

## THE INDIAN MOTHER.

BY GREGOR BURGESS.

The snow lay deep in the woods and on the inland streams, rendering the hunters' occupation doubly arduous. Daily roamed in search of food the indefatigable Nimrods; returning, however, at night with scarce sufficient for the single meal per day to which all were now reduced. Of this Wasesqueo and her son received invariably the least and worst portion; but as harsher grew their treatment of herself and boy, the more tenderly did the unhappy mother press to her breast her only child. His cheeks had now lost the bloom of health, appearing wan and thin. Seated on the brush of the camp with listless aspect and subdued mien, the poor fatherless boy looked certainly a fit object of compassion. The orphan, however, might as soon expect pity from the starving tiger or enraged elephant trampling his victim, as from Etap or his sons, who so far forgot the dignity of manhood as to tease and abuse on every possible occasion, a woman and child almost in the last stages of exhaustion. Escaping from the tormenters of herself and child, the troubled mother would hie away to the thick, silent woods, where, making a fire, she would solace herself recounting to her boy the hunting exploits of his dead father. How on the Shabootawan lake, when autumn had changed to yellow the forest leaves, he followed, for hours, in his swift canoe, the beautifully speckled, cunning coon until that mighty diver had been killed; or, when, after being absent all day, he would return at evening time, loaded with ducks and beavers that he had shot on the beautiful, placid lakes among the woods. But greatest of all 'twould be, when, after days of absence, he returned to their camp, proud and elated, handing to his wife the claw of a bear, joyful sign that a monarch of the woods was slain. Then would follow an account of how, whilst visiting his rabbit snares, he had

fallen upon the fresh track of the thievish lynx; that throwing down in the snow his load of dead rabbits he had chased over hill and plain, until by speed of foot he overtook the snare robber and struck him dead with his axe. Numerous were her stories also of the beautifully furred martins, minks and otters he had trapped; telling him, too, of times when the valuable silver-gray or black fox had been brought to their lodge; and, last but not least, that frequently on their hunting grounds in the Cabistachewin country, forty deer in one winter had fallen before his unerring aim. With such reminiscences did the poor mother recall past and happier days, endeavoring by them to while away the miserable hours of life. How soon, alas! they were destined to follow the departed hunter, let the gentle reader learn from this true tale. Reluctantly rising from her brushy seat, she would tell her son, "Ho! my little man, we must return to the camp, where again they are certain to abuse us; but never mind, if it's the will of the Great Spirit, we shall see the spring as well as they." Entering amid the evil looks and spiteful words of her near relations—among whom was her own father—she would hasten to their part of the camp, where, covering themselves with a tattered blanket, they soon forgot in heaven-sent sleep, the miseries of existence. Far on into that beautiful moonlight night, old Etap (her father) beat his deerskin covered drum and sang his conjuring songs, hoping thereby to propitiate the spirit whose peculiar province it is to give unto or withhold from the Indian, the reindeer. Next morning with throat parched, blood-shot eyes, and swollen lips, he communicated to his daughter, to an invalid son, called James, with his wife Numaby and their three children, that they must all leave the camp instantly and endeavor to