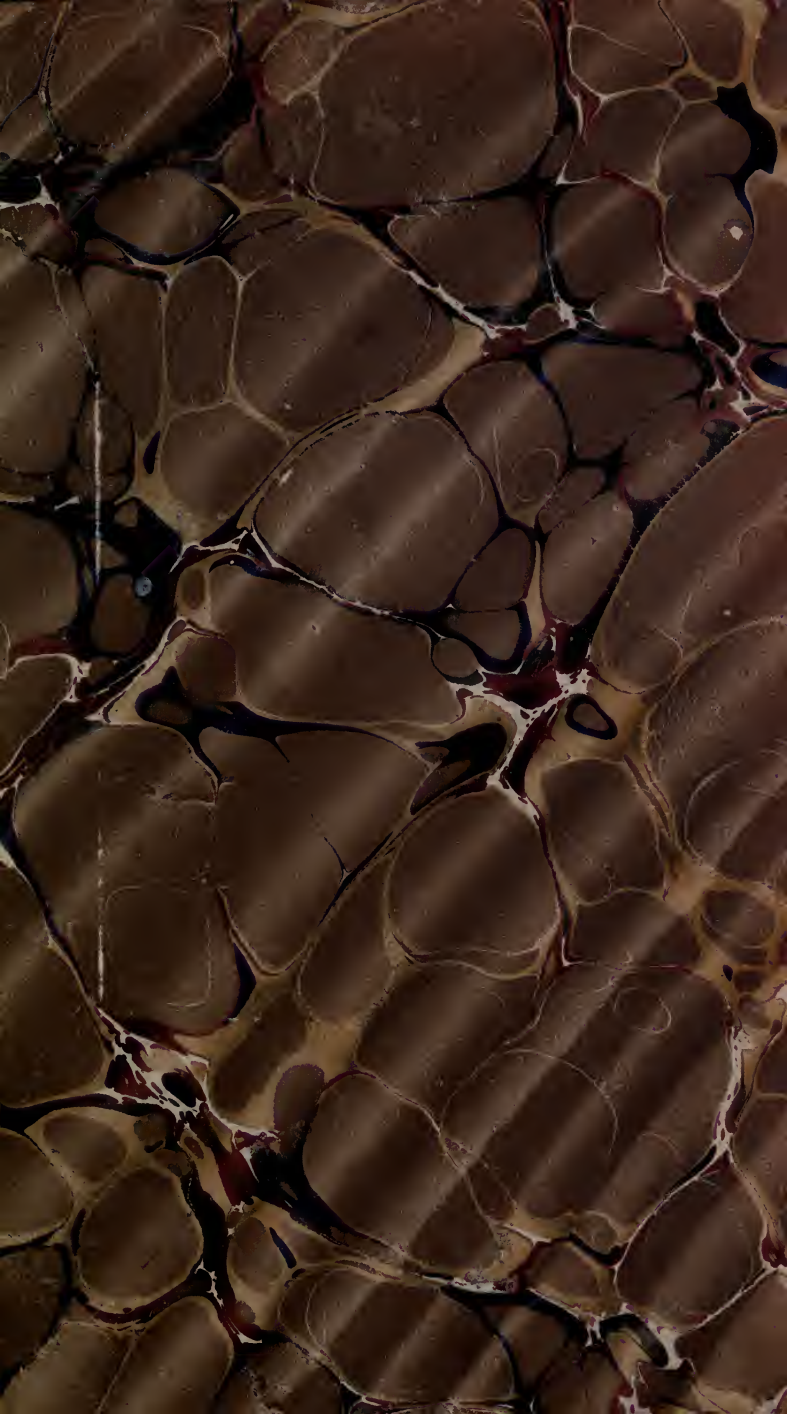


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THE PATHFINDER;

OR,

THE INLAND SEA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE PIONEERS,” “THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS,”
“THE PRAIRIE,” ETC.

Here the heart
May give a useful lesson to the head,
And Learning wiser grow without his books.

COWPER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1840.

P R E F A C E.

THE plan of this tale suggested itself to the writer many years since; though the details are altogether of recent invention. The idea of associating seamen and savages, in incidents that might be supposed characteristic of the Great Lakes, having been mentioned to a Publisher, the latter obtained something like a pledge from the Author, to carry out the design at some future day, which pledge is now tardily and imperfectly redeemed.

The reader may recognise an old friend, under new circumstances, in the principal character of this legend. If the exhibition made of this old acquaintance, in the novel circumstances in which he now appears, should be found not to lessen his favour with the

public, it will be a source of extreme gratification to the writer, since he has an interest in the individual in question that falls little short of reality. It is not an easy task, however, to introduce the same character in four separate works, and to maintain the peculiarities that are indispensable to identity, without incurring a risk of fatiguing the reader with sameness; and the present experiment has been so long delayed, quite as much from doubts of its success as from any other cause. In this, as in every other undertaking, it must be the "end" that will "crown the work."

The Indian character has so little variety, that it has been my object to avoid dwelling on it too much on the present occasion; its association with the sailor, too, it is feared, will be found to have more novelty than interest.

It may strike the novice as an anachronism, to place vessels on Ontario in the middle of the eighteenth century; but, in this particu-

lar, facts will fully bear out all the licence of the fiction. Although the precise vessels mentioned in these pages may never have existed on that water or anywhere else, others so nearly resembling them are known to have navigated that inland sea, even at a period much earlier than the one just mentioned, as to form a sufficient authority for their introduction into a work of fiction. It is a fact not generally remembered, however well known it may be, that there are isolated spots, along the line of the great lakes, that date, as settlements, as far back as many of the older American towns, and which were the seats of a species of civilisation, long before the greater portion of even the older states was rescued from the wilderness.

Ontario, in our own times, has been the scene of important naval evolutions. Fleets have manœuvred on those waters, which, half a century ago, were as deserted as waters well can be; and the day is not distant, when the whole of that vast range of lakes will become the seat

of empire, and fraught with all the interests of human society. A passing glimpse, even though it be in a work of fiction, of what that vast region so lately was, may help to make up the sum of knowledge by which alone a just appreciation can be formed of the wonderful means by which Providence is clearing the way for the advancement of civilisation across the whole American continent.

DECEMBER, 1839.

THE PATHFINDER.

CHAPTER I.

The turf shall be my fragrant shrine ;
My temple, Lord ! that arch of thine ;
My censer's breath the mountain airs,
And silent thoughts my only prayers.

MOORE.

THE sublimity connected with vastness is familiar to every eye. The most abstruse, the most far-reaching, perhaps the most chastened of the poet's thoughts, crowd on the imagination as he gazes into the depths of the illimitable void. The expanse of the ocean is seldom seen by the novice with indifference ; and the mind, even in the obscurity of night, finds a parallel to that grandeur, which seems inseparable from images that the senses cannot compass. With feelings akin to this admira-

tion and awe — the offspring of sublimity — were the different characters with which the action of this tale must open, gazing on the scene before them. Four persons in all — two of each sex — they had managed to ascend a pile of trees, that had been upturned by a tempest, to catch a view of the objects that surrounded them. It is still the practice of the country to call these spots wind-rows. By letting in the light of heaven upon the dark and damp recesses of the wood, they form a sort of oases in the solemn obscurity of the virgin forests of America. The particular wind-row of which we are writing, lay on the brow of a gentle acclivity; and, though small, it had opened the way for an extensive view to those who might occupy its upper margin, a rare occurrence to the traveller in the woods. As usual, the spot was small, but owing to the circumstances of its lying on the low acclivity mentioned, and that of the opening's extending downward, it offered more than common advantages to the eye. Philosophy has not yet determined the nature of the power that so

often lays desolate spots of this description ; some ascribing it to the whirlwinds that produce water-spouts on the ocean ; while others again impute it to sudden and violent passages of streams of the electric fluid ; but the effects in the woods are familiar to all. On the upper margin of the opening to which there is allusion, the viewless influence had piled tree on tree, in such a manner as had not only enabled the two males of the party to ascend to an elevation of some thirty feet above the level of the earth, but, with a little care and encouragement, to induce their more timid companions to accompany them. The vast trunks that had been broken and driven by the force of the gust, lay blended like jack-straws ; while their branches, still exhaling the fragrance of withering leaves, were interlaced in a manner to afford sufficient support to the hands. One tree had been completely uprooted, and its lower end, filled with earth, had been cast uppermost, in a way to supply a sort of staging for the four adventurers, when they had gained the desired distance from the ground.

The reader is to anticipate none of the appliances of people of condition in the description of the personal appearances of the group in question. They were all wayfarers in the wilderness; and had they not been, neither their previous habits, nor their actual social positions, would have accustomed them to many of the luxuries of rank. Two of the party, indeed, a male and female, belonged to the native owners of the soil, being Indians of the well-known tribe of the Tuscaroras; while their companions were a man, who bore about him the peculiarities of one who had passed his days on the ocean, and was too in a station little, if any, above that of a common mariner; while his female associate was a maiden of a class in no great degree superior to his own; though her youth, sweetness of countenance, and a modest, but spirited mien, lent that character of intellect and refinement, which adds so much to the charm of beauty in the sex. On the present occasion, her full blue eye reflected the feeling of sublimity that the scene excited, and her pleasant face was beaming with the pensive

expression, with which all deep emotions, even though they bring the most grateful pleasure, shadow the countenances of the ingenuous and thoughtful.

And truly the scene was of a nature deeply to impress the imagination of the beholder. Towards the west, in which direction the faces of the party were turned, and in which alone could much be seen, the eye ranged over an ocean of leaves, glorious and rich in the varied and lively verdure of a generous vegetation, and shaded by the luxuriant tints that belong to the forty-second degree of latitude. The elm with its graceful and weeping top, the rich varieties of the maple, most of the noble oaks of the American forest, with the broad-leaved linden known in the parlance of the country as the bass-wood, mingled their uppermost branches, forming one broad, and seemingly interminable carpet of foliage, that stretched away towards the setting sun, until it bounded the horizon, by blending with the clouds, as the waves and the sky meet at the base of the vault of heaven. Here and there,

by some accident of the tempests, or by a caprice of nature, a trifling opening among these giant members of the forest permitted an inferior tree to struggle upward toward the light, and to lift its modest head nearly to a level with the surrounding surface of verdure. Of this class were the birch, a tree of some account in regions less favoured, the quivering aspen, various generous nut-woods, and divers others that resembled the ignoble and vulgar, thrown by circumstances into the presence of the stately and great. Here and there too, the tall straight trunk of the pine pierced the vast field, rising high above it, like some grand monument reared by art on a plain of leaves.

It was the vastness of the view, the nearly unbroken surface of verdure, that contained the principle of grandeur. The beauty was to be traced in the delicate tints, relieved by gradations of light and shade; while the solemn repose induced the feeling allied to awe.

“Uncle,” said the wondering, but pleased girl, addressing her male companion, whose arm she rather touched than leaned on, to

steady her own light, but firm footing, "this is like a view of the ocean you so much love!"

"So much for ignorance, and a girl's fancy, Magnet,"—a term of affection the sailor often used in allusion to his niece's personal attractions,—“no one but a child would think of likening this handful of leaves to a look at the real Atlantic. You might seize all these tree-tops to Neptune's jacket, and they would make no more than a nosegay for his bosom.”

“More fanciful than true, I think, uncle. Look thither; it must be miles on miles, and yet we see nothing but leaves! what more could one behold, if looking at the ocean?”

“More!” returned the uncle, giving an impatient gesture with the elbow the other touched, for his arms were crossed, and the hands were thrust into the bosom of a vest of red cloth, a fashion of the times,—“More, Magnet? say, rather, what less? Where are your combing seas, your blue water, your rollers, your breakers, your whales, or your water-spouts, and your endless motion, in this bit of a forest, child?”

“ And where are your tree-tops, your solemn silence, your fragrant leaves, and your beautiful green, uncle, on the ocean ? ”

“ Tut, Magnet ; if you understood the thing, you would know that green water is a sailor’s bane. He scarcely relishes a greenhorn less.”

“ But green trees are a different thing.— Hist ! that sound is the air breathing among the leaves ! ”

“ You should hear a nor-wester breathe, girl, if you fancy wind aloft. Now, where are your gales, and hurricanes, and trades, and levanters, and such like incidents, in this bit of a forest ? and what fishes have you swimming beneath yonder tame surface ? ”

“ That there have been tempests here, these signs around us plainly show ; and beasts, if not fishes, are beneath those leaves.”

“ I do not know that,” returned the uncle, with a sailor’s dogmatism. “ They told us many stories at Albany, of the wild animals we should fall in with, and yet we have seen nothing to frighten a seal. I doubt if any of

your inland animals will compare with a low latitude shark."

"See!" exclaimed the niece, who was more occupied with the sublimity and beauty of the "boundless wood," than with her uncle's arguments, "yonder is a smoke curling over the tops of the trees — can it come from a house?"

"Ay, ay; there is a look of humanity in that smoke," returned the old seaman, "which is worth a thousand trees. I must show it to Arrowhead, who may be running past a port without knowing it. It is probable there is a caboose, where there is a smoke."

As he concluded, the uncle drew a hand from his bosom, touched the male Indian, who was standing near him, lightly on the shoulder, and pointed out a thin line of vapour that was stealing slowly out of the wilderness of leaves, at a distance of about a mile, and was diffusing itself in almost imperceptible threads of humidity, in the quivering atmosphere. The Tuscarora was one of those noble-looking warriors that were oftener met with among the aborigines of this continent a century since, than to-

day ; and, while he had mingled sufficiently with the colonists to be familiar with their habits and even with their language, he had lost little, if any, of the wild grandeur and simple dignity of a chief. Between him and the old seaman the intercourse had been friendly, but distant ; for the Indian had been too much accustomed to mingle with the officers of the different military posts he had frequented, not to understand that his present companion was only a subordinate. So imposing, indeed, had been the quiet superiority of the Tuscarora's reserve, that Charles Cap, for so was the seaman named, in his most dogmatical or facetious moments, had not ventured on familiarity, in an intercourse that had now lasted more than a week. The sight of the curling smoke, however, had struck the latter like the sudden appearance of a sail at sea ; and, for the first time since they met, he ventured to touch the warrior, as has been related.

The quick eye of the Tuscarora instantly caught a sight of the smoke ; and for quite a minute, he stood, slightly raised on tiptoe,

with distended nostrils, like the buck that scents a taint in the air, and a gaze as riveted as that of the trained pointer while he waits his master's aim. Then falling back on his feet, a low exclamation, in the soft tones that form so singular a contrast to its harsher cries, in the Indian warrior's voice, was barely audible; otherwise, he was undisturbed. His countenance was calm, and his quick, dark, eagle eye moved over the leafy panorama, as if to take in at a glance every circumstance that might enlighten his mind. That the long journey they had attempted to make through a broad belt of wilderness, was necessarily attended with danger, both uncle and niece well knew; though neither could at once determine whether the sign that others were in their vicinity was the harbinger of good or evil.

“There must be Oneidas, or Tuscaroras, near us, Arrowhead,” said Cap, addressing his Indian companion by his conventional English name; “will it not be well to join company with them, and get a comfortable berth for the night in their wigwam?”

“ No wigwam there,” Arrowhead answered, in his unmoved manner — “ too much tree.”

“ But Indians must be there ; perhaps some old messmates of your own, Master Arrowhead.”

“ No Tuscarora — no Oneida — no Mohawk — pale-face fire.”

“ The devil it is ! Well, Magnet, this surpasses a seaman’s philosophy : we old sea-dogs can tell a soldier’s from a sailor’s quid, or a lubber’s nest from a mate’s hammock ; but I do not think the oldest admiral in his Majesty’s fleet can tell a king’s smoke from a collier’s.”

The idea that human beings were in their vicinity, in that ocean of wilderness, had deepened the flush on the blooming cheek and brightened the eye of the fair creature at his side ; but she soon turned with a look of surprise to her relative, and said, hesitatingly, for both had often admired the Tuscarora’s knowledge, or, we might almost say, instinct—

“ A pale-face’s fire ! Surely, uncle, he cannot know *that* ?”

“ Ten days since, child, I would have sworn

to it ; but now I hardly know what to believe. May I take the liberty of asking, Arrowhead, why you fancy that smoke, now, a pale-face's smoke, and not a red-skin's?"

"Wet wood," returned the warrior, with the calmness with which the pedagogue might point out an arithmetical demonstration to his puzzled pupil. "Much wet — much smoke ; much water — black smoke."

"But, begging your pardon, Master Arrowhead, the smoke is not black, nor is there much of it. To my eye, now, it is as light and fanciful a smoke as ever rose from a captain's tea-kettle, when nothing was left to make the fire but a few chips from the dunnage."

"Too much water," returned Arrowhead, with a slight nod of the head : "Tuscarora too cunning to make fire with water ; pale-face too much book, and burn anything ; much book, little know."

"Well, that's reasonable, I allow," said Cap, who was no devotee of learning : "he means that as a hit at your reading, Magnet ; for the chief has sensible notions of things in his

own way. How far, now, Arrowhead, do you make us, by your calculation, from the bit of a pond that you call the Great Lake, and towards which we have been so many days shaping our course?"

The Tuscarora looked at the seaman with quiet superiority, as he answered—

“Ontario, like heaven; one sun, and the great traveller will know it.”

“Well, I have been a great traveller, I cannot deny, but of all my v’y’ges this has been the longest, the least profitable, and the farthest inland. If this body of fresh water is so nigh, Arrowhead, and at the same time so large, one might think a pair of good eyes would find it out; for, apparently, everything within thirty miles is to be seen from this look-out.”

“Look,” said Arrowhead, stretching an arm before him with quiet grace; “Ontario!”

“Uncle, you are accustomed to cry ‘land ho!’ but not ‘water ho!’ and you do not see it,” cried the niece, laughing, as girls will laugh at their own idle conceits.

“How now, Magnet, dost suppose that I shouldn't know my native element, if it were in sight?”

“But, Ontario is not your native element, dear uncle; for you come from the salt water, while this is fresh.”

“That might make some difference to your young mariner, but none in the world to the old one. I should know water, child, were I to see it in China.”

“Ontario,” repeated the Arrowhead, with emphasis, again stretching his hand towards the north-west.

Cap looked at the Tuscarora, for the first time since their acquaintance, with something like an air of contempt, though he did not fail to follow the direction of the chief's eye and arm, both of which were directed, to all appearance, toward a vacant point in the heavens, a short distance above the plain of leaves.

“Ay, ay; this is much as I expected, when I left the coast to come in search of a fresh-water pond,” resumed Cap, shrugging

his shoulders like one whose mind was made up, and who thought no more need be said. "Ontario may be there, or, for that matter, it may be in my pocket. Well, I suppose there will be room enough, when we reach it, to work our canoe. But, Arrowhead, if there be pale-faces in our neighbourhood, I confess I should like to get within hail of them."

The Tuscarora now gave a quiet inclination of his head, and the whole party descended from the roots of the uptorn tree in silence. When they had reached the ground, Arrowhead intimated his intention to go towards the fire, and ascertain who had lighted it; while he advised his wife and the two others to return to a canoe, which they had left in the adjacent stream, and await his return.

"Why, chief, this might do on soundings, and in an offing where one knew the channel," returned old Cap; "but in an unknown region like this, I think it unsafe to trust the pilot alone too far from the ship: so, with your leave, we will not part company."

"What my brother want?" asked the

Indian, gravely, though without taking offence at a distrust that was sufficiently plain.

“Your company, Master Arrowhead, and no more. I will go with you, and speak these strangers.”

The Tuscarora assented without difficulty, and again he directed his patient and submissive little wife, who seldom turned her full rich black eye on him, but to express equally her respect, her dread, and her love, to proceed to the boat. But, here, Magnet raised a difficulty. Although spirited, and of unusual energy under circumstances of trial, she was but woman; and the idea of being entirely deserted by her two male protectors, in the midst of a wilderness, that her senses had just told her was seemingly illimitable, became so keenly painful, that she expressed a wish to accompany her uncle.

“The exercise will be a relief, dear sir, after sitting so long in the canoe,” she added, as the rich blood slowly returned to a cheek that had paled, in spite of her efforts to be calm; “and there may be females with the strangers.”

“Come, then, child; it is but a cable’s length, and we shall return an hour before the sun sets.”

With this permission, the girl, whose real name was Mabel Dunham, prepared to be of the party; while the Dew-of-June, as the wife of Arrowhead was called, passively went her way towards the canoe, too much accustomed to obedience, solitude, and the gloom of the forest, to feel apprehension.

The three who remained in the wind-row, now picked their way around its tangled maze, and gained the margin of the woods, in the necessary direction. A few glances of the eye sufficed for Arrowhead; but old Cap deliberately set the smoke by a pocket-compass, before he trusted himself within the shadows of the trees.

“This steering by the nose, Magnet, may do well enough for an Indian, but your thoroughbred knows the virtue of the needle,” said the uncle, as he trudged at the heels of the light-stepping Tuscarora. “America would never have been discovered, take my word for it, if

Columbus had been nothing but nostrils. Friend Arrowhead, didst ever see a machine like this?"

The Indian turned, cast a glance at the compass, which Cap held in a way to direct his course, and gravely answered—

"A pale-face eye. The Tuscarora see in his head. The Salt-water (for so the Indian styled his companion) all eye now ; no tongue."

"He means, uncle, that we had needs be silent ; perhaps he distrusts the persons we are about to meet."

"Ay—'t is an Indian's fashion of going to quarters. You perceive he has examined the priming of his rifle, and it may be as well, if I look to that of my own pistols."

Without betraying alarm at these preparations, to which she had become accustomed by her long journey in the wilderness, Mabel followed with a step as light and elastic as that of the Indian, keeping close in the rear of her companions. For the first half mile, no other caution beyond a rigid silence was observed ; but as the party drew nearer to the spot

where the fire was known to be, much greater care became necessary.

The forest, as usual, had little to intercept the view, below the branches, but the tall straight trunks of trees. Everything belonging to vegetation had struggled towards the light, and beneath the leafy canopy one walked, as it might be, through a vast natural vault, that was upheld by myriads of rustic columns. These columns, or trees, however, often served to conceal the adventurer, the hunter, or the foe; and as Arrowhead swiftly approached the spot where his practised and unerring senses told him the strangers ought to be, his footstep gradually became lighter, his eye more vigilant, and his person was more carefully concealed.

“See, Salt-water,” he said exultingly, pointing at the same time through the vista of trees, “pale-face fire!”

“By the Lord, the fellow is right!” muttered Cap; “there they are, sure enough, and eating their grub as quietly as if they were in the cabin of a three-decker.”

“Arrowhead is but half right!” whispered Mabel; “for there are two Indians and only one white man.”

“Pale-faces,” said the Tuscarora, holding up two fingers; “red man,” holding up one.

“Well,” rejoined Cap, “it is hard to say which is right and which is wrong. One is entirely white, and a fine comely lad he is, with an air of life and respectability about him; one is a red-skin as plain as paint and nature can make him; but the third chap is half-rigged, being neither brig nor schooner.”

“Pale-faces,” repeated Arrowhead, again raising two fingers; “red man,” showing but one.

“He must be right, uncle; for his eye seems never to fail. But it is now urgent to know whether we meet as friends or foes. They may be French.”

“One hail will soon satisfy us on that head,” returned Cap. “Stand you behind this tree, Magnet, lest the knaves take it into their heads to fire a broadside without a parley, and I will soon learn what colours they sail under.”

The uncle had placed his two hands to his mouth to form a trumpet, and was about to give the promised hail, when a rapid movement from the hand of Arrowhead defeated the intention by deranging the instrument.

“Red man, Mohican,” said the Tuscarora ; “good ; pale-faces, Yengeese.”

“These are heavenly tidings,” murmured Mabel, who little relished the prospect of a deadly fray in that remote wilderness. “Let us approach at once, dear uncle, and proclaim ourselves friends.”

“Good,” said the Tuscarora ; “red man cool, and know ; pale-face, hurried, and fire. Let the squaw go.”

“What !” said Cap, in astonishment, “send little Magnet ahead, as a look-out, while two lubbers, like you and me, lie-to, to see what sort of a land-fall she will make ! If I do, I——”

“It is wisest, uncle,” interrupted the generous girl, “and I have no fear. No Christian, seeing a woman approach alone, would fire upon her ; and my presence will be a pledge of

peace. Let me go forward, as Arrowhead wishes, and all will be well. We are, as yet, unseen, and the surprise of the strangers will not partake of alarm."

"Good," returned Arrowhead, who did not conceal his approbation of ^{Mabel} Agnes' spirit.

"It has an unseaman-like look," answered Cap; "but, being in the woods, no one will know it. If you think, Mabel—"

"Uncle, I know. There is no cause to fear for me; and you are always nigh to protect me."

"Well, take one of the pistols, then—"

"Nay, I had better rely on my youth and feebleness," said the girl, smiling, while her colour heightened under her feelings. "Among Christian men, a woman's best guard is her claim to their protection. I know nothing of arms, and wish to live in ignorance of them."

The uncle desisted; and, after receiving a few cautious instructions from the Tuscarora, Mabel rallied all her spirit, and advanced alone towards the group seated near the fire. Although the heart of the girl beat quick, her step was firm, and her movements, seemingly,

were without reluctance. A death-like silence reigned in the forest; for they towards whom she approached, were too much occupied in appeasing that great natural appetite, hunger, to avert their looks, for an instant, from the important business in which they were all engaged. When ^{Mabel} Agnes, however, had got within a hundred feet of the fire, she trod upon a dried stick, and the trifling noise that was produced by her light footstep caused the Mohican, as Arrowhead had pronounced the Indian to be, and his companion, whose character had been thought so equivocal, to rise to their feet, as quick as thought. Both glanced at the rifles that leaned against a tree; and then each stood without stretching out an arm, as his eyes fell on the form of the girl. The Indian uttered a few words to his companion, and resumed his seat and his meal, as calmly as if no interruption had occurred. On the contrary, the white man left the fire, and came forward to meet Mabel.

The latter saw, as the stranger approached, that she was about to be addressed by one of her own colour, though his dress was so strange

a mixture of the habits of the two races, that it required a near look to be certain of the fact. He was of middle age; but there was an open honesty, a total absence of guile, in his face, which otherwise would not have been thought handsome, that at once assured Magnet she was in no danger. Still she paused, in obedience to a law of her habits if not of nature, which rendered her averse to the appearance of advancing too freely to meet one of the other sex, under the circumstances in which she was placed.

“Fear nothing, young woman,” said the hunter, for such his attire would indicate him to be; “you have met Christian men in the wilderness, and such as know how to treat all kindly that are disposed to peace and justice. I am a man well known in all these parts, and perhaps one of my names may have reached your ears. By the Frenchers and the redskins on the other side of the Big Lakes, I am called La Longue Carabine; by the Mohicans, a just-minded and upright tribe, what is left of them, Hawk Eye; while the troops and rangers

along this side of the water call me Pathfinder, inasmuch as I have never been known to miss one end of the trail, when there was a Mingo, or a friend who stood in need of me, at the other."

This was not uttered boastfully, but with the honest confidence of one who well knew that by whatever name others might have heard of him, he had no reason to blush at the reports. The effect on ^{Mabel} Agnes was instantaneous. The moment she heard the last *sobriquet*, she clasped her hands eagerly and repeated the word—

"Pathfinder!"

"So they call me, young woman, and many a great lord has got a title that he did not half so well merit; though, if truth be said, I rather pride myself in finding my way where there is no path, than in finding it where there is. But the regular troops are by no means particular, and half the time they don't know the difference between a trail and a path, though one is a matter for the eye, while the other is little more than scent."

“Then you are the friend my father promised to send to meet us?”

“If you are Sergeant Dunham’s daughter, the great Prophet of the Delawares never uttered more truth.”

“I am Mabel, and yonder, hid by the trees, are my uncle, whose name is Cap, and a Tuscarora called Arrowhead. We did not hope to meet you until we had nearly reached the shores of the lake.”

“I wish a juster-minded Indian had been your guide,” said Pathfinder; “for I am no lover of the Tuscaroras, who have travelled too far from the graves of their fathers always to remember the Great Spirit; and Arrowhead is an ambitious chief. Is the Dew-of-June with him?”

“His wife accompanies us, and a humble and mild creature she is.”

“Ay, and true-hearted; which is more than any who know him will say of Arrowhead. Well, we must take the fare that Providence bestows, while we follow the trail of life. I suppose worse guides might have been found

than the Tuscarora ; though he has too much Mingo blood for one who consorts altogether with the Delawares."

"It is, then, perhaps, fortunate we have met," said Mabel.

"It is not misfortunate, at any rate ; for I promised the Sergeant I would see his child safe to the garrison, though I died for it. We expected to meet you before you reached the Falls, where we have left our own canoe ; while we thought it might do no harm to come up a few miles, in order to be of service if wanted. It is lucky we did, for I doubt if Arrowhead be the man to shoot the current."

"Here come my uncle and the Tuscarora, and our parties can now join."

As Mabel concluded, Cap and Arrowhead, who saw that the conference was amicable, drew nigh ; and a few words sufficed to let them know as much as the girl herself had learned from the strangers. As soon as this was done, the party proceeded towards the two who still remained near the fire.

CHAPTER II.

Yea ! long as Nature's humblest child
Hath kept her temple undefiled
By simple sacrifice,
Earth's fairest scenes are all his own,
He is a monarch, and his throne
Is built amid the skies !

WILSON.

THE Mohican continued to eat, though the second white man rose, and courteously took off his cap to Mabel Dunham. He was young, healthful, and manly in appearance; and he wore a dress which, while it was less rigidly professional than that of the uncle, also denoted one accustomed to the water. In that age, real seamen were a class entirely apart from the rest of mankind, their ideas, ordinary language, and attire, being as strongly indicative

of their calling, as the opinions, speech, and dress of a Turk denote a Mussulman. Although the Pathfinder was scarcely in the prime of life, Mabel had met him with a steadiness that may have been the consequence of having braced her nerves for the interview; but, when her eyes encountered those of the young man at the fire, they fell before the gaze of admiration with which she saw, or fancied she saw, he greeted her. Each, in truth, felt that interest in the other, which similarity of age, condition, mutual comeliness, and their novel situation would be likely to inspire in the young and ingenuous.

“Here,” said Pathfinder, with an honest smile bestowed on Mabel, “are the friends your worthy father has sent to meet you. This is a great Delaware; and one that has had honours as well as troubles in his day. He has an Indian name fit for a chief; but as the language is not always easy for the inexperienced to pronounce, we naturally turn it into English, and call him the Big Serpent. You are not to suppose, however, that by this name we

wish to say that he is treacherous, beyond what is lawful in a red-skin ; but that he is wise, and has the cunning that becomes a warrior. Arrowhead, there, knows what I mean."

While the Pathfinder was delivering this address, the two Indians gazed on each other steadily, and the Tuscarora advanced and spoke to the other in an apparently friendly manner.

"I like to see this," continued Pathfinder ; "the salutes of two red-skins in the woods, Master Cap, are like the hailing of friendly vessels on the ocean. But, speaking of water, it reminds me of my young friend, Jasper Western, here, who can claim to know something of these matters, seeing that he has passed his days on Ontario."

"I am glad to see you, friend," said Cap, giving the young fresh-water sailor a cordial gripe ; "though you must have something still to learn, considering the school to which you have been sent. This is my niece, Mabel ; I call her Magnet, for a reason she never dreams of, though you may, possibly, have education

enough to guess at it, having some pretensions to understand the compass, I suppose."

"The reason is easily comprehended," said the young man, involuntarily fastening his keen dark eye, at the same time, on the suffused face of the girl; "and I feel sure that the sailor who steers by your Magnet will never make a bad land-fall."

"Ha, you do make use of some of the terms, I find, and that with propriety and understanding; though, on the whole, I fear you have seen more green than blue water."

"It is not surprising that we should get some of the phrases that belong to the land; for we are seldom out of sight of it, twenty-four hours at a time."

"More's the pity, boy; more's the pity. A very little land ought to go a great way with a seafaring man. Now, if the truth were known, Master Western, I suppose there is more or less land all round your lake."

"And, uncle, is there not more or less land around the ocean?" said Magnet, quickly; for she dreaded a premature display of the old

seaman's peculiar dogmatism, not to say, pedantry.

“No, child, there is more or less ocean all round the land; that's what I tell the people ashore, youngster. They are living, as it might be, in the midst of the sea, without knowing it; by sufferance, as it were, the water being so much the more powerful, and the largest. But there is no end to conceit in this world; for a fellow who never saw salt water, often fancies he knows more than one who has gone round the Horn. No, no, this earth is pretty much an island; and all that can be truly said not to be so, is water.”

Young Western had a profound deference for a mariner of the ocean, on which he had often pined to sail; but he had, also, a natural regard for the broad sheet on which he had passed his life, and which was not without its beauties in his eyes.

“What you say, sir,” he answered modestly, “may be true, as to the Atlantic; but we have a respect for the land, up here, on Ontario.”

“That is because you are always land-lock-

ed," returned Cap, laughing heartily ; " but yonder is the Pathfinder, as they call him, with some smoking platters, inviting us to share in his mess ; and I will confess that one gets no venison at sea. Master Western, civility to girls, at your time of life, comes as easy as taking in the slack of the ensign halyards ; and if you will just keep an eye to her kid and cann, while I join the mess of the Pathfinder and our Indian friends, I make no doubt she will remember it."

Master Cap uttered more than he was aware of at the time. Jasper Western did attend to the wants of Mabel, and she long remembered the kind manly attention of the young sailor, at this their first interview. He placed the end of a log for a seat, obtained for her a delicious morsel of the venison, gave her a draught of pure water from the spring, and as he sat near and opposite to her, fast won his way to her esteem by his gentle but frank manner of manifesting his care ; homage that woman always wishes to receive, but which is never so flattering or so agreeable, as when it comes from the young to

those of their own age—from the manly to the gentle. Like most of those who pass their time excluded from the society of the softer sex, young Western was earnest, sincere, and kind in his attentions, which, though they wanted a conventional refinement, that, perhaps, Mabel never missed, had those winning qualities that prove very sufficient as substitutes. Leaving these two inexperienced and unsophisticated young people to become acquainted through their feelings, rather than their expressed thoughts, we will turn to the group, in which the uncle, with a facility of taking care of himself that never deserted him, had already become a principal actor.

The party had taken their places around a platter of venison steaks, which served for the common use, and the discourse naturally partook of the characters of the different individuals that composed it. The Indians were silent and industrious, the appetite of the aboriginal American for venison being seemingly inappeasable, while the two white men were communicative and discursive, each of the lat-

ter being garrulous and opinionated in his way. But, as the dialogue will serve to put the reader in possession of certain facts that may render the succeeding narrative more clear, it will be well to record it.

“There must be satisfaction in this life of yours, no doubt, Mr. Pathfinder,” continued Cap, when the hunger of the travellers was so far appeased that they began to pick and choose among the savoury morsels; “it has some of the chances and luck that we seamen like; and if ours is all water, yours is all land.”

“Nay, we have water too, in our journeyings and marches,” returned his white companion; “we border-men handle the paddle and the spear almost as much as the rifle and the hunting-knife.”

“Ay; but do you handle the brace and the bow-line, the wheel and the lead-line, the reef-point and the top-rope? The paddle is a good thing, out of doubt, in a canoe; but of what use is it in the ship?”

“Nay, I respect all men in their callings, and I can believe the things you mention have

their uses. One who has lived, like myself, in company with many tribes, understands differences in usages. The paint of a Mingo is not the paint of a Delaware; and he who should expect to see a warrior in the dress of a squaw might be disappointed. I am not yet very old, but I have lived in the woods, and have some acquaintance with human nature. I never believed much in the learning of them that dwell in towns, for I never yet met with one that had an eye for a rifle, or a trail."

"That's my manner of reasoning, Master Pathfinder, to a yarn. Walking about streets, going to church of Sundays, and hearing sermons, never yet made a man of a human being. Send the boy out upon the broad ocean, if you wish to open his eyes, and let him look upon foreign nations, or, what I call the face of nature, if you wish him to understand his own character. Now, there is my brother-in-law, the Sergeant, he is as good a fellow as ever broke a biscuit, in his way; but what is he, after all? why, nothing but a soldier. A Sergeant, to be sure, but that is a sort of a soldier,

you know. When he wished to marry poor Bridget, my sister, I told the girl what he was, as in duty bound, and what she might expect from such a husband; but you know how it is with girls when their minds are jammed by an inclination. It is true, the Sergeant has risen in his calling, and they say he is an important man at the fort; but his poor wife has not lived to see it all, for she has now been dead these fourteen years."

"A soldier's calling is an honourable calling, provided he has fi't only on the side of right," returned the Pathfinder; "and as the Frenchers are always wrong, and his Sacred Majesty and these colonies are always right, I take it the Sergeant has a quiet conscience, as well as a good character. I have never slept more sweetly than when I have fi't the Mingos, though it is the law with me to fight always like a white man, and never like an Indian. The Sarpent, here, has his fashions, and I have mine; and yet have we fi't, side by side, these many years, without either's thinking a hard thought consarning the other's ways. I

tell him there is but one heaven and one hell, notwithstanding his traditions, though there are many paths to both.”

“ That is rational ; and he is bound to believe you, though, I fancy, most of the roads to the last are on dry land. The sea is what my poor sister Bridget used to call a ‘purifying place,’ and one is out of the way of temptation when out of sight of land. I doubt if as much can be said in favour of your lakes, up here-away.”

“ That towns and settlements lead to sin, I will allow ; but our lakes are bordered by the forests, and one is every day called upon to worship God in such a temple. That men are not always the same, even in the wilderness, I must admit, for the difference between a Mingo and a Delaware is as plain to be seen as the difference between the sun and the moon. I am glad, friend Cap, that we have met, however, if it be only that you may tell the Big Sarpent here, that there are lakes in which the water is salt. We have been pretty much of one mind since our acquaintance began, and

if the Mohican has only half the faith in me that I have in him, he believes all that I have told him touching the white men's ways and natur's laws ; but it has always seemed to me that none of the red-skins have given as free a belief as an honest man likes to the accounts of the Big Salt Lakes, and to that of there being rivers that flow up stream."

"This comes of getting things wrong end foremost," answered Cap, with a condescending nod. "You have thought of your lakes and rifts, as the ship ; and of the ocean and the tides, as the boat. Neither Arrowhead nor the Serpent need doubt what you have said concerning both, though I confess, myself, to some difficulty in swallowing the tale about there being inland seas at all, and still more that there is any sea of fresh water. I have come this long journey as much to satisfy my own eyes and palate concerning these facts, as to oblige the Sergeant and Magnet, though the first was my sister's husband, and I love the last like a child."

"You are wrong — you are wrong, friend

Cap, very wrong to distrust the power of God, in anything," returned Pathfinder, earnestly. "They that live in the settlements and the towns get to have confined and unjust opinions consarning the might of His hand, but we, who pass our time in His very presence, as it might be, see things differently — I mean, such of us as have white natur's. A red-skin has his notions, and it is right that it should be so; and if they are not exactly the same as a Christian white man's, there is no harm in it. Still, there are matters that belong altogether to the ordering of God's providence; and these salt and fresh water lakes are some of them. I do not pretend to account for these things, but I think it the duty of all to believe in them. For my part, I am one of them who think that the same hand which made the sweet water can make the salt."

"Hold on there, Master Pathfinder," interrupted Cap, not without some heat; "in the way of a proper and manly faith, I will turn my back on no one, when afloat. Although more accustomed to make all snug aloft, and to

show the proper canvass, than to pray when the hurricane comes, I know that we are but helpless mortals at times, and I hope I pay reverence where reverence is due. All I mean to say, and that is rather insinuated than said, is this ; which is, as you all know, simply an intimation that, being accustomed to see water in large bodies salt, I should like to taste it before I can believe it to be fresh."

" God has given the salt lick to the deer ; and he has given to man, red-skin and white, the delicious spring at which to slake his thirst. It is unreasonable to think that he may not have given lakes of pure water to the west, and lakes of impure water to the east."

Cap was awed, in spite of his overweening dogmatism, by the earnest simplicity of the Pathfinder, though he did not relish the idea of believing a fact which, for many years, he had pertinaciously insisted could not be true. Unwilling to give up the point, and, at the same time, unable to maintain it against a reasoning to which he was unaccustomed, and which possessed equally the force of truth,

faith, and probability, he was glad to get rid of the subject by evasion.

“ Well, well, friend Pathfinder,” he said, “ we will leave the argument where it is ; and, as the Sergeant has sent you to give us pilotage to this same lake, we can try the water when we once reach it. Only mark my words—I do not say that it may not be fresh on the surface ; the Atlantic is sometimes fresh on the surface, near the mouths of great rivers ; but, rely on it, I shall show you a way of tasting the water many fathoms deep, of which you never dreamed ; and then we shall know more about it.”

The guide seemed content to let the matter rest, and the conversation changed.

“ We are not over-conceited consarning our gifts,” observed the Pathfinder after a short pause, “ and well know that such as live in the towns, and near the sea—”

“ On the sea,” interrupted Cap.

“ On the sea, if you wish it, friend, have opportunities that do not befall us of the wilderness. Still, we know our own callings,

and they are what I consider natural callings, and are not parverted by vanity and wantonness. Now, my gifts are with the rifle, and on a trail, and in the way of game and scouting; for, though I can use the spear and the paddle, I pride not myself on either. The youth, Jasper, there, who is discoursing with the Sergeant's daughter, is a different cratur'; for he may be said to breathe the water, as it might be, like a fish. The Indians and Frenchers of the north shore call him Eau-douce, on account of his gifts in this particular. He is better at the oar, and the rope too, than in making fires on a trail."

"There must be something about these gifts of which you speak, after all," said Cap. "Now this fire, I will acknowledge, has overlaid all my seamanship. Arrowhead, there, said the smoke came from a pale-face's fire, and that is a piece of philosophy that I hold to be equal to steering in a dark night by the edges of the sand."

"It's no great secret, it's no great secret," returned Pathfinder, laughing with great in-

ward glee, though habitual caution prevented the emission of any noise. "Nothing is easier to us who pass our time in the great school of Providence, than to larn its lessons. We should be as useless on a trail, or in carrying tidings through the wilderness, as so many woodchucks, did we not soon come to a knowledge of these niceties. Eau-douce, as we call him, is so fond of the water, that he gathered a damp stick or two for our fire, and there are plenty of them, as well as those that are thoroughly dried, lying scattered about; and wet will bring dark smoke, as I suppose even you followers of the sea must know. It's no great secret — it's no great secret — though all is mystery to such as doesn't study the Lord and His mighty ways with humility and thankfulness."

"That must be a keen eye of Arrowhead's to see so slight a difference."

"He would be but a poor Indian if he did'nt. No, no; it is war-time, and no red-skin is outlying without using his senses. Every skin has its own natur', and every na-

tur' has its own laws, as well as its own skin. It was many years before I could master all these higher branches of a forest education ; for red-skin knowledge doesn't come as easy to white-skin natur', as what I suppose is intended to be white-skin knowledge ; though I have but little of the latter, having passed most of my time in the wilderness."

" You have been a ready scholar, Master Pathfinder, as is seen by your understanding these things so well. I suppose it would be no great matter, for a man regularly brought up to the sea, to catch these trifles, if he could only bring his mind fairly to bear upon them."

" I don't know that. The white man has his difficulties in getting red-skin habits, quite as much as the Indian in getting white-skin ways. As for the real natur', it is my opinion that neither can actually get that of the other."

" And yet we sailors, who run about the world so much, say there is but one nature, whether it be in the China-man or a Dutch-

man. For my own part, I am much of that way of thinking too; for I have generally found that all nations like gold and silver, and most men relish tobacco."

"Then you seafaring men know little of the red-skins. Have you ever known any of your China-men who could sing their death-songs, with their flesh torn with splinters, and cut with knives, the fire raging around their naked bodies, and death staring them in the face? Until you can find me a China-man, or a Christian-man, that can do all this, you cannot find a man with a red-skin natur', let him look ever so valiant, or know how to read all the books that were ever printed."

"It is the savages only that play each other such hellish tricks," said Master Cap, glancing his eyes about him uneasily at the apparently endless arches of the forest. "No white man is ever condemned to undergo these trials."

"Nay, therein you are again mistaken," returned the Pathfinder, coolly selecting a delicate morsel of the venison as his *bonne*,

bouche ; “ for though these torments belong only to the red-skin natur’, in the way of bearing them like braves, white-skin natur’ may be, and often has been, agonized by them.”

“ Happily,” said Cap, with an effort to clear his throat, “ none of his Majesty’s allies will be likely to attempt such damnable cruelties on any of his Majesty’s loyal subjects. I have not served much in the royal navy, it is true ; but I have served, and that is something ; and, in the way of privateering and worrying the enemy in his ships and cargoes, I’ve done my full share. But I trust there are no French savages on this side the lake, and I think you said that Ontario is a broad sheet of water ?”

“ Nay, it is broad in our eyes,” returned Pathfinder, not caring to conceal the smile which lighted a face that had been burnt by exposure to a bright red, “ though I mistrust that some may think it narrow ; and narrow it is, if you wish it to keep off the foe. Ontario has two ends, and the enemy that is

afraid to cross it, will be certain to come round it."

"Ah! that comes of your d——d fresh-water ponds!" growled Cap, hemming so loudly as to cause him instantly to repent the indiscretion. "No man, now, ever heard of a pirate or a ship getting round one end of the Atlantic!"

"Mayhap the ocean has no ends?"

"That it hasn't; nor sides, nor bottom. The nation that is snugly moored on one of its coasts, need fear nothing from the one anchored abeam, let it be ever so savage, unless it possesses the art of ship-building. No, no! the people who live on the shores of the Atlantic need fear but little for their skins or their scalps. A man may lie down at night, in those regions, in the hope of finding the hair on his head in the morning, unless he wears a wig."

"It isn't so here. I don't wish to flurry the young woman, and therefore I will be in no way particular, though she seems pretty much listening to Eau-douce, as we call him; but with-

out the education I have received, I should think it, at this very moment, a risky journey to go over the very ground that lies between us and the garrison, in the present state of this frontier. There are about as many Iroquois on this side of Ontario, as there are on the other. It is for this very reason, friend Cap, that the Sergeant has engaged us to come out and show you the path."

"What! do the knaves dare to cruise so near the guns of one of his Majesty's works?"

"Do not the ravens resort near the carcass of the deer, though the fowler is at hand? They come this-a-way, as it might be, naturally. There are more or less whites passing between the forts and the settlements, and they are sure to be on their trails. The Sarpent has come up one side of the river, and I have come up the other, in order to scout for the outlying rascals, while Jasper brought up the canoe, like a bold-hearted sailor as he is. The Sergeant told him, with tears in his eyes, all about his child, and how his heart yearned for her, and how gentle and obedient she was, until I think

the lad would have dashed into a Mingo camp, single-handed, rather than not a-come."

"We thank him — we thank him, and shall think the better of him for his readiness; though I suppose the boy has run no great risk, after all."

"Only the risk of being shot from a cover, as he forced the canoe up a swift rift, or turned an elbow in the stream, with his eyes fastened on the eddies. Of all the risky journeys, that on an ambushed river is the most risky, in my judgment, and that risk has Jasper run."

"And why the devil has the Sergeant sent for me to travel a hundred and fifty miles in this outlandish manner? Give me an offing, and the enemy in sight, and I'll play with him in his own fashion, as long as he pleases, long bows or close quarters; but to be shot like a turtle asleep is not to my humour. If it were not for little Magnet there, I would tack ship this instant, make the best of my way back to York, and let Ontario take care of itself, salt water or fresh water."

“That wouldn’t mend the matter much, friend mariner, as the road to return is much longer and almost as bad as the road to go on. Trust to us, and we will carry you through safely, or lose our scalps.”

Cap wore a tight solid queue, done up in eel-skin, while the top of his head was nearly bald ; and he mechanically passed his hand over both, as if to make certain that each was in its right place. He was at the bottom, however, a brave man, and had often faced death with coolness, though never in the frightful forms in which it presented itself under the brief but graphic picture of his companion. It was too late to retreat ; and he determined to put the best face on the matter, though he could not avoid muttering inwardly a few curses on the indifference and indiscretion with which his brother-in-law, the Sergeant, had led him into his present dilemma.

“I make no doubt, Master Pathfinder,” he answered, when these thoughts had found time to glance through his mind, “that we shall

reach port in safety. What distance may we now be from the fort?"

"Little more than fifteen miles; and swift miles too, as the river runs, if the Mingos let us go clear."

"And I suppose the woods will stretch along starboard and larboard, as heretofore?"

"Anan?"

"I mean that we shall have to pick our way through these damned trees."

"Nay, nay, you will go in the canoe, and the Oswego has been cleared of its flood-wood by the troops. It will be floating down stream, and that, too, with a swift current."

"And what the devil is to prevent these minks of which you speak, from shooting us as we double a headland, or are busy in steering clear of the rocks?"

"The Lord!—he who has so often helped others, in greater difficulties. Many and many is the time that my head would have been stripped of hair, skin, and all, hadn't the Lord fi't of my side. I never go into a skrimmage,

friend mariner, without thinking of this great ally, who can do more in battle than all the battalions of the 60th, were they brought into a single line."

"Ay, ay, this may do well enough for a scouter; but we seamen like our offing, and to go into action with nothing in our minds but the business before us — plain broadside and broadside work, and no trees or rocks, to thicken the water."

"And no Lord, too, I dare to say, if the truth were known. Take my word for it, Master Cap, that no battle is the worse fit for having the Lord on your side. Look at the head of the Big Sarpent, there; you can see the mark of a knife all along by his left ear: now, nothing but a bullet from this long rifle of mine saved his scalp that day; for it had fairly started, and half a minute more would have left him without the war-lock. When the Mohican squeezes my hand, and intermates that I befriended him in that matter, I tell him, no; it was the Lord, who led me to the only spot where execution could be done, or

his necessity be made known, on account of the smoke. Sartain when I got the right position, I finished the affair of my own accord; for a friend under the tomahawk is apt to make a man think quick, and act at once, as was my case, or the Sarpent's spirit would be hunting in the happy land of his people, at this very moment."

"Come, come, Pathfinder, this palaver is worse than being skinned from stem to stern; we have but a few hours of sun, and had better be drifting down this said current of yours, while we may. Magnet, dear, are you not ready to get under way?"

Magnet started, blushed brightly, and made her preparations for an immediate departure. Not a syllable of the discourse just related had she heard; for Eau-douce, as young Jasper was oftener called than anything else, had been filling her ears with a description of the yet distant port towards which she was journeying, with accounts of her father whom she had not seen since a child, and with the manner of life of those who lived in the frontier garrisons.

Unconsciously, she had become deeply interested, and her thoughts had been too intently directed to these matters to allow any of the less agreeable subjects discussed by those so near to reach her ears. The bustle of departure put an end to the conversation entirely, and the baggage of the scouts, or guides, being trifling, in a few minutes the whole party was ready to proceed. As they were about to quit the spot, however, to the surprise of even his fellow-guides, Pathfinder collected a quantity of branches, and threw them upon the embers of the fire, taking care even to see that some of the wood was damp, in order to raise as dark and dense a smoke as possible.

“When you can hide your trail, Jasper,” he said, “a smoke at leaving an encampment may do good, instead of harm. If there are a dozen Mingos within ten miles of us, some on ’em are on the heights, or in the trees, looking out for smokes; let them see this, and much good may it do them. They are welcome to our leavings.”

“But may they not strike and follow on our trail?” asked the youth whose interest in the hazard of his situation had much increased since the meeting with Magnet. “We shall leave a broad path to the river.”

“The broader the better; when there, it will surpass Mingo cunning, even, to say which way the canoe has gone; up stream or down. Water is the only thing in natur’ that will thoroughly wash out a trail, and even water will not always do it when the scent is strong. Do you not see, Eau-douce, that if any Mingos have seen our path below the falls, they will strike off towards this smoke, and that they will naturally conclude that they who began by going up stream, will end by going up stream. If they know anything, they now know a party is out from the fort, and it will exceed even Mingo wit to fancy that we have come up here just for the pleasure of going back again, and that, too, the same day, and at the risk of our scalps.”

“Certainly,” added Jasper, who was talking apart with the Pathfinder, as they moved to-

wards the wind-row, "they cannot know anything about the Sergeant's daughter, for the greatest secrecy has been observed on her account."

"And they will learn nothing here," returned Pathfinder, causing his companion to see that he trod with the utmost care on the impression left on the leaves by the little foot of Mabel, "unless this old salt-water fish has been taking his niece about in the wind-row, like a fa'n playing by the side of the old doe,"

"Buck, you mean, Pathfinder."

"Isn't he a queerity? Now I can consort with such a sailor as yourself, Eau-douce, and find nothing very contrary in our gifts, though yours belong to the lakes, and mine to the woods. Hark'e, Jasper," continued the scout, laughing in his noiseless manner; "suppose we try the temper of his blade, and run him over the falls?"

"And what would be done with the pretty niece, in the mean while?"

"Nay, nay, no harm shall come to her; she

must walk round the portage, at any rate ; but you and I can try this Atlantic oceaner, and then all parties will become better acquainted. We shall find out whether his flint will strike fire ; and he may come to know something of frontier tricks."

Young Jasper smiled, for he was not averse to fun, and had been a little touched by Cap's superciliousness ; but Mabel's fair face, light agile form, and winning smiles, stood like a shield between her uncle and the intended experiment.

"Perhaps the Sergeant's daughter will be frightened," he said.

"Not she, if she has any of the Sergeant's spirit in her. She doesn't look like a skeary thing, at all. Leave it to me, then, Eau-douce, and I will manage the affair alone."

"Not you, Pathfinder ; you would only drown both. If the canoe goes over, I must go in it."

"Well ; have it so, then ; shall we smoke the pipe of agreement on the bargain ?"

Jasper laughed, nodded his head, by way

of consent, and then the subject was dropped, as the party had reached the canoe so often mentioned, and fewer words had determined much greater things between the parties.

CHAPTER III.

Before these fields were shorn and till'd,
Full to the brim our rivers flow'd ;
The melody of waters fill'd
The fresh and boundless wood ;
And torrents dash'd, and rivulets play'd,
And fountains spouted in the shade.

BRYANT.

It is generally known, that the waters which flow into the southern side of Ontario are, in general, narrow, sluggish, and deep. There are some exceptions to this rule, for many of the rivers have rapids, or, as they are termed in the language of the region, "rifts," and some have falls. Among the latter was the particular stream on which our adventurers were now journeying. The Oswego is formed by the junction of the Oneida and the Onondaga, both of which flow from lakes ; and it pursues its way, through a gently undulating country,

some eight or ten miles, until it reaches the margin of a sort of natural terrace, down which it tumbles some ten or fifteen feet, to another level, across which it glides, or glances, or pursues its course with the silent stealthy progress of deep water, until it throws its tribute into the broad receptacle of the Ontario. The canoe in which Cap and his party had travelled from Fort Stanwix, the last military station on the Mohawk, lay by the side of this river, and into it the whole party now entered, with the exception of Pathfinder, who remained on the land, in order to shove the light vessel off.

“Let her stern drift down stream, Jasper,” said the man of the woods to the young mariner of the lake, who had dispossessed Arrowhead of his paddle and taken his own station as steersman; let it go down with the current. Should any of these infarnals, the Mingos, strike our trail, or follow it to this point, they will not fail to look for the signs in the mud; and if they discover that we have left the shore

with the nose of the canoe up-stream, it is a natural belief to think we went up-stream.

This direction was followed; and, giving a vigorous shove, the Pathfinder, who was in the flower of his strength and activity, made a leap, landing lightly, and without disturbing its equilibrium, in the bow of the canoe. As soon as it had reached the centre of the river or the strength of the current, the boat was turned, and it began to glide noiselessly down the stream.

The vessel in which Cap and his niece had embarked for their long and adventurous journey, was one of the canoes of bark, which the Indians are in the habit of constructing, and which, by their exceeding lightness and the ease with which they are propelled, are admirably adapted to a navigation in which shoals, flood-wood, and other similar obstructions, so often occur. The two men who composed its original crew had several times carried it, when emptied of its luggage, many hundred yards; and it would not have exceeded the strength of

a single man to lift its weight. Still it was long, and, for a canoe, wide; a want of steadiness being its principal defect in the eyes of the uninitiated. A few hours' practice, however, in a great measure remedied this evil, and both Mabel and her uncle had learned so far to humour its movements, that they now maintained their places with perfect composure; nor did the additional weight of the three guides tax its power in any particular degree, the breadth of the rounded bottom allowing the necessary quantity of water to be displaced, without bringing the gunwale very sensibly nearer to the surface of the stream. Its workmanship was neat; the timbers were small, and secured by thongs; and the whole fabric, though it was so slight and precarious to the eye, was probably capable of conveying double the number of persons that it now contained.

Cap was seated on a low thwart, in the centre of the canoe; the Big Serpent knelt near him. Arrowhead and his wife occupied places forward of both, the former having relinquished his post aft. Mabel was half-reclining on

some of her own effects, behind her uncle, while the Pathfinder and Eau-douce stood erect, the one in the bow, and the other in the stern, each using a paddle, with a long, steady, noiseless sweep. The conversation was carried on in low tones, all of the party beginning to feel the necessity of prudence, as they drew nearer to the outskirts of the fort, and had no longer the cover of the woods.

The Oswego, just at that place, was a deep dark stream of no great width, its still gloomy-looking current winding its way among overhanging trees, that, in particular spots, almost shut out the light of the heavens. Here and there some half-fallen giant of the forest lay nearly across its surface, rendering care necessary to avoid the limbs; and most of the distance, the lower branches and leaves of the trees of smaller growth were laved by its waters. The picture which has been so beautifully described by our own admirable poet, and which we have placed at the head of this chapter, as an epigraph, was here realised; the earth fattened by the decayed vegetation of

centuries, and black with loam, the stream that filled the banks nearly to overflowing, and the "fresh and boundless wood," being all as visible to the eye, as the pen of Bryant has elsewhere vividly presented them to the imagination. In short, the entire scene was one of a rich and benevolent nature, before it had been subjected to the uses and desires of man; luxuriant, wild, full of promise, and not without the charm of the picturesque, even in its rudest state. It will be remembered that this was in the year 175-, or long before even speculation had brought any portion of western New York within the bounds of civilisation or the projects of the adventurous. At that distant day, there were two great channels of military communication between the inhabited portion of the colony of New York, and the frontiers that lay adjacent to the Canadas:—that by Lakes Champlain and George, and that by means of the Mohawk, Wood Creek, the Oneida, and the rivers we have been describing. Along both these lines of communication, military posts had been established, though there

existed a blank space of a hundred miles between the last fort at the head of the Mohawk, and the outlet of the Oswego, which embraced most of the distance that Cap and Mabel had journeyed under the protection of Arrow-head.

“ I sometimes wish for peace, again,” said the Pathfinder, “ when one can range the forest without searching for any other enemy than the beasts and fishes. Ah’s ! me ; many is the day that the Sarpent, there, and I have passed happily among the streams, living on venison, salmon, and trout, without thought of a Mingo or a scalp ! I sometimes wish that them blessed days might come back, for it is not my real gift to slay my own kind. I’m sartain the Sergeant’s daughter don’t think me a wretch that takes pleasure in preying on human natur’ ? ”

As this remark, a sort of half interrogatory, was made, Pathfinder looked behind him ; and, though the most partial friend could scarcely term his sun-burnt and hard features handsome, even Mabel thought his smile attractive,

by its simple ingenuousness and the uprightness that beamed in every lineament of his honest countenance.

“ I do not think my father would have sent one like those you mention to see his daughter through the wilderness,” the young woman answered, returning the smile as frankly as it was given, and much more sweetly.

“ That he wouldn't, that he wouldn't; the Sergeant is a man of feeling, and many is the march and the fight that we have had — stood shoulder to shoulder in, as *he* would call it — though I always keep my limbs free, when near a Frencher or a Mingo.”

“ You are, then, the young friend of whom my father has spoken so often in his letters ? ”

“ His *young* friend — the Sergeant has the advantage of me by thirty years ; yes, he is thirty years my senior, and as many my better.”

“ Not in the eyes of the daughter, perhaps, friend Pathfinder,” put in Cap, whose spirits began to revive, when he found the water once more flowing around him. “ The thirty years

that you mention, are not often thought to be an advantage in the eyes of girls of nineteen."

Mabel coloured; and, in turning aside her face, to avoid the looks of those in the bow of the canoe, she encountered the admiring gaze of the young man in the stern. As a last resource, her spirited but soft blue eyes sought refuge in the water. Just at this moment a dull heavy sound swept up the avenue formed by the trees, borne along by a light air that hardly produced a ripple on the water.

"That sounds pleasantly," said Cap, pricking up his ears like a dog that hears a distant baying; "it is the surf on the shores of your lake, I suppose?"

"Not so — not so," answered the Pathfinder; "it is merely this river tumbling over some rocks, half a mile below us."

"Is there a fall in the stream?" demanded Mabel, a still brighter flush glowing in her face.

"The devil! Master Pathfinder, or you, Mr. Eau-deuce," (for so Cap began to style

Jasper, by way of entering cordially into the border usages,) "had you not better give the canoe a sheer, and get nearer to the shore? These waterfalls have generally rapids above them, and one might as well get into the Maelstrom at once, as to run into their suction."

"Trust to us — trust to us, friend Cap," answered Pathfinder; "we are but fresh-water sailors, it is true, and I cannot boast of being much even of that; but we understand rifts, and rapids, and cataracts; and, in going down these, we shall do our endeavours not to disgrace our education."

"In going down!" exclaimed Cap. "The devil, man! you do not dream of going down a waterfall, in this egg-shell of bark!"

"Sartain; the path lies over the falls, and it is much easier to shoot them, than to unload the canoe, and to carry that and all it contains around a portage of a mile, by hand."

Mabel turned her pallid countenance towards the young man in the stern of the canoe; for, just at that moment, a fresh roar of the fall was borne to her ears, by a new current of the

air, and it really sounded terrific, now that the cause was understood.

“We thought that, by landing the females and the two Indians,” Jasper quietly observed, “we three white men, all of whom are used to the water, might carry the canoe over in safety, for we often shoot these falls.”

“And we counted on you, friend mariner, as a mainstay,” said Pathfinder, winking at Jasper over his shoulder; “for you are accustomed to see waves tumbling about; and without some one to steady the cargo, all the finery of the Sergeant’s daughter might be washed into the river, and be lost.”

Cap was puzzled. The idea of going over a waterfall was, perhaps, more serious in his eyes than it would have been in those of one totally ignorant of all that pertained to boats; for he understood the power of the element, and the total feebleness of man when exposed to its fury. Still his pride revolted at the thought of deserting the boat, while others not only steadily, but coolly, proposed to continue in it. Notwithstanding the latter feeling, and his

innate as well as acquired steadiness in danger, he would probably have deserted his post, had not the images of Indians tearing scalps from the human head, taken so strong hold of his fancy, as to induce him to imagine the canoe a sort of sanctuary.

“What is to be done with Magnet?” he demanded, affection for his niece raising another qualm in his conscience. “We cannot allow Magnet to land if there are enemy’s Indians near?”

“Nay, no Mingo will be near the portage; for that is a spot too public for their devilries,” answered the Pathfinder, confidently. “Natur’ is natur’, and it is an Indian’s natur’ to be found where he is least expected. No fear of him on a beaten path; for he wishes to come upon you when unprepared to meet him, and the fiery villains make it a point to deceive you, one way or another. Sheer in, Eau-douce, and we will land the Sergeant’s daughter on the end of that log, where she can reach the shore with a dry foot.”

The injunction was obeyed, and in a few minutes the whole party had left the canoe, with

the exception of Pathfinder and the two sailors. Notwithstanding his professional pride, Cap would have gladly followed ; but he did not like to exhibit so unequivocal a weakness in the presence of a fresh-water sailor.

“ I call all hands to witness,” he said, as those who had landed moved away, “ that I do not look on this affair as anything more than canoeing in the woods. There is no seamanship in tumbling over a waterfall, which is a feat the greatest lubber can perform as well as the oldest mariner.”

“ Nay, nay, you needn't despise the Oswego Falls, neither,” put in Pathfinder, “ for though they may not be Niagara, nor the Genessee, nor the Cahoos, nor Glenn's, nor those on the Canada, they are narvous enough for a new beginner. Let the Sergeant's daughter stand on yonder rock, and she will see the manner in which we ignorant backwoodsmen get over a difficulty that we can't get under. Now, Eau-douce, a steady hand and a true eye, for all rests on you, seeing that we can count Master Cap for no more than a passenger.”

The canoe was leaving the shore, as he concluded, while Mabel went hurriedly and trembling to the rock that had been pointed out, talking to her companion of the danger her uncle so unnecessarily ran, while her eyes were riveted on the agile and vigorous form of Eau-douce, as he stood erect in the stern of the light boat, governing its movements. As soon, however, as she reached a point where she got a view of the fall, she gave an involuntary but suppressed scream, and covered her eyes. At the next instant, the latter were again free, and the entranced girl stood immovable as a statue, a scarcely breathing observer of all that passed. The two Indians seated themselves passively on a log, hardly looking towards the stream, while the wife of Arrowhead came near Mabel, and appeared to watch the motions of the canoe with some such interest as a child regards the leaps of a tumbler.

As soon as the boat was in the stream, Pathfinder sunk on his knees, continuing to use the paddle, though it was slowly, and in a manner not to interfere with the efforts of his compa-

nion. The latter still stood erect; and, as he kept his eye on some object beyond the fall, it was evident that he was carefully looking for the spot proper for their passage.

“Further west, boy; further west,” muttered Pathfinder; “there where you see the water foam. Bring the top of the dead oak in a line with the stem of the blasted hemlock.”

Eau-douce made no answer; for the canoe was in the centre of the stream, with its head pointed towards the fall, and it had already begun to quicken its motion, by the increased force of the current. At that moment, Cap would cheerfully have renounced every claim to glory that could possibly be acquired by the feat, to have been safe again on shore. He heard the roar of the water, thundering as it might be, behind a screen, but becoming more and more distinct, louder and louder, and before him he saw its line cutting the forest below, along which the green and angry element seemed stretched and shining, as if the particles were about to lose their principle of cohesion.

“Down with your helm, down with your

helm, man !” he exclaimed, unable any longer to suppress his anxiety, as the canoe glided towards the edge of the fall.

“ Ay, ay, down it is, sure enough,” answered Pathfinder, looking behind him for a single instant, with his silent joyous laugh—“ down we go, of a sartainty ! Heave her starn up, boy ; further up with her starn !”

The rest was like the passage of the viewless wind. Eau-douce gave the required sweep with his paddle, the canoe glanced into the channel, and for a few seconds it seemed to Cap that he was tossing in a caldron. He felt the bow of the canoe tip, saw the raging foaming water careering madly by his side, was sensible that the light fabric in which he floated was tossed about like an egg-shell, and then, not less to his great joy than to his surprise, he discovered that it was gliding across the basin of still water, below the fall, under the steady impulse of Jasper’s paddle.

The Pathfinder continued to laugh ; but he arose from his knees, and, searching for a tin pot and a horn spoon, he began deliberately

to measure the water that had been taken in in the passage.

“ Fourteen spoonfuls, Eau-douce ; fourteen fairly measured spoonfuls. I have, you must acknowledge, known you to go down with only ten.”

“ Master Cap leaned so hard up stream,” returned Jasper, seriously, “ that I had difficulty in trimming the canoe.”

“ It may be so, it may be so; no doubt it *was* so, since you say it; but I have known you go over with only ten.”

Cap now gave a tremendous hem, felt for his queue as if to ascertain its safety, and then looked back in order to examine the danger he had gone through. His safety is easily explained. Most of the river fell perpendicularly ten or twelve feet; but near its centre, the force of the current had so far worn away the rock, as to permit the water to shoot through a narrow passage, at an angle of about forty or forty-five degrees. Down this ticklish descent the canoe had glanced, amid fragments of broken rock, whirlpools, foam,

and furious tossings of the element, which an uninstructed eye would believe menaced inevitable destruction to an object so fragile. But the very lightness of the canoe had favoured its descent; for, borne on the crests of the waves, and directed by a steady eye and an arm full of muscle, it had passed like a feather from one pile of foam to another, scarcely permitting its glossy side to be wetted. There were a few rocks to be avoided, the proper direction was to be rigidly observed, and the fierce current did the rest.*

To say that Cap was astonished would not be expressing half his feelings: he felt awed; for the profound dread of rocks, which most seamen entertain, came in aid of his admiration of the boldness of the exploit. Still he was indisposed to express all he felt, lest it might be conceding too much in favour of fresh water and inland navigation; and no

* Lest the reader suppose we are dealing purely in fiction, the writer will add that he has known a long thirty-two-pounder carried over these same falls in perfect safety.

sooner had he cleared his throat with the aforesaid hem, than he loosened his tongue in the usual strain of superiority.

“ I do not gainsay your knowledge of the channel, Master Eau-douce (for such he religiously believed to be Jasper’s *sobriquet*); and, after all, to know the channel in such a place is the main point. I have had cockswains with me who could come down that shoot too, if they only knew the channel.”

“ It isn’t enough to know the channel, friend mariner,” said Pathfinder; “ it needs narves and skill to keep the canoe straight, and to keep her clear of the rocks too. There isn’t another boatman in all this region that can shoot the Oswego, but Eau-douce there, with any sartainty; though, now and then, one has blundered through. I can’t do it myself unless by means of Providence, and it needs Jasper’s hand and Jasper’s eye to make sure of a dry passage. Fourteen spoonfuls, after all, are no great matter, though I wish it had been but ten, seeing that the Sergeant’s daughter was a looker-on.”

“ And yet you conned the canoe; you told him how to head, and how to sheer.”

“ Human frailty, master mariner; that was a little of white-skin natur’. Now, had the Sarpent, yonder, been in the boat, not a word would he have spoken, or thought would he have given to the public. An Indian knows how to hold his tongue; but we white folk fancy we are always wiser than our fellows. I’m curing myself fast of the weakness, but it needs time to root up the tree that has been growing more than thirty years.”

“ I think little of this affair, sir; nothing at all, to speak my mind freely. It’s a mere wash of spray to shooting London Bridge, which is done every day by hundreds of persons, and often by the most delicate ladies in the land. The King’s Majesty has shot the bridge in his royal person.”

“ Well, I want no delicate ladies or king’s majesties (God bless ’em) in the canoe, in going over these falls; for a boat’s breadth, either way, may make a drowning matter of it. Eau-douce, we shall have to carry the Sergeant’s

brother over Niagara yet, to show him what may be done on a frontier."

"The devil! Master Pathfinder, you must be joking, now! Surely it is not possible for a bark canoe to go over that mighty cataract?"

"You never were more mistaken, Master Cap, in your life. Nothing is easier, and many is the canoe I have seen go over it with my own eyes; and if we both live, I hope to satisfy you that the feat can be done. For my part, I think the largest ship that ever sailed on the ocean, might be carried over, could she once get into the rapids."

Cap did not perceive the wink which Pathfinder exchanged with Eau-douce, and he remained silent for some time; for, sooth to say, he had never suspected the possibility of going down Niagara, feasible as the thing must appear to every one, on a second thought, the real difficulty existing in going up it.

By this time, the party had reached the place where Jasper had left his own canoe, concealed in the bushes, and they all re-embarked; Cap, Jasper, and his niece, in one boat, and

Pathfinder, Arrowhead, and the wife of the latter, in the other. The Mohican had already passed down the banks of the river by land, looking cautiously, and with the skill of his people, for the signs of an enemy.

The cheek of Mabel did not recover all its bloom until the canoe was again in the current, down which it floated swiftly, occasionally impelled by the paddle of Jasper. She witnessed the descent of the falls with a degree of terror that had rendered her mute; but her fright had not been so great as to prevent admiration of the steadiness of the youth who directed the movement, from blending with the passing terror. In truth, one much less quick and sensitive might have had her feelings awakened by the cool and gallant air with which Eau-douce had accomplished this clever exploit. He had stood firmly erect, notwithstanding the plunge; and to those who were on the shore, it was evident that, by a timely application of his skill and strength, the canoe had received a sheer that alone carried it clear of a rock, over which the boiling water was leaping in *jets d'eau*,—

now leaving the brown stone visible, and now covering it with a limpid sheet, as if machinery controlled the play of the element. The tongue cannot always express what the eyes view ; but Mabel saw enough, even in that moment of fear, to blend for ever in her mind the pictures presented by the plunging canoe and the unmoved steersman. She admitted that insidious feeling which binds woman so strongly to man, by feeling additional security in finding herself under his care ; and for the first time since leaving Fort Stanwix, she was entirely at her ease in the frail bark in which she travelled. As the other canoe kept quite near her own, however, and the Pathfinder, by floating at her side, was most in view, the conversation was principally maintained with that person ; Jasper seldom speaking unless addressed, and constantly exhibiting a wariness in the management of his own boat, that might have been remarked by one accustomed to his ordinarily confident careless manner, had such an observer been present to note what was passing.

“ We know too well a woman’s gifts, to

think of carrying the Sergeant's daughter over the falls," said Pathfinder, looking at Mabel, while he addressed her uncle; "though I've been acquainted with some of her sex, in these regions, that would think but little of doing the thing."

"Mabel is faint-hearted, like her mother," returned Cap, "and you did well, friend, to humour her weakness. You will remember the child has never been at sea."

"No, no, it was easy to discover that; by your own fearlessness, any one might have seen how little you cared about the matter. I went over once with a raw hand, and he jumped out of the canoe just as it tipped, and you may judge what a time he had of it."

"What became of the poor fellow?" asked Cap, scarcely knowing how to take the other's manner which was so dry, while it was so simple, that a less obtuse subject than the old sailor might well have suspected its sincerity. "One who has passed the place knows how to feel for him."

"He was a *poor* fellow, as you say; and

a poor frontier man too, though he came out to show his skill among us ignoranter. What became of him? — why, he went down the falls topsy-turvy like, as would have happened to a court-house or a fort.”

“ If it should jump out of a canoe,” interrupted Jasper, smiling, though he was evidently more disposed than his friend to let the passage of the falls be forgotten.

“ The boy is right,” rejoined Pathfinder, laughing in Mabel’s face, the canoes being now so near that they almost touched; “ he is sartainly right. But you have not told us what you think of the leap we took ?”

“ It was perilous and bold,” said Mabel; “ while looking at it, I could have wished that it had not been attempted, though, now it is over, I can admire its boldness and the steadiness with which it was made.”

“ Now, do not think that we did this thing to set ourselves off in female eyes. It may be pleasant to the young to win each other’s good opinions, by doing things that may seem praiseworthy and bold; but neither Eau-douce

nor myself is of that race. My natur', though perhaps the Sarpent would be a better witness, has few turns in it, and is a straight natur'; nor would it be likely to lead me into a vanity of this sort while out on duty. As for Jasper, he would sooner go over the Oswego Falls, without a looker-on, than do it before a hundred pair of eyes. I know the lad well from use and much consorting, and I am sure he is not boastful or vain-glorious."

Mabel rewarded the scout with a smile, that served to keep the canoes together for some time longer; for the sight of youth and beauty was so rare on that remote frontier, that even the rebuked and self-mortified feelings of this wanderer of the forest were sensibly touched by the blooming loveliness of the girl.

"We did it for the best," Pathfinder continued; "'t was all for the best. Had we waited to carry the canoe across the portage, time would have been lost, and nothing is so precious as time, when you are mistrustful of Mingos."

“ But we can have little to fear, now. The canoes move swiftly, and two hours, you have said, will carry us down to the fort.”

“ It shall be a cunning Iroquois who hurts a hair of your head, pretty one; for all here are bound to the Sergeant, and most, I think, to yourself, to see you safe from harm. Ha! Eau-douce; what is that in the river, at the lower turn, yonder, beneath the bushes,—I mean standing on the rock?”

“ ’T is the Big Serpent, Pathfinder; he is making signs to us in a way I don’t understand.”

“ ’T is the Sarpent, as sure as I’m a white man, and he wishes us to drop in nearer to his shore. Mischief is brewing, or one of his deliberation and steadiness would never take this trouble. Courage, all! we are men, and must meet devilry as becomes our colour and our callings. Ah! I never knew good come of boasting; and here, just as I was vaunting of our safety, comes danger to give me the lie.”

CHAPTER IV.

—— Art, stryving to compare
 With nature, did an arber greene dispred,
 Fram'd of wanton yvie flowing fayre,
 Through which the fragrant eglantines did spred.

SPENSER.

THE Oswego, below the falls, is a more rapid unequal stream, than it is above them. There are places where the river flows in the quiet stillness of deep water, but many shoals and rapids occur; and, at that distant day, when everything was in its natural state, some of the passes were not altogether without hazard. Very little exertion was required on the part of those who managed the canoes, except in those places where the swiftness of the current and the presence of the rocks required care; when, indeed, not only vigi-

lance, but great coolness, readiness, and strength of arm became necessary, in order to avoid the dangers. Of all this the Mohican was aware, and he had judiciously selected a spot where the river flowed tranquilly, to intercept the canoes, in order to make his communication without hazard to those he wished to speak.

The Pathfinder had no sooner recognised the form of his red friend, than, with a strong sweep of his paddle, he threw the head of his own canoe towards the shore, motioning for Jasper to follow. In a minute both boats were silently drifting down the stream, within reach of the bushes that overhung the water, all observing a profound silence ; some from alarm, and others from habitual caution. As the travellers drew nearer the Indian, he made a sign for them to stop ; and then he and Pathfinder had a short but earnest conference, in the language of the Delawares.

“ The chief is not apt to see enemies in a dead log,” observed the white man, to his red associate ; “ why does he tell us to stop ?”

“Mingos are in the woods.”

“That we have believed these two days: does the chief know it?”

The Mohican quietly held up the head of a pipe formed of stone.

“It lay on a fresh trail that led towards the garrison,”—for so it was the usage of that frontier to term a military work, whether it was occupied or not.

“That may be the bowl of a pipe belonging to a soldier. Many use the red-skin pipes.”

“See,” said the Big Serpent, again holding the thing he had found up to the view of his friend.

The bowl of the pipe was of soap-stone, and it had been carved with great care, and with a very respectable degree of skill; in its centre was a small Latin cross, made with an accuracy that permitted no doubt of its meaning.

“That does foretell devilry and wickedness,” said the Pathfinder, who had all the provincial horror of the holy symbol in question that then pervaded the country, and which became so incorporated with its prejudices, by

confounding men with things, as to have left its traces strong enough on the moral feeling of the community to be discovered even at the present hour; "no Indian who had not been parvarted by the cunning priests of the Canadas, would dream of carving a thing like that on his pipe. I'll warrant ye, the knave prays to the image every time he wishes to sarcumvent the innocent, and work his fearful wickedness. It looks fresh, too, Chingachgook?"

"The tobacco was burning when I found it."

"That is close work, chief. Where was the trail?"

The Mohican pointed to a spot not a hundred yards from that where they stood.

The matter now began to look very serious, and the two principal guides conferred apart for several minutes, when both ascended the bank, approached the indicated spot, and examined the trail with the utmost care. After this investigation had lasted a quarter of an hour, the white man returned alone, his red friend having disappeared in the forest.

The ordinary expression of the countenance of the Pathfinder was that of simplicity, integrity, and sincerity, blended in an air of self-reliance that usually gave great confidence to those who found themselves under his care; but now a look of concern cast a shade over his honest face, that struck the whole party.

“What cheer, Master Pathfinder?” demanded Cap, permitting a voice that was usually deep, loud, and confident, to sink into the cautious tones that better suited the dangers of the wilderness; “has the enemy got between us and our port?”

“Anan?”

“Have any of these painted scaramouches anchored off the harbour towards which we are running, with the hope of cutting us off in entering?”

“It may be all as you say, friend Cap, but I am none the wiser for your words; and, in ticklish times, the plainer a man makes his English, the easier he is understood. I know nothing of ports and anchors; but there is a direful Mingo trail within a hundred yards of

this very spot, and as fresh as venison without salt. If one of the fiery devils has passed, so have a dozen; and, what is worse, they have gone down towards the garrison, and not a soul crosses the clearing around it, that some of their piercing eyes will not discover, when sarrtain bullets will follow."

"Cannot this said fort deliver a broadside, and clear everything within the sweep of its hawse?"

"Nay, the forts this-a-way are not like forts in the settlements, and two or three light cannon are all they have down at the mouth of the river; and then, broadsides fired at a dozen out-lying Mingoës, lying behind logs, and in a forest, would be powder spent in vain. We have but one course, and that is a very nice one. We are judgmatically placed here, both canoes being hid by the high bank and the bushes, from all eyes, except those of any lurker directly opposite. Here, then, we may stay, without much present fear; but how to get the blood-thirsty devils up the stream again?—Ha! I have it—I have it—if it

does no good, it can do no harm. Do you see the wide-topped chestnut here, Jasper, at the last turn in the river? on our own side of the stream, I mean?"

"That near the fallen pine?"

"The very same. Take the flint and tinder-box, creep along the bank, and light a fire at that spot; may be the smoke will draw them above us. In the mean while, we will drop the canoes carefully down beyond the point below, and find another shelter. Bushes are plenty, and covers are easily to be had in this region, as witness the many ambushments."

"I will do it, Pathfinder," said Jasper, springing to the shore. "In ten minutes the fire shall be lighted."

"And, Eau-douce, use plenty of damp wood, this time," half whispered the other, laughing heartily, in his own peculiar manner: "when smoke is wanted, water helps to thicken it."

The young man who too well understood his duty to delay unnecessarily, was soon off, making his way rapidly towards the desired point. A slight attempt of Mabel to object

to the risk was disregarded, and the party immediately prepared to change its position, as it could be seen from the place where Jasper intended to light his fire. The movement did not require haste, and it was made leisurely and with care. The canoes were got clear of the bushes, then suffered to drop down with the stream until they reached the spot where the chestnut, at the foot of which Jasper was to light the fire, was almost shut out from view, when they stopped, and every eye was turned in the direction of the adventurer.

“There goes the smoke!” exclaimed the Pathfinder, as a current of air whirled a little column of the vapour from the land, allowing it to rise spirally above the bed of the river. “A good flint, a small bit of steel, and plenty of dry leaves, make a quick fire. I hope Eau-douce will have the wit to bethink him of the damp wood now when it may serve us all a good turn.”

“Too much smoke — too much cunning,” said Arrowhead, sententiously.

“That is Gospel truth, Tuscarora, if the Mingos didn't know that they are near soldiers; but soldiers commonly think more of their dinner, at a halt, than of their wisdom and danger. No, no; let the boy pile on his logs, and smoke them well too; it will all be laid to the stupidity of some Scotch or Irish blunderer, who is thinking more of his oatmeal or his potatoes, than of Indian sarcumventions or Indian rifles.”

“And yet I should think, from all we have heard in the towns, that the soldiers on this frontier are used to the artifices of their enemies,” said Mabel; “and have got to be almost as wily as the red-men themselves.”

“Not they, not they. Experience makes them but little wiser; and they wheel, and platoon, and battalion it about, here in the forest, just as they did in their parks at home, of which they are all so fond of talking. One red-skin has more cunning in his natur' than a whole regiment from the other side of the water; that is, what I call cunning of the woods. But there is smoke

enough, of all conscience, and we had better drop into another cover. The lad has thrown the river on his fire, and there is danger that the Mingos will believe a whole regiment is out."

While speaking, the Pathfinder permitted his canoe to drift away from the bush by which it had been retained, and in a couple of minutes the bend in the river concealed the smoke and the tree. Fortunately a small indentation in the shore presented itself, within a few yards of the point they had just passed; and the two canoes glided into it, under the impulsion of the paddles.

A better spot could not have been found for the purpose of the travellers than the one they now occupied. The bushes were thick and overhung the water, forming a complete canopy of leaves. There was a small gravelly strand at the bottom of the little bay, where most of the party landed to be more at their ease, and the only position from which they could possibly be seen, was a point on the river directly opposite. There was

little danger, however, of discovery from that quarter, as the thicket there was even denser than common, and the land beyond it was so wet and marshy, as to render it difficult to be trodden.

“This is a safe cover,” said the Pathfinder, after he had taken a scrutinizing survey of his position; “but it may be necessary to make it safer. Master Cap, I ask nothing of you but silence, and a quieting of such gifts as you may have got at sea, while the Tuscarora and I make provision for the evil hour.”

The guide then went a short distance into the bushes, accompanied by the Indian, where the two cut off the larger stems of several alders and other bushes, using the utmost care not to make a noise. The ends of these little trees, for such in fact they were, were forced into the mud, outside of the canoes, the depth of the water being very trifling; and in the course of ten minutes a very effectual screen was interposed between them and the principal point of danger. Much ingenuity and readiness were manifested in making this simple ar-

rangement, in which the two workmen were essentially favoured by the natural formation of the bank, the indentation in the shore, the shallowness of the water, and the manner in which the tangled bushes dipped into the stream. The Pathfinder had the address to look for bushes that had curved stems, things easily found in such a place; and by cutting them some distance beneath the bend, and permitting the latter to touch the water, the artificial little thicket had not the appearance of growing in the stream, which might have excited suspicion; but, one passing it, would have thought that the bushes shot out horizontally from the bank before they inclined upwards towards the light. In short, the shelter was so cunningly devised, and so artfully prepared, that none but an unusually distrustful eye would have been turned for an instant towards the spot, in quest of a hiding-place.

“This is the best cover I ever yet got into,” said the Pathfinder, with his quiet laugh, after having been on the outside to reconnoiter;

“the leaves of our new trees fairly touch those of the bushes over our heads, and even the painter who has been in the garrison of late, could not tell which belong to Providence, and which are ours. Hist!—yonder comes Eau-douce, wading, like a sensible boy, as he is, to leave his trail in the water! and we shall soon see whether our cover is good for anything or not.”

Jasper had, indeed, returned from his duty above; and missing the canoes, he at once inferred that they had dropped round the next bend in the river, in order to get out of sight of the fire. His habits of caution immediately suggested the expediency of stepping into the water, in order that there might exist no visible communication between the marks left on the shore by the party, and the place where he believed them to have taken refuge below. Should the Canadian Indians return on their own trail, and discover that made by the Pathfinder and the Serpent in their ascent from, and descent to the river, the clue to their movements would cease at the shore, water

leaving no prints of footsteps. The young man had, therefore, waded, knee-deep, as far as the point, and was now seen making his way slowly down the margin of the stream, searching curiously for the spot in which the canoes were hid.

It was in the power of those behind the bushes, by placing their eyes near the leaves, to find many places to look through, while one at a little distance lost this advantage; or, even did his sight happen to fall on some small opening, the bank and the shadows beyond prevented him from detecting forms and outlines of sufficient dimensions to expose the fugitives. It was evident to those who watched his motions from behind their cover, and they were all in the canoes, that Jasper was totally at a loss to imagine where the Pathfinder had secreted himself. When fairly round the curvature in the shore, and out of sight of the fire he had lighted above, the young man stopped and began examining the bank deliberately and with great care. Occasionally, he advanced eight or ten paces, and then halted again, to

renew the search. The water being much shallower than common, he stepped aside, in order to walk with greater ease to himself, and came so near the artificial plantation that he might have touched it with his hand. Still he detected nothing, and was actually passing the spot when Pathfinder made an opening beneath the branches and called to him, in a low voice, to enter.

“This is pretty well,” said the Pathfinder, laughing; though pale-face eyes and red-skin eyes are as different as human spy-glasses. I would wager, with the Sergeant’s daughter, here, a horn of powder against a wampumbelt for her girdle, that her father’s rijiment should march by this embankment of ours, and never find out the fraud! But, if the Mingos actually get down into the bed of the river where Jasper passed, I should tremble for the plantation. It will do, for their eyes, even across the stream, however, and will not be without its use.”

“Don’t you think, Master Pathfinder, that it would be wisest, after all,” said Cap, “to

get under way at once, and carry sail hard down stream, as soon as we are satisfied these rascals are fairly astern of us? We seamen call a stern chase a long chase."

"I wouldn't move from this spot, until we hear from the Sarpent, with the Sergeant's pretty daughter here in our company, for all the powder in the magazine of the fort below. Sartain captivity or sartain death would follow. If a tender fa'n, such as the maiden we have in charge, could thread the forest like old deer, it might, indeed, do to quit the canoes; for, by making a circuit, we could reach the garrison before morning."

"Then let it be done," said Mabel, springing to her feet, under the sudden impulse of awakened energy. "I am young, active, used to exercise, and could easily outwalk my dear uncle. Let no one think me a hindrance. I cannot bear that all your lives should be exposed on my account."

"No, no, pretty one; we think you anything but a hindrance or anything that is unbecoming, and would willingly run twice this

risk to do you and the honest Sergeant a service. Do I not speak your mind, Eau-douce?"

"To do *her* a service!" said Jasper with emphasis. "Nothing shall tempt me to desert Mabel Dunham until she is safe in her father's arms."

"Well said, lad; bravely and honestly said, too; and I join in it, heart and hand. No, no; you are not the first of your sex I have led through the wilderness, and never but once did any harm befall any of them:—that was a sad day, certainly; but its like may never come again."

Mabel looked from one of her protectors to the other, and her fine eyes swam in tears. Frankly placing a hand in that of each, she answered them, though at first her voice was choked —

"I have no right to expose you on my account. My dear father will thank you, I thank you, God will reward you; but let there be no unnecessary risk. I can walk far, and have often gone miles on some girlish fancy; why not now exert myself for my life? nay, for your precious lives?"

“She is a true dove, Jasper,” said the Pathfinder, neither relinquishing the hand he held until the girl herself, in native modesty, saw fit to withdraw it, “and wonderfully winning! We get to be rough, and sometimes even hard-hearted, in the woods, Mabel; but the sight of one like you brings us back again to our young feelings, and does us good for the remainder of our days. I dare say Jasper here will tell you the same; for, like me in the forest, the lad sees but few such as yourself on Ontario, to soften his heart, and remind him of love for his kind. Speak out, now, Jasper, and say if it is not so.”

“I question if many like Mabel Dunham are to be found anywhere,” returned the young man gallantly, an honest sincerity glowing in his face, that spoke more eloquently than his tongue; “you need not mention woods and lakes to challenge her equals, but I would go into the settlements and towns.”

“We had better leave the canoes,” Mabel hurriedly rejoined; “for I feel it is no longer safe to be here.”

“ You can never do it, you can never do it. It would be a march of more than twenty miles, and that too of tramping over brush and roots, and through swamps, in the dark ; the trail of such a party would be wide, and we might have to fight our way into the garrison, after all. We will wait for the Mohican.”

Such appearing to be the decision of him to whom all, in their present strait, looked up for counsel, no more was said on the subject. The whole party now broke up into groups ; Arrowhead and his wife sitting apart under the bushes, conversing in a low tone, though the man spoke sternly, and the woman answered with the subdued mildness that marks the degraded condition of a savage's wife. Pathfinder and Cap occupied one canoe, chatting of their different adventures by sea and land ; while Jasper and Mabel sat in the other, making greater progress in intimacy in a single hour than might have been effected under other circumstances in a twelvemonth. Notwithstanding their situation as regards the enemy, the time flew by swiftly, and the young

people, in particular, were astonished when Cap informed them how long they had been thus occupied.

“If one could smoke, Master Pathfinder,” observed the old sailor, “this berth would be snug enough; for, to give the devil his due, you have got the canoes handsomely land-locked, and into moorings that would defy a monsoon. The only hardship is the denial of the pipe.”

“The scent of the tobacco would betray us; and where is the use of taking all these precautions against the Mingo’s eyes, if we are to tell him where the cover is to be found through the nose? No, no; deny your appetites; deny your appetites, and learn one virtue from a red-skin, who will pass a week without eating even, to get a single scalp. Did you hear nothing, Jasper?”

“The Serpent is coming.”

“Then let us see if Mohican eyes are better than them of a lad who follows the water.”

The Mohican had indeed made his appearance in the same direction as that by which

Jasper had rejoined his friends. Instead of coming directly on, however, no sooner did he pass the bend, where he was concealed from any who might be higher up stream, than he moved close under the bank; and, using the utmost caution, got a position where he could look back, with his person sufficiently concealed by the bushes to prevent its being seen by any in that quarter.

“The Sarpent sees the knaves!” whispered Pathfinder. “As I’m a Christian white man, they have bit at the bait, and have ambushed the smoke!”

Here a hearty but silent laugh interrupted his words, and nudging Cap with his elbow, they all continued to watch the movements of Chingachgook in profound stillness. The Mochican remained stationary as the rock on which he stood, fully ten minutes; and then it was apparent that something of interest had occurred within his view, for he drew back with a hurried manner, looked anxiously and keenly along the margin of the stream, and moved

quickly down it, taking care to lose his trail in the shallow water. He was evidently in a hurry and concerned, now looking behind him, and then casting eager glances towards every spot on the shore, where he thought a canoe might be concealed.

“Call him in,” whispered Jasper, scarcely able to restrain his impatience; “call him in, or it will be too late. See! he is actually passing us.”

“Not so, not so, lad; nothing presses, depend on it,” returned his companion, “or the Sarpent would begin to creep. The Lord help us and teach us wisdom! I *do* believe even Chingachgook, whose sight is as faithful as the hound’s scent, overlooks us, and will not find out the ambushment we have made!”

This exultation was untimely; for the words were no sooner spoken than the Indian, who had actually got several feet lower down the stream than the artificial cover, suddenly stopped; fastened a keen-riveted glance among the transplanted bushes; made a few hasty

steps backward ; and, bending his body and carefully separating the branches, he appeared among them.

“ The accursed Mingos ! ” said Pathfinder, as soon as his friend was near enough to be addressed with prudence.

“ Iroquois, ” returned the sententious Indian.

“ No matter, no matter ; Iroquois, devil, Mingo, Mengwes, or furies—all are pretty much the same. I call all rascals, Mingos. Come hither, chief, and let us converse rationally.”

The two then stepped aside, and conversed earnestly in the dialect of the Delawares. When their private communication was over, Pathfinder rejoined the rest, and made them acquainted with all he had learned.

The Mohican had followed the trail of their enemies some distance towards the fort, until the latter caught a sight of the smoke of Jasper's fire, when they instantly retraced their steps. It now became necessary for Chingachgook, who ran the greatest risk of detec-

tion, to find a cover where he could secrete himself, until the party might pass. It was, perhaps, fortunate for him, that the savages were so intent on this recent discovery, that they did not bestow the ordinary attention on the signs of the forest. At all events, they passed him swiftly, fifteen in number, treading lightly in each others' footsteps; and he was enabled again to get into their rear. After proceeding to the place where the footsteps of Pathfinder and the Mohican had joined the principal trail, the Iroquois had struck off to the river, which they reached just as Jasper had disappeared behind the bend below. The smoke being now in plain view, the savages plunged into the woods, and endeavoured to approach the fire unseen. Chingachgook profited by this occasion to descend to the water, and to gain the bend in the river also, which he thought had been effected undiscovered. Here he paused, as has been stated, until he saw his enemies at the fire, where their stay, however, was very short.

Of the motives of the Iroquois the Mohican

could judge only by their acts. He thought they had detected the artifice of the fire, and were aware that it had been kindled with a view to mislead them; for, after a hasty examination of the spot, they had separated, some plunging again into the woods, while six or eight had followed the footsteps of Jasper along the shore, and come down the stream towards the place where the canoes had landed. What course they might take on reaching that spot, was only to be conjectured; for the Serpent had felt the emergency to be too pressing to delay looking for his friends any longer. From some indications that were to be gathered from their gestures, however, he thought it probable that their enemies might follow down in the margin of the stream, but could not be certain.

As the Pathfinder related these facts to his companions, the professional feelings of the two other white men came uppermost, and both naturally reverted to their habits, in quest of the means of escape.

“ Let us run out the canoes at once,” said

Jasper, eagerly; "the current is strong, and by using the paddles vigorously we shall soon be beyond the reach of these scoundrels!"

"And this poor flower, that first blossomed in the clearings—shall it wither in the forest?" objected his friend, with a poetry that he had unconsciously imbibed by his long association with the Delawares.

"We must all die first," answered the youth, a generous colour mounting to his temples; "Mabel and Arrowhead's wife may lie down in the canoes, while we do our duty, like men, on our feet."

"Ay, you are active at the paddle and the oar, Eau-douce, I will allow, but an accursed Mingo is more active at his mischief; the canoes are swift, but a rifle-bullet is swifter."

"It is the business of men, engaged as we have been by a confiding father, to run this risk—"

"But it is not their business to overlook prudence."

"Prudence! a man may carry his prudence so far as to forget his courage."

The group was standing on the narrow strand, the Pathfinder leaning on his rifle, the butt of which rested on the gravelly beach, while both his hands clasped the barrel, at the height of his own shoulders. As Jasper threw out this severe and unmerited imputation, the deep red of his comrade's face maintained its hue unchanged, though the young man perceived that the fingers grasped the iron of the gun with the tenacity of a vice. Here all betrayal of emotion ceased.

“You are young and hot-headed,” returned Pathfinder, with a dignity that impressed his listeners with a keen sense of his moral superiority; “but my life has been passed among dangers of this sort, and my experience and gifts are not to be mastered by the impatience of a boy. As for courage, Jasper, I will not send back an angry and unmeaning word, to meet an angry and an unmeaning word; for I know that you are true in your station and according to your knowledge; but take the advice of one who faced the Mingos when you were a child, and know that their cunning is

easier sarcumvented by prudence than outwitted by foolishness.”

“ I ask your pardon, Pathfinder,” said the repentant Jasper, eagerly grasping the hand that the other permitted him to seize ; “ I ask your pardon, humbly and sincerely. ’T was a foolish, as well as wicked thing to hint of a man whose heart, in a good cause, is known to be as firm as the rocks on the lake shore.”

For the first time the colour deepened on the cheek of the Pathfinder, and the solemn dignity that he had assumed, under a purely natural impulse, disappeared in the expression of the earnest simplicity that was inherent in all his feelings. He met the grasp of his young friend, with a squeeze as cordial as if no chord had jarred between them, and a slight sternness that had gathered about his eye disappeared in a look of natural kindness.

“ ’T is well, Jasper, ’t is well,” he answered, laughing, “ I bear no ill-will, nor shall any one in my behalf. My natur’ is that of a white man, and that is to bear no malice. It might have been ticklish work to have said half as

much to the Sarpent here, though he is a Delaware, for colour will have its way—”

A touch on his shoulder caused the speaker to cease. Mabel was standing erect in the canoe, her light, but swelling form bent forward in an attitude of graceful earnestness, her finger on her lips, her head averted, her spirited eyes riveted on an opening in the bushes, and one arm extended with a fishing-rod the end of which had touched the Pathfinder. The latter bowed his head to a level with a look-out near which he had intentionally kept himself, and then whispered to Jasper—

“The accursed Mingos! Stand to your arms, my men, but lay quiet as the corpses of dead trees!”

Jasper advanced rapidly, but noiselessly, to the canoe, and with a gentle violence induced Mabel to place herself in such an attitude as concealed her entire body, though it would have probably exceeded his means to induce the girl so far to lower her head, that she could not keep her gaze fastened on their enemies.

He then took his own post near her, with his rifle cocked and poised, in readiness to fire. Arrowhead and Chingachgook crawled to the cover, and lay in wait like snakes, with their arms prepared for service, while the wife of the former bowed her head between her knees, covered it with her calico robe, and remained passive and immovable. Cap loosened both his pistols in their belt, but seemed quite at a loss what course to pursue. The Pathfinder did not stir. He had originally got a position where he might aim with deadly effect through the leaves, and where he could watch the movements of his enemies; and he was far too steady to be disconcerted at a moment so critical.

It was truly an alarming instant. Just as Mabel touched the shoulder of her guide, three of the Iroquois had appeared in the water, at the bend of the river, within a hundred yards of the cover, and halted to examine the stream below. They were all naked to the waist, armed for an expedition against their foes, and in their war-paint. It was apparent that they

were undecided as to the course they ought to pursue in order to find the fugitives. One pointed down the river, a second up the stream, and the third towards the opposite bank. They evidently doubted.

CHAPTER V.

Death is here, and death is there,
Death is busy everywhere.

SHELLEY.

It was a breathless moment. The only clue the fugitives possessed to the intentions of their pursuers, was in their gestures, and the indications that escaped them in the fury of disappointment. That a party had returned already, on their own footsteps, by land, was pretty certain; and all the benefit expected from the artifice of the fire was necessarily lost. But that consideration became of little moment, just then; for the party was menaced with an immediate discovery, by those who had kept on a level with the river. All the facts presented themselves clearly, and as

it might be by intuition, to the mind of Pathfinder, who perceived the necessity of immediate decision, and of being in readiness to act in concert. Without making any noise, therefore, he managed to get the two Indians and Jasper near him, when he opened his communications in a whisper.

“ We must be ready, we must be ready,” he said. “ There are but three of the scalping devils, and we are five, four of whom may be set down as manful warriors, for such a skirmish. Eau-douce, do you take the fellow that is painted like death ; Chingachgook, I give you the chief ; and Arrowhead must keep his eye on the young one. There must be no mistake ; for two bullets in the same body would be sinful waste, with one like the Sergeant’s daughter in danger. I shall hold myself in reserve against accident, lest a fourth reptile appear, for one of your hands may prove unsteady. By no means fire until I give the word ; we must not let the crack of the rifle be heard except in the last resort, since all the rest of the miscreants are still

within hearing. Jasper, boy, in case of any movement behind us, on the bank, I trust to you to run out the canoe with the Sergeant's daughter, and to pull for the garrison, by God's leave."

The Pathfinder had no sooner given these directions than the near approach of their enemies rendered profound silence necessary. The Iroquois in the river were slowly descending the stream, keeping of necessity near the bushes that overhung the water, while the rustling of leaves and the snapping of twigs soon gave fearful evidence that another party was moving along the bank, at an equally graduated pace and directly abreast of them. In consequence of the distance between the bushes planted by the fugitives and the true shore, the two parties became visible to each other when opposite that precise point. Both stopped, and a conversation ensued, that may be said to have passed directly over the heads of those who were concealed. Indeed nothing sheltered the travellers, but the branches and leaves of plants so pliant that they yielded

to every current of air, and which a puff of wind a little stronger than common would have blown away. Fortunately the line of sight carried the eyes of the two parties of savages, whether they stood in the water or on the land, above the bushes; and the leaves appeared blended in a way to excite no suspicion. Perhaps the very boldness of the expedient alone prevented an immediate exposure. The conversation that took place was conducted earnestly, but in guarded tones, as if those who spoke wished to defeat the intentions of any listeners. It was in a dialect that both the Indian warriors beneath, as well as the Pathfinder, understood. Even Jasper comprehended a portion of what was said.

“The trail is washed away by the water!” said one from below, who stood so near the artificial cover of the fugitives, that he might have been struck by the salmon-spear that lay in the bottom of Jasper’s canoe. “Water has washed it so clear, that a Yengeese hound could not follow.”

“The pale-faces have left the shore in

their canoes," answered the speaker on the bank.

"It cannot be. The rifles of our warriors below are certain."

The Pathfinder gave a significant glance at Jasper, and he clenched his teeth in order to suppress the sound of his own breathing.

"Let my young men look as if their eyes were eagles'," said the eldest warrior among those who were wading in the river. "We have been a whole moon on the war-path, and have found but one scalp. There is a maiden among them, and some of our braves want wives."

Happily these words were lost on Mabel; but Jasper's frown became deeper, and his face fiercely flushed.

The savages now ceased speaking, and the party that was concealed heard the slow and guarded movements of those who were on the bank, as they pushed the bushes aside in their wary progress. It was soon evident that the latter had passed the cover; but the group in the water still remained, scanning the shore

with eyes that glared through their war-paint, like coals of living fire. After a pause of two or three minutes, these three began also to descend the stream, though it was step by step, as men move who look for an object that has been lost. In this manner they passed the artificial screen, and Pathfinder opened his mouth, in that hearty but noiseless laugh, that nature and habit had contributed to render a peculiarity of the man. His triumph, however, was premature; for the last of the retiring party, just at this moment casting a look behind him, suddenly stopped; and his fixed attitude and steady gaze at once betrayed the appalling fact that some neglected bush had awakened his suspicions.

It was, perhaps, fortunate for the concealed, that the warrior who manifested these fearful signs of distrust was young, and had still a reputation to acquire. He knew the importance of discretion and modesty in one of his years, and most of all did he dread the ridicule and contempt that would certainly follow a false alarm. Without recalling any of his com-

panions, therefore, he turned on his own footsteps ; and while the others continued to descend the river, he cautiously approached the bushes, on which his looks were still fastened, as by a charm. Some of the leaves which were exposed to the sun had drooped a little, and this slight departure from the usual natural laws had caught the quick eyes of the Indian ; for so practised and acute do the senses of the savage become, more especially when he is on the war-path, that trifles apparently of the most insignificant sort often prove to be clues to lead him to his object.

The trifling nature of the change which had aroused the suspicion of this youth, was an additional motive for not acquainting his companions with his discovery. Should he really detect anything, his glory would be the greater for being unshared ; and should he not, he might hope to escape that derision which the young Indian so much dreads. Then there were the dangers of an ambush and a surprise, to which every warrior of the woods is keenly alive, to render his approach slow and cautious.

In consequence of the delay that proceeded from these combined causes, the two parties had descended some fifty or sixty yards before the young savage was again near enough to the bushes of the Pathfinder to touch them with his hand.

Notwithstanding their critical situation, the whole party behind the cover had their eyes fastened on the working countenance of the young Iroquois, who was agitated by conflicting feelings. First came the eager hope of obtaining success where some of the most experienced of his tribe had failed, and with it a degree of glory that had seldom fallen to the share of one of his years or a brave on his first war-path; then followed doubts, as the drooping leaves seemed to rise again, and to revive in the currents of air; and distrust of hidden danger lent its exciting feeling to keep the eloquent features in play. So very slight, however, had been the alteration produced by the heat on bushes of which the stems were in the water, that when the Iroquois actually laid his hand on the leaves, he fancied that he had been de-

ceived. As no man ever distrusts strongly without using all convenient means of satisfying his doubts, however, the young warrior cautiously pushed aside the branches, and advanced a step within the hiding-place, when the forms of the concealed party met his gaze, resembling so many breathless statues. The low exclamation, the slight start, and the glaring eye, were hardly seen and heard, before the arm of Chingachgook was raised, and the tomahawk of the Delaware descended on the shaven head of his foe. The Iroquois raised his hands frantically, bounded backward, and fell into the water, at a spot where the current swept the body away, the struggling limbs still tossing and writhing in the agony of death. The Delaware made a vigorous but unsuccessful attempt to seize an arm, with the hope of securing the scalp; but the blood-stained waters whirled down the current, carrying with them their quivering burthen.

All this passed in less than a minute; and the events were so sudden and unexpected, that men less accustomed than the Pathfinder

and his associates to forest warfare, would have been at a loss how to act.

“There is not a moment to lose,” said Jasper, tearing aside the bushes, as he spoke earnestly, but in a suppressed voice. “Do as I do, Master Cap, if you would save your niece; and you, Mabel lie at your length in the canoe.”

The words were scarcely uttered when, seizing the bow of the light boat, he dragged it along the shore, wading himself while Cap aided behind, keeping so near the bank as to avoid being seen by the savages below, and striving to gain the turn in the river above him, which would effectually conceal the party from the enemy. The Pathfinder's canoe lay nearest to the bank, and it was necessarily the last to quit the shore. The Delaware leaped on the narrow strand, and plunged into the forest, it being his assigned duty to watch the foe in that quarter, while Arrowhead motioned to his white companion to seize the bow of the boat, and to follow Jasper. All this was the work of an instant: but when the Pathfinder

reached the current that was sweeping round the turn, he felt a sudden change in the weight he was dragging ; and looking back, he found that both the Tuscarora and his wife had deserted him. The thought of treachery flashed upon his mind, but there was no time to pause ; for the wailing shout that arose from the party below, proclaimed that the body of the young Iroquois had floated as low as the spot reached by his friends. The report of a rifle followed ; and then the guide saw that Jasper, having doubled the bend in the river, was crossing the stream, standing erect in the stern of the canoe, while Cap was seated forward, both propelling the light boat with vigorous strokes of the paddles. A glance, a thought, and an expedient followed each other quickly in one so trained in the vicissitudes of the frontier warfare. Springing into the stern of his own canoe, he urged it by a vigorous shove into the current, and commenced crossing the stream himself, at a point so much lower than that of his companions as to offer his own person for a target to the enemy, well

knowing that their keen desire to secure a scalp would control all other feelings.

“Keep well up the current, Jasper,” shouted the gallant guide, as he swept the water with long, steady, vigorous strokes of the paddle; “keep well up the current, and pull for the alder bushes opposite. Preserve the Sergeant’s daughter before all things, and leave these Mingo knaves to the Sarpent and me.”

Jasper flourished his paddle, as a signal of understanding, while shot succeeded shot in quick succession, all now being aimed at the solitary man in the nearest canoe.

“Ay, empty your rifles, like simpletons, as you are,” said the Pathfinder, who had acquired a habit of speaking when alone, from passing so much of his time in the solitude of the forest; “empty your rifles with an unsteady aim, and give me time to put yard upon yard of river between us. I will not revile you like a Delaware or a Mohican; for my gifts are a white man’s gifts, and not an Indian’s; and boasting in battle is no part of a Christian

warrior ; but I may say here, all alone by myself, that you are little better than so many men from the town shooting at robins in the orchards. That was well meant," throwing back his head, as a rifle-bullet cut a lock of hair from his temple ; "but the lead that misses by an inch is as useless as the lead that never quits the barrel. Bravely done, Jasper ! the Sergeant's sweet child must be saved, even if we go in without our own scalps."

By this time the Pathfinder was in the centre of the river, and almost abreast of his enemies, while the other canoe, impelled by the vigorous arms of Cap and Jasper, had nearly gained the opposite shore at the precise spot that had been pointed out to them. The old mariner now played his part manfully ; for he was on his proper element, loved his niece sincerely, had a proper regard for his own person, and was not unused to fire, though his experience certainly lay in a very different species of warfare. A few strokes of the paddles were given, and the canoe shot into the bushes, Mabel was

hurried to land by Jasper, and, for the present, all three of the fugitives were safe.

Not so with the Pathfinder: his hardy self-devotion had brought him into a situation of unusual exposure, the hazards of which were much increased by the fact that just as he drifted nearest to the enemy, the party on the shore rushed down the bank, and joined their friends who still stood in the water. The Oswego was about a cable's length in width at this point, and the canoe being in the centre, the object was only a hundred yards from the rifles that were constantly discharged at it; or, at the usual target distance for that weapon.

In this extremity the steadiness and skill of the Pathfinder did him good service. He knew that his safety depended altogether on keeping in motion; for a stationary object, at that distance, would have been hit nearly every shot. Nor was motion of itself sufficient; for, accustomed to kill the bounding deer, his enemies probably knew how to vary the line of aim so as to strike him, should he

continue to move in any one direction. He was consequently compelled to change the course of the canoe,—at one moment shooting down with the current, with the swiftness of an arrow; and at the next checking its progress in that direction, to glance athwart the stream. Luckily the Iroquois could not reload their pieces in the water, and the bushes that everywhere fringed the shore, rendered it difficult to keep the fugitive in view, when on the land. Aided by these circumstances, and having received the fire of all his foes, the Pathfinder was gaining fast in distance, both downwards and across the current, when a new danger suddenly, if not unexpectedly, presented itself, by the appearance of the party that had been left in ambush below with a view to watch the river.

These were the savages alluded to in the short dialogue that has been already related. They were no less than ten in number; and understanding all the advantages of their bloody occupation, they had posted themselves at a spot where the water dashed

among rocks and over shallows, in a way to form a rapid which, in the language of the country, is called a rift. The Pathfinder saw that, if he entered this rift, he should be compelled to approach a point where the Iroquois had posted themselves, for the current was irresistible, and the rocks allowed no other safe passage, while death or captivity would be the probable result of the attempt. All his efforts, therefore, were turned towards reaching the western shore, the foe being all on the eastern side of the river; but the exploit surpassed human power, and to attempt to stem the stream, would at once have so far diminished the motion of the canoe as to render aim certain. In this exigency the guide came to a decision with his usual cool promptitude, making his preparations accordingly. Instead of endeavouring to gain the channel, he steered towards the shallowest part of the stream, on reaching which he seized his rifle and pack, leaped into the water, and began to wade from rock to rock taking the direction of the western shore.

The canoe whirled about in the furious current, now rolling over some slippery stone, now filling, and then emptying itself, until it lodged on the shore, within a few yards of the spot where the Iroquois had posted themselves.

In the mean while the Pathfinder was far from being out of danger : for the first minute, admiration of his promptitude and daring, which are so high virtues in the mind of an Indian, kept his enemies motionless ; but the desire of revenge, and the cravings for the much-prized trophy, soon overcame this transient feeling, and aroused them from their stupor. Rifle flashed after rifle, and the bullets whistled around the head of the fugitive, amid the roar of the waters. Still he proceeded like one who bore a charmed life ; for while his rude frontier garments were more than once cut, his skin was not rased.

As the Pathfinder, in several instances, was compelled to wade in water that rose nearly to his arms, while he kept his rifle and ammunition elevated above the raging current,

the toil soon fatigued him, and he was glad to stop at a large stone, or a small rock, which rose so high above the river, that its upper surface was dry. On this stone he placed his powder-horn, getting behind it himself, so as to have the advantage of a partial cover for his body. The western shore was only fifty feet distant, but the quiet, swift, dark current that glanced through the interval, sufficiently showed that here he would be compelled to swim.

A short cessation in the firing now took place on the part of the Indians, who gathered about the canoe, and having found the paddles, were preparing to cross the river.

“Pathfinder,” called a voice from among the bushes, at the point nearest to the person addressed, on the western shore.

“What would you have, Jasper?”

“Be of good heart—friends are at hand, and not a single Mingo shall cross without suffering for his boldness. Had you not better leave the rifle on the rock, and swim to us before the rascals can get afloat?”

“ A true woodsman never quits his piece, while he has any powder in his horn, or a bullet in his pouch. I have not drawn a trigger this day, Eau-douce, and shouldn't relish the idea of parting with those reptiles without causing them to remember my name. A little water will not harm my legs ; and I see that blackguard, Arrowhead, among the scamps, and wish to send him the wages he has so faithfully earned. You have not brought the Sergeant's daughter down here in a range with their bullets, I hope, Jasper ? ”

“ She is safe, for the present at least ; though all depends on our keeping the river between us and the enemy. They must know our weakness now ; and should they cross, no doubt some of their party will be left on the other side.”

“ This canoeing touches your gifts rather than mine, boy, though I will handle a paddle with the best Mingo that ever struck a salmon. If they cross below the rift, why can't we cross in the still water above, and keep playing at dodge and turn with the wolves ? ”

“ Because, as I have said, they will leave a party on the other shore ; and then, Pathfinder, would you expose Mabel to the rifles of the Iroquois ? ”

“ The Sergeant’s daughter must be saved,” returned the guide with calm energy. “ You are right, Jasper ; she has no gift to authorise her in offering her sweet face and tender body to a Mingo rifle. What can be done then ? They must be kept from crossing for an hour or two, if possible, when we must do our best in the darkness.”

“ I agree with you, Pathfinder, if it can be effected ; but, are we strong enough for such a purpose ? ”

“ The Lord is with us, boy ; the Lord is with us ; and it is unreasonable to suppose that one like the Sergeant’s daughter will be altogether abandoned by Providence, in such a strait. There is not a boat between the falls and the garrison, except these two canoes, to my sartain knowledge ; and I think it will go beyond red-skin gifts to cross in the face of two rifles like these of your’n and mine. I

will not vaunt, Jasper ; but it is well known on all this frontier that kildeer seldom fails."

"Your skill is admitted by all, far and near, Pathfinder ; but a rifle takes time to be loaded ; nor are you on the land, aided by a good cover, where you can work to the advantage you are used to. If you had our canoe, might you not pass to the shore with a dry rifle?"

"Can an eagle fly, Jasper?" returned the other, laughing in his usual manner, and looking back as he spoke. "But it would be unwise to expose yourself on the water ; for them miscreants are beginning to bethink them again of powder and bullets."

"It can be done without any such chances. Master Cap has gone up to the canoe, and will cast the branch of a tree into the river to try the current, which sets from the point above in the direction of your rock. See, there it comes already ; if it float fairly, you must raise your arm, when the canoe will follow. At all events, if the boat should pass you, the eddy below will bring it up, and I can recover it."

While Jasper was still speaking, the floating

branch came in sight; and quickening its progress with the increasing velocity of the current, it swept swiftly down towards the Pathfinder, who seized it as it was passing, and held it in the air, as a sign of success. Cap understood the signal, and presently the canoe was launched into the stream, with a caution and an intelligence that the habits of the mariner had fitted him to observe. It floated in the same direction as the branch, and in a minute was arrested by the Pathfinder.

“This has been done with a frontier man’s judgment, Jasper,” said the guide, laughing; “but you have your gifts which incline most to the water, as mine incline to the woods. Now, let them Mingo knaves cock their rifles and get rests, for this is the last chance they are likely to have at a man without a cover.”

“Nay, shove the canoe towards the shore, quartering the current, and throw yourself into it as it goes off,” said Jasper, eagerly. “There is little use in running any risk.”

“I love to stand up face to face with my

enemies like a man, while they set me the example," returned the Pathfinder, proudly. "I am not a red-skin born, and it is more a white man's gifts to fight openly, than to lie in ambushment."

"And Mabel?"

"True, boy, true; the Sergeant's daughter must be saved; and, as you say, foolish risks only become boys. Think you that you can catch the canoe where you stand?"

"There can be no doubt, if you give a vigorous push."

Pathfinder made the necessary effort; the light bark shot across the intervening space, and Jasper seized it as it came to land. To secure the canoe, and to take proper positions in the cover, occupied the friends but a moment, when they shook hands cordially, like those who had met after a long separation.

"Now, Jasper, we shall see if a Mingo of them all dares cross the Oswego in the teeth of killdeer! You are handier with the oar and the paddle, and the sail, than with the rifle, perhaps; but you have a stout heart, and a

steady hand, and them are things that count in a fight."

"Mabel will find me between her and her enemies," said Jasper calmly.

"Yes, yes, the Sergeant's daughter must be protected. I like you, boy, on your own account; but I like you all the better that you think of one so feeble at a moment when there is need of all your manhood. See! Jasper, three of the knaves are actually getting into the canoe! They must believe we have fled, or they would not surely venture so much, directly in the very face of killdeer."

Sure enough the Iroquois did appear bent on venturing across the stream; for, as the Pathfinder and his friends now kept their persons strictly concealed, their enemies began to think that the latter had taken to flight. Such a course was that which most white men would have followed; but Mabel was under the care of those who were much too well skilled in forest warfare to neglect to defend the only pass that, in truth, now offered even a probable chance for protection.

As the Pathfinder had said, three warriors were in the canoe, two holding their rifles at a poise, as they knelt in readiness to aim the deadly weapons, and the other standing erect in the stern to wield the paddle. In this manner they left the shore, having had the precaution to haul the canoe, previously to entering it, so far up the stream as to have got into the comparatively still water above the rift. It was apparent at a glance that the savage who guided the boat was skilled in the art; for the long steady sweep of his paddle sent the light bark over the glassy surface of the tranquil river, as if it were a feather floating in air.

“ Shall I fire ? ” demanded Jasper in a whisper, trembling with eagerness to engage.

“ Not yet, boy ; not yet. There are but three of them, and if Master Cap yonder knows how to use the popguns he carries in his belt, we may even let them land, and then we shall recover the canoe.”

“ But, Mabel ?—”

“ No fear for the Sergeant’s daughter. She is safe in the hollow stump, you say, with the opening judgmatically hid by the brambles. If what you tell me of the manner in which you concealed the trail be true, the sweet-one might lie there a month, and laugh at the Mingos.”

“ We are never certain. I wish we had brought her nearer to our own cover !”

“ What for, Eau-douce? To place her pretty little head and leaping heart among flying bullets? No, no; she is better where she is, because she is safer.”

“ We are never certain. We thought ourselves safe behind the bushes, and yet you saw that we were discovered.”

“ And the Mingo imp paid for his curiosity, as these knaves are about to do —”

The Pathfinder ceased speaking; for at that instant the sharp report of a rifle was heard, when the Indian in the stern of the canoe leaped high into the air, and fell into the water, holding the paddle in his hand. A small

wreath of smoke floated out from among the bushes of the eastern shore, and was soon absorbed by the atmosphere.

“That is the Sarpent hissing!” exclaimed the Pathfinder exultingly. “A bolder or a truer heart never beat in the breast of a Delaware. I am sorry that he interfered; but he could not have known our condition—he could not have known our condition.”

The canoe had no sooner lost its guide than it floated with the stream, and was soon sucked into the rapids of the rift. Perfectly helpless, the two remaining savages gazed wildly about them, but could offer no resistance to the power of the element. It was, perhaps, fortunate for Chingachgook that the attention of most of the Iroquois was intently given to the situation of those in the boat, else would his escape have been, to the last degree, difficult, if not totally impracticable. But not a foe moved, except to conceal his person behind some cover; and every eye was riveted on the two remaining adventurers. In less time than has been necessary to record these occur-

rences, the canoe was whirling and tossing in the rift, while both the savages had stretched themselves in its bottom, as the only means of preserving the equilibrium. This natural expedient soon failed them; for, striking a rock, the light craft rolled over, and the two warriors were thrown into the river. The water is seldom deep on a rift, except in particular places where it may have worn channels; and there was little to be apprehended from drowning, though their arms were lost; and the two savages were fain to make the best of their way to the friendly shore, swimming and wading as circumstances required. The canoe itself lodged on a rock in the centre of the stream, where for the moment it became useless to both parties.

“Now is our time, Pathfinder,” cried Jasper, as the two Iroquois exposed most of their persons while wading in the shallowest part of the rapids: “the fellow up stream is mine, and you can take the lower.”

So excited had the young man become by all the incidents of the stirring scene, that the

bullet sped from his rifle as he spoke; but uselessly, as it would seem, for both the fugitives tossed their arms in disdain. The Pathfinder did not fire.

“No, no, Eau-douce,” he answered; “I do not seek blood without a cause; and my bullet is well leathered and carefully driven down, for the time of need. I love no Mingo, as is just, seeing how much I have consorted with the Delawares, who are their mortal and natural enemies; but I never pull trigger on one of the miscreants unless it be plain that his death will lead to some good end. The deer never leaped that fell by my hand wantonly. By living much alone with God in the wilderness a man gets to feel the justice of such opinions. One life is sufficient for our present wants; and there may yet be occasion to use killdeer in behalf of the Serpent, who has done an untimorous thing to let them rampant devils so plainly know that he is in their neighbourhood. As I'm a wicked sinner, there is one of them prowling along the bank this very moment, like one of the boys of the

garrison sculking behind a fallen tree to get a shot at a squirrel !”

As the Pathfinder pointed with his finger while speaking, the quick eye of Jasper soon caught the object towards which it was directed. One of the young warriors of the enemy, burning with a desire to distinguish himself, had stolen from his party towards the cover in which Chingachgook had concealed himself; and as the latter was deceived by the apparent apathy of his foes, as well as engaged in some further preparations of his own, he had evidently obtained a position where he got a sight of the Delaware. This circumstance was apparent by the arrangements the Iroquois was making to fire, for Chingachgook himself was not visible from the western side of the river. The rift was at a bend in the Oswego, and the sweep of the eastern shore formed a curve so wide that Chingachgook was quite near to his enemies in a straight direction, though separated by several hundred feet on the land, owing to which fact air lines brought both parties

nearly equidistant from the Pathfinder and Jasper. The general width of the river being a little less than two hundred yards, such necessarily was about the distance between his two observers and the sculking Iroquois.

“The Sarpent must be thereabouts,” observed Pathfinder, who never turned his eye for an instant from the young warrior; “and yet he must be strangely off his guard to allow a Mingo devil to get his stand so near, with manifest signs of bloodshed in his heart.”

“See,” interrupted Jasper,—“there is the body of the Indian the Delaware shot! It has drifted on a rock, and the current has forced the head and face above the water.”

“Quite likely, boy; quite likely. Human natur’ is little better than a log of drift wood, when the life that was breathed into its nostrils has departed. That Iroquois will never harm any one more; but yonder sculking savage is bent on taking the scalp of my best and most tried friend——”

The Pathfinder suddenly interrupted himself, by raising his rifle, a weapon of unusual

length, with admirable precision, and firing the instant it had got its level. The Iroquois on the opposite shore, was in the act of aiming when the fatal messenger from killdeer arrived. His rifle was discharged, it is true, but it was with the muzzle in the air, while the man himself plunged into the bushes, quite evidently hurt, if not slain.

“The sculking reptyle brought it on himself,” muttered Pathfinder, sternly, as dropping the butt of his rifle, he carefully commenced reloading it. “Chingachgook and I have consorted together since we were boys, and have fi’t in company, on the Horican, the Mohawk, the Ontario, and all the other bloody passes between the country of the Frenchers and our own; and did the foolish knave believe that I would stand by and see my best friend cut off in an ambushment?”

“We have served the Serpent as good a turn as he served us. Those rascals are troubled, Pathfinder, and are falling back into their covers, since they find we can reach them across the river.”

“The shot is no great matter, Jasper ; no great matter. Ask any of the 60th, and they can tell you what killdeer can do, and has done, and that too when the bullets were flying about our heads like hailstones. No, no ! this is no great matter, and the unthoughtful vagabond drew it down on himself.”

“Is that a dog, or a deer, swimming towards this shore ?”

Pathfinder started, for sure enough an object was crossing the stream, above the rift, towards which, however, it was gradually setting by the force of the current. A second look satisfied both the observers that it was a man, and an Indian, though so concealed as, at first, to render it doubtful. Some stratagem was apprehended, and the closest attention was given to the movements of the stranger.

“He is pushing something before him, as he swims, and his head resembles a drifting bush,” said Jasper.

“’Tis Indian devilry, boy : but Christian honesty shall sarcumvent their arts.”

As the man slowly approached, the observers began to doubt the accuracy of their first impressions, and it was only when two thirds of the stream were passed, that the truth was really known.

“The Big Sarpent, as I live!” exclaimed Pathfinder, looking at his companion, and laughing until the tears came into his eyes, with pure delight at the success of the artifice. “He has tied bushes to his head, so as to hide it, put the horn on top, lashed the rifle to that bit of log he is pushing before him, and has come over to join his friends. Ah’s me! The times and times, that he and I have cut such pranks, right in the teeth of Mingos raging for our blood, in the great thoroughfare round and about Ty!”

“It may not be the Serpent, after all, Pathfinder; I can see no feature that I remember.”

“Feature! Who looks for features in an Indian?—No, no, boy; ’t is the paint that speaks, and none but a Delaware would wear that paint: them are his colours, Jasper, just as your craft on the lake wears St. George’s

Cross, and the Frenchers set their table-cloths to fluttering in the wind, with all the stains of fish-bones and venison steaks upon them. Now, you see the eye, lad, and it is the eye of a chief. But, Eau-douce, fierce as it is in battle, and glassy as it looks from among the leaves," — here the Pathfinder laid his finger lightly but impressively on his companion's arm,—“ I have seen it shed tears like rain. There is a soul and a heart under that red skin, rely on it; although they are a soul and a heart with gifts different from our own.”

“ No one who is acquainted with the chief ever doubted that.”

“ I *know* it,” returned the other, proudly, “ for I have consorted with him in sorrow and in joy : in one I have found him a man, however stricken ; in the other, a chief who knows that the women of his tribe are the most seemly in light merriment. But, hist ! It is too much like the people of the settlements to pour soft speeches into another's ear ; and the Serpent has keen senses. He knows I love him, and that I speak well of him behind his back ; but

a Delaware has modesty in his inmost nature, though he will brag like a sinner when tied to a stake."

The Serpent now reached the shore, directly in the front of his two comrades, with whose precise position he must have been acquainted before leaving the eastern side of the river, and rising from the water he shook himself like a dog, and made the usual exclamation—
" Hugh !"

CHAPTER VI.

These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
Are but the varied God.

THOMSON.

As the chief landed he was met by the Pathfinder, who addressed him in the language of the warrior's people.

“Was it well done, Chingachgook,” he said, reproachfully, “to ambush a dozen Mingos, alone? Killdeer seldom fails me, it is true; but the Oswego makes a distant mark, and that miscreant showed little more than his head and shoulders above the bushes, and an on-practysed hand and eye might have failed. You should have thought of this, chief; you should have thought of this!”

“The Great Serpent is a Mohican warrior—he sees only his enemies when he is on the

war-path, and his fathers have struck the Min-gos from behind, since the waters began to run.”

“ I know your gifts, I know your gifts, and respect them too. No man shall hear me complain that a red-skin observed red-skin natur’, but prudence as much becomes a warrior as valour ; and had not the Iroquois devils been looking after their friends who were in the water, a hot trail they would have made of your’n.”

“ What is the Delaware about to do ? ” exclaimed Jasper, who observed at that moment that the chief had suddenly left the Pathfinder, and advanced to the water’s edge, apparently with an intention of again entering the river. “ He will not be so mad as to return to the other shore, for any trifle he may have forgotten ? ”

“ Not he, not he ; he is as prudent as he is brave, in the main, though so forgetful of himself in the late ambushment. Hark’e, Jasper,” leading the other a little aside, just as they heard the Indian’s plunge into the water—

“ hark’e, lad ; Chingachgook is not a Christian white man, like ourselves, but a Mohican chief, who has his gifts and traditions to tell him what he ought to do ; and he who consorts with them that are not strictly and altogether of his own kind, had better leave natur’ and use to govern his comrades. A king’s soldier will swear, and he will drink, and it is of little use to try to prevent him ; a gentleman likes his delicacies, and a lady her feathers, and it does not avail much to struggle against either ; whereas an Indian’s natur’ and gifts are much stronger than these, and no doubt were bestowed by the Lord for wise ends, though neither you nor me can follow them in all their windings.”

“ What does this mean ? — See, the Delaware is swimming towards the body that is lodged on the rock ? Why does he risk this ? ”

“ For honour, and glory, and renown, as great gentlemen quit their quiet homes beyond seas, where, as they tell me, heart has nothing left to wish for, that is, such hearts as can be

satisfied in a clearing, to come hither to live on game and fight the Frenchers."

"I understand you — your friend has gone to secure the scalp."

"'T is his gift, and let him enjoy it. We are white men, and cannot mangle a dead enemy; but it is honour in the eyes of a red-skin to do so. It may seem singular to you, Eau-douce, but I've known white men of great name and character manifest as remarkable ideas concerning their honour, I have."

"A savage will be a savage, Pathfinder, let him keep what company he may."

"It is well for us to say so, lad; but, as I tell you, white honour will not always conform to reason, or to the will of God. I have passed days thinking of these matters, out in the silent woods, and I have come to the opinion, boy, that, as Providence rules all things, no gift is bestowed without some wise and reasonable end. If Indians are of no use, Indians would not have been created; and I do suppose, could one dive to the bottom of things, it would be found that even the Mingo tribes were produced

for some rational and proper purpose, though I confess it surpasses my means to say what it is."

"The Serpent greatly exposes himself to the enemy, in order to get his scalp! This may lose us the day."

"Not in his mind, Jasper. That one scalp has more honour in it, according to the Serpent's notions of warfare, than a field covered with slain, that kept the hair on their heads. Now, there was the fine young captain of the 60th that threw away his life, in trying to bring off a three-pounder from among the Frenchers, in the last skirmish we had; he thought he was saving honour; and I have known a young ensign wrap himself up in his colours, and go to sleep in his blood, fancying that he was lying on something softer even than buffalo-skins!"

"Yes, yes; one can understand the merit of not hauling down an ensign."

"And these are Chingachgook's colours—he will keep them to show his children's children"—here the Pathfinder interrupted himself, shook his head in melancholy, and slowly added,

“ Ah’s me ! no shoot of the old Mohican stem remains ! He has no children to delight with his trophies ; no tribe to honour by his deeds ; he is a lone man in this world, and yet he stands true to his training and his gifts ! There is something honest and respectable in these, you must allow, Jasper ; yes, there is something decent in that.”

Here a great outcry from among the Iroquois, was succeeded by the quick reports of their rifles, and so eager did the enemy become, in the desire to drive the Delaware back from his victim, that a dozen rushed into the river, several of whom even advanced near a hundred feet into the foaming current, as if they actually meditated a serious sortie. But Chingachgook continued unmoved, as he remained unhurt by the missiles, accomplishing his task with the dexterity of long habit. Flourishing his reeking trophy, he gave the war-whoop in its most frightful intonations, and for a minute the arches of the silent woods, and the deep vista formed by the course of the river, echoed with cries so terrific that Mabel bowed her head, in

irrepressible fear, while her uncle for a single instant actually meditated flight.

“ This surpasses all I have heard from the wretches,” Jasper exclaimed, stopping his ears, equally in horror and disgust.

“ ’T is their music, boy ; their drum and fife ; their trumpets and clarions. No doubt they love those sounds ; for they stir up in them fierce feelings, and a desire for blood,” returned the Pathfinder, totally unmoved. “ I thought them rather frightful when a mere youngster ; but they have got to be like the whistle of the whip-poor-will, or the song of the cat-bird in my ear now. All the screeching reptyles that could stand between the falls and the garrison, would have no effect on my narves, at this time of day. I say it not in boasting, Jasper ; for the man that lets in cowardice through the ears, must have but a weak heart, at the best ; sounds and outcries being more intended to alarm women and children, than such as scout the forest and face the foe. I hope the Sarpent is now satisfied, for here he comes with the scalp at his belt.”

Jasper turned away his head as the Delaware rose from the water, in pure disgust at his late errand; but the Pathfinder regarded his friend with the philosophical indifference of one who had made up his mind to be indifferent to things he deemed immaterial. As the Delaware passed deeper into the bushes, with a view to wring his trifling calico dress, and to prepare his rifle for service, he gave one glance of triumph at his companions, and then all emotion connected with the recent exploit seemed to cease.

“Jasper,” resumed the guide, “step down to the station of Master Cap, and ask him to join us: we have little time for a council, and yet our plans must be laid quickly, for it will not be long before them Mingos will be plotting our ruin.”

The young man complied; and in a few minutes the four were assembled near the shore, completely concealed from the view of their enemies, while they kept a vigilant watch over the proceedings of the latter, in order to consult on their own future movements.

By this time the day had so far advanced as to leave but a few minutes between the passing light and an obscurity that promised to be even deeper than common. The sun had already set, and the twilight of a low latitude would soon pass into the darkness of deep night. Most of the hopes of the party rested on this favourable circumstance, though it was not without its dangers also, as the very obscurity which would favour their escape would be as likely to conceal the movements of their wily enemies.

“The moment has come, men,” Pathfinder commenced, “when our plans must be coolly laid, in order that we may act together, and with a right understanding of our errand and gifts. In an hour’s time these woods will be as dark as midnight; and if we are ever to gain the garrison, it must be done under favour of this advantage. What say you, Master Cap? for though none of the most experienced in combats and retreats in the woods, your years entitle you to speak first in a matter like this, and in a council.”

“ And my near relationship to Mabel, Pathfinder, ought to count for something—”

“ I don't know that, I don't know that. Regard is regard, and liking, liking, whether it be a gift of natur', or come from one's own judgment and inclinations. I will say nothing for the Sarpent, who is past placing his mind on the women, but as for Jasper and myself, we are as ready to stand between the Sergeant's daughter and the Mingos as her own brave father himself could be. Do I say more than the truth, lad ?”

“ Mabel may count on me to the last drop of my blood,” said Jasper, speaking low, but speaking with intense feeling.

“ Well, well,” rejoined the uncle, “ we will not discuss this matter, as all seem willing to serve the girl, and deeds are better than words. In my judgment, all we have to do is to go on board the canoe when it gets to be so dark the enemy's look-outs can't see us, and run for the haven, as wind and tide will allow.”

“ That is easily said, but not so easily done,”

returned the guide. "We shall be more exposed in the river than by following the woods, and then there is the Oswego rift below us, and I am far from sartain that Jasper himself can carry a boat safely through it, in the dark. What say you, lad, as to your own skill and judgment?"

"I am of Master Cap's opinion about using the canoe. Mabel is too tender to walk through swamps and among roots of trees, in such a night as this promises to be, and then I always feel myself stouter of heart and truer of eye, when afloat than when ashore."

"Stout of heart, you always be, lad, and I think tolerably true of eye for one who has lived so much in broad sunshine, and so little in the woods. Ah's me! the Ontario has no trees, or it would be a plain to delight a hunter's heart! As to your opinion, friends, there is much for, and much against it. For it, it may be said water leaves no trail—"

"What do you call the wake?" interrupted the pertinacious and dogmatical Cap.

"Anan?"

“Go on,” said Jasper; Master Cap thinks he is on the ocean—water leaves no trail—”

“It leaves none, Eau-douce, hereaway, though I do not pretend to say what it may leave on the sea. Then a canoe is both swift and easy, when it floats with the current, and the tender limbs of the Sergeant’s daughter will be favoured by its motion. But, on the other hand, the river will have no cover but the clouds in the heavens; the rift is a ticklish thing for boats to venture into, even by daylight; and it is six fairly measured miles, by water, from this spot to the garrison. Then a trail on land is not easy to be found in the dark. I am troubled, Jasper, to say which way we ought to counsel and advise.”

“If the Serpent and myself could swim into the river, and bring off the other canoe,” the young sailor replied, “it would seem to me, that our safest course would be the water.”

“If, indeed! and yet it might easily be done, as soon as it is a little darker. Well, well, considering the Sergeant’s daughter, and her gifts, I am not sartain it will not be the best.

Though were we only a party of men, it would be like a hunt to the lusty and brave, to play at hide-and-seek with yonder miscreants on the other shore. Jasper," continued the guide, into whose character there entered no ingredient that belonged to vain display or theatrical effect, "will you undertake to bring in the canoe?"

"I will undertake anything that will serve and protect Mabel, Pathfinder."

"That is an upright feeling, and I suppose it is natur'. The Sarpent, who is nearly naked already, can help you ; and this will be cutting off one of the means of them devils to work their harm."

This material point being settled, the different members of the party prepared themselves to put the project in execution. The shades of evening fell fast upon the forest ; and by the time all was ready for the attempt, it was found impossible to discern objects on the opposite shore. Time now pressed ; for Indian cunning could devise so many expedients for passing so narrow a stream, that the Pathfinder was getting impatient to quit the spot. While

Jasper and his companion entered the river, armed with nothing but their knives and the Delaware's tomahawk, observing the greatest caution not to betray their movements, the guide brought Mabel from her place of concealment, and bidding her and Cap proceed along the shore to the foot of the rapids, he got into the canoe that remained in his possession, in order to carry it to the same place.

This was easily effected. The canoe was laid against the bank, and Mabel and her uncle entered it, taking their seats as usual; while the Pathfinder, erect in the stern, held by a bush, in order to prevent the swift stream from sweeping them down its current. Several minutes of intense and breathless expectation followed, while they awaited the result of the bold attempt of their comrades.

It will be understood that the two adventurers were compelled to swim across a deep and rapid channel, ere they could reach a part of the rift that admitted of wading. This portion of the enterprise was soon effected; and Jasper and the Serpent struck the bottom, side

by side, at the same instant. Having secured firm footing, they took hold of each other's hands, and waded slowly and with extreme caution, in the supposed direction of the canoe. But the darkness was already so deep, that they soon ascertained they were to be but little aided by the sense of sight, and that their search must be conducted on that species of instinct which enables the woodsman to find his way, when the sun is hid, no stars appear, and all would seem chaos to one less accustomed to the mazes of the forest. Under these circumstances, Jasper submitted to be guided by the Delaware, whose habits best fitted him to take the lead. Still it was no easy matter to wade amid the roaring element at that hour, and retain a clear recollection of the localities. By the time they believed themselves to be in the centre of the stream, the two shores were discernible merely by masses of obscurity denser than common, the outlines against the clouds being barely distinguishable by the ragged tops of the trees. Once or twice the wanderers altered their course, in

consequence of unexpectedly stepping into deep water ; for they knew that the boat had lodged on the shallowest part of the rift. In short, with this fact for their compass, Jasper and his companion wandered about in the water for nearly a quarter of an hour ; and at the end of that period, which began to appear interminable to the young man, they found themselves apparently no nearer the object of their search than they had been at its commencement. Just as the Delaware was about to stop, in order to inform his associate that they would do well to return to the land, in order to take a fresh departure, he saw the form of a man moving about in the water, almost within reach of his arm. Jasper was at his side, and he at once understood that the Iroquois were engaged on the same errand as he was himself.

“ Mingo ! ” he uttered in Jasper’s ear :—
“ the Serpent will show his brother how to be cunning.”

The young sailor caught a glimpse of the figure at that instant, and the startling truth also flashed on his mind. Understanding the

necessity of trusting all to the Delaware chief, he kept back, while his friend moved cautiously in the direction in which the strange form had vanished. In another moment it was seen again, evidently moving towards themselves. The waters made such an uproar, that little was to be apprehended from ordinary sounds; and the Indian, turning his head, hastily said —

“ Leave it to the cunning of the Great Serpent.”

“ Hugh !” exclaimed the strange savage, adding, in the language of his people — “ the canoe is found, but there were none to help me. Come, let us raise it from the rock.”

“ Willingly ;” answered Chingachgook, who understood the dialect — “ lead ; we will follow.”

The stranger, unable to distinguish between voices and accents, amid the raging of the rapid, led the way in the necessary direction; and, the two others keeping close at his heels, all three speedily reached the canoe. The Iroquois laid hold of one end, Chingachgook

placed himself in the centre, and Jasper went to the opposite extremity, as it was important that the stranger should not detect the presence of a pale-face, a discovery that might be made by the parts of the dress the young man still wore, as well as by the general appearance of his head.

“Lift,” said the Iroquois, in the sententious manner of his race; and by a trifling effort the canoe was raised from the rock, held a moment in the air to empty it, and then placed carefully on the water, in its proper position. All three held it firmly, lest it should escape from their hands, under the pressure of the violent current, while the Iroquois, who led of course, being at the upper end of the boat, took the direction of the eastern shore, or towards the spot where his friends waited his return.

As the Delaware and Jasper well knew there must be several more of the Iroquois on the rift, from the circumstance that their own appearance had occasioned no surprise in the individual they had met, both felt the

necessity of extreme caution. Men less bold and determined would have thought that they were incurring too great a risk, by thus venturing into the midst of their enemies; but these hardy borderers were unacquainted with fear, were accustomed to hazards, and so well understood the necessity of at least preventing their foes from getting the boat, that they would have cheerfully encountered even greater risks to secure their object. So all-important to the safety of Mabel, indeed, did Jasper deem the possession or the destruction of this canoe, that he had drawn his knife, and stood ready to rip up the bark, in order to render the boat temporarily unserviceable, should anything occur to compel the Delaware and himself to abandon their prize.

In the mean time, the Iroquois, who led the way, proceeded slowly through the water, in the direction of his own party, still grasping the canoe, and dragging his reluctant followers in his train. Once, Chingachgook raised his tomahawk, and was about to bury it in the brain of his confiding and unsuspecting

neighbour ; but the probability that the death-cry or the floating body might give the alarm, induced that wary chief to change his purpose. At the next moment he regretted this indecision, for the three who clung to the canoe suddenly found themselves in the centre of a party of no less than four others who were in quest of it.

After the usual brief characteristic exclamations of satisfaction, the savages eagerly laid hold of the canoe, for all seemed impressed with the necessity of securing this important boat, the one side in order to assail their foes, and the other to secure their retreat. The addition to the party, however, was so unlooked-for, and so completely gave the enemy the superiority, that, for a few moments, the ingenuity and address of even the Delaware were at fault. The five Iroquois, who seemed perfectly to understand their errand, pressed forward towards their own shore, without pausing to converse ; their object being in truth to obtain the paddles, which they had previously secured, and to embark three or

four warriors, with all their rifles and powder-horns, the want of which had alone prevented their crossing the river, by swimming, as soon as it was dark.

In this manner, the body of friends and foes united reached the margin of the eastern channel, where, as in the case of the western, the river was too deep to be waded. Here a short pause succeeded, it being necessary to determine the manner in which the canoe was to be carried across. One of the four who had just reached the boat, was a chief; and the habitual deference which the American Indian pays to merit, experience, and station, kept the others silent, until this individual had spoken.

The halt greatly added to the danger of discovering the presence of Jasper, in particular, who however had the precaution to throw the cap he wore into the bottom of the canoe. Being without his jacket and shirt, the outline of his figure, in the obscurity, would now be less likely to attract observation. His position, too, at the stern of the canoe, a little favoured his concealment, the Iroquois naturally keeping

their looks directed the other way. Not so with Chingachgook. This warrior was literally in the midst of his most deadly foes, and he could scarcely move without touching one of them. Yet he was apparently unmoved, though he kept all his senses on the alert, in readiness to escape, or to strike a blow, at the proper moment. By carefully abstaining from looking towards those behind him, he lessened the chances of discovery, and waited with the indomitable patience of an Indian for the instant when he should be required to act.

“ Let all my young men but two, one at each end of the canoe, cross and get their arms,” said the Iroquois chief. “ Let the two push over the boat.”

The Indians quietly obeyed, leaving Jasper at the stern, and the Iroquois who had found the canoe at the bow of the light craft, Chingachgook burying himself so deep in the river, as to be passed by the others without detection. The splashing in the water, the tossing arms and the calls of one to another, soon announced that the four who had last joined the party,

were already swimming. As soon as this fact was certain, the Delaware rose, resumed his former station, and began to think the moment for action was come.

One less habitually under self-restraint than this warrior, would probably have now aimed his meditated blow ; but Chingachgook knew there were more Iroquois behind him on the rift, and he was a warrior much too trained and experienced to risk anything unnecessarily. He suffered the Indian at the bow of the canoe to push off into the deep water, and then all three were swimming in the direction of the eastern shore. Instead, however, of helping the canoe across the swift current, no sooner did the Delaware and Jasper find themselves within the influence of its greatest force, than both began to swim in a way to check their further progress across the stream. Nor was this done suddenly, or in the incautious manner in which a civilized man would have been apt to attempt the artifice, but warily, and so gradually that the Iroquois at the bow fancied at first he was merely struggling against the strength of the

current. Of course, while acted on by these opposing efforts, the canoe drifted down stream, and in about a minute it was floating in still deeper water at the foot of the rift. Here, however, the Iroquois was not slow in finding that something unusual retarded their advance, and looking back he first learned that he was resisted by the efforts of his companions.

That second nature, which grows up through habit, instantly told the young Iroquois that he was alone with enemies. Dashing the water aside, he sprang at the throat of Chingachgook, and the two Indians, relinquishing their hold of the canoe, seized each other like tigers. In the midst of the darkness of that gloomy night, and floating in an element so dangerous to man when engaged in deadly strife, they appeared to forget everything but their fell animosity, and their mutual desire to conquer.

Jasper had now complete command of the canoe, which flew off like a feather impelled by the breath, under the violent reaction of the struggles of the two combatants. The first impulse of the youth was to swim to the aid of the

Delaware, but the importance of securing the boat presented itself with ten-fold force, while he listened to the heavy breathings of the warriors as they throttled each other, and he proceeded as fast as possible towards the western shore. This he soon reached ; and after a short search, he succeeded in discovering the remainder of the party, and in procuring his clothes. A few words sufficed to explain the situation in which he had left the Delaware, and the manner in which the canoe had been obtained.

When those who had been left behind had heard the explanations of Jasper, a profound stillness reigned among them, each listening intently in the vain hope of catching some clue to the result of the fearful struggle that had just taken place, if it were not still going on in the water. Nothing was audible beyond the steady roar of the rushing river ; it being a part of the policy of their enemies on the opposite shore to observe the most death-like stillness.

“ Take this paddle, Jasper,” said Pathfinder,

calmly, though the listeners thought his voice sounded more melancholy than usual; “and follow with your own canoe.—It is unsafe for us to remain here longer.”

“But the Serpent?”

“The Great Serpent is in the hands of his own Deity, and will live or die, according to the intentions of Providence. We can do him no good, and may risk too much by remaining here in idleness, like women talking over their distresses. This darkness is very precious—”

A loud, long, piercing yell came from the shore, and cut short the words of the guide.

“What is the meaning of that uproar, Master Pathfinder?” demanded Cap. “It sounds more like the outcries of devils than anything that can come from the throats of Christians and men.”

“Christians they are not, and do not pretend to be, and do not wish to be; and in calling them devils, you have scarcely misnamed them. That yell is one of rejoicing, and it is as conquerors they have given it.

The body of the Serpent, no doubt, dead or alive, is in their power !”

“ And we —” exclaimed Jasper, who felt a pang of generous regret, as the idea that he might have averted the calamity presented itself to his mind, had he not deserted his comrade.

“ We can do the chief no good, lad, and must quit this spot as fast as possible.”

“ Without one attempt to rescue him ?— without even knowing whether he be dead or living ?”

“ Jasper is right,” said Mabel, who could speak, though her voice sounded huskily and smothered ; “ I have no fears, uncle, and will stay here until we know what has become of our friend.”

This seems reasonable, Pathfinder,” put in Cap. “ Your true seaman cannot well desert a messmate ; and I am glad to find that motives so correct exist among those fresh-water people.”

“ Tut, tut,” returned the impatient guide, forcing the canoe into the stream as he spoke,

“ye know nothing, and ye fear nothing. If ye value your lives, think of reaching the garrison, and leave the Delaware in the hands of Providence. Ah’s me ! the deer that goes too often to the lick meets the hunter at last !”

CHAPTER VII.

And is this—Yarrow?—this the stream
Of which my fancy cherish'd
So faithfully a waking dream?
An image that hath perish'd?
Oh that some minstrel's harp were near,
To utter notes of gladness,
And chase this silence from the air,
That fills my heart with sadness!

WORDSWORTH.

THE scene was not without its sublimity, and the ardent, generous-minded Mabel felt her blood thrill in her veins, and her cheeks flush, as the canoe shot into the strength of the stream to quit the spot. The darkness of the night had lessened, by the dispersion of the clouds; but the overhanging woods rendered the shores so obscure, that the boats floated down the current in a belt of gloom

that effectually secured them from detection. Still, there was necessarily a strong feeling of insecurity in all on board them ; and even Jasper, who by this time began to tremble in behalf of the girl, at every unusual sound that arose from the forest, kept casting uneasy glances around him, as he drifted on in company. The paddle was used lightly, and only with exceeding care ; for the slightest sound in the breathing stillness of that hour and place, might apprise the watchful ears of the Iroquois of their position.

All these accessaries added to the impressive grandeur of her situation, and contributed to render the moment much the most exciting that had ever occurred in the brief existence of Mabel Dunham. Spirited, accustomed to self-reliance, and sustained by the pride of considering herself a soldier's daughter, she could hardly be said to be under the influence of fear, yet her heart often beat quicker than common, her fine blue eye lighted with an exhibition of a resolution that was wasted in the darkness, and her quickened feelings came in

aid of the real sublimity that belonged to the scene, and to the incidents of the night.

“ Mabel ! ” said the suppressed voice of Jasper, as the two canoes floated so near each other that the hand of the young man held them together ; “ you have no dread, you trust freely to our care and willingness to protect you ? ”

“ I am a soldier’s daughter, as you know, Jasper Western, and ought to be ashamed to confess fear. ”

“ Rely on me—on us all. Your uncle, Pathfinder, the Delaware were the poor fellow here, I myself will risk everything rather than harm should reach you. ”

“ I believe you, Jasper, ” returned the girl, her hand unconsciously playing in the water. “ I know that my uncle loves me, and will never think of himself until he has first thought of me ; and I believe you are all my father’s friends, and would willingly assist his child. But I am not so feeble and weak-minded as you may think ; for though only a girl from the towns, and like most of that

class, a little disposed to see danger where there is none, I promise you, Jasper, no foolish fears of mine shall stand in the way of your doing your duty."

"The Sergeant's daughter is right, and she is worthy of being honest Thomas Dunham's child," put in the Pathfinder. "Ah's me! pretty one, many is the time that your father and I have scouted and marched together on the flanks and rear of the enemy, in nights darker than this, and that too when we did not know but the next moment would lead us into a bloody ambushment. I was at his side when he got the wound in his shoulder; and the honest fellow will tell you, when you meet, the manner in which we contrived to cross the river that lay in our rear, in order to save his scalp."

"He *has* told me," said Mabel, with more energy perhaps than her situation rendered prudent. "I have his letters, in which he has mentioned all that, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the service. God will remember it, Pathfinder; and there is no gra-

itude that you can ask of the daughter, which she will not cheerfully repay for her father's life."

"Ay, that is the way with all your gentle and pure-hearted creatures. I have seen some of you before, and have heard of others. The Sergeant, himself, has talked to me of his own young days; and of your mother, and of the manner in which he courted her, and of all the crossings and disappointments, until he succeeded at last."

"My mother did not live long to repay him for what he did to win her," said Mabel, with a trembling lip.

"So he tells me. The honest Sergeant has kept nothing back; for being so many years my senior, he has looked on me, in our many scoutings together, as a sort of son."

"Perhaps, Pathfinder," observed Jasper, with a huskiness in his voice that defeated the attempt at pleasantry, "he would be glad to have you for one in reality."

"And if he did, Eau-douce, where would be the sin of it? He knows what I am on a

trail or a scout, and he has seen me often face to face with the Frenchers. I have sometimes thought, lad, that we all ought to seek for wives; for the man that lives altogether in the woods, and in company with his enemies or his prey, gets to lose some of the feeling of kind in the end."

"From the specimen I have seen," observed Mabel, "I should say that they who live much in the forest, forget to learn many of the deceits and vices of the towns."

"It is not easy, Mabel, to dwell always in the presence of God, and not feel the power of His goodness. I have attended church-sarvice in the garrisons, and tried hard, as becomes a true soldier, to join in the prayers; for though no enlisted sarvant of the King, I fight his battles and sarve his cause,— and so I have endeavoured to worship garrison-fashion, but never could raise within me the solemn feelings and true affection that I feel when alone with God in the forest. There I seem to stand face to face with my Master; all

around me is fresh and beautiful, as it came from His hand ; and there is no nicety, or doctrine, to chill the feelings. No, no ; the woods are the true temple, after all, for there the thoughts are free to mount higher even than the clouds.”

“ You speak the truth, Master Pathfinder,” said Cap, “ and a truth that all who live much in solitude know. What, for instance, is the reason that seafaring-men, in general, are so religious and conscientious in all they do, but the fact that they are so often alone with Providence, and have so little to do with the wickedness of the land. Many and many is the time that I have stood my watch, under the equator perhaps, or in the Southern Ocean, when the nights are lighted up with the fires of heaven ; and that is the time, I can tell you, my hearties, to bring a man to his bearings, in the way of his sins. I have rattled down mine, again and again, under such circumstances, until the shrouds and lanyards of conscience have fairly creaked with the strain.

I agree with you, Master Pathfinder, therefore, in saying, if you want a truly religious man, go to sea, or go into the woods.

“Uncle, I thought seamen had little credit, generally, for their respect for religion?”

“All d—d slander, girl! ask your seafaring-man what his real private opinion is of your landmen, parsons and all, and you will hear the other side of the question. I know no class of men who have been so belied as seafaring-men in this particular; and it is all because they do not stay at home to defend themselves, and pay the clergy. They haven’t as much doctrine, perhaps, as some ashore; but as for all the essentials of Christianity, the seaman beats the landsman hand-over-hand.”

“I will not answer for all this, Master Cap,” returned Pathfinder; “but I dare say some of it may be true. I want no thunder and lightning to remind me of my God, nor am I as apt to bethink on most of all His goodness in trouble and tribulations, as on a calm, solemn, quiet day, in a forest, when His voice

is heard in the creaking of a dead branch, or in the song of a bird, as much in my ears at least, as it is ever heard in uproar and gales. How is it with you, Eau-douce; you face the tempests as well as Master Cap, and ought to know something of the feelings of storms?"

"I fear that I am too young and too inexperienced to be able to say much on such a subject," modestly answered Jasper.

"But you have your feelings!" said Mabel, quickly. "You cannot — no one can live among such scenes without feeling how much they ought to trust in God!"

"I shall not belie my training so much as to say I do not sometimes think of these things, but I fear it is not as often or as much as I ought."

"Fresh water!" resumed Cap, pithily; "you are not to expect too much of the young man, Mabel. I think they call you, sometimes, by a name which would insinuate all this: Eau-de-vie, is it not?"

"Eau-douce," quietly replied Jasper, who from sailing on the lake had acquired a know-

ledge of French, as well as of several of the Indian dialects. "It is a name the Iroquois have given me to distinguish me from some of my companions who once sailed upon the sea, and are fond of filling the ears of the natives with stories of their great salt-water lakes."

"And why shouldn't they? I dare say they do the savages no harm. They may not civilize them, but they will not make them greater barbarians than they are. Ay, ay, Eau-deuce; that must mean the white brandy, which is no great matter after all, and may well enough be called the deuce, for deuced stuff it is!"

"The signification of Eau-douce is sweet-water, or water that can be drunk, and it is the manner in which the French express fresh-water," rejoined Jasper, a little nettled at the distinction made by Cap, although the latter was the uncle of Mabel.

"And how the devil do they make water out of Eau-in-deuce, when it means brandy in Eau-de-vie? This may be the French used hereaway, but it is not that they use in Burdux

and other French ports ; besides, among seamen, Eau always means brandy ; and Eau-de-vie, brandy of a high proof. I think nothing of your ignorance, young man ; for it is natural to your situation, and cannot be helped. If you will return with me, and make a v'y'ge or two on the Atlantic, it will serve you a good turn the remainder of your days ; and Mabel, there, and all the other young women near the coast, will think all the better of you, should you live to be as old as one of the trees in this forest."

"Nay, nay," interrupted the single-hearted and generous guide, "Jasper wants not for friends in this region, I can assure you ; and though seeing the world, according to his habits, may do him good as well as another, we shall think none the worse of him if he never quits us. Eau-douce or Eau-de-vie, he is a brave true-hearted youth, and I always sleep as soundly when he is on the watch as if I was up and stirring myself ; ay, and for that matter, sounder too. The Sergeant's daughter, here, doesn't believe it necessary for the lad

to go to sea, in order to make a man of him, or one who is worthy to be respected and esteemed."

Mabel made no reply to this appeal, and she even looked towards the western shore, although the darkness rendered the natural movement unnecessary to conceal her face. But Jasper felt that there was a necessity for his saying something; the pride of youth and manhood revolting at the idea of his being in a condition not to command the respect of his fellows or the smiles of his equals of the other sex. Still he was unwilling to utter aught that might be considered harsh to the uncle of Mabel; and his self-command was, perhaps, more creditable than his modesty and spirit.

"I pretend not to things I don't possess," he said, "and lay no claim to any knowledge of the ocean or of navigation. We steer by the stars and the compass on these lakes, running from headland to headland; and, having little need of figures and calculations, make no use of them. But we have our claims, notwithstanding, as I have often heard from those who

have passed years on the ocean. In the first place, we have always the land aboard, and much of the time on a lee-shore, and that I have frequently heard makes hardy sailors. Our gales are sudden and severe, and we are compelled to run for our ports at all hours—”

“ You have your leads,” interrupted Cap.

“ They are of little use, and are seldom cast.”

“ The deep-seas—”

“ I have heard of such things, but confess I never saw one.”

“ Oh ! deuce, with a vengeance. A trader, and no deep-sea ! Why, boy, you cannot pretend to be anything of a mariner. Who the devil ever heard of a seaman without his deep-sea ?”

“ I do not pretend to any particular skill, Master Cap—”

“ Except in shooting falls, Jasper ; except in shooting falls and rifts,” said Pathfinder, coming to the rescue ; “ in which business, even you, Master Cap, must allow he has some handiness. In my judgment, every man is to

be esteemed or condemned according to his gifts ; and if Master Cap is useless in running the Oswego falls, I try to remember that he is useful when out of sight of land ; and if Jasper be useless when out of sight of land, I do not forget that he has a true eye and steady hand when running the falls."

"But Jasper is not useless—would not be useless, when out of sight of land," said Mabel, with a spirit and energy that caused her clear sweet voice to be startling, amid the solemn stillness of that extraordinary scene. "No one can be useless there, who can do so much here, is what I mean ; though, I dare say, he is not as well acquainted with ships as my uncle."

"Ay, bolster each other up in your ignorance," returned Cap, with a sneer. "We seamen are so much out-numbered when ashore, that it is seldom we get our dues ; but when you want to be defended, or trade is to be carried on, there is outcry enough for us."

"But, uncle, landsmen do not come to attack our coasts ; so that seamen only meet seamen."

"So much for ignorance !—Where are all the

enemies that have landed in this country, French and English ; let me inquire, niece ?”

“ Sure enough, where are they !” ejaculated Fathfinder. “ None can tell better than we who dwell in the woods, Master Cap. I have often followed their line of march by bones bleaching in the rain, and have found their trail by graves, years after they and their pride had vanished together. Generals and privates, they lay scattered throughout the land, so many proofs of what men are when led on by their love of great names, and the wish to be more than their fellows.”

“ I must say, Master Pathfinder, that you sometimes utter opinions that are a little remarkable for a man who lives by the rifle ; seldom snuffing the air but he smells gunpowder, or turning out of his berth but to bear down on an enemy.”

“ If you think I pass my days in warfare against my kind, you know neither me nor my history. The man that lives in the woods and on the frontiers, must take the chances of the things among which he dwells. For this I am

not accountable, being but an humble and powerless hunter, and scout, and guide. My real calling is to hunt for the army, on its marches, and in times of peace; although I am more especially engaged in the service of one officer, who is now absent in the settlements, where I never follow him. No, no; bloodshed and warfare are not my real gifts, but peace and mercy. Still, I must face the enemy as well as another; and as for a Mingo, I look upon him as man looks on a snake, a creatur' to be put beneath the heel whenever a fitting occasion offers."

"Well, well; I have mistaken your calling, which I had thought as regularly warlike as that of a ship's gunner. There is my brother-in-law, now; he has been a soldier since he was sixteen, and he looks upon his trade as every way as respectable as that of a seafaring-man, which is a point I hardly think it worth while to dispute with him."

"My father has been taught to believe that it is honourable to carry arms," said Mabel, "for his father was a soldier before him."

“ Yes, yes,” resumed the guide, “ most of the Sergeant’s gifts are martial, and he looks at most things in this world over the barrel of his musket. One of his notions, now, is to prefer a king’s piece to a regular, double-sighted, long-barrelled rifle. Such conceits will come over men, from long habit ; and prejudice is, perhaps, the commonest failing of human natur’.”

“ Ashore, I grant you,” said Cap. “ I never return from a v’y’ge but I make the very same remark. Now, the last time I came in, I found scarcely a man in all York, who would think of matters and things in general as I thought about them myself. Every man I met, appeared to have bowsed all his idees up into the wind’s eye ; and when he did fall off a little from his one-sided notions, it was commonly to wear short round on his heel, and to lay up as close as ever on the other tack.”

“ Do you understand this, Jasper ?” the smiling Mabel half-whispered to the young man, who still kept his own canoe so near as to be close at her side.

“ There is not so much difference between

salt and fresh water that we who pass our time on them cannot comprehend each other. It is no great merit, Mabel, to understand the language of our trade."

"Even religion," continued Cap, "isn't moored in exactly the same place it was in my young days. They veer and haul upon it ashore as they do on all other things, and it is no wonder if now and then they get jammed. Everything seems to change but the compass, and even that has its variations."

"Well," returned the Pathfinder, "I thought Christianity and the compass both pretty stationary."

"So they are afloat, bating the variations. Religion at sea is just the same thing to-day that it was when I first put my hand into the tar-bucket. No one will dispute it who has the fear of God before his eyes. I can see no difference between the state of religion on board ship now, and what it was when I was a youngster. But it is not so ashore, by any means. Take my word for it, Master Pathfinder, it is a difficult thing to find a man — I

mean a landsman — who views these matters to-day exactly as he looked at them forty years ago.”

“And yet God is unchanged ; His works are unchanged ; His Holy Word is unchanged ; and all that ought to bless and honour His name, should be unchanged too.”

“Not ashore. That is the worst of the land ; it is all the while in motion, I tell you, though it looks so solid. If you plant a tree, and leave it, on your return from a three years’ v’y’ge you don’t find it at all the sort of thing you left it. The towns grow, and new streets spring up ; the wharfs are altered ; and the whole face of the earth undergoes change. Now, a ship comes back from an India v’y’ge just the thing she sailed, bating the want of paint, wear and tear, and the accidents of the sea.”

“That is too true, Master Cap, and more’s the pity. Ah’s me ! the things they call improvements and betterments are undermining and defacing the land. The glorious works of God are daily cut down and destroyed, and the

hand of man seems to be upraised in contempt of His mighty will. They tell me there are fearful signs of what we may all come to, to be met with west and south of the great lakes, though I have never yet visited that region."

"What do you mean, Pathfinder?" modestly inquired Jasper.

"I mean the spots marked by the vengeance of Heaven, or which, perhaps, have been raised up as solemn warnings to the thoughtless and wasteful hereaways. They call them prairies; and I have heard as honest Delawares as I ever knew declare, that the finger of God has been laid so heavily on them that they are totally without trees. This is an awful visitation to befall innocent earth, and can only mean to show to what frightful consequences a heedless desire to destroy may lead."

"And yet I have seen settlers who have much fancied these open spots, because they saved them the toil of clearing. You relish your bread, Pathfinder, and yet wheat will not ripen in the shade."

"But honesty will, and simple wishes, and

a love of God, Jasper. Even Master Cap will tell you, a treeless plain must resemble a desert island."

"Why, that as it may be," put in Cap. "Desert islands, too, have their uses; for they serve to correct the reckonings by. If my taste is consulted, I shall never quarrel with a plain for wanting trees. As nature has given a man eyes to look about with, and a sun to shine, were it not for ship-building, and now and then a house, I can see no great use in a tree; especially one that don't bear monkeys or fruit."

To this remark the guide made no answer, beyond a low sound, intended to enjoin silence on his companions. While the desultory conversation just related had been carried on in subdued voices, the canoes were dropping slowly down with the current within the deep shadows of the western shore, the paddles being used merely to preserve the desired direction and proper positions. The strength of the stream varied materially, the water being seemingly still in places, while in other reaches

it flowed at a rate exceeding two, or even three miles in the hour. On the rifts it even dashed forward with a velocity that was appalling to the unpractised eye. Jasper was of opinion that they might drift down with the current to the mouth of the river in two hours from the time they left the shore, and he and the Pathfinder had agreed on the expediency of suffering the canoes to float of themselves for a time, or at least until they had passed the first dangers of their new movement. The dialogue had been carried on in voices too, guardedly low; for, though the quiet of deep solitude reigned in that vast and nearly boundless forest, nature was speaking with her thousand tongues in the eloquent language of night in a wilderness. The air sighed through ten thousand trees, the water rippled, and at places even roared along the shores; and now and then was heard the creaking of a branch, or a trunk, as it rubbed against some object similar to itself, under the vibrations of a nicely balanced body. All living sounds had ceased. Once, it is true, the Pathfinder fancied he heard the

howl of a distant wolf, of which a few prowled through these woods; but it was a transient and doubtful cry, that might possibly have been attributed to the imagination. When he desired his companions, however, to cease talking, in the manner just mentioned, his vigilant ear had caught the peculiar sound that is made by the parting of a dried branch of a tree, and which, if his senses did not deceive him, came from the western shore. All who are accustomed to that particular sound will understand how readily the ear receives it, and how easy it is to distinguish the tread which breaks the branch from every other noise of the forest.

“There is the footstep of a man on the bank,” said Pathfinder to Jasper, speaking in neither a whisper nor yet in a voice loud enough to be heard at any distance. “Can the accursed Iroquois have crossed the river, already, with their arms, and without a boat?”

“It may be the Delaware. He would follow us of course down this bank, and would know where to look for us. Let me draw closer in to the shore, and reconnoitre.”

“Go, boy, but be light with the paddle, and, on no account, venture ashore on an onsartainty.”

“Is this prudent?” demanded Mabel, with an impetuosity that rendered her incautious in modulating her sweet voice.

“Very imprudent, if you speak so loud, fair one. I like your voice, which is soft and pleasing, after listening so long to the tones of men; but it must not be heard too much, or too freely, just now. Your father, the honest Sergeant, will tell you, when you meet him, that silence is a double virtue on a trail. Go, Jasper, and do justice to your own character for prudence.”

Ten anxious minutes succeeded the disappearance of the canoe of Jasper, which glided away from that of the Pathfinder so noiselessly, that it had been swallowed up in the gloom before Mabel allowed herself to believe the young man would really venture alone, on a service that struck her imagination as singularly dangerous. During this time, the party continued to float with the current, no one

speaking, and it might almost be said, no one breathing, so strong was the general desire to catch the minutest sound that should come from the shore. But the same solemn, we might indeed say sublime, quiet, reigned as before; the washing of the water, as it piled up against some slight obstruction, and the sighing of the trees, alone interrupting the slumbers of the forest. At the end of the period mentioned, the snapping of dried branches were again faintly heard, and the Pathfinder fancied that the sound of smothered voices reached him.

“I may be mistaken,” he said, “for the thoughts often fancy what the heart wishes; but these were notes like the low tones of the Delaware.”

“Do the dead of the savages ever walk?” demanded Cap.

“Ay, and run, too, in their happy hunting-grounds, but nowhere else. A red-skin finishes with the 'arth, after the breath quits the body. It is not one of his gifts to linger around his wigwam, when his hour has passed.”

“I see some object on the water,” whispered Mabel, whose eye had not ceased to dwell on the body of gloom, with close intensity, since the disappearance of Jasper.

“It is the canoe.” returned the guide, greatly relieved. “All must be safe, or we should have heard from the lad.”

In another minute the two canoes, which became visible to those they carried, only as they drew near each other, again floated side by side, and the form of Jasper was recognised at the stern of his own boat. The figure of a second man was seated in the bow ; and as the young sailor so wielded his paddle, as to bring the face of his companion near the eyes of the Pathfinder and Mabel, they both recognised the person of the Delaware.

“Chingachgook — my brother!” said the guide, in the dialect of the other’s people, a tremour shaking his voice that betrayed the strength of his feelings.—“Chief of the Mohicans! my heart is very glad. Often have we passed through blood and strife together, but I was afraid it was never to be so again.”

“Hugh! — The Mingos are squaws! — Three of their scalps hang at my girdle. They do not know how to strike the Great Serpent of the Delawares. Their hearts have no blood; and their thoughts are on their return path, across the waters of the Great Lake.”

“Have you been among them, chief? and what has become of the warrior who was in the river?”

“He has turned into a fish, and lies at the bottom with the eels! Let his brothers bait their hooks for him. Pathfinder, I have counted the enemy, and have touched their rifles.”

“Ah! I thought he would be venturesome!” exclaimed the guide, in English. “The risky fellow has been in the midst of them, and has brought us back their whole history. Speak, Chingachgook, and I will make our friends as knowing as ourselves.”

The Delaware now related in a low earnest manner, the substance of all his discoveries, since he was last seen struggling with his foe in the river. Of the fate of his antagonist he

said no more, it not being usual for a warrior to boast in his more direct and useful narratives. As soon as he had conquered in that fearful strife, however, he swam to the eastern shore, landed with caution, and wound his way in amongst the Iroquois, concealed by the darkness, undetected, and, in the main, even unsuspected. Once, indeed, he had been questioned; but answering that he was Arrowhead, no further inquiries were made. By the passing remarks, he soon ascertained that the party was out expressly to intercept Mabel and her uncle, concerning whose rank, however, they had evidently been deceived. He also ascertained enough to justify the suspicion that Arrowhead had betrayed them to their enemies, for some motive that it was not now easy to reach, as he had not yet received the reward of his services.

Pathfinder communicated no more of this intelligence to his companions than he thought might relieve their apprehensions, intimating, at the same time, that now was the moment for exertion, the Iroquois not having yet entirely

recovered from the confusion created by their losses.

“ We shall find them at the rift, I make no manner of doubt,” he continued ; “ and there it will be our fate to pass them, or to fall into their hands. The distance to the garrison will then be so short, that I have been thinking of the plan of landing with Mabel, myself, that I may take her in, by some of the by-ways, and leave the canoes to their chances in the rapids.”

“ It will never succéed, Pathfinder,” eagerly interrupted Jasper. “ Mabel is not strong enough to tramp the woods in a night like this. Put her in my skiff, and I will lose my life, or carry her through the rift safely, dark as it is.”

“ No doubt you will, lad ; no one doubts your willingness to do anything to serve the Sergeant’s daughter ; but it must be the eye of Providence, and not your own, that will take you safely through the Oswego rift in a night like this.”

“ And who will lead her safely to the garrison if she land? Is not the night as dark on shore as on the water? or do you think I

know less of my calling than you know of yours?"

"Spiritedly said, lad; but if I should lose my way in the dark—and I believe no man can say truly that such a thing ever yet happened to me — but, if I *should* lose my way, no other harm would come of it than to pass a night in the forest; whereas a false turn of the paddle, or a broad sheer of the canoe, would put you and the young woman into the river, out of which it is more than probable the Sergeant's daughter would never come alive."

"I will leave it to Mabel herself; I am certain that she will feel more secure in the canoe."

"I have great confidence in you both," answered the girl; "and have no doubts that either will do all he can to prove to my father how much he values him; but I confess I should not like to quit the canoe, with the certainty we have of there being enemies like those we have seen, in the forest. But my uncle can decide for me in this matter."

"I have no liking for the woods," said Cap; "while one has a clear drift like this on the

river. Besides, Master Pathfinder, to say nothing of the savages, you overlook the sharks."

"Sharks! who ever heard of sharks in the wilderness?"

"Ay! sharks, or bears, or wolves — no matter what you call a thing, so it has the mind and power to bite."

"Lord, lord, man; do you dread any creatur' that is to be found in the American forest? A catamount is a skeary animal, I will allow, but then it is nothing in the hands of a practised hunter. Talk of the Mingos, and their devilries, if you will; but do not raise a false alarm about bears and wolves."

"Ay, ay, Master Pathfinder, this is all well enough for you, who probably know the name of every creature you would meet. Use is everything, and it makes a man bold when he might otherwise be bashful. I have known seamen in the low latitudes swim for hours at a time, among sharks fifteen or twenty feet long, and think no more of what they were doing, than a countryman thinks of whom he is

amongst, when he comes out of a church-door of a Sunday afternoon."

"This is extraordinary!" exclaimed Jasper, who, in good sooth, had not yet acquired that material part of his trade, the ability to spin a yarn. "I have always heard that it was certain death to venture in the water among sharks?"

"I forgot to say, that the lads always took capstan-bars, or gunners' handspikes, or crows with them, to rap the beasts over the noses, if they got to be troublesome. No, no, I have no liking for bears and wolves, though a whale, in my eye, is very much the same sort of fish as a red-herring, after it is dried and salted. Mabel and I had better stick to the canoe."

"Mabel would do well to change canoes," added Jasper. "This of mine is empty, and even Pathfinder will allow that my eye is surer than his own, on the water."

"That I will, cheerfully, boy. The water belongs to your gifts, and no one will deny that you have improved them to the utmost. You are right enough in believing that the Sergeant's

daughter will be safer in your canoe than in this ; and, though I would gladly keep her near myself, I have her welfare too much at heart, not to give her honest advice. Bring your canoe close alongside, Jasper, and I will give you what you must consider as a precious treasure."

" I do so consider it," returned the youth, not losing a moment in complying with the request ; when Mabel passed from one canoe to the other, taking her seat on the effects which had hitherto composed its sole cargo.

As soon as this arrangement was made, the canoes separated a short distance, and the paddles were used, though with great care to avoid making any noise. The conversation gradually ceased ; and as the dreaded rift was approached, all became impressed with the gravity of the moment. That their enemies would endeavour to reach this point before them, was almost certain ; and it seemed so little probable any one should attempt to pass it, in the profound obscurity which reigned, that Pathfinder was confident parties were on

both sides of the river, in the hope of intercepting them when they might land. He would not have made the proposal he did, had he not felt sure of his own ability to convert this very anticipation of success, into a means of defeating the plans of the Iroquois. As the arrangement now stood, however, everything depended on the skill of those who guided the canoes; for should either hit a rock, if not split asunder, it would almost certainly be upset, and then would come not only all the hazards of the river itself, but, for Mabel, the certainty of falling into the hands of her pursuers. The utmost circumspection consequently became necessary, and each one was too much engrossed with his own thoughts, to feel a disposition to utter more than was called for by the exigencies of the case.

As the canoes stole silently along, the roar of the rift became audible, and it required all the fortitude of Cap to keep his seat; while these boding sounds were approached, amid a darkness that scarcely permitted a view of

the outlines of the wooded shore, and of the gloomy vault above his head. He retained a vivid impression of the falls, and his imagination was not now idle in swelling the dangers of the rift to a level with those of the headlong descent he had that day made, and even to increase them, under the influence of doubt and uncertainty. In this, however, the old mariner was mistaken, for the Oswego Rift and the Oswego Falls are very different in their characters and violence; the former being no more than a rapid, that glances among shallows and rocks, while the latter really deserved the name it bore, as has been already shown.

Mabel certainly felt distrust and apprehension; but her entire situation was so novel, and her reliance on her guide so great, that she retained a self-command that might not have existed had she clearer perceptions of the truth, or been better acquainted with the helplessness of men, when placed in opposition to the power and majesty of Nature.

“That is the spot you have mentioned?”

she said to Jasper, when the roar of the rift first came freshly and distinctly on her ear.

“It is; and I beg you to have confidence in me. We are not old acquaintances, Mabel; but we live many days in one, in this wilderness. I think already, that I have known you years!”

“And I do not feel as if you were a stranger to me, Jasper. I have every reliance on your skill, as well as on your disposition to serve me.”

“We shall see, we shall see. Pathfinder is striking the rapids too near the centre of the river; the bed of the water is closer to the eastern shore; but I cannot make him hear me now. Hold firmly to the canoe, Mabel, and fear nothing.”

At the next moment the swift current had sucked them into the rift, and for three or four minutes the awe-struck, rather than the alarmed girl saw nothing around her but sheets of glancing foam, heard nothing but the roar of waters. Twenty times did the canoe appear about to dash against some curl-

ing and bright wave that showed itself even amid that obscurity; and as often did it glide away again unharmed, impelled by the vigorous arm of him who governed its movements. Once, and once only, did Jasper seem to lose command of his frail bark, during which brief space it fairly whirled entirely round; but, by a desperate effort, he brought it again under control, recovered the lost channel, and was soon rewarded for all his anxiety, by finding himself floating quietly in the deep water below the rapids, secure from every danger, and without having taken in enough of the element to serve for a draught.

“All is over, Mabel,” the young man cried, cheerfully. “The danger is past, and you may now, indeed, hope to meet your father this very night.”

“God be praised! Jasper, we shall owe this great happiness to you.”

“The Pathfinder may claim a full share in the merit; but what has become of the other canoe?”

“ I see something near us on the water : is it not the boat of our friends ? ”

A few strokes of the paddle brought Jasper to the side of the object in question : it was the other canoe, empty and bottom upwards. No sooner did the young man ascertain this fact, than he began to search for the swimmers ; and, to his great joy, Cap was soon discovered drifting down with the current ; the old seaman preferring the chances of drowning to those of landing among savages. He was hauled into the canoe, though not without difficulty, and then the search ended ; for Jasper was persuaded that the Pathfinder would wade to the shore, the water being shallow, in preference to abandoning his beloved rifle.

The remainder of the passage was short, though made amid darkness and doubt. After a short pause, a dull roaring sound was heard, which at times resembled the mutterings of distant thunder, and then again brought with it the washing of waters. Jasper announced to his companions that they now heard the

surf of the lake. Low curved spits of land lay before them, into the bay formed by one of which the canoe glided, and then it shot up noiselessly upon a gravelly beach. The transition that followed was so hurried and great, that Mabel scarcely knew what passed. In the course of a few minutes, however, sentinels had been passed, a gate was opened, and the agitated girl found herself in the arms of a parent who was almost a stranger to her.

CHAPTER VIII.

A land of love, and a land of light,
Withouten sun, or moon, or night :
Where the river swa'd a living stream,
And the light a pure celestial beam :
The land of vision, it would seem
A still, an everlasting dream.

Queen's Wake.

THE rest that succeeds fatigue, and which attends a newly awakened sense of security, is generally sweet and deep. Such was the fact with Mabel, who did not rise from her humble pallet — such a bed as a Sergeant's daughter might claim in a remote frontier post—until long after the garrison had obeyed the usual summons of the drums, and had assembled at the morning parade. Sergeant Dunham, on whose shoulders fell the task of

attending to these ordinary and daily duties, had got through all his morning avocations, and was beginning to think of his breakfast, ere his child left her room, and came into the fresh air, equally bewildered, delighted, and grateful, at the novelty and security of her new situation.

At the time of which we are writing, Oswego was one of the extreme frontier posts of the British possessions on this continent. It had not been long occupied, and was garrisoned by a battalion of a regiment that had been originally Scotch, but into which many Americans had been received since its arrival in this country; an innovation that had led the way to Mabel's father filling the humble, but responsible situation of the oldest Sergeant. A few young officers, also, who were natives of the colonies, were to be found in the corps. The fort itself, like most works of that character, was better adapted to resist an attack of savages, than to withstand a regular siege; but the great difficulty of transporting heavy artillery and other necessaries

rendered the occurrence of the latter a probability so remote, as scarcely to enter into the estimate of the engineers who had planned the defences. There were bastions of earth and logs, a dry ditch, a stockade, a parade of considerable extent, and barracks of logs, that answered the double purpose of dwellings and fortifications. A few light field-pieces stood in the area of the fort, ready to be conveyed to any point where they might be wanted, and one or two heavy iron guns looked out from the summits of the advanced angles, as so many admonitions to the audacious to respect their power.

When Mabel, quitting the convenient, but comparatively retired hut where her father had been permitted to place her, issued into the pure air of the morning, she found herself at the foot of a bastion, that lay invitingly before her, with a promise of giving a *coup d'œil* of all that had been concealed in the darkness of the preceding night. Tripping up the grassy ascent, the light-hearted, as well as light-footed girl found herself at once

on a point where the sight, at a few varying glances, could take in all the external novelties of her new situation.

To the southward lay the forest through which she had been journeying so many weary days, and which had proved so full of dangers. It was separated from the stockade by a belt of open land, that had been principally cleared of its woods to form the martial constructions around her. This glacis, for such in fact was its military uses, might have covered a hundred acres ; but with it every sign of civilisation ceased. All beyond was forest ; that dense interminable forest that Mabel could now picture to herself, through her recollections, with its hidden glassy lakes, its dark rolling stream, and its world of nature.

Turning from this view, our heroine felt her cheek fanned by a fresh and grateful breeze, such as she had not experienced since quitting the far-distant coast. Here a new scene presented itself : although expected, it was not without a start, and a low exclamation indicative of pleasure, that the eager eyes of the

girl drank in its beauties. To the north, and east, and west, in every direction, in short, over one entire half of the novel panorama, lay a field of rolling waters. The element was neither of that glassy green which distinguishes the American waters in general, nor yet of the deep blue of the ocean; the colour being of a slightly amber hue, that scarcely affected its limpidity. No land was to be seen, with the exception of the adjacent coast, which stretched to the right and left, in an unbroken outline of forest, with wide bays and low headlands or points; still much of the shore was rocky, and into its caverns the sluggish waters occasionally rolled, producing a hollow sound, that resembled the concussions of a distant gun. No sail whitened the surface, no whale or other fish gambolled on its bosom, no sign of use or service rewarded the longest and most minute gaze at its boundless expanse. It was a scene, on one side, of apparently endless forests, while a waste of seemingly interminable water spread itself on the other. Nature had appeared to delight in producing

grand effects, by setting two of her principal agents in bold relief to each other, neglecting details; the eye turning from the broad carpet of leaves to the still broader field of fluid, from the endless but gentle heavings of the lake to the holy calm and poetical solitude of the forest, with wonder and delight.

Mabel Dunham, though unsophisticated, like most of her countrywomen of that period, and ingenuous and frank as any warm-hearted and sincere-minded girl well could be, was not altogether without a feeling for the poetry of this beautiful earth of ours. Although she could scarcely be said to be educated at all, for few of her sex at that day, and in this country, received much more than the rudiments of plain English instruction, still she had been taught much more than was usual for young women in her own station in life; and, in one sense certainly, she did credit to her teaching. The widow of a field-officer, who formerly belonged to the same regiment as her father, had taken the child in charge at the death of its mother; and under the care

of this lady, Mabel had acquired some tastes and many ideas, which otherwise might always have remained strangers to her. Her situation in the family had been less that of a domestic than of a humble companion, and the results were quite apparent in her attire, her language, her sentiments, and even in her feelings, though neither, perhaps, rose to the level of those which would properly characterize a lady. She had lost the coarser and less refined habits and manners of one in her original position, without having quite reached a point that disqualified her for the situation in life that the accidents of birth and fortune would probably compel her to fill. All else that was distinctive and peculiar in her, belonged to natural character.

With such antecedents, it will occasion the reader no wonder, if he learns that Mabel viewed the novel scene before her with a pleasure far superior to that produced by vulgar surprise. She felt its ordinary beauties, as most would have felt them, but she had also a feeling for its sublimity—for that softened solitude,

that calm grandeur, and eloquent repose that ever pervades broad views of natural objects which are yet undisturbed by the labours and struggles of man.

“How beautiful!” she exclaimed, unconscious of speaking, as she stood on the solitary bastion, facing the air from the lake, and experiencing the genial influence of its freshness pervading both her body and her mind. “How very beautiful! and yet how singular!”

The words, and the train of her ideas, were interrupted by a touch of a finger on her shoulder, and turning, in the expectation of seeing her father, Mabel found Pathfinder at her side. He was leaning quietly on his long rifle, and laughing in his quiet manner, while, with an outstretched arm, he swept over the whole panorama of land and water.

“Here you have both our domains,” he said, “Jasper’s and mine. The lake is for him, and the woods are for me. The lad sometimes boasts of the breadth of his dominions; but I tell him my trees make as broad a plain on the face of this ’arth, as all his water. Well, Ma-

bel, you are fit for either ; for I do not see that fear of the Mingos, or night marches, can destroy your pretty looks."

" It is a new character for the Pathfinder to appear in, to compliment a silly girl."

" Not silly, Mabel ; no, not in the least silly. The Sergeant's daughter would do discredit to her worthy father, were she to do, or say, anything that, in common honesty, could be called silly."

" Then she must take care and not put too much faith in treacherous flattering words. But, Pathfinder, I rejoice to see you among us again ; for, though Jasper did not seem to feel much uneasiness, I was afraid some accident might have happened to you and your friend, on that frightful rift."

" The lad knows us both, and was sartain that we should not drown, which is scarcely one of my gifts. It would have been hard swimming, of a sartainty, with a long-barrelled rifle in the hand ; and what between the game, and the savages, and the French, killdeer and I have gone through too much in company to part very

easily. No, no; we waded ashore, the rift being shallow enough for that with small exceptions, and we landed with our arms in our hands. We had to take our time for it, on account of the Iroquois, I will own; but, as soon as the sculking vagabonds saw the lights that the Sergeant sent down to your canoe, we well understood they would decamp, since a visit might have been expected from some of the garrison. So it was only sitting patiently on the stones for an hour, and all the danger was over. Patience is the greatest of virtues in a woodsman."

"I rejoice to hear this, for fatigue itself could scarcely make me sleep, for thinking of what might befall you."

"Lord bless your tender little heart, Mabel! but this is the way with all you gentle ones. I must say, on my part, however, that I was right glad to see the lanterns come down to the water-side, which I knew to be a sure sign of *your* safety. We hunters and guides are rude beings; but we have our feelings, and our ideas, as well as any general in the army. Both Jas-

per and I would have died before you should have come to harm—we would.”

“ I thank you for all you did for me, Pathfinder ; from the bottom of my heart, I thank you, and depend on it my father shall know it. I have already told him much, but have still a duty to perform on this subject.”

“ Tush, Mabel ! The Sergeant knows what the woods be, and what men—true red-men be, too. There is little need to tell him anything about it. Well, now you have met your father, do you find the honest old soldier the sort of person you expected to find ?”

“ He is my own dear father, and received me as a soldier and a father should receive a child. Have you known him long, Pathfinder ?”

“ That is as people count time. I was just twelve when the Sergeant took me on my first scouting, and that is now more than twenty years ago. We had a tramping time of it ; and as it was before your day, you would have had no father, had not the rifle been one of my natural gifts.”

“ Explain yourself.”

“ It is too simple for many words. We were ambushed, and the Sergeant got a bad hurt, and would have lost his scalp, but for a sort of in-bred turn I took to the weapon. We brought him off, however, and a handsomer head of hair, for his time of life, is not to be found in the rijiment, than the Sargeant carries about with him this blessed day.”

“ You saved my father’s life, Pathfinder !” exclaimed Mabel, unconsciously, though warmly, taking one of his hard sinewy hands into both her own. “ God bless you for this, too, among your other good acts !”

“ Nay, I did not say that much, though I believe I did save his scalp. A man might live without a scalp, and so I cannot say I saved his life. Jasper may say that much consarning you ; for without his eye and arm the canoe would never have passed the rift in safety, on a night like the last. The gifts of the lad are for the water, while mine are for the hunt and the trail. He is yonder, in the cove there, looking after the canoes, and keeping an eye on his beloved little craft. To my

eye, there is no likelier youth in these parts, than Jasper Western.”

For the first time since she had left her room, Mabel now turned her eyes beneath her, and got a view of what might be called the fore-ground of the remarkable picture she had been studying with so much pleasure. The Oswego threw its dark waters into the lake, between banks of some height; that on its eastern side being bolder and projecting further north than that on its western. The fort was on the latter, and immediately beneath it were a few huts of logs, which, as they could not interfere with the defence of the place, had been erected along the strand for the purpose of receiving and containing such stores as were landed, or were intended to be embarked in the communications between the different ports on the shores of Ontario. There were two low, curved, gravelly points, that had been formed with surprising regularity by the counteracting forces of the northerly winds and the swift current, and which, inclining from the storms of the lake, formed two coves within the river:

that on the western side was the most deeply indented ; and as it also had the most water, it formed a sort of picturesque little port for the post. It was along the narrow strand that lay between the low height of the fort and the water of this cove, that the rude buildings just mentioned had been erected.

Several skiffs, bateaux, and canoes were hauled up on the shore, and in the cove itself lay the little craft, from which Jasper obtained his claim to be considered a sailor. She was cutter-rigged, might have been of forty tons burthen, was so neatly constructed and painted as to have something of the air of a vessel of war, though entirely without quarters, and rigged and sparred with so scrupulous a regard to proportions and beauty, as well as fitness and judgment, as to give her an appearance that even Mabel at once distinguished to be gallant and trim. Her mould was admirable, for a wright of great skill had sent her drafts from England, at the express request of the officer who had caused her to be constructed ; her paint dark, warlike, and neat ;

and the long coach-whip pennant that she wore, at once proclaimed her to be the property of the King. Her name was the Scud.

“That, then, is the vessel of Jasper!” said Mabel, who associated the master of the little craft quite naturally with the cutter itself. “Are there many others on this lake?”

“The Frenchers have three: one of which they tell me is a real ship, such as are used on the ocean; another a brig; and a third is a cutter, like the Scud here, which they call the Squirrel, in their own tongue, however; and which seems to have a natural hatred of our own pretty boat, for Jasper seldom goes out that the Squirrel is not at his heels.”

“And is Jasper one to run from a Frenchman, though he appears in the shape of a squirrel, and that, too, on the water?”

“Of what use would valour be without the means of turning it to account? Jasper is a brave boy, as all on this frontier know; but he has no gun except a little howitzer, and then his crew consists only of two men besides himself, and a boy. I was with him in one of

his trampooses, and the youngster was risky enough, for he brought us so near the enemy that rifles began to talk ; but the Frenchers carry cannon and ports, and never show their faces outside of Frontenac, without having some twenty men, besides their Squirrel, in their cutter. No, no ; this Scud was built for flying, and the Major says he will not put her in a fighting humour, by giving her men and arms, lest she should take him at his word, and get her wings clipped. I know little of these things, for my gifts are not at all in that way ; but I see the reason of the thing—I see its reason, though Jasper does not.”

“ Ah ! here is my uncle, none the worse for his swim, coming to look at this inland sea.”

Sure enough, Cap, who had announced his approach by a couple of lusty hems, now made his appearance on the bastion, where, after nodding to his niece and her companion, he made a deliberate survey of the expanse of water before him. In order to effect this at his ease, the mariner mounted on one of the old iron guns, folded his arms across his breast, and balanced

his body, as if he felt the motion of a vessel. To complete the picture, he had a short pipe in his mouth.

“Well, Master Cap,” asked the Pathfinder innocently, for he did not detect the expression of contempt that was gradually settling on the features of the other; “is it not a beautiful sheet, and fit to be named a sea?”

“This, then, is what you call your lake?” demanded Cap, sweeping the northern horizon with his pipe. “I say, is this really your lake?”

“Sartain; and, if the judgment of one who has lived on the shores of many others can be taken, a very good lake it is.”

“Just as I expected. A pond in dimensions, and a scuttle-butt in taste. It is all in vain to travel inland, in the hope of seeing anything either full-grown or useful. I knew it would turn out just in this way.”

“What is the matter with Ontario, Master Cap? It is large, and fair to look at, and pleasant enough to drink, for those who can't get at the water of the springs.”

“Do you call this large?” asked Cap, again sweeping the air with the pipe. “I will just ask you what there is large about it? Didn’t Jasper himself confess that it was only some twenty leagues from shore to shore?”

“But uncle,” interposed Mabel; “no land is to be seen, except here on our own coast. To me it looks exactly like the ocean.”

“This bit of a pond look like the ocean! Well, Magnet, that from a girl who has had real seamen in her family is downright nonsense. What is there about it, pray, that has even the outline of a sea on it?”

“Why, there is water — water — water — nothing but water, for miles on miles — far as the eye can see.”

“And isn’t there water — water — water — nothing but water for miles on miles, in your rivers, that you have been canoeing through, too? — ay, and ‘as far as the eye can see,’ in the bargain?”

“Yes, uncle, but the rivers have their banks, and there are trees along them, and they are narrow.”

“And isn't this a bank where we stand? don't these soldiers call this the bank of the lake? and ar'n't there trees in thousands? and ar'n't twenty leagues narrow enough of all conscience? Who the devil ever heard of the banks of the ocean, unless it might be the banks that are under water?”

“But, uncle, we cannot see across this lake, as we can see across a river.”

“There you are out, Magnet. Ar'n't the Amazon, and Oronoco, and La Plata rivers, and can you see across them? Hark'e, Pathfinder, I very much doubt if this stripe of water here, be even a lake; for to me it appears to be only a river. You are by no means particular about your geography, I find, up here in the woods.”

“There *you* are out, Master Cap. There is a river, and a noble one too, at each end of it; but this is old Ontario before you; and, though it is not my gift to live on a lake, to my judgment there are few better than this.”

“And, uncle, if we stood on the beach at Rockaway, what more should we see, than we

now behold? There is a shore on one side, or banks there, and trees, too, as well as those which are here.”

“ This is perverseness, Magnet, and young girls should steer clear of anything like obstinacy. In the first place, the ocean, has coasts, but no banks, except the Grand Banks, as I tell you, which are out of sight of land; and you will not pretend that this bank is out of sight of land, or even under water? ”

“ As Mabel could not very plausibly set up this extravagant opinion, Cap pursued the subject, his countenance beginning to discover the triumph of a successful disputant.

“ And then them trees bear no comparison to these trees. The coasts of the ocean have farms, and cities, and country-seats, and, in some parts of the world, castles and monasteries, and lighthouses — ay, ay — lighthouses, in particular, on them; not one of all which things is to be seen here. No, no, Master Pathfinder; I never heard of an ocean that hadn't more or less lighthouses on it; whereas, hereaway there is not even a beacon.”

“ There is what is better, there is what is better ; a forest and noble trees, a fit temple of God.”

“ Ay, your forest may do for a lake ; but of what use would an ocean be if the earth all around it were forest ? Ships would be unnecessary, as timber might be floated in rafts, and there would be an end of trade, and what would a world be without trade ? I am of that philosopher’s opinion, who says human nature was invented for the purposes of trade. Magnet, I am astonished that you should think this water even looks like sea-water ! Now, I dare say, that there isn’t such a thing as a whale in all your lake, Master Pathfinder ?”

“ I never heard of one, I will confess ; but I am no judge of animals that live in the water, unless it be the fishes of the rivers and the brooks.”

“ Nor a grampus, nor a porpoise even ? not so much as a poor devil of a shark ?”

“ I will not take it on myself to say there is either. My gifts are not in that way, I tell you, Master Cap.”

“Nor herring, nor albatros, nor flying-fish?” continued Cap, who kept his eye fastened on the guide, in order to see how far he might venture. “No such thing as a fish that can fly, I dare say?”

“A fish that can fly! Master Cap, Master Cap, do not think, because we are mere borderers, that we have no ideas of natur’, and what she has been pleased to do. I know there are squirrels that can fly—”

“A squirrel fly! — the devil, Master Pathfinder. Do you suppose that you have got a boy on his first v’y’ge, up here among you?”

“I know nothing of your v’y’ges, Master Cap, though I suppose them to have been many; but as for what belongs to natur’ in the woods, what I have seen I may tell, and not fear the face of man.”

“And do you wish me to understand that you have seen a squirrel fly?”

“If you wish to understand the power of God, Master Cap, you will do well to believe that, and many other things of a like natur’, for you may be quite sartain it is true.”

“And yet, Pathfinder,” said Mabel, looking so prettily and sweetly even while she played with the guide’s infirmity, that he forgave her in his heart, — “you, who speak so reverently of the power of the Deity, appear to doubt that a fish can fly.”

“I have not said it, I have not said it; and if Master Cap is ready to testify to the fact, unlikely as it seems, I am willing to try to think it true. I think it every man’s duty to believe in the power of God, however difficult it may be.”

“And why isn’t my fish as likely to have wings as your squirrel?” demanded Cap, with more logic than was his wont. “That fishes do and can fly, is as true as it is reasonable—”

“Nay, that is the only difficulty in believing the story,” rejoined the guide. “It seems unreasonable to give an animal that lives in the water wings, which seemingly can be of no use to it.”

“And do you suppose that the fishes are such asses as to fly about under water, when they are once fairly fitted out with wings?”

“Nay, I know nothing of the matter ; but that fish should fly in the air seems more contrary to natur’ still, than that they should fly in their own element—that in which they were born and brought up, as one might say.”

“So much for contracted ideas, Magnet. The fish fly out of water to run away from their enemies in the water ; and there you see not only the fact, but the reason for it.”

“Then I suppose it must be true,” said the guide, quietly. “How long are their flights?”

“Not quite as far as those of pigeons, perhaps ; but far enough to make an offing. As for those squirrels of yours, we’ll say no more about them, friend Pathfinder, as I suppose they were mentioned just as a make-weight to the fish, in favour of the woods. But what is this thing anchored here under the hill?”

“That is the cutter of Jasper, uncle,” said Mabel, hurriedly ; “and a very pretty vessel I think it is. Its name, too, is the ‘Scud.’”

“Ay, it will do well enough for a lake, perhaps, but it’s no great affair. The lad has

got a standing bowsprit, and who ever saw a cutter with a standing bowsprit before?"

"But may there not be some good reason for it, on a lake like this, uncle?"

"Sure enough—I must remember this is not the ocean, though it does look so much like it."

"Ah! uncle, then Ontario *does* look like the ocean, after all?"

"In your eyes, I mean, and those of Pathfinder; not in the least in mine, Magnet. Now you might set me down out yonder, in the middle of this bit of a pond, and that too in the darkest night that ever fell from the heavens, and in the smallest canoe, and I could tell you it was only a lake. For that matter, the Dorothy (the name of his vessel) would find it out as quick as I could myself. I do not believe that brig would make more than a couple of short stretches, at the most, before she would perceive the difference between Ontario and the old Atlantic. I once took her down into one of the large South American bays, and she behaved herself as

awkwardly as a booby would in a church with the congregation in a hurry. And Jasper sails that boat? I must have a cruise with the lad, Magnet, before I quit you, just for the name of the thing. It would never do to say I got in sight of this pond, and went away without taking a trip on it."

"Well, well, you needn't wait long for that," returned Pathfinder; "for the Sergeant is about to embark with a party, to relieve a post among the Thousand Islands; and, as I heard him say, he intended that Mabel should go along, you can join company too."

"Is this true, Magnet?"

"I believe it is," returned the girl, a flush so imperceptible as to escape the observation of her companions, glowing on her cheeks, "though I have had so little opportunity to talk with my dear father, that I am not quite certain. Here he comes, however, and you can inquire of himself."

Notwithstanding his humble rank, there was something in the mien and character of Ser-

giant Dunham that commanded respect : of a tall imposing figure, grave and saturnine disposition, and accurate and precise in his acts and manner of thinking, even Cap, dogmatical and supercilious as he usually was with landsmen, did not presume to take the same liberties with the old soldier as he did with his other friends. It was often remarked that Sergeant Dunham received more true respect from Duncan of Lundie, the Scotch laird who commanded the post, than most of the subalterns ; for experience and tried services were of quite as much value in the eyes of the veteran major, as birth and money. While the Sergeant never even hoped to rise any higher, he so far respected himself and his present station, as always to act in a way to command attention ; and the habit of mixing so much with inferiors, whose passions and dispositions he felt it necessary to restrain by distance and dignity, had so far coloured his whole deportment, that few were altogether free from its influence. While the captains treated him kindly and as an old comrade,

the lieutenants seldom ventured to dissent from his military opinions; and the ensigns, it was remarked, actually manifested a species of respect that amounted to something very like deference. It is no wonder then, that the announcement of Mabel put a sudden termination to the singular dialogue we have just related, though it had been often observed that the Pathfinder was the only man on that frontier, beneath the condition of a gentleman, who presumed to treat the Sergeant at all as an equal, or even with the cordial familiarity of a friend.

“Good morrow, brother Cap,” said the Sergeant, giving the military salute, as he walked, in a grave stately manner on the bastion. “My morning duty has made me seem forgetful of you and Mabel; but we have now an hour or two to spare, and to get acquainted. Do you not perceive, brother, a strong likeness in the girl, to her we have so long lost?”

“Mabel is the image of her mother, Sergeant, as I have always said, with a little of

your firmer figure; though, for that matter, the Caps were never wanting in spring and activity."

Mabel cast a timid glance at the stern rigid countenance of her father, of whom she had ever thought as the warm-hearted dwell on the affection of their absent parents; and, as she saw that the muscles of his face were working, notwithstanding the stiffness and method of his manner, her very heart yearned to throw herself on his bosom, and to weep at will. But he was so much colder in externals, so much more formal and distant than she had expected to find him, that she would not have dared to hazard the freedom, even had they been alone.

"You have taken a long and troublesome journey, brother, on my account: and we will try to make you comfortable while you stay among us."

"I hear you are likely to receive orders to lift your anchor, Sergeant, and to shift your berth into a part of the world where they say there are a thousand islands?"

“Pathfinder, this is some of your forgetfulness?—”

“Nay, nay, Sergeant, I forgot nothing; but it did not seem to me necessary to hide your intentions so very closely from your own flesh and blood.”

“All military movements ought to be made with as little conversation as possible,” returned the Sergeant, tapping the guide’s shoulder in a friendly but reproachful manner. “You have passed too much of your life in front of the French not to know the value of silence. But no matter; the thing must soon be known, and there is no great use in trying now to conceal it. We shall embark a relief party shortly for a post on the lake, though I do not say it is for the Thousand Islands, and I may have to go with it; in which case I intend to take Mabel to make my broth for me; and I hope, brother, you will not despise a soldier’s fare for a month or so.”

“That will depend on the manner of marching. I have no love for woods and swamps.”

“We shall sail in the Scud; and, indeed,

the whole service, which is no stranger to us, is likely enough to please one accustomed to the water."

"Ay, to salt-water if you will, but not to lake-water. If you have no person to handle that bit of a cutter for you, I have no objection to ship for the v'y'ge, notwithstanding; though I shall look on the whole affair as so much time thrown away, for I consider it an imposition to call sailing about this pond going to sea."

"Jasper is every way able to manage the Scud, brother Cap; and in that light I cannot say that we have need of your services, though we shall be glad of your company. You cannot return to the settlements until a party is sent in, and that is not likely to happen until after my return. Well, Pathfinder, this is the first time I ever knew men on the trail of the Mingos and you not at their head."

"To be honest with you, Sergeant," returned the guide, not without a little awkwardness of manner, and a perceptible difference in the hue of a face that had become so uniformly red by

exposure, "I have not felt that it was my gift this morning. In the first place, I very well know that the soldiers of the 55th are not the lads to overtake Iroquois in the woods; and the knaves did not wait to be surrounded when they knew that Jasper had reached the garrison. Then a man may take a little rest after a summer of hard work, and no impeachment of his good-will. Besides, the Sarpent is out with them; and if the miscreants are to be found at all, you may trust to his inimity and sight; the first being stronger, and the last nearly, if not quite, as good as my own. He loves the sculking vagabonds as little as myself; and, for that matter I may say, that my own feelings towards a Mingo are not much more than the gifts of a Delaware grafted on a Christian stock. No, no; I thought I would leave the honour this time, if honour there is to be, to the young ensign that commands, who, if he don't lose his scalp, may boast of his campaign in his letters to his mother, when he gets in. I thought I would play idler once in my life."

“And no one has a better right, if long and faithful service entitles a man to a furlough,” returned the Sergeant kindly. “Mabel will think none the worse of you for preferring her company to the trail of the savages; and, I dare say, will be happy to give you a part of her breakfast if you are inclined to eat. You must not think, girl, however, that the Pathfinder is in the habit of letting prowlers around the fort beat a retreat without hearing the crack of his rifle.”

“If I thought she did, Sergeant, though not much given to showy and parade evolutions, I would shoulder kildeer and quit the garrison before her pretty eyes had time to frown. No, no; Mabel knows me better, though we are but new acquaintances, for there has been no want of Mingos to enliven the short march we have already made in company.”

“It would need a great deal of testimony, Pathfinder, to make me think ill of you in any way, and more than all in the way you mention,” returned Mabel, colouring with the sincere earnestness with which she endeavoured

to remove any suspicion to the contrary from his mind. "Both father and daughter, I believe, owe you their lives, and believe me, that neither will ever forget it."

"Thank you, Mabel, thank you with all my heart. But I will not take advantage of your ignorance neither, girl, and therefore shall say, I do not think the Mingos would have hurt a hair of your head, had they succeeded by their devilries and contrivances, in getting you into their hands. My scalp, and Jasper's, and Master Cap's there, and the Sarpent's too, would sartainly have been smoked; but as for the Sergeant's daughter, I do not think they would have hurt a hair of her head."

"And why should I suppose that enemies, known to spare neither women nor children, would have shown more mercy to me than to another? I feel, Pathfinder, that I owe you my life."

"I say nay, Mabel; they wouldn't have had the heart to hurt you. No, not even a fiery Mingo devil would have had the heart to hurt a hair of your head. Bad as I suspect the

vampires to be, I do not suspect them of anything so wicked as that. They might have wished you, nay, forced you to become the wife of one of their chiefs, and that would be torment enough to a Christian young woman ; but beyond that I do not think even the Mingos themselves would have gone."

"Well, then, I shall owe my escape from this great misfortune to you," said Mabel, taking his hard hand into her own frankly and cordially, and certainly in a way to delight the honest guide. "To me it would be a lighter evil to be killed than to become the wife of an Indian."

"That is her gift, Sergeant," exclaimed Pathfinder, turning to his old comrade with gratification written on every lineament of his honest countenance, "and it will have its way. I tell the Sarpent, that no Christianizing will ever make even a Delaware a white man ; nor any whooping and yelling convert a pale-face into a red-skin. That is the gift of a young woman born of Christian parents, and it ought to be maintained."

“ You are right, Pathfinder; and so far as Mabel Dunham is concerned, it *shall* be maintained. But it is time to break your fasts; and if you will follow me, brother Cap, I will show you how we poor soldiers live here on a distant frontier.”

CHAPTER IX.

Now my co-mates and partners in exile,
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
Here feel we but the penalty of Adam.

As You Like It.

SERGEANT DUNHAM made no empty vaunt when he gave the promise conveyed in the closing words of the last chapter. Notwithstanding the remote frontier position of the post, they who lived at it enjoyed a table that, in many respects, kings and princes might have envied. At the period of our tale, and, indeed, for half a century later, the whole of that vast region which has been called the West, or the new countries since the war of the revolution, lay a comparatively unpeopled desert, teeming with all the

living productions of nature, that properly belonged to the climate, man and the domestic animals excepted. The few Indians that roamed its forests then, could produce no visible effects on the abundance of the game; and the scattered garrisons, or occasional hunters, that here and there were to be met with on that vast surface, had no other influence than the bee on the buckwheat field, or the humming-bird on the flower.

The marvels that have descended to our own times, in the way of tradition, concerning the quantities of beasts, birds, and fishes, that were then to be met with, on the shores of the great lakes in particular, are known to be sustained by the experience of living men; else might we hesitate about relating them; but having been eye-witnesses of some of these prodigies, our office shall be discharged with the confidence that certainty can impart. Oswego was particularly well placed to keep the larder of an epicure amply supplied. Fish of various sorts abounded in its river, and the sportsman had only to cast his line to haul in

a bass or some other member of the finny tribe, which then peopled the waters, as the air above the swamps of this fruitful latitude are known to be filled with insects. Among others was the salmon of the lakes, a variety of that well-known species, that is scarcely inferior to the delicious salmon of northern Europe. Of the different migratory birds that frequent forests and waters, there was the same affluence, hundreds of acres of geese and ducks being often seen at a time, in the great bays that indent the shores of the lake. Deer, bears, rabbits, and squirrels, with divers other quadrupeds, among which was sometimes included the elk, or moose, helped to complete the sum of the natural supplies on which all the posts depended, more or less, to relieve the unavoidable privations of their remote frontier positions.

In a place where viands that would elsewhere be deemed great luxuries, were so abundant, no one was excluded from their enjoyment. The meanest individual at Oswego habitually feasted on game that would have form-

ed the boast of a Parisian table; and it was no more than a healthful commentary on the caprices of taste, and of the waywardness of human desires, that the very diet which in other scenes would have been deemed the subject of envy and repinings, got to pall on the appetite. The coarse and regular food of the army, which it became necessary to husband on account of the difficulty of transportation, rose in the estimation of the common soldier; and, at any time, he would cheerfully desert his venison, and ducks, and pigeons, and salmon, to banquet on the sweets of pickled pork, stringy turnips, and half-cooked cabbage.

The table of Sergeant Dunham, as a matter of course, partook of the abundance and luxuries of the frontier, as well as of its privations. A delicious broiled salmon smoked on a homely platter, hot venison steaks sent up their appetizing odours, and several dishes of cold meats, all of which were composed of game, had been set before the guests, in honour of the newly arrived visitors, and in vindication of the old soldier's hospitality.

“ You do not seem to be on short allowance, in this quarter of the world, Sergeant,” said Cap, after he had got fairly initiated into the mysteries of the different dishes: “ your salmon might satisfy a Scotsman.”

“ It fails to do it, notwithstanding, brother Cap; for among two or three hundred of the fellows that we have in this garrison, there are not half a dozen who will not swear that the fish is unfit to be eaten. Even some of the lads, who never tasted venison except as poachers at home, turn up their noses at the fattest haunches that we get here.”

“ Ay, that is Christian natur’,” put in Pathfinder; “ and I must say, it is none to its credit. Now, a red-skin never repines, but is always thankful for the food he gets, whether it be fat or lean, venison or bear, wild turkey’s breast or wild goose’s wing. To the shame of us white men be it said, that we look upon blessings without satisfaction, and consider trifling evils as matters of great account.”

“ It is so with the 55th, as I can answer,

though I cannot say as much for their Christianity," returned the Sergeant. "Even the Major himself, old Duncan of Lundie, will sometimes swear an oatmeal cake is better fare than the Oswego bass, and sigh for a swallow of Highland water, when, if so minded, he has the whole of Ontario to quench his thirst in."

"Has Major Duncan a wife and children?" asked Mabel, whose thoughts naturally turned towards her own sex, in her new situation.

"Not he, girl; though they do say that he has a betrothed at home. The lady, it seems, is willing to wait, rather than suffer the hardships of service in this wild region; all of which, brother Cap, is not according to my notions of a woman's duties. Your sister thought differently, and had it pleased God to spare her, would have been sitting at this moment on the very camp-stool that her daughter so well becomes."

"I hope, Sergeant, you do not think of Mabel, for a soldier's wife," returned Cap, gravely. "Our family has done its share in

that way already, and it's high time that the sea was again remembered."

"I do not think of finding a husband for the girl in the 55th, or any other regiment, I can promise you, brother; though I do think it getting to be time that the child were respectably married."

"Father!"

"'Tis not their gifts, Sergeant, to talk of these matters in so open a manner," said the guide; "for I've seen it verified by experience, that he who would follow the trail of a virgin's good-will, must not go shouting out his thoughts behind her. So, if you please, we will talk of something else."

"Well, then, brother Cap, I hope that bit of a cold roasted pig is to your mind; you seem to fancy the food."

"Ay, ay; give me civilised grub, if I must eat," returned the pertinacious seaman. "Venison is well enough for your inland sailors, but we of the ocean like a little of that which we understand."

Here Pathfinder laid down his knife and

fork, and indulged in a hearty laugh, though in his always silent manner: then he asked, with a little curiosity in his manner—

“Don’t you miss the skin, Master Cap? don’t you miss the skin?”

“It would have been better for its jacket, I think myself, Pathfinder; but I suppose it is a fashion of the woods to serve up shoats in this style.”

“Well, well, a man may go round the ’arth and not know everything. If you had had the skinning of that pig, Master Cap, it would have left you sore hands. The creatur’ is a hedgehog!”

“Blast me, if I thought it wholesome natural pork, either,” returned Cap. “But then I believed even a pig might lose some of its good qualities, up hereaway in the woods. It seemed no more than reason that a fresh-water hog should not be altogether so good as a salt-water hog. I suppose, Sergeant, by this time, it is all the same to you?”

“If the skinning of it, brother, does not fall

to my duty. Pathfinder, I hope you didn't find Mabel disobedient on the march?"

"Not she, not she. If Mabel is only half as well satisfied with Jasper and the Pathfinder, as the Pathfinder and Jasper are satisfied with her, Sergeant, we shall be friends for the remainder of our days."

As the guide spoke, he turned his eyes towards the blushing girl, with a sort of innocent desire to know her opinion; and then, with an inborn delicacy, that proved he was far superior to the vulgar desire to invade the sanctity of feminine feeling, he looked at his plate, and seemed to regret his own boldness.

"Well, well, we must remember that women are not men, my friend," resumed the Sergeant, "and make proper allowances for nature and education. A recruit is not a veteran. Any man knows that it takes longer to make a good soldier, than it takes to make anything else; and it ought to require unusual time to make a good soldier's daughter."

"This is new doctrine, Sergeant," said Cap, with some spirit. "We old seamen are apt

to think that six soldiers, ay, and capital soldiers too, might be made, while one sailor is getting his education."

"Ay, brother Cap, I've seen something of the opinions which seafaring-men have of themselves," returned the brother-in-law, with a smile as bland as comported with his saturnine features; "for I was many years one of the garrison in a seaport. You and I have conversed on the subject before, and I'm afraid we shall never agree. But if you wish to know what the difference is between a real soldier, and man in what I should call a state of nature, you have only to look at a battalion of the 55th, on parade this afternoon, and then, when you get back to York, examine one of the militia regiments making its greatest efforts."

"Well, to my eye, Sergeant, there is very little difference, not more than you'll find between a brig and a snow. To me they seem alike; all scarlet, and feathers, and powder, and pipe-clay."

"So much, sir, for the judgment of a sai-

lor, returned the Sergeant with dignity ; “ but perhaps you are not aware that it requires a year to teach a true soldier how to eat ? ”

“ So much the worse for him. The militia know how to eat at starting ; for I have often heard that, on their marches, they commonly eat all before them, even if they do nothing else.”

“ They have their gifts, I suppose, like other men,” observed Pathfinder, with a view to preserve the peace, which was evidently in some danger of being broken, by the obstinate predilection of each of the disputants in favour of his own calling ; “ and when a man has his gift from Providence, it is commonly idle to endeavour to bear up against it. The 55th, Sergeant, is a judicious regiment, in the way of eating, as I know from having been so long in its company, though I dare say militia corps could be found that would outdo them in feats of that natur’, too.”

“ Uncle,” said Mabel, “ if you have breakfasted, I will thank you to go out upon the bastion with me, again. We have neither of

us half seen the lake, and it would be hardly seemly for a young woman to be walking about the fort, the first day of her arrival, quite alone."

Cap understood the motive of Mabel ; and having, at the bottom, a hearty friendship for his brother-in-law, he was willing enough to defer the argument until they had been longer together, for the idea of abandoning it altogether never crossed the mind of one so dogmatical and obstinate. He accordingly accompanied his niece, leaving Sergeant Dunham and his friend, the Pathfinder, alone together. As soon as his adversary had beat a retreat, the Sergeant, who did not quite so well understand the manœuvre of his daughter, turned to his companion, and with a smile that was not without triumph, he remarked —

" The army, Pathfinder, has never yet done itself justice, in the way of asserting its rights ; and, though modesty becomes a man, whether he is in a red coat or a black one, or, for that matter, in his shirt-sleeves, I

don't like to let a good opportunity slip of saying a word in its behalf. Well, my friend," laying his own hand on one of the Pathfinder's, and giving it a hearty squeeze — "how do you like the girl?"

"You have reason to be proud of her, Sergeant; you have reason to be proud at finding yourself the father of so handsome and well-mannered a young woman. I have seen many of her sex, and some that were great and beautiful; but never before did I meet with one in whom I thought Providence had so well balanced the different gifts."

"And the good opinion, I can tell you, Pathfinder, is mutual. She told me, last night, all about your coolness, and spirit, and kindness, — particularly the last, for kindness counts for more than half with females, my friend, — and the first inspection seems to give satisfaction on both sides. Brush up the uniform, and pay a little more attention to the outside, Pathfinder, and you will have the girl, heart and hand."

“Nay, nay, Sergeant, I’ve forgotten nothing that you have told me, and grudge no reasonable pains to make myself as pleasant in the eyes of Mabel, as she is getting to be in mine. I cleaned and brightened up killdeer, this morning, as soon as the sun rose; and, in my judgment, the piece never looked better than it does at this very moment.”

“That is according to your hunting notions, Pathfinder; but fire-arms should sparkle and glitter in the sun, and I never yet could see any beauty in a clouded barrel.”

“Lord Howe thought otherwise, Sergeant; and he was accounted a good soldier.”

“Very true; his lordship had all the barrels of his regiment darkened, and what good came of it? You can see his ’scutcheon hanging in the English church at Albany! No, no, my worthy friend, a soldier should be a soldier, and at no time ought he to be ashamed, or afraid, to carry about him the signs and symbols of his honourable trade. Had you much discourse with Mabel, Pathfinder, as you came along in the canoe?”

“There was not much opportunity, Sergeant, and then I found myself so much beneath her in ideas, that I was afraid to speak of much beyond what belonged to my own gifts.”

“Therein you are partly right, and partly wrong, my friend. Women love trifling discourse, though they like to have most of it to themselves. Now you know I’m a man that do not loosen my tongue at every giddy thought; and yet there were days when I could see that Mabel’s mother thought none the worse of me, because I descended a little from my manhood. It is true, I was twenty-two years younger then, than I am to-day; and, moreover, instead of being the oldest Sergeant in the regiment, I was the youngest. Dignity is commanding and useful, and there is no getting on without it, as respects the men; but if you would be thoroughly esteemed by a woman, it is necessary to condescend a little, on occasions.”

“Ah’s me! Sergeant; I sometimes fear it will never do.”

“Why do you think so discouragingly of a

matter on which I thought both our minds were made up?"

"We did agree, if Mabel should prove what you told me she was, and if the girl could fancy a rude hunter and guide, that I should quit some of my wandering ways, and try to humanize my mind down to a wife and children. But since I have seen the girl, I will own that many misgivings have come over me."

"How's this?" interrupted the Sergeant, sternly; "did I not understand you to say that you were pleased? — and is Mabel a young woman to disappoint expectation?"

"Ah! Sergeant, it is not Mabel that I distrust; but myself. I am but a poor ignorant woodsman, after all; and perhaps I'm not, in truth, as good as even you and I may think me."

"If you doubt your own judgment of yourself, Pathfinder, I beg you will not doubt mine. Am I not accustomed to judge men's character? Is it not my especial duty? and am I often deceived? Ask Major Duncan, sir, if you desire any assurances in this particular."

“ But, Sergeant, we have long been friends ; have fi't side by side a dozen times, and have done each other many services. When this is the case, men are apt to think over-kindly of each other ; and I fear me that the daughter may not be so likely to view a plain ignorant hunter as favourably as the father does.”

“ Tut, tut, Pathfinder, you don't know yourself, man, and may put all faith in my judgment. In the first place, you have experience ; and as all girls must want that, no prudent young woman would overlook such a qualification. Then you are not one of the coxcombs that strut about when they first join a regiment ; but a man who has seen service, and who carries the marks of it on his person and countenance. I dare say you have been under fire some thirty or forty times, counting all the skirmishes and ambushes that you've seen.”

“ All of that, Sergeant, all of that ; but what will it avail, in gaining the good-will of a tender-hearted young female ?”

“ It will gain the day. Experience in the field is as good in love as in war. But you

are as honest-hearted and as loyal a subject, as the King can boast of — God bless him ! ”

“ That may be too, that may be too ; but I’m afraid I’m too rude, and too old, and too wild like, to suit the fancy of such a young and delicate girl as Mabel, who has been unused to our wilderness ways, and may think the settlements better suited to her gifts and inclinations.”

“ These are new misgivings for you, my friend ; and I wonder they were never paraded before.”

“ Because I never knew my own worthlessness, perhaps, until I saw Mabel. I have travelled with some as fair, and have guided them through the forest, and seen them in their perils and in their gladness ; but they were always too much above me, to make me think of them, as more than so many feeble ones I was bound to protect and defend. The case is now different. Mabel and I are so nearly alike, that I feel weighed down with a load that is hard to bear, at finding us so unlike. I do wish, Sergeant, that I was ten years younger, more comely to

look at, and better suited to please a handsome young woman's fancy."

"Cheer up, my brave friend, and trust to a father's knowledge of womankind. Mabel half loves you already, and a fortnight's intercourse and kindness, down among the islands yonder, will close ranks with the other half. The girl as much as told me this herself, last night."

"Can this be so, Sergeant?" said the guide, whose meek and modest nature shrunk from viewing himself in colours so favourable. "Can this be truly so? I am but a poor hunter, and Mabel, I see, is fit to be an officer's lady. Do you think the girl will consent to quit all her beloved settlement usages, and her visitings, and church-goings, to dwell with a plain guide and hunter, up hereaway in the woods? Will she not, in the end, crave her old ways, and a better man?"

"A better man, Pathfinder, would be hard to find," returned the father. "As for town usages, they are soon forgotten in the freedom of the forest, and Mabel has just spirit enough

to dwell on a frontier. I've not planned this marriage, my friend, without thinking it over, as a general does his campaign. At first, I thought of bringing you into the regiment, that you might succeed me when I retire, which must be sooner or later; but on reflection, Pathfinder, I think you are scarcely fitted for the office. Still, if not a soldier in all the meanings of the word, you are a soldier in its best meaning, and I know that you have the good-will of every officer in the corps. As long as I live, Mabel can dwell with me, and you will always have a home when you return from your scoutings and marches."

"This is very pleasant to think of, Sergeant, if the girl can only come into our wishes with good-will. But, ah's me! it does not seem that one like myself can ever be agreeable in her handsome eyes. If I were younger, and more comely, now, as Jasper Western is for instance, there might be a chance — yes, then, indeed, there might be some chance."

"That, for Jasper Eau-douce, and every younker of them in or about the fort!" re-

turned the Sergeant, snapping his fingers. "If not actually a younger, you are a younger-looking, ay, and a better-looking man than the Scud's master——"

"Anan?" said Pathfinder, looking up at his companion with an expression of doubt, as if he did not understand his meaning.

"I say if not actually younger in days and years, you look more hardy and like whipcord than Jasper, or any of them; and there will be more of you, thirty years hence, than of all of them put together. A good conscience will keep one like you a mere boy all his life."

"Jasper has as clear a conscience as any youth I know, Sergeant; and is as likely to wear, on that account, as any young man in the colony."

"Then you are my friend," squeezing the other's hand—"my tried, sworn, and constant friend."

"Yes, we have been friends, Sergeant, near twenty years — before Mabel was born."

"True enough — before Mabel was born,

we were well-trying friends ; and the hussy would never dream of refusing to marry a man who was her father's friend before she was born."

" We don't know, Sergeant, we don't know. Like loves like. The young prefer the young for companions, and the old the old."

" Not for wives, Pathfinder ; I never knew an old man, now, who had an objection to a young wife. Then you are respected and esteemed by every officer in the fort, as I have said already, and it will please her fancy to like a man that every one else likes."

" I hope I have no enemies but the Mingos," returned the guide, stroking down his hair meekly, and speaking thoughtfully. " I've *tried* to do right, and that ought to make friends, though it sometimes fails."

" And you may be said to keep the best company ; for even old Duncan of Lundie is glad to see you, and you pass hours in his society. Of all the guides, he confides most in you."

" Ay, even greater than he is, have marched

by my side for days, and have conversed with me as if I were their brother ; but, Sergeant, I have never been puffed up by their company, for I know that the woods often bring men to a level, who would not be so in the settlements."

"And you are known to be the greatest rifle-shot that ever pulled trigger in all this region."

"If Mabel could fancy a man for that, I might have no great reason to despair ; and yet, Sergeant, I sometimes think that it is all as much owing to kildeer as to any skill of my own. It is sartainly a wonderful piece, and might do as much in the hands of another."

"That is your own humble opinion of yourself, Pathfinder ; but we have seen too many fail with the same weapon, and you succeed too often with the rifles of other men, to allow me to agree with you. We will get up a shooting match in a day or two, when you can show your skill, and then Mabel will form some judgment concerning your true character."

“ Will that be fair, Sergeant? Everybody knows that kildeer seldom misses; and ought we to make a trial of this sort when we all know what must be the result?”

“ Tut, tut, man; I foresee I must do half this courting for you. For one who is always inside of the smoke in a skirmish, you are the faintest-hearted suitor I ever met with. Remember, Mabel comes of a bold stock; and the girl will be as likely to admire a man, as her mother was before her.”

Here the Sergeant arose, and proceeded to attend to his never-ceasing duties, without apology; the terms on which the guide stood with all in the garrison, rendering this freedom quite a matter of course.

The reader will have gathered from the conversation just related, one of the plans that Sergeant Dunham had in view, in causing his daughter to be brought to the frontier. Although, necessarily, much weaned from the caresses and blandishments that had rendered his child so dear to him, during the first year or two of his widowerhood, he had still a strong,

but somewhat latent love for her. Accustomed to command and to obey, without being questioned himself, or questioning others, concerning the reasonableness of the mandates, he was, perhaps, too much disposed to believe that his daughter would marry the man he might select, while he was far from being disposed to do violence to her wishes. The fact was, few knew the Pathfinder intimately, without secretly believing him to be one of extraordinary qualities. Ever the same, simple-minded, faithful, utterly without fear, and yet prudent, foremost in all warrantable enterprises or what the opinion of the day considered as such, and never engaged in anything to call a blush to his cheek or censure on his acts, it was not possible to live much with this being who, in his peculiar way, was a sort of type of what Adam might have been supposed to be before the fall, though certainly not without sin, and not feel a respect and admiration for him, that had no reference to his position in life. It was remarked, that no officer passed him without saluting him as if

he had been his equal; no common man, without addressing him with the confidence and freedom of a comrade. The most surprising peculiarity about the man himself, was the entire indifference with which he regarded all distinctions that did not depend on personal merit. He was respectful to his superiors from habit; but had often been known to correct their mistakes, and to reprove their vices, with a fearlessness that proved how essentially he regarded the more material points, and with a natural discrimination that appeared to set education at defiance. In short, a disbeliever in the ability of man to distinguish between good and evil without the aid of instruction, would have been staggered by the character of this extraordinary inhabitant of the frontier. His feelings appeared to possess the freshness and nature of the forest in which he passed so much of his time; and no casuist could have made clearer decisions in matters relating to right and wrong; and yet he was not without his prejudices which, though few, and coloured by the character and usages of the individual,

were deep-rooted, and almost formed a part of his nature. But the most striking feature about the moral organisation of Pathfinder, was his beautiful and unerring sense of justice. This noble trait, and without it no man can be truly great, with it no man other than respectable, probably had its unseen influence on all who associated with him ; for the common and unprincipled brawler of the camp had been known to return from an expedition made in his company, rebuked by his sentiments, softened by his language, and improved by his example. As might have been expected, with so elevated a quality his fidelity was like the immovable rock : treachery in him was classed among the things that are impossible ; and as he seldom retired before his enemies, so was he never known, under any circumstances that admitted of an alternative, to abandon a friend. The affinities of such a character were, as a matter of course, those of like for like. His associates and intimates, though more or less determined by chance, were generally of the highest order as to moral propen-

sities; for he appeared to possess a species of instinctive discrimination, that led him, insensibly to himself most probably, to cling closest to those whose characters would best reward his friendship. In short, it was said of the Pathfinder, by one accustomed to study his fellows, that he was a fair example of what a just-minded and pure man might be, while untempted by unruly or ambitious desires, and left to follow the bias of his feelings, amid the solitary grandeur and ennobling influences of a sublime nature; neither led aside by the inducements which influence all to do evil amid the incentives of civilisation; nor forgetful of the Almighty Being, whose spirit pervades the wilderness as well as the towns.

Such was the man whom Sergeant Dunham had selected as the husband of Mabel. In making this choice, he had not been as much governed by a clear and judicious view of the merits of the individual, perhaps, as by his own likings; still, no one knew the Pathfinder as intimately as himself, without always conceding to the honest guide a high place in his

esteem, on account of these very virtues. That his daughter could find any serious objections to the match the old soldier did not apprehend; while, on the other hand, he saw many advantages to himself, in dim perspective, that were connected with the decline of his days, and an evening of life passed among descendants who were equally dear to him through both parents. He had first made the proposition to his friend, who had listened to it kindly, but who, the Sergeant was now pleased to find, already betrayed a willingness to come into his own views, that was proportioned to the doubts and misgivings proceeding from his humble distrust of himself.

CHAPTER X.

Think not I love him, though I ask for him ;
'T is but a peevish boy :—yet he talks well—
But what care I for words ?

A WEEK passed in the usual routine of a garrison. Mabel was becoming used to a situation that, at first, she had found not only novel, but a little irksome ; and the officers and men in their turn, gradually familiarized to the presence of a young and blooming girl whose attire and carriage had that air of modest gentility about them, which she had obtained in the family of her patroness, annoyed her less by their ill-concealed admiration, while they gratified her by the respect which, she was fain to think, they paid her on account of her father ; but which, in truth was more to be attributed to her own modest,

but spirited deportment, than to any deference for the worthy Sergeant.

Acquaintances made in a forest, or in any circumstances of unusual excitement, soon attain their limits. Mabel found one week's residence at Oswego sufficient to determine her, as to those with whom she might be intimate, and those whom she ought to avoid. The sort of neutral position occupied by her father, who was not an officer while he was so much more than a common soldier, by keeping her aloof from the two great classes of military life, lessened the number of those whom she was compelled to know, and made the duty of decision comparatively easy. Still she soon discovered that there were a few, even among those that could aspire to a seat at the commandant's table, who were disposed to overlook the halbert, for the novelty of a well-turned figure, and of a pretty winning face; and by the end of the first two or three days, she had admirers even among the gentlemen. The Quarter-Master, in particular, a middle-aged soldier, who had more than once

tried the blessings of matrimony already, but was now a widower, was evidently disposed to increase his intimacy with the Sergeant, though their duties often brought them together; and the youngsters among his messmates did not fail to note that this man of method, who was a Scotsman of the name of Muir, was much more frequent in his visits to the quarters of his subordinate than had formerly been his wont. A laugh, or a joke, in honour of the "Sergeant's daughter," however, limited their strictures; though "Mabel Dunham" was soon a toast that even the ensign, or the lieutenant, did not disdain to give.

At the end of the week, Duncan of Lundie sent for Sergeant Dunham, after evening roll-call, on business of a nature that, it was understood, required a personal conference. The old veteran dwelt in a moveable hut, which, being placed on trucks, he could order to be wheeled about at pleasure, sometimes living in one part of the area within the fort, and sometimes in another. On the present occasion, he had made a halt near the centre, and

there he was found by his subordinate, who was admitted to his presence without any delay, or dancing attendance in an ante-chamber. In point of fact, there was very little difference in the quality of the accommodations allowed to the officers and those allowed to the men, the former being merely granted the most room; and Mabel and her father were lodged nearly, if not quite as well, as the commandant of the place himself.

“Walk in, Sergeant, walk in, my good friend,” said old Lundie, heartily, as his inferior stood in a respectful attitude at the door of a sort of library and bedroom into which he had been ushered;—“walk in, and take a seat on that stool. I have sent for you, man, to discuss anything but rosters and pay-rolls, this evening. It is now many years since we have been comrades, and ‘auld lang syne’ should count for something, even between a Major and his orderly, a Scot and a Yankee. Sit ye down, man, and just put yourself at your ease. It has been a fine day, Sergeant.”

“ It has, indeed, Major Duncan,” returned the other, who, though he complied so far as to take the seat, was much too practised not to understand the degree of respect it was necessary to maintain in his manner; “ a very fine day, sir, it has been, and we may look for more of them at this season.”

“ I hope so with all my heart. The crops look well as it is, man, and you’ll be finding that the 55th make almost as good farmers as soldiers. I never saw better potatoes in Scotland, than we are likely to have in that new patch of ours.”

“ They promise a good yield, Major Duncan; and, in that light, a more comfortable winter than the last.”

“ Life is progressive, Sergeant, in its comforts, as well as in its need of them. We grow old, and I begin to think it time to retire and settle in life. I feel that my working days are nearly over.”

“ The King, God bless him ! sir, has much good service in your honour yet.”

“ It may be so, Sergeant Dunham, especially if he should happen to have a spare lieutenant-colonelcy left.”

“ The 55th will be honoured the day that commission is given to Duncan of Lundie, sir.”

“ And Duncan of Lundie will be honoured the day he receives it. But, Sergeant, if you have never had a lieutenant-colonelcy, you have had a good wife, and that is the next thing to rank, in making a man happy.”

“ I have been married, Major Duncan ; but it is now a long time since I have had no drawback on the love I bear his Majesty and my duty.”

“ What, man, not even the love you bear that active, little, round-limbed, rosy-cheeked daughter, that I have seen in the fort these last few days ! Out upon you, Sergeant ! old fellow as I am, I could almost love that little lassie, myself, and send the lieutenant-colonelcy to the devil.”

“ We all know where Major Duncan’s heart is, and that is in Scotland, where a beauti-

ful lady is ready and willing to make him happy, as soon as his own sense of duty shall permit."

"Ay, hope is ever a far-off thing, Sergeant," returned the superior, a shade of melancholy passing over his hard Scottish features, as he spoke; "and bonny Scotland is a far-off country. Well, if we have no heather and oatmeal in this region, we have venison for the killing of it, and salmon as plenty as at Berwick-upon-Tweed. Is it true, Sergeant, that the men complain of having been over-venisoned, and over-pigeoned, of late?"

"Not for some weeks, Major Duncan, for neither deer nor birds are so plenty at this season as they have been. They begin to throw their remarks about concerning the salmon, but I trust we shall get through the summer without any serious disturbance on the score of food. The Scotch in the battalion do, indeed, talk more than is prudent of their want of oatmeal, grumbling occasionally of our wheaten bread."

“ Ah ! that is human nature, Sergeant ; pure unadulterated Scotch human nature. A cake, man, to say the truth, is an agreeable morsel, and I often see the time when I pine for a bite myself.”

“ If the feeling gets to be troublesome, Major Duncan, — in the men I mean, sir, for I would not think of saying so disrespectful a thing to your honour, — but if the men ever pine seriously for their natural food, I would humbly recommend that some oatmeal be imported, or prepared in this country for them, and I think we shall hear no more of it. A very little would answer for a cure, sir.”

“ You are a wag, Sergeant ; but hang me if I am sure you are not right. There may be sweeter things in this world, after all, than oatmeal. You have a sweet daughter, Dunham, for one.”

“ The girl is like her mother, Major Duncan, and will pass inspection,” said the Sergeant, proudly. “ Neither was brought up on anything better than good American flour. The girl will pass inspection, sir.”

“ That would she, I’ll answer for it. Well, I may as well come to the point at once, man, and bring up my reserve into the front of the battle. Here is Davy Muir, the Quartermaster, disposed to make your daughter his wife, and he has just got me to open the matter to you, being fearful of compromising his own dignity; and I may as well add, that half the youngsters in the fort toast her, and talk of her from morning till night.”

“ She is much honoured, sir,” returned the father, stiffly; “ but I trust the gentlemen will find something more worthy of them to talk about ere long. I hope to see her the wife of an honest man before many weeks, sir.”

“ Yes, Davy is an honest man, and that is more than can be said for all in the Quartermaster’s department, I’m thinking, Sergeant,” returned Lundie, with a slight smile. “ Well, then, may I tell the Cupid-stricken youth, that the matter is as good as settled?”

“ I thank your honour; but Mabel is betrothed to another.”

“ The devil she is! That will produce a stir

in the fort ; though I'm not sorry to hear it either, for to be frank with you, Sergeant, I'm no great admirer of unequal matches."

" I think with your honour, and have no desire to see my daughter an officer's lady. If she can get as high as her mother was before her, it ought to satisfy any reasonable woman."

" And may I ask, Sergeant, who is the lucky man that you intend to call son-in-law ?"

" The Pathfinder, your honour."

" Pathfinder !"

" The same, Major Duncan ; and in naming him to you, I give you his whole history. No one is better known on this frontier, than my honest, brave, true-hearted friend."

" All that is true enough ; but is he, after all, the sort of person to make a girl of twenty happy ?"

" Why not, your honour ? The man is at the head of his calling. There is no other guide, or scout, connected with the army, that has half the reputation of Pathfinder, or who deserves to have it half as well."

" Very true, Sergeant ; but is the reputa-

tion of a scout, exactly the sort of renown to captivate a girl's fancy?"

"Talking of girls' fancies, sir, is, in my humble opinion, much like talking of a recruit's judgment. If we were to take the movements of the awkward squad, sir, as a guide, we should never form a decent line in battalion, Major Duncan."

"But your daughter has nothing awkward about her; for a genteeler girl, of her class, could not be found in old Albion itself. Is she of your way of thinking, in this matter? — though, I suppose she must be, as you say she is betrothed."

"We have not yet conversed on the subject, your honour; but I consider her mind as good as made up, from several little circumstances that might be named."

"And what are these circumstances, Sergeant?" asked the Major, who began to take more interest than he had at first felt in the subject. "I confess a little curiosity to know something about a woman's mind, being, as you know, a bachelor myself."

“ Why, your honour, when I speak of the Pathfinder to the girl, she always looks me full in the face; chimes in with everything I say in his favour, and has a frank open way with her, which says as much as if she half considered him already as a husband.”

“ Hum — and these signs you think, Dunham, are faithful tokens of your daughter’s feelings?”

“ I do, your honour, for they strike me as natural. When I find a man, sir, who looks me full in the face, while he praises an officer—for, begging your honour’s pardon, the men will sometimes pass their strictures on their betters — and when I find a man looking me in the eyes as he praises his captain, I always set it down that the fellow is honest and means what he says.”

“ Is there not some material difference in the age of the intended bridegroom, and that of his pretty bride, Sergeant?”

“ You are quite right, sir; Pathfinder is well advanced towards forty, and Mabel has every prospect of happiness that a young

woman can derive from the certainty of possessing an experienced husband. I was quite forty myself, your honour, when I married her mother."

"But, will your daughter be as likely to admire a green hunting-shirt, such as that our worthy guide wears, with a fox-skin cap, as the smart uniform of the 55th?"

"Perhaps not, sir; and, therefore, she will have the merit of self-denial, which always makes a young woman wiser and better."

"And are you not afraid that she may be left a widow while still a young woman? what between wild beasts, and wilder savages, Pathfinder may be said to carry his life in his hand."

"'Every bullet has its billet,' Lundie," for so the Major was fond of being called, in his moments of condescension, and when not engaged in military affairs; "and no man in the 55th can call himself beyond or above the chances of sudden death. In that particular, Mabel would gain nothing by a change. Besides, sir, if I may speak freely on such a

subject, I much doubt if ever Pathfinder dies in battle, or by any of the sudden chances of the wilderness.”

“ And why so, Sergeant ? ” asked the Major, looking at his inferior with the sort of reverence which a Scot of his day was more apt than at present to entertain for mysterious agencies. “ He is a soldier, so far as danger is concerned, and one that is much more than usually exposed ; and being free of his person, why should he expect to escape, when others do not ? ”

“ I do not believe, your honour, that the Pathfinder considers his own chances better than any one’s else, but the man will never die by a bullet. I have seen him so often, handling his rifle with as much composure as if it were a shepherd’s crook, in the midst of the heaviest showers of bullets, and under so many extraordinary circumstances, that I do not think Providence means he should ever fall in that manner. And yet, if there be a man in his Majesty’s dominions who really deserves such a death, it is Pathfinder.”

“ We never know, Sergeant,” returned Lundie, with a countenance that was grave with thought; “ and the less we say about it, perhaps, the better. But, will your daughter—Mabel, I think, you call her—will Mabel be as willing to accept one, who, after all, is a mere hanger-on of the army, as to take one from the service itself? There is no hope of promotion for the guide, Sergeant.”

“ He is at the head of his corps already, your honour. In short, Mabel has made up her mind on this subject; and, as your honour has had the condescension to speak to me about Mr. Muir, I trust you will be kind enough to say that the girl is as good as billeted for life.”

“ Well, well, this is your own matter, and, now—Sergeant Dunham!”

“ Your honour,” said the other, rising, and giving the customary salute.

“ You have been told it is my intention to send you down among the 'Thousand Islands for the next month. All the old subalterns have had their tours of duty in that quarter—

all that I like to trust, at least; and it has, at length come to your turn. Lieutenant Muir, it is true, claims his right; but being Quarter-master, I do not like to break up well-established arrangements. Are the men drafted?"

"Everything is ready, your honour. The draft is made, and I understood that the canoe which got in last night, brought a message to say that the party already below is looking out for the relief."

"It did; and you must sail the day after to-morrow, if not to-morrow night. It will be wise, perhaps, to sail in the dark."

"So Jasper thinks, Major Duncan, and I know no one more to be depended on, in such an affair, than young Jasper Western."

"Young Jasper Eau-douce!" said Lundie, a slight smile gathering around his usually stern mouth. "Will that lad be of your party, Sergeant?"

"Your honour will remember that the Scud never quits port without him."

"True; but all general rules have their ex-

ceptions. Have I not seen a seafaring-person about the fort within the last few days?"

"No doubt, your honour; it is Master Cap, a brother-in-law of mine, who brought my daughter from below."

"Why not put him in the Scud for this cruise, Sergeant, and leave Jasper behind? Your brother-in-law would like the variety of a fresh-water cruise, and you would enjoy more of his company."

"I intended to ask your honour's permission to take him along; but he must go as a volunteer. Jasper is too brave a lad to be turned out of his command without a reason, Major Duncan; and I'm afraid brother Cap despises fresh water too much to duty on it."

"Quite right, Sergeant, and I leave all this to your own discretion. Eau-douce must retain his command, on second thoughts. You intend that Pathfinder shall also be of the party?"

"If your honour approves of it. There will be service for both the guides, the Indian as well as the white man."

"I think you are right. Well, Sergeant, I

wish you good luck in the enterprise ; and remember the post is to be destroyed and abandoned when your command is withdrawn. It will have done its work by that time, or we shall have failed entirely, and it is too ticklish a position to be maintained unnecessarily. You can retire."

Sergeant Dunham gave the customary salute, turned on his heels, as if they had been pivots, and had got the door nearly drawn-to after him, when he was suddenly recalled.

" I had forgotten, Sergeant, the younger officers have begged for a shooting match, and to-morrow has been named for the day. All competitors will be admitted, and the prizes will be a silver-mounted powder-horn, a leathern flask ditto," reading from a piece of paper, " as I see by the professional jargon of this bill, and a silk calash for a lady. The latter is to enable the victor to show his gallantry, by making an offering of it to her he best loves."

" All very agreeable, your honour, at least to him that succeeds. Is the Pathfinder to be permitted to enter ?"

“ I do not well see how he can be excluded, if he choose to come forward. Latterly, I have observed that he takes no share in these sports, probably from a conviction of his own unequalled skill.”

“ That’s it, Major Duncan ; the honest fellow knows there is not a man on the frontier who can equal him, and he does not wish to spoil the pleasure of others. I think we may trust to his delicacy in anything, sir. Perhaps it may be as well to let him have his own way ?”

“ In this instance we must, Sergeant. Whether he will be as successful in all others remains to be seen. I wish you good evening, Dunham.”

The Sergeant now withdrew, leaving Duncan of Lundie to his own thoughts : that they were not altogether disagreeable, was to be inferred from the smiles which occasionally covered a countenance that was hard and martial in its usual expression, though there were moments in which all its severe sobriety prevailed. Half an hour might have passed, when a tap at

the door was answered by a direction to enter. A middle-aged man, in the dress of an officer, but whose uniform wanted the usual smartness of the profession, made his appearance, and was saluted as "Mr. Muir."

"I have come, sir, at your bidding, to know my fortune," said the Quarter-master, in a strong Scotch accent, as soon as he had taken the seat which was proffered to him. "To say the truth to you, Major Duncan, this girl is making as much havoc in the garrison, as the French did before Ty; I never witnessed so general a rout in so short a time!"

"Surely, Davy, you don't mean to persuade me that your young and unsophisticated heart is in such a flame, after one week's ignition? Why, man, this is worse than the affair in Scotland, where it was said the heat within was so intense that it just burnt a hole through your own precious body, and left a place for all the lassies to peer in at, to see what the combustible material was worth."

"Ye'll have your own way, Major Duncan; and your father and mother would have theirs

before ye, even if the enemy were in the camp. I see nothing so extraordinar' in young people following the bent of their inclinations and wishes."

"But you've followed yours so often, Davy, that I should think by this time it had lost the edge of novelty. Including that informal affair in Scotland, when you were a lad, you've been married four times already."

"Only three, Major, as I hope to get another wife. I've not yet had my number: no, no; only three."

"I'm thinking, Davy, you don't include the first affair, I mentioned; that in which there was no parson."

"And why should I, Major? The courts decided that it was no marriage; and what more could a man want? The woman took advantage of a slight amorous propensity, that may be a weakness in my disposition, perhaps; and inveigled me into a contract, that was found to be illegal."

"If I remember right, Muir, there were thought to be two sides to that question, in the time of it?"

“It would be but an indifferent question, my dear Major, that hadn’t two sides to it; and I’ve known many that had three. But the poor woman’s dead, and there was no issue; so nothing came of it after all. Then, I was particularly unfortunate with my second wife; I say second, Major, out of deference to you, and on the mere supposition that the first was a marriage at all; but first or second, I was particularly unfortunate with Jeannie Graham, who died in the first lustrum, leaving neither chick no chiel behind her. I do think, if Jeannie had survived, I never should have turned my thoughts towards another wife.”

“But as she did not, you married twice after her death; and are desirous of doing so a third time.”

“The truth can never justly be gainsaid, Major Duncan, and I am always ready to avow it. I’m thinking, Lundie, you are melancholar’ this fine evening?”

“No, Muir, not melancholy absolutely; but a little thoughtful, I confess. I was looking back to my boyish days when I, the laird’s

son, and you the parson's, roamed about our native hills, happy and careless boys, taking little heed to the future; and then have followed some thoughts, that may be a little painful, concerning that future, as it has turned out to be."

"Surely, Lundie, ye do not complain of ye'r portion of it. You've risen to be a major, and will soon be a lieutenant-colonel, if letters tell the truth, while I am just one step higher than when your honoured father gave me my first commission, and a poor deevil of a Quarter-master."

"And the four wives?"

"Three, Lundie; three only that were legal, even under our own liberal and sanctified laws."

"Well, then, let it be three. Ye know, Davy," said Major Duncan, insensibly dropping into the pronunciation and dialect of his youth, as is much the practice with educated Scotchmen, as they warm with a subject that comes near the heart;—"ye know, Davy, that my own choice has long been made, and in

how anxious and hope-wearied a manner, I've waited for that happy hour when I can call the woman I've so long loved, a wife; and here have you, without fortune, name, birth, or merit; I mean particular merit—"

"Na, na; dinna say that, Lundie. The Muirs are of gude bluid."

"Well, then, without aught but bluid, ye've wived four times—"

"I tall ye, but thrice, Lundie. Ye'll weaken auld friendship if ye call it four."

"Put it at ye'r own number, Davy; and its far more than ye'r share. Our lives have been very different on the score of matrimony, at least; you must allow that, my old friend."

"And which do you think has been the gainer, Major, speaking as frankly the'gither as we did when lads."

"Nay, I've nothing to conceal. My days have passed in hope deferred, while yours have passed in—"

"Not in hope realized, I give you mine honour, Major Duncan," interrupted the Quarter-master. "Each new experiment I have

thought might prove an advantage ; but disappointment seems the lot of man. Ah ! this is a vain world of ours, Lundie, it must be owned ; and in nothing vainer than in matrimony.”

“ And yet you are ready to put your neck into the noose for the fifth time ? ”

“ I desire to say, it will be but the fourth, Major Duncan,” said the Quarter-master positively ; then, instantly changing the expression of his face to one of boyish rapture, he added : — “ But this Mabel Dunham is a *rara avis* ! Our Scotch lassies are fair and pleasant ; but it must be owned, these colonials are of surpassing comeliness.”

“ You will do well to recollect your commission and blood, Davy. I believe all four of your wives — ”

“ I wish, my dear Lundie, ye’d be more accurate in ye’r arithmetic. Three times one make three.”

“ All three, then, were what might be termed gentlewomen ? ”

“ That’s just it, Major. Three were gentle-

women, as you say, and the connections were suitable."

"And the fourth being the daughter of my father's gardener, the connection was unsuitable. But have you no fear that marrying the child of a non-commissioned officer who is in the same corps with yourself, will have the effect to lessen your consequence in the regiment?"

"That's just been my weakness through life, Major Duncan; for I've always married without regard to consequences. Every man has his besetting sin, and matrimony, I fear, is mine. And, now that we have discussed what may be called the principles of the connection, I will just ask, if you did me the favour to speak to the Sergeant on the trifling affair?"

"I did, David; and am sorry to say for your hopes, that I see no great chance of your succeeding."

"Not succeeding! An officer, and a Quarter-master in the bargain, and not succeed with a Sergeant's daughter!"

"It's just that, Davy."

“And why not, Lundie? Will ye have the goodness to answer just that?”

“The girl is betrothed. Hand plighted, word passed, love pledged,—no, hang me if I believe that, either; but she is betrothed.”

“Well, that’s an obstacle, it must be avowed, Major, though it counts for little if the heart is free.”

“Quite true; and I think it probable the heart is free in this case; for the intended husband appears to be the choice of the father, rather than of the daughter.”

“And who may it be, Major?” asked the Quarter-master, who viewed the whole matter with the philosophy and coolness that are acquired by use. “I do not recollect any plausible suitor, that is likely to stand in my way.”

“No, *you* are the only *plausible* suitor on the frontier, Davy. The happy man is Pathfinder.”

“Pathfinder, Major Duncan?”

“No more, nor any less, David Muir. Pathfinder is the man; but it may relieve your

jealousy a little, to know that, in my judgment at least, it is a match of the father's rather than of the daughter's seeking."

"I thought as much!" exclaimed the Quarter-master, drawing a long breath, like one who felt relieved; "it's quite impossible, that with my experience in human nature —"

"Particularly hu-woman's nature, David."

"Ye will have ye'r joke, Lundie, let who will suffer. But I did not think it possible I could be deceived as to the young woman's inclinations, which I think I may boldly pronounce to be altogether above the condition of Pathfinder. As for the individual himself—why, time will show."

"Now, tell me frankly, Davy Muir," said Lundie, stopping short in his walk, and looking the other earnestly in the face, with a comical expression of surprise, that rendered the veteran's countenance ridiculously earnest, — "do you really suppose, a girl like the daughter of Sergeant Dunham, can take a serious fancy to a man of your years and appearance, and experience, I might add?"

“Hout, awa’, Lundie, ye dinna know the sax, and that’s the reason ye’r unmarried in ye’r forty-fifth year. It’s a fearfu’ time ye’ve been a bachelor, Major!”

“And what may be *your* age, Lieutenant Muir, if I may presume to ask so delicate a question?”

“Forty-seven; I’ll no deny it, Lundie; and if I get Mabel, there’ll be just a wife for every twa lustrums. But I did’na think Sergeant Dunham would be so humble-minded, as to dream of giving that sweet lass of his to one like the Pathfinder.”

“There’s no dream about it, Davy; the man is as serious as a soldier about to be flogged.”

“Well, well, Major, we are auld friends,”—both ran into the Scotch, or avoided it, as they approached or drew away from their younger days, in the dialogue,—“and ought to know how to take and give a joke, off duty. It is possible the worthy man has not understood my hints, or he never would have thought of such a thing. The difference between an officer’s consort, and a guide’s woman, is as vast as that

between the antiquity of Scotland, and the antiquity of America. I'm auld blood, too, Lundie."

"Take my word for it, Davy, your antiquity will do you no good 'in this affair; and as for your blood, it is not older than your bones. Well, well, man, ye know the Sergeant's answer; and so ye perceive that my influence, on which ye counted so much, can do nought for ye. Let us take a glass the'gither, Davy, for auld acquaintance sake; and then ye'll be doing well to remember the party that marches the morrow, and to forget Mabel Dunham as fast as ever you can."

"Ah! Major, I have always found it easier to forget a wife, than to forget a sweetheart. When a couple are fairly married, all is settled but the death, as one may say, which must finally part us all; and it seems to me awfu' irreverent to disturb the departed; whereas, there is so much anxiety, and hope, and felicity, in expectation like, with the lassie, that it keeps thought alive."

"That is just my idea of your situation, Davy; for I never supposed you expected any more felicity with either of your wives. Now,

I've heard of fellows who were so stupid as to look forward to happiness with their wives, even beyond the grave. I drink to your success, or to your speedy recovery from this attack, Lieutenant; and I admonish you to be more cautious in future, as some of these violent cases may yet carry you off."

"Many thanks, dear Major; and a speedy termination to an old courtship, of which I know something. This is real mountain-dew, Lundie, and it warms the heart like a gleam of bonny Scotland. As for the men you've just mentioned, they could have had but one wife a-piece; for where there are several, the deeds of the women, themselves, may carry them different ways. I think a reasonable husband ought to be satisfied with passing his allotted time with any particular wife, in this world, and not to go about moping for things unattainable. I'm infinitely obliged to you, Major Duncan, for this and all your other acts of friendship; and if you could but add another, I should think you had not altogether forgotten the playfellow of your boyhood."

"Well, Davy, if the request be reasonable,

and such as a superior ought to grant, out with it, man."

"If ye could only contrive a little service for me, down among the Thousand Isles, for a fortnight or so, I think this matter might be settled to the satisfaction of all parties. Just remember, Lundie, the lassie is the only marriageable white female on this frontier."

"There is always duty for one in your line, at a post, however small; but this below can be done by the Sergeant as well as by the Quarter-master-general, and better too."

"But not better than by a regimental officer. There is great waste, in common, among the orderlies."

"I'll think of it, Muir," said the Major, laughing, "and you shall have my answer in the morning. Here will be a fine occasion, man, the morrow, to show yourself off before the lady; you are expert with the rifle, and prizes are to be won. Make up your mind to display your skill, and who knows what may yet happen before the Scud sails."

"I'm thinking most of the young men will try their hands in this sport, Major?"

“That will they, and some of the old ones, too, if you appear. To keep you in countenance, I’ll try a shot or two myself, Davy; and you know I have some name that way.”

“It might, indeed, do good. The female heart, Major Duncan, is susceptible in many different modes, and sometimes in a way that the rules of philosophy might reject. Some require a suitor to sit down before them, as it might be, in a regular siege, and only capitulate when the place can hold out no longer; others again like to be carried by storm; while there are hussies who can only be caught by leading them into an ambush. The first is the most creditable and officer-like process, perhaps; but I must say, I think the last the most pleasing.”

“An opinion formed from experience, out of all question. And what of the storming parties?”

“They may do for younger men, Lundie,” returned the Quarter-master, rising and winking, a liberty that he often took with his commanding officer, on the score of a long intimacy; “every period of life has its necessities, and at forty-seven it’s just as well to trust a

little to the head. I wish you a very good even, Major Duncan, and freedom from gout, with a sweet and refreshing sleep."

"The same to yourself, Mr. Muir, with many thanks. Remember the passage of arms for the morrow."

The Quarter-master withdrew, leaving Lundie in his library to reflect on what had just passed. Use had so accustomed Major Duncan to Lieutenant Muir and all his traits and humours, that the conduct of the latter did not strike the former with the same force, as it will probably the reader. In truth, while all men act under one common law that is termed nature, the varieties in their dispositions, modes of judging, feelings, and selfishness, are infinite.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,

Bangor House, Shoe Lane.







PS1410

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