

tinued Murry sententiously, "squaws is women."

But Corporal Blake was silent, lying in the dry grass with his cap low over his eyes, and thinking of Winunla and the kid. For the kid had held Blake's finger for a blissful half hour that afternoon and Blake had carried the finger stiffly separate from its fellows for the rest of the day.

Blake had been the Hon. Fred's friend back in the mother country. He knew better than another what was the home from which the Hon. Fred had been irascibly exiled, and to which he had been recalled. He knew better than another how different would be the new-old ways and the women. He had a swift vision of it all—the luxury, the ultra culture, the traditions. And there had been a girl with cool, sweet eyes and a slow—too slow—voice, in the old days—a girl who knew Winunla's race only in posters, and who would teach the Hon. Fred to forget, or, if memory were stubborn, to groan, remembering.

Blake, with his cap over his eyes, lay very silent.

The doctor and the local missionary discussed the situation with more minuteness than they could generally afford to individual tragedies among their people. The doctor had come to this particular agency since the apostasy of the Hon. Fred, but he had lived on other agencies and he understood.

"It's largely our own fault," he said. "In nine cases out of ten it's our own fault. We pity these youngsters—these cast off younger sons who ought to be cast off, God knows! Then we let them marry one of our people—the people we are set to watch over—and we think we've done our duty if the wedding's legal."

"But he seemed to care for the girl," the missionary said feebly. "And I'm quite sure he intended to come back as soon as the estate was settled. He—in fact, he told me so."

The missionary was not surprised at the doctor's laughter.

"And you haven't seen it all before? Or did you think the girl was different from the others and could hold him? He went back with a few gray hairs, and his mother wept over him, and some girl who had heard his story will marry him—and we will look after Winunla and the half breed."

The missionary sighed. It was one of the stereotyped tragedies which he knew by heart, and could in no wise help. Only, he had warned Winunla as he had warned others of his maidens. He had said to her:

"He is not of your world, my dear, and sooner or later there will be great yearning in him for his own, and he will go back to it, and leave you to grow old with memories. And your people will walk apart from you and whisper when you pass them—alone. Take rather some man from among them—your people—brave and strong and one with you."

But Winunla had smiled securely, and lifted stubborn eyes to the missionary's pleading.

"Is he not brave and strong above all men? And he has stooped to me, and he shall be one with me and I with him."

"You are a fool, Winunla," the missionary had said with unprofessional sharpness. And then he had married them, and, seeing the great light in the face of the Hon. Fred—a face grown unwontedly grave as he turned to kiss his bride—had even dared to hope that all might be well.

But so he had hoped before—and then sighed as he sighed now, walking with the doctor past the house where Winunla dwelt, as he had prophesied, with her memories. In the doorway stood Winunla, her baby held against her breast. The girl's dark face smiled at them.

Half an hour before, a man had come down the wagon track, a big man with a wide gait, and black as even a fair man would be against the setting sun. Winunla, watching from her window, had seen him, and, catching the baby in her arms, she threw the door open and stood waiting—clenching her impatient feet on the threshold. The blood flashed across her yellow cheek. When she flushed so, the Hon. Fred had said she was like a tulip—an English tulip. Her dusky eyes grew nar-

row to hold back the happy tears, her breath came sharp between her parted lips.

"Wait until he laughs, Dear Heart!" she whispered. "And his eyes—they are so blue!"

From the roadway Ookiye, the old chief who bore his years as a strong youth his beauty, waved his hand to her in passing. And behind him the blank November prairie grew red beneath the dying sun.

Winunla still stood in the doorway when the doctor and the missionary passed. They looked at her and their hearts were sad within them because they realized the pathos of the girl's attitude. She had been standing so far half an hour, and the wind was cold about her, but only her heart felt the chill of it.

Over at the Fort the shortening days brought shrewd discussion of the situation.

"It will be a year next week," said Sergeant Callan. "Faith, it's not a gayer story because it's an old one. I knew the day he went away—and she at the train with him, kissing him good-by like a white girl, with the tears in the eyes of her and her heart on her lips. I knew that day—and didn't you, Blake?"

Blake shifted his cap to look away over the homesick prairie with puckered eyes. "No," he said stubbornly. "Because Winunla is not a woman for a man to drop easily."

A soldier laughed brutally. "Not if you had held her first, eh? Never mind—she's for the first comer now Blake, and that may be you—I like

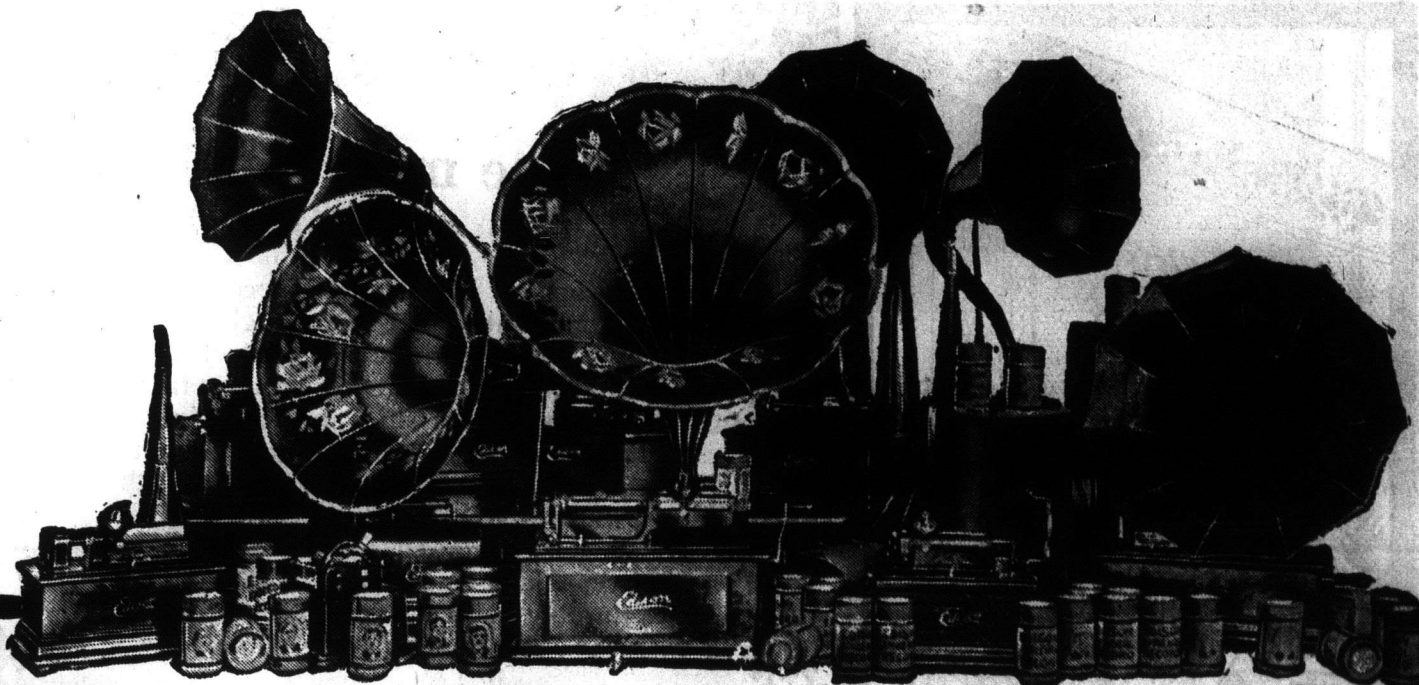
them white myself!"

Then, because there was a general movement in his embarrassed direction, he withdrew expeditiously and with understanding. For there are men to whom womanhood is always white.

And Blake crossed the three miles of prairie to the agency. Winunla greeted him with the grave courtesy of her people, warmed with a certain pretty gladness because he had been her husband's friend. And Blake, quite understanding, watched the girl with eyes that were used to finding new beauties in her.

That she should be left so—for men to pity and for curs to jeer at!

He pinched the baby's shapeless moccasin, and stooped to bring a brass button in reach of the groping finger. Winunla, holding the child by its frock, laughed down at the big, clean fellow



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