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THE TRANSLATION OF A SAVAGE

By Gilbert Parker

Volume 3.

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CHAPTER IX

THE FAITH OF COMRADES

When Francis Armour left his wife's room he did not go to his own, but quietly descended the stairs, went to the library, and sat down. The loneliest thing in the world is to be *tete-a-tete* with one's conscience. A man may have a bad hour with an enemy, a sad hour with a friend, a peaceful hour with himself, but when the little dwarf, conscience, perches upon every hillock of remembrance and makes slow signs—those strange symbols of the language of the soul—to him, no slave upon the tread-mill suffers more.

The butler came in to see if anything was required, but Armour only greeted him silently and waved him away. His brain was painfully alert, his memory singularly awake. It seemed that the incident of this hour had so opened up every channel of his intelligence that all his life ran past him in fantastic

panorama, as by that illumination which comes to the drowning man. He seemed under some strange spell. Once or twice he rose, rubbed his eyes, and looked round the room—the room where as a boy he had spent idle hours, where as a student he had been in the hands of his tutor, and as a young man had found recreations such as belong to ambitious and ardent youth. Every corner was familiar. Nothing was changed. The books upon the shelves were as they were placed twenty years ago. And yet he did not seem a part of it. It did not seem natural to him. He was in an atmosphere of strangeness—that atmosphere which surrounds a man, as by a cloud, when some crisis comes upon him and his life seems to stand still, whirling upon its narrow base, while the world appears at an interminable distance, even as to a deaf man who sees yet cannot hear.

There came home to him at that moment with a force indescribable the shamelessness of the act he committed four years ago. He had thought to come back to miserable humiliation. For four years he had refused to do his duty as a man towards an innocent woman,—a woman, though in part a savage,—now transformed into a gentle, noble creature of delight and goodness. How had he deserved it? He had sown the storm, it was but just that he should reap the whirlwind; he had scattered thistles, could he expect to gather grapes? He knew that the sympathy of all his father's house was not with him, but with the woman he had wronged. He was glad it was so. Looking back now, it seemed so poor and paltry a thing that he, a man, should stoop to revenge himself upon those who had given him birth, as a kind of insult to the woman who had lightly set him aside, and should use for that purpose a helpless, confiding girl. To revenge one's self for wrong to one's self is but a common passion, which has little dignity; to avenge some one whom one has loved, man or woman, —and, before all, woman,—has some touch of nobility, is redeemed by loyalty. For his act there was not one word of defence to be made, and he was not prepared to make it.

The cigars and liquors were beside him, but he did not touch them. He seemed very far away from the ordinary details of his life: he knew he had before him hard travel, and he was not confident of the end. He could not tell how long he sat there. —After, a time the ticking of the clock seemed painfully loud to him. Now and again he heard a cab rattling through the Square, and the foolish song of some drunken loiterer in the night caused him to start painfully. Everything jarred on him. Once he got up, went to the window, and looked out. The moon was shining full on the Square. He wondered if it would be well for him to go out and find some quiet to his nerves in walking. He did so. Out in the Square he looked up to his wife's window. It was lighted. Long time he walked up and down, his eyes on the window. It held him like a charm. Once he leaned against the iron railings of the garden and looked up, not moving for a time. Presently he saw the curtain of the window raised, and against the dim light of the room was outlined the figure of his wife. He knew it. She stood for a moment looking out into the night. She could not see him, nor could he see her features at all plainly, but he knew that she, like him, was alone with the catastrophe which his wickedness had sent upon her. Soon the curtain was drawn down again, and then he went once more to the house and took his old seat beside the table. He fell to brooding, and at last, exhausted, dropped to a troubled sleep. He woke with a start. Some one was in the room. He heard a step behind him. He came to his feet quickly, a wild light in his eyes. He faced his brother Richard.

Late in the afternoon Marion had telegraphed to Richard that Frank was coming. He had been away visiting some poor and sick people, and when he came back to Greyhope it was too late to catch the train. But the horses were harnessed straightway, and he was driven into town, a three-hours' drive. He had left the horses at the stables, and, having a latch-key, had come in quietly. He had seen the light in the study, and guessed who was there. He entered, and saw his brother asleep. He watched him for a moment and studied him. Then he moved away to take off his hat, and, as he did so, stumbled slightly. Then it was Frank waked, and for the first time in five years they looked each other in the eyes. They both stood immovable for a moment, and then Richard caught Frank's hand in both of his and said: "God bless you, my boy! I am glad you are back."

"Dick! Dick!" was the reply, and Frank's other hand clutched Richard's shoulder in his strong emotion. They stood silent for a moment longer, and then Richard recovered himself. He waved his hand to the chairs. The strain of the situation was a little painful for them both. Men are shy with each other where their emotions are in play.

"Why, my boy," he said, waving a hand to the spirits and liqueurs, "full bottles and unopened boxes? Tut, tut! here's a pretty how-d'ye-do. Is this the way you toast the home quarters? You're a fine soldier for an old mess!"

So saying, he poured out some whiskey, then opened the box of cigars and pushed them towards his brother. He did not care particularly to drink or smoke himself, but a man—an Englishman—is a strange creature. He is most natural and at ease when he is engaged in eating and drinking. He relieves every trying situation by some frivolous and selfish occupation, as of dismembering a partridge, or mixing a punch.

"Well, Frank," said his brother, "now what have you to say for yourself? Why didn't you come long ago? You have played the adventurer for five years, and what have you to show for it? Have you a fortune?" Frank shook his head, and twisted a shoulder. "What have you done that is worth the doing, then?"

"Nothing that I intended to do, Dick," was the grave reply.

"Yes, I imagined that. You have seen them, have you?" he added, in a softer voice.

Frank blew a great cloud of smoke about his face, and through it he said:

"Yes, I have seen a damned sight more than I deserved to see."

"Oh, of course; I know that, my boy; but, so far as I can see, in another direction you are getting quite what you deserve: your wife and child are upstairs—you are here."

He paused, was silent for a moment, then leaned over, caught his brother's arm, and said, in a low, strenuous voice: "Frank Armour, you laid a hateful little plot for us. It wasn't manly, but we forgave it and did the best we could. But see here, Frank, take my word for it, you have had a lot of luck. There isn't one woman out of ten thousand that would have stood the test as your wife has stood it; injured at the start, constant neglect, temptation—" he paused. "My boy, did you ever think of that, of the temptation to a woman neglected by her husband? The temptation to men? Yes, you have had a lot of luck. There has been a special providence for you, my boy; but not for your sake. God doesn't love neglectful husbands, but I think He is pretty sorry for neglected wives."

Frank was very still. His head drooped, the cigar hung unheeded in his fingers for a moment, and he said at last: "Dick, old boy, I've thought it all over to-night since I came back—everything that you've said. I have not a word of defence to make, but, by heaven! I'm going to win my wife's love if I can, and when I do it I'll make up for all my cursed foolishness—see if I don't."

"That sounds well, Frank," was the quiet reply. "I like to hear you talk that way. You would be very foolish if you did not. What do you think of the child?"

"Can you ask me what I think? He is a splendid little fellow."

"Take care of him, then—take good care of him: you may never have another," was the grim rejoinder. Frank winced. His brother rose, took his arm, and said: "Let us go to our rooms, Frank. There will be time enough to talk later, and I am not so young as I once was."

Truth to say, Richard Armour was not so young as he seemed a few months before. His shoulders were a little stooped, he was greyer about the temples. The little bit of cynicism which had appeared in that remark about the care of the child showed also in the lines of his mouth; yet his eyes had the same old true, honest look. But a man cannot be hit in mortal places once or twice in his life without its being etched on his face or dropped like a pinch of aloe from his tongue.

Still they sat and talked much longer, Frank showing better than when his brother came, Richard gone grey and tired. At last Richard rose and motioned towards the window. "See, Frank," he said, "it is morning." Then he went and lifted the blind. The grey, unpurged air oozed on the glass. The light was breaking over the tops of the houses. A crossing-sweeper early to his task, or holding the key of the street, went pottering by, and a policeman glanced up at them as he passed. Richard drew down the curtain again.

"Dick," said Frank suddenly, "you look old. I wonder if I have changed as much?"

Six months before, Frank Armour would have said that his brother looked young.

"Oh, you look young enough, Frank," was the reply. "But I am a good deal older than I was five years ago. . . Come, let us go to bed."

CHAPTER X

THOU KNOWEST THE SECRETS OF OUR HEARTS

And Lali? How had the night gone for her? When she rose from the child's cot, where her lips had

caught the warmth that her husband had left on them, she stood for a moment bewildered in the middle of the room. She looked at the door out of which he had gone, her bosom beating hard, her heart throbbing so that it hurt her—that she could have cried out from mere physical pain. The wifedom in her was plundering the wild stores of her generous soul for the man, for—as Richard had said that day, that memorable day!—the father of her child. But the woman, the pure translated woman, who was born anew when this frail life in its pink and white glory crept out into the dazzling world, shrank back, as any girl might shrink that had not known marriage. This child had come—from what?—She shuddered now—how many times had she done so since she first waked to the vulgar sacrilege of her marriage? She knew now that every good mother, when her first child is born, takes it in her arms, and, all her agony gone, and the ineffable peace of delivered motherhood come, speaks the name of its father, and calls it his child. But—she remembered it now—when her child was born, this little waif, the fruit of a man's hot, malicious hour, she wrapped it in her arms, pressed its delicate flesh to the silken folds of her bosom, and weeping, whispered only: "My child, my little, little child!"

She had never, as many a wife far from her husband has done, talked to her child of its father, told it of his beauty and his virtues, arrayed it day by day in sweet linen and pretty adornments, as if he were just then knocking at her door; she had never imagined what he would say when he did come. What could such a father think of his child, born of a woman whose very life he had intended as an insult? No, she had loved it for father and mother also. She had tried to be good, a good mother, living a life unutterably lonely, hard in all that it involved of study, new duty, translation, and burial of primitive emotions. And with all the care and tearful watchfulness that had been needed, she had grown so proud, so exacting—exacting for her child, proud for herself.

How could she know now that this hasty declaration of affection was anything more than the mere man in him? Years ago she had not been able to judge between love and insult—what guarantee had she here? Did he think that she could believe in him? She was not the woman he had married, he was not the man she had married. He had deceived her basely—she had been a common chattel. She had been miserable enough—could she give herself over to his flying emotions again so suddenly?

She paced the room, her face now in her hands, her hands now clasping and wringing before her. Her wifely duty? She straightened to that. Duty! She was first and before all a good, unpolluted woman. No, no, it could not be. Love him? Again she shrank. Then came flooding on her that afternoon when she had flung herself on Richard's breast, and all those hundred days of happiness in Richard's company—Richard the considerate, the strong, who had stood so by his honour in an hour of peril.

Now as she thought of it a hot wave shivered through all her body, and tingled to her hair. Her face again dropped in her hands, and, as on that other day, she knelt beside the cot, and, bursting into tears, said through her sobs: "My baby, my own dear baby! Oh, that we could go away—away—and never come back again!"

She did not know how intense her sobs were. They waked the child from its delicate sleep; its blue eyes opened wide and wise all on the instant, its round soft arm ran up to its mother's neck, and it said: "Don't c'y! I want to s'leep wif you! I'se so s'leepy!"

She caught the child to her wet face, smiled at it through her tears, went with it to her own bed, put it away in the deep whiteness, kissed it, and fondled it away again into the heaven of sleep. When this was done she felt calmer. How she hungered over it! This—this could not be denied her. This, at least, was all hers, without clause or reservation, an absolute love, and an absolute right.

She disrobed and drew in beside the child, and its little dewy cheek touching her breast seemed to ease the ache in her soul.

But sleep would not come. All the past four years trooped by, with their thousand incidents magnified in the sharp, throbbing light of her mind, and at last she knew and saw clearly what was before her, what trials, what duty, and what honour demanded—her honour.

Richard? Once for all she gently put him away from her into that infinite distance of fine respect which a good woman can feel, who has known what she and Richard had known—and set aside. But he had made for her so high a standard, that for one to be measured thereby was a severe challenge.

Could Frank come even to that measure? She dared not try to answer the question. She feared, she shrank, she grew sick at heart. She did not reckon with that other thing, that powerful, infinite influence which ties a woman, she knows not how or why, to the man who led her to the world of motherhood. Through all the wrongs which she may suffer by him, there runs this cable of unhappy attraction, testified to by how many sorrowful lives!

But Lali was trying to think it out, not only to feel, and she did not count that subterranean force

which must play its part in this new situation in her drama of life. Could she love him? She crept away out of the haven where her child was, put on her dressing-gown, went to the window, and looked out upon the night, all unconscious that her husband was looking at her from the Square below. Love him?—Love him?—Love him? Could she? Did he love her? Her eyes wandered over the Square. Nowhere else was there a light, but a chimney-flue was creaking somewhere. It jarred on her so that she shrank. Then all at once she smiled to think how she had changed. Four years ago she could have slept amid the hammers of a foundry. The noise ceased. Her eyes passed from the cloud of trees in the Square to the sky—all stars, and restful deep blue. That—that was the same. How she knew it! Orion and Ashtaroth, and Mars and the Pleiades, and the long trail of the Milky Way. As a little child hanging in the trees, or sprawled beside a tepee, she had made friends with them all, even as she learned and loved all the signs of the earth beneath—the twist of a blade of grass, the portent in the cry of a river-hen, the colour of a star, the smell of a wind. She had known Nature then, now she knew men. And knowing them, and having suffered, and sick at heart as she was, standing by this window in the dead of night, the cry that shook her softly was not of her new life, but of the old, primitive, child-like.

'Pasagathe, omarki kethose kolokani vorgantha pestorondikat Oni.'

"A spear hath pierced me, and the smart of the nettle is in my wound. Maker of the soft night, bind my wounds with sleep, lest I cry out and be a coward and unworthy."

Again and again, unconsciously, the words passed from her lips

'Vorganthe, pestorondikat Oni.'

At last she let down the blind, came to the bed, and once more gathered her child in her arms with an infinite hunger. This love was hers—rich, untrammelled, and so sacred. No matter what came, and she did not know what would come, she had the child. There was a kind of ecstasy in it, and she lay and trembled with the feeling, but at last fell into a troubled sleep.

She waked suddenly to hear footsteps passing her door. She listened. One footstep was heavier than the other—heavier and a little stumbling; she recognised them, Frank and Richard. In that moment her heart hardened. Frank Armour must tread a difficult road.

CHAPTER XI

UPON THE HIGHWAY

Frank visited the child in the morning, and was received with a casual interest. Richard Joseph Armour was fastidious, was not to be won at the grand gallop. Besides, he had just had a visit from his uncle, and the good taste of that gay time was yet in his mouth. He did not resent the embraces, but he did not respond to them, and he straightened himself with relief when the assault was over. Some one was paying homage to him, that was all he knew; but for his own satisfaction and pleasure he preferred as yet his old comrades, Edward Lambert, Captain Vidall, General Armour, and, above all, Richard. He only showed real interest at the last, when he asked, as it were in compromise, if his father would give him a sword. No one had ever talked to him of his father, and he had no instinct for him so far as could be seen. The sword was, therefore, after the manner of a concession. Frank rashly promised it, and was promptly told by Marion that it couldn't be; and she was backed by Captain Vidall, who said it had already been tabooed, and Frank wasn't to come in and ask for favours or expect them.

The husband and wife met at breakfast. He was down first. When his wife entered, he came to her, they touched hands, and she presently took a seat beside him. More than once he paused suddenly in his eating, when he thought of his inexplicable case. He was now face to face with a reversed situation. He had once picked up a pebble from the brown dirt of a prairie, that he might toss it into the pool of this home life; and he had tossed it, and from the sweet bath there had come out a precious stone, which he longed to wear, and knew that he could not—not yet. He could have coerced a lower being, but for his manhood's sake—he had risen to that now, it is curious how the dignity of fatherhood helps to make a man—he could not coerce here, and if he did, he knew that the product would be disaster.

He listened to her talk with Marion and Captain Vidall. Her voice was musical, balanced, her language breathed; it had manner, and an indescribable cadence of intelligence, joined to a deliberation, which touched her off with distinction. When she spoke to him—and she seemed to do that as by studied intention and with tact at certain intervals—her manner was composed and kind. She had

resolved on her part. She asked him about his journey over, about his plans for the day, and if he had decided to ride with her in the Park,—he could have the general's mount, she was sure, for the general was not going that day,—and would he mind doing a little errand for her afterwards in Regent Street, for the child—she feared she herself would not have time?

Just then General Armour entered, and, passing behind her, kissed her on the cheek, dropping his hand on Frank's shoulder at the same time with a hearty greeting. Of course, Frank could have his mount, he said. Mrs. Armour did not come down, but she sent word by Richard, who entered last, that she would be glad to see Frank for a moment before he left for the Park. As of old, Richard took both Lali's hands in his, patted them, and cheerily said:

"Well, well, Lali, we've got the wild man home again safe and sound, haven't we—the same old vagabond? We'll have to turn him into a Christian again—'For while the lamp holds out to burn'—"

He did not give her time to reply, but their eyes met honestly, kindly, and from the look they both passed into life and time again with a fresh courage. She did not know, nor did he, how near they had been to an abyss; and neither ever knew. One furtive glance at the moment, one hesitating pressure of the hand, one movement of the head from each other's gaze, and there had been unhappiness for them all. But they were safe.

In the Park, Frank and his wife talked little. They met many who greeted them cordially, and numbers of Frank's old club friends summoned him to the sacred fires at his earliest opportunity. The two talked chiefly of the people they met, and Frank thrilled with admiration at his wife's gentle judgment of everybody.

"The true thing, absolutely the true thing," he said; and he was conscious, too, that her instincts were right and searching, for once or twice he saw her face chill a little when they met one or two men whose reputations as chevaliers des dames were pronounced. These men had had one or two confusing minutes with Lali in their time.

"How splendidly you ride!" he said, as he came up swiftly to her, after having chatted for a moment with Edward Lambert. "You sit like wax, and so entirely easy."

"Thank you," she said. "I suppose I really like it too well to ride badly, and then I began young on horses not so good as Musket here—bareback, too!" she added, with a little soft irony.

He thought—she did not, however—that she was referring to that first letter he sent home to his people, when he consigned her, like any other awkward freight, to their care. He flushed to his eyes. It cut him deep, but her eyes only had a distant, dreamy look which conveyed nothing of the sting in her words. Like most men, he had a touch of vanity too, and he might have resented the words vaguely, had he not remembered his talk with his mother an hour before.

She had begged him to have patience, she had made him promise that he would not in any circumstance say an ungentle or bitter thing, that he would bide the effort of constant devotion, and his love of the child. Especially must he try to reach her through love of the child.

By which it will be seen that Mrs. Armour had come to some wisdom by reason of her love for Frank's wife and child.

"My son," she had said, "through the child is the surest way, believe me; for only a mother can understand what that means, how much and how far it goes. You are a father, but until last night you never had the flush of that love in your veins. You stand yet only at the door of that life which has done more to guide, save, instruct, and deepen your wife's life than anything else, though your brother Richard—to whom you owe a debt that you can never repay—has done much in deed. Be wise, my dear, as I have learned a little to be since first your wife came. All might easily have gone wrong. It has all gone well; and we, my son, have tried to do our duty lovingly, consistently, to dear Lali and the child."

She made him promise that he would wait, that he would not try to hurry his wife's affection for him by any spoken or insistent claim. "For, Frank dear," she said, "you are only legally married, not morally, not as God can bless—not yet. But I pray that what will sanctify all may come soon, very soon, to the joy of us all. But again—and I cannot say it too prayerfully—do not force one little claim that your marriage gave you, but prove yourself to her, who has cause to distrust you so much. Will you forgive your mother, my dear, for speaking to you?"

He had told her then that what she had asked he had intended as his own course, yet what she had said would keep it in his mind always, for he was sure it was right. Mrs. Armour had then embraced him, and they parted. Dealing with Lali had taught them all much of the human heart that they had never known before, and the result thereof was wisdom.

They talked casually enough for the rest of the ride, and before they parted at the door Frank received his commission for Regent Street, and accepted it with delight, as a schoolboy might a gift. He was absurdly grateful for any favours from her, any sign of her companionship. They met at luncheon; then, because Lali had to keep an engagement in Eaton Square, they parted again, and Frank and Richard took a walk, after a long hour with the child, who still so hungered for his sword that Frank disobeyed orders, and dragged Richard off to Oxford Street to get one. He was reduced to a beatific attitude of submission, for he knew that he had few odds with him now, and that he must live by virtue of new virtues. He was no longer proud of himself in any way, and he knew that no one else was, or rather he felt so, and that was just the same.

He talked of the boy, he talked of his wife, he laid plans, he tore them down, he built them up again, he asked advice, he did not wait to hear it, but rambled on, excited, eager. Truth is, there had suddenly been lifted from his mind the dread and shadow of four years. Wherever he had gone, whatever he had been or done, that dread shadow had followed him, and now to know that instead of having to endure a hell he had to win a heaven, and to feel as if his brain had been opened and a mass of vapours and naughty little mannikins of remorse had been let out, was a trifle intoxicating even to a man of his usual vigour and early acquaintance with exciting things.

"Dick, Dick!" he said enthusiastically, "you've been royal. You always were better than any chap I ever knew. You're always doing for others. Hang it, Dick, where does your fun come in? Nobody seems ever to do anything for you."

Richard gave his arm a squeeze. "Never mind about me, boy. I've had all the fun I want, and all I'm likely to get, and so long as you're all willing to have me around, I'm satisfied. There's always a lot to do among the people in the village, one way and another, and I've a heap of reading on, and what more does a fellow want?"

"You didn't always feel that way, Dick?"

"No. You see, at different times in life you want different kinds of pleasures. I've had a good many kinds, and the present kind is about as satisfactory as any."

"But, Dick, you ought to get married. You've got coin, you've got sense, you're a bit distinguished-looking, and I'll back your heart against a thousand bishops. You've never been in danger of making a fool of yourself as I have. Why didn't you—why don't you—get married?"

Richard patted his brother's shoulder.

"Married, boy? Married? I've got too much on my hands. I've got to bring you up yet. And when that's done I shall have to write a book called 'How to bring up a Parent.' Then I've got to help bring your boy up, as I've done these last three years and more. I've got to think of that boy for a long while yet, for I know him better than you do, and I shall need some of my coin to carry out my plans."

"God bless you, Dick! Bring me up as you will, only bring her along too; and as for the boy, you're far more his father than I am. And mother says that it's you that's given me the wife I've got now—so what can I say?—what can I say?"

It was the middle of the Green Park, and Richard turned and clasped Frank by both shoulders.

"Say? Say that you'll stand by the thing you swore to one mad day in the West as well as any man that ever lived—to have and to hold, to love and to cherish from this day forth till death us do part, Amen."

Richard's voice was low and full of a strange, searching something.

Frank, wondering at this great affection and fondness of his brother, looked him in the eyes warmly, solemnly, and replied: "For richer or for poorer, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health—so help me God, and her kindness and forgiveness!"

CHAPTER XII

"THE CHASE OF THE YELLOW SWAN"

Frank and Lali did not meet until dinner was announced. The conversation at dinner was mainly upon

the return to Greyhope, which was fixed for the following morning, and it was deftly kept gay and superficial by Marion and Richard and Captain Vidall, until General Armour became reminiscent, and held the interest of the table through a dozen little incidents of camp and barrack life until the ladies rose. There had been an engagement for late in the evening, but it had been given up because of Frank's home-coming, and there was to be a family gathering merely— for Captain Vidall was now as much one of the family as Frank or Richard, by virtue of his approaching marriage with Marion. The men left alone, General Armour questioned Frank freely about life in the Hudson's Bay country, and the conversation ran on idly till it was time to join the ladies.

When they reached the drawing-room, Marion was seated at the piano, playing a rhapsody of Raff's, and Mrs. Armour and Lali were seated side by side. Frank thrilled at seeing his wife's hand in his mother's. Marion nodded over the piano at the men, and presently played a snatch of Carmen, then wandered off into the barbaric strength of Tannhauser, and as suddenly again into the ballet music of Faust.

"Why so wilful, my girl?" asked her father, who had a keen taste for music. "Why this tangle? Let us have something definite."

Marion sprang up from the piano. "I can't. I'm not definite myself to-night." Then, turning to Lali: "Lali dear, sing something—do! Sing my favourite, 'The Chase of the Yellow Swan.'"

This was a song which in the later days at Greyhope, Lali had sung for Marion, first in her own language, with the few notes of an Indian chant, and afterwards, by the help of the celebrated musician who had taught her both music and singing, both of which she had learned but slowly, it was translated and set to music. Lali looked Marion steadily in the eyes for a moment and then rose. It cost her something to do this thing, for while she had often talked much and long with Richard about that old life, it now seemed as if she were to sing it to one who would not quite understand why she should sing it at all, or what was her real attitude towards her past—that she looked upon it from the infinite distance of affectionate pity, knowledge, and indescribable change, and yet loved the inspiring atmosphere and mystery of that lonely North, which once in the veins never leaves it—never. Would he understand that she was feeling, not the common detail of the lodge and the camp-fire and the Company's post, but the deep spirit of Nature, filtering through the senses in a thousand ways—the wild ducks' flight, the sweet smell of the balsam, the exquisite gallop of the deer, the powder of the frost, the sun and snow and blue plains of water, the thrilling eternity of plain and the splendid steps of the hills, which led away by stair and entresol to the Kimash Hills, the Hills of the Mighty Men?

She did not know what he would think, and again on second thought she determined to make him, by this song, contrast her as she was when he married her, and now—how she herself could look upon that past unabashed, speak of it without blushing, sing of it with pride, having reached a point where she could look down and say: "This was the way by which I came."

She rose, and was accompanied to the piano by General Armour, Frank admiring her soft, springing steps, her figure so girlish and lissom. She paused for a little before she began. Her eyes showed for a moment over the piano, deep, burning, in-looking; then they veiled; her fingers touched the keys, wandered over them in a few strange, soft chords, paused, wandered again, more firmly and very intimately, and then she sang. Her voice was a good contralto, well balanced, true, of no great range, but within its compass melodious, and having some inexpressible charm of temperament. Frank did not need to strain his ears to hear the words; every one came clear, searching, delicately valued:

"In the flash of the singing dawn,
At the door of the Great One,
The joy of his lodge knelt down,
Knelt down, and her hair in the sun
Shone like showering dust,
And her eyes were as eyes of the fawn.
And she cried to her lord,
'O my lord, O my life,
From the desert I come;
From the hills of the Dawn.'
And he lifted the curtain and said,
'Hast thou seen It, the Yellow Swan?'

"And she lifted her head, and her eyes
Were as lights in the dark,
And her hands folded slow on her breast,
And her face was as one who has seen
The gods and the place where they dwell;

And she said: 'Is it meet that I kneel,
That I kneel as I speak to my lord?'
And he answered her: 'Nay, but to stand,
And to sit by my side;
But speak, thou hast followed the trail,
Hast thou found It, the Yellow Swan?'

"And she stood as a queen, and her voice
Was as one who hath seen the Hills,
The Hills of the Mighty Men,
And hath heard them cry in the night,
Hath heard them call in the dawn,
Hath seen It, the Yellow Swan.
And she said: 'It is not for my lord;'
And she murmured, 'I cannot tell,
But my lord must go as I went,
And my lord must come as I came,
And my lord shall be wise.'

"And he cried in his wrath,
'What is thine, it is mine,
And thine eyes are my eyes
Thou shalt speak of the Yellow Swan!'
But she answered him: 'Nay, though I die.
I have lain in the nest of the Swan,
I have heard, I have known;
When thine eyes too have seen,
When thine ears too have heard,
Thou shalt do with me then as thou wilt!'

"And he lifted his hand to strike,
And he straightened his spear to slay,
But a great light struck on his eyes,
And he heard the rushing of wings,
And his long spear fell from his hand,
And a terrible stillness came.
And when the spell passed from his eyes,
He stood in his doorway alone,
And gone was the queen of his soul,
And gone was the Yellow Swan."

Frank Armour listened as in a dream. The song had the wild swing of savage life, the deep sweetness of a monotone, but it had also the fine intelligence, the subtle allusiveness of romance. He could read between the lines. The allegory touched him where his nerves were sensitive. Where she had gone he could not go until his eyes had seen and known what hers had seen and known; he could not grasp his happiness all in a moment; she was no longer at his feet, but equal with him, and wiser than he. She had not meant the song to be allusive when she began, but to speak to him through it by singing the heathen song as his own sister might sing it. As the song went on, however, she felt the inherent suggestion in it, so that when she had finished it required all her strength to get up calmly, come among them again, and listen to their praises and thanks. She had no particular wish to be alone with Frank just yet, but the others soon arranged themselves so that the husband and wife were left in a cosy corner of the room.

Lali's heart fluttered a little at first, for the day had been trying, and she was not as strong as she could wish. Admirably as she had gone through the season, it had worn on her, and her constitution had become sensitive and delicate, while yet strong. The life had almost refined her too much. Always on the watch that she should do exactly as Marion or Mrs. Armour, always so sensitive as to what was required of her, always preparing for this very time, now that it had come, and her heart and mind were strong, her body seemed to weaken. Once or twice during the day she had felt a little faint, but it had passed off, and she had scolded herself. She did not wish a serious talk with her husband to-night, but she saw now that it was inevitable.

He said to her as he sat down beside her: "You sing very well indeed.
The song is full of meaning, and you bring it all out."

"I am glad you like it," she responded conventionally. "Of course it's an unusual song for an English

drawing-room."

"As you sing it, it would be beautiful and acceptable anywhere, Lali."

"Thank you again," she answered, closing and unclosing her fan, her eyes wandering to where Mrs. Armour was. She wished she could escape, for she did not feel like talking, and yet though the man was her husband she could not say that she was too tired to talk; she must be polite. Then, with a little dainty malice: "It is more interesting, though, in the vernacular—and costume!"

"Not unless you sang it so," he answered gallantly, and with a kind of earnestness.

"You have not forgotten the way of London men," she rejoined.

"Perhaps that is well, for I do not know the way of women," he said, with a faint bitterness. "Yet, I don't speak unadvisedly in this,"—here he meant to be a little bold and bring the talk to the past,—"for I heard you sing that song once before."

She turned on him half puzzled, a little nervous. "Where did you hear me sing it?"

He had made up his mind, wisely enough, to speak with much openness and some tact also, if possible. "It was on the Glow Worm River at the Clip Claw Hills. I came into your father's camp one evening in the autumn, hungry and tired and knocked about. I was given the next tent to yours. It was night, and just before I turned in I heard your voice singing. I couldn't understand much of the language, but I had the sense of it, and I know it when I hear it again."

"Yes, I remember singing it that night," she said. "Next day was the Feast of the Yellow Swan."

Her eyes presently became dreamy, and her face took on a distant, rapt look. She sat looking straight before her for a moment.

He did not speak, for he interpreted the look aright, and he was going to be patient, to wait.

"Tell me of my father," she said. "You have been kind to him?"

He winced a little. "When I left Fort Charles he was very well," he said, "and he asked me to tell you to come some day. He also has sent you a half-dozen silver-fox skins, a sash, and moccasins made by his own hands. The things are not yet unpacked."

Moccasins?—She remembered when last she had moccasins on her feet—the day she rode the horse at the quick-set hedge, and nearly lost her life. How very distant that all was, and yet how near too! Suddenly she remembered also why she took that mad ride, and her heart hardened a little.

"You have been kind to my father since I left?" she asked.

He met her eyes steadily. "No, not always; not more than I have been kind to you. But at the last, yes." Suddenly his voice became intensely direct and honest. "Lali," he continued, "there is much that I want to say to you." She waved her hand in a wearied fashion. "I want to tell you that I would do the hardest penance if I could wipe out these last four years."

"Penance?" she said dreamily—"penance? What guarantee of happiness would that be? One would not wish another to do penance if—"

She paused.

"I understand," he said—"if one cared—if one loved. Yes, I understand. But that does not alter the force or meaning of the wish. I swear to you that I repent with all my heart—the first wrong to you, the long absence—the neglect—everything."

She turned slowly to him. "Everything-Everything?" she repeated after him. "Do you understand what that means? Do you know a woman's heart? No. Do you know what a shameful neglect is at the most pitiful time in your life? No. How can a man know! He has a thousand things—the woman has nothing, nothing at all except the refuge of home, that for which she gave up everything!"

Presently she broke off, and something sprang up and caught her in the throat. Years of indignation were at work in her. "I have had a home," she said, in a low, thrilling voice—"a good home; but what did that cost you? Not one honest sentiment of pity, kindness, or solicitude. You clothed me, fed me, abandoned me, as—how can one say it? Do I not know, if coming back you had found me as you expected to find me, what the result would have been? Do I not know? You would have endured me if I did not thrust myself upon you, for you have after all a sense of legal duty, a kind of stubborn honour.

But you would have made my life such that some day one or both of us would have died suddenly. For"—she looked him with a hot clearness in the eyes—"for there is just so much that a woman can bear. I wish this talk had not come now, but, since it has come, it is better to speak plainly. You see, you misunderstand. A heathen has a heart as another—has a life to be spoiled or made happy as another. Had there been one honest passion in your treatment of me— in your marrying me—there would be something on which to base mutual respect, which is more or less necessary when one is expected to love. But—but I will not speak more of it, for it chokes me, the insult to me, not as I was, but as I am. Then it would probably have driven me mad, if I had known; now it eats into my life like rust."

He made a motion as if to take her hands, but lifting them away quietly she said: "You forget that there are others present, as well as the fact that we can talk better without demonstration."

He was about to speak, but she stopped him. "No, wait," she said; "for I want to say a little more. I was only an Indian girl, but you must remember that I had also in my veins good white blood, Scotch blood. Perhaps it was that which drew me to you then—for Lali the Indian girl loved you. Life had been to me pleasant enough—without care, without misery, open, strong and free; our people were not as those others which had learned the white man's vices. We loved the hunt, the camp-fires, the sacred feasts, the legends of the Mighty Men; and the earth was a good friend, whom we knew as the child knows its mother."

She paused. Something seemed to arrest her attention. Frank followed her eyes. She was watching Captain Vidall and Marion. He guessed what she was thinking—how different her own wooing had been from theirs, how concerning her courtship she had not one sweet memory—the thing that keeps alive more love and loyalty in this world than anything else. Presently General Armour joined them, and Frank's opportunity was over for the present.

Captain Vidall and Marion were engaged in a very earnest conversation, though it might not appear so to observers.

"Come, now, Marion," he said protestingly, "don't be impossible. Please give the day a name. Don't you think we've waited about long enough?"

"There was a man in the Bible who served seven years."

"I've served over three in India since I met you at the well, and that counts double. Why so particular to a day? It's a bit Jewish. Anyhow, that seven years was rough on Rachel."

"How, Hume? Because she got passee?"

"Well, that counted; but do you suppose that Jew was going to put in those seven years without interest? Don't you believe it. Rachel paid capital and interest back, or Jacob was no Jew. Tell me, Marion, when shall it be?"

"Hume, for a man who has trifled away years in India, you are strangely impatient."

"Mrs. Lambert says that I have the sweetest disposition."

"My dear sir!"

"Don't look at me like that at this distance, or I shall have to wear goggles, as the man did who went courting the Sun."

"How supremely ridiculous you are! And I thought you such a sensible, serious man."

"Mrs. Lambert put that in your head. We used to meet at the annual dinners of the Bible Society."

"Why do you tell me such stuff?"

"It's a fact. Her father and my aunt were in that swim, and we were sympathisers."

"Mercenary people!"

"It worked very well in her case; not so well in mine. But we conceived a profound respect for each other then. But tell me, Marion, when is it to be? Why put off the inevitable?"

"It isn't inevitable—and I'm only twenty-three."

"Only twenty-three,
And as good fish in the sea"

he responded, laughing. "Yes, but you've set the precedent for a courtship of four years and a bit, and what man could face it?"

"You did."

"Yes, but I wasn't advertised of the fact beforehand. Suppose I had seen the notice at the start: 'This mortgage cannot be raised inside of four years—and a bit!' There's a limit to human endurance."

"Why shouldn't I hold to the number, but alter the years to days?"

"You wouldn't dare. A woman must live up to her reputation."

"Indeed? What an ambition!"

"And a man to his manners."

"An unknown quantity."

"And a lover to his promises."

"A book of jokes." Marion had developed a taste for satire.

"Which reminds me of Lady Halwood and Mrs. Lambert. Lady Halwood was more impertinent than usual the other day at the Sinclairs' show, and had a little fling at Mrs. Lambert. The talk turned on gowns. Lady Halwood was much interested at once. She has a weakness that way. 'Why,' said she, 'I like these fashions this year, but I'm not sure that they suit me. They're the same as when the Queen came to the throne.' 'Well,' said Mrs. Lambert sweetly, 'if they suited you then—' There was an audible titter, and Mrs. Lambert had an enemy for life."

"I don't see the point of your story in this connection."

"No? Well, it was merely to suggest that if you had to live up to this scheme of four-years' probation, other people besides lovers would make up books of jokes, and—"

"That's like a man—to threaten."

"Yes, I threaten—on my knees."

"Hume, how long do you think Frank will have to wait?"

They were sitting where they had a good view of the husband and wife, and Vidall, after a moment, said: "I don't know. She has waited four years, too; now it looks as if, like Jacob, she was going to gather in her shekels of interest compounded."

"It isn't going to be a bit pleasant to watch."

"But you won't be here to see."

Marion ignored the suggestion. "She seems to have hardened since he came yesterday. I hardly know her; and yet she looks awfully worn to-night, don't you think?"

"Yes, as if she had to keep a hand on herself. But it'll come out all right in the end, you'll see."

"Yes, of course; but she might be sensible and fall in love with Frank at once. That's what she did when—"

"When she didn't know man."

"Yes, but where would you all be if we women acted on what we know of you?"

"On our knees chiefly, as I am. Remember this, Marion, that half a sinner is better than no man."

"You mean that no man is better than half a saint?"

"How you must admire me!"

"Why?"

"As you are about to name the day, I assume that I'm a whole saint in your eyes."

"St. Augustine!"

"Who was he?"

"A man that reformed."

"Before or after marriage?"

"Before, I suppose."

"I don't think he died happy."

"Why not?"

"I've a faint recollection that he was boiled."

"Don't be horrid. What has that to do with it?"

"Nothing, perhaps. But he probably broke out again after marriage, and sank at last into that caldron. That's what it means by being-steeped in crime."

"How utterly nonsensical you are!"

"I feel light-headed. You've been at sea, on a yacht becalmed, haven't you? when along comes a groundswell, and as you rock in the sun there comes trouble, and your head goes round like a top? Now, that's my case. I've been becalmed four years, and while I pray for a little wind to take me—home, you rock me in the trough of uncertainty. Suspense is very gall and wormwood. You know what the jailer said to the criminal who was hanging on a reprieve: 'Rope deferred maketh the heart sick.' Marion, give me the hour, or give me the rope."

"The rope enough to hang yourself?"

She suddenly reached up and pulled a hair from her head. She laid it in his hand—a long brown silken thread. "Hume," she said airily yet gently, "there is the rope. Can you love me for a month of Sundays?"

"Yes, for ever and a day!"

"I will cancel the day, and take your bond for the rest. I will be generous. I will marry you in two months—and a day."

"My dearest girl!"—he drew her hand into both of his—"I can't have you more generous than myself, I'll throw off the month." But his eyes were shining very seriously, though his mouth smiled.

"Two months and a day," she repeated.

"We must all bundle off to Greyhope to-morrow," came General Armour's voice across the room. "Down comes the baby, cradle and all."

Lali rose. "I am very tired," she said; "I think I will say good-night."

"I'll go and see the boy with you," Frank said, rising also.

Lali turned towards Marion. Marion's face was flushed, and had a sweet, happy confusion. With a low, trembling good-night to Captain Vidall, a hurried kiss on her mother's cheek, and a tip-toed caress on her father's head, she ran and linked her arm in Lali's, and together they proceeded to the child's room. Richard was there when they arrived, mending a broken toy. Two hours later, the brothers parted at Frank's door.

"Reaping the whirlwind, Dick?" Frank said, dropping his hand on his brother's arm.

Richard pointed to the child's room.

"Nonsense! Do you want all the world at once? You are reaping the forgiveness of your sins." Somehow Richard's voice was a little stern.

"I was thinking of my devilry, Dick. That's the whirlwind—here!" His hand dropped on his breast.

"That's where it ought to be. Good-night."

"Good-night."

CHAPTER XIII

A LIVING POEM

Part of Frank's most trying interview, next to the meeting with his wife, was that with Mackenzie, who had been his special commissioner in the movement of his masquerade. Mackenzie also had learned a great deal since she had brought Lali—home. She, like others, had come to care truly for the sweet barbarian, and served her with a grim kind of reverence. Just in proportion as this had increased, her respect for Frank had decreased. No man can keep a front of dignity in the face of an unbecoming action. However, Mackenzie had her moment, and when it was over, the new life began at no general disadvantage to Frank. To all save the immediate family Frank and Lali were a companionable husband and wife. She rode with him, occasionally walked with him, now and again sang to him, and they appeared in the streets of St. Albans and at the Abbey together, and oftener still in the village church near, where the Armours of many generations were proclaimed of much account in the solid virtues of tomb and tablet.

The day had gone by when Lali attracted any especial notice among the villagers, and she enjoyed the quiet beauty and earnestness of the service. But she received a shock one Sunday. She had been nervous all the week, she could not tell why, and others remarked how her face had taken on a new sensitiveness, a delicate anxiety, and that her strength was not what it had been. As, for instance, after riding she required to rest, a thing before unknown, and she often lay down for an hour before dinner. Then, too, at table once she grew suddenly pale and swayed against Edward Lambert, who was sitting next to her. She would not, however, leave the table, but sat the dinner out, to Frank's apprehension. He was devoted, but it was clear to Marion and her mother at least that his attentions were trying to her. They seemed to put her under an obligation which to meet was a trial. There is nothing more wearing to a woman than affectionate attentions from a man who has claims upon her, but whom she does not love. These same attentions from one who has no claims give her a thrill of pleasure. It is useless to ask for justice in such a matter. These things are governed by no law; and rightly so, else the world would be in good time a loveless multitude, held together only by the hungering ties of parent and child.

But this Sunday wherein Lali received a shock. She did not know that the banns for Marion's and Captain Vidall's marriage were to be announced, and at the time her thoughts were far away. She was recalled to herself by the clergyman's voice pronouncing their names, and saying: "If any of you do know cause or just impediment why these two people should not be joined together in the bonds of holy matrimony, ye are to declare it." All at once there came back to her her own marriage when the Protestant missionary, in his nasal monotone, mumbled these very words, not as if he expected that any human being would, or could, offer objection.

She almost sprang from her seat now. Her nerves all at once came to such a tension that she could have cried out. Why had there been no one there at her marriage to say: "I forbid it"? How shameful it had all been! And the first kiss her husband had given her had the flavour of brandy! If she could but turn back the hands upon the clock of Time! Under the influence of the music and the excited condition of her nerves, the event became magnified, distorted; it burned into her brain. It was not made less poignant by the sermon from the text: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." When the words were first announced in the original, it sounded like her own language, save that it was softer, and her heart throbbed fast. Then came the interpretation: "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting."

Then suddenly swept over her a new feeling, one she had never felt before. Up to this point a determination to justify her child, to reverse the verdict of the world, to turn her husband's sin upon himself, had made her defiant, even bitter; in all things eager to live up to her new life, to the standard that Richard had by manner and suggestion, rather than by words, laid down for her. But now there came in upon her a flood of despair. At best she was only of this race through one-third of her parentage, and education and refinement and all things could do no more than make her possible. There must always be in the record: "She was of a strange people. She was born in a wigwam." She did not know that failing health was really the cause of this lapse of self-confidence, this growing self-depreciation, this languor for which she could not account. She found that she could not toss the child and frolic with it as she had done; she was conscious that within a month there had stolen upon her the desire to be much alone, to avoid noises and bustle—it irritated her. She found herself thinking more and more of her father, her father to whom she had never written one line since she had left the North. She had had good reasons for not writing—writing could do no good whatever, particularly to a man who could not read, and who would not have understood her new life if he had read. Yet now she seemed not to know why she had not written, and to blame herself for neglect and forgetfulness. It weighed on her. Why had she ever been taken from the place of tamarack-trees and the sweeping prairie grass? No, no, she was not, after all, fit for this life. She had been mistaken, and Richard had been mistaken—Richard, who was so wise. The London season? Ah! that was because people had found a novelty, and herself of better manners than had been expected.

The house was now full of preparations for the wedding. It stared her in the face every day, almost every hour. Dressmakers, milliners, tailors, and all those other necessary people. Did the others think what all this meant to her? It was impossible that they should. When Marion came back from town at night and told of her trials among the dressmakers, when she asked the general opinion and sometimes individual judgment, she could not know that it was at the expense of Lali's nerves.

Lali, when she married, had changed her moccasins, combed her hair, and put on a fine red belt, and that was all. She was not envious now, not at all. But somehow it all was a deadly kind of evidence against herself and her marriage. Her reproach was public, the world knew it, and no woman can forgive a public shame, even was it brought about by a man she loved, or loves. Her chiefest property in life is her self-esteem and her name before the world. Rob her of these, and her heaven has fallen, and if a man has shifted the foundations of her peace, there is no forgiveness for him till her Paradise has been reconquered. So busy were all the others that they did not see how her strength was failing. There were three weeks between the day the banns were announced and the day of the wedding, which was to be in the village church, not in town; for, as Marion said, she had seen too many marriages for one day's triumph and criticism; she wanted hers where there would be neither triumph nor criticism, but among people who had known her from her childhood up. A happy romance had raised Marion's point of view.

Meanwhile Frank was winning the confidence of his own child, who, however, ranked Richard higher always, and became to a degree his father's tyrant. But Frank's nature was undergoing a change. His point of view also had enlarged. The suffering, bitterness, and humiliation of his life in the North had done him good. He was being disciplined to take his position as a husband and father, but he sometimes grew heavy-hearted when he saw how his attentions oppressed his wife, and had it not been for Richard he might probably have brought on disaster, for the position was trying to all concerned. A few days before the wedding Edward Lambert and his wife arrived, and he, Captain Vidall, and Frank Armour took rides and walks together, or set the world right in the billiard-room. Richard seldom joined them, though their efforts to induce him to do so were many. He had his pensioners, his books, his pipe, and "the boy," and he had returned in all respects, in so far as could be seen, to his old life, save for the new and larger interest of his nephew.

One evening the three men with General Armour were all gathered in the billiard-room. Conversation had been general and without particular force, as it always is when merely civic or political matters are under view. But some one gave a social twist to the talk, and presently they were launched upon that sea where every man provides his own chart, or he is a very worm and no man. Each man had been differently trained, each viewed life from a different stand-point, and yet each had been brought up in the same social atmosphere, in the same social sets, had imbibed the same traditions, been moved generally by the same public considerations.

"But there's little to be said for a man who doesn't, outwardly at least, live up to the social necessity," said Lambert.

"And keep the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue," rejoined Vidall.

"I've lived seventy-odd years, and I've knocked about a good deal in my time," said the general, "but I've never found that you could make a breach of social necessity, as you call it, without paying for it one way or another. The trouble with us when we're young is that we want to get more out of life than there really is in it. There is not much in it, after all. You can stand just so much fighting, just so much work, just so much emotion—and you can stand less emotion than anything else. I'm sure more men and women break up from a hydrostatic pressure of emotion than from anything else. Upon my soul, that's so."

"You are right, General," said Lambert. "The steady way is the best way. The world is a passable place, if a fellow has a decent income by inheritance, or can earn a big one, but to be really contented to earn money it must be a big one, otherwise he is far better pleased to take the small inherited income. It has a lot of dignity, which the other can only bring when it is large."

"That's only true in this country; it's not true in America," said Frank, "for there the man who doesn't earn money is looked upon as a muff, and is treated as such. A small inherited income is thought to be a trifle enervating. But there is a country of emotions, if you like. The American heart is worn upon the American sleeve, and the American mind is the most active thing in this world. That's why they grow old so young."

"I met a woman a year or so ago at dinner," said Vidall, "who looked forty. She looked it, and she acted it. She was younger than any woman present, but she seemed older. There was a kind of hopeless languor about her which struck me as pathetic. Yet she had been beautiful, and might even have been so when I saw her, if it hadn't been for that look. It was the look of a person who had no interest in

things. And the person who has no interest in things is the person who once had a great deal of interest in things, who had too passionate an interest. The revulsion is always terrible. Too much romance is deadly. It is as false a stimulant as opium or alcohol, and leaves a corresponding mark. Well, I heard her history. She was married at fifteen—ran away to be married; and in spite of the fact that a railway accident nearly took her husband from her on the night of her marriage—one would have thought that would make a strong bond—she was soon alive to the attentions that are given a pretty and—considerate woman. At a ball at Naples, her husband, having in vain tried to induce her to go home, picked her up under his arm and carried her out of the ballroom. Then came a couple of years of opium-eating, fierce social excitement, divorce, new marriage, and so on, until her husband agreeably decided to live in Nice, while she lived somewhere else. Four days after I had met her at the dinner I saw her again. I could scarcely believe my eyes. The woman had changed completely. She was young again—twenty-five, in face and carriage, in the eye and hand, in step and voice."

"Who was the man?" suggested Frank Armour. "A man about her own age, or a little more, but who was an infant beside her in knowledge of the world." "She was in love with the fellow? It was a grande passion?" asked Lambert.

"In love with him? No, not at all. It was a momentary revival of an old-possibility."

"You mean that such women never really love?"

"Perhaps once, Frank, but only after a fashion. The rest was mere imitation of their first impulses."

"And this woman?"

"Well, the end came sooner than I expected. I tell you I was shocked at the look in her face when I saw it again. That light had flickered out; the sensitive alertness of hand, eye, voice, and carriage had died away; lines had settled in the face, and the face itself had gone cold, with that hard, cold passiveness which comes from exhausted emotions and a closed heart. The jewels she wore might have been put upon a statue with equal effect."

"It seems to me that we might pitch into men in these things and not make women the dreadful examples," said a voice from the corner. It was the voice of Richard, who had but just entered.

"My dear Dick," said his father, "men don't make such frightful examples, because these things mean less to men than they do to women. Romance is an incident to a man; he can even come through an affair with no ideals gone, with his mental fineness unimpaired; but it is different with a woman. She has more emotion than mind, else there were no cradles in the land. Her standards are set by the rules of the heart, and when she has broken these rules she has lost her standard too. But to come back, it is true, I think, as I said, that man or woman must not expect too much out of life, but be satisfied with what they can get within the normal courses of society and convention and home, and the end thereof is peace—yes, upon my soul, it's peace."

There was something very fine in the blunt, honest words of the old man, whose name had ever been sweet with honour.

"And the chief thing is that a man live up to his own standard," said Lambert. "Isn't that so, Dick?—you're the wise man."

"Every man should have laws of his own, I should think; commandments of his own, for every man has a different set of circumstances wherein to work—or worry."

"The wisest man I ever knew," said Frank, dropping his cigar, "was a little French-Canadian trapper up in the Saskatchewan country. A priest asked him one day what was the best thing in life, and he answered: 'For a young man's mind to be old, and an old man's heart to be young.' The priest asked him how that could be. And he said: 'Good food, a good woman to teach him when he is young, and a child to teach him when he is old.' Then the priest said: 'What about the Church and the love of God?' The little man thought a little, and then said: 'Well, it is the same—the love of man and woman came first in the world, then the child, then God in the garden.' Afterwards he made a little speech of good-bye to us, for we were going to the south while he remained in a fork of the Far Off River. It was like some ancient blessing: that we should always have a safe tent and no sorrow as we travelled; that we should always have a cache for our food, and food for our cache; that we should never find a tree that would not give sap, nor a field that would not grow grain; that our bees should not freeze in winter, and that the honey should be thick, and the comb break like snow in the teeth; that we keep hearts like the morning, and that we come slow to the Four Corners where man says Good-night."

Each of the other men present wondered at that instant if Frank Armour would, or could, have said this with the same feelings two months before. He seemed almost transformed.

"It reminds me," said the general, "of an inscription from an Egyptian monument which an officer of the First put into English verse for me years ago:

"Fair be the garden where their loves shall dwell,
Safe be the highway where their feet may go,
Rich be the fields wherein their hands may toil,
The fountains many where their good wines flow.
Full be their harvest-bins with corn and oil,
To sorrow may their humour be a foil;
Quick be their hearts all wise delights to know,
Tardy their footsteps to the gate Farewell."

There was a moment's silence after he had finished, and then there was noise without, a sound of pattering feet; the door flew open, and in ran a little figure in white—young Richard in his bed-gown, who had broken away from his nurse, and had made his way to the billiard-room, where he knew his uncle had gone.

The child's face was flashing with mischief and adventure. He ran in among the group, and stretched out his hands with a little fighting air. His uncle Richard made a step towards him, but he ran back; his father made as if to take him in his arms, but he evaded him. Presently the door opened, the nurse entered, the child sprang from among the group, and ran with a laughing defiance to the farthest end of the room, and, leaning his chin on the billiard-table, flashed a look of defiant humour at his pursuer. Presently the door opened again, and the figure of the mother appeared. All at once the child's face altered; he stood perfectly still, and waited for his mother to come to him. Lali had not spoken, and she did not speak until, lifting the child, she came the length of the billiard-table and faced them.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "for intruding; but Richard has led us a dance, and I suppose the mother may go where her child goes."

"The mother and the child are always welcome wherever they go," said General Armour quietly.

All the men had risen to their feet, and they made a kind of semicircle before her. The white-robed child had clasped its arms about her neck, and nestled its face against hers, as if, with perfect satisfaction, it had got to the end of its adventure; but the look of humour was still in the eyes as they ran from Richard to his father and back again.

Frank Armour stepped forwards and took the child's hand, as it rested on the mother's shoulder. Lali's face underwent a slight change as her husband's fingers touched her neck.

"I must go," she said. "I hope I have not broken up a serious conversation—or were you not so serious after all?" she said, glancing archly at General Armour. "We were talking of women," said Lambert.

"The subject is wide," replied Lali, "and the speakers many. One would think some wisdom might be got in such a case."

"Believe me, we were not trying to understand the subject," said Captain Vidall; "the most that a mere man can do is to appreciate it."

"There are some things that are hidden from the struggling mind of man, and are revealed unto babes and the mothers of babes," said General Armour gravely, as, reaching out his hands, he took the child from the mother's arms, kissed it full upon the lips, and added: "Men do not understand women, because men's minds have not been trained in the same school. When once a man has mastered the very alphabet of motherhood, then he shall have mastered the mind of woman; but I, at least, refuse to say that I do not understand, from the stand-point of modern cynicism."

"Ah, General, General!" said Lambert, "we have lost the chivalric way of saying things, which belongs to your generation."

By this time the wife had reached the door. She turned and held out her arms for the child. General Armour came and placed the boy where he had found it, and, with eyes suddenly filling, laid both his hands upon Lali's and they clasped the child, and said: "It is worth while to have lived so long and to have seen so much." Her eyes met his in a wistful, anxious expression, shifted to those of her husband, dropped to the cheeks of the child, and with the whispered word, which no one, not even the general, heard, she passed from the room, the nurse following her.

Perhaps some of the most striking contrasts are achieved in the least melodramatic way. The sudden incursion of the child and its mother into the group, the effect of their presence, and their soft

departure, leaving behind them, as it were, a trail of light, changed the whole atmosphere of the room, as though some new life had been breathed into it, charged each mind with new sensations, and gave each figure new attitude. Not a man present but had had his full swing with the world, none worse than most men, none better than most, save that each had latent in him a good sense of honour concerning all civic and domestic virtues. They were not men of sentimentality; they were not accustomed to exposing their hearts upon their sleeve, but each, as the door closed, recognised that something for one instant had come in among them, had made their past conversation to appear meagre, crude, and lacking in both height and depth. Somehow, they seemed to feel, although no words expressed the thought, that for an instant they were in the presence of a wisdom greater than any wisdom of a man's smoking-room.

"It is wonderful, wonderful," said the general slowly, and no man asked him why he said it, or what was wonderful. But Richard, sitting apart, watched Frank's face acutely, himself wondering when the hour would come that the wife would forgive her husband, and this situation so fraught with danger would be relieved.

CHAPTER XIV

ON THE EDGE OF A FUTURE

At last the day of the wedding came, a beautiful September day, which may be more beautiful in uncertain England than anywhere else. Lali had been strangely quiet all the day before, and she had also seemed strangely delicate. Perhaps, or perhaps not, she felt the crisis was approaching. It is probable that when the mind has been strained for a long time, and the heart and body suffered much, one sees a calamity vaguely, and cannot define it; appreciates it, and does not know it. She came to Marion's room about a half-hour before they were to start for the church. Marion was already dressed and ready, save for the few final touches, which, though they have been given a dozen times, must still again be given just before the bride starts for the church. Such is the anxious mind of women on these occasions. The two stood and looked at each other a moment, each wondering what were the thoughts of the other. Lali was struck by that high, proud look over which lay a glamour of infinite satisfaction, of sweetness, which comes to every good woman's face when she goes to the altar in a marriage which is not contingent on the rise or fall in stocks, or a satisfactory settlement. Marion, looking, saw, as if it had been revealed to her all at once, the intense and miraculous change which had come over the young wife, even within the past two months. Indeed, she had changed as much within that time as within all the previous four years—that is, she had been brought to a certain point in her education and experience, where without a newer and deeper influence she could go no further. That newer and deeper influence had come, and the result thereof was a woman standing upon the verge of the real tragedy to her life, which was not in having married the man, but in facing that marriage with her new intelligence and a transformed soul. Men can face that sort of thing with a kind of philosophy, not because men are better or wiser, but because it really means less to them. They have resources of life, they can bury themselves in their ambitions good or bad, but a woman can only bury herself in her affections, unless her heart has been closed; and in that case she herself has lost much of what made her adorable. And while she may go on with the closed heart and become a saint, even saintship is hardly sufficient to compensate any man or woman for a half-lived life. The only thing worth doing in this world is to live life according to one's convictions—and one's heart. He or she who sells that fine independence for a mess of pottage, no matter if the mess be spiced, sells, as the Master said, the immortal part of him.

And so Lali, just here on the edge of Marion's future, looking into that mirror, was catching the reflection of her own life. When two women come so near that, like the lovers in the *Tempest*, they have changed eyes, in so far as to read each other's hearts, even indifferently, which is much where two women are concerned, there is only one resource, and that is to fall into each other's arms, and to weep if it be convenient, or to hold their tears for a more fitting occasion; and most people will admit that tears need not add to a bride's beauty.

Marion might, therefore, be pardoned if she had her tears in her throat and not in her eyes, and Lali, if they arose for a moment no higher than her heart. But they did fall into each other's arms despite veils and orange blossoms, and somehow Marion had the feeling for Lali that she had on that first day at Greyhope, four years ago, when standing on the bridge, the girl looked down into the water, tears dropping on her hands, and Marion said to her: "Poor girl! poor girl!" The situations were the same,

because Lali had come to a new phase of her life, and what that phase would be who could tell—happiness or despair?

The usual person might think that Lali was placing herself and her wifely affection at a rather high price, but then it is about the only thing that a woman can place high, even though she be one-third a white woman and two-thirds an Indian. Here was a beautiful woman, who had run the gamut of a London season, who had played a pretty social part, admirably trained therefor by one of the best and most cultured families of England. Besides, why should any woman sell her affections even to her husband, bargain away her love, the one thing that sanctifies "what God hath joined let no man put asunder"? Lali was primitive, she was unlike so many in a trivial world, but she was right. She might suffer, she might die, but, after all, there are many things worse than that. Man is born in a day, and he dies in a day, and the thing is easily over; but to have a sick heart for three-fourths of one's lifetime is simply to have death renewed every morning; and life at that price is not worth living. In this sensitive age we are desperately anxious to save life, as if it was the really great thing in the world; but in the good, strong times of the earth—and in these times, indeed, when necessity knows its hour—men held their lives as lightly as a bird upon the housetop which any chance stone might drop.

It is possible that at this moment the two women understood each other better than they had ever done, and respected each other more. Lali, recovering herself, spoke a few soft words of congratulation, and then appeared to busy herself in putting little touches to Marion's dress, that soft persuasion of fingers which does so much to coax mere cloth into a sort of living harmony with the body.

They had no more words of confidence, but in the porch of the church, Marion, as she passed Lali, caught the slender fingers in her own and pressed them tenderly. Marion was giving comfort, and yet if she had been asked why she could not have told. She did not try to define it further than to say to herself that she herself was having almost too much happiness. The village was en fete, and peasants lined the street leading to the church, ready with their hearty God-bless-you's. Lali sat between her husband and Mrs. Armour, apparently impassive until there came the question: "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" and General Armour's voice came clear and strong: "I do." Then a soft little cry broke from her, and she shivered slightly. Mrs. Armour did not notice, but Frank and Mrs. Lambert heard and saw, and both were afterwards watchful and solicitous. Frank caught Mrs. Lambert's eye, and it said, to a little motion of the head: "Do not appear to notice."

Lali was as if in a dream. She never took her eyes from the group at the altar until the end, and the two, now man and wife, turned to go into the vestry. Then she appeared to sink away into herself for a moment, before she fell into conversation with the others, as they moved towards the vestry.

"It was beautiful, wasn't it?" ventured Edward Lambert.

"The most beautiful wedding I ever saw," she answered, with a little shadow of meaning; and Lambert guessed that it was the only one she had seen since she came to England.

"How well Vidall looked," said Frank, "and as proud as a sultan. Did you hear what he said, as Marion came up the aisle?"

"No," responded Lambert.

"He said, 'By Jove, isn't she fine!' He didn't seem conscious that other people were present."

"Well, if a man hasn't some inspirations on his wedding-day when is he to have them?" said Mrs. Lambert. "For my part, I think that the woman always does that sort of thing better than a man. It is her really great occasion, and she masters it—the comedy is all hers." They were just then entering the vestry.

"Or the tragedy, as the case may be," said Lali quietly, smiling at Marion. She had, as it were, recovered herself, and her words had come with that airy, impersonal tone which permits nothing of what is said in it to be taken seriously. Something said by the others had recalled her to herself, and she was now returned very suddenly to the old position of alertness and social finesse. Something icy seemed to pass over her, and she immediately lost all self-consciousness, and began to speak to her husband with less reserve than she had shown since he had come. But he was not deceived. He saw that at that very instant she was further away from him than she had ever been. He sighed, in spite of himself, as Lali, with well-turned words, said some loving greetings to Marion, and then talked a moment with Captain Vidall.

"Who can understand a woman?" said Lambert to his wife meaningly.

"Whoever will," she answered. "How do you mean?"

"Whoever will wait like the saint upon the pillar, will suffer like the traveller in the desert; serve like a slave, and demand like a king; have patience greater than Job; love ceaseless as a fountain in the hills; who sees in the darkness and is not afraid of light; who distrusts not, neither believes, but stands ready to be taught; who is prepared for a kiss this hour and a reproach the next; who turneth neither to right nor left at her words, but hath an unswerving eye—these shall understand a woman."

"I never knew you so philosophical. Where did you get this deliverance on the subject?"

"May not even a woman have a moment of inspiration?"

"I should expect that of my wife."

"And I should expect that of my husband. It is trite to say that men are vain; I shall remark that they sit so much in their own light that they are surprised if another being crosses their disc."

"You always were clever, my dear, and you always were twice too good for me."

"Well, every woman—worth the knowing—is a missionary."

"Where does Lali come in?"

"Can you ask? To justify the claims of womanhood in spite of race—and all."

"To bring one man to a sense of the duty of sex to sex, eh?"

"Truly. And is she not doing it well? See her now." They were now just leaving the church, and Lali had taken General Armour's arm, while Richard led his mother to the carriage.

Lali was moving with a little touch of grandeur in her manner and a more than ordinary deliberation. She had had a moment of great weakness, and then there had come the reaction—carried almost too far by the force of the will. She was indeed straining herself too far. Four years of tension were culminating.

"See her now, Edward," repeated Mrs. Lambert. "Yes, but if I'm not mistaken, my dear, she is doing so well that she's going to pieces. She's overstrung to-day. If it were you, you'd be in hysterics."

"I believe you are right," was the grave reply. "There will be an end to this comedy one way or another very soon."

A moment afterwards they were in a carriage rolling away to Greyhope.

CHAPTER XV

THE END OF THE TRAIL

When Marion was about leaving with her husband for the railway station, she sought out Lali, and found her standing half hidden by the curtains of a window, looking out at little Richard, who was parading his pony up and down before the house. An unutterable sweetness looked out of Marion's eyes. She had found, as it seemed to her, and as so many have believed until their lives' end, the secret of existence. Lali saw the glistening joy, and responded to it, just as it was in her being to respond to every change of nature—that sensitiveness was in her as deep as being.

"You are very happy, dear?" she said to Marion. "You cannot think how happy, Lali. And I want to say that I feel sure that you will yet be as happy, even happier than I. Oh, it will come—it will come. And you have the boy now—so fine, so good."

Lali looked out to where little Richard disported himself; her eyes shone, and she turned with a responsive but still sad smile to Marion. "Marion," she said gently, "the other should have come before he came."
"Frank loves you, Lali."

"Who knows? And then, oh, I cannot tell! How can one force one's heart? No, no! One has to wait, and wait, even if the heart grows harder, and one gets hopeless."

Marion kissed her on the cheek and smiled. "Some day soon the heart will open up, and then such a

flood will pour out! See, Lali. I am going now, and our lives won't run together so much again ever, perhaps. But I want to tell you now that your coming to us has done me a world of good—helped me to be a wiser girl; and I ought to be a better woman for it. Good-bye."

They were calling to her, and with a hurried embrace the two parted, and in a few moments the bride and bridegroom were on their way to the new life. As the carriage disappeared in a turn of the limes, Lali vanished also to her room. She was not seen at dinner. Mackenzie came to say that she was not very well, and that she would keep to her room. Frank sent several times during the evening to inquire after her, and was told that she was resting comfortably. He did not try to see her, and in this was wise. He had now fallen into a habit of delicate consideration, which brought its own reward. He had given up hope of winning her heart or confidence by storm, and had followed his finer and better instincts—had come to the point where he made no claims, and even in his own mind stood upon no rights. His mother brought him word from Lali before he retired, to say that she was sorry she could not see him, but giving him a message and a commission into town the following morning for their son. Her tact had grown as her strength had declined. There is something in failing health—ill-health without disease—which sharpens and refines the faculties, and makes the temper exquisitely sensitive—that is, with people of a certain good sort. The aplomb and spirited manner in which Lali had borne herself at the wedding and after, was the last flicker of her old strength, and of the second phase in her married life. The end of the first phase came with the ride at the quick-set hedge, this with a less intent but as active a temper.

The next morning she did not appear at breakfast, but sent a message to Frank to say that she was better, and adding another commission for town. All day, save for an hour on the balcony, she kept to her room, and lay down for the greater part of the afternoon. In the evening, when Frank returned, his mother sent for him, and frankly told him that she thought it would be better for him to go away for a few weeks or so; that Lali was in a languid, nervous state, and she thought that by the time he got back—if he would go—she would be better, and that better things would come for him.

Frank was no longer the vain, selfish fellow who had married Lali—something of the best in him was at work. He understood, and suggested a couple of weeks with Richard at their little place in Scotland. Also, he saw his wife for a little while that evening. She had been lying down, but she disposed herself in a deep chair before he entered. He was a little shocked to see, as it were all at once, how delicate she looked. He came and sat down near her, and after a few moments of friendly talk, in which he spoke solicitously of her health, he told her that he thought of going up to Scotland with Richard for a few weeks, if she saw no objection.

She did not quite understand why he was going. She thought that perhaps he felt the strain of the situation, and that a little absence would be good for both. This pleased her. She did not shrink, as she had so often done since his return, when he laid his hand on hers for an instant, as he asked her if she were willing that he should go. Sometimes in the past few weeks she had almost hated him. Now she was a little sorry for him, but she said that of course he must go; that no doubt it was good that he should go, and so on, in gentle, allusive phrases. The next evening she came down to dinner, and was more like herself as she was before Frank came back, but she ate little, and before the men came into the drawing-room she had excused herself, and retired; at which Mrs. Lambert shook her head apprehensively at herself, and made up her mind to stay at Greyhope longer than she intended.

Which was good for all concerned; for, two nights after Frank and Richard had gone, Mackenzie hurried down to the drawing-room with the news that Lali had been found in a faint on her chamber floor. That was the beginning of weeks of anxiety, in which Mrs. Lambert was to Mrs. Armour what Marion would have been, and more; and both to Lali all that mother and sister could be.

Their patient was unlike any other that they had known. Feverish, she had no fever; with a gentle, hacking cough, she had no lung trouble; nervous, she still was oblivious to very much that went on around her; hungering often for her child, she would not let him remain long with her when he came. Her sleep was broken, and she sometimes talked to herself, whether consciously or unconsciously they did not know. The doctor had no remedies but tonics—he did not understand the case; but he gently ventured the opinion that it was mostly a matter of race, that she was pining because civilisation had been infused into her veins—the old insufficient theory.

"Stuff and nonsense!" said General Armour, when his wife told him. "The girl bloomed till Frank came back. God bless my soul! she's falling in love, and doesn't know what it is."

He was only partly right, perhaps, but he was nearer the truth than the dealer in quinine and a cheap philosophy of life. "She'll come around all right, you'll see. Decline—decline be hanged! The girl shall live, —damn it, she shall!" he blurted out, as his wife's eyes filled with tears.

Mrs. Lambert was much of the same mind as the general, but went further. She said to Mrs. Armour

that in all her life she had never seen so sweet a character, so sensitive a mind—a mind whose sorrow was imagination. And therein the little lady showed herself a person of wisdom. For none of them had yet reckoned with that one great element in Lali's character—that thing which is the birthright of all who own the North for a mother, the awe of imagination, the awe and the pain, which in its finest expression comes near, very near, to the supernatural. Lali's mind was all pictures; she never thought of things in words, she saw them; and everything in her life arrayed itself in a scene before her, made vivid by her sensitive soul, so much more sensitive now with health failing, the spirit wearing out the body. There was her malady—the sick heart and mind.

A new sickness wore upon her. It had not touched her from the day she left the North until she sang "The Chase of the Yellow Swan" that first evening after Frank's return. Ever since then her father was much in her mind—the memory of her childhood, and its sweet, inspiring friendship with Nature. All the roughness and coarseness of the life was refined in her memory by the exquisite atmosphere of the North, the good sweet earth, the strong bracing wind, the camaraderie of trees and streams and grass and animals. And in it all stood her father, whom she had left alone, in that interminable interval between the old life and the new.

Had she done right? She had cut him off, as if he had never been—her people, her country also; and for what? For this—for this sinking sense, this failing body, this wear and tear of mind and heart, this constant study to be possible where she had once been declared by the world to be impossible.

One night she lay sleeping after a rather feverish day, when it was thought best to keep the child from her. Suddenly she waked, and sat up. Looking straight before her, she said:

"I will arise, and will go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son."

She said nothing more than this, and presently lay back, with eyes wide open, gazing before her. Like this she lay all night long, a strange, aching look in her face. There had come upon her the sudden impulse to leave it all, and go back to her father. But the child—that gave her pause. Towards morning she fell asleep, and slept far on into the day, a thing that had not occurred for a long time.

At noon a letter arrived for her. It came into General Armour's hands, and he, seeing that it bore the stamp of the Hudson's Bay Company, with the legend, From Fort St. Charles, concluded that it was news of Lali's father. Then came the question whether the letter should be given to her. The general was for doing so, and he prevailed. If it were bad news, he said, it might raise her out of her present apathy and by changing the play of her emotions do her good in the end.

The letter was given to her in the afternoon. She took it apathetically, but presently, seeing where it was from, she opened it hurriedly with a little cry which was very like a moan too. There were two letters inside one from the factor at Fort Charles in English, and one from her father in the Indian language. She read her father's letter first, the other fluttered to her feet from her lap. General Armour, looking down, saw a sentence in it which, he felt, warranted him in picking it up, reading it, and retaining it, his face settling into painful lines as he did so. Days afterwards, Lali read her father's letter to Mrs. Armour. It ran:

My daughter,

Lali, the sweet noise of the Spring:

Thy father speaks.

I have seen more than half a hundred moons come like the sickle and go like the eye of a running buck, swelling with fire, but I hear not thy voice at my tent door since the first one came and went.

Thou art gone.

Thy face was like the sun on running water; thy hand hung on thy wrists like the ear of a young deer; thy foot was as soft on the grass as the rain on a child's cheek; thy words were like snow in summer, which melts in richness on the hot earth. Thy bow and arrow hang lonely upon the wall, and thy empty cup is beside the pot.

Thou art gone.

Thou hast become great with a great race, and that is well. Our race is not great, and shall not be, until the hour when the Mighty Men of the Kimash Hills arise from their sleep and possess the land again.

Thou art gone.

But thou hast seen many worlds, and thou hast learned great things, and thou and I shall meet no more; for how shall the wise kneel at the feet of the foolish, as thou didst kneel once at thy father's feet?

Thou art gone.

High on the Clip Claw Hills the trees are green, in the Plain of the Rolling Stars the wings of the wild fowl are many, and fine is the mist upon Goldfly Lake; and the heart of Eye-of-the-Moon is strong.

Thou art here.

The trail is open to the White Valley, and the Scarlet Hunter hath saved me, when my feet strayed in the plains and my eyes were blinded.

Thou art here.

I have friends on the Far Off River who show me the yards where the musk-ox gather; I have found the gardens of the young sable, and my tents are full of store.

Thou art here.

In the morning my spirit is light, and I have harvest where I would gather, and the stubble is for my foes. In the evening my limbs are heavy, and I am at rest in my blanket. The hunt is mine and sleep is mine, and my soul is cheerful when I remember thee.

Thou art here.

I have built for thee a place where thy spirit comes. I hear thee when thou callest to me, and I kneel outside the door, for thou art wise, and thou speakest to me; but thee as thou art in a far land I shall see no more. This is my word to thee, that thou mayst know that I am not alone. Thou shalt not come again, as thou once went; it is not meet. But by these other ways I will speak to thee.

Thou art here.

Farewell. I have spoken.

Lali finished reading, and then slowly folded up the letter. The writing was that of the wife of the factor at Fort Charles—she knew it. She sat for a minute looking straight before her. She read her father's allegory. Barbarian in so much as her father was, he had beaten this thing out with the hammer of wisdom. He missed her, but she must not come back; she had outgrown the old life—he knew it and she was with him in spirit, in his memory; she understood his picturesque phrases, borrowed from the large, affluent world about him. Something of the righteousness and magnanimity of this letter passed into her, giving her for an instant a sort of peace. She had needed it—needed it to justify herself, and she had been justified. To return was impossible—she had known that all along, though she had not admitted it; the struggle had been but a kind of remorse, after all. That her father should come to her was also impossible—it was neither for her happiness nor his. She had been two different persons in her life, and the first was only a memory to the second. The father had solved the problem for her. He too was now a memory that she could think on with pleasure, as associated with the girl she once was. He had been well provided for by her husband, and General Armour put his hand on hers gently and said:

"Lali, without your permission I have read this other letter."

She did not appear curious. She was thinking still of her father's letter to her. She nodded abstractedly. "Lali," he continued, "this says that your father wished that letter to be written to you just as he said it at the Fort, on the day of the Feast of the Yellow Swan. He stood up—the factor writes so here—and said that he had been thinking much for years, and that the time had come when he must speak to his daughter over the seas—"

General Armour paused. Lali inclined her head, smiled wistfully, and held up the letter for him to see. The general continued:

"So he spoke as has been written to you, and then they had the Feast of the Yellow Swan, and that night—" He paused again, but presently, his voice a little husky, he went on: "That night he set out on a long journey,"—he lifted the letter and looked at it, then met the serious eyes of his daughter-in-law,"

on a long journey to the Hills of the Mighty Men; and, my dear, he never came back; for, as he said, there was peace in the White Valley, and he would rest till the world should come to its Spring again, and the noise of its coming should be in his ears. Those, Lali, are his very words."

His hand closed on hers, he reached out and took the other hand, from which the paper fluttered, and clasped both tight in his own firm grasp.

"My daughter," he said, "you have another father." With a low cry, like that of a fawn struck in the throat, she slid forward on her knees beside him, and buried her face on his arm. She understood. Her father was dead. Mrs. Armour came forward, and, kneeling also, drew the dark head to her bosom. Then that flood came which sweeps away the rust that gathers in the eyes and breaks through the closed dikes of the heart.

Hours after, when she had fallen into a deep sleep, General Armour and his wife met outside her bedroom door.

"I shall not leave her," Mrs. Armour said. "Send for Frank. His time has almost come."

But it would not have come so soon had not something else occurred. The day that he came back from Scotland he entered his wife's room, prepared for a change in her, yet he did not find so much to make him happy as he had hoped. She received him with a gentleness which touched him, she let her hand rest in his, she seemed glad to have him with her. All bars had been cast down between them, but he knew that she had not given him all, and she knew it also. But she hoped he did not know, and she dreaded the hour when he would speak out of his now full heart. He did not yet urge his affection on her, he was simply devoted, and watchful, and tender, and delightedly hopeful.

But one night she came tapping at his door. When he opened it, she said: "Oh come, come! Richard is ill! I have sent for the doctor."

Henceforth she was her old self again, with a transformed spirit, her motherhood spending itself in a thousand ways. She who was weak bodily became now much stronger; the light of new vigour came to her eyes; she and her husband, in the common peril, worked together, thinking little of themselves, and all of the child. The last stage of the journey to happiness was being passed, and if it was not obvious to themselves, the others, Marion and Captain Vidall included, saw it.

One anxious day, after the family doctor had left the sick child's room, Marion, turning to the father and mother, said: "Greyhope will be itself again. I will go and tell Richard that the danger is over."

As she turned to do so, Richard entered the room. "I have seen the doctor," he began, "and the little chap is going to pull along like a house afire."

Tapping Frank affectionately on the arm, he was about to continue, but he saw what stopped him. He saw the last move in Frank Armour's tragic-comedy. He and Marion left the room as quickly as was possible to him, for, as he said himself, he was "slow at a quick march"; and a moment afterwards the wife heard without demur her husband's tale of love for her.

Yet, as if to remind him of the wrong he had done, Heaven never granted Frank Armour another child.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Every man should have laws of his own
Flood came which sweeps away the rust that gathers in the eyes
How can one force one's heart? No, no! One has to wait
Man or woman must not expect too much out of life
May be more beautiful in uncertain England than anywhere else
Men are shy with each other where their emotions are in play
Prepared for a kiss this hour and a reproach the next
Romance is an incident to a man
Simply to have death renewed every morning
To sorrow may their humour be a foil
We want to get more out of life than there really is in it

Who can understand a woman?

Worth while to have lived so long and to have seen so much

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE TRANSLATION OF A SAVAGE, VOLUME 3 ***

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