

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac Crane
Leslie Stockton Vatsyayana Verne
Burroughs Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Harte
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Hesse
London Descartes Cervantes Voltaire Cooke
Poe Aristotle Wells Shakespeare Irving
Hale James Hastings Richter Chambers Alcott
Bunner Shakespeare Richter Chambers Alcott
Doré Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
Swift Dante Pushkin Newton



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The Arrow-Maker A Drama in Three Acts

Mary Hunter Austin

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Mary Hunter Austin

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8472-1658-2

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THE ARROW-MAKER

A Drama in Three Acts

BY
MARY AUSTIN

Revised Edition

AMS PRESS
NEW YORK

Reprinted from the edition of 1915, Boston
First AMS EDITION published 1969
Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 70-90082

AMS PRESS, INC.
New York, N. Y. 10003

DEDICATED
IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO
H. C. H.
AS ONE WHO AMONG MANY PROTESTANTS
"MADE GOOD"

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The greatest difficulty to be met in the writing of an Indian play is the extensive misinformation about Indians. Any real aboriginal of my acquaintance resembles his prototype in the public mind about as much as he does the high-nosed, wooden sign of a tobacco store, the fact being that, among the fifty-eight linguistic groups of American aboriginals, customs, traits, and beliefs differ as greatly as among Slavs and Sicilians. Their very speech appears not to be derived from any common stock. All that they really have of likeness is an average condition of primitiveness: they have traveled just so far toward an understanding of the world they live in, and no farther. It is this general limitation of knowledge which makes, in spite of the multiplication of tribal customs, a common attitude of mind which alone affords a basis of interpretation.

But before attempting to realize the working of Indian psychology, you must first rid [Pg viii] yourself of the notion that there is any real difference between the tribes of men except the explanations. What determines man's behavior in the presence of fever, thunder, and the separations of death, is the nature of his guess at the causes of these things. The issues of life do not vary so much with the conditions of civilization as is popularly supposed.

Chiefest among the misconceptions of primitive life, which make difficult any dramatic presentation of it, is the notion that all human contacts are accompanied by the degree of emotional stress that obtains only in the most complex social organizations. We are always hearing, from the people farthest removed from them, of "great primitive passions," when in fact what distinguishes the passions of the tribesmen from our own is their greater liability to the pacific influences of nature, and their greater freedom from the stimulus of imagination. What among us makes for the immensity of emotion, is the great weight of accumulated emotional tradition stored up in literature and art, almost entirely wanting in the camps of the aboriginals. There the two greatest themes of modern drama, love and ambition, [Pg ix] are modified, the one by the more or less communal nature of tribal labor, the other by the plain fact that in

the simple, open-air life of the Indian the physical stress of sex is actually much less than in conditions called civilized.

When the critics are heard talking of "drama of great primitive passions," what they mean is great barbaric passions, passions far enough along in the process of socialization to be subject to the interactions of wealth, caste, and established religion, and still free from the obligation of politeness. But the life of the American Indian provides no such conditions, and, moreover, in the factor which makes conspicuously for the degree of complication called Plot, is notably wanting,—I mean in the factor of Privacy. Where all the functions of living are carried on in the presence of the community, or at the best behind the thin-walled, leafy huts, human relations become simplified to a degree difficult for our complexer habit to comprehend. The only really great passions—great, I mean, in the sense of being dramatically possible—are communal, and find their expression in the dance which is the normal vehicle of emotional stress. [Pg x]

In *The Arrow-Maker* the author, without dwelling too much on tribal peculiarities, has attempted the explication of this primitive attitude toward a human type common to all conditions of society. The particular mould in which the story is cast takes shape from the manner of aboriginal life in the Southwest, anywhere between the Klamath River and the Painted Desert; but it has been written in vain if the situation has not also worked itself out in terms of your own environment.

The Chisera is simply the Genius, one of those singular and powerful characters whom we are still, with all our learning, unable to account for without falling back on the primitive conception of gift as arising from direct communication with the gods. That she becomes a Medicine Woman is due to the circumstance of being born into a time which fails to discriminate very clearly as to just which of the inexplicable things lie within the control of her particular gift. That she accepts the interpretation of her preëminence which common opinion provides for her, does not alter the fact that she is no more or less than just the gifted woman, too much occupied with the use of her gift [Pg xi] to look well after herself, and more or less at the mercy of the tribe. What chiefly influences their attitude to-

ward her is worthy of note, being no less than the universal, unreasoned conviction that great gift belongs, not to the possessor of it, but to society at large. The whole question then becomes one of how the tribe shall work the Chisera to their best advantage.

How they did this, with what damage and success is to be read, but if to be read profitably, with its application in mind to the present social awakening to the waste, the enormous and stupid waste, of the gifts of women. To one fresh from the consideration of the roots of life as they lie close to the surface of primitive society, this obsession of the recent centuries, that the community can only be served by a gift for architecture, for administration, for healing, when it occurs in the person of a male, is only a trifle less ridiculous than that other social stupidity, namely, that a gift of mothering must not be exercised except in the event of a particular man being able, under certain restrictions, to afford the opportunity. There is perhaps no social movement going on at present so deep-rooted and dramatic as this [Pg xii] struggle of Femininity to recapture its right to serve, and still to serve with whatever powers and possessions it finds itself endowed. But a dramatic presentation of it is hardly possible outside of primitive conditions where no tradition intervenes to prevent society from accepting the logic of events.

Whatever more there may be in *The Arrow-Maker*, besides its Indian color, should lie in the discovery by the Chisera, to which the author subscribes, that it is also in conjunction with her normal relation for loving and bearing that the possessor of gifts finds the greatest increment of power. To such of these as have not discovered it for themselves, *The Arrow-Maker* is hopefully recommended. [Pg xiii]

NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The Arrow-Maker was first published as produced at The New Theatre, New York, in the spring of 1911. In that edition certain concessions were made to what was thought to be the demand for a drama of Indian life which should present the Indian more nearly as he is popularly conceived.

After four years the success of the published play as an authentic note on aboriginal life as well as a drama suitable for production in schools and colleges, seems to warrant its publication in the original form. As it now stands, the book not only conforms to the author's original conception of the drama, but to the conditions of the life it presents.

With the addition of notes and glossary it is hoped the present edition will meet every demand that can be made on an honest attempt to render in dramatic form a neglected phase of American life.

M. A. [Pg xiv]

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

In the order of their appearance

Choco	}	
Pamaquash	}	<i>Fighting men</i>
Tavwots	}	
Yavi		<i>A youth</i>
Seegooche		<i>The Chief's wife</i>
Tiawa		<i>A very old woman</i>
Wacoba		<i>Wife to Pamaquash</i>
The Chisera		<i>Medicine Woman of the Paiutes</i>
Bright Water		<i>The Chief's daughter</i>
White Flower	}	
Tuiyo	}	<i>Friends of Bright Water</i>
Pioke	}	
Simwa		<i>The Arrow-Maker</i>
Padahoon		<i>Rival to Simwa for leadership</i>
Rain Wind		<i>Chief of the Paiutes</i>
Haiwai		<i>A young matron</i>

THE ARROW-MAKER

ACT FIRST

Scene. — *The hut of the Chisera, in the foot-hills of the Sierras. It stands at the mouth of a steep, dark cañon, opening toward the valley of Saghara-wite. At the back rise high and barren cliffs where eagles nest; at the foot of the cliffs runs a stream, hidden by willow and buckthorn and toyon. The wickiup is built in the usual Paiute fashion, of long willows set about a circular pit, bent over to form a dome, thatched with reeds and grass. About the hut lie baskets and blankets, a stone metate, other household articles, all of the best quality; in front is a clear space overflowing with knee-deep many-colored bloom of the California spring. A little bank that runs from the wickiup to the toyon bushes is covered with white forget-me-nots. The hearth-fire between two stones is quite out, but the deerskin that screens the opening of the hut is caught up at one side, a sign that the [Pg 4] owner is not far from home, or expects to return soon.*

At first glance the scene appears devoid of life, but suddenly the call of a jay bird is heard faintly and far up the trail that leads to the right among the rocks. It is repeated nearer at hand, perfectly imitated but with a nuance that advises of human origin, and two or three half-naked Indians are seen to be making their way toward the bottom of the cañon, their movements so cunningly harmonized with the lines of the landscape as to render them nearly invisible. Choco and Pamaquash with two others come together at the end of the bank farthest from the Chisera's hut.

Choco

Who called?

Pamaquash

It came from farther up.

Choco

Yavi, I think.

Pamaquash

He must have seen something. [Pg 5]

Choco

By the Bear, if the Castacs have crossed our boundaries, there are some of them shall not recross it!

Pamaquash

Hush—the Chisera—she will hear you!

Choco

She is not in the hut. She went out toward the hills early this morning, and has not yet returned. Besides, if the Castacs have crossed, we cannot keep it from the women much longer.

Pamaquash

(Who has moved up to a better post of observation.) There is some one on the trail.

(The jay's call is heard and answered softly by Pamaquash.)

Choco

Yavi. But Tavwots is not with him. *(Yavi comes dropping from the cliffs.)* What have you seen?

Yavi

Smoke rising—by Deer Leap. Two long puffs and a short one.

(The news is received with sharp, excited murmurs.)
[Pg 6]

Pamaquash

More than a score—and with all our youths we cannot count so many.

Choco

And this business of war leader still unsettled— The Council must sit at once. Go, one of you, and tell Chief Rain Wind that Tavwots has signaled from Deer Leap that more than a score of Castacs are out against us.

Pamaquash

And tell the women to prepare a gift hastily for the Chisera. Who knows how soon we shall have need of her medicine.

(One of the Indians departs on this errand.)

Choco

Never so much need of it as when we have neglected our own part of the affair! Even before the Castacs began to fill up our springs and drive our deer, we knew that the Chief is too old for war; and now that the enemy has crossed our borders we are still leaderless.

Pamaquash

So we should not be if we had followed the [Pg 7] tribal use and given the leadership to years and experience. It is you young men who have unsettled judgment, with the to-do you have made about the Arrow-Maker.

Choco

I have nothing against years and experience, but when one has the gods as plainly on his side as Simwa—

Yavi

Never have I seen a man so increase in power and fortune—

Pamaquash

Huh—huh! I too have watched the growth of this Simwa. Also I have seen a gourd swelling with the rains, and I have not laid it to the gods in either case. But the Council must sit upon it. We must bring it to the Council.

Yavi

(Hotly.) Why should you credit the gods with Simwa's good fortune since he himself does not so claim it? For my part, I think with the Arrow-Maker, that it is better for a man to thrive by his own wits, rather than [Pg 8] by the making of medicine or the wisdom of the elders.

Pamaquash

(From above.) Tst—st, Tavwots!

(Tavwots comes down the cañon panting with speed. He drops exhausted on the bank, and Yavi gives him water between his palms from the creek.)

Choco

Have they crossed?

Tavwots

Between Deer Leap and Standing Rock—more than a score, though I think some of them were boys—but they had no women.

Choco

They mean fighting, then!

Yavi

Well, they can have it.

Tavwots

But they should not be let fatten on our deer before they come to it. Winnemucca, whom I left at Deer Leap, will bring us word [Pg 9] where they camp to-night. In the mean time there is much to do. (*Rising.*)

Choco

Much. No doubt Simwa will have something to suggest.

Tavwots

The Arrow-Maker is not yet war leader, my friend. I go to the Chief and the Council. (*He goes.*)

Choco

And yet, I think the Chief favors Simwa, else why should he prefer to put the election to lot rather than keep to the custom of the fathers?

Yavi

(*Going.*) There might be reasons to that, not touching the merits of the Arrow-Maker.

Pamaquash

Tavwots has met the women!

(*Sounds of the grief of the women in the direction of the camp.*)

Choco

They are coming to the Chisera. We [Pg 10] should not have let them find us here; they will neglect their business with her to beset us with questions.

(To them enter three women of the campody of Sa-gharawite, carrying perfect-patterned, bowl-shaped baskets, with gifts of food for the Chisera. Seegooche, the Chiefs wife, is old and full of dignity. Tiawa is old and sharp, but Wacoba is a comfortable, comely matron, who wears a blanket modestly yet to conceal charms not past their prime. Seegooche and Tiawa wear basket caps, but Wacoba has a bandeau of bright beads about her hair. They show signs of agitation, instantly subdued at sight of the men.)

Seegooche

Is this true what Tavwots has told us, that the Castacs are upon us?

Choco

No nearer than Pahrump. Not so near by the time we have done with them. What gifts have you?

Tiawa

The best the camp affords. Think you we [Pg 11] would stint when the smoke of the Castacs goes up within our borders?

Wacoba

Where is she?

Choco

Abroad in the hills gathering roots and herbs for to-night's medicine. Wait for her. — We must go look to our fighting gear.

(He goes out in the direction of the campody.)

Pamaquash

(To Wacoba.) My bow case, is it finished?

Wacoba

And the bow inside it. See that you come not back to me nor to your young son until the bowstring is frayed asunder.

Pamaquash

If you do your work with the Chisera as well as we with Castac, you shall not need to question our bowstrings. (*Going.*)

Seegooche

Leave us to deal—though if she cannot [Pg 12] help us in this matter, I do not know where we shall turn.

Tiawa

Never have I asked help of her, and been disappointed.

Wacoba

(*Gathering flowers.*) Aye, but that was mere women's matters, weevil in the pine nuts, a love-charm or a colicky child. *This is war!*

Seegooche

(*Still peering about.*) As if that were not a woman's affair also!

Tiawa

You may well say that! It was in our last quarrel with Castac I lost the only man-child I ever had, dead before he was born. When the women showed me his face, it was all puckered with the bitterness of that defeat. You may well say a woman's matter!

Seegooche

That was the year my husband was first made Chief, and we covered defeat with victory, as we shall again. It was Tinnemaha, [Pg

13] the father of the Chisera, went before the gods for us, I remember.

Tiawa

Well for us that he taught her his strong medicine. Not a fighting man from Tecuya to Tehachappi but trusts in her.

(Goes to the creek and dips up water to drink in her basket cap.)

Wacoba

(Tentatively.) It is believed by some that she makes medicine for Simwa, the Arrow-Maker, and that is why his arrows are so well feathered and fly so swiftly to the mark.

Seegooche

Simwa! Why, he scoffs at charms and speaks lightly even of the gods.

Tiawa

(Giving the others to drink from her cap.) Aye; Simwa puts not faith in anybody but Simwa.

Seegooche

And with good reason, for he is the most skillful of the tribesmen. He has made all [Pg 14] the arrows for the fighting men. Do you think they will make him war leader?

Wacoba

(Ornamenting the basket she has brought with a wreath of flowers, which she plucks.) Padahoon will never agree to it.

Tiawa

But if Simwa is the better man?