



CHAPTER II. When Mrs. Frank Armour arrived at Montreal, she still wore her Indian costume of clean well brodered buckskin, moccasins and leggings, all surmounted by a blanket. It was not a distinguished costume, but it seemed suitable to its wearer.

What she thought of it all is not quite easy to say. It is possible that at first she only considered that she was the wife of a white man—a thing to be desired—and that the man she loved was hers forever—a matter of indefinable joy to her. That he was sending her to England did not fret her, because it was his will, and he knew what was best.

He had treated her kindly enough in the days they were together, but she had not been a great deal with him because they traveled fast, and his duties were many, or he made them so, but the latter possibility did not occur to her. When he had hastily bidden her farewell at Port Arthur, he had kissed her and said, "Goodby, my wife." She was not acute enough yet in the in-

tions of Saxon speech to catch the satire—almost involuntary—in the last two words. She remembered the words, however, and the kiss, and she was quite satisfied. To what she was going she did not speculate. He was sending her—that was enough.

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

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

There were several on board who knew the Armours well by name, and two who knew them personally. One was Mr. Edward Lambert, a barrister of the Middle Temple, and the other was Mrs. Townley, a widow, a member of a well known Herefordshire family, who, on a pleasant journey in Scotland, had met, conquered and married a

from abundant, was good. Those, therefore, who were curious and rude enough to stare at her were probably disappointed to find that she ate like "any Christian man."

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

Mrs. Townley had a pretty way of putting her head to one side and speaking very quaintly. She had had it as a girl. She had not lost it as a woman, any more than she had lost a soft little spontaneous laugh which was one of her unusual charms, for women can laugh very softly now, and her sense of humor supervening for the moment she said: "Really you have asked me a conundrum! I fancy I see Mrs. Armour's face when she gets the news—at the breakfast table, of course—and gives a little shriek, and says, 'General, oh, general!' But it is all very shocking, you know," she added in a lowering voice.

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

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

Had he been present at a certain scene at Greyhope a day or two before he would have been still more anxious. It was the custom at breakfast for Mrs. Armour to open her husband's letters and read them while he was engaged with his newspaper and hand to him afterward those that were important.

This morning Marion noticed a letter from Frank among the pile and without a word pounced upon it. She was curious, as any woman would be, to see how he took Mrs. Sherwood's action. Her father was deep in his paper at the time. Her mother was reading other letters. Marion read the first few lines with a feeling of almost painful wonder, the words were so curious, cynical and cold.

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

Mrs. Armour, however, had been started. She knew that Marion had been reading a letter, and with a mother's instinct her thoughts were instantly on Frank. She spoke quickly, almost sharply. "Marion, come here."

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

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

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

"An Indian! A wild Indian!" Mrs. Armour whispered faintly as she dropped into a chair.

"And she'll be here in two or three days!" flattered Marion hysterically. Meanwhile Richard had hastily picked up the Times. "She is due here the day after tomorrow," he said deliberately. "Frank is as decisive as he is rash. Well, it is a melancholy tit for tat."

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

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

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

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