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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE TRANSLATION OF A SAVAGE, VOLUME 1 ***

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THE TRANSLATION OF A SAVAGE

By Gilbert Parker

Volume 1.

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INTRODUCTION

The Translation of a Savage was written in the early autumn of 1893, at Hampstead Heath, where for over twenty years I have gone, now and then, when I wished to be in an atmosphere conducive to composition. Hampstead is one of the parts of London which has as yet been scarcely invaded by the lodging-house keeper. It is very difficult to get apartments at Hampstead; it is essentially a residential place; and, like Chelsea, has literary and artistic character all its own. I think I have seen more people carrying books in their hands at Hampstead than in any other spot in England; and there it was, perched above London, with eyes looking towards the Atlantic over the leagues of land and the thousand leagues of sea, that I wrote 'The Translation of a Savage'. It was written, as it were, in one concentrated effort, a ceaseless writing. It was, in effect, what the Daily Chronicle said of 'When Valmond Came to Pontiac', a tour de force. It belonged to a genre which compelled me to dispose of a thing in one continuous effort, or the impulse, impetus, and fulness of movement was gone. The writing of a book of the kind admitted of no invasion from extraneous sources, and that was why, while writing 'The Translation of a Savage' at Hampstead, my letters were only delivered to me once a week. I saw no friends, for no one knew where I was; but I walked the heights, I practised with my golf clubs on the Heath, and I sat in the early autumn evenings looking out at London in that agony of energy which its myriad lives represented. It was a good time.

The story had a basis of fact; the main incident was true. It happened, however, in Michigan rather than in Canada; but I placed the incident in Canada where it was just as true to the life. I was living in Hertfordshire at the time of writing the story, and that is why the English scenes were worked out in Hertfordshire and in London. When I had finished the tale, there came over me suddenly a kind of feeling that the incident was too bold and maybe too crude to be believed, and I was almost tempted to consign it to the flames; but the editor of 'The English Illustrated Magazine', Sir C. Kinloch-Cooke, took a wholly different view, and eagerly published it. The judgment of the press was favourable,—highly so —and I was as much surprised as pleased when Mr. George Moore, in the Hogarth Club one night, in 1894, said to me: "There is a really remarkable play in that book of yours, 'The Translation, of a Savage'." I had not thought up to that time that my work was of the kind which would appeal to George Moore, but he was always making discoveries. Meeting him in Pall Mall one day, he said to me: "My dear fellow, I have made a great discovery. I have been reading the Old Testament. It is magnificent. In the mass of its incoherence it has a series of the most marvellous stories. Do you remember—" etc. Then he came home and had tea with me, revelling, in the meantime, on having discovered the Bible!

I cannot feel that 'The Translation of a Savage' has any significance beyond the truthfulness with which I believe it describes the transformation, or rather the evolution, of a primitive character into a character with an intelligence of perception and a sympathy which is generally supposed to be the outcome of long processes of civilisation and culture. The book has so many friends—this has been sufficiently established by the very large sale it has had in cheap editions—that I am still disposed to feel it was an inevitable manifestation in the progress of my art, such as it is. People of diverse conditions of life have found in it something to interest and to stimulate. One of the most volcanic of the Labour members in the House of Commons told me that the violence of his opposition to me in debate on a certain bill was greatly moderated by the fact that I had written 'The Translation of a Savage'; while a certain rather grave duke remarked to me concerning the character of Lali that "She would have been all right anywhere." I am bound to say that he was a duke who, while a young man, knew the wilds of Canada and the United States almost as well as I know Westminster.

THE TRANSLATION OF A SAVAGE

CHAPTER I

HIS GREAT MISTAKE

It appeared that Armour had made the great mistake of his life. When people came to know, they said that to have done it when sober had shown him possessed of a kind of maliciousness and cynicism almost pardonable, but to do it when tipsy proved him merely weak and foolish. But the fact is, he was less tipsy at the time than was imagined; and he could have answered to more malice and cynicism than was credited to him. To those who know the world it is not singular that, of the two, Armour was thought to have made the mistake and had the misfortune, or that people wasted their pity and their scorn upon him alone. Apparently they did not see that the woman was to be pitied. He had married her; and she was only an Indian girl from Fort Charles of the Hudson's Bay Company, with a little honest white blood in her veins. Nobody, not even her own people, felt that she had anything at stake,

or was in danger of unhappiness, or was other than a person who had ludicrously come to bear the name of Mrs. Francis Armour. If any one had said in justification that she loved the man, the answer would have been that plenty of Indian women had loved white men, but had not married them, and yet the population of half- breeds went on increasing.

Frank Armour had been a popular man in London. His club might be found in the vicinity of Pall Mall, his father's name was high and honoured in the Army List, one of his brothers had served with Wolseley in Africa, and Frank himself, having no profession, but with a taste for business and investment, had gone to Canada with some such intention as Lord Selkirk's in the early part of the century. He owned large shares in the Hudson's Bay Company, and when he travelled through the North-West country, prospecting, he was received most hospitably. Of an inquiring and gregarious nature he went as much among the half-breeds—or 'metis', as they are called—and Indians as among the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company and the white settlers. He had ever been credited with having a philosophical turn of mind; and this was accompanied by a certain strain of impulsiveness or daring. He had been accustomed all his life to make up his mind quickly and, because he was well enough off to bear the consequences of momentary rashness in commercial investments, he was not counted among the transgressors. He had his own fortune; he was not drawing upon a common purse. It was a different matter when he trafficked rashly in the family name so far as to marry the daughter of Eye-of-the-Moon, the Indian chief.

He was tolerably happy when he went to the Hudson's Bay country; for Miss Julia Sherwood was his promised wife, and she, if poor, was notably beautiful and of good family. His people had not looked quite kindly on this engagement; they had, indeed, tried in many ways to prevent it; partly because of Miss Sherwood's poverty, and also because they knew that Lady Agnes Martling had long cared for him, and was most happily endowed with wealth and good looks also. When he left for Canada they were inwardly glad (they imagined that something might occur to end the engagement)—all except Richard, the wiseacre of the family, the book- man, the drone, who preferred living at Greyhope, their Hertfordshire home, the year through, to spending half the time in Cavendish Square. Richard was very fond of Frank, admiring him immensely for his buxom strength and cleverness, and not a little, too, for that very rashness which had brought him such havoc at last.

Richard was not, as Frank used to say, "perfectly sound on his pins," —that is, he was slightly lame, but he was right at heart. He was an immense reader, but made little use of what he read. He had an abundant humour, and remembered every anecdote he ever heard. He was kind to the poor, walked much, talked to himself as he walked, and was known by the humble sort as "a'centric." But he had a wise head, and he foresaw danger to Frank's happiness when he went away. While others had gossiped and manoeuvred and were busily idle, he had watched things. He saw that Frank was dear to Julia in proportion to the distance between her and young Lord Haldwell, whose father had done something remarkable in guns or torpedoes and was rewarded with a lordship and an uncommonly large fortune. He also saw that, after Frank left, the distance between Lord Haldwell and Julia became distinctly less —they were both staying at Greyhope. Julia Sherwood was a remarkably clever girl. Though he felt it his duty to speak to her for his brother,—a difficult and delicate matter, he thought it would come better from his mother.

But when he took action it was too late. Miss Sherwood naively declared that she had not known her own heart, and that she did not care for Frank any more. She wept a little, and was soothed by motherly Mrs. Armour, who was inwardly glad, though she knew the matter would cause Frank pain; and even General Armour could not help showing slight satisfaction, though he was innocent of any deliberate action to separate the two. Straightway Miss Sherwood despatched a letter to the wilds of Canada, and for a week was an unengaged young person. But she was no doubt consoled by the fact that for some time past she had had complete control of Lord Haldwell's emotions. At the end of the week her perceptions were justified by Lord Haldwell's proposal, which, with admirable tact and obvious demureness, was accepted.

Now, Frank Armour was wandering much in the wilds, so that his letters and papers went careering about after him, and some that came first were last to reach him. That was how he received a newspaper announcing the marriage of Lord Haldwell and Julia Sherwood at the same time that her letter, written in estimable English and with admirable feeling, came, begging for a release from their engagement, and, towards its close, assuming, with a charming regret, that all was over, and that the last word had been said between them.

Armour was sitting in the trader's room at Fort Charles when the carrier came with the mails. He had had some successful days hunting buffalo with Eye-of-the-Moon and a little band of metis, had had a long pow-wow in Eye-of-the-Moon's lodge, had chatted gaily with Lali the daughter, and was now prepared to enjoy heartily the arrears of correspondence and news before him. He ran his hand through the letters and papers, intending to classify them immediately, according to such handwriting

as he recognised and the dates on the envelopes. But, as he did so, he saw a newspaper from which the wrapper was partly torn. He also saw a note in the margin directing him to a certain page. The note was in Richard's handwriting. He opened the paper at the page indicated and saw the account of the marriage! His teeth clinched on his cigar, his face turned white, the paper fell from his fingers. He gasped, his hands spread out nervously, then caught the table and held it as though to steady himself.

The trader rose. "You are ill," he said. "Have you bad news?" He glanced towards the paper. Slowly Armour folded the paper up, and then rose unsteadily. "Gordon," he said, "give me a glass of brandy."

He turned towards the cupboard in the room. The trader opened it, took out a bottle, and put it on the table beside Armour, together with a glass and some water. Armour poured out a stiff draught, added a very little water, and drank it. He drew a great sigh, and stood looking at the paper.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Armour?" urged the trader.

"Nothing, thank you, nothing at all. Just leave the brandy here, will you? I feel knocked about, and I have to go through the rest of these letters."

He ran his fingers through the pile, turning it over hastily, as if searching for something. The trader understood. He was a cool-headed Scotsman; he knew that there were some things best not inquired into, and that men must have their bad hours alone. He glanced at the brandy debatingly, but presently turned and left the room in silence. In his own mind, however, he wished he might have taken the brandy without being discourteous. Armour had discovered Miss Sherwood's letter. Before he opened it he took a little more brandy. Then he sat down and read it deliberately. The liquor had steadied him. The fingers of one hand even drummed on the table. But the face was drawn, the eyes were hard, and the look of him was altogether pinched. After he had finished this, he looked for others from the same hand. He found none. Then he picked out those from his mother and father. He read them grimly. Once he paused as he read his mother's letter, and took a gulp of plain brandy. There was something very like a sneer on his face when he finished reading. He read the hollowness of the sympathy extended to him; he understood the far from adroit references to Lady Agnes Martling. He was very bitter. He opened no more letters, but took up the Morning Post again, and read it slowly through. The look of his face was not pleasant. There was a small looking-glass opposite him. He caught sight of himself in it. He drew his hand across his eyes and forehead, as though he was in a miserable dream. He looked again; he could not recognise himself.

He then bundled the letters and papers into his despatch-box. His attention was drawn to one letter. He picked it up. It was from Richard. He started to break the seal, but paused. The strain of the event was too much; he winced. He determined not to read it then, to wait until he had recovered himself. He laughed now painfully. It had been better for him—it had, maybe, averted what people were used to term his tragedy—had he read his brother's letter at that moment. For Richard Armour was a sensible man, notwithstanding his peculiarities; and perhaps the most sensible words he ever wrote were in that letter thrust unceremoniously into Frank Armour's pocket. Armour had received a terrible blow. He read his life backwards. He had no future. The liquor he had drunk had not fevered him, it had not wildly excited him; it merely drew him up to a point where he could put a sudden impulse into practice without flinching. He was bitter against his people; he credited them with more interference than was actual. He felt that happiness had gone out of his life and left him hopeless. As we said, he was a man of quick decisions. He would have made a dashing but reckless soldier; he was not without the elements of the gamester. It is possible that there was in him also a strain of cruelty, undeveloped but radical. Life so far had evolved the best in him; he had been cheery and candid. Now he travelled back into new avenues of his mind and found strange, aboriginal passions, fully adapted to the present situation. Vulgar anger and reproaches were not after his nature. He suddenly found sources of refined but desperate retaliation. He drew upon them. He would do something to humiliate his people and the girl who had spoiled his life. Some one thing! It should be absolute and lasting, it should show how low had fallen his opinion of women, of whom Julia Sherwood had once been chiefest to him. In that he would show his scorn of her. He would bring down the pride of his family, who, he believed, had helped, out of mere selfishness, to tumble his happiness into the shambles.

He was older by years than an hour ago. But he was not without the faculty of humour; that was why he did not become very excited; it was also why he determined upon a comedy which should have all the elements of tragedy. Perhaps, however, he would have hesitated to carry his purposes to immediate conclusions, were it not that the very gods seemed to play his game with him. For, while he stood there, looking out into the yard of the fort, a Protestant missionary passed the window. The Protestant missionary, as he is found at such places as Fort Charles, is not a strictly superior person. A Jesuit might have been of advantage to Frank Armour at that moment. The Protestant missionary is not above comfortable assurances of gold. So that when Armour summoned this one in, and told him what was required of him, and slipped a generous gift of the Queen's coin into his hand, he smiled vaguely and

was willing to do what he was bidden. Had he been a Jesuit, who is sworn to poverty, and more often than not a man of birth and education, he might have influenced Frank Armour and prevented the notable mishap and scandal. As it was, Armour took more brandy.

Then he went down to Eye-of-the-Moon's lodge. A few hours afterwards the missionary met him there. The next morning Lali, the daughter of Eye-of- the-Moon, and the chieftainess of a portion of her father's tribe, whose grandfather had been a white man, was introduced to the Hudson's Bay country as Mrs. Frank Armour. But that was not all. Indeed, as it stood, it was very little. He had only made his comedy possible as yet; now the play itself was to come. He had carried his scheme through boldly so far. He would not flinch in carrying it out to the last letter. He brought his wife down to the Great Lakes immediately, scarcely resting day or night. There he engaged an ordinary but reliable woman, to whom he gave instructions, and sent the pair to the coast. He instructed his solicitor at Montreal to procure passages for Mrs. Francis Armour and maid for Liverpool. Then, by letters, he instructed his solicitor in London to meet Mrs. Francis Armour and maid at Liverpool and take them to Greyhope in Hertfordshire—that is, if General Armour and Mrs. Armour, or some representative of the family, did not meet them when they landed from the steamship.

Presently he sat down and wrote to his father and mother, and asked them to meet his wife and her maid when they arrived by the steamer Aphrodite. He did not explain to them in precise detail his feelings on Miss Julia Sherwood's marriage, nor did he go into full particulars as to the personality of Mrs. Frank Armour; but he did say that, because he knew they were anxious that he should marry "acceptably," he had married into the aristocracy, the oldest aristocracy of America; and because he also knew they wished him to marry wealth, he sent them a wife rich in virtues—native, unspoiled virtues. He hoped that they would take her to their hearts and cherish her. He knew their firm principles of honour, and that he could trust them to be kind to his wife until he returned to share the affection which he was sure would be given to her. It was not his intention to return to England for some time yet. He had work to do in connection with his proposed colony; and a wife—even a native wife— could not well be a companion in the circumstances. Besides, Lali—his wife's name was Lali!—would be better occupied in learning the peculiarities of the life in which her future would be cast. It was possible they would find her an apt pupil. Of this they could not complain, that she was untravelled; for she had ridden a horse, bareback, half across the continent. They could not cavil at her education, for she knew several languages—aboriginal languages—of the North. She had merely to learn the dialect of English society, and how to carry with acceptable form the costumes of the race to which she was going. Her own costume was picturesque, but it might appear unusual in London society. Still, they could use their own judgment about that.

Then, when she was gone beyond recall, he chanced one day to put on the coat he wore when the letters and paper declaring his misfortune came to him. He found his brother's letter; he opened it and read it. It was the letter of a man who knew how to appreciate at their proper value the misfortunes, as the fortunes, of life. While Frank Armour read he came to feel for the first time that his brother Richard had suffered, maybe, from some such misery as had come to him through Julia Sherwood. It was a dispassionate, manly letter, relieved by gentle wit, and hinting with careful kindness that a sudden blow was better for a man than a lifelong thorn in his side. Of Julia Sherwood he had nothing particularly bitter to say. He delicately suggested that she had acted according to her nature, and that in the see-saw of life Frank had had a sore blow; but this was to be borne. The letter did not say too much; it did not magnify the difficulty, it did not depreciate it. It did not even directly counsel; it was wholesomely, tenderly judicial. Indirectly, it dwelt upon the steadiness and manliness of Frank's character; directly, lightly, and without rhetoric, it enlarged upon their own comradeship. It ran over pleasantly the days of their boyhood, when they were hardly ever separated. It made distinct, yet with no obvious purpose, how good were friendship and confidence—which might be the most unselfish thing in the world—between two men. With the letter before him Frank Armour saw his act in a new light.

As we said, it is possible if he had read it on the day when his trouble came to him, he had not married Lali, or sent her to England on this—to her—involuntary mission of revenge. It is possible, also, that there came to him the first vague conception of the wrong he had done this Indian girl, who undoubtedly married him because she cared for him after her heathen fashion, while he had married her for nothing that was commendable; not even for passion, which may be pardoned, nor for vanity, which has its virtues. He had had his hour with circumstance; circumstance would have its hour with him in due course. Yet there was no extraordinary revulsion. He was still angry, cynical, and very sore. He would see the play out with a consistent firmness. He almost managed a smile when a letter was handed to him some weeks later, bearing his solicitor's assurance that Mrs. Frank Armour and her maid had been safely bestowed on the Aphrodite for England. This was the first act in his tragic comedy.

CHAPTER II

A DIFFICULT SITUATION

When Mrs. Frank Armour arrived at Montreal she still wore her Indian costume of clean, well-broidered buckskin, moccasins, and leggings, all surmounted by a blanket. It was not a distinguished costume, but it seemed suitable to its wearer. Mr. Armour's agent was in a quandary. He had received no instructions regarding her dress. He felt, of course, that, as Mrs. Frank Armour, she should put off these garments, and dress, so far as was possible, in accordance with her new position. But when he spoke about it to Mackenzie, the elderly maid and companion, he found that Mr. Armour had said that his wife was to arrive in England dressed as she was. He saw something ulterior in the matter, but it was not his province to interfere. And so Mrs. Frank Armour was a passenger by the Aphrodite in her buckskin garments.

What she thought of it all is not quite easy to say. It is possible that at first she only considered that she was the wife of a white man,— a thing to be desired, and that the man she loved was hers for ever — a matter of indefinable joy to her. That he was sending her to England did not fret her, because it was his will, and he knew what was best. Busy with her contented and yet somewhat dazed thoughts of him,—she was too happy to be very active mentally, even if it had been the characteristic of her race,— she was not at first aware how much notice she excited, and how strange a figure she was in this staring city. When it did dawn upon her she shrank a little, but still was placid, preferring to sit with her hands folded in her lap, idly watching things. She appeared oblivious that she was the wife of a man of family and rank; she was only thinking that the man was hers—all hers. He had treated her kindly enough in the days they were together, but she had not been a great deal with him, because they travelled fast, and his duties were many, or he made them so—but the latter possibility did not occur to her.

When he had hastily bidden her farewell at Port Arthur he had kissed her and said: "Good-bye, my wife." She was not yet acute enough in the inflections of Saxon speech to catch the satire—almost involuntary—in the last two words. She remembered the words, however, and the kiss, and she was quite satisfied. To what she was going she did not speculate. He was sending her: that was enough.

The woman given to her as maid had been well chosen. Armour had done this carefully. She was Scotch, was reserved, had a certain amount of shrewdness, would obey instructions, and do her duty carefully. What she thought about the whole matter she kept to herself; even the solicitor at Montreal could not find out. She had her instructions clear in her mind; she was determined to carry them out to the letter—for which she was already well paid, and was like to be better paid; because Armour had arranged that she should continue to be with his wife after they got to England. She understood well the language of Lali's tribe, and because Lali's English was limited she would be indispensable in England.

Mackenzie, therefore, had responsibility, and if she was not elated over it, she still knew the importance of her position, and had enough practical vanity to make her an efficient servant and companion. She already felt that she had got her position in life, from which she was to go out no more for ever. She had been brought up in the shadow of Alnwick Castle, and she knew what was due to her charge—by other people; herself only should have liberty with her. She was taking Lali to the home of General Armour, and that must be kept constantly before her mind. Therefore, from the day they set foot on the Aphrodite, she kept her place beside Mrs. Armour, sitting with her,—they walked very little, — and scarcely ever speaking, either to her or to the curious passengers. Presently the passengers became more inquisitive, and made many attempts at being friendly; but these received little encouragement. It had become known who the Indian girl was, and many wild tales went about as to her marriage with Francis Armour. Now it was maintained she had saved his life at an outbreak of her tribe; again, that she had found him dying in the woods and had nursed him back to life and health; yet again, that she was a chieftainess, a successful claimant against the Hudson's Bay Company—and so on.

There were several on board who knew the Armours well by name, and two who knew them personally. One was Mr. Edward Lambert, a barrister of the Middle Temple, and the other was Mrs. Townley, a widow, a member of a well-known Hertfordshire family, who, on a pleasant journey in Scotland, had met, conquered, and married a wealthy young American, and had been left alone in the world, by no means portionless, eighteen months before. Lambert knew Richard Armour well, and when, from Francis Armour's solicitor, with whom he was acquainted, he heard, just before they started, who the Indian girl was, he was greatly shocked and sorry. He guessed at once the motive, the madness, of this marriage. But he kept his information and his opinions mostly to himself, except in so

far as it seemed only due to friendship to contradict the numberless idle stories going about. After the first day at sea he came to know Mrs. Townley, and when he discovered that they had many common friends and that she knew the Armours, he spoke a little more freely to her regarding the Indian wife, and told her what he believed was the cause of the marriage.

Mrs. Townley was a woman—a girl—of uncommon gentleness of disposition, and, in spite of her troubles, inclined to view life with a sunny eye. She had known of Frank Armour's engagement with Miss Julia Sherwood, but she had never heard the sequel. If this was the sequel—well, it had to be faced. But she was almost tremulous with sympathy when she remembered Mrs. Armour, and Frank's gay, fashionable sister, Marion, and contemplated the arrival of this Indian girl at Greyhope. She had always liked Frank Armour, but this made her angry with him; for, on second thoughts, she was not more sorry for him and for his people than for Lali, the wife. She had the true instinct of womanhood, and she supposed that a heathen like this could have feelings to be hurt and a life to be wounded as herself or another. At least she saw what was possible in the future when this Indian girl came to understand her position—only to be accomplished by contact with the new life, so different from her past. Both she and Lambert decided that she was very fine-looking, not withstanding her costume. She was slim and well built, with modest bust and shapely feet and ankles. Her eyes were large, meditative, and intelligent, her features distinguished. She was a goodly product of her race, being descended from a line of chiefs and chieftainesses—broken only in the case of her grandfather, as has been mentioned. Her hands (the two kindly inquisitors decided) were almost her best point. They were perfectly made, slim, yet plump, the fingers tapering, the wrist supple. Mrs. Townley then and there decided that the girl had possibilities. But here she was, an Indian, with few signs of civilisation or of that breeding which seems to white people the only breeding fit for earth or heaven.

Mrs. Townley did not need Lambert's suggestion that she should try to approach the girl, make friends with her, and prepare her in some slight degree for the strange career before her.

Mrs. Townley had an infinite amount of tact. She knew it was best to approach the attendant first. This she did, and, to the surprise of other lady-passengers, received no rebuff. Her advance was not, however, rapid. Mackenzie had had her instructions. When she found that Mrs. Townley knew Francis Armour and his people, she thawed a little more, and then, very hesitatingly, she introduced her to the Indian wife. Mrs. Townley smiled her best—and there were many who knew how attractive she could be at such a moment. There was a slight pause, in which Lali looked at her meditatively, earnestly, and then those beautiful wild fingers glided out, and caught her hand, and held it; but she spoke no word. She only looked inquiringly, seriously, at her new-found friend, and presently dropped the blanket away from her, and sat up firmly, as though she felt she was not altogether an alien now, and had a right to hold herself proudly among white people, as she did in her own country and with her own tribe, who had greatly admired her. Certainly Mrs. Townley could find no fault with the woman as an Indian. She had taste, carried her clothes well, and was superbly fresh in appearance, though her hair still bore very slight traces of the grease which even the most aristocratic Indians use.

But Lali would not talk. Mrs. Townley was anxious that the girl should be dressed in European costume, and offered to lend and rearrange dresses of her own, but she came in collision with Mr. Armour's instructions. So she had to assume a merely kind and comforting attitude. The wife had not the slightest idea where she was going, and even when Mackenzie, at Mrs. Townley's oft-repeated request, explained very briefly and unpicturesquely, she only looked incredulous or unconcerned. Yet the ship, its curious passengers, the dining saloon, the music, the sea, and all, had given her suggestions of what was to come. They had expected that at table she would be awkward and ignorant to a degree. But she had at times eaten at the trader's table at Fort Charles, and had learned how to use a knife and fork. She had also been a favourite with the trader's wife, who had taught her very many civilised things. Her English, though far from abundant, was good. Those, therefore, who were curious and rude enough to stare at her were probably disappointed to find that she ate like "any Christom man."

"How do you think the Armours will receive her?" said Lambert to Mrs. Townley, of whose judgment on short acquaintance he had come to entertain a high opinion.

Mrs. Townley had a pretty way of putting her head to one side and speaking very piquantly. She had had it as a girl; she had not lost it as a woman, any more than she had lost a soft little spontaneous laugh which was one of her unusual charms—for few women can laugh audibly with effect. She laughed very softly now, and, her sense of humour supervening for the moment, she said:

"Really, you have asked me a conundrum. I fancy I see Mrs. Armour's face when she gets the news,—at the breakfast-table, of course, and gives a little shriek, and says: 'General! oh, General!' But it is all very shocking, you know," she added, in a lower voice. "Still I think they will receive her and do the best they can for her; because, you see, there she is, married hard and fast. She bears the Armour

name, and is likely to make them all very unhappy, indeed, if she determines to retaliate upon them for any neglect."

"Yes. But how to retaliate, Mrs. Townley?" Lambert had not a suggestive mind.

"Well, for instance, suppose they sent her away into seclusion,—with Frank's consent, another serious question,—and she should take the notion to fly her retirement, and appear inopportunely at some social function clothed as she is now! I fancy her blanket would be a wet one in such a case—if you will pardon the little joke."

Lambert sighed. "Poor Frank—poor devil!" he said, almost beneath his breath.

"And wherefore poor Frank? Do you think he or the Armours of Greyhope are the only ones at stake in this? What about this poor girl? Just think why he married her, if our suspicions are right,—and then imagine her feelings when she wakes to the truth over there, as some time she is sure to do!"

Then Lambert began to see the matter in a different light, and his sympathy for Francis Armour grew less as his pity for the girl increased. In fact, the day before they got to Liverpool he swore at Armour more than once, and was anxious concerning the reception of the heathen wife by her white relatives.

Had he been present at a certain scene at Greyhope a day or two before, he would have been still more anxious. It was the custom, at breakfast, for Mrs. Armour to open her husband's letters and read them while he was engaged with his newspaper, and hand to him afterwards those that were important. This morning Marion noticed a letter from Frank amongst the pile, and, without a word, pounced upon it. She was curious—as any woman would be—to see how he took Miss Sherwood's action. Her father was deep in his paper at the time. Her mother was reading other letters. Marion read the first few lines with a feeling of almost painful wonder, the words were so curious, cynical, and cold.

Richard sat opposite her. He also was engaged with his paper, but, chancing to glance up, he saw that she was becoming very pale, and that the letter trembled in her fingers. Being a little short-sighted, he was not near enough to see the handwriting. He did not speak yet. He watched. Presently, seeing her grow more excited, he touched her foot under the table. She looked up, and caught his eye. She gasped slightly. She gave him a warning look, and turned away from her mother. Then she went on reading to the bitter end.

Presently a little cry escaped her against her will. At that her mother looked up, but she only saw her daughter's back, as she rose hurriedly from the table, saying that she would return in a moment. Mrs. Armour, however, had been startled. She knew that Marion had been reading a letter, and, with a mother's instinct, her thoughts were instantly on Frank. She spoke quickly, almost sharply:

"Marion, come here."

Richard had risen. He came round the table, and, as the girl obeyed her mother, took the letter from her fingers and hastily glanced over it. Mrs. Armour came forward and took her daughter's arm. "Marion," she said, "there is something wrong—with Frank. What is it?"

General Armour was now looking up at them all, curiously, questioningly, through his glasses, his paper laid down, his hands resting on the table.

Marion could not answer. She was sick with regret, vexation, and shame; at the first flush, death—for Frank—had been preferable to this. She had a considerable store of vanity; she was not very philosophical. Besides, she was not married; and what Captain Vidall, her devoted admirer and possible husband, would think of this heathenish alliance was not a cheer ful thought to her. She choked down a sob, and waved her hand towards Richard to answer for her. He was pale too, but cool. He understood the case instantly; he made up his mind instantly also as to what ought to be—must be—done.

"Well, mother," he said, "it is about Frank. But he is all right; that is, he is alive and well-in body. But he has arranged a hateful little embarrassment for us—he is married."

"Married!" exclaimed his mother faintly. "Oh, poor Lady Agnes!"

Marion sniffed a little viciously at this.

"Married? Married?" said his father. "Well, what about it? eh? what about it?"

The mother wrung her hands. "Oh, I know it is something dreadful— dreadful! He has married some horrible wild person, or something."

Richard, miserable as he was, remained calm. "Well," said he, "I don't know about her being horrible. Frank is silent on that point; but she is wild enough—a wild Indian, in fact."

"Indian? Indian? Good God—a red nigger!" cried General Armour harshly, starting to his feet.

"An Indian? a wild Indian?" Mrs. Armour whispered faintly, as she dropped into a chair.

"And she'll be here in two or three days," fluttered Marion hysterically.

Meanwhile Richard had hastily picked up the Times. "She is due here the day after to-morrow," he said deliberately. "Frank is as decisive as he is rash. Well, it's a melancholy tit-for-tat."

"What do you mean by tit-for-tat?" cried his father angrily.

"Oh, I mean that—that we tried to hasten Julia's marriage—with the other fellow, and he is giving us one in return; and you will all agree that it's a pretty permanent one."

The old soldier recovered himself, and was beside his wife in an instant. He took her hand. "Don't fret about it, wife," he said; "it's an ugly business, but we must put up with it. The boy was out of his head. We are old, now, my dear, but there was a time when we should have resented such a thing as much as Frank—though not in the same fashion, perhaps— not in the same fashion." The old man pressed his lips hard to keep down his emotion.

"Oh, how could he—how could he!" said his mother: "we meant everything for the best."

"It is always dangerous business meddling with lovers' affairs," rejoined Richard. "Lovers take themselves very seriously indeed, and—well, here the thing is! Now, who will go and fetch her from Liverpool? I should say that both my father and my mother ought to go."

Thus Richard took it for granted that they would receive Frank's Indian wife into their home. He intended that, so far as he was concerned, there should be no doubt upon the question from the beginning.

"Never—she shall never come here!" said Marion, with flashing eyes; "a common squaw, with greasy hair, and blankets, and big mouth, and black teeth, who eats with her fingers and grunts! If she does, if she is brought to Greyhope, I will never show my face in the world again. Frank married the animal: why does he ship her home to us? Why didn't he come with her? Why does he not take her to a home of his own? Why should he send her here, to turn our house into a menagerie?"

Marion drew her skirt back, as if the common squaw, with her blankets and grease, was at that moment near her.

"Well, you see," continued Richard, "that is just it. As I said, Frank arranged this little complication with a trifling amount of malice. No doubt he didn't come with her because he wished to test the family loyalty and hospitality; but a postscript to this letter says that his solicitor has instructions to meet his wife at Liverpool, and bring her on here in case we fail to show her proper courtesy."

General Armour here spoke. "He has carried the war of retaliation very far indeed, but men do mad things when their blood is up, as I have seen often. That doesn't alter our clear duty in the matter. If the woman were bad, or shameful, it would be a different thing; if—"

Marion interrupted: "She has ridden bareback across the continent like a jockey,—like a common jockey, and she wears a blanket, and she doesn't know a word of English, and she will sit on the floor!"

"Well," said her father, "all these things are not sins, and she must be taught better."

"Joseph, how can you?" said Mrs. Armour indignantly. "She cannot, she shall not come here. Think of Marion. Think of our position."

She hid her troubled, tear-stained face behind her handkerchief. At the same time she grasped her husband's hand. She knew that he was right. She honoured him in her heart for the position he had taken, but she could not resist the natural impulse of a woman where her taste and convention were shocked.

The old man was very pale, but there was no mistaking his determination. He had been more indignant than any of them, at first, but he had an unusual sense of justice when he got face to face with it, as Richard had here helped him to do. "We do not know that the woman has done any wrong," he said. "As for our name and position, they, thank God! are where a mad marriage cannot unseat them. We have had much prosperity in the world, my wife; we have had neither death nor dishonour; we—"

"If this isn't dishonour, father, what is?" Marion flashed out.

He answered calmly. "My daughter, it is a great misfortune, it will probably be a lifelong trial, but it is not necessarily dishonour."

"You never can make a scandal less by trying to hide it," said Richard, backing up his father. "It is all pretty awkward, but I daresay we shall get some amusement out of it in the end."

"Richard," said his mother through her tears, "you are flippant and unkind!"

"Indeed, mother," was his reply, "I never was more serious in my life. When I spoke of amusement, I meant comedy merely, not fun—the thing that looks like tragedy and has a happy ending. That is what I mean, mother, nothing more."

"You are always so very deep, Richard," remarked Marion ironically, "and care so very little how the rest of us feel about things. You have no family pride. If you had married a squaw, we shouldn't have been surprised. You could have camped in the grounds with your wild woman, and never have been missed—by the world," she hastened to add, for she saw a sudden pain in his face.

He turned from them all a little wearily, and limped over to the window. He stood looking out into the limes where he and Frank had played when boys. He put his finger up, his unhandsome finger, and caught away some moisture from his eyes. He did not dare to let them see his face, nor yet to speak. Marion had cut deeper than she knew, and he would carry the wound for many a day before it healed.

But his sister felt instantly how cruel she had been, as she saw him limp away, and caught sight of the bowed shoulders and the prematurely grey hair. Her heart smote her. She ran over, and impulsively put her hands on his shoulder. "Oh, Dick," she said, "forgive me, Dick! I didn't mean it. I was angry and foolish and hateful."

He took one of her hands as it rested on his shoulder, she standing partly behind him, and raised it to his lips, but he did not turn to her; he could not.

"It is all right—all right," he said; "it doesn't make any difference.
Let us think of Frank and what we have got to do. Let us stand together,
Marion; that is best."

But her tears were dropping on his shoulder, as her forehead rested on her hand. He knew now that, whatever Frank's wife was, she would not have an absolute enemy here; for when Marion cried her heart was soft. She was clay in the hands of the potter whom we call Mercy—more often a stranger to the hearts of women than of men. At the other side of the room also the father and mother, tearless now, watched these two; and the mother saw her duty better and with less rebelliousness. She had felt it from the first, but she could not bring her mind to do it. They held each other's hands in silence. Presently General Armour said: "Richard, your mother and I will go to Liverpool to meet Frank's wife."

Marion shuddered a little, and her hands closed on Richard's shoulder, but she said nothing.

CHAPTER III

OUT OF THE NORTH

It was a beautiful day—which was so much in favour of Mrs. Frank Armour in relation to her husband's people. General Armour and his wife had come down from London by the latest train possible, that their suspense at Liverpool might be short. They said little to each other, but when they did speak it was of things very different from the skeleton which they expected to put into the family cupboard presently. Each was trying to spare the other. It was very touching. They naturally looked upon the matter in its most unpromising light, because an Indian was an Indian, and this unknown savage from Fort Charles was in violent contrast to such desirable persons as Lady Agnes Martling. Not that the Armours were zealous for mere money and title, but the thing itself was altogether a propos, as Mrs. Armour had more naively than correctly put it. The general, whose knowledge of character and the circumstances of life was considerable, had worked out the thing with much accuracy. He had declared to Richard, in their quiet talk upon the subject, that Frank must have been anything but sober when he did it. He had previously called it a policy of retaliation; so that now he was very near the

truth. When they arrived at the dock at Liverpool, the Aphrodite was just making into the harbour.

"Egad," said General Armour to himself, "Sebastopol was easier than this; for fighting I know, and being peppered I know, by Jews, Greeks, infidels, and heretics; but to take a savage to my arms and do for her what her godfathers and godmothers never did, is worse than the devil's dance at Delhi."

What Mrs. Armour, who was not quite so definite as her husband, thought, it would be hard to tell; but probably grief for, and indignation at, her son, were uppermost in her mind. She had quite determined upon her course. None could better carry that high, neutral look of social superiority than she.

Please Heaven, she said to herself, no one should see that her equanimity was shaken. They had brought one servant with them, who had been gravely and yet conventionally informed that his young master's wife, an Indian chieftainess, was expected. There are few family troubles but find their way to servants' hall with an uncomfortable speed; for, whether or not stone walls have ears, certainly men-servants and maid-servants have eyes that serve for ears, and ears that do more than their bounden duty. Boulter, the footman, knew his business. When informed of the coming of Mrs. Francis Armour, the Indian chieftainess, his face was absolutely expressionless; his "Yessir" was as mechanical as usual. On the dock he was marble—indifferent. When the passengers began to land, he showed no excitement. He was decorously alert. When the crucial moment came, he was imperturbable. Boulter was an excellent servant. So said Edward Lambert to himself after the event; so, likewise, said Mrs. Townley to herself when the thing was over; so declared General Armour many a time after, and once very emphatically, just before he raised Boulter's wages.

As the boat neared Liverpool, Lambert and Mrs. Townley grew nervous. The truth regarding the Indian wife had become known among the passengers, and most were very curious—some in a well-bred fashion, some intrusively, vulgarly. Mackenzie, Lali's companion, like Boulter, was expressionless in face. She had her duty to do, paid for liberally, and she would do it. Lali might have had a more presentable and dignified attendant, but not one more worthy. It was noticeable that the captain of the ship and all the officers had been markedly courteous to Mrs. Armour throughout the voyage, but, to their credit, not ostentatiously so. When the vessel was brought to anchor and the passengers were being put upon the tender, the captain came and made his respectful adieus, as though Lali were a lady of title in her own right, and not an Indian girl married to a man acting under the influence of brandy and malice. General Armour and Mrs. Armour were always grateful to Lambert and Mrs. Townley for the part they played in this desperate little comedy. They stood still and watchful as the passengers came ashore one by one. They saw that they were the centre of unusual interest, but General Armour was used to bearing himself with a grim kind of indifference in public, and his wife was calm, and so somewhat disappointed those who probably expected the old officer and his wife to be distressed. Frank Armour's solicitor was also there, but, with good taste, he held aloof. The two needed all their courage, however, when they saw a figure in buckskin and blanket step upon the deck, attended by a very ordinary, austere, and shabbily-dressed Scotswoman. But immediately behind them were Edward Lambert and Mrs. Townley, and these, with their simple tact, naturalness, and freedom from any sort of embarrassment, acted as foils, and relieved the situation.

General Armour advanced, hat in hand. "You are my son's wife?" he said courteously to this being in a blanket.

She looked up and shook her head slightly, for she did not quite understand; but she recognised his likeness to her husband, and presently she smiled up musingly. Mackenzie repeated to her what General Armour had said. She nodded now, a flash of pleasure lighting up her face, and she slid out her beautiful hand to him. The general took it and pressed it mechanically, his lips twitching slightly. He pressed it far harder than he meant, for his feelings were at tension. She winced slightly, and involuntarily thrust out her other hand, as if to relieve his pressure. As she did so the blanket fell away from her head and shoulders. Lambert, with excellent intuition, caught it, and threw it across his arm. Then, quickly, and without embarrassment, he and Mrs. Townley greeted General Armour, who returned the greetings gravely, but in a singular, confidential tone, which showed his gratitude. Then he raised his hat again to Lali, and said: "Come and let me introduce you —to your husband's mother."

The falling back of that blanket had saved the situation; for when the girl stood without it in her buckskin garments there was a dignity in her bearing which carried off the bizarre event. There was timidity in her face, and yet a kind of pride too, though she was only a savage. The case, even at this critical moment, did not seem quite hopeless. When they came to Mrs. Armour, Lali shrank away timidly from the look in the mother's eyes, and, shivering slightly, looked round for her blanket. But Lambert had deftly passed it on to the footman. Presently Mrs. Armour took both the girl's hands in hers (perhaps she did it because the eyes of the public were on her, but that is neither here nor there—she did it), and kissed her on the cheek. Then they moved away to a closed carriage.

And that was the second act in Frank Armour's comedy of errors.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE NAME OF THE FAMILY

The journey from Liverpool to Greyhope was passed in comparative silence. The Armours had a compartment to themselves, and they made the Indian girl as comfortable as possible without self-consciousness, without any artificial politeness. So far, what they had done was a matter of duty, not of will; but they had done their duty naturally all their lives, and it was natural to them now. They had no personal feelings towards the girl one way or another, as yet. It was trying to them that people stared into the compartment at different stations. It presently dawned upon General Armour that it might also be trying to their charge. Neither he nor his wife had taken into account the possibility of the girl having feelings to be hurt. But he had noticed Lali shrink visibly and flush slightly when some one stared harder than usual, and this troubled him. It opened up a possibility. He began indefinitely to see that they were not the only factors in the equation. He was probably a little vexed that he had not seen it before; for he wished to be a just man. He was wont to quote with more or less austerity—chiefly the result of his professional life—this:

"For justice, all place a temple, and all season summer."

And, man of war as he was, he had another saying which was much in his mouth; and he lived up to it with considerable sincerity:

> "Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,
> To silence envious tongues."

He whispered to his wife. It would have been hard to tell from her look what she thought of the matter, but presently she changed seats with her husband, that he might, by holding his newspaper at a certain angle, shield the girl from intrusive gazers.

At every station the same scene was enacted. And inquisitive people must have been surprised to see how monotonously ordinary was the manner of the three white people in the compartment. Suddenly, at a station near London, General Armour gave a start, and used a strong expression under his breath. Glancing at the "Marriage" column, he saw a notice to the effect that on a certain day of a certain month, Francis Gilbert, the son of General Joseph Armour, C.B., of Greyhope, Hertfordshire, and Cavendish Square, was married to Lali, the daughter of Eye-of-the-Moon, chief of the Bloods, at her father's lodge in the Saskatchewan Valley. This had been inserted by Frank Armour's solicitor, according to his instructions, on the day that the Aphrodite was due at Liverpool. General Armour did not at first intend to show this to his wife, but on second thought he did, because he knew she would eventually come to know of it, and also because she saw that something had moved him. She silently reached out her hand for the paper. He handed it to her, pointing to the notice.

Mrs. Armour was unhappy, but her self-possession was admirable, and she said nothing. She turned her face to the window, and sat for a long time looking out. She did not turn to the others, for her eyes were full of tears, and she did not dare to wipe them away, nor yet to let them be seen. She let them dry there. She was thinking of her son, her favourite son, for whom she had been so ambitious, and for whom, so far as she could, and retain her self-respect, she had delicately intrigued, that he might happily and befittingly marry. She knew that in the matter of his engagement she had not done what was best for him, but how could she have guessed that this would be the result? She also was sure that when the first flush of his anger and disappointment had passed, and he came to view this thing with cooler mind, he would repent deeply—for a whole lifetime. She was convinced that he had not married this savage for anything which could make marriage endurable. Under the weight of the thought she was likely to forget that the young alien wife might have lost terribly in the event also.

The arrival at Euston and the departure from St. Pancras were rather painful all round, for, though there was no waiting at either place, the appearance of an Indian girl in native costume was uncommon enough, even in cosmopolitan London, to draw much attention. Besides, the placards of the evening papers were blazoned with such announcements as this:

A RED INDIAN GIRL MARRIED INTO AN ENGLISH COUNTY FAMILY.

Some one had telegraphed particulars—distorted particulars—over from Liverpool, and all the evening sheets had their portion of extravagance and sensation. General Armour became a little more erect and austere as he caught sight of these placards, and Mrs. Armour groaned inwardly; but their faces were inscrutable, and they quietly conducted their charge, minus her blanket, to the train which was to take them to St. Albans, and were soon wheeling homeward.

At Euston they parted with Lambert and Mrs. Townley, who quite simply and conventionally bade good-bye to them and their Indian daughter-in-law. Lali had grown to like Mrs. Townley, and when they parted she spoke a few words quickly in her own tongue, and then immediately was confused, because she remembered that she could not be understood. But presently she said in halting English that the face of her white friend was good, and she hoped that she would come one time and sit beside her in her wigwam, for she would be sad till her husband travelled to her.

Mrs. Townley made some polite reply in simple English, pressed the girl's hand sympathetically, and hurried away. Before she parted from Mr. Lambert, however, she said, with a pretty touch of cynicism: "I think I see Marion Armour listening to her sister-in-law issue invitations to her wigwam. I am afraid I should be rather depressed myself if I had to be sisterly to a wigwam lady."

"But I say, Mrs. Townley," rejoined Lambert seriously, as he loitered at the steps of her carriage, "I shouldn't be surprised if my Lady Wigwam— a rather apt and striking title, by the way—turned out better than we think. She carried herself rippingly without the blanket, and I never saw a more beautiful hand in my life—but one," he added, as his fingers at that moment closed on hers, and held them tightly, in spite of the indignant little effort at withdrawal. "She may yet be able to give them all points in dignity and that kind of thing, and pay Master Frank back in his own coin. I do not see, after all, that he is the martyr."

Lambert's voice got softer, for he still held Mrs. Townley's fingers, the footman not having the matter in his eye,—and then he spoke still more seriously on sentimental affairs of his own, in which he evidently hoped she would take some interest. Indeed, it is hard to tell how far the case might have been pushed if she had not suddenly looked a little forbidding and imperious. For even people of no notable height, with soft features, dark brown eyes, and a delightful little laugh, may appear rather regal at times. Lambert did not quite understand why she should take this attitude. If he had been as keen regarding his own affairs of the affections as in the case of Frank Armour and his Indian bride, he had known that every woman has in her mind the occasion when she should and when she should not be wooed, and nothing disappoints her more than a declaration at a time which is not her time. If it does not fall out as she wishes it, retrospect, a dear thing to a woman, is spoiled. Many a man has been sent to the right-about because he has ventured his proposal at the wrong time. What would have occurred to Lambert it is hard to tell; but he saw that something was wrong, and stopped in time.

When General Armour and his party reached Greyhope it was late in the evening. The girl seemed tired and confused by the events of the day, and did as she was directed, indifferently, limply. But when they entered the gates of Greyhope and travelled up the long avenue of limes, she looked round her somewhat eagerly, and drew a long sigh, maybe of relief or pleasure. She presently stretched out a hand almost caressingly to the thick trees and the grass, and said aloud: "Oh, the beautiful trees and the long grass!" There was a whirr of birds' wings among the branches, and then, presently, there rose from a distance the sweet, gurgling whistle of the nightingale. A smile as of reminiscence crossed her face. Then she said, as if to herself: "It is the same. I shall not die. I hear the birds' wings, and one is singing. It is pleasant to sleep in the long grass when the nights are summer, and to hang your cradle in the trees."

She had asked for her own blanket, refusing a rug, when they left St. Albans, and it had been given to her. She drew it about her now with a feeling of comfort, and seemed to lose the horrible sense of strangeness which had almost convulsed her when she was put into the carriage at the railway station. Her reserve had hidden much of what she really felt; but the drive through the limes had shown General Armour and his wife that they had to do with a nature having capacities for sensitive feeling; which, it is sometimes thought, is only the prerogative of certain well-bred civilisations.

But it was impossible that they should yet, or for many a day, feel any sense of kinship with this aboriginal girl. Presently the carriage drew up to the doorway, which was instantly opened to them. A broad belt of light streamed out upon the stone steps. Far back in the hall stood Marion, one hand upon the balustrade of the staircase, the other tightly held at her side, as if to nerve herself for the meeting. The eyes of the Indian girl pierced the light, and, as if by a strange instinct, found those of Marion, even before she left the carriage. Lali felt vaguely that here was her possible enemy. As she stepped out of the carriage, General Armour's hand under her elbow to assist her, she drew her blanket something more closely about her, and so proceeded up the steps. The composure of the servants was, in the circumstances, remarkable. It needed to have been, for the courage displayed by Lali's two new

guardians during the day almost faltered at the threshold of their own home. Any sign of surprise or amusement on the part of the domestics would have given them some painful moments subsequently. But all was perfectly decorous. Marion still stood motionless, almost dazed, The group advanced into the hall, and there paused, as if waiting for her.

At that moment Richard came out of the study at her right hand, took her arm, and said quietly: "Come along, Marion. Let us be as brave as our father and mother."

She gave a hard little gasp and seemed to awake as from a dream. She quickly glided forwards ahead of him, kissed her mother and father almost abruptly, then turned to the young wife with a scrutinising eye. "Marion," said her father, "this is your sister." Marion stood hesitating, confused.

"Marion, dear," repeated her mother ceremoniously, "this is your brother's wife.—Lali, this is your husband's sister, Marion."

Mackenzie translated the words swiftly to the girl, and her eyes flashed wide. Then in a low voice she said in English: "Yes, Marion, How!"

It is probable that neither Marion nor any one present knew quite the meaning of 'How', save Richard, and he could not suppress a smile, it sounded so absurd and aboriginal. But at this exclamation Marion once more came to herself. She could not possibly go so far as her mother did at the dock and kiss this savage, but, with a rather sudden grasp of the hand, she said, a little hysterically, for her brain was going round like a wheel,—"Wo-won't you let me take your blanket?" and forthwith laid hold of it with tremulous politeness.

The question sounded, for the instant, so ludicrous to Richard that, in spite of the distressing situation, he had to choke back a laugh. Years afterwards, if he wished for any momentary revenge upon Marion (and he had a keen sense of wordy retaliation), he simply said: "Wo-won't you let me take your blanket?"

Of course the Indian girl did not understand, but she submitted to the removal of this uncommon mantle, and stood forth a less trying sight to Marion's eyes; for, as we said before, her buckskin costume set off softly the good outlines of her form.

The Indian girl's eyes wandered from Marion to Richard. They wandered from anxiety, doubt, and a bitter kind of reserve, to cordiality, sympathy, and a grave kind of humour. Instantly the girl knew that she had in eccentric Richard Armour a frank friend. Unlike as he was to his brother, there was still in their eyes the same friendliness and humanity. That is, it was the same look that Frank carried when he first came to her father's lodge.

Richard held out his hand with a cordial little laugh and said: "Ah, ah, very glad, very glad! Just in time for supper. Come along. How is Frank, eh? how is Frank? Just so; just so. Pleasant journey, I suppose?" He shook her hand warmly three or four times, and, as he held it, placed his left hand over it and patted it patriarchally, as was his custom with all the children and all the old ladies that he knew.

"Richard," said his mother, in a studiously neutral voice, "you might see about the wine."

Then Richard appeared to recover himself, and did as he was requested, but not until his brother's wife had said to him in English, as they courteously drew her towards the staircase: "Oh, my brother Richard, How!"

But the first strain and suspense were now over for the family, and it is probable that never had they felt such relief as when they sat down behind closed doors in their own rooms for a short respite, while the Indian girl was closeted alone with Mackenzie and a trusted maid, in what she called her wigwam.

CHAPTER V

AN AWKWARD HALF-HOUR

It is just as well, perhaps, that the matter had become notorious. Otherwise the Armours had lived in that unpleasant condition of being constantly "discovered." It was simply a case of aiming at absolute secrecy, which had been frustrated by Frank himself, or bold and unembarrassed acknowledgment and an attempt to carry things off with a high hand. The latter course was the only one possible. It had

originally been Richard's idea, appropriated by General Armour, and accepted by Mrs. Armour and Marion with what grace was possible. The publication of the event prepared their friends, and precluded the necessity for reserve. What the friends did not know was whether they ought or ought not to commiserate the Armours. It was a difficult position. A death, an accident, a lost reputation, would have been easy to them; concerning these there could be no doubt. But an Indian daughter-in-law, a person in moccasins, was scarcely a thing to be congratulated upon; and yet sympathy and consolation might be much misplaced; no one could tell how the Armours would take it. For even their closest acquaintances knew what kind of delicate hauteur was possible to them. Even the "'centric" Richard, who visited the cottages of the poor, carrying soup and luxuries of many kinds, accompanying them with the most wholesome advice a single man ever gave to families and the heads of families, whose laugh was so cheery and spontaneous,—and face so uncommonly grave and sad at times,—had a faculty for manner. With astonishing suddenness he could raise insurmountable barriers; and people, not of his order, who occasionally presumed on his simplicity of life and habits, found themselves put distinctly ill at ease by a quiet, curious look in his eye. No man was ever more the recluse and at the same time the man of the world. He had had his bitter little comedy of life, but it was different from that of his brother Frank. It was buried very deep; not one of his family knew of it: Edward Lambert, and one or two others who had good reason never to speak of it, were the only persons possessing his secret.

But all England knew of Frank's mesalliance. And the question was, What would people do? They very properly did nothing at first. They waited to see how the Armours would act: they did not congratulate; they did not console; that was left to those papers which chanced to resent General Armour's politics, and those others which were emotional and sensational on every subject—particularly so where women were concerned.

It was the beginning of the season, but the Armours had decided that they would not go to town. That is, the general and his wife were not going. They felt that they ought to be at Greyhope with their daughter-in-law —which was to their credit. Regarding Marion they had nothing to say. Mrs. Armour inclined to her going to town for the season, to visit Mrs. Townley, who had thoughtfully written to her, saying that she was very lonely, and begging Mrs. Armour to let her come, if she would. She said that of course Marion would see much of her people in town just the same. Mrs. Townley was a very clever and tactful woman.

She guessed that General Armour and his wife were not likely to come to town, but that must not appear, and the invitation should be on a different basis—as it was.

It is probable that Marion saw through the delicate plot, but that did not make her like Mrs. Townley less. These little pieces of art make life possible, these tender fictions!

Marion was, however, not in good humour; she was nervous and a little petulant. She had a high-strung temperament, a sensitive perception of the fitness of things, and a horror of what was gauche; and she would, in brief, make a rather austere person if the lines of life did not run in her favour. She had something of Frank's impulsiveness and temper; it would have been a great blessing to her if she had had a portion of Richard's philosophical humour also. She was at a point of tension—her mother and Richard could see that. She was anxious—though for the world she would not have had it thought so—regarding Captain Vidall. She had never cared for anybody but him; it was possible she never would. But he did not know this, and she was not absolutely sure that his evident but as yet informal love would stand this strain—which shows how people very honourable and perfect-minded in themselves may allow a large margin to other people who are presumably honourable and perfect-minded also. There was no engagement between them, and he was not bound in any way, and could, therefore, without slashing the hem of the code, retire without any apology; but they had had that unspoken understanding which most people who love each other show even before a word of declaration has passed their lips. If he withdrew because of this scandal there might be some awkward hours for Frank Armour's wife at Greyhope; but, more than that, there would be a very hard-hearted young lady to play her part in the deceitful world; she would be as merciless as she could be. Naturally, being young, she exaggerated the importance of the event, and brooded on it. It was different with her father and mother. They were shocked and indignant at first, but when the first scene had been faced they began to make the best of things all round. That is, they proceeded at once to turn the North American Indian into a European—a matter of no little difficulty. A governess was discussed; but General Armour did not like the idea, and Richard opposed it heartily. She must be taught English and educated, and made possible in "Christian clothing," as Mrs. Armour put it. Of the education they almost despaired—all save Richard; time, instruction, vanity, and a dressmaker might do much as to the other.

The evening of her arrival, Lali would not, with any urging, put on clothes of Marion's which had been sent in to her. And the next morning it was still the same.

She came into the breakfast-room dressed still in buckskin and moccasins, and though the grease had been taken out of her hair it was still combed flat. Mrs. Armour had tried to influence her through Mackenzie, but to no purpose. She was placidly stubborn.

It had been unwisely told her by Mackenzie that they were Marion's clothes. They scarcely took in the fact that the girl had pride, that she was the daughter of a chief, and a chieftainess herself, and that it was far from happy to offer her Marion's clothes to wear.

Now, Richard, when he was a lad, had been on a journey to the South Seas, and had learned some of the peculiarities of the native mind, and he did not suppose that American Indians differed very much from certain well- bred Polynesians in little matters of form and good taste. When his mother told him what had occurred before Lali entered the breakfast-room, he went directly to what he believed was the cause, and advised tact with conciliation. He also pointed out that Lali was something taller than Marion, and that she might be possessed of that general trait of humanity-vanity. Mrs. Armour had not yet got used to thinking of the girl in another manner than an intrusive being of a lower order, who was there to try their patience, but also to do their bidding. She had yet to grasp the fact that, being her son's wife, she must have, therefore, a position in the house, exercising a certain authority over the servants, who, to Mrs. Armour, at first seemed of superior stuff. But Richard said to her: "Mother, I fancy you don't quite grasp the position. The girl is the daughter of a chief, and the descendant of a family of chiefs, perhaps through many generations. In her own land she has been used to respect, and has been looked up to pretty generally. Her garments are, I fancy, considered very smart in the Hudson's Bay country; and a finely decorated blanket like hers is expensive up there. You see, we have to take the thing by comparison; so please give the girl a chance."

And Mrs. Armour answered wearily, "I suppose you are right, Richard; you generally are in the end, though why you should be I do not know, for you never see anything of the world any more, and you moon about among the cottagers. I suppose it's your native sense and the books you read."

Richard laughed softly, but there was a queer ring in the laugh, and he came over stumblingly and put his arm round his mother's shoulder. "Never mind how I get such sense as I have, mother; I have so much time to think, it would be a wonder if I hadn't some. But I think we had better try to study her, and coax her along, and not fob her off as a very inferior person, or we shall have our hands full in earnest. My opinion is, she has got that which will save her and us too—a very high spirit, which only needs opportunity to develop into a remarkable thing; and, take my word for it, mother, if we treat her as a chieftainess, or princess, or whatever she is, and not simply as a dusky person, we shall come off better and she will come off better in the long run. She is not darker than a Spaniard, anyhow." At this point Marion entered the room, and her mother rehearsed briefly to her what their talk had been. Marion had had little sleep, and she only lifted her eyebrows at them at first. She was in little mood for conciliation. She remembered all at once that at supper the evening before her sister-in-law had said How! to the butler, and had eaten the mayonnaise with a dessert spoon. But presently, because she saw they waited for her to speak, she said, with a little flutter of maliciousness: "Wouldn't it be well for Richard- -he has plenty of time, and we are also likely to have it now —to put us all through a course of instruction for the training of chieftainesses? And when do you think she will be ready for a drawing-room—Her Majesty Queen Victoria's, or ours?"

"Marion!" said Mrs. Armour severely; but Richard came round to her, and, with his fresh, child-like humour, put his arm round her waist and added "Marion, I'd be willing to bet—if I were in the habit of betting—my shaky old pins here against a lock of your hair that you may present her at any drawing-room—ours or Queen Victoria's—in two years, if we go at it right; and it would serve Master Frank very well if we turned her out something, after all."

To which Mrs. Armour responded almost eagerly: "I wish it were only possible, Richard. And what you say is true, I suppose, that she is of rank in her own country, whatever value that may have."

Richard saw his advantage. "Well, mother," he said, "a chieftainess is a chieftainess, and I don't know but to announce her as such, and—"

"And be proud of it, as it were," put in Marion, "and pose her, and make her a prize—a Pocahontas, wasn't it?—and go on pretending world without end!" Marion's voice was still slightly grating, but there was in it too a faint sound of hope. "Perhaps," she said to herself, "Richard is right."

At this point the door opened and Lali entered, shown in by Colvin, her newly-appointed maid, and followed by Mackenzie, and, as we said, dressed still in her heathenish garments. She had a strong sense of dignity, for she stood still and waited. Perhaps nothing could have impressed Marion more. Had Lali been subservient simply, an entirely passive, unintelligent creature, she would probably have tyrannised over her in a soft, persistent fashion, and despised her generally. But Mrs. Armour and Marion saw that this stranger might become very troublesome indeed, if her temper were to have play.

They were aware of capacities for passion in those dark eyes, so musing yet so active in expression, which moved swiftly from one object to another and then suddenly became resolute.

Both mother and daughter came forward, and held out their hands, wishing her a pleasant good-morning, and were followed by Richard, and immediately by General Armour, who had entered soon after her. She had been keen enough to read (if a little vaguely) behind the scenes, and her mind was wakening slowly to the peculiarity of the position she occupied. The place awed her, and had broken her rest by perplexing her mind, and she sat down to the breakfast-table with a strange hunted look in her face. But opposite to her was a window opening to the ground, and beyond it were the limes and beeches and a wide perfect sward and far away a little lake, on which swans and wild fowl fluttered. Presently, as she sat silent, eating little, her eyes lifted to the window. They flashed instantly, her face lighted up with a weird kind of charm, and suddenly she got to her feet with Indian exclamations on her lips, and, as if unconscious of them all, went swiftly to the window and out of it, waving her hands up and down once or twice to the trees and the sunlight.

"What did she say?" said Mrs. Armour, rising with the others.

"She said," replied Mackenzie, as she hurried towards the window, "that they were her beautiful woods, and there were wild birds flying and swimming in the water, as in her own country."

By this time all were at the window, Richard arriving last, and the Indian girl turned on them, her body all quivering with excitement, laughed a low, bird-like laugh, and then, clapping her hands above her head, she swung round and ran like a deer towards the lake, shaking her head back as an animal does when fleeing from his pursuers. She would scarcely have been recognised as the same placid, speechless woman in a blanket who sat with folded hands day after day on the Aphrodite.

The watchers turned and looked at each other in wonder. Truly, their task of civilising a savage would not lack in interest. The old general was better pleased, however, at this display of activity and excitement than at yesterday's taciturnity. He loved spirit, even if it had to be subdued, and he thought on the instant that he might possibly come to look upon the fair savage as an actual and not a nominal daughter-in-law. He had a keen appreciation of courage, and he thought he saw in her face, as she turned upon them, a look of defiance or daring, and nothing could have got at his nature quicker. If the case had not been so near to his own hearthstone he would have chuckled. As it was, he said good-humouredly that Mackenzie and Marion should go and bring her back. But Mackenzie was already at that duty. Mrs. Armour had had the presence of mind to send for Colvin; but presently, when the general spoke, she thought it better that Marion should go, and counselled returning to breakfast and not making the matter of too much importance. This they did, Richard very reluctantly; while Marion, rather pleased than not at the spirit shown by the strange girl, ran away over the grass towards the lake, where Lali had now stopped. There was a little bridge at one point where the lake narrowed, and Lali, evidently seeing it all at once, went towards it, and ran up on it, standing poised above the water about the middle of it. For an instant an unpleasant possibility came into Marion's mind: suppose the excited girl intended suicide! She shivered as she thought of it, and yet—! She put that horribly cruel and selfish thought away from her with an indignant word at herself. She had passed Mackenzie, and came first to the lake. Here she slackened, and waved her hand playfully to the girl, so as not to frighten her; and then with a forced laugh came up panting on the bridge, and was presently by Lali's side. Lali eyed her a little furtively, but, seeing that Marion was much inclined to be pleasant, she nodded to her, said some Indian words hastily, and spread out her hands towards the water. As she did so, Marion noticed again the beauty of those hands and the graceful character of the gesture, so much so that she forgot the flat hair and the unstayed body, and the rather broad feet, and the delicate duskiness, which had so worked upon her in imagination and in fact the evening before. She put her hand kindly on that long slim hand stretched out beside her, and, because she knew not what else to speak, and because the tongue is very perverse at times,—saying the opposite of what is expected,—she herself blundered out, "How! How! Lali."

Perhaps Lali was as much surprised at the remark as Marion herself, and certainly very much more delighted. The sound of those familiar words, spoken by accident as they were, opened the way to a better understanding, as nothing else could possibly have done. Marion was annoyed with herself, and yet amused too. If her mind had been perfectly assured regarding Captain Vidall, it is probable that then and there a peculiar, a genial, comradeship would have been formed. As it was, Marion found this little event more endurable than she expected. She also found that Lali, when she laughed in pleasant acknowledgment of that How! had remarkably white and regular teeth. Indeed, Marion Armour began to discover some estimable points in the appearance of her savage sister-in-law. Marion remarked to herself that Lali might be a rather striking person, if she were dressed, as her mother said, in Christian garments, could speak the English language well—and was somebody else's sister-in-law.

At this point Mackenzie came breathlessly to the bridge, and called out a little sharply to Lali,

rebuking her. In this Mackenzie made a mistake; for not only did Lali draw herself up with considerable dignity, but Marion, noticing the masterful nature of the tone, instantly said: "Mackenzie, you must remember that you are speaking to Mrs. Francis Armour, and that her position in General Armour's house is the same as mine. I hope it is not necessary to say anything more, Mackenzie."

Mackenzie flushed. She was a sensible woman, she knew that she had done wrong, and she said very promptly: "I am very sorry, miss. I was flustered, and I expect I haven't got used to speaking to—to Mrs. Armour as I'll be sure to do in the future."

As she spoke, two or three deer came trotting out of the beeches down to the lake side. If Lali was pleased and excited before, she was overwhelmed now. Her breath came in quick little gasps; she laughed; she tossed her hands; she seemed to become dizzy with delight; and presently, as if this new link with, and reminder of, her past, had moved her as one little expects a savage heart to be moved, two tears gathered in her eyes, then slid down her cheek unheeded, and dried there in the sunlight, as she still gazed at the deer. Marion, at first surprised, was now touched, as she could not have thought it possible concerning this wild creature, and her hand went out and caught Lali's gently. At this genuine act of sympathy, instinctively felt by Lali, the stranger in a strange land, husbanded and yet a widow, there came a flood of tears, and, dropping on her knees, she leaned against the low railing of the bridge and wept silently. So passionless was her grief it seemed the more pathetic, and Marion dropped on her knees beside her, put her arm round her shoulder, and said: "Poor girl! Poor girl!"

At that Lali caught her hand, and held it, repeating after her the words:
"Poor girl! Poor girl!"

She did not quite understand them, but she remembered that once just before she parted from her husband at the Great Lakes he had said those very words. If the fates had apparently given things into Frank Armour's hands when he sacrificed this girl to his revenge, they were evidently inclined to play a game which would eventually defeat his purpose, wicked as it had been in effect if not in absolute motive. What the end of this attempt to engraft the Indian girl upon the strictest convention of English social life would have been had her introduction not been at Greyhope, where faint likenesses to her past surrounded her, it is hard to conjecture. But, from present appearances, it would seem that Richard Armour was not wholly a false prophet; for the savage had shown herself that morning to possess, in their crudeness, some striking qualities of character. Given character, many things are possible, even to those who are not of the elect.

This was the beginning of better things. Lali seemed to the Armours not quite so impossible now. Had she been of the very common order of Indian "pure and simple," the task had resolved itself into making a common savage into a very common European. But, whatever Lali was, it was abundantly evident that she must be reckoned with at all points, and that she was more likely to become a very startling figure in the Armour household than a mere encumbrance to be blushed for, whose eternal absence were preferable to her company.

Years after that first morning Marion caught herself shuddering at the thought that came to her when she saw Lali hovering on the bridge. Whatever Marion's faults were, she had a fine dislike of anything that seemed unfair. She had not ridden to hounds for nothing. She had at heart the sportsman's instinct. It was upon this basis, indeed, that Richard appealed to her in the first trying days of Lali's life among them. To oppose your will to Marion on the basis of superior knowledge was only to turn her into a rebel; and a very effective rebel she made; for she had a pretty gift at the retort courteous, and she could take as much, and as well, as she gave. She rebelled at first at assisting in Lali's education, though by fits and starts she would teach her English words, and help her to form long sentences, and was, on the whole, quite patient. But Lali's real instructors were Mrs. Armour and Richard—, her best, Richard.

The first few days she made but little progress, for everything was strange to her, and things made her giddy—the servants, the formal routine, the handsome furnishings, Marion's music, the great house, the many precise personal duties set for her, to be got through at stated times; and Mrs. Armour's rather grand manner. But there was the relief to this, else the girl had pined terribly for her native woods and prairies; this was the park, the deer, the lake, the hares, and birds. While she sat saying over after Mrs. Armour words and phrases in English, or was being shown how she must put on and wear the clothes which a dressmaker from Regent Street had been brought to make, her eyes would wander dreamily to the trees and the lake and the grass. They soon discovered that she would pay no attention and was straightway difficult to teach if she was not placed where she could look out on the park. They had no choice, for though her resistance was never active it was nevertheless effective.

Presently she got on very swiftly with Richard. For he, with instinct worthy of a woman, turned their lessons upon her own country and Frank. This cost him something, but it had its reward. There was no

more listlessness. Previously Frank's name had scarcely been spoken to her. Mrs. Armour would have hours of hesitation and impotent regret before she brought herself to speak of her son to his Indian wife. Marion tried to do it a few times and failed; the general did it with rather a forced voice and manner, because he saw that his wife was very tender upon the point. But Richard, who never knew self-consciousness, spoke freely of Frank when he spoke at all; and it was seeing Lali's eyes brighten and her look earnestly fixed on him when he chanced to mention Frank's name, that determined him on his new method of instruction. It had its dangers, but he had calculated them all. The girl must be educated at all costs. The sooner that occurred the sooner would she see her own position and try to adapt herself to her responsibilities, and face the real state of her husband's attitude towards her.

He succeeded admirably. Striving to tell him about her past life, and ready to talk endlessly about her husband, of his prowess in the hunt, of his strength and beauty, she also strove to find English words for the purpose, and Richard supplied them with uncommon willingness. He humoured her so far as to learn many Indian words and phrases, but he was chary of his use of them, and tried hard to make her appreciative of her new life and surroundings. He watched her waking slowly to an understanding of the life, and of all that it involved. It gave him a kind of fear, too, because she was sensitive, and there was the possible danger of her growing disheartened or desperate, and doing some mad thing in the hour that she wakened to the secret behind her marriage.

His apprehensions were not without cause. For slowly there came into Lali's mind the element of comparison. She became conscious of it one day when some neighbouring people called at Greyhope. Mrs. Armour, in her sense of duty, which she had rigidly set before her, introduced Lali into the drawing-room. The visitors veiled their curiosity and said some pleasant casual things to the young wife, but she saw the half-curious, half-furtive glances, she caught a sidelong glance and smile, and when they were gone she took to looking at herself in a mirror, a thing she could scarcely be persuaded to do before. She saw the difference between her carriage and theirs, her manner of wearing her clothes and theirs, her complexion and theirs. She exaggerated the difference. She brooded on it. Now she sat downcast and timid, and hunted in face, as on the first evening she came; now she appeared restless and excited.

If Mrs. Armour was not exactly sympathetic with her, she was quiet and forbearing, and General Armour, like Richard, tried to draw her out—but not on the same subjects. He dwelt upon what she did; the walks she took in the park, those hours in the afternoon when, with Mackenzie or Colvin, she vanished into the beeches, making friends with the birds and deer and swans. But most of all she loved to go to the stables. She was, however, asked not to go unless Richard or General Armour was with her. She loved horses, and these were a wonder to her. She had never known any but the wild, ungroomed Indian pony, on which she had ridden in every fashion and over every kind of country. Mrs. Armour sent for a riding- master, and had riding-costumes made for her. It was intended that she should ride every day as soon as she seemed sufficiently presentable. This did not appear so very far off, for she improved daily in appearance. Her hair was growing finer, and was made up in the modest prevailing fashion; her skin, no longer exposed to an inclement climate, and subject to the utmost care, was smoother and fairer; her feet, encased in fine, well-made boots, looked much smaller; her waist was shaped to fashion, and she was very straight and lissom. So many things she did jarred on her relatives, that they were not fully aware of the great improvement in her appearance. Even Richard admitted her trying at times.

Marion went up to town to stay with Mrs. Townley, and there had to face a good deal of curiosity. People looked at her sometimes as if it was she and not Lali that was an Indian. But she carried things off bravely enough, and answered those kind inquiries, which one's friends make when we are in embarrassing situations, with answers so calm and pleasant that people did not know what to think.

"Yes," she said, in reply to Lady Balwood, "her sister-in-law might be in town later in the year, perhaps before the season was over: she could not tell. She was tired after her long voyage, and she preferred the quiet of Greyhope; she was fond of riding and country-life; but still she would come to town for a time." And so on.

"Ah, dear me, how charming! And doesn't she resent her husband's absence—during the honeymoon? or did the honeymoon occur before she came over to England?" And Lady Balwood tried to say it all playfully, and certainly said it something loudly. She had daughters.

But Marion was perfectly prepared. Her face did not change expression. "Yes, they had had their honeymoon on the prairies; Frank was so fascinated with the life and the people. He had not come home at once, because he was making she did not know how great a fortune over there in investments, and so Mrs. Armour came on before him, and, of course, as soon as he could get away from his business, he would follow his wife."

And though Marion smiled, her heart was very hot, and she could have slain Lady Balwood in her

tracks. Lady Balwood then nodded a little patronisingly, and babbled that "she hoped so much to see Mrs. Francis Armour. She must be so very interesting, the papers said so much about her."

Now, while this conversation was going on, some one stood not far behind Marion, who seemed much interested in her and what she said. But Marion did not see this person. She was startled presently, however, to hear a strong voice say softly over her shoulder: "What a charming woman Lady Balwood is! And so ingenuous!"

She was grateful, tremulous, proud. Why had he—Captain Vidall—kept out of the way all these weeks, just when she needed him most, just when he should have played the part of a man? Then she was feeling twinges at the heart, too. She had seen Lady Agnes Martling that afternoon, and had noticed how the news had worn on her. She felt how much better it had been had Frank come quietly home and married her, instead of doing the wild, scandalous thing that was making so many heart-burnings. A few minutes ago she had longed for a chance to say something delicately acid to Lady Haldwell, once Julia Sherwood, who was there. Now there was a chance to give her bitter spirit tongue. She was glad—she dared not think how glad—to hear that voice again; but she was angry too, and he should suffer for it—the more so because she recognised in the tone, and afterwards in his face, that he was still absorbingly interested in her. There was a little burst of thanksgiving in her heart, and then she prepared a very notable commination service in her mind.

This meeting had been deftly arranged by Mrs. Townley, with the help of Edward Lambert, who now held her fingers with a kind of vanity of possession whenever he bade her good-bye or met her. Captain Vidall had, in fact, been out of the country, had only been back a week, and had only heard of Frank Armour's mesalliance from Lambert at an At Home forty- eight hours before. Mrs. Townley guessed what was really at the bottom of Marion's occasional bitterness, and, piecing together many little things dropped casually by her friend, had come to the conclusion that the happiness of two people was at stake.

When Marion shook hands with Captain Vidall she had herself exceedingly well under control. She looked at him in slight surprise, and casually remarked that they had not chanced to meet lately in the run of small- and-earlies. She appeared to be unconscious that he had been out of the country, and also that she had been till very recently indeed at Greyhope. He hastened to assure her that he had been away, and to lay siege to this unexpected barrier. He knew all about Frank's affair, and, though it troubled him, he did not see why it should make any difference in his regard for Frank's sister. Fastidious as he was in all things, he was fastidiously deferential. Not an exquisite, he had all that vanity as to appearance so usual with the military man; himself of the most perfect temper and sweetness of manner and conduct, the unusual disturbed him. Not possessed of a vivid imagination, he could scarcely conjure up this Indian bride at Greyhope.

But face to face with Marion Armour he saw what troubled his mind, and he determined he would not meet her irony with irony, her assumed indifference with indifference. He had learned one of the most important lessons of life—never to quarrel with a woman. Whoever has so far erred has been foolish indeed. It is the worst of policy, to say nothing of its being the worst of art; and life should never be without art. It is absurd to be perfectly natural; anything, anybody can be that. Well, Captain Hume Vidall was something of an artist, more, however, in principle than by temperament. He refused to recognise the rather malicious adroitness with which Marion turned his remarks again upon himself, twisted out of all semblance. He was very patient. He inquired quietly, and as if honestly interested, about Frank, and said—because he thought it safest as well as most reasonable—that, naturally, they must have been surprised at his marrying a native; but he himself had seen some such marriages turn out very well—in Japan, India, the South Sea Islands, and Canada. He assumed that Marion's sister-in-law was beautiful, and then disarmed Marion by saying that he thought of going down to Greyhope immediately, to call on General Armour and Mrs. Armour, and wondered if she was going back before the end of the season.

Quick as Marion was, this was said so quietly that she did not quite see the drift of it. She had intended staying in London to the end of the season, not because she enjoyed it, but because she was determined to face Frank's marriage at every quarter, and have it over, once for all, so far as herself was concerned. But now, taken slightly aback, she said, almost without thinking, that she would probably go back soon—she was not quite sure; but certainly her father and mother would be glad to see Captain Vidall at any time.

Then, without any apparent relevancy, he asked her if Mrs. Frank Armour still wore her Indian costume. In any one else the question had seemed impertinent; in him it had a touch of confidence, of the privilege of close friendship. Then he said, with a meditative look and a very calm, retrospective voice, that he was once very much in love with a native girl in India, and might have become permanently devoted to her, were it not for the accident of his being ordered back to England

summarily.

This was a piece of news which cut two ways. In the first place it lessened the extraordinary character of Frank's marriage, and it roused in her an immediate curiosity—which a woman always feels in the past "affairs" of her lover, or possible lover. Vidall did not take pains to impress her with the fact that the matter occurred when he was almost a boy; and it was when her earnest inquisition had drawn from him, bit by bit, the circumstances of the case, and she had forgotten many parts of her commination service and to preserve an effective neutrality in tone, that she became aware he was speaking ancient history. Then it was too late to draw back.

They had threaded their way through the crowd into the conservatory, where they were quite alone, and there, with only a little pyramid of hydrangeas between them, which she could not help but notice chimed well with the colour of her dress, he dropped his voice a little lower, and then suddenly said, his eyes hard on her: "I want your permission to go to Greyhope."

The tone drew her eyes hastily to his, and, seeing, she dropped them again. Vidall had a strong will, and, what is of more consequence, a peculiarly attractive voice. It had a vibration which made some of his words organ-like in sound. She felt the influence of it. She said a little faintly, her fingers toying with a hydrangea: "I am afraid I do not understand. There is no reason why you should not go to Greyhope without my permission."

"I cannot go without it," he persisted. "I am waiting for my commission from you."

She dropped her hand from the flower with a little impatient motion. She was tired, her head ached, she wanted to be alone. "Why are you enigmatical?" she said. Then quickly: "I wish I knew what is in your mind. You play with words so."

She scarcely knew what she said. A woman who loves a man very much is not quick to take in the absolute declaration of that man's love on the instant; it is too wonderful for her. He felt his check flush with hers, he drew her look again to his. "Marion! Marion!" he said. That was all.

"Oh, hush, some one is coming!" was her quick, throbbing reply. When they parted a half-hour later, he said to her: "Will you give me my commission to go to Greyhope?"

"Oh no, I cannot," she said very gravely; "but come to Greyhope-when I go back."

"And when will that be?" he said, smiling, yet a little ruefully too.

"Please ask Mrs. Townley," she replied; "she is coming also."

Marion, knew what that commission to go to Greyhope meant. But she determined that he should see Lali first, before anything irrevocable was done. She still looked upon Frank's marriage as a scandal. Well, Captain Vidall should face it in all its crudeness. So, in a week or less, Marion and Mrs. Townley were in Greyhope.

Two months had gone since Lali arrived in England, and yet no letter had come to her, or to any of them, from Frank. Frank's solicitor in London had written him fully of her arrival, and he had had a reply, with further instructions regarding money to be placed to General Armour's credit for the benefit of his wife. Lali, as she became Europeanised, also awoke to the forms and ceremonies of her new life. She had overheard Frank's father and mother wondering, and fretting as they wondered, why they had not received any word from him. General Armour had even called him a scoundrel, which sent Frank's mother into tears. Then Lali had questioned Mackenzie and Colvin, for she had increasing shrewdness, and she began to feel her actual position. She resented General Armour's imputation, but in her heart she began to pine and wonder. At times, too, she was fitful, and was not to be drawn out. But she went on improving in personal appearance and manner and in learning the English language. Mrs. Townley's appearance marked a change in her. When they met she suddenly stood still and trembled. When Mrs. Townley came to her and took her hand and kissed her, she shivered, and then caught her about the shoulders lightly, but was silent. After a little she said: "Come—come to my wigwam, and talk with me."

She said it with a strange little smile, for now she recognised that the word wigwam was not to be used in her new life. But Mrs. Townley whispered: "Ask Marion to come too."

Lali hesitated, and then said, a little maliciously: "Marion, will you come to my wigwam?"

Marion ran to her, caught her about the waist, and replied gaily: "Yes, we will have a pow-wow—is that right—is pow-wow right?"

The Indian girl shook her head with a pretty vagueness, and vanished with them. General Armour walked up and down the room briskly, then turned on his wife and said: "Wife, it was a brutal thing:

Frank doesn't deserve to be—the father of her child."

But Lali had moods—singular moods. She indulged in one three days after the arrival of Marion and Mrs. Townley. She had learned to ride with the side-saddle, and wore her riding-dress admirably. Nowhere did she show to better advantage. She had taken to riding now with General Armour on the country roads. On this day Captain Vidall was expected, he having written to ask that he might come. What trouble Lali had with one of the servants that morning was never thoroughly explained, but certain it is, she came to have a crude notion of why Frank Armour married her. The servant was dismissed duly, but that was after the contre-temps.

It was late afternoon. Everybody had been busy, because one or two other guests were expected besides Captain Vidall. Lali had kept to herself, sending word through Richard that she would not "be English," as she vaguely put it, that day. She had sent Mackenzie on some mission. She sat on the floor of her room, as she used to sit on the ground in her father's lodge. Her head was bowed in her hands, and her arms rested on her knees. Her body swayed to and fro. Presently all motion ceased. She became perfectly still. She looked before her as if studying something.

Her eyes immediately flashed. She rose quickly to her feet, went to her wardrobe, and took out her Indian costume and blanket, with which she could never be induced to part. Almost feverishly she took off the clothes she wore and hastily threw them from her. Then she put on the buckskin clothes in which she had journeyed to England, drew down her hair as she used to wear it, fastened round her waist a long red sash which had been given her by a governor of the Hudson's Bay Company when he had visited her father's country, threw her blanket round her shoulders, and then eyed herself in the great mirror in the room. What she saw evidently did not please her perfectly, for she stretched out her hands and looked at them; she shook her head at herself and put her hand to her cheeks and pinched them, they were not so brown as they once were, then she thrust out her foot. She drew it back quickly in disdain. Immediately she caught the fashionable slippers from her feet and threw them among the discarded garments. She looked at herself again. Still she was not satisfied, but she threw up her arms, as with a sense of pleasure and freedom, and laughed at herself. She pushed out her moccasined foot, tapped the floor with it, nodded towards it, and said a word or two in her own language. She heard some one in the next room, possibly Mackenzie. She stepped to the door leading into the hall, opened it, went out, travelled its length, ran down a back hallway, out into the park, towards the stables, her blanket, as her hair, flying behind her.

She entered the stables, made for a horse that she had ridden much, put a bridle on him, led him out before any one had seen her, and, catching him by the mane, suddenly threw herself on him at a bound, and, giving him a tap with a short whip she had caught up in the stable, headed him for the main avenue and the open road. Then a stableman saw her and ran after, but he might as well have tried to follow the wind. He forthwith proceeded to saddle another horse. Boulter also saw her as she passed the house, and, running in, told Mrs. Armour and the general. They both ran to the window and saw dashing down the avenue—a picture out of Fenimore Cooper; a saddleless horse with a rider whose fingers merely touched the bridle, riding as on a journey of life and death.

"My God, it's Lali! She's mad—she's mad! She is striking that horse!
It will bolt! It will kill her!" cried the general.

Then he rushed for a horse to follow her. Mrs. Armour's hands clasped painfully. For an instant she had almost the same thought as had Marion on the first morning of Lali's coming; but that passed, and left her gazing helplessly after the horse-woman. The flying blanket had frightened the blooded horse, and he made desperate efforts to fulfil the general's predictions.

Lali soon found that she had miscalculated. She was not riding an Indian pony, but a crazed, high-strung horse. As they flew, she sitting superbly and tugging at the bridle, the party coming from the railway station entered the great gate, accompanied by Richard and Marion. In a moment they sighted this wild pair bearing down upon them with a terrible swiftness.

As Marion recognised Lali she turned pale and cried out, rising in her seat. Instinctively Captain Vidall knew who it was, though he could not guess the cause of the singular circumstance. He saw that the horse had bolted, but also that the rider seemed entirely fearless. "Why, in Heaven's name," he said between his teeth, "doesn't she let go that blanket!"

At that moment Lali did let it go, and the horse dashed by them, making hard for the gate. "Turn the horses round and follow her," said Vidall to the driver. While this was doing, Marion caught sight of her father riding hard down the avenue. He passed them, and called to them to hurry on after him.

Lali had not the slightest sense of fear, but she knew that the horse had gone mad. When they passed through the gate and swerved into the road, a less practised rider would have been thrown. She sat like

wax. The pace was incredible for a mile, and though General Armour rode well, he was far behind.

Suddenly a trap appeared in the road in front of them, and the driver, seeing the runaway, set his horses at right angles to the road. It served the purpose only to provide another danger. Not far from where the trap was drawn, and between it and the runaway, was a lane, which ended at a farmyard in a cul-de-sac. The horse swerved into it, not slacking its pace, and in the fraction of a minute came to the farmyard.

But now the fever was in Lali's blood. She did not care whether she lived or died. A high hedge formed the cul-de-sac. When she saw the horse slacking she cut it savagely across the head twice with a whip, and drove him at the green wall. He was of too good make to refuse it, stiff as it was. He rose to it magnificently, and cleared it; but almost as he struck the ground squarely, he staggered and fell—the girl beneath him. He had burst a blood-vessel. The ground was soft and wet; the weight of the horse prevented her from getting free. She felt its hoof striking in its death-struggles, and once her shoulder was struck. Instinctively she buried her face in the mud, and her arms covered her head.

And then she knew no more.

When she came to, she was in the carriage within the gates of Greyhope, and Marion was bending over her. She suddenly tried to lift herself, but could not. Presently she saw another face—that of General Armour. It was stern, and yet his eyes were swimming as he looked at her.

"How!" she said to him—"How!" and fainted again.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Being young, she exaggerated the importance of the event
His duties were many, or he made them so
Men must have their bad hours alone
Most important lessons of life—never to quarrel with a woman
Sympathy and consolation might be much misplaced
These little pieces of art make life possible
Think of our position
Who never knew self-consciousness
You never can make a scandal less by trying to hide it

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