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## THE LIFE RANSOM.

BY GEORGINA C. MUNRO.

SOFTLY the west wind stole over the sunny lake, and welcome to us was even its low faint breath, as we sat in the deep shadow of the forest trees in the sultry hour of summer noon-tide. Before us the broad Huron was flashing in the sun rays, divided from the flower-gemmed bank by a belt of glittering sand, while on our right the bold headland stretched far into the sleeping waters, whereon rock, and tree, and grassy mound were brightly mirrored.

Nothing of life stirred in the silent wilderness save the brilliant butterflies hovering around more gaily tinted blossoms, and the bright humming-birds, with their emerald and ruby plumage, glancing like jewels in the sunshine, fluttering over the flowery shrubs, and darting away across the honeycomb quartz that gleamed between us and the point, with a low hum as though they were murmuring tales of the gold which slept below. But all the unsunned treasures which the gold-bloom might indicate, were in worth far below the priceless offering once laid upon those stones; and many, many years must pass away ere time, or change, the foot of the stranger, or the hand of the gold-seeker, shall banish the memories which cling around the spot. Though strange to us, they were familiar to more than one of our companions, and as we sat there beneath the lofty sycamores, with the noonday sun pouring down light and beauty on the fertile earth and deep blue waters, the tale to which we listened, gained, perchance, a deeper interest from the scene of its relation.

The coming winter had breathed his first frost-spell over the forest, turning to crimson, and gold, and silver, its garb of varied green, when one evening a girl sat on the grassy bank watching the latest sunbeams fade from the glowing sky and darkening lake. The sunset hues had left the clouds, and the stars were glancing forth to mirror themselves in the blue waters, but still the girl kept her post; gazing along the shore, and afar in the distance. She was alone, yet the line of tall trees bordering the forest concealed an Indian encampment, and above their heads several columns of grey smoke were soaring up into the evening sky, while the murmur of voices rose on the air, and at times peals of laughter echoed through the woods.

But Wabegwona cared not to join in the merriment. She was watching for the return of her nearest relative, who had ever been to her as a brother, and dreaming such dim visions as she could dream of the scenes and the people among whom her mother had been born. For though her hair was dark as midnight, and her features those of the race with whom she dwelt, there was enough in the maiden's fairer complexion and deep blue eyes to have won her the name of Wabegwona (White Lily), which was bestowed upon her by her tribe.

Her father, long dead, had been a great chief, but her

mother had been found as a child by the Ottowas among the ruins of an American out-post which another nation had destroyed; and, carried away and adopted by them, had become the wife of one of their bravest warriors. Yet amid all the contrasts of her wild forest life, the fair-haired daughter of the pale-faces had retained some faint recollection of the past to breathe into the wondering ear of her child, before she, also, was called away, and Wabegwona was left an orphan—alone, save for Laguiab, the son of her father's brother, who had taken her to his home, and bade his mother look upon her as a daughter. And the young men, to whom her smile was cold as sun-lit snow, and the old women, who were for ever whispering like the forest leaves, said that Laguiab would make her his wife. But the maiden's heart was still in her mother's grave, and the boldest hunter and bravest warrior of the Ottowas feared to draw it thence too rashly, lest it might shrink away from his touch.

And now a dark speck glided among the starbeams on the lake, and a canoe came bounding forward eagerly, like a wild deer to its favourite haunt. It was that for which Wabegwona watched, and a smile lit up her features as she beheld it, and her thoughts, which had been wandering far beyond the dark forest and the gleaming waves, flew back to the present.

"The rifle of Laguiab has not been idle," said Wabegwona, who stood on the shore to welcome her cousin. "He has lingered long, but his canoe is heavy."

"The rifle of Laguiab has been his enemy," replied the hunter mournfully. "Let my sister bid the young men come hither, for the load in his canoe lies heavy on the heart of Laguiab."

One glance had told the girl that a stranger lay to all appearance lifeless in the canoe, and she hastened to summon the hunters from the fires, around which they were talking of the past day's exploits. Then she went on to tell her aunt of the guest they might expect.

How Wabegwona's heart beat as the Ottowas bore the wounded stranger into the lodge, and she saw that he was not merely young and handsome, for that was little then to her, but of the race her mother had always loved! And when the medicine-men had done their best, and, so they said, charmed the bullet out of the wound, and spoken the wise words which would make their herb-potions drive away the evil spirit of fever and call back health to the sufferer, then Laguiab came to her and told her how a branch had caught the trigger of his rifle, and, without his touch, it had struck down the white hunter in the moment he first beheld him.

"But Wabegwona will be a sister to the pale face," continued the young Ottawa. "She will know that it is the heart of Laguiab which lies wounded in his lodge, and she will watch over the stranger as the eagle watches over her young one, until his wings are strong, and his eyes can look boldly on the sun."

As the summer wind was Laguiab's voice, and the maiden's



will was the rush which loved to bend before it; for no brother could be dearer than he had ever been to her. But the strong grasp of sickness was on the stranger's frame, and it was long ere all their care could loosen it; and often as she sat beside his couch, while the spirits of the past and of the absent seemed hovering around and in communion with him, did Wabegwona fear that he would pass away to the Happy Gardens of the pale-faces, and leave a shadow on the soul of Laguiab. For though the Ottawa had slain many foes on the war-path, until his fame was on the earth, as the lights\* whose name he bore were in the sky, and shone in the sight of many nations, and women trembled at its rushing sound, and warriors mused on what it might portend; still the young chief sorrowed for the aimless blow which had struck down a tree whose fall might crush many flowers but gave no place for glory to spring up. But the summons had not gone forth, and the Englishman was left to find the life to which he awoke, a wilder dream than all his fever-visions.

Weeks and months had glided by; the snows which had not fallen when Seyton was brought to the Ottawa's encampment, had melted away with the hours for ever vanished, and leaves were bursting forth on the trees, and flowers were starting up among the bright fresh grass with all the rapidity and vigour of the vegetation in that region. But spring did not find the Ottawas where the autumn left them, on the point beside the gold-bloom. Death had breathed on one of their fairest plants, and when it withered and died, they, as is frequent among the Indians, deserted the scene of the misfortune, and their lodges were now raised, and their fires lighted on the shores of a quiet bay several miles lower down the lake.

Again it was evening, and Wabegwona sat on the star-lit strand. But this time she was not alone, for Seyton was by her side, telling her of the mighty river beside which dwelt her mother's people and his own. And of the stately dwellings along its shores, and down where the salt waves broke in restless murmurs that were for ever whispering of the distant island far towards the rising sun, where it moaned and dashed around their forefathers' graves.

And he told her, too, of one who would gladly bear away the fairest flower of the forest to bloom within one of those proud dwellings; and of a love which would guard it against the tempest, and shelter it from the burning sun-ray, and cheer it, if the breath of sorrow, which wanders everywhere, should bow it to the earth.

The maiden smiled as she listened, but the Englishman wondered if it were in pleasure or in scorn, for the faint light revealed her face but dimly.

"Has Wabegwona no words?" he asked. "Say, must the pale-face regret that her voice called him back, when his spirit was on the wing?"

There was a minute's silence, and then the low sweet voice of Wabegwona came like music on the ear. "Why should an Ottawa girl speak?" was her reply. "The words of the pale-face are the stars; the heart of Wabegwona is the lake whereon they rest. Let them look down and they will see no other light reflected in it."

A joyful exclamation was on Seyton's lips, but it was stayed, as a shadow fell on the sand, and a form stood before him. It was Laguiab; the star-beams showed him deadly pale, and his arms were folded, and his lips compressed, while his glance was as though the true Aurora Borealis had flashed upon them.

"Laguiab is a fool," said he, bitterly. "His rifle was wise, but he was angry with its wisdom. Are there no blossoms beside the distant waters, where the pale-faces build their lodges so high up into the sky, that the stranger must come with a tongue keener and brighter than the knives of his people, to steal away the only flower an Indian loved to look upon? The heart of Laguiab was spread before my sister," continued the warrior, reproachfully, to Wabegwona. "Had the White Lily looked into it she would have seen nothing but herself. But a white mist has come before her eyes, and she cannot see—a strange wind has whispered in her ear, and the voice to which she once listened is forgotten."

The Ottawa paused; but, surprised by the accusation of treachery, of which he had no thought of being guilty, Seyton hesitated to reply. And Wabegwona bowed her head in silence, for love for Laguiab was strong within her heart;

but it was only as a brother that he had always mingled in her thoughts, and she had never dreamed of hearing such words from his lips. After a moment, he resumed more fiercely—

"But why should that mist stay to blind the eyes of Wabegwona? Laguiab's arm is stronger than his voice, and his anger is a mighty tempest, which breaks down the forest as it passes. It shall sweep the mist from his path, and the eyes of the White Lily can look once more on his face."

As he spoke the last words, Laguiab drew the tomahawk from his belt. Seyton had risen to his feet, but not to fly; though a strange thrill shot through his heart as he stood for a moment defenceless before the enraged Indian, like a fawn awaiting the panther's spring. The bright weapon gleamed in the starbeams as the Ottawa raised his arm; but the next instant it was whirled far over the lake to bury its keen edge in the slumbering waters.

"No," said the Indian, in a low deep voice, "the arm of Laguiab is strong, but not strong enough to strike his friend. The pale-face has slept in his lodge, and hunted by his side, and an Ottawa chief cannot take the life he has watched over. There is a cloud on Laguiab; but the stars are bright, and the clouds cast no shadow on the lake. Let it be so—the path of my brother shall be open to the great villages of his people. But let not his glance be ever dark towards the White Lily, which his hand has torn from the home where it was loved and sheltered in the forest, to plant it afar where the axe of the stranger has left no branches to cover the earth."

And before either had time to answer, Laguiab had plunged amid the dark cedars which reared their lofty heads near the shore; nor did he return to the encampment until the silence of midnight rested on its bark-covered lodges and smouldering fires. The next morning Seyton asked in vain for his host; for, before the last star faded from the sky, the young chief, with some half-dozen hunters, had gone into the woods in quest of game. Had they remained they would have found more need for their rifles. But no thought of danger was in the minds of the Ottawas. Not that they had no enemies, but that they dreamed not that any of their foes were near enough to raise the war-whoop within their hearing.

It was the oft repeated tale in those regions,—the wild-cat stealing on her prey while it slept. But this time in the daylight. All was hushed and still, as though the voice of pain or discord had never echoed through the wilderness, when suddenly a youth rushed into the centre of the lodges, crying:—"The Winnebagoes! the Winnebagoes!"

A wild shriek of woman's terror was the reply, to be instantly followed by a shriller cry of agony, which told that the work of destruction had begun, and to be in its turn lost in the terrible war-whoop of the Winnebagoes, as they rushed upon the unprepared and unsuspecting Ottawas. We will not describe the scene of bloodshed and desolation. It is enough that death and fire reigned everywhere, and that Wabegwona, who had taken shelter beneath the branches of a fallen tree, saw Seyton, stunned and bleeding, carried away alive to meet a darker fate than had befallen her tribesmen.

When Laguiab and his hunters returned at sun-set, they found their encampment a heap of ruins, and those they had left in life claimed nothing now at their hands, except a grave and revenge; so said the sorrowing and indignant warriors when they heard the tale which Wabegwona alone remained to tell. But other thoughts were in the young chief's mind as he looked upon the maiden's face, and saw in it the agony which rent her heart; and his gaze lingered on her pale features while his tribesmen spoke of seeking another band of their nation, some days' journey distant, to join with them in wreaking on their foes the vengeance they were too weak to take alone.

"Another chief will lead the young men," said he, quietly; "Laguiab's path is over the water, but he must go alone. Let not Wabegwona weep as though the sun were gone for ever. Day will come back to pour sunshine on the darkened lake, and the drooping Lily will raise her head again."

The night had passed away, and the morrow's sun was shining gaily and brilliantly on the scene we first described, and Seyton stood in the centre of that spot of gleaming quartz, to take his last farewell of life, and view calmly as he could the terrible preparations for its close. How the

\* Laguiab is the Indian for the Aurora Borealis.



thought of Wabegwona, and of that distant home, whence the wild spirit of adventure had lured him, came round him in that moment when death in its most dreadful aspect stood before him, and cruel hands, and savage looks, and taunting words surrounded him in that lonely and beautiful spot, where he must close his eyes in agony, far away from all he loved, with not one kind glance or friendly voice to support him in the fearful hour of trial!

Just as the signal for its commencement was to be given, a youth, who had accompanied the war party to serve as an unsuspecting looking scout, approached the chiefs, and intimated that a stranger claimed the privilege of entering and leaving the camp unmolested. Safe conduct was accorded, and in a few minutes a young Indian advanced into the circle of expectant warriors, with the haughty step and lofty air of one accustomed to be honoured and obeyed. Despite the usual self-control of such assemblages, the name of "Laguiab!" ran in wondering tones around the circle.

"The Winnebagoes looked for Laguiab," said an old chief, with a hidden sneer. "Had he flown up into the sky, or dived like an otter into the lake, when the war-whoop was sounding through the woods?"

"Laguiab has followed the Winnebagoes," said he coldly, "to ask if they ever heard his name."

"It is the name of a brave warrior," replied the Winnebago. "There is no greater in his nation."

The dark eye of the Ottawa flashed proudly for a moment, then he said, as coldly as before—"Would the Winnebagoes like to boast to their women that they had slain that warrior? or a pale-face whose name they never heard?"

"The path of Laguiab is open," replied the old chief. "The Winnebagoes will not keep what is not theirs."

"Let the pale-face be free as the wind which wanders over the lake," said Laguiab, "and an Ottawa chief will be the prisoner of his foes."

The old chief waved his hand, and in an instant a ready knife severed the thongs which bound Seyton to the stake.

"Laguiab! Laguiab! this must not be!" exclaimed the Englishman, springing to his side. "What have I done, that you should die for me?"

A mournful smile flitted over the Ottawa's face. He pressed Seyton's hand, and whispered in his ear: "There is sorrow in the heart of Wabegwona, and the eyes of Laguiab could not look upon her tears. It is well—Laguiab is content. The voices of his fathers are in his ears, calling him away, and an Indian must follow to the Land of Spirits. Why should he stay? The light of Laguiab will shine no more upon the night of the Ottawas; but the White Lily will be happy in the shelter that she loves."

Then turning away, he spoke a few words to his captors; and before the Englishman well knew the purpose of the Indians, who once more seized him, he was speeding over the deep waters, far away from the fatal spot where the life of Laguiab was being paid the fearful price of his liberty.

And there, on the gold-bloom, was offered up the noble heart of the Ottawa chief, the sacrifice of a self-devotion, against which, not all the wealth, slumbering in the untouched mine, could ever weigh. The next tempest swept away the traces of the sacrifice; and when we heard the tale, and looked upon the spot, all was calm and bright, as though the passions of man had never cast a shadow upon the earth, though even then the name of Laguiab was still loved and wept over in one dwelling far away on the banks of the St. Lawrence. And many, many more years must glide into the past, ere the memory of that deed shall die away, or it cease to be recounted to those, who, like ourselves, may chance to rest in that wild but lovely scene, amid their wanderings in the West.

## GLEANINGS. BY JULIA KAVANAGH.

### AN IDEAL WOMAN.

THE Marquis de Croixmare was generally acknowledged to be one of the most fascinating men of rank who frequented the *côterie* of Grimm, Diderot, and Baron d'Holbach, in the last century. Without being either young or handsome, he exercised a singular power of seduction on all those who came within his sphere. The ease and elegance of his bearing, the courteousness and delicacy of his address, the vivacity of his wit, and, above all, the rare goodness of his

heart, united to a flow of feeling which he vainly strove to conceal, had won him the epithet of *Le Charmant*.

He had little or none of the philosophic intolerance of the period; his indulgence towards every sincere feeling, however much it might differ from his own opinions, was proverbial; above all, he delighted in originality; probably, because he was himself one of the most original, as well as agreeable, men of his time. His ideas on the subject of women were said to be somewhat peculiar; but he was chary of manifesting them. It was seldom that even his most intimate friends could induce him to reveal his real *façon de penser* on that delicate subject; he heard them with a quiet smile; turned off the conversation with a jest or a repartee, and remained impenetrable. No conclusions could be drawn from his behaviour towards the ladies whom he knew; he was the friend of all; the lover of none—sometimes, indeed, amongst the numerous women whom he daily met in the elegant and polished society of the times, one seemed to excite his interest, and draw his attention more than the rest; for a few days, for a week, perhaps even for a month, the Marquis became her devoted slave; his friends could no longer see him, or when they did see him, could get nothing from him save brief and evasive replies; he had vanished from the dinners of Baron d'Holbach, and was not to be found at the suppers of Madame d'Epinay, who, according to the witty Sidney Smith, sinned and sipped so agreeably.

Whilst the fit was on him, remonstrances availed not with the fascinated Marquis; when it was over, he returned to his friends and previous habits, bore with perfect good humour the pleasantries to which his brief passion exposed him, but gave no explanation of his conduct, which appeared the more enigmatical, from the object of his choice being generally the plainest and least attractive woman of his acquaintance. What charm had drawn him towards her, no one knew or suspected; not even the lady herself; still less could any one tell why that charm had ceased so suddenly. But it was apparent that these disappointments, which became less frequent as he advanced in life, were nevertheless painful to the Marquis de Croixmare; he himself was the first to jest about them; but the jest was bitter; the mirth came not from the heart. Madame d'Epinay saw, and said, truly, that he was not happy.

His friend Diderot, who entertained some very peculiar opinions on the nature and character of women, was extremely desirous of knowing what the Marquis really thought on the subject. He sounded him in the most adroit manner; but his efforts remained fruitless, until he one evening at length succeeded in ascertaining the truth. The Marquis, Diderot, Grimm the heavy German, the little Italian Abbé Galiani, were with several others at Baron d'Holbach's; dinner was over; the servants had left the room; the conversation was unrestrained; women formed the topic of discourse; and as the feminine element had never found much favour in this learned *côterie*, the ladies were treated with little gallantry or tenderness. Diderot had been declaiming one of his long and eloquent tirades; the lively little Abbé, who sat near him, was going to reply, and contradict, as was his wont, for the pure pleasure of contradicting, but the philosopher laid his hand on the arm of his friend, and gently checked him; he had noticed the evident impatience of the Marquis de Croixmare whilst he spoke, and wished to hear his answer.

"You are mistaken, Diderot," said he, with some warmth; "allow me to say so. All women are not as you represent them."

"Where are the exceptions?" asked Diderot.

"They exist," pertinaciously asserted the Marquis.

"What! there exist women who are not vain, light, frivolous, and inconstant, and who, at the same time,—for this is the great point,—possess with those negative virtues attractions so great, a charm so deep, that the man who loves them once must love for ever? You say, Croixmare, that there are such women?"

"I say it."

"Then, why," triumphantly exclaimed Diderot, "why did not you, who are always in love with some woman or other, why did not you remain faithful to at least one of these paragon women?"

"Alas!" sorrowfully replied the Marquis, "because I have never met with one like her yet."

Every one smiled at the apparent contradiction—he continued, without heeding this.