

The God of her People

BY

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY REMINGTON SCHUYLER

A stirring tale of romance and adventure which shows the difference between the white man's god and the red man's god

INSPECTOR McBAIN of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police did not go into sentimental details when he called in Philip Needham from barracks and explained to him the trouble that was brewing up at the headwaters of the Beaver. He introduced him to Jean Pierrot, the slim, soft-voiced French half-breed who had come down through three hundred miles of wilderness with the news, and who sat with his big dark eyes staring hard at Philip as the Inspector went over in five minutes the facts which it had taken him three-quarters of an hour to tell.

"The Sarcees and the Swamp Crees are ready to jump at one another's throats up on the Beaver," said the Inspector. "The trouble began with a fight in which the Sarcees murdered a missionary. Isn't that it, Jean?"

"Non, M'sieur," replied the half-breed. "They did not murder him. They killed him."

"God save us!" chuckled the big Inspector. "Here's a half savage from the jungle who sees a difference between murder and killing which we don't see in law, Philip. According to our code the missionary was murdered, and the affair has started trouble that promises a tribal war. I'm not going to send a dozen nor half a dozen men up there to stop the fight. I'm going to send you—alone—as peacemaker, and to bring back as many of the Sarcees as you like. Cockburn as factor on the Beaver and you can get all of the assistance you want from him and the Crees. The trouble started over a woman. She's a young Cree. Maballa is her name, Jean says, and you may have to bring her back with you. She's

a pagan and a renegade, for she has left the Crees to join the Sarcees."

It was the second day after, when they were resting from a hard portage on the lower Sturgeon, that Jean Pierrot made answer to what the Inspector had said.

"Sometimes, M'sieur," he said in his low quiet voice, "I think that there must be more than one God—that there must be three, your God, and mine, and a God for such as she and her people."

Philip was lighting his pipe, but paused until the flame of his match burned the tips of his fingers.

"Maballa, you mean," he said, striking another."

"Yes, Maballa, M'sieur—and the Sarcees."

"They are pagans," said Philip, puffing out smoke, "so how can they have a God?"

"There was a time when I believed that there was but one God, M'sieur," replied Jean. "I am a Catholic, and I carry an ivory cross of the Virgin on my breast. I thought there was but one God—our God—until I was sent to school in Montreal. After that I worked for the Great Company for three years, and I saw a great deal of your God—the God of what I heard called Civilization. It is a different God from the God of our big North; down there even the God of the Virgin is a different God. You worship Him in your big churches on one day, and then for the six days that follow you lie, you cheat, you ruin one another, you break the ten commandments. We have no churches. Our God is about us, in the forests, the swamps, in the night play of the aurora; we don't shout His name, we don't have brass bands to work for Him, but most

that the business has evolved to such an extent that the name no longer fits. If he were simply an agent, he would be a middleman with no financial responsibilities. That is to say, if an advertiser, having failed in business, could not pay his bills, the publication that carried the advertising would be compelled to stand the loss. Yet, in these days, the advertising agency stands the loss.

Moreover, much of Mr. Presbrey's activities are only preliminary to advertising. He is a sort of consulting industrial engineer, with a specialty along the line of distribution. A large part of his business is to find out what is the matter, to demonstrate that he is right and to show what to do.

But such activities only intensify the abounding faith in the power of publicity that brought him into the advertising business. The one word that he uses over and over and over again is "distribution." Start the stream to flowing. Keep the way clear. Put things where they belong--in the hands of consumers.

Which is easily said, but sometimes apparently all but impossible to do. How should one go about it, for instance, to advertise plumbers' supplies? All of the plumbers in the country might advertise bargain sales, and the women would pass them by to crush around the silk counters where \$1.50 goods were being sacrificed for 50 cents. And, what man would be lured away from a new suit by the knowledge that he could get a bathtub at 20 per cent. off the regular price?

Until Frank Presbrey's time, even the manufacturers of plumbers' supplies did not believe their wares could be profitably advertised. Mr. Presbrey believed otherwise. He believed otherwise because he had a plan in mind that had never occurred to the manufacturers. He laid his plan before one of the largest firms in the country. They were interested, but not excited. They believed just enough in it not to refuse to put any money into it, but not enough to put much money into it. They would experiment a little and see what happened.

This is what happened. Their business began to grow at once. In a year or two it had doubled. Nor did the growth stop at doubling. It is still going on.

This is what Mr. Presbrey did:

He edited and published for the firm a little magazine devoted to the plumbing trade. The paper upon which it was printed was the best. The illustrations with which it was lightened up were the brightest. The best technical experts contributed to its pages. Each month, every plumber in the United States received a free copy.

What good did that do the plumbing firm? Wait.

The subject matter pertained exclusively to matters that suggested the craft of the plumber. There was every kind of article, from the sort that described "The Bath as a Marriage Rite" to the other kind that deftly pictured in word and half-tone the sumptuous tanks in which kings paddle around when they come home tired from a hard day's work. And, along toward the back of each number, there was a department in which experts took up the various knotty jobs that trouble plumbers and told them precisely how to solve their problems. In each number there was also much other solid information, of practical value to this kind of workers.

Naturally, the magazine was of great interest to plumbers. The general articles appealed to them because of their inherent interest and the magnificence with which they were illustrated. And, while they were turning the pages, they could not well overlook the occasional page that was devoted to the advertising of the firm's wares. It was not that the pages barked out at them in big black type. The pages did not bark at all. They were splendid in their artistic dignity and good taste. The fact that the firm made beautiful bathtubs was not told in type, so much as it was told in a picture, printed so superbly upon heavy paper that it required no text beyond the name of the maker. And thus, by mere suggestion, it gradually came about that the plumbers themselves began to tell their firms and the public the story that the manufacturers themselves could never have told so well.

Mr. Presbrey appears to be quite within the facts in his contention that the advertising agency business has outgrown its name. Mr. Presbrey and men of his type are really experts in the problem of making merchandise move. If lawyers be attorneys at law, these men are attorneys at distribution.

of us wear His crosses and live up to Him in our way, which is a different way than yours. For these reasons I know there are two Gods, my God and yours, and I almost believe there is a third—for her people."

Something in the manner of Jean's saying these things stirred Philip strangely. The half-breed's dark eyes glowed with a warm fire. His thin sensitive face seemed to quiver with an emotion which he fought to keep back. There was the graceful poise of an animal in his slender, steel-sinewed body as he hunched himself over to peer up the river; a fascination about him—in the sun shining in his jet-black hair, in the soft Cree melody of his voice, the cool daring of his beautiful eyes.

"And what kind of a God would you have for a pagan God?" queried Philip.

"I don't know," said Jean, straightening himself. "I have thought of it a good deal, M'sieur, but I don't know. Perhaps you can help me." Philip caught an eager, almost hopeful, look in the other's eyes. "The Sarcees are not only pagans, but the last of what was once a great race. There are less than a score of them, counting women and children, up where we are going, M'sieur. It is what is left of the Lone Arrow tribe. Twenty years ago, when it was much stronger, this tribe came upon a Cree village which had been deserted because of the red plague—the smallpox, and in one of the tepees they found a half-dead little babe, deserted by its people. They were deadly enemies then—the Crees and the Sarcees, M'sieur—and yet the Sarcees took this babe, and saved its life—because it was a babe, and helpless. I ask you, M'sieur, would a people without a God have done this—when the other people, the people *with* a God, abandoned the child to its death? That child, M'sieur, was Maballa, the Cree pagan."

Jean's eyes glistened.

"Would a Godless people have done that, M'sieur?" he demanded.

"No, Jean—"

"And that was not all," continued Jean, turning his face again up the river, and speaking for a moment as if to no one but himself. "She came to the Post after that, ten years later, when M'sieur Simpson was factor, and la Madame took a great fancy to her and taught her a great deal that civilized people know. Then she died, la Madame, and the new factor and his Cree wife came to the Post. Maballa loved her

adopted people, and for that all the Crees hated her and shunned her. The factor's Cree wife hated her most of all, more than she hated the Sarcees. Three times a year Lone Arrow's son came to the Post with what was left of his father's tribe, and brought their furs, and it was at these times that the young people, grown now to manhood and young womanhood, found their hearts beating with love."

Pierrot rose to his feet and looked far up the river, with his back to Philip.

"The Sarcee band came last to the Post six weeks ago," he finished. "A little before that the new Missioner had come over from Churchill. He was bad, M'sieur. He attempted to insult Maballa in a way which is common to the followers of the civilized man's God. Maballa fled to the Sarcee camp, and Sakimay, the pagan son of Lone Arrow, hunted the Missioner out and they fought. The Missioner was killed; so was Sakimay. Their two graves are side by side, so close that you may reach from one to the other. Over the Missioner's grave is the white cross of God; around Sakimay's there is a fence of sapling pickets, tins filled with meat, a tiny canoe, a tepee as large as your hand, and such weapons, made of wood, as he will need in the hereafter. There are ten or fifteen of the Sarcees, and they have drawn back a few miles, and guarded themselves. There has been a little fighting, and it is fortunate for the Sarcees that a Cree and a half-breed have been killed. I do not understand why the Sarcees remain, for some day will find them all dead unless they move. I think, M'sieur, it must be because of Maballa. For each day two women come to the graves with their offerings for the dead. One of these is the Missioner's Indian wife, who has turned Christian, and the other is Maballa, the pagan Cree."

For days after this stop at the portage Jean Pierrot spoke no more of Maballa and her people, except to answer Philip's questions. He dropped into the moody silence of the forest man, saying no more than a dozen words at night when they stopped to camp, even when Philip brought up again and again the question of the three Gods. The half-breed was always sitting beside the fire when he went to his blankets, and once he awoke, long after midnight, to find Jean sitting where he had left him hours before. After a time Philip ceased to question him, and began to study him in another way.



"SAKIMAY, THE PAGAN SON OF LONE ARROW, HUNTED THE MISSIONER
OUT AND THEY FOUGHT"



"I SAW MABALLA AND SHE TOOK ME BY THE HAND"

He knew that something was troubling Jean. Several times, when Jean thought him asleep, he saw Pierrot take the ivory cross from his breast and hold it in his hands; and one night, when the spring wind was wailing mournfully through the spruce tops, Jean

stood up in the light of the camp-fire with his hands and the cross stretched above his head, as if in an attitude of prayer.

The night before they came to the Post on the Beaver, Pierrot raised his head from between his hands and looked across the fire at Philip, who was smoking his pipe.

"M'sieur," he exclaimed suddenly, "I have never seen a more beautiful woman than Maballa, even in Montreal and Quebec. I have seen her with her hair down, M'sieur, falling to her knees, glistening like a raven's wing in the sun. Her voice is like that of the bird-flutes which we make of reeds—for she is a Cree. I swear to God if she was not a pagan I would fight for her, and for her people."

In an instant Philip had gone to his side, and reached down a hand.

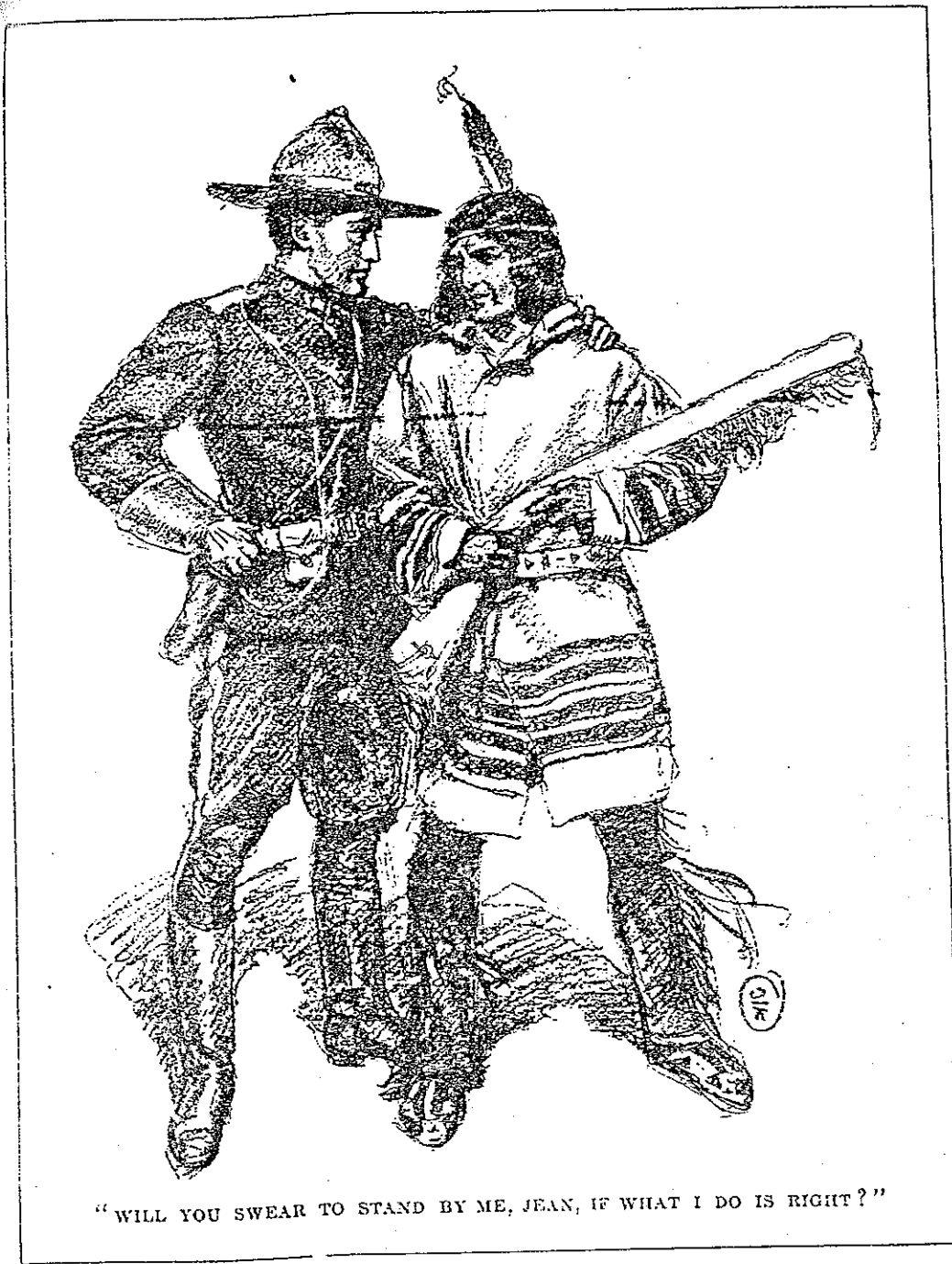
"Jean Pierrot," he said quietly. "You, too, love this girl."

Jean lifted his head slowly. His slim, dark hand met Philip's; in his eyes there glowed a soft light.

"Yes, M'sieur, I love her."

He dropped his head again, slowly, and said: "But she has betrayed her God. If

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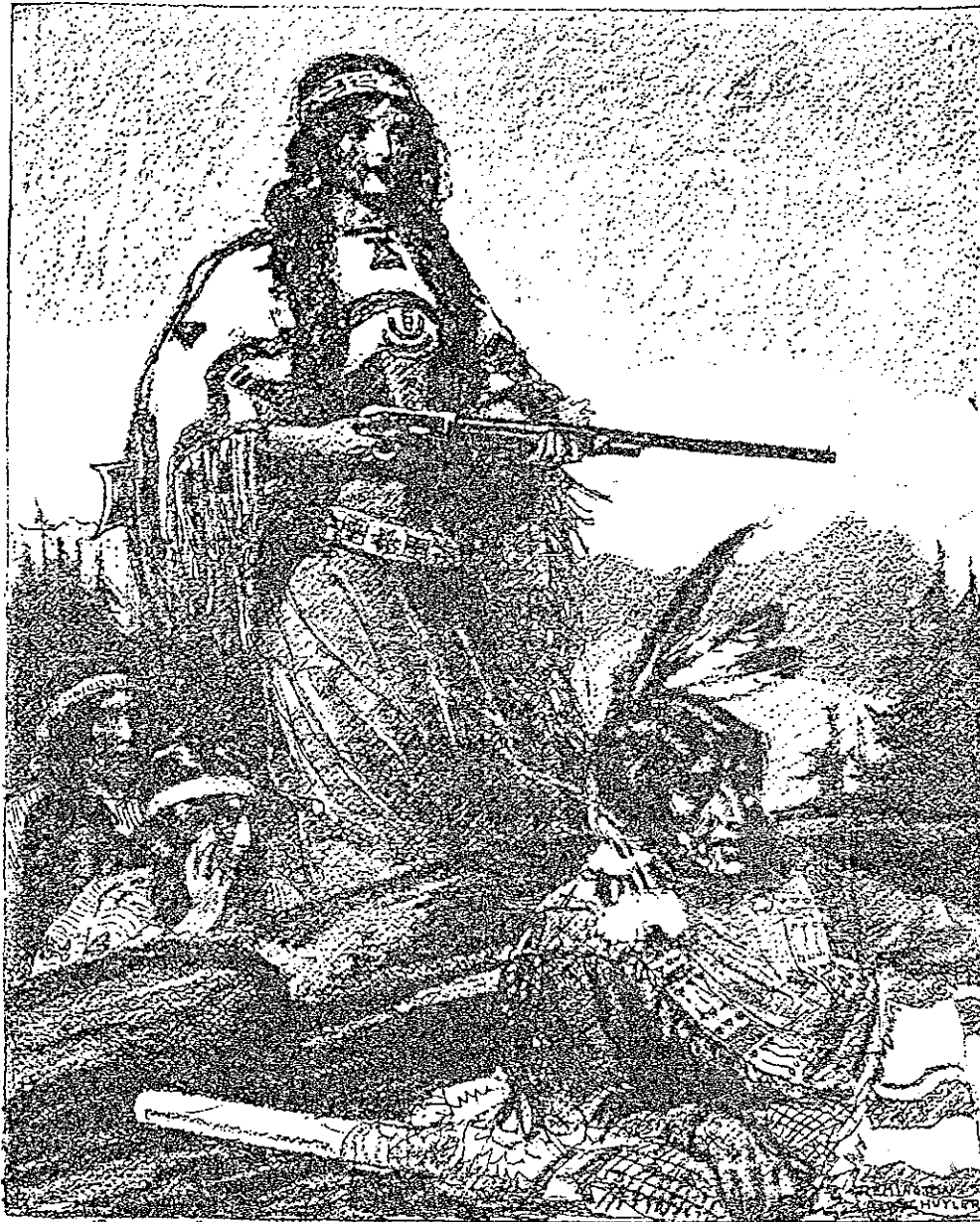
"WILL YOU SWEAR TO STAND BY ME, JEAN, IF WHAT I DO IS RIGHT?"

I went to her now, after Sakimay is dead, and gave her my love, and fought for her, I would be betraying my God—the God of the Virgin—for a woman. For she is a pagan."

As the half-breed walked out into the gloom Philip watched him until his form disappeared among the forest shadows,

wondering what the world would be if, the God of all people were as omniscient as this God of Jean Pierrot's.

It was the deep gray dusk of a night that promised rain when the canoe of Philip and Jean Pierrot came into the last straight-water of the Beaver, a quarter of a mile



UNDER HIS EYES THE LAST OF A RACE WERE DYING

from the Post. Above the thick spruce and balsam there was an unusual glow in the sky, and when their canoe ran into the landing they were greeted by a mad rush of howling dogs and a crowd of Cree masters who lashed right and left with short whips, while a dozen Indian boys shouted and

kicked in the faces of the savage huskies. Philip noticed that most of the men carried rifles.

The Inuit brought Cockburn, the factor, to the door of the Company store, and when he saw that one of the newcomers was Jean Pierrot he lost no time in shaking