

THE HILL OF PAINS

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The Hill of Pains by Gilbert Parker

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GILBERT PARKER

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GILBERT PARKER

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of the Strong, etc.*



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The Hill of Pains



I.

SEE, madame, see,— there, on the Hill of Pains! . . . One more . . . one more.”

“One more, Marie, . . . it is the life: that on the Hill, this here below; and yet the sun is bright, the cockatoos are laughing in the palms, and you hear my linnet singing.”

“It turns slowly, . . . slowly. Now It points across the Winter Valley. . . Ah!”

“Yes, across the Winter Valley, where the deep woods are, and beyond”—

“And beyond?”

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"To the Pascal River."

"And my home is at the Pascal River. . . . How dim the sunshine has become! I can only see It now — like a long dark finger." . . .

"No, child, there is bright sunshine still: there is no cloud at all; but It *is* like a finger. It is quivering now, as if it were not sure."

"Thanksgiving, if it be not sure! . . . but the hill is cloudy still."

"No, Marie, how droll you are! The hill is not cloudy: even from here one can see something glisten beside the grove of pines."

"I know. It is the White Rock where King Ovi died, but whose burial-place none knows."

"A black king merely."

"His heart was not black: there are stains upon White Rock, and

they are red. . . . Is it still upon the Hill of Pains, madame?"

"Yes, still, and pointing as you say, like a human finger, towards Winter Valley."

"I did not say a *human* finger, madame. There is nothing human there."

"Yet was not that the gleam of bayonets near the palisade?"

"But bayonets are not human, neither here in Noumea, nor yet on Isle Nou over there."

"You are sad to-day, my Marie. Have you had lonely dreams?"

"*You* are human, madame. It is like summer always where you are. Is it very bright out there just now? Sometimes, . . . sometimes, madame, things are so dark to me."

"Marie, turn your face to me so !

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Your eyes do not see, my child, because they are full of tears. The cloud is in them, not on the world. See, I kiss this rain away."

"Yes, it is my eyes, madame."

"It is the tears, Marie."

"I weep for the cloud out there upon the world, and yet the cloud is in my eyes."

"You weep because of It, Marie. Your heart is tender. Your tears are for the prisoner,—the hunted in the chase."

"No, madame, I am selfish. I weep for myself. Tell me truly, as—as if I were your own child, was there no cloud, no darkness, out there?"

"None, dear."

"Then,—then,—madame, I suppose it was my tears."