "It's hurt me—terribly. But you—it must be like the cracking of your soul. And Josephine, Mienonne, my little flower! She is with her mother!"

"Yes," replied Philip. "Come. Let us go. We can do nothing here. And Josephine and her mother will be better alone for a while. It is your 'I understand,' said Adare almost roughly, in his struggle to steady himself. 'You're thinking of me, Boy. God bless you for that. You go to Josephine and Miriam. It is your place. Jean and I will go into the big room.'"

Philip left them in Adare's room and went to his own, leaving the door open that he might hear Josephine if she came out into the hall. He was there to meet her when she appeared a little later. They went to Moanne. And at last all things were done, and

the lights turned low in Adare House. Philip did not take off his clothes that night, nor did Jean and Metoosin. In the early dawn they went out together in the little garden of crosses, close to the side of Iowaka. Jean pointed out the plot.

"Josephine would say the little one will sleep best there, close to her," he said. "She will care for it, M'sieur. She will know, and understand, and keep his little soul bright and happy in Heaven."

And there they digged. No one in Adare House heard the cautious fall of pick and spade.

With morning came a strangely clear sun. Out of the sky had gone the last haze of cloud. Jean crossed himself, and said:

"She knows—she sent sunshine instead of storm."

Hours later it was Adare who stood over the little grave, and said words deep and strong, and quivering with emotion, and it was Jean and Metoosin who dug the tiny casket into the frozen earth. Miriam was not there, but Josephine clung to Philip's side, and only once did her voice break. The grief she was fighting back. Philip was more once in his big room, and Josephine with her mother. He did not even want Jean's company. In his room he sat alone, and at a strangely enough slept more soundly than he had been able to sleep for some time.

When he awoke the following morning his first thought was that that was the day of the third night. He had scarcely dressed when Adare's voice greeted him from outside the door. It was different now filled with the old cheer and booming hopefulness, and Philip smiled as he thought how this stricken giant of the wilderness was rising out of his own grief to comfort Josephine and him. They were at breakfast, and Philip was delighted to find Josephine looking much better than he had expected. Miriam had sunk deeper under the strain of the preceding hours. She was still white-chin and white hands trembled. She spoke little. Tenderly Adare tried to raise her spirits.

During the rest of that day Philip saw but little of Josephine, and he made no effort to intrude himself upon her. Late in the afternoon Jean asked him if he had made friends with the dogs, and Philip told him of his experience with them. Not until nine o'clock that night did he know why the half-breed had asked.

At that hour Adare House had sunk into quiet. Miriam and her husband had gone to bed, the light was low. For an hour Philip had listened for the footsteps which he knew he would hear to-night. At last he knew that Josephine had come out into the hall. He heard Jean's low voice, and then the opening and closing of the door that let them out into the night. There was a short silence. Then the door re-opened, and some one returned through the hall. The steps stopped at his own door—a knock—and a moment later he was standing face to face with Croisset.

"Throw on your coat and cap and come with me, M'sieur," he cried in a low voice. "And bring your pistol!"

Without a word Philip obeyed. By the time they stood out in the night his blood was racing in a wild anticipation. Josephine had disappeared. Jean gripped his arm.

"To-night something may happen," he said, in a voice that was as hard and cold as the blue lights of the aurora in the polar sky. "It is possible. We may need your help. I would have asked Metoosin, but it would have made him suspicious of

something—and he knows nothing. You have made friends with the dogs? You know Captain?"

"Yes."

"Then go to them—go as fast as you can, M'sieur. And if you hear a shot to-night—or a loud cry from out there in the forest, fire the dogs swiftly. Captain will be with them to meet our trail, shouting 'Kill! Kill! Kill!' with every breath you take, and don't stop so long as there is a foot print in the snow ahead of you or a human bone to pick! Do you understand, M'sieur?"

His eyes were points of flame in the gloom.

"Do you understand?"

"Do you understand?" "Duh—Jean—" gasped Philip. "Duh—"

"If you understand—that is all," interrupted Jean. "If there is a pill in what we are doing this night the pack will be worth more to us than a dozen men. If anything happens to us they will be our avengers. Go! There is not one moment for you to lose. Remember—a shot—a single cry!"

His eyes glittered in his eyes, told Philip this was no time for fear. He turned and ran swiftly across the clearing in the direction of the dog pit. Ten minutes later he came with a yowling cry with the smell of blood. Eyes of fire glared at him. The snapping of fangs and the snarling of savage throats greeted him. One by one he called the names of the dogs, but they remembered—called them over and over again, advancing fearfully among them, until he dropped upon his knees with his hand on the chain that held Captain. From their whines answered him, and their whines answered him.

Then he fell silent—listening. He could hear his own heart beat. Every fibre in his body was quivering with expectation of a strange fear. The hand that rested on Captain's collar trembled. In the distance an owl hooted, and the first note of it sent a red hot fire through him. Six farther away wolf howled. Then came a silence in which he thought he could hear the rush of blood through his own throbbing veins.

With his fingers at the steel snap on Captain's collar he waited.

(To be continued.)

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Chief low has been formed. This much has enlisted the rank of the tallion from Co. low in a Ser'ty Battalion.



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