

The Translation of a Savage, Volume 2.

Gilbert Parker

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THE TRANSLATION OF A SAVAGE

By Gilbert Parker

Volume 2.

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CHAPTER VI

THE PASSING OF THE YEARS

Lali's recovery was not rapid. A change had come upon her. With that strange ride had gone the last strong flicker of the desire for savage life in her. She knew now the position she held towards her husband: that he had never loved her; that she was only an instrument for unworthy retaliation. So soon as she could speak after her accident, she told them that they must not write to him and tell him of it. She also made them promise that they would give him no news of her at all, save that she was well. They could not refuse to promise; they felt she had the right to demand much more than that. They had begun to care for her for herself, and when the months went by, and one day there was a hush about her room, and anxiety, and then relief, in the faces of all, they came to care for her still more for the sake of her child.

As the weeks passed, the fair-haired child grew more and more like his father; but if Lali thought of her husband they never knew it by anything she said, for she would not speak of him. She also made them promise that they would not write to him of the child's birth. Richard, with his sense of justice, and knowing how much the woman had been wronged, said that in all this she had done quite right; that Frank, if he had done his duty after marrying her, should have come with her. And because they all felt that Richard had been her best friend as well as their own, they called the child after him. This also was Lali's wish. Coincident with her motherhood there came to Lali a new purpose. She had not lived with the Armours without absorbing some of their fine social sense and dignity. This, added to the native instinct of pride in her, gave her a new ambition. As hour by hour her child grew dear to her, so hour by hour her husband grew away from her. She schooled herself against him. --At times she thought she hated him. She felt she could never forgive him, but she would prove to him that it was she who had made the mistake of her life in marrying him; that she had been wronged, not he; and that his sin would face him with reproach and punishment one day. Richard's

prophecy was likely to come true: she would defeat very perfectly indeed Frank's intentions. After the child was born, so soon as she was able, she renewed her studies with Richard and Mrs. Armour. She read every morning for hours; she rode; she practised all those graceful arts of the toilet which belong to the social convention; she showed an unexpected faculty for singing, and practised it faithfully; and she begged Mrs. Armour and Marion to correct her at every point where correction seemed necessary. When the child was two years old, they all went to London, something against Lali's personal feelings, but quite in accord with what she felt her duty.

Richard was left behind at Greyhope. For the first time in eighteen months he was alone with his old quiet duties and recreations. During that time he had not neglected his pensioners,—his poor, sick, halt, and blind, but a deeper, larger interest had come into his life in the person of Lali. During all that time she had seldom been out of his sight, never out of his influence and tutelage. His days had been full, his every hour had been given a keen, responsible interest. As if by tacit consent, every incident or development of Lali's life was influenced by his judgment and decision. He had been more to her than General Armour, Mrs. Armour, or Marion. Schooled as he was in all the ways of the world, he had at the same time a mind as sensitive as a woman's, an indescribable gentleness, a persuasive temperament. Since, years before, he had withdrawn from the social world and become a recluse, many of his finer qualities had gone into an indulgent seclusion. He had once loved the world and the gay life of London, but some untoward event, coupled with a radical love of retirement, had sent him into years of isolation at Greyhope.

His tutelar relations with Lali had reopened many an old spring of sensation and experience. Her shy dependency, her innocent inquisitiveness, had searched out his remotest sympathies. In teaching her he had himself been re-taught. Before she came he had been satisfied with the quiet usefulness and studious ease of his life. But in her presence something of his old youthfulness came back, some reflection of the ardent hopes of his young manhood. He did not notice the change in himself. He only knew that his life was very full. He read later at nights, he rose earlier in the morning. But unconsciously to himself, he was undergoing a change. The more a man's sympathies and emotions are active, the less is he the philosopher. It is only when one has withdrawn from the more personal influence of the emotions that one's philosophy may be trusted. One may be interested in mankind and still be philosophical—may be, as it were, the priest and confessor to all comers. But let one be touched in some vital corner in one's nature, and the high, faultless impartiality is gone. In proportion as Richard's interest in Lali had grown, the universal quality of his sympathy had declined. Man is only man. Not that his benefactions as lord-bountiful in the parish had grown perfunctory, but the calm detail of his interest was not so definite. He was the same, yet not the same.

He was not aware of any difference in himself. He did not know that he looked younger by ten years. Such is the effect of mere personal sympathy upon a man's look and bearing. When, therefore, one bright May morning, the family at Greyhope, himself excluded, was ready to start for London, he had no thought but that he would drop back into his old silent life, as it was before Lali came, and his brother's child was born. He was not conscious that he was very restless that morning; he scarcely was aware that he had got up two hours earlier than usual. At the breakfast-table he was cheerful and alert. After breakfast he amused himself in

playing with the child till the carriage was brought round. It was such a morning as does not come a dozen times a year in England. The sweet, moist air blew from the meadows and up through the lime trees with a warm, insinuating gladness. The lawn sloped delightfully away to the flowered embrasures of the park, and a fragrant abundance of flowers met the eye and cheered the senses. While Richard loitered on the steps with the child and its nurse, more excited than he knew, Lali came out and stood beside him. At the moment Richard was looking into the distance. He did not hear her when she came. She stood near him for a moment, and did not speak. Her eyes followed the direction of his look, and idled tenderly with the prospect before her. She did not even notice the child. The same thought was in the mind of both--with a difference. Richard was wondering how any one could choose to change the sweet dignity of that rural life for the flaring, hurried delights of London and the season. He had thought this a thousand times, and yet, though he would have been little willing to acknowledge it, his conviction was not so impregnable as it had been.

Mrs. Francis Armour was stepping from the known to the unknown. She was leaving the precincts of a life in which, socially, she had been born again. Its sweetness and benign quietness had all worked upon her nature and origin to change her. In that it was an out-door life, full of freshness and open-air vigour, it was not antagonistic to her past. Upon this sympathetic basis had been imposed the conditions of a fine social decorum. The conditions must still exist. But how would it be when she was withdrawn from this peaceful activity of nature and set down among "those garish lights" in Cavendish Square and Piccadilly? She hardly knew to what she was going as yet. There had been a few social functions at Greyhope since she had come, but that could give her, after all, but little idea of the swing and pressure of London life.

At this moment she was lingering over the scene before her. She was wondering with the naive wonder of an awakened mind. She had intended many times of late saying to Richard all the native gratitude she felt; yet somehow she had never been able to say it. The moment of parting had come.

"What are you thinking of, Richard?" she said now. He started and turned towards her.

"I hardly know," he answered. "My thoughts were drifting."

"Richard," she said abruptly, "I want to thank you."

"Thank me for what, Lali?" he questioned.

"To thank you, Richard, for everything--since I came, over three years ago."

He broke out into a soft little laugh, then, with his old good-natured manner, caught her hand as he did the first night she came to Greyhope, patted it in a fatherly fashion, and said:

"It is the wrong way about, Lali; I ought to be thanking you, not you me. Why, look what a stupid old foggy I was then, toddling about the place with too much time on my hands, reading a lot and forgetting everything; and here you came in, gave me something to do, made the little I know of any use, and ran a pretty gold wire down the rusty fiddle of life. If there are any speeches of gratitude to be made, they are mine, they are

mine."

"Richard," she said very quietly and gravely, "I owe you more than I can ever say--in English. You have taught me to speak in your tongue enough for all the usual things of life, but one can only speak from the depths of one's heart in one's native tongue. And see," she added, with a painful little smile, "how strange it would sound if I were to tell you all I thought in the language of my people--of my people, whom I shall never see again. Richard, can you understand what it must be to have a father whom one is never likely to see again--whom, if one did see again, something painful would happen? We grow away from people against our will; we feel the same towards them, but they cannot feel the same towards us; for their world is in another hemisphere. We want to love them, and we love, remember, and are glad to meet them again, but they feel that we are unfamiliar, and, because we have grown different outwardly, they seem to miss some chord that used to ring. Richard, I--I--" She paused.

"Yes, Lali," he assented--"yes, I understand you so far; but speak out."

"I am not happy," she said. "I never shall be happy. I have my child, and that is all I have. I cannot go back to the life in which I was born; I must go on as I am, a stranger among a strange people, pitied, suffered, cared for a little--and that is all."

The nurse had drawn away a little distance with the child. The rest of the family were making their preparations inside the house. There was no one near to watch the singular little drama.

"You should not say that," he added; "we all feel you to be one of us."

"But all your world does not feel me to be one of them," she rejoined.

"We shall see about that when you go up to town. You are a bit morbid, Lali. I don't wonder at your feeling a little shy; but then you will simply carry things before you--now you take my word for it! For I know London pretty well."

She held out her ungloved hands.

"Do they compare with the white hands of the ladies you know?" she said.

"They are about the finest hands I have ever seen," he replied. "You can't see yourself, sister of mine."

"I do not care very much to see myself," she said. "If I had not a maid I expect I should look very shiftless, for I don't care to look in a mirror. My only mirror used to be a stream of water in summer," she added, "and a corner of a looking-glass got from the Hudson's Bay fort in the winter."

"Well, you are missing a lot of enjoyment," he said, "if you do not use your mirror much. The rest of us can appreciate what you would see there."

She reached out and touched his arm.

"Do you like to look at me?" she questioned, with a strange simple candour.

For the first time in many a year, Richard Armour blushed like a girl fresh from school. The question had come so suddenly, it had gone so quickly into a sensitive corner of his nature, that he lost command of himself for the instant, yet had little idea why the command was lost. He touched the fingers on his arm affectionately.

"Like to look at you--like to look at you? Why, of course we all like to look at you. You are very fine and handsome and interesting."

"Richard," she said, drawing her hands away, "is that why you like to look at me?"

He had recovered himself. He laughed in his old hearty way, and said:

"Yes, yes; why, of course! Come, let us go and see the boy," he added, taking her arm and hurrying her down the steps. "Come and let us see Richard Joseph, the pride of all the Armours."

She moved beside him in a kind of dream. She had learned much since she came to Greyhope, and yet she could not at that moment have told exactly why she asked Richard the question that had confused him, nor did she know quite what lay behind the question. But every problem which has life works itself out to its appointed end, if fumbling human fingers do not meddle with it. Half the miseries of this world are caused by forcing issues, in every problem of the affections, the emotions, and the soul. There is a law working with which there should be no tampering, lest in foolish interruption come only confusion and disaster. Against every such question there should be written the one word, "Wait."

Richard Armour stooped over the child. "A beauty," he said, "a perfect little gentleman. Like Richard Joseph Armour there is none," he added.

"Whom do you think he looks like, Richard?" she asked. This was a question she had never asked before since the child was born. Whom the child looked like every one knew; but within the past year and a half Francis Armour's name had seldom been mentioned, and never in connection with the child. The child's mother asked the question with a strange quietness. Richard answered it without hesitation.

"The child looks like Frank," he said. "As like him as can be."

"I am glad," she said, "for all your sakes."

"You are very deep this morning, Lali," Richard said, with a kind of helplessness. "Frank will be pretty proud of the youngster when he comes back. But he won't be prouder of him than I am."

"I know that," she said. "Won't you be lonely without the boy--and me, Richard?"

Again the question went home. "Lonely? I should think I would," he said. "I should think I would. But then, you see, school is over, and the master stays behind and makes up the marks. You will find London a jollier master than I am, Lali. There'll be lots of shows, and plenty to do, and smart frocks, and no end of feeds and frolics; and that is more amusing than studying three hours a day with a dry old stick like me. I tell you what, when Frank comes--"

She interrupted him. "Do not speak of that," she said. Then, with a sudden burst of feeling, though her words were scarcely audible: "I owe you everything, Richard--everything that is good. I owe him nothing, Richard--nothing but what is bitter."

"Hush, hush," he said; "you must not speak that way. Lali, I want to say to you--"

At that moment General Armour, Mrs. Armour, and Marion appeared on the door-step, and the carriage came wheeling up the drive. What Richard intended to say was left unsaid. The chances were it never would be said.

"Well, well," said General Armour, calling down at them, "escort his imperial highness to the chariot which awaits him, and then ho! for London town. Come along, my daughter," he said to Lali; "come up here and take the last whiff of Greyhope that you will have for six months. Dear, dear, what lunatics we all are, to be sure! Why, we're as happy as little birds in their nests out in the decent country, and yet we scamper off to a smoky old city by the Thames to rush along with the world, instead of sitting high and far away from it and watching it go by. God bless my soul, I'm old enough to know better! Well, let me help you in, my dear," he added to his wife; "and in you go, Marion; and in you go, your imperial highness"--he passed the child awkwardly in to Marion; "and in you go, my daughter," he added, as he handed Lali in, pressing her hand with a brusque fatherliness as he did so. He then got in after them.

Richard came to the side of the carriage and bade them all good-bye one by one. Lali gave him her hand, but did not speak a word. He called a cheerful adieu, the horses were whipped up, and in a moment Richard was left alone on the steps of the house. He stood for a time looking, then he turned to go into the house, but changed his mind, sat down, lit a cigar, and did not move from his seat until he was summoned to his lonely luncheon.

Nobody thought much of leaving Richard behind at Greyhope. It seemed the natural thing to do. But still he had not been left alone--entirely alone--for three years or more.

The days and weeks went on. If Richard had been accounted eccentric before, there was far greater cause for the term now. Life dragged. Too much had been taken out of his life all at once; for, in the first place, the family had been drawn together more during the trouble which Lali's advent had brought; then the child and its mother, his pupil, were gone also. He wandered about in a kind of vague unrest. The hardest thing in this world to get used to is the absence of a familiar footstep and the cheerful greeting of a familiar eye. And the man with no chick or child feels even the absence of his dog from the hearth-rug when he returns from a journey or his day's work. It gives him a sense of strangeness and loss. But when it is the voice of a woman and the hand of a child that is missed, you can back no speculation upon that man's mood or mind or conduct. There is no influence like the influence of habit, and that is how, when the minds of people are at one, physical distances and differences, no matter how great, are invisible, or at least not obvious.

Richard Armour was a sensible man; but when one morning he suddenly packed a portmanteau and went up to town to Cavendish Square, the act might be considered from two sides of the equation. If he came back to

enter again into the social life which, for so many years, he had abjured, it was not very sensible, because the world never welcomes its deserters; it might, if men and women grew younger instead of older. If he came to see his family, or because he hungered for his godchild, or because--but we are hurrying the situation. It were wiser not to state the problem yet. The afternoon that he arrived at Cavendish Square all his family were out except his brother's wife. Lali was in the drawing-room, receiving a visitor who had asked for Mrs. Armour and Mrs. Francis Armour. The visitor was received by Mrs. Francis Armour. The visitor knew that Mrs. Armour was not at home. She had by chance seen her and Marion in Bond Street, and was not seen by them. She straightway got into her carriage and drove up to Cavendish Square, hoping to find Mrs. Francis Armour at home. There had been house-parties at Greyhope since Lali had come there to live, but this visitor, though once an intimate friend of the family, had never been a guest.

The visitor was Lady Haldwell, once Miss Julia Sherwood, who had made possible what was called Francis Armour's tragedy. Since Lali had come to town Lady Haldwell had seen her, but had never met her. She was not at heart wicked, but there are few women who can resist an opportunity of anatomising and reckoning up the merits and demerits of a woman who has married an old lover. When that woman is in the position of Lali, the situation has an unusual piquancy and interest. Hence Lady Haldwell's journey of inquisition to Cavendish Square.

As Richard passed the drawing-room door to ascend the stairs, he recognised the voices.

Once a sort of heathen, as Mrs. Francis Armour had been, she still could grasp the situation with considerable clearness. There is nothing keener than one woman's instinct regarding another woman, where a man is concerned. Mrs. Francis Armour received Lady Haldwell with a quiet stateliness, which, if it did not astonish her, gave her sufficient warning that matters were not, in this little comedy, to be all her own way.

Thrown upon the mere resources of wit and language, Mrs. Francis Armour must have been at a disadvantage. For Lady Haldwell had a good gift of speech, a pretty talent for epithet, and no unnecessary tenderness. She bore Lali no malice. She was too decorous and high for that. In her mind the wife of the man she had discarded was a mere commonplace catastrophe, to be viewed without horror, maybe with pity. She had heard the alien spoken well of by some people; others had seemed indignant that the Armours should try to push "a red woman" into English society. Truth is, the Armours did not try at all to push her. For over three years they had let society talk. They had not entertained largely in Cavendish Square since Lali came, and those invited to Greyhope had a chance to refuse the invitations if they chose. Most people did not choose to decline them. But Lady Haldwell was not of that number. She had never been invited. But now in town, when entertainment must be more general, she and the Armours were prepared for social interchange.

Behind Lady Haldwell's visit curiosity chiefly ran. She was in a way sorry for Frank Armour, for she had been fond of him after a fashion, always fonder of him than of Lord Haldwell. She had married with her fingers holding the scales of advantage; and Lord Haldwell dressed well, was immensely rich, and the title had a charm.

When Mrs. Francis Armour met her with her strange, impressive dignity,

she was the slightest bit confused, but not outwardly. She had not expected it. At first Lali did not know who her visitor was. She had not caught the name distinctly from the servant.

Presently Lady Haldwell said, as Lali gave her hand "I am Lady Haldwell. As Miss Sherwood I was an old friend of your husband."

A scornful glitter came into Mrs. Armour's eyes--a peculiar touch of burnished gold, an effect of the light at a certain angle of the lens. It gave for the instant an uncanny look to the face, almost something malicious. She guessed why this woman had come. She knew the whole history of the past, and it touched her in a tender spot. She knew she was had at an advantage. Before her was a woman perfectly trained in the fine social life to which she was born, whose equanimity was as regular as her features. Herself was by nature a creature of impulse, of the woods and streams and open life. The social convention had been engrafted. As yet she was used to thinking and speaking with all candour. She was to have her training in the charms of superficiality, but that was to come; and when it came she would not be an unskilful apprentice. Perhaps the latent subtlety of her race came to help her natural candour at the moment. For she said at once, in a slow, quiet tone:

"I never heard my husband speak of you. Will you sit down?"

"And Mrs. Armour and Marion are not in? No, I suppose your husband did not speak much of his old friends."

The attack was studied and cruel. But Lady Haldwell had been stung by Mrs. Armour's remark, and it piqued her that this was possible.

"Well, yes, he spoke of some of his friends, but not of you."

"Indeed! That is strange."

"There was no necessity," said Mrs. Armour quietly.

"Of discussing me? I suppose not. But by some chance--"

"It was just as well, perhaps, not to anticipate the pleasure of our meeting."

Lady Haldwell was surprised. She had not expected this cleverness. They talked casually for a little time, the visitor trying in vain to delicately give the conversation a personal turn. At last, a little foolishly, she grew bolder, with a needless selfishness.

"So old a friend of your husband as I am, I am hopeful you and I may be friends also."

Mrs. Armour saw the move.

"You are very kind," she said conventionally, and offered a cup of tea.

Lady Haldwell now ventured unwisely. She was nettled at the other's self-possession.

"But then, in a way, I have been your friend for a long time, Mrs. Armour."

The point was veiled in a vague tone, but Mrs. Armour understood. Her reply was not wanting. "Any one who has been a friend to my husband has, naturally, claims upon me."

Lady Haldwell, in spite of herself, chafed. There was a subtlety in the woman before her not to be reckoned with lightly.

"And if an enemy?" she said, smiling.

A strange smile also flickered across Mrs. Armour's face as she said:

"If an enemy of my husband called, and was penitent, I should--offer her tea, no doubt."

"That is, in this country; but in your own country, which, I believe, is different, what would you do?" Mrs. Armour looked steadily and coldly into her visitor's eyes.

"In my country enemies do not compel us to be polite."

"By calling on you?" Lady Haldwell was growing a little reckless. "But then, that is a savage country. We are different here. I suppose, however, your husband told you of these things, so that you were not surprised. And when does he come? His stay is protracted. Let me see, how long is it? Ah yes, near four years." Here she became altogether reckless, which she regretted afterwards, for she knew, after all, what was due herself. "He will come back, I suppose?"

Lady Haldwell was no coward, else she had hesitated before speaking in that way before this woman, in whose blood was the wildness of the heroic North. Perhaps she guessed the passion in Lali's breast, perhaps not. In any case she would have said what she listed at the moment.

Wild as were the passions in Lali's breast, she thought on the instant of her child, of what Richard Armour would say; for he had often talked to her about not showing her emotions and passions, had told her that violence of all kinds was not wise or proper. Her fingers ached to grasp this beautiful, exasperating woman by the throat. But after an effort at calmness she remained still and silent, looking at her visitor with a scornful dignity. Lady Haldwell presently rose,--she could not endure the furnace of that look,--and said good-bye. She turned towards the door. Mrs. Armour remained immovable. At that instant, however, some one stepped from behind a large screen just inside the door. It was Richard Armour. He was pale, and on his face was a sternness the like of which this and perhaps only one other woman had ever seen on him. He interrupted her.

"Lady Haldwell has a fine talent for irony," he said, "but she does not always use it wisely. In a man it would bear another name, and from a man it would be differently received." He came close to her. "You are a brave woman," he said, "or you would have been more careful. Of course you knew that my mother and sister were not at home?"

She smiled languidly. "And why 'of course'?"

"I do not know that; only I know that I think so; and I also think that my brother Frank's worst misfortune did not occur when Miss Julia

Sherwood trafficked without compunction in his happiness."

"Don't be oracular, my dear Richard Armour," she replied. "You are trying, really. This seems almost melodramatic; and melodrama is bad enough at Drury Lane."

"You are not a good friend even to yourself," he answered.

"What a discoverer you are! And how much in earnest! Do come back to the world, Mr. Armour; you would be a relief, a new sensation."

"I fancy I shall come back, if only to see the 'engineer hoist with his own'--torpedo."

He paused before the last word to give it point, for her husband's father had made his money out of torpedoes. She felt the sting in spite of herself, and she saw the point.

"And then we will talk it over at the end of the season," he added, "and compare notes. Good-afternoon."

"You stake much on your hazard," she said, glancing back at Lali, who still stood immovable. "Au revoir!" She left the room. Richard heard the door close after her and the servant retire. Then he turned to Lali.

As he did so, she ran forward to him with a cry. "Oh, Richard, Richard!" she exclaimed, with a sob, threw her arms over his shoulder, and let her forehead drop on his breast. Then came a sudden impulse in his blood. Long after he shuddered when he remembered what he thought at that instant; what he wished to do; what rich madness possessed him. He knew now why he had come to town; he also knew why he must not stay, or, if staying, what must be his course.

He took her gently by the arm and led her to a chair, speaking cheerily to her. Then he sat down beside her, and all at once again, her face wet and burning, she flung herself forward on her knees beside him, and clung to him.

"Oh, Richard, I am glad you have come," she said. "I would have killed her if I had not thought of you. I want you to stay; I am always better when you are with me. I have missed you, and I know that baby misses you too."

He had his cue. He rose, trembling a little. "Come, come," he said heartily, "it's all right, it's all right-my sister. Let us go and see the youngster. There, dry your eyes, and forget all about that woman. She is only envious of you. Come, for his imperial highness!"

She was in a tumult of feeling. It was seldom that she had shown emotion in the past two years, and it was the more ample when it did break forth. But she dried her eyes, and together they went to the nursery. She dismissed the nurse and they were left alone by the sleeping child. She knelt at the head of the little cot, and touched the child's forehead with her lips. He stooped down also beside it.

"He's a grand little fellow," he said. "Lali," he continued presently, "it is time Frank came home. I am going to write for him. If he does not come at once, I shall go and fetch him."

"Never! never!" Her eyes flashed angrily. "Promise that you will not. Let him come when he is ready.

"He does not, care." She shuddered a little.

"But he will care when he comes, and you--you care for him, Lali?"

Again she shuddered, and a whiteness ran under the hot excitement of her cheeks. She said nothing, but looked up at him, then dropped her face in her hands.

"You do care for him, Lali," he said earnestly, almost solemnly, his lips twitching slightly. "You must care for him; it is his right; and he will--I swear to you I know he will--care for you."

In his own mind there was another thought, a hard, strange thought; and it had to do with the possibility of his brother not caring for this wife.

Still she did not speak.

"To a good woman, with a good husband," he continued, "there is no one--there should be no one--like the father of her child. And no woman ever loved her child more than you do yours." He knew that this was special pleading.

She trembled, and then dropped her cheek beside the child's. "I want Frank to be happy," he went on; "there is no one I care more for than for Frank."

She lifted her face to him now, in it a strange light. Then her look ran to confusion, and she seemed to read all that he meant to convey. He knew she did. He touched her shoulder.

"You must do the best you can every way, for Frank's sake, for all our sakes. I will help you--God knows I will--all I can."

"Ah, yes, yes," she whispered, from the child's pillow.

He could see the flame in her cheek. "I understand." She put out her hand to him, but did not look up. "Leave me alone with my baby, Richard," she pleaded.

He took her hand and pressed it again and again in his old, unconscious way. Then he let it go, and went slowly to the door. There he turned and looked back at her. He mastered the hot thought in him. "God help me!" she murmured from the cot. The next morning Richard went back to Greyhope.

CHAPTER VII

A COURT-MARTIAL

It was hard to tell, save for a certain deliberateness of speech and a colour a little more pronounced than that of a Spanish woman, that Mrs. Frank Armour had not been brought up in England. She had a kind of grave

sweetness and distant charm which made her notable at any table or in any ballroom. Indeed, it soon became apparent that she was to be the pleasant talk, the interest of the season. This was tolerably comforting to the Armours. Again Richard's prophecy had been fulfilled, and as he sat alone at Greyhope and read the Morning Post, noticing Lali's name at distinguished gatherings, or, picking up the World, saw how the lion-hunters talked extravagantly of her, he took some satisfaction to himself that he had foreseen her triumph where others looked for her downfall. Lali herself was not elated; it gratified her, but she had been an angel, and a very unsatisfactory one, if it had not done so. As her confidence grew (though outwardly she had never appeared to lack it greatly), she did not hesitate to speak of herself as an Indian, her country as a good country, and her people as a noble if dispossessed race; all the more so if she thought reference to her nationality and past was being rather conspicuously avoided. She had asked General Armour for an interview with her husband's solicitor. This was granted. When she met the solicitor, she asked him to send no newspaper to her husband containing any reference to herself, nor yet to mention her in his letters.

She had never directly received a line from him but once, and that was after she had come to know the truth about his marriage with her. She could read in the conventional sentences, made simple as for a child, the strained politeness, and his absolute silence as to whether or not a child had been born to them, the utter absence of affection for her. She had also induced General Armour and his wife to give her husband's solicitor no information regarding the birth of the child. There was thus apparently no more inducement for him to hurry back to England than there was when he had sent her off on his mission of retaliation, which had been such an ignominious failure. For the humiliation of his family had been short-lived, the affront to Lady Haldwell nothing at all. The Armours had not been human if they had failed to enjoy their daughter-in-law's success. Although they never, perhaps, would quite recover the disappointment concerning Lady Agnes Martling, the result was so much better than they in their cheerfulest moments dared hope for, that they appeared genuinely content.

To their grandchild they were devotedly attached. Marion was his faithful slave and admirer, so much so that Captain Vidall, who now and then was permitted to see the child, declared himself jealous. He and Marion were to be married soon. The wedding had been delayed owing to his enforced absence abroad. Mrs. Edward Lambert, once Mrs. Townley, shyly regretted in Lali's presence that the child, or one as sweet, was not hers. Her husband evidently shared her opinion, from the extraordinary notice he took of it when his wife was not present. Not that Richard Joseph Armour, Jun., was always in evidence, but when asked for by his faithful friends and admirers he was amiably produced.

Meanwhile, Frank Armour across the sea was engaged with many things. His business concerns had not prospered prodigiously, chiefly because his judgment, like his temper, had grown somewhat uncertain. His popularity in the Hudson's Bay country had been at some tension since he had shipped his wife away to England. Even the ordinary savage mind saw something unusual and undomestic in it, and the general hospitality declined a little. Armour did not immediately guess the cause; but one day, about a year after his wife had gone, he found occasion to reprove a half-breed, by name Jacques Pontiac; and Jacques, with more honesty than politeness, said some hard words, and asked how much he paid for his English hired devils to kill his wife. Strange to say, he did not resent this startling remark. It set him thinking. He began to blame himself for

not having written oftener to his people--and to his wife. He wondered how far his revenge had succeeded. He was most ashamed of it now. He knew that he had done a dishonourable thing. The more he thought upon it the more angry with himself he became. Yet he dreaded to go back to England and face it all: the reproach of his people; the amusement of society; his wife herself. He never attempted to picture her as a civilised being. He scarcely knew her when he married her. She knew him much better, for primitive people are quicker in the play of their passions, and she had come to love him before he had begun to notice her at all.

Presently he ate his heart out with mortification. To be yoked for ever to--a savage! It was horrible. And their children? It was strange he had not thought of that before. Children? He shrugged his shoulders. There might possibly be a child, but children--never! But he doubted even regarding a child, for no word had come to him concerning that possibility. He was even most puzzled at the tone and substance of their letters. From the beginning there had been no reproaches, no excitement, no railing, but studied kindness and conventional statements, through which Mrs. Armour's solicitous affection scarcely ever peeped. He had shot his bolt, and got--consideration, almost imperturbability. They appeared to treat the matter as though he were a wild youth who would not yet mend his ways. He read over their infrequent letters to him; his to them had been still more infrequent. In one there was the statement that "she was progressing favourably with her English"; in another, that "she was riding a good deal"; again, that "she appeared anxious to adapt herself to her new life."

At all these he whistled a little to himself, and smiled bitterly. Then, all at once, he got up and straightway burned them all. He again tried to put the matter behind him for the present, knowing that he must face it one day, and staving off its reality as long as possible. He did his utmost to be philosophical and say his quid refert, but it was easier tried than done; for Jacques Pontiac's words kept rankling in his mind, and he found himself carrying round a vague load, which made him abstracted occasionally, and often a little reckless in action and speech. In hunting bear and moose he had proved himself more daring than the oldest hunter, and proportionately successful. He paid his servants well, but was sharp with them.

He made long, hard expeditions, defying the weather as the hardiest of prairie and mountain men mostly hesitate to defy it; he bought up much land, then, dissatisfied, sold it again at a loss, but subsequently made final arrangements for establishing a very large farm. When he once became actually interested in this he shook off something of his moodiness and settled himself to develop the thing. He had good talent for initiative and administration, and at last, in the time when his wife was a feature of the London season, he found his scheme in working order, and the necessity of going to England was forced upon him.

Actually he wished that the absolute necessity had presented itself before. There was always the moral necessity, of course--but then! Here now was a business need; and he must go. Yet he did not fix a day or make definite arrangements. He could hardly have believed himself such a coward. With liberal emphasis he called himself a sneak, and one day at Fort Charles sat down to write to his solicitor in Montreal to say that he would come on at once. Still he hesitated. As he sat there thinking, Eye-of-the-Moon, his father-in-law, opened the door quietly and entered. He had avoided the chief ever since he had come back to Fort

Charles, and practically had not spoken to him for a year. Armour flushed slightly with annoyance. But presently, with a touch of his old humour, he rose, held out his hand, and said ironically: "Well, father-in-law, it's about time we had a big talk, isn't it? We're not very intimate for such close relatives."

The old Indian did not fully understand the meaning or the tone of Armour's speech, but he said "How!" and, reaching out his hand for the pipe offered him, lighted it, and sat down, smoking in silence. Armour waited; but, seeing that the other was not yet moved to talk, he turned to his letter again. After a time, Eye-of-the-Moon said gravely, getting to his feet: "Brother!"

Armour looked up, then rose also. The Indian bowed to him courteously, then sat down again. Armour threw a leg over a corner of the table and waited.

"Brother," said the Indian presently, "you are of the great race that conquers us. You come and take our land and our game, and we at last have to beg of you for food and shelter. Then you take our daughters, and we know not where they go. They are gone like the down from the thistle. We see them not, but you remain. And men say evil things. There are bad words abroad. Brother, what have you done with my daughter?"

Had the Indian come and stormed, begged money of him, sponged on him, or abused him, he had taken it very calmly--he would, in fact, have been superior. But there was dignity in the chief's manner; there was solemnity in his speech; his voice conveyed resoluteness and earnestness, which the stoic calm of his face might not have suggested; and Armour felt that he had no advantage at all. Besides, Armour had a conscience, though he had played some rare tricks with it of late, and it needed more hardihood than he possessed to face this old man down. And why face him down? Lali was his daughter, blood of his blood, the chieftainess of one branch of his people, honoured at least among these poor savages, and the old man had a right to ask, as asked another more famous, "Where is my daughter?"

His hands in his pockets, Armour sat silent for a minute, eyeing his boot, as he swung his leg to and fro. Presently he said: "Eye-of-the-Moon, I don't think I can talk as poetically as you, even in my own language, and I shall not try. But I should like to ask you this: Do you believe any harm has come to your daughter--to my wife?"

The old Indian forgot to blow the tobacco-smoke from his mouth, and, as he sat debating, lips slightly apart, it came leaking out in little trailing clouds and gave a strange appearance to his iron-featured face. He looked steadily at Armour, and said: "You are of those who rule in your land,"--here Armour protested, "you have much gold to buy and sell. I am a chief," he drew himself up,--"I am poor: we speak with the straight tongue; it is cowards who lie. Speak deep as from the heart, my brother, and tell me where my daughter is."

Armour could not but respect the chief for the way this request was put, but still it galled him to think that he was under suspicion of having done any bodily injury to his wife, so he quietly persisted: "Do you think I have done Lali any harm?"

"The thing is strange," replied the other. "You are of those who are

great among your people. You married a daughter of a red man. Then she was yours for less than one moon, and you sent her far away, and you stayed. Her father was as a dog in your sight. Do men whose hearts are clear act so? They have said strange things of you. I have not believed; but it is good I know all, that I may say to the tale-bearers, 'You have crooked tongues.'"

Armour sat for a moment longer, his face turned to the open window. He was perfectly still, but he had become grave. He was about to reply to the chief, when the trader entered the room hurriedly with a newspaper in his hand. He paused abruptly when he saw Eye-of-the-Moon. Armour felt that the trader had something important to communicate. He guessed it was in the paper. He mutely held out his hand for it. The trader handed it to him hesitatingly, at the same time pointing to a paragraph, and saying: "It is nearly two years old, as you see. I chanced upon it by accident to-day."

It was a copy of a London evening paper, containing a somewhat sensational account of Lali's accident. It said that she was in a critical condition. This time Armour did not ask for brandy, but the trader put it out beside him. He shook his head. "Gordon," he said presently, "I shall leave here in the morning. Please send my men to me."

The trader whispered to him: "She was all right, of course, long ago, Mr. Armour, or you would have heard."

Armour looked at the date of the paper. He had several letters from England of a later date, and these said nothing of her illness. It bewildered him, made him uneasy. Perhaps the first real sense of his duty as a husband came home to him there. For the first time he was anxious about the woman for her own sake. The trader had left the room.

"What a scoundrel I've been!" said Armour between his teeth, oblivious, for the moment, of Eye-of-the-Moon's presence. Presently, bethinking himself, he turned to the Indian. "I've been debating," he said. "Eye-of-the-Moon, my wife is in England, at my father's home. I am going to her. Men have lied in thinking I would do her any injury, but--but--never mind, the harm was of another kind. It isn't wise for a white man and an Indian to marry, but when they are married--well, they must live as man and wife should live, and, as I said, I am going to my wife."

To say all this to a common Indian, whose only property was a dozen ponies and a couple of tepees, required something very like moral courage; but then Armour had not been exercising moral courage during the last year or so, and its exercise was profitable to him. The next morning he was on his way to Montreal, and Eye-of-the-Moon was the richest chief in British North America, at that moment, by five thousand dollars or so.

CHAPTER VIII

TO EVERY MAN HIS HOUR

It was the close of the season: many people had left town, but festivities were still on. To a stranger the season might have seemed

at its height. The Armours were giving a large party in Cavendish Square before going back again to Greyhope, where, for the sake of Lali and her child, they intended to remain during the rest of the summer, in preference to going on the Continent or to Scotland. The only unsatisfactory feature of Lali's season was the absence of her husband. Naturally there were those who said strange things regarding Frank Armour's stay in America; but it was pretty generally known that he was engaged in land speculations, and his club friends, who perhaps took the pleasantest view of the matter, said that he was very wise indeed, if a little cowardly, in staying abroad until his wife was educated and ready to take her position in society. There was one thing on which they were all agreed: Mrs. Frank Armour either had a mind superior to the charms of their sex, or was incapable of that vanity which hath many suitors, and says: "So far shalt thou go, and--" The fact is, Mrs. Frank Armour's mind was superior. She had only one object--to triumph over her husband grandly, as a woman righteously might. She had vanity, of course, but it was not ignoble. She kept one thing in view; she lived for it.

Her translation had been successful. There were times when she remembered her father, the wild days on the prairies, the buffalo-hunt, tracking the deer, tribal battles, the long silent hours of the winter, and the warm summer nights when she slept in the prairie grass or camped with her people in the trough of a great landwave. Sometimes the hunger for its freedom, and its idleness, and its sport, came to her greatly; but she thought of her child, and she put it from her. She was ambitious for him; she was keen to prove her worth as a wife against her husband's unworthiness. This perhaps saved her. She might have lost had her life been without this motive.

The very morning of this notable reception, General Armour had received a note from Frank Armour's solicitor, saying that his son was likely to arrive in London from America that day or the next. Frank had written to his people no word of his coming; to his wife, as we have said, he had not written for months; and before he started back he would not write, because he wished to make what amends he could in person. He expected to find her improved, of course, but still he could only think of her as an Indian, showing her common prairie origin. His knowledge of her before their marriage had been particularly brief; she was little more in his eyes than a thousand other Indian women, save that she was better-looking, was whiter than most, and had finer features. He could not very clearly remember the tones of her voice, because after marriage, and before he had sent her to England, he had seen little or nothing of her.

When General Armour received the news of Frank's return he told his wife and Marion, and they consulted together whether it were good to let Lali know at once. He might arrive that evening. If so, the position would be awkward, because it was impossible to tell how it might affect her. If they did tell her, and Frank happened not to arrive, it might unnerve her so as to make her appearance in the evening doubtful. Richard, the wiseacre, the inexhaustible Richard, was caring for his cottagers and cutting the leaves of new books--his chiefest pleasure--at Greyhope. They felt it was a matter they ought to be able to decide for themselves, but still it was the last evening of Lali's stay in town, and they did not care to take any risk. Strange to say, they had come to take pride in their son's wife; for even General and Mrs. Armour, high-minded and of serene social status as they were, seemed not quite insensible to the pleasure of being an axle on which a system of social notoriety revolved.

At the opportune moment Captain Vidall was announced, and, because he and

Marion were soon to carry but one name between them, he was called into family consultation. It is somewhat singular that in this case the women were quite wrong and the men were quite right. For General Armour and Captain Vidall were for silence until Frank came, if he came that day, or for telling her the following morning, when the function was over. And the men prevailed.

Marion was much excited all day; she had given orders that Frank's room should be made ready, but for whom she gave no information. While Lali was dressing for the evening, something excited and nervous, she entered her room. They were now the best of friends. The years had seen many shifting scenes in their companionship; they had been as often at war as at peace; but they had respected each other, each after her own fashion; and now they had a real and mutual regard. Lali's was a slim, lithe figure, wearing its fashionable robes with an air of possession; and the face above it, if not entirely beautiful, had a strange, warm fascination. The girl had not been a chieftainess for nothing. A look of quiet command was there, but also a far-away expression which gave a faint look of sadness even when a smile was at the lips. The smile itself did not come quickly, it grew; but above it all was hair of perfect brown, most rare,--setting off her face as a plume does a helmet. She showed no surprise when Marion entered. She welcomed her with a smile and outstretched hand, but said nothing.

"Lali," said Marion somewhat abruptly,--she scarcely knew why she said it,--"are you happy?"

It was strange how the Indian girl had taken on those little manners of society which convey so much by inflection. She lifted her eyebrows at Marion, and said presently, in a soft, deliberate voice, "Come, Marion, we will go and see little Richard; then I shall be happy."

She linked her arm through Marion's. Marion drummed her fingers lightly on the beautiful arm, and then fell to wondering what she should say next. They passed into the room where the child lay sleeping; they went to his little bed, and Lali stretched out her hand gently, touching the curls of the child. Running a finger through one delicately, she said, with a still softer tone than before: "Why should not one be happy?"

Marion looked up slowly into her eyes, let a hand fall on her shoulder gently, and replied: "Lali, do you never wish Frank to come?"

Lali's fingers came from the child, the colour mounted slowly to her forehead, and she drew the girl away again into the other room. Then she turned and faced Marion, a deep fire in her eyes, and said, in a whisper almost hoarse in its intensity: "Yes; I wish he would come to-night."

She looked harder yet at Marion; then, with a flash of pride and her hands clasping before her, she drew herself up, and added: "Am I not worthy to be his wife now? Am I not beautiful--for a savage?"

There was no common vanity in the action. It had a noble kind of wistfulness, and a serenity that entirely redeemed it. Marion dated her own happiness from the time when Lali met her accident, for in the evening of that disastrous day she issued to Captain Hume Vidall a commission which he could never--wished never--to resign. Since then she had been at her best,--we are all more or less selfish creatures,--and had grown gentler, curbing the delicate imperiousness of her nature, and frankly, and without the least pique, taken a secondary position of

interest in the household, occasioned by Lali's popularity. She looked Lali up and down with a glance in which many feelings met, and then, catching her hands warmly, she lifted them, put them on her own shoulders, and said: "My dear beautiful savage, you are fit and worthy to be Queen of England; and Frank, when he comes--"

"Hush!" said the other dreamily, and put a finger on Marion's lips. "I know what you are going to say, but I do not wish to hear it. He did not love me then. He used me--" She shuddered, put her hands to her eyes with a pained, trembling motion, then threw her head back with a quick sigh. "But I will not speak of it. Come, we are for the dance, Marion. It is the last, to-night. To-morrow--" She paused, looking straight before her, lost in thought.

"Yes, to-morrow, Lali?"

"I do not know about to-morrow," was the reply. "Strange things come to me."

Marion longed to tell her then and there the great news, but she was afraid to do so, and was, moreover, withheld by the remembrance that it had been agreed she should not be told. She said nothing.

At eleven o'clock the rooms were filled. For the fag end of the season, people seemed unusually brilliant. The evening itself was not so hot as common, and there was an extra array of distinguished guests. Marion was nervous all the evening, though she showed little of it, being most prettily employed in making people pleased with themselves. Mrs. Armour also was not free from apprehension. In reply to inquiries concerning her son she said, as she had often said during the season, that he might be back at any time now. Lali had answered always in the same fashion, and had shown no sign that his continued absence was singular. As the evening wore on, the probability of Frank's appearance seemed less; and the Armours began to breathe more freely.

Frank had, however, arrived. He had driven straight from Euston to Cavendish Square, but, seeing the house lighted up, and guests arriving, he had a sudden feeling of uncertainty. He ordered the cabman to take him to his club. There he put himself in evening-dress, and drove back again to the house. He entered quietly. At the moment the hall was almost deserted; people were mostly in the ballroom and supper-room. He paused a moment, biting his moustache as if in perplexity. A strange timidity came on him. All his old dash and self-possession seemed to have forsaken him. Presently, seeing a number of people entering the hall, he made for the staircase, and went hastily up. Mechanically he went to his own room, and found it lighted. Flowers were set about, and everything was made ready as for a guest. He sat down, not thinking, but dazed.

Glancing up, he saw his face in a mirror. It was bronzed, but it looked rather old and careworn. He shrugged a shoulder at that. Then, in the mirror, he saw also something else. It startled him so that he sat perfectly still for a moment looking at it. It was some one laughing at him over his shoulder--a child! He got to his feet and turned round. On the table was a very large photograph of a smiling child--with his eyes, his face. He caught the chair-arm, and stood looking at it a little wildly. Then he laughed a strange laugh, and the tears leaped to his eyes. He caught the picture in his hands, and kissed it,--very foolishly, men not fathers might think,--and read the name beneath,

Richard Joseph Armour; and again, beneath that, the date of birth. He then put it back on the table and sat looking at it-looking, and forgetting, and remembering.

Presently, the door opened, and some one entered. It was Marion. She had seen him pass through the hall; she had then gone and told her father and mother, to prepare them, and had followed him upstairs. He did not hear her. She stepped softly forwards. "Frank!" she said--"Frank!" and laid a hand on his shoulder. He started up and turned his face on her.

Then he caught her hands and kissed her. "Marion!" he said, and he could say no more. But presently he pointed towards the photograph.

She nodded her head. "Yes, it is your child, Frank. Though, of course, you don't deserve it. . . . Frank dear," she added, "I am glad--we shall all be glad-to have you back; but you are a wicked man." She felt she must say that.

Now he only nodded, and still looked at the portrait. "Where is--my wife?" he added presently.

"She is in the ballroom." Marion was wondering what was best to do.

He caught his thumb-nail in his teeth. He winced in spite of himself. "I will go to her," he said, "and then--the baby."

"I am glad," she replied, "that you have so much sense of justice left, Frank: the wife first, the baby afterwards. But do you think you deserve either?"

He became moody, and made an impatient gesture. "Lady Agnes Martling is here, and also Lady Haldwell," she persisted cruelly. She did not mind, because she knew he would have enough to compensate him afterwards.

"Marion," he said, "say it all, and let me have it over. Say what you like, and I'll not whimper. I'll face it. But I want to see my child."

She was sorry for him. She had really wanted to see how much he was capable of feeling in the matter.

"Wait here, Frank," she said. "That will be best; and I will bring your wife to you."

He said nothing, but assented with a motion of the hand, and she left him where he was. He braced himself for the interview. Assuredly a man loses something of natural courage and self-confidence when he has done a thing of which he should be, and is, ashamed.

It seemed a long time (it was in reality but a couple of minutes) before the door opened again, and Marion said: "Frank, your wife!" and then retreated.

The door closed, leaving a stately figure standing just inside it. The figure did not move forwards, but stood there, full of life and fine excitement, but very still also.

Frank Armour was confounded. He came forwards slowly, looking hard. Was this distinguished, handsome, reproachful woman his wife--Lali, the

Indian girl, whom he had married in a fit of pique and brandy? He could hardly believe his eyes; and yet hers looked out at him with something that he remembered too, together with something which he did not remember, making him uneasy. Clearly, his great mistake had turned from ashes into fruit. "Lali!" he said, and held out his hand.

She reached out hers courteously, but her fingers gave him no response.

"We have many things to say to each other," she said, "but they cannot be said now. I shall be missed from the ballroom."

"Missed from the ballroom!" He almost laughed to think how strange this sounded in his ears. As if interpreting his thought, she added: "You see, it is our last affair of the season, and we are all anxious to do our duty perfectly. Will you go down with me? We can talk afterwards."

Her continued self-possession utterly confused him. She had utterly confused Marion also, when told that her husband was in the house. She had had presentiments, and, besides, she had been schooling herself for this hour for a long time. She turned towards the door.

"But," he asked, like a supplicant, "our child! I want to see the boy."

She lifted her eyebrows, then, seeing the photograph of the baby on the table, understood how he knew. "Come with me, then," she said, with a little more feeling.

She led the way along the landing, and paused at her door. "Remember that we have to appear amongst the guests directly," she said, as though to warn him against any demonstration. Then they entered. She went over to the cot and drew back the fleecy curtain from over the sleeping boy's head. His fingers hungered to take his child to his arms. "He is magnificent--magnificent!" he said, with a great pride. "Why did you never let me know of it?"

"How could I tell what you would do?" she calmly replied. "You married me--wickedly, and used me wickedly afterwards; and I loved the child."

"You loved the child," he repeated after her. "Lali," he added, "I don't deserve it, but forgive me, if you can--for the child's sake."

"We had better go below," she calmly replied. "We have both duties to do. You will of course--appear with me--before them?"

The slight irony in the tone cut him horribly. He offered his arm in silence. They passed on to the staircase.

"It is necessary," she said, "to appear cheerful before one's guests."

She had him at an advantage at every point. "We will be cheerful, then," was his reply, spoken with a grim kind of humour. "You have learned it all, haven't you?" he added.

They were just entering the ballroom. "Yes, with your kind help--and absence," she replied.

The surprise of the guests was somewhat diminished by the fact that Marion, telling General Armour and his wife first of Frank's return, industriously sent the news buzzing about the room.

The two went straight to Frank's father and mother. Their parts were all excellently played. Then Frank mingled among the guests, being very heartily greeted, and heard congratulations on all sides. Old club friends rallied him as a deserter, and new acquaintances flocked about him; and presently he awakened to the fact that his Indian wife had been an interest of the season, was not the least admired person present. It was altogether too good luck for him; but he had an uncomfortable conviction that he had a long path of penance to walk before he could hope to enjoy it.

All at once he met Lady Haldwell, who, in spite of all, still accepted invitations to General Armour's house--the strange scene between Lali and herself never having been disclosed to the family. He had nothing but bitterness in his heart for her, but he spoke a few smooth words, and she languidly congratulated him on his bronzed appearance. He asked for a dance, but she had not one to give him. As she was leaving, she suddenly turned as though she had forgotten something, and looking at him, said: "I forgot to congratulate you on your marriage. I hope it is not too late?"

He bowed. "Your congratulations are so sincere," he said, "that they would be a propos late or early." When he stood with his wife whilst the guests were leaving, and saw with what manner she carried it all off,--as though she had been born in the good land of good breeding,--he was moved alternately with wonder and shame--shame that he had intended this noble creature as a sacrifice to his ugly temper and spite.

When all the guests were gone and the family stood alone in the drawing-room, a silence suddenly fell amongst them. Presently Marion said to her mother in a half-whisper, "I wish Richard were here."

They all felt the extreme awkwardness of the situation, especially when Lali bade General Armour, Mrs. Armour, and Marion good-night, and then, turning to her husband, said, "Good-night"--she did not even speak his name. "Perhaps you would care to ride to-morrow morning? I always go to the Park at ten, and this will be my last ride of the season."

Had she written out an elaborate proclamation of her intended attitude towards her husband, it could not have more clearly conveyed her mind than this little speech, delivered as to a most friendly acquaintance. General Armour pulled his moustache fiercely, and, it is possible, enjoyed the situation, despite its peril. Mrs. Armour turned to the mantel and seemed tremulously engaged in arranging some bric-a-brac. Marion, however, with a fine instinct, slid her arm through that of Lali, and gently said: "Yes, of course Frank will be glad of a ride in the Park. He used to ride with me every morning. But let us go, us three, and kiss the baby good-night--'good-night till we meet in the morning.'"

She linked her arm now through Frank's, and as she did so he replied to Lali: "I shall be glad to ride in the morning, but--"

"But we can arrange it at breakfast," said his wife hurriedly. At the same time she allowed herself to be drawn away to the hall with her husband.

He was very angry, but he knew he had no right to be so. He choked back his wrath and moved on amiably enough, and suddenly the fashion in which the tables had been turned on him struck him with its tragic comedy, and

he involuntarily smiled. His sense of humour saved him from words and acts which might possibly have made the matter a pure tragedy after all. He loosed his arm from Marion's.

"I must bid father and mother good-night. Then I will join you both-- 'in the court of the king.'" And he turned and went back, and said to his father as he kissed his mother: "I am had at an advantage, General."

"And serves you right, my boy. You had the odds with you, but she has captured them like a born soldier." His mother said to him gently: "Frank, you blamed us, but remember that we wished only your good. Take my advice, dear, and try to love your wife and win her confidence."

"Love her--try to love her!" he said. "I shall easily do that. But the other--?" He shook his head a little, though what he meant perhaps he did not know quite himself, and then followed Marion and Lali upstairs. Marion had tried to escape from Lali, but was told that she must stay; and the three met at the child's cot. Marion stooped down and kissed its forehead. Frank stooped also and kissed its cheek. Then the wife kissed the other cheek. The child slept peacefully on. "You can always see the baby here before breakfast, if you choose," said Lali; and she held out her hand again in good-night. At this point Marion stole away, in spite of Lah's quick little cry of "Wait, Marion!" and the two were left alone again.

"I am very tired," she said. "I would rather not talk to-night." The dismissal was evident.

He took her hand, held it an instant, and presently said: "I will not detain you, but I would ask you, Lali, to remember that you are my wife. Nothing can alter that."

"Still we are only strangers, as you know," she quietly rejoined.

"You forget the days we were together--after we were married," he cautiously urged.

"I am not the same girl, . . . you killed her. . . We have to start again. . . . I know all."

"You know that in my wretched anger and madness I--"

"Oh, please do not speak of it," she said; "it is so bad even in thought."

"But will you never forgive me, and care for me? We have to live our lives together."

"Pray let us not speak of it now," she said, in a weary voice; then, breathlessly: "It is of much more consequence that you should love me --and the child."

He drew himself up with a choking sigh, and spread out his arms to her. "Oh, my wife!" he exclaimed.

"No, no," she cried, "this is unreasonable; we know so little of each other. . . . Good-night, again."

He turned at the door, came back, and, stooping, kissed the child on the

lips. Then he said: "You are right. I deserve to suffer. . . .
Good-night."

But when he was gone she dropped on her knees, and kissed the child many times on the lips also.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

If fumbling human fingers do not meddle with it
Miseries of this world are caused by forcing issues
Reading a lot and forgetting everything
The world never welcomes its deserters
There is no influence like the influence of habit
There should be written the one word, "Wait."
Training in the charms of superficiality
We grow away from people against our will
We speak with the straight tongue; it is cowards who lie

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