STANDARD LITERATURE SERIES

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS

BY

J. FENIMORE COOPER

CONDENSED FOR USE IN SCHOOLS
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATORY NOTES

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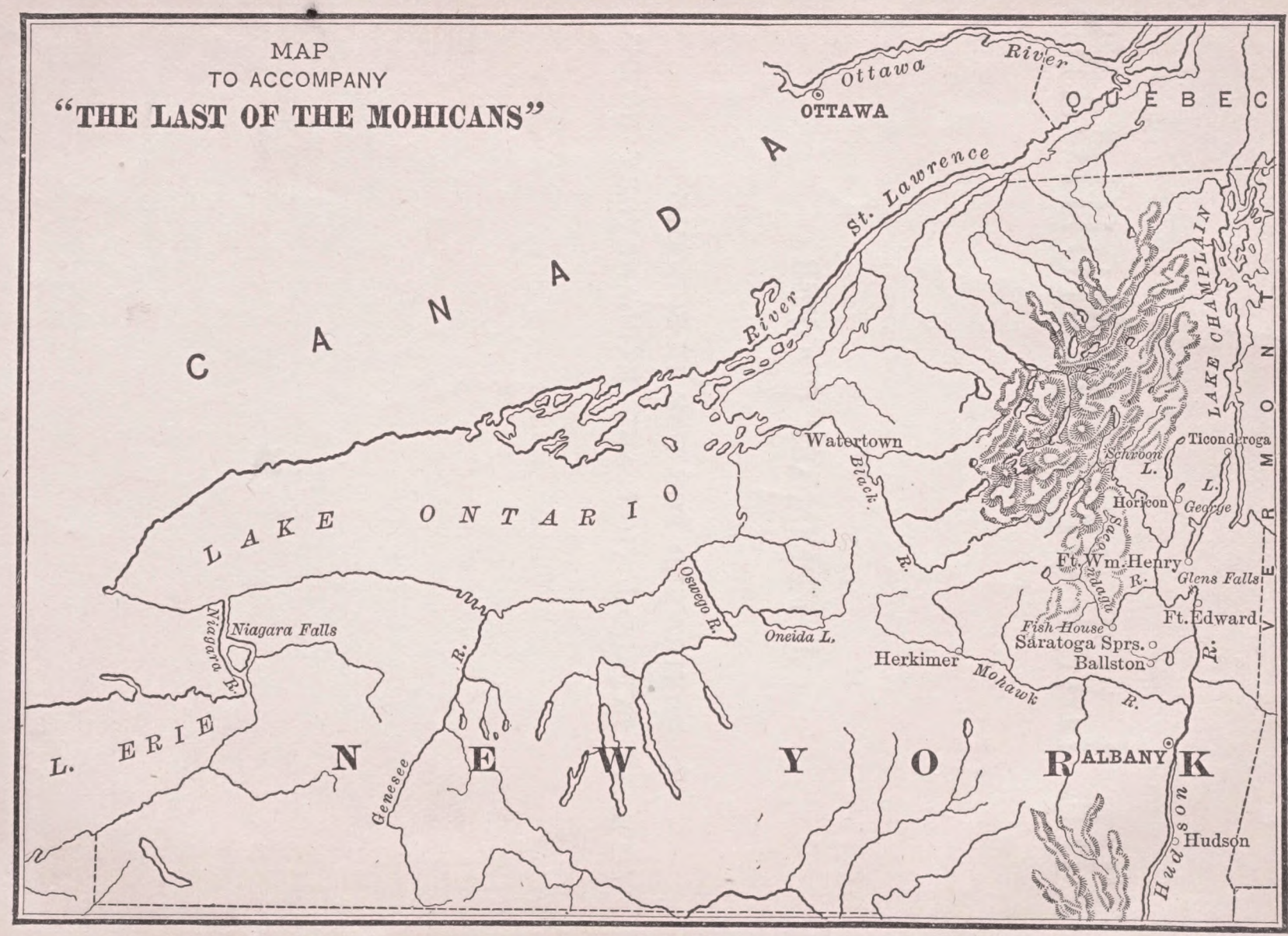

INTRODUCTION.

"The Last of the Mohicans" is generally regarded as the best of Cooper's novels. It is certainly one of the most popular. The principal hero is a young Indian chief, Uncas, son of Chingachgook, of the tribe of the Mohicans, or Mohegans, a kindred tribe to the Lenni Lenape, or Delawares. In both father and son, as they figure in the story, we have a good delineation of the attractive side of Indian character, while a strong type of the reverse is presented to us in the cunning and treacherous Magua. Of the other persons introduced, the most interesting, perhaps, is Hawkeye, the scout, whom we have read of under a different name in another of the 'Leatherstocking Tales' ("The Deerslayer"—Standard Literature Series, No. 8). A further charm is added to the book in the heroism exhibited by the two young ladies—Cora and Alice—in all the terrible scenes through which they are made to pass, and the humorous element is well represented in the oddities and peculiarities of Gamut, the singing master. The scene of the story is laid in the district of the Upper Hudson and Lake George, New York State, and the period is the third year (1757) of the French and Indian War. (See Historical Sketch below.)

THE INDIANS.

No one knows where the Indians came from. It is generally believed that their ancestors crossed from Asia, by way of Bering Strait, a great many centuries ago, and, moving southward, gradually settled North and South America.

They were divided into many tribes, each governed by a chief. Usually the chief was elected by the warriors of his tribe, but in a few tribes the office descended from father to son. A careful study of the language of the Indians proves that they belonged to fifty-eight distinct families. The tribes along the Atlantic Coast, from Labrador to Pamlico Sound, all belonged to the Algonquian family. They included the Massachusets, the Narragansets, the Pequots, the Mohegans, the Delawares, the Pottawotomis, and the Powhatans. Massasoit, King Philip, Canonicus, and Powhatan were Algonquins. Other tribes of the Algonquins extended across Canada and into the Mississippi valley as far

south as the mouth of the Ohio. They included the Shawnees, the Miamis, the Illinois, and other tribes. Tecumseh was a chief of the Shawnees of the Algonquian family. On both sides of the St. Lawrence River and lakes Erie and Ontario lived the tribes belonging to another family called the Iroquois or Hurons. Their lands extended southward through Pennsylvania to Chesapeake Bay, and they were entirely surrounded by Algonquian tribes. The Nottoways of Virginia, the Tuscaroras of North Carolina, and the Cherokees, a very powerful tribe occupying the rich valleys of the Appalachian Mountains, from James River southeast to the Coosa and Chattahoochee rivers, also belonged to the Iroquois family. The Cherokees did not know this fact, but it has been clearly proven by a study of the language of the two tribes.

The tribes between the Savannah River and the Mississippi belonged to the Muscogean, or Mobilian family. Those west of the Mississippi were Sioux, Caddoes, and Shoshones.

Frequently a tribe wandered away from the family and settled among strangers. An instance of this is found in the Nottoway and Tuscarora tribes, who wandered away from the main body of the Iroquois and settled among the Algonquins on the Nottoway and Cape Fear rivers.

Boundary lines between the different tribes were not definitely fixed. Tribes of the same linguistic family were usually entirely independent of each other. Two notable exceptions to this are found. Among the Muscogeans a number of tribes were united in the Creek Confederation. The Iroquois were united by the famous league of the Five Nations. The tribes constituting the Five Nations were the Mohawks, Oneidas, Senecas, Cayugas, and Onondagas. Early in the eighteenth century the Tuscaroras of the South united with them, forming the Six Nations. A perfect union existed among these tribes, and their method of government might well serve, in some respects, as a model for civilized people. They never numbered all told more than fifteen thousand people, and their largest fighting force was two thousand five hundred. Yet so splendid was their organization that they virtually conquered the Algonquian tribes, and some historians believe that if the settlement of our country had taken place a century later these "Romans of the New World" would have brought all the tribes north of the Gulf of Mexico under their rule.

The first approach to a census of the Five Nations was taken in 1660, when they numbered about eleven thousand; to-day they are more than fifteen thousand in number, and the tribes are widely scattered. Some live upon the reservation set apart for them in the State of New York, some in Canada, and others beyond the Mississippi.

Nearly all of the first settlers of our country were so dishonest and

cruel toward the Indians that the Indians became bitter enemies. They went upon the war path, burned cabins, tomahawked men, women, and children, or carried them off into a dreadful captivity.

William Penn, who settled Pennsylvania, called the chiefs together and paid them for the land. They saw that the Quakers were honest, and the treaty of peace which they made with "Father Penn" was not broken for more than half a century. The Indians with whom this famous treaty was made were the Leni-Lenape, or Delawares.

Naturally the Indians became involved in the early colonial wars, sometimes fighting on the side of the French and sometimes on that of the English, for those two great nations were jealous rivals in the New World. King William's War lasted from 1689 to 1697. The Indians of Canada and Maine fought for the French, while the Iroquois helped the English. Many fearful outrages were committed by the red men.

When Queen Anne's War broke out in 1702, the Iroquois remained neutral, because of a treaty made some time before with the French. The other savages ravaged the New England frontier until 1713, when the war came to an end.

The Iroquois were broken up and scattered by the French and Indian War and afterwards by the Revolution. Generally they fought on the side of the English against the French. They were divided during the Revolution, when the Mohawks, Senecas, Cayugas, and Onondagas fought for the English, while the Oneidas and Tuscaroras helped the Americans. In 1784 the Mohawks removed to Upper Canada. In the war of 1812, the Senecas arrayed themselves on the side of the Americans, though a part of the tribe in Ohio joined the English. This band removed to Indian Territory in 1831, but the rest of the tribe remained in New York. The Cayugas were so ferocious that General Sullivan destroyed their villages in 1779, and the British destroyed the villages of the Oneidas on account of the valuable aid they gave us. For this loss our government made them compensation in 1794. In 1785 and 1788, this tribe ceded their lands to the State of New York. Later some of them went to Canada, while a large number in 1821 acquired lands on Green Bay, Wisconsin. The Onondagas in 1788 ceded all their territory to New York, with the exception of a small tract which they still hold.

The Indians were very fierce and merciless in war. One of their peculiar weapons was the tomahawk. This was a kind of a hatchet which, as made by the natives, had a head of stone, attached by thongs to the end of the shaft, but in later times steel heads, supplied by white traders, came into use. The head of the tomahawk was often hollowed out to suit the purpose of a smoking-pipe, the mouth-piece being in

the end of the shaft. In war the Indians used the tomahawk not only in hand-to-hand fighting, but to throw at the enemy, and they did this so skilfully that very often the sharp edge first struck the person aimed at. The Indians also fought with bows and arrows, as well as, in later times, with firearms, and they had knives, which they used in the barbarous practice of scalping. When they killed or captured an enemy they usually cut off his scalp—the skin and hair of the top of the skull—and carried it away as a trophy of victory, and the warrior's bravery and success on the war-path were judged, among his own people, chiefly by the number of scalps he could show.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

For a long time England and France claimed the same territory in America. England, basing her claim on the explorations of John and Sebastian Cabot in 1497 and 1498, regarded the entire North American continent as her own, and English colonies were established along nearly the whole Atlantic coast from Maine to Florida. The claim of France was based on the discoveries and explorations of Verrazzani, Cartier, Champlain, La Salle, and others, and the French were the first European colonizers of the valley of the St. Lawrence. Later they proceeded west and south—along the great lakes and down the Mississippi—establishing settlements and building forts. It was inevitable that in the course of time they should come in conflict with the English frontiersmen advancing west.

In 1749 the Ohio Company, formed of London and Virginia traders, obtained from King George II. a grant of land of over half a million acres, bordering the Ohio, and they sent out an expedition to explore the territory. The French, alarmed at this, began to build forts along the Alleghany River. Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia, hearing of these operations, sent George Washington, then a young man, with a letter to the French general stationed at Lake Erie, warning him against intruding further on English territory. The warning was disregarded, and in 1754 a force of French troops appeared at the junction of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers, drove off the English settlers, and erected there a fort which they called Fort Duquesne. To recover this important post an expedition of two British regiments of regulars and a few companies of colonial troops set out under General Braddock, with George Washington as one of his staff. Braddock knew nothing of Indian fighting, and refused to follow Washington's advice. The soldiers marched into an ambush; the army was cut to pieces ; more

than seven hundred were killed, including Braddock, and total destruction was averted only by the skill and experience of the young Virginian.

Soon after these events war was formally declared between England and France. It is known in American history as the French and Indian War. On the New York frontier the English cause had been sustained by Sir William Johnson. This general defeated the French after a bloody struggle on the shore of Lake George in September, 1755. He then built Fort William Henry at the south end of that lake to defend the northern approaches to the Hudson River. The French built Fort Ticonderoga at the northern end of the lake. Fort Edward on the Hudson had been built in August by New England troops.

In 1756 the French, under the Marquis de Montcalm, gained control of Lake Ontario, and in 1757 they appeared before Fort William Henry. This post was then held for the English by Colonel Monro (spelled Munro by Cooper in the story) with less than five hundred men, and seventeen hundred additional troops occupying an encampment in the vicinity. Montcalm, with upwards of six thousand French and a great number of Iroquois Indians (who in this struggle took the side of France), laid siege to the fort. Monro sent for reinforcements to General Webb, then commanding in the colony of New York, and stationed at Fort Edward, fourteen miles distant, with four thousand British regulars. Webb returned an answer, advising Monro to capitulate on the best terms he could get. Nevertheless the brave colonel defended his post as long as his ammunition lasted, and then he was obliged to surrender, the French general granting honorable terms and promising a safe escort to Fort Edward. On August 9th Monro and his small band left the fort, but no sooner were they outside the walls than they were ferociously attacked by the Indians. Numbers of the unfortunate people were tomahawked, others carried off as prisoners, and the remainder left to make their way to Fort Edward as best they could.

But the following year the tide of victory turned in favor of the English. Louisburg, Nova Scotia, was taken from the French, and Fort Duquesne was recaptured. The name of the latter was changed to Fort Pitt (afterwards Pittsburg), in honor of the famous William Pitt, then the foremost statesman of England (later known as Earl of Chatham). The final and crowning victory was the capture of Quebec in 1759 by the English under General Wolfe, who was himself killed in the battle, the French general Montcalm also meeting his death on the field. In 1760 Montreal was surrendered to the English, and Canada became a British possession.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER was born in Burlington, N. J., in 1789—the year in which George Washington was inaugurated first President of the United States. His boyhood was passed at Cooperstown, N. Y., a village founded by his father. After completing his studies at Yale, young Cooper entered the American navy as midshipman, subsequently obtaining the rank of lieutenant. He also made some voyages in a merchant vessel, and in this service acquired that knowledge of sea life of which he made good use in many of his novels.

Cooper has been styled the Walter Scott of America. It is hardly an exaggeration to rank him so high, for he has done for America what Scott did for Scotland : he has illustrated and popularized much of its history and many of its olden traditions in stories that will have appreciative readers so long as the English language is spoken. As a recent writer observes, he "wrote for men and women as well as for boys and girls," and the best of his stories are "purely American, native born, and native bred."

Another distinction must be assigned to Cooper, and it is a mark of high merit : he was the first American novelist who became widely known and esteemed in foreign countries. "The Spy" appeared in 1821 —a time when American literature was in its infancy. Though but the second of the author's works, it immediately became popular on both sides of the Atlantic. It was translated into several European languages, and may, we are told, be read even in the Persian tongue.

Other stories quickly followed. "The Pioneers" was published in 1823. This and "The Deerslayer," "The Pathfinder," "The Last of the Mohicans," and "The Prairie" belong to the series known as the Leatherstocking Tales, so called from *Leatherstocking*, the sobriquet of Natty Bumppo, the most celebrated of the characters introduced. These deal with life and adventure among the Indians, in description of which Cooper surpassed all other writers. The sea tales include "The Pilot," published in 1823 ; "The Red Rover," in 1828; "The Water-Witch," in 1830 ; "The Two Admirals," in 1842, and "The Sea Lions," in 1849. Altogether, Cooper wrote thirty-three novels, many of them universally recognized as entitled to first rank in that field of literature.

In 1826 Cooper visited Europe, and remained for several years, continuing his literary work and producing, in addition to novels, some volumes of sketches of European society. He returned to America in 1833. His last book, "The Ways of the Hour," which deals with abuses of trial by jury, was published in 1850. He died on the 14th of September the following year at Cooperstown.

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS.

CHAPTER I.

THE HOLY LAKE.

It was a feature peculiar to the colonial wars of North America, that the toils and dangers of the wilderness were to be encountered before the adverse hosts could meet. A wide boundary of forests severed the possessions of the hostile provinces of France and England. The hardy colonist and the trained European who fought at his side, frequently expended months in struggling against the rapids of the streams, or in effecting the rugged passes of the mountains, in quest of an opportunity to exhibit their courage in a more martial conflict.

Perhaps no district of the intermediate frontiers can furnish a livelier picture of the fierceness of the savage warfare of those periods than the country which lies between the head waters of the Hudson and the adjacent lakes. The facilities which Nature had there offered to the march of the combatants were too obvious to be neglected. The lengthened sheet of the Champlain stretched from the frontiers of Canada, deep within the borders of the neighboring province of New York, forming a natural passage across half the distance that the French were compelled to master in order to strike their enemies. Near its southern termination, it received the contributions of another lake, whose waters were so limpid as to have been exclusively selected by the Jesuit missionaries to perform the typical purification of baptism, and to obtain for it the title of Lake "du Saint Sacrement."[1] The less zeal-

[1] (*pron.* dū sang sakr-mŏng) French for *of the Holy Sacrament.*

ous English thought they conferred a sufficient honor on its unsullied fountains when they bestowed the name of their reigning prince, the second of the house of Hanover.[1]

Winding its way among countless islands, and embedded in mountains, the "holy lake" extended a dozen leagues still further to the south. With the high plain that there interposed itself to the further passage of the water, commenced a portage[2] of as many miles, which conducted the adventurer to the banks of the Hudson at a point where, with the usual obstructions of the rapids or rifts, the river became navigable to the tide.

While the restless enterprise of the French even attempted the distant and difficult gorges of the Alleghany,[3] it may be easily imagined that their proverbial acuteness would not overlook the natural advantages of the district we have described. It became the bloody arena in which most of the battles for the mastery of the colonies were contested.

CHAPTER II.

UNWELCOME TIDINGS.

In this scene of strife and bloodshed the incidents we shall attempt to relate occurred, during the third year of the war which England and France last waged for the possession of a country that neither was destined to retain.

The imbecility of her military leaders abroad, and the want of energy in her councils at home, had lowered the character of Great Britain from the proud elevation in which it had been placed by her former warriors and statesmen. In this abasement the colonists, though innocent of her imbecility,

[1] King George II., after whom the lake referred to was called Lake George. He was grandson of the Princess Sophia of Hanover, hence the title of the house or family.

[2] narrow tract of land over which goods are carried from one river, canal, or other waterway to another.

[3] mountains in Pennsylvania.

were participators. They had recently seen a chosen army from that country, which they had blindly believed invincible —an army led by a chief [1] who had been selected from a crowd of trained warriors for his rare military endowments—disgracefully routed by a handful of French and Indians, and only saved from annihilation by the coolness and spirit of a Virginian boy,[2] whose riper fame has since diffused itself, with the steady influence of moral truth, to the uttermost confines of Christendom. A wide frontier had been laid naked by this unexpected disaster, and more substantial evils were preceded by a thousand fanciful and imaginary dangers. The alarmed colonists believed that the yells of the savages mingled with every fitful gust of wind that issued from the interminable forests of the West. The terrific character of their merciless enemies increased immeasurably the natural horrors of warfare.

When, therefore, intelligence was received at the fort,[3] which covered the southern termination of the portage between the Hudson and the lakes, that Montcalm [4] had been seen moving up the Champlain, with an army "numerous as the leaves on the trees," its truth was admitted with more of the craven reluctance of fear than with the stern joy that a warrior should feel, in finding an enemy within reach of his blow. The news had been brought, toward the decline of a day in midsummer, by an Indian runner, who also bore an urgent request from Munro, the commander of a work [5] on the shore of the "holy lake," for a speedy and powerful re-enforcement. It has already been mentioned that the distance between these two posts was less than five leagues. The rude path, which originally formed their line of communication, had been widened for the passage of wagons, so that the distance which had been traveled by the son of the forest in two hours, might easily be effected by a detachment of troops between the rising and setting of a summer sun.

[1] General Braddock.
[2] George Washington.
[3] Fort Edward.
[4] French general. See Introduction.
[5] Fort William Henry.

The loyal servants of the British crown had given to one of these forest fastnesses the name of William Henry, and to the other that of Fort Edward, calling each after a favorite prince of the reigning family. The veteran Scotchman just named[1] held the first, with a regiment of regulars and a few provincials, a force really by far too small to make head against the formidable power that Montcalm was leading to the foot of his earthen mounds. At the latter,[2] however, lay General Webb, who commanded the armies of the king in the northern provinces, with a body of more than five thousand men. By uniting the several detachments of his command, this officer might have arrayed nearly double that number of combatants against the enterprising Frenchman, who had ventured so far from his re-enforcements with an army but little superior in numbers. But under the influence of their degraded fortunes both officers and men appeared better disposed to await the approach of their antagonists than to resist the progress of their march.

After the first surprise of the intelligence had a little abated, a rumor was spread through the camp,[2] that a detachment of fifteen hundred men was to depart with the dawn for William Henry. That which at first was only rumor soon became certainty, as orders passed from the quarters of the commander-in-chief to the several corps he had selected for this service, to prepare for their speedy departure. An hour or two of hurried footsteps and anxious faces succeeded; then darkness drew his veil around the secluded spot, and a silence soon pervaded the camp as deep as that of the forest by which it was environed.

According to the orders of the preceding night, the heavy sleep of the army was broken by the rolling of the warning drums just as day began to draw the shaggy outlines of some tall pines of the vicinity on the opening brightness of a soft and cloudless eastern sky. In an instant the whole camp was

[1] General Munro.

[2] *i.e.*, Fort Edward.

in motion; the meanest soldier arousing from his lair to witness the departure of his comrades. The chosen band left the encampment in the gray light of the morning, and soon afterwards the sounds of the retiring column had ceased to be borne on the breeze to the listeners.

But there still remained the signs of another departure, before a log-cabin of unusual size and accommodation, in front of which those sentinels paced their rounds who were known to guard the person of the English general. At this spot were gathered some half dozen horses, caparisoned in a manner which showed that two at least were destined to bear the persons of females, of a rank that it was not usual to meet so far in the wilds of the country. A third wore the trappings and arms of an officer of the staff; while the rest, from the plainness of the housings, and the traveling-mails with which they were encumbered, were evidently fitted for the reception of as many menials, who were, seemingly, already awaiting the pleasure of those they served. At a respectful distance from this unusual show were gathered divers groups of curious idlers; some admiring the blood and bone of the high-mettled military charger, and others gazing at the preparations with the dull wonder of vulgar curiosity. There was one man, however, who, by his countenance and actions, formed a marked exception to those who composed the latter class of spectators, being neither idle, nor seemingly very ignorant.

The person of this individual was to the last degree ungainly, without being in any particular manner deformed. He had all the bones and joints of other men, without any of their proportions. Erect, his stature surpassed that of his fellows; though seated, he appeared reduced within the ordinary limits of the race. His head was large; his shoulders narrow; his arms long and dangling; while his hands were small, if not delicate. His legs and thighs were of extraordinary length; and his knees would have been considered tre-

mendous had they not been outdone by the broader foundations on which this false superstructure of blended human orders was so profanely reared. A sky-blue coat, with short and broad skirts and low cape, exposed a long, thin neck. His nether garment was of yellow nankeen,[1] closely fitted to the shape, and tied at his bunches of knees by large knots of white ribbon, a good deal sullied by use. Clouded cotton stockings and shoes, on one of the latter of which was a plated spur, completed the costume. From beneath the flap of an enormous pocket of a soiled vest of embossed silk projected an instrument which, from being seen in such martial company, might have been easily mistaken for some mischievous and unknown implement of war. Small as it was, this uncommon engine had excited the curiosity of most of the Europeans in the camp, though several of the provincials were seen to handle it, not only without fear, but with the utmost familiarity. A large, civil cocked hat, like those worn by clergymen within the last thirty years, surmounted the whole, furnishing dignity to a good-natured and somewhat vacant countenance, that apparently needed such artificial aid to support the gravity of some high and extraordinary trust.

While the common herd stood aloof, in deference to the quarters of Webb, the figure we have described stalked into the center of the domestics, freely expressing his censures or commendations on the merits of the horses, as by chance they displeased or satisfied his judgment. His eyes soon fell on the still, upright, and rigid form of the Indian runner, who had borne to the camp the unwelcome tidings of the preceding evening. Although in a state of perfect repose, there was a sullen fierceness mingled with the quiet of the savage that was likely to arrest the attention of more experienced eyes than those which now scanned him, in unconcealed amazement. The native bore both the tomahawk and knife of his tribe; and yet his appearance was not altogether that of a

[1] species of cotton cloth originally brought from Nankin, China.

warrior. On the contrary, there was an air of neglect about his person, like that which might have proceeded from great and recent exertion, which he had not yet found leisure to repair. The colors of the war-paint had blended in wild confusion about his fierce countenance, and rendered his swarthy lineaments more savage than if art had attempted an effect, which had been thus produced by chance. His eye, alone, which glistened like a fiery star amid lowering clouds, was to be seen in its state of native wildness. For a single instant, his searching and yet wary glance met the wondering look of the other, and then changing its direction, partly in cunning, and partly in disdain, it remained fixed, as if penetrating the distant air.

It is impossible to say what unlooked-for remark this short and silent communication, between two such singular men, might have elicited from the white man, had not his active curiosity been again drawn to other objects.

CHAPTER III.

CORA AND ALICE.

A GENERAL movement among the domestics, and a low sound of gentle voices, announced the approach of those whose presence alone was wanted to enable the cavalcade to move. A young man, in the dress of an officer, conducted to their steeds two females, who, as it was apparent by their dresses, were prepared to encounter the fatigues of a journey in the woods. One, and she was the most juvenile in her appearance, though both were young, permitted glimpses of her dazzling complexion, fair golden hair, and bright-blue eyes, to be caught, as she artlessly suffered the morning air to blow aside the green veil which descended low from her beaver. The other concealed her charms with a care that seemed better fitted to the experience of four or five additional years.

No sooner were these females seated than their attendant sprung lightly into the saddle of his war-horse, when the whole three bowed to Webb, who, in courtesy, awaited their parting on the threshold of his cabin, and, turning their horses' heads, they proceeded at a slow amble, followed by their train toward the northern entrance of the encampment. As they traversed that short distance, not a voice was heard among them; but a slight exclamation proceeded from the younger of the females as the Indian runner glided by her, unexpectedly, and led the way along the military road in her front. Though this sudden and startling movement of the Indian produced no sound from the other, in the surprise, her veil was allowed to open its folds, and betrayed an indescribable look of pity, admiration, and horror, as her dark eye followed the easy motions of the savage. The tresses of this lady were shining and black, like the plumage of the raven. Her complexion was not brown, but it rather appeared charged with the color of the rich blood that seemed ready to burst its bounds. She smiled, as if in pity at her own momentary forgetfulness, when, replacing the veil, she bowed her face, and rode in silence, like one whose thoughts were abstracted from the scene around her.

While one of the lovely beings we have presented to the reader was thus lost in thought, the other inquired of the youth who rode by her side:

"Are such specters frequent in the woods, Heyward; or is this sight an especial entertainment ordered on our behalf? If the latter, gratitude must close our mouths; but if the former, both Cora and I shall have need to draw largely on that stock of hereditary courage which we boast, even before we are made to encounter the redoubtable Montcalm."

"Yon Indian is a 'runner' of the army; and, after the fashion of his people, he may be accounted a hero," returned the officer. "He has volunteered to guide us to the lake, by a path but little known, sooner than if we followed the tardy

movements of the column; and, by consequence, more agreeably."

"I like him not," said the lady, shuddering. "You know him, Duncan, or you would not trust yourself so freely to his keeping."

"Say, rather, Alice, that I would not trust you. I do know him, or he would not have my confidence. He is said to be a Canadian, too; and yet he served with our friends the Mohawks, who, as you know, are one of the six allied nations.[1] He was brought among us, as I have heard, by some strange accident in which your father was interested, and in which the savage was rigidly dealt by—but I forget the idle tale; it is enough that he is now our friend. But he stops; the private path by which we are to journey is doubtless at hand."

The conjecture of Major Heyward was true. When they reached the spot where the Indian stood pointing into the thicket that fringed the military road, a narrow path became visible.

"Here lies our way," said the young man in a low voice. "Manifest no distrust, or you may invite the danger you appear to apprehend."

"Cora, what think you?" asked the reluctant fair one. "If we journey with the troops, though we may find their presence irksome, shall we not feel better assurance of our safety?"

"Being little accustomed to the practices of the savages, Alice, you mistake the place of real danger," said Heyward. "If enemies have reached the portage at all, they will surely be found skirting the column, where scalps abound the most.[2] The route of the detachment is known, while ours, having been determined within the hour, must still be secret."

"Should we distrust the man because his manners are not our manners, and that his skin is dark?" coldly answered Cora.

Alice hesitated no longer; but giving her horse a cut of the

[1] *i.e.*, of Indians.

[2] See Introduction, about Indian warfare.

whip, she was the first to dash aside the slight branches of the bushes, and to follow the runner along the dark pathway. The young man regarded the last speaker in open admiration, and even permitted her fairer companion to proceed unattended, while he opened the way for the passage of her who had been called Cora. It would seem that the domestics had been previously instructed; for, instead of penetrating the thicket, they followed the route of the column; a measure which Heyward stated had been dictated by the sagacity of their guide, in order to diminish the marks of their trail, if, haply, the Canadian savages should be lurking so far in advance of their army. For many minutes the intricacy of the route admitted of no further dialogue; after which they emerged from the broad border of underbrush which grew along the line of the highway, and entered under the high but dark branches of the forest.

CHAPTER IV.

A DISCIPLE OF APOLLO.

THE youth now turned to speak to the dark-eyed Cora, when the distant sounds of horses' hoofs clattering over the roots of the broken way in his rear, caused him to check his charger, and the party came to a halt to obtain an explanation of the interruption.

In a few moments the person of the ungainly man described in a preceding chapter came into view, with as much rapidity as he could excite his meager beast to endure without coming to an open rupture. The frown which had gathered around the handsome and manly brow of Heyward, gradually relaxed, and his lips curled into a slight smile, as he regarded the stranger. Alice made no very powerful effort to control her merriment; and even the dark, thoughtful eye of Cora lighted with humor.

"Seek you any here?" demanded Heyward, when the other had arrived sufficiently nigh to abate his speed; "I trust you are no messenger of evil tidings."

"Even so," replied the stranger, "I hear you are riding to William Henry; as I am journeying thitherward myself, I concluded good company would seem consistent to the wishes of both parties."

"You appear to possess the privilege of a casting vote," returned Heyward; "we are three, while you have consulted no one but yourself."

"Even so. The first point to be obtained is to know one's own mind. Once sure of that, and where women are concerned it is not easy, the next is, to act up to the decision. I have endeavored to do both, and here I am."

"If you journey to the lake, you have mistaken your route," said Heyward, haughtily; "the highway thither is at least half a mile behind you."

"Even so," returned the stranger; "I have tarried at 'Edward' a week, and I should be dumb not to have inquired the road I was to journey. It is not prudent for any one of my profession to be too familiar with those he has to instruct; for which reason I follow not the line of the army: besides which, I conclude that a gentleman of your character has the best judgment in matters of wayfaring; I have therefore decided to join company, in order that the ride may be made agreeable, and partake of social communion."

"A most arbitrary, if not a hasty decision!" exclaimed Heyward. "But you speak of instruction, and of a profession; are you an adjunct to the provincial corps, as a master of the noble science of defense and offense?"

"Of offense, I hope there is none, to either party," answered the stranger; "of defense, I make none—by God's good mercy, having committed no palpable sin since last entreating His pardoning grace. I lay claim to no higher gift

than a small insight into the glorious art of petitioning and thanksgiving, as practiced in psalmody."

"The man is, most manifestly, a disciple of Apollo,"[1] cried the amused Alice, "and I take him under my own especial protection. I am glad to encounter thee, friend," continued the maiden, waving her hand to the stranger to proceed, as she urged her horse to renew its amble. "Partial relatives have almost persuaded me that I am not entirely worthless in a duet myself; and we may enliven our wayfaring by indulging in our favorite pursuit. You have limited your efforts to sacred song?"

"Even so. As the psalms of David exceed all other language, so does the psalmody that has been fitted to them by the divines and sages of the land surpass all vain poetry. Happily, I may say that I utter nothing but the thoughts and the wishes of the King of Israel himself."

Then, without circumlocution or apology, placing the unknown engine, already described, to his mouth, from which he drew a high, shrill sound, he commenced singing the following words, in full, sweet, and melodious tones:

"How good it is, O see,
And how it pleaseth well,
Together, e'en in unity,
For brethren so to dwell."[2]

Such an innovation on the silence of the forest could not fail to enlist the ears of those who journeyed at so short a distance in advance. The Indian muttered a few words in broken English to Heyward, who, in his turn, spoke to the stranger, at once interrupting, and, for the time, closing his musical efforts.

"Though we are not in danger, common prudence would teach us to journey through this wilderness in as quiet a manner as possible. You will, then, pardon me, Alice, should I

[1] the god of music, according to ancient mythology. [2] Psalm cxxxiii.

diminish your enjoyments, by requesting this gentleman to postpone his chant until a safer opportunity."

He paused and turned his head toward a thicket, and then bent his eyes suspiciously on their guide, who continued his steady pace in undisturbed gravity. The young man smiled to himself, for he believed he had mistaken some shining berry of the woods for the glistening eyeballs of a prowling savage, and he rode forward, continuing the conversation which had been interrupted by the passing thought.

Major Heyward was mistaken only in suffering his youthful and generous pride to suppress his active watchfulness. The cavalcade had not long passed, before the branches of the bushes that formed the thicket were cautiously moved asunder, and a human visage, as fiercely wild as savage art and unbridled passions could make it, peered out on the retiring footsteps of the travelers. A gleam of exultation shot across the darkly painted lineaments of the inhabitant of the forest, as he traced the route of his intended victims, who rode unconsciously onward.

CHAPTER V.

HAWKEYE AND CHINGACHGOOK.

Leaving Heyward and his companions to penetrate still deeper into the forest, we use an author's privilege and shift the scene a few miles to the westward of the place where we have last seen them. On that day two men were lingering on the banks of a small but rapid stream, within an hour's journey of the encampment of Webb, like those who awaited the appearance of an absent person, or the approach of some expected event. One of these loiterers showed the red skin and wild accouterments of a native of the woods; the other exhibited, through the mask of his rude and nearly savage equipments, the brighter, though sunburned and long faded complexion of one who might claim descent from a European

parentage. The former was seated on the end of a mossy log, in a posture that permitted him to heighten the effect of his earnest language by the calm but expressive gestures of an Indian engaged in debate. His body, which was nearly naked, presented a terrific emblem of death, drawn in colors of white and black. His closely shaved head, on which no other hair than the well-known scalping-tuft was preserved, was without ornament of any kind, with the exception of a solitary eagle's plume, that crossed his crown, and depended over the left shoulder. A tomahawk and scalping-knife were in his girdle; while a short military rifle, of that sort with which the policy of the whites armed their savage allies, lay carelessly across his bare and sinewy knee.

The frame of the white man was like that of one who had known hardships and exertion from his earliest youth. His person, though muscular, was rather attenuated than full; but every nerve and muscle appeared strung and indurated by unremitted exposure and toil. He wore a hunting-shirt of forest-green, fringed with faded yellow, and a summer cap of skins which had been shorn of their fur. He also bore a knife in a girdle of wampum,[1] like that which confined the scanty garments of the Indian, but no tomahawk. His moccasins were ornamented after the gay fashion of the natives, while the only part of his under-dress which appeared below the hunting-frock, was a pair of buckskin leggins that laced at the sides, and which were gartered above the knees with the sinews of a deer. A pouch and horn completed his personal accouterments, though a rifle of great length leaned against a neighboring sapling. The eye of the hunter, or scout, whichever he might be, was small, quick, keen, and restless, roving while he spoke, on every side of him, as if in quest of game, or distrusting the sudden approach of some lurking enemy. Notwithstanding these symptoms of habitual

[1] beads made of shells, and used by the Indians as money; also formed into belts and other ornaments.

suspicion, his countenance was not only without guile, but, at the moment at which he is introduced, it was charged with an expression of sturdy honesty.

"Even your traditions make the case in my favor, Chingachgook," he said, speaking in the tongue which was known to all the natives who formerly inhabited the country between the Hudson and the Potomac. "Your fathers came from the setting sun,[1] crossed the big river,[2] fought the people of the country, and took the land; and mine came from the red sky of the morning, over the salt lake,[3] and did their work much after the fashion that had been set them by yours; then let God judge the matter between us, and friends spare their words."

"My fathers fought with the naked red man!" returned the Indian, sternly, in the same language. "Is there no difference, Hawkeye, between the stone-headed arrow of the warrior, and the leaden bullet with which you kill?"

"There is reason in an Indian, though Nature has made him with a red skin," said the white man. "I am no scholar, and I care not who knows it; but judging from what I have seen, at deer-chases and squirrel-hunts, I should think a rifle in the hands of their grandfathers was not so dangerous as a hickory bow and a good flint-head might be, if drawn with Indian judgment, and sent by an Indian eye. But every story has its two sides; so I ask you, Chingachgook, what passed, according to the traditions of the red men, when our fathers first met?"

A silence of a minute succeeded, during which the Indian sat mute; then he commenced his brief tale, with a solemnity that served to heighten its appearance of truth.

"Listen, Hawkeye, and your ear shall drink no lie. 'Tis what my fathers have said, and what the Mohicans[4] have done. My tribe is the grandfather of nations, but I am an unmixed man. The blood of chiefs is in my veins, where it must stay

[1] *i.e.*, from the west.
[2] the Mississippi.
[3] the Atlantic Ocean.
[4] *pron.* mō-hē'-kanz.

forever. The Dutch landed, and gave my people the fire-water;[1] they drank until the heavens and the earth seemed to meet, and they foolishly thought they had found the Great Spirit.[2] Then they parted with their land. Foot by foot, they were driven back from the shores, until I, that am a chief and a sagamore,[3] have never seen the sun shine but through the trees, and have never visited the graves of my fathers."

"Graves bring solemn feelings over the mind," returned the scout, a good deal touched at the calm suffering of his companion; "and they often aid a man in his good intentions; though, for myself, I expect to leave my own bones unburied, to bleach in the woods, or to be torn asunder by the wolves. But where are to be found those of your race who came to their kin in the Delaware country so many summers since?"

"Where are the blossoms of those summers—fallen one by one; so all of my family departed, each in his turn, to the land of spirits. I am on the hill-top, and must go down into the valley; and, when Uncas follows in my footsteps, there will no longer be any of the blood of the sagamores, for my boy is the last of the Mohicans."

CHAPTER VI.

"UNCAS IS HERE."

"UNCAS is here!" said another voice, in soft, guttural tones, near Chingachgook's elbow; "who speaks to Uncas?"

The white man loosened his knife in his leathern sheath, and made an involuntary movement of the hand toward his rifle at this sudden interruption; but the Indian sat composed, and without turning his head at the unexpected sounds.

At the next instant a youthful warrior passed between them, with a noiseless step, and seated himself on the bank of

[1] whiskey. [2] the Indians' name for God. [3] head or king of a tribe of Indians.

the rapid stream. No exclamation of surprise escaped the father, nor was any question asked, or reply given, for several minutes. At length Chingachgook turned his eyes slowly toward his son and demanded:

"Do the Maquas[1] dare to leave the print of their moccasins in these woods?"

"I have been on their trail," replied the young Indian, "and know that they number as many as the fingers of my two hands; but they lie hid like cowards."

"The thieves are outlying for scalps and plunder!" said the white man, whom we shall call Hawkeye, after the manner of his companions. "That busy Frenchman, Montcalm, will send his spies into our very camp, but he will know what road to travel."

"'Tis enough!" returned the father, glancing his eye toward the setting sun; "they shall be driven like deer from their bushes. Hawkeye, let us eat to-night, and show the Maquas that we are men to-morrow."

"I am as ready to do the one as the other: but to fight the Iroquois 'tis necessary to find the skulkers; and to eat, 'tis necessary to get the game—talk of the devil and he will come; there is a pair of the biggest antlers I have seen this season moving the bushes below the hill! Now, Uncas, I will bet my charger three times full of powder, against a foot of wampum, that I take him atwixt the eyes, and nearer to the right than to the left."

"It cannot be!" said the young Indian, springing to his feet; "all but the tips of his horns are hid!"

Adjusting his rifle, Hawkeye was about to make an exhibition of that skill on which he so much valued himself, when the warrior struck up the piece with his hand, saying:

"Hawkeye! will you fight the Maquas?"

"These Indians know the nature of the woods, as it might be by instinct!" returned the scout, dropping his rifle. "I

[1] See note, page 46.

must leave the buck to your arrow, Uncas, or we may kill a deer for them thieves, the Iroquois, to eat."[1]

Uncas threw himself on the ground and approached the animal with wary movements. When within a few yards of the cover, he fitted an arrow to his bow with the utmost care. In another moment the twang of the cord was heard, and the wounded buck plunged from the cover to the very feet of his hidden enemy. Avoiding the horns of the infuriated animal, Uncas darted to his side, and passed his knife across the throat, when, bounding to the edge of the river, it fell, dyeing the waters with its blood.

"'Twas done with Indian skill," said the scout. "By the Lord, here is a drove of them! If they come within range of a bullet I will drop one, though the whole Six Nations[2] should be lurking within sound! What do you hear, Chingachgook, for to my ears the woods are dumb?"

"There is but one deer, and he is dead," said the Indian, bending his body till his ear nearly touched the earth. "I hear the sounds of feet! The horses of white men are coming! Hawkeye, they are your brothers; speak to them."

"That will I," returned the hunter, "but I see nothing, nor do I hear the sounds of man or beast. Ha! there goes something like the crackling of a dry stick—now I hear the bushes move—yes, yes, there is a trampling that I mistook for the falls—and—but here they come themselves; God keep them from the Iroquois!"

CHAPTER VII.

LE RENARD SUBTIL.

THE words were still in the mouth of the scout, when the leader of the party, whose approaching footsteps had caught the vigilant ear of the Indian, came openly into view.

[1] meaning that the report of the rifle would draw the Iroquois to the spot. For Iroquois, see Introduction.

[2] of Indians. See Introduction.

"Who comes?" demanded the scout; "who comes hither among the beasts and dangers of the wilderness?"

"Believers in religion and friends to the law and to the king," returned he who rode foremost; "men who have journeyed since the rising sun, in the shades of this forest, without nourishment, and are sadly tired of our wayfaring."

"You are, then, lost," interrupted the hunter, "and have found how helpless 'tis not to know whether to take the right hand or the left?"

"Even so. Know ye the distance to a post of the crown, called William Henry?"

"Hoot!" shouted the scout, who did not spare his open laughter. "You are as much off the scent as a hound would be, with Horican[1] atwixt him and the deer. William Henry, man! if you are friends to the king, your better way would be to follow the river down to Edward, and lay the matter before Webb, who tarries there instead of pushing into the defiles, and driving this saucy Frenchman back across Champlain into his den again."

Before the stranger could make any reply, another horseman dashed the bushes aside, and leaped his charger into the pathway in front of his companion.

"What, then, may be our distance from Fort Edward?" demanded the new speaker: "the place you advise us to seek we left this morning, and our destination is the head of the lake. We trusted to an Indian guide to take us by a near path, and we are deceived in his knowledge. In plain words, we know not where we are."

"An Indian lost in the woods!" said the scout, shaking his head doubtingly. "'Tis strange that an Indian should be lost

[1] Lake George. In explanation of the name Horican, the author says in his Introduction: "Looking over an ancient map, it was ascertained that a tribe of Indians, called Les Horicans by the French, existed in the neighborhood of this beautiful sheet of water. As every word uttered by Natty Bumppo [Hawkeye's real name] was not to be received as rigid truth, we took the liberty of putting the Horican into his mouth as the substitute for Lake George. The name has appeared to find favor."

atwixt Horican and the bend in the river! Is he a Mohawk?"

"Not by birth, though adopted in that tribe; I think his birthplace was further north, and he is one of those you call a Huron!"

"A Huron!" repeated the sturdy scout; "they are a thievish race; you can never make anything of them but skulks and vagabonds. Since you trusted yourself to the care of one of that nation, I only wonder that you have not fallen in with more."

"I have told you our guide is now a Mohawk, and that he serves with our forces as a friend."

"And I tell you that he who is born a Mingo[1] will die a Mingo," returned the other, positively. "A Mohawk! No, give me a Delaware or a Mohican for honesty; and when they will fight—which they won't all do, having suffered their cunning enemies the Maquas to make them women—but when they will fight at all, look to a Delaware or a Mohican for a warrior! I should like to look at the creatur'; if it is a true Iroquois, I can tell by his knavish look, and by his paint," said the scout, stepping past the charger of Heyward, and entering the path behind the mare of the singing-master. After proceeding a few paces, he encountered the females, who awaited the result of the conference with anxiety, and not entirely without apprehension. Behind these, the runner leaned against a tree, where he stood the close examination of the scout with an air unmoved, though with a look so dark and savage that it might in itself excite fear. Satisfied with his scrutiny, the hunter soon left him, and returned to Heyward.

"A Mingo is a Mingo, and, God having made him so, neither the Mohawks nor any other tribe can alter him," he said, when he had regained his former position. "If we were alone, and you would leave that noble horse at the mercy of

[1] See note, page 46.

the wolves to-night, I could show you the way to Edward myself, within an hour, for it lies only about an hour's journey hence; but with such ladies in your company 'tis impossible."

"And why? They are fatigued, but they are quite equal to a ride of a few more miles."

"'Tis a natural impossibility!" repeated the scout; "I wouldn't walk a mile in these woods after night gets into them, in company with that runner, for the best rifle in the colonies. They are full of outlying Iroquois, and your mongrel Mohawk knows where to find them too well to be my companion."

"Think you so?" said Heyward, dropping his voice nearly to a whisper; "I confess I have not been without my own suspicions. It was because I suspected him that I would follow no longer; making him, as you see, follow me."

The hunter mused a moment, and then made a gesture, which instantly brought his two red companions to his side. They spoke together earnestly in the Delaware language, though in an undertone; and, by the gestures of the white man, which were frequently directed toward the top of the tree, it was evident he pointed out the situation of their hidden enemy. His companions were not long in comprehending his wishes, and, laying aside their fire-arms, they parted, taking opposite sides of the path, and burying themselves in the thicket with such cautious movements that their steps were inaudible.

"Now, go you back," said the hunter, speaking again to Heyward, "and hold the imp in talk; these Mohicans here will take him without breaking his paint."

Heyward turned back, then spurred his charger, and drew the reins again, when the animal had carried him within a few yards of the place where the sullen runner still stood, leaning against the tree.

"You may see, Magua," he said, endeavoring to assume an

air of freedom and confidence, "that the night is closing around us, and yet we are no nearer to William Henry than when we left the encampment of Webb with the rising sun. You have missed the way, nor have I been more fortunate. But, happily we have fallen in with a hunter, he whom you hear talking to the singer, that is acquainted with the deer-paths and by-ways of the woods, and who promises to lead us to a place where we may rest securely till the morning."

"Then Le Renard Subtil[1] will go," returned the runner, raising his little wallet from the place where it had lain at his feet.

"Go! Whom call you Le Renard?"

"'Tis the name his Canada fathers[2] have given to Magua," returned the runner. "Night is the same as day to Le Subtil, when Munro waits for him."

"And what account will Le Renard give the chief of William Henry[3] concerning his daughters? Will he dare to tell the hot-blooded Scotsman[3] that his children are left without a guide, though Magua promised to be one? Rest your weary limbs, and open your wallet to eat. We have a few moments to spare. When the ladies are refreshed, we will proceed. Le Renard will have strength and sight to find the path in the morning." He paused, for sounds like the snapping of a dry stick and the rustling of leaves rose from the adjacent bushes; but, recollecting himself instantly, he continued: "We must be moving before the sun is seen, or Montcalm may lie in our path, and shut us out from the fortress."

The hand of Magua dropped to his side, his nostrils expanded, and his ears seemed even to stand more erect than usual. Heyward, who watched his movements with a vigilant eye, carelessly extricated one of his feet from the stirrup, and dismounted with a determination to advance and seize his treacherous companion. In order, however, to prevent unnecessary alarm, he still preserved an air of friendship.

[1] French for *The Subtile Fox.* [2] meaning the French. [3] General Munro.

"Le Renard Subtil does not eat," he said. "His corn is not well parched, and it seems dry. Let me examine; perhaps something may be found among my own provisions that will help his appetite."

Magua held out the wallet to the proffer of the other. He even suffered their hands to meet, without betraying the least emotion. But when he felt the fingers of Heyward moving gently along his own naked arm, he struck up the limb of the young man, and, uttering a piercing cry as he darted beneath it, plunged into the opposite thicket. At the next instant the form of Chingachgook appeared from the bushes, and glided across the path in swift pursuit. Next followed the shout of Uncas, when the woods were lighted by a sudden flash, that was accompanied by the sharp report of the hunter's rifle.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEW GUIDES.

THE suddenness of the flight of his guide and the cries of the pursuers caused Heyward to remain fixed, for a few moments, in inactive surprise. Then he dashed aside the surrounding bushes, and pressed eagerly forward to lend his aid in the chase. Before he had proceeded a hundred yards, however, he met the three foresters returning from their unsuccessful pursuit.

"Why so soon disheartened?" he exclaimed; "the scoundrel must be concealed behind some of these trees, and may yet be secured. We are not safe while he goes at large."

"Would you set a cloud to chase the wind?" returned the disappointed scout. "I heard the imp brushing over the dry leaves like a black snake, and, blinking a glimpse of him, just over ag'in yon big pine, I pulled as it might be on the scent; but 'twouldn't do! and yet, for a reasonable aim, if anybody but myself had touched the trigger, I should call it a quick

sight. Look at this sumach; its leaves are red, though everybody knows the fruit is in the yellow blossom in the month of July!"

"'Tis the blood of Le Subtil: he is hurt, and may yet fall!"

"No, no," returned the scout. "I rubbed the bark off a limb perhaps, but the creatur' leaped the longer for it. Come, friends, let us move our station, and in such a fashion, too, as will throw the cunning of a Mingo on a wrong scent, or our scalps will be drying in the wind ag'in this hour to-morrow."

This appalling declaration served to remind Heyward of the importance of the charge with which he himself had been intrusted.

"What is to be done?" he said, feeling the utter helplessness of doubt in such a pressing strait. "Desert me not, for God's sake! Remain to defend those I escort, and freely name your own reward!"

His companions, who conversed apart in the language of their tribe, heeded not his sudden and earnest appeal. Though their dialogue was maintained in low and cautious sounds, but little above a whisper, Heyward, who now approached, could easily distinguish the earnest tones of the younger warrior from the more deliberate speeches of his senior. He drew still nigher to the dusky group, with an intention of making his offers of compensation more definite, when the white man turned away, saying in a sort of soliloquy, and in the English tongue:

"Uncas is right. It would not be the act of men to leave such harmless things to their fate, even though it breaks up the harboring-place forever. If you would save these tender blossoms from the fangs of the worst of sarpents, gentlemen, you have neither time to lose nor resolution to throw away!"

"How can such a wish be doubted? Have I not already offered——"

"Offer your prayers to Him who can give us wisdom to circumvent the cunning of the devils who fill these woods,"

calmly interrupted the scout, "but spare your offers of money, which neither you may live to realize, nor I to profit by. These Mohicans and I will do what man's thoughts can invent to keep such flowers from harm. First, you must promise two things, both in your own name, and for your friends, or, without serving you, we shall only injure ourselves."

"Name them."

"The one is, to be still as these sleeping woods, let what will happen, and the other is, to keep the place where we shall take you forever a secret from all mortal men."

"I will do my utmost to see both these conditions fulfilled."

"Then follow, for we are losing moments that are as precious as the heart's blood to a stricken deer!"

When they rejoined the expecting and anxious females Heyward briefly acquainted them with the conditions of their new guide, and with the necessity that existed for their hushing every apprehension in instant and serious exertions. Silently, and without a moment's delay, they permitted him to assist them from their saddles, when they descended quickly to the water's edge, where the scout had collected the rest of the party, more by the agency of expressive gestures than by any use of words.

"What to do with these dumb creatures!" muttered the white man, on whom the sole control of their future movements appeared to devolve: "it would be time lost to cut their throats, and cast them into the river; and to leave them here would be to tell the Mingoes that they have not far to seek to find their owners!"

"Then give them their bridles, and let them range the woods," Heyward ventured to suggest.

"No; it would be better to mislead the imps, and make them believe they must equal a horse's speed to run down their chase. Ay, ay, that will blind their fire-balls of eyes."

The Indians then taking the bridles, led the horses into the

bed of the river. At a short distance from the shore they turned, and were soon concealed by the projection of the bank, under the brow of which they moved, in a direction opposite to the course of the waters. In the meantime, the scout drew a canoe of bark from its place of concealment beneath some low bushes, and he silently motioned for the females to enter. They complied without hesitation, though many a fearful and anxious glance was thrown behind them toward the thickening gloom, which now lay like a dark barrier along the margin of the stream.

So soon as Cora and Alice were seated, the scout, without regarding the element, directed Heyward to support one side of the frail vessel, and, posting himself at the other, they bore it up against the stream, followed by the singing-master. In this manner they proceeded for many rods, in a silence that was only interrupted by the rippling of the water. At length they reached a point in the river where the roving eye of Heyward became riveted on a cluster of black objects, collected at a spot where the high bank threw a deeper shadow than usual on the dark waters. Hesitating to advance, he pointed out the place to the attention of his companion.

"Ay," returned the composed scout, "the Indians have hid the beasts with the judgment of natives! Water leaves no trail, and an owl's eyes would be blinded by the darkness of such a hole."

The whole party was soon reunited, and another consultation was held between the scout and his new comrades, during which they whose fates depended on the faith and ingenuity of these unknown foresters had a little leisure to observe their situation more minutely.

The river was confined between high and cragged rocks, one of which impended above the spot where the canoe rested. As these, again, were surmounted by tall trees, which appeared to totter on the brows of the precipice, it gave the stream the appearance of running through a deep and narrow

dell. All beneath the fantastic limbs and ragged tree-tops which were, here and there, dimly painted against the starry zenith, lay alike in shadowed obscurity.

CHAPTER IX.

GLEN'S FALLS.

THE horses had been secured to some scattering shrubs that grew in the fissures of the rocks, where, standing in the water, they were left to pass the night. The scout directed Heyward and his disconsolate fellow-travelers to seat themselves in the forward end of the canoe, and took possession of the other himself, as erect and steady as if he floated in a vessel of much firmer materials. The Indians warily retraced their steps toward the place they had left, when the scout, placing his pole against a rock, by a powerful shove sent his frail bark into the center of the stream. For many minutes the struggle, between the light bubble in which they floated and the swift current, was severe and doubtful. At last the canoe became stationary at the side of a flat rock that lay on a level with the water.

"Where are we, and what is next to be done?" demanded Heyward, perceiving that the exertions of the scout had ceased.

"You are at the foot of Glen's,"[1] returned the other, speaking aloud, without fear of consequences, within the roar of the cataract; "and the next thing is to make a steady landing, lest the canoe upset and you should go down again the hard road we have traveled, faster than you came up. There, go you all on the rock, and I will bring up the Mohicans with the venison."

His passengers gladly complied with these directions. As the last foot touched the rock, the canoe whirled from its

[1] Glen's Falls, on the Hudson River.

station, when the tall form of the scout was seen, for an instant, gliding above the waters, before it disappeared in the impenetrable darkness that rested on the bed of the river. Left by their guide, the travelers remained a few minutes in helpless ignorance, afraid even to move along the broken rocks, lest a false step should precipitate them down some one of the many deep and roaring caverns, into which the water seemed to tumble, on every side of them. Their suspense, however, was soon relieved; for, aided by the skill of the natives, the canoe shot back into the eddy, and floated again at the side of the low rock, before they thought the scout had even time to rejoin his companions.

"We are now fortified, garrisoned, and provisioned," cried Heyward, cheerfully, "and may set Montcalm and his allies at defiance. How now, my vigilant sentinel, can you see anything of those you call the Iroquois, on the mainland? Do your ears tell you that they have traced our retreat?"

"I should be sorry to think they had, though this is a spot that stout courage might hold for a smart scrimmage. I will not deny, however, but the horses cowered when I passed them, as though they scented the wolves; and a wolf is a beast that is apt to hover about an Indian ambushment, craving the offals of the deer the savages kill."

The scout, while making his remarks, was busied in collecting certain necessary implements; as he concluded, he moved silently by the group of travelers, accompanied by the Mohicans, who seemed to comprehend his intentions with instinctive readiness, when the whole three disappeared in succession, seeming to vanish against the dark face of a perpendicular rock, that rose to the height of a few yards, within as many feet of the water's edge. Smothered voices were next heard, as though men called to each other in the bowels of the earth, when a sudden light flashed upon those without, and laid bare the much-prized secret of the place.

At the further extremity of a narrow, deep cavern in the

rock was seated the scout, holding a blazing knot of pine. At a little distance in advance stood Uncas, his whole person thrown powerfully into view. The travelers anxiously regarded the upright, flexible figure of the young Mohican, graceful and unrestrained in the attitudes and movements of nature.

"Let us hope," said Heyward, "that this Mohican may not disappoint our wishes, but prove, what his looks assert him to be, a brave and constant friend."

"Now Duncan Heyward speaks as Duncan Heyward should," said Cora: "who, that looks at this creature of Nature, remembers the shade of his skin?"

A short silence succeeded this remark, which was interrupted by the scout calling to them aloud to enter.

"This fire begins to show too bright a flame," he continued, as they complied, "and might light the Mingoes to our undoing. Uncas, drop the blanket and show the knaves its dark side. This is not such a supper as a major of the Royal Americans has a right to expect, but I've known stout detachments of the corps glad to eat their venison raw, and without a relish, too. Here, you see, we have plenty of salt, and can make a quick broil. There's fresh sassafras boughs for the ladies to sit on."

Uncas did as the other had directed, and, when the voice of Hawkeye ceased, the roar of the cataract sounded like the rumbling of distant thunder.

"Are we quite safe in this cavern?" demanded Heyward. "Is there no danger of surprise? A single armed man at its entrance would hold us at his mercy."

A spectral-looking figure now stalked from out the darkness behind the scout, and, seizing a blazing brand, held it toward the further extremity of their place of retreat. It was their attendant, Chingachgook, who, lifting another blanket, discovered that the cavern had two outlets. Then, holding the brand, he crossed a deep, narrow chasm in the rocks,

which ran at right angles with the passage they were in, but which, unlike that, was open to the heavens, and entered another cave, answering to the description of the first, in every essential particular.

"Such old foxes as Chingachgook and myself are not often caught in a burrow with one hole," said Hawkeye, laughing; "you can easily see the cunning of the place—the rock is black limestone. There are the falls on two sides of us, and the river above and below. If you had daylight, it would be worth the trouble to step on the height of this rock, and look at the perversity of the water. It falls by no rule at all; sometimes it leaps, sometimes it tumbles; there, it skips; here, it shoots; in one place 'tis white as snow, and in another, 'tis green as grass."

As the scout had not found it necessary to cease his culinary labors while he spoke, they now suffered their attention to be drawn to the necessary though more vulgar consideration of their supper.

CHAPTER X.

A STRANGE CRY.

THE repast, which was greatly aided by the addition of a few delicacies that Heyward had the precaution to bring with him when they left their horses, was exceedingly refreshing to the wearied party. Uncas acted as attendant to the females, performing all the little offices within his power, with a mixture of dignity and anxious grace that served to amuse Heyward, who well knew that it was an utter innovation on the Indian customs, which forbid their warriors to descend to any menial employment, especially in favor of their women.

"Come, friend," said Hawkeye, drawing out a keg from beneath a cover of leaves, toward the close of the repast, and addressing the stranger who sat at his elbow, "try a little

spruce.[1] I drink to our better friendship. How do you name yourself?"

"Gamut—David Gamut," returned the singing-master.

"A very good name, and, I dare say, handed down from honest forefathers. What may be your calling?"

"I am an unworthy instructor in the art of psalmody. I teach singing to the youths of the Connecticut levy."[2]

"You might be better employed, but I suppose it is your gift, and mustn't be denied any more than if 'twas shooting or some other better inclination. Let us hear what you can do in that way; 'twill be a friendly manner of saying good-night, for 'tis time that these ladies should be getting strength for a hard and a long push, in the morning."

"With a joyful pleasure do I consent," said David, adjusting his iron-rimmed spectacles, and producing his hymn-book, which he tendered to Alice, who, with her sister, joined in the singing. The air was solemn and slow, and they were dwelling on one of the low, dying chords which the ear devours with rapture, when a cry, that seemed neither human nor earthly, rose in the outward air, penetrating not only the recesses of the cavern, but to the inmost hearts of all who heard it. It was followed by a stillness as deep as if the waters had been checked in their furious progress at such a horrid interruption.

"What is it?" murmured Alice, after a few moments of terrible suspense.

"What is it?" repeated Heyward aloud.

Neither Hawkeye nor the Indians made any reply. They listened with a manner that expressed their own astonishment. At length they spoke together earnestly, when Uncas, passing by the inner aperture, left the cavern. When he had gone the scout first spoke in English.

"What it is, none here can tell; though two of us have

[1] a liquor made from the leaves and sprouts of the spruce-fir.

[2] body of soldiers; troops enlisted or levied for military service.

ranged the woods for more than thirty years. I did believe there was no cry that Indian or beast could make that my ears had not heard; but this has proved that I was only a conceited mortal! Well, Uncas!" speaking in Delaware to the young chief as he re-entered, "what see you? Do our lights shine through the blankets?"

The answer was short, and apparently decided, being given in the same tongue.

"There is nothing to be seen without," continued Hawkeye, "and our hiding-place is still in darkness. Pass into the other cave, you that need it, and seek for sleep; we must be afoot long before the sun."

Cora set the example of compliance with a steadiness that taught the more timid Alice the necessity of obedience. Before leaving the place, however, she whispered a request to Duncan that he would follow. Uncas raised the blanket for their passage, and Heyward took with him a blazing knot, which threw a dim light through their new apartment. Placing it in a favorable position, he joined the females, who now found themselves alone with him for the first time since they had left the friendly ramparts of Fort Edward.

"Leave us not, Duncan," said Alice; "we cannot sleep in such a place as this with that horrid cry still ringing in our ears!"

"First let us examine into the security of your fortress," he answered, "and then we will speak of rest."

He approached the further end of the cavern to an outlet, which, like the others, was concealed by blankets, and, removing the thick screen, breathed the fresh and reviving air from the cataract.

"Nature has made an impenetrable barrier on this side," he continued, pointing down into an arm of the river flowing beneath his feet, before he dropped the blanket; "and as you know that good men are on guard in front, I see no reason why the advice of our host should be disregarded. I am cer-

tain Cora will join me in saying that sleep is necessary to you both."

"Cora may submit to the justice of your opinion, though she cannot put it in practice," returned the elder sister, who had placed herself by the side of Alice, on a couch of sassafras. "Ask yourself, Heyward, can daughters forget the anxiety a father must endure, whose children lodge, he knows not where or how?"

"He is a soldier, and knows how to estimate the chances of the woods."

"How kind has he ever been to all my follies! how indulgent to all my wishes!" sobbed Alice. "We have been selfish, sister, in urging our visit at such hazard!"

"When he heard of your arrival at Edward," said Heyward, "there was a powerful struggle in his bosom between fear and love; though the latter, heightened, if possible, by so long a separation, quickly prevailed. 'It is the spirit of my noble-minded Cora that leads them, Duncan,' he said, 'and I will not balk it.'"

Duncan ceased speaking; for, while his eyes were riveted on those of Alice, the same horrid cry as before filled the air. A long, breathless silence succeeded. At length, the blanket was slowly raised, and the scout stood in the aperture with a countenance whose firmness evidently began to give way before a mystery which seemed to threaten some danger, against which all his cunning and experience might prove of no avail.

"'Twould be neglecting a warning that is given for our good, to lie hid any longer," said Hawkeye, "when such sounds are raised in the forest! These gentle ones may keep close, but the Mohicans and I will watch upon the rock, where I suppose a major of the 60th would wish to keep us company. We cannot explain the cry just heard, and we, therefore, believe it a sign for our good."

"It is extraordinary!" said Heyward, taking his pistols from the place where he had laid them on entering. "Be it a

sign of peace or a signal of war, it must be looked to. Lead the way, my friend; I follow."

On issuing from their place of confinement, the eyes of each individual were bent along the opposite shores in quest of some signs of life that might explain the nature of the interruption they had heard, but their anxious and eager looks rested only on naked rocks and straight and immovable trees.

"Here is nothing to be seen but the gloom and quiet of a lovely evening," whispered Heyward.

As he spoke, the same sound arose once more as if from the bed of the river, and having broken out of the narrow bounds of the cliffs, was heard undulating through the forest, in distant and dying cadences.

"Can any here give a name to such a cry?" demanded Hawkeye when the last echo was lost in the woods; "if so, let him speak; for myself, I judge it not to belong to 'arth."

"Here, then, is one who can undeceive you," said Duncan. "I know the sound full well, for often have I heard it on the field of battle. 'Tis the horrid shriek that a horse will give in his agony. My charger is either a prey to the beasts of the forest, or he sees his danger, without the power to avoid it. The sound might deceive me in the cavern, but in the open air I know it too well to be wrong."

The scout and his companions listened to this simple explanation with the interest of men who imbibe new ideas at the same time that they get rid of old ones. The two latter uttered their usual exclamation, "Hugh!" as the truth first glanced upon their minds, while the former, after a short pause, took upon himself to reply.

"I cannot deny your words," he said; "for I am little skilled in horses, though born where they abound. The wolves must be hovering above their heads on the bank, and the timorsome creatures are calling on man for help, in the best manner they are able. Uncas"—he spoke in Delaware —"Uncas, drop down in the canoe, and whirl a brand among

the pack; or fear may do what the wolves can't get at to perform, and leave us without horses in the morning."

The young native had already descended to the water to comply, when a low howl was raised on the edge of the river, and was borne swiftly off into the depths of the forest, as though the beasts, of their own accord, were abandoning their prey in sudden terror. Uncas, with instinctive quickness, receded, and the three foresters held another of their low, earnest conferences.

"We have been like hunters who have lost the points of the heavens," said Hawkeye, turning away from his companions; "now we begin again to know the signs of our course, and the paths are cleared from briers! Seat yourselves in the shade which the moon throws from yonder beech, and let us wait for that which the Lord may choose to send next. Let all your conversation be in whispers; though it would be better, perhaps, if each one held discourse with his own thoughts, for a time."

CHAPTER XI.

THE ATTACK.

In such circumstances common prudence dictated that Heyward and his companions should imitate a caution that proceeded from so intelligent a source. The young man drew a pile of sassafras from the cave, and placing it in the chasm which separated the two caverns, it was occupied by the sisters, who were thus protected by the rocks from any missiles. Heyward himself was posted at hand, so near that he might communicate with his companions without raising his voice to a dangerous elevation; while David bestowed his person in such a manner among the fissures of the rocks that his ungainly limbs were no longer offensive to the eye.

In this manner hours passed by without further interruption. The moon reached the zenith, and shed its mild light

on the sisters slumbering peacefully in each other's arms. Duncan cast a shawl of Cora's before a spectacle he so much loved to contemplate, and then suffered his own head to seek a pillow on the rock. David began to utter sounds that would have shocked his delicate organs in more wakeful moments; in short, all but Hawkeye and the Mohicans lost every idea of consciousness in uncontrollable drowsiness. But the watchfulness of these vigilant protectors neither tired nor slumbered. It was continued until the moon had set, and a pale streak above the tree-tops, at the bend of the river a little below, announced the approach of day. Then, for the first time, Hawkeye was seen to stir. He crawled along the rock, and shook Duncan from his heavy slumbers.

"Now is the time to journey," he whispered; "awake the gentle ones, and be ready to get into the canoe when I bring it to the landing-place."

Duncan immediately lifted the shawl from the sleeping females. The motion caused Cora to raise her hand as if to repulse him, while Alice murmured, in her soft, gentle voice: "No, no, dear father, we were not deserted; Duncan was with us!"

"Yes, sweet innocence," whispered the youth: "Duncan is here. Cora! Alice! awake! The hour has come to move!"

A loud shriek from the younger of the sisters, and the form of the other standing upright before him in bewildered horror, was the unexpected answer he received. While the words were still on the lips of Heyward, there had arisen such a tumult of yells and cries as served to drive the swift currents of his own blood back from its bounding course into the fountain of his heart. The cries came from no particular direction, though it was evident they filled the woods, and, as the appalled listeners easily imagined, the caverns of the falls, the rocks, the bed of the river, and the upper air. David raised his tall person in the midst of the infernal din, with a hand on either ear, exclaiming:

"Whence comes this discord? Has hell broke loose that man should utter sounds like these?"

The bright flashes and the quick reports of a dozen rifles from the opposite bank of the stream, followed this incautious exposure of his person, and left the unfortunate singing-master senseless on that rock where he had been so long slumbering. The Mohicans boldly sent back the intimidating yell of their enemies, who raised a shout of savage triumph at the fall of Gamut. The flash of rifles was then quick and close between them, but either party was too well skilled to leave even a limb exposed to the hostile aim. Duncan listened with intense anxiety for the strokes of the paddle, believing that flight was now their only refuge. The river glanced by with its ordinary velocity, but the canoe was nowhere to be seen on its dark waters. He had just fancied they were cruelly deserted by the scout, as a stream of flame issued from the rock beneath him, and a shriek of agony announced that the messenger of death, sent from the fatal weapon of Hawkeye, had found a victim. At this slight repulse the assailants instantly withdrew, and gradually the place became as still as before the sudden tumult.

Duncan seized the favorable moment to spring to the body of Gamut, which he bore within the shelter of the narrow chasm that protected the sisters. In another minute the whole party was collected in this spot of comparative safety.

"The poor fellow has saved his scalp," said Hawkeye, coolly, passing his hand over the head of David; "but he is a proof that a man may be born with too long a tongue. 'Twas downright madness to show six feet of flesh and blood, on a naked rock, to the raging savages."

"Is he not dead?" demanded Cora. "Can we do aught to assist the wretched man?"

"No, no! the life is in his heart yet, and after he has slept awhile he will come to himself," returned Hawkeye. "Carry him in, Uncas, and lay him on the sassafras. The longer his

nap the better for him, as I doubt whether he can find a proper cover for such a shape on these rocks; and singing won't do any good with the Iroquois."

"You believe, then, the attack will be renewed?" asked Heyward.

"Do I expect a hungry wolf will satisfy his craving with a mouthful? They have lost a man, and 'tis their fashion, when they meet a loss, and fail in the surprise, to fall back; but we shall have them on again. Our main hope will be to keep the rock until Munro can send a party to our help!"

"You hear our probable fortunes, Cora," said Duncan, "and you know we have everything to hope from the anxiety and experience of your father. Come, then, with Alice, into this cavern, where you will be safe from the murderous rifles of our enemies, and where you may bestow a care on our unfortunate comrade."

The sisters followed him into the outer cave, where David was beginning, by his sighs, to give symptoms of returning consciousness; and then commending the wounded man to their attention, he joined the scout and his companions, who still lay within the protection of the chasm between the two caves.

"I tell you, Uncas," said the former, as Heyward joined them, "you are wasteful of your powder, and the kick of the rifle disconcerts your aim. Little powder, light lead, and a long arm seldom fail of bringing the death-screech from a Mingo! At least, such has been my experience with the creatures. Come, friends, let us to our covers, for no man can tell when or where a Maqua[1] will strike his blow."

The Indians silently repaired to their appointed stations, which were fissures in the rocks, whence they could command the approaches to the foot of the falls. In the center of the

[1] It will be observed that Hawkeye applies different names to his enemies. Mingo and Maqua are terms of contempt, and Iroquois is a name given by the French. The Indians rarely use the same name when different tribes speak of each other. Mingo was the Delaware term for the Five Nations; Maqua was the Dutch.—*Author's Note.*

little island, a few short and stunted pines had found root, forming a thicket, into which Hawkeye darted with the swiftness of a deer, followed by the active Duncan. Here they secured themselves among the shrubs and fragments of stone that were scattered about the place. Above them was a bare, rounded rock, on each side of which the water played its gambols, and plunged into the abysses beneath.

A long and anxious watch succeeded, but without any further evidences of a renewed attack; and Duncan began to hope that their enemies had been effectually repulsed. When he ventured to utter this impression to his companion, it was met by Hawkeye with an incredulous shake of the head.

"You know not the nature of a Maqua, if you think he is so easily beaten back without a scalp," he answered. "Hist! look into the water above, just where it breaks over the rocks. The risky devils have swam down upon the very pitch, and have hit the very head of the island. Hist! man, keep close! or the hair will be off your crown in the turning of a knife!"

Heyward lifted his head from the cover, and beheld a prodigy of rashness and skill. The river had worn away the edge of the soft rock in such a manner as to render its first pitch less perpendicular than is usual at waterfalls. A party of their foes had ventured into the current, and swam down upon this point, knowing the ready access it would give, if successful, to their intended victims. As Hawkeye ceased speaking, four human heads could be seen peering above the few logs of drift-wood that had lodged on these naked rocks.

He placed a finger in his mouth, and drew a long, shrill whistle, which was answered from the rocks, that were guarded by the Mohicans. Duncan caught glimpses of the heads above the scattered drift-wood, as this signal rose on the air, but they disappeared again as suddenly as they had glanced upon his sight. A low, rustling sound next drew his attention behind him, and, turning his head, he beheld Uncas within a few feet, creeping to his side. Hawkeye spoke to him in Del-

aware, when the young chief took his position with singular caution and undisturbed coolness.

At that moment the woods were filled with another burst of cries; and, at the signal, four savages sprang from the cover of the drift-wood. Heyward felt a burning desire to rush forward to meet them, so intense was the delirious anxiety of the moment: but he was restrained by the deliberate examples of the scout and Uncas. When their foes, who leaped over the black rocks that divided them, with long bounds, uttering the wildest yells, were within a few rods, the rifle of Hawkeye slowly rose from among the shrubs, and poured out its fatal contents. The foremost Indian bounded like a stricken deer and fell headlong among the clefts of the island.

"Now, Uncas!" cried the scout, drawing his long knife, while his quick eye began to flash with ardor, "take the last of the screeching imps; of the other two we are sartain!"

He was obeyed; and but two enemies remained to be overcome. Heyward had given one of his pistols to Hawkeye, and together they rushed down a little declivity toward their foes; they discharged their weapons at the same instant, and equally without success.

"I know'd it, and I said it!" muttered the scout, whirling the despised little implement over the falls with bitter disdain. "Come on, ye bloody-minded hell-hounds! ye meet a man without a cross!"[1]

The words were barely uttered when he encountered a savage of gigantic stature and of the fiercest mien. At the same moment Duncan found himself engaged with the other in a similar contest of hand to hand. With ready skill, Hawkeye and his antagonist each grasped the uplifted arm of the other which held the dangerous knife. For nearly a minute they stood looking one another in the eye, and gradually exerting the power of their muscles for the mastery. At length the toughened sinews of the white man prevailed over the less

[1] *i.e.*, having no Indian blood in his veins; of pure white stock or descent.

practiced limbs of the native. The arm of the latter slowly gave way before the increasing force of the scout, who, suddenly wresting his armed hand from the grasp of his foe, drove his sharp weapon through his naked bosom to the heart. In the meantime Heyward had been pressed in a more deadly struggle. His slight sword was snapped in the first encounter. As he was destitute of any other means of defense, his safety now depended entirely on bodily strength and resolution. Happily, he soon succeeded in disarming his adversary, whose knife fell on the rock at their feet; and from this moment it became a fierce struggle who should cast the other over the dizzy height into a neighboring cavern of the falls. Each successive struggle brought them nearer to the verge, where Duncan perceived the final and conquering effort must be made. Each of the combatants threw all his energies into that effort, and the result was, that both tottered on the brink of the precipice. Heyward felt the grasp of the other at his throat, and saw the grim smile the savage gave, under the revengeful hope that he hurried his enemy to a fate similar to his own, as he felt his body slowly yielding to a resistless power, and the young man experienced the passing agony of such a moment in all its dark horrors. At that instant of extreme danger a dark hand and a glancing knife appeared before him; the Indian released his hold as the blood flowed freely from around the severed tendons of his wrist; and, while Duncan was drawn backward by the saving arm of Uncas, his charmed eyes were still riveted on the fierce and disappointed countenance of his foe, who fell sullenly and disappointed down the precipice.

"To cover! to cover!" cried Hawkeye, who just then had dispatched his enemy; "to cover, for your lives! The work is but half ended!"

The young Mohican gave a shout of triumph, and, followed by Duncan, he glided up the acclivity they had descended to the combat, and sought the friendly shelter of the rocks and shrubs.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WARRIOR IN THE OAK.

THE warning call of the scout was not uttered without occasion. During the occurrence of the deadly encounter just related, the roar of the falls was unbroken by any human sound whatever. The moment the struggle was decided, a yell arose as fierce and savage as wild and revengeful passions could throw into the air. It was followed by the swift flashes of the rifles, which sent their leaden messengers across the rock in volleys, as though the assailants would pour out their impotent fury on the insensible scene of the fatal contest.

"Let them burn their powder," said the deliberate scout, while bullet after bullet whizzed by the place where he securely lay; "there will be a fine gathering of lead when it is over, and I fancy the imps will tire of the sport afore these old stones cry out for mercy! Uncas, boy, I told you to take that loping miscreant under the line of white paint;[1] now, if your bullet went a hair's breadth, it went two inches above it. The life lies low in a Mingo, and humanity teaches us to make a quick end of the sarpents."

"I cannot permit you to accuse Uncas of want of judgment or of skill," said Duncan; "he saved my life in the coolest and readiest manner, and he has made a friend who never will require to be reminded of the debt he owes."

"Life is an obligation which friends often owe to each other in the wilderness," replied Hawkeye. "I dare say I may have served Uncas some such turn myself before now; and I well remember that he has stood between me and death five times; three times from the Mingoes, and——"

"That bullet was better aimed than common!" exclaimed

[1] referring to the Indian's war-paint. The Indians stained or painted their faces and other parts of their bodies before going to war.

Duncan, involuntarily shrinking from a shot which struck the rock at his side with a smart rebound.

Hawkeye laid his hand on the shapeless metal, and shook his head, as he examined it, saying, "Falling lead is never flattened! Had it come from the clouds this might have happened."

But the rifle of Uncas was raised toward the heaven, directing the eye of his companions to a point where the mystery was explained. A ragged oak grew on the right bank of the river, nearly opposite to their position, and among the topmost leaves, which scantily concealed the stunted limbs, a savage was nestled, partly concealed by the trunk of the tree, and partly exposed, as though looking down upon them to ascertain the effect produced by his treacherous aim.

"These devils will scale heaven to circumvent us to our ruin," said Hawkeye; "keep him in play, boy, until I can bring Killdeer[1] to bear, when we will try his metal on each side of the tree at once."

Uncas delayed his fire until the scout uttered the word. The rifles flashed, the leaves and bark of the oak flew into the air, and were scattered by the wind, but the Indian answered their assault by a taunting laugh, sending down upon them another bullet in return, that struck the cap of Hawkeye from his head. Once more the savage yells burst out of the woods, and the leaden hail whistled above the heads of the besieged.

"This must be looked to," said the scout, glancing about him with an anxious eye. "Uncas, call up your father; we have need of all our we'pons to bring the cunning varment from his roost.

The signal was instantly given; and, before Hawkeye had reloaded his rifle, they were joined by Chingachgook. They then conversed earnestly together in Delaware for a few moments, when each quietly took his post, in order to execute the plan they had speedily devised.

[1] the name of a favorite rifle of Hawkeye's.

The warrior in the oak had maintained a quick though ineffectual fire, from the moment of his discovery. But his aim was interrupted by the vigilance of his enemies, whose rifles instantaneously bore on any part of his person that was left exposed. Still his bullets fell in the center of the crouching party. The clothes of Heyward, which rendered him peculiarly conspicuous, were repeatedly cut, and once blood was drawn from a slight wound in his arm.

At length the Huron attempted a better and more fatal aim. The quick eyes of the Mohicans caught the dark line of his lower limbs incautiously exposed through the thin foliage, a few inches from the trunk of the tree. Their rifles made a common report, when, sinking on his wounded limb, part of the body of the savage came into view. Swift as thought, Hawkeye seized the advantage, and discharged his fatal weapon into the top of the oak. The leaves were unusually agitated; and, after a few moments of vain struggling, the form of the savage was seen swinging in the wind, while he still grasped a branch of the tree, with hands clenched in desperation.

"Give him, in pity give him the contents of another rifle!" cried Duncan, turning away his eyes in horror from the spectacle of a fellow-creature in such awful jeopardy.

"Not a karnel!"[1] exclaimed Hawkeye; "his death is certain, and we have no powder to spare, for Indian fights sometimes last for days; 'tis their scalps or ours!—and God, who made us, has put into our natures the craving to keep the skin on the head!"

Against this stern morality there was no appeal. From that moment the yells in the forest once more ceased, the fire was suffered to decline, and all eyes, those of friends as well as enemies, became fixed on the hopeless condition of the wretch who was dangling between heaven and earth. At length one hand of the Huron lost its hold and dropped exhausted to his

[1] kernel, meaning grain of powder.

side. A desperate struggle to recover the branch succeeded, and then the savage was seen for a fleeting instant grasping wildly at the empty air. The lightning is not quicker than was the flame from the rifle of Hawkeye; the limbs of the victim trembled and contracted, and the body parted the foaming waters like lead, when the element closed above it in its ceaseless velocity, and every vestige of the unhappy Huron was lost forever. A single yell burst from the woods, and all was again still.

CHAPTER XIII.

GOOD SWIMMERS.

HAWKEYE shook his head at his own momentary weakness, even uttering his self-disapprobation aloud.

"'Twas the last charge in my horn and the last bullet in my pouch, and 'twas the act of a boy!" he said; "what mattered it whether he struck the rock living or dead! Feeling would soon be over. Uncas, lad, go down to the canoe, and bring up the big horn; it is all the powder we have left, and we shall need it to the last grain."

The young Mohican complied, leaving the scout turning over the useless contents of his pouch, and shaking the empty horn. From this unsatisfactory examination he was soon called by a loud exclamation from Uncas, that sounded as the signal of some new calamity. Every thought filled with apprehension for the precious treasure he had concealed in the cavern, the young man started to his feet, totally regardless of the hazard he incurred by such an exposure. His movements were imitated by his companions, and, together, they rushed down the pass to the friendly chasm, with a rapidity that rendered the scattering fire of their enemies perfectly harmless. The cry had brought the sisters, together with the wounded David, from their place of refuge, and the whole

party, at a single glance, was made acquainted with the nature of the disaster.

At a short distance from the rock their little bark was seen floating across the eddy, toward the swift current of the river, in a manner which proved that its course was directed by some hidden agent. The instant this unwelcome sight caught the eye of the scout, his rifle was leveled, as by instinct, but the barrel gave no answer to the bright sparks of the flint.

"'Tis too late, 'tis too late!" Hawkeye exclaimed, dropping the useless piece in bitter disappointment; "the miscreant has struck the rapid; and, had we powder, it could hardly send the lead swifter than he now goes!"

The adventurous Huron raised his head above the shelter of the canoe, and while it glided swiftly down the stream, he waved his hand, and gave forth the shout which was the known signal of success. His cry was answered by a yell and a laugh from the woods.

"What is to be done?" demanded Duncan, losing the first feeling of disappointment in a more manly desire for exertion: "What will become of us?"

Hawkeye made no other reply than by passing his finger around the crown of his head, in a manner so significant that none who witnessed the action could mistake its meaning.[1]

"Surely our case is not so desperate!" exclaimed the youth; "the Hurons are not here; we may make good the caverns; we may oppose their landing."

"With what?" coolly demanded the scout. "The arrows of Uncas, or such tears as women shed! No, no; you are young, and rich, and have friends, and at such an age I know it is hard to die! But," glancing his eyes at the Mohicans, "let us remember we are men without a cross, and let us teach these natives of the forest that white blood can run as freely as red, when the appointed hour is come."

[1] *i.e.*, that they would be scalped by the Indians.

"Why die at all!" said Cora, advancing from the place where natural horror had, until this moment, held her riveted to the rock. "The path is open on every side; fly, then, to the woods, and call on God for succor. Go, brave men; we owe you too much already; let us no longer involve you in our hapless fortunes."

"You but little know the craft of the Iroquois, lady, if you judge they have left the path open to the woods!" returned Hawkeye, who, however, immediately added, "the down-stream current, it is certain, might soon sweep us beyond the reach of their rifles."

"Then try the river. Why linger, to add to the number of the victims of our enemies?"

"Why?" repeated the scout. "Because it is better for a man to die at peace with himself than to live haunted by an evil conscience. What answer could we give Munro when he asked us where and how we left his children?"

"Go to him, and say that you left them with a message to hasten to their aid," returned Cora, advancing nigher to the scout, in her generous ardor, "that the Hurons bear them into the northern wilds, but that by vigilance and speed they may yet be rescued; and if, after all, it should please Heaven that his assistance come too late, bear to him," she continued, her voice gradually lowering, until it seemed nearly choked, "the love, the blessings, the final prayers of his daughters, and bid him not mourn their early fate, but to look forward with humble confidence to the Christian's goal to meet his children."

The hard, weather-beaten features of the scout began to work, and, when she had ended, he drooped his chin to his hand, like a man musing profoundly on the nature of the proposal.

"There is reason in her words!" at length broke from his trembling lips; "ay, and they bear the spirit of Christianity; what might be right and proper in a red-skin, may be sinful in

a man who has not even a cross in blood to plead for his ignorance. Chingachgook! Uncas! hear you the talk of the dark-eyed woman?"

He now spoke in Delaware to his companions, and his address seemed very decided. The elder Mohican appeared to ponder on his words, as though he felt the importance of their import. After a moment of hesitation, he waved his hand in assent, and uttered the English word "Good," with the peculiar emphasis of his people. Then, replacing his knife and tomahawk in his girdle, the warrior moved silently to the edge of the rock which was most concealed from the banks of the river. Here he paused a moment, pointed significantly to the woods below, and, saying a few words in his own language, as if indicating his intended route, he dropped into the water, and sunk from before the eyes of the witnesses of his movements. The scout delayed his departure to speak to the generous girl, whose breathing became lighter as she saw the success of her remonstrance.

"Wisdom is sometimes given to the young, as well as to the old," he said; "and what you have spoken is wise, not to call it by a better word. If you are led into the woods, that is, such of you as may be spared for awhile, break the twigs on the bushes as you pass, and make the marks of your trail as broad as you can, when, if mortal eyes can see them, depend on having a friend who will follow to the ends of 'arth afore he desarts you!"

He gave Cora an affectionate shake of the hand, lifted his rifle, and, after regarding it a moment with melancholy solicitude, carefully laid it aside, and descended to the place where Chingachgook had just disappeared. For an instant he hung suspended by the rock; and, looking about him, added, bitterly, "Had the powder held out, this disgrace could never have befallen!" then, loosening his hold, the water closed above his head, and he also became lost to view. All eyes were now turned on Uncas, who stood leaning against the

ragged rock, in immovable composure. After waiting a short time, Cora pointed down the river, and said:

"Your friends have not been seen, and are now, most probably, in safety; is it not time for you to follow?"

"Uncas will stay," the young Mohican calmly answered in English.

"To increase the horror of our capture, and to diminish the chances of our release! Go, generous young man," Cora continued, "go to my father, and be the most confidential of my messengers. Tell him to trust you with the means to buy the freedom of his daughters. Go! 'tis my wish, 'tis my prayer, that you will go!"

The young chief no longer hesitated. With a noiseless step he crossed the rock, and dropped into the troubled stream. Hardly a breath was drawn by those he left behind, until they caught a glimpse of his head emerging for air, far down the current, when he again sank, and was seen no more. After the last look at Uncas, Cora turned, and, with a quivering lip, addressed herself to Heyward:

"I have heard of your boasted skill in the water, too, Duncan," she said; "follow, then, the wise example set you by these simple and faithful beings."

"Is such the faith that Cora Munro would exact from her protector?" said the young man, smiling mournfully, but with bitterness.

"This is a time," she answered, "when every duty should be equally considered. To us you can be of no further service here, but your precious life may be saved for other and nearer friends."

He made no reply, though his eyes fell wistfully on the beautiful form of Alice, who was clinging to his arm with the dependency of an infant.

"Consider," continued Cora, "that the worst to us can be but death; a tribute that all must pay at the good time of God's appointment."

"There are evils worse than death," said Duncan, speaking hoarsely, "but which the presence of one who would die in your behalf may avert."

Cora ceased her entreaties, and, veiling her face in her shawl, drew the nearly insensible Alice after her into the deepest recess of the inner cavern.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOUR PRISONERS.

THE sudden and almost magical change from the stirring incidents of the combat to the stillness that now reigned around him, acted on the heated imagination of Heyward like some exciting dream. Leading David into the cavern, and drawing a pile of sassafras before the passage, he seated himself in the center, grasping his pistol with a hand convulsively clenched. "The Hurons, if they come, may not gain our position so easily as they think," he lowly muttered; and, dropping his head back against the rock, he seemed to await the result in patience.

With the last sound of his voice, a deep, long, and almost breathless silence succeeded. As minute after minute passed by, leaving them in undisturbed security, hope was gradually gaining possession of every bosom, though each one felt reluctant to give utterance to expectations that the next moment might so fearfully destroy.

David alone formed an exception to these emotions. A gleam of light from the opening crossed his wan countenance, and fell upon the pages of the little volume, whose leaves he was again occupied in turning, as if searching for some song fitted to their condition. At length his industry found its reward; for, without explanation or apology, he pronounced the words, "Isle of Wight," drew a sweet sound from his pitch-pipe, and then ran through the preliminary modula-

tions of the air whose name he had just mentioned. He was filling the arches of the cave with long and full tones when a yell burst into the air without, that instantly stilled his pious strains, choking his voice suddenly, as though his heart had bounded into the passage of his throat.

"We are lost!" exclaimed Alice, throwing herself into the arms of Cora.

"Not yet, not yet," returned Heyward; "the sound came from the center of the island. We are not yet discovered, and there is still hope."

A second yell soon followed the first, when a rush of voices was heard pouring down the island, from its upper to its lower extremity, until they reached the naked rock above the caverns, where, after a shout of savage triumph, the air continued full of horrible cries and screams, such as man alone can utter, and he only when in a state of the fiercest barbarity.

In the midst of this tumult, a triumphant yell was raised within a few yards of the hidden entrance to the cave. Heyward abandoned every hope, with the belief it was the signal that they were discovered. Again the impression passed away, as he heard the voices collect near the spot where the white man had so reluctantly abandoned his rifle. Amid the jargon of the Indian dialects that he now plainly heard, it was easy to distinguish not only words, but sentences. A burst of voices had shouted simultaneously, "La Longue Carabine!"[1] causing the woods to re-echo with a name which Heyward well remembered had been given by his enemies to a celebrated hunter and scout of the English camp, and who, he now learned for the first time, had been his late companion.

"La Longue Carabine! La Longue Carabine!" passed from mouth to mouth, until the whole band appeared to be collected around a trophy which would seem to announce the death of its formidable owner. After a consultation, which was, at times, deafened by bursts of savage joy, they again separated,

[1] French for *The Long Rifle*, one of the names the Indians gave to Hawkeye.

filling the air with the name of a foe whose body, Heyward could collect from their expression, they hoped to find concealed in some crevice of the island.

"Now," he whispered to the trembling sisters, "now is the moment of uncertainty; if our place of retreat escape this scrutiny, we are still safe! In every event, we are assured by what has fallen from our enemies, that our friends have escaped, and in two short hours we may look for succor from Webb."

"Then to Heaven will I return my thanks!" exclaimed the younger sister, casting herself on the naked rock. But when her lips moved, the words they should have uttered appeared frozen by some new and sudden chill. Her bloom gave place to the paleness of death; while those hands which she had raised toward heaven, dropped in horizontal lines before her, the fingers pointing forward in convulsed motion. Heyward turned the instant she gave a direction to his suspicions, and, peering just above the ledge which formed the threshold of the open outlet of the cavern, beheld the malignant and savage features of Le Renard Subtil. Forgetful of everything but the impulses of his hot blood, he leveled his pistol and fired. The report of the weapon made the cavern bellow like an eruption from a volcano; and when the smoke it vomited had been driven away before the current of air which issued from the ravine, the place so lately occupied by the features of his treacherous guide was vacant. Rushing to the outlet, Heyward caught a glimpse of his dark figure, stealing around a low and narrow ledge, which soon hid him entirely from sight.

Among the savages a frightful stillness succeeded the explosion, which had just been heard bursting from the bowels of the rock. But when Le Renard raised his voice in a long and intelligible whoop, it was answered by a yell from every Indian within hearing of the sound. The clamorous noises again rushed down the island; and, before Duncan had time to recover from the shock, the cavern was entered at both its

extremities, and he and his companions were dragged from their shelter and borne into the day, where they stood surrounded by the whole band of the triumphant Hurons.

CHAPTER XV.

DUNCAN TRIES THE POTENCY OF GOLD.

THE instant the shock of this sudden misfortune had abated, Duncan began to make his observations on the appearance and proceedings of their captors. Contrary to the usages of the natives in the wantonness of their success, they had respected, not only the persons of the trembling sisters, but his own. The rich ornaments of his military attire had indeed been repeatedly handled by different individuals of the tribe with eyes expressing a savage longing to possess the baubles; but, before the customary violence could be resorted to, a mandate in the authoritative voice of a warrior of gigantic size, stayed the uplifted hand, and convinced Heyward that they were to be reserved for some object of particular moment.

While, however, these manifestations of weakness were exhibited by the young and vain of the party, the more experienced warriors continued their search throughout both caverns with an activity that denoted they were far from being satisfied with those fruits of their conquest which had already been brought to light. Unable to discover any new victim, they soon approached their male prisoners, pronouncing the name of "La Longue Carabine," with a fierceness that could not easily be mistaken.

"You hear," said Magua, "the red Hurons call for the life of 'The Long Rifle,' or they will have the blood of them that keep him hid!"

"He is gone—escaped," replied Heyward. "He is far beyond their reach."

Renard smiled with cold contempt, as he answered:

"Is he a bird, to spread his wings; or is he a fish, to swim without air? The white chief[1] reads in his books, and he believes the Hurons are fools!"

"Though no fish, 'The Long Rifle' can swim. He floated down the stream when the powder was all burned, and when the eyes of the Hurons were behind a cloud."

The Hurons had awaited the result of this dialogue with characteristic patience. When Heyward ceased to speak, they turned their eyes on Magua for an explanation of what had been said.[2] As soon as the truth was generally understood, the savages raised a frightful yell, which declared the extent of their disappointment. Some threw threatening looks at those captives who still remained in their power; while one or two even gave vent to their malignant feelings by the most meaning gestures, against which neither the sex nor the beauty of the sisters was any protection. The young soldier made a desperate but fruitless effort to spring to the side of Alice, when he saw the dark hand of a savage twisted in the rich tresses which were flowing in volumes over her shoulders, while a knife was passed around the head from which they fell, as if to denote the horrid manner in which it was about to be robbed of its beautiful ornament. But his hands were bound; and at the first movement he made, he felt the grasp of the powerful Indian who directed the band, pressing his shoulder like a vise. Immediately conscious how unavailing any struggle against such an overwhelming force must prove, he submitted to his fate, encouraging his gentle companions by a few low and tender assurances that the natives seldom failed to threaten more than they performed.

The stolen canoe, by which the savages had made their descent on the island, was now placed near the mouth of the outer cavern, and the leader made signs to the prisoners to descend and enter. As resistance was impossible, Heyward

[1] meaning Heyward.

[2] the other Indians not understanding English, in which Heyward and Magua had been speaking.

led the way into the canoe, where he was soon seated with the sisters and David. In a few moments the captives found themselves on the south bank of the stream, nearly opposite to the point where they had struck it on the preceding evening. Here was held a consultation, during which the horses were led from the cover of the woods.

The band now divided. The great chief already mentioned, mounted the charger of Heyward, and, followed by most of his people, disappeared in the woods, leaving the prisoners in charge of six savages, at whose head was Le Renard Subtil. Duncan witnessed all their movements with renewed uneasiness. No other expectation was left for himself and companions but to be retained as hopeless captives. Anxious to know the worst and willing to try the potency of gold, he addressed himself to his former guide, saying in tones as friendly as he could assume:

"Does not Renard mean to carry to the rich and gray-headed Scotchman his daughters? The chief of William Henry will give as a great chief should for such a service. The medal[1] of Magua will no longer be of tin, but of beaten gold; dollars will be as plenty in his pouch as pebbles on the shore of Horican. As for myself, I know not how to exceed the gratitude of the Scotchman, but I—yes, I will——"

"What will the young chief, who comes from toward the sun, give?" demanded the Huron, observing that Heyward hesitated.

"He will make the fire-water flow before the wigwam of Magua until the heart of the Indian shall be lighter than the feathers of the humming-bird."

"Enough: Le Renard is a wise chief, and what he does will be seen. Go and keep the mouth shut. When Magua speaks, it will be the time to answer."

[1] It has long been a practice with the whites to conciliate the important men of the Indians by presenting medals, which are worn in place of their own rude ornaments.—*Author's Note.*

Heyward, perceiving that the eyes of his companion were fastened on the rest of the band, fell back immediately; in order to avoid the appearance of any suspicious confederacy with their leader. Magua then signed to him to help the sisters into their saddles. The mare of David had been taken with the followers of the large chief; in consequence its owner, as well as Duncan, was compelled to journey on foot. When all were prepared, Magua made the signal to proceed, advancing in front to lead the party in person. Next followed David. The sisters rode in his rear, with Heyward at their side, while the Indians brought up the close of the march.

Cora alone remembered the parting injunctions of the scout, and, whenever an opportunity offered, she stretched forth her arm to bend aside the twigs that met her hands. But the vigilance of the Indians rendered this act of precaution both difficult and dangerous. She was often defeated in her purpose by encountering their watchful eyes, when it became necessary to feign an alarm she did not feel, and occupy the limb by some gesture of feminine apprehension.

Magua seldom turned to look at his followers, and he never spoke. With the sun for his only guide, or aided by such blind marks as are known only to the sagacity of the native, he held his way with the accuracy of instinct, and nearly with the directness of a bird. He never seemed to hesitate. Whenever the eyes of the travelers rose from the decayed leaves over which they trod, his dark form was to be seen glancing among the stems of the trees in front, his head in a forward position, with the light plume on his crest fluttering in a current of air made solely by the swiftness of his own motion.

But all this diligence and speed were not without an object. After crossing a low vale, through which wound a gushing brook, he suddenly ascended a hill, so steep that the sisters were compelled to alight in order to follow. When the summit was gained, they found themselves on a level spot, but

thinly covered with trees, under one of which Magua had thrown his dark form, as if willing and ready to seek that rest which was so much needed by the whole party.

CHAPTER XVI.

LE RENARD'S PROPOSAL.

NOTWITHSTANDING the swiftness of their flight, one of the Indians had found an opportunity to kill a straggling fawn with an arrow, and had borne the more preferable fragments of the victim, patiently on his shoulders, to the stopping-place. Without any cookery, he was immediately employed, in common with his fellows, in gorging himself with this sustenance. Magua alone sat apart, without participating in the revolting meal, and apparently buried in the deepest thought.

This abstinence, so remarkable in an Indian, when he possessed the means of satisfying hunger, at length attracted the notice of Heyward. The young man willingly believed that the Huron deliberated on the most eligible manner of eluding the vigilance of his associates. With a view to assist his plans by any suggestion of his own, and to strengthen the temptation, he straggled, as if without an object, to the spot where Le Renard was seated.

"Go," said the Huron, "go to the dark-haired daughter, and say, Magua waits to speak. The father will remember what the child promises."

Duncan, who interpreted this speech to express a wish for some additional pledge that the promised gifts should not be withheld, slowly repaired to the place where the sisters were now resting from their fatigue, to communicate its purport to Cora.

"You understand the nature of an Indian's wishes," he concluded, as he led her toward the place where she was expected, "and must be prodigal of your offers of powder and

blankets. Remember that on your presence of mind and ingenuity even your life, as well as that of Alice, may in some measure depend. But hush! we approach the Indian. Magua, the lady with whom you wish to speak is here."

The Indian rose slowly from his seat, and then signed with his hand for Heyward to retire, saying, coldly:

"When the Huron talks to the women, his tribe shut their ears."

Cora waited until Duncan had departed, and then turning to the native, with the dignity of her sex in her voice and manner, she said, "What would Le Renard say to the daughter of Munro?"

"Listen," said the Indian: "Magua was born a chief and a warrior among the red Hurons of the lakes. His Canada fathers came into the woods, and taught him to drink the fire-water, and he became a rascal. The Hurons drove him from the graves of his people, as they would chase the hunted buffalo. The chief, who was born a Huron, was at last a warrior among the Mohawks! When his English and French fathers dug up the hatchet,[1] Le Renard struck the war-post of the Mohawks, and went out against his own nation. The pale-faces have driven the red-skins from their hunting-grounds, and now, when they fight, a white man leads the way. The old chief at Horican, your father, was the great captain of our war-party. He said to the Mohawks do this, and do that, and he was minded. He made a law, that if an Indian swallowed the fire-water, and came into the cloth wigwams of his warriors, it should not be forgotten. Magua foolishly opened his mouth, and the hot liquor led him into the cabin of Munro. What did the gray-head? Let his daughter say."

[1] It was the custom of the Indians to bury the tomahawk or hatchet when they made peace, and to dig it up again when about to go to war; hence the phrase "burying the hatchet" came to mean putting an end to quarrels or disputes.

"He forgot not his words, and did justice, by punishing the offender," said the undaunted daughter.

"Justice!" repeated the Indian, casting a glance of the most ferocious expression at her countenance; "is it justice to make evil, and then punish for it? Magua was not himself; it was the fire-water that spoke and acted for him! but Munro did not believe it. The Huron chief[1] was tied up before all the pale-faced warriors, and whipped like a dog."

Cora remained silent, for she knew not how to palliate this imprudent severity on the part of her father in a manner to suit the comprehension of an Indian.

"See!" continued Magua, tearing aside the slight calico that very imperfectly concealed his painted breast; "here are scars given by knives and bullets—of these a warrior may boast before his nation; but the gray-head has left marks on the back of the Huron chief that he must hide, like a squaw,[2] under this painted cloth of the whites."

"Name your intention, Magua," said Cora. "Is it to lead us prisoners to the woods, or do you contemplate some greater evil? Is there no reward, no means of softening your heart?"

"Listen," said the Indian again. "When Magua left his people, his wife was given to another chief; he has now made friends with the Hurons and will go back to the graves of his tribe, on the shores of the great lake. Let the daughter of the English chief follow, and live in his wigwam forever."

However revolting this proposal was to Cora, she retained sufficient self-command to reply:

"And what pleasure would Magua find in sharing his cabin with a wife he did not love; one who would be of a nation and color different from his own? It would be better to take the gold of Munro, and buy the heart of some Huron maid with his gifts."

The Indian made no reply for near a minute, but bent

[1] meaning Magua himself.

[2] Indian woman.

his fierce looks on the countenance of Cora. Then he answered:

"When the blows scorched the back of the Huron, he would know where to find a woman to feel the smart. The daughter of Munro would draw his water, hoe his corn, and cook his venison.[1] The body of the gray-head would sleep among his cannon, but his heart would lie within reach of the knife of Le Subtil."

"Monster! well dost thou deserve thy treacherous name!" cried Cora. "None but a fiend could meditate such a vengeance! But thou overratest thy power! You shall find it is, in truth, the heart of Munro you hold, and that it will defy your utmost malice!"

The Indian answered this bold defiance by a ghastly smile, while he motioned her away, as if to close the conference forever. Cora was obliged to comply; for Magua instantly left the spot, and approached his gluttonous comrades. When he reached the cluster of lolling savages, who lay stretched on the earth, he commenced speaking with the dignity of an Indian chief. At first his language appeared calm and deliberative. He recited the events on the island, the death of their brave warriors; he spoke of the wives and children of the slain, their destitution, their misery, and their unavenged wrongs. Then suddenly lifting his voice to a pitch of terrific energy, he concluded by demanding:

"Are the Hurons dogs to bear this? What shall be said to the old men when they ask us for scalps, and we have not a hair from a white-head to give them? The women will point their fingers at us. There is a dark spot on the names of the Hurons, and it must be hid in blood——!"

His voice was no longer audible in the burst of rage which now broke into the air. The whole band sprung upon their

[1] Among the Indians the men did nothing but hunting and fighting, all the other work, such as building their huts or wigwams, cutting wood for fuel, sowing corn, carrying burdens, etc., being done by the women.

feet as one man and rushed upon the prisoners in a body with drawn knives and uplifted tomahawks. Heyward threw himself between the sisters and the foremost, whom he grappled with a desperate strength that for a moment checked his violence. This gave Magua time to interpose, and, with a rapid enunciation and animated gesture, he drew the attention of the band again to himself. In that language he knew so well how to assume, he diverted his comrades from their instant purpose and invited them to prolong the misery of their victims. His proposal was received with acclamations, and executed with the swiftness of thought. Two powerful warriors cast themselves on Heyward, another securing the less active singing-master. Neither of the captives, however, submitted without a desperate struggle. Even David hurled his assailant to the earth, nor was Heyward secured until the Indians directed their united force to that object. He was then bound and fastened to the body of a sapling, while on his right Cora was placed in a durance similar to his own, and on his left, the withes which bound her to a pine, performed that office for Alice which her trembling limbs refused, and alone kept her fragile form from sinking. Magua now approached Cora, and pointed out, with the most malign expression of countenance, the speedy fate that waited her.

"Ha!" he added, "what says the daughter of Munro? Her head is too good to find a pillow in the wigwam of Le Renard; will she like it better when it rolls about this hill a plaything for the wolves? Say; shall I send the yellow-hair to her father, and will you follow Magua to the great lakes, to carry his water, and feed him with corn?"

Cora beckoned him away, with a motion of disgust she could not control.

"What says he, dearest Cora?" asked the trembling voice of Alice. "Did he speak of sending me to our father?"

For many moments the elder sister looked upon the younger, with a countenance that wavered with contending emotions.

At length she spoke in an expression of tenderness that seemed maternal.

"Alice," she said, "the Huron offers us both life—nay, more than both; he offers to restore Duncan, as well as you, to our friends—to our father—if I will bow down this rebellious, stubborn pride of mine, and consent to follow him to the wilderness; go to the habitation of the Hurons; in short, to become his wife! Speak, then, Alice; child of my affections! sister of my love! Is life to be purchased by such a sacrifice? Will you, Alice, receive it at my hands at such a price?"

"No, no, no; better that we die as we have lived, together!"

"Then die!" shouted Magua, hurling his tomahawk at the speaker, and gnashing his teeth with rage.

The ax cleaved the air in front of Heyward, and, cutting some of the flowing ringlets of Alice, quivered in the tree above her head. The sight maddened Duncan to desperation. Collecting all his energies in one effort, he snapped the twigs which bound him, and rushed upon another savage, who was preparing to repeat the blow. They encountered, grappled, and fell to the earth together. The naked body of his antagonist afforded Heyward no means of holding his adversary, who glided from his grasp, and rose again with one knee on his chest, pressing him down with the weight of a giant. Duncan already saw the knife gleaming in the air, when a whistling sound swept past him, and was rather accompanied, than followed, by the sharp crack of a rifle. He felt his breast relieved from the load it had endured; he saw the savage expression of his adversary's countenance change to a look of vacant wildness, when the Indian fell dead on the faded leaves by his side.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RESCUE.

THE Hurons stood aghast at this sudden visitation of death on one of their band, and the name of "La Longue Cara-

bine" burst simultaneously from every lip. The cry was accompanied by a shout from a little thicket, where the incautious party had piled their arms; and, at the next moment, Hawkeye, too eager to load the rifle he had regained, was seen advancing upon them, brandishing the weapon, and cutting the air with powerful sweeps. Rapid as was the progress of the scout, it was exceeded by that of a vigorous form, which bounded past him into the center of the Hurons, where it stood, whirling a tomahawk and flourishing a knife in front of Cora. Quicker than the thoughts could follow these movements, an image, armed in the panoply of death, glided before their eyes, and assumed a threatening attitude at the other's side. The savage tormentors recoiled before these warlike intruders, and uttered, as they appeared in quick succession, the well-known and dreaded appellations of—

"Le Cerf Agile![1] Le Gros Serpent!"[2]

But the leader of the Hurons was not so easily disconcerted. Casting his eyes around, he comprehended the nature of the assault at a glance, and encouraging his followers, he unsheathed his long knife, and rushed upon Chingachgook. It was the signal for a general combat. Uncas, leaping on an enemy, with a single blow of his tomahawk, cleft him to the brain. Heyward tore the weapon of Magua from the sapling and rushed eagerly toward the fray. As the combatants were now equal in number, each singled an opponent from the adverse band. Hawkeye soon got another enemy within reach of his arm, and with one sweep of his weapon beat down his antagonist, crushing him to the earth with the blow. Heyward ventured to hurl the tomahawk he had seized, too ardent to await the moment of closing. It struck the Indian on the forehead, and checked for an instant his onward rush. Encouraged by this advantage, he sprung upon his enemy with naked hands. He immediately found himself fully engaged,

[1] French for *The Swift Deer*, another name for Uncas.

[2] French for *The Great Serpent*, another name for Chingachgook.

with all his activity and courage, in endeavoring to ward the desperate thrusts made with the knife of the Huron. Unable longer to foil an enemy so alert and vigilant, he threw his arms about him, and succeeded in pinning the limbs of the other to his side with an iron grasp, but one that was far too exhausting to himself to continue long. At the next moment the breech of Hawkeye's rifle fell on the head of his adversary, whose muscles appeared to wither under the shock, as he sunk from the arms of Duncan flexible and motionless.

When Uncas had brained his first antagonist, he turned, like a hungry lion, to seek another. The fifth and only Huron disengaged at the first onset had paused a moment, and then seeing that all around him were employed in the deadly strife, he sprang forward toward the defenseless Cora, sending his keen ax as the dreadful precursor of his approach. The tomahawk grazed her shoulder; and, cutting the withes which bound her to the tree, left the maiden at liberty to fly. She eluded the grasp of the savage, and threw herself on the bosom of Alice, striving, with convulsed fingers, to tear asunder the twigs which confined her sister. But the Huron, seizing her by the rich tresses which fell about her form, tore her from her frantic hold, and bowed her down with brutal violence to her knees. The savage drew the flowing curls through his hand, and, raising them on high, he passed the knife around the head of his victim with an exulting laugh. But just then the sight caught the eye of Uncas. For an instant he appeared darting through the air, and descending in a ball, he fell on the chest of his enemy. They arose together, fought, and bled, each in his turn. But the conflict was soon decided; the tomahawk of Heyward and the rifle of Hawkeye descended on the skull of the Huron, at the same moment that the knife of Uncas reached his heart.

The battle was now terminated with the exception of the struggle between Le Renard Subtil and Le Gros Serpent.

Well did these barbarous warriors prove that they deserved those significant names which had been bestowed for deeds in former wars. When they engaged, some little time was lost in eluding the quick and vigorous thrust which had been aimed at their lives. Suddenly darting on each other, they closed, and came to the earth, twisted together like twining serpents, in pliant and subtle folds. At the moment when the victors found themselves unoccupied, the spot where these desperate combatants lay could be distinguished only by a cloud of dust and leaves which moved from the center of the little plain toward its boundary, as if raised by the passage of a whirlwind. Heyward and his companions rushed to the place, encircling the little canopy of dust which hung above the warriors. In vain did Uncas dart around the cloud, with a wish to strike his knife into the heart of his father's foe; the threatening rifle of Hawkeye was raised and suspended in vain, while Duncan endeavored to seize the limbs of the Huron with hands that appeared to have lost their power. Covered, as they were, with dust and blood, the swift evolutions of the combatants seemed to incorporate their bodies into one. In this manner, the scene of the combat was removed from the center of the little plain to its verge. The Mohican now found an opportunity to make a powerful thrust with his knife; Magua suddenly relinquished his grasp, and fell backward without motion, and seemingly without life. His adversary leaped on his feet, making the arches of the forest ring with the sounds of triumph.

"Well done for the Delawares! victory to the Mohican!" cried Hawkeye, elevating the butt of the long and fatal rifle. But, at the moment when the weapon was in the act of descending, the subtle Huron rolled swiftly from beneath the danger, over the edge of the precipice, and, falling on his feet, was seen leaping into the center of a thicket of low bushes, which clung along its sides. The Delawares uttered their exclamation of surprise, and were following like hounds

in view of a deer, when a cry from the scout recalled them to the summit of the hill.

"Let him go—let him go; 'tis but one man, and he without a rifle or bow, many a long mile from his French commerades; he can do no further mischief, until such time as he, and we too, may leave the prints of our moccasins over a long reach of sandy plain. See, Uncas," he added, in Delaware, "your father is flaying the scalps already."

But Uncas, denying his habits, flew with instinctive delicacy, accompanied by Heyward, to the assistance of the females, and, quickly releasing Alice, placed her in the arms of Cora. We shall not attempt to describe the gratitude to the Almighty Disposer of events which glowed in the bosoms of the sisters, who were thus unexpectedly restored to life and to each other.

"We are saved! we are saved! to return to the arms of our dear, dear father, and his heart will not be broken with grief," cried Alice, throwing herself on the bosom of Cora, and sobbing aloud.

During the display of emotions so natural in their situation, Hawkeye approached David, and liberated him from the bonds he had, until that moment, endured with the most exemplary patience. The scout then proceeded to collect and to examine into the state of the captured arsenal of the Hurons. In this office he was joined by Chingachgook, who found his own, as well as the rifle of his son, among the arms. Even Heyward and David were furnished with weapons; nor was ammunition wanting to render them effectual. The scout now announced that the hour had arrived when it was necessary to move.

Aided by Duncan and the younger Mohican, the two sisters descended the precipitous sides of the hill. At the foot they found the horses browsing the herbage of the bushes; and, having mounted, they followed the movements of a guide, who, in the most deadly straits, had so often proved himself

their friend. The journey was, however, short. Hawkeye, leaving the blind path that the Hurons had followed, turned short to his right, and, entering a thicket, crossed a babbling brook, and halted in a narrow dell, under the shade of a few water-elms.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT THE SALT-SPRINGS.

THE scout and the Indians appeared to be familiar with the sequestered place where they now were; for, leaning their rifles against the trees, they commenced throwing aside the dried leaves and opening the blue clay, out of which a clear and sparkling spring of bright, glancing water quickly bubbled. The white man then looked about him, as though seeking for some object which was not to be found as readily as he expected.

"Them careless imps, the Mohawks, with their Tuscarora and Onondaga brethren,[1] have been here slaking their thirst," he muttered, "and the vagabonds have thrown away the gourd![2] This is the way with benefits when they are bestowed on such disremembering hounds!"

Uncas silently extended toward him the desired gourd, which the spleen of Hawkeye had hitherto prevented him from observing, on a branch of an elm. Filling it with water, he retired to a short distance, to a place where the ground was more firm and dry; here he coolly seated himself, and, after taking a long draught, he commenced a strict examination of the fragments of food left by the Hurons, which had hung in a wallet on his arm.

"Thank you, lad!" he continued, returning the gourd to Uncas; "now we will see how these Hurons lived, when outlying in ambushments. Look at this! The varlets know the

[1] Indian tribes.

[2] fruit, such as the pumpkin, with a hard rind or shell, which, when dry, is used for drinking-cups.

better pieces of the deer. But everything is raw, for the Iroquois are thorough savages. Uncas, take my steel, and kindle a fire;[1] a mouthful of a tender broil will give natur' a helping hand, after so long a trail."

Heyward now assisted the ladies to alight, and placed himself at their side, not unwilling to enjoy a few moments of rest, after the bloody scene he had just gone through. While the culinary process was in hand, curiosity induced him to inquire into the circumstances which had led to their unexpected rescue.

"How is it that we see you so soon, my generous friend," he asked, "and without aid from the garrison of Edward?"

"Had we gone to the bend in the river, we might have been in time to rake the leaves over your bodies, but too late to have saved your scalps," answered the scout. "No, no; instead of throwing away strength and opportunity by crossing to the fort, we lay by under the bank of the Hudson, waiting to watch the movements of the Hurons."

"You were, then, witnesses of all that passed?"

"Not of all; for Indian sight is too keen to be easily cheated, and we kept close."

"You saw our capture?" Heyward next demanded.

"We heard it. An Indian yell is plain language to men who have passed their days in the woods. But when you landed, we were driven to crawl, like sarpents, beneath the leaves; and then we lost sight of you entirely, until we placed eyes on you again, trussed to the trees, and ready bound for an Indian massacre."

"Our rescue was the deed of Providence. It was nearly a miracle that you did not mistake the path, for the Hurons divided, and each band had its horses."

"Ay! there we were thrown off the scent, and might, indeed, have lost the trail, had it not been for Uncas; we took

[1] a piece of steel for striking against flint to produce sparks for lighting a fire. This method was common before the invention of matches.

the path, however, that led into the wilderness; for we judged that the savages would hold that course with their prisoners. But when we had followed it without finding a single twig broken, as I had advised, my mind misgave me; especially as all the footsteps had the prints of moccasins."

"Our captors had the precaution to see us shod like themselves," said Duncan, raising a foot, and exhibiting the buckskin he wore.

"Ay! it was judgmatical,[1] and like themselves, though we were too expert to be thrown from a trail by so common an invention."

"To what, then, are we indebted for our safety?"

"To the judgment of the young Mohican, in matters which I should know better than he, but which I can now hardly believe to be true, though my own eyes tell me it is so. Uncas was bold enough to say that the beasts ridden by the gentle ones planted the legs of one side on the ground at the same time, which is contrary to the movements of all trotting four-footed animals of my knowledge, except the bear. And yet here are horses that always journey in this manner, as my own eyes have seen, and as their trail has shown for twenty long miles."

"'Tis the merit of the animal! They come from the shores of Narragansett Bay, in the small province of Providence Plantations,[2] and are celebrated for their hardihood, and the ease of this peculiar movement; though other horses are not unfrequently trained to the same."

"It may be—it may be," said Hawkeye, "but, go sidling or straight, Uncas had seen the movement, and their trail led us on to the broken bush. The outer branch, near the prints of one of the horses, was bent upward, as a lady breaks a flower from its stem, but all the rest were ragged and broken down, as if the strong hand of man had been tearing them! So I

[1] a favorite word of Hawkeye's, meaning judicious, prudent.

[2] in what is now the state of Rhode Island.

concluded that the cunning varments had seen the twig bent, and had torn the rest to make us believe a buck had been feeling the boughs with his antlers."

"I do believe your sagacity did not deceive you; for some such thing occurred."

"That was easy to see," added the scout, "and a very different matter it was from a waddling horse! It then struck me the Mingoes would push for this spring, for the knaves well knew the virtue of its waters."

"Is it, then, so famous?" demanded Heyward.

"Few red-skins who travel south and east of the great lakes but have heard of its qualities. Will you taste for yourself?"

Heyward took the gourd, and, after swallowing a little of the water, threw it aside with grimaces of discontent.

"Ah! you want the flavor that one gets by habit; the time was when I liked it as little as yourself; but I have come to my taste, and I now crave it as a deer does the licks.[1] But Uncas has made his fire, and it is time we think of eating, for our journey is long and all before us."

When this necessary, and, happily, grateful duty had been performed, each of the foresters stopped and took a long and parting draught at that solitary and silent spring around which and its sister-fountains, within fifty years, the wealth, beauty, and talents of a hemisphere were to assemble in throngs in pursuit of health and pleasure.[2] Then Hawkeye announced his determination to proceed. The sisters resumed their saddles; Duncan and David grasped their rifles, and followed on their footsteps, the scout leading the advance, and the Mohicans bringing up the rear. The whole party moved

[1] Many of the animals of the American forest resort to those spots where salt-springs are found. These are called "licks," or "salt-licks," in the language of the country, from the circumstance that the quadruped is often obliged to lick the earth in order to obtain the saline particles. —*Author's Note.*

[2] The scene of the foregoing incidents is on the spot where the village of Ballston now stands, one of the two principal watering-places of America.—*Author's Note.*

swiftly through the narrow path toward the north, leaving the healing waters to mingle unheeded with the adjacent brook.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BLOCK-HOUSE.

THE route taken by Hawkeye lay across those sandy plains, relieved by occasional valleys and swells of land, which had been traversed by their party on the morning of the same day with the baffled Magua for their guide. The sun had now fallen low toward the distant mountains; and, as their journey lay through the forest, the heat was no longer oppressive. Their progress, in consequence, was proportionate; and before twilight gathered about them they had made a good many toilsome miles on their return. While the eyes of the sisters were endeavoring to catch glimpses through the trees of the flood of golden glory which formed a glittering halo around the sun, Hawkeye turned suddenly, and, pointing upward toward the gorgeous heavens, he spoke:

"Yonder is the signal given to man to seek his food and natural rest; better and wiser would it be, if he could understand the signs of Natur', and take a lesson from the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the fields! Our night, however, will soon be over, for, with the moon, we must be up and moving again. I remember to have fout[1] the Maquas, hereaways, in the first war in which I ever drew blood from man; and we threw up a work of blocks, to keep the ravenous varments from handling our scalps. If my marks do not fail me, we shall find the place a few rods further to our left."

Without waiting for any reply, the sturdy hunter moved boldly into a dense thicket of young chestnuts, shoving aside the branches like a man who expected at each step to discover some object he had formerly known. The recollection of the

[1] fought.

scout did not deceive him. After penetrating through the brush for a few hundred feet, he entered an open space, that surrounded a low, green hillock, which was crowned by the decayed block-house in question. This rude and neglected building was one of those deserted works which, having been thrown up on an emergency, had been abandoned with the disappearance of danger, and was now quietly crumbling in the solitude of the forest. The roof of bark had long since fallen, but the huge logs of pine, which had been hastily thrown together, still preserved their relative positions, though one angle of the work had given away and threatened a speedy downfall to the remainder of the rustic edifice. Heyward and his companion hesitated to approach a building so decayed, but Hawkeye and the Indians entered without fear. While the former surveyed the ruins, with the curiosity of one whose recollections were reviving at each moment, Chingachgook related to his son, with the pride of a conqueror, the brief history of the skirmish which had been fought, in his youth, in that secluded spot. In the meantime the sisters dismounted, and prepared to enjoy their halt in the coolness of the evening, in a security which they believed nothing but the beasts of the forest could invade.

"Would not our resting-place have been more retired, my worthy friend," demanded Duncan, "had we chosen a spot less known, and one more rarely visited than this?"

"Few live who know the block-house was ever raised," was the answer; "'tis not often that narratives are written of such a scrimmage as was here fout atween the Mohicans and the Mohawks, in a war of their own waging. I was then a younker, and went out with the Delawares, because I know'd they were a wronged race. Forty days and forty nights did the imps crave blood around this pile of logs, which I designed and partly reared. The Delawares lent themselves to the work, and we made it good, ten to twenty, until our numbers were nearly equal, and then we sallied out upon the hounds,

and not a man of them ever got back to tell the fate of his party. But the gentle ones are willing to rest, after all they have seen and done this day. Uncas, clear out the spring, while your father and I make a cover for their tender heads, of those chestnut-shoots, and a bed of grass and leaves."

A spring, which many years before had induced the natives to select the place for their temporary fortification, was soon cleared of leaves, and a fountain gushed from the bed, diffusing its waters over the verdant hillocks. A corner of the building was then roofed to exclude the heavy dew of the climate, and shrubs and dried leaves were laid beneath it for the sisters to repose on.

While the woodsmen were employed in this manner, Cora and Alice partook of refreshment. They then retired within the walls, and first offering thanksgiving for past mercies, and petitioning for the Divine favor throughout the coming night, they laid their tender forms on the fragrant couch, and soon sank into slumbers. Duncan had prepared himself to pass the night in watchfulness near them, just without the ruin, but the scout pointed toward Chingachgook, as he disposed his own person on the grass, and said:

"The eyes of a white man are too heavy for such a watch as this! The Mohican will be our sentinel. Do then, like Uncas and myself, sleep and sleep in safety."

Heyward perceived, in truth, that the younger Indian had thrown his form on the side of the hillock, and that his example had been followed by David. He then posted his back against the logs of the block-house, in a half-recumbent posture, and soon fell into a deep sleep. How long he lay in this state he never knew, but he was awakened by a light tap on the shoulder.

"Friend," said Chingachgook in a low voice, "moon comes, and white man's fort far—far off; time to move."

"You say true! call up your friends, and bridle the horses, while I prepare my own companions for the march!"

"We are awake, Duncan," said the soft tones of Alice within the building, "and ready to travel very fast, after so refreshing a sleep."

"The Mohicans hear an enemy!" whispered Hawkeye, who by this time was awake and stirring. "That scampering Huron has fallen in with one of Montcalm's outlying parties and they have struck upon our trail. Lead the horses into the block-house, Uncas; and, friends, do you follow to the same shelter."

He was instantly obeyed, the Mohicans leading the Narragansetts within the ruin, whither the whole party repaired, with the most guarded silence. The sounds of approaching footsteps were now distinctly audible. They were soon mingled with voices calling to each other in an Indian dialect, which the hunter, in a whisper, affirmed to Heyward was the language of the Hurons. The savages were so near, that the least motion in one of the horses would have betrayed the fugitives. But in discovering the character of the mound, the attention of the Hurons appeared directed to a different object. They spoke together, and the sounds of their voices were low and solemn, as if influenced by a reverence that was deeply blended with awe. Then they drew warily back, keeping their eyes riveted on the ruin, as if they expected to see the apparitions of the dead issue from its walls, until having reached the boundary of the area, they moved slowly into the thicket, and disappeared.

Hawkeye waited until a signal from the listening Chingachgook assured him that every sound from the retiring party was swallowed by the distance, when he motioned to Heyward to lead forth the horses, and to assist the sisters into their saddles. The instant this was done, they issued through the broken gate-way, and, stealing out by a direction opposite to the one by which they had entered, they quitted the spot, to bury themselves in the gloom of the woods.

CHAPTER XX.

RESTORED TO THEIR FATHER.

DURING the rapid movement from the block-house, and until the party was deeply buried in the forest, each individual was too much interested in the escape to hazard a word, even in whispers. The scout resumed his post in the advance, but more than once he halted to consult with his confederates, the Mohicans. Not a sound arose from the forest, unless it was the distant rippling of a water-course. Birds, beasts, and men appeared to slumber alike, if, indeed, any of the latter were to be found in that wide tract of wilderness. But the sounds of the rivulet relieved the guides from embarrassment, and toward it they immediately held their way.

When the banks of the little stream were gained, Hawkeye made another halt; and, taking the moccasins from his feet, he invited Heyward and Gamut to follow his example. He then entered the water, and for near an hour they traveled in the bed of the brook, leaving no trail. The moon had already sunk into an immense pile of black clouds, when they issued from the water-course to rise again to the right and level of the sandy but wooded plain. The path soon became more uneven, and the travelers could plainly perceive that the mountains drew the nigher to them on each hand, and that they were about entering one of their gorges. Suddenly, Hawkeye made a pause, and, waiting until he was joined by the whole party, he spoke in tones so cautious that they added to the solemnity of his words:

"It is easy to know the pathways, and to find the licks and water-courses of the wilderness, but who that saw this spot could say that a mighty army was at rest among yonder silent trees and barren mountains?"

"We are, then, at no great distance from William Henry?" said Heyward.

"It is yet a long and weary path, and when and where to strike it is now our greatest difficulty. See," he said, pointing through the trees toward a little basin of water, "here is the 'bloody pond'; and I am on ground over which I have fout the enemy, from the rising to the setting sun."

"Ha!" exclaimed Duncan, "that sheet of water, then, is the sepulcher of the brave men who fell in the contest."

"Three battles did we make with the Dutch-Frenchman[1] in a day," continued Hawkeye. "He met us hard by, in our outward march to ambush his advance, and scattered us, like driven deer, through the defile, to the shores of Horican. Then we rallied behind our fallen trees, and made head against him, under Sir William—who was made Sir William for that very deed; and well did we pay him for the disgrace of the morning. Hundreds of Frenchmen saw the sun that day for the last time; and even their leader, Dieskau himself, fell into our hands, so cut and torn with the lead, that he has gone back to his own country unfit for further acts in war."

"'Twas a noble repulse," exclaimed Heyward. "The fame of it reached us early, in our southern army. You have, then, seen much service on this frontier?"

"I!" said the scout, erecting his tall person with an air of military pride; "there are not many echoes among these hills that haven't rung with the crack of my rifle, nor is there the space of a square mile atwixt Horican and the river[2] that Killdeer hasn't dropped a living body on, be it an enemy, or be it a brute beast. Hist! see you nothing walking on the shores of the pond? By Heaven! there is a human form, and it approaches!"

"Qui vive?"[3] demanded a stern voice, which sounded like a challenge from another world, issuing out of that solitary and solemn place.

[1] Baron Dieskau, a German, in the service of France. A few years previous to the period of the tale, this officer was defeated on the shores of Lake George by Sir William Johnson of Johnstown, New York. —*Author's Note.*

[2] meaning the Hudson.

[3] (*pron.* kē vēv) French for *who's there?*

"France!" cried Heyward, advancing within a few yards of the sentinel.

"Are you an officer of the king?" asked the Frenchman, speaking in his native tongue.

"Without doubt, comrade," replied Heyward, speaking also in French. "I have here with me the daughters of the commandant of the fort. I made them prisoners near the other fort, and am conducting them to the general."

"My faith! ladies," exclaimed the sentinel, "I am grieved for you. But you will find our general a brave man, and polite to ladies."

He then made a low bow, and Heyward adding a "good night, comrade," they moved deliberately forward.

"'Tis well you understood the knave," whispered the scout when they had gained a little distance from the place, "but the French have gathered around the fort in good earnest, and we have a delicate needle to thread in passing them. We must turn on our trail, and get without the line of their lookouts, when we will bend short to the west, and enter the mountains; where I can hide you, so that all the devil's hounds in Montcalm's pay would be thrown off the scent for months to come."

"Let it be done, and that instantly."

Hawkeye merely uttering the mandate to "follow," moved along the route by which they had just entered their present dangerous situation. Their progress was guarded, and without noise; for none knew at what moment a passing patrol, or a crouching picket, of the enemy, might rise upon their path. The scout soon deviated from the line of their retreat, and, striking off toward the mountains which form the western boundary of the plain, he led his followers deep within the shadows that were cast from their high summits. At length the party began slowly to rise a steep ascent by a path that wound among rocks and trees. As they gradually rose from the level of the valleys, the thick darkness which usually pre-

cedes the approach of day began to disperse, and objects were seen in the plain colors with which they had been gifted by Nature. When they issued from the stunted woods which clung to the barren sides of the mountain, upon a flat and mossy rock that formed its summit, they met the morning, as it came blushing above the green pines of a hill that lay on the opposite side of the valley of the Horican.

The scout now told the sisters to dismount; and taking the bridles from the mouths, and the saddles off the backs of the jaded beasts, he turned them loose, to glean a scanty subsistence among the herbage of that elevated region.

"Have we no further need of them?" demanded Heyward.

"See, and judge with your own eyes," said the scout, advancing toward the eastern brow of the mountain, whither he beckoned for the whole party to follow.

When they reached the verge of the precipice, they saw at a glance the camp of Montcalm. The mountain on which they stood, elevated, perhaps, a thousand feet in the air, was a high cone that rose a little in advance of that range which stretches for miles along the western shores of the lake. Immediately at the feet of the party, the southern shore of the Horican swept in a broad semicircle, marking a wide strand that soon rose into an uneven and somewhat elevated plain. To the north, stretched the limpid sheet of the "holy lake," indented with numberless bays, and dotted with countless islands. At the distance of a few leagues, the bed of the waters became lost among mountains, or was wrapped in the masses of vapor that came slowly rolling along their bosom. But a narrow opening in the crest of the hills pointed out the passage by which they found their way still further north, to spread their pure and ample sheets again, before pouring out their tribute into the distant Champlain.

Directly on the shore of the lake, and nearer to its western than to its eastern margin, lay the extensive earthen ramparts and low buildings of William Henry. Two of the sweeping

bastions[1] appeared to rest on the water which washed their bases, while a deep ditch and extensive morasses guarded its other sides and angles. The land had been cleared of wood for a reasonable distance around the work. In its front might be seen the scattered sentinels, who held a weary watch against their numerous foes; and, within the walls, the travelers looked down upon men still drowsy with a night of vigilance. Toward the southeast, but in immediate contact with the fort, was an intrenched camp, posted on a rocky eminence, in which Hawkeye pointed out to Heyward and his companions those auxiliary regiments that had so recently left the Hudson in their company. But the spectacle which most concerned the young soldier was on the western bank of the lake. On a strip of land, which appeared too narrow to contain such an army, but which, in truth, extended many hundreds of yards from the shores of the Horican to the base of the mountain, were to be seen the white tents and military engines of an encampment of ten thousand men. Batteries were already thrown up in their front, and even while the spectators above them were looking down on a scene which lay like a map beneath their feet, the roar of artillery rose from the valley.

"Morning is just touching them below," said the scout, "and the watchers have a mind to wake up the sleepers by the sound of cannon. We are a few hours too late! Montcalm has already filled the woods with his accursed Iroquois. See!" continued the scout, directing the attention of Cora to the quarters of her own father, "how that shot has made the stones fly from the side of the commandant's house!"

"Heyward, I sicken at the sight of danger that I cannot share," said the undaunted daughter. "Let us go to Montcalm and demand admission; he dare not deny a child the boon."

"You would scarce find the tent of the Frenchman with the hair on your head," said the blunt scout.

[1] masses of earth, faced with sods or stones, and projecting from the rampart of a fort.

He then waved his hand for them to follow, and threw himself down the steep declivity with free but careful footsteps. Heyward assisted the sisters to descend, and in a few minutes they were all far down the mountain. The direction taken by Hawkeye soon brought the travelers to the level of the plain, nearly opposite to a sally-port in the western curtain of the fort, which lay itself at the distance of about half a mile from the point where he halted to allow Duncan to come up with his charge. In their eagerness they had anticipated the fog, which was rolling heavily down the lake, and it became necessary to pause until the mists had wrapped the camp of the enemy in their fleecy mantle. The Mohicans profited by the delay to steal out of the woods, and to make a survey of surrounding objects. They were followed at a little distance by the scout with a view to obtain some faint knowledge, for himself, of the more immediate localities. In a few moments he returned, his face reddened with vexation.

"Here has the cunning Frenchman been posting a picket directly in our path," said he; "red-skins and whites, and we shall be as likely to fall into their midst as to pass them in the fog!"

To avoid the danger they made a little circuit to the left, and were already inclining again toward the right, having, as Heyward thought, got over nearly half the distance to the friendly works, when his ears were saluted with the fierce summons, apparently within twenty feet of them, of——

"Qui va la?"[1]

"Push on!" whispered the scout, once more bending to the left.

"Push on!" repeated Heyward; when the summons was renewed by a dozen voices.

"Let us fire," said Hawkeye; "they will believe it is a sortie and give way."

The instant the French heard the pieces, it seemed as if the

[1] (*pron.* kē vă lă) French for *who goes there?*

plain was alive with men, muskets rattling along its whole extent, from the shores of the lake to the furthest boundary of the woods. Cries, voices calling to each other, and the reports of firing were quick and incessant, and, apparently, on every side of them. Suddenly, a glare of light flashed across the scene, the fog rolled upward in thick wreaths, several cannon belched across the plain, and the roar was thrown back from the echoes of the mountain.

"'Tis from the fort!" exclaimed Hawkeye, "and we, like stricken fools, were rushing to the woods, under the very knives of the Maquas."

The instant their mistake was rectified, the whole party retraced the error with the utmost diligence. Men, hot and angry in pursuit, were evidently on their footsteps, and each instant threatened their capture, if not their destruction.

"No quarter to the knaves!" an eager pursuer cried in French.

"Stand firm and be ready, my gallant 60ths!"[1] suddenly exclaimed a voice above them. "Wait to see the enemy; fire low, and sweep the glacis."

"Father! father!" exclaimed a piercing cry from out the mist; "it is I! Alice! Spare, oh! save your daughters!"

"Hold!" shouted the former speaker, in the awful tones of parental agony. "'Tis she! God has restored me my children! Throw open the sally-port; to the field, 60ths, to the field; pull not a trigger, lest ye kill my lambs! Drive off these dogs of France with your steel."

Duncan heard the grating of the rusty hinges, and darting to the spot, directed by the sound, he met a long line of dark-red warriors, passing quickly toward the glacis. He knew them for his own battalion of Royal Americans, and flying to their head, soon swept every trace of his pursuers from before the works.

For an instant, Cora and Alice had stood trembling and

[1] meaning the men of the 60th Regiment.

bewildered by this unexpected desertion; but, before either had leisure for speech, an officer of gigantic frame, whose locks were bleached with years and service, rushed out of the body of the mist, folded them to his bosom, while large scalding tears rolled down his pale and wrinkled cheeks, and exclaimed:

"For this I thank Thee, Lord! Let danger come as it will, Thy servant is now prepared!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SCOUT AND THE LETTER.

A FEW succeeding days were passed amid the dangers of the siege, which was vigorously pressed by a power against whose approaches Munro possessed no competent means of resistance. It appeared as if Webb, with his army, which lay slumbering on the banks of the Hudson, had utterly forgotten the strait to which his countrymen were reduced. Montcalm had filled the woods with his savages, every yell from whom rang through the British encampment, chilling the hearts of the men who were already but too much disposed to magnify the danger.

It was in the afternoon of the fifth day of the siege that Major Heyward profited by a parley that had just been beaten,[1] by repairing to the ramparts of one end of the water-bastions, to breathe the cool air from the lake, and to take a survey of the progress of the siege. He was alone, if the solitary sentinel who paced the mound be excepted; for the artillerists had hastened also to profit by the temporary suspension of their arduous duties. Two little spotless flags were abroad, the one on a salient angle of the fort, and the other on the advanced battery of the besiegers—emblems of the truce which existed, not only to the acts, but it would seem also to the enmity of the combatants.

[1] sound of drum or trumpet as a signal that a parley, or conference, is desired with the enemy.

Duncan stood contemplating the scene a few minutes, when his eyes were directed to the front of the sally-port, already mentioned, by the sounds of approaching footsteps. He walked to an angle of the bastion, and beheld the scout advancing under the custody of a French officer, to the body of the fort. The countenance of Hawkeye was haggard and careworn and his air dejected. He was without his favorite weapon, and his arms were even bound behind him with thongs made of the skin of a deer. Heyward started with surprise, descended from the bastion into the bosom of the work, and, moving rapidly across the parade, was quickly in the presence of the colonel. Munro was pacing his apartment with a disturbed air as Duncan entered.

"You have anticipated my wishes, Major Heyward," he said; "I was about to request this favor."

"I am sorry to see, sir, that the messenger I so warmly recommended has returned in custody of the French! I hope there is no reason to distrust his fidelity."

"The fidelity of 'The Long Rifle' is well known to me," returned Munro, "and is above suspicion; though his usual good fortune seems, at last, to have failed. Montcalm has got him, and with the politeness of his nation, he has sent him in with a doleful tale, of 'knowing how I valued the fellow, he could not think of retaining him.'"

"But the general[1] and his succor——"

"Did ye look to the south as ye entered, and could ye not see them?" said the old soldier, laughing bitterly.

"They are coming, then? The scout has said as much?"

"When? and by what path? for the dunce has omitted to tell me this. There is a letter, it would seem, too; and that is the only agreeable part of the matter. For if the news of the letter were bad, the gentility of this French monsieur would certainly compel him to let us know it."

"He keeps the letter, then, while he releases the messenger.

[1] meaning Webb.

But what says the scout? He has eyes and ears, and a tongue: what report does he make?"

"Oh! sir, he is free to tell all that he has seen and heard. There is a fort of his majesty's on the banks of the Hudson, called Edward, in honor of his gracious highness of York,[1] you'll know; and it is well filled with armed men, as such a work should be."

"But there was no movement, no signs of any intention to advance to our relief?"

"There were the morning and evening parades." Then, suddenly changing his bitter manner, he continued: "And yet there must be something in that letter which it would be well to know!"

"Our decision should be speedy," said Duncan. "I cannot conceal from you, sir, that the camp will not be much longer tenable: and I am sorry to add that things appear no better in the fort—more than half the guns are burst."

"Major Heyward," said Munro, "while there is hope of succor, this fortress will I defend, though it be to be done with pebbles gathered on the lake-shore. It is a sight of the letter that we want, that we may know the intentions of the man the Earl of Loudon[2] has left among us as his substitute?"

"And can I be of service in the matter?"

"Sir, you can. Montcalm has invited me to a personal interview between the works and his own camp; in order, as he says, to impart some additional information. Now, I think, it would not be wise to show any undue solicitude to meet him, and I would employ you, an officer of rank, as my substitute."

Duncan cheerfully assented to supply the place of the veteran. A long communication succeeded, during which the young man received some additional insight into his duty, from his commander, and then the former took his leave. With a roll and beat of the drum, and covered by a white flag,

[1] Edward, Duke of York, grandson of King George II.

[2] commander-in-chief of the British forces in America.

he left the sally-port within ten minutes after his instructions were ended.

The general of the enemy received the youthful messenger surrounded by his principal officers and a swarthy band of the native chiefs who had followed him to the field with the warriors of their several tribes. The Marquis of Montcalm was, at the period of which we write, in the flower of his age and in the zenith of his fortunes. But, even in that enviable situation, he was affable, and distinguished as much for his attention to the forms of courtesy, as for that chivalrous courage which, only two short years afterward, induced him to throw away his life on the plains of Abraham.[1]

After a protracted and fruitless interview, Duncan took his leave, favorably impressed with an opinion of the courtesy and talents of the enemy's captain, but as ignorant of what he came to learn as when he arrived. Montcalm followed him as far as the entrance of the marquee, renewing his invitations to the commandant of the fort to give him an immediate meeting in the open ground between the two armies. There they separated, and Duncan returned to the quarters of his own commander.

CHAPTER XXII.

MUNRO SURRENDERS.

Major Heyward found Munro attended only by his daughters. The quick eyes of Alice soon caught a glimpse of his figure reflected from a glass, and she sprang blushing from her father's knee, exclaiming aloud:

"Major Heyward!"

"What of the lad?" demanded her father; "I have sent him to crack[2] a little with the Frenchman. Ha! sir, you are young, and you're nimble! Away with you, ye baggage; as if

[1] at the battle of Quebec.

[2] (Scotch) to chat; to talk.

there were not troubles enough for a soldier without having his camp filled with such prattling hussies as yourself!"

Alice laughingly followed her sister, who instantly led the way from the apartment. Munro, instead of demanding the result of the young man's mission, paced the room for a few moments with his head inclined toward the floor, like a man lost in thought. At length he raised his eyes and exclaimed:

"They are a pair of excellent girls, Heyward, and such as any one may boast of."

"You are not now to learn my opinion of your daughters, Colonel Munro."

"True, lad, true," interrupted the impatient old man; "you were about opening your mind more fully on that matter the day you got in; but I did not think it becoming in an old soldier to be talking of nuptial blessings when the enemies of his king were likely to be unbidden guests at the feast! I was wrong, Duncan, and I am now ready to hear what you have to say. Your mother was the only child of my bosom friend, Duncan: and I'll just give you a hearing, though all the knights of St. Louis[1] were in a body at the sally-port."

Heyward, who perceived that his superior took a malicious pleasure in exhibiting his contempt for the message of the French general, was fain to humor a spleen that he knew would be but short-lived; he, therefore, replied with as much indifference as he could assume on such a subject:

"My request, as you know, sir, went so far as to presume to the honor of being your son."

"Ay, boy, you found words to make yourself very plainly comprehended. But, let me ask ye, sir, have you been as intelligible to the girl?"

"On my honor, no!" exclaimed Duncan; "there would have been an abuse of a confided trust had I taken advantage of my situation for such a purpose."

"Your notions are those of a gentleman, Major Heyward.

[1] the patron saint of France.

But Cora Munro is a maiden too discreet to need the guardianship even of a father."

"Cora! I—I—I was not conscious of having mentioned her name," said Duncan, stammering.

"And to marry whom, then, did you wish my consent, Major Heyward?" demanded the old soldier, erecting himself in the dignity of offended feeling.

"You have another, and not less lovely child."

"Alice!" exclaimed the father, in astonishment.

"Such was the direction of my wishes, sir."

The young man awaited in silence the result of the extraordinary effect produced by a communication which, as it now appeared, was so unexpected. For several minutes Munro paced the chamber with rapid strides. At length he said with lip that quivered violently:

"Duncan Heyward, I have loved you for the sake of him whose blood is in your veins; I have loved you for your own good qualities. But all this love would turn to hatred, were I assured that what I so much apprehend is true."

"God forbid that any act or thought of mine should lead to such a change!" exclaimed the young man, whose eye never quailed under the penetrating look it encountered. Munro suffered himself to be appeased by the unaltered countenance he met, and, with a voice sensibly softened, he continued:

"You would be my son, Duncan, and you're ignorant of the history of the man you wish to call your father. Sit ye down, young man, and I will open to you the wounds of a seared heart in as few words as may be suitable. You know already, Major Heyward, that my family was both ancient and honorable. I was, may be, such a one as yourself when I plighted my faith to Alice Graham, the only child of a neighboring laird[1] of some estate. But the connection was disagreeable to her father, on more accounts than my poverty. I did therefore what an honest man should—restored the maiden

[1] Scotch landowner or house-proprietor.

to her troth, and departed the country in the service of my king. I had seen many regions before duty called me to the islands of the West Indies. There it was my lot to form a connection with one who became my wife and the mother of Cora. She was the daughter of a gentleman of those isles, by a lady whose misfortune it was, if you will, to be descended, remotely, from that unfortunate class who are so basely enslaved to administer to the wants of a luxurious people. Ha! Major Heyward, you are yourself born at the south, where these unfortunate beings are considered of a race inferior to your own."

"'Tis most unfortunately true, sir," said Duncan.

"And you cast it on my child as a reproach? You scorn to mingle the blood of the Heywards with one so degraded?"

"Heaven protect me from a prejudice so unworthy of my reason!" returned Duncan. "The sweetness, the beauty, the witchery of your younger daughter, Colonel Munro, might explain my motives without imputing to me this injustice."

"Ye are right, sir," returned the old man, again changing his tones to those of gentleness, or rather softness; "the girl is the image of what her mother was at her years, and before she had become acquainted with grief. When death deprived me of my wife, I returned to Scotland, enriched by the marriage; and, would you think it, Duncan? the suffering angel had remained in the state of celibacy[1] twenty long years, and that for the sake of a man who could forget her! She did more, sir; she overlooked my want of faith, and, all difficulties being now removed, she took me for her husband."

"And became the mother of Alice?" exclaimed Duncan.

"She did, indeed," said the old man. "But she is a saint in heaven, sir. I had her but a single year, a short term of happiness for one who had seen her youth fade in hopeless pining."

There was something so commanding in the distress of the

[1] not being married.

old man, that Heyward did not dare to venture a syllable of consolation. Munro sat utterly unconscious of the other's presence, his features exposed and working with the anguish of his regrets. At length he arose, and taking a single turn across the room, he approached his companion and demanded:

"Have you not, Major Heyward, some communication that I should hear from the Marquis de Montcalm?"

Duncan stated the result of his interview with the French commander, and upon hearing it the colonel exclaimed:

"He wishes to confer with Munro! Faith, sir, I have much inclination to indulge the man, if it should only be to let him behold the firm countenance we maintain in spite of his numbers and his summons. There might be no bad policy in such a stroke, young man. I will meet the Frenchman, and that without fear or delay; promptly, sir, as becomes a servant of my royal master. Go, Major Heyward, and give them a flourish of the music; and send out a messenger to let them know who is coming. We will follow with a small guard, for such respect is due to one who holds the honor of his king in keeping; and hark'ee, Duncan," he added, "it may be prudent to have some aid at hand, in case there should be treachery at the bottom of it all."

The young man hastened to make the necessary arrangements, and as soon as the usual ceremonials of a military departure were observed, they left the fortress, attended by the escort. They had proceeded only a hundred yards from the works, when the little array which attended the French general at the conference, was seen issuing from the hollow way which formed the bed of a brook that ran between the batteries of the besiegers and the fort. From the moment that Munro left his own works to appear in front of his enemies, his air had been grand, and his step and countenance highly military. The instant he caught a glimpse of the white plume that waved in the hat of Montcalm, his eye lighted, and age no longer appeared to possess any influence

over his vast and muscular person. Montcalm moved toward them with a quick but graceful step, baring his head to the veteran, and dropping his spotless plume nearly to the earth in courtesy. Then, as became his superior rank and the nature of the interview, the Frenchman broke the silence, turning to Heyward, who acted as interpreter.

"I have solicited this interview from your superior, monsieur," he said, "because he has already done everything that is necessary for the honor of his prince, and I believe he will now listen to the admonitions of humanity. I will forever bear testimony that his resistance has been gallant, and was continued as long as there was hope. What is now so freely accorded to approved courage may be refused to useless obstinacy. Monsieur would wish to see my camp, and witness for himself our numbers and the impossibility of resisting them with success?"

"I know that the king of France is well served," returned the Scotsman, "but my royal master has as many and as faithful troops."

"Though not at hand, fortunately for us," said Montcalm. "These hills afford us every opportunity for reconnoitering your works, gentlemen, and I am possibly as well acquainted with your weak condition as you can be yourselves."

"Ask the French general if his glasses can reach to the Hudson," said Munro, proudly; "and if he knows when and where to expect the army of Webb."

"Let General Webb be his own interpreter," returned Montcalm, suddenly extending an open letter toward Munro, as he spoke; "you will there learn, monsieur, that his movements are not likely to prove embarrassing to my army."

The veteran seized the proffered paper with an eagerness that betrayed how important he deemed its contents. As his eye passed hastily over the words, his countenance changed from its look of military pride to one of deep chagrin; and suffering the paper to fall from his hand, his head dropped

upon his chest, like that of a man whose hopes were withered at a single blow. Duncan caught the letter from the ground, and read at a glance its cruel purport. Their superior, so far from encouraging them to resist, advised a speedy surrender, urging as a reason, the impossibility of his sending a single man to their rescue.

"Here is no deception!" exclaimed Duncan, "this is the signature of Webb, and must be the captured letter."

"The man has betrayed me!" Munro bitterly exclaimed; "he has brought dishonor where disgrace was never before known to dwell, and shame has he heaped heavily on my gray hairs."

"Messieurs," said Montcalm, advancing toward them a step, in generous interest, "you little know me if you believe me capable of profiting by this letter to humble brave men. Listen to my terms before you leave me."

"What says the Frenchman?" demanded the veteran, sternly; "does he make a merit of having captured a scout, with a note from head-quarters?"

Duncan explained the other's meaning.

"Monsieur de Montcalm, we will hear you," the veteran added, more calmly, as Duncan ended.

"To retain the fort is now impossible," said his liberal enemy. "It is necessary to the interests of my master that it should be destroyed; but, as for yourselves, and your brave comrades, there is no privilege dear to a soldier that shall be denied."

"Our colors?" demanded Heyward.

"Carry them to England, and show them to your king."

"Our arms?"

"Keep them; none can use them better."

"Our march; the surrender of the place?"

"Shall all be done in a way most honorable to yourselves."

Duncan turned to explain these proposals to his commander, who was deeply touched by so unexpected generosity.

"Go, Duncan," he said; "and arrange it all. I have lived to see two things that never did I expect to behold—an Englishman afraid to support a friend, and a Frenchman too honest to profit by his advantage."

So saying, the veteran returned slowly toward the fort. Duncan remained to settle the terms of the capitulation. He was seen to re-enter the works during the first watches of the night, and, immediately after a private conference with the commandant, to leave them again. It was then openly announced that hostilities must cease—Munro having signed a treaty, by which the place was to be yielded to the enemy; the garrison to retain their arms, their colors, and their baggage, and consequently, according to military opinion, their honor.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MASSACRE OF WILLIAM HENRY.

THE hostile armies which lay in the wilds of Horican passed the night of the 9th of August, 1757, much in the manner they would have encountered on the fairest field of Europe. The first tap of the French drums in the early morning was echoed from the bosom of the fort, and presently the valley was filled with the strains of martial music. The horns of the victors sounded merry and cheerful flourishes, until the last laggard of the camp was at his post.

Then, that success which was already so well known, was officially announced; the band who were selected to guard the gates of the fort were detailed, and defiled before their chief; the signal of their approach was given, and all the usual preparations for a change of masters were ordered and executed.

A very different scene presented itself within the lines of the Anglo-American army. As soon as the warning signal was given, it exhibited all the signs of a hurried and forced departure. The sullen soldiers fell into their places, like

men whose blood had been heated by the past contest, and who only desired the opportunity to revenge an indignity which was still wounding to their pride. Women and children ran from place to place, some bearing the scanty remnants of their baggage, and others searching in the ranks for those they looked to for protection. Munro appeared among his troops firm but dejected. It was evident that the blow had struck deep into his heart, though he struggled to sustain his misfortune with the port of a man. Duncan was touched at the quiet exhibition of his grief. He had discharged his own duty, and he now pressed to the side of the old man, to know in what particular he might serve him.

"My daughters," was the brief but expressive reply.

"Good Heavens! are not arrangements already made for their convenience?"

"To-day I am only a soldier, Major Heyward. All that you see here claim alike to be my children."

Duncan had heard enough. Without losing a moment, he flew toward the quarters of Munro in quest of the sisters. He found them prepared to depart and surrounded by a weeping assemblage of their own sex. Though the cheeks of Cora were pale, she had lost none of her firmness; but the eyes of Alice were inflamed, and betrayed how long and bitterly she had wept. They both received the young man with undisguised pleasure; the former being the first to speak.

"The fort is lost," she said, with a melancholy smile; "though our good name, I trust, remains."

"'Tis brighter than ever. But, dear Miss Munro, it is time to think less of others, and to make provision for yourself. Military usage demands that your father and I should for a little while continue with the troops. Then where to seek a proper protector for you against the confusion and chances of such a scene?"

"None is necessary," returned Cora; "who will dare to injure the daughter of such a father at a time like this?"

"I would not leave you alone," continued the youth, "for the command of the best regiment in the pay of the king. Alice is not gifted with all your firmness, and God only knows the terror she might endure."

"You may be right," Cora replied. "Listen; chance has already sent us a friend when he is most needed."

Duncan on the instant comprehended her meaning. The sounds of sacred music caught his ear, and instantly drew him to an apartment in an adjacent building, where he found David pouring out his pious feelings through the only medium in which he ever indulged. Duncan in a few words explained his wishes:

"It will be your duty to see that none dare to approach the ladies with any rude intention. In this task you will be seconded by the domestics of their household."

"Even so."

"It is possible that the Indians and stragglers of the enemy may intrude, in which case you will remind them of the terms of the capitulation, and threaten to report their conduct to Montcalm. A word will suffice."

"If not, I have that here which shall," returned David, exhibiting his book. "Here are words which, uttered, or rather thundered, with proper emphasis, shall quiet the most unruly temper."

By this time the signal of departure had been given, and the head of the English column was in motion. The sisters started at the sound, and, glancing their eyes around, they saw the white uniforms of the French grenadiers, who had already taken possession of the gates of the fort. At that moment an enormous cloud seemed to pass suddenly above their heads, and, looking upward, they discovered that they stood beneath the wide folds of the standard of France.

"Let us go," said Cora; "this is no longer a fit place for the children of an English officer."

Alice clung to the arm of her sister, and together they left

the parade, accompanied by the moving throng that surrounded them. As they quitted the fort the French stood to their arms, Montcalm having collected his parties so soon as his guards had possession of the works. Living masses of the English, to the amount in the whole of near three thousand, converged to the point of their march, a vista cut through the lofty trees, where the road to the Hudson entered the forest. Along the borders of the woods hung a dark cloud of savages, hovering like vultures, who were only kept from swooping on their prey by the presence and restraint of a superior army. A few had straggled among the conquered columns, where they stalked in sullen discontent: attentive, though, as yet, passive, observers of the moving multitude.

The advance, with Heyward at its head, was slowly disappearing, when the attention of Cora was drawn to a collection of stragglers, by the sounds of contention. A truant provincial was paying the forfeit of his disobedience, by being plundered of those very effects which had caused him to desert his place in the ranks. The man was of powerful frame, and too avaricious to part with his goods without a struggle. Individuals from either party interfered; the one side to prevent, and the other to aid in the robbery. Voices grew loud and angry, and a hundred savages appeared, as it were by magic, where a dozen only had been seen a minute before. It was then that Cora saw the form of Magua gliding among his countrymen, and speaking with his fatal and artful eloquence. The mass of women and children stopped, and hovered together like alarmed and fluttering birds. But the cupidity of the Indian was soon gratified, and the different bodies again moved slowly onward.

The savages now fell back, and seemed content to let their enemies advance without further molestation. But as the female crowd approached them, the gaudy colors of a shawl attracted the eyes of a Huron. He advanced to seize it without the least hesitation. The woman, in terror, wrapped her

child in the coveted article, and folded both more closely to her bosom. Cora was in the act of speaking, with an intent to advise the woman to abandon the trifle, when the savage relinquished his hold of the shawl, tore the screaming infant from her arms, dashed its head against a rock, and cast the quivering remains to her very feet. For an instant the mother stood like a statue of despair, and then she raised her eyes toward heaven, as if calling on God to curse the perpetrator of the foul deed, when, maddened at his disappointment, the shawl having become a prize to another, the Huron drove his tomahawk into her own brain.

At that dangerous moment Magua placed his hands to his mouth, and raised the fatal and appalling whoop. The scattered Indians started at the well-known cry, and directly there arose such a yell along the plain, and through the arches of the wood, as seldom burst from human lips before. More than two thousand raving savages broke from the forest at the signal, and threw themselves across the fatal plain. We shall not dwell on the revolting horrors that succeeded. Death was everywhere, and in his most terrific and disgusting aspects. Resistance only served to inflame the murderers, who inflicted their furious blows long after their victims were beyond the power of their resentment. The flow of blood might be likened to the outbreaking of a torrent.

In such a scene none had leisure to note the fleeting moments. It might have been ten minutes that the sisters had stood riveted to one spot, horror-stricken, and nearly helpless. When the first blow was struck, their screaming companions had pressed upon them in a body, rendering flight impossible; and now that fear or death had scattered most if not all from around them, they saw no avenue open but such as conducted to the tomahawks of their foes. On every side arose shrieks, groans, exhortations, and curses. At this moment Alice caught a glimpse of her father, moving rapidly across the plain in the direction of the French army. He

was proceeding to Montcalm, fearless of every danger, to claim the escort for which he had before conditioned.

"Father—father—we are here!" shrieked Alice, as he passed at no great distance, without appearing to heed them. "Come to us, father, or we die!"

The old man appeared to catch the sounds, for he paused and listened, but Alice had dropped senseless on the earth, and Cora had sunk at her side. Munro shook his head in disappointment, and proceeded, bent on the high duty of his station.

"Lady," said Gamut, "it may not be amiss to try the potency of music here."

Then raising his voice, he poured out a strain so powerful as to be heard even amid the din of that bloody field. The sounds caught the ears of a distant savage, who flew raging from group to group, like one who hunted for some victim worthy of his renown. It was Magua, who uttered a yell of pleasure when he beheld his ancient prisoners again at his mercy.

"Come," he said, laying his hands on the dress of Cora, "the wigwam of the Huron is still open. Is it not better than this place?"

"Away!" cried Cora, veiling her eyes from his revolting aspect.

"Magua is a great chief!" returned the exulting savage: "will the dark-hair go to his tribe?"

"Never! strike if thou wilt, and complete thy revenge."

He hesitated a moment; and then catching the senseless form of Alice in his arms, moved swiftly across the plain toward the woods.

"Hold!" shrieked Cora, following wildly on his footsteps; "release the child! Wretch! what is't you do?"

"Stay—lady—stay," called Gamut. "The holy charm is beginning to be felt, and soon shalt thou see this horrid tumult stilled."

Perceiving that he was unheeded, the faithful David followed the distracted sister, raising his voice again in sacred song, and sweeping the air to the measure, with his long arm. In this manner they traversed the plain, through the flying, the wounded, and the dead. Cora would have fallen more than once, under the blows of her savage enemies, but for the extraordinary being who stalked in her rear, and who now appeared to the astonished natives gifted with the protecting spirit of madness.

Magua entered the woods through a low ravine, where he quickly found the Narragansetts, which the travelers had abandoned so shortly before, waiting his appearance, in custody of a savage as fierce as himself. Placing Alice on the same animal with Cora, he seized the bridle and commenced his route by plunging deeper into the forest. David, perceiving that he was alone, threw his long limb across the saddle of the beast they had deserted, and made such progress in the pursuit as the difficulties of the path permitted. They soon began to ascend; and when they gained the flattened surface of the mountain-top, and approached the eastern precipice, Cora recognized the spot to which she had once before been led under the more friendly auspices of the scout. Here Magua suffered them to dismount; and, notwithstanding their long captivity, curiosity induced them to gaze at the sickening sight below.

The cruel work was still unchecked. On every side the captured were flying before their relentless persecutors, while the armed columns of the French stood fast in an apathy which has never been explained, and which has left an immovable blot on the otherwise fair escutcheon of their leader. Nor was the sword of death stayed until cupidity got the mastery of revenge. Then, indeed, the shrieks of the wounded and the yells of their murderers grew less frequent, until, finally, the cries of horror were lost to their ear, or were drowned in the loud, long, and piercing whoops of the triumphant savages.

The bloody and inhuman scene, thus rather incidentally mentioned than described, is conspicuous in the pages of colonial history by the merited title of "The Massacre of William Henry."

CHAPTER XXIV.

SEARCHING FOR HIS CHILDREN.

THE third day from the capture of the fort was drawing to a close, but the business of the narrative must still detain the reader on the shores of the "holy lake." The blood-stained conquerors had departed; and their camp, which had so lately rung with the merry rejoicings of a victorious army, lay a silent and deserted city of huts. The fortress was a smoldering ruin, charred rafters, fragments of exploded artillery, and rent mason-work covering its earthen mounds in confused disorder.

About an hour before the setting of the sun, the forms of five men might have been seen issuing from the narrow vista of trees, where the path to the Hudson entered the forest, and advancing in the direction of the ruined works. A light figure preceded the rest of the party, with the caution and activity of a native; indicating, by gestures, to his companions, the route he deemed it most prudent to pursue. Nor were those in the rear wanting in every caution known to forest warfare. One among them, also an Indian, watched the margin of the woods, with eyes long accustomed to read the smallest signs of danger. The remaining three were white, though clad in vestments adapted to their present hazardous pursuit—that of hanging on the skirts of a retiring army in the wilderness.

The effects produced by the appalling sights that constantly arose in their path to the lake-shore, were as different as the characters of the respective individuals. The youth in front

threw serious glances at the mangled victims, afraid to exhibit his feelings, and yet too inexperienced to quell entirely their powerful influence. His red associate passed the groups of dead with an eye so calm that nothing but long practice could enable him to maintain. One of the white men, whose gray locks, blending with a martial air, betrayed a man experienced in scenes of war, was not ashamed to groan aloud, whenever a spectacle of more than usual horror came under his view. The young man at his elbow seemed to suppress his feelings in tenderness to his companion. The straggler who brought up the rear gazed at the appalling sight with execrations so bitter as to denote how much he denounced the crime of his enemies.

The reader will perceive in these characters, the Mohicans and their white friend the scout, together with Munro and Heyward. It was, in truth, the father in quest of his children, attended by the youth who felt so deep a stake in their happiness, and those brave and trusty foresters who had already proved their skill and fidelity.

When Uncas, who moved in front, had reached the center of the plain, he raised a cry that drew his companions in a body to the spot. The young warrior had halted over a group of females who lay in a cluster, a confused mass of dead. Munro and Heyward flew toward the festering heap, endeavoring to discover vestiges of those they sought. They found instant relief in the search, though each was condemned to experience the misery of an uncertainty that was hardly less insupportable than the most revolting truth. They were standing, silent and thoughtful, around the melancholy pile when Uncas bounded away from the spot, and in the next instant he was seen tearing from a bush, and waving in triumph, a fragment of the green riding-veil of Cora. The movement, the exhibition, and the cry which burst from the lips of the young Mohican, instantly drew the whole party about him.

"My child!" said Munro; "give me my child!"

"Uncas will try," was the short and touching answer.

The simple but meaning assurance was lost on the father, who seized the piece of gauze, and crushed it in his hand, while his eyes roamed fearfully among the bushes, as if he equally dreaded and hoped for the secrets they might reveal.

"Here are no dead," said Heyward; "the storm seems not to have passed this way."

"That's manifest; and clearer than the heavens above our heads," returned the scout; "but either she, or they that have robbed her, have passed the bush; for I remember the rag she wore to hide a face that all did love to look upon. Uncas, you are right; the dark-hair has been here, and she has fled, like a frightened fawn, to the wood. Let us search for the marks she left; for, to Indian eyes, I sometimes think even a humming-bird leaves his trail in the air."

The young Mohican darted away at the suggestion, and the scout had hardly done speaking, before the former raised a cry of success from the margin of the forest. On reaching the spot, the anxious party perceived another portion of the veil fluttering on the lower branch of a beech.

"Softly, softly," said the scout, extending his long rifle in front of the eager Heyward. "The beauty of the trail must not be deformed. A step too soon may give us hours of trouble. We have them, though; that much is beyond denial."

"Bless ye, bless ye, worthy man!" exclaimed Munro: "whither, then, have they fled, and where are my babes?"

"The path they have taken depends on many chances. If they have gone alone, they are quite as likely to move in a circle as straight; and they may be within a dozen miles of us; but if the Hurons, or any of the French Indians have laid hands on them, 'tis probable they are now near the borders of the Canadas. Gently, gently, Uncas; you are as impatient as a man in the settlements; you forget that light feet leave but faint marks!"

"Hugh!" exclaimed Chingachgook, who had been occupied in examining an opening that had been evidently made through the low underbrush, which skirted the forest; and who now stood erect, as he pointed downward, in the attitude and with the air of a man who beheld a disgusting serpent.

"Here is the impression of the footstep of a man," cried Heyward, bending over the spot; "he has trod in the margin of this pool. They are captives."

"Better so than left to starve in the wilderness," returned the scout; "and they will leave a wider trail. Stoop to it, Uncas, and try what you can make of the moccasin; for moccasin it plainly is, and no shoe."

The young Mohican bent over the track, and removing the scattered leaves, he examined it with that sort of scrutiny that a money-dealer would bestow on a suspected bill. At length he arose from his knees, satisfied with the result of the examination.

"Well, boy," demanded the attentive scout, "what does it say? Can you make anything of the tell-tale?"

"Le Renard Subtil!"

"Ha! that rampaging devil again! There never will be an end of his loping, till Killdeer has said a word to him."

Heyward reluctantly admitted the truth of this intelligence, and now expressed rather his hopes than his doubts by saying:

"One moccasin is so much like another, it is probable there is some mistake."

"One moccasin like another! You may as well say that one foot is like another. Look at it, Sagamore: you measured the prints more than once, when we hunted the varments from Glen's to the health springs."

Chingachgook complied; and after finishing his short examination, he merely pronounced the word:

"Magua!"

"Ay, 'tis a settled thing; here, then, have passed the dark-hair and Magua."

"And not Alice?" demanded Heyward.

"Of her we have not yet seen signs," returned the scout, looking closely around at the trees, the bushes, and the ground. "What have we there? Uncas, bring hither the thing you see dangling from yonder thorn-bush."

When the Indian had complied, the scout received the prize, and, holding it on high, he laughed in his silent but heartfelt manner.

"'Tis the tooting we'pon of the singer!" he said. "Uncas, look for the marks of a shoe long enough to uphold six feet two of tottering human flesh. I have some hopes of the fellow, since he has given up squalling to follow some better trade."

"At least, he has been faithful to his trust," said Heyward; "and Cora and Alice are not without a friend."

"Yes," said Hawkeye, dropping his rifle, and leaning on it with an air of visible contempt, "he will do their singing! Well, boy, any signs of such a foundation?"

"Here is something like the footstep of one who has worn a shoe; can it be that of our friend?"

"Touch the leaves lightly, or you'll disconcart the formation. That! that is the print of a foot, but 'tis the dark-hair's."

"As we now possess these infallible signs," said Heyward, "let us commence our march. A moment, at such a time, will appear an age to the captives."

"It is not the swiftest-leaping deer that gives the longest chase," returned Hawkeye; "we know that the rampaging Huron has passed—and the dark-hair—and the singer—but where is she of the yellow locks? Move on, Uncas, and keep your eyes on the dried leaves. I will watch the bushes, while your father shall run with a low nose to the ground. Move on, friends; the sun is getting behind the hills."

Before they had proceeded many rods, the Indians stopped, and appeared to gaze at some signs on the earth with more than their usual keenness. Both father and son spoke quick

and loud, now looking at the object of their mutual admiration, and now regarding each other with pleasure.

"They have found the little foot!" exclaimed the scout, moving forward without attending further to his own portion of the duty. "What have we here? By the truest rifle on the frontiers, here have been them one-sided horses again! Now all is plain as the north star at midnight. Yes, here they have mounted. There the beasts have been bound to a sapling in waiting; and yonder runs the broad path away to the north in full sweep for the Canadas."

"But still there are no signs of Alice—of the younger Miss Munro," said Duncan.

"Unless the shining bauble Uncas has just lifted from the ground should prove one. Pass it this way, lad, that we may look at it."

Heyward instantly knew it for a trinket that Alice was fond of wearing, and which he recollected to have seen, on the fatal morning of the massacre, dangling from the fair neck of his mistress. He seized the highly prized jewel; and, as he proclaimed the fact, it vanished from the eyes of the wondering scout, who in vain looked for it on the ground long after it was warmly pressed against the beating heart of Duncan.

"Pshaw!" said the disappointed Hawkeye; "'tis a certain sign of age when the sight begins to weaken. I should like to find the thing, too, if it were only to carry it to the right owner, and that would be bringing the two ends of what I call a long trail together—for by this time the broad St. Lawrence or, perhaps, the Great Lakes themselves are atwixt us."

"So much the more reason why we should not delay our march," returned Heyward; "let us proceed."

"Young blood and hot blood, they say, are much the same thing. An Indian never starts on an expedition without smoking over his council-fire; and I honor their customs in this particular, seeing that they are deliberate and wise. We will, therefore, go back and light our fire to-night in the ruins

of the old fort, and in the morning we shall be fresh and ready to undertake our work like men, and not like babbling women or eager boys."

Heyward saw, by the manner of the scout, that altercation would be useless. Munro had again sunk into that sort of apathy which had beset him since his late overwhelming misfortunes. The young man took the veteran by the arm, and followed in the footsteps of the Indians and the scout, who had already begun to retrace the path which conducted them to the plain.

The shades of evening had come to increase the dreariness of the place when the party entered the ruins of William Henry. The scout and his companions immediately made their preparations to pass the night there, but with an earnestness and sobriety of demeanor that betrayed how much the unusual horrors they had just witnessed worked on even their practiced feelings. A few fragments of rafters were reared against a blackened wall; and when Uncas had covered them slightly with brush, the temporary accommodations were deemed sufficient. The young Indian pointed toward his rude hut when his labor was ended; and Heyward, who understood the meaning of the silent gesture, gently urged Munro to enter. Leaving the bereaved old man alone with his sorrows, Duncan immediately returned into the open air, placing himself at an angle of the works, too much excited to seek the repose he had recommended to his veteran friend.

Hawkeye and the Indians lighted their fire and took their evening's repast, a frugal meal of dried bear's meat. Not one of the three appeared to doubt their perfect security, as was indicated by the preparations that were soon made to sit in council over their future proceedings. After a short pause, Chingachgook lighted a pipe whose bowl was curiously carved in one of the soft stones of the country, and whose stem was a tube of wood, and commenced smoking. When he had inhaled enough of the fragrance of the weed, he passed the

instrument into the hands of the scout. In this manner the pipe had made its rounds three several times, amid the most profound silence, before either of the party opened his lips. Then the sagamore, as the oldest and highest in rank, proposed the subject for deliberation. He was answered by the scout; and Chingachgook rejoined, when the other objected to his opinions. But the youthful Uncas continued a silent listener, until Hawkeye demanded his opinion.

By the frequency with which the Indians described the marks of a forest-trail, it was evident they urged a pursuit by land, while the repeated sweep of Hawkeye's arm toward the Horican denoted that he was for a passage across its waters. The latter was, to every appearance, fast losing ground, and the point was about to be decided against him, when he arose to his feet, and suddenly assumed the manner of an Indian, and adopted all the arts of native eloquence. Elevating an arm, he pointed out the track of the sun, repeating the gesture for every day that was necessary to accomplish their object. Then he delineated a long and painful path, amid rocks and water-courses. The age and weakness of Munro were indicated by signs too palpable to be mistaken. The Mohicans listened gravely, and with countenances that reflected the sentiments of the speaker. Conviction gradually wrought its influence, and toward the close of Hawkeye's speech his sentences were accompanied by the customary exclamation of commendation. In short, Uncas and his father became converts to his way of thinking.

The instant the matter in discussion was decided, the debate and everything connected with it, except the result, appeared to be forgotten. Hawkeye very composedly stretched his tall frame before the dying embers, and closed his organs in sleep. Chingachgook announced his desire to sleep, by wrapping his head in his blanket, and stretching his form on the naked earth. Uncas, raking the coals in such a manner that they should impart their warmth to his father's feet, sought his

own pillow among the ruins of the place. Heyward soon imitated their example; and, long before the night had turned, they who lay in the bosom of the ruined work seemed to slumber as heavily as the unconscious multitude whose bones were already beginning to bleach on the surrounding plain.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE LAKE.

THE heavens were still studded with stars, when Hawkeye came to rouse the sleepers. Casting aside their cloaks, Munro and Heyward were on their feet, while the woodsman was still making his low calls, at the entrance of the rude shelter where they had passed the night. When they issued from beneath its concealment, they found the scout awaiting their appearance.

"Come," he said, turning toward a curtain of the works; "let us get into the ditch on this side, and be regardful to step on the stones and fragments of wood as you go."

His companions complied, though to two of them the reasons of this precaution were yet a mystery. When they were in the low cavity that surrounded the earthen fort on three of its sides, they found the passage nearly choked by the ruins. With care and patience, however, they succeeded in clambering after the scout, until they reached the shore of the lake, where Uncas had already found one of the Huron canoes.

"That's a trail that nothing but a nose can follow," said the satisfied scout, looking back along their difficult way; "grass is a treacherous carpet for a flying party to tread on, but wood and stone take no print from a moccasin. Shove in the canoe nigher to the land, Uncas. Softly, lad, softly; it must not touch the beach, or the knaves will know by what road we have left the place."

The young man observed the precaution; and the scout,

laying a board from the ruins to the canoe, made a sign for the two officers to enter. When this was done, everything was studiously restored to its former disorder; and then Hawkeye succeeded in reaching his little vessel without leaving behind him any of those marks which he appeared so much to dread.

"I have put a trail of water atween us," said he, "and any of the imps that may be after our scalps, and unless they can make friends with the fishes, and hear who has paddled across their basin, we shall throw the length of the Horican behind us before they have made up their minds which path to take."

"With foes in front, and foes in our rear, our journey is like to be one of danger," said Heyward.

"Danger!" repeated Hawkeye, "no, not of danger, for with vigilant ears and quick eyes we can manage to keep a few hours ahead of the knaves."

It is possible that Heyward's estimate of danger differed in some degree from that of the scout, for, instead of replying, he sat in silence, while the canoe glided over several miles of water. Just as the day dawned, they entered the narrows of the lake, and stole swiftly and cautiously among their numberless little islands. It was by this road that Montcalm had retired with his army, and the adventurers knew not but he had left some of his Indians in ambush, to protect the rear of his forces and collect the stragglers. They therefore approached the passage with the customary silence of their guarded habits.

Chingachgook laid aside his paddle, while Uncas and the scout urged the light vessel through crooked and intricate channels, where every foot that they advanced exposed them to the danger of some sudden rising on their progress. The lake soon began to expand, and their route lay along a wide reach, that was lined by high and rugged mountains. Instead of following the western shore, whither their errand led them, the wary Mohican inclined his course more toward those hills

behind which Montcalm was known to have led his army into the formidable fortress of Ticonderoga. This caution was maintained for hours until they had reached a bay, nigh the northern termination of the lake. Here the canoe was driven upon the beach, and the whole party landed. Hawkeye and Heyward ascended an adjacent bluff, where the former, after considering the expanse of water beneath him, pointed out to the latter a small black object, hovering under a headland, at the distance of several miles.

"Do you see it?" demanded the scout. "Now, what would you account that spot, were you left alone to find your way through this wilderness?"

"But for its distance and its magnitude, I should suppose it a bird. Can it be a living object?"

"'Tis a canoe of good birchen bark, and paddled by fierce and crafty Mingoes. These varlets, the moment it is dark, will be on our trail, as true as hounds on the scent. We must throw them off or our pursuit of Le Renard Subtil may be given up. These lakes are useful at times, especially when the game takes the water," continued the scout, gazing about him with a countenance of concern; "but they give no cover, except it be to the fishes. God knows what the country would be, if the settlement should ever spread far from the two rivers. Both hunting and war would lose their beauty."

"Let us not delay a moment without some good and obvious cause."

"I little like that smoke which you may see worming up along the rock above the canoe," interrupted the abstracted scout. "My life on it, other eyes than ours see it, and know its meaning. Well, words will not mend the matter, and it is time that we were doing."

Hawkeye moved away from the lookout, and descended, musing profoundly, to the shore. He communicated the result of his observations to his companions, in Delaware, and a short and earnest consultation succeeded. When it ter-

minated, the three instantly set about executing their new resolutions.

The canoe was lifted from the water, and borne on the shoulders of the party. They proceeded into the wood, making as broad and obvious a trail as possible. They soon reached a water-course, which they crossed, and continued onward, until they came to an extensive and naked rock. At this point, where their footsteps might be expected to be no longer visible, they retraced their route to the brook, walking backward with the utmost care. They now followed the bed of the little stream to the lake, into which they immediately launched their canoe again. A low point concealed them from the headland, and the margin of the lake was fringed for some distance with dense and overhanging bushes. Under the cover of these natural advantages, they toiled their way, with patient industry, until the scout pronounced that he believed it would be safe once more to land.

The halt continued until evening rendered objects indistinct and uncertain to the eye. Then they resumed their route, and, favored by the darkness, pushed silently and vigorously toward the western shore. Although the rugged outline of mountain, to which they were steering, presented no distinctive marks to the eyes of Duncan, the Mohican entered the little haven he had selected with the confidence and accuracy of an experienced pilot.

The boat was again borne into the woods, where it was carefully concealed under a pile of brush. The adventurers assumed their arms and packs, and the scout announced to Munro and Heyward that he and the Indians were at last in readiness to proceed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BEAVER POND.

THE party had landed on the border of the rugged district which separates the tributaries of Champlain from those of the Hudson, the Mohawk, and the St. Lawrence. Hawkeye and the Mohicans did not hesitate to plunge into its depths, with the freedom of men accustomed to its privations and difficulties. For many hours the travelers toiled on their laborious way, guided by a star, or following the direction of some water-course, until the scout called a halt, and, holding a short consultation with the Indians, they lighted their fire, and made the usual preparations to pass the remainder of the night where they were. Imitating the example of their associates, Munro and Duncan slept without fear, if not without uneasiness.

The sun was shedding a strong and clear light in the forest, when the travelers resumed their journey. After proceeding a few miles, the progress of Hawkeye, who led the advance, became more deliberate and watchful. He often stopped to examine the trees; nor did he cross a rivulet, without attentively considering the quantity, the velocity, and the color of its waters. Distrusting his own judgment, his appeals to the opinions of Chingachgook were frequent and earnest.

During one of these conferences Uncas sprang up the side of a little acclivity, a few rods in advance, and stood over a spot of fresh earth, that looked as though it had been recently upturned by the passage of some heavy animal. The eyes of the whole party followed the unexpected movement.

"'Tis the trail!" exclaimed the scout, advancing to the spot; "the lad is quick of sight and keen of wit for his years."

"See!" said Uncas, pointing north and south, at the evi-

dent marks of the broad trail on either side of him; "the dark-hair has gone towards the frost." [1]

"Hound never ran on a more beautiful scent," responded the scout; "we are favored, greatly favored, and can follow with high noses. Ay, here are both your waddling beasts; this Huron travels like a white general."

By the middle of the afternoon they had passed the Scaroon,[2] and were following the route of the declining sun. After descending an eminence to a low bottom, through which a swift stream glided, they suddenly came to a place where the party of Le Renard had made a halt. Extinguished brands were lying around a spring, the offals of a deer were scattered about the place, and the trees bore evident marks of having been browsed by the horses. At a little distance, Heyward discovered the small bower under which he was fain to believe that Cora and Alice had reposed. But while the earth was trodden, and the footsteps of both men and beasts were so plainly visible around the place, the trail appeared to have suddenly ended.

It was easy to follow the tracks of the Narragansetts, but they seemed only to have wandered without guides or any other object than the pursuit of food. At length Uncas, who, with his father, had endeavored to trace the route of the horses, came upon a sign of their presence that was quite recent. Before following the clew, he communicated his success to his companions; and, while the latter were consulting on the circumstance, the youth reappeared, leading the two fillies, with their saddles broken, and the housings soiled, as though they had been permitted to run at will for several days.

"What should this prove?" said Duncan, turning pale, and glancing his eyes around him, as if he feared the brush and leaves were about to give up some horrid secret.

"That our march is come to a quick end, and that we are in an enemy's country," returned the scout. "Had the knave

[1] *i.e.*, the north. [2] or Schroon, a lake northwest of Lake George. See map.

been pressed, and the gentle ones wanted horses to keep up with the party, he might have taken their scalps; but without an enemy at his heels, and with such rugged beasts as these, he would not hurt a hair of their heads. The horses are here, but the Hurons are gone; let us hunt for the path by which they departed."

Hawkeye and the Mohicans now applied themselves to their task in good earnest. A circle of a few hundred feet in circumference was drawn, and each of the party took a segment for his portion. The examination, however, resulted in no discovery. The impressions of footsteps were numerous, but they all appeared like those of men who had wandered about the spot without any design to quit it. Again the scout and his companions made the circuit of the halting-place. Not a leaf was left unturned. The sticks were removed, and the stones lifted—for Indian cunning was known frequently to adopt these objects as covers, laboring with the utmost patience and industry, to conceal each footstep as they proceeded. Still no discovery was made. At length Uncas, whose activity had enabled him to achieve his portion of the task the soonest, raked the earth across the turbid little rill which ran from the spring, and diverted its course into another channel. So soon as the narrow bed below the dam was dry, he stooped over it with keen and curious eyes. A cry of exultation immediately announced the success of the young warrior. The whole party crowded to the spot where Uncas pointed out the impression of a moccasin in the moist alluvion.

"The lad will be an honor to his people," said Hawkeye, regarding the trail with much admiration. "But that is not the footstep of an Indian; the weight is too much on the heel, and the toes are squared. Run back, Uncas, and bring me the size of the singer's foot. You will find a beautiful print of it just opposite yon rock, agin the hill-side."

While the youth was engaged in this commission, the scout and Chingachgook were attentively considering the impres-

sions. The measurements agreed, and the former unhesitatingly pronounced that the footstep was that of David, who had, evidently, been made to exchange his shoes for moccasins.

"I can now read the whole of it, as plainly as if I had seen the arts of Le Subtil," he added; "the singer, being a man whose gifts lay chiefly in his throat and feet, was made to go first, and the others have trod in his steps, imitating their formation."

"But," cried Duncan, "I see no signs of——"

"The gentle ones," interrupted the scout; "the varlet has found a way to carry them, until he supposed he had thrown any followers off the scent. My life on it, we see their pretty little feet again before many rods go by."

The whole party now proceeded, following the course of the rill, keeping anxious eyes on the regular impressions. The water soon flowed into its bed again, but, watching the ground on either side, the foresters pursued their way, content with knowing that the trail lay beneath. More than half a mile was passed, before the rill rippled close around the base of an extensive and dry rock. Here they paused to make sure that the Hurons had not quitted the water.

It was fortunate they did so. For the quick and active Uncas soon found the impression of a foot on a bunch of moss, where it would seem an Indian had inadvertently trodden. Pursuing the direction given by this discovery, he entered the neighboring thicket, and struck the trail as fresh and obvious as it had been before they reached the spring. Another shout announced the good fortune of the youth to his companions, and at once terminated the search.

"Ay, it has been planned with Indian judgment," said the scout, when the party was assembled around the place, "and would have blinded white eyes."

The party resumed its course after making a short halt to take a hurried repast. When the meal was ended, the scout

cast a glance upward at the setting sun, and pushed forward with a rapidity which compelled Heyward and the still vigorous Munro to exert all their muscles to equal. Before an hour had elapsed, however, the speed of Hawkeye sensibly abated, and he began to turn suspiciously from side to side, as if he were conscious of approaching danger. He soon stopped and waited for the whole party to come up.

"I scent the Hurons," he said, speaking to the Mohicans; "yonder is open sky, through the tree-tops, and we are getting too nigh their encampment. Sagamore, you will take the hillside to the right; Uncas will bend along the brook to the left, while I will try the trail. If anything should happen the call will be three croaks of a crow. I saw one of the birds fanning himself in the air, just beyond the dead oak—another sign that we are touching an encampment."

The Indians departed their several ways without reply, while Hawkeye cautiously proceeded with the two gentlemen. Heyward soon pressed to the side of their guide, eager to catch an early glimpse of those enemies he had pursued with so much toil and anxiety. His companion told him to steal to the edge of the wood, which was fringed with a thicket, and wait his coming, for he wished to examine certain suspicious signs a little on one side. Duncan obeyed, and soon found himself in a situation to command a view which he found as extraordinary as it was novel.

The trees of many acres had been felled, and the glow of a mild summer's evening had fallen on the clearing, in beautiful contrast to the gray light of the forest. A short distance from the place where Duncan stood, the stream had seemingly expanded into a little lake, covering most of the low land, from mountain to mountain. The water fell out of this wide basin, in a cataract so regular and gentle, that it appeared rather to be the work of human hands than fashioned by Nature. A hundred earthen dwellings stood on the margin of the lake, and even in its water, as though the latter had over-

flowed its usual banks. They appeared, however, to be deserted, but in a few minutes Duncan fancied he discovered several human forms advancing toward him on all fours, and apparently dragging in their train some heavy, and, as he was quick to apprehend, some formidable engine. Just then a few dark-looking heads gleamed out of the dwellings, and the place seemed suddenly alive with beings which glided from cover to cover so swiftly as to allow no opportunity of examining their humors or pursuits. Alarmed at these suspicious movements, he was about to attempt the signal of the crows, when the rustling of leaves at hand drew his eyes in another direction.

The young man started, and recoiled a few paces instinctively, when he found himself within a hundred yards of a stranger Indian. Recovering his recollection on the instant, instead of sounding an alarm, which might prove fatal to himself, he remained stationary, an attentive observer of the other's motions. An instant of calm observation served to assure him that he was undiscovered. The native, like himself, seemed occupied in considering the low dwellings of the village, and the stolen movements of its inhabitants. It was impossible to discover the expression of his features, through the grotesque mask of paint under which they were concealed; though Duncan fancied it was rather melancholy than savage. He was still curiously observing the person of his neighbor, when the scout stole silently and cautiously to his side.

"You see we have reached their settlement or encampment," whispered the young man; "and here is one of the savages himself, in a very embarrassing position for our further movements."

Hawkeye started, and dropped his rifle, when, directed by the finger of his companion, the stranger came under his view. Then, lowering the dangerous muzzle, he stretched forward his long neck, as if to assist a scrutiny that was already intensely keen.

"The imp is not a Huron," he said, "nor of any of the

Canada tribes; and yet you see, by his clothes, the knave has been plundering a white. Do you keep him under your rifle while I creep in behind through the bush and take him alive. Fire on no account."

In the next moment he was concealed by the leaves. Duncan waited several minutes in feverish impatience, before he caught another glimpse of the scout. Then he reappeared, creeping along the earth, from which his dress was hardly distinguishable, directly in the rear of his intended captive. Having reached within a few yards of the latter, he arose to his feet, silently and slowly. At that instant, several loud blows were struck on the water, and Duncan turned his eyes just in time to perceive that a hundred dark forms were plunging in a body into the troubled little sheet. Grasping his rifle, his looks were again bent on the Indian near him. Instead of taking the alarm, the unconscious savage stretched forward his neck, as if he also watched the movements about the gloomy lake, with a sort of silly curiosity. In the meantime the uplifted hand of Hawkeye was above him. But, without any apparent reason, it was withdrawn, and its owner indulged in a long though silent fit of merriment. When the peculiar and hearty laughter of Hawkeye was ended, instead of grasping his victim by the throat, he tapped him lightly on the shoulder, and exclaimed aloud:

"How now, friend! Have you a mind to teach the beavers to sing?"

"Even so," was the ready answer. "It would seem that the Being that gave them power to improve His gifts so well, would not deny them voices to proclaim His praise."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TENTS OF THE PHILISTINES.

THE reader may imagine the surprise of Heyward. His lurking Indians were suddenly converted into four-footed

beasts; his lake into a beaver-pond; his cataract into a dam, constructed by those industrious and ingenious quadrupeds; and a suspected enemy into his tried friend, David Gamut, the master of psalmody. The presence of the latter created so many unexpected hopes relative to the sisters that, without a moment's hesitation, the young man broke out of his ambush and sprang forward to join the two principal actors in the scene.

The merriment of Hawkeye was not easily appeased. Without ceremony, and with a rough hand, he twirled the supple Gamut around on his heel, and more than once affirmed that the Hurons had done themselves great credit in the fashion of his costume. Then, seizing the hand of the other, he squeezed it with a grip that brought the tears into the eyes of the placid David, and wished him joy of his new condition.

"You were about opening your throat-practysings among the beavers, were ye?" he said. "The cunning devils know half the trade already, for they beat the time with their tails, as you heard just now; and in good time it was too, or Killdeer might have sounded the first note among them. I have known greater fools, who could read and write, than an experienced old beaver; but, as for squalling, the animals are born dumb! What think you of such a song as this?"

David shut his sensitive ears, and even Heyward, apprised as he was of the nature of the cry, looked upward in quest of the bird, as the cawing of a crow rang in the air about them.

"See," continued the laughing scout, as he pointed toward the remainder of the party, who, in obedience to the signal, were already approaching; "this music has its virtues; it brings two rifles to my elbow, to say nothing of the knives and tomahawks. But we see that you are safe; now tell us what has become of the maidens."

"They are captives to the heathen," said David; "and, though troubled in spirit, enjoying safety in the body."

"Both?" demanded the breathless Heyward.

"Even so. Though our wayfaring has been sore and our sustenance scanty, we have had little other cause for complaint, except the violence done our feelings, by being thus led in captivity into a far land."

"Bless ye for these very words!" exclaimed the trembling Munro; "I shall then receive my babes, spotless and angel-like, as I lost them!"

"Here, friend," said the scout, "I did intend to kindle a fire with this tooting-whistle of thine; but as you value the thing, take it, and blow your best on it!"

Gamut received his pitch-pipe with a strong expression of pleasure, and satisfying himself that none of its melody was lost, he made a demonstration toward achieving a few stanzas of one of the longest effusions in the little volume already mentioned. Heyward, however, hastily interrupted his pious purpose, by continuing questions concerning the past and present condition of his fellow-captives.

The narrative of David was simple, and the facts but few. Magua had waited on the mountain until a safe moment to retire presented itself, when he had descended and taken the route along the western side of the Horican, in the direction of the Canadas. At night the utmost care had been taken of the captives, both to prevent injury from the damps of the woods, and to guard against an escape. At the spring, the horses were turned loose, as had been seen; and notwithstanding the remoteness and length of their trail, the artifices already named were resorted to, in order to cut off every clew to their place of retreat. On their arrival at the encampment of his people, Magua, in obedience to a policy seldom departed from, separated his prisoners. Cora had been sent to a tribe that temporarily occupied an adjacent valley, though David was far too ignorant of the customs and history of the natives to be able to declare anything satisfactory concerning their name or character. He only knew that they had not engaged in the late expedition against William Henry; that like the

Hurons themselves, they were allies of Montcalm; and that they maintained an amicable though watchful intercourse with the warlike and savage people whom chance had, for a time, brought in such close and disagreeable contact with themselves.

The Mohicans and the scout listened to his narrative with an interest that increased as he proceeded; and it was while attempting to explain the pursuits of the community in which Cora was detained, that the latter abruptly demanded:

"Did you see the fashion of their knives? Were they of English or French formation?"

"My thoughts were bent on no such vanities. They never join their voices in praise, and it would seem that they are among the profanest of the idolatrous."

"Therein you belie the nature of an Indian. Even the Mingo adores but the true and living God. Although they endeavor to make truces with the wicked one—as who would not with an enemy he cannot conquer?—they yet look up, for favor and assistance, to the Great and Good Spirit only."

"It may be so," said David; "but I have seen strange and fantastic images drawn in their paint, of which their admiration and care savored of spiritual pride; especially one, and that, too, a foul and loathsome object."

"Was it a sarpent?" quickly demanded the scout.

"Much the same. It was in the likeness of an abject and creeping tortoise."

"Hugh!" exclaimed both the attentive Mohicans in a breath; while the scout shook his head with the air of one who had made an important but by no means a pleasing discovery. Then the father spoke in the language of the Delawares, and with a calmness and dignity that instantly arrested the attention even of those to whom his words were unintelligible. His gestures were impressive and at times energetic. Once he lifted his arm on high; and as it descended, the action threw aside the folds of his light mantle, a finger resting on his breast, as if he would enforce his meaning by the attitude.

Duncan's eyes followed the movement, and he perceived that the animal just mentioned[1] was beautifully though faintly worked, in a blue tint, on the swarthy breast of the chief. All that he had ever heard of the violent separation of the vast tribes of the Delawares rushed across his mind, and he waited the proper moment to speak, with a suspense that was rendered nearly intolerable, by his interest in the stake. His wish, however, was anticipated by the scout, who turned from his red friend, saying:

"We have found that which may be good or evil to us, as Heaven disposes. The sagamore is of the high blood of the Delawares, and is the great chief of the Tortoises![2] That some of this stock are among the people of whom the singer tells us, is plain by his words; and had he but spent half the breath in prudent questions, that he has blown away in making a trumpet of his throat, we might have known how many warriors they numbered. It is, altogether, a dangerous path we move in; for a friend whose face is turned from you often bears a bloodier mind than the enemy who seeks your scalp."

"You then suspect it is a portion of that people among whom Cora resides?" said Duncan.

The scout nodded his head in assent, though he seemed anxious to waive the further discussion of a subject that appeared painful.

"It would be well," he added, "to let this man go in again, as usual, and for him to tarry in the lodges, giving notice to the gentle ones of our approach, until we call him out by signal, to consult. You know the cry of a crow, friend, from the whistle of the whip-poor-will?"

"'Tis a pleasing bird," resumed David, "and has a soft and

[1] *i. e.*, a tortoise.

[2] The importance attached to the tortoise by many tribes of the red men is very marked. It was part of the mythology of the Lenni Lenape, or Delawares, that the earth rested on the back of a tortoise. And it would seem that among all those tribes the *totem* or emblem of the Tortoise always held a high position.—*Author's Note.*

The totem was a rude figure or picture of bird or beast, used by the Indians as a symbolic name, or the emblem of a family.

melancholy note; though the time is rather quick and ill-measured."

"Well," said the scout, "since you like his whistle, it shall be your signal. Remember, then, when you hear the whip-poor-will's call three times repeated, you are to come into the bushes where the bird might be supposed——"

"Stop," interrupted Heyward; "I will accompany him."

"You!" exclaimed the astonished Hawkeye; "are you tired of seeing the sun rise and set?"

He regarded the young man a moment in speechless amazement. But Duncan waved his hand in sign of his dislike to all remonstrance, and then he said:

"You have the means of disguise; change me, paint me too, if you will; in short, alter me to anything—a fool."

Perhaps there was something in the proposal that suited the scout's own hardy nature, and that secret love of desperate adventure, which had increased with his experience, until hazard and danger had become, in some measure, necessary to the enjoyment of his existence. Instead of continuing to oppose the scheme of Duncan, his humor suddenly altered, and he lent himself to its execution.

"Come," he said, with a good-humored smile; "the buck that will take to the water must be headed, and not followed. Chingachgook has as many different paints as the engineer officer's wife, who takes down natur' on scraps of paper, making the mountains look like cocks of rusty hay, and placing the blue sky in reach of your hand. The sagamore can use them too. Seat yourself on the log; and, my life on it, he can make a natural fool of you, and that well to your liking."

Duncan complied; and the Mohican, who had been an attentive listener, readily undertook the office. Long practiced in all the subtle arts of his race, he drew with great dexterity and quickness, the fantastic shadow that the natives were accustomed to consider as the evidence of a friendly and jocular

disposition. Every line that could possibly be interpreted into a secret inclination for war, was carefully avoided; while, on the other hand, he studied those conceits that might be construed into amity.

In short, he entirely sacrificed every appearance of the warrior to the masquerade of a buffoon. Such exhibitions were not uncommon among the Indians; and, as Duncan was already sufficiently disguised in his dress, there certainly did exist some reason for believing that, with his knowledge of the French, he might pass for a juggler from Ticonderoga, straggling among the allied and friendly tribes.

When he was thought to be sufficiently painted, the scout gave him much friendly advice; concerted signals, and appointed the place where they should meet, in the event of mutual success. Duncan shook his worthy associate warmly by the hand, recommended his aged friend to his care, and, returning his good wishes, he motioned to David to proceed. Hawkeye gazed after the high-spirited young man for several moments, in open admiration; then shaking his head doubtingly, he turned, and led his own division of the party into the concealment of the forest.

The route taken by Duncan and David lay directly across the clearing of the beavers and along the margin of their pond. After making nearly a semicircle around this pond, they diverged from the water-course, and began to ascend to the level of a slight elevation in that bottom-land over which they journeyed. Within half an hour they gained the margin of another opening that bore all the signs of having been also made by the beavers, and which those sagacious animals had probably been induced by some accident to abandon for the more eligible position they now occupied.

On the opposite side of the clearing, and near the point where the brook tumbled over some rocks from a still higher level, some fifty or sixty lodges, rudely fabricated of logs, brush, and earth intermingled, were to be discovered. They

were arranged without order, and constructed with very little attention to neatness or beauty. So inferior were they in the two latter particulars to the village Duncan had just seen, that he began to expect a second surprise. This expectation was in no degree diminished when, by the doubtful twilight, he beheld twenty or thirty forms rising from the cover of the tall coarse grass in front of the lodges, and then sinking again from the sight, as it were, to burrow in the earth. David, observing that his companion lingered, pursued the direction of his gaze, and recalled the recollection of Heyward by speaking.

"There is much fruitful soil uncultivated here," he said. "It is rather joy than labor to the spirit, to lift up the voice in praise; but sadly do these boys abuse their gifts. Rarely have I found any of their age, on whom Nature has so freely bestowed the elements of psalmody; and surely there are none who neglect them more. Three nights have I now tarried here, and three several times have I assembled the urchins to join in sacred song; and as often have they responded to my efforts with whoopings and howlings that have chilled my soul!"

"Of whom speak you?"

"Of those children of the devil, who waste the precious moments in yonder idle antics."

David closed his ears against the juvenile pack, whose yell just then rang shrilly through the forest; and Duncan, suffering his lip to curl, as in mockery of his own superstition, said firmly:

"We will proceed."

Without moving the safeguards from his ears, the master of song complied, and together they pursued their way toward what David was sometimes wont to call "the tents of the Philistines."[1]

[1] enemies of Israel. See 1 Samuel, iv.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

It is unusual to find an encampment of the natives guarded by the presence of armed men. Well informed of the approach of every danger, the Indian rests secure under the knowledge of the signs of the forest. But the enemy who by any lucky accident eludes the vigilance of the scouts, will seldom meet with sentinels nearer home to sound the alarm.

When Duncan and David, therefore, found themselves in the center of the children who played the antics already referred to, it was without the least previous intimation of their approach. But as soon as they were observed, the whole of the juvenile pack raised, by common consent, a shrill and warning whoop; and then sank, as it were, by magic, from before the sight of their visitors. The young soldier would have retreated, but it was too late to appear to hesitate. The cry of the children had drawn a dozen warriors to the door of the nearest lodge, where they stood clustered in a dark and savage group, gravely awaiting the nearer approach of those who had unexpectedly come among them.

David, in some measure familiarized to the scene, led the way into this very building. It was the principal edifice of the village, being the lodge in which the tribe held its councils and public meetings during their temporary residence on the borders of the English province. Duncan, imitating the example of the deliberate Gamut, drew a bundle of fragrant brush from beneath a pile that filled a corner of the hut, and seated himself in silence. As soon as their visitor had passed, the warriors fell back from the entrance, and arranging themselves about him, seemed to await the moment when it might comport with the dignity of the stranger to speak. A flaring torch was burning in the place, and sent its red glare from face to face as it waved in the currents of air. Duncan prof-

ited by its light to read the probable character of his reception in the countenances of his hosts. At length one whose hair was beginning to be sprinkled with gray advanced out of the gloom of a corner, and spoke. He used the language of the Wyandots, or Hurons; his words were, consequently, unintelligible to Heyward, though they seemed to be uttered more in courtesy than anger. The latter shook his head, and made a gesture indicative of his inability to reply.

"Do none of my brothers speak the French or the English?" he said, in the former language.

The warrior replied by dryly demanding, in the language of the Canadas:

"When our Great Father speaks to his people, is it with the tongue of a Huron?"

"He knows no difference in his children, whether the color of the skin be red, or black, or white," returned Duncan, evasively; "though chiefly is he satisfied with the brave Hurons."

"In what manner will he speak," demanded the wary chief, "when the runners count to him the scalps which five nights ago grew on the heads of the Yengeese?"[1]

"They were his enemies," said Duncan, shuddering involuntarily; "and, doubtless, he will say, 'It is good—my Hurons are very gallant.'"

"Our Canada father[2] does not think it. Instead of looking forward to reward his Indians, his eyes are turned backward. He sees the dead Yengeese,[3] but no Huron. What can this mean?"

"A great chief, like him, has more thoughts than tongues. He looks to see that no enemies are on his trail. He has bid me, who am a man that knows the art of healing, to go to his children, the red Hurons of the great lakes, and ask if any are sick!"

[1] Indian name for *English*, and origin of the modern word *Yankees*.

[2] meaning Montcalm.

[3] *i.e.*, those massacred at William Henry.

A brief silence succeeded this annunciation of the character Duncan had assumed. Every eye was simultaneously bent on his person, as if to inquire into the truth or falsehood of the declaration, with an intelligence and keenness that caused the subject of their scrutiny to tremble for the result. He was, however, relieved again by the former speaker.

"Do the cunning men of the Canadas paint their skins?" the Huron coldly continued; "we have heard them boast that their faces were pale."

"When an Indian chief comes among his white fathers," returned Duncan, "he lays aside his buffalo-robe to carry the shirt that is offered him. My brothers have given me paint, and I wear it."

A low murmur of applause announced that the compliment to the tribe was favorably received. The elderly chief made a gesture of commendation, which was answered by most of his companions, who each threw forth a hand and uttered a brief exclamation of pleasure. At this moment a low but fearful sound arose from the forest, and was immediately succeeded by a high, shrill yell, that was drawn out until it equaled the longest and most plaintive howl of the wolf. The sudden interruption caused Duncan to start from his seat. At the same instant the warriors glided in a body from the lodge, and the outer air was filled with loud shouts that nearly drowned those awful sounds, which were still ringing beneath the arches of the woods. Unable to command himself any longer, the youth broke from the place, and presently stood in the center of a disorderly throng that included nearly everything having life within the limits of the encampment. Though astounded at first by the uproar, Heyward was soon enabled to find its solution by the scene that followed.

There yet lingered sufficient light in the heavens to exhibit those bright openings among the tree-tops, where different paths left the clearings to enter the depths of the wilderness. Beneath one of them a line of warriors issued from the

woods, and advanced slowly toward the dwellings. One in front bore a short pole, on which, as it afterward appeared, were suspended several human scalps. The startling sounds that Duncan had heard were what the whites have, not inappropriately, called the "death-halloo;" and each repetition of the cry was intended to announce to the tribe the fate of an enemy.

When at the distance of a few hundred feet from the lodges, the newly arrived party halted. All the warriors of the encampment then drew their knives, and they arranged themselves in two lines, forming a lane from the war-party to the lodges. The squaws seized clubs, axes, or whatever weapon first offered itself to their hands, and rushed eagerly to act their part in the cruel game that was at hand. Even the children would not be excluded; but boys, little able to wield the instruments, tore the tomahawks from the belts of their fathers and stole into the ranks, apt imitators of the savage traits exhibited by their parents.

Large piles of brush lay scattered about the clearing, and an aged squaw was occupied in firing as many as might serve to light the coming exhibition. The warriors just arrived were the most distant figures. A little in advance stood two men, who were apparently selected from the rest as the principal actors in what was to follow. The light was not strong enough to render their features distinct, though it was quite evident that they were governed by very different emotions. While one stood erect and firm, prepared to meet his fate like a hero, the other bowed his head as if palsied by terror or stricken with shame. The high-spirited Duncan felt a powerful impulse of admiration and pity toward the former, though no opportunity could offer to exhibit his generous emotions. Just then the signal yell was given, and the quiet which had preceded it was broken by a burst of cries that far exceeded any before heard. The most abject of the two victims continued motionless, but the other bounded from the

place with the swiftness of a deer. Instead of rushing through the hostile lines, he entered the dangerous defile, and before time was given for a single blow, turned short, and, leaping the heads of a row of children, he gained at once the exterior side of the formidable array. The artifice was answered by a hundred voices raised in imprecations, and the whole of the excited multitude broke from their order and spread themselves about the place in wild confusion.

It will easily be understood that, amid such a concourse of enemies, no breathing time was allowed the fugitive. There was a single moment when it seemed as if he would have reached the forest, but the whole body of his captors threw themselves before him and drove him back into the center of his relentless persecutors. Turning like a headed deer, he shot, with the swiftness of an arrow, through a pillar of forked flame, and passing the whole multitude harmless, he appeared on the opposite side of the clearing. Here, too, he was met and turned by a few of the older and more subtle of the Hurons. Once more he tried the throng, as if seeking safety in its blindness, and then Duncan believed the active and courageous young stranger was lost, but the next moment he saw him quietly leaning against a small painted post which stood before the door of the principal lodge.

Duncan now followed the crowd, which drew nigh the lodges, and curiosity induced him to approach the stranger. He found him, standing with one arm cast about the post, and breathing thick and hard, after his exertions, but disdaining to permit a single sign of suffering to escape. The next moment, the captive, turning his face toward the light, permitted Duncan to exchange glances with the firm and piercing eyes of Uncas.

Breathless with amazement, and heavily oppressed with the critical situation of his friend, Heyward recoiled before the look, trembling lest its meaning might, in some unknown manner, hasten the prisoner's fate. There was not, however,

any instant cause for such an apprehension. Just then a warrior forced his way into the crowd, took Uncas by the arm, and led him toward the door of the council lodge. Thither all the chiefs, and most of the warriors, followed; among whom Heyward found means to enter without attracting dangerous attention to himself.

A few minutes were consumed in disposing of those present in a manner suitable to their rank and influence in the tribe. In the center of the lodge, under an opening that admitted the twinkling light of one or two stars, stood Uncas—calm, elevated, and collected. His high and haughty carriage was not lost on his captors, who often bent their looks on his person, with eyes which plainly betrayed their admiration of the stranger's daring. The case was different with the individual whom Duncan had observed to stand forth with his friend, previously to the desperate trial of speed; and who, instead of joining in the chase, had remained, like a cringing statue, expressive of shame and disgrace. When each individual had taken his proper station, and silence reigned in the place, the gray-haired chief already introduced to the reader spoke aloud, in the language of the Lenni Lenape:

"Delaware," he said, "though one of a nation of women, you have proved yourself a man. I would give you food; but he who eats with a Huron should become his friend. Rest in peace till the morning sun, when our last words shall be spoken. Two of my young men are in pursuit of your companion. When they come back our wise men will say to you 'live' or 'die.'"

"Has a Huron no ears?" scornfully exclaimed Uncas; "twice, since he has been your prisoner, has the Delaware heard a gun that he knows. Your young men will never come back."

A short and sullen pause succeeded this bold assertion. Duncan, who understood the Mohican to allude to the fatal rifle of the scout, bent forward in earnest observation of the

effect it might produce on the conquerors; but the chief was content with simply retorting:

"If the Lenape are so skillful, why is one of their bravest warriors here?"

"He followed in the steps of a flying coward, and fell into a snare. The cunning beaver may be caught."

As Uncas thus replied, he pointed with his finger toward the solitary Huron, but without deigning to bestow any other notice on so unworthy an object. The words of the answer and the air of the speaker produced a strong sensation among his auditors. In the meantime the more aged chiefs, in the center, communed with each other in short and broken sentences. Again, a long and deeply solemn pause took place. It was known, by all present, to be the grave precursor of an important judgment. They who composed the outer circle of faces were on tiptoe to gaze; and even the culprit for an instant forgot his shame in a deeper emotion, and exposed his abject features in order to cast an anxious and troubled glance at the dark assemblage of chiefs. The silence was finally broken by the aged warrior so often named. He arose from the earth, and moving past the immovable form of Uncas, placed himself in a dignified attitude before the offender. At that moment, the withered squaw already mentioned moved into the circle, holding the torch, and muttering the indistinct words of what might have been a species of incantation. The young Huron was in his war-paint, and very little of a finely molded form was concealed by his attire. The light rendered every limb discernible, and Duncan turned away in horror when he saw they were writhing in agony. The woman was commencing a low and plaintive howl at the sad and shameful spectacle, when the chief put forth his hand and gently pushed her aside.

"Reed-that-bends," he said, addressing the young culprit by name, and in his proper language, "though the Great Spirit has made you pleasant to the eyes, it would have been

better that you had not been born. Your tongue is loud in the village, but in battle it is still. None of my young men strike the tomahawk deeper into the war-post—none of them so lightly on the Yengeese. The enemy know the shape of your back, but they have never seen the color of your eyes. Three times have they called on you to come, and as often did you forget to answer. Your name will never be mentioned again in your tribe—it is already forgotten."

As the chief slowly uttered these words, pausing impressively between each sentence, the culprit raised his face, in deference to the other's rank and years. Shame, horror, and pride struggled in its lineaments. His eye, which was contracted with inward anguish, gleamed on the persons of those whose breath was his fame; and the latter emotion for an instant predominated. He arose to his feet, and, baring his bosom, looked steadily on the keen, glittering knife that was already upheld by his judge. As the weapon passed slowly into his heart he even smiled, as if in joy at having found death less dreadful than he had anticipated, and fell heavily on his face, at the feet of the rigid form of Uncas.

The squaw gave a loud and plaintive yell, dashed the torch to the earth, and buried everything in darkness. The whole shuddering group of spectators glided from the lodge, like troubled spirits; and Duncan thought that he and the yet throbbing body of the victim of an Indian judgment had now become its only tenants.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A GREAT MEDICINE.

A SINGLE moment served to convince the youth that he was mistaken. A hand was laid, with a powerful pressure, on his arm, and the low voice of Uncas muttered in his ears:

"The Hurons are dogs. The sight of a coward's blood

can never make a warrior tremble. The Gray Head[1] and the sagamore are safe, and the rifle of Hawkeye is not asleep. Go—Uncas and the Open Hand[2] are now strangers. It is enough."

Heyward would gladly have heard more, but a gentle push from his friend urged him toward the door, and admonished him of the danger that might attend the discovery of their intercourse. Slowly yielding to the necessity, he quitted the lodge, and mingled with the throng that hovered nigh. A knot of warriors soon entered the place again, and reissuing, they bore the senseless remains into the adjacent woods. After this, Duncan wandered among the lodges, unquestioned and unnoticed, endeavoring to find some trace of her in whose behalf he incurred the risk he ran. Abandoning a species of inquiry that proved fruitless, he retraced his steps to the council lodge, resolved to seek and question David, in order to put an end to his doubts. On reaching the building, the young man found that the warriors had reassembled, and were now calmly smoking, while they conversed gravely on the chief incidents of their recent expedition to the head of the Horican.

Heyward walked into the lodge and took his seat with a gravity that accorded admirably with the deportment of his hosts. A hasty but searching glance sufficed to tell him that, though Uncas still remained where he had left him, David had not reappeared. He had not long occupied the seat, when another of the elder warriors addressed him.

"My Canada father does not forget his children," said the chief, speaking in French; "I thank him. An evil spirit lives in the wife of one of my young men. Can the cunning stranger frighten him away?"

Heyward possessed some knowledge of the mummery practiced among the Indians in cases of such supposed visitations. Aware of the necessity of preserving the dignity of his imaginary character, he answered with suitable mystery:

[1] meaning Munro. [2] meaning Heyward.

"Spirits differ; some yield to the power of wisdom, while others are too strong."

"My brother is a great medicine,"[1] said the cunning savage; "he will try?"

A gesture of assent was the answer. The Huron was content with the assurance, and, resuming his pipe, he awaited the proper moment to move. The minutes lingered, and the delay had seemed an hour, when the Huron laid aside his pipe, and threw his robe across his breast, as if about to lead the way to the lodge of the invalid. Just then, a warrior of powerful frame darkened the door, and stalking silently among the attentive group, he seated himself on one end of the low pile of brush which sustained Duncan. The latter cast an impatient look at his neighbor, and felt his flesh creep with uncontrollable horror when he found himself in actual contact with Magua.

The sudden return of this artful and dreaded chief caused a delay in the departure of the Huron. Several pipes, that had been extinguished, were lighted again; while the newcomer, without speaking a word, drew his tomahawk from his girdle, and filling the bowl on its head, began to inhale the vapors of the weed through the hollow handle with as much indifference as if he had not been absent two weary days on a long and toilsome hunt. Ten minutes might have passed in this manner before any of the warriors spoke.

"Welcome," one at length uttered. "The Delawares have been like bears after the honey-pots, prowling around my village. But who has ever found a Huron asleep?"

The darkness of the impending cloud which precedes a burst of thunder, was not blacker than the brow of Magua, as he exclaimed:

"The Delawares of the lakes!"

"Not so. They who wear the petticoats of squaws, on

[1] or medicine-man; English for terms used among the American Indians to denote any person supposed to possess mysterious or supernatural powers.

their own river. One of them has been passing the tribe."

"Did my young men take his scalp?"

"His legs were good, though his arm is better for the hoe than the tomahawk," returned the other, pointing to the immovable form of Uncas.

Magua arose, casting for the first time a glance in the direction of the prisoner, who stood a little behind him, and, heaving a breath from the very bottom of his chest, he pronounced aloud the formidable name of:

"Le Cerf Agile!"

Each warrior sprang upon his feet at the utterance of the well-known appellation, and there was a short period during which the stoical constancy of the natives was completely conquered by surprise. Magua, raising his arm, shook it at the captive—the light silver ornaments attached to his bracelet rattling with the trembling agitation of the limb, as, in a tone of vengeance, he exclaimed in English:

"Mohican, you die! Go—take him where there is silence; let us see if a Delaware can sleep at night, and in the morning die."

The young men whose duty it was to guard the prisoner, instantly passed their ligaments of bark across his arms, and led him from the lodge, amid a profound and ominous silence.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN INTELLIGENT BEAR.

When the chief who had solicited the aid of Duncan, finished his pipe, he made a movement toward departing. A motion of a finger was the intimation he gave the supposed physician to follow; and passing through the clouds of smoke, Duncan was glad to be able, at last, to breathe the pure air of a cool and refreshing summer evening.

Instead of pursuing his way among those lodges where Heyward had already made his unsuccessful search, his companion turned aside, and proceeded directly toward the base of an adjacent mountain which overhung the temporary village. The boys had resumed their sports in the clearing, and one of the boldest of their number had conveyed a few brands into some piles of tree-tops that had hitherto escaped the burning. The blaze of one of these fires lighted the way of the chief and Duncan, fell upon the white surface of the mountain, and was reflected downward upon a dark and mysterious-looking being that arose, unexpectedly, in their path.

The Indian paused, as if doubtful whether to proceed, and permitted his companion to approach his side. A large black ball, which at first seemed stationary, now began to move in a manner that to the latter was inexplicable. Again the fire brightened, and its glare fell more distinctly on the object. Then even Duncan knew it, by its restless and sidelong attitudes, to be a bear. Though it growled loudly and fiercely, it gave no other indications of hostility. The Huron seemed assured that the intentions of this singular intruder were peaceable, for, after giving it an attentive examination, he quietly pursued his course. Duncan, who knew that the animal was often domesticated among the Indians, followed the example of his companion. They passed it unmolested. Though obliged to come nearly in contact with the monster, the Huron was content with proceeding without wasting a moment in further examination; but Heyward was unable to prevent his eyes from looking backward, in salutary watchfulness against attacks in the rear. His uneasiness was in no degree diminished when he perceived the beast rolling along their path and following their footsteps. He would have spoken, but the Indian at that moment shoved aside a door of bark, and entered a cavern in the bosom of the mountain.

Profiting by so easy a method of retreat, Duncan stepped after him, and was gladly closing the slight cover to the

opening, when he felt it drawn from his hand by the beast, whose shaggy form immediately darkened the passage. How long the nerves of Heyward would have sustained him in this extraordinary situation, it might be difficult to decide; for, happily, he soon found relief. A glimmer of light had constantly been in their front, and they now arrived at the place whence it proceeded.

A large cavity in the rock had been rudely fitted to answer the purposes of many apartments. The subdivisions were composed of stone, sticks, and bark, intermingled. Openings above admitted the light by day, and at night fires and torches supplied the place of the sun. Hither the Hurons had brought most of their valuables, and hither, as it now appeared, the sick woman, who was believed to be the victim of supernatural power. The apartment into which Duncan and his guide first entered had been exclusively devoted to her accommodation. The latter approached her bedside, which was surrounded by females, in the center of whom Heyward was surprised to find his missing friend, David. A single look was sufficient to apprise the pretended leech[1] that the invalid was far beyond his power of healing.

Gamut, who had stood prepared to pour forth his spirit in song when the visitors entered, after delaying a moment, drew a strain from his pipe and commenced a hymn that might have worked a miracle, had faith in its efficacy been of much avail. He was allowed to proceed to the close, Duncan too glad of the delay to hazard the slightest interruption. As the dying cadence of his strains was falling on the ears of the latter, he started aside at hearing them repeated behind him, in a voice half human and half sepulchral. Looking around, he beheld the shaggy monster seated on end in a shadow of the cavern, where it repeated, in a low growl, sounds which bore a slight resemblance to the melody of the singer.

The effect of so strange an echo on David may better be

[1] old word for doctor or physician.

imagined than described. His eyes opened as if he doubted their truth; and his voice became instantly mute in excess of wonder. A deep-laid scheme of communicating some important intelligence to Heyward was driven from his recollection by an emotion which very nearly resembled fear, but which he was fain to believe was admiration. Under its influence he exclaimed aloud, "She expects you, and is at hand;" and precipitately left the cavern.

There was a strange blending of the ridiculous with that which was so solemn in this scene. The beast still continued its rolling and apparently untiring movements, though its ludicrous attempt to imitate the melody of David ceased the instant the latter abandoned the field. The chief advanced to the bedside of the invalid, and beckoned away the whole group of female attendants that had clustered there to witness the skill of the stranger. He was implicitly, though reluctantly, obeyed; and when the low echo which rang along the hollow, natural gallery, from the distant closing door, had ceased, pointing toward his insensible daughter, he said:

"Now let my brother show his power."

Thus called on to exercise the functions of his assumed character, Heyward was apprehensive that the smallest delay might prove dangerous. In the disordered state of his thoughts, he would soon have fallen into some suspicious if not fatal error, had not his attempts been interrupted by a fierce growl from the quadruped. Three several times did he renew his efforts to proceed, and as often was he met by the same unaccountable opposition, each interruption seeming more savage and threatening than the preceding.

"The cunning ones are jealous," said the Huron; "I go. Brother, the woman is the wife of one of my bravest young men; deal justly by her. Peace," he added, beckoning to the discontented beast to be quiet; "I go."

The chief was as good as his word, and Duncan now found himself alone in that wild and desolate abode, with the help-

less invalid, and the fierce and dangerous brute. The youth looked anxiously about him for some weapon, with which he might make a resistance against the attack he now seriously expected. It seemed, however, as if the humor of the animal had suddenly changed. The huge and unwieldy talons pawed stupidly about the grinning muzzle, and while Heyward kept his eyes riveted on its movements with jealous watchfulness, the grim head fell on one side, and in its place appeared the honest, sturdy countenance of the scout, who was indulging, from the bottom of his soul, in his own peculiar expression of merriment.

"Hist!" said the wary woodsman, interrupting Heyward's exclamation of surprise; "the varlets are about the place, and any sounds that are not natural to witchcraft would bring them back upon us in a body."

"Tell me the meaning of this masquerade; and why you have attempted so desperate an adventure."

"Ah! reason and calculation are often outdone by accident," returned the scout. "But as a story should always commence at the beginning, I will tell you the whole in order. After we parted I placed the commandant and the sagamore in an old beaver-lodge, where they are safer from the Hurons than they would be in the garrison of Edward. After which Uncas and I pushed for the other encampment, as was agreed; have you seen the lad?"

"To my great grief!—he is captive, and condemned to die at the rising of the sun."

"I had misgivings that such would be his fate," resumed the scout, in a less confident and joyous tone. "Well, Uncas and I fell in with a returning party of the varlets; the lad was much too forward for a scout; nay, for that matter, being of hot blood, he was not so much to blame, and, after all, one of the Hurons proved a coward and, in fleeing, led him into an ambushment."

"And dearly has he paid for the weakness!"

The scout significantly passed his hand across his own throat, after which he continued:

"After the loss of the boy, I turned upon the Hurons, as you may judge. Then what should luck do in my favor but lead me to the very spot where one of the most famous conjurers of the tribe was dressing himself, as I well knew, for some great battle with Satan. So a judgmatical rap over the head stiffened the lying impostor for a time, and stringing him up atween two saplings, I made free with his finery, and took the part of the bear on myself, in order that the operations might proceed. But all our work is yet before us; where is the gentle one?"

"Heaven knows: I have examined every lodge in the village without discovering the slightest trace of her presence in the tribe."

"You heard what the singer said, as he left us—'She is at hand, and expects you.' Here are walls enough to separate the whole settlement. A bear ought to climb; therefore will I take a look above them. There may be honey-pots hid in these rocks, and I am a beast, you know, that has a hankering for the sweets."

The scout clambered up the partition, imitating, as he went, the clumsy motion of the beast he represented; but the instant the summit was gained, he made a gesture for silence, and slid down with the utmost precipitation.

"She is here," he whispered, "and by that door you will find her. I would have spoken a word of comfort to the afflicted soul; but the sight of such a monster might upset her reason. Though for that matter, Major, you are none of the most inviting yourself in your paint."

Duncan, who had already sprung eagerly forward, drew instantly back on hearing these discouraging words.

"Am I, then, so very revolting?" he demanded, with an air of chagrin.

"You might not startle a wolf or turn the Royal Americans

from a charge; but I've seen the time when you had a better-favored look. See," he added, pointing to a place where the water trickled from a rock, "you may easily get rid of the sagamore's daub, and when you come back I will try my hand at a new embellishment. It's common for a conjurer to alter his paint."

The deliberate woodsman had little occasion to hunt for arguments to enforce his advice. He was yet speaking when Duncan availed himself of the water. In a moment every frightful or offensive mark was obliterated, and the youth appeared again in the lineaments with which he had been gifted by Nature. Thus prepared for an interview with his mistress, he took a hasty leave of his companion, and disappeared through the indicated passage.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LE RENARD SUBTIL TRAPPED.

DUNCAN had no other guide than a distant glimmering light, which served, however, the office of a polar star to the lover. By its aid he was enabled to enter another apartment of the cavern, that had been solely appropriated to the safe-keeping of so important a prisoner as a daughter of the commandant of William Henry. It was profusely strewed with the plunder of that unlucky fortress. In the midst of this confusion he found her he sought, pale, anxious, and terrified, but lovely. David had prepared her for such a visit.

"Duncan!" she exclaimed, in a voice that seemed to tremble at the sounds created by itself.

"Alice!" he answered, leaping carelessly among the trunks, boxes, arms, and furniture, until he stood at her side.

"I knew that you would never desert me," she said, looking up with a momentary glow on her otherwise dejected countenance. "But you are alone! Grateful as it is to be thus

remembered, I could wish to think you are not entirely alone."

Duncan, observing that she trembled in a manner which betrayed her inability to stand, gently induced her to be seated while he recounted those leading incidents which it has been our task to record.

"And now, Alice," he added, "you will see how much is still expected of you. By the assistance of our experienced and invaluable friend, the scout, we may find our way from this savage people, but you will have to exert your utmost fortitude. Remember that you fly to the arms of your venerable parent, and how much his happiness, as well as your own, depends on those exertions."

The youth was interrupted by a light tap on his shoulder. Starting to his feet, he turned and, confronting the intruder, his looks fell on the dark form and malignant visage of Magua. The deep, guttural laugh of the savage sounded, at such a moment, to Duncan like the taunt of a demon. Regarding both his captives for a moment with a steady look, and then stepping aside, the Indian dropped a log of wood across a door different from that by which Duncan had entered, after which he approached his prisoners, and said in English:

"The pale-faces trap the cunning beavers; but the red-skins know how to take the Yengeese."

"Huron, do your worst!" exclaimed the excited Heyward; "you and your vengeance are alike despised."

"Will the white man speak these words at the stake?"[1] asked Magua.

"Here; singly to your face, or in the presence of your nation."

"Le Renard Subtil is a great chief," returned the Indian; "he will go and bring his young men to see how bravely a pale-face can laugh at the tortures."

He turned away while speaking, and was about to leave the

[1] the stake or post to which the Indians tied prisoners to torture or put them to death.

place through the avenue by which Duncan had approached, when a growl caught his ear, and caused him to hesitate. The figure of the bear appeared in the door, where it sat, rolling from side to side in its customary restlessness. Magua, like the father of the sick woman, eyed it keenly for a moment, as if to ascertain its character, and as soon as he recognized the well-known attire of the conjurer, he prepared to pass it in cool contempt.

"Fool!" exclaimed the chief, in Huron, "go play with the children and squaws; leave men to their wisdom."

Suddenly the beast extended its arms, or rather legs, and inclosed him in a grasp that might have vied with the "bear's hug" itself. Heyward then caught up a thong of buckskin, which had been used around some bundle, and when he beheld his enemy with his two arms pinned to his side by the iron muscles of the scout, he rushed upon him, and effectually secured them there. Arms, legs, and feet were encircled in twenty folds of the thong, in less time than we have taken to record the circumstance. When the Huron was completely pinioned, Duncan laid him on his back, utterly helpless.

Throughout the whole of this operation, Magua, though he had struggled violently, had not uttered the slightest exclamation. But when Hawkeye removed the shaggy jaws of the beast, and exposed his own rugged countenance to the gaze of the Huron, the philosophy of the latter was so far mastered as to permit him to utter the never-failing "Hugh!"

"Ay! you've found your tongue," said his conqueror; "now, in order that you shall not use it to our ruin, I must make free to stop your mouth."

As there was no time to be lost, the scout immediately set about to gag the Indian.

"By what place did the imp enter?" asked he, when his work was ended. "Not a soul has passed my way since you left me."

Duncan pointed out the door by which Magua had come,

and which now presented too many obstacles to a quick retreat.

"Bring on the gentle one, then," continued his friend; "we must make a push for the woods by the other outlet."

"'Tis impossible!" said Duncan; "fear has overcome her, and she is helpless. Go, noble and worthy friend, save yourself, and leave me to my fate!"

"Every trail has its end, and every calamity brings its lesson!" returned the scout. "There, wrap her in them Indian cloths. Now take her in your arms and follow."

Duncan took the light person of Alice in his arms, and followed on the footsteps of the scout. They passed to the entrance, and Hawkeye threw open the covering of bark and left the place, enacting the character of the bear as he proceeded. Taking the path most likely to avoid observation, he rather skirted than entered the village. The warriors were still to be seen in the distance, by the fading light of the fires, stalking from lodge to lodge. Alice revived under the renovating influence of the open air.

"Now let me make an effort to walk," she said, when they had entered the forest. "I am indeed restored."

"Nay, Alice, you are yet too weak."

The maiden struggled gently to release herself, and Heyward was compelled to part with his precious burden. The representative of the bear had been an entire stranger to the emotions of the lover while his arms encircled his mistress, but when he found himself at a suitable distance from the lodges he made a halt, and spoke on a subject of which he was thoroughly the master.

"This path will lead you to the brook," he said; "follow its northern bank until you come to a fall; mount the hill on your right, and you will see the fires of the other people. There you must go, and demand protection; if they are true Delawares, you will be safe. A distant flight with that gentle one, just now, is impossible. The Hurons would follow our

trail, and master our scalps before we had got a dozen miles. Go, and Providence be with you!"

"And you!" demanded Heyward, in surprise; "surely we part not here?"

"The Hurons hold the pride of the Delawares; the last of the high blood of the Mohicans is in their power," returned the scout; "I go to see what can be done in his favor. Afore it shall be said that Uncas was taken to the torment, and I at hand, good faith shall depart from the 'arth, and Killdeer become as harmless as the tooting we'pon of the singer!"

Duncan released his hold on the arm of the scout, who turned and steadily retraced his steps toward the lodges. After pausing a moment to gaze at his retiring form, the successful and yet sorrowful Heyward and Alice took their way together toward the distant village of the Delawares.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A BOLD ADVENTURE.

HAWKEYE pursued his way directly towards the center of the lodges. As he approached the buildings his steps became more deliberate, and his vigilant eye suffered no sign, whether friendly or hostile, to escape him. A neglected hut was a little in advance of the others, and appeared as if it had been deserted when half completed. Throwing himself into a suitable posture for the beast he represented, Hawkeye crawled to a little opening, where he might command a view of the interior. It proved to be the abiding-place of David Gamut. Hither the faithful singing-master had now brought himself, together with all his sorrows, and his meek dependence on the protection of Providence. First making the circuit of the hut, and ascertaining that it stood quite alone, Hawkeye ventured through its low door, into the very presence of Gamut. The suddenness and the nature of the surprise

had nearly proved too much for the faith and resolution of David. He fumbled for his pitch-pipe, and arose with a confused intention of attempting a musical exorcism.

"Dark and mysterious monster!" he exclaimed, "I know not your nature nor intents; but if aught you meditate against the person of one of the humblest servants of the temple, listen to the inspired language of the youth of Israel, and repent."

The bear shook his shaggy sides, and then a well-known voice replied:

"Put up the tooting we'pon, and teach your throat modesty. Five words of plain and comprehendible English are worth, just now, an hour of squalling."

"What art thou?" demanded David, nearly gasping for breath.

"A man like yourself," returned Hawkeye, uncasing his honest countenance to assure the confidence of his companion. "Have you so soon forgotten from whom you received the foolish instrument you hold in your hand? Now let us to business."

"First tell me of the maiden and of the youth who so bravely sought her," interrupted David.

"Ay; they are happily free from the tomahawks of these varlets. But can you put me on the scent of Uncas?"

"The task will not be difficult," returned David, hesitating; "though I greatly fear your presence would rather increase than mitigate his unhappy fortunes."

"No more words, but lead on," returned Hawkeye, concealing his face again, and setting the example in his own person by instantly quitting the hut.

The lodge in which Uncas was confined was in the very center of the village, and in a situation, perhaps, more difficult than any other to approach without observation. But it was not the policy of Hawkeye to affect the least concealment. Presuming on his ability to sustain the character he had as-

sumed, he took the most plain and direct route to the place. The boys were already buried in sleep, and all the women, and most of the warriors, had retired to their lodges for the night. Four or five of the latter only lingered about the door of the prison of Uncas, wary but close observers of the manner of their captive. At the sight of Gamut, accompanied by one in the well-known masquerade of their most distinguished conjurer, they readily made way for them both. From the total inability of the scout to address the Hurons in their own language, he was compelled to trust the conversation entirely to David. Notwithstanding the simplicity of the latter, he did justice to the instructions Hawkeye had taken care to give him.

"The Delawares are women!" he exclaimed, addressing himself to one of them who had a slight understanding of the language in which he spoke; "the Yengeese, my foolish countrymen, have told them to take up the tomahawk and strike their fathers in the Canadas, and they have forgotten their sex. Does my brother wish to hear Le Cerf Agile ask for his petticoats, and see him weep before the Hurons at the stake?"

The exclamation "Hugh!" delivered in a strong tone of assent, announced the gratification the savage would receive in witnessing such an exhibition of weakness in an enemy so long hated and so much feared.

"Then let him step aside, and the cunning man will blow upon the dog! Tell it to my brothers."

The Huron explained the meaning of David to his fellows, who drew back a little from the entrance, and motioned for the supposed conjurer to enter. But the bear, instead of obeying, maintained the seat it had taken, and growled.

"The cunning man is afraid that his breath will blow upon his brothers, and take away their courage, too," continued David; "they must stand further off."

The Hurons fell back in a body, taking a position where they were out of ear-shot, though at the same time they could command a view of the entrance to the lodge. Then, as if

satisfied of their safety, the scout slowly entered the place. It was silent and gloomy, being tenanted solely by the captive, and lighted by the dying embers of a fire which had been used for cookery. As soon as David gave the preconcerted signal, a low hissing sound was heard in the lodge, in place of the fierce growlings of the bear. Uncas had cast his body against the wall of the hut, and closed his eyes, as if willing to exclude so contemptible and disagreeable an object from his sight. But the moment the noise of the serpent was heard, he arose, and uttered, in a deep, suppressed voice:

"Hawkeye!"

"Cut his bands," said Hawkeye to David.

The singer did as he was ordered, and Uncas found his limbs released. At the same moment the dried skin of the animal rattled, and presently the scout arose to his feet, in proper person. When he had cast his shaggy vestment, which was done by simply loosing certain thongs of skin, he drew a long glittering knife, and put it in the hands of Uncas.

"The red Hurons are without," he said; "let us be ready."

"We will go," said Uncas.

"Whither?"

"To the Tortoises; they are the children of my grandfathers."

"Ay, lad," said the scout, "the same blood runs in your veins, I believe; but what shall we do with the Mingoes at the door? They count six, and this singer is as good as nothing. As for myself, I can brain a Huron as well as a better man; but when it comes to a race, the knaves would prove too much for me. So, Uncas, you had better take the leap, while I will put on the skin again, and trust to cunning for want of speed."

The young Mohican made no reply, but leaned his body against one of the posts that supported the wall of the hut.

"Well," said the scout, "why do you tarry? There will be time enough for me. They will give chase to you at first."

"Uncas will stay," was the calm reply.

"For what?"

"To die with the friend of the Delawares."

"Ay, lad," returned Hawkeye, "'twould have been more like a Mingo than a Mohican had you left me. But I thought I would make the offer, seeing that youth commonly loves life. Well, what can't be done by main courage, in war, must be done by circumvention. Put on the skin; I doubt not you can play the bear nearly as well as myself."

Uncas incased himself in the covering of the beast, and then awaited such other movements as his more aged companion saw fit to dictate.

"Now, friend," said Hawkeye, addressing David, "an exchange of garments will be a great convenience to you. Here, take my hunting-shirt and cap, and give me your blanket and hat. You must trust me with the book and spectacles, as well as the tooter, too: if we ever meet again, you shall have all back, with many thanks into the bargain."

David parted with the articles with a readiness that would have done credit to his liberality, had he not profited, in many particulars, by the exchange. Hawkeye was not long in assuming his borrowed garments, and when his restless eyes were hid behind the glasses, and his head was surmounted by the triangular beaver, as their statures were not dissimilar, he might readily have passed for the singer by starlight. He now turned to David and gave him his parting instructions.

"Your chiefest danger will be at the moment when the savages find out that they have been deceived. If you stay, it must be to sit down here in the shadow, and take the part of Uncas, until such time as the cunning of the Indians discovers the cheat, when your time of trial will come. So choose for yourself—to make a rush or to tarry here."

"Even so," said David, firmly; "I will abide in the place of the Delaware. Bravely and generously has he battled in our behalf; and this, and more, will I dare in his service."

The scout shook him cordially by the hand; after which he

immediately left the lodge, attended by the new representative of the beast. The instant he found himself under the observation of the Hurons, he drew up his tall form in the rigid manner of David, threw out his arm in the act of keeping time, and commenced what he intended for an imitation of his psalmody. The little knot of Indians drew back in a body, and suffered, as they thought, the conjurer and his inspired assistant to proceed. It required no common exercise of fortitude in Uncas and the scout to continue the dignified and deliberate pace they had assumed in passing the lodges. The least injudicious or impatient movement on the part of David might betray them, and time was absolutely necessary to insure the safety of the scout. They were not, however, interrupted; the darkness of the hour and the boldness of the attempt proving their principal friends. The adventurers had got clear of the village, and were now swiftly approaching the shelter of the woods, when a loud and long cry arose from the lodge where Uncas had been confined. The Mohican started on his feet and shook his shaggy covering, as though about to make some desperate effort.

"Hold!" said the scout, "let them yell again!"

The next instant a burst of cries filled the air and ran along the whole extent of the village. Uncas cast his skin and stepped forth in his own beautiful proportions. Hawkeye tapped him lightly on the shoulder and glided ahead.

"Now let the devils strike our scent!" said the scout, tearing two rifles from beneath a bush, and flourishing Killdeer, as he handed Uncas his weapon; "two, at least, will find it to their deaths."

Then, throwing their pieces to a low trail, like sportsmen in readiness for their game, they dashed forward, and were soon buried in the somber darkness of the forest.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE FUGITIVES.

THE impatience of the savages who lingered about the prison of Uncas had overcome their dread of the conjurer's breath. They stole, cautiously and with beating hearts, to a crevice through which the faint light of the fire was glimmering. For several minutes they mistook the form of David for that of their prisoner, but when, unconscious of being observed, he turned his head and exposed his mild countenance, in place of the haughty lineaments of their prisoner, it would have exceeded the credulity of even a native to have doubted any longer. They rushed together into the lodge, and laying their hands, with but little ceremony, on their captive, immediately detected the imposition. Then arose the cry first heard by the fugitives. It was succeeded by the most frantic demonstrations of vengeance. A native warrior fights as he sleeps, without the protection of anything defensive. The sounds of the alarm were, therefore, hardly uttered, before two hundred men were crowded in a body round the council-lodge, impatiently awaiting the instructions of their chiefs. In such a sudden demand on their wisdom, the presence of the cunning Magua could scarcely fail of being needed, and messengers were dispatched to his lodge, requiring his presence.

In the meantime some of the swiftest of the young men were ordered to make the circuit of the clearing under cover of the woods, in order to ascertain that their suspected neighbors, the Delawares, designed no mischief. The clamor of many voices soon announced that a party approached, who might be expected to communicate some intelligence. The crowd without gave way, and several warriors entered the place, bringing with them the hapless conjurer, who had been left so long by the scout in duress. He was listened to with the deepest attention. When his brief story was ended, the

father of the sick woman related what he knew. The subsequent inquiries were made with the characteristic cunning of the savages. Instead of rushing in a disorderly throng to the cavern, ten of the wisest among the chiefs were selected to prosecute the investigation. As no time was to be lost, the individuals appointed rose in a body, and left the place without speaking.

The outer apartment of the cavern was silent and gloomy. The woman lay in her usual place, though there were those present who affirmed they had seen her borne to the woods, by the supposed "medicine of the white men." Such a contradiction of the tale related by the father, caused all eyes to be turned on him. The chief advanced to the side of the bed, and, stooping, cast a look at the features, as if distrusting their reality. His daughter was dead. The mournful intelligence was received in solemn silence. After a short pause, a dark-looking object was seen rolling out of an adjoining apartment, into the very center of the room where they stood. The whole party drew back a little, until the object fronted the light and, rising on end, exhibited the distorted but still fierce and sullen features of Magua.

The discovery was succeeded by a general exclamation of amazement. As soon as the true situation of the chief was understood, several ready knives appeared, and his limbs and tongue were quickly released. The Huron arose, and shook himself like a lion quitting his lair. When suitable time had elapsed, the oldest of the party spoke.

"My friend has found an enemy," he said. "Is he nigh, that the Hurons may take revenge?"

"Let the Delaware die!" exclaimed Magua, in a voice of thunder.

"The Mohican is swift of foot, and leaps far, but my young men are on his trail."

"Is he gone?" demanded Magua, in tones so deep and guttural, that they seemed to proceed from his inmost chest.

"An evil spirit has been among us, and the Delaware has blinded our eyes."

"An evil spirit!" repeated the other, mockingly; "'tis the spirit that has taken the lives of so many Hurons—the dog who carries the heart and cunning of a Huron under a pale skin—La Longue Carabine!"

The pronunciation of so terrible a name produced the usual effect among his auditors. But when time was given for reflection, and the warriors remembered that their formidable and daring enemy had even been in the bosom of their encampment, working injury, fearful rage took the place of wonder. Magua, who had found leisure for reflection, now assumed the air of one who knew how to think and act with a dignity worthy of so grave a subject.

"Let us go to my people," he said; "they wait for us."

His companions consented in silence, and the whole of the savage party left the cavern and returned to the council-lodge. When they were seated, Magua told his tale without duplicity or reservation. The whole deception practiced by both Duncan and Hawkeye was, of course, laid naked; and no room was found, even for the most superstitious of the tribe, any longer to affix a doubt on the character of the occurrences. When he had ended, additional pursuers were sent on the trail of the fugitives; and then the chiefs applied themselves in earnest to the business of consultation. Many different expedients were proposed by the elder warriors in succession, to all of which Magua was a silent and respectful listener. It was only when each one disposed to speak had uttered his sentiments, that he prepared to advance his own opinions. They were given with additional weight from the circumstance that some of the runners had already returned, and reported that their enemies had been traced so far as to leave no doubt of their having sought safety in the neighboring camp of their suspected allies, the Delawares.

It has been already stated that, in obedience to a policy

rarely departed from, the sisters were separated so soon as they reached the Huron village. Magua had early discovered that, in retaining the person of Alice, he possessed the most effectual check on Cora. When they parted, therefore, he kept the former within reach of his hand, consigning the one he most valued to the keeping of their allies. While goaded incessantly by those revengeful impulses that in a savage seldom slumber, the chief was still attentive to his more permanent personal interests.

He had now attained one great object of all his cunning. The ground he had lost in the favor of his people was completely regained, and he found himself even placed at the head of affairs. Throwing off, therefore, the appearance of consultation, he assumed the grave air of authority necessary to support the dignity of his office.

Runners were dispatched for intelligence in different directions; spies were ordered to approach and feel the encampment of the Delawares; the warriors were dismissed to their lodges, with an intimation that their services would soon be needed; and the women and children were ordered to retire. When these arrangements were made, Magua passed to his own lodge. While others slept, however, he neither knew nor sought repose, and long before the day dawned, warrior after warrior entered his solitary hut, until they had collected to the number of twenty. Each bore his rifle, and all the other accouterments of war, though the paint was uniformly peaceful. The entrance of these fierce-looking beings was unnoticed: some seating themselves in the shadows of the place, and others standing like motionless statues, until the whole of the band designated the previous evening was collected.

Then Magua arose and gave the signal to proceed, marching himself in advance. They followed their leader singly, and in that well-known order which has obtained the distinguishing appellation of Indian file.[1] Instead of taking the path which

[1] single file, passing one behind the other.

led directly toward the camp of the Delawares, he led his party for some distance down the windings of the stream, and along the little artificial lake of the beavers. The day began to dawn as they entered the clearing which had been formed by those industrious animals.

Though Magua, who had resumed his ancient garb, bore the outline of a fox on the dressed skin which formed his robe, there was one chief of his party who carried the beaver as his peculiar symbol, or totem.[1] There would have been a species of profanity in the omission, had this man passed so powerful a community of his fancied kindred without bestowing some evidence of his regard. Accordingly he paused, and spoke in words as kind and friendly as if he were addressing more intelligent beings. He called the animals his cousins, and reminded them that his protecting influence was the reason they remained unharmed, while so many avaricious traders were prompting the Indians to take their lives.[2] Just as he had ended his address, the head of a large beaver was thrust from the door of a lodge whose earthen walls had been much injured, and which the whole party had believed, from its situation, to be uninhabited. Such an extraordinary sign of confidence was received by the orator as a highly favorable omen, and though the animal retreated a little precipitately, he was lavish of his thanks and commendations.

When Magua thought sufficient time had been lost in gratifying the family affection of the warrior, he again made the signal to proceed. As the Indians moved away in a body, and with a step that would have been inaudible to the ears of any common man, the same venerable-looking beaver once more ventured his head from its cover. Had any of the Hurons turned to look behind them, they would have seen the animal watching their movements with a sagacity that might

[1] See note 2, page 129.

[2] These harangues to the beasts are frequent among the Indians. They often address their victims in this way, reproaching them for cowardice, or commending their resolution, as they may happen to exhibit fortitude or the reverse in suffering.—*Author's Note.*

easily have been mistaken for reason. Indeed, so very intelligible were the devices of the quadruped, that even the most experienced observer would have been at a loss to account for its actions, until the moment when the party entered the forest, when the whole would have been explained, by seeing the entire animal issue from the lodge, uncasing, by the act, the grave features of Chingachgook from his mask of fur.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TAMENUND.

THE tribe, or, rather, half tribe of Delawares which has been so often mentioned, and whose present place of encampment was so nigh the temporary village of the Hurons, could assemble about an equal number of warriors with the latter people. Like their neighbors, they had followed Montcalm into the territories of the English crown, and were making heavy and serious inroads on the hunting-grounds of the Mohawks; though they had seen fit, with the mysterious reserve so common among the natives, to withhold their assistance at the moment when it was most required. On that morning when Magua led his silent party from the settlement of the beavers into the forest in the manner described, the sun rose upon the Delaware encampment, as if it had suddenly burst upon a busy people, actively employed in all the customary avocations of high noon. The warriors were lounging in groups, musing more than they conversed; and when a few words were uttered, speaking like men who deeply weighed their opinions. Occasionally the eyes of the whole group were turned toward a large lodge in the center of the village, as if it contained the subject of their common thoughts.

During the existence of this scene, a man suddenly appeared at the furthest extremity of a platform of rock which formed the level of the village. He was without arms, and his paint

tended rather to soften than increase the natural sternness of his austere countenance. When in full view of the Delawares, he stopped, and made a gesture of amity, by throwing his arm upward toward heaven, and then letting it fall impressively on his breast. The inhabitants of the village answered his salute by a low murmur of welcome, and encouraged him to advance by similar indications of friendship. Fortified by these assurances, the dark figure left the brow of the natural rocky terrace. When he had reached the group in which the principal chiefs were collected, he paused, and then the Delawares saw that the active and erect form that stood before them was that of the well-known Huron chief, Le Renard Subtil. The warriors in front stepped aside, opening the way to their most approved orator, one who spoke all those languages that were cultivated among the northern aborigines.

"The wise Huron is welcome," said the Delaware, in the language of the Maquas; "he is come to eat his succotash with his brothers of the lakes."

"He is come," replied Magua, bending his head with the dignity of an Eastern prince.

The chief extended his arm, and, taking the other by the wrist, they once more exchanged friendly salutations. Then the Delaware invited his guest to enter his own lodge and share his morning meal. The invitation was accepted; and the two warriors, attended by three or four of the old men, walked calmly away. During the short repast that followed, the conversation related entirely to the events of the hunt in which Magua had lately been engaged. When the appetites of the whole were appeased, the squaws removed the trenchers and gourds, and the two parties began to prepare themselves for a subtle trial of their wits.

"I have brought gifts to my brother," said Magua. "His nation would not go on the war-path, because they did not think it well: but their friends have remembered where they lived."

When he had thus announced his liberal intention, the crafty chief arose and spread his presents before the dazzled eyes of his hosts. They consisted principally of trinkets of little value, plundered from the slaughtered females of William Henry. He bestowed those of greater value on the two most distinguished warriors, one of whom was his host, who, after contemplating his own liberal share of the spoil with peculiar gratification, repeated the words:

"My brother is a wise chief. He is welcome."

"The Hurons love the Delawares," returned Magua. "The red-skins should be friends, and look with open eyes on the white men. Has not my brother scented spies in the woods?"

The Delaware, whose name in English signified "Hard-heart," an appellation that the French had translated into "Le Coeur-dur," forgot that obduracy of purpose that had probably obtained him so significant a title, and he deigned to answer directly.

"There have been strange moccasins about my camp. They have been tracked into my lodges."

"Did my brother beat out the dogs?" asked Magua.

"It would not do. The stranger is always welcome to the children of the Lenape."

"The stranger, but not the spy."

"Would the Yengeese send their women as spies? Did not the Huron chief say he took women in the battle?"

"He told no lie. The Yengeese have sent out their scouts. They have been in my wigwams, but they found there no one to say welcome. Then they fled to the Delawares—for, say they, the Delawares are our friends; their minds are turned from their Canada father!"

"Let my father look in my face," said Le Coeur-dur; "he will see no change. It is true, my young men did not go out on the war-path; they had dreams for not doing so. But they love and venerate the great white chief."

"Will he think so when he hears that his greatest enemy is fed in the camp of his children? When he is told a bloody Yengee smokes at your fire? That the pale-face who has slain so many of his friends goes in and out among the Delawares? Go! my great Canada father is not a fool!"

"Where is the Yengee that the Delawares fear?" returned the other; "who has slain my young men? Who is the mortal enemy of my Great Father?"[1]

"La Longue Carabine!"

The Delaware warriors started at the well-known name, betraying, by their amazement, that they now learned, for the first time, one so famous among the Indian allies of France was within their power.

"What does my brother mean?" demanded Le Coeur-dur, in a tone that, by its wonder, far exceeded the usual apathy of his race.

"A Huron never lies!" returned Magua; "let the Delawares count their prisoners; they will find one whose skin is neither red nor pale."

A long and musing pause succeeded. The chief consulted apart with his companions, and messengers were dispatched to collect certain others of the most distinguished men of the tribe. As warrior after warrior dropped in, they were each made acquainted, in turn, with the important intelligence that Magua had just communicated. When the excitement had a little abated, the old men disposed themselves seriously to consider that which it became the honor and safety of their tribe to perform under circumstances of so much delicacy and embarrassment. The council of the Delawares was short. When it was ended, a general bustle announced that it was to be immediately succeeded by a solemn and formal assemblage of the nation.

It might have been half an hour before each individual, including even the women and children, was in his place.

[1] meaning the King of France.

The delay had been created by the grave preparations that were deemed necessary to so unusual a conference. But when the sun was seen climbing above the tops of that mountain against whose bosom the Delawares had constructed their encampment, most were seated. The multitude somewhat exceeded a thousand souls. In a collection of so serious savages there is never found any impatient aspirant after distinction. It rests solely with the oldest and most experienced of the men to lay the subject of the conference before the people. Until such a one chose to make some movement, no deeds in arms, no natural gifts would have justified the slightest interruption. On the present occasion the delay had continued long beyond the usual deliberative pause that precedes such a conference.

At length, one of those low murmurs that are so apt to disturb a multitude was heard, and the whole nation arose to their feet by a common impulse. At that instant the door of one of the lodges opened, and three men, issuing from it, slowly approached the place of consultation. They were all aged, even beyond that period to which the oldest present had reached; but one in the center, who leaned on his companion for support, had numbered an amount of years to which the human race is seldom permitted to attain. His frame, which had once been tall and erect, was now bending under the pressure of more than a century. His dark, wrinkled countenance was in singular and wild contrast with the long white locks which floated on his shoulders.

The dress of this patriarch was rich and imposing, though strictly after the simple fashions of the tribe. His robe was of the finest skins, which had been deprived of their fur, in order to admit of a hieroglyphical representation of various deeds in arms done in former ages. His bosom was loaded with medals, some in massive silver, and one or two even in gold, the gifts of various Christian potentates during the long period of his life. His head was encircled by a sort of plated diadem,

which bore glittering ornaments that sparkled amid the glossy hues of three drooping ostrich feathers, dyed a deep black. His tomahawk was nearly hid in silver, and the handle of his knife shone like a horn of solid gold.

So soon as the first hum of emotion and pleasure, which the sudden appearance of this venerated individual created, had a little subsided, the name of Tamenund was whispered from mouth to mouth. Magua had often heard the fame of this wise and just Delaware; a reputation that even proceeded so far as to bestow on him the rare gift of holding secret communion with the Great Spirit, and which has since transmitted his name, with some slight alteration, to the white usurpers of his ancient territory, as the imaginary tutelar saint[1] of a vast empire. The eyes of the old man were closed, as though the organs were wearied with having so long witnessed the selfish workings of the human passions. He seated himself in the center of his nation, with the dignity of a monarch and the air of a father.

After a short delay, a few of the young men, to whom instructions had been whispered by one of the aged attendants, arose, left the crowd, and entered the lodge which has already been noted. In a few minutes they reappeared, escorting the individuals who had caused all these solemn preparations toward the seat of judgment. The crowd opened in a lane; and, when the party had re-entered, it closed in again, forming a large and dense belt of human bodies, arranged in an open circle.

[1] The Americans sometimes call their tutelar saint Tamenay, a corruption of the name of the renowned chief here introduced. There are many traditions which speak of the character and power of Tamenund. He was said to have been wise above all other red men, and to have lived to a great age. But at what period this venerated chief lived, and died, has never been clearly proved. The author in conferring the same name upon a venerable character of the last century was only following a practice common among the red men, that of handing down the names of their greatest chiefs to succeeding generations as so many titles of honor.—*Author's Note.*

CHAPTER XXXV.

MAGUA'S TRIUMPH.

CORA stood foremost among the prisoners, entwining her arms in those of Alice, in the tenderness of sisterly love. Notwithstanding the fearful and menacing array of savages on every side of her, no apprehension on her own account could prevent the noble-minded maiden from keeping her eyes fastened on the pale and anxious features of the trembling Alice. Close at their side stood Heyward. Hawkeye had placed himself a little in the rear, with a deference to the superior rank of his companions, that no similarity in the state of their present fortunes could induce him to forget. Uncas was not there. When perfect silence was restored, one of the chiefs, who sat at the side of the patriarch, arose, and demanded in very intelligible English: "Which of my prisoners is La Longue Carabine?"

Neither Duncan nor the scout answered. The former glanced his eyes around the assembly, and recoiled a pace, when they fell on the malignant visage of Magua. He saw, at once, that this wily savage had some secret agency in their present arraignment before the nation, and determined to throw every possible impediment in the way of the execution of his sinister plans. Before he had time, however, to speak, the question was repeated in a louder voice.

"Give us arms," the young man replied, "and place us in yonder woods. Our deeds shall speak for us!"

"This is the warrior whose name has filled our ears!" returned the chief, regarding Heyward with curious interest. "What has brought the white man into the camp of the Delawares?"

"My necessities. I come for food, shelter, and friends."

"It cannot be. The woods are full of game. The head of a warrior needs no other shelter than a sky without clouds."

Duncan, a little at a loss in what manner to proceed, remained silent; but the scout now advanced steadily to the front.

"That I did not answer to the call of La Longue Carabine was not owing either to shame or fear," he said; "for neither one nor the other is the gift of an honest man. But I do not admit the right of the Mingoes to bestow a name on one whose friends have been mindful of his gifts, in this particular; especially as their title is a lie, Killdeer being a grooved barrel and no carabine. I am a man, however, that got the name of Nathaniel from my kin; the compliment of Hawkeye from the Delawares, who live on their own river; and whom the Iroquois have presumed to style the Long Rifle, without any warranty from him who is most concerned in the matter."

"It is good," said the chief. "Brother," added he, turning his eyes on Magua, "the Delawares listen."

Thus called on to declare his object, the Huron arose; and, advancing with great deliberation and dignity into the very center of the circle, where he stood confronted to the prisoners, he placed himself in an attitude to speak.

"The Spirit that made men, colored them differently," commenced the subtle Huron. "Some are blacker than the sluggish bear. These He said should be slaves; and He ordered them to work forever like the beaver. Some He made with faces paler than the ermine of the forests; and these He ordered to be traders; dogs to their women, and wolves to their slaves. Some the Great Spirit made with skins brighter and redder than yonder sun, and these did He fashion to His own mind. He gave them this island as He had made it, covered with trees and filled with game. If they fought among themselves, it was to prove that they were men. They were brave; they were just; they were happy. If the Great Spirit gave different tongues to His red children, it was that all animals might understand them. Some He placed among the snows with their cousin, the bear. Some He placed near the

setting sun, on the road to the happy hunting-grounds. Some on the lands around the great fresh waters; but to His greatest and most beloved, He gave the sands of the salt lake. Do my brothers know the name of this favored people?"

"It was the Lenape!" exclaimed twenty eager voices in a breath.

"It was the Lenni Lenape," returned Magua, affecting to bend his head in reverence to their former greatness. "It was the tribes of the Lenape! The sun rose from water that was salt, and set in water that was sweet, and never hid himself from their eyes. But why should I, a Huron of the woods, tell a wise people their own traditions? Why remind them of their injuries; their ancient greatness; their deeds; their glory; their happiness; their losses; their defeats; their misery? Is there not one among them who has seen it all, and who knows it to be true? I have done. My tongue is still, for my heart is of lead. I listen."

As the voice of the speaker suddenly ceased, every face and all eyes turned, by a common movement, toward the venerable Tamenund. The patriarch made an effort to rise, and being upheld by his supporters, he gained his feet while he tottered with weakness.

"Who calls upon the children of the Lenape?" he said, in a deep voice; "who speaks of things gone? Does not the egg become a worm—the worm a fly, and perish? Why tell the Delawares of good that is past? Better thank the Manitou[1] for that which remains. What brings a Huron here?"

"Justice. His prisoners are with his brothers, and he comes for his own."

Tamenund turned his head toward one of his supporters, and listened to the short explanation the man gave. Then facing the applicant, he regarded him a moment with deep attention; after which he said, in a low and reluctant voice:

"Justice is the law of the great Manitou. My children,

[1] Indian name for God, or the Great Spirit.

give the stranger food. Then, Huron, take thine own and depart."

On the delivery of this solemn judgment the patriarch seated himself. Then Magua cast a look of triumph around the whole assembly before he proceeded to the execution of his purpose, but Cora rushed to the feet of the patriarch, and, raising her voice, exclaimed aloud:

"Just and venerable Delaware, on thy wisdom and power we lean for mercy! Be deaf to yonder artful and remorseless monster, who poisons thy ears with falsehoods to feed his thirst for blood. Thou that hast lived long, and that hast seen the evil of the world, shouldst know how to temper its calamities to the miserable."

The eyes of the old man opened heavily, and he once more looked upward at the multitude. Rising without assistance, and seemingly without an effort, he demanded, in a voice that startled its auditors by its firmness—

"What art thou?"

"A woman. One of a hated race, if thou wilt—a Yengee. But one who has never harmed thee, and who cannot harm thy people, if she would; who asks for succor. For myself I ask nothing. Like thee and thine, venerable chief, the curse of my ancestors has fallen heavily on their child. But yonder is one who has never known the weight of Heaven's displeasure until now. She is the daughter of an old and failing man, whose days are near their close. She has many, very many to love her and delight in her; and she is too good, much too precious, to become the victim of that villain. But there is yet one of thine own people who has not been brought before thee; before thou lettest the Huron depart in triumph, hear him speak."

"Let him come," returned the sage.

Then Tamenund once more sank into his seat, and a silence so deep prevailed, while the young men prepared to obey his simple mandate, that the leaves which fluttered in the draught

of the light morning air were distinctly heard rustling in the surrounding forest.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A SON OF THE GREAT UNAMIS.

THE silence continued unbroken by human sounds for many anxious minutes. Then the waving multitude opened and shut again, and Uncas stood in the living circle. Advancing with a slow and noiseless step up the area, he placed himself immediately before the footstool of the sage. Here he stood unnoted, though keenly observant himself, until one of the chiefs apprised the latter of his presence.

"With what tongue does the prisoner speak to the Manitou?" demanded the patriarch, without unclosing his eyes.

"Like his fathers," Uncas replied; "with the tongue of a Delaware."

"Delaware!" resumed the sage, "little art thou worthy of thy name. My people have not seen a bright sun in many winters; and the warrior who deserts his tribe when hid in clouds is doubly a traitor. The law of the Manitou is just. It is so; while the rivers run and the mountains stand, while the blossoms come and go on the trees, it must be so. He is thine, my children; deal justly by him."

Then a cry of vengeance burst at once, as it might be, from the united lips of the nation. In the midst of these prolonged and savage yells, a chief proclaimed, in a high voice, that the captive was condemned to endure the dreadful trial of torture by fire. Throughout these trying moments, Uncas had alone preserved his serenity. He looked on the preparations with a steady eye, and when the tormentors came to seize him, he met them with a firm and upright attitude. One among them seized the hunting-shirt of the young warrior, and at a single effort, tore it from his body. Then with a yell he leaped towards his victim and prepared to lead him to the stake.

But at that moment the purpose of the savage was arrested as suddenly as if a supernatural agency had interposed in the behalf of Uncas. The eyeballs of the Delaware seemed to start from their sockets; his mouth opened, and his whole form became frozen in an attitude of amazement. Raising his hand with a slow and regulated motion, he pointed with a finger to the bosom of the captive. His companions crowded about him in wonder, and every eye was, like his own, fastened intently on the figure of a small tortoise, beautifully tattooed on the breast of the prisoner, in a bright blue tint. For a single instant Uncas enjoyed his triumph, calmly smiling on the scene. Then, motioning the crowd away with a high and haughty sweep of his arm, he advanced in front of the nation with the air of a king, and spoke louder than the murmur of admiration that ran through the multitude:

"Men of the Lenni Lenape!" he said, "my race upholds the earth! Your feeble tribe stands on my shell! What fire that a Delaware can light would burn the child of my fathers; the blood that came from such stock would smother your flames! My race is the grandfather of nations!"

"Who art thou?" demanded Tamenund, rising at the startling tones he heard, more than at any meaning conveyed by the language of the prisoner.

"Uncas, the son of Chingachgook," answered the captive, "a son of the great Unamis."[1]

"The hour of Tamenund is nigh!" exclaimed the sage; "the day is come, at last, to the night! I thank the Manitou that one is here to fill my place at the council fire. Uncas, the child of Uncas, is found! Let the eyes of a dying eagle gaze on the rising sun!"

The youth stepped lightly, but proudly, on the platform, where he became visible to the whole agitated and wondering multitude. Tamenund held him long at the length of his arm, and read every turn in the fine lineaments of his counte-

[1] Turtle.

nance, with the untiring gaze of one who recalled days of happiness.

"Is Tamenund a boy?" at length the bewildered prophet exclaimed. "The arrow of Tamenund would not frighten the fawn; his arm is withered like the branch of a dead oak; yet is Uncas before him as they went to battle against the pale-faces! Uncas, the panther of his tribe, the eldest son of the Lenape, the wisest sagamore of the Mohicans! Tell me, ye Delawares, has Tamenund been a sleeper for a hundred winters?"

Uncas, looking in his face with the fondness and veneration of a favored child, presumed on his own high and acknowledged rank to reply:

"Four warriors of his race have lived and died," he said, "since the friend of Tamenund led his people in battle. The blood of the Turtle has been in many chiefs, but all have gone back into the earth whence they came, except Chingachgook and his son. Once we slept where we could hear the salt lake speak in its anger. Then we were rulers and sagamores over the land. But when a pale-face was seen on every brook, we followed the deer back to the river of our nation. The Delawares were gone. Few warriors of them all stayed to drink of the stream they loved. Then said my fathers: 'Here will we hunt. The waters of the river go into the salt lake. If we go toward the setting sun, we shall find streams that run into the great lakes of sweet water; there would a Mohican die, like fishes of the sea in the clear springs. When the Manitou is ready, and shall say "Come," we will follow the river to the sea and take our own again.'"

The men of the Lenape listened to his words with all the respect that superstition could lend, finding a secret charm even in the figurative language with which the young sagamore imparted his ideas. Uncas himself watched the effect with intelligent eyes, and gradually dropped the air of authority he had assumed, as he perceived that his auditors were content.

Then, permitting his looks to wander over the silent throng, he first perceived Hawkeye in his bonds. Stepping eagerly from his stand, he made way for himself to the side of his friend; and, cutting his thongs with a quick and angry stroke of his own knife, he motioned to the crowd to divide. The Indians silently obeyed, and once more they stood ranged in their circle, as before his appearance among them. Uncas took the scout by the hand, and led him to the feet of the patriarch.

"Father," he said, "look at this pale-face; a just man, and a friend of the Delawares."

"Is he a son of Minquon?"[1]

"Not so; a warrior known to the Yengeese, and feared by the Maquas."

"What name has he gained by his deeds?"

"We call him Hawkeye," Uncas replied, using the Delaware phrase; "for his sight never fails. The Mingoes know him better by the death he gives their warriors: with them he is The Long Rifle."

"La Longue Carabine!" exclaimed Tamenund, opening his eyes, and regarding the scout sternly. "My son has not done well to call him friend."

"I call him so who proves himself such," returned the young chief, with great calmness, but with a steady mien. "If Uncas is welcome among the Delawares, then is Hawkeye with his friends."

"The pale-face has slain my young men; his name is great for the blows he has struck the Lenape."

"If a Mingo has whispered that much in the ear of the Delaware, he has only shown that he is a singing-bird," said the scout, who now believed that it was time to vindicate himself from such offensive charges. "That I have slain the

[1] William Penn [founder of Philadelphia] was termed Minquon by the Delawares, and as he never used violence or injustice in his dealings with them, his reputation for probity passed into a proverb.—*Author's Note.*

Maquas, I am not the man to deny, even at their own council-fires; but that, knowingly, my hand has ever harmed a Delaware, is opposed to the reason of my gifts, which is friendly to them and all that belongs to their nation."

A low exclamation of applause passed among the warriors, who exchanged looks with each other like men that first began to perceive their error.

"Where is the Huron?" demanded Tamenund. "Has he stopped my ears?"

Magua answered to the call by stepping boldly in front of the patriarch.

"The just Tamenund," he said, "will not keep what a Huron has lent."

"The woman the Huron left with my warriors?"

"She is mine!" cried Magua, shaking his hand in triumph at Uncas.

After a short and impressive pause the sage, on whom alone the decision depended, said, in a firm voice:

"Huron, depart."

"As he came, just Tamenund," demanded the wily Magua, "or with hands filled with the faith of the Delawares? The wigwam of Le Renard Subtil is empty. Make him strong with his own."

The aged man mused with himself for a time; and then, bending his head toward one of his venerable companions, he asked:

"Is this Mingo a chief?"

"The first in his nation."

"Girl, what wouldst thou? A great warrior takes thee to wife. Go; thy race will not end."

"Better, a thousand times, it should," exclaimed the horror-struck Cora, "than meet with such a degradation!"

"Huron, her mind is in the tents of her fathers. An unwilling maiden makes an unhappy wigwam."

"She speaks with the tongue of her people," returned

Magua, regarding his victim with a look of bitter irony. "She is of a race of traders, and will bargain for a bright look. Let Tamenund speak the words."

"Take you the wampum and our love."

"Nothing hence but what Magua brought hither."

"Then depart with thine own. The Great Manitou forbids that a Delaware should be unjust."

Magua advanced and seized the captive strongly by the arm; the Delawares fell back in silence; and Cora, as if conscious that remonstrance would be useless, prepared to submit to her fate without resistance.

"Hold, hold!" cried Duncan, springing forward; "Huron, have mercy! Her ransom shall make thee richer than any of thy people were ever yet known to be."

"Magua is a red-skin; he wants not the beads of the pale-faces."

"Gold, silver, powder, lead—all that a warrior needs shall be in thy wigwam; all that becomes the greatest chief."

"Le Subtil is very strong," cried Magua, violently shaking the hand which grasped the unresisting arm of Cora; "he has his revenge!"

"Huron," said Uncas, "the justice of the Delawares comes from the Manitou. Look at the sun. He is now in the upper branches of the hemlock. Your path is short and open. When he is seen above the trees, there will be men on your trail."

"I hear a crow!" exclaimed Magua, with a taunting laugh. "Go," he added, shaking his hand at the crowd, which had slowly opened to admit his passage. "Dogs, rabbits, thieves —I spit on you!"

His parting gibes were listened to in a dead, boding silence, and Magua passed unmolested into the forest, followed by his passive captive, and protected by the inviolable laws of Indian hospitality.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DELAWARES ON THE WAR-PATH.

So long as their enemy and his victim continued in sight, the multitude remained motionless; but the instant he disappeared, it became tossed and agitated by fierce and powerful passion. Uncas maintained his elevated stand, keeping his eyes on the form of Cora, until the colors of her dress were blended with the foliage of the forest, when he descended, and moving silently through the throng, he disappeared in that lodge from which he had so recently issued. Tamenund and Alice were then removed, and the women and children were ordered to disperse. During the momentous hour that succeeded, the encampment resembled a hive of bees, who only awaited the example of their leader to take some distant and momentous flight.

A young warrior at length issued from the lodge of Uncas; and moving deliberately toward a dwarf pine in the crevices of the rocky terrace, he tore the bark from its body, and then returned whence he came without speaking. He was soon followed by another, who stripped the sapling of its branches, leaving it a naked trunk. A third colored the post with stripes of a dark-red paint; all which indications of a hostile design in the leaders of the nation were received by the men without in a gloomy and ominous silence. Finally, the Mohican himself reappeared, divested of all his attire except his girdle and leggins, and with one-half of his fine features hid under a cloud of threatening black. Uncas moved with a slow and dignified tread toward the post, which he immediately commenced encircling with a measured step, not unlike an ancient dance, raising his voice, at the same time, in the wild and irregular chant of his war-song. Three times did he repeat the song, and as often did he encircle the post in his dance.

At the close of the first turn, a grave and highly esteemed chief of the Lenape followed his example, singing words of his own to music of a similar character. Warrior after warrior enlisted in the dance until all of any renown were numbered in its mazes. Just then Uncas struck his tomahawk deep into the post, and raised his voice into a shout which might be termed his own battle-cry. The act announced that he had assumed the chief authority in the intended expedition. It was a signal that awakened all the slumbering passions of the nation. A hundred youths, who had hitherto been restrained by the diffidence of their years, rushed in a frantic body on the fancied emblem of their enemy, and severed it asunder, splinter by splinter, until nothing remained of the trunk but its roots in the earth.

The instant Uncas had struck the blow, he moved out of the circle, and cast his eyes up to the sun, which was just gaining the point when the truce with Magua was to end. The fact was soon announced by a significant gesture, accompanied by a corresponding cry; and the whole of the excited multitude abandoned their mimic warfare, with shrill yells of pleasure, to prepare for the more hazardous experiment of the reality.

In the meantime Duncan saw Alice to a place of safety, and then sought the scout with a countenance that denoted how eagerly he also panted for the approaching contest. Hawkeye cast an occasional look at the number and quality of the warriors who, from time to time, signified their readiness to accompany Uncas to the field. In this particular he was soon satisfied, for, as has been already seen, the power of the young chief quickly embraced every fighting man in the nation. After this material point was so satisfactorily decided, he dispatched an Indian boy in quest of Killdeer and the rifle of Uncas, to the place where they had deposited the weapons on approaching the camp of the Delawares. He received Killdeer with a satisfaction that, momentarily, drove all other recollections from his mind.

Uncas now collected his chiefs and divided his power. He presented Hawkeye as a warrior often tried, and always deserving of confidence. When he found his friend met with a favorable reception, he bestowed on him the command of twenty men. He gave the Delawares to understand the rank of Heyward among the troops of the Yengeese, and then tendered to him a trust of equal authority. But Duncan declined the charge, professing his readiness to serve as a volunteer by the side of the scout. After this disposition, the young Mohican appointed various native chiefs to fill the different situations of responsibility, and, the time pressing, he gave forth the word to march. He was cheerfully but silently obeyed by more than two hundred men.

Their entrance into the forest was perfectly unmolested; nor did they encounter any living objects that could either give the alarm or furnish the intelligence they needed, until they came upon the lairs of their own scouts. Here a halt was ordered, and the chiefs were assembled to hold a "whispering council." After a conference of many minutes, a solitary individual was seen advancing from the side of the enemy with such apparent haste as to induce the belief that he might be a messenger charged with pacific overtures. When within a hundred yards, however, of the cover behind which the Delaware council had assembled, the stranger hesitated, appeared uncertain what course to take, and finally halted. All eyes now turned on Uncas as if seeking direction.

"Hawkeye," said the young chief, in a low voice, "he must never speak to the Hurons again."

"His time has come," said the scout, thrusting the long barrel of his rifle through the leaves, and taking his deliberate and fatal aim. But, instead of pulling the trigger, he lowered the muzzle again, and indulged himself in a fit of his peculiar mirth. "I took the imp for a Mingo, as I'm a miserable sinner!" he said; "but when my eye ranged along his ribs for a place to get the bullet in—would you think it, Uncas—I

saw the musicianer's blower! and so, after all, it is the man they call Gamut, whose death can profit no one, and whose life may be made serviceable to our own ends."

So saying, Hawkeye laid aside his rifle; and crawling through the bushes until within hearing of David, he attempted to repeat the musical effort, which had conducted himself, with so much safety, through the Huron encampment. The poor fellow appeared relieved from a state of great embarrassment; for pursuing the direction of the voice, he soon discovered the hidden songster.

"I wonder what the Hurons will think of that," said the scout, as he urged his companion toward the rear. "If the knaves lie within earshot, they will say there are two non-compossers instead of one! But here we are safe," he added, pointing to Uncas and his associates. "Now give us the history of the Mingo inventions without any ups and downs of voice."

"The heathen are abroad in goodly numbers," said David; "and, I fear, with evil intent. There has been much howling and ungodly revelry, together with such sounds as it is profanity to utter, in their habitations within the past hour: so much so, in truth, that I have fled to the Delawares in search of peace."

"Your ears might not have profited much by the exchange had you been quicker of foot," returned the scout, a little dryly. "But let that be as it may; where are the Hurons?"

"They lie hid in the forest, between this spot and their village, in such force that prudence would teach you instantly to return."

Uncas cast a glance along the range of trees which concealed his own band and mentioned the name of:

"Magua?"

"Is among them. He brought in the maiden that had sojourned with the Delawares, and leaving her in the cave, has put himself, like a raging wolf, at the head of his savages. I know not what has troubled his spirit so greatly!"

"He has left her, you say, in the cave!" interrupted Heyward; "'tis well that we know its situation! May not something be done for instant relief?"

Uncas looked earnestly at the scout, before he asked:

"What says Hawkeye?"

"Give me my twenty rifles, and I will turn to the right, along the stream; and, passing by the huts of the beaver, will join the sagamore and the colonel. You shall then hear the whoop from that quarter; with this wind one may easily send it a mile. Then, Uncas, do you drive in their front; when they come within range of our pieces, we will give them a blow that, I pledge the good name of an old frontiersman, shall make their line bend like an ashen bow. After which, we will carry their village, and take the woman from the cave; when the affair may be finished with the tribe, according to a white man's battle, by a blow and a victory; or, in the Indian fashion, with a dodge and a cover. There may be no great learning, Major, in this plan, but with courage and patience it can be all done."

"I like it much," cried Duncan, who saw that the release of Cora was the primary object in the mind of the scout—"I like it much. Let it be instantly attempted."

After a short conference, the plan was matured, and rendered more intelligible to the several parties; the different signals were appointed, and the chiefs separated, each to his allotted station.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE FIGHT.

During the time Uncas was making this disposition of his forces, the woods were as still, and, with the exception of those who had met in council, apparently as much untenanted, as when they came fresh from the hands of their Almighty Creator. But Hawkeye, whose duty led him foremost in the

adventure, knew the character of those with whom he was about to contend too well to trust the treacherous quiet.

When he saw his little band collected, the scout threw Killdeer into the hollow of his arm and, making a silent signal that he would be followed, he led them many rods toward the rear, into the bed of a little brook which they had crossed in advancing. Here he halted, and then for the first time perceived that his party had been followed thus far by the singing-master. He hesitated, as if weighing the chances of such a strange enlistment in his mind, before he said:

"You know not the use of any we'pon. You carry no rifle; and, believe me, what the Mingoes take they will freely give again."

"Though not a vaunting and bloodily-disposed Goliath,"[1] returned David, drawing a sling from beneath his uncouth attire, "I have not forgotten the example of the Jewish boy. With this ancient instrument of war have I practiced much in my youth, and peradventure the skill has not entirely departed from me."

"Ay!" said Hawkeye, "the thing might do its work among arrows, or even knives; but these Mengwe[2] have been furnished by the Frenchers with a good grooved barrel a man. However, it seems to be your gift to go unharmed amid fire; and as you have hitherto been favored, you can follow; we may find use for you in the shoutings."

Hawkeye then made the signal to proceed. He knew that the Huron encampment lay a short half mile up the brook; and, with the characteristic anxiety of one who dreaded a hidden danger, he was greatly troubled at not finding the smallest trace of the presence of his enemy. He had stood, while making his observations, sheltered by a brake, and his companions still lay in the bed of the ravine, through which the small stream debouched; but on hearing a low, though intelligible signal, the whole party stole up the bank, like so many

[1] See 1 Samuel, xvii. 4–49. [2] meaning Mingoes.

dark specters, and silently arranged themselves around him. Pointing in the direction he wished to proceed, Hawkeye advanced, the band breaking off in a single file, and following accurately in his footsteps. The party was scarcely uncovered before a volley from a dozen rifles was heard in their rear; and a Delaware, leaping high into the air, like a wounded deer, fell at his whole length, perfectly dead.

"Ah! I feared some deviltry like this!" exclaimed the scout, in English; adding, with the quickness of thought, in his adopted tongue, "To cover, men, and charge!"

The band dispersed at the word, and, before Heyward had well recovered from his surprise, he found himself standing alone with David. Luckily the Hurons had already fallen back, and he was safe from their fire. It would seem that the assault had been made by a very small party, which, however, continued to increase in numbers, as it retired on its friends, until the return fire was nearly, if not quite, equal to that maintained by the advancing Delawares. Heyward threw himself among the combatants, and, imitating the necessary caution of his companions, he made quick discharges with his own rifle. The contest now grew warm and stationary. Few were injured, as both parties kept their bodies as much protected as possible by the trees. But the chances were gradually growing unfavorable to Hawkeye and his band. The quick-sighted scout perceived his danger, without knowing how to remedy it. He saw it was more dangerous to retreat than to maintain his ground: while he found his enemy throwing out men on his flank, which rendered the task of keeping themselves covered so very difficult to the Delawares as nearly to silence their fire. At this embarrassing moment, when they began to think the whole of the hostile tribe was gradually encircling them, they heard the yell of combatants, and the rattling of arms, echoing under the arches of the wood, at the place where Uncas was posted; a bottom which lay beneath the ground on which Hawkeye and his party were contending.

The effects of this attack were instantaneous, and to the scout and his friends greatly relieving. Animating his followers by his voice and example, Hawkeye gave the word to bear down upon their foes. The charge, in that rude species of warfare, consisted merely in pushing from cover to cover, nigher to the enemy; and in this maneuver he was instantly and successfully obeyed. The Hurons were compelled to withdraw, and the scene of the contest rapidly changed from the more open ground on which it had commenced to a spot where the assailed found a thicket to rest upon. Here the struggle was protracted, arduous, and seemingly of doubtful issue; the Delawares, though none of them fell, beginning to bleed freely, in consequence of the disadvantage at which they were held. In this crisis, Hawkeye found means to get behind the same tree that served for a cover to Heyward; most of his own combatants being within call, a little on his right, where they maintained rapid though fruitless discharges on their sheltered enemies.

"Shall we charge?" exclaimed Heyward.

"I little relish such a measure," replied Hawkeye, "for a scalp or two must be thrown away in the attempt. And yet if we are to be of use to Uncas, these knaves in our front must be got rid of."

Then, turning with a prompt and decided air, he called aloud to his Indians, in their own language. His words were answered by a shout; and, at a given signal, each warrior made a swift movement around his particular tree. The sight of so many dark bodies, glancing before their eyes at the same instant, drew a hasty, and consequently an ineffectual fire from the Hurons. Without stopping to breathe, the Delawares leaped in long bounds toward the wood, like so many panthers springing upon their prey. Hawkeye was in front, brandishing his terrible rifle, and animating his followers by his example. The combat endured only for an instant, hand to hand, and then the assailed yielded ground rapidly, until

they reached the opposite margin of the thicket, where they clung to the cover with that sort of obstinacy that is so often witnessed in hunted brutes. At this critical moment, when the success of the struggle was again becoming doubtful, the crack of the rifle was heard behind the Hurons, and a bullet came whizzing from among some beaver lodges, which were situated in the clearing, in the rear, and was followed by the fierce and appalling yell of the war-whoop.

"There speaks the sagamore!" shouted Hawkeye, answering the cry with his own stentorian voice; "we have them now in face and back!"

The effect on the Hurons was instantaneous. They took to flight, but many fell under the bullets of the Delawares. We shall not pause to detail the meeting between the scout and Chingachgook, or the more touching interview that Duncan held with Munro. A few brief and hurried words served to explain the state of things to both parties; and then Hawkeye, pointing out the sagamore to his band, resigned the chief authority into the hands of the Mohican chief. Chingachgook, following the footsteps of the scout, led the party back through the thicket, his men scalping the fallen Hurons, and secreting their own dead as they proceeded, until they gained a point where it was thought well to make a halt.

The warriors were now posted on a bit of level ground, sprinkled with trees in sufficient numbers to conceal them. The land fell away rather precipitately in front, and beneath their eyes stretched a narrow, dark, and wooded vale. It was through this dense and dark forest that Uncas was still contending with the main body of the Hurons. The Mohican and his friends advanced to the brow of the hill, and listened, with practiced ears, to the sounds of the combat.

"The fight is coming up the ascent," said Duncan, pointing in the direction of a new explosion of fire-arms; "we are too much in the center of their line to be effective."

"They will incline into the hollow, where the cover is

thicker," said the scout, "and that will leave us well on the flank. Go, Sagamore: you will hardly be in time to give the whoop and lead on the young men. I will fight this scrimmage with warriors of my own color. You know me, Mohican; not a Huron of them all shall cross the swell, into your rear, without the notice of Killdeer."

It was not long before the reports of the rifles began to lose the echoes of the woods, and to sound like weapons discharged in the open air. Then a warrior appeared, here and there, driven to the skirts of the forest, and rallying as he entered the clearing as at the place where the final stand was to be made. These were soon joined by others, until a long line of swarthy figures was to be seen clinging to the cover with the obstinacy of desperation. Heyward began to grow impatient, and turned his eyes anxiously in the direction of Chingachgook. The chief was seated on a rock, considering the spectacle with an eye as deliberate as if he were posted there merely to view the struggle.

"The time is come for the Delaware to strike!" said Duncan.

"Not so, not so," returned the scout; "when he scents his friends, he will let them know that he is here. See, see, the knaves are getting in that clump of pines, like bees settling after their flight."

At that instant the whoop was given, and a dozen Hurons fell by a discharge from Chingachgook and his band. The shout that followed was answered by a single war-cry from the forest, and a yell passed through the air that sounded as if a thousand throats were united in a common effort. The Hurons staggered, deserting the center of their line, and Uncas issued from the forest through the opening they had left, at the head of a hundred warriors.

Waving his hands right and left, the young chief pointed out the enemy to his followers, who separated in pursuit. The war now divided, both wings of broken Hurons seeking

protection in the woods again, hotly pressed by the victorious warriors of the Lenape. A minute might have passed, but the sounds were already receding in different directions, and gradually losing their distinctness beneath the echoing arches of the woods. One little knot of Hurons, however, had disdained to seek cover, and were retiring, like lions at bay, slowly and sullenly up the acclivity, which Chingachgook and his band had just deserted, to mingle more closely in the fray. Magua was conspicuous in this party, both by his fierce and savage mien, and by the air of haughty authority he yet maintained.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CORA IS AVENGED.

In his earnestness to expedite the pursuit, Uncas had left himself nearly alone; but the moment his eye caught the figure of Le Subtil every other consideration was forgotten. Raising his cry of battle, which recalled some six or seven warriors, and reckless of the disparity of their numbers, he rushed upon his enemy. Le Renard, who watched the movement, paused to receive him with secret joy. But at the moment when he thought the rashness of his impetuous young assailant had left him at his mercy, another shout was given, and La Longue Carabine was seen rushing to the rescue attended by all his white associates. The Huron instantly turned and commenced a rapid retreat up the ascent. Uncas continued the pursuit with the velocity of the wind, and the pursuers and pursued entered the Wyandot village within striking distance of each other.

Excited by the presence of their dwellings, and tired of the chase, the Hurons now made a stand, and fought around their council-lodge with the fury of despair. The onset and the issue were like the passage and destruction of a whirlwind. The tomahawk of Uncas, the blows of Hawkeye, and even

the still nervous arm of Munro were all busy for that passing moment, and the ground was quickly strewed with their enemies. Magua, though daring and much exposed, escaped from every effort against his life. Raising a yell that spoke volumes of anger and disappointment, the subtle chief, when he saw his comrades fallen, darted away from the place, attended by his two only surviving friends.

But Uncas bounded forward in pursuit; Hawkeye, Heyward, and David pressing on his footsteps. Suddenly Magua entered the mouth of the cave already known to the reader. Hawkeye, who had only forborne to fire in tenderness to Uncas, raised a shout of success, and proclaimed aloud that now they were certain of their game. The pursuers dashed into the long and narrow entrance in time to catch a glimpse of the retreating forms of the Hurons. Uncas kept his eye on Magua, as if life to him possessed but a single object. Heyward and the scout still pressed on in his rear. But their way was becoming intricate in dark and gloomy passages, and the glimpses of the retiring warriors less distinct and frequent; and for a moment the trace was believed to be lost, when a white robe was seen fluttering in the further extremity of a passage that seemed to lead up the mountain.

"'Tis Cora!" exclaimed Heyward, in a voice in which horror and delight were wildly mingled.

"Cora! Cora!" echoed Uncas, bounding forward like a deer.

"'Tis the maiden!" shouted the scout. "Courage, lady, we come! we come!"

The chase was renewed with a diligence rendered tenfold encouraging by this glimpse of the captive. But the way was rugged, broken, and, in spots, nearly impassable. Uncas abandoned his rifle, and leaped forward with headlong precipitation. Heyward rashly imitated his example, though both were, a moment afterward, admonished of its madness by hearing the bellowing of a piece that the Hurons found time

to discharge down the passage in the rocks, the bullet from which even gave the young Mohican a slight wound.

"We must close!" said the scout, passing his friends by a desperate leap; "the knaves will pick us all off at this distance; and see, they hold the maiden so as to shield themselves!"

Though his words were unheeded, or rather unheard, his example was followed by his companions, who, by incredible exertions, got near enough to the fugitives to perceive that Cora was borne along between the two warriors, while Magua prescribed the direction and manner of their flight. At this moment the forms of all four were strongly drawn against an opening in the sky, and then disappeared. Nearly frantic with disappointment, Uncas and Heyward increased efforts that already seemed superhuman, and they issued from the cavern on the side of the mountain in time to note the route of the pursued. The course lay up the ascent, and still continued hazardous and laborious.

Encumbered by his rifle, and, perhaps, not sustained by so deep an interest in the captive as his companions, the scout suffered the latter to precede him a little, Uncas, in his turn, taking the lead of Heyward. In this manner rocks, precipices, and difficulties were surmounted in an incredibly short space, that at another time, and under other circumstances, would have been deemed almost insuperable. But the impetuous young men were rewarded by finding that the Hurons were losing ground in the race.

"Stay, dog of the Wyandots!" exclaimed Uncas, shaking his bright tomahawk at Magua; "a Delaware girl calls stay!"

"I will go no further," cried Cora, stopping unexpectedly on a ledge of rocks that overhung a deep precipice at no great distance from the summit of the mountain. "Kill me if thou wilt, detestable Huron; I will go no further."

The supporters of the maiden raised their ready tomahawks, but Magua stayed the uplifted arms. The Huron chief, after

casting the weapons he had wrested from his companions over the rocks, drew his knife, and turned to his captive with a look in which conflicting passions fiercely contended.

"Woman," he said, "choose; the wigwam or the knife of Le Subtil!"

Cora regarded him not, but, dropping on her knees, she raised her eyes and stretched her arms toward heaven, saying, in a meek and yet confiding voice:

"I am thine! Do with me as thou seest best!"

"Woman," repeated Magua, hoarsely, "choose!"

But Cora neither heard nor heeded his demand. The form of the Huron trembled in every fiber, and he raised his arm on high, but dropped it again with a bewildered air, like one who doubted. Once more he struggled with himself, and lifted the keen weapon again—but just then a piercing cry was heard above them, and Uncas appeared, leaping frantically, from a fearful height, upon the ledge. Magua recoiled a step; and one of his assistants, profiting by the chance, sheathed his own knife in the bosom of Cora.

The Huron sprang like a tiger on his offending and already retreating countryman, but the falling form of Uncas separated the unnatural combatants. Diverted from his object by this interruption, and maddened by the murder he had just witnessed, Magua buried his weapon in the back of the prostrate Delaware, uttering an unearthly shout as he committed the dastardly deed. But Uncas arose from the blow as the wounded panther turns upon his foe, and struck the murderer of Cora to his feet by an effort in which the last of his failing strength was expended. Then with a stern and steady look, he turned to Le Subtil and indicated, by the expression of his eye, all that he would do, had not the power deserted him. The latter seized the nerveless arm of the unresisting Delaware, and passed his knife into his bosom three several times before his victim, still keeping his gaze riveted on his enemy with a look of inextinguishable scorn, fell dead at his feet.

"Mercy! mercy! Huron," cried Heyward, from above, "give mercy, and thou shalt receive it!"

Whirling the bloody knife up at the imploring youth, the victorious Magua uttered a cry so fierce, so wild, and yet so joyous, that it conveyed the sounds of savage triumph to the ears of those who fought in the valley, a thousand feet below. He was answered by a burst from the lips of the scout, whose tall person was just then seen moving swiftly toward him, along those dangerous crags, with steps as bold and reckless as if he possessed the power to move in air. But when the hunter reached the scene of the ruthless massacre, the ledge was tenanted only by the dead.

His keen eyes took a single look at the victims, and then shot its glances over the difficulties of the ascent in his front. A form stood at the brow of the mountain, on the very edge of the giddy height, with uplifted arms, in an awful attitude of menace. Without stopping to consider his person, the rifle of Hawkeye was raised; but a rock, which fell on the head of one of the fugitives below, exposed the indignant and glowing countenance of the honest Gamut. Then Magua issued from a crevice, and, stepping with calm indifference over the body of the last of his associates, he leaped a wide fissure, and ascended the rocks at a point where the arm of David could not reach him. A single bound would carry him to the brow of the precipice, and assure his safety. Before taking the leap, however, the Huron paused, and shaking his hand at the scout, he shouted:

"The pale-faces are dogs; the Delawares, women; Magua leaves them on the rocks, for the crows!"

Laughing hoarsely, he made a desperate leap, and fell short of his mark; though his hands grasped a shrub on the verge of the height. The form of Hawkeye had crouched like a beast about to take its spring. Without exhausting himself with fruitless efforts, the cunning Magua suffered his body to drop to the length of his arms, and found a fragment for his

feet to rest on. Then summoning all his powers, he renewed the attempt, and so far succeeded as to draw his knees on the edge of the mountain. It was now that the weapon of the scout was drawn to his shoulder. The surrounding rocks, themselves, were not steadier than the piece became, for the single instant that it poured out its contents. The arms of the Huron relaxed, and his body fell back a little, while his knees still kept their position. Turning a relentless look on his enemy, he shook a hand in grim defiance. But his hold loosened, and his dark person was seen cutting the air with his head downward, for a fleeting instant, until it glided past the fringe of shrubbery which clung to the mountain, in his rapid flight to destruction.

CHAPTER XL.

THE BURIAL.

On the succeeding day the sun rose on the Lenape a nation of mourners. No shouts of success, no songs of triumph, were heard, in rejoicings for their victory. The lodges were deserted; but a broad belt of earnest faces encircled a spot in their vicinity, whither everything possessing life had repaired, and where all were now collected in deep and awful silence.

Six Delaware girls, with their long, dark, flowing tresses falling loosely across their bosoms, stood apart, and only gave proofs of their existence as they occasionally strewed sweet-scented herbs and forest flowers on a litter of fragrant plants that, under a pall of Indian robes, supported all that now remained of the high-souled and generous Cora. Her form was concealed in many wrappers of the same simple manufacture, and her face was shut forever from the gaze of men. At her feet was seated the desolate Munro. His aged head was bowed nearly to the earth, in compelled submission to the stroke of Providence. Gamut stood at his side, his meek head bared to

the rays of the sun, while his eyes seemed to be equally divided between that little volume, which contained so many holy maxims, and the being in whose behalf his soul yearned to administer consolation. Heyward was also nigh, endeavoring to keep down those sudden risings of sorrow that it required his utmost manhood to subdue.

But sad and melancholy as this group may easily be imagined, it was far less touching than another that occupied the opposite space of the same area. Seated, as in life, with his form and limbs arranged in grave and decent composure, Uncas appeared, arrayed in the most gorgeous ornaments that the wealth of the tribe could furnish. Rich plumes nodded above his head; wampum, gorgets, bracelets, and medals, adorned his person in profusion; though his dull eye and vacant lineaments too strongly contradicted the idle tale of pride they would convey.

Directly in front of the corpse Chingachgook was placed, without arms, paint, or adornment of any sort, except the bright-blue blazonry of his race, that was indelibly impressed on his naked bosom. The scout was hard by, leaning in a pensive posture on his own fatal and avenging weapon; while Tamenund, supported by the elders of his nation, occupied a high place at hand, whence he might look down on the mute and sorrowful assemblage of his people.

Just within the inner edge of the circle stood a soldier, in the military attire of a strange nation; and without it was his war-horse, in the center of a collection of mounted domestics, seemingly in readiness to undertake some distant journey. The vestments of the stranger announced him to be one who held a responsible situation near the person of the captain of the Canadas; and who, as it would now seem, finding his errand of peace frustrated by the fierce impetuosity of his allies, was content to become a silent and sad spectator of the fruits of a contest that he had arrived too late to anticipate.

The day was drawing to the close of its first quarter, and

yet had the multitude maintained its breathing stillness since its dawn. At last, the sage of the Delawares stretched forth an arm, and, leaning on the shoulders of his attendants, he arose with an air as feeble as if another age had already intervened between the man who had met his nation the preceding day and him who now tottered on his elevated stand.

"Men of the Lenape!" he said, "the face of the Manitou is behind a cloud! his eye is turned from you; his ears are shut; his tongue gives no answer. You see him not; yet his judgments are before you."

As this annunciation stole on the ears of the multitude, a stillness succeeded as if the venerated spirit they worshiped had uttered the words. As the immediate effect, however, gradually passed away, a low murmur of voices commenced a sort of chant in honor of the dead. The words were connected by no regular continuation, but as one ceased another took up the eulogy, and gave vent to emotions in such language as was suggested by the occasion. A girl, selected for the task by her rank and qualifications, commenced by modest allusions to the qualities of the deceased warrior, embellishing her expressions with those Oriental images that the Indians have probably brought with them from the extremes of the other continent. Then, they who succeeded, changing their tones to a milder strain, alluded to the stranger maiden, who had left the upper earth at a time so near his own departure, as to render the will of the Great Spirit too manifest to be disregarded. With another transition in voice and subject, allusions were next made to the virgin who wept in the adjacent lodge. They compared her to flakes of snow—as pure, as white, and as brilliant, and as liable to melt in the fierce heats of summer or congeal in the frosts of winter.

A signal was now given by one of the elder chiefs to the women who crowded that part of the circle near which the body of Cora lay. Obedient to the sign, the girls raised the bier to the elevation of their heads, and advanced with slow

and regulated steps, chanting, as they proceeded, another wailing song in praise of the deceased. Gamut now bent his head over the shoulder of the unconscious father, whispering:

"They move with the remains of thy child; shall we not follow and see them interred with Christian burial?"

Munro started, and, bestowing one anxious and hurried glance around him, he arose and followed in the simple train with the mien of a soldier, but bearing the full burden of a parent's suffering. His friends pressed around him with a sorrow that was too strong to be termed sympathy. The place which had been chosen for the grave of Cora was a little knoll, where a cluster of young and healthful pines had taken root, forming themselves a melancholy and appropriate shade over the spot. On reaching it the girls deposited their burden, and continued for many minutes waiting for some evidence that they whose feelings were most concerned were content with the arrangement. At length the scout, who alone understood their habits, said in their own language:

"My daughters have done well; the white men thank them."

Satisfied with this testimony in their favor, the girls proceeded to deposit the body in a shell, ingeniously and not inelegantly fabricated of the bark of the birch; after which they lowered it into its dark and final abode.

"My young women have done enough," resumed the scout. "I see that one who knows the Christian fashion is about to speak."

The females stood modestly aside, and during the time David was occupied in pouring out the pious feelings of his spirit, not a sign of impatience escaped them. The master of song exceeded his usual efforts. He ended, as he had begun, in the midst of solemn silence. The head of Munro had sunk upon his chest, and he was again fast relapsing into melancholy, when the young Frenchman ventured to touch him lightly on the elbow. As soon as he had gained the attention

of the mourning old man, he pointed toward a group of young Indians, who approached with a light but closely covered litter, and then pointed upward toward the sun.

"I understand you, sir," returned Munro, with a voice of forced firmness; "I understand you. It is the will of Heaven, and I submit. Come, gentlemen, our duty here is ended; let us depart."

Heyward gladly obeyed a summons that took them from a spot where, each instant, he felt his self-control was about to desert him. While his companions were mounting, however, he found time to press the hand of the scout, and to repeat the terms of an engagement they had made, to meet again within the posts of the British army. Then, gladly throwing himself into the saddle, he spurred his charger to the side of the litter, whence low and stifled sobs alone announced the presence of Alice. In this manner, the head of Munro again dropping on his bosom, with Heyward and David following in sorrowing silence, and attended by the aide of Montcalm with his guard, all the white men, with the exception of Hawkeye, passed from before the eyes of the Delawares, and were soon buried in the vast forests of that region.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE SAGAMORE NOT ALONE.

But the tie which, through their common calamity, had united the feelings of these simple dwellers in the woods with the strangers who had thus transiently visited them was not so easily broken. Years passed away before the traditionary tale of the white maiden, and of the young warrior of the Mohicans, ceased to beguile the long nights and tedious marches, or to animate their youthful and brave with a desire for vengeance. Neither were the secondary actors in these momentous incidents forgotten. Through the medium of the scout, who

served for years afterward as a link between them and civilized life, they learned, in answer to their inquiries, that the Gray Head was speedily gathered to his fathers—borne down by his misfortunes, and that the Open Hand had conveyed his surviving daughter far into the settlements of the pale-faces, where her tears had at last ceased to flow, and had been succeeded by the bright smiles which were better suited to her joyous nature.

But these were events of a time later than that which concerns our tale. Deserted by all of his color, Hawkeye returned to the spot where his own sympathies led him, with a force that no ideal bond of union could bestow. He was just in time to catch a parting look of the features of Uncas, whom the Delawares were already inclosing in his last vestment of skins. The body was deposited in an attitude of repose, facing the rising sun, with the implements of war and of the chase at hand, in readiness for the final journey. The manual rites then ceased, and all present reverted to the more spiritual part of the ceremonies.

Chingachgook became once more the object of the common attention. He had not yet spoken, and something consolatory and instructive was expected from so renowned a chief on an occasion of such interest. Conscious of the wishes of the people, the warrior raised his face and looked about him with a steady eye. His firmly compressed lips then severed, and for the first time during the long ceremonies his voice was distinctly audible.

"Why do my brothers mourn," he said; "why do my daughters weep, that a young man has gone to the happy hunting-grounds; that a chief has filled his time with honor? He was good; he was dutiful; he was brave. Who can deny it? The Manitou had need of such a warrior, and he has called him away. As for me, I am alone——"

"No, no," cried Hawkeye, "no, Sagamore, not alone. The gifts of our colors may be different, but God has so placed us

as to journey in the same path. I have no kin, and I may also say, like you, no people. He was your son, and a red-skin by nature; and it may be that your blood was nearer—but if ever I forget the lad who has so often fout at my side in war, and slept at my side in peace, may He who made us all forget me. The boy has left us for a time; but, Sagamore, you are not alone."

Chingachgook grasped the hand that, in the warmth of feeling, the scout had stretched across the fresh earth, and in that attitude of friendship these two sturdy and intrepid woodsmen bowed their heads together, while scalding tears fell to their feet, watering the grave of Uncas like drops of falling rain.

In the midst of the awful stillness with which such a burst of feeling, coming, as it did, from the two most renowned warriors of that region, was received, Tamenund lifted his voice to disperse the multitude.

"It is enough," he said. "Go, children of the Lenape, the anger of the Manitou is not done. Why should Tamenund stay? The pale-faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the red men has not yet come again. My day has been too long. In the morning I saw the sons of Unamis happy and strong; and yet, before the night has come, have I lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans."


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