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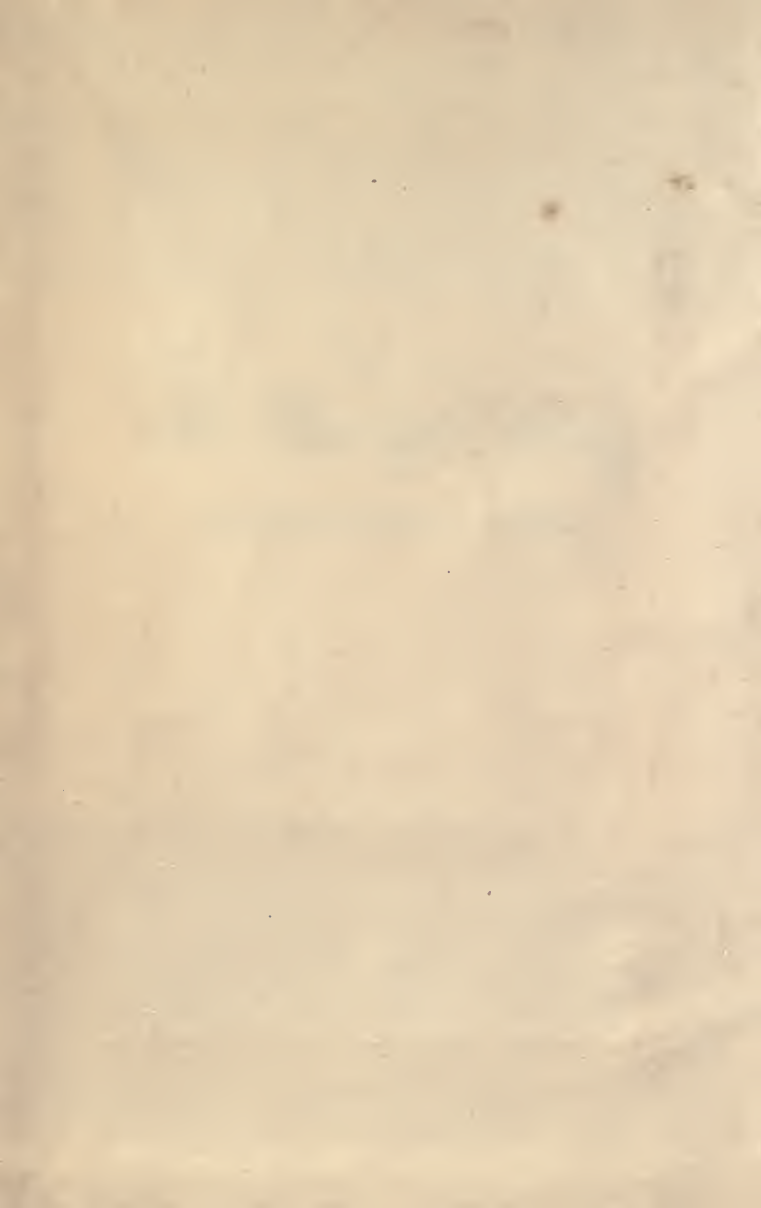
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No. 4.

ONE PENNY.

THE  
MOUNTAIN CAT,



JACKSON'S NOVELS

JAMES JACKSON.

2 Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.



# JACKSON'S NOVELS.

## MOUNTAIN CAT!

### CHAPTER I.

LOSE a brave man in a strange forest at night, his heart will grow still at the sounds that assail his ear, or at the thoughts that throng his brain.

Twice during the tramp Nightwell had tried to build a fire, but the winds destroyed his efforts before the blaze had time to make way among the damp burrs and damper leaves.

"I wish he was hyar, 'pon my word I do," growled Tarsus Nightwell. "Thar's no gal hid in these woods, and the Injuns are mighty scarce, too. It is a wild-goose chase, and he knowed it would be sich when he sent us off. Simon, thar's somethin' very deceitful in man."

But the man called Simon did not respond. He was feeling the trunk of a tree—running his hand over it as if hunting for something of value.

"Ye're right, Tarsus," he said, rising, with a sigh of chagrin. "The bark, the old moss sign, are agin' us. Thar's no north side to these trees."

"An' none to the wind," growled Nightwell. "Put up your hand an' try it, Simon. Why in other woods I could tell which way was which by the blowin' of the wind; but now tell if ye dare."

"I tried that twenty times to-night. This is an awful country! Everything contrary hyar. Why I believe the needle would stand straight on end and p'int to the sky."

"Ef thar is one over these infernal woods."

After a while the lost giants determined to push toward the river, which, from the sound of its cavernous dashings, might be five or six miles distant.

They started forward, refreshed by the rest, Tarsus Nightwell in advance. They trailed their long rifles at their sides, and kept their ears trained to catch the slightest suspicious sounds.

The journey through the nocturnal forest was necessarily slow. It led them over high hills and through rocky gorges, out of which naught but their experienced woodcraft brought them without broken limbs.

The sound of the Ausable grew more distinct, and it at last became evident that the spell of bewilderment had been broken.

They were in a country where the hemlocks were young, a good place for the shy deer, and their enemy, the ravenous wolf.

It was in this place that Nightwell, communing with his superstitious thoughts, started when Simon's hand fell upon his shoulder, and pressed his wet garments upon his skin. The giant began a sentence of expletives, which his companion quickly broke.

"Stop an' listen! By the holy stars we're followed!"

The superstitious hunter did hear a footstep among the young leaves which their own feet had lately passed.

"A wolf, mayhap, Simon. It's got the trot of that beast."

"But it's no wolf! I've been listenin' to it for miles. When we stop it stops. Thar! ye can't hear it now. What do I think it is? It's a man."

"Injun?"

"I don't know, because I can't see 'im."

"Now let's go on ag'in till I kin get the bang of the stop," said Nightwell. "I'll take the rear. Now push on."

The journey was resumed, with Simon in the van.

Tarsus Nightwell kept his ears strained to catch any sounds that might follow them.

He heard the footstep which had attracted Simon. It followed them in that peculiar dog-trot of the Indian; it was monotonous, (never varying, nor stopping, save when the giants stopped to listen.

It worked Nightwell into a passion of madness. He drew his knife and crouched in the path. Simon, not missing him for the roar of the Ausable, went on.

Panther-like, the giant waited for the mysterious trailer. It continued to approach, and in the very path which the hunters had made in the leaves.

Nightwell saw it not, but marked its approach by the footsteps. Slowly he drew the long knife back, and held his breath.

The trailer was before him—a figure darker than the ghostly hemlocks around.

The giant saw for a moment, and then, throwing his body, tiger-like, forward, struck with all his might.

But nothing opposed his knife, and the hunter went headlong across the trail to fall into a clump of bushes, from whose recesses he frightened a coyote with a loud cry.

For one moment he lay there, when, springing to his feet, he dashed through the forest, calling hastily for Simon Oldfoot.

He heard the call and halted, for the first time to discover that Nightwell was not at his heels.

"By the jumpin' jingo! the fool went back to fight it," he said. "He's runnin' as if the old Zach war at his heels."

Like a wild deer the giant was pushing through the Adirondack woods, breaking the young bushes down, and startling more than one animal from its covert.



He would have rushed past Simon, if that individual had not checked him.

"You'd run spang into the Ausable!" Simon said, harshly. "That isn't a sleepin' thing in these woods now—my head on that. What hev ye seen?"

"Don't ask me, Simon. It war nothing that hes blood. I struck with all my might, an' by the holy stars, I fell right through it! Come, Simon, let's get out of this devil-land. It war a ghost—thin au' cold as the air—fur my blood froze as I went through it."

Nightwell was the incarnation of fright, and Simon caught the disease.

He felt the chill of terror in his heart, and as he listened, not to the natural unterrifying roar of the river, but to the sepulchral drip, drip of the water through the trees, he became incapable of flight.

And, added to other sounds, came that awful trot of the mysterious trailer.

Not trotting, but walking rapidly through the Adirondack woods, was the "ghost" which had frightened the two men, who would have attacked an entire Indian village, or stood their ground against a pack of mountain wolves.

Of course it was not a spectre, but a person composed, like themselves, of flesh, blood, bone and sinew.

The easy swinging motion of the body, and the elastic step, were the causes of that step, so like the well-known dog-trot.

It was the figure of a boy that glided shadow-like under the rain-burdened branches of the trees—a boy clad in wild and fantastic garb of buckskin, with a cap of fur, and moccasins of elegant workmanship. The contour of face and figure was remarkably handsome, and the youth still in his sixteenth year, though strong and agile for one so young, would at any time attract attention.

And then he was a character in those dark tarns of the Adirondacks; his feet knew the trails that led to Whiteface's snowy crest, as his paddles knew the sleeping depths of Tupper Lake.

He carried a light rifle as a trail in his right hand. It was his only visible weapon; but he had others, as the reader shall see.

He wore in his fur cap a sprig of pine, which looked very like a plume, and at his side hung what appeared to be an oversized powder-horn, but which in reality was a bugle.

But all at once the boy stopped and listened. There were sounds in the woods ahead, besides those made by the Ausable.

He listened with a smile on his well-formed face, but did not pursue.

The boy did not pause till the sound of flying feet were lost, seemingly among the waves of the stormy stream.

Then a light laugh, though a strange one, rippled over his lips.

The boy reached the river at a point that called forth an exclamation of joy.

Securing his rifle to his back by means of a strap which had been coiled at his belt, he caught the slender trunk of a pine that venturesomely grew at the very edge of the precipice, and lowered himself into the chasm.

At last, by the aid of the natural stairway, the forest sprite reached the bottom, where the roar of the Ausable was almost deafening. The rocks at his feet were spray-washed and slippery, and the spectacle which the river possessed in the daytime was hidden in the darkness at night.

Hurrying along over the rocks with the sure steps of a person reared in these awful solitudes, the youth reached a place which, in daylight, would have revealed an opening like the forbidding mouth of a cavern.

This he entered like one in authority there, and soon a singular apartment was revealed by a fire that blazed on a stone floor.

Then the wood ghost stood revealed in the mellow light of a fine fire, and his features were brought into view.

Around him were bare walls, but not monotonous.

Some hand had covered them with singular pictures drawn with various coloured stones, with bows and arrows, and the heads of the animals and fowls then found in the Adirondack country. Further up than the tallest man could reach those grotesque pictures adorned the light stones, and the ceiling, fifty feet above the fire, was covered by the monster head of a demon flanked by bat-like wings, a picture truly hideous and frightening in its aspect.

No articles of furniture filled the subterranean abode.

A couch of skins directly beneath the drawing of rural peace and simplicity was the only object that suggested repose. Besides several guns, and a half-concealed provision-chest, it was the only thing there.

The boy, Piney Paul, seemed at once at home, and he suddenly heard the growl of a wolf-dog.

He turned quickly at the sound, and confronted a strongly-built Indian naked to the waist. He wore no plume, but his hair was long and lay on his massive shoulders.

"Nokomis!" cried Piney Paul, starting toward the Indian, "they are here! He has sent them from the city to find and to slay."

"Nokomis saw them in the forest," was the reply. "He came to tell the pine hunter that they cannot trail together."

The boy started at the Upas's words, and his eyes flashed.

"I know his gold will be far-reaching. It will, by foul means, buy the Indian over to him, but it cannot buy Nokomis, the last of his race!"

For a moment the Indian was silent. The workings of his countenance told that the youth's speech had affected him. A mental battle between good and evil was going on in his mind.

"Nokomis has said!" he spoke firmly, avoiding the boy's gaze.

"His gold has corrupted even you, then!" Piney Paul cried, drawing his figure to its full height, as with flashing eyes he darted forward until right before the redskin.

The youth's finger pointed overhead, and the Indian's eyes keenly followed it.

For one brief moment he looked up. In that short space of time his eyes took in the great devilish face and wings that covered the ceiling, and with a shriek of terror, he turned on his heel and fled from the cavern.

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## CHAPTER II.

"THAR's not the sign of a boat hereabouts, an' we've skarted the whole island. Nokomis and Red Loon will not stay much longer. What d'ye say to landin' hyar, anyhow?"

"Yes, land here, Tarsus. We have not been observed, I am sure."

"Observed? of course not. It was quite dark when we left the shore, an' the risin' moon will not betray us now. That island is a place of my own pickin', Mr. Crane. Pray call it Deer Island—the Injuns do—but they don't know why. Nokomis, who knows every foot of the surface, says he never saw a deer hyar. Guess they called it that because a deer never got hyar."

The man who smiled faintly at the hunter's last remark, was a person of two and thirty, with snaky eyes, and a cold, money-cunning face. He was fashionably dressed to be a habitue of the Adirondacks; there were rings of much value on his white hands, and a diamond pin on his bosom.

He sat in the stern of a long canoe, which, besides himself, carried the two hunters, Tarsus Nightwell and Simon Oldfoot.

Before the craft loomed the form of an island roughened with trees and deep indentations of coast—one of the picturesque spots of land that beautify the watery breast of Lake Tupper.

"They were to meet us at a certain place, I suppose," the men said, questioningly.

"Of course," answered Simon, "We've been hyar afore, an' kin find the place. Wonderful country, this."

"Nature is wild here," was the reply.

"An' the people, too."

"The Indians, you mean?"

"Everybody! Bless you, Mr. Crane, if you'd seen what Tarsus an' me hev seen since we've come into this country, you wouldn't be hyar to-night to meet two redskins in Deer Island."

The boat was moored to the body of a tree, which the violence of the mountain gales had hurled into the water, and the trio pushed into the interior of the island.

"They're thar," said Nightwell, suddenly throwing his voice over his

shoulder at his followers ; and a minute later five dark human figures stood amid the shadows that nestled on the centre of the island.

"This is our master," said Nightwell to the two Indian figures, waving his hands as he spoke toward Cecil Crane. "This is the white man with the gold. He will tell our red brethren what he wants. Nokomis and Red Loon must know that he never lies."

Without waiting for Nightwell to finish the introductory remarks, Cecil Crane extended his hands, which were taken by the stranger with expressive "ughs!" and "good brothers!"

"I came from the great city to see you," Cecil Crane said, as the Indians drew their figures to majestic height, and with arms folded upon brawny chests, waited for him to speak. "Long ago some evil hand stole a white child from the arms of its mother, and it was carried to this country. Somewhere that child is still hidden, watched by the person who stole it. It was seventeen years ago: We have heard that she has been seen in these mountains, and we have hunted for her ; but all trails have ended suddenly, as if the child had stepped into the water of this lake. I came to tell my red brethren that if they find the trail, and bring the white child to me, I will load them down with gold. My friends are here—they are skilful hunters ; they will trail with Red Loon and Nokomis."

Cecil Crane finished, and stepping back, awaited a reply.

The Indian called Red Loon, a little fellow, but possessed of much strength, broke the silence.

"Red Loon will trail the child for his pale brother," he said. "He must be well paid, for does not the chief take his life in his hands? There is one that will follow Red Loon. He will tear the white child from the Indian's arms, and send a bullet to his heart. The canoe-boy is a tiger."

Cecil Crane looked at his white companion.

"Whom does he mean?" he asked.

"I'll tell ye arter 'while. Don't let the boy bother you."

"Tell Red Loon, Mr. Crane, that you'll give him all he wants," said Oldfoot.

The last sentence, couched in a whisper, fell upon the white man's ears alone, and he assured the cavilling Indian that his trail should be plentifully sprinkled with gold coin.

The Indian's eyes flashed greedily.

"It is enough!" said Red Loon. "We will trail the man with the white girl. The woods and rivers of this land are as open ground to Red Loon and Nokomis. Will my white brother go back?"

"No!" said Cecil Crane, quickly. "Without the girl I will never return."

"Then you never go back!"

If a thunderbolt had dropped at the feet of the five the thrilling sentence would not have startled them less.

Half an hour later the island on the bosom of Lake Tupper was deserted by humanity.

Two boats were disappearing in the shadows that hugged the mainland. They contained Cecil Crane and his party, glad, no doubt, to escape from Deer Island with their lives.

In an opposite direction, an object like a small canoe was moving from the island, cutting the water into shining ripples, but making no noise to disturb the listening ear of nature.

The figure that occupied the middle of the barque was boyish in proportions. It was Piney Paul's.

He guided the boat toward a dark island-like object, which might have been visible to keen eyes from Deer Island. It lay some distance north of the place of the interrupted conference, and was not so large as it by several acres.

When the boat touched the most adventuresome shadows of the trees, the boy lifted the bugle to his lips and blew a blast that made the distant mountains ring with delightful echoes. He blew but once, when the bugle fell at his side, and he rested on his oars at the edge of the shade.

For several moments there was no response, and the boy manifesting fretful impatience, was lifting the bugle again, when a sound, like the plunge of some large animal into the water, caused him to desist.

Presently the ripples sent forth by the swimmer eddied to the boat, and then a dark, shaggy head was lifted from the lake, and two paws, drenched but large and powerful, rested on the gunwale.

Two paws, not hands, for the swimmer was a monster dog.

"So you heard me, Death?" the boy said, patting the dog familiarly on the head. "How is the master to-night, and the mistress, too? Do you want to rest before going back to tell them that I am alone? No, no! Your limbs are strong, and I am impatient. Go back now."

As the last words fell from Piney Paul's lips, he thrust a curiously-shaped stick between the dog's jaws, and with a look half human the paws left the boat and disappeared.

"I don't know whether I am doing right in trusting them," the boy said, watching the dog's head as it moved forward toward the island. "I am match enough for Cecil Crane and his hirelings. But the old hermit knows something about my life-hunt, and without that knowledge I may never succeed. Let him tell me the secret, and I'll snap my fingers at the foes of the Adirondacks."

A few minutes after the dog's departure a singular cry came from the shadows of the island, and the canoe instantly shot forward again.

Springing from the barque the boy alighted on land, and started into the interior of the island.

A few steps sufficed to bring him to a strange habitation built of pine boughs. It was scarcely large enough to comfortably accommodate a single person, however few his wants.

This habitation was revealed by a fire that blazed at the hovel-like door, and showed the being who stood there waiting to receive his visitor.

In appearance the ogre of the island tallied exactly with his surroundings. He was old, misshapen and dwarfish. His skin looked like burned parchment. Two little eyes literally burned in his head, and the lips, when parted, displayed two rows of wolf-like fangs. Half clad, with powerful chest hideously tattooed as if to frighten the timid, the ogre of the island confronted Piney Paul.

Standing beside this imp of the Adirondacks was the dog which had answered Piney Paul's signal—a brute of unusual proportions, ferocious in aspect, a Nero of his species.

"I am here!" Piney Paul said, halting at a respectful distance from the fiend of the island. "You have promised to tell me to-night. There are bad men on the trail. One man's gold has hired the Indian chiefs to hunt the hidden girl. They must not find! Tell me, and in return you shall know where the Englishman hid the gold, away back when England and America fought one another."

The ogre's eyes flashed with greed, showing that into his barbarous heart the love of gold had penetrated.

He came forward stealthily like the panther, with his eyes fixed, beast like upon the boy.

"I don't like those eyes—they may mean mischief," thought Piney Paul, involuntarily retreating a step.

"Tell me, Ocotoc," he said. "Be as good as your word. Where is the lost lodge of the Adirondacks? Again and again I have come here but to be put off. I believe you do not know anything about the hidden girl. If you do, why do you repeatedly break your oath-bound promise? I will never come here again."

The dwarf, almost crouching at the boy's very feet, replied with a laugh, devilish in sound, and the dog ground his teeth.

"The solitary boy disbelieves Ocotoc," he said, speaking for the first time, and in a squeaking tone. "He would not tell him where the yellow pebbles were if Ocotoc showed him the trail to the girl."

"Try me!" cried Piney Paul, eagerly. "Try me, if you dare!"

"Then tell Ocotoc first, and the trail will be made plain."

"No," said the boy. "I was to give my secret for yours—I want to have yours first—that was the bargain."

The Indian gritted his fangs, and looked at the dog, who caught his glance, and then fastened his eyes upon the boy.

"Pelosee," he said.

The next moment there sprung from the door of the hovel a being so striking in contrast to the ogre that Piney Paul uttered an exclamation of astonishment, and started back.

The new-comer upon the scene was an Indian girl, tall, beautiful, and symmetrical of limb. There was grace in her movements, and but for the

mad flashings of her deep-set eyes of darkness, she might have been taken for the angel of the isle.

The eyes of the astonished boy became riveted upon the fascinating enchantress. They did not return to Ocotoc, until his very life hung by a thread as slender as the spider's spinning.

Pelosee, as she was called, came forward, straight toward Piney Paul, watched by the ogre and his dog.

"Behold the lost girl!" cried Ocotoc, suddenly, waving his hand toward the siren. "She stands before the mountain boy. Ocotoc's secret lies at his feet. Now, where is the Englishman's gold?"

"What! THAT girl the inmate of the hidden lodge?" cried the mountain youth. "I did not come here to be blindly hoodwinked. Do you think I am a fool? That girl's skin is red! she is an Indian! I know she is not Cicely."

The forest girl, who had halted before Piney Paul, came forward again.

The mountain boy retreated for she seemed transformed into a veritable tigress.

"Now," cried Ocotoc, springing erect, "he believes it not! Pelosee! Death!"

Yet warned by the ogre's signal, Piney Paul's hasty preparations for defence were quickly dashed aside.

Simultaneously the maiden and the dog sprung upon him.

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### CHAPTER III.

"THERE is a place where the mountain wildcat will tell!" he said mysteriously and with rancour. "Ocotoc goes not there, for his limbs are weak and he might fall. Pelosee will take the boy thither, and he shall tell her where the gold is or—be left alone!"

The words "be left alone," seemed indicative of some terrible doom.

Pelosee started forward in the direction indicated by the Indian's finger, and Piney Paul found himself borne from the spot by his captor.

"If I live to leave the infernal island alive, you'll pay for this night's work!" he cried over his shoulder at the dwarf, whose look told how his heart was beating with fiendish delight.

He took but few steps in the natural gait though his feet touched the ground. One of Pelosee's hands gripped his arm like a shackle, and the fingers seemed to encircle the very bone itself.

Pelosee was not the only guard, for there trotted at his heels the dog, ready to rend him to pieces at the bidding of the island witch.

After awhile the party began to ascend the side of an acclivity. Pelosee

pushed her way through the small brush that fringed the foot of the rise, and entered the line of trees.

Piney Paul looked up and saw the moonlight far above him.

All at once Pelosee stopped and spoke to Death.

As if understanding her, the dog set up a peculiar barking, which was immediately answered by the distinct howls of wolves, which seemed to emanate from the bowels of the earth, but at a point still above them.

"Wolves, by hokey!" the mountain hermit involuntarily exclaimed. "They don't get this far up on the mainland mountains."

"Here they stay," Pelosee answered, with mysterious significance. "The little wood-cat will see."

A few steps further on brought them to one of the numerous hollows or basins about the scene. It was almost square, and seemed some dark cellar formed by the hands of mountain imps.

From its depths came a series of wolfish howls that rivalled Bedlam.

Piney Paul heard the ravenous animals fighting each other, and caught glimpses of brute figures in furious combat.

"Ocotoc caught the wild dogs when the snow covered them in the mountains," Pelosee said, suddenly a swering Piney Paul's mental question of "how came the wolves there?" "Pelosee feeds them when she likes; but for three nights they have not tasted meat."

Did the boy shudder? If he did not nothing could appal him.

"I guess I see through the matter," he said, looking up into the girl's face, now calm, and not stern. "I'm to go down among them if I don't tell you about the god."

"Thus says Ocotoc, the child of the Great Spirit."

"Or somebody else's devil!" said Piney Paul, madly. "See here, Pelosee, what have you got against me? Must you kill because HE says 'kill?' Gimminy and crickets! you might want help somewhere some o' these days. Besides, the white girl is poor; she is hunted by bad men; she is your sister, Pelosee, and mine, too."

The girl's eyes softened, and fell upon the mountain boy.

"Pelosee has no sister," she said. "The Mountain Cat wants to make her his squaw."

"You're getting jealous. It's all out o' place here. Pelosee, there is a land far from this island where there is an empty lodge. We would be happy there: No Ocotoc—no little hut of pine boughs."

The girl was silent.

"I would come back," said the boy, continuing quickly. "Go and tell Ocotoc that I was thrown to the wolves. He will believe."

"But the dog would say that Pelosee comes back with a forked tongue," said the Indian, hesitating.

Piney Paul looked at his old enemy, the dog.

The animal was lying on the ground, with his head over the rim of the basin, snarling at his wilder brethren, the wolves.



"He will never tell!" the boy cried. "You can tell Ocotoc that he fell in trying to bite me."

The next moment there was a loud cry of canine terror, and Death went headlong into the pit, sent to his doom by the young imp's foot.

Pelosee uttered an exclamation of horror, and Piney Paul found himself lifted from the ground.

"The Mountain Cat must follow the dog! But he shall have a knife to fight the wolves with. Pelosee was going to let him hunt the hidden girl; but now—now he must go down to the wolves—down to the mad mountain dogs!"

Piney Paul caught the glitter of a knife as it was thrust into his belt, and the next instant he was pushed over the edge of the basin.

For one moment, awful and brief, Pelosee held him in mid-air, and then he fell down—down amongst the wolves fighting over the quivering body of the dog Death!

Daylight, when it broke, found Cecil Crane and his followers pushing through a rough forest of pine and hemlock:

The party was guided by Red Loon, in whose tracks Nokomis, the Upas, trod with the noiseless tread of the panther.

Cecil Crane saw the Indian pointing to a large rock upon whose side the rays of the morning sun were beating. It seemed ablaze with burnished gold; but a second look revealed some rude lettering thereon, and, eager to see, Cecil Crane stepped aside to obtain a proper view.

The rock towered for thirty feet above him, and there upon its bleached surface was the following sentence;—

"DEATH AWAITS CECIL CRANE IN THE LAND OF THE HIDDEN LODGE!"

The Indians watched the workings of the white man's countenance as he read the words sculptured in the rock.

"Who did it?" he cried, pointing to the rock.

"Ask the Manitou," was the reply. "Red Loon and Nokomis do not know."

"Look hyar, Mr. Crane, we hev'n't got one dollar yet fur all our trudg-in' in this kentry. Hadn't you better pay up a little?"

Cecil Crane, in no good humour, flashed at the speaker like a heap of ignited powder. Tarsus Nightwell had applied the fire to his ire.

"You know the bargain!" he cried. "You need no money here. If you want to leave my employ you can go—both of you."

"No sech talk as that or thar'll be a row in camp. By the jumpin' jingo, we mean business! It looks like death to stay with you. We didn't know this when we come hyar—did we, Simon?"

"Not by a long shot," growled the second mutineer.

For a moment the white men glared into each other's eyes.

Within the last few hours Cecil Crane had witnessed enough to render him a desperate man. He was desperate.

"Say it quick!" blurted Tarsus. "Is it to be money or separation?!"

The giant looked at his knife that stuck in his heavy leathern belt, but quick and brief as the glance was, Cecil Crane caught it.

In an instant he took the rifle from Red Loon's hands, and Nightwell, as he started back with a curse, found the muzzle of the cocked weapon at his breast.

Simon Oldfoot stared at the thrilling tableau.

"Which will you do now—follow me henceforth without grumbling, or die where you stand?" cried Cecil Crane.

"What's the use of putting the question that way?" said the giant, whose face was white. "You've got the upper hand, Mr. Crane; but by the holy stars, if I hed you whar you hev me thar'll be somebody shot. I don't want to go out just yet, nor in this way, so we'll trump up matters in different shape."

"You're getting sensible now," said Crane, keeping the rifle at Nightwell's breast. "Down! and swear to follow me—no, to carry out your part of the agreement! Both of you down!"

The men did not hesitate, but fell upon their knees, and took the solemn oath which fell from Cecil Crane's lips.

The rifle was then returned to Red Loon, and without another word the party began to descend.

Cecil Crane had quelled a serious mutiny, but he had forced an oath upon two of the greatest vagabonds on earth.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

PELOSEE, the island witch, bounded down the mountain-side, after dropping Piney Paul into the pit of wolves.

She did not stay to see the ravenous beasts turn from Death to the rich morsel of brave humanity which she had dropped into their de .

The youth alighted sooner than he had hoped to, and fortunately on a spot unoccupied by the wolves, who at the further side of the pit were reuding the unfortunate island dog.

He drew his knife and awaited the merciless onslaught which he believed would soon follow. But in this he was disappointed.

The gaunt animals, six in number, seemed determined to finish Death, the dog, before paying their respects to the new-comer, and the mountain boy, hugging the blood-bespattered wall of the cavern, held his knife ready for the combat.

He saw the battle end over the last bone. He heard new growls of wolfish rage and bloodthirstiness, and saw mad eyes turn suddenly upon him.

He was discovered, and the fight for life—the forlorn fight as it terribly seemed—was about to begin!

He ran his left hand over the walls about and above him, with the hope that niches or steps might be found in the yielding rocks. Nor was the search fruitless, for his hands touched a shelf in the rock above, and the next moment he stood above the stony projection.

But this good fortune promised little hope, his feet but five feet from the floor; but with the desperation engendered by despair, Piney Paul fell to work on the wall with his knife. The rock yielded li' half-baked clay, and he drew himself up higher.

Now the wolves were at him; they sprung up and scraped the soles of his mocassins, while he held his breath and toiled for life.

Glancing down, he saw the eagerness of the bloodthirsty animals; they were contending with themselves for the right to leap at the escaping boy.

Holding with his left hand and feet to the niches, he toiled with his right as a human being never toiled before. He saw the stars far above, and the moonlight around the basin's rim seemed as far off as ever.

"Just let me out o' this!" he cried, as if appealing to the glittering orbs of night. "Just let me out o' this death-hole, an' the she-devil who put me here will know that I can punish. They are on the trail now, and I am here with six wolves ready to tear me limb from limb. Snakes an' witches! if I had a ladder!"

The last words had scarcely left the brave boy's lips, when there came a sharp sound, the snapping of steel, and the shining knife broken at the handle, fell at the feet of the wolves.

Piney Paul was yet several feet from the rim of the basin, and his last avenue of escape now suddenly had closed on him, and life seemed only to be measured by the limits of bodily endurance.

The wolves seemed to comprehend the situation, for their loud howls had ceased, and they were looking up at the mountain boy clinging to the rock wall.

"How long can I hang here?" Piney Paul asked himself. "I might hang for six hours if I was fresh; but I've worked hard to get here, and that's against me. But I'll hang till I drop—that's as certain as they are watching me down there."

He felt the body succumbing to the intense strain endured for an hour or more with great fortitude.

His arms grew heavy and painful from wrist to shoulder, and a numbness attacked his hands.

Piney Paul looked up imploringly to Heaven: He saw the dancing firmament, then the form of some overshadowing ogre seemed to darken the mouth of the pit, and a great arm came down after him.

He shrunk involuntarily from the vision, a loud shriek pealed from his throat, and his fingers left the rocky wall.

The wolves sprung to their feet and rushed forward; but the boy did not fall.

On the contrary, he was lifted from the basin by the hand which had appeared to him as the claw of some demon.

He lay white and motionless on the rocks at the edge of the wolves den, and a human figure bent over him.

It was Pelosee !

It was not for the purpose of snatching Piney Paul from the horrors of the basin that Pelosee had returned.

Having dropped her victim among the ravenous animals she fled down the mountain side, nor paused until she found herself amid the undergrowth at the base.

Then fear and terror took sudden possession of her heart. She was returning to Ocotoc without the dog Death !

For years the animal had guarded the island home ; he and the imp occupied the same cot ; they were inseparable.

What punishment would be visited upon her for the animal's death, Pelosee did not know ! But the thought of incurring Ocotoc's blind fury made her halt in the woods and hesitate. She would not face the ogre. Better flight from the island, or death, than that ordeal.

Pelosee turned and went back with the determination of casting herself into the pit and sharing the fate of Piney Paul and Death.

She reached the horrid den in time to see the brave boy reeling into insensibility, and about to give up the struggle which, for two terrible hours, he had carried on with such fortitude.

At sight of him a new desire—an eager resolution—flashed into her heart.

She would not die ! She would fly to the island, and that with the boy whom she had lately doomed.

Then her hand fell upon Piney Paul, and with her Amazonian strength she drew him out of the jaws of death and laid him down at the rim of the pit.

He lay like one dead in the weird moonlight that lay upon the crest of the mountain. His face was ashy, and his hands were torn by the rough edges of the niches.

But he was not dead ; Pelosee saw that the boy, exhausted by his long endurance, had fainted. She did not try to revive him there, but lifted him as he was and went down the mountain.

Once at the foot of the mountain, Pelosee discovered the path which led to the island hut, and set off through the pines in an almost opposite direction.

A short journey brought her to the waters of the lake, and, singular to say, to the very spot where the boat of the mountain boy was moored.

The Indian witch waded into the clear, cold water, and deposited her burden on the bottom of the craft, which she then loosened and took possession of herself.

A moment later the little craft was skimming over the water like a

swallow, the ripples, tipped with gold by the morning sun, dancing about the stern.

Piney Paul did not open his eyes until Pelosee, with vigorous strokes, was darting toward a little cove above which rose a mass of grey rocks.

At first he did not comprehend the situation, but when he saw the face above—when he remembered the dark hand which crept over the edge of the pit in that awful moment—he knew that he was rescued.

His stare was met by a smile that illumined Pelosee's face, and releasing one of the paddles, her hand passed gently over his forehead.

"Good! the mountain boy's head is not hot," she said, with joy. "The wolves will never get him now."

"But where are we going?" asked Paul. "Gimminy crickets! this beats my time all holler! Say, is this my boat?"

The girl nodded.

"Snakes and witches, what does it all mean? Why, we're near the mainland. Over there is Eagle Nest, standing up like a giant! We've got around Deer Island, where I met the hunters last night. You didn't go back to the old man. Afraid to go without the dog, eh?"

"Pelosee couldn't stand before Ocotoc and say that the big dog was dead," was the reply.

"He'd fume, I guess, over such a catastrophe," smiled Piney Paul.

"Where would the mountain boy like to go?" asked Pelosee, with a curious expression of countenance.

Piney Paul started at the interrogative.

"Where is the lost lodge? thither I would go."

"And the mountain boy would forget Pelosee, and go and live with the lost girl."

The island witch was jealous.

"But I will never forget you! Why your hand lifted me from the wolves, and I would be a dog if I did not love my red sister. Pelosee, I have spent five years of my life among these mountains hunting for the lost lodge. It is lost to me yet. But you know where the hidden wigwam is. Will you not tell me, and together we will go to it."

Pelosee's eyes flashed with delight.

"Will the white hunter go with Pelosee?" she cried.

"Yes!" was the answer. "Only put an end to my long trails. I will follow you to the lost lodge."

The boat touched the bank as Piney Paul uttered the last words and the occupants debarked.

"Sink the boat!" said Pelosee, and the craft was sent below the surface, there to remain until needed again.

A minute later the pair were pushing through the forest.

"Pelosee," said the boy, suddenly touching his guide's arm and causing her to halt, "we are travelling without arms of any kind. The lost home is far away, perhaps."

"It is far away," was the echo.

"My home is near," he said. "There are weapons there, and food, too, Pelosee."

The girl hesitated, and cast her eyes at the sun.

"We can go to the mountain boy's lodge," she said, "but we must not stay long. There are others on the trail."

"Yes, and we must outwit them. Now at last, Cecil Crane, I am on the right trail."

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## CHAPTER V.

ONE night, several days after the occurrence of the scenes recorded in the last chapter, the figure of a young girl appeared at the water's edge, and raised a little boat which had been concealed beneath the surface.

There was grace in the movements of the girlish figure, which was tastefully clad in comfortably-fitting forest garb. But the face was white; the long golden hair which fell upon the well-rounded shoulders and rested lightly there, contrasted well with the mild blue eyes that glowed beneath long silken lashes. The hair was not confined, and its only ornament was a tiny arrow tipped with bright feathers; the middle of the shaft was concealed by the flowing tresses, while the shining barb and beautiful feathers conspicuously showed their salient points.

The island beauty was not armed, as if no danger lurked around; and after bailing the boat, an operation which was quickly performed by dexterously tipping it, she stepped into the craft, and pulled for the mainland.

It was evident that the girl was keeping an appointed meeting, for her actions denoted this. But who could the lover be, in that wild, unfrequented chamber of nature? We shall see.

Shortly after the landing there came a sound from the shadows of the woods that brought a pleased smile to the girl's face. She did not fly, though the step was cautious, and full of stealth, but stood erect, with her eyes fixed upon the figure slowly approaching among the pines.

At last she was joined by a person to whom she held out her white hands, and her name, gently spoken by the new-comer, had a musical sound.

"Little Arrow is here. The Red Eagle knew that she would meet him and keep her word."

The speaker was a veritable Indian Apollo. He had not passed his eighteenth year. The hand that grasped the ornamented rifle which trailed at his side was womanish in creation. After the backwoods manner, he was fashionably dressed; his scalp-lock oiled like the hair of a dandy.

That the pair were lovers, notwithstanding the contrasting hue of skin,

was evident. The attitude in the moonlight, the deep look into each other's eyes, the meeting, told this.

"I will never turn back when I can meet you," the white girl said, looking up into the Indian's face. "What have you been doing away so long?"

"Red Eagle has been in the forest. He has seen figures there like the beings from Manitou-land. They build fires in the mountains, and talk in a language that Red Eagle does not understand."

The speaker held up to the girl a mocassin beaded curiously from heel to toe, and ornamented by fringe, which had met with rough usage in the wood.

Little Arrow greeted the object with an exclamation of wonder, and, taking it from Red Eagle's hand, held it up in the moonlight and admired it.

"Whose can it be?" she asked, with a glance at the Indian: "Was it worn to the rocks, or did the waters carry it to the place?"

"Where Red Eagle found it, there it was lost," was the reply. "There were tracks along the river. Little Arrow, the woods are full of strange people. They are not on the trail for any good. They will be here by and by."

"No, no!" cried the girl, shuddering, and her face grew pale. "Do not say that they will come to the island, Red Eagle. We are happy there."

"But it is not Little Arrow's home," the young Indian said. "She was not born there, but away to the south, where the great lodges of the pale-faces are."

"How do you know this? Who has been talking to Red Eagle in the forest?"

"No one has talked to him. His heart says that Little Arrow came from the south. Her face is white. The skin of Patagan is red."

"But I don't know anything about my girlhood," was the reply. "I have always lived here and with Patagan on the pretty island. I was born here, but why my face is white I don't know. Patagan does, perhaps, but I never bother him about it. I am happy here."

The sounds of footsteps and voices suddenly fell upon their ears. Red Eagle turned to the woods, and with flashing eyes listened for a moment like a tiger brought to bay.

"Back to the island," he whispered to his companion. "The panthers from the south are in the woods; they must not find the white bird here."

Little Arrow did not wait, but stepped into the canoe and pushed from the shore.

The shadows of the island pines stretched their grotesque arms far into the lake, and once among them the boat came to a halt, and Little Arrow turned her face toward the shore.

Red Eagle stood in the light until he saw the boat glide into the gloom,

when he caught a stout pine-bough and dexterously lifted his figure up into the dense foliage.

The young redskin had scarcely time to ensconce himself in the tree when five persons reached the water's edge.

He looked down through the pines and counted five men—three whites and two Indians.

"Well, here we are, and nothing yet," said one of the whites. "But there's an island that doesn't look big enough to hold a wigwam. Is this the end of this long trailing, Red Loon? I have trusted you and Nokomis. By the distant gods! if you trifle with me you shall be paid, not in gold, but in the coin which treachery merits!"

"The lost lodge is very near, and the white girl will soon be yours."

These words were intelligible to the occupant of the tree, and they made him start.

"See!" cried Red Loon, rising suddenly, and pointing with pride to the ground, as he looked up at Cecil Crane. "Whose feet makes the little tracks? Will the white man say now that the Indians guide him falsely?"

Eager to inspect the signs the girl-hunter stooped, while Red Loon was directing his companion's attention to the shadow of the island pines.

"Look, Nokomis! It is blacker than the shadows. We are at the end of the trail; the hidden lodge is there!"

The chief's hand was outstretched, and the Upas, bending eagerly forward with the flash of triumph and greed in his little eyes, was trying to make out the dark object on the water.

The next moment there was the sharp report of a rifle, and Red Loon staggered back and sunk upon his knees at the edge of the water.

With the echoes of that deadly shot the forest rung.

"It is the beginning of the end, and the end is not far away."

The voice started the occupants of the bank.

White grew the faces of Cecil Crane and the two giants, and Nokomis stood gazing upward, as if expecting his doom from the depths of the stars.

But the voice startled another person.

While the echoes still filled the forest, there came the horrified shriek of a human being from among the pine boughs, and a heavy body descended and dropped among the astonished group.

With exclamations of terror the four started back, while the wraith bounded up, and with a cry disappeared in the forest.

It was the Red Eagle.

Simultaneously with the shot that dropped the crested Mohican at the edge of the lake, the boat in the pinery shadows shot suddenly toward the island. It darted through the waters like an arrow, and soon disappeared.

Little Arrow's face was a strange admixture of fear and anxiety.

"They do not want the girl with the one mocassin," she said, glancing



At the beautiful shoe that lay at her feet. "For me they come; they want to take me from Patagan, and to tear Red Eagle away."

As the white girl spoke there came the dip of oars from the left, and she beheld a canoe gliding silently and swiftly through the moonlight toward her.

Its approach had been noiseless and certain, and Little Arrow, when she saw it, uttered a cry of alarm.

She saw the single figure that bent to the paddles, saw that the person was one of her own sex, and, instead of being reassured, became yet more alarmed.

It was in vain that the frightened girl threw all her strength into the task of propelling the canoe; the new craft gained rapidly upon her, and at last she saw the inutility of an attempt to escape.

The pursuing boat shot swiftly alongside, and its occupant leaned over and clutched Little Arrow's right arm!

The white maiden submitted.

For many moments the ogre's child looked curiously into the face of her captive.

It seemed the hawk looking at the dove in its talons.

"Where is the lodge?" asked Pelosee, suddenly.

Little Arrow sent a glance full of fear toward the island, which now lay between them and the scene of the love meeting.

"Is it there?" asked the island witch, noting the rapid glance. "Pelosee knew it was near the big cave. Is it yonder, white girl?"

"Why do you want to know?" asked Little Arrow. "Are you the owner of this?"

She was holding the mocassin up to Pelosee.

"It is mine!" was the cry that greeted the shoe. "Pelosee lost it with the mountain boy at the loud water."

"The mountain boy!" echoed the white captive. "Red Eagle found it at the waterfall."

The mocassin was snatched from Little Arrow's hand and flung into the bottom of Pelosee's canoe.

"Come!" said the giantess. "White girl must go with Pelosee."

But the captive shrunk back shudderingly.

The Indian girl's gripe tightened on her arm.

"Must go!" Pelosee's eyes flashed madly. "The mountain boy has hunted long for the white girl."

Little Arrow could not resist; she was powerless in the hands of Ocotoc's princess.

Before she could remonstrate she was lifted from the boat and placed before the Indian girl, whose terrible eyes almost made her cower at her feet.

Pelosee left the little boat where she had relieved it of its fair, timid occupant.

She then, with her own paddles, put about and started for the mainland, which was now cast in shadow by the descent of the moon.

Pelosee ran the boat against the grassy bank and the boat remained moored there. Then the island witch motioned her captive to follow her, and the two stepped upon the bank.

"To the white hunter now!" said Pelosee. "But, stay! Does the white girl love the little mountain boy?"

"What mountain boy?" she asked. "Little Arrow knows no young man but the Red Eagle."

"Then she will not love the young cat of the pines?"

"She loves Red Eagle."

Pelosee uttered a cry of joy.

She lifted her captive from the ground, and held her out at arm's length in an outburst of admiration, as the child holds her doll.

"Pelosee and Little Arrow will be sisters!" she cried. "But if she smiles upon the Mountain Cat, then to her heart reddens the knife of Ocotoc's child."

Little Arrow shuddered at the shining blade which was flashed in her face.

"Pelosee need not fear. Red Eagle is my warrior."

Was that a step that startled the two girls? They heard the sound like the snapping of a twig, and the next instant, with a cry of joy, Little Arrow wrenched herself from Pelosee's grasp, and sprung toward a crouching figure that hugged the trunk of a pine several feet away.

As she left the witch's side, the figure at the tree rose, and caught her on an arm hastily flung out, and Pelosee found herself almost hurled to the ground.

With a cry of rage the scarlet captor regained her feet, and bounded forward again, but the person who held Little Arrow so securely, pushed her back once more.

The giantess had found her match in strength.

Three times the maddened Indian threw herself upon her savage-like antagonist, for the purpose of rescuing her captive, but by a dexterous movement on his part, her knife was knocked from her hand, and sent spinning into the depths of the lake.

At last the unknown assumed the offensive, and thrust Pelosee to the water's edge. She saw him then, an athletic young Indian, and his eyes seemed to emit sparks of fire.

Strength was his passion. He forced her feet into the water, and then flung her over the boat headlong into the lake!

Having performed this feat, he turned to the white girl with a laugh of victory, and the two darted into the forest.

Pelosee, after a moment's submersion, came to the surface and seized the canoe, by the aid of which she speedily gained the shore.

But her foe and the late captive were gone.

That night, upon the shore of the mountain-locked lake, another obstacle—the revenge of a baffled woman—was flung upon the trail of Piney Paul, the young hermit.

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## CHAPTER VI.

THE shooting of the Red Loon, so unexpected and mysterious, threw consternation into the ranks of Cecil Crane's party.

The dropping of Red Eagle from the pines and his rapid flight into the forest still further startled them.

At the edge of the lake lay the prostrated red-man. The wild rolling of his eyes told his companions that life still remained, and now and then a convulsive movement bathed one red arm in the lake.

Crane moved toward the stricken chief, who recognised him as he knelt at his side.

"Does Red Loon know who shot him?" the white man asked.

The Indian ground his teeth.

"It was the Mountain Cat, who is on the white man's trail," he said, between his gasps.

"Mountain Cat, or not, I'm not afraid of him," said Cecil Crane. "Did I come to this accursed island to be beaten back without the object of my search? Where is the slayer? I wish he were here now."

The last sentence was echoed over the sleeping water, and the next moment a figure with human outlines fell from the tree.

"I am here, Cecil Crane!" cried the new-comer. "We were destined to meet in these fastnesses, and, by the holy stars, we might as well meet here!"

Unable to speak, Cecil Crane gazed at the boyish figure that stood before him with the moonlight full upon the piney plume and close-fitting garb of buckskin.

"I am here! What have you got to say about it?"

Then the man found his tongue.

"I want you to quit your following me with your accursed threatenings!" he cried, his evil eyes flashing at the boy, who was none other than Piney Paul.

"Threatenings!" was the echo, and the boy's glance went to the Mohican lying motionless and death-like now at the water. "Is that the result of threats?" he cried, triumphantly. "Didn't you hear your doom on the island, Cecil Crane? Witches and snakes! you will soon be convinced that I do not lie!"

"Curse you!" cried Cecil Crane, striding forward; but a rifle was suddenly lifted before him. "We'll end the matter here—yes, here! where your cowardly bullet killed my red friend"

But the maddened man was suddenly halted by the muzzle of the rifle which was thrust into his face.

"Stand! or by the living stars I'll let the moonlight through you! No trifling here—I didn't come for that."

"Nor I—so we agree on that score. Who are you, anyhow?"

"One who will not let you find the lost lodge."

Cecil Crane drew back. There seemed prophecy in the determined voice and visage before him.

Piney Paul stood before him with no thought of retreat.

All at once there was a sound that startled the antagonists on the shore of the lake. It was the twang of a bow-string, and it came from the forest into which Cecil Crane's companions had retreated.

Fast upon it came a loud cry from Piney Paul, and dropping the rifle he staggered back, with a barbed and feathered shaft sticking through his arm!

Cecil Crane sprung upon him with an exclamation of tigerish rage and triumph, and before the boy could draw the knife hidden beneath his buckskin jacket, he held him by the throat, and pushed him helplessly back.

"When you follow me again it will not be in the flesh!" the man hissed. "I care not to know who you are now; no one will seek to know when I am through with you. Here he is, my good fellows; the arrow went clear through his arm. Did Nokomis try to wing the eagle, or to kill him?"

Nokomis, the Upas, held a bow in his red hands, and his eyes rested upon Piney Paul with much malignance.

He suddenly jerked Piney Paul upright, and flung him against a pine, holding him the while. Then he caught the shaft, which had passed entirely through the arm, and gave it a hard wrench. But the arrow, instead of coming out, snapped with a click, and left the barb in the boy's flesh.

There was no cry of pain at this exhibition of brutality. Piney Paul's eyes glared madly at his tormentor, but his lips, white and clenched, did not utter a word.

"Hold him a moment, Nokomis," said the villain, suddenly, as he turned upon the Indian, and thrust the boy toward him.

The next moment Piney Paul was in the hands of his red betrayer.

"Now we'll finish the work," said Cecil Craue, as he picked up the boy's rifle. "We'll get rid of one imp who might do us an amount of injury. Hold him out, now, Nokomis. I won't touch you. One blow will finish the wild-cat."

Piney Paul looked at the uplifted rifle without a move. Then he glanced at Nokomis, and saw a strange light flash in his eyes.

"The wolves!" he said to the Upas. "Has Nokomis forgotten?"

Nokomis, with the suddenness of thought, jerked the boy from beneath the uplifted weapon.

"The boy belongs to Nokomis! His arrow is in his arm."

Cecil Crane uttered an oath and dropped the rifle.

"Yours by the law of the woods, I suppose; but will not Nokomis *SELL* the boy?"

The reply did not come in words. Nokomis released Piney Paul, who stepped from his side.

"Go!" was the whispered command from the Indian's lips. "Nokomis has not forgotten the wolves."

Piney Paul did not wait to note the result of the Indian's quarrel with his employer, but quitted the scene and bouded through the great forest.

The events of the last hour had been so startling as to appear incredible. Concealed in the pine, he had witnessed the meeting of Red Eagle and the white girl of the island, and every word of theirs had fallen upon his ears.

The sight of Little Arrow had opened a new revelation to him. The hidden lodge sought so long was not a myth; he felt that he had looked upon its occupant in the person of the fair white girl, whose boat had glided to the shadows that hung around the distant island.

Pelosee had not guided him wrongly. Her knowledge of the lost wigwam had not deceived him.

With such thoughts as these the boy burst through the woods with the stubborn shaft-stalk in his flesh. He had no weapon but the concealed knife in his bosom.

All at once there came a whirring sound of a missile flying through the air, and a knife was buried in the tree against which he stood.

Starting forward Piney Paul stood face to face with Pelosee. The garments of the Indian girl were dragged and soiled; the sleeve of her jacket was ripped from shoulder to elbow, and displayed the naked arm.

"What has happened?" cried the startled boy. "Let me know all about it, Pelosee, and why you left the spot where you were to wait for me? The boat is gone. Did you take it?"

Pelosee made no reply, but with a display of strength she sprang to the tree, and drew the deeply-buried knife from the wood.

She then seized our hero's arm, and drew him to a spot upon which the starlight uninterruptedly fell.

"See!" she cried, fiendishly, thrusting the blade before his face. "It is red! red! Let Pelosee have the white boy's hand. Does he not feel the blood on the wood and the iron?"

A shudder crept to Piney Paul's heart.

"But the blood—how came it here?" he said. "Who did you meet in the forest?"

"Pelosee saw the flower of the hidden lodge. She followed her in her boat and caught her. But a young Indian tore her from Pelosee and threw Ocotoc's child into the lake. They fled together, but Pelosee followed,

swearing to have the blood of both, for did not the wigwam girl go with the Indian when Pelosee was taking her to the Mountain Cat?"

"No! you did not come up with them and kill Cicely?" jumping at the conclusion of the girl's narration. "A bear! thank God, it was not Cicely!"

"A big bear!" was the reply, and the girl's eyes flashed anew. "If he had not stopped Pelosee, it would have been the rose."

Piney Paul drew a breath of relief, but his eyes flashed madly as he cried—

"You have saved my life! I owe you much; but you must not touch HER. I will kill the person who harms her, though it be even you!"

Pelosee's reply was a scornful and derisive laugh.

"I mean business," said the boy. "Try it on, if you doubt it."

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## CHAPTER VII.

"AFFAIRS would wear a different aspect if you hadn't pushed my gun down when I had Cecil Crane covered on the log," continued Piney Paul.

"Where's your rifle?"

"Broken where the bear lies dead. And where is the Mountain Cat's gun?" she asked.

"Where I met the five traitors and shot Red Loon."

The twain, united again, left the spot, and found the bear lying on the field of battle quite dead.

At the halt made at the carcass, the girl described the battle to Piney Paul, and picked up her rifle.

The boy took the weapon and eyed it for a moment.

"See!" he cried, as his face lit up with hope, "there's life in the gun yet. Gimminy! this is luck!"

Pelosee produced a strong cord made from twisted sinews, and, seating herself upon the carcass of the bear, Piney Paul mended the weapon.

"There!" he said at last, holding the gun up to the girl. "Who shall carry it—you or I?"

"The Mountain Cat mended it, and he shall carry it."

Piney Paul, followed by Pelosee, resumed the trail with a light heart, now that he had a weapon.

It soon became evident that the young Mohican was not going to return Little Arrow to the island. He could tear her from Patagan with comparative ease, but as it was, loose in the forest and with a determination to keep the girl for himself, the arts of the Indian would be used for that purpose.

Red Eagle seemed to be flying to some place beyond the Adirondacks.

"Stop!" said Paul, pausing, and laying his hand on the arm of the eager Pelosee. "We must stop here till morning. Red Eagle is running as if all the imps on earth were reaching for his scalp-lock."

"Pelosee will not rest her foot here!" she said, pointing toward the gloom that gathered ahead.

"You can't see anything out there if your eyes are extra good. They must rest sometimes, they will not run always."

"While we trail they rest, and while we rest they fly."

"There's something in that, I admit," the boy said. "Do you hear the river?"

"It is the crazy water," she said. "Red Eagle and his girl cannot cross."

"But they can follow the stream. We stop here."

Pelosee would not listen, and stubbornly started forward.

"You will leave me?" he said.

"Pelosee's eyes are like the owl's. The forest trails are hers."

"It's no use to reason with you, I guess. You can go! But stay one moment. What if you find them?"

"Pelosee will tell the Mountain Cat; but not now."

"You mean mischief. You are mad at Cicely. What will you do?"

He laid his hand menacingly on the rifle, which stood against a tree.

There was no reply, for Pelosee sprung away, and fled like a startled fawn through the forest.

"I'm alone now, and in a strange land, but there's no turning back," said the mountain boy. "Cicely is somewhere ahead, and everybody in these woods lift hands against me. It's a bad condition of affairs, but I'll make it look better. I will, sure as shooting!"

He did not follow the deserting witch; the shadows had already hidden her form; he ceased to hear her feet crushing the pine cones.

"To the river," he said. "It isn't far away, and I'll be that far advanced when daylight comes."

He soon stood upon the bank of a river whose waters, unseen in the night, filled his ears with the sound of their dashing.

"I'll take the old bed to-night," he said, as he drew himself up into the recesses of a pine. "By and by I'll get out of this country—that is if I get Cicely."

He heard a voice.

"Ye'll rouse the very wildcats by yer hollering," said the unseen speaker. "I'm comin' as fast as I kin. Whar are yer, Crane? an' warn't ye speakin' to somebody awhile back?"

"Right here I am!" came the response: "Take my arm and pull me out. There! another minute and I would have been gone. Speaking to somebody, Tarsus? Yes! Call Nokomis and Simon down here. That infernal boy is hereabouts."

"But it is dark and dangerous!" was the response

“ He couldn’t have been ten feet away when you came. **Look!** what is that against that rock ? ”

Cecil Crane pointed toward the only rock visible by its white surface in the gorge.

“ The brat, by hokey ! ” cried Nightwell, starting forward.

But a wild shout rung in his ears, and the dark figure against the rock sprang past him and pushed Cecil Crane over the slippery stones.

With a hurried glance at the form struggling in the whitened water, Nightwell sprang forward and flung himself upon Piney Paul.

The boy met the giant with great bravery.

His rifle was quickly uplifted, and with all his might he struck at his antagonist.

He slipped and fell backward upon the rocks.

Stunned by the fall, Nightwell’s gripe loosened, and Piney Paul slid away, leaving the man motionless at the edge of the water.

“ I believe he’s dead ! ” the boy exclaimed, looking at him. “ If so, I have one enemy the less. Out o’ this, Piney Paul, or there’ll be two more to grapple with. ”

A splash in the water that shut off the shore along the cliff, made him turn quickly, and he saw half a dozen dark figures at his side.

“ Indians, by crickets ! ” he cried, starting from the new foe, and lifting his rifle.

Then the spot resounded with loud cries, and a shower of arrows fell around the flying boy, who had shot one of his assailants. He hastened down the stream as fast as the rocks permitted.

The hunters of Nokomis were close upon him, now and then sending a shaft forward with the hope of arresting the flight of the foe.

“ Where’s the place that brought me down ? ” muttered Piney Paul.

“ If I could find that, there’d be a chance to get above those redskins. Ha ! here it is, by my life ! ”

He stopped, and throwing the gun upon his back drew himself upon the rocks by means of heavy vines.

Up he slowly worked his way. The presence of the Indians in the gorge was manifest by certain sounds that could not mislead the fugitive.

“ Up to the woods, ” said an Indian. “ Nokomis, the last Upas dog, is up among the trees ; the pale-face fled no further down, for see, the water would be above him. There is no trail. He has crept up the vines. ”

The Indian’s words thrust the peril of a new danger upon the boy. The band were going to ascend to the forest above them by the vines in which he had taken refuge.

Skilfully the redskin made his way upward over the vines and nearer and nearer to the boy.

Piney Paul noted his progress by the shaking of the vine ; but the Indian passed the young red-slayer to the right, though so near that he could have been struck with a knife.



Once upon the cliff, the Indian told his companions that the vines were safe for scaling purposes, and the ascent of the others began.

One by one they passed the boy's place of concealment.

"Eighteen," he murmured, with a smile, as the last one passed. "In the woods above they'll look for me, and they'll find me too, I reckon."

His last sentence was almost cut short by sounds that thrilled him to the marrow. These sounds were the blows of a tomahawk, that sent a quiver through the vines.

"The confounded redskin is cutting the vine away, and I'll have to go down with it when it falls."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

NOT far from the scene of the thrilling incident just narrated, and listening to the blows of the hatchet, stood two persons.

Hand in hand they stood in the shadows of the cliffs and the trees, and the light of the moon fell at their feet, but did not expose their figures.

One of the listeners was an Indian athlete, youthful, and naked to the waist. His companion was a young white girl, beautiful but pale.

Red Eagle and Little Arrow!

"Red Eagle knows not where to go," he said: "Better back to Patagan."

The girl gave him an anxious look.

"But the hunters are between us," she said.

Red Eagle drew his tomahawk.

"I am not a coward!" he cried. "Back to the island, if the forest swarms with hunters! Red Eagle will face the old man and tell him that he loves Little Arrow! that he fled with her but to save her."

The lost girl crept trustingly to the young redskin's side.

"I will follow," she said, courageously.

They resolved to return to the island and live out the love of their lives.

Tramp! tramp! through the forest came the sounds of feet, that startled the lovers, and Red Eagle drew the girl further into the shadows.

"The hunters of Nokomis," he whispered.

Gradually they passed from sight and sound, and Cicely was thankful.

Suddenly there appeared in the wake of the hunters a figure which at first resembled a panther, but larger than that animal.—It stooped over the fresh trail like an experienced hunter, but rose erect a few feet from the fugitives.

"They go down the river," said the voice of the trailer. "Do they follow the white girl and her red lover, or are they the Indians who hunt the Upas?"

Cicely heard the voice and started from the sound. At the same time she recognised the speaker—and so did Red Eagle.

Standing in the edge of the moonlight, erect and statue-like, appeared the person whose dark eyes the girl dreaded to encounter—Pelosée!

The witch was still on her trail, and a long blade glistened in her hand.

Noiselessly Red Eagle dropped Cicely's arm. He held a knife in his hand as if about to slay the huntress.

Cicely did not restrain him. He darted forward with a cougar-like spring before she could have lifted a hand for that purpose.

The distance had not been miscalculated, for, with a startling cry, Pelosée fell back beneath the force of the plunge. She staggered toward the water, with the hand of Red Eagle at her throat. But at last she brought her prodigious strength into full play, and flung the Mohican aside, when she cleared the distance between him and Cicely with a single bound.

Red Eagle did not rise from the ground, and the witch flew at Cicely.

"Before the eyes of the Mountain Cat Pelosée will take your life!" was her exulting cry.

She carried rather than led Cicely to the spot where in the moonlight the Mohican lay, with his scalp-lock on the ground.

"He has gone to Watchemenetoc!" said Pelosée savagely.

"No! no!" cried Cicely in anguish, as she was permitted to kneel over the Indian, whose eyes, rolling wildly, became fixed, and regarded her with a soft expression. "Red Eagle is not dead—he will not die because Pelosée struck him!"

"Red Eagle will soon be on the never-ending trail," came the reply from the prostrate Indian. "The knife of the witch found his life lodge. Little Arrow will live for the young white hunter now. He hunts her to take her to the home from which Patagan stole her long ago."

Cicely started.

"I have always been Patagan's child!"

The dying Indian slowly shook his head.

"No! The lost lodge is to the south. The boy would take her back to the lodge."

The death-rattle followed, and he died with his eyes fixed on Cicely!

"The long trail," said Pelosée, glancing significantly at the young chief.

"Come, we must go."

"Go! whither?" Cicely rose, and faced the scarlet witch.

"To the mountain boy," was the reply.

"I am ready now. He wants to take me back to the long-lost home."

Pelosée held Cicely at arm's length, and gazed strangely into her face.

"The little Mountain Cat would take the white girl to the lost wigwam and would make love to her there!" she said, fiendishly. "But the knife shines between her and that wigwam. It is Pelosée who talks thus to the pale flower!"

"You would not kill me, Pelosée?" she said, laying her hand on the jealous one's arm. "We should be sisters—not enemies."

"The Mountain Cat belongs to Pelosée! She saved him from wolves."

Cicely did not reply, but wished herself far from the vixen's presence.

"Pelosee knows where the boy is," the red girl said suddenly. "The vines went down with him when the Brown Ptarmigan cut them away."

The captive looked up into the speaker's face, at a loss to understand her. A moment later the twain were hastening from the spot.

"There was too much stuff around me," said Piney Paul, smiling at his ludicrous situation. "Big fishes! I thought I would never stop. Over and over I went, until plump! splash! right into the water. Now I'm for getting out o' this. Nobody about, I guess. I wonder if this gorge doesn't end somewhere? I'll try it, at any rate."

He started down the ravine for the purpose of finding a stairway to the vines overhead.

Piney Paul at last discovered that the stream grew wider as he advanced, and he emerged unexpectedly from the gorge upon a level shore.

"Let me see," he said, after a moment's pause. "Nokomis is hunted; the Indians want him. I am hunted; so are Cicely and the young red-skin. Pelosee is a hunter, too—why we're hunting one another!"

Here a dark object lying in the moonlight to his left attracted him.

A quick step brought him to the corpse of the Red Eagle.

"Here's a go!" he cried. "I'd like to know who did this!"

He looked at a footprint in the yielding earth, and then started up.

"Back it is!" cried the boy, discovering the trail of the witch and her captive. "They've gone toward the gorge. Let them keep in the moonlight and I can track them."

With the first beams of the morning light he cast his eyes across the stream and discovered the hunters of Nokomis, the stealthy eighteen. They formed a circle round a scarlet figure easily recognisable as Nokomis.

Piney Paul raised his rifle and looked along the barrel.

"The fellow who cut the vines down is there," he murmured. "Good-bye, Mr. Ptarmigan. You've cut your last vine off, I reckon."

A moment's silence followed the boy's words—and then the crack of the rifle, which was a death-shot for the Brown Ptarmigan, who went backward with a loud cry, and fell at the feet of the hunted Upas!

"Run, Nokomis, run!" shouted Piney Paul, showing himself.

Like a startled deer Nokomis dashed through the ranks of his hunters, and fled like an arrow.

"One good turn deserves another," said the boy. "We're square now, Nokomis!"

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## CHAPTER IX.

WHAT motive controlled Cecil Crane's evil spirit? Why did he leave a luxurious home in New York city that he might unearth the hidden abode of the young Red Eagle's white love?

Gold!

"Yonder at last!" he said, halting suddenly, as the glimmer of a fire greeted his vision. "I thought I must be near the spot where I saw the Indian girl yesterday. If the other is only there how lucky I will call myself! Caution! that's the word."

The light increased in size and intensity as the man advanced, and a long crawl through the woods brought him to a spot from whence the occupants of the little camp were visible.

Seated on a log, and by the light of a fire, was a young white girl, whose garments revealed a story of forest life, and of long absence from the homes of her race. She was very beautiful to the solitary watcher, whose eyes flashed madly like those of the tiger.

For several minutes the white hunter fastened his eyes on the fair girl, regardless of the large Indian girl who was preparing a mountain grouse.

He hunted Cicely, not Pelosee; he wanted the white girl, but if the red one interfered he would drive a knife to her heart.

Cicely was watching Pelosee roasting the grouse, and did not catch a sound that betrayed the spoiler's approach. At last Cecil Crane crouched the ground, until he was in the girl's shadow, thrown by the firelight.

Her slender fingers were toying with her golden locks, when, with a half-wolfish cry which he could not suppress, the eager crawler sprang forward and seized his prey!

Lifted from the log by Cecil Crane, she uttered a shriek, which caused Pelosee to leave her culinary operations and stand erect. The island witch took in the situation at a glance, and started forward upon the impulse of the moment. But the hunter jerking the knife from between his teeth, held it so menacingly near Cicely's heart that she stopped abruptly.

"Stand where you are, red witch!" cried Cecil Crane. "I want no intermeddling. Girl," to Cicely, "You don't know me?"

"I know you were hunting for me," was the reply. "Why am I hunted like a wolf? You know, and will you not tell me?"

"My name is Cecil Crane. A long time ago a man died in New York, and left a great deal of property to a little girl just out of her cradle. She was not his child, but she was near to him. He said in his will that if, at the age of fifteen, that heiress was not in the city to claim the estate, it should pass to his brother's son. Well, the girl did not appear when she became fifteen, and the nephew came into possession of the estate, which to-day is a vast one even in that rich city. Do you want to know why she never appeared? Shortly after the opening of the will, an Indian was seen prowling around her home some twenty miles from the city, and one night both he and the child disappeared.

"The years passed away and the little girl became lost to the memory of the few who knew her. But at last strange stories came to the cities about a white person among these mountains—a girl who lived with an old Indian. The tales sounded like myths, but I believed them. I came

here to prove them, and I know now that you are the girl who was carried away by the Indian. I am the old man's nephew, and, curse you, your finding your way back would make me a beggar! I'm going to drive this knife clear through your heart! For that purpose I came, at the cost of many thousands to get here."

Cicely uttered a cry of horror, and strove to break from his grasp.

"When did the red trollop leave?" he suddenly asked, noticing that Pelosee had mysteriously and noiselessly disappeared.

He left the hut and took Cicely into the woods.

All at once there came a startled cry from the shaded forest depths, and then the sound of some one running deeper into the gloom. Suddenly the feet of the unseen neared the fire, and all at once came into the light.

It was Cecil Crane, and alone!

There were footsteps behind him, and he caught sight of a female figure clad in a fantastic Indian dress. He started forward again, when the crack of a rifle echoed clear and shrilly through the forest aisles.

Cecil Crane fell backward to the very edge of the fire to rise no more!

"I told him the wolves should quarrel over his carcass!" cried Piney Paul, bounding into the firelight. He turned quickly to greet the springing form of Pelosee, but stopped with a cry of horror at the burden she was carrying in her arms.

"My God! is this the end of the trail? Tell me that Cicely is not dead! If she is, I wish Cecil Crane had a thousand lives that I might take them every one!"

Pelosee did not reply, but laid Cicely, or Little Arrow, at Piney Paul's feet, and then looked up with the unmistakable triumph of jealousy in her sparkling eyes!

"Who did this,—you or Cecil Crane!" he cried, glancing at Pelosee:

"The man you shot! he stabbed her in the forest."

He lifted Cicely's body from the ground, then turned away, followed by the evil-minded Pelosee.

They went to the cave, and to his intense relief he found that Cicely breathed—that she had been stabbed in the arm only. He laid her on a couch, and watched her unceasingly. He resolved that he would not leave her until he had placed her in possession of her rights in New York.

Pelosee had followed him to the cave, and noticed with no sign of joy Cicely's return to consciousness and health, and then she disappeared, leaving the youthful twain its sole occupants.

All at once, a cry that caused the boy to leap to his feet, came into the cavern.

"Paul," said Cicely, in a whisper "there is a person in yon shadow. I am not feverish now. I have been awake all the time."

The boy turned toward the dark spot, but he had not advanced far before a figure stepped from the shadows, and with flashing eyes and a knife stood before him.

It was Pelosee ! and the presence of the knife betrayed her intentions.

"No !" cried Piney Paul, meeting her look with defiance. "If you offer to kill Cicely I'll drive a bullet through you ! Go back to Ocotoc, and tell him that the girl that he stole is going back to her people. Look up and see the Watchemenetoc," he added, pointing toward the ceiling of the cavern. "He wants to see you touch the white girl !"

The red witch looked up, and uttered a wild cry of horror and fright.

The eyes of the pictured ogre seemed to scintillate with true fiendishness, and the bat-like wings appeared to move.

With a cry Pelosee started back ; the knife dropped from her hands, and she disappeared !

"It's the last of her !" said Piney Paul. "She'll go back to Ocotoc, and perhaps fling herself among the wolves."

Safety at last seemed breaking over the head of Cicely Draeme. She held out her hand to Piney Paul, and said—

"I feel that the trail is leading us out of the woods. The lodge of my white people does not seem far away."

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There was commotion in the fashionable society of New York when Piney Paul, accompanied by Cicely, clad in her fantastic forest garb, appeared and claimed the wealth of Cecil Crane.

Blanche, the villain's haughty wife, tried to laugh the twain's pretensions down ; but Paul, who stood in her luxurious drawing-room, brought his fist down upon the table and emphatically cried—

"Laughing proves nothing ! Creeks and crashes ! the girl's got to have her rights, and I'm going to see that she gets every shilling due to her. I mean business ! The will gives your wealth to her at this day. Say she is not Cicely Draeme, and I'll tramp back and bring old Ocotoc himself here. Ha ! that hits the mark. Business is business ! You must give up all. This house suits Cicely and me. We want to live here by and by."

The boy was the hero in the city, as he had been in the forest.

He carried his point, and the wealth belonging to Cicely was restored to her.

Many years afterward a party of men found a wonderful cave among the cliffs of the Ausable ; it seemed a veritable galaxy of pictures, and the roof was covered by the head and wings of a demon !

But the cave was not tenanted, except by a heap of bones, which marked the last resting place of Nokomis.

As for Patagan he did not seek Cicely, but made the best of her absence, and soon afterwards died.

I need not add that Piney Paul—Paul Burleigh, as his true name was—wedded the Little Arrow of the Adirondacks. The reader has anticipated this happy ending to their eventful career.

[THE END.]



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