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C. E. WYNDHAM.

THE LAST

OF THE MOHICANS:

A NARRATIVE OF 1757

VOL. II.

LONDON

THE LAST

OF

THE MOHICANS;

A

NARRATIVE OF 1757.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE SPY," "THE PILOT,
"THE PIONEERS," &c. &c.

"Mislike me not, for my complexion,
The shadowed livery of the burnished sun."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

JOHN MILLER, NEW BRIDGE STREET.

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THE

LAST OF THE MOHICANS.

CHAPTER I.

"I'll seek a readier path."—*Parnell.*

The route taken by Hawk-eye 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 towards the distant mountains, and as their journey lay through the interminable forest, the heat was no longer oppressive. Their progress, in consequence, was proportionate, and long before the twilight gathered

about them, they made good many toilsome miles, on their return path.

The hunter, like the savage whose place he filled, seemed to select among the blind signs of their wild route with a species of instinct, seldom abating in his speed, and never pausing to deliberate. A rapid and oblique glance at the moss on the trees, with an occasional upward gaze towards the setting sun, or a steady but passing look at the direction of the numerous water courses, through which he waded, were sufficient to determine his path, and remove his greatest difficulties. In the mean time, the forest began to change its hues, losing that lively green which had embellished its arches, in the graver light, which is the usual precursor of the close of day.

While the eyes of the sisters were endeavouring to catch glimpses, through the trees, of the flood of golden glory, which formed a glittering halo around the sun, tinging here and there, with ruby streaks, or bordering with narrow edgings of shining yellow, a mass of clouds that lay piled at no great distance above the western hills,

Hawk-eye turned suddenly, and pointing upward towards the gorgeous heavens, he spoke.

"Yonder is the signal given to man to seek his food and natural rest," he said; "better and wiser would it be, if he could understand the signs of nature, 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 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 an assent, or, indeed, for any reply, the sturdy hunter moved boldly into a dense thicket of young chesnuts, shoving aside the branches of the exuberant shoots which nearly covered the ground, like a man who expected, at each step, to discover some object he had formerly known. The recollection of the

scout did not deceive him. After penetrating through the brush, matted as it was with briars, for a few hundred feet, he entered into 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, neglected, and nearly forgotten, like the circumstances which had caused it to be reared. Such memorials of the passage and struggles of man are yet frequent throughout the broad barrier of wilderness, which once separated the hostile provinces, and form a species of ruins, that are intimately associated with the recollections of colonial history, and which are in appropriate keeping with the gloomy character of the surrounding scenery. The roof of bark had long since fallen and mingled with the soil, but the huge logs of pine, which had been hastily thrown together, still preserved their rela-

tive positions, though one angle of the work had given way under the pressure, and threatened a speedy downfall to the remainder of the rustic edifice. While Heyward and his companions hesitated to approach a building of such a decayed appearance, Hawk-eye and the Indians entered within the low walls, not only without fear, but with obvious interest. While the former surveyed the ruins, both internally, and externally, with the curiosity of one whose recollections were reviving at each moment, Chingachgook related to his son, in the language of the Delawares, and with the pride of a conqueror, the brief history of the skirmish which had been fought in his youth, in that secluded spot. A strain of melancholy, however, blended with his triumph, rendering his voice, as usual, soft and musical.

In the mean time, the sisters gladly dismounted, and prepared to enjoy their halt in the coolness of the evening, and 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 the more vigilant Duncan, perceiving that the scout had already finished his short survey, "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 slow and musing answer; "'tis not often that books are made, and narratives written, of such a skrimmage 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 scandalized and wronged race. Forty days and forty nights did the imps crave our blood around this pile of logs, which I designed and partly reared, being, as you'll remember, no Indian myself, but a man without a cross.—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. Yes, yes; I was then young, and new to the sight of blood, and not

relishing the thought that creatures who had spirits like myself, should lay on the naked ground, to be torn asunder by beasts, or to bleach in the rains, I buried the dead with my own hands, under that very little hillock, where you have placed yourselves; and no bad seat does it make either, though it be raised by the bones of mortal men."

Heyward and the sisters arose on the instant from the grassy sepulchre; nor could the two latter, notwithstanding the terrific scenes they had so recently passed through, entirely suppress an emotion of natural horror, when they found themselves in such familiar contact with the grave of the dead Mohawks. The gray light, the gloomy little area of dark grass, surrounded by its border of brush, beyond which the pines rose, in breathing silence, apparently, into the very clouds, and the death-like stillness of the vast forest, were all in unison to deepen such a sensation.

"They are gone, and they are harmless," continued Hawk-eye, waving his hand, with a melancholy smile, at their manifest

alarm; "they'll never shout the warwhoop, nor strike a blow with the tomahawk, again! And of all those who aided in placing them where they lie, Chingachgook and I only are living! The brothers and family of the Mohican formed our war party, and you see before you, all that are now left of his race."

The eyes of the listeners involuntarily sought the forms of the Indians, with a compassionate interest in their desolate fortune. Their dark persons were still to be seen within the shadows of the blockhouse, the son listening to the relation of his father, with that sort of intenseness, which would be created by a narrative, that redounded so much to the honour of those, whose names he had long revered for their courage and savage virtues.

"I had thought the Delawares a pacific people," said Duncan, "and that they never waged war in person; trusting the defence of their lands to those very Mohawks that you slew!"

"'Tis true in part," returned the scout, "and yet at the bottom, 'tis a wicked lie.

Such a treaty was made in ages gone by, through the deviltries of the Dutchers, who wished to disarm the natives that had the best right to the country, where they had settled themselves. The Mohicans, though a part of the same nation, having to deal with the English, never entered into the silly bargain, but kept to their manhood; as in truth did the Delawares, when their eyes were opened to their folly. You see before you, a chief of the great Mohican Sagamores! Once his family could chase their deer over tracts of country wider than that which belongs to the Albany Patteroon without crossing brook or hill, that was not their own; but what is left to their descendant! He may find his six feet of earth, when God chooses; and keep it in peace, perhaps, if he has a friend who will take the pains to sink his head so low, that the ploughshares cannot reach it!"

"Enough!" said Heyward, apprehensive that the subject might lead to a discussion that would interrupt the harmony, so necessary to the preservation of his fair companions; we have journeyed far, and

few among us are blest with forms like that of yours, which seems to know neither fatigue nor weakness."

"The sinews and bones of a man carry me through it all," said the hunter, surveying his muscular limbs with a simplicity that betrayed the honest pleasure the compliment afforded him; "there are larger and heavier men to be found in the settlements, but you might travel many days in a city, before you could meet one able to walk fifty miles without stopping to take breath, or who has kept the hounds within hearing during a chase of hours. However, as flesh and blood are not always the same, it is quite reasonable to suppose, that 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 these chestnut shoots, and a bed of grass and leaves."

The dialogue ceased, while the hunter and his companions busied themselves in preparations for the comfort and protection of those they guided. A spring, which

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

While the diligent woodsmen were employed in this manner, Cora and Alice partook of that refreshment, which duty required, much more than inclination prompted, them to accept. They then retired within the walls, and first offering up their thanksgivings for past mercies, and petitioning for a continuance of the Divine favour throughout the coming night, they laid their tender forms on the fragrant couch, and in spite of recollections and forebodings, soon sunk into those slumbers which nature so imperiously demanded, and which were sweetened by hopes for the morrow. Duncan had prepared himself to pass the night in watchfulness,

near them, just without the ruin; but the scout, perceiving his intention, pointed towards Chingachgook, as he coolly disposed his own person on the grass, and said—

"The eyes of a white man are too heavy, and too blind, for such a watch as this! The Mohican will be our sentinel; therefore, let us sleep."

"I proved myself a sluggard on my post during the past night," said Heyward, "and have less need of repose than you, who did more credit to the character of a soldier. Let all the party seek their rest, then, while I hold the guard."

"If we lay among the white tents of the 60th, and in front of an enemy like the French, I could not ask for a better watchman," returned the scout; "but in the darkness, and among the signs of the wilderness, your judgment would be like the folly of a child, and your vigilance thrown away. 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, while they were

talking, like one who sought to make the most of the time allotted to rest, and that his example had been followed by David, whose voice literally 'clove to his jaws' with the fever of his wound, heightened, as it was, by their toilsome march. Unwilling to prolong a useless discussion, the young man affected to comply, by posting his back against the logs of the block-house, in a half recumbent posture, though resolutely determined, in his own mind, not to close an eye until he had delivered his precious charge into the arms of Munro himself. Hawk-eye, believing he had prevailed, soon fell asleep, and a silence as deep as the solitude in which they had found it, pervaded the retired spot.

For many minutes Duncan succeeded in keeping his senses on the alert, and alive to every moaning sound that arose from the forest. His vision became more acute, as the shades of evening settled on the place, and even after the stars were glimmering above his head, he was able to distinguish the recumbent forms of his companions, as they lay stretched on the grass, and to

note the person of Chingachgook, who sat upright and motionless as one of the trees, which formed the dark barrier on every side of them. He still heard the gentle breathings of the sisters, who lay within a few feet of him, and not a leaf was ruffled by the passing air, of which his ear did not detect the whispering sound. At length, however, the mournful notes of a whip-poor-will, became blended with the moanings of an owl; his heavy eyes occasionally sought the bright rays of the stars, and then he fancied he saw them through the fallen lids. At instants of momentary wakefulness, he mistook a bush for his associate sentinel; his head next sunk upon his shoulder, which, in its turn, sought the support of the ground; and finally, his whole person became relaxed and pliant, and the young man sunk into a deep sleep, dreaming that he was a knight of ancient chivalry holding his midnight vigils before the tent of a re-captured princess, whose favour he did not despair of gaining, by such a proof of devotion and watchfulness.

How long the tired Duncan lay in this

insensible state he never knew himself, but his slumbering visions had been long lost in total forgetfulness, when he was awakened by a light tap on the shoulder. Aroused by this signal, slight as it was, he sprang upon his feet, with a confused recollection of the self-imposed duty he had assumed with the commencement of the night—

"Who comes?" he demanded, feeling for his sword, at the place where it was usually suspended. "Speak! friend or enemy?"

"Friend," replied the low voice of Chingachgook; who, pointing upward at the luminary which was shedding its mild light through the opening in the trees, directly on their bivouac, immediately added, in his rude English, "moon comes, and white man's fort far—far off; time to move, when sleep shuts both eyes of the Frenchman!"

"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, silvery tones of Alice within the building,

" and ready to travel very fast, after so refreshing a sleep; but you have watched through the tedious night, in our behalf, after having endured so much fatigue the live-long day!"

" Say, rather, I would have watched, but my treacherous eyes betrayed me; twice have I proved myself unfit for the trust I bear."

" Nay, Duncan, deny it not," interrupted the smiling Alice, issuing from the shadows of the building into the light of the moon, in all the loveliness of her freshened beauty; " I know you to be a heedless one, when self is the object of your care, and but too vigilant in favour of others. Can we not tarry here a little longer, while you find the rest you need. Cheerfully, most cheerfully, will Cora and I keep the vigils, while you, and all these brave men, endeavour to snatch a little sleep!"

" If shame could cure me of my drowsiness, I should never close an eye again," said the uneasy youth, gazing at the ingenuous countenance of Alice, where, how-

ever, in its sweet solicitude, he read nothing to confirm his half awakened suspicion. "It is but too true, that after leading you into danger by my heedlessness, I have not even the merit of guarding your pillows, as should become a soldier."

"No one but Duncan himself, should accuse Duncan of such weakness!" returned the confiding Alice; who lent herself, with all a woman's confidence to that generous delusion which painted the perfection of her youthful admirer. "Go, then, and sleep; believe me, neither of us, weak girls as we are, will betray our watch."

The young man was relieved from the awkwardness of making any further protestations of his own demerits, by an exclamation from Chingachgook, and the attitude of riveted attention assumed by his son.

"The Mohicans hear an enemy!" whispered Hawk-eye, who, by this time, in common with the whole party, was awake and stirring. "They scent some danger in the wind!"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Heyward. "Surely, we have had enough of blood-shed!"

While he spoke, however, the young soldier seized his rifle, and advancing towards the front, prepared to atone for his venial remissness, by freely exposing his life in defence of those he attended.

"'Tis some creature of the forest prowling around us in quest of food!" he said, in a whisper, as soon as the low, and apparently, distant sounds, which had startled the Mohicans, reached his own ears.

"Hist!" returned the attentive scout; "'tis man; even I can now tell his tread, poor as my senses are, when compared to an Indian's! That scampering Huron has fallen in with one of Montcalm's outlying parties, and they have struck upon our trail. I shouldn't like myself to spill more human blood in this spot," he added, looking around with anxiety in his features, at the dim objects by which he was surrounded; "but what must be, must! Lead the horses into the block-house, Uncas; and, friends, do you follow to the same shelter.

Poor and old as it is, it offers a cover, and has rung with the crack of a rifle afore to night!"

He was instantly obeyed, the Mohicans leading the Narragansets within the ruin, whither the whole party repaired, with the most guarded silence.

The sounds of approaching footsteps were now too distinctly audible, to leave any doubts as to the nature of the interruption. 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. When the party reached the point where the horses had entered the thicket which surrounded the block-house, they were evidently at fault, having lost those marks which, until that moment, had directed their pursuit.

It would seem by the voices that twenty men were soon collected at that one spot, mingling their different opinions and advice, in noisy clamour.

"The knaves know our weakness," whispered Hawk-eye, who stood by the side of

Heyward, in deep shade, looking through an opening in the logs, "or they wouldn't indulge their idleness in such a squaw's march. Listen to the reptiles! each man among them seems to have two tongues, and but a single leg!"

Duncan, brave, and even fierce as he sometimes was in the combat, could not, in such a moment of painful suspense, make any reply to the cool and characteristic remark of the scout. He only grasped his rifle more firmly, and fastened his eyes upon the narrow opening, through which he gazed upon the moonlight view with increasing intenseness. The deeper tones of one who spoke as having authority, were next heard, amid a silence that denoted the respect with which his orders, or rather advice, was received. After which, by the rustling of leaves, and cracking of dried twigs, it was apparent the savages were separating in pursuit of the lost trail. Fortunately for the pursued, the light of the moon, while it shed a flood of mild lustre, upon the little area around the ruin, was not sufficiently strong to penetrate the deep

arches of the forest, where the objects still lay in dim and deceptive shadow. The search proved fruitless; for so short and sudden had been the passage from the faint path the travellers had journeyed into the thicket, that every trace of their footsteps was lost in the obscurity of the woods.

It was not long, however, before the restless savages were heard beating the brush, and gradually approaching the inner edge of that dense border of young chestnuts, which encircled the little area.

"They are coming!" muttered Heyward, endeavouring to thrust his rifle through the chink in the logs; "let us fire on their approach!"

"Keep every thing in the shade," returned the scout; "the snapping of a flint, or even the smell of a single karnel of the brimstone, would bring the hungry varlets upon us in a body. Should it please God, that we must give battle for the scalps, trust to the experience of men who know the ways of the savages, and who are not often backward when the war-whoop is howled."

Duncan cast his eyes anxiously behind him, and saw that the trembling sisters were cowering in the far corner of the building, while the Mohicans stood in the shadow, like two upright posts, ready, and apparently willing, to strike, when the blow should be needed. Curbing his impatience, he again looked out upon the area, and awaited the result in silence. At that instant the thicket opened, and a tall and armed Huron advanced a few paces into the open space. As he gazed upon the silent block-house, the moon fell full upon his swarthy countenance, and betrayed its surprise and curiosity. He made the exclamation, which usually accompanies the former emotion in an Indian, and calling in a low voice, soon drew a companion to his side.

These children of the woods stood together for several moments, pointing at the crumbling edifice, and conversing in the unintelligible language of their tribe. They then approached, though with slow and cautious steps, pausing every instant to look at the building, like startled deer,

whose curiosity struggled powerfully with their awakened apprehensions for the mastery. The foot of one of them suddenly rested on the mound, and he stooped to examine its nature. At this moment, Heyward observed that the scout loosened his knife in its sheath, and lowered the muzzle of his rifle. Imitating these movements, the young man prepared himself for the struggle, which now seemed inevitable.

The savages were so near, that the least motion in one of the horses, or even a breath louder than common, 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. They then drew warily back, keeping their eyes riveted on the ruin, as if they expected to see the apparitions of the dead issue from its silent walls, until having reached the boundary of the area, they moved slowly into the thicket, and disappeared.

Hawk-eye dropped the breech of his rifle to the earth, and drawing a long, free breath, exclaimed, in an audible whisper—

"Ay! they respect the dead, and it has this time saved their own lives, and it may be, the lives of better men too!"

Heyward lent his attention, for a single moment, to his companion, but without replying, he again turned towards those who just then interested him more. He heard the two Hurons leave the bushes, and it was soon plain that all the pursuers were gathered about them, in deep attention to their report. After a few minutes of earnest and solemn dialogue, altogether different from the noisy clamour with which they had first collected about the spot, the sounds grew fainter, and more distant, and finally were lost in the depths of the forest.

Hawk-eye waited until a signal from the listening Chingachgook assured him, that every sound from the retiring party was completely 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 gateway, and stealing out by a direction opposite to the one by which they had entered, they quitted the spot, the sisters casting furtive glances at the silent grave and crumbling ruin, as they left the soft light of the moon, to bury themselves in the deep gloom of the woods.

CHAPTER II.

"*Guard.*—Qui est là?
Puc.—Païsans, pauvres gens de France."
King Henry VI.

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 their escape to hazard a word even in whispers. The scout resumed his post in the advance, though his steps, after he had thrown a safe distance between himself and his enemies, were more deliberate than in their previous march, in consequence of his utter ignorance of the localities of the surrounding woods. More than once he halted to consult with his confederates,

the Mohicans, pointing upwards at the moon, and examining the barks of the trees with extraordinary care. In these brief pauses, Heyward and the sisters listened, with senses rendered doubly acute by their danger, to detect any symptoms which might announce the proximity of their foes. At such moments, it seemed as if a vast range of country lay buried in eternal sleep; not the least sound arising from the forest, unless it was the distant and scarcely audible rippling of a water-course. Birds, beasts, and man 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, feeble and murmuring as they were, relieved the guides at once from no trifling embarrassment, and towards it they immediately held their silent and diligent way.

When the banks of the little stream were gained, Hawk-eye 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 travelled in the bed of the brook, leaving no dangerous trail. The moon had already sunk into an immense pile of black clouds, which lay impending above the western horizon, when they issued from the low and devious water course, to rise again to the light and level of the sandy but wooded plain. Here the scout seemed to be once more at home, for he held on his way with the certainty and diligence of a man who moved in the security of his own knowledge. The path soon became more uneven, and the travellers could plainly perceive that the mountains drew nigher to them on each hand, and that they were, in truth, about entering one of their widest gorges. Suddenly Hawk-eye made a pause, and waiting until he was joined by the whole party, he spoke; though in tones so low and cautious, that they added to the solemnity of his words, in the quiet and darkness of the place.

"It is easy to know the path-ways, and to find the licks and water-courses of the wilderness," he said; "but who that saw

this spot could venture to 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, advancing, with interest, nigher to the scout.

"It is yet a long and weary path," was the answer, "and when and where to strike it, is now our greatest difficulty. "See," he said, pointing through the trees towards a spot where a little basin of water reflected the bright stars from its still and placid bosom, "here is the 'bloody pond,' and I am on ground that I have not only often travelled, but over which I have fou't the enemy, from the rising to the setting sun!"

"Ha! that sheet of dull and dreary water, then, is the sepulchre of the brave men who fell in the contest! I have heard it named, but never have I stood on its banks before!"

"Three battles did we make with the Dutch Frenchman in a day!" continued Hawk-eye, pursuing the train of his own thoughts, rather than replying to the re-

mark of Duncan. "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, in the heat of his youthful ardour; "the fame of it reached us early in our southern army."

"Ay! but it did not end there. I was sent by Major Effingham, at Sir William's own bidding, to out-flank the French, and carry the tidings of their disaster across the portage, to the fort on the Hudson. Just hereaway, where you see the trees rise into a mountain swell, I met a party

coming down to our aid, and I led them where the enemy were taking their meal, little dreaming that they had not finished the bloody work of the day."

"And you surprised them!"

"If death can be a surprise to men who are thinking only of the cravings of their appetites! we gave them but little breathing time, for they had borne hard upon us in the fight of the morning, and there were few in our party who had not lost friend or relative by their hands. When all was over, the dead, and some say the dying, were cast into that little pond. These eyes have seen its waters coloured with blood, as natural water never yet flowed from the bowels of the 'arth."

"It was a convenient, and, I trust, will prove a peaceful grave to a soldier! 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, that 'kill-deer' hasn't dropped a living body on, be it an enemy, or be it a brute beast.

As for the grave there, being as quiet as you mention, it is another matter. There are them in the camp who say and think, man to lie still, should not be buried while the breath is in the body; and certain it is, that in the hurry of that evening, the doctors had but little time to say who was living, and who was dead. Hist! see you nothing now, walking on the shore of the pond?"

"'Tis not probable that any are as houseless as ourselves, in this dreary forest."

"Such as he may care but little for house or shelter, and night dew can never wet a body that passes its days in the water!" returned the scout, grasping the shoulder of Heyward, with such convulsive strength, as to make the young soldier painfully sensible how much superstitious terror had gotten the mastery of a man who was usually so dauntless.

"By heaven! there is a human form,

and it approaches! stand to your arms, my friends, for we know not whom we encounter."

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

"What says it?" whispered the scout; "it speaks neither Indian nor English!"

"Qui vive?" repeated the same voice, which was quickly followed by the rattling of arms, and a menacing attitude.

"France," cried Heyward, advancing from the shadow of the trees, to the shore of the pond, within a few yards of the sentinel.

"D'ou venez-vous—ou allez-vous d'aussi bonne heure?" demanded the grenadier, in the language, and with the accent of a man from old France.

"Je viens de la découverte, et je vais me coucher."

"Etes-vous officier du roi?"

"Sans doute, mon camarade; me prends-tu pour un provincial! Je suis capitaine de

chasseurs (Heyward well knew that the other was of a regiment in the line)—j'ai ici, avec moi, les filles du commandant de la fortification. Aha! tu en as entendu parler! je les ai fait prisonnières près de l'autre fort, et je les conduit au général."

"Ma foi! mesdames; j'en suis faché pour vous," exclaimed the young soldier, touching his cap with studious politeness, and no little grace; "mais—fortune de guerre! vous trouverez notre général un brave homme, et bien poli avec les dames."

"C'est le caractere des gens de guerre," said Cora, with admirable self-possession; 'A dieu, mon ami; je vous souhaiterais un devoir plus agréable, a remplir."

The soldier made a low and humble acknowledgment for her civility; and Heyward adding, "a bonne nuit, mon comarade," they moved deliberately forward; leaving the sentinel pacing along the banks of the silent pond, little suspecting an enemy of so much effrontery, and humming to himself those words which were recalled to his mind by the sight of women, and,

perhaps, by the recollections of his own distant and beautiful France—

"Vive le vin, vive l'amour," &c. &c.

"'Tis well you understood the knave!" whispered the scout, when they had gained a little distance from the place, and letting his rifle fall into the hollow of his arm again; "I soon saw that he was one of them uneasy Frenchers, and well for him it was, that his speech was friendly, and his wishes kind; or a place might have been found for his bones amongst those of his countrymen."

He was interrupted by a long and heavy groan, which arose from the little basin, as though in truth, the spirits of the departed lingered about their watery sepulchre.

"Surely, it was of flesh!" continued the scout; "no spirit could handle its arms so steadily!"

"It *was* of flesh, but whether the poor fellow still belongs to this world, may well be doubted," said Heyward, glancing his eyes quickly around him, and missing

Chingachgook from their little band.—Another groan, more faint than the former, was succeeded by a heavy and sullen plunge into the water, and all was as still again, as if the borders of the dreary pool had never been awakened from the silence of creation. While they yet hesitated in an uncertainty, that each moment served to render more painful, the form of the Indian was seen gliding out of the thicket, and rejoined them, while with one hand he attached the reeking scalp of the unfortunate young Frenchman to his girdle, and with the other he replaced the knife and tomahawk that had drank his blood. He then took his wonted station, a little on one flank, with the satisfied air of a man who believed he had done a deed of merit.

The scout dropped one end of his rifle to the earth, and leaning his hands on the other, he stood musing a moment in profound silence. Then shaking his head in a mournful manner, he muttered—

"'Twould have been a cruel and an unhuman act for a white-skin; but 'tis the gift and natur of an Indian, and I suppose

it should not be denied! I could wish, though, it had befallen an accursed Mingo, rather than that gay, young boy, from the old countries!"

"Enough!" said Heyward, apprehensive the unconscious sisters might comprehend the nature of the detention, and conquering his disgust by a train of reflections very much like that of the hunter; "'tis done, and though better it were left undone, cannot be amended. You see we are, too obviously, within the sentinels of the enemy; what course do you propose to follow?"

"Yes," said Hawk-eye, rousing himself again, "'tis, as you say, too late to harbour further thoughts about it! Aye, the French have gathered around the fort in good earnest, and we have a delicate needle to thread in passing them."

"And but little time to do it in," added Heyward, glancing his eyes upward, towards the bank of vapour that concealed the setting moon.

"And little time to do it in!" repeated the scout. "The thing may be done in two

fashions, by the help of Providence, without which it may not be done at all!"

"Name them quickly, for time presses."

"One would be, to dismount the gentle ones, and let their beasts range the plain; by sending the Mohicans in front, we might then cut a lane through their sentries, and enter the fort over the dead bodies."

"It will not do—it will not do!" interrupted the generous Heyward; "a soldier might force his way in this manner, but never with such a convoy."

"'Twould be, indeed, a bloody path for such tender feet to wade in!" returned the equally reluctant scout, "but I thought it befitting my manhood to name the thing. We must then turn on our trail, and get without the line of their look-outs, 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," returned the impatient young man, "and that instantly."

Further words were unnecessary; for

Hawk-eye, merely uttering the mandate to "follow," moved along the route, by which they had just entered their present, critical, and even dangerous situation. Their progress, like their late dialogue, was guarded, and without noise; for none knew at what moment a passing patrol, or a crouching piquet, of the enemy, might rise upon their path. As they held their silent way along the margin of the pond, again, Heyward and the scout stole furtive glances at its appalling dreariness. They looked in vain for the form they had so recently seen stalking along its silent shores, while a low and regular wash of the little waves, by announcing that the waters were not yet subsided, furnished a frightful memorial of the deed of blood they had just witnessed. Like all that passing and gloomy scene, the low basin, however, quickly melted in the darkness, and became blended with the mass of black objects in the rear of the active travellers.

Hawk-eye soon deviated from the line of their retreat, and striking off towards the mountains which form the western

boundary of the narrow plain, he led his followers, with swift steps, deep within the dense shadows, that were cast from their high and broken summits. Their route was now painful; lying over ground ragged with rocks, and intersected with ravines, and their progress proportionately slow. Bleak and black hills lay on every side of them, compensating, in some degree, for the additional toil of the march, by the sense of security they imparted. At length the party began slowly to rise a steep and rugged ascent, by a path that curiously wound among rocks and trees, avoiding the one, and supported by the other, in a manner that showed it had been devised by men long practised in the arts of the wilderness. As they gradually rose from the level of the valleys, the thick darkness which usually precedes the approach of day, began to disperse, and objects were seen in the plain and palpable colours with which they had been gifted by nature. When they issued from the stinted 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 shrubs and meagre herbage of that elevated region.

"Go," he said, "and seek your food where natur gives it you; and beware that you become not food to ravenous wolves yourselves, among these hills."

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

"See, and judge with your own eyes," said the scout, advancing towards the eastern brow of the mountain, whither he beckoned for the whole party to follow; "if it was as easy to look into the heart of man, as it is to spy out the nakedness of Montcalm's camp from this spot, hypocrites would grow scarce, and the cunning of a

Mingo might prove a losing game, compared to the honesty of a Delaware."

When the travellers had reached the verge of the precipice, they saw, at a glance, the truth of the scout's declaration, and the admirable foresight with which he had led them to their commanding station.

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 reached for miles along the western shores of the lake, until meeting its sister piles beyond the water, it ran off far towards the Canadas, in confused and broken masses of rock, which were thinly sprinkled with evergreens. Immediately at the feet of the party, the southern shore of the Horican swept in a broad semi-circle, from mountain to mountain, marking a wide strand, that soon rose into an uneven and somewhat elevated plain. To the north stretched the limpid, and, as it appeared from that dizzy height, the narrow sheet of the "holy lake," indented with numberless

bays, embellished by fantastic head-lands, 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 vapour, that came slowly rolling along their bosom, before a light morning air. But a narrow opening between the crests of the hills, pointed out the passage by which they found their way still farther north, to spread their pure and ample sheets again, before pouring out their tribute into the distant Champlain. To the south stretched the defile, or, rather, broken plain, so often mentioned. For several miles in this direction, the mountains appeared reluctant to yield their dominion, but within reach of the eye they diverged, and finally melted into the level and sandy lands, across which we have accompanied our adventurers in their double journey. Along both ranges of hills, which bounded the opposite sides of the lake and valley, clouds of light vapour were rising in spiral wreaths from the uninhabited woods, looking like the smokes of hidden cottages, or rolled

lazily down the declivities, to mingle with the fogs of the lower land. A single, solitary, snow-white cloud floated above the valley, and marked the spot, beneath which lay the silent pool of the "bloody pond."

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 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, but every other part of the scene lay in the green livery of nature, except where the limpid water mellowed the view, or the bold rocks thrust their black and naked heads above the undulating outlines of the mountain ranges. In its front might be seen the scattered sentinels, who held a weary watch against their numerous foes; and within the walls themselves, the travellers looked down upon men still drowsy

with a night of vigilance. Towards the south-east, but in immediate contact with the fort, was an entrenched camp, posted on a rocky eminence, that would have been far more eligible for the work itself, in which Hawk-eye pointed out the presence of those auxiliary regiments that had so recently left the Hudson in their company. From the woods a little farther to the south, rose numerous dark and lurid smokes, that were easily to be distinguished from the purer exhalations of the springs, and which the scout also showed to Heyward, as evidences that the enemy lay in force in that direction.

But the spectacle which most concerned the young soldier, was on the western bank of the lake, though quite near to its southern termination. On a stripe of land, which appeared, from its stand, 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 for an encampment of ten thousand men. Batteries were

already thrown up in their front, and even while the spectators above them were looking down, with such different emotions, on a scene, which lay like a map beneath their feet, the roar of artillery rose from out the valley, and passed off, in thundering echoes, along the eastern hills.

"Morning is just touching them below," said the deliberate and musing 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."

"The place is, indeed, invested," returned Duncan; "but is there no expedient by which we may enter? capture in the works would be far preferable to falling, again, into the hands of the roving Indians."

"See!" exclaimed the scout, unconsciously 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! Ay! these Frenchers

will pull it to pieces faster than it was put together, solid and thick though it be!"

"Heyward, I sicken at the sight of danger, that I cannot share," said the undaunted but anxious 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. "If I had but one of the thousand boats which lie empty along that shore, it might be done. Ha! here will soon be an end of the firing, for yonder comes a fog that will turn day to night, and make an Indian arrow more dangerous than a moulded cannon. Now, if you are equal to the work, and will follow, I will make a push; for I long to get down into that camp, if it be only to scatter some Mingo dogs that I see lurking in the skirts of yonder thicket of birch."

"We are equal!" said Cora, firmly; "on such an errand we will follow to any danger!"

The scout turned to her with a smile of

honest and cordial approbation, as he answered—

"I would I had a thousand men, of brawny limbs and quick eyes, that feared death as little as you! I'd send them jabbering Frenchers back into their den again, afore the week was ended, howling like so many fettered hounds, or hungry wolves. But stir," he added, turning from her to the rest of the party, "the fog comes rolling down so fast, we shall have but just the time to meet it on the plain, and use it as a cover. Remember, if any accident should befall me, to keep the air blowing on your left cheeks—or, rather, follow the Mohicans; they'd scent their way, be it in day or be it at night."

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 a mountain, whose sides they had climbed with so much toil and pain.

The direction taken by Hawk-eye soon

brought the travellers 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, and favoured by the nature of the ground, 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 profit early by their report, and to obtain some faint knowledge for himself of the more immediate localities.

In a very few moments he returned, his face reddened with vexation, while he muttered forth his disappointment in words of no very gentle import.

"Here, has the cunning Frenchman been posting a piquet directly in our path,"

he said: 'red skins and whites; and we shall be as likely to fall into their midst, as to pass them in the fog!"

"Cannot we make a circuit to avoid the danger," asked Heyward, "and come into our path again when it is past?"

"Who that once bends from the line of his march, in a fog, can tell when or how to turn to find it again! The mists of Horican are not like the curls from a peace-pipe, or the smoke which settles above a mosquetoe fire!"

He was yet speaking, when a crashing sound was heard, and a cannon-ball entered the thicket, striking the body of a sapling, and rebounding to the earth, its force being much expended by previous resistance. The Indians followed instantly like busy attendants on the terrible messenger, and Uncas commenced speaking earnestly, and with much action, in the Delaware tongue.

"It may be so, lad," muttered the scout, when he had ended, "for desperate fevers are not to be treated like a tooth-ache. Come, then, the fog is shutting in."

"Stop!" cried Heyward; "first explain your expectations."

"'Tis soon done, and a small hope it is; but then it is better than nothing. This shot that you see," added the scout, kicking the harmless iron with his foot, "has ploughed the 'arth in its road from the fort, and we shall hunt for the furrow it has made, when all other signs may fail. No more words, but follow; or the fog may leave us in the middle of our path, a mark for both armies to shoot at."

Heyward perceiving that, in fact, a crisis had arrived, when acts were more required than words, placed himself between the sisters, and drew them swiftly forward, keeping the dim figure of their leader in his eye. It was soon apparent that Hawk-eye had not magnified the power of the fog, for before they had proceeded twenty yards, it was difficult for the different individuals of the party to distinguish each other, in the vapour.

They had made their little circuit to the left, and were already inclining again to-

wards 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 là?"

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

"Push on!" repeated Heyward, when the summons was renewed by a dozen voices, each of which seemed charged with threatening menaces.

"C'est moi," cried Duncan, dragging, rather than leading those he supported, swiftly, onward.

"Bête! qui? moi!"

"Un ami de la France."

"Tu m'as plus l'air d'un *ennemi* de la France; arrete! ou pardieu je te ferai ami du diable. Non! feu; camarades, feu!"

The order was instantly obeyed, and the fog was stirred by the explosion of fifty muskets. Happily, the aim was bad, and the bullets cut the air in a direction a little different from that taken by the fugitives,

though still so nigh them, that to the unpractised ears of David and the two maidens, it appeared as if they whistled within a few inches of the organs. The outcry was renewed, and the order, not only to fire again, but to pursue, was too plainly audible. When Heyward briefly explained the meaning of the words they heard, Hawk-eye halted, and spoke with quick decision and great firmness.

"Let us deliver our fire," he said; "they will believe it a sortie, and give way, or will wait for reinforcements."

The scheme was well conceived, but failed in its effect. The instant the French heard their pieces, it seemed as if the plain was alive with men, muskets rattling along its whole extent, from the shores of the lake to the farthest boundary of the woods.

"We shall draw their entire army upon us, and bring on a general assault," said Duncan. "Lead on my friend, for your own life and ours!"

The scout seemed willing to comply;

but, in the hurry of the moment, and in the change of position, he had lost the direction. In vain he turned either cheek towards the light air, they felt equally cool. In this dilemma, Uncas lighted on the furrow of the cannon ball, where it had cut the ground in three little adjacent ant-hills.

"Give me the range!" said Hawk-eye, bending to catch a glimpse of the direction, and then instantly moving onward.

Cries, oaths, voices calling to each other, and the reports of muskets, were now quick and incessant, and apparently on every side of them. Suddenly, a strong glare of light flashed across the scene, the fog rolled upward in thick wreaths, and several cannon belched across the plain, and the roar was thrown heavily back from the bellowing echoes of the mountain.

"'Tis from the fort!" exclaimed Hawk-eye, turning short on his tracks; "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. Duncan willingly relinquished the support of Cora to the offered arm of Uncas, and Cora as readily accepted the welcome assistance. Men, hot and angry in the pursuit, were evidently on their footsteps, and each instant threatened their capture, if not their destruction.

"Point de quartier, aux coquins!" cried an eager pursuer, who seemed to direct the operations of the enemy.

"Stand firm, and be ready, my gallant 60ths!" suddenly exclaimed a voice above them, in the deep tones of authority; "wait to see the enemy, fire low, and sweep the glacis."

"Father! father!" exclaimed a piercing female cry from out the mist; "it is I! Alice! thy own Elsie! spare, oh! save your daughters!"

"Hold!" shouted the former speaker, in the awful tones of parental agony, the sound reaching even to the woods, and rolling back in solemn echo. "'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 swiftly towards the glacis. He knew them for his own battalion of the 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 bewildered by this unexpected desertion; but, before either had leisure for speech, or even thought, an officer of gigantic frame, whose locks were bleached with years and service, but whose air of military grandeur had been rather softened than destroyed by time, rushed out of the body of the mist, and folded them to his bosom, while large scalding tears rolled down his pale and wrinkled

cheeks, and he exclaimed, in the peculiar accent of Scotland—

"For this I thank thee, Lord! Let danger come as it will, thy servant is prepared!"

CHAPTER III.

"Then go we in, to know his embassy;
Which I could, with a ready guess, declare,
Before the Frenchman speak a word of it."

King Henry V.

THE few succeeding days were passed amid all the privations, the uproar, and 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 brethren were reduced. Montcalm had filled the woods of the portage with his savages. every yell and whoop from whom rang through the British encampment,

chilling the hearts of men, who were already but too much disposed to magnify the danger, with additional terror.

Not so, however, with the besieged.—Animated by the words, and stimulated by the examples of their leaders, they had found their courage, and maintained their ancient reputation with a zeal that did justice to the stern character of their commander. As if satisfied with the toil of marching through the wilderness to encounter his enemy, the French general, though of approved skill, had neglected to seize the adjacent mountains, whence the besieged might have been exterminated with impunity, and which, in the more modern warfare of the country, would not have been neglected for a single hour. This sort of contempt for eminences, or rather dread of the labour of ascending them, might have been termed the besetting weakness of the warfare of the period. It originated in the simplicity of the Indian contests, in which, from the nature of the combats, and the density of the forests, fortresses were rare, and artillery next to

useless. The carelessness engendered by these usages, descended even to the war of the revolution, and lost the states the important fortress of Ticonderoga, opening a way for the army of Burgoyne, into what was then the bosom of the country. We look back at this ignorance, or infatuation, which ever it may be called, with astonishment, knowing that the neglect of an eminence, whose difficulties, like those of Mount Defiance, had been so greatly exaggerated, would, at the present time, prove fatal to the reputation of the engineer who had planned the works at their base, or to that of the general, whose lot it was to defend them.

The tourist, the valetudinarian, or the amateur of the beauties of nature, who, in the train of his four-in-hand, now rolls through the scenes we have attempted to describe, in quest of information, health, or pleasure, or floats steadily towards his object on those artificial waters, which have sprung up under the administration of a statesman, who has dared to stake his political character on the hazardous issue,

is not to suppose that his ancestors traversed those hills, or struggled with the same currents with equal facility. The transportation of a single heavy gun, was often considered equal to a victory gained; if happily the difficulties of the passage had not so far separated it from its necessary concomitants, the ammunition, as to render it no more than an useless tube of unwieldy iron.

The evils of this state of things pressed heavily on the fortunes of the resolute Scotsman, who now defended William Henry. Though his adversary neglected the hills, he had planted his batteries with judgment on the plain, and caused them to be served with vigour and skill. Against this assault, the besieged could only oppose the imperfect and hasty preparations of a fortress in the wilderness, to whose mounds those extended sheets of water, which stretched into the Canadas, bore no friendly aid, while they opened the way to their more fortunate enemies.

It was on the afternoon of the fifth day of the siege, and the fourth of his own ser-

vice in it, that Major Heyward profited by a parley that had just been beaten, by repairing to the ramparts of one 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. The evening was delightfully calm, and the light air from the limpid water fresh and soothing. – It seemed as if, with the termination to the roar of artillery, and the plunging of shot, nature had also seized the moment to assume her mildest and most captivating form. The sun poured down his parting glory on the scene, without the oppression of those fierce rays that belong to the climate and the season. The mountains looked green, and fresh, and lovely; tempered with the milder light, or softened in shadow, as thin vapours floated between them and the sun. The numerous islands rested on the bosom of the Horican, some low and sunken, as if imbedded in the

waters, and others appearing to hover above the element, in little hillocks of green velvet, among which the fishermen of the beleaguering army peacefully rowed their skiffs, or floated at rest on the glassy mirror, in quiet pursuit of their game.

The scene was at once animated and still. All that pertained to nature was sweet, or simply grand; while those parts which depended on the temper and movements of man, were in perfect unison.

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. Behind these, again, swung, heavily opening and closing in silken folds, the rival standards of England and France.

A hundred gay and thoughtless young Frenchmen were drawing a net to the pebbly beach, within dangerous proximity to the sullen but silent cannon of the fort, while the eastern mountain was sending back the loud shouts and gay merriment

that attended their sport. Some were rushing eagerly to enjoy the aquatic games of the lake, and others were already toiling their way up the neighbouring hills, with the restless curiosity of their nation. To all these sports and pursuits, those of the enemy who watched the besieged, and the besieged themselves, were, however, merely the idle, though sympathizing spectators. Here and there a piquet had indeed raised a song, or mingled in a dance, which had drawn the dusky savages around them, from their lairs in the forest, in mute astonishment. In short, every thing wore rather the appearance of a day of pleasure, than of an hour stolen from the dangers and toil of a bloody and vindictive warfare.

Duncan had stood in a musing attitude, contemplating this scene a few minutes, when his eyes were directed to the glacis in 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 Hawk-eye was

haggard and care-worn, and his air dejected, as though he felt the deepest degradation at having fallen into the power of his enemies. He was without his favourite weapon, and his arms were even bound behind him with thongs, made of the skin of a deer. The arrival of flags, to cover the messengers of summons, had occurred so often of late, that when Heyward first threw his careless glance on this groupe, he expected to see another of the officers of the enemy, charged with a similar office; but the instant he recognised the tall person, and still sturdy, though downcast, features of his friend, the woodsman, he started with surprise, and turned to descend from the bastion into the bosom of the work.

The sounds of other voices, however, caught his attention, and for a moment caused him to forget his purpose. At the inner angle of the mound, he met the sisters, walking along the parapet, in search, like himself, of air and relief from confinement. They had not met since that painful moment when he deserted them, on the

plain, only to assure their safety. He had parted from them, worn with care, and jaded with fatigue; he now saw them refreshed and blooming, though still timid and anxious. Under such an inducement it will cause no surprise, that the young man lost sight, for a time, of other objects, in order to address them. He was, however, anticipated by the voice of the ardent and youthful Alice.

"Ah! thou truant! thou recreant knight! he who abandons his damsels in the very lists, to abide the fortunes of the fray!" she cried, in affected reproaches, which her beaming eyes and extended hands so flatteringly denied. "Here have we been days, nay, ages, expecting you at our feet, imploring mercy and forgetfulness of your craven backsliding, or, I should rather say, back-running—for verily you fled in a manner that no stricken deer, as our worthy friend the scout would say, could equal!"

"You know that Alice means our thanks and our blessings," added the graver and more thoughtful Cora. "In truth, we

have a little wondered why you should so rigidly absent yourself from a place, where the gratitude of the daughters might receive the support of a parent's thanks."

"Your father himself could tell you, that though absent from your presence, I have not been altogether forgetful of your safety," returned the young man; "the mastery of yonder village of huts," pointing to the neighbouring entrenched camp, "has been keenly disputed; and he who holds it, is sure to be possessed of this fort, and that which it contains. My days and my nights have all been passed there, since we separated, because I thought that duty called me thither. But," he added, with an air of chagrin, which he endeavoured, though unsuccessfully, to conceal, "had I been aware, that what I then believed a soldier's conduct, could be so construed, shame would have been added to the list of reasons."

"Heyward!—Duncan!" exclaimed Alice, bending forward to read his half-averted countenance, until a lock of her golden hair rested in rich contrast on her flushed

cheek, and nearly concealed the tear that had started to her anxious eye; "did I think this idle tongue of mine had pained you, I would silence it for ever! Cora can say, if Cora would, how justly we have prized your services, and how deep—I had almost said, how fervent—is our gratitude!"

"And will Cora attest the truth of this?" cried Duncan, suffering the cloud to be chased from his countenance by a smile of open pleasure. "What says our graver sister? Will she find an excuse for the neglect of the knight, in the ardour of a soldier?"

Cora made no immediate answer, but turned her face towards the water, as if looking on the plain sheet of the Horican. When she did bend her dark eyes on the young man, they were yet filled with an expression of anguish that at once drove every thought but that of kind solicitude from his mind.

"You are not well, dearest Miss Munro!" he exclaimed; "we have trifled, while you are in suffering!"

"'Tis nothing," she answered, gently refusing his offered support, with feminine reserve. "That I cannot see the sunny side of the picture of life, like this artless but ardent enthusiast," she added, laying her hand lightly, but affectionately, on the arm of her anxious sister, "is the penalty of experience, and, perhaps, the misfortune of my nature. See," she continued, with an effort, as if determined to shake off every infirmity, in a sense of duty; "look around you, Major Heyward, and tell me what a prospect is this, for the daughter of a soldier, whose greatest happiness is his honour and his military renown!"

"Neither ought nor shall be tarnished by circumstances, over which he has had no control," Duncan warmly replied. "But your words recall me to my own duty. I go now to your gallant father, to hear his determination in matters of the last moment to our defence. God bless you in every fortune, noble—Cora—I may, and must call you." She frankly gave him her hand, though her lips quivered, and her cheeks gradually became of an ashy pale-

ness. "In every fortune, I know you will be an ornament and honour to your sex. Alice, adieu"—his tones changed from admiration to tenderness—"adieu, Alice; we shall soon meet again; as conquerors, I trust, and amid rejoicings!"

Without waiting for an answer from either of the maidens, the young man threw himself down the grassy steps of the bastion, and moving rapidly across the parade, he was quickly in the presence of their father. Munro was pacing his narrow apartment with a disturbed air, and gigantic strides, as Duncan entered.

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

"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 ac-

cursed 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.' A jesuitical way, that, Major Duncan Heyward, of telling a man of his misfortunes!"

"But the general and his succour?—"

"Did ye look to the south as ye entered, and could ye not see them!" said the old soldier, laughing bitterly. "Hoot! hoot! you're an impatient boy, sir, and cannot give the gentlemen leisure for their march!"

"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 the customary attentions of your Marquis of Montcalm—I warrant me, Duncan, that he of Lothian would buy a dozen such marquessates—but, 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, sir, while he releases the messenger?"

"Aye, that does he, and all for the sake of what you call your 'bonhommie.' I would venture, if the truth was known, the fellow's grandfather taught the noble science of dancing!"

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

"Oh! sir, he is not wanting in natural organs, and he is free to tell all that he has seen and heard. The whole amount is this: there is a fort of his majesty's on the banks of the Hudson, called Edward, in honour of his gracious highness of York, you'll know, and it is well filled with armed men, as such a work should be!"

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

"There were the morning and evening parades, and when one of the provincial loons—you'll know, Duncan, your're half a Scotsman yourself—when one of them dropped his powder over his porretch, if it touched the coals, it just burnt!" Then

suddenly changing his bitter, ironical manner, to one more grave and thoughtful he continued; "and yet there might, and must be, something in that letter, which it would be well to know!"

"Our decision should be speedy," said Duncan, gladly availing himself of this change of humour to press the more important objects of their interview; "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 our guns are bursted."

"And how should it be otherwise! some were fished from the bottom of the lake; some have been rusting in the woods since the discovery of the country; and some were never guns at all—mere privateersmen's playthings! Do you think, sir, you can have Woolwich Warren in the midst of a wilderness; three thousand miles from Great Britain!"

"Our walls are crumbling about our ears, and provisions begin to fail us," continued Heyward, without regarding this

new burst of indignation; "even the men show signs of discontent and alarm."

"Major Heyward," said Munro, turning to his youthful associate with all the dignity of his years and superior rank; "I should have served his majesty for half a century, and earned these gray hairs, in vain, were I ignorant of all you say, and of all the pressing nature of our circumstances; still, there is every thing due to the honour of the king's arms, and something to ourselves. While there is hope of succour, 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, therefore, that we want, that we may know the intentions of the man, the Earl of Loudon has left among us as his substitute?"

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

"Sir, you can; the Marquis of Montcalm has, in addition to his other civilities, invited me to a personal interview between these 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; for it would but ill comport with the honour of Scotland, to let it be said, one of her gentlemen was outdone in civility, by a native of any other country on earth!"

Without assuming the supererogatory task of entering into a discussion of the comparative merits of national courtesy, Duncan cheerfully assented to supply the place of the veteran, in the approaching interview. A long and confidential communication now succeeded, during which the young man received some additional insight into his duty, from the experience and native acuteness of his commander, and then the former took his leave.

As Duncan could only act as the representative of the commandant of the fort, the ceremonies which should have accompanied a meeting between the heads of the adverse forces, were of course dispensed with. The truce still existed, and with a roll and beat of the drum, and covered by a little white flag, Duncan left the sally-port, within ten minutes after his

instructions were ended. He was received by the French officer in advance, with the usual formalities, and immediately accompanied to the distant marquee of the renowned soldier, who lead the forces of France.

The general of the enemy received the youthful messenger, surrounded by his principal officers, and by a swarthy band of the native chiefs, who had followed him to the field, with the warriors of their several tribes. Heyward paused short, when, in glancing his eyes rapidly over the dark groupe of the latter, he beheld the malignant countenance of Magua, regarding him with the calm but sullen attention which marked the expression of that subtle savage. A slight exclamation of surprise even burst from the lips of the young man; but, instantly recollecting his errand, and the presence in which he stood, he suppressed every appearance of emotion, and turned to the hostile leader, who had already advanced a step to receive him.

The Marquis of Montcalm was, at the period of which we write, in the flower of

his age, and it may be added, 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 afterwards, induced him to throw away his life, on the plains of Abraham. Duncan, in turning his eyes from the malign expression of Magua, suffered them to rest with pleasure on the smiling and polished features, and the noble, military air of the French general.

"Monsieur," said the latter, "J'ai beaucoup de plaisir à—bah!—où est cet interpréte?"

"Je crois, monsieur, qu'il ne sera pas nécessaire," Heyward modestly replied; "je parle un peu Français."

"Ah! j'en suis bien aise," said Montcalm, taking Duncan familiarly by the arm, and leading him deep into the marquee, a little out of ear-shot; "je déteste ces fripons là; on ne sait jamais sur quel piè on est avec eux. Eh bien! monsieur," he continued, still speaking in French;

"though I should have been proud of receiving your commandant, I am very happy that he has seen proper to employ an officer so distinguished, and who, I am sure, is so amiable as yourself."

Duncan bowed low, pleased with the compliment, in spite of a most heroic determination to suffer no artifice to lure him into a forgetfulness of the interests of his prince; and Montcalm, after a pause of a moment, as if to collect his thoughts, proceeded—

"Your commandant is a brave man, and well qualified to repel my assaults. Mais, monsieur, is it not time to begin to take more counsel of humanity, and less of your own courage? The one as strongly characterizes the hero as the other!"

"We consider the qualities as inseparable," returned Duncan, smiling; "but while we find in the vigour of your excellency every motive to stimulate the one, we can, as yet, see no particular call for the exercise of the other."

Montcalm, in his turn, slightly bowed, but it was with the air of a man too prac-

tised to remember the language of flattery. After musing a moment, he added—

"It is possible my glasses have deceived me, and that your works resist our cannon better than I had supposed. You know our force?"

"Our accounts vary," said Duncan, carelessly; "the highest, however, has not exceeded twenty thousand men."

The Frenchman bit his lip, and fastened his eyes keenly on the other, as if to read his thoughts; then, with a readiness peculiar to himself, he continued, as if assenting to the truth of an enumeration, which he knew was not credited by his visitor.

"It is a poor compliment to the vigilance of us soldiers, monsieur, that, do what we will, we never can conceal our numbers. If it were to be done at all, one would believe it might succeed in these woods. Though you think it too soon to listen to the calls of humanity," he added, smiling, archly, "I may be permitted to believe that gallantry is not forgotten by one so young as yourself. The daughters

of the commandant, I learn, have passed into the fort since it was invested?"

"It is true, monsieur; but so far from weakening our efforts, they set us an example of courage in their own fortitude. Were nothing but resolution necessary to repel so accomplished a soldier, as M. de Montcalm, I would gladly trust the defence of William Henry to the elder of those ladies."

"We have a wise ordinance in our Salique laws, which says, 'the crown of France shall never descend the lance to the distaff,'" said Montcalm, dryly, and with a little hauteur; but, instantly adding, with his former frank and easy air, "as all the nobler qualities are hereditary, I can easily credit you; though, as I said before, courage has its limits, and humanity must not be forgotten. I trust, monsieur, you come authorised to treat for the surrender of the place?"

"Has your excellency found our defence so feeble as to believe the measure necessary!"

"I should be sorry to have the defence

protracted in such a manner as to irritate my red friends there," continued Montcalm, glancing his eyes at the group of grave and attentive Indians, without attending to the other's question; "I find it difficult, even now, to limit them to the usages of war."

Heyward was silent, for a painful recollection of the dangers he had so recently escaped came over his mind, and recalled the images of those defenceless beings who had shared in all his sufferings.

"Ces messieurs là," said Montcalm, following up the advantage which he conceived he had gained, "are most formidable when baffled; and it is unnecessary to tell you with what difficulty they are restrained in their anger. Eh bien, monsieur! shall we speak of the terms of the surrender?"

"I fear your excellency has been deceived as to the strength of William Henry, and the resources of its garrison!"

"I have not set down before Quebec, but an earthen work, that is defended by

twenty-three hundred gallant men," was the laconic, though polite reply.

"Our mounds are earthen, certainly—nor are they seated on the rocks of Cape Diamond;—but they stand on that shore which proved so destructive to Dieskau and his brave army. There is also a powerful force within a few hours march of us, which we account upon as part of our means of defence."

"Some six or eight thousand men," returned Montcalm, with much apparent indifference, "whom their leader wisely judges to be safer in their works than in the field."

It was now Heyward's turn to bite his lip with vexation, as the other so coolly alluded to a force which the young man knew to be overrated. Both mused a little while in silence, when Montcalm renewed the conversation in a way that showed he believed the visit of his guest was, solely, to propose terms of capitulation. On the other hand, Heyward began to throw sundry inducements in the way of the French

general, to betray the discoveries he had made through the intercepted letter. The artifice of neither, however, succeeded; and, after a protracted and fruitless interview, Duncan took his leave, favourably 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 advanced post of the French, accompanied as before; whence he instantly proceeded to the fort, and to the quarters of his own commander.

CHAPTER IV.

"*Edg.*—Before you fight the battle, ope this letter."—*Lear.*

Major Heyward found Munro attended only by his daughters. Alice sate upon his knee, parting the grey hairs on the forehead of the old man, with her delicate fingers; and whenever he affected to frown on her trifling, appeasing his assumed anger by pressing her ruby lips fondly on his wrinkled brow. Cora was seated nigh them, a calm and amused looker on; regarding the wayward movements of her more youthful sister, with that species of maternal fondness which characterised her

love for Alice. Not only the dangers through which they had passed, but those which still impended above them, appeared to be momentarily forgotten, in the soothing indulgence of such a family meeting. It seemed as if they had profited by the short truce, to devote an instant to the purest and best affections: the daughters forgetting their fears, and the veteran his cares, in the stillness and security of the moment. Of this scene, Duncan, who in his eagerness to report his arrival, had entered unannounced, stood many moments an unobserved and a delighted spectator. But the quick and dancing 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 in her surprise—

"Major Heyward!"

"What of the lad?" demanded her father; "I have sent him to crack a little with the Frenchman. Ha! sir, you are young, and you're nimble. Away with you, ye baggage; as if there were not troubles enough for a soldier, without hav-

ing his camp filled with such prattling hussies as yourself!"

"Alice laughingly followed her sister, who instantly led the way from an apartment, where she perceived their presence was no longer desirable. Munro, instead of demanding the result of the young man's mission, paced the room for a few moments, with his hands behind his back, and his head inclined towards the floor, like a man lost in deep thought. At length he raised his eyes, glistening with a father's fondness, 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 and wedding jokes, when the enemies of his king were likely to be unbidden guests at the feast! But I

was wrong, Duncan, boy, I was wrong there, and I am now ready to hear what you have to say."

"Notwithstanding the pleasure your assurance gives me, dear sir, I have, just now, a message from Montcalm—"

"Let the Frenchman and all his host go to the devil, sir!" exclaimed the veteran, frowning severely. "He is not yet master of William Henry, nor shall he ever be, provided Webb proves himself the man he should. No, sir! thank heaven, we are not yet in such a strait that it can be said Munro is too much pressed to discharge the little domestic duties of his own family! 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 were in a body at the sally-port, with the French saint at their head, craving to speak a word under favour. A pretty degree of knighthood, sir, is that which can be bought with sugar-hogsheads! and then your twopenny marquessates! The Thistle is the order for dignity and antiquity; the veritable 'nemo me

impune lacessit' of chivalry! Ye had ancestors in that degree, Duncan, and they were an ornament to the nobles of Scotland."

Heyward, who perceived that his superior took a malicious pleasure in exhibiting his contempt for the message of the French general, was fain to humour a spleen that he knew would be 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 honour 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 honour, no," exclaimed Duncan, warmly; "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, and well enough in their place. But Cora Munro is a maiden

too discreet, and of a mind too elevated and improved to need the guardianship even of a father."

"Cora!"

"Ay—Cora! we are talking of your pretensions to Miss Munro, are we not, sir?"

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

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

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

"Alice!" exclaimed the father, in an astonishment equal to that with which Duncan had just repeated the name of her sister.

"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 long and rapid strides, his rigid features working convulsively, and every faculty seemingly absorbed in the musings of his own mind. At length, he paused directly in front of Heyward, and riveting his eyes upon those of the other, he said, with a lip that quivered violently with his emotions.—

"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; and I have loved you, because I thought you would contribute to the happiness of my child. 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. Without adverting to the impossibility of the other's comprehending those feelings which were hid in his own bosom, 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."

By this time, the message of Montcalm was as much forgotten by him who bore it, as by the man for whose ears it was intended. Each drew a chair, and while the veteran communed a few moments with his own thoughts, apparently in sadness, the youth suppressed his impatience in a look and attitude of respectful attention. At length the former spoke—

"You'll know, already, Major Heyward, that my family was both ancient and honourable," commenced the Scotsman, "though it might not altogether be endowed with that amount of wealth, that should correspond with its degree. I was, may be, such an one as yourself, when I plighted my faith to Alice Graham; the only child of a neighbouring laird of some

estate. But the connexion was disagreeable to her father, on more accounts than my poverty. I did, therefore, what an honest man should; restored the maiden her troth, and departed the country, in the service of my king. I had seen many regions, and had shed much blood in different lands, before duty called me to the islands of the West Indies. There it was my lot to form a connexion with one who in time 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," said the old man, proudly, "to be descended, remotely, from that unfortunate class, who are so basely enslaved to administer to the wants of a luxurious people! Ay, sir, that is a curse entailed on Scotland, by her unnatural union with a foreign and trading people. But could I find a man among them, who would dare to reflect her descent on my child, he should feel the weight of a father's anger! 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, unable any longer to prevent his eyes from sinking to the floor in embarrassment.

"And you cast it on my child as a reproach! You scorn to mingle the blood of the Heywards, with one so degraded—lovely and virtuous though she be?" fiercely demanded the jealous parent.

"Heaven protect me from a prejudice so unworthy of my reason!" returned Duncan, at the same time conscious of such a feeling, and that as deeply rooted as if it had been engrafted in his nature. "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 heartless state of celibacy 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, with an eagerness, that might have proved dangerous, at a moment when the thoughts of Munro were less occupied than at present.

"She did, indeed," said the old man, the muscles of his face working powerfully, as he proceeded, "and dearly did she pay for the blessing she bestowed. But she is a saint in heaven, sir; and it ill becomes one whose foot rests on the grave, to mourn a lot so blessed. I had her but a single year, though; a short term of happiness, for one who had seen her youth fade in hopeless pining!"

There was something so commanding, if not awful, in the distress of the 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, while heavy tears fell from his eyes, and rolled unheeded from his cheeks to the floor. At length he moved, as if suddenly recovering his recollection; when he arose, and taking a single turn across the room, he approached his companion with an air of high military grandeur, and demanded—

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

Duncan started, in his turn, and immediately commenced, in an embarrassed voice, to repeat the half-forgotten message. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the evasive, though polite manner, with which the French general had eluded every attempt of Heyward to worm from him the purport of the communication he had proposed making, or on the decided, though still polished message, by which he now gave his enemy to understand, that unless he

chose to receive it in person, he should not receive it at all. As Munro listened to the lengthened detail of Duncan, the excited feelings of the father gradually gave way before the obligations of his station, and when the other was done, he saw before him nothing but the veteran, swelling with the wounded feelings of a soldier.

"You have said enough, Major Heyward!" exclaimed the angry old man; "enough to make a volume of commentary on French civility! Here has this gentleman invited me to a conference, and when I send him a capable substitute, for ye're all that Duncan, though your years are but few, he answers me with a riddle!"

"He may have thought less favourably of the substitute, my dear sir," returned Duncan, smiling; "and you will remember that the invitation, which he now repeats, was to the commandant of the works, and not to his second."

"Well, sir, is not a substitute clothed with all the power and dignity of him who grants the commission! 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."

Duncan, who believed it of the last importance, that they should speedily come at the contents of the letter borne by the scout, gladly encouraged this idea, saying—

"Without doubt, he could gather no confidence by witnessing our indifference."

"You never said truer word. I could wish, sir, that he would visit the works in open day, and in the form of a storming party: that is the least failing method of proving the countenance of an enemy, and would be far preferable to the battering system he has chosen. The beauty and manliness of warfare has been much deformed, Major Heyward, by the arts of your Monsieur Vauban. Our ancestors were far above such scientific cowardice!"

"It may be very true, sir; but we are now obliged to repel art by art. What is

your pleasure in the matter of the interview?"

"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 honour of his king in keeping; "and hark'ee, Duncan," he added, in a half whisper, though they were alone, "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 availed himself of this order to quit the apartment; and, as the day was fast coming to a close, he hastened without delay to make the necessary arrangements. A very few minutes only were necessary to parade a few files, and to despatch an orderly with a flag, to announce the approach of the commandant of the fort. When Duncan had done

both these, he led the guard to the sally-port, near which he found his superior already waiting his appearance. As soon as the usual ceremonials of a military departure were observed, the veteran, and his more youthful companion, 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 to 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 with the consciousness of his own daring, and age no longer appeared to possess any influence over his vast and still muscular person.

"Speak to the boys to be watchful, sir," he said, in an under tone, to Duncan;

" and to look well to their flints and steel, for one is never safe with a servant of these Louis; at the same time, we will show them the front of men in deep security. Ye'll understand me, Major Heyward!"

He was interrupted by the clamour of a drum from the approaching Frenchmen, which was immediately answered, when each party pushed an orderly in advance, bearing a white flag, and the wary Scotsman halted, with his guard close at his back. As soon as this slight salutation had passed, Montcalm moved towards them with a quick but graceful step, baring his head to the veteran, and dropping his spotless plume nearly to the earth in courtesy. If the air of Munro was more commanding and manly, it wanted both the ease and insinuating polish of the Frenchman. Neither spoke for a few moments, each regarding the other with curious and interested eyes. Then, as became his superior rank, and the nature of the interview, Montcalm first broke the silence. After uttering the usual words of greeting to Munro, he turned to Duncan,

and continued, with a smile of recognition, speaking always in French—

"I am rejoiced, monsieur, that you have given us the pleasure of your company on this occasion. There will be no necessity to employ an ordinary interpreter, for in your hands I feel the same security, as if I spoke your language myself."

Duncan acknowledged the compliment, when Montcalm, turning to his guard, which, in imitation of that of their enemies, pressed close upon him, he continued—

"En arriere, mes enfans—il fait chaud; retirezvous un peu."

Before Major Heyward would imitate this proof of confidence, he glanced his eyes around the plain, and beheld, with uneasiness, the numerous dusky groupes of savages, who looked out from the margin of the surrounding woods, curious spectators of the pending interview.

"Monsieur de Montcalm will readily acknowledge the difference of our situation," he said, with some embarrassment, pointing, at the same time, towards those

dangerous foes who were to be seen in almost every direction. "Were we to dismiss our guard, we should stand here at the mercy of our enemies."

"Monsieur, you have the plighted faith of 'ungentil-homme Français,' for your safety," returned Montcalm, laying his hand impressively on his heart, "and it should suffice."

"It shall. Fall back," Duncan added to the officer who led the escort; "fall back, sir, beyond hearing, and wait for orders."

Munro witnessed this movement with manifest uneasiness, nor did he fail to demand an instant explanation.

"Is it not our interest, sir, to betray no distrust?" retorted Duncan. "Monsieur de Montcalm pledges his word for our safety, and I have ordered the men to withdraw a little, in order to prove how much we depend on his assurance."

"It may be all right, sir, but I have no overweening reliance on the faith of these marquesses, or marquis, as they call themselves. Their patents of nobility are too

common, to be certain that they bear the seal of true honour."

"You forget, dear sir, that we confer with an officer, distinguished alike in Europe and America for his deeds. From a soldier of his reputation, we can have nothing to apprehend."

The old man made a gesture of resignation, though his rigid features still betrayed his obstinate adherence to a distrust, which he derived from a sort of hereditary contempt of his enemy, rather than from any present signs, which might warrant so uncharitable a feeling. Montcalm waited patiently, until this little dialogue in demi-voice was ended, when he drew nigher, and opened the subject of their conference.

"I have solicited this interview from your superior, monsieur," he said, "because I believe he will allow himself to be persuaded, that he has already done every thing which is necessary for the honour of his prince, and will now listen to the admonitions of humanity. I will for ever bear testimony that his resistance has been

gallant, and was continued so long as there was any hope."

When this opening was translated to Munro, he answered with dignity, but with sufficient courtesy,

"However I may prize such testimony from Monsieur Montcalm, it will be more valuable when it shall be better merited."

The French general smiled, as Duncan gave him the purport of this reply, and observed—

"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 his resisting them with success."

"I know that the king of France is well served," returned the unmoved Scotsman, as soon as Duncan ended his translation; "but my own royal master has as many and as faithful troops."

"Though not at hand, fortunately for us," said Montcalm, without waiting, in his ardour, for the interpreter. "There is

a destiny in war, to which a brave man knows how to submit, with the same courage that he faces his foes."

"Had I been conscious that Monsieur Montcalm was master of the English, I would have spared myself the trouble of so awkward a translation," said the vexed Duncan, dryly; remembering instantly his recent by-play with Munro.

"Your pardon, monsieur," rejoined the Frenchman, suffering a slight colour to appear on his dark cheek. "There is a vast difference between understanding and speaking a foreign tongue; you will, therefore, please to assist me still." Then after a short pause, he added, "These hills afford us every opportunity of reconnoitring your works, messieurs, and I am possibly as well acquainted with their 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 Général Webb be his own inter-

preter," returned the politic Montcalm, suddenly extending an open letter towards 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 offered paper without waiting for Duncan to translate the speech, and with an eagerness that betrayed how important he deemed its contents. As his eye passed heavily over the words, his countenance gradually changed from its look of military pride, to one of deep chagrin; his lip began to quiver; and, as he suffered the paper to fall from his hand, his head dropped upon his chest, like that of a man whose hopes were all withered at a single blow. Duncan caught the letter from the ground, and without apology for the liberty he took, he read, at a glance, its cruel purport. Their common superior, so far from encouraging them to resist, advised a speedy surrender, urging, in the plainest language, as a reason, the utter impossibility of his sending a single man to their rescue.

"Here is no deception!" exclaimed Duncan, examining the billet both inside and out; "this is the signature of Webb, and must be the captured letter!"

"The man has betrayed me!" Munro at length bitterly exclaimed, "he has brought dishonour to the door of one where disgrace was never before known to dwell, and shame has he heaped heavily on my gray hairs!"

"Say not so!" cried Duncan; "we are yet masters of the fort, and of our honour! Let us then sell our lives at such a rate, as shall make our enemies believe the purchase too dear!"

"Boy, I thank thee!" exclaimed the old man, rousing himself from his stupor; "you have, for once, reminded Munro of his duty. We will go back, and dig our graves behind those ramparts!"

"Messieurs," said Montcalm, advancing towards them a step, in his generous interest; "you little know Louis de St. Véran, if you believe him capable of profiting by this letter, to humble brave men, or to build up a dishonest reputation for himself. 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? Sir, he had better raise this siege, and go to sit down before Edward, if he wishes to frighten his enemy with words!"

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 colours?" demanded Heyward.

"Carry them to England, and shew 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 honourable to yourselves."

Duncan now turned to explain these proposals to his commander, who heard him with amazement, and a sensibility that was deeply touched by such unusual and unexpected generosity.

"Go you, Duncan," he said; "go with this marquess, as indeed marquess he should be; go to his marquee, and arrange it all. I have lived to see two things in my old age, 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 again dropped his head to his chest, and returned slowly towards the fort, exhibiting, in the dejection of his air, to the anxious garrison, a harbinger of evil tidings.

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, with the morning; the garrison to retain their arms, their colours, and their baggage, and consequently, according to military opinion, their honour.

CHAPTER V.

"Weave we the woof. The thread is spun.
The web is wove. The work is done."—*Gray.*

THE hostile armies, who lay in the wilds of the Horican, passed the night of the ninth of August, 1757, much in the manner that would have prevailed, had they encountered on the fairest field of Europe. While the conquered were still, sullen, and dejected, the victors triumphed. But there are limits alike to grief and joy; and long before the dead watches of the morning came, the stillness of those boundless woods was only broken by a gay call from some exulting young Frenchman of the advanced piquets, or a menacing challenge from the fort, which sternly forbade the approach of any hostile footsteps before

the stipulated moment should arrive. Even these occasional threatening sounds ceased to be heard in that dull hour which precedes the day, at which period a listener might have sought, in vain, any evidence of the presence of those armed powers, that then slumbered on the shores of the "holy lake."

It was during these moments of deep silence, that the canvass which concealed the entrance to a spacious marquee, in the French encampment, was shoved aside, and a man issued from beneath the drapery into the open air. He was enveloped in a cloak that might have been intended as a protection from the chilling damps of the woods, but which served equally well, as a mantle, to conceal his person. He was permitted to pass the grenadier, who watched over the slumbers of the French commander, without interruption, the man making the usual salute, which betokens military deference, as the other passed swiftly through the little city of tents, in the direction of William Henry. Whenever this unknown individual encountered one of the number-

less sentinels, who crossed his path, his answer was prompt, and as it appeared, satisfactory; for he was uniformly allowed to proceed, without further interrogation.

With the exception of such repeated, but brief interruptions, he had moved silently from the centre of the camp to its most advanced outposts, when he drew nigh the soldier who held his watch nearest to the works of the enemy. As he approached, he was received with the usual challenge.

"Qui vive?"

"France"—was the reply.

"Le mot d'ordre?"

"La victoire," said the other, drawing so nigh, as to be heard in a loud whisper.

"C'est bien," returned the sentinel, throwing his musket from the charge to his shoulder; "vous vous promenez bien matin, monsieur!"

"Il est necessaire d'être vigilant, mon enfant," the other observed, dropping a fold of his cloak, and looking the soldier close in the face, as he passed him, still continuing his way towards the British fortification. The man started; his arms

rattled heavily as he threw them forward, in the lowest and most respectful salute; and when he had again recovered his piece, he turned to walk his post, muttering between his teeth,

"Il faut être vigilant, en vérité! je crois que nous avons là, un caporal qui ne dort jamais!"

The officer proceeded, without affecting to hear the words which escaped the sentinel in his surprise; nor did he again pause until he had reached the low strand, and in a somewhat dangerous vicinity to the western water bastion of the fort. The light of an obscured moon was just sufficient to render objects, though dim, perceptible in their outlines. He, therefore, took the precaution to place himself against the trunk of a tree, where he leaned for many minutes, and seemed to contemplate the dark and silent mounds of the English works in profound attention. His gaze at the ramparts was not that of a curious or idle spectator; but his looks wandered from point to point, denoting his knowledge of military usages, and betraying

that his search was not unaccompanied by distrust. At length he appeared satisfied; and having cast his eyes impatiently upward, towards the summit of the eastern mountain, as if anticipating the approach of the morning, he was in the act of turning on his footsteps, when a light sound on the nearest angle of the bastion caught his ear and induced him to remain.

Just then a figure was seen to approach the edge of the rampart, where it stood, apparently, contemplating in its turn the distant tents of the French encampment. Its head was then turned towards the east, as though equally anxious for the appearance of light, when the form leaned against the mound, and seemed to gaze upon the glassy expanse of the waters, which, like a submarine firmament, glittered with its thousand mimic stars. The melancholy air, the hour, together with the vast frame of the man who thus leaned, in musing, against the English ramparts, left no doubt as to his person, in the mind of the observant spectator. Delicacy, no less than prudence, now urged him to retire; and he had

moved cautiously round the body of the tree, for that purpose, when another sound drew his attention, and once more arrested his footsteps. It was a low, and almost inaudible movement of the water, and was succeeded by a grating of pebbles, one against the other. In a moment, he saw a dark form rise, as it were, out of the lake, and steal, without further noise, to the land, within a few feet of the place where he himself stood. A rifle next slowly rose between his eyes and the watery mirror; but before it could be discharged, his own hand was on the lock.

"Hugh!" exclaimed the savage, whose treacherous aim was so singularly and so unexpectedly interrupted.

Without making any reply the French officer laid his hand on the shoulder of the Indian, and led him in profound silence to a distance from the spot, where their subsequent dialogue might have proved dangerous, and where, it seemed, that one of them, at least, sought a victim. Then, throwing open his cloak, so as to expose his uniform, and the cross of St. Louis, which

was suspended at his breast, Montcalm sternly demanded—

"What means this! does not my son know, that the hatchet is buried between the English and his Canadian father?"

"What can the Hurons do?" returned the savage, speaking, also, though imperfectly, in the French language. "Not a warrior has a scalp, and the pale faces make friends!"

"Ha! le Renard Subtil! Methinks this is an excess of zeal for a friend, who was so late an enemy! How many suns have set since le Renard struck the war post of the English!"

"Where is that sun?" demanded the sullen savage. "Behind the hill; and it is dark and cold. But when he comes again, it will be bright and warm. Le Subtil is the sun of his tribe. There have been clouds and many mountains between him and his nation; but now he shines, and it is a clear sky!"

"That le Renard has power with his people I well know," said Montcalm; "for

yesterday he hunted for their scalps, and to-day they hear him at the council fire!"

"Magua is a great chief!"

"Let him prove it by teaching his nation how to conduct towards our new friends!"

"Why did the chief of the Canadas bring his young men into the woods, and fire his cannon at yonder earthen house?" demanded the subtle Indian.

"To subdue it. My master owns the land, and your father was ordered to drive off these English squatters. They have consented to go, and now he calls them enemies no longer."

"'Tis well. Magua took the hatchet to colour it with blood. It is now bright; when it is red it shall be buried."

"But Magua is pledged not to sully the lilies of France. The enemies of the great king across the salt lake are his enemies; his friends the friends of the Hurons."

"Friends!" repeated the Indian, in bitter scorn. "Let his father give Magua a hand."

Montcalm, who felt that his influence

over the warlike tribes he had gathered, was to be maintained by concession, rather than by power, complied, reluctantly, with the other's request. The savage placed the finger of the French commander on a deep scar in his bosom, and then exultingly demanded—

"Does my father know that?"

"What warrior does not! 'tis where the leaden bullet has cut."

"And this!" continued the Indian, who had turned his naked back to the other, his body being without its usual calico mantle.

"This!—my son, has been sadly injured, here! who has done this?"

"Magua slept hard in the English wigwams, and the sticks have left their mark," returned the savage, with a hollow laugh, which did not, nor could not, however, conceal the fierce temper that nearly choked him. Then, recollecting himself, with sudden and native dignity, he added —"Go; teach your young men, it is peace! le Renard Subtil knows how to speak to a Huron warrior!"

Without deigning to bestow farther words, or to wait for any answer, the savage cast his rifle into the hollow of his arm, and moved silently through the encampment towards the woods, where his own tribe was known to lie. Every few yards, as he proceeded, he was challenged by the sentinels; but he stalked sullenly onward, utterly disregarding the summons of the soldiers, who only spared his life, because they knew the air and tread, no less than the obstinate daring, of an Indian.

Montcalm lingered long and melancholy on the strand, where he had been left by his companion, brooding deeply on the temper which his ungovernable ally had just discovered. Already had his fair fame been tarnished by one horrid scene, and in circumstances fearfully resembling those, under which he now found himself. As he mused, he became keenly sensible of the deep responsibility they assume, who disregard the means to attain their end, and of all the danger of setting in motion an engine, which it exceeds human power to

controul. Then shaking off a train of reflections, that he accounted a weakness in such a moment of triumph, he retraced his steps towards his tent, giving the order as he passed, to make the signal that should call the army from its slumbers.

The first tap of the French drums was echoed from the bosom of the fort; and presently the valley was filled with the strains of martial music, rising long, thrilling, and lively, above the rattling accompaniment. The horns of the victors sounded merry and cheerful flourishes, until the last laggard of the camp was at his post; but the instant the British fifes had blown their shrill signal, they became mute. In the mean time the day had dawned, and when the line of the French army was ready to receive its general, the rays of a brilliant sun were glancing along its glittering array. Then, that success which was already so well known, was officially announced; the favoured 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 directly under the guns of the contested works.

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 shouldered their empty tubes, and 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, concealed, as it was, under all the observances of military etiquette. Women and children ran from place to place, some bearing the scanty remnants of their baggage, and others searching, in the ranks, for those countenances they looked up to for protection.

Munro appeared among his silent troops, firm, but dejected. It was evident that the unexpected 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 and impressive 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," said the veteran. "All that you see here claim alike to be my children."

Duncan had heard enough. Without losing one of those moments which had now become so precious, he flew towards the quarters of Munro, in quest of the sisters. He found them on the threshold of the low edifice, already prepared to depart, and surrounded by a clamorous and weeping assemblage of their own sex, that had gathered about the place, with a sort of instinctive conciousness, that it was the point most likely to be protected. Though the cheeks of Cora were pale, and her

countenance anxious, 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, however, received the young man with undisguised pleasure; the former, for a novelty, 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, dearest Miss Munro, it is time to think less of others, and to make some provision for yourself. Military usage—pride—that pride on which you so much value yourself, 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 chance of such a scene!"

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

"I would not leave you alone," continued the youth, looking about him in a

hurried manner, "for the command of the best regiment in the pay of the king! Remember, our Alice is not gifted with all your firmness, and God only knows the terror she might endure."

"You may be right," Cora replied, smiling again, but far more sadly than before. "Listen; chance has already sent us a friend when he is most needed."

Duncan did listen, and on the instant comprehended her meaning. The low and serious sounds of the sacred music, so well known to the eastern provinces, caught his ear, and instantly drew him to an apartment in an adjacent building, which had already been deserted by its customary tenants. There he found David pouring out his pious feelings, through the only medium in which he ever indulged. Duncan waited, until by the cessation of the movement of the hand he believed the strain was ended, when, by touching his shoulder, he drew the attention of the other to himself, and in a few words explained his wishes.

"Even so," replied the single minded

disciple of the King of Israel, when the young man had ended; "I have found much that is comely and melodious in the maidens, and it is fitting that we, who have consorted in so much peril, should abide together in peace. I will attend them, when I have completed my morning praise, to which nothing is now wanting but the doxology. Wilt thou bear a part friend? The metre is common, and the tune known as 'Southwell.'"

Then, extending the little volume, and giving the pitch of the air, anew, with considerate attention, David re-commenced and finished his strains, with a fixedness of manner that it was not easy to interrupt. Heyward was fain to wait until the verse was ended; when seeing David relieving himself from the spectacles, and replacing the book, he continued —

"It will be your duty to see that none dare to approach the ladies with any rude intention, or to offer insult or taunt at the misfortune of their brave father. 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, with an air, in which meekness and confidence were singularly blended. "Here are words, which uttered, or rather thundered, with proper emphasis, and in measured time, shall quiet the most unruly temper.

"Why rage the heathen furiously!"—

"Enough," said Heyward, interrupting the burst of his musical invocation; "we understand each other; it is time that we should now assume our respective duties."

Gamut cheerfully assented, and together they immediately sought the maidens. Cora received her new, and somewhat extraordinary protector, courteously at least; and even the pallid features of Alice lighted again with some of their

native archness, as she thanked Heyward for his care. Duncan took occasion to assure them he had done the best that circumstances permitted, and, as he believed, quite enough for the security of their feelings; of danger there was none. He then spoke gladly of his intention to rejoin them, the moment he had led the advance a few miles towards the Hudson, and immediately took his leave.

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 spotless 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 still surrounded them.

As they passed the gates, the French officers, who had learned their rank, bowed often and low, forbearing, however, to intrude those attentions, which they saw, with peculiar tact, might not be agreeable. As every vehicle, and each beast of burthen, was occupied by the sick and wounded, Cora had decided to endure the fatigues of a foot march, rather than interfere with their comforts. Indeed, many a maimed and feeble soldier was compelled to drag his exhausted limbs in the rear of the columns, for the want of the necessary means of conveyance in that wilderness. The whole, however, was in motion; the weak and wounded, groaning, and in suffering; their comrades, silent and sullen; and the women and children in terror, though they knew not of what.

As the confused and timid throng left the protecting mounds of the fort, and issued on the open plain, the whole scene was at once presented to their eyes. At

a little distance on the right, and somewhat in the rear, the French army stood to their arms, Montcalm having collected his parties, so soon as his guards had possession of the works. They were attentive, but silent observers of the proceedings of the vanquished, failing in none of the stipulated military honours, and offering no taunt or insult, in their success, to their less fortunate foes. Living masses of the English, to the amount, in the whole, of near three thousand, were moving slowly across the plain, towards the common centre, and gradually approached each other, as they 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 sweeping borders of the woods hung a dark cloud of savages, eyeing the passage of their enemies, and hovering at a distance, like vultures, who were only kept from stooping 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; atten-

tive, though, as yet, passive observers of all that moving multitude.

The advance, with Heyward at its head, had already reached the defile, and 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 few minutes 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 colours of a shawl attracted the eyes of a wild and untutored Huron. He advanced to seize it, without the least hesitation. The woman, more in terror than through love of the ornament, 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, and tore the screaming infant from her arms. Abandoning every thing to the greedy grasp of those around her, the mother darted with distraction in her mien, to reclaim her child. The Indian smiled grimly, and extended one hand, in sign of a willingness to exchange, while, with the other he flourished the babe above his head, holding it by the feet, as if to enhance the value of the ransom.

"Here—here—there—all—any—every thing!" exclaimed the breathless woman; tearing the lighter articles of dress from

her person, with ill-directed and trembling fingers—" Take all, but give me my babe!"

The savage spurned the worthless rags, and perceiving that the shawl had already become a prize to another, his bantering, but sullen smile, changing to a gleam of ferocity, he dashed the head of the infant against a rock, and cast its quivering remains to her very feet. For an instant the mother stood, like a statue of despair, looking wildly down at the unseemly object, which had so lately nestled in her bosom and smiled in her face; and then she raised her eyes and countenance towards heaven, as if calling on God to curse the perpetrator of the foul deed. She was spared the sin of such a prayer; for, maddened at his disappointment, and excited by the sight of blood, the Huron mercifully drove his tomahawk into her own brain. The mother sunk under the blow, and fell, grasping at her child, in death, with the same engrossing love that had caused her to cherish it when living.

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, as coursers bound at the signal to quit the goal; and, directly, there arose such a yell along the plain, and through the arches of the wood, as seldom bursted from human lips before. They who heard it listened with a curdling horror at the heart, little inferior to that dread which may be expected to attend the blasts of the final summons.

More than two thousand raging savages broke from the forest at the signal, and threw themselves across the fatal plain with instinctive alacrity. We shall not dwell on the revolting horrors that succeeded.—Death was every where, 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 gushing torrent; and as the natives became heated and maddened by the sight,

many among them even kneeled to the earth, and drank freely, exultingly, hellishly of the crimson tide.

The trained bodies of the troops threw themselves quickly into solid masses, endeavouring to awe their assailants by the imposing appearance of a military front. The experiment in some measure succeeded, though far too many suffered their unloaded muskets to be torn from their hands, in the vain hope of appeasing the savages.

In such a scene, none had leisure to note the fleeting moments. It might have been ten minutes (it seemed an age), that the sisters had stood rivetted 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 the vast form of her father, moving rapidly across the plain, in the direction of the French army. He was in truth proceeding to Montcalm, fearless of every danger, to claim the tardy escort, for which he had before conditioned. Fifty glittering axes and barbed spears were offered unheeded at his life, but the savages respected his rank and calmness, even in their greatest fury. The dangerous weapons were brushed aside by the still nervous arm of the veteran, or fell of themselves, after menacing an act that it would seem no one had courage to perform. Fortunately the vindictive Magua was searching his victim in the very band the veteran had just quitted.

"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 cry was repeated, and in terms and tones that might have melted a heart of stone, but it was unanswered. Once, indeed, 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, hovering, in untiring tenderness, over her lifeless form. Munro shook his head in disappointment, and proceeded, bent on the high duty of his responsible station.

"Lady," said Gamut, who, helpless and useless as he was, had not yet dreamed of deserting his trust, "it is the jubilee of the devils, and this is not a meet place for christians to tarry in. Let us up and fly!"

"Go," said Cora, still gazing at her unconscious sister; "save thyself. To me thou canst not be of further use."

David comprehended the unyielding character of her resolution, by the simple, but expressive gesture, that accompanied her words. He gazed for a moment at the dusky forms that were acting their hellish rites on every side of him, and his tall person grew more erect, while his chest heaved, and every feature swelled, and seemed to speak with the power of the feelings by which he was governed.

"If the Jewish boy might tame the evil spirit of Saul by the sound of his harp, and

the words of sacred song, it may not be amiss," he said, "to try the potency of music here."

Then raising his voice to its highest tones, he poured out a strain so powerful as to be heard, even amid the din of that bloody field. More than one savage rushed towards them, thinking to rifle the unprotected sisters of their attire, and bear away their scalps; but when they found this strange and unmoved figure rivetted to his post, they paused to listen. Astonishment soon changed to admiration, and they passed on to other and less courageous victims, openly expressing their satisfaction at the firmness with which the white warrior sung his death song. Encouraged and deluded by his success, David exerted all his powers to extend what he believed so holy an influence. The unwonted sounds caught the ears of a distant savage, who flew, raging from group to group, like one who, scorning to touch the vulgar herd, hunted for some victim more 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 soiled hand on the dress of Cora, "the wigwam of the Huron is open. Is it not better than this place?"

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

The Indian laughed tauntingly as he held up his reeking hand, and answered—"It is red, but it comes from white veins!"

"Monster! there is blood, oceans of blood, upon thy soul; thy spirit has moved this scene."

"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 hellish revenge."

He hesitated a moment; and then catching the light and senseless form of Alice in his arms, the subtle Indian 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!"

But Magua was deaf to her voice; or rather he knew his power, and was determined to maintain it.

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

Perceiving that, in his turn, 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 diligent accompaniment. In this manner they traversed the plain, through the flying, the wounded, and the dead. The fierce Huron was at any time sufficient for himself and the victim that he bore, though 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, who knew how to avoid the more pressing dangers, and also to elude pursuit, entered the woods through a low ravine, where he quickly found the Narragansetts, which the travellers had abandoned so shortly before, awaiting his appearance, in custody of a savage as fierce

and as malign in his expression as himself. Laying Alice on one of the horses, he made a sign for Cora to mount the other.

Notwithstanding the horror excited by the presence of her captor, there was a present relief in escaping from the bloody scene enacting on the plain, to which the maiden could not be altogether insensible. She took her seat, and held forth her arms for her sister, with an air of entreaty and love, that even the Huron could not deny. Placing Alice, then, 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 left alone, utterly disregarded, as a subject too worthless even to destroy, 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; but, as the motion had a tendency to revive the dormant faculties of her sister, the attention of Cora was too much divided between the

tenderest solicitude in her behalf, and in listening to the cries, which were still too audible on the plain, to note the direction in which they journeyed. When, however, they gained the flattened surface of the mountain top, and approached the eastern precipice, she recognised 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 own captivity, the curiosity which seems inseparable from horror, 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 Christian King stood fast, in an apathy which has never been explained, and which has left an immoveable 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.

CHAPTER VI.

"Why, any thing:
An honourable murderer, if you will;
For nought I did in hate, but all in honour."—*Othello.*

THE bloody and inhuman scene which we have rather incidentally mentioned than described, in the close of the preceding chapter, is conspicuous in the pages of colonial history, by the merited title of "The massacre of William Henry." It so far deepened the stain which a previous and very similar event had left upon the reputation of the French commander, that it was not entirely erased by his early and glorious death. It is now becoming obscured by time; and thousands, who know that Montcalm died like a hero on the

plains of Abraham, have yet to learn how much he was deficient in that moral courage, without which no man can be truly great. Pages might be written to prove, from this illustrious example, the defects of human excellence; to show how easy it is for generous sentiments, high courtesy, and chivalrous courage, to lose their influence beneath the chilling ascendency of mistaken selfishness, and to exhibit to the world a man who was great in all the minor attributes of character, but who was found wanting, when it became necessary to prove how much principle is superior to policy. But the task would exceed our fanciful prerogatives; and, as history, like love, is so apt to surround her heroes with an atmosphere of imaginary brightness, it is probable that Louis de Saint Véran will be viewed by posterity only as the gallant defender of his country, while his cruel apathy on the shores of the Oswego and of the Horican, will be forgotten. Deeply regretting this weakness on the part of our sister muse, we shall at once retire from

her sacred precincts, within the proper limits of our own humbler vocation.

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." When last seen, the environs of the works were filled with violence and uproar. They were now emphatically possessed by stillness and death. 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 smouldering ruin; charred rafters, fragments of exploded artillery, and rent mason-work, covering its earthen mounds, in confused and negligent disorder.

A frightful change had also occurred in the season. The sun had hid its warmth behind an impenetrable mass of vapour, and hundreds of human forms, which had blackened beneath the fierce heats of August, were stiffening in their deformity, before the blasts of a premature November.

The curling and spotless mists which had been seen sailing above the hills towards the north, were now returning in an interminable dusky sheet, that was urged along by the fury of a tempest. The crowded mirror of the Horican was gone; and in its place the green and angry waters lashed the shores, as if indignantly casting back its impurities to the polluted strand. Still the clear fountain retained a portion of its charmed influence; but it reflected only the sombre gloom that fell from the impending heavens. That humid and congenial atmosphere which was wont about the view, veiling its harshness, and softening its asperities, had disappeared, and the northern air poured across the waste of water so harsh and unmingled, that nothing was left to be conjectured by the eye or fashioned by the fancy.

The fiercer element had cropped the verdure of the plain, which looked as though it were scathed by the consuming lightning. But here and there a dark green tuft rose in the midst of the desolation; the earliest fruits of a soil that had

been fattened with human blood. The whole landscape, which, seen by a favouring light and in a genial temperature, had been found so lovely, appeared now like some pictured allegory of life, in which the objects were arrayed in their harshest but truest colours, and without the relief of any shadowing.

The solitary and arid blades of grass arose from the passing gusts fearfully perceptible; the bold and rocky mountains were too distinct in their barrenness, and the eye even sought relief in vain by attempting to pierce the illimitable void of heaven, which was shut to its gaze by the dusky sheet of ragged and driving vapour.

The wind blew unequally, sometimes sweeping heavily along the ground, seeming to whisper its moanings in the cold ears of the dead, then rising in a shrill and mournful whistling, it entered the forest with a rush that filled the air with the leaves and branches it scattered in its path. Amid the unnatural shower a few hungry ravens struggled with the gale; but no sooner was the green ocean of woods which stretched

beneath them passed, than they gladly stooped at random to that hideous haven where their revolting food so freely abounded.

In short, it was a scene of wildness and desolation, and it appeared as if all who had profanely entered it had been stricken at a blow by the powerful and relentless arm of death. But the prohibition had ceased; and for the first time since the perpetrators of those foul deeds which had assisted to disfigure the scene were gone, living human beings had now presumed to approach the dreary place.

About an hour before the setting of the sun, on the day already mentioned, 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. At first their progress was slow and guarded, as though they entered with reluctance amid the horrors of the spot, or dreaded the renewal of some of its frightful incidents. A light figure preceded the rest of the party with all the

caution and activity of a native, ascending every hillock to reconnoitre, and indicating by gestures to his companions the route he deemed it most prudent they should pursue. Nor were those in the rear wanting in every caution and foresight known to forest warfare. One among them, and he also was an Indian, moved a little on one flank, and watched the neighbouring margin of the woods with eyes long accustomed to read the smallest sign of approaching danger. The remaining three were white, though clad in vestments strikingly adapted, both in quality and colour, 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 who composed the party. The youth in front threw serious but furtive glances at the mangled victims, as he stepped lightly across the plain, afraid to exhibit the natural emotions he endured, and yet too inexperienced to quell entirely their sudden

and powerful influence. His red associate, however, was superior to such a weakness. He passed the groupes of dead with a steadiness of purpose, and an eye so calm that nothing but long and inveterate practice could enable him to maintain. The sensations produced in the minds of even the white men were different though uniformly sorrowful. One, whose gray locks and furrowed lineaments, blending with a martial air and trade, betrayed, in spite of the disguise of a woodman's rough dress, a man long 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 shuddered, but seemed to suppress his feelings in tenderness to his companion. Of them all, the straggler who brought up the rear appeared alone to indulge, without fear of observation or dread of consequences, in the feelings he experienced. But with him the offence seemed rather given to the intellectual than the physical man. He gazed at the most appalling sight with eyes and muscles that knew not

how to waver, but with execrations so bitter and deep as to denote how much he denounced the moral enormity of such a butchery.

The reader will perceive at once in these respective 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 through the trying scenes related.

When Uncas, who moved in front, had reached the centre of the plain, he raised a cry that drew his companions in a body to the spot. The young warrior had halted over a groupe of females, who lay in a cluster, a confused mass of dead. Notwithstanding the revolting horrors of the exhibition, Munro and Heyward flew towards the festering heap, endeavouring, with a love that no unseemliness could extinguish, to discover whether any vestiges of those they sought were to be seen among the

tattered and many-coloured garments. The father and the lover found instant relief in the search; though each was condemned again 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 the scout approached. Eyeing the sad spectacle with an angry and flushed countenance, the sturdy woodsman, for the first time since entering the plain, spoke intelligibly and aloud.

"I have been on many a shocking field, and have followed a trail of blood for weary miles," he said, "but never have I found the hand of the devil so plain as it is here to be seen! Revenge is an Indian feeling, and all who know me know that there is no cross in my veins; but this much will I say—here, in the face of heaven, and with the power of the Lord so manifest in this howling wilderness, that should these Frenchers ever trust themselves again within the range of a ragged bullet, there is one rifle shall play its part, so long as flint will fire or powder burn!—I leave the toma-

hawk and knife to such as have a natural gift to use them. What say you, Chingachgook," he added, in Delaware; "shall the red Hurons boast of this to their women when the deep snows come?"

A gleam of resentment flashed across the dark lineaments of the Mohican chief; he loosened his knife in his sheath, and then turning calmly from the sight, his countenance settled into a repose as deep as if he never knew the influence or instigations of passion.

"Montcalm! Montcalm!" continued the deeply resentful and less self-restrained scout; "they say a time must come when all the deeds done in the flesh will be seen at a single look; and that by eyes cleared from their mortal infirmities. Woe betide the wretch who is born to behold this plain, with the judgment hanging above his soul! Ha—as I am a man of white blood, yonder lies a red-skin without the hair of his head where nature rooted it! Look to him, Delaware; it may be one of your missing people; and he should have burial like a stout warrior. I see it in your eye, Saga-

more; a Huron pays for this afore the fall winds have blown away the scent of the blood!"

Chingachgook approached the mutilated form, and turning it over, he found the distinguishing marks of one of those six allied tribes or nations, as they were called, who, while they fought in the English ranks, were so deadly hostile to his own people. Spurning the loathsome object with his foot, he turned from it with the same indifference he would have quitted a brute carcass. The scout comprehended the action, and very deliberately pursued his own way, continuing, however, his denunciations against the French commander in the same resentful strain.

"Nothing but vast wisdom and unlimited power should dare to sweep off men in multitudes," he added; "for it is only the one that can know the necessity of the judgment; and what is there short of the other that can replace the creatures of the Lord? I hold it a sin to kill the second buck afore the first is eaten, unless a march in the front or an ambushment be contem-

plated. It is a different matter with a few warriors in open and rugged fight, for 'tis their gift to die with the rifle or the tomahawk in hand, according as their natures may happen to be white or red. Uncas, come this way, lad, and let the raven settle upon the Mingo. I know, from often seeing it, that they have a craving for the flesh of an Oneida; and it is as well to let the bird follow the gift of its natural appetite."

"Hugh!" exclaimed the young Mohican, rising on the extremities of his feet, and gazing intently in his front, frightening away the raven to some other prey by the sound and the action.

"What is it, boy?" whispered the scout, lowering his tall form into a crouching attitude, like a panther about to take his leap; "God send it be a tardy Frencher skulking for plunder. I do believe 'killdeer' would take an uncommon range today!"

Uncas, without making any reply, bounded away from the spot, and in the next instant 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 again burst from the lips of the young Mohican, instantly drew the whole party once more about him.

"My child!" said Munro, speaking quick and wildly; "give me my child!"

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

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

"Here are no dead!" said Heyward, in a voice that was hollow and nearly stifled by apprehension; "the storm seems not to have passed this way."

"That's manifest, and clearer than the heavens above our heads," returned the cool and undisturbed 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 frighted fawn, to the wood; none who could fly would remain to be murdered! Let us have a 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; "we now know our work, but 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!" ex-

claimed the agitated father; "whither then have they fled, and where are my babes?"

"The path they have taken depends on many chances. If they have gone alone, as they are quite as likely to move in a circle as straight, 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. But what matters that!" continued the deliberate scout, observing the powerful anxiety and disappointment the listeners exhibited; "here are the Mohicans and I on one end of the trail, and we'll find the other, though they should be a hundred leagues asunder! 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 downwards, in the attitude and

with the air of a man who beheld a disgusting serpent.

"Here is the palpable impression of the footstep of a man!" cried Heyward, bending over the indicated spot; "he has trod in the margin of this pool, and the mark cannot be mistaken. They are captives!"

"Better so than left to starve in the wilderness," returned the scout; "and they will leave a wider trail. I would wager fifty beaver skins to as many flints, that the Mohicans and I enter their wigwams within the month! Stoop to it, Uncas, and try what you can make of that moccasin; for moccasin it plainly is, and no shoe."

The young Mohican bent over the track, and removing the scattered leaves from around the place, he examined it with much of that sort of scrutiny that a money-dealer, in these days of pecuniary doubts, would bestow on a suspected due-bill. At length, he arose from his knees, as if satisfied with the result of the examination.

"Well, boy," demanded the attentive scout, "what does it say? can you make any thing 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 friendly word to him."

Heyward reluctantly admitted the truth of this intelligence, and now rather expressed 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, though we all know that some are long and others short, some broad and others narrow, some with high and some with low insteps, some in-toed and some out! One moccasin is no more like another than one book is like another; though they who can read in one are seldom able to tell the marks of the other. Which is all ordered for the best, giving to every man his natural advantages. Let me get down to it, Uncas; neither book nor moccasin is the worse for having two opinions instead of one." The scout stooped to the task, and instantly

added, "you are right, boy; here is the patch we saw so often on the other chase. And the fellow will drink when he can get an opportunity; your drinking Indian always learns to walk with a wider toe than the natural savage, it being the gift of a drunkard, whether of a white or red skin. 'Tis just the length and breadth too! look at it, Sagamore; you measured the prints more than once, when we hunted the varments from Glenn's to the health-springs."

Chingachgook complied, and after finishing his short examination, he arose, and with a quiet and grave demeanour, he merely pronounced, though with a foreign accent, the word—

"Magua."

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

"And not Alice?" demanded the startled Heyward.

"Of her we have not yet seen the 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 youthful Indian warrior had complied, the scout received the prize, and holding it on high, he laughed in his silent but heartfelt manner, before he said—

"'Tis the tooting we'pon of the singer! now we shall have a trail a priest might travel. Uncas, look for the marks of a shoe that is long enough to uphold six feet two of tottering human flesh. I begin to have some hopes of the fellow, since he has given up squalling to follow, perhaps, 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 Hawk-eye, dropping his rifle, and leaning on it with an air of visible contempt, "he will do their singing! Can he slay a buck for their dinner; journey by the moss on the beeches, or cut the throat of a Huron? If not, the first cat-bird he meets is the cleverest fellow of the two. Well, boy, any signs of such a foundation?"

"Here is something like the footstep of one who has worn a shoe," said Heyward, gladly changing the discourse from the abuse of David, to whom he now felt the strongest tie of gratitude; "can it be that of our friend?"

"Touch the leaves lightly, or you will disconsart the formation. That! that, is the print of a foot, but 'tis the dark hair's; and small it is, too, for one of such a noble height and grand appearance! The singer would cover it with his heel!"

"Where? let me look on the footsteps of my child!" said Munro, eagerly shoving the bushes aside, and bending fondly over the nearly obliterated impression. Though the tread, which had left the mark, had been light and rapid, it was still very plainly visible. The aged soldier examined it with eyes that grew dim as he gazed; nor did he rise from his stooping posture, until Heyward saw that he had watered the graceful trace of his daughter's passage, with a scalding and heavy tear. Willing to divert a distress which threatened each moment to break through the restraint of

appearances, by giving the veteran something to do, the young man said to the scout—

"As we now possess these infallible signs, 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 Hawk-eye, without moving his eyes from considering the different marks that had come under his view; "We know that the rampaging Huron has passed—and the dark hair—and the singer—but where is she of the yellow locks and blue eyes? Though little, and far from being as bold as her sister, she is fair to the view, and pleasant in discourse. Has she no friend that none care for her?"

"God forbid she should ever want hundreds! Are we not now in her pursuit? for one, I will never cease the search till she be found!"

"In that case we may have to journey by different paths; for here she has not passed, light and little as her footsteps would be."

Heyward drew back, all his ardour to proceed seeming to vanish on the instant. Without attending to this sudden change in the other's humour, the scout, after musing a moment, continued—

"There is no woman in this wilderness could leave such a print as that, but the dark-hair, or her sister! We know that the first has been here, but where are the signs of the other? Let us push deeper on the trail, and if nothing offers, we must go back to the plain, and strike another scent. 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."

"Is there nothing that I can do?" demanded the anxious Heyward.

"You!" repeated the scout, who, with his red friends, was already advancing in the order he had prescribed; "yes, you can keep in our rear, and be careful not to cross the trail."

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 the most unequivocal 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! An ambushment has been planted in the spot! No, by the truest rifle on the frontiers, here have been them one-sided horses again! Now the whole secret is out, and 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, with the tenacious memory of a lover, 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 Hawk-eye, ceasing to rake the leaves with the breech of his rifle; "'tis a certain sign of age when the sight begins to weaken. Such a glittering gewgaw, and not to be seen! Well, well, I can squint along a clouded barrel yet, and that is enough to settle all disputes between me and the Mingoes. 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, even the Great Lakes, 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. We are not about to start on a squirrel hunt, or to drive a deer into the Horican, but to outlie for days and nights, and to stretch across a wilderness where the feet of men seldom go, and where no bookish knowledge would carry you through harmless. An Indian never starts on such an expedition without smoking over his council fire; and though a man of white blood, I honour 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 instantly 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, and from which he was, apparently, to be roused

only by some new and powerful excitement. Making a merit of necessity, 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.

CHAPTER VII.

Salar. "Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh; what's that good for?

Shy. "To bait fish withal; if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge."

Shakspeare.

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 demeanour, that betrayed how much the unusual horrors they had just witnessed, worked on even their practised 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 impressively toward his rude hut, when his labour 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, too much excited himself to seek the repose he had recommended to his veteran friend.

While Hawk-eye and the Indians lighted their fire, and took their evening's repast, a frugal meal of dried bear's meat, the young man paid a visit to that curtain of the dilapidated fort which looked out on the sheet of the Horican. The wind had fallen, and the waves were already rolling on the sandy beach beneath him, in a more regular and tempered succession. The clouds, as if tired of their furious chase, were breaking asunder; the heavier volumes, gathering in black masses about the horizon, while the lighter scud still hurried above the water, or eddied among the tops of the mountains, like broken flights of

birds, hovering around their roosts. Here and there a red and fiery star struggled through the drifting vapour, furnishing a lurid gleam of brightness to the dull aspect of the heavens. Within the bosom of the encircling hills, an impenetrable darkness had already settled, and the plain lay like a vast and deserted charnel-house, without omen or whisper, to disturb the slumbers of its numerous and hapless tenants.

Of this scene, so chillingly in accordance with the past, Duncan stood for many minutes a rapt observer. His eyes wandered from the bosom of the mound, where the foresters were seated around their glimmering fire, to the fainter light, which still lingered in the skies, and then rested long and anxiously on the embodied gloom, which lay like a dreary void on that side of him where reposed the dead. He soon fancied that inexplicable sounds arose from the place, though so indistinct and stolen, as to render not only their nature, but even their existence, uncertain. Ashamed of his apprehensions, the young man turned towards the water, and strove to divert his

attention to the mimic stars that dimly glimmered along its moving surface. Still, his too conscious ears performed their ungrateful duty, as if to warn him of some lurking danger. At length a swift trampling seemed, quite audibly, to rush athwart the darkness. Unable any longer to quiet his uneasiness, Duncan spoke in a low voice to the scout, requesting him to ascend the mound, to the place where he stood. Hawk-eye threw his rifle across an arm, and complied, but with an air so unmoved and calm, as to prove how much he accounted on the security of their position.

"Listen," said Duncan, when the other had placed himself deliberately at his elbow; "there are suppressed noises on the plain, which may show that Montcalm has not yet entirely deserted his conquest."

"Then ears are better than eyes," said the undisturbed scout, who having just deposited a portion of a bear between his grinders, spoke thick and slow, like one whose mouth was doubly occupied; "I, myself, saw him caged in Ty, with all his host; for your Frenchers, when they have

done a clever thing, like to get back, and have a dance, or a merry-making, over their success."

"I know not. An Indian seldom sleeps in war, and plunder may keep a Huron here, after his tribe has departed. It would be well to extinguish the fire, and have a watch—Listen! you hear the noise I mean."

"An Indian more rarely lurks about the graves. Though ready to slay, and not over regardful of the means, he is commonly content with the scalp, unless when blood is hot, and temper up; but after the spirit is once fairly gone, he forgets his enmity, and is willing to let the dead find their natural rest. Speaking of spirits, Major, are you of opinion that the heaven of a red skin, and of us whites, will be one and the same?"

"No doubt—no doubt. I thought I heard it again! or was it the rustling of the leaves in the top of the beech?"

"For my own part," continued Hawkeye, turning his face for a moment in the direction indicated by Heyward, but with a vacant and careless manner, "I believe

that paradise is ordained for happiness; and that men will be indulged in it according to their dispositions and gifts. I therefore judge that a red skin is not far from the truth, when he believes he is to find them glorious hunting grounds, of which his traditions tell; nor, for that matter, do I think it would be any disparagement to a man without a cross, to pass his time—"

"You hear it again!" interrupted Duncan.

"Ay, ay; when food is scarce, and when food is plenty, a wolf grows bold," said the unmoved scout. "There would be picking, too, among the skins of the devils, if there was light and time for the sport! But concerning the life that is to come, Major. I have heard preachers say, in the settlements, that heaven was a place of rest. Now men's minds differ as to their ideas of enjoyment. For myself, and I say it with reverence to the ordering of Providence, it would be no great indulgence to be kept shut up in those mansions of which they preach, having a natural longing for motion and the chase."

Duncan, who was now made to understand the nature of the noises he had heard, answered, with more attention to the subject which the humour of the scout had chosen for discussion, by saying—

"It is difficult to account for the feelings that may attend the last great change."

"It would be a change, indeed, for a man who has passed his days in the open air," returned the single-minded scout; "and who has so often broken his fast on the head waters of the Hudson, to sleep within sound of the roaring Mohawk! But it is a comfort to know we serve a merciful Master, though we do it each after his fashion, and with great tracts of wilderness atween us—What goes there?"

"Is it not the rushing of the wolves as you have mentioned?"

Hawk-eye slowly shook his head, and beckoned for Duncan to follow him to a spot, whither the glare from the fire did not extend. When he had taken this precaution, the scout placed himself in an attitude of intense attention, and listened,

long and keenly, for a repetition of the low sound that had so unexpectedly startled him. His vigilance, however, seemed exercised in vain; for, after a fruitless pause, he whispered to Duncan—

"We must give a call to Uncas. The boy has Indian senses, and may hear what is hid from us; for, being a white-skin, I will not deny my nature."

The young Mohican, who was conversing in a low voice with his father, started as he heard the moaning of an owl, and, springing on his feet, he looked toward the black mounds, as if seeking the place whence the sounds proceeded. The scout repeated the call, and in a few moments Duncan saw the figure of Uncas stealing cautiously along the rampart to the spot where they stood.

Hawk-eye explained his wishes in a very few words, which were spoken in the Delaware tongue. So soon as Uncas was in possession of the reason why he was summoned, he threw himself flat on the turf; where, to the eyes of Duncan, he appeared to lie quiet and motionless. Surprised at

the immovable attitude of the young warrior, and curious to observe the manner in which he employed his faculties to obtain the desired information, Heyward advanced a few steps, and bent over the dark object, on which he had kept his eyes intently rivetted. Then it was he discovered that the form of Uncas had vanished, and that he beheld only the dark outline of an inequality in the embankment.

"What has become of the Mohican?" he demanded of the scout, stepping back in amazement; "it was here that I saw him fall, and I could have sworn that here he yet remained!"

"Hist! speak lower; for we know not what ears are open, and the Mingoes are a quick-witted breed. As for Uncas, he is out on the plain, and the Maquas, if any such are about us, will find their equal."

"You then think that Montcalm has not called off all his Indians! Let us give the alarm to our companions, that we may stand by our arms. Here are five of us, who are not unused to meet an enemy."

"Not a word to either, as you value life!

Look at the Sagamore, how like a gran Indian chief he sits by the fire! If there are any skulkers out in the darkness, they will never discover by his countenance that we suspect danger to be at hand!"

"But they may discover him, and it will prove his death. His person can be too plainly seen by the light of that fire, and he will become the first and most certain victim!"

"It is undeniable that now you speak the truth," returned the scout, betraying more of anxiety in his manner than was usual; "yet what can be done! A single suspicious look might bring on an attack before we are ready to receive it. He knows, by the call I gave to Uncas, that we have struck a scent; I will tell him that we are on the trail of the Mingoes; his Indian nature will teach him how to act."

The scout then applied his fingers to his mouth, and raised a low hissing sound, that caused Duncan at first to start aside, believing that he heard a serpent. The head of Chingachgook was resting on a hand, as

he sat musing by himself; but the moment he heard the warning of the animal whose name he bore, it arose to an upright position, and his dark eyes glanced swiftly and keenly on every side of him. With this sudden, and perhaps involuntary movement, every appearance of surprise or alarm was ended. His rifle lay untouched, and apparently unnoticed, within reach of his hand. The tomahawk that he had loosened in his belt, for the sake of ease, was even suffered to fall from its usual situation to the ground, and his form seemed to sink, like that of a man, whose nerves and sinews were suffered to relax for the purpose of rest. Cunningly resuming his former position, though with a change of hands, as if the movement had been made merely to relieve the limb, the native awaited the result with a calmness and fortitude that none but an Indian warrior would have known how to exercise.

But Heyward saw that, while to a less instructed eye, the Mohican chief appeared to slumber, his nostrils were expanded, his head was turned a little to one side, as if to assist the organs of hear-

ing, and that his quick and rapid glances ran incessantly over every object within the power of his vision.

"See the noble fellow!" whispered Hawk-eye, pressing the arm of Heyward; "he knows that a look or a motion might disconsart our wisdom, and put us at the mercy of them imps—"

He was interrupted by the flash and report of a rifle. The air was filled with sparks of fire around that spot where the eyes of Heyward were still fastened with admiration and wonder. A second look told him that Chingachgook had disappeared in the confusion. In the mean time the scout had thrown forward his rifle, like one prepared for instant service, and awaited impatiently the moment when an enemy might rise to view. But with the solitary and fruitless attempt made on the life of Chingachgook, the attack appeared to have terminated. Once or twice the listeners thought they could distinguish the distant rustling of bushes, as bodies of some unknown description rushed through them; nor was it long before Hawk-eye pointed out the "scampering of the

wolves," as if they fled precipitately before the passage of some intruders on their proper domains. After an impatient and breathless pause of several minutes, a plunge was heard into the water, and was immediately succeeded by the report of another rifle.

"There goes Uncas!" said the scout; "the boy bears a smart piece! I know its crack, as well as a father knows the language of his child, for I carried the gun myself until a better offered."

"What can this mean?" demanded Duncan; "we are watched, and, as it would seem, marked for destruction."

"Yonder scattered brand can witness that no good was intended, and this Indian will testify that no harm has been done," returned the scout, dropping his rifle coolly across his arm again, and following Chingachgook, who just then re-appeared within the circle of light, into the bosom of the works. "How is it, Sagamore? Are the Mingoes upon us in earnest, or is it only one of those reptiles who hang upon the skirts of a war party, to scalp the

dead, go in, and make their boast among the sqaws of the valiant deeds done on the pale-faces!"

Chingachgook very quietly resumed his seat, nor did he make any reply, until after he had examined the firebrand which had been struck by the bullet, that had nearly proved fatal to himself. After which, he was content to reply, holding a single finger up to view, with the English monosyllable—

"One."

"I thought as much," returned Hawkeye, seating himself; "and as he had got the cover of the lake afore Uncas pulled upon him, it is more than probable the knave will sing his lies about some great ambushment, in which he was outlying on the trail of two Mohicans and a white hunter—for the officers can be considered as little better than idlers in such a skrimmage. Well, let him—let him. There are always some honest men in every nation, though heaven knows, too, that they are scarce among the Maquas, to look down an upstart when he brags ag'in the

face of all reason! The varlet sent his lead within whistle of your ears, Sagamore."

Chingachgook turned a calm and incurious eye towards the place where the ball had struck, and then resumed his former attitude, with a composure that could not be disturbed by so trifling an incident. Just then Uncas glided into the circle, and seated himself at the fire, with the same appearance of indifference as was maintained by his father.

Of these several movements, Heyward was a deeply interested and wondering observer. It appeared to him as though the foresters had some secret means of intelligence, which had escaped the vigilance of his own faculties. In place of that eager and garrulous narration, with which a white youth would have endeavoured to communicate, and perhaps exaggerate, that which had passed out in the darkness of the plain, the young warrior was seemingly content to let his deeds speak for themselves. It was, in fact, neither the moment nor the occasion for an Indian to

boast of his exploits; and it is probable, that had Heyward neglected to inquire, not another syllable would, just then, have been uttered on the subject.

"What has become of our enemy, Uncas?" demanded Duncan; "we heard your rifle, and hoped you had not fired in vain."

The young chief removed a fold of his hunting shirt, and quietly exposed the fatal tuft of hair, which he bore as the symbol of his victory. Chingachgook laid his hand on the scalp, and considered it for a moment with deep attention. Then dropping it, with powerful disgust depicted in his strong and expressive features, he exclaimed—

"Hugh! Oneida!"

"Oneida!" repeated the scout, who was fast losing his interest in the scene, in an apathy nearly assimilated to that of his red associates, but who now advanced with uncommon earnestness to regard the bloody badge. "By the Lord, if the Oneidas are outlying upon our trail, we shall be flanked by devils on every side of

us! Now, to white eyes there is no difference between this bit of skin and that of any other Indian, and yet the Sagamore declares it came from the poll of a Mingo; nay, he even names the tribe of the poor devil, with as much ease as if the scalp was the leaf of a book, and each hair a letter. What right have christian whites to boast of their learning, when a savage can read a language, that would prove too much for the wisest of them all! What say *you*, lad; of what people was the knave?"

Uncas raised his eyes to the face of the scout, and answered, in his soft, musical voice—

"Oneida."

"Oneida again! when one Indian makes a declaration it is commonly true; but when he is supported by his people, set it down as gospel!"

"The poor fellow has mistaken us for French!" said Heyward, "or he would not have attempted the life of a friend."

"He mistake a Mohican, in his paint, for a Huron! You would be as likely to

mistake them white coated grenadiers of Montcalm, for the scarlet jackets of the 'Royal Americans,'" returned the scout. "No, no, the sarpent knew his errand; nor was there any great mistake in the matter, for there is but little love atween a Delaware and a Mingo, let their tribes go out to fight for whom they may in a white quarrel. For that matter, though the Oneidas do serve his sacred majesty, who is my own sovereign lord and master, I should not have deliberated long about letting off 'killdeer' at the imp myself, had luck thrown him in my way,"

"That would have been an abuse of our treaties, and unworthy of your character."

"When a man consorts much with a people," continued Hawk-eye, "if they are honest, and he no knave, love will grow up atwixt them. It is true that white cunning has managed to throw the tribes into great confusion, as respects friends and enemies; so that the Hurons and the Oneidas, who speak the same tongue, or what may be called the same, take each other's scalps, and the Delawares

are divided among themselves; a few hanging about their great council fire, on their own river, and fighting on the same side with the Mingoes, while the greater part are in the Canadas, out of natural enmity to the Maquas—thus throwing every thing into disorder, and destroying all the harmony of warfare. Yet a red natur is not likely to alter with every shift of policy! so that the love atwixt a Mohican and a Mingo is much like the regard between a white man and a sarpent."

"I regret to hear it; for I had believed those natives who dwelt within our boundaries had found us too just and liberal, not to identify themselves, fully, with our quarrels."

"Why," said the scout, "I believe it is natur to give a preference to one's own quarrels before those of strangers. Now, for myself, I do love justice; and therefore—I will not say I hate a Mingo, for that may be unsuitable to my colour and religion—though I will just repeat, it may have been owing to the night that I kill-

deer' had no hand in the death of this skulking Oneida."

Then, as if satisfied with the force of his own reasons, whatever might be their effect on the opinions of the other disputant, the honest but implacable woodsman turned from the fire, content to let the controversy slumber. Heyward withdrew to the rampart, too uneasy and too little accustomed to the warfare of the woods, to remain at ease under the possibility of such insidious attacks. Not so, however, with the scout and the Mohicans. Those acute and long practised senses, whose powers so often exceed the limits of all ordinary credulity, after having detected the danger, had enabled them to ascertain its magnitude and duration. Not one of the three appeared in the least to doubt, now, of their perfect security, as was indicated by the preparations that were soon made, to sit in council over their future proceedings.

The confusion of nations, and even of tribes, to which Hawk-eye alluded, existed

at that period in the fullest force. The great tie of language, and, of course, of a common origin, was severed in many places; and it was one of its consequences that the Delaware and the Mingo, (as the people of the Six Nations were called,) were found fighting in the same ranks, while the latter sought the scalp of the Huron, though believed to be the root of his own stock. The Delawares were even divided among themselves. Though love for the soil which had belonged to his ancestors, kept the Sagamore of the Mohicans, with a small band of followers who were serving at Edward, under the banners of the English king, by far the largest portion of his nation were known to be in the field as allies of Montcalm. The reader probably knows, if enough has not already been gleaned from this narrative, that the Delaware, or Lenape claimed to be the progenitors of that numerous people, who once were masters of most of the eastern and northern states of America, of whom the community of the Mohicans

was an ancient and highly honoured member.

It was of course with a perfect understanding of the minute and intricate interests, which had armed friend against friend, and brought natural enemies to combat by each other's side, that the scout and his companions now disposed themselves to deliberate on the measures that were to govern their future movements, amid so many jarring and savage races of men. Duncan knew enough of Indian customs to understand the reason that the fire was replenished, and why the warriors, not excepting Hawk-eye, took their seats within the curl of its smoke, with so much gravity and decorum. Placing himself at an angle of the works, where he might be a spectator of the scene within, while he kept a watchful eye against any danger from without, he awaited the result, with as much patience as he could summon for the occasion.

After a short and impressive 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 soothing 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 to speak. Then the Sagamore, as the oldest and highest in rank, in a few calm and dignified words, 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 and respectful listener, until Hawk-eye, in complaisance, demanded his opinion. Heyward gathered from the manners of the different speakers, that the father and son espoused one side of a disputed question, while the white man maintained the other. The contest gradually grew warmer, until it was quite evident the feelings of the speakers began to be somewhat enlisted in the debate.

Notwithstanding the increasing warmth of the amicable contest, the most decorous christian assembly, not even excepting those in which its reverend ministers are collected, might have learned a wholesome lesson of moderation from the forbearance and courtesy of the disputants. The words of Uncas were received with the same deep attention as those which fell from the maturer wisdom of his father; and so far from manifesting any impatience, none spoke in reply, until a few moments of silent meditation were seemingly bestowed in deliberating on what had already been said.

The language of the Mohicans was accompanied by gestures so direct and natural, that Heyward had but little difficulty in following the thread of their argument. On the other hand the scout was obscure; because, from the lingering pride of colour, he rather affected the cold and inartificial manner which characterizes all classes of Anglo-Americans, when unexcited. 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 Hawk-eye's arm toward the Horican, denoted that he advocated 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 shaking off his apathy, he 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 the slumbering and unconscious Munro, were indicated by signs too palpable to be mistaken. Duncan perceived that even his own powers were spoken lightly of, as the scout extended his palm, and mentioned him by the appellation of the "open hand;" a name his liberality had purchased of all the friendly tribes. Then came the representation of the light

and graceful movements of a canoe, set in forcible contrast to the tottering steps of one enfeebled and tired. He concluded by pointing to the scalp of the Oneida, and apparently urging the necessity of their departing speedily, and in a manner that should leave no trail.

The Mohicans listened gravely, and with countenances that reflected the sentiments of the speaker. Conviction gradually wrought its influence, and towards the close of Hawk-eye'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, abandoning their own previously expressed opinions, with a liberality and candour, that had they been the representatives of some great and civilized people, would have infallibly worked their political ruin, by destroying for ever, their reputation for consistency.

The instant the matter in discussion was decided, the debate, and every thing connected with it, except the result, appeared to be forgotten. Hawk-eye, without look-

ing round to read his triumph in applauding eyes, very composedly stretched his tall frame before the dying embers, and closed his own organs in sleep.

Left now in a measure to themselves, the Mohicans, whose time had been so much devoted to the interests of others, seized the moment to devote some attention to themselves. Casting off at once the grave and austere demeanour of an Indian chief, Chingachgook commenced speaking to his son in the soft and playful tones of affection. Uncas gladly met the familiar air of his father, and before the hard breathing of the scout announced that he slept, a complete change was effected in the manner of his two associates.

It is impossible to describe the music of their language, while thus engaged in laughter and endearments, in such a way as to render it intelligible to those whose ears have never listened to its melody. The compass of their voices, particularly that of the youth, was wonderful; extending from the deepest bass, to tones that were even feminine in softness. The eyes

of the father followed the plastic and ingenious movements of the son with open delight, and he never failed to smile in reply to the other's contagious but low laughter. While under the influence of these gentle and natural feelings, no trace of ferocity was to be seen in the softened features of the Sagamore. His figured panoply of death looked more like a disguise assumed in mockery, than a fierce annunciation of a desire to carry destruction and desolation in his footsteps.

After an hour passed in the indulgence of their better feelings, Chingachgook abruptly announced his desire to sleep, by wrapping his head in his blanket, and stretching his form on the naked earth. The merriment of Uncas instantly ceased, and carefully raking the coals in such a manner that they should impart their warmth to his father's feet, the youth sought his own pillow among the ruins of the place.

Imbibing renewed confidence from the security of these experienced foresters, 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 VIII.

"Land of Albania; let me bend mine eyes
On thee, thou rugged nurse of savage men!"
Childe Harold.

THE heavens were still studded with stars when Hawk-eye came to arouse 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 nigh by, and the only salutation between them was the significant gesture for silence made by their sagacious leader.

"Think over your prayers," he whispered, as they approached him; "for he, to whom you make them, knows all tongues; that of the heart as well as those of the mouth. But speak not a syllable; it is rare for a white voice to pitch itself properly in the woods, as we have seen by the example of that miserable devil, the singer. Come," he continued, turning towards 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 one of them the reasons of all this extraordinary 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 sandy shore of the Horican.

"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. Had you worn your armed boots there might, indeed, have been something to fear! but with the deer-skin suitably prepared a man may trust himself generally on rocks with safety. Shove in the canoe nigher to the land, Uncas; this sand will take a stamp as easily as the butter of the Dutchers on the Mohawk. 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, every thing was studiously restored to its former disorder; and then Hawk-eye succeeded in reaching his little birchin vessel, without leaving behind him any of those marks which he appeared so much to dread. Heyward was silent until the Indians had cautiously paddled the canoe some distance from the fort, and within the broad and dark shadow that fell from the eastern

mountains on the glossy surface of the lake; then he demanded—

"What need have we for this stolen and hurried departure?"

"If the blood of an Oneida could stain such a sheet of pure water as this we float on," returned the scout, "your two eyes would answer your own question. Have you forgotten the skulking reptile that Uncas slew?"

"By no means. But he was said to be alone, and dead men give no cause for fear!"

"Ay, he was alone in his deviltry! but an Indian, whose tribe counts so many warriors, need seldom fear his blood will run without the death-shriek coming speedily from some of his enemies."

"But our presence—the authority of Colonel Munro, would prove a sufficient protection against the anger of our allies, especially in a case where the wretch so well merited his fate. I trust in Heaven you have not deviated a single foot from the direct line of our course with so slight a reason."

"Do you think the bullet of that varlet's rifle would have turned aside, though his sacred majesty the king had stood in its path!" returned the stubborn scout. "Why did not the grand Frencher, he who is captain general of the Canadas, bury the tomahawks of the Hurons, if a word from a white can work so strongly on the natur of an Indian?"

The reply of Heyward was interrupted by a deep and heavy groan from Munro; but after he had paused a moment, in deference to the sorrow of his aged friend, he resumed the subject.

"The Marquis of Montcalm can only settle that error with his God," said the young man, solemnly.

"Ay, ay, now there is reason in your words, for they are bottomed on religion and honesty. There is a vast difference between throwing a regiment of white coats atwixt the tribes and the prisoners, and coaxing an angry savage to forget he carries a knife and a rifle, with words that must begin with calling him 'your son.'

No, no," continued the scout, looking back at the dim shore of William Henry, which now appeared to be fast receding, and laughing in his own silent but heartfelt manner; " I have but a trail of water atween us; and unless the imps can make friends with the fishes, and hear who has paddled across their basin this fine morning, 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!"

" Danger!" repeated Hawk-eye, calmly; " no, not absolutely of danger; for, with vigilant ears and quick eyes, we can manage to keep a few hours ahead of the knaves; or, if we must try the rifle, there are three of us who understand its gifts as well as any you can name on the borders. No, not of danger, but that we shall have what you may call a brisk push of it is probable; and it may happen a brush, a skrimmage, or some such divarsion, but always

where covers are good and ammunition abundant."

It is possible that Heyward's estimate of danger, distinguished as he was for spirit, differed in some degree from that of the scout, for instead of replying he now 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 eyes of the Sagamore moved warily from islet to islet, and copse to copse, as the canoe

proceeded; and when a clearer sheet of water permitted, his keen vision was bent along the bald rocks and impending forests that frowned upon the narrow strait.

Heyward, who was a doubly interested spectator, as well from the beauties of the place as from the apprehension natural to his situation, was just believing that he had permitted the latter to be excited without sufficient reason, when the paddles ceased moving in obedience to a signal from Chingachgook.

"Hugh!" exclaimed Uncas, nearly at the moment that the light tap his father had made on the side of the canoe notified them of the vicinity of danger.

"What now?" asked the scout; "the lake is as smooth as if the winds had never blown, and I can see along its sheet for miles; there is not so much as the black head of a loon dotting the water!"

The Indian gravely raised his paddle, and pointed in the direction that his own steady look was rivetted. Duncan's eyes followed the motion. A few rods in their front lay another of the low wooded islets,

but it appeared as calm and peaceful as if its solitude had never been disturbed by the foot of man.

"I see nothing," he said, "but land and water; and a lovely scene it is!"

"Hist!" interrupted the scout. "Ay, Sagamore, there is always a reason for what you do! 'Tis but a shade, and yet it is not natural. You see the mist, Major, that is rising above the island; you can't call it a fog, for it is more like a streak of thin cloud"—

"It is vapour from the water."

"That a child could tell. But what is the edging of blacker smoke that hangs along its lower side, and which you may trace down into the thicket of hazle? 'Tis from a fire, but one that in my judgment has been suffered to burn low."

"Let us then push for the place and relieve our doubts," said the impatient Duncan; "the party must be small that can lie on such a bit of land."

"If you judge of Indian cunning by the rules you find in books, or by white sagacity, they will lead you astray, if not to

your death," returned Hawk-eye, examining the signs of the place with that acuteness which distinguished him. "If I may be permitted to speak in this matter it will be to say, that we have but two things to choose between; the one is to return and give up all thoughts of following the Hurons—"

"Never!" exclaimed Heyward, in a voice far too loud for their circumstances.

"Well, well," continued Hawk-eye, making a hasty sign to repress his ardour; "I am much of your mind myself, though I thought it becoming my experience to tell the whole. We must then make a push, and if the Indians or Frenchers are in the narrows, run the gauntlet through these topling mountains. Is there reason in my words, Sagamore?"

The Indian made no other answer than by dropping his paddle into the water and urging forward the canoe. As he held the office of directing its course, his resolution was sufficiently indicated by the movement. The whole party now plied their paddles vigorously, and in a very few moments

they had reached a point whence they might command an entire view of the northern shore of the island, the side that had hitherto been concealed.

"There they are by all the truth of signs!" whispered the scout; "two canoes and a smoke! The knaves have'nt yet got their eyes out of the mist, or we should hear the accursed whoop. Together, friends—we are leaving them and are already nearly out of whistle of a bullet."

The well known crack of a rifle, whose ball came skipping along the placid surface of the strait, and a shrill yell from the island, interrupted his speech, and announced that their passage was discovered. In another instant several savages were seen rushing into the canoes, which were soon dancing over the water in swift pursuit. These fearful precursors of a coming struggle produced no change in the countenances and movements of his three guides, so far as Duncan could discover, except that the strokes of their paddles were longer and more in unison, and caused the little bark to spring forward

like a creature possessing life and volition.

"Hold them there, Sagamore," said Hawk-eye, looking coolly backward over his left shoulder, while he still plied his paddle; "keep them just there. Them Hurons have never a piece in their nation that will execute at this distance; but 'kill-deer' has a barrel on which a man may safely calculate."

The scout having ascertained that the Mohicans were sufficient of themselves to maintain the requisite distance, deliberately laid aside his paddle and raised the fatal rifle. Three several times he brought the piece to his shoulder, and when his companions were expecting the report, he as often lowered it to request the Indians would permit their enemies to approach a little nigher. At length his accurate and fastidious eye seemed satisfied, and throwing out his left arm on the barrel, he was slowly elevating the muzzle, when an exclamation from Uncas, who sat in the bow, once more caused him to suspend the shot.

"What now, lad?" demanded Hawk-

eye; "you saved a Huron from the death-shriek by that word; have you reason for what you do?"

Uncas pointed towards the rocky shore, a little in their front, whence another war canoe was darting directly across their course. It was too obvious now that their situation was imminently perilous to need the aid of language to confirm it. The scout laid aside his rifle and resumed the paddle, while Chingachgook inclined the bows of the canoe a little towards the western shore, in order to increase the distance between them and this new enemy. In the meantime they were reminded of the presence of those who pressed upon their rear by wild and exulting shouts. The stirring scene awakened even Munro from the dull apathy into which he was plunged by the weight of his misfortunes.

"Let us make for the rocks on the main," he said, with the firm mien of a tried soldier, "and give battle to the savages. God forbid that I, or those attached to me and mine, should ever trust again to the faith of any servant of the Louises!"

"He who wishes to prosper in Indian warfare," returned the busy scout, "must not be too proud to learn from the wit of a native. Lay her more along the land, Sagamore; we are doubling on the varlets, and perhaps they may try to strike our trail on the long calculation."

Hawk-eye was not mistaken, for when the Hurons found their course was likely to throw them behind their chase, they rendered it less direct, until by gradually bearing more and more obliquely, the two canoes were ere long gliding on parallel lines, within two hundred yards of each other. It now became entirely a trial of speed. So rapid was the progress of the light vessels, that the lake curled in their front in miniature waves, and their motion became undulating by its own velocity. It was, perhaps, owing to this circumstance, in addition to the necessity of keeping every hand employed at the paddles, that the Hurons had not immediate recourse to their firearms. The exertions of the fugitives were too severe to continue long, and the pursuers had the advantage of numbers. Dun-

can observed with uneasiness that the scout began to look anxiously about him, as if searching for some further means of assisting their flight.

"Edge her a little more from the sun, Sagamore," said the stubborn woodsman; "I see the knaves are sparing a man to the rifle. A single broken bone might lose us our scalps. Edge more from the sun, and we will put the island between us."

The expedient was not without its use. A long low island lay at a little distance before them, and as they closed with it the chasing canoe was compelled to take a side opposite to that on which the pursued passed. The scout and his companions did not neglect this advantage, but the instant they were hid from observation by the bushes, they redoubled efforts that before had seemed prodigious. The two canoes came round the last low point, like two coursers at the top of their speed, the fugitives taking the lead. This change had brought them nigher to each other, however, while it altered their relative positions.

"You showed knowledge in the shaping of birchen bark, Uncas, when you chose this from among the Huron canoes," said the scout, smiling, apparently more in satisfaction at their superiority in the race, than from that prospect of final escape which now began to open a little upon them. "The imps have put all their strength again at the paddles, and we are to struggle for our scalps with bits of flattened wood, instead of clouded barrels and true eyes! A long stroke, and together, friends."

"They are preparing for a shot," said Heyward; "and as we are in a line with them it can scarcely fail."

"Get you then into the bottom of the canoe," returned the scout; "you and the Colonel; it will be so much taken from the size of the mark."

Heyward smiled, as he answered—

"It would be but an ill example for the highest in rank to dodge while the warriors were under fire!"

"Lord! Lord! that is now a white man's courage!" exclaimed the scout;

" and like too many of his notions not to be maintained by reason. Do you think the Sagamore, or Uncas, or even I, who am a man without a cross, would deliberate about finding a cover in a skrimmage when an open body would do no good! For what have the Frenchers reared up their Quebec, if fighting is always to be done in the clearings?"

" All that you say is very true, my friend," replied Heyward; " still our customs must prevent us from doing as you wish."

A volley from the Hurons interrupted the discourse, and as the bullets whistled about them Duncan saw the head of Uncas turned, looking back at himself and Munro. Notwithstanding the nearness of the enemy, and his own great personal danger, the countenance of the young warrior expressed no other emotion, as the former was compelled to think, than amazement at finding men willing to encounter so useless an exposure. Chingachgook was probably better acquainted with the notions of white men, for he did not even cast a glance

aside from the riveted look his eye maintained on the object by which he governed their course. A ball soon struck the light and polished paddle from the hands of the chief, and drove it through the air far in the advance. A shout arose from the Hurons, who seized the opportunity to fire another volley. Uncas described an arc in the water with his own blade, and as the canoe passed swiftly on, Chingachgook recovered his paddle, and flourishing it on high, he gave the war-whoop of the Mohicans, and then lent his own strength and skill again to the important task.

The clamorous sounds of "le Gros Serpent," "la Longue Carabine," "le Cerf Agile," burst at once from the canoes behind, and seemed to give new zeal to the pursuers. The scout seized "kill-deer" in his left hand, and elevating it above his head, he shook it in triumph at his enemies. The savages answered the insult with a yell, and immediately another volley succeeded. The bullets pattered along the lake, and one even pierced the bark of their little vessel. No perceptible emotion

could be discovered in the Mohicans during this critical moment, their rigid features expressing neither hope nor alarm; but the scout again turned his head, and laughing in his own silent manner, he said to Heyward—

"The knaves love to hear the sounds of their pieces; but the eye is not to be found among the Mingoes that can calculate a true range in a dancing canoe! You see the dumb devils have taken off a man to charge, and by the smallest measurement that can be allowed, we move three feet to their two!"

Duncan, who was not altogether as easy under this nice estimate of distances as his companions, was glad to find, however, that owing to their superior dexterity, and the diversion among their enemies, they were very sensibly obtaining the advantage. The Hurons soon fired again, and a bullet struck the blade of Hawk-eye's paddle without injury.

"That will do," said the scout, examining the slight indentation with a curious eye; "it would not have cut the skin of

an infant, much less of men, who, like us, have been blown upon by the Heavens in their anger. Now, Major, if you will try to use this piece of flattened wood, I'll let 'kill-deer' take a part in the conversation."

Heyward seized the paddle, and applied himself to the work with an eagerness that supplied the place of skill, while Hawk-eye was engaged in inspecting the priming of his rifle. The latter then took a swift aim, and fired. The Huron in the bows of the leading canoe had risen with a similar object, and he now fell backward, suffering his gun to escape from his hands into the water. In an instant, however, he recovered his feet, though his gestures were wild and bewildered. At the same moment his companions suspended their efforts, and the chasing canoes clustered together, and became stationary. Chingachgook and Uncas profited by the interval to regain their wind, though Duncan continued to work with the most persevering industry. The father and son now cast calm but inquiring glances at each other, to learn if either had

sustained any injury by the fire; for both well knew that no cry or exclamation would, in such a moment of necessity, have been permitted to betray the accident. A few large drops of blood were trickling down the shoulder of the Sagamore, who, when he perceived that the eyes of Uncas dwelt too long on the sight, raised some water in the hollow of his hand, and washing off the stain, was content to manifest, in this simple manner, the slightness of the injury.

"Softly, softly, Major," said the scout, who by this time had reloaded his rifle; "we are a little too far already for a rifle to put forth its beauties, and you see yonder imps are holding a council. Let them come up within striking distance—my eye may well be trusted in such a matter—and I will trail the varlets the length of the Horican, guaranteeing that not a shot of theirs shall, at the worst, more than break the skin, while 'kill-deer' shall touch the life twice in three times."

"We forget our errand," returned the

diligent Duncan. "For God's sake, let us profit by this advantage, and increase our distance from the enemy."

"Give me my children," said Munro, hoarsely; "trifle no longer with a father's agony, but restore me my babes!"

Long and habitual deference to the mandates of his superiors had taught the scout the virtue of obedience. Throwing a last and lingering glance at the distant canoes, he laid aside his rifle, and relieving the wearied Duncan, resumed the paddle, which he wielded with sinews that never tired. His efforts were seconded by those of the Mohicans, and a very few minutes served to place such a sheet of water between them and their enemies, that Heyward once more breathed freely.

The lake now began to expand, and their route lay along a wide reach, that was lined, as before, by high and ragged mountains. But the islands were few, and easily avoided. The strokes of the paddles grew more measured and regular, while they who plied them continued their labour, after the close and deadly chace from

which they had just relieved themselves, with as much coolness as though their speed had been tried in sport, rather than under such pressing, nay, almost desperate, circumstances.

Instead of following the western shore, whither their errand led them, the wary Mohican inclined his course more towards those hills, behind which Montcalm was known to have led his army into the formidable fortress of Ticonderoga. As the Hurons, to every appearance, had abandoned the pursuit, there was no apparent reason for this excess of caution. It was, however, 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. Hawk-eye and Heyward ascended an adjacent bluff, where the former, after considering the expanse of water beneath him attentively for many minutes, pointed out to the latter a small black object, hovering under a head-land, 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 white experience 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! Though Providence has lent to those who inhabit the woods eyes that would be needless to men in the settlements, where there are inventions to assist the sight, yet no human organs can see all the dangers which at this moment circumvent us. These varlets pretend to be bent chiefly on their sundown meal, but the moment it is dark, they 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 settlements 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."

Hawk-eye moved away from the look-out, 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 terminated, 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 backwards, 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 head-land, 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, favoured 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 lifted, and 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 IX.

"If you find a man there, he shall die a flea's death."
Merry Wives of Windsor

THE party had landed on the border of a region that is, even to this day, less known to the inhabitants of the states than the deserts of Arabia, or the steppes of Tartary. It was the sterile and rugged district which separates the tributaries of Champlain from those of the Hudson, the Mohawk, and of the St. Lawrence. Since the period of our tale, the active spirit of the country has surrounded it with a belt of rich and thriving settlements, though none but the hunter or the savage is ever known, even now, to penetrate its rude and wild recesses.

As Hawk-eye and the Mohicans had, however, often traversed the mountains and valleys of this vast wilderness, they did not hesitate to plunge into its depths with the freedom of men accustomed to its privations and difficulties. For many hours the travellers 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 then were.

Imitating the example, and emulating the confidence of their more experienced associates, Munro and Duncan slept without fear, if not without uneasiness. The dews were suffered to exhale, and the sun had dispersed the mists, and was shedding a strong and clear light in the forest, when the travellers resumed their journey.

After proceeding a few miles, the progress of Hawk-eye, 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 colour of its waters. Distrusting his own judgment, his appeals to the opinion of Chingachgook were frequent and earnest. During one of these conferences, Heyward observed that Uncas stood a patient and silent, though, as he imagined, an interested listener. He was strongly tempted to address the young chieftain, and demand his opinion of their progress; but the calm and dignified demeanour of the native induced him to believe that, like himself, the other was wholly dependent on the sagacity and intelligence of the seniors of the party. At last the scout spoke in English, and at once explained the embarrassment of their situation.

"When I found that the home path of the Hurons run north," he said, "it did not need the judgment of many long years to tell that they would follow the valleys, and keep atween the waters of the Hudson and the Horican, until they might strike the springs of the Canada streams, which would lead them into the heart of the

country of the Frenchers. Yet here are we within a short range of the Scaroon, and not a sign of a trail have we crossed! Human nature is weak, and it is possible we may not have taken the proper scent."

"Heaven protect us from such an error!" exclaimed Duncan. "Let us retrace our steps, and examine as we go with keener eyes. Has Uncas no counsel to offer in such a strait?"

The young Mohican cast a quick glance at his father, but instantly recovering his quiet and reserved mien, he continued silent. Chingachgook had caught the look, and motioning with his hand, he bade him speak. The moment this permission was accorded, the countenance of Uncas changed from its grave composure to a gleam of intelligence and joy. Bounding forward like a deer, he sprang up the side of a little acclivity, a few rods in advance, and stood exultingly 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,

and read their success in the air of triumph that the youth assumed.

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

"'Tis extraordinary that he should have withheld his knowledge so long," muttered Duncan, at his elbow.

"It would have been more wonderful had he spoken without a bidding! No, no; your young white, who gathers his learning from books, and can measure what he knows by the page, may conceit that his knowledge, like his legs, outruns that of his father; but where experience is the master, the scholar is made to know the value of years, and respects them accordingly."

"See!" said Uncas, pointing north and south, at the evident marks of the broad trail on either side of him; the dark hair has gone towards the frost."

"Hound never ran on a more beautiful scent," responded the scout, dashing forward at once on the indicated route; "we are favoured, greatly favoured, and can

follow with high noses. Ay, here are both your waddling beasts; this Huron travels like a white general! The fellow is stricken with a judgment, and is mad! Look sharp for wheels, Sagamore," he continued, looking back and laughing, in his newly awakened satisfaction; "we shall soon have the fool journeying in a coach, and that with three of the best pair of eyes on the borders in his rear."

The spirits of the scout, and the astonishing success of the chase, in which a circuitous distance of more than forty miles had been passed, did not fail to impart a portion of hope to the whole party. Their advance was rapid; and made with as much confidence as a traveller would proceed along a wide highway. If a rock, or a rivulet, or a bit of earth harder than common, severed the links of the clue they followed, the true eye of the scout recovered them at a distance, and seldom rendered the delay of a single moment necessary. Their progress was much facilitated by the certainty that Magua had found it necessary to journey through the valleys;

a circumstance which rendered the general direction of the route sure. Nor had the Huron entirely neglected the arts uniformly practised by the natives, when retiring in front of an enemy. False trails, and sudden turnings, were frequent, wherever a brook, or the formation of the ground, rendered them feasible; but his pursuers were rarely deceived, and never failed to detect their error, before they had lost either time or distance on the deceptive track.

By the middle of the afternoon they had passed the Scaroon, 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 long and closely by the horses. At a little distance, Heyward discovered, and contemplated with tender emotion 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 endeavoured to trace the route of the horses, came upon a sign of their presence, that was quite recent. Before following the clue, he communicated his success to his companions, and while the latter were consulting on the circumstance, the youth re-appeared, 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 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. I know your thoughts, and shame be it to our colour that you have reason for them; but he who thinks that even a Mingo would ill treat a woman, unless it be to tomahawk her, knows nothing of Indian natur, or the laws of the woods. No, no; I have heard that the French Indians had come into these hills to hunt the moose, and we are getting within scent of their camp. Why should they not? the morning and evening guns of Ty may be heard any day among these mountains, for the Frenchers are running a new line atween the provinces of the king and the Canadas. It is true that the horses are here, but the Hurons are gone; let us then hunt for the path by which they departed."

Hawk-eye 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, each slowly following the other, until they assembled in the centre once more, no wiser than they started.

"Such cunning is not without its deviltry!" exclaimed Hawk-eye, when he met the disappointed looks of his assistants. "We must get down to it, Sagamore, beginning at the spring and going over the ground by inches. The Huron shall never brag in his tribe that he has a foot which leaves no print!"

Setting the example himself, the scout engaged in the scrutiny with renewed zeal. 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, labouring 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 its 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 rich and moist alluvion.

"The lad will be an honour to his people!" said Hawk-eye, regarding the trail with as much admiration as a naturalist would expend on the tusk of a mammoth, or the rib of a mastoden; "ay, and a thorn in the sides of the Hurons. Yet that is not the footstep of an Indian! the weight is too much on the heel, and the

toes are squared, as though one of the French dancers had been in pigeon-winging his tribe! 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, ag'in the hill side."

While the youth was engaged in this commission, the scout and Chingachgook were attentively considering the impressions. The measurements agreed, and the former unhesitatingly pronounced that the footstep was that of David, who had once more 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 neighbouring 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."

"Shall we proceed?" demanded Heyward.

"Softly, softly; we know our path, but it is good to examine the formation of things. This is my schooling, Major, and if one neglects the book there is no better chance of learning from the hand of Providence, than yon idle boy has with an old gal. All is plain but one thing, which is the manner that the knave contrived to get the gentle ones along the blind trail. Even a Huron would be too proud to let their tender feet touch the water."

"Will this assist in explaining the difficulty?" said Heyward, pointing towards the fragments of a sort of hand-barrow, that had been rudely constructed of boughs, and bound together with withes, and which now seemed carelessly cast aside as useless.

"'Tis all explained!" cried the delighted Hawk-eye. "If them varlets have passed a minute, they have spent hours in striving to fabricate a lying end to their trail! Well, I've known them waste a day in the same manner to as little purpose. Here we have three pair of moccasins, and two of little feet. It is amazing that any mortal beings can journey on limbs so small! Pass me the thong of buckskin, Uncas, and let me take the length of this foot. By the Lord it is no longer than a child's, and yet the maidens are tall and comely. That Providence is partial in its gifts for its own wise reasons, the best and most contented of us must allow!"

"The tender limbs of my daughters are unequal to these hardships!" said Munro, looking at the light footsteps of his children with a parent's love; "we shall find their fainting forms in this desert."

"Of that there is little cause to fear," returned the attentive scout, slowly shaking his head; "this is a firm and straight, though a light step, and not over long. See, the heel has hardly touched the

ground; and there the dark-hair has made a little jump from root to root. No, no; my knowledge for it, neither of them was nigh fainting hereaway. Now the singer was beginning to be foot-sore and leg-weary, as is plain by his trail. There you see he slipped; here he has travelled wide and tottered; and there, again it looks as though he journeyed on snow-shoes. Ay, ay, a man who uses his throat altogether, can hardly give his legs a proper training!"

From such undeniable testimony did the practised woodsman arrive at the truth, with nearly as much certainty and precision as if he had been a witness of all those events which his ingenuity so easily elucidated. Cheered by these assurances, and satisfied by a reasoning that was so obvious, while it was so simple, the party resumed its course after making a short halt, to take a hurried and slight repast.

When the meal was ended the scout cast a glance upward at the setting sun, and pushed forward with a rapidity, to equal which compelled Heyward and the still vigorous Munro to exert all their muscles.

Their route now lay along the bottom which has already been mentioned. As the Hurons had made no further efforts to conceal their footsteps, the progress of the pursuers was no longer delayed by uncertainty. Before an hour had elapsed, however, the speed of Hawk-eye sensibly abated, and his head, instead of maintaining its former direct and forward look, began to turn suspiciously from side to side, as if he were conscious of approaching danger. He soon stopped again and awaited 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 hill side, 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 deeming any reply necessary, while Hawk-eye 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 as usual 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 hun-

dred earthen dwellings stood on the margin of the lake, and even in its waters, as though the latter had flowed its usual banks. Their rounded roofs, admirably moulded for defence against the weather, denoted more of industry and foresight than the natives were wont to bestow on their regular habitations, much less on those they occupied for the temporary purposes of hunting and war. In short, the whole village, or town, whichever it might be termed, possessed more of method and neatness of execution than the white men had been accustomed to believe belonged ordinarily to the Indian habits. It appeared, however, to be deserted. At least so thought Duncan for many minutes; but at length he fancied he discovered several human forms advancing towards 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, however, glided from cover to cover so swiftly as to

allow no opportunity of examining their humours or pursuits. Alarmed at these suspicious and inexplicable movements, he was about to attempt the signal of the crows, when the rustling of the 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 have proved fatal to himself, he remained stationary, an attentive observer of the other's motions.

An instant of calm observation served to assure Duncan 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. His head was shaved as usual, with the exception of the crown, from

whose tuft three or four faded feathers from a hawk's wing were loosely dangling. A ragged calico mantle half encircled his body, while his nether garment was composed of an ordinary shirt, the sleeves of which were made to perform the office that is usually executed by a much more commodious arrangement. His legs were bare and sadly cut and torn by briars. The feet were, however, covered with a pair of good bear-skin moccasins. Altogether the appearance of the individual was forlorn and miserable.

Duncan was still curiously observing the person of his neighbour, 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."

Hawk-eye 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. Ay, Montcalm has raked the woods for his inroad, and a whooping murdering set of varlets has he gathered together! Can you see where he has put his rifle or his bow?"

"He appears to have no arms; nor does he seem to be viciously inclined. Unless he communicate the alarm to his fellows, who, as you see are dodging about the water, we have but little to fear from him."

The scout turned to Heyward, and regarded him a moment with unconcealed amazement. Then opening wide his mouth, he indulged in unrestrained and heartfelt laughter, though in that silent and peculiar manner which danger had so long taught him to practice.

Repeating the words, "fellows who are dodging about the water!" he added, "so much for schooling and passing a boyhood in the settlements! The knave has long

legs though and shall not be trusted. Do you keep him under your rifle while I creep in behind, through the bush, and take him alive. Fire on no account!"

Heyward had already permitted his companion to bury part of his person in the thicket, when stretching forth an arm, he arrested him in order to ask—

"If I see you in danger, may I not risk a shot?"

Hawk-eye regarded him a moment, like one who knew not how to take the question; then nodding his head, he answered, still laughing, though inaudibly—

"Fire a whole platoon, Major."

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 re-appeared, 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 mean time, the uplifted hand of Hawk-eye was above him. But, without any apparent reason it was withdrawn, and its owner indulged in another long, though still silent, fit of merriment. When the peculiar and hearty laughter of Hawk-eye 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 X.

"*Bot.* Are we all met?
"*Qui.* Pat—pat; and here's a marvellous
Convenient place for our rehearsal."
Shakspeare.

The reader may better imagine, than we describe, 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 Hawk-eye 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 gripe 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 'kill-deer' 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 towards the remainder of the party, who, in obedience to the signal, were already approaching; "this is music which has its natural virtues; it brings two good 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 greatly troubled in spirit, enjoying comfort and 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!"

"I know not that their delivery is at hand," returned the doubting David; "the leader of these savages is possessed of an evil spirit, that no power, short of Omnipotence, can tame. I have tried him, sleeping and waking, but neither sounds nor language seem to touch his soul."

"Where is the knave?" bluntly interrupted the scout.

"He hunts the moose to-day with his young men; and to-morrow, as I hear, they pass further into these forests, and nigher to the borders of Canada. The elder maiden is conveyed to a neighbouring people, whose lodges are situate beyond yonder black pinnacle of rock; while the younger is detained among the women of the Hurons, whose dwellings are but two short miles hence, on a table land, where the fire has done the office of the ax, and prepared the place for their reception."

"Alice, my gentle Alice!" murmured Heyward; "she has lost the consolation of her sister's presence!"

"Even so. But so far as praise and

thanksgiving in psalmody can temper the spirit in affliction, she has not suffered."

"Has she then a heart for music?"

"Of the graver and more solemn character; though it must be acknowledged, that in spite of all my endeavours, the maiden weeps oftener than she smiles. At such moments I forbear to press the holy songs; but there are many sweet and comfortable periods of satisfactory communication, when the ears of the savages are astounded with the upliftings of our voices?"

"And why are you permitted to go at large, unwatched?"

David composed his features into what he intended should express an air of modest humility, before he meekly replied—

"Little be the praise to such a worm as I. But though the power of psalmody was suspended in the terrible business of that field of blood through which we passed, it has recovered its influence even over the souls of the heathen, and I am suffered to go and come at will."

The scout laughed, and tapping his own

forehead significantly, he perhaps explained the single indulgence more satisfactorily, when he said—

"The Indians never harm a non-composser. But why, when the path lay open before your eyes, did you not strike back on your own trail, (it is not so blind as that which a squirrel would make,) and bring in the tidings to Edward?"

The scout, remembering only his own sturdy and iron nature, had probably exacted a task, that David, under no circumstances, could have performed. But, without entirely losing the meekness of his air, the latter was content to answer—

"Though my soul would rejoice to visit the habitations of Christendom once more, my feet would rather follow the tender spirits intrusted to my keeping, even into the idolatrous province of the Jesuits, than take one step backward while they pined in captivity and sorrow."

Though the figurative language of David was not very intelligible to all who heard him, the sincere and steady expression of his eye, and the glow on his honest coun-

penance, were not easily mistaken. Uncas pressed closer to his side, and regarded the speaker with a look of grave commendation, while his father expressed his satisfaction by the ordinary pithy exclamation of approbation. The scout shook his head, as he rejoined—

"The Lord never intended that the man should place all his endeavours in his throat, to the neglect of other and better gifts! But he has fallen into the hands of some silly woman, when he should have been gathering his education under a blue sky, and among the beauties of the forest. Here, friend, 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 as strong an expression of pleasure, as he believed it compatible with the grave functions he exercised to exhibit. After essaying its virtues, repeatedly, in contrast with his own voice, and satisfying himself that none of its melody was lost, he made a very serious demonstration towards achieving a

few stanzas of one of the longest effusions in the little volume, so often mentioned.

Heyward, however, hastily interrupted his pious purpose, by continuing questions concerning the past and present condition of his fellow captives, and in a manner more methodical than had been permitted by his feelings in the opening of their interview. David, though he regarded his treasure with longing eyes, was constrained to answer; especially, as the venerable father took a part in the interrogatories, with an interest too imposing to be denied. Nor did the scout fail to throw in a pertinent inquiry, whenever a fitting occasion presented. In this manner, though with frequent interruptions, which were filled with certain threatening sounds from the recovered instrument, the pursuers were put in possession of such leading circumstances, as were likely to prove useful in accomplishing their great and engrossing object —the recovery of the sisters. 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 Horrican, in the direction of the Canadas. As the subtle Huron was familiar with the paths, and well knew there was no immediate danger of pursuit, their progress had been moderate, and far from fatiguing. It appeared, from the unembellished statement of David that his own presence had been rather endured than desired; though even Magua had not been entirely exempt from that veneration with which the Indians regard those whom the Great Spirit has visited in their intellects. 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 has been seen; and notwithstanding the remoteness and length of their trial, the artifices already named were resorted to, in order to cut off every clue 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 a 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 interrupted and imperfect narrative, with an interest that obviously 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, but rather mingled in consolation with those of the maidens."

"The time may come when you will not consider the knife of a savage such a despisable vanity," returned the scout, with a strong expression of contempt for the other's dulness. "Had they held their corn-feast—or can you say anything of the totems of their tribe?"

"Of corn, we had many and plentiful feasts; for the grain, being in the milk, is both sweet to the mouth and comfortable to the stomach. Of totem, I know not the meaning; but if it appertaineth in anywise to the art of Indian music, it need not be inquired after at their hands. 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! 'Tis a wicked fabrication of the whites, and I say it to the shame of my colour, that would make the warrior bow down before images of his own creation. It is true, they endeavour to

make truces with the wicked one—as who would not with an enemy he cannot conquer—but they look up for favour 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, savoured 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 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 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 awaited 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 their Tortoises! 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!"

"Explain," said Duncan.

"'Tis a long and melancholy tradition, and one I little like to think of! for it is not to be denied, that the evil has been mainly done by men with white skins. But it has ended in turning the tomahawk of brother against brother, and brought the Mingo and the Delaware to travel in the same path!"

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

The scout nodded his head in assent, though he seemed anxious to waive the further discussion of a subject that appeared painful. The impatient Duncan now made several hasty and desperate propositions to attempt the release of the sisters. Monro seemed to shake off his dull apathy, and listened to the wild schemes of the young man, with a deference that his grey hairs and reverend years should have denied. But the scout, after suffering the ardour of

the lover to expend itself a little, found means to convince him of the folly of precipitation, in a matter that would require their coolest judgment and utmost fortitude.

"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," returned David, "and has a soft and melancholy note! though the time is rather quick and ill-measured."

"He speaks of the wish-ton-wish," said the scout; "well, 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 Hawk-

eye; "are you tired of seeing the sun rise and set?"

"David is a living proof that the Hurons can be merciful."

"Ay, but David can use his throat, as no man, in his senses, would pervart the gift."

"I too can play the madman, the fool, the hero; in short, any or everything, to rescue her I love from such a captivity. Name your objections no longer; I am resolved."

Hawk-eye regarded the young man a moment in speechless amazement. But Duncan, who, in deference to the other's skill and services, had hitherto submitted somewhat implicitly to his dictation, now assumed the superior, with a loftiness of manner, that was not easily resisted. He waved his hand, in sign of his dislike to all remonstrance, and then, in more tempered language, he continued—

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

"It is not for one like me to say that he

who is already formed by so powerful a hand as Providence, stands in need of a change," muttered the discontented scout. "When you send your parties abroad in war, you find it prudent, at least to arrange the marks and places of encampment, in order that they who fight on your side, may know when and where to expect a friend?"

"Listen," interrupted Duncan; "you have heard from this faithful follower of the captives, that the Indians are of two tribes, if not of different nations. With one whom you think to be a branch of the Delawares, is she you call the 'dark-hair;' the other, and younger of the ladies, is undeniably with our declared enemies, the Hurons. It becomes my youth and rank to attempt the latter adventure. While you, therefore, are negotiating with your friends for the release of one of the sisters, I will effect that of the other, or die."

The awakened spirit of the young soldier gleamed in his eyes, and his form dilated and became imposing under its influence. Hawk-eye, though too much accustomed to

Indian artifices not to forsee all the danger of the experiment, knew not well how to combat this sudden resolution. Perhaps there was something in the proposal that suited his own hardy nature, and that secret love of desperate adventure, which had increased with his daily 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 humour suddenly altered, and he lent himself to its execution.

"Come," he said, with a good humoured 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 nature 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 soon make a natural fool of you, and that, well, to your liking."

Duncan complied, and the Mohican, who

had been an attentive listener to the discourse, readily undertook the office. Long practised 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 a wish for amity. In short, he entirely sacrificed every appearance of the warrior, to the masquerade of a buffoon. Such exibitions 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 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. The parting between Munro and his young friend was more melancholy and feeling; still, the former submitted to the separation with an indifference that his warm and honest nature would never have permitted in a more healthful state of mind. The scout led Heyward aside, and acquainted him with his intention to leave the veteran in some safe encampment, in charge of Chingachgook, while he and Uncas pursued their enquiries among the people they had reason to believe were Delawares. Then renewing his cautions and advice, he concluded by saying, with a solemnity and warmth of feeling, with which Duncan was deeply touched—

"And now God bless you! You have shown a spirit that I like; for it is the gift of youth, more especially one of warm blood and a stout heart. But believe the warning of a man, who has reason to know all he says to be true. You will have occasion for your best manhood, and for a sharper wit than what is to be gathered in books, afore you out-do the cunning, or get the

better of the courage of a Mingo! God bless you! if the Hurons master your scalp, rely on the promise of one, who has two stout warriors to back him—They shall pay for their victory, with a life for every hair it holds! I say, young gentleman, may Providence bless your undertaking, which is altogether for good; and remember, that to outwit the knaves it is lawful to practise things that may not be naturally the gift of a white skin."

Duncan shook his worthy and reluctant associate warmly by the hand, once more recommended his aged friend to his care, and returning his good wishes, he motioned to David to proceed. Hawk-eye gazed after the high-spirited and adventurous 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. When the former found himself alone with

with one so simple, and so little qualified to render any assistance in desperate emergencies, he first began to be sensible of the difficulties of the task he had undertaken. The fading light increased the gloominess of the bleak and savage wilderness, that stretched so far on every side of him, and there was even a fearful character in the stillness of those little huts, that he knew were so abundantly peopled. It struck him, as he gazed at the admirable structures, and the wonderful precautions of their sagacious inmates, that even the brutes of these vast wilds were possessed of an instinct nearly commensurate with his own practised reason; and he could not reflect, without anxiety, on the unequal contest that he had so rashly courted. Then came the glowing image of Alice; her distress; her actual danger; and all the peril of his situation faded before her loveliness. Cheering David with his voice, he moved more swiftly onward, with the light and vigorous step of youth and enterprise.

After making nearly a semi-circle around the 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. A very natural sensation caused Duncan to hesitate a moment, unwilling to leave the cover of their bushy path, as a man pauses to collect his energies before he essays any hazardous experiment, in which he is secretly conscious they will all be needed. He profited by the halt, to gather such information as might be obtained from his short and hasty glances.

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 any order, and seemed to be

constructed with very little attention to their neatness or beauty. Indeed, so very inferior were they, in the two latter particulars, to the village Duncan had just seen, that he began to expect a second surprise, no less astonishing than the former. This expectation was in no degree diminished, when, by the doubtful twilight, he beheld twenty or thirty forms, rising alternately, 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. By the sudden and hasty glimpses that he caught of these figures, they seemed more like dark glancing spectres, or some other unearthly beings, than creatures fashioned with the ordinary and vulgar materials of flesh and blood. A gaunt, naked form, was seen, for a single instant, tossing its arms wildly in the air, and then the spot it had filled was vacant; the figure appearing, suddenly, in some other and distant place, or being succeeded by another, possessing the same mysterious character. David, observing that his companion

lingered, pursued the direction of his gaze, and in some measure recalled the recollection of Heyward, by speaking—

"There is much fruitful soil uncultivated here," he said; "and I may add, without the sinful leaven of self-commendation, that, since my short sojourn in these heathenish abodes, much good seed has been scattered by the way side."

"The tribes are fonder of the chase, than of the arts of men of labour," returned the unconscious Duncan, still gazing at the objects of his wonder.

"It is rather joy than labour 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, 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 inmost soul!"

"Of whom speak you?"

"Of those children of the devil, who waste their precious moments in yonder idle antics. Ah! the wholesome restraint of discipline is but little known among this self-abandoned people! In a country of birches, a rod is never seen; and it ought not to appear a marvel in my eyes, that the choicest blessings of Providence are wasted in such cries as these."

David closed his ears against the juvenile pack, whose yells just then rang shrilly through the forest; and Duncan, suffering his lip to curl in a proud smile, as in mockery at his own momentary superstition, said firmly—

"We will proceed."

Without removing the safeguards from his ears, the master of song complied, and together they pursued their way, boldly, towards what David was sometimes wont to call "the tents of the Philistines."

END OF VOL. II.

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