SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—Introducing some of the people of the pretty little French-Canadian village of Peribonka, particularly the Crippled Lady, and of the simple inhabitants, and heroine of an epic destined to live long in the village annals.

CHAPTER II.—How the romance of Molly Brant, sister of the great Indian chief, Joseph Brant, and Sir William Johnson, in pre-Revolutionary days, comes down to today with the birth of a son, Paul, to Molly Kirke, wife of a powerful New York financier, and her death when Paul is thirteen years old. Molly Kirke was a descendant of Molly Brant, and her boy has many of the Indian characteristics. At thirty-two Paul marries Claire Durand, daughter of his father's business partner. He is in charge of an immense engineering work on the Mistassini river, near Peribonka, which his millionaire father has undertaken but his Indian blood deplores the destruction of the wilderness, and his thoughts are more of Carla Haldan—not then the Crippled Lady—than of his work.

CHAPTER III.—Paul's wife is in Europe, she having no inclination to live in "those horrible woods." He comes to see in Carla, daughter of a central European immigrant, with her devotion to her invalid mother and her work of educating the village children, his ideal of womanhood.

CHAPTER IV.—Paul writes to his wife, urging her to join him, though Carla is the inspiration of the letter. Later that evening, passing the Haldan home, he hears Carla crying. He enters the cottage. Mrs. Haldan, long a hopeless invalid, is dead. Paul's efforts to comfort Carla, he feels, bring them closer together.

CHAPTER IV

The next day was Saturday. Paul started for Peribonka early in the morning with Carla. Bad weather had given way at last to glorious autumnal sunshine and warmth. He was glad the rain-soaked sand and clay made a horse and buggy necessary. Carla was different, had grown different overnight. The beauty which had come into her face when he was with her mother had not disappeared to leave it so tense and strained again. She seemed nearer to him, infinitely more dependent than yesterday, and happier—if there could be such a thing as that emotion left in her life.

They crossed the great blueberry "burns," with miles and miles of flat, wild country about them, reaching toward the lake on one side and the timbered wilderness on the other. Only at wide intervals was there a habitant's home, and they met no one on the sticky road. Even this barrenness Paul loved. He talked to Carla about the country. All nature, no matter how desolate it might appear to others, was beautiful to him, he said. Nature could not make a desolation that was not beautiful, and never was there a jarring note in its handiwork. Because most humans could not see the beauty and pathos of a fire-blackened stub or the enchanting mystery of a dormant pond was not proof that Nature had made an error. It was merely evidence that most human eyes were blind.

In a sandy place he got out and cut bushes weighted heavily with blueberries, and they plucked the luscious fruit from the same stems and ate it as they rode along. It was almost happiness. Only the grim thing shadowing them kept it from being that, and even this shadow seemed to fold its wings for flashing moments. It grew warm, and, with the habit of her mother's people, Carla bared her head to let the air stir in her hair. Paul looked at it, with the restless desire in him growing stronger. It was always so smooth and soft, with its silky coils so gracefully fitting her head, that it seemed a loss of something precious not to touch its beauty. He thought of what Lucy-Belle had told her husband—of the love story in Carla's life. Some man had loved it. Some man had put his hand upon it. As their road came into green timber and he listened to Carla's voice telling him that in her own heart was a love for Nature so great that she would never live in a city again, he wondered what it was that had spoiled her romance so that she would never care for any other man or marry.

They came to Peribonka, and Maria Chapdelaine set them a luncheon in the old-fashioned little dining room overlooking her garden, with its luxuriant array of vegetables and flowers. She admired Carla, and brought in a little girl she had adopted to show her what loveliness one might come to possess if one lived right. Carla was a bit embarrassed, and Paul delighted, by such ardent and frankly spoken approval. Samuel Chapdelaine, tall, thin, and the main prop of Peribonka's church choir, joined them at the table for a visit, and after a time Paul took him aside and explained his mission. They went up the street together, and when they returned the business was over. The small square of ground with its wild honeysuckle vines belonged to Carla.

He took her to see it after they said good-by to the Chapdelaines, and when they stood over it, looking down at the river, he saw tears in Carla's eyes for the first time since he had known her. She made no movement to hide them or wipe them away when she smiled her gratitude at him. He held out his hand, and she gave him her own. He held it for a few moments, and neither broke the silence which fell between them as they walked down the footworn path and through the picket gate.

An impulse which neither attempted no voice held them for a time in Peribonka. They went down to the river's edge and stood where they could see the birds splashing water over themselves on the sandbars. They saw the dumpy little twice-a-week boat from across the lake unloading goods for the villagers and habitants at its dilapidated wharf. On the opposite shore, close to the roadside, was a shrine. They could see its cross from where they stood, with the sun shining on it.

When they were ready to go Paul felt as if he were leaving something in Peribonka, just as the warmth of Carla's hand had left something in his heart. Carla, Peribonka, the little plot of ground—they would be as unforgettable as Mrs. Haldan's memories. He thought of this as they rode back through the afternoon. He thought of it later when he stood in his office again, and looked down upon the smash and grind of machinery in the pit. It troubled him and made him restless and uneasy. This day, burned deeply into his life, seemed unreal now that it was over. It was as if an experience had turned into a dream, a thing of a few minutes instead of hours.

The friendly, faintly smiling gaze of his wife followed him about the room. He answered her letter that evening, and in his pages to her his freshly roused emotions found their voice. He told about the tragedy in Carla's life, of their journey to Peribonka, and of the little plot of ground in the cemetery. Writing in his office, with his wife's face looking at him, it was not difficult for him to let the floods pour out, just as he had unleashed them once or twice before in his six years of married life with her. He was a man, wanting a woman. He wanted his wife. He did not want her in Europe or Egypt or waiting for him in a palace at home. He wanted her with him. He told her this as tenderly as a man could write to a woman. It was a letter of love, of risen hope, of visionings—to his wife. Carla was the inspiration of it.

He sealed and addressed the letter and put it in the company's mail. What a glory life would be if his wife would come at last! He had painted a picture for her in the letter—her golden beauty a part of the blue of open skies, a thing near and wonderful for him to have. But when he went out into the night and looked at the row of lighted cottages on the hill he thought of Carla, and a yearning to be near her possessed him again.

This impulse bewildered him. He went to his bachelor quarters and tried to read. One by one the houses grew dark. Still he endeavored to make his books and magazines interest him. Never had his nerves been more sleeplessly alert, and their obstinacy persisted after he had undressed and gone to bed. Something kept him awake—an incessant stream of things passing through his mind, detached, illogical, unreasonable, and always bringing him back in one way or another to Carla and her mother.

He got up and dressed. It was after midnight. Over the pit hung an illumination which reached up into the sky like the glow from a volcano. He turned down the cinder path and was soon among the men. No one was on the job who did not know him, even in the night shifts. Many of them spoke to him tonight, but their friendliness failed to wipe away the disquiet of mind which had compelled him to get out of bed. He looked at his watch and found it was one o'clock when he reached the far end of the workings. A gravel-made road led to the forest trail higher up, and he took this road out of the pit.

After a little he came to the row of cottages. There was a light in the Haldan home, and he found himself wondering what Carla did with the long nights in which she waited for the coming of death. Was it possible for her to sleep? Or did she sit alone through dragging hours watching her mother, praying for the day? He stopped at the gate to the picket fence which enclosed her flower gardens, and his ears caught a sound which did not come from the pit. It was like a cry. He opened the gate quietly and went in. A window was open somewhere, and he could hear clearly a voice that was sobbing. It was Carla! No one else in the cottage could be crying like that—surely not Carla's mother. His heart thumped against his ribs. His breath came a little short. He went to the door and knocked against it gently. Then more loudly. Some one came, and the door opened. He entered and stood beside Carla. She had not been in bed, had not undressed. She was as he had left her hours before, except that her face and eyes were stricken with a grief that terrified him. Then, in the dim light, a miracle happened. She smiled at him through tears. "I was hoping for you," she said.

"I was passing—heard you crying—"

He said no more, because he had guessed only half the truth. He was careful to speak so that his voice would not awaken Carla's mother, if she were asleep. His mind was not working quickly, he was bewildered and frightened by the agony in Carla's face, the way she turned and went ahead of him into the big room with Mrs. Haldan's empty chair near the window, and from that to another room that was full of light, and from which the sobbing must have come at the gate. In the open door of this room Carla waited, and without turning her head gave him her hand. It was a cold, lifeless little hand, with no spark left of the warmth and thrill which he had felt in it a few hours before. He closed his own over it tightly, for the hand, more than Carla's face and eyes, struck the truth to his heart. They went in. Mrs. Haldan lay in her bed. Her face was lighted with peace, her lips were gently smiling. She was very white and very still. Paul knew she was dead.

Carla drew him nearer. When they were beside her mother she looked up at him. Her eyes, flooded with their pain, were starry bright, almost with pride, almost with glory.

"Beautiful," she whispered, the word breaking in her throat.

Paul bowed his head. "Yes, she is beautiful," he said, fighting to keep his voice even.

The hand which was not holding Carla's he placed on her mother's white forehead. For a few moments they stood in this way. Then the same impulse which had drawn his boyish lips to his mother's cold face

It Was Carla! No One Else in the Cottage Could Be Crying Like That.

when her soul was gone made him bend over and kiss the smooth, white brow where his hand had lain. A little cry tore itself from Carla's breast, and freeing her hand from Paul's she sank down upon her knees and pressed her face closely against her mother. For an eternity, it seemed to him, he stood over her—an eternity in which he could find no words for his lips to say, nothing which might help a little to ease the grief which had come so suddenly and crushingly upon her.

Slowly he put out a hand until it rested on Carla's head. Then he gently stroked her hair, and after a little the tenseness went out of Carla's body, and she seemed to be sleeping beside her mother—sleeping with wide-open, misty eyes, which Paul could not see, while through the partly open window came to them the drone and grind and distant tumult of the pit.

CHAPTER V

On Tuesday they went to Peribonka.

For thirty minutes there was silence in the pit, the first time in three years. The pit demanded it. It cared nothing for James Kirke, on whose millions it fed, but for Carla Haldan it held a warm affection. Out of the pit came tributes of flowers which smothered the little cottage on the hill, and when Carla and her mother went to Peribonka the soul of the pit went with them. For the first time Paul looked down upon it and almost loved it.

The next day Carla was among her children in the school. This was the most amazing part of her fortitude. Two days later Paul was called unexpectedly to New York.

The new life which submerged him for a fortnight, its passionate business details, its conferences, the talk of still more millions, and of greater activities, was like a plunge into a maelstrom. His father and Durand had perfected a fresh scheme for bringing in another hundred million dollars of other people's money. Each day they were struggling to reach a little farther. Their huge new office building, with its appalling efficiency and ceaseless rush of living creatures, oppressed and dismayed him, and he was startled by its unexpected effect upon him. It was worse than the pit, for the pit had its redeeming edge of wilderness and its human forces at work with their naked hands in rock and clay. Here his mind seemed dulled, his wits blunted, his senses overwhelmed by the magnitude of the things which he knew were happening without the physical use of hands and bodies, without the flesh and blood vigor—the strain of brawn and muscle—which had made the pit endurable for him. He made no great effort to enter into it or to understand it. The house where his mother had lived seemed no longer even the husk of a home. It was filled with a cathedral stillness, wrapped up, packed away, moth-protected, like a palace whose occupants had suddenly died, a place guarded by soft-footed and obsequious servants who made him shiver. It was a sepulcher of hopes for him, a place of gayety and laughter and entertainment for Claire. Here he felt about him a clinging emptiness, a great loneliness, a haunting unrest—and in this same environment Claire would find amusement and happiness when she returned. The truth of the thing added to his heaviness of heart. A new note had come into his thoughts. He was beginning to ask himself if Claire, with all her wealth and freedom, were really happy. And if, in any way, it were possible for him to make her happy.

He had written to her immediately after the death of Carla's mother, and toward the end of the fortnight he sent her another letter. He wanted her more than ever, and in this last letter, his third since he had heard from her, he told of the loneliness of the great house, its emptiness, its coldness, and how only her golden presence could bring it back to life. Inspirationally he made a suggestion. If she would come back and spend only a little while with him upon the Mistassini, he would take her anywhere she might want to go when the job was off his hands—around the world, if that would please her. It would be rather wonderful, wouldn't it? Around the world—just they two! He asked the question with almost boyish hope and earnestness.

He was glad when the day arrived for him to leave for the Mistassini, for there seemed to be something of homeness about the pit for him now. The company boat met him at Roberval, across the lake. When he first caught the gleam of sunlight on the white, bare walls of the monastery at the mouth of the Peribonka, he felt as if a soothing and friendly influence had come to possess him.

A press of business awaited him at his office, and not until the day after his return did he see Carla. She was among her children, in the closing hour of school in the afternoon. The tragic strain which he had observed in her face before her mother's death had disappeared. A deeper and more permanent thing had taken its place, and though it was less poignant, it stirred him for a moment with a sensation of uneasiness, as if he had personally lost something. He could not tell just what it was, then or afterward. She seemed older, as if he had been away two years instead of two weeks, and he felt, in an unaccountable way, as if a distance as wide as the pit itself had come between them. Even the little tremble of gladness in her voice when she greeted him did not dispel this effect.

He walked with her to the cottage, and she gave him flowers for his office, and when he returned with them and put them on his desk, he was oppressed still more by the sense of having missed an important and necessary thing which he had expected to find when he came back to the pit. He was sure that Carla had been glad to see him. But she was not the same Carla he had taken over the blueberry plains to Peribonka. He doubted if she would personally come to his office with flowers again.

In this he was mistaken. She came on Saturday morning with an armful of asters. Another night or two of frost and they would all be gone, she said. She asked about Claire, and they talked for a few minutes of his visit to the city. She did not speak of her mother, or Peribonka, or anything that had to do with herself—except her flowers and her school. As she arranged the flowers she bent over his desk so that the silky head which he had stroked with his hand was very near him, and suddenly he felt himself overwhelmed by a flame that left no part of him untouched. When Carla's deft fingers finished their task, she found Paul looking at her with a face that was wholly Indian once more. He thanked her as he might have thanked her a year ago. His hand touched hers for just a moment, and a swift throb came in Carla's throat. Their eyes met, Carla's faultlessly clear and pure and filled with a shining light—Paul's with a somber, settled grimness far back in them.

At his door they paused another moment. Then Carla left him.

It was her last visit to his office.

Within an hour after she had gone Paul was driving to Peribonka alone. The roads had hardened, and he made it quickly in his car. The asters and a bunch of roses which had come to him from Roberval he placed on Mrs. Haldan's grave. Carla had been there, for the grave was well cared for and covered with flowers from her garden, most of them faded and shriveled by the frosts. These he gathered in a cluster and placed in a pot by themselves, near his roses. He remembered that Carla loved flowers even when their color and life were gone.

He made no effort to blind himself to the fact which had leaped upon him so irresistibly when he had looked at Carla's head bent over his desk. The futility of such evasion struck him with almost equal force. He wanted Carla, and that want was as much a part of him as his vision or his sense of the obligations of life. It was she who had brought him back to the Mistassini with a feeling that he was on his way home. His regard for her was not a sudden irruption brought about by a physical or emotional restlessness, which might have been stirred by her nearness and her beauty. He could look back and see where it had been growing in him slowly over a period of three years, so slowly that it had not been difficult for him to escape its true significance. But now there was no longer the possibility of either avoidance or self-deception. He knew that Carla meant more to him than friendship, and that only a miracle had held his arms from taking her into them.

He also believed that a flash of understanding had come into her eyes when she looked at him and saw in his face the grim shadowing of the fight which from that moment he was bound to make.

After this Paul was more than ever filled with the desire to go among the men and work with his hands, and he was seldom in his office. Every muscle in his body yearned for the strenuous activity of work which he saw piled upon others, and he let down the bars which his position had compelled him to accept, until, at times, one coming upon him in the pit would have taken him for a laborer. He was skillful with the ax, and one day late in October he had finished hewing a saddle into a heavy timber when he turned about to find Carla standing a few feet away, looking at him. She had come to the far edge of the pit to find the father of one of her boys, and for a moment it seemed to Paul that he caught in her face a look which bridged in a few seconds the abysmal gulf which he had felt growing between them since her mother's death. He went to her, breathing quickly because of his exertions, and Carla laughed softly, almost with a little triumph in her throat, when he showed her his hands blackened by pine pitch.

He went to Peribonka frequently during these autumn days, and once a week he had flowers sent to him from Roberval for Mrs. Haldan's grave. Carla knew of his visits to the little cemetery, and Paul made no effort to conceal them from her. He never went on Sunday, which was Carla's day with her mother. When she tried to express to him the depth of her gratitude, he talked as if it were the spirit of his own mother he was thinking of when he took flowers to Peribonka. But he felt he was not hiding the truth from her, and was rather glad of it. It was a satisfaction for him to know that Carla was conscious of his thoughts about her. It made his fight easier, gave it a certain thrill, which comes to a man when he is aware that some one he cares for is watching him. And the knowledge of it could not harm Carla, in whose life another love had fastened itself so securely that no corner of her heart could be filled with an emotion responsive to his own. They made no effort to avoid each other, except that he did not take her to Peribonka and she did not come to his office any more, and one day when they were together he asked her frankly why she did not marry. No sooner were the words spoken than he was sorry. He could see the hurt flame up for an instant in her eyes, like a fire from which a curtain had been suddenly snatched away; and then it died out, leaving her face a little whiter, but smiling at him gently, as if she were apologizing for letting it affect her in that way. Then she told him. It was almost traditional in their family that a woman should have but one love. And she had loved a man, still loved him, with all her heart and soul, though he was gone from her forever. The love had come into her life a long time ago. She emphasized this fact, gazing away from him with her long lashes veiling eyes filled with mystic visions.

He was glad he had heard the words from her own lips. It built up a new comradeship between them and made him more positive of his triumph over himself. A letter from Claire helped him. His wife laughed at him pleasantly for his whimsical suggestion of a journey around the world, and then painted in her picturesque and vivid way the torture which she knew such a trip would be for him. "Without your forests, your open skies, your big outdoors, you would die before we got half around, Paul," she wrote him. "It would be merciless of me to make you pay in that way for my presence up at the Mistassini. I am coming, and just because I want to come. I am anticipating seeing something very wonderful up there, something which will mean greatly more to you and me than six months or a year rambling around the earth. As for such a trip, with you in it"—and then she went on to tell him more about himself than he thought she had ever known. The letter thrilled him. It gave him a new vision of Claire, who had never analyzed him in this gentle and understanding way, portraying for him the life which he loved as though it were a part of herself. But in the end, after assuring him again that she was coming to him and was looking forward to the time when they would be together, she said her return to America might be postponed until the following May or June. Could he wait that long?

Carla also received a letter from Claire. It was filled with a womanly tenderness and sympathy for one who had suffered a great loss, and was filled with the intimate knowledge and sentiment which could only have been given and inspired by Paul. Carla let him read it. Her eyes were strangely alight, though she had prepared herself to show it to him.

"You told me once that millions could not buy sentiment," she said. "And millions could not bring what has come in her letter. It is her heart speaking to me."

Carla became so deeply absorbed in work outside of her school that he did not talk with her again for a week. She formed evening classes, in which she taught English to the adults who wanted to come to them, and the few spare hours of her afternoons were spent among the mothers of her school children. With the coming of winter Paul buried himself more passionately in the actual stress of outdoor labor, leaving his office routine largely to others, and the change benefited him. Carla, on the other hand, seemed to have assumed too great a burden. The strain, if it were that, began to show its effect on her, until Lucy-Belle noted it and remonstrated with Paul.

"Every day she is growing less like the Carla we knew before her mother died," she told him. "She is breaking under an effort to keep her mind away from herself. Yesterday I dropped into her cottage for a moment when I knew she was there, and I found her crying. She is growing paler, and it frightens me to see the loveliness fading slowly out of her face. You must do something, Paul, make her drop her night classes, send her away for a vacation if you can. I think I am the only one she confides in at all, and I should not betray her confidence—not even what I have guessed about her. But something is eating at her life which isn't entirely the loss of her mother. She insists that her night work is a pleasure, says she is feeling well and doesn't want to go away. But I know of a dream she has always had of visiting her mother's country. If the company could arrange something like that—"

Paul saw Carla the next day, a cold Sunday with snow on the ground. For the first time in many weeks they had a long walk together, and at the beginning of it she settled any suggestions he might have had in his mind. It was as if she saw written in his face what Lucy-Belle had said to him. She mentioned Mrs. Derwent's visit and told him what she had said about her work, smiling the other's fears away as absurd and without reason, and adding with a very decisive little note in her voice that to give up this work or go away, as Lucy-Belle had suggested, was the last thing she would think of doing.

She had heard again from his wife. It was her third letter, and came from Capri, where she was spending the winter, painting. Claire had sent her a little sketch of the vineyards and the picturesque houses on their rock cliffs. These letters, Carla said, would always remain brightly in her memories, they were so friendly and cheering. She had answered them, and had tried to tell Claire a little about her own work, and of the glory and beauty of the great forests and mighty rivers near them. But she lacked the creative soul which his wife possessed, and could not adequately describe them.

Paul knew that something of Carla's real soul was gone even as she talked to him.

His own dragged heavily through the winter. Spring came, and his days at the pit were almost over. August would see his work finished. He did not know what he would do then, he told Carla. Things were happening in South America. He might go there. Carla's future was settled for another year. The government had offered her a contract to remain with the children on the Mistassini and she had accepted. She hoped that within a year or two she might be able to find a place in Peribonka near her mother.

Late in May Paul's wife sailed from Cherbourg and, to his surprise, was coming straight to Quebec to join him.

"That is wonderful of her," said Carla, her eyes shining with the light which was always in them when she was thinking or speaking of Claire. "She is coming directly to you!"

The day he left for Quebec he saw her for a few moments to say good-by.

"I wish I were a man—and you," she said.

A radiance was in her face when he left her.

That evening, at dinner, Lucy-Belle said to her husband: "Carla's school was closed this afternoon. Beryl told me she dismissed the children because she had a headache. We must go over and see her."

"I have been there," replied Derwent. "I was a bit worried when one of the boys told me what had happened, so I went over to see if she needed me, and found her—crying."

"Oh!" exclaimed Lucy-Belle. "Now I think I understand!"

She said nothing more to her husband about Carla Haldan.

(Continued Next Week.)

Sugar doesn't always sweeten politics.

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Many a professional funny man doesn't know how sadly funny he really is.

We often wonder what Necessity, looking over some of the inventions, thinks of her children.

NOTICE FOR PULICATION—Department of the Interior, U. S. Land Office at The Dalles, Oregon, Oct. 22, 1929.

Notice is hereby given that Peter Dohm of The Dalles, Oregon, who, on Sept. 24, 1924 made H. E. 023268 and also H. E. 023339, both under Act Dec. 29, 1916, for Lot 1, Sec.12, T. 1 S., R. 15 E., NE¼SW¼, Sec. 5, SE¼NE¼, Sec. 6, N½NE¼, NE¼NW¼, Lots 1, 2, Section 7, Township 1-South, Range 16-East, Willamette Meridian, has filed notice of intention to make final three year proof, to establish claim to the land above described, before Register, United States Land Office, at The Dalles, Oregon, on the 14th day of December, 1929.

Claimant names as witnesses: James A. Claussen of Dufur, Oregon Glenn O. Allen of The Dalles Oregon Elliott P. Roberts of The Dalles, Oregon, George Petroff of The Dalles, Oregon.

J. W. Donnelly, Register

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