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It was true enough. As he spoke the door opened and a line of Sioux filed in and ranged themselves in sinister silence behind us along the wall. It was not, however, for him to count the odds. He hung his head under the governor's look of disgust.

"Whatever happens, sir," Mr. Temple said slowly, "your engagement to my daughter is broken." Then he stood, biting his lips, like one robbed of his cause.

"These are to see fair play." Looking at me, the breed waved at his men. "Now, m'sieu l'abbé."

"I forbid it!" the governor snapped.

I had felt for him through it all, but that sharp order injected a touch of irritation into my pity and I put a little mettle in my answer.

"June is of age, son."

He stared at me a moment, his eyes round and black in their angry surprise. "You, also? You intend to marry them?"

"Better than to let them go out from here unwed."

But no argument would reach him. "In that case you are no longer my friend. After this your church will also lack the backing of the Company."

The unfairness of the speech moved me to a spirited rejoinder. "Son, why do you persist in kicking against the pricks, the goads that you sharpened for yourself in the long time ago?"

He made bitter answer:

"It seems that my consent is needed as little as it is wished."

The accent, slight as it was, touched June. Her big eyes grew moist, and, stepping, she laid a soft hand on his arm. "I do wish it. Won't—"

But he flung round and gave her his back. "Never let me see you again!"

I asked if he would like to retire.

"No! I'll drink my draft."

WITH that I began—the ceremony that ought to have been performed four years ago. Of a necessity a missionary is called upon to carry out the sacraments in strange settings; yet never do I remember officiating in a wilder or one more fit. The dark log store, silent Sioux in the shadow under the candles, Duncan's fringed moose-skins, the governor's bluff form, all was in keeping with the wild beauty and her big, strong man, save only Carew's scared white face. As I have said, it remained for a cause light to the verge of laughter to give the last push that was to throw Mr. Temple from his stubborn stand and bring happiness and grandchildren to his declining years. It came when I stumbled on the question, "Who gives this woman in marriage to this man?" in reading from my pocket Vulgate.

I ought to have omitted it, but having said it, I looked at Mr. Temple. He, however, made no sign, and it was the breed who broke the awkward pause. Stimulated, perhaps, by some memory of the persecution June had sustained at Carew's hands, he nodded at the Englishman.

"This gentleman."

I doubt whether Carew ever realised the fulness of the sarcasm; understood that in the last few minutes a battle had been fought and lost, a battle the significance of which, though masked by phrases, was vividly real as those which primitive men waged for the bodies of their women. If he did, then cowardice had killed shame as well as natural passion, for he answered at once:

"I will—if you wish it?"

His fawning consent fell on dead silence, but as he rose in his despicable weakness, the governor swung round with a roar.

"Sit down, sir! She goes to a man, at least. I will give her away myself!"

THE END.