

THE
BRIDE OF THE WILDERNESS.

BY EMERSON BENNETT.

AUTHOR OF "CLARA MORELAND," "THE FORGED WILL," "THE
PIONEER'S DAUGHTER," "WALDE-WARREN," "VIOLA,"
"KATE CLARENDON," ETC., ETC.

"We must pronounce this superior to anything we have yet seen from the pen of Mr. Bennett. As a writer of western romance, he has no superior. The plot is well laid, and the characters are admirably sustained throughout. There are no dull, prosy chapters, where the interest lags, or the reader turns the pages carelessly with a yawn and a stretch, in search of the next dialogue. Those who are familiar with the fascinating pen of Bennett, love to follow him out into the wild and gorgeous scenery of the west, for there he is in his element. On the boundless prairie, diamonded with sparkling dew, bathed in the radiance of a summer sunset, or swept by the wild, bursting tempest; in the grand old forest, and the ragged mountain defile, he is at home, and there the reader loves to wander with him. In his description of the Indian character, the author is hard to excel. Mr. Bennett has a host of admirers, and we are sure the present work will not disappoint any expectations they may have formed from the announcement of a new work from his pen.

—*Literary Gazette.*

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TO

CAPTAIN M. WISE,

Of Philadelphia,

THIS WORK,

WITH THE WARMEST FEELINGS OF FRIENDSHIP AND ESTEEM,

Is Inscribed,

BY THE AUTHOR.

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THE BRIDE OF THE WILDERNESS.

CHAPTER I.

THE WAYFARERS.

IN the Spring of 1773, just as the last rays of the setting sun were gilding the loftiest peaks of Laurel Ridge—a range of mountains in the north-west portion of what is now known as the State of Virginia—a party of wayfarers halted on the summit of one of the lower hills of the chain, and immediately set about preparations for encamping for the night. The party alluded to numbered ten persons, counting great and small, black and white. The leading personage of this number was a large, stout-built man, about thirty-five years of age, with rather strongly marked features, characterized by a frank, manly, honest expression. He was accompanied by his wife, three children, his wife's sister, three negro servants, and a stupid, or half-witted fellow, a distant relative, who for a number of years had been reckoned as one of the family.

Besides the individuals mentioned, there were ten horses; on three of which, when the party came to a halt, were mounted the wife, her sister, the three children, and a

female servant of the African race; while the other horses were loaded with provisions, and such articles as were indispensable to a family about to settle in a new country.

From the foregoing, the reader will readily infer, that the party presented to his notice were journeying from a country that might be termed settled, into the wilderness, for the purpose of there making a permanent home. Such was the fact. Major Hargrave, as he was called, the individual first mentioned, was the son of a Maryland planter, who, because of his marrying contrary to his father's wishes, had been disowned and disinherited. Brought up in comparative luxury, he found himself, on his marriage, the possessor of a lovely and amiable wife, but without pecuniary means—she being the daughter of a gentleman who had died insolvent. The widowed mother of Mrs. Hargrave, however, had a small property, which had been settled upon her by her father; and she at once gave her son-in-law an invitation to make her house his home. He accepted the invitation, and thenceforth took charge of all her business, till the day of her death, which event occurred the winter preceding the spring of the opening of our story.

On the death of the mother, the property she left was equally divided between the two daughters—the wife of Hargrave and the sister accompanying her—the only heirs; but the whole, after paying the funeral expenses and some outstanding debts, did not, besides the three negroes already mentioned, amount to a thousand dollars.

Major Hargrave had now three children—the eldest seven and the youngest three—and to provide for these, and give them a fair start in life, when they should become of age, he resolved to venture into the wilderness, whither many persons in straitened circumstances were then bending their steps, and where, in the parlance of the day, land could be had for the “taking up.” Or, in other

words, to speak more explicitly, Virginia, in order to induce persons to settle on her unoccupied lands, had recently passed laws, to the effect that any one, citizen or alien, who should erect a cabin on these lands, and raise a crop of grain, however small, should be entitled to four hundred acres thereof, with a pre-emption right to a thousand acres adjoining, provided the latter was so located as to be at the time free from all prior claims of a like nature.

This wise policy on the part of Virginia's legislators, drew a tide of emigration westward and within her borders, which advanced her unsettled territory many years in the otherwise natural march of civilization. For the sake of lands to be had for the mere living upon, many families were found to risk the dangers and endure the hardships of entering a new country, hitherto occupied only by wild beasts and savages. Among these adventurers, as the reader perceives, was the household of Hargrave, whose subsequent history and eventful experiences will form the matter with which we hope to interest him in the pages that follow.

Of the members composing this household, there are but two of whom it will be necessary to speak in this connection; and these are the moonling, or simpleton, and the sister of the wife.

To begin with the former, it suits our present purpose to say that Jacob Cheatstraw—or, as he was more generally and familiarly styled, Simple Roley, owing to his want of intellect, and a kind of sideling, rolling motion which he exhibited in walking—was a second cousin of the Wilburns, which was the family name of Mrs. Hargrave. His father died before his birth, and his mother about ten years preceding the date of our story. Poor, friendless, an orphan, without home, incapable of maintaining himself, he was truly an object of pity; and as such Mrs. Wilburn offered

him a place in her family, which he gladly accepted. The death of his benefactress threw him upon the mercy of Hargrave; who, being a man of a noble, generous nature, kindly informed him he should not want for the necessities of life so long as he himself should live to provide them for his own family. The poor fellow shed tears of gratitude at this announcement; for he had at times sufficient intellect to understand his own mental deficiency, and also the nobility of soul which prompted the kind offer of Hargrave.

In truth, Jacob, or Simple Roley, as we shall often term him, was not a downright fool. He had some understanding; and there were lucid intervals in his forlorn career, when he seemed quite knowing, displayed a good share of common sense, and even rose to ironic wit; and there were times again, when a heavy cloud, or pall, seemed to envelope his poor brain, and cast black shadows, as of an eternal mental night, upon his soul.

The personal appearance of Simple Roley was not of course prepossessing. He was tall, lank, ungainly, awkward. His head was small, and his hair nearly white. He had scarcely any eye-brows; and his pale, blue eyes, unless when under excitement, had a dull, leaden look; and, in fact, the whole countenance might be described as a perfect blank. If he could be said to have a passion for anything, it was for solitude. He loved to be alone in the fields, or the woods, where he would amuse himself for hours, in gathering flowers, clambering rocks and hills, and talking to himself. There was withal a fine chord of affection running through his nature, and he devotedly loved those who were kind to him. And none, for good reasons, did he love better than Gertrude Wilburn, the sister of Mrs. Hargrave, of whom we will now say a few words.

Gertrude was about two-and-twenty years of age, of a fine form, with a very pleasing, and, what some would term

handsome countenance. Her features were regular and animated, and their expression highly intellectual. Her complexion was dark, with raven hair, and black, sparkling eyes. She had an amiable, sweet tempered disposition, and a superior mind; and was, indeed, a very prepossessing and interesting being.

She had, for that period, received a very good education—an education, in fact, which, combined with her natural turn of mind, fitted her for the most refined society—and she could have remained behind, and been better off, perhaps, in a worldly point of view, than in uniting her fortune with that of her sister. But Gertrude, to her praise be it spoken, was not a selfish being; she loved her sister; and when she found it was the lot of Mrs. Hargrave to venture into the wilderness, she resolved to unite to hers her own slender means, and share with her the perils and hardships of a frontier life. We will only add here, that her heart was yet free, although more than one person had paid suit to her and sought her hand.

With this explanation we will proceed, and let our story, as it progresses, make known the rest.

As we have said, the last rays of the setting sun were streaming upon our party of wayfarers as they came to a halt on one of the lower hills of the chain known as Laurel Ridge. Above them, to the right, rose a high peak, which shut off the view in that direction; but to the left the view was more enlarged; and before them, or westward, the vision extended for miles, over a dark, unbroken forest, which just then was beginning to put forth the bud and blossom and leaf of spring. The day had been chilly, with signs of rain. On the loftier mountains still lay snow to a considerable depth; and the breeze, having come from the regions where winter still lingered, had brought with it cool, invigorating airs. The snow had melted from the

ground where our wayfarers came to a halt; but still it was damp; and in some places there were little pools of water, which already began to feel the influence of coming night, and exhibit it in the form of a very slight glassy congealment. A mountain stream, which had its source on the higher hill to the right, ran gurgling past, and went tumbling down over the rocks, to lose itself in the larger stream, that had gathered other waters and flowed along a rugged channel at the base of the range of which we are speaking.

Beside this stream Major Hargrave had halted, for the purpose of making his night's encampment; and as the dying day warned him to improve his time, if he would have all completed before night closed around him, he immediately set about it. His first movement was to have his wife, Gertrude, the children, and female servant dismount; and then, with the male negroes, he set to work to unload the horses.

Of course, travelling in the manner he was, through an unbroken wilderness, it was impossible that he could take with him much in the shape of furniture. A few indispensable articles, with bedding, wearing apparel, cooking utensils, provisions—consisting principally of corn, meal, and jerked venison—comprised the main part of the lading from which he now relieved the weary horses. His next proceeding was to cut down a few staddles, and erect a temporary habitation for the night. These staddles were bound together at the top with strong withes, so as to spread out at the base something like an umbrella. Over these was drawn a large strong tent-cloth, which had been prepared for the purpose, and which was sufficient, in a great measure, to protect those who took shelter under it from either snow, sleet, or rain. Under this tent, so soon as erected, gathered the female portion of the party, with all the articles of furniture, bedding, and provisions which

they had brought with them. The next proceeding was to have a large fire kindled outside; and as fools are said to make the best fire, this unpleasant task was assigned to Simple Roley. We say unpleasant task, for, with little else than damp, green wood to work with, it was no easy matter to get a bright flame to flash on the dark background of enclosing night.

Having gathered together his combustible materials, and lighted, by means of flint and steel, a piece of punk, Simple Roley laid down to it in earnest; and after blowing till his head grew dizzy, he had the satisfaction of seeing his efforts crowned with success.

"I do wonder, Major," he said, as he got up from the moist, cold ground, and perceived his benefactor standing near: "I do wonder, Major, why wood can't grow dry as well as green!"

The Major merely smiled, and was turning away, when the simpleton, with a very serious air, touched him on the shoulder, and continued:

"Major Hargrave, I have asked a civil question, of some importance, and you don't answer. Must I take it for granted that the fool knows more than the wise man?"

"You may take so much for granted, Roley, if you can answer your own question."

"Aha! I thought so, Major," returned the moonling, with an air of consequence, as he tapped his own forehead. "It is here, Major. Mark! The reason that green wood can't grow dry, sir, is because there's sap in it."

"Any fool could give that answer," replied the Major, laughing.

"No, saving your presence, there was *one* that couldn't," rejoined Roley, pointedly.—"Now mark, Major Hargrave! here comes something of still greater importance."

"Well, out with it, Roley; for if you have got an idea

on that little brain of yours, it ought not to stay there long."

"Major Hargrave," pursued the simpleton, with an uncommonly grave air, "you are a husband, a father, a master, and my benefactor; I love you, and would like to be always with you to make your fires; but something may occur to produce a separation—I may die or be taken prisoner by the Indians; and should either of these events happen, it would be no more than right and proper that I should leave behind me plenty of dry wood. Now if you will attend to my advice, Major, I'll show you how you can grow it."

"Grow dry wood, Roley?"

"Ay, sir—that's the point—grow dry wood. You wonder, sir, I see—no wonder you do—for the idea, I think, is my own."

"Well, well, out with it. Yet stay! here comes Cuba—(pointing to one of the negroes, who, having performed his part with regard to the horses, now came shuffling up toward the fire)—I will make him my proxy; for I have something else to do."

"Cuba," pursued the simpleton, addressing the black, with the same air of serious importance, "you are your master's proxy. You are honored, Cuba. Attention!"

Cuba was one of your thick-pated, flat-nosed, good-natured, loquacious, argumentative gentlemen of color, and was by nature very well fitted to discuss a scientific idea with one of Simple Roley's calibre. With a broad grin of satisfaction, as he spread the palms of his hands to the blaze, he said:

"Wat's de succumstance ob disputation, frien' Roley?"

"Listen, Cuba, and you shall hear, and get wisdom from a fool. The question is, why can't green wood grow dry?"

"Why, it does so, frien' Roley, when it am cut down long nuff."

"No, Cuba, you mistake the important bearing of my question. I mean, why can't it grow dry standing up in the woods?"

"Oh, dat ar' way, hey?" returned the negro, looking straight at the fire, and scratching his woolly head, with an air of perplexity: "you mean dat ar' way, hey?"

"I mean exactly as expressed, Cuba."

"Well, stop—don't you tell—but jus gib dis nigger time to exemplify de subject in de mind, dat de explanification, when perduced, may be satisfactionary. Dar—dar—no—yes—dar—I hab it. Yes frien' Roley, I hab it. De reason, you see, why de wood in de tree don't grow dry, am case ob de liquidification of de groun' sile."

"That's a very good remark for you, Cuba, being as you are of darker intellect than me—but that's not it. The true reason is, as I told the Major, because there's sap in it."

"Why, why, frien' Roley, any fool could tell dat," said the negro, opening his eyes with a broad stare.

"So the Major answered," replied Roley; "but it seems there were *two* that couldn't. Now mark, Cuba! and let the little knowledge you've got expand!" pursued the simpleton, with the air of a learned professor. "It is admitted, by both you and the Major, Cuba, as an indisputable fact, that the sap in the wood keeps it green; and therefore, could this sap be removed, the tree must grow dry."

"Y-a-s," drawled the black, again scratching his head, "dat succumstance looks reasonous."

"Well, Cuba, I—I, Jacob Cheatstraw—I, Simple Roley, as men call me—I, the fool, the simpleton—I, even I, Cuba—have hit upon a plan for removing it."

"You hab?"

"Yes, I have. You wonder, I see, and no wonder you

do, as I said to the Major; and he must wonder still more, you being his proxy. Now mark, Cuba! and I'll tell you how it is to be done. But I must speak low—yea, I must whisper it in your ear, that the wind may not catch the news—for the wind has ears, Cuba—and hearing, and going, it might spread it afar; and I wish the Major only to have it, as the all I have to give him for his kindness."

Here, at the recollection of the Major's generosity, the grateful simpleton gave vent to his feelings in a flood of tears; while Cuba stared at the fire, and looked very solemn.

"Now, Cuba," pursued Simple Roley, at length, drawing his sleeve across his eyes, "all feelings of a tender nature must be cast aside, while we touch upon science. Cuba, I have said that the reason green wood can't grow dry, is because there's sap in it."

Cuba nodded.

"Wherefore it follows, that if that sap can be removed while the tree is young, it must grow dry."

"Y-a-s," drawled the wondering negro, "it looks like dat 'ud do it."

"I have thought of a way by which that can be done, Cuba," continued the moonling, with, if anything, a still more important air. "That is the secret, Cuba, you being your master's proxy, I am now about to make known to you. Not to delay longer so important a communication, let me whisper it in your ear!"

The two drew close together; and putting his mouth to the ear of the black, Simple Roley uttered, in a mysterious whisper, the single word:

"*Suction!*"

Cuba, as his betters might have done, opened his eyes, with a look that plainly showed he did not comprehend how suction was to accomplish so important a matter. For

some moments he waited a further explanation; but not receiving one from the now enraptured Roley, he ventured the remark.

"Dat suction am de t'ing under observation, am very satisfactionary, frien' Roley; but de main pint ob de disputation, 'bout which I'd hab you argufy, am how de suction am to be dispersed to de green tree?"

"And shall I, who have originated this grand idea," answered the simpleton, somewhat haughtily, "spend my time to explain it in detail? No! never. Let men of lesser brains do that. Enough for me, to have put you upon a train of thought worthy of serious consideration. Go your way, Cuba—go your way. I was mistaken; the world, I see, is yet in ignorance; and that man is truly a fool, that casts pearls before swine. No, Cuba, mankind are not yet prepared for this revealment; and for making my secret known, I foresee I shall still be called a simpleton. Well, be it so;" and he folded his arms with resignation. "When the time comes that my idea can be carried out, then shall I be known for what I am, and my name shall be on the lips of every being that is called to kindle a fire. Till then, let me rest in obscurity, like many another great philosopher that has trod this vale of life before me;" and with his arms still folded, the moonling stalked away, with some such feelings of isolation as Napoleon might have experienced when he trod the sea-girt isle of St. Helena.

Ah! poor simpleton! there have lived, since your time, greater fools than you; men, pretending to be philosophers, whose theories, if carried out, would have resulted in less good to the world than taking sap from green wood; whose projects would have ended, in fact, where yours began—in smoke.

But we have not done with the moonling yet, and so let us follow him.

CHAPTER II.

THE ALARM.

WHEN Simple Roley quitted his black companion, instead of approaching the tent, he bent his steps in an opposite direction, toward the steep hill which we have mentioned as rising high above the place of encampment. He stopped not at the base of the hill, but ascended some seventy-five or a hundred feet, when he came to a large, flat rock, upon which he clambered, and there seated himself, in such a position that, by the aid of the fire-light, he could overlook the place he had left.

"The world is not prepared for my revelation," he muttered, as he gathered his feet under him, like a tailor upon a shop-board. "Well, the world is the loser," he sighed; and resting his chin upon his hands, and his elbows on his knees, he soon became lost in a silent revery, which continued for more than a quarter of an hour, during which time he moved not a limb nor a muscle.

Meantime, preparations for the evening meal had been actively going forward at the camp. Aunt Chloe, as she was called, the consort matrimonial of Cuba, had already succeeded in making a kettle of mush, and putting a large corn-cake into very warm quarters, and was now in the act of broiling some slices of bear-meat, which only the day previous formed a portion of a wild savage animal, whose curiosity having taken it within bullet range of our party of travellers, had been shot by the Major. The other servants were bustling about, putting everything to rights—

but, like most southern negroes, taking three times as many steps as would have sufficed to do all that was required of them.

At last the announcement was made that the meal was ready—a bed serving for a table, and a blanket for a tablecloth. As the Major, with his wife, children and Gertrude, gathered around the frugal repast, an inquiry was made for Simple Roley, who, notwithstanding his want of intellect, and a certain companionship which he maintained with the negroes, was always assigned a place with the family at the first table.

"Where is he, Cuba?" asked the Major, of his ebony proxy. "I left him with you, to explain some wonderful discovery he had just made, thinking you would be more likely to comprehend him than I."

"Dat's trufh, Mas'er; and de succumstance dat frien' Roley went on for to exculpitate, was ob de most universalist satisfactionary—"

"There, there, Cuba—that will do!" cried the Major, choking down a mouthful of hot mush, and fairly burning his throat, in his haste to prevent the loquacious negro entering into anything like a detail of what had passed between him and the simpleton. "I did not ask you what he said, Cuba—but where he is now?"

"Well, Mas'er, dat am more den I can prognosticate; but I seed him g'wine toward de mountain, yon'er; and it's little I knows of de succumstance of de manner of frien' Roley's layin' de shape of his course, unless he am dar now."

"Well, go and call him; and tell him, if he wants his supper hot, he had better make haste; though, for that matter," he added, with a wry face, "if this mush should cool a little, I don't know as he would be any the worse for it."

Cuba shuffled away; and it was not long ere his stentorian voice was heard shouting the name of Jacob Cheatstraw. The simpleton heard it, and it aroused him from his revery, and caused him to turn his eyes toward the camp—but he returned no answer. Firmly convinced now, from his own imbecile train of thought, that he was in this world, but not of it, he contented himself with simply looking down, as it were, upon a race of beings, who, though they might be very well in their way, were by no means prepared to comprehend ideas so much in advance of the age as those he had uttered within the hour.

"Ay, call away!" he muttered to himself; "call away, Cuba, till your lungs are sore! you are just fit for a speaking trumpet—to echo the ideas of others, but not to originate anything new."

"Jacob Cheatstraw!" shouted Cuba; "whar am ye? If you don't come to your supper dis time, I hab de honor to investigate you wid de fac', dat dat succumstance will argufy dat arter dis nigger's done dar'll be nuffin' lef'. Dar, now—dar."

"Eat?—yes, that's it—eat! eat! eat!" mentally soliloquized Jacob, contemptuously. "What's the difference between man and the animal? Both eat; and eating, without thinking, makes man the animal. Ha! listen to the wind!" he pursued, mentally, as he heard it sigh among the trees above him. "Does that eat? No! Then in so far is it superior to man or animal. I like superior things; and therefore I'll sit awhile, and hold converse with the wind."

Having called in vain, till he was hoarse and discouraged, Cuba returned to the tent, to report that the simpleton was not to be found; while the moonling himself sat contentedly on the rock, awaiting a favorable opportunity to address himself orally to man's superior, the wind.

For some ten or fifteen minutes longer, Simple Roley remained silent, without motion, as though he were a part of the rock itself, rather than a human being. His gaze, during this time, was turned toward the darker part of the forest—or, rather, that farthest from the firelight—and he was really waiting for the wind to appear to him in a tangible body, that he might hold discourse with it as with a human being. By thus looking steadily, his eyes became gradually so accustomed to the darkness, that at length he could distinguish objects where at first he could see nothing but an inky pall. And then he saw, or fancied he saw, the wind approaching him very slowly, in the form of a human being.

"Why should a superior being, like the wind, be thus cautious in advancing to one who can appreciate it?" mentally queried Roley. "I have ever believed the wind to be a fearless being; but this is not the movement of one that is fearless, and therefore it may not be the wind. Let me note well its motions ere I address it."

And then something—perhaps the guardian spirit of the poor simpleton—for who shall say that Heaven has not so ordained that even poor, benighted simpletons have guardian spirits to watch over and direct them while on their dreary pilgrimage through life?—something, we say, impressed Simple Roley with the startling idea, that, instead of a friend, the moving object might be an enemy; that, instead of the wind embodied, it might be an Indian; and in consequence he resolved to remain silent, and watch, and not address it, till he could be sure no danger was to be apprehended.

By a natural transition, in one whose soul was imbued with a deep feeling of gratitude, the moonling's thoughts now reverted to Major Hargrave and his family, and Gertrude Wilburn; and the idea occurred to him, that should

the moving object prove to be an Indian, there was danger in his approach to those that he, the simpleton, loved. Fearless for himself, he had fears for those who had befriended him; and he felt that if he could do anything for them, even by the sacrifice of his own poor life, it were a proper and a righteous thing so to do.

With this idea uppermost in his imbecile mind, he watched the moving object with the same degree of startled interest that an animal, guided alone by instinct, might be supposed to watch the motions of a deadly foe.

Near, and nearer—by a slow, silent, almost imperceptible movement—drew the suspected object toward the rock upon which Simple Roley sat; and the latter, now more strongly than ever impressed with the idea of danger, fairly held his breath, but kept his eyes rivetted upon the cause of alarm. At last the figure reached the rock; and as its head rose above the level of the place on which the simpleton was sitting, he felt certain it was an Indian.

Yes, to all appearance, it was a savage, and therefore his worst fears were confirmed; for why should a savage approach in this cautious manner, unless he had evil designs on the party below? But what was to be done? was the next important query in the mind of Simple Roley. Should he bound away, and give the alarm? or should he remain quiet, and watch the further movement of the Indian?

While sitting, pondering, undecided as to which course he should pursue, the simpleton saw the face of the savage turn toward him. Fearful of being discovered, and acting from an impulse entirely new to him, he made a sudden bound forward, and, as chance, or fate, or Providence would have it, landed fairly upon the shoulders of his suspected foe. The startled figure, at the same time, gave a yell and a leap; but, missing his footing, fell; and his head

striking against a rock, he was deprived of consciousness, if not of life. The simpleton was pitched headlong down the hill; but, landing upon a thick cluster of bushes, was more scared than hurt. Regaining his feet, he took the nearest course to the camp; and fear lending fleetness to his limbs, he was not long in reaching the tent; into which he rushed, all breathless, shouting:

"Indians! Indians! Indians!"

Great was the alarm and confusion which this unexpected *entree* occasioned. All sprang to their feet; and amid the screams of women and children, the Major grasped his rifle, and gallantly stationed himself at the entrance, ready to defend with his life those under his protection—at the same time calling to Cuba and Dick, the two male negroes, to follow his example—an order which was obeyed with a promptness worthy of disciplined soldiers, although both of the blacks fairly quaked with terrors which no ordinary alarm could produce.

After waiting some minutes in the expectation of an attack, but finding none was made, and perceiving no signs of the approach of a foe, the Major began to think the whole might be a false alarm, which had originated solely in the morbid brain of the simpleton.

Acting upon this idea, he turned to the latter, who was standing near, with his arms folded across his breast, and sternly demanded:

"Jacob, what is the meaning of all this?"

The simpleton merely stared upon him, with a vacant look, but spoke not a word in the way of explanation.

"I say, what is the meaning of all this?" again demanded the Major, in a tone even more stern and severe.

But to this, as before, there was no reply.

"Nay, Edward, do not speak so harshly to the poor fellow," interposed Gertrude, gently. "Let me try what I

can do to get at the truth by milder language. Do you love me, Jacob?" she inquired, in a soft, musical tone, at the same time placing a hand on his shoulder, and looking into his face with a charming smile.

The eyes of the simpleton now encountered hers; but for a moment there was no sign of recognition. Then a sudden change came over his features; and he cried, eagerly:

"Did I save you, Mistress Gerty?"

"Yes, Roley, yes," she answered, humoring him, in order, by drawing him into conversation, to be able to get at the secret, which she saw he was not now in a condition to reveal in a direct, straightforward way. "How did you do it?"

"Why, don't you know, Mistress Gerty?"

"No, Roley, I forget."

"Ah! yes, I see. Umph! yes, I see. Why, I jumped right upon his shoulders."

"Did you, indeed? Ah, me! how stupid I was to forget!"

"Yes," pursued the simpleton, his blank features brightening with a ray of intellect—"yes, Mistress Gerty, and I will tell you how it happened. You see I was sitting on a large flat rock, up there on the hill, and I saw the Indian coming slowly toward me, till he got up to the rock, when he turned to take a look at me, and I jumped right upon him."

"And what became of him?" inquired the Major.

"I am talking to Mistress Gerty, sir!" said Simple Roley, with an air of dignity.

"Well, Roley, what became of the Indian?" inquired Gertrude, in a tone which, in spite of herself, gave token of secret uneasiness, if not alarm.

"Better go up and see, I think," was the answer.

"Well, dat succumstance argufies—"

"Hold your tongue, Cuba!" said the Major, sternly. "Will you not show me the spot, Jacob?" he inquired.

"Yes," replied the latter; "I fear not to lead, if you fear not to follow."

"Do not go, Edward!" now interposed Mrs. Hargrave, anxiously. "There is danger, perhaps; and if anything should happen to you, what would become of us?"

"I will be cautious, wife—I will be cautious," rejoined the Major. "This may all be the result of some aberration of intellect; and, if so, we have nothing to fear."

"And if not so, Edward?"

"Why, then we are not safe where we are; and it will be better if I can ascertain *what* we have to fear."

Mrs. Hargrave tacitly admitted the force of his argument, and made no further objection. Accordingly the Major prepared to set off, under the guidance of the simpleton, to ascertain how much of the latter's alarming statement might be true. Not knowing what he had to fear, he thought it best to adopt every means of precaution which his almost defenceless situation would allow. He therefore collected the women and children into one corner of the tent, and bade them crouch down and be silent; and stationed Cuba and Dick near the entrance, with orders to defend it with their lives.

This done, he requested the simpleton to lead the way; and the two cautiously set forth; leaving more than one blanched face and wildly palpitating heart, to await, in trying suspense, the result of their adventure.

CHAPTER III.

A STRANGE GUEST.

SOME fifteen or twenty minutes were spent by the Major and the simpleton in reaching the spot where the adventure of the latter had occurred with the Indian; for they took a circuitous route, and approached the rock with extreme caution. The light of the fire enabled Hargrave to see an object when brought between that and himself; and after a short search in the vicinity of the rock, he found the Indian lying where he had fallen, and, to all appearance, dead. He stooped down and raised him; and then discovered a slight wound, on or near the left temple, from which the blood had flowed rather freely. Placing his hand on the heart of the savage, the Major fancied he felt a slight pulsation, or tremor; and he at once resolved to take him down to the tent, and use every means in his power to restore him to life and consciousness—in order, if possible, to get some clue to his secret movements. That the savage was out alone, on a hunting or scouting expedition, Major Hargrave was inclined to believe; for if not alone, others would have come to his assistance; and the stealthy manner in which he had approached the camp, according to the simpleton's account, was proof sufficient that he wished to reconnoitre without his presence being suspected.

But here again was something more curious and difficult of explanation. Why had the Indian approached the rock, on which the simpleton was seated, with so much caution? for the rock was so far from the encampment,

that he could scarcely have had fears of being seen, even in broad day light. Here was something like mystery, and the Major pondered upon it; for he was one who, in a case like this, put much stress even upon what, to others, would have seemed trifles. The best solution he could give to the matter was, that the Indian, being on the look-out, might have seen Jacob leave the fire and approach the wood, without learning the precise spot where he had located himself: or, otherwise, knowing the spot, and thinking himself safe in the darkness and gloom of the forest, he might have approached in the cautious manner he did, for the purpose of taking his scalp.

At all events, the result was singular—namely—that, in falling, the Indian should have struck his head against a rock in such a manner as to deprive him of consciousness, if not of life.

These thoughts passed through the mind of Major Hargrave, while he and Jacob were on their way to the tent, bearing the body of the senseless savage. Their return in safety was hailed with great delight by all; and believing, from the circumstances which the Major now detailed, coupled with his own opinions, that there was no reason to apprehend an attack from a body of savages, curiosity, united with sympathy for the wounded Indian, became the feelings paramount in the breasts of the different persons composing the party.

Taking the Indian under the cover of the tent, and bidding Cuba and Dick stand to their posts, and keep a sharp look-out, the Major, with a lighted pine-knot, proceeded to make an examination of the wound, with a view, as we before remarked, of restoring the savage to life and getting a clue to his secret. The Indian was of a middle size, partially covered with skins, and hideously painted. With the paint, the blood from the wound had mingled, in

such a way as to add nothing to his beauty; and on removing this blood, with a cloth dipped in spirits, the paint came off with it.

"Why! what have we here?" exclaimed Hargrave, gazing upon the wounded man with a look of surprise. "Hold the light nearer, Chloe. There—so. Why, as I'm a living sinner, this man is white."

"He is indeed!" said Mrs. Hargrave. "Poor fellow! he has made his escape from the Indians in this disguise."

"More likely he is some worthless renegade, who has too long escaped the halter," grumbled the Major. "Hand the spirits, somebody, and let us try their effect inside, since an external application has produced such a wonderful result. I am now more anxious than ever to bring this fellow to life, if only to give him a swing from some high tree."

"Why, surely, Edward, you would not hang him?" exclaimed Gertrude, with a slight shudder.

"Would I shoot a hawk that I caught stealing my chickens?"

"But is there no difference between a hawk and a fellow being, Major Hargrave?"

"Don't call this disguised lump of mortality a fellow being, Gertrude!" cried the other, with a gruffness not usual with him. "If there is any being on earth I mortally hate, it is a traitor to his race and country."

"But he may not prove to be one!"

"True, Gertrude; and before I decide on hanging him, I will ascertain that he is not dead already."

Saying this, the Major pried open the wounded man's jaws, with the handle of a spoon, and then poured a small quantity of liquor into his mouth. The head, lying back, with the face uppermost, caused the spirits to run down his throat, and severe strangulation was the result. The

man coughed and choked for a few moments, throwing his arms about convulsively; and then, raising himself into a sitting posture, stared wildly about him, as one who knew not what to think of what he saw.

"Well," said Hargrave, rather roughly, "what may be your opinion of us, stranger, now that you have us under close inspection?"

"Me Injun," was the reply.

"Yes, you are just about as much of an Indian as I am," returned the Major, frowning; "that is to say, so far as color of skin may be concerned; though, in all that pertains to savage brutality, you may be a chief among red-devils, for all I know to the contrary."

"Me Injun," persisted the other.

"You are a liar and a knave!" cried the Major, flushing with anger; for, being one of your plain, free-spoken, truth-loving individuals, he could never keep his temper when brought in contact with a man who spoke falsely or equivocated. "What! you scoundrel!" he pursued, with startling vehemence; "have you the assurance, the audacity, to tell me you are an Indian, with that white skin covering you? Look on your left hand, there, from which I've just removed the paint, and then tell me you are an Indian again, if you dare!"

The stranger looked at his and, hand his countenance fell, and he hung his head in shame. Then he raised his hand to the wound; which seemed to cause him no little astonishment also; for, glancing furtively around, he inquired, in a timid voice:

"Where am I, friends? what has happened? and how came I here?"

"I did it!" replied Simple Roley, stalking in front of him, with the air of a general who had just won a battle: "I did it."

"Ay, and did it as never mortal did it before," rejoined the Major, laughing in spite of himself, as the ludicrous picture of the double leap formed itself in his mind from the description which the simpleton had given him of the whole affair. "Talk about new inventions, Roley! Why, if you can only get the king's patent for causing traitors to butt their own brains out, I think you need never trouble your little head about such matters as growing dry wood."

"Ah, Major," cried the simpleton, eagerly, "since you have touched on that subject—that subject which still lies nearest my heart of all—let me ask you if Cuba, there, your proxy, did me the honor to inform you of the real secret which I conveyed to him?"

"Why, frien' Roley," put in Cuba—who, hearing himself thus spoken of, felt he had a right to speak for himself—"I was just a g'wine to gib Mas'er Hargrave de inviduous explanation dat de succumstance—"

"Silence!" interrupted the Major; "and attend to your business, Cuba! Come, stranger," he continued, addressing the wounded man, "since I know you to be a white man, with an English tongue in your head, I wish to know more of you. Who are you? what is your name? where do you belong? what is your occupation? and why were you skulking about my camp here, costumed and bedaubed like an Indian?"

"All you ask, sir, is a secret," replied the stranger, in a firmer and more decided tone than he had heretofore used. "You are a stranger to me," he continued, "as I am to you; would you tell me a secret?"

"Not unless it were a secret by which the world could be rid of you."

The face of the wounded man flushed, and his eyes flashed, as he rejoined:

"You are a strong man, sir, and are surrounded by your

family and slaves; I am wounded, and weak, and unarmed; and therefore am just such an object as you can insult with impunity."

"No, by my soul!" cried the generous-hearted Major, flushing with shame. "Your hand, stranger," he continued, frankly, extending his own. "I have been a man, sir, that has had some hard knocks in my time; but you have just given me the hardest hit I ever had in my life. You speak well, stranger; and now that I look again at your face, hang me if I can really believe you are a cursed renegade after all."

"Whatever I am, I am no traitor," replied the other, averting his gaze in such a way as to leave the Major in doubt whether honesty or knavery was the predominant trait of his character.

"Well, whoever or whatever you may be," returned the other, sternly, "one question you must answer, and answer truly, for your very life may depend upon your doing so. Were you outlying our camp with a sinister purpose in your heart?"

"Suppose I should say I was?"

"Then I would give you credit for an honest admission, which should go far in your favor."

"Suppose I should say I was not?"

"Well, suppose you should say one way or the other," returned the Major, beginning to get angry again; "and then, I suppose, I should know better what to say in reply."

"I decline answering your question," rejoined the stranger, somewhat sullenly.

"Then you may consider yourself a prisoner."

"Very well—be it so."

"And allow me to add," pursued Hargrave, in a sharp, severe, decisive tone, "that if you attempt to escape, while

held a prisoner by me, you will be shot down like a beast."

"Very well—be it so."

"And let me further add," continued the Major, in a still sharper tone, not a little nettled at the cool indifference displayed by his strange captive; "should our camp be attacked before morning, the blood of your heart shall be the first drawn."

"Very well—be it so," was again replied, in the same tone of indifference.

"By the King's life," muttered Hargrave, as he turned away to get a rope—"I do not know what to make of the fellow. He is a puzzle. His looks have a mixture of honesty and knavery—so has his language. Well, if he gets harsher treatment than he deserves, he must blame himself. Under the circumstances, I feel it my duty to be severe."

Returning with a strong rope in his hand, he said to the stranger:

"The circumstances which have placed you where you are, are in every particular suspicious. As you refuse to enter into any explanation, you will have no good reason to complain if I take measures to secure you against escape."

"I shall make no complaints," returned the other, quietly, almost sadly. "Do with me, sir, as you see proper."

"Let me see your eye!" rejoined the Major, hesitating.

The stranger looked him full in the eye—looked long and steadily. There was nothing like impudence in his gaze—nothing like quailing. Hargrave was more puzzled than ever.

"I do not know what to make of you," he said; "but of this I feel assured—that either at heart you are honest, or you are the most consummate villain that goes unhung.

I must do what I consider to be my duty, however; and if I do you wrong, I shall at any time, when convinced I have done you wrong, be ready to make you any reparation that lies in my power."

Saying this, he proceeded to bind the stranger, hand and foot. This done, he inquired, in a kindly tone, if there were anything he could do for him.

"Only leave me to myself," was the reply.

"But not till we have bound up your wound, which is still bleeding," interposed Gertrude, in a gentle, feeling tone.

The stranger, who had previously taken no notice of Gertrude, now turned his dark eyes inquiringly upon her, and let his gaze rest there for several moments, during which time a slight glow was seen to spread itself over that portion of his features from which the paint and blood had been removed. There was something in that look of the stranger, which made Gertrude feel embarrassed, though she could not tell why; and the Major, perceiving this, hastened to relieve her, by addressing the wounded man in a tone calculated to break the spell, if spell there were.

"You have been asked a civil question, sir," he said; "but you do not answer. Perhaps you did not understand this lady?"

Instantly the wounded man fixed his eye upon Hargrave, and said, with pointed emphasis:

"Words are sometimes spoken, that the *heart* understands as well as the *head*."

This reply did not please Hargrave, who quickly rejoined:

"Come! come! there must be no romancing here! You are not a knight in disguise; nor is this damsel a 'lady fair,' to fall in love with you, if you were. I assure you,

sir, if you were as black as my Cuba, there, Miss Wilburn would have addressed to you the same inquiry, and in the same kindly tone."

"Then, sir, is her heart right; and she is too kind and gentle a being to be taken into the wilderness, and exposed to all its hardships and horrors," was the rejoinder, uttered in a thoughtful, almost melancholy tone. "As to romancing," he added, quickly, in an altered voice, "I pray you not to put any such construction upon my words! I simply meant to say, that, while I understood what she said, I felt the kindness of her inquiry in my heart. But I have not answered her question; and my head, which begins to ache, tells me I should answer it in the affirmative. If you will bind up the wound, and allow me something for a pillow, and enough covering to keep off the cold night air, I shall feel that, though a captive, I am not in the hands of enemies."

"You shall not suffer through any neglect of mine, be you friend or foe," rejoined the Major. "I may sometimes be rough in speech," he continued, as a sort of apology for what he had said; "but I think my worst enemy would not accuse me of harboring malice against any creature which God has made."

He then set about dressing the wound of his captive-guest, which was not a very serious one; and having finished, he placed him in very comfortable quarters, and assured him he had nothing to fear so long as he remained quiet and the camp undisturbed by foes from without.

The stranger thanked him; said he was satisfied he was in good hands; hoped all would rest well; observed that he felt very drowsy himself; and, soon after, appeared to be lost in a deep sleep.

Major Hargrave now bade the children, the simpleton, and Aunt Chloe, to lie down, and get what sleep they

could; and, calling his wife and Gertrude aside, inquired what they thought of the stranger.

"Some men," he said, "think women are unfit to counsel with on any subject; but I, on the contrary, believe, that if men would take the advice of women on all subjects of importance, they would have fewer errors to regret. There is a quick, active, innate perception in women, that amounts almost to a presentiment or an instinct; and now, from this peculiar faculty, I wish judgment rendered upon the stranger."

"If you wish an impartial decision, you should never flatter the judge," replied Gertrude, with a smile. "However, as to the stranger, I do not think we have anything to fear from him. What has led him to assume this disguise, is more than I can tell, of course; but he is certainly a man of mind and education."

"I see!" rejoined Hargrave, with a meaning smile; "if we wish an impartial decision, we should never allow the culprit to flatter the judge. Well, wife, what say you?"

"My opinion is the same as Gertrude's," replied Mrs. Hargrave. "I cannot think the man means to harm us."

"Well, hang it, I'm of the same opinion," rejoined the Major; "and I have half a notion to cut his cords and let him go. But then," he added, reflectingly, "why was he skulking about our camp in such disguise? and, if really honest, why did he refuse to give an explanation?"

"Would not a villain give an explanation, if he fancied there was a chance for him to get off?" suggested Gertrude. "His firm refusal to answer your questions, not knowing what the consequences might be, is to my mind a strong evidence that he is both a man of courage and an honest man."

"There is something in that, too," said Hargrave, musing. "Well, what say you—shall I set him free?"

"Perhaps it would be better to let him remain as he is to-night, Edward," returned Mrs. Hargrave. "Whatever our feelings may be, we must remember we are in the wilderness, with little or no protection! and that the lives of our dear children, as well as our own, are in jeopardy."

"True, true, Sarah; you are right; we must be cautious—for their sakes, if not for our own. Well, the matter is decided. Go you both to rest, and Cuba and I will stand guard; or, rather, I will remain up all night, and Cuba and Dick shall take turns."

Having thus settled the matter, the Major went to take a look at his horses, which were fastened to some saplings on the western side of the tent. As it was impossible to carry hay with him, the principal feed of the horses consisted of corn meal, mixed with water, which was given them to drink from a bucket. When there was no grazing for them in the locality pitched upon for the night's encampment—as was the case in the present instance—the Major made it a point to have them fed twice before retiring to rest; and this he now attended to himself, without calling upon his servants.

He then re-entered the tent, and told Dick to lie down and get a few hours' rest, so as to relieve Cuba before morning; who was to remain, meantime, on the watch, near the main entrance. He then, rifle in hand, selected his own position, near the horses and the stranger, so that he could hear the least movement of either; and putting out the light, he sat down in the dark, to pass a long, gloomy night, in such anxiety as a fond parent must feel, when, surrounded by perils, he knows the responsibility of protector rests almost solely upon himself.

The night, as we have elsewhere said of the day, was chilly, with signs of rain. Toward midnight the wind began to blow in sullen gusts from the east; and went

moaning around the tent, flapping the canvass, causing the staddles, which supported it, to creak, and bend, and groan, and, altogether, made such wild, discordant music, as was most unpleasant to the ears of the lonely watchers.

A little after midnight, Dick was called to relieve Cuba, who had more than once dosed on his post. About this time it set in to drizzle; but soon larger drops fell; and an hour later it poured down in torrents—the rain being fiercely driven against the tent by gusts of wind that threatened to upset it and hurl it down the mountain. Soon large puddles of water began to form inside the tent under the sleepers; who, one after another, arose in dismay, to find their very voices drowned by the loud beating of the rain, the howling of wind, and the roaring of the swollen mountain stream.

Of all who had that night laid themselves down to rest, the stranger alone remained quiet, seemingly regardless of the raging storm.

CHAPTER IV.

SOMETHING MORE OF THE STRANGER.

AMID the screaming of his children, who were greatly frightened, and a babel-like confusion of voices, the Major now made an effort to strike a light; but it was at least ten minutes before he succeeded. When at last he did succeed, the light threw its ruddy gleams upon a ludicrous and motley scene.

Cuba and Chloe, half frightened out of their senses, were found locked in each other's arms, both praying with all their might, under the impression that their time had really come to quit the transitory things of earth. Dick was sitting flat upon the wet ground, his arms thrown around one of the staddles, the whites of his eyes visible in a complete circle, and his rifle, lock downwards, lying in a pool of water, beyond reaching distance. The simpleton was standing in the centre of the tent, in a large puddle, his feet alternately going up and down like a culprit on a treadwheel, and his arms swinging wildly to and fro. His lips were moving rapidly also; and he was really addressing himself to man's superior, the wind; though, unfortunately, the wind was so noisy that night, that his voice was completely drowned; and therefore the world must of necessity ever remain ignorant of his sage remarks. To complete the picture, Mrs. Hargrave had two of her children—two little girls—one five, the other three—in her arms, both screaming with infantile energy, and she looking terrified and bewildered; while her first born, a

little boy of seven, was clinging to Gertrude, who was seated on a bag of corn, the picture of dismay.

As Hargrave glanced around him, his first inclination was to laugh; but recollecting that the condition of things was rather too serious for a joke, he at once made use of his stentorian voice, in a series of commands, that soon had the effect to bring about something like order:

"Here, you frightened ebonies!" he cried, thrusting himself between Cuba and Chloe; "is this a time and place to be hugging and bellowing like two lubberly fools? Stir yourselves about, put things to rights, and make secure from the water such articles as are likely to be damaged in their present condition! And you, Dick—what are you sprawled out there for, like a land turtle, and your rifle in the water? You are a pretty specimen of a guard, now, are you not? I'm ashamed of you! Get up, you black dunce, and go and see to the horses! Look to each halter; and if you find one not secure, be sure you make it secure, or your back shall answer for your neglect! Come, Master Roley, take yourself out of the way; and if you needs must dance, go outside, where you'll be made to dance to some purpose. Don't be alarmed, my children—nothing will harm you. Sit down, wife, and try and compose yourself! Why, one would think you never saw a storm before. Do not look so frightened, Gertrude! no danger of our blowing away. The storm will soon abate, I think; and if it don't, we are on terra firma, and not on the ocean."

Having thus hurried around the tent, and said something to each, and got matters into a proper train, the Major repaired to his captive-guest, expecting to find him awake and anxious, if not absolutely frightened also. To his great surprise, the man appeared to be asleep.

"Perhaps he is dead!" said the Major; and the very thought gave his feelings a shock.

He held the light near his face, and, to his great relief, saw that he breathed, and breathed as one sleeping soundly. He next felt his pulse, and found it beat regularly.

"Well, this is the strangest thing of all!" he said, musingly. "Can he be feigning this? If so, it is the best counterfeit I ever saw. It cannot be a natural sleep: or, if so, I will stake my life that no man sleeps that way, on such a night as this, with an uneasy conscience. At all events, I'll not keep him longer in bonds."

Saying this, Hargrave drew a hunting-knife from a sheath in his bosom, and cut the cords that bound the stranger's limbs. Still he did not wake. He then shook him—at first gently—and finally with considerable force. At last the stranger opened his eyes, gave a start of surprise, and exclaimed:

"What! *reveille*! and I asleep?"

"Not exactly," said the Major, in his turn surprised also. "You hear not the beat of the drum, but of the elements."

"Your pardon!" returned the stranger, quickly, with no little confusion of manner—"I now comprehend—a terrible storm rages."

"As surely as you are a soldier."

"How know you I am a soldier?" inquired the stranger, sitting up, turning aside his face, and beginning to chafe his limbs, which had been somewhat benumbed by the cords.

"You just made use of a military phrase."

"Ah! true—*reveille*—yes, I remember—a term I learned when once quartered in a garrison."

"You are a soldier," rejoined the Major, positively;

"seek not to deny it; for you have just used another military phrase."

"At all events, I am your prisoner."

"No, stranger, you are now free."

"How?" cried the other, in surprise.

"Do you not see I have cut the cords from your limbs?"

"Do you mean by this that you give me liberty?"

"You are free to depart when it suits you."

"What has brought about this change in your conduct, good sir?"

"Why, I did not feel that I was doing exactly right when I bound you," replied Hargrave; "and since I have seen how you can sleep, amid the almost deafening noise of the elements without, and a Bedlam-like tumult within, I am satisfied you must have a clear conscience."

"Or one hardened in crime," replied the guest. "But the truth is, sir, I was very much fatigued; and I think the wound on my head tended to make me uncommonly drowsy, also. You say then I am free?"

"I do."

"Sir, I thank you!" rejoined the stranger, rising to his feet, and exhibiting considerable emotion. "Your hand, sir! for it is the hand of a noble, generous man. I hope," he continued, "we shall yet know each other better, and have no cause to regret our first meeting. I know you would like an explanation concerning myself; and if that explanation were to be given to any stranger, you should have it; but, with your generous permission, that is a secret which must remain close-locked in my breast—at least for the present."

"I have a curiosity, I admit," said Hargrave, "to know the motive that prompted you to assume this disguise, and approach my camp with such extreme caution; but I claim

no right to your secret; and it rests with you to divulge it, or not, as you may see proper."

"Your generous forbearance almost tempts me to make you a confidant," returned the other; "but I must have no confidants; and therefore you will pardon me, if, on this subject, I keep my lips sealed. Bear this in mind, however! that in the ups and downs, the changing scenes of life, it may possibly be in my power to do you a service; and if so, you may then have even less reason than now to regret your kindness to one made a captive under very singular and suspicious circumstances."

"Will you favor me with your name?"

The stranger hesitated a moment, and then said:

"Call me Kingsley."

"Mine is Hargrave—Edward Hargrave," rejoined the host.

"Major Hargrave!" interposed the simpleton, who had drawn near enough to overhear the conversation. "Yes, sir: mark!—Major, sir! Major!—he's in the military line."

"A militia Major," said Hargrave, laughing.

"And what might your name be, my honest friend—to whom, I believe, I am indebted for a sore head, etcetera?" inquired Kingsley, turning good-humoredly to the moonling.

"Well, sir, it might be Leap-in-the-Dark—but it isn't," cried Simple Roley, with a merry laugh.

"Idiotic!" said the Major to his guest, in an under tone, by way of apology, or explanation of what might otherwise be deemed downright rudeness.

"He has some wit, at all events," was the reply.

Simple Roley overheard him.

"Do you think fools have wit?" he inquired, looking demurely into Kingsley's face.

"I think they do, at times," was answered.

"That is your opinion then?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's mine, too; and two fools' opinions ought to make a fact," rejoined Roley, bounding away with a laugh.

A minute later he had renewed his discourse with the wind.

"How the storm rages!" observed Kingsley, as a rather stronger gust than common swept around the tent, shaking it violently, and almost wrenching it from its foundation.

"Yes, and I fear it will continue so as to prevent us resuming our journey to-morrow," replied Hargrave.

"Do you go far west?" inquired the other.

"Some three or four days' journey yet to our destination."

"Where do you think of locating?"

"I have made selection of a very pleasant spot on the Monongahela. It is government land now; but will be mine when I shall succeed in raising from it a crop of corn—at least four hundred acres will thus be secured to me, with a pre-emption right to a thousand more adjoining."

"On the Monongahela?" repeated Kingsley, glancing across the tent to where Mrs. Hargrave and Gertrude were seated with the children, who, more or less frightened, were still clinging to them. "It is a fearful undertaking with such companions!" he added, nodding toward those on whom his eye rested.

"I know it," returned Hargrave, with a sigh; "but he who has Poverty for a master, must needs perform unpleasant tasks."

"I fear you will have occasion to regret that you have permitted *any* circumstances to influence you to quit the limits of civilization!" pursued Kingsley, shaking his head.

"He who understands the signs of the times, may prophesy;

and I warn you, that the hatchet of the red man is not buried deep."

"Do you think there is danger of another Indian war?" inquired Hargrave, anxiously.

"No one in the wilderness is at any time safe from the attacks of the savage," replied the other, somewhat evasively. "Because I like you, Major Hargrave, and now feel an interest in your welfare, and that of your family, I could wish you had never entered upon this perilous undertaking. Are yonder ladies sisters?"

"They are."

"How kindly the younger spoke to me last night!" he continued, looking long and steadily toward Gertrude. "Gentle being! I shall not soon forget her."

"She is a dear, good girl," replied Hargrave; "and all who know her, love her. But, in justice to my wife, I must tell you, she also had something to say in your behalf: in fact, what the two said, had much to do with your liberation."

"Heaven bless them both!" exclaimed the other, with feeling; "and may the good angels guard them from all evil!" Then, after a short pause, during which he seemed much abstracted, he continued: "Major Hargrave, may I ask, as a favor, that you will permit me to make one of your party till you arrive at your destination?"

"Oh, yes," said the simpleton, at this moment sidling up to Kingsley; "you may go; for I feel as if I wanted company; and who so good company for a fool, as he who has butted a part of his brains out against a rock?"

Kingsley and Hargrave both laughed, and the latter observed:

"You grow sharper every day, Roley."

"Sorry I can't return the compliment, Major," rejoined the simpleton, running his fingers through his fine, flaxen

hair. "Stranger," turning to Kingsley, and folding his arms with an air; "do you happen to know anything about the primary principle of suction?"

"Not particularly."

"Ever had any experience in that line?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"Umph!" returned Roley, contemptuously; "you are a bigger fool than I thought; and therefore no companion for me after all."

"Jacob," said the Major, sternly; "you are becoming insolent; this must be stopped."

"Very well—it shall be so, Major—I will let him off," returned the simpleton, in a patronizing tone, and with a stiff inclination of the head. "Stranger—or Kingsley, I think you call yourself—Mr. Kingsley, your hand;" and as he took the hand, which the latter readily extended, he added, quickly: "Do you really love Mistress Gerty?"

"I am totally ignorant of whom you mean, my friend."

"Do you hear that?" cried the moonling, with an air of triumph: "do you hear that, Major? I didn't say it—he said it himself; admits he is *totally ignorant*; and don't even know Mistress Gerty, whom he has been staring at so much."

Kingsley blushed; and, with some little confusion, rejoined, hurriedly:

"Is yonder maiden the one you designate as Mistress Gerty?"

Simple Roley now stared upon the interrogator with a vacant eye, and with features as void of expression as a waxen doll.

"Yes," the Major hastened to answer; "Gertrude Wilburn is her name; but the poor lad generally calls her Mistress Gerty."

On hearing the name again mentioned, the simpleton

started, the blood rushed up and reddened his features, and he exclaimed, hurriedly, almost wildly:

"You must love her more than I do, and be a better man than I am, or you can't have her."

"Whence this strange whim?" said Kingsley, with a light laugh. "What induces you to think, my friend, that I care more for Mistress Gertrude than her married sister?"

Instead of answering direct, Simple Roley began to sing a song he had some time learned:

SONG.

"The leaves were green—the leaves were green—
And the birds in the green leaves sung;
But the frost it came, and now it was seen
No longer so green they hung:
They drooped, and faded, and withered away,
And fell to the earth so cold;
And the blithe birds left, for they would not stay,
And the mournful tale they told.

"The heart was green—the heart was green—
And joy in the green heart sung;
But the spoiler he came, and now it was seen
No joy to the green heart clung:
It drooped, and faded, and withered away,
And was laid in the earth so cold;
And friends cried, wo! and alack-a-day!
And thus is the sad tale told."

As he finished singing, Simple Roley covered his face with his hands, and walked slowly away, sobbing audibly. There was something strange, almost startling, in the words and manner of the simpleton; and proceeding, moreover, from one whose feeble intellect scarcely permitted the idea of a design on his part to be entertained for a moment, the whole made a powerful impression upon the mind of Major

Hargrave, who was, we must own, rather superstitiously inclined. Turning to Kingsley, he fixed his eye steadily upon his countenance, and said, in a tone more emphatic than the occasion might have warranted:

"Heaven send this be no omen of what is to follow! But we are sometimes warned of evil; and they are wise that heed!"

Kingsley felt from these remarks, the tone in which they were uttered, and the look which accompanied them, that in the mind of his host the application was already made; and with heightened color, he replied, quickly, but with dignity:

"Major Hargrave, it needs no adept in the solution of riddles, to understand an allusion so pointed. I perceive, sir, that even the vagaries of an idiot, are sufficient to excite in your breast suspicions of myself; and that too concerning a something so absolutely chimerical, that the mere idea of an attempt at refutation appears to me most ridiculous and absurd. The proper course, under such circumstances, is to act and not to talk; and therefore, as you say I am free, I trust you will throw no obstacle in the way of my speedy departure!"

"At least," returned Hargrave, coloring with very shame—for a moment's reflection showed him how preposterous it was, in this case, to act from mere impression, rather than judgment based on reason: "At least, sir, you shall not leave before morning. Pardon me!" he continued, frankly; "for I perceive I have acted very foolishly, in allowing superstition to get the better of my reason. Poh! poh!" he pursued: "how absurd! how absurd! to suspect you of having evil design against one you do not even know! and how unjust to the girl herself! Hang me, if I don't think I had better change places with the sim-

pleton! Mr. Kingsley, I pray you overlook my unstudied words!"

"With all my heart," returned the other, cordially; "and I am really glad to know so trifling a matter is not going to be a cause for our separation. There, Major—say no more—I understand you better now. You love the lady—as every one must who loves goodness and purity; and a jealous care of her safety, caused you to make too much account of a foolish whim, originating in a brain that lacks intellect."

"That is it—that is it!" said Hargrave, hurriedly. "I see you understand me; and so let us say no more about it."

"Permit me to ask one other favor of you," said Kingsley, looking down at his Indian costume. "If I am to keep company with you, I should like to dress in a manner more becoming a white man. So long as I passed for a savage, and wore the paint of a savage, this gear did well enough; but, you perceive, with half the paint rubbed off of me, I am a kind of nondescript—neither a pale-face nor an Indian. Now if you have any clothes that I can wear, I will throw off this disguise, and endeavor to look a little more respectable."

"I have a suit, which is rather large for you, and of rather coarse stuff; but, if you can make it answer, you are welcome to it."

"I thank you; but I am not without money, and will pay you for it."

"Not a penny, Mr. Kingsley. I, trust, though I am poor, I am not so niggardly as to take pay for my old clothes."

"Everything of use has its value," returned the other. "But I appreciate your feelings, and will accept the suit as a present."

The Major now had recourse to his stock of wearing apparel—which, we must admit, was not equal, in either quantity or quality, to that of some of our modern mustachioed fashionables—and selecting a pair of buckskin breeches, with leggins, and a waistcoat and roundabout of linsey-woolsey, he brought and offered them to Kingsley, accompanying the gift with a regret that they were not better and more suitable.

"No apologies, Major!" returned the guest; "these are just the garments I want; and when a man is suited with his suit, it is all that is necessary. Now, then, if you will be so kind as to let one of your servants bring me some water, and some spirits, and hang up a blanket here, so as to screen me from observation, I trust, when you next see me, I shall be looking a little more human than I now do."

Major Hargrave gave the necessary orders; and soon his guest found himself in a dressing-room, which, if not very magnificent, fully answered his purpose. This done, the Major rejoined his wife and children; and having quieted the fears of all, the remainder of the night was spent in such conversation as their peculiar circumstances naturally called forth.

CHAPTER V.

STORM BOUND.

DAY dawned upon our party of wayfarers with the storm still raging, though not with quite as much fury as through the latter part of the night. The clouds were almost inky black, and hung low, and the rain still fell in torrents; but though the wind blew strong from the north-east, it no longer came in such fierce gusts as to cause even the most timid any further alarm for the safety of the tent. Daylight also brought relief in another shape. The night had passed without any assault from a savage foe; and now that the double gloom of darkness and uncertainty was dispelled, and all could see about them clearly, confidence was restored, and even the negroes felt ashamed of the cowardice they had so recently displayed.

"I tell you what 'tis, Chlo'," said Cuba—who, now that the danger seemed past, felt an itching to justify himself in the eyes of his colored companions for the ridiculous part he had played so recently—the three negroes were at the time standing at the western entrance, looking out upon the storm: "I tell you what 'tis, Chlo'—if ever a nigger was clean skeered mad, dat dar same nigger was you'se'f, during de extreme configuration of dis yere terrific hurricane last night."

"Guess I's wasn't more skeered nor you, Cube," replied Aunt Chloe, with spirit.

"Yah! yah! yah!" laughed Cuba: "hear dat, Dick? "Chlo' says she wasn't more skeered nor me—yah! yah!"

yah!—dat's too good! Why, Chlo', I's wasn't skeered at all: I's jus' making b'lieve, to see how fur you'd go wid your hystericals."

"Now, now, Cube," cried his spouse, beginning to get angry; "I's doesn't wish to be 'sidered impertriment, nor de likes; but, but, if you says to me, dat you wasn't skeered nigger last night, I tell you you lies!—dar."

"Now, now look a here, Chlo'," rejoined Cuba, putting on a serious, determined, dignified look, and speaking with deliberate emphasis, in order to make his words impressive, and excite something like a feeling of awe in the breast of his conjugal partner: "dat's a succumstance as cl'arly and inividually argufies dat you, my better half—you, my maternomical connexion—doesn't know what good broughten up am, and what 'spects de due deco'um ob your husband. When you marr'ed me, you broughten you'se'f under de general head of 'specting my deco'um; and if you doesn't do it, dar'll be a family separation, widout junction, and separate maintingence."

The big words, which Aunt Chloe could not comprehend—we fear the reader is not much wiser than her in this respect—for Cuba spoke from sound rather than sense, and his idioms might have confounded a Johnson, a Walker, or a Webster, with all their lexicographical lore,—the big words of Cuba, we say, with the solemnity of their utterance, impressed Aunt Chloe with the idea, that to persist in calling her liege lord a liar, would bring about an awful state of affairs; still, woman-like, she could not bear the thought of being vanquished in the battle of tongue—at least without firing a retreating shot—and so she said:

"Well, Cube, I's knows 'nuff to knows dat dem tings you spoke about am awful—dat's trufh; but, but, Cube, if you doesn't jus' like to be called a liar, what does ye tell lies for?"

"I's 'peal to you, Dick," cried Cuba, turning to the latter, who was standing alongside, a silent listener: "I's peal to you, as a gentlem of conference, if dat succumstance ob Chloe's am not nuff to put her cl'ar beyond de pale ob b'aramguity?"

"Why, Cube," answered Dick, thoughtfully—"one ting am cl'ar in de sposition ob Chlo'—you was de skeerdest nigger last night dat ever was."

"Hole your tongue, Dick!" cried Cuba, waxing wroth: "You needn't open dat 'ar big mouth of your'n wid any insignications agin dis chile; for any nigger dat squats in de mud, when he am posted, wid his gun under water, I hole dat for a succumstance dat I's got nuffin more to say to him."

"Well, I's didn't squat case I's afeared," said Dick, firing up. "Oh, de prays you and Chlo' was making—you oughten to heard you'se'fs. Whew! golly! I tought de day of judge-emt was come in de night—yah! yah! yah!" And then he struck up:

"Go 'way, nigger—you can't sing—
Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling:
Go 'way, nigger—hoe de corn—
Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling:
Go 'way, nigger—git some sense—
Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling:
Go 'way, nigger—and neber come back—
Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling—tio—jah!

"Ah! Cube, it'll neber do for yous to talk to dis chile, arter what I seed last night."

"You, you say you wasn't afeared!" pursued Cuba, with angry vehemence: "I'd jus' tank you to explicit de succumstance ob you being down dar on de groun', flat as a mountain, wid a arm round de post, like de tree round de sarpint."

"Why, why, anybody dat couldn't see de reason ob my 'sition dar, must be as big fool as you'se'f."

"And what was de reason?—explanify de succumstance 'fore you goes further."

"Why, Cube, I was jus' trying to hole de stick down from blowing away de tent—dat's all."

Cuba drew back on hearing this, and his black features almost grew red with indignation. He essayed to speak—but his choler choked him; and it was some time before he could command his voice so as to make himself intelligible.

"Dick!" he at last managed to utter, still half suffocated by the pressure of his pent-up feelings: "Dick! I's always 'spected you sence you was a chile—(Cuba was ten years Dick's senior)—and I's always 'spected your deco'um—but I's can't 'spect neider no longer. I's done wid ye, Dick, I is. When a gentlem nigger, like you'se'f, gits cotched in a imperfidyus lie, dat moment all extermination is gone 'tween us; and dat succumstance alone brings dat nigger down in my confirmation to jus' nuffin at all."

Here a call from the Major separated the trio, and ended the discussion for the time.

As the storm still beat too violently to permit of a fire being kindled outside of the tent, the morning's meal was easily prepared, and consisted of jerked venison, cold bear meat, cold corn cake and mush, maple molasses, and salt. It was not very dainty fare, it is true; and was not served in a style to suit a modern exquisite: but it was at least good, healthy food; and the travellers in the wilderness of that day, were satisfied to get as good—being more apt to trouble themselves about quantity than quality.

By the time that the meal was ready, Kingsley made his appearance; and so altered was he, by the removal of paint and change of dress, that each member of the party gazed upon him in surprise; and even the Major admitted, that if he had met him anywhere else, he would have been loth to swear to his identity with the wretched looking object he

had the night before brought into the tent in an unconscious state.

The personal appearance of Kingsley was rather prepossessing. He was apparently about thirty years of age, had regular features, black hair and eyes, and, when animated, the expression of his countenance was highly intellectual. The nose was slightly aquiline, and the lips were thin and compressed, denoting a person of resolution, decision and firmness. In his smile, and the light of his dark eye, there was something almost fascinating; and yet, at the same time, there was a something, you could not say what, that seemed to repel. It was, in fact, as if a good and evil principle were struggling for the mastery—the one drawing you to him—the other keeping you at a distance. His manners were refined and polished, and seemed to indicate one who had passed much of his time among persons of high breeding. The garments which he now had on, were of coarse materials, and were much too large for him; but still his air had so much of the dignified and commanding, and his movements were so easy and graceful, that the most ignorant boor would never for a moment have mistaken him for a fellow of his own grade. His head was still bandaged; but the cloths had been taken off and replaced, in a way to denote that he was one who had had some experience in the dressing of wounds. There was a winning cordiality and frankness in his manners, as he came forward, and, bowing politely, said:

"I give you good morning, ladies, and sincerely regret you have not had a good night's rest."

Gertrude and Mrs. Hargrave both bowed to his salutation, and the latter replied:

"I regret, even more than the loss of rest, that this storm is likely to detain us here a day and night longer. You, Mr. Kingsley—for so my husband informs me you

are called—seem to have rested better than we: I trust you find your wound less serious than we at first apprehended?"

"Thank you, madam; and am happy to say, my wound is not serious, and will not long trouble me," returned Kingsley, again bowing. "I was stunned by the fall; and the wound might have proved fatal, perhaps, had I not fallen into good hands. Miss Wilburn," he added, turning frankly to Gertrude, "is entitled to my special thanks, for her kindness to one whom she had good reason to believe was her foe."

"I did nothing but my duty, sir," replied Gertrude, slightly coloring. "The Bible tells us we should do unto others as we would that others should do unto us; and, in carrying out that divine precept, we do but our duty; and whether the other party be friend or foe, we lose not our reward by so doing."

"Ah! how few obey that divine command!" said Kingsley, in a tone of reflection, letting his eyes fall to the ground.

"They who disregard it are the losers," rejoined Gertrude.

"Mr. Kingsley," now interposed Hargrave, "I owe you an apology, for an unwonted oversight on my part last night; I forgot to ask you to eat—and you must have been hungry. The only reparation I can now make, is to ask you to eat a double quantity of a cold breakfast. Come! the meal waits;" and he led the way to the frugal repast.

The day proved a very unpleasant one to our party of way-farers—the storm continuing, with little or no abatement, till the sun went down. Time thus spent in the wilderness, without books, occupation, or amusement, and by persons wet, cold, and anxious, naturally became irksome; and none regretted to see darkness again settle over the earth; for the beds had been so arranged through the

day, that the wet would not again disturb the sleepers, and all hoped to pass a few of the dreary hours in a state of forgetfulness.

A few hours of the morning, it is true, had glided away in an interesting conversation between the Major, the ladies, and Kingsley—the last mentioned of whom had done what he could to entertain the others, by drawing largely upon a fund of anecdote and narration, well seasoned with wit, common sense, and shrewd observation; but he at last grew weary of talking, and the rest of the day became only so many hours of mental depression and sullen gloom, which very well accorded with the state of the weather.

At an early hour in the evening all retired to rest, and most of the party slept soundly till day broke on the following morning. It was still raining—but not very hard; the wind had changed; the clouds were broken; and, an hour or two later, the bright sun became visible, shining through a gentle sprinkle, sending gladness to every heart, and setting a long, beautiful bow on the western heavens, as a sign that he had resumed his sway, and the power of the storm was past.

Preparations were now made for resuming the journey; and, long before noon, the little cavalcade began to descend the mountain. As it is not our design to give further incidents of the slow and toilsome journey of the Major and his family through the wilderness, we will merely say here, that the fourth night from his quitting Laurel Ridge, he pitched his camp upon the spot he had selected for his future home.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW HOME AND INCIDENTS.

MAJOR HARGRAVE was a man of energy, and energetically did he set to work, on the day following his arrival at his destination, to construct a comfortable log-cabin for his family. He had brought with him a number of farm-tools, and, among the rest, some four or five good axes; and as Kingsley, who had accompanied him to his journey's end, volunteered to assist him in putting up his new structure, four of these axes were thus brought into immediate use, and most vigorously were they applied to the trees of the forest.

For the site of his cabin, the Major selected a knoll, at a point where a creek or stream, of considerable size, poured its waters into the Monongahela. The base of this knoll, was, owing to a bend of the Monongahela, washed on two sides by that river, and on the third by the afore-mentioned creek—so that it might with some propriety be termed a peninsula. The natural advantages which such a spot possessed against a covert assault, struck the Major at once; and he forthwith determined to erect his cabin here, surround it with a stockade, and cut a broad channel from river to creek, so that none could approach it without first crossing water. To carry out the full design, however, would require more labor and time than could well be spared at once; and so the Major resolved to first clear up the knoll, erect his cabin, and put his crops into the

ground, that his family, if unmolested, might have the means of living through the year.

A log-cabin in the wilderness, is a building easily constructed; and, with four laborers, may be completed in a very short time. Trees, of about a foot in diameter, are first cut down, then cut to a certain length, and notched on two sides, near the two ends. By this means, the end logs lock into those laid lengthwise, and the bodies meet, forming a structure, compact, solid, durable, and bullet-proof. When, by placing one log above the other, the building has reached the proper height to begin the base of the roof, the two end logs are allowed to project beyond the others, and these are called eave-bearers. Across these, reaching from one to the other, running length-wise, are laid two saplings, called butting poles. The end logs are then shortened, to form the slope of the roof—the transverse logs still locking into them, by notches, as before. When, by means of this angle or slope, the ribs, as the roof timbers are called, meet, a single one is laid across the top, forming the ridge-pole or comb of the whole. The skeleton of the house is now complete; and the next proceeding is to put on the clap-boards, to keep the roof from leaking. These, from two to three feet long, are split from timber of about two feet in diameter, and of a thickness varying from one to two inches; and, when laid on the roof, are lapped one over the other, with cross poles over them, to keep them in their places. A hole is next cut, about central way of the building, to serve as a door; another, of smaller dimensions, on the same side, for a window; and a third, on the other side of the cabin, opposite the door, for a fire-place. The hearth, back, and jambs of the fire-place are formed of large, flat stones; and the chimney, constructed of logs, is put up outside. The door itself is generally made of split timbers, pinned

together through cross-bars, and hung on heavy wooden hinges. Some lighter frame work serves for the window, and greased paper answers the purpose of glass. Cross-timbers are then laid along the ground, from two to four feet apart; and to these are pinned what are called punch-eons, which somewhat resemble boards, being split from logs to about three inches in thickness, and hewed on both sides tolerably smooth. Just fancy tables, stools, benches, bedsteads, and shelves, made from similar materials, in the same rough manner, and you will form a pretty correct idea of a log-cabin of early times.

Such was the kind of building which Major Hargrave, with the aid of Kingsley and the two negroes, erected on the summit of the selected knoll, within a few days from the first stroke of the axe—the family meantime occupying the tent, which was pitched close by. When completed, the whole party entered their new abode, with all their effects; and rough and homely though it was, it seemed like a mansion to them, after their long, fatiguing journey through a pathless forest, across mountains and streams, and at all times surrounded by perils, both visible and unseen.

"Well, wife, what think you of your new home?" inquired Hargrave, as Mrs. Hargrave seated herself on a rough bench, and drew her little children around her.

"If God keeps us all in health, and permits us to live here in peace, I shall never murmur," was her reply, as she took her youngest on her lap, folded her to her bosom, and kissed her with maternal fondness.

"I guess nobody won't hurt us now," said the little boy, gazing around upon the strong, thick, rough walls.

He was a very interesting child, with blue eyes, fair curly hair, and an intelligent expression of countenance.

"What makes you think nobody will hurt us now, Jo-

seph?" inquired his mother, fondly placing a hand upon his head.

"'Cause papa won't let them," he answered, looking proudly upon his father. "If he could keep everybody and everything from hurting us in the woods, I guess he can keep everybody and everything from hurting us in this strong house. Don't *you* think so, Cuba?" he added, appealing to that colored individual, who was busy stopping up the chinks in the fire-place.

Cuba, between whom and the little boy a great intimacy and very warm friendship existed, on hearing his name called, dropped his work, and turning round, said:

"W'at's de subject ob disputation, dis time, Mas'er Josey, dat I's called on to exculpitate?"

"Why, I was saying papa wouldn't let nobody hurt us in this strong house—would he?"

"De Lor' bless you, chile! so fur's you'se'f am 'cerned, dar's not nobody living, I's dar say, dat would so fur set aside de ambigenious feelings of de human natur' ob de gentlem, dat he would put a hand on you' h'ar."

"You wouldn't let nobody hurt us, would you, Cuba?" cried the next younger, a bright-eyed, sunny-haired, affectionate little girl of five; and as she spoke, she bounded up to the negro, and clasped him around the leg.

Cuba stooped down, gently raised the child into his arms, and turned aside to the fireplace, as if to examine it, but in reality to conceal his emotion.

"Say, Cuba!" continued the little girl, playfully, patting his black cheek with her small, soft, lily hand: "Say, Cuba! would you let anybody hurt us? now would you?"

"No, Missee Nelly, chile, darling—de Lor' help me—not while I's got dis neck right side up on dis head."

"There, Joe, I knew he wouldn't," cried Nelly, throw-

ing her arms around Cuba's neck, and looking back to her brother, with childish triumph.

"Come, Cube," cried Aunt Chloe, as she brushed past her consort, with a load of pewter dishes, which she was about to arrange on a couple of shelves that had been put up in one corner for this purpose, and which she proudly denominated her pantry—"if you am to fix dat ar fireplace, 'fore I's commence de cookery, 'spect you'd better do it; for when I's git dese dishes 'ranged, dar'll be a corn-cake under way, and den dar'll be no time lef' for your fussification wid de cracks."

"Dar, chile—dar," said Cuba, as he gently placed little Ellen on her feet; and drawing his sleeve across his eyes, and fetching one or two hems, he resumed his work in the chimney.

Simple Roley, with his hands in his pockets, now came sidling up to the fireplace; and after watching Cuba a few minutes, said, with an air of deep reflection:

"Cuba, I will thank you to make the draught good—since I am to make the fires, and nothing but green wood for fuel. Cuba, my idea must really be carried out, for the world has suffered long enough."

"Well, frien' Roley," replied Cuba, looking up from his work; "de succumstance ob car'ing out your idee ob de princerpals ob de suction, am very much flumigated; but, but de real truf h am, dat I's doesn't know de exact persition ob de fust understanding ob de proper state ob de affa'r."

"Ignorance!" muttered the simpleton, with a smile of contempt; and turning abruptly away, he walked out of the cabin into the open air.

It was a beautiful morning—the heavens clear—and the sun, about half way to the zenith, was pouring down a soft, warm, mellow flood of light upon a pleasing landscape.

Standing upon a log, near a large, sturdy oak, which the Major, with a view to something picturesque, had expressly reserved, was Gertrude Wilburn, gazing upon the scene with those feelings of pleasure which a contemplation of nature is apt to awaken in the breast of one possessed of a poetic temperament. Perceiving her, the simpleton took two or three steps toward her; but changing his mind—or, rather, some mind changing him—he drew stealthily up to the tree, and concealed himself behind it; so that, as he expressed it, “he might watch Mistress Gerty without being seen, because something was going to happen.”

Had Simple Roley been guided by sound reason, or good common sense, he would never have fancied that anything peculiar, connected with our heroine, was about to happen at such a time and place; but so it is, that the instinct of the animal, and the prescience of the fool, oftentimes exceed the vaunted wisdom of those who are called wise.

And what explanation may we attach to facts that are in themselves so wonderful and mysterious? May we not suppose, that where there is animal life, without mind or reason, that such object may be easily impressed by prescient mind beyond the material existence, which to us alone is visible by the natural eye? May we not infer, that objects, possessing animal life, but lacking mind and reason, are so impressed, when they do that which provides against a future contingency, and yet without showing any evidence of a foreknowledge? That this is every day done, none will gainsay; but by what process it is done, let those who have a better solution to the mystery, give it. Pope says:

“Who taught the nations of the field and wood,
Prescient, the tides and tempests to withstand?”

Ay, who taught them? Let those who deny the existence of a God—who deny a future existence—who deny the existence of mind out of the body—answer!

The scene which Gertrude Wilburn gazed upon, was calculated to afford the contemplative mind a feeling of pleasure commingled with awe. She was standing on the southern side of the cabin, on a rise of ground, which, without being high itself above the land adjoining on the north, gave her vision an extended sweep toward the south. Immediately around her, the trees had been felled, with the exception of the oak just mentioned; and trunks, branches, chips and stumps, almost concealed the ground which they had so recently shaded. Before her, the knoll descended almost abruptly to the point where the smaller stream joined the larger; and through the branches of trees still standing at its base, she could see the waters, bright and silvery where the sunlight fell upon them, and dark and gloomy where the forest threw its shadows; but rendered more interesting and beautiful by the strong contrast which one portion presented to the other. Beyond the Monongahela, far away to the distant hills, which drew the line against the sky, stretched an unbroken forest, green with the leaf of spring, beautiful to look upon, but filling the mind with emotions of grandeur, sublimity, mystery and awe; for who could say what danger lurked within that seemingly boundless covert? Away to the right, or west, across the creek, on a distant hill, Gertrude beheld a small clearing, and saw a blue smoke ascending from the cabin of another settler in this wilderness; but this, save her own home, was the only sign of civilization visible—all the rest being forest—deep, dark, unbroken, mysterious forest. Yet the scene was not void of life, though so little of human life was to be seen. Thousands of the feathered tribe, many of them of the brightest and most showy plumage,

sailed through the blue ether, skimmed along the surface of the waters, fluttered among the branches of the trees, and gave vent to their gladness in songs of such delightful melody, that Gertrude, enchanted through the senses of seeing and hearing, stood rivetted to the spot, lost in a kind of poetical revery.

At length the spell was broken by the appearance of Kingsley, who emerged from the wood near by, carrying a rifle in his right hand, and having a wild turkey, which he had shot, slung over his left shoulder. On seeing him, the first impulse of our heroine was to turn away and enter the cabin; but it at once struck her that this proceeding might seem rude; and as she was not one who would intentionally or knowingly hurt any one's feelings, she remained on the spot, merely stepping down from the log on which she had been standing.

It may be proper to remark here, that though Kingsley had for many days been a member of the household of Hargrave, travelling with the family, eating at the same table, and sleeping in the same tent, yet nothing like intimacy had sprung up between him and Gertrude; and in all this time he had probably never said a dozen words to her, that had not been spoken in the presence or hearing of a third party. And this had been mainly owing to the management of Gertrude herself. Not that she had any particular dislike to Kingsley; on the contrary, she considered him a gentleman of fine mind, good education, and high breeding; but he was a stranger to her—a stranger about whom hung a mystery—and she felt no interest in him, further than a willingness to exchange the common civilities of the day, converse on topics of general interest, and treat him at all times with proper respect.

And, in justice to Gertrude, we will say here, that though she had a fine poetical temperament and organiza-

tion, she was not one of your wildly romantic heroines, to fall desperately in love with a mysterious stranger, merely because he was mysterious. No! possessing a sweet, gentle, affectionate disposition, a desire to please and be pleased, a mind which could ever find congeniality in lofty thoughts and aspirations, she was still one to be guided in all she did by sound, practical common sense. Whether Kingsley had a more special regard for her, than she for him, the reader can judge from what follows.

"You see, Miss Wilburn," he said, with a smile, as he came up, holding up the turkey by the neck, "I have provided something for Aunt Chloe to try her skill upon."

"I fear she will make a sorry job of it," returned Gertrude, pleasantly; "for even a good cook, with a good turkey, may fail to make a good dish, if she lack all the other essentials."

"What a gloomy wilderness lies yonder, in full view!" pursued Kingsley, changing the subject, and pointing toward the south; and as he spoke, his features became very grave, and something like a sigh escaped him.

"It would not appear so gloomy to me," replied Gertrude, "if it were not for the thought that a terrible foe may therein lie concealed."

"Ay, Miss Wilburn, that is the thing; for no one, in such a wilderness as this, can say his or her life is safe for an hour."

"For the matter of that, Mr. Kingsley, no one can say his or her life is safe for an hour, even in the settlements," returned Gertrude; "but there is this difference; there we do not feel ourselves surrounded by danger at all times, as we do here; and hence we live on in more *seeming* security, and think less of death. I am not sure," she added, reflectingly, after a slight pause, "but the wilderness may be the better place of the two to prepare our-

selves for the great change which must sooner or later take place."

"Do you think you will be contented to spend your days here?" inquired the other.

"I do not know how that may be, Mr. Kingsley; but I shall *strive* to be contented in whatsoever station and situation it may please Providence to place me."

"And do you think Providence has placed you here, Miss Wilburn?"

"I believe Providence has permitted me to come here, with my dear sister, to be her companion."

"Do you not candidly think that you yourself had more to do with your coming hither than Providence?"

"Why such a question, Mr. Kingsley?" rejoined Gertrude, turning to him with an air of surprise. "Surely, you do not doubt the existence of that Overruling Power which is often termed Providence?"

"I do not doubt the existence of an Overruling Power, Miss Wilburn; but I think some persons are too apt to attribute that to a higher Power, which is merely the result of their own individual action. I do not believe in the *special* interposition of Providence; for that, to my mind, seems to imply the continual working of miracles, and is directly opposed to the idea of a general law governing everything which has a being."

"Still," replied Gertrude, unwilling to yield her point, "if you believe in Providence at all, you must admit that nothing takes place without its permission."

"Why, as to that, I must say, that everything which happens, is permitted to happen, otherwise it would not happen; but this rather goes to support my argument than confute it; for it proves that Providence does not interfere in the matter at all. There is quite a difference, Miss Wilburn, between bringing a certain thing to pass, and

doing nothing to prevent it; and it certainly does not follow, that because it happens, it has the sanction of Providence—otherwise the murderer might justly claim, that, in doing the murder, he was doing Heaven's will. No, Miss Wilburn—I believe there are certain great, fixed laws, which govern everything; and that it is as easy for us to break those laws, as to keep within their limits; but those laws, containing exactly what is required for a proper regulation, if we do break them, we must suffer to the exact amount which we transgress. But I have brought on a discussion, without intending to do so; and so let us go back to the point where we started. Have you never as yet regretted leaving the settlements for a home in the wilderness?"

"I certainly would not have come hither from mere choice of locality; but circumstances rendered it necessary for my sister to come; and I would not be so selfish as to remain behind, and leave her without a female companion to help lighten the heavy hours of solitude and gloom which she perforce must pass in a place so far beyond the pale of society."

"But she is not without companionship; she has a husband, children and servants."

"And a sister," added Gertrude, smiling.

"But when she had so many to care for, and to care for her, she should not have exacted such a sacrifice from you, as a total seclusion from the world, to say nothing of hardships and perils beyond number."

"Wrong her not by believing she did exact it," replied Gertrude, warmly. "No! my coming with her was my own doing, against her and her husband's express commands. The truth is, Mr. Kingsley, when our dear mother died, (and, at the recollection, the eyes of the affectionate Gertrude filled with tears,) she left the little all she possessed

to my sister and myself. To have divided this, would have left her almost needy, and might have brought suffering upon her and her family. I would not hear to a division on this account, although she and my brother-in-law were both generous enough to propose it, and even urge my concurrence. Well, without a division, if they left for the wilderness, they would of course take all; and thus I, if I remained behind, would be left penniless; but, by my keeping with them, there would be no need of a division; and I knew that if they found a home here, I should find one also."

"Miss Wilburn," rejoined Kingsley, earnestly, looking her full in the eye, "you are the most unselfish being it has ever been my lot to meet with; and if I could be certain you might ever be brought to take an interest in my welfare, I would never cease to bless the hour and circumstances which first brought us together."

Gertrude crimsoned to the eyes, for the tenor of Kingsley's language was too pointed to be mistaken. For some moments she seemed greatly embarrassed—in fact, until Kingsley again spoke.

"May I dare to hope, Miss Wilburn," he continued, closely noting every change and expression of her countenance, "that you do or will take an interest in my welfare?"

"So far as to wish you well, Mr. Kingsley," she now replied, regaining her natural look, tone, and manner.

"Nay, Miss Wilburn," rejoined Kingsley, speaking earnestly and pointedly, a slight flush now mantling his own features, "I mean something more than merely wishing me well. The truth is," he continued, hurriedly, without waiting for her to reply; "the truth is, Miss Wilburn, I have taken a deeper interest in *your* welfare than I could have believed it possible for me to take in one of your sex

before we met. I am a stranger to you, I know; and the manner of my introduction to you was not one, I am aware, to leave you void of suspicion that I may be worse than I seem; but were all to be explained to your entire satisfaction, and you be led to believe me a man of principle and honor, would you, could you, take any more interest in me than in any other gentleman?"

"Frankly, Mr. Kingsley, I could not," replied Gertrude, looking toward the ground.

"Then I have no hope," rejoined the other, with a deep sigh, turning away his face, perhaps to conceal his emotion. "Well," he resumed, after a slight pause, "I am not sorry I have asked the question—though I would to Heaven it had been differently answered! I am about to leave, Miss Wilburn, and it is not probable we shall ever meet again. I wish you well, and sincerely hope there are many years of happiness before you."

There was a melancholy sadness in the tone of Kingsley, that touched a sympathetic chord in the breast of Gertrude; and her voice gave evidence of this, as she inquired:

"Do you take your departure soon, Mr. Kingsley?"

"The shadow of yonder tree (pointing to the oak) will scarcely be cast to the eastward, ere I shall be lost in the depths of the great forest," was the reply, spoken in a desponding tone.

Gertrude was about to say something more; when, with a yell of horror, the simpleton bounded from behind the oak, shouting:

"A snake! a snake! a snake!"

Impulsively Gertrude sprung back; and at the same instant a copperhead shot past her, and fastened its poisonous fangs in one of Kingsley's leggins. With perfect composure, but with a movement quick as thought, he struck

the serpent a violent blow with his rifle, which loosened its hold and laid it writhing upon the earth. Then calmly, but quickly, placing the breach of his weapon upon the head of the reptile, he said, as he crushed it into the ground:

"May such be the fate of all your enemies, Miss Wilburn!"

Gertrude shuddered—for it seemed to her she had just escaped an awful death.

"I now more firmly believe in the direct guardianship of an invisible intelligence," she said, solemnly. "You may call it a general law, if you will, Mr. Kingsley—but I shall term it Providence."

"And wherefore?" returned the other. "It was by mere accident that Jacob saw the serpent in time to give you warning."

"No, it wasn't, Mr. Kingsley, begging your pardon for contradicting you!" said the simpleton, approaching Gertrude, and taking her hand. "No accident about me seeing that snake, sir, I assure you. I knew something was going to happen to Mistress Gerty before I concealed myself behind that tree. Did I not save you, Mistress Gerty?" he added, turning and looking fondly into her sweet face.

"You did, Roley," she answered, giving his hand a warm pressure: "you did; and I will love you for it."

"You see, sir," pursued the moonling, with an air of consequence; "you see, Mr. Kingsley, I am the favored suitor."

Kingsley colored to the temples; but said, with an affected laugh:

"I shall soon leave you a clear field."

Gertrude, without making any reply, turned quickly away, and hastened into the cabin.

Some three hours later, Kingsley took leave of the Major and his family, and departed, none knew whither. Shortly after, a small silk purse, containing ten doubloons, was found on the sill of the window; but whether left there by mistake, or design, none could say.

"Well," said Hargrave, musingly, "there are some men that cannot easily be fathomed; and he who has just left us, is one of them. He is first taken in disguise—which appears to give him less trouble than it does me—he joins my family, accompanies me on my journey, assists me to erect my cabin, and, the very day I get into comfortable quarters, he leaves abruptly, and says not a word concerning his own destination. It is all very strange, very mysterious."

Gertrude said nothing.

CHAPTER VII.

WANTS OF THE WILDERNESS.

THOUGH Major Hargrave and his family had taken possession of their new dwelling, as mentioned in the foregoing chapter, it yet wanted much of being finished to the satisfaction of all parties. There were the crevices between the logs to be stopped with clay; a floor to be put in overhead, so that the negroes could have a separate sleeping apartment; bedsteads to be constructed, though never so rough and homely; shelves to be arranged along the walls, for holding various minor articles; pegs to be driven into the logs, on which to hang different garments; and many other trifling things to be done, which we will not weary the reader by enumerating.

The Major, however, with an eye to the future, did not give these matters very serious attention: or, in other words, did not attend to them to the neglect of his out-of-door occupation. From sun to sun, in fair weather, he, with Cuba and Dick, worked steadily at the forest, felling trees, occasionally uprooting a stump, and turning over the ground, to get it ready for cultivation; and after dark, for a couple of hours, and on rainy days, he employed himself and servants in putting the finishing touches to the interior of the cabin.

A month's labor made quite a change in the appearance of the immediate locality which the Major had fixed upon for a permanent residence. The knoll, by this time, was completely cleared of trees and brush, down to the point

where the streams united, and back to the bend in the Monongahela, whence the Major had thought of cutting a channel to the creek. The soil had been turned up with a shovel-plough, and was now planted with corn, potatoes, beans, pumpkins, squashes, and a few other vegetables. All the cleared ground was now under cultivation, with the exception of a narrow circle close around the dwelling, and a path, about four feet wide, leading thence to the forest.

As there was no lack of wild beasts in this quarter, particularly wolves, which sometimes made night hideous with their howlings, the Major had early constructed a pin-fold, just back of the cabin, into which the horses were driven at night, and secured against molestation. In the morning, such of them as were not wanted in the harness for hauling, ploughing, and so forth, were hobbled and turned out to graze along the banks of the streams, where they found enough to satisfy their hunger without wandering too far.

Notwithstanding so much had been done, and the Major saw that, comparatively speaking, he was very comfortably fixed, he, with his negroes, still kept to work as vigorously as ever. He cut down trees, and, after selecting such portions of them as he thought he might want to use for timber, hauled the remainder into piles, and burned them on the ground; and then turned up the soil, and planted it with corn; and so continued to do till the season became too far advanced for planting, and the weather too hot for such laborious employment.

Meantime, the interior of the cabin had been completed; and really looked quite neat and comfortable, considering of what rough materials it was composed. In one corner stood a ladder, which led to the chamber under the roof; and in the corner opposite, at the same end of the building, was Aunt Chloe's pantry, as she called it, which consisted

of a few shelves and pegs, some culinary utensils, some provisions, some cold victuals, and a great deal of imagination. The other end of the cabin was shut from view by a partition made of tent-cloth. This was Gertrude's sleeping apartment; and contained, besides her own, most of the family clothing, neatly hung up on pegs driven into the logs. A few shelves had been put up in here also, on which were arranged a few of her favorite books, with smaller articles of value and use which she had brought with her. It contained, moreover, a slab-table, a three legged stool, and a small mirror; and was, altogether, quite as comfortable and cozy a little sleeping-room as the place and circumstances would permit her to have. The body of the cabin displayed a large slab-table for family meals, a few benches and stools, with shelves and pegs along the walls, all occupied with something; while four pairs of hooks, depending from the ceiling, suspended four good rifles, with bullet-pouches, powder-horns, etcetera.

Now fancy the household all assembled, white and black, to the number of ten persons—all plainly and coarsely dressed, in materials which had come through the hand-loom, or been prepared from the skin of some wild animal—with only such light upon them as could get in through the open door, the window of greased paper, and down the chimney—or, if night, stream upon them from some lighted pipe-knot—and all, too, so grouped as to represent almost every imaginable attitude—and you have such a picture of the interior of Major Hargrave's cabin in the wilderness, as was presented to the view more than once in every twenty-four hours.

In their new home, the Hargraves found themselves in immediate want of many things which time and labor only could supply; and even then but poorly supply, if compared with the comforts of a regular settlement, where each one may

live by following a single occupation. Here, shut out from the world, as it were, they saw that, for a long time, they would have to depend wholly upon themselves. It is true, they knew this before they came here, and had prepared for it as well as they could; but not till they got here, and got settled, so to speak, did they realize, in its full extent, how much they had depended upon others all their lives. If any one flatters himself, at the present day, that he is independent of his fellows, let him look carefully to the list of wants which our friends in the wilderness were forced to make out for themselves.

We may begin by saying, that, for the time being, they did not want clothes, because they had brought a good stock with them; but should they continue to remain here, they would want them; and how was this want to be supplied? They could not go and buy the cloth, for there was no store in all that region—consequently, to prepare themselves against a time of need, they *now* wanted the materials of which cloth is made—videlicet—wool and flax. Wool comes from sheep—therefore sheep were wanted; but though these might have been procured of some neighboring settler, within a circuit of twenty or thirty miles, yet wolves were plenty, which would just now make it a risky venture, to say nothing of wintering them, when the fodder might prove insufficient for the horses, two or three of which must of necessity be kept over to work in the harness. Flax could be raised; but not the present season, because all the cleared land was needed for corn and vegetables, on which to live.

Well, granted they could get wool and flax in abundance, neither, nor both combined, would in their raw state be cloth; and to make them into cloth, the one must be carded, the other swingled and hatched, and both be spun and wove. Hand-cards, a hatchel, spinning-wheels, and the finer materials for a loom, they had brought with them;

but the loom itself must be constructed and put up by the Major; and the spinning and weaving be done by his wife, Gertrude, or Aunt Chloe—for there was no one else to be employed, either as carpenter or weaver. And when the cloth should be ready, they must make it up themselves—for there was neither tailor, nor mantua-maker, in that part of the country.

Neither was there a hatter for the head, nor a shoemaker for the feet; but skins of wild animals could be twisted into some kind of shape to answer for the former; and moc-casins, which were easily made, and another rudely shaped article, called shoe-pack, would do for the latter: yet however much wanted, the family must rely on their own skill to make them. If an iron tool got out of order, the Major found he must do his own smithing; if the harness broke, he must, for the time, take hold of another peculiar trade, and mend it: if a strap was wanting, and a strap not to be had, a skin must be tanned for the purpose. He really wanted his house enlarged; for it was too small, and he wanted partitions in it; but he did not consider himself competent to do the work, and there was no carpenter he could call on. He would have liked some convenient furniture—but no cabinet maker lived within hundreds of miles. And, most of all, the meal he brought with him having become exhausted, he wanted more corn ground; but there was no miller and no mill, and it must therefore be grated or pounded. Grating was too slow a process for so many mouths—pounding, in a common mortar, was not much better—and so the Major set his wits to work, and constructed a machine, which, in the absence of a mill, was made to answer.

He first procured a block of hard wood, some three feet long, and two feet in diameter, and burned a deep, wide, mortar-shaped excavation in one end. To this excavation

he fitted a pestle of hard wood, about ten feet long; and then morticed this pestle into the small end of an ash sapling some thirty feet long. The large end of this sapling he then fastened under one of the ground logs of the cabin; and supported the whole at an angle of about forty-five degrees, by resting it on two forks placed some ten feet from the butt. Thus the small end was raised some fifteen feet; and the pestle, being ten feet long, hung down to within two feet of the mortar-block, which was placed directly under it. A pin, running through the pestle, enabled two persons to work it at the same time; and as fast as they could spring it down into the mortar, the elastic ash brought it up. By reason of this corn-mashing, Cuba and Dick took many an extra sweat; and it is not on record that either of them ever failed to do justice to the first meal of victuals that followed this labor.

"Dick," groaned Cuba, one day, while at work, with the perspiration oozing from every pore, "I's doesn't like to say nuffin in the 'plaining way; but, but I's forced by complication into dis here remark—dat cutting down trees am proper work for any gentlem nigger, like you'se'f and myse'f—but dis here am de debil,—dar."

"Spect you isn't fur from de trufh, Cube," grunted Dick.

We might still go on with our catalogue of wants; but lest it should stretch beyond the reader's patience, and end in a yawn, which is a kind of death-blow to an author's popularity, we will only mention a few more, and leave the list to be finished by any one having a desire, and imagination enough, to carry it out. There was no school for the children—no children-associates—no church—no minister, and no doctor. For the table, there was no tea, no coffee, no sugar, and no molasses—or, at most, only a little of each, which they had brought with them, to be used only

on special occasions. True, maple sugar and molasses might be made, if they remained here another year; but we are now speaking of the present; everything might come in time—but very little could be had now. They had no cows and no goats; and consequently no milk, no butter, and no cheese. Fresh meat they could procure in abundance—such as wild-turkey, venison, and the flesh of bear; but these, with little other seasoning than salt, and such other accompaniments as could be made from Indian meal, did not prove so very palatable as one at first thought might suppose. And to crown all, it was now ascertained that the meal would be consumed some weeks before the new corn could ripen, and thus meat alone would be left to satisfy the cravings of hunger.

Even with all these wants, and many more, which we will not stop to mention, our friends felt that they might be contented in their new home, were it not for the greatest want of all, security against the savage. There was no telling what moment a band of Indians might come down upon them, lay their house in ashes, and either murder them, or, what was no better, drag them into hopeless captivity. True, they trusted to remain unmolested; yet their hope was not buoyant—but full of fear, and trembling, and strong misgivings.

The Major had by this time abandoned his first idea of cutting a channel from river to creek, but not his intention of doing something more for security. His second plan was to put up a strong palisade immediately around the dwelling; and using the timbers he had preserved, he went vigorously to work; and, in the course of two or three weeks, completed his design to his satisfaction.

Meantime, our friends had received visits from only three individuals, and these neighboring settlers. The first lived in the cabin which we mentioned as being in the

range of Gertrude's vision on the morning of Kingsley's departure, and which was about five miles distant. The others lived further off, in different directions, and out of sight. They did not come together—but separately, and at different times—and, after a short stay, during which each conversed with the Major on matters pertaining to themselves, families, settlement in the wilderness, and so on, they left—each in turn extending him an invitation to visit them at their new homes. But they were not persons of very refined manners; were not, in truth, congenial spirits; and he felt little interest in them, beyond the fact that they were white settlers in the same region of country as himself.

Major Hargrave found sufficient out-of-door occupation to keep him busy; and Mrs. Hargrave, being a fond mother, kept her mind principally occupied with trifling domestic affairs and her little children; but Gertrude seriously felt the want of something to do; and this made the time with her pass rather tediously. There was a certain sameness in the round of each day, which began to grow wearisome to her; and she felt it more than her sister, because of her different temperament and organization. And besides, however much Gertrude might love the children—and love them she did, and took great delight in teaching the two older some simple lessons, and telling them childish stories—still she was not their mother, and could not of course feel that maternal interest in them which oftentimes excludes all thought of self.

The truth was, Gertrude had arrived at an age when the heart feels a void in any society but that of one, who, by the curious and wonderful law of magnetic affinity, can supply the place of all others; and the want of occupation increased the feeling, by causing the mind to dwell, so to speak, upon itself. There was no society here suited to

her years, and therefore no chance to expand the mind by a congenial interchange of ideas. She had brought with her a few books; but having re-read these, they no longer afforded her any amusement. She had a strong love for nature, and could have passed many delightful hours of solitude in the great forest which surrounded her, only that the charm of contemplation would ever be broken by the fear, if not by the reality, of danger. The dread of savages, wild beasts, and serpents, was a strong antidote to the desire for forest seclusion; and therefore she seldom ventured beyond sight of the cabin, or the loud call of its inmates. In fact, there was only one direction in which, owing to the circumstances mentioned, she cared to venture to any extent; and the point at which she aimed, though out of sight of the cabin, was not beyond the sound of a horn—or, in a favorable state of the atmosphere, the stentorian voice of Hargrave.

There was a small, beautiful island in the Monongahela, some little distance below the point where the creek joined it—but which, owing to a bend in the river, was not visible from any part of the knoll; and having accidentally discovered this pleasant retreat, Gertrude prevailed upon the Major to construct a boat, and allow Simple Roley and herself to make daily excursions thither. We say Gertrude prevailed upon her kinsman to do this; for when she first mentioned the matter to him, he strongly opposed her wish—giving, as a reason, that he feared something serious might result from such a daily venture.

To visit this island each day, and spend there some three or four of the hottest hours, now became the chief delight of Gertrude. She built her a little bower; and under its cooling shade she would sit, and look off through the green leaves, upon the gliding stream, and upon the dark waving forest beyond; while the breeze would fan her brow, and

play with her curls, and lull her into a dreamy state, just fitted for a gentle flight of poetic fancy. No better companion for solitude could she have had than the simpleton; for, contented, to sit in the shade, or wander along the sandy beach, picking up pebbles, skimming stones on the water, and talking to himself, he never disturbed her reverie.

Thus days and weeks passed away; and months had elapsed since the first stroke of the Major's axe in the forest, and yet nothing had occurred to cause the family any serious alarm.

Having thus given the reader a brief sketch of domestic life in the wilderness, we will now gradually pass on to more stirring and interesting scenes.

CHAPTER VIII.

A GENUINE BACKWOODSMAN.

It was the custom of Major Hargrave to supply the family with meat, by hunting early in the morning. When informed by Aunt Chloe, who attended solely to the culinary department, "dat de larder was gittin' cibberly low down," he would make his arrangements for an early start on the following day; and the first streak of dawn would generally find him, with his rifle on his shoulder, bending his steps toward the dark forest; and by the time the sun had got cleverly above the hills, he would often be seen emerging from the wood, loaded with game.

One day, as the Major was returning from one of these excursions, bearing on his back a plump fawn, which he had just shot, he was startled at hearing a dry stick break behind him; and suddenly dropping his burden, he sprung behind a tree close by, grasped his rifle firmly, and prepared to defend himself, in case the new-comer should prove to be a foe.

"Hello! stranger—don't be skeered!" called out a voice, in a coarse, gruff tone. "I never hurt nobody that I've got nothing agin—and I've got nothing agin you—so how ar' ye, any how?"

On hearing this, the Major ventured to take a cautious look around the tree; and perceived a tall, raw-boned, ungainly figure advancing toward him, at a leisure, careless pace. Seeing that he was a white man, and alone, and nothing particularly hostile in his appearance, Hargrave

stepped boldly out into full view, and waited for him to come up.

The new-comer was one of those peculiar specimens of the *genus homo*, which seem as if especially designed as a sort of connecting link between two races diametrically opposed; and of whom it may be said, that in their persons, habits, and characteristics, they united two extremes—civilization and barbarism. White by birth, with some ideas of refinement—even though gross ones, comparatively speaking—and, physiologically considered, superior to the red man—they were, by their wild, lonely, roving lives, and occasional contact with the Indian, reduced almost to his moral and intellectual level—yet retained just enough of a higher plane of being, to be still above the savage race and below their own—so that the law of affinity would draw them about equally to one extreme or the other.

The pathless wilderness of the period of which we write—stretching away for hundreds of leagues, from the seaboard settlements of the white man, to the wigwam villages of the Indian, with a curious intermixture of the two races between—was certainly calculated to give origin to a class of beings similar to the one under notice, and who might be said to belong to nobody but themselves. Setting off alone into the wilderness, as traders, trappers, or hunters, or all three occupations combined; always surrounded by danger; always on the alert for a foe; oftentimes contending for life with a wild beast, and sometimes with a human being; sleeping on the ground, with only a blanket wrapped around them, and frequently without even this; depending on their own vigilance, activity, skill, and rifle, for safety; with no companion to cheer their solitude, and for weeks, perhaps, without a being of their kind with whom to exchange a thought; with only such garments to cover them as they could fashion for themselves from the rudest mate-

rials; they naturally became hardy, independent of their kind, bold, reckless, coarse in their manners, wild in their appearance—and, in short, semi-barbarian.

Of this class, as we have already remarked, was the individual who so unceremoniously accosted Major Hargrave. We have said that he was tall, raw-boned, and ungainly in his appearance; but this conveys only a vague idea of the *tout ensemble* of the man. He was about thirty-five years of age, was scarcely less than six feet in height, had long legs and arms, large bony hands and fingers, and a very disagreeable stoop in the shoulders, which inclined his head forward toward his bosom, and sometimes gave him the appearance of looking out through his black, bushy eyebrows. His hair and beard were both black, long, and matted; and the two together completely concealed his neck, and a large portion of his face—particularly the lower part. Neither scissors, razor, nor comb, had apparently ever been within hailing distance—at least since the days of his youth—and we doubt whether he would have known to what use to put the second and last mentioned articles. His features, what could be seen, were hard, rough, and coarse; his eyes were small, keen, and shrewd; and his complexion was of the color of brown tan. Unless it might be shrewdness, it was difficult to say what expression predominated; but the countenance was not at all prepossessing, and no honest man would have been likely to have taken him into his confidence on a short acquaintance; and, for that matter, a rogue might have been afraid to trust him with a secret also. Still, for all, you could not positively say he was evil at heart, for you could see nothing in his look decidedly sinister; and perhaps it was merely external appearances which tended to give one at first, as they did the Major, an unfavorable impression concerning the man's character.

The habiliments of the stranger were in very good keep-

ing with his personal appearance. A sort of nondescript cap, made from the skin of a panther, with the hair-side out, surmounted his head, and seemed to press the stiff, uncombed locks into a friendly contiguity. Of the same kind of skin, with the hair-side out also, was made his breeches, leggings, and moccasins; but a green linsey hunting-shirt, with a broad cape, covered his arms and body; and around the waist passed a belt, in which were stuck a hunting-knife and tomahawk. To his shoulders was strapped a bundle of furs, with some few other articles; and in his hand he carried an uncommonly long rifle, of superior workmanship. Advancing close to the Major, without showing the least sign of fear or suspicion, this singular being placed the breech of his rifle on the ground, clasped the barrel with his left hand, extended the right, and continued, in the same gruff, familiar tone:

"How ar' ye, stranger? how d'ye do? Glad to see ye? Hope our acquaintance 'll prove profitable. Little skeered, though, at fust—warn't ye? But that's nothing. Ef you'd jest looked round, like you mought hev done, you'd hev seed at once that I's a human, and no Injun. Come," he pursued, as Hargrave drew himself up with a haughty reserve, "why don't ye give a feller a shake o' yer paw, and not look so shy? 'Spect you arn't afeard o' me now? and don't mean to quarrel, nor nothing—hey?"

"I am not afraid of you, sir, and do not wish to quarrel with you," replied the Major, with a dignified coldness. "You are a stranger to me, sir," he pursued, in the same tone of unbending dignity; "and I am not used to such familiarity from one I do not know."

"Umph!" returned the other, with a broad laugh: "'spect you've brought your high notions from the settlements. Hain't been in these parts long, I reckon?"

"I have brought my high notions from good breeding,

at least," was the cutting reply; "and I would I could say as much for you."

"Come, come, stranger—that thar last remark of yourn war rayther personal; and I don't allow no human, white nor red, to git *too* personal;" and as he spoke, the keen eyes of the hunter emitted a fiery gleam, that warned the Major he must be a little more circumspect in his language. "But, come," he pursued, all traces of anger disappearing; "I reckon as how you didn't mean nothing—'cause you couldn't make nothing by gitting into a fight with me, no how. We'll call it a joke this time, stranger—only be a little bit car'ful not to joke that thar way too often. This here's a smart chance of a critter you've shot, stranger," he continued, turning round and examining the fawn; "but thar's one thing about it I object to."

"What may that be, sir?" inquired Hargrave.

"Why, you merely crippled it with your shot, and had to finish it with your knife. Now that thar, stranger, warn't done science; and ef thar's any thing I hate, it's to see one of these here critters mangled. I al'ays plump 'em right through the heart, or the eye—though the eye's my preference, ef I can only git to see it."

"Probably you are a better marksman than I," returned the Major.

"Wall, I mought be that, and not hev nothing to brag about, ef you don't ginerally do it more science nor this here," rejoined the other, with a broad laugh. "'Speet your rifle arn't none o' the best, maybe—and that makes a powerful difference in a long shot. Jest give me a squint at the bore and sights, and I can tell better."

"You must excuse me," said Hargrave, drawing back, as the other reached out his hand for the piece; "but, really, I do not like to yield up my only weapon to a total stranger."

The stranger indulged in another broad, hearty laugh, and rejoined:

"Skeered yit, I see—a liddle of the settlement skeer still hanging to ye. Wall, I hope you'll know me better afore I leave. I look rough, I know," he continued, glancing down at his person; "I've got kind o' rough ways with me, and hain't got a voice none o' the softest; but, stranger, I'll tell ye what's a fact—I never struck an unarmed foe in my life. Howsomever, you've only got my word for that—and that thar goes for nothing with you, I see, till you know so'thing more. Is that thar piece of yourn loaded?"

"It is," replied Hargrave.

"So is mine; and being as you suspicion me, 'spose we swap, like, till I get a look at it."

Unwilling to wound the other's feelings by a second refusal, and really ashamed to show distrust, where, in all probability, there was no occasion for it, the Major acceded to the proposition, and the two exchanged rifles. On getting Hargrave's piece, the old woodsman examined the bore and the sights, took a glance along the barrel, and then said:

"Wall, stranger, this here arn't the most parfect shooter in the world—but you mought hev done better nor cripple that poor fawn."

"May I inquire where you are from?" said Hargrave, changing the subject, as the two again exchanged rifles.

"Wall, I'm from most anywhar," replied the other, with a laugh; "for I've tramped a heap in my time; but I'm last from Fort Fincastle."

"And pray, where is that?" inquired Hargrave.

"On the Ohio, at the mouth of Wheeling Creek—'bout fifty or sixty miles from here."

Is it a strong fortress, and well garrisoned?"

"Rayther a good fort, I should reckon—though not in gineral pertikerly well garrisoned. Thar's three brothers thar, by the name of Zane; them I should say war the principal, or head men; and then thar's six or eight others mought do to fight behind logs; and thar's a heap of women and children. Jest now, though, thar's another party thar, headed by a feller they call Captain Cresap; but they're bound down the Ohio, on a exploring expedition, to locate lands, and won't be thar long."

"Have you any news concerning the Indians?"

"Wall, none to speak on, stranger. But look here! we mought as well know one another while we're about it. My name is Gibbs—Gideon Gibbs—sometimes called Gid Gibbs—but oftener Tomahawk Gibbs—least ways round in this region."

"Why are you called Tomahawk Gibbs?" inquired Hargrave. "I hope it is not significant of a too free use of that weapon."

"You hev me thar!" cried the other, with a coarse, hearty laugh; "you hev me thar, I reckon!"

"Indeed, sir! I am very sorry to hear you are so bloody minded."

As the Major said this, Tomahawk Gibbs gave a boisterous shout, and exclaimed:

"It arn't on humans, Squire—"

"Hargrave is my name," interrupted the other.

"Yes, rayther a good name, too, I 'spect; but Squire is shorter; and I'll call you that, ef it makes no difference. It arn't on humans, as I said, I use the tomahawk—least ways not often."

"What then?"

"Trees!—ha! ha! ha!—trees,—d'ye take?"

"I can't say that I do."

"I cut G. G. on trees; d'ye take now?"

"As much in the dark as ever, Mr. Gibbs," said Hargrave, beginning to doubt that he was talking to a sane man.

"Wall, I'll explain then," rejoined Gibbs; "for this here same tomahawk business consarns you a lettles—a trifle."

"Concerns me?"

"A trifle—only a trifle, Squire; easy settled—I arn't hard on no man. I'll tell ye. You see I'm 'bout as much of a explorer as hunter—doing a trifle at several things. Wall, when I diskiver a place as looks like it mought be of val'e soon, I jest cuts G. G. on one o' the trees—which stands for Gideon Gibbs, ye see; and that thar same doing gives me what they call round here a tomahawk claim to the land."*

"Indeed?"

"Wall, yes—rayther."

"And what does the tomahawk claim give you?" inquired Hargrave.

"All I can git, according to the val'e o' the land—sometimes more—sometimes less—ginerally more. Yes, I 'spect I've got a claim agin you, ef that's your shanty up thar on the knoll."

"A claim against me?"

"Yes, rayther—that's what I war 'luding to jest now. Come back here, 'bout twenty rods, and I'll show you as perty a G. G. as a feller could want. Them thar letters, standing for Gideon Gibbs, is cut on a maple, near a spring, and war done a year ago."

"And for this you expect me to pay you a certain sum?"

"Wall, yes—rayther. I don't car 'bout the chink, ef you're short,—and 'spect you is. I'll take it out in furs,

* These "tomahawk claims," or "rights," were not unusual among the early settlers of the region of country where the scene of our story is located.

or skins, or anything of val'e as I can trade. I've got a bundle here, that I've tuk sence I left Fincastle, of a feller that's owed me for two year. You see I arn't hard on no man, as I said afore."

"And what do you do, when you find a person who refuses to buy up your claim?"

"I don't let him refuse, Squire," replied Gibbs, in a positive tone. "Never had but one feller as tried it; and he caved in, arter a six months' stand out; and I put on extra charges on him, to kiver expenses like."

"Do you mean to say that you would force persons to pay you?"

"Yes, rayther—leastways ef they got obstroperlous, like that feller did."

"Suppose I should refuse to pay you anything—what would you do?"

"Tell better arter you'd tried it awhile; but reckon you won't stand out 'bout a trifle."

"Why do you think so?"

"Wall, you have a honest look, and look like you'd like every feller to live honest."

"But do you consider it an honest employment to go strolling about through the woods, cutting your initials on trees; and then, when some person happens to locate in the vicinity, call on him to pay you a certain sum?" inquired Hargrave, with some asperity.

"Why, yes," replied Gibbs, "as the times go, I don't see why it arn't honest. Don't you call it honest, Squire, to squat yourself down here, on a pick of land, and try to make a live on't?"

"Certainly I do; but mine is a very different case from yours, and I can see no analogy between the two."

"No what, Squire?"

"No analogy—no likeness—no resemblance."

"Oh, you can't, hey? Wall, that thar's 'cause one's your case, and 'tother's mine."

"Not exactly that, Mr. Gibbs; but you, by merely cutting your initials on a tree, have really no claim to the land."

"Wall, what claim hev you, Squire?" You hain't bought it of nobody, hev you?"

"No! but by building a cabin, and raising a crop of corn, Government *gives* me the land."

"And who's Government? let me ax," returned Gibbs, a little scornfully.

"Why, in this case, Government is the Colony of Virginia—which is a large tract of country, ruled by a Governor, Council of State, and House of Burgesses—which last is composed of persons from each county, elected by the people at large to represent them—and all these combined form a legal, or corporate body, invested with power to make laws for all the rest."

"Wall, Squire," returned Gibbs, taking off his cap, and giving a vigorous dig in among his matted hair—"all that thar may be powerful cl'ar to some people—but it's too crinky-crankum for me, by a heap. But jest tell me this: What right has the Gov'ner, and his Buggysesses, as you call them thar fellers, to give away this here land?"

"I do not think," replied the Major, laughing, "that I shall be able to explain the matter so that you will understand it. I may say in a word, however, that this land being a part of the Colony, and the persons I spoke of being the head men of the Colony, they *have* a right to do what they please with it."

"Umph!" grunted Gibbs, putting a huge quid of tobacco into his mouth, and straightening himself up with an air: "I've heerd these here kind o' things preached up afore; and they've al'ays fotched me squar' up to one

opinion; and that is, that the old Gov'ner, and all the chaps that foller on his trail, are a set of—thieves! They've got no arthly right to this here sile—for they've never been here to put a mark on't; and ef it belongs to any human besides them as diskivers it, like me and you, it belongs to the Injuns, who had it hundreds of years afore ever a white man put his foot down this side o' salt water."

"There is some truth in that, I must admit," returned Hargrave.

"It's all truth, Squire," rejoined Gibbs, beginning to expectorate pretty freely; "and I licked a feller once for saying it wasn't. Me and Logan, a fine old Mingo chief, hev had many a friendly talk about the matter; and we al'ays agreed on that thar p'int, as easy as a she bear and her cub mought."

"Logan!" said the Major, musingly: "Logan! I think I have heard him spoken of. Is he not a chief that is friendly to the whites?"

"Wall, he is," replied Gibbs: "and a more decenter red-skin never drawed a breath or a bow. I used to hate Injuns as I do sarpints; but arter I got to know Logan, I concluded that ef one red-skin had such a heap of good stuff in him, more mought; and arter I'd got a little leaned over on thar side like, I begun to understand they war jest about the wust used set o' humans that a feller could scar' up. Howsomever, I'm white, and hev got a white natur'; and ef a fight should come about, as some think thar will, 'tween us and them—why, old Sylvia here, (lifting up his rifle,) will hev to bark agin 'em."

"And is it thought that we shall have another war with the Indians?" inquired the Major, with no little uneasiness in his look.

"Some say we shall, and some say we shan't, and it arn't powerful easy to tell which is right," replied Gibbs.

"And what do you think yourself? You are much about—and, according to your own statement, have mingled with both races—and therefore should be able to form a pretty correct opinion."

"Wall, Squire, it's my pertikeler and private opinion," replied Gibbs deliberately, "that afore many years is come and gone, thar'll be a heap o' blood spilt along these here same borders."

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated Hargrave, his thoughts at once reverting to his dear wife and children. "But I fear it is too true," he continued, rather to himself than his companion; "for men, accounted wise, have predicted that ere long the Colonies and the Mother Country will be in arms against each other; and should such prediction be verified, the Indians will not be idle spectators. Well, God guard us all! for He alone can. Come, Mr. Gibbs, you shall breakfast with me; and we will talk over your peculiar claim, and other matters, more at ease; for doubtless you will feel better on a full stomach; and I fear my family are anxious about my absence."

"Spoken like a gentleman, Squire, and I'm your man," returned Gibbs, with a smile. "Don't trouble yourself to carry that thar critter," he added, as Hargrave moved toward his game. "I'll tote it home for ye, and take a slice for pay;" and bending down as he spoke, he picked up the carcass with ease, swung it round upon his shoulders, and the two set off for the dwelling.

"Say nothing about the Indians in the presence of any of my family," continued the Major, as he walked along with his brawny companion.

"Oh, I'm death on silence afore women folks and children," replied Gibbs. "Wall, Squire," he pursued, as he

came to the clearing, "you've got things looking quite decent here for so short a time. Corn coming up brisk, and looks like you'd hev a good crop. Hello! pallisades round the shanty, hey?—that thar's a good idea too—though I hope you'll never need 'em."

"Thank you! and amen to the sentiment!" returned the Major, gravely.

It was quite an incident for the Hargraves to see a stranger at their table in the wilderness, and more especially one as unprepossessing in his appearance as Gibbs—for since Kingsley's departure, none, save the regular household, had ever eaten a meal under that roof. It was apparent to the Major, that his wife, children, Gertrude, the blacks, and even simple Roley, regarded the new-comer with fear and distrust; but all were too well-bred to let their aversion be carried to a point of rudeness; and Gibbs was not overmuch sensitive, nor blessed with that intuitive perception which enables one to read the passing thought. He sat down to the table as he would have sat down to skin a deer, and went to work at the viands before him with the same hearty earnestness. The dishes were three in number—namely: jerked venison, cold bear-meat, and several smoking-hot broiled slices of the animal which had just been killed.

"I'll trouble you for the bread, Squire," muttered Gibbs, with his mouth, and it was not a small one, filled to its utmost capacity.

"And it would trouble me exceedingly," said the Major, with a laugh, "if I were obliged to get some for you."

"Hey?" exclaimed Gibbs, with a stare of surprise: "hain't you got no bread?"

"No! our corn is exhausted—we have no vegetables—and so our fare is what you see."

Gibbs ripped out an oath, and said it was what he called "gitting treed."

"Arn't them thar youngsters going to git sick on sich feed, Squire?" he asked.

"I fear they will, Mr. Gibbs; but it will be of no use to borrow trouble."

"That thar's a fact," returned Gibbs, catching the sorrowful eye of Mrs. Hargrave; "and arter all, I can't say as how cl'ar meat 'll hurt anybody—for I've lived on't six weeks at a stretch, and most the time without salt at that—and don't spect I'm any wuss fur't now."

After breakfast, Hargrave and Gibbs went out, and sat down on a bench, under the shade of the oak before mentioned; and the former said:

"Now, sir, what is the amount of your claim against me?"

"My tomahawk claim, hey?" replied Gibbs, with one of his peculiar broad laughs. "Wall, Squire, I hate to say anything 'bout it, and you out o' bread—it kind o' looks hard. Reckon I'll let it be till I come round agin. Powerful han'some critter, that thar!" he added, with a comical expression of countenance, jerking his thumb over the left shoulder, toward the cabin. "Darter o' yourn, Squire?"

"Whom do you mean, Mr. Gibbs?" said the Major, pretending not to understand to whom the other alluded.

"Why, that thar biggest white gal."

"Oh, that is Miss Wilburn—my wife's sister."

"Arn't married, is she?"

"No, she is single."

"Wall, she'd be some to hev, I reckon," said Gibbs, looking down toward the ground, and beginning to whistle.

Hargrave made no reply; and after a short pause, Gibbs, with a very foolish, sheepish look, pursued:

"You know her better'n me, Squire—and I'd just like—to—ax—"

"Well?" rejoined Hargrave, as the other paused.

"Why," said Gibbs, apparently making a desperate effort to appear at his ease; "I war going to say, Squire, I'd jest like to ax, ef you think a feller o' my inches 'ud do to court her?"

"I do not think she has any desire for matrimony," answered the Major, turning away his face to conceal a laugh.

"Wall," returned Gibbs, after another pause, during which he seemed to be meditating deeply—"I hain't got no wife—and I like that gal's looks. I'll tell you what I'll do, Squire: I'm going away east'ard, to the settlements; but I'll be back agin afore long; and while I'm gone, I'll jest git you to talk to her for me like; and ef you kin git her to gin in to a snug courting along o' me, I'll say nothing more 'bout that thar little tomahawk business."

The Major felt an almost irresistible inclination to burst into a hearty laugh; but, by a great effort, he managed to keep a pretty serious countenance, and rejoined:

"But you have not told me what is the amount of your claim, Mr. Gibbs?"

"Wall, 'bout twenty-five dollars, I reckon."

"Would you take any less to have the money down?"

"Oh, you needn't mind it, Squire—I'll call agin."

"But I fear I shall not be able to do anything for you in the way you spoke of—for Miss Wilburn has already refused several suitors."

"Good-looking?" queried Gibbs, innocently, stroking his beard.

"*Very!*" returned the Major; and unable to keep a serious countenance any longer, he gave way to his risible inclinations, and laughed till his sides ached.

"Funny, arn't it?" said Gibbs, toward the last, joining in with a regular horse-roar; which brought Gertrude herself to the door; who little dreamed that she was indirectly the cause of such boisterous merriment.

After some further conversation, of a desultory nature, Gibbs rose to depart.

"Squire," he said, grasping Hargrave's hand, "you're a hoss, and I like you—thar. I'm going now; and when I'm gone, you kin tell the gal what I said: thar's no harm in trying the critters, you know—ha! ha! ha! Good-bye, till I see you agin."

Saying this, he immediately set off, with long strides; and, without even once looking back, soon disappeared in the great forest.

The Major, with some curious reflections on human nature, watched him as long as he kept in sight; and then entered the cabin, to tell Gertrude of her conquest, and enjoy another hearty laugh at her expense.

CHAPTER IX.

A MORNING RIDE ON THE WATER.

THERE is a charm in beauty, let beauty come in what form it will, that fills the mind with an interior joy, if we may so express it, and enchains it to the object or objects which excite this delightful emotion. Beauty, too, may come in many forms; but in none, perhaps, that awaken in us such lofty sentiments, such upreaching aspirations, as when we see it displayed in nature, on a broad scale, where a thousand varied things combine to produce one grand or entrancing effect, and that effect draws our thoughts harmoniously upward to the Great Giver, the eternal source of light and life and love. And one of the most beautiful scenes in nature, is a calm, delightful summer's morn, with the sun just peeping over the eastern hills, a soft breeze wafting the sweet perfume of a thousand flowers, that have just awakened from a night's repose, and still hold in their tiny cups the jewel dew-drop, and look as if weeping for very joy, while the songs of a thousand feathered minstrels give forth a melody that no music of art can rival.

Gertrude Wilburn, as we have more than once said, possessed a poetical temperament; and consequently was a great lover of the beautiful in nature; and such a morning as we have described, had charms for her, which more than counterbalanced any gloomy impressions which she might previously have received from any source less than a great casualty or danger; and therefore, by banishing all that

had been unpleasant, left her mind free to revel in the delights which it awakened in her bosom. To hear the melody of morn, behold its beauties, and catch its first, cooling, balmy breath, she ever in summer arose with the lark, and went forth into the open air, where she would wait for the greeting of the monarch of day, with as much glad earnestness as she would have done for the coming of some dear expected friend. Simple Roley was often her companion—for he, too, was a lover of nature—though his intellect, if intellect it could be called, was such, that he could not see anything as it was, but always with the tincture which a diseased fancy gave to it. He ever took a delight, though, in beauty, and felt an inexpressible joy in its presence; but whence that joy sprung, he could not tell—having no more idea of its source, than he had of the purpose for which he was formed, or the secrets of the spirit-world.

The third morning from the appearance and departure of that singular individual known as Tomahawk Gibbs, was one of those very delightful mornings to which we have alluded; and Gertrude was enjoying its beauties, and inhaling its fragrance, and drinking in its melodies, both in a material and spiritual sense, ere Aurora had finished her diurnal limnings on the etherial back-ground of the eastern heavens. Her position, as we here introduce her, was on a point of the knoll, some half-a-dozen rods south of the cabin, whence her vision could command the widest sweep. Her figure was erect, her face was toward the east, her thoughts were tending upward, and her heart was full of thanksgiving. She looked very beautiful herself, as she stood thus and there, arrayed in plain, neat garments; her raven hair combed smoothly back from her high, broad, intellectual forehead; her lips slightly parted, as if with an expression of pleasure; her cheeks slightly tinted with the

warm blood of youth and animation; and her dark, eloquent eyes sparkling with emotions of internal delight. Few could have seen her then, without being struck with the surpassing loveliness which interior pleasure, combined with the lofty thoughts of a pure mind, can stamp upon lineaments that of themselves may possess nothing beyond ordinary attractions. It is indeed mind that gives expression to the human face; and expression it is that gives beauty; and so where the expression of intellect is wanting, the mere features, though never so perfect in formation, become repellant instead of attractive; just as a great city would become dismal without tenants.

While standing in the attitude described, lost in a reverie of high and noble thought, Gertrude was approached by the simpleton, who had just come forth to join her and get his limited share of early morning enjoyment.

"You are looking very beautiful this morning, Mistress Gerty," he said, as he gained her side.

"And it looks a very beautiful morning, Roley," she answered, with a pleasant laugh, making a play upon his words. Then, after a short pause, she said, quickly: "Roley, I should really like a ride on the water this fine morning. See! our little boat is down there, with its bow just touching the beach, and really looks as if it would like to be off with us."

"May be it would like to be off with us, Mistress Gerty," replied the simpleton, quietly: "shall I go and ask it?"

"Yes, do, Roley!" said Gertrude, with a laugh.

The moonling at once set off down the hill; but ere he reached the boat, Gertrude was at his side.

"Well, Roley, what did the boat say?" she playfully inquired.

"I haven't asked it yet, Mistress Gerty."

"Well, I knew it *would* say yes," returned the other;

"and as it would not be right to keep it waiting, I have come to be ready. Never mind asking it now, Roley; but hasten and untie it, and we will have a pleasant ride, which will give us an appetite for our breakfast."

"I wish it would give us some corn bread with our appetite," rejoined the simple Jacob, as he proceeded to do as directed. "But what will the Major say?" he added, looking up at his fair companion. "I am thinking he will miss us, and won't know where to find us, and will get alarmed."

"No fear, Roley; we will be back soon; and I will take all the blame, if any one finds fault."

She stepped into the boat as she spoke; and Simple Roley, having unloosed its fastenings, took up the paddle and pushed it from the shore. The little vessel was none of the prettiest—being made of clapboards split from logs, and pinned together with wooden pins; but it was strong—and, though awkward to manage, was safe. Simple Roley, however, by daily practice, had become a perfect master of the little craft; and standing erect, near the stern, with long sweeps of the oar, he now sent it skimming over the placid bosom of the Monongahela.

Gertrude had taken her seat about midway between the bow and the stern; and as the boat glided out into the middle of the stream, she gazed around her with feelings of rapturous delight. Day had fairly dawned; but the sun had not made his appearance, and the eastern heavens were one sheet of changing, glowing, golden red. The river looked very beautiful under this light; and the thick wooded banks, with overhanging bushes, green leaves, and gay blossoms—all more or less tinted with this golden hue—now had a charm for the eye of our heroine that they did not possess in the full glare of the sun; while the balmy air, floating over the water, and the gay carols of a thou-

sand birds, which soared and flew and sailed above and around her, combined to make the scene enchanting beyond the power of description.

"Oh, this is more delightful, more beautiful, than I had anticipated!" murmured Gertrude, with glowing cheeks, sparkling eyes, and a radiant expression. "Nature! I do indeed love thee!" she exclaimed, enthusiastically; "and scenes like this are almost worth a life in the wilderness to behold. A life in the wilderness!" she repeated, in an altered tone. "Ah! if we were only sure it would be a *life* in the wilderness! But here, beset by dangers on every side, none can say how soon that life may be taken: and then what follows? I hope a life beyond—but who shall say?"

"There is a life beyond!" rejoined the simpleton, for a moment suspending the motion of his paddle, and gazing upward with a look of inspired solemnity.

Gertrude started, and turned toward him in wonder—for she thought she had spoken the words too low to reach his ear.

"Who told you this, Roley?" she inquired.

"In my dreams once," he continued, in the same solemn tone, without changing his attitude, or even giving a glance at Gertrude—apparently answering her question without being aware she had asked one: "In my dreams once, a beautiful being came to me, and said—'Poor youth! you shall one day live in a world where none shall say to you, Thou fool!' She was very beautiful," he continued, "and her face was like my dear, dead mother;" and as this seemed to call up from the well of memory painful recollections, he bowed his face in his hands, and burst into tears.

Gertrude was not without a certain degree of superstition; and the words and manner of Simple Roley, coming

so unexpectedly, with so much truthful force, made a powerful impression upon her mind.

"I am reprov'd," she murmured; "reprov'd by one who is not accounted wise; reprov'd by one who may be said to be scarcely a child in knowledge. Do spirits once departed ever return to us?" she mused. "If so, there is a world in which they live—there is then truly a life beyond. If not so, then whence this vision—this dream—this revealment in sleep—to one whose waking mind is as it were a wreck of intellect, too shattered to comprehend the most simple train of reasoning? Ah! 'these things are truly hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed even unto babes!' May God forgive me for expressing doubt, when in truth I do not, did not, doubt!" she continued, with fervor. "No, as I know myself, I did not doubt. The words seemed to come to my lips, and I gave them utterance; but had another so spoken, my inner nature would have been shocked. Henceforth there shall be a guard over my thought and speech, that I may never again question what I would not hear questioned by another."

Simple Roley, meantime, dried his eyes; and as he resumed his occupation with the oar, he said, with a simple laugh:

"Oh, Mistress Gerty, I do feel so very happy just now, I think I could love an Indian! I guess it's because it's such a very pretty morning, isn't it?"

"Perhaps it is, Roley," replied his fair companion, thoughtfully. "But when did you dream that dream?" she asked, after a short pause.

"What dream, Mistress Gerty?"

"Why, that one you were just telling me, about your dear mother."

The simpleton now stared upon her with one of his va-

cant looks. Then seeming suddenly to catch an idea, he exclaimed:

"Yes! she was a dear mother—wasn't she?"

"Ah! yes—all mothers are dear to us," rejoined Gertrude, sadly, as her mind reverted to her own; and unconsciously she sighed, and her bright eyes became dim with tears. "But when they have gone from us, on that dread journey, whose viewless, pathless road is never trod by the traveller of the material world," she continued, in a kind of melancholy reverie; "then it is that we, who are left behind, feel, in our inmost hearts, how dear they were to us indeed!—Mother!" she still pursued, in a solemn, reflective tone of deep feeling: Mother! how sweet, how sacred, how hallowed in our memories that name!—Mother! the first word we are taught to lisp in infancy—the first being we look upon with the awakening intelligence of an immortal soul—the truest, kindest, most unselfish friend we ever have in our sometimes long and dreary journey through life. Whatever may be our misfortunes, or our triumphs, she, while living, stands ever ready to condole with us, weep with us, or rejoice with us. Our sorrows are her sorrows—our joys are her joys—and every prayer that ascends from her heart to the Throne of God, bears to Heaven a holy petition for our prosperity and happiness. We may slight her counsels—we may abuse her kindness; but she never forgets us; we are ever in her thoughts: and should the world forsake us, and all others desert, we may count on her to stand unflinchingly by us, the rock in the tempest, to which we may cling till the wave of death engulfs. And when that period comes," pursued Gertrude, in a still sadder and more solemn tone; "when her venerable head is laid low in death; when we have taken our last look of that dear face—pressed our lips to those cold lips, which in life warmed our very soul with an electrical

thrill of love, but which shall now speak to us no more; and have seen her revered form lowered into the cold and silent grave; and heard the sods of the valley fall hollowly upon her coffin; and have turned away with the painful conviction that none are left to fill her place—then do we recall, in tears, her goodness and her love; and feel, in each throb of our grief-torn hearts, that, until this awful separation, we never knew how truly dear she was to us."

While Gertrude was thus soliloquising—for it can hardly be said that she was addressing her companion—Simple Roley again suspended his labor with the oar, and listened; and when her voice had ceased, he said, drawing a hand across his eyes:

"I love to hear you talk so, Mistress Gerty; but it makes me very sad."

"But you did not tell me the dream you had about your mother?"

"Then how do you know I had such a dream?" inquired the other.

"I mean you did not tell me *when* you dreamed it!"

"I don't understand what you mean," returned Jacob, with a look of perplexity.

"Well, never mind!" rejoined Gertrude; who now perceived that all recollection of the dream, and the words he had uttered concerning it, had passed from the mind of her simple companion; if indeed—and with her it was a matter of doubt—he could at the time have been conscious of what he was saying. "Never mind, Roley; we will talk about something else. Why, here we are, almost to our little island! Come, we must land there—for I wish to see how my little bower looks so early in the morning."

The island to which Gertrude alluded, and of which mention has been previously made, was a small, narrow strip of land which divided the waters of the Monongahela.

On one side was a sandy, level beach; but the remainder of it was covered with trees and under-growth, which formed a delightful shade in the mid-day heats of mid-summer. In one of its coolest and most shady recesses, Gertrude, with a little labor, had constructed a bower, to which a path led from the beach, and around which grew vines, and bloomed numerous wild flowers. It was a beautiful little retreat, this bower; for all that nature had not done in its construction, had been done by the hand of one who possessed no common share of skill, taste, and refinement.

And never did this little bower appear more beautiful and enchanting, than it did on that morning, as Gertrude seated herself under the green, dewy leaves, and saw the sun just rising over the eastern hills, and pouring in upon her a flood of yellow, golden light, and heard the feathered choir fill the balmy air with melodious songs of rejoicing.

She could have remained here for hours without weariness; but she remembered that her absence might be a source of alarm to the family, and so she made her stay short. As she entered the boat on her return, she observed, on the opposite shore, a small bush, covered with summer blossoms of the brightest hue; and thinking these might please the children, she requested Jacob to paddle over to them; which he did. As the boat touched the bank, which sloped upward to a goodly height, Gertrude sprung out, and bounded up the acclivity, to where the bush was growing. But like most objects which look beautiful at a distance, she found the blossoms would not bear a close inspection—being coarse in texture and color, and of an unpleasant smell.

"Well, I declare," she said, slightly pouting her lips, "I have half a mind to get vexed; for I was anticipating the pleasure which my return, with so many bright blossoms,

would give the dear children; when lo! I reach them, and find them worthless. Ah me! I fear it is too often true, that anticipation is the reality of enjoyment—the reality itself being merely the gilded ball of the steeple, which a distant vision transmutes into solid gold. Disappointment, too, in this life, like a grim shadow, is ever with us, to depress our spirits; and were it not for the sun of Hope, shining out and casting this shadow behind us, we should be miserable indeed. Well, now that I am so far up the hill, I will venture to the top, and take a view of our cabin from this side of the river, in this mellow morning light."

With this Gertrude tripped away lightly, and soon reached the summit of the sloping bank, where she halted, and turned her face in the direction of the knoll. She had merely given a glance over the scene, when she was startled by hearing the rustling of bushes behind her; and as she turned quickly round, she beheld, to her horror, a large, black, shaggy bear, coming directly toward her. Flight could scarcely have saved her now; but even this resource was denied to her; for every limb was paralyzed with terror; and she stood like a statue, with her gaze rivetted upon the beast, and her eyes almost starting from their sockets; while the animal, seeing that she faced him, raised himself upon his hind legs, and approached her with more caution.

Time, in our individual lives, cannot properly be measured by minutes, and hours, and days, and weeks, and months, and years—for there are sometimes moments in our existence, when the impression of thoughts, feelings, passions, emotions, and recollections, becomes so powerful, that we live an age in a moment; and there are other times, when years pass, and we can only recall them as a short, delightful dream. The former was now the case with our heroine. In the few moments she stood there—

unable to move—unable to breathe—with her straining eyes fixed upon the savage beast, which was approaching to destroy her—she seemed to live a whole life; and it would almost fill a volume, to tell what she thought—concerning the past, the present, and the future—in the time it would take one to count ten.

Near, and nearer drew the beast, till not more than six feet divided him from Gertrude; and yet she could not move—could not speak—could not even breathe; but she could think! think! think! and a thousand thoughts, in the twinkling of an eye, each clear and distinct from the other, crowded themselves upon her throbbing brain.

Suddenly the sharp crack of a rifle awoke the echoes of the forest; and the huge bear, with a howl of pain and rage, dropped upon his four feet, and turned from her. Another glance showed Gertrude the figure of a hunter, emerging, with a bound, from a near covert; and the enraged animal, with savage growls and howls, making toward him. She saw this—more like the flitting shadow of a dream than a reality—and then a deep darkness settled over her vision, thought ceased, and all the overtaxed senses slept.

CHAPTER X.

THE WOUNDED HUNTER.

WHEN consciousness first returned to Gertrude Wilburn, she gazed around her with a bewildered air; and it was some moments ere she could recall the thrilling scene, of which we gave a brief description at the close of the preceding chapter. Then she started to her feet, in no little alarm; but found her limbs weak and trembling, her mind confused, and sight unsteady. A low, half-stifled groan drew her attention toward the point where she had seen the figure of the hunter emerging from the covert, and a few feet this side she beheld two dark objects lying on the ground near together. Another glance showed her that one of these objects was the animal which had sought her life, and the other the hunter who had so opportunely come to her rescue. Both were apparently dead—for neither moved; and Gertrude, after gazing upon them a few moments, with strange, indescribable feelings, ventured to approach them—but slowly and timidly, as one naturally draws near a horrible sight—impelled forward by a secret something almost impossible to resist.

The bear was dead and bloody, with his throat partly cut, and several deep wounds on his body; and the hunter, with his clothes rent in several places, and his flesh here and there badly lacerated, as if done by the teeth or claws of the beast, was lying on his face, actually weltering in his own blood, with a large hunting-knife tightly clasped in his right hand. There had evidently been a fearful

struggle between the beast and the man ; and both seemed to have ended the strife with their lives at the same time—neither victorious over the other.

Sick at heart, and her whole frame trembling, Gertrude gazed upon the horrifying sight ; and when she wanted to turn away, and flee from the awful scene, she found herself enchained to the spot by some unaccountable spell.

“May God be merciful to you, who, to save my poor life, so heroically sacrificed your own!” she at length ejaculated, clasping her hands, and gazing upon the bloody form of the hunter, with strange, wild emotions.

As she spoke, the wounded man gave another stifled groan, as if in response to her words.

“Now may God forgive me for standing idle here, above this noble hunter, when perhaps I can do something to restore the life that is not as yet wholly lost!” she cried, with a strong feeling of self-reproach ; and instantly bending down, she turned the stranger over upon his back, and, placing her right arm under his head, gently raised it, and supported it against her body ; while she gazed upon his handsome, manly features, with feelings and emotions so strangely commingled, that we shall not stop here to analyze them.

✓ The stranger was a young man—or, at most, not more than five-and-twenty years of age—and his face, which was not scarred or scratched, or even spotted with blood, was striking, noble, and intellectual. It was very pale, however ; the eyes were closed ; the teeth appeared to be tightly ground together ; the lips were compressed ; and the prevailing expression was one of great physical suffering. There was a frightful wound across his breast, from which the blood was still flowing ; and as Gertrude looked at this, she felt her senses reel ; and it was only by a great

effort—a strong exercise of her will—that she could keep herself from swooning.

“Great Heaven !” she cried, almost distractedly : “what shall I do ? what shall I do ? If I leave him, and go for assistance, he may die ; and yet what can I do here ? Jacob ! Roley !” she called, wildly : “where are you ? Quick ! Jacob—come here !”

She waited a few moments ; but receiving no answer, she called again in a still louder tone ; but to this, like the other, there was no response.

“Perhaps he is dead !” she pursued, looking upon the young man with an icy shudder—for though life, in such a condition, was fearful to Gertrude, death was still more awful to contemplate. “But no !” she continued, placing a hand upon his heart ; “there is a slight pulsation here—though, he does not seem to breathe. Ah me ! I fear all will soon be over ; and yet, oh, God ! I would not have him die ! for then the reflection that his life had been given for mine, would make my life miserable indeed ! Can I do nothing ?—oh ! great Heaven ! can I do nothing to save him ?”

She looked again at the frightful wound on the breast ; and, as she saw the life-blood slowly ebbing away, the idea occurred to her that she might possibly staunch it ; and instantly tearing off her apron, she doubled it so as to cover the laceration, and made it fast around the body. Scarcely had she done this, when the wounded man, with a kind of gurgling gasp, and a low groan, opened his eyes, and fixed them upon hers with an expression of bewildered wonder.

“Who are you ?” he said, faintly, but without attempting to change his position, and apparently unconscious of his real condition.

“I am one whose life you have just saved, at the risk—God forefend that I shall ever be obliged to say at the ex-

pense—of your own; and one who, whatever your fate may be, noble sir, will never cease to remember you with the deepest feelings of gratitude!" replied Gertrude, with the full warmth of her grateful nature. "Oh! sir," she continued, "it gives me unbounded joy to see you revive, and hear you speak! for now I have hope that God, in His mercy, will preserve you from the awful fate to which I feared you were consigned!"

"This is a singular dream!" said the stranger, slowly closing his eyes, as if to convince himself it were nothing more than a sleeping vision.

"Would to Heaven, for your sake, it were a dream!" said Gertrude, warmly; "but alas! it is a too painful, too horrible reality!"

"Am I then awake?" returned the other, with more energy, opening his eyes again, and glancing quickly around him. "Ah! yes," he continued, as his gaze rested upon the bloody carcass of the beast, which he had so manfully fought and slain—"I seem to remember something—something;" and he brought one hand to his forehead, as if to assist his memory. "All is confused," he muttered; "all is confused. My mind seems to grasp something wild and terrible—but I cannot distinctly recall what has happened. Tell me, fair lady, why are you here supporting me, and gazing upon me with such a look of commiseration?"

Gertrude hurriedly related all that she herself knew concerning what had taken place.

"And so I am wounded, you say?" rejoined the stranger, glancing down at the bandage that passed across his breast. "And here too, it seems!" he continued, wonderingly, placing his hand upon it. "Is it not strange that I feel no pain?" he said: "these wounds you speak

of must be mere scratches;" and he was about to push the bandage away, but Gertrude prevented him.

"Do not, sir, remove it!" she said; "for, I assure you, the wound is frightful to look at, and I would not willingly see it again."

"Ah! yes—you must be right," rejoined the other, feebly; "for I feel very faint;" and he again closed his eyes, and seemed to be greatly exhausted. "Water!" he resumed, still more faintly; "water! give me water! I am—my throat feels—parched;" and, with the last word, he relapsed into his previous state of unconsciousness.

"He asks for water and I have no means of bringing it to him," thought Gertrude. "What shall I do? He may die now, after all, and no one here to assist me! Roley!" she called again, in loud, thrilling tones: "Roley! where are you? why do you not answer me? He answers me not," she said, despairingly: "perhaps he has gone home: what shall I do?"

At this moment her eye rested on a horn cup attached to the girdle of the hunter.

"Ah! she exclaimed—"I now at least have the means of procuring water;" and gently laying the wounded man upon the ground, she detached the cup, and bounded away down the declivity to the river.

To her surprise, she found the boat made fast to the shore, but the simpleton was nowhere in sight. She called his name again and again, but only the echoes of the forest responded. Gertrude was now alarmed for his safety; for the water here was deep, and she feared the poor fellow had fallen into it. She looked eagerly up and down the bank—but could see nothing of him. She looked up and across the river, to the knoll, which from here was just visible—but she could see no one stirring there.

"Alas! most eventful day! most woeful adventure!" she

exclaimed, wringing her hands in despair; and then quickly filling the cup with water, she hastened back to the stranger, scarcely conscious of what she was doing. She found him lying as she left him—but still unconscious. He was breathing, too—but irregularly, and with much difficulty. This, however, in a slight degree, renewed her hope that he might yet be saved; and stooping down, she gently raised his head again, and moistened his lips. Slowly the lids of his eyes again unclosed, to the great joy of our heroine, who instantly placed the cup to his lips, saying, eagerly:

“Here is water, sir! here is water—drink! drink! it may revive you.”

The wounded man, with a convulsive gasp, now made a hurried, nervous attempt to comply with her request; and Gertrude, in her haste to assist him, let the cup slip, and the contents were spilled. The stranger uttered a groan of disappointment, and Gertrude a cry of despair.

“It does seem,” she said mentally, “as if Providence had deserted both of us. One moment!” she said aloud, easing the wounded man down upon the earth. “One moment! and I will be back with more.”

She darted away again to the water, running like one demented; and filling the cup, hurried back up the hill, and reached the stranger completely out of breath. Again she lifted him, put the cup to his lips, and this time he managed to swallow the liquid—gulping it down with the wild eagerness of one dying of thirst.

“More!” he said, faintly: “more!”

Again Gertrude hurried to the river and back; but even this was not sufficient; and it was not till the third cup had been drained, that the wounded man’s thirst was appeased.

“How do you feel, sir, now?” anxiously inquired Gertrude.

To this question there was no answer; and Gertrude, after waiting a few moments, still supporting the stranger’s head, repeated it.

“Weak,” was the faint reply—“very weak.”

“I must get assistance, and have you removed!” said Gertrude; but the hunter either did not hear her, or felt himself unable to reply, for he made no answer.

Again placing her preserver carefully on the ground, Gertrude hastened down to the boat, in the hope of finding her simple companion; but the moonling was still absent, and her loud and oft repeated calls failed to get from him a response. The sun was by this time more than an hour above the hills; and Gertrude noted this with additional anxiety; for she rightly conjectured that her absence was causing her friends, on the opposite side of the river, a good deal of uneasiness, not to say alarm.

“Well,” she sighed—“there is no help for it, and I must try my skill with the oar—though, I feel almost certain, I can never get this boat across, and so far up the stream.”

She unloosed its fastenings as she spoke; and stepping into it, took up the oar; but just as she was about pushing from the bank, she accidentally descried the Major and Cuba coming down the creek on a kind of raft.

“Thank Heaven!” she exclaimed—“I shall get assistance at last. They have missed the boat, and rightly conjectured that Roley and I took it.”

Gertrude now watched her friends with intense interest. On leaving the creek, they pushed out into the current of the Monongahela, and slowly floated down the stream. It was nearly a quarter-of-an-hour after this, ere they got within hail of our anxious heroine; and it took them some five minutes longer to work their awkward clumsy craft to the point where she was standing; although her repeated calls

to them, to hasten, for the love of Heaven, caused them to exert themselves to the utmost.

"What is it, Gertrude? what is the matter? what has happened?" cried the Major, with a look of alarm, as he leaped upon the bank, followed by the wondering Cuba.

There is a stranger up here, badly wounded—perhaps dying—perhaps dead," answered Gertrude, breathlessly. "Come! quick! follow me, and I will show him to you!" and she darted away up the hill—the Major keeping close to her side, and Cuba only a pace behind.

The hunter was found lying exactly as Gertrude had left him, still breathing, but still unconscious.

"Great Heaven!" cried Hargrave, as he got a sight of the wounded man, and the dead beast by his side; "what is the meaning of this?"

Gertrude hurriedly related what had taken place, including an account of her efforts to do something for the poor fellow, and her despair at not being able for so long a time to get any assistance.

"And so," returned the Major, compressing his lips and shuddering, "you were snatched by this young man from the very jaws of death! Poor fellow! poor fellow! God send that his gallant defence of you may not cost him his life!"

"Oh! God forbid that it should!" cried Gertrude, earnestly; "but I greatly fear he will never recover."

"Well, we will take him home, and do the best we can for him," returned the Major. "Ah! Gertrude, Gertrude," he continued, with a reproving glance; "you should not have left home as you did; you should have told me, at least, where you were going; we have all been made very uneasy by your absence."

"It was wrong, I know, Edward, and severely have I been punished. Good Heavens!" she suddenly exclaimed;

"I had forgotten to tell you that Simple Roley is not to be found. I left him at the boat; and have called and called—but all in vain. I fear he is drowned."

"Be not alarmed, Gertrude," replied Hargrave, in a soothing tone. "You know the poor fellow's habits; and doubtless he has wandered down the bank. I hope no harm has befallen him!" he added, gravely; "for I feel as if he were one of my own children. But the stranger must be first attended to; and as soon as we get him home, I will start Cuba here in search of Jacob. Come, Cuba! we must now take the wounded man down to the boat; and you must mind your steps, and handle him very carefully."

"Yes, Mas'er," answered the black; and then he muttered to himself: "Well, dis chile isn't de knowinest nigger dat eber liv'd, dat's sartain; but one ting dis nigger's got to say to hisse'f, in dese horritific times; and dat is, dat if I's seen a b'ar, like dis gentlem did—and like dis gentlem, I's knowed all de time dat he was a b'ar—and dat ar' same b'ar was a comin' arter dis chile—dat dar succumstance would argufy dat dis same nigger's heels would be most powerful circulated in de investigation ob distance; and de b'ar might have de whole groun' to hisse'f—dar."

The stranger was carefully raised, carried down to the boat, taken across to the cabin, laid on a bed, and his wounds dressed as well as circumstances would permit—but without in all this time recovering consciousness. His breathing, meantime, had become a little more regular; but that was all the change that could be perceived for the better; and Major Hargrave, after due deliberation, gave it as his opinion that he would never recover.

Gertrude, who heard him, turned away her head, and complained of dizziness. There were strange, powerful emotions at work in her gentle breast; but none suspected them, and she told her feelings to none.

As soon as the young hunter had been safely deposited

on a bed in the cabin, Cuba, by his master's orders, set off to seek Simple Roley; whom he at last found, about half a mile down the stream, seated on the ground, with a handful of flowers beside him, which, in his own simple way, he was trying to arrange into a kind of bouquet. His return was hailed with joy by all parties—for simple though he was, he was dearly loved by old and young.

In the course of the day, a party of individuals, dressed like hunters, carrying as many rifles, with several other implements belonging to their real profession, crossed the river on the raft which the Major had left on the other side, and at once made inquiry for the very person who now lay wounded and unconscious in the cabin.

They all expressed the warmest affection for the young man; and more than one of them, as they gazed upon him, as he lay before them, with the pallid hue of death upon his handsome features, and lost in a slumber which might never know mortal waking, shed tears of grief at his untimely misfortune.

In reply to the Major's inquiries, they stated that the name of the young man was George Graham; that his family, who resided in the interior of the colony, was one of high standing; and that a more noble, generous-hearted being than himself did not exist. They further stated, that they themselves were in the employ of Government, as topographical surveyors; that, having a natural liking for adventure, young Graham had solicited and received the appointment of assistant to the corps; and that early on the morning of this eventful day, he had left the last night's camp, some two miles distant, in quest of game; and not returning within a reasonable time, they had become alarmed at his absence, and had been anxiously seeking him ever since.

"And now, sir," said the principal personage of the party—a hale, intelligent, venerable-looking gentleman—

addressing himself to Hargrave; "duty will compel us, much against our wishes, to leave this young man in your care; for we can do nothing for him if we remain, and he is not now in a condition to be removed. Besides, sir," he continued, glancing at Mrs. Hargrave and Gertrude, "I am satisfied that I leave him in good hands. His wounds, of course, will need dressing often; and beyond this, great care, careful nursing, almost constant attendance, will be required to restore him to life and strength." Then turning to Gertrude, taking her hand, and fixing his mild eye upon hers, he continued: "As, in some slight degree, young lady, his misfortune may be attributed to his gallant venture in your behalf, may I not rest assured that you will be a kind of guardian angel to him during his confinement here?"

Gertrude colored to the temples, turned deadly pale, dropped her eyes to the ground, and for a moment seemed unable to reply. Then she said quickly, earnestly, but in a tremulous tone:

"I owe my life to him, sir; and God forbid that I should become so ungrateful as to make a poor return for it!"

"Rest assured, sir, that the young man shall have the best attention which my humble means will afford!" rejoined the Major.

"Thank you!" returned the other; "and, as I said before, I am satisfied he is in good hands. Should he die," he added to Hargrave, aside—"bury him so that his body can be recovered by his friends. As soon as I can, I will despatch a message to his father, who will doubtless send for him. And so, sir, I take my leave—for ere the sun sets, I must be miles away."

"Ah!" said Gertrude, mentally, gazing after the departing friends of young Graham, "it needed not *his* words to tell my heart its duty toward one who saved my life at such a fearful risk to his own."

CHAPTER XI.

GERTRUDE AND HER PRESERVER.

DURING the first two or three days of his confinement, George Graham remained in a torpid state of unconsciousness—hanging, as it were, by a mere thread, between life and death. With the first active struggle of nature for the mastery, set in fever and delirium; and for the next three or four days, danger seemed as imminent as before, and none could say how matters would terminate. A week passed, and with it the crisis of his malady. Nature, aided by careful nursing and a strong constitution, triumphed. Reason returned; and from the moment she resumed her sway, he began to amend; but slowly—very, very slowly. During this time he had become much reduced; and pale, weak, and emaciated, he found himself as helpless as an infant, and with a voice that could scarcely articulate above a whisper. All memory of the fearful scene, in which he had played so gallant a part, was now completely obliterated; and he gazed around him in feeble wonder, and as feebly inquired where he was, and the cause of his being there. Gertrude, who so far had been an almost constant attendant upon him, answered his questions in as few words as possible, and then told him he must ask nothing further till his strength should be so restored that he might fairly be considered beyond the danger of a relapse.

We say that, during the long struggle between life and death, Gertrude was an almost constant attendant upon young Graham—ministering, so far as lay in her province and power, to his every want—and only getting,

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out of every twenty-four, but a very few hours of rest for her own weary self. She did not of course dress his wounds; this unpleasant task devolved upon the Major; but she sat by his humble couch the live-long day, and the greater portion of the night; fanning him; smoothing his pillow; moistening his lips and brow; giving him to drink of pure water, and, toward the last, of some weak broths—alas! the all she had to give—manifesting, during all this time, the deepest concern for his fate; and only retiring when earnestly solicited by her friends, and compelled by weariness; and then always leaving the strongest injunctions that he must not for a moment be without a careful watcher by his side.

If Gertrude Wilburn might be said to owe her life to George Graham—George Graham, on the other hand, might almost be said to owe his life to Gertrude Wilburn; so that the obligation on the one side, was nearly equalled by the obligation on the other; and as he, in rescuing her from deadly peril, nearly lost his own life; so she, by long vigils and great mental anxiety on his account, impaired her health to such a degree, that fears were entertained by her friends that a serious illness would be the result. A serious illness did not follow, however; but for several days from the time that young Graham could be pronounced out of danger and convalescing, Gertrude found herself so much indisposed as not to be able to leave the house, and, a portion of the time, not even her bed.

One thing now struck her friends as somewhat singular; and this was—that she, who had all along manifested so deep an interest in the wounded man—an interest, in fact, which had been carried in some measure to an extreme—should now, all suddenly as it were, become, or seem to become, so indifferent about him as rarely ever to mention his name. But they reasoned that her own illness, and

his convalescence, might be a sufficient cause for her to think less of him and more of herself; and they reasoned wrongly—as people frequently do, when they attempt to explain anything peculiar which they really know nothing about.

A woman's heart is a curious something, which may be, and is at times, so filled with contradictions, that she herself would be puzzled to give an explanation of the inconsistencies of her own actions: but this may be recorded as a fact; that whenever sympathy and gratitude are the two strongest emotions of her heart, the object which excites these emotions to the greatest degree, will rarely fail to become an object of still deeper interest to her—and never, if both parties be young, and both with affections unoccupied. Love, that something invisible, intangible, and undefined, which emanates from an unknown source—which, pure, and sacred, and holy, completely pervades the grosser being, to the refinement of every thought, passion, and emotion; love, which is the soul of angels, and one of the great attributes of Deity—which, like a light from Heaven, casts a halo around our existence—elevating, ennobling, and purifying our every feeling and sentiment; love, we say, so pure and perfect in itself, will, when brought to bear upon a human organization, display itself in accordance with that organization; and thus at times its shadowings forth will be so inconsistent with what love is known to be, that its presence will not be even so much as suspected by any one who is not deeply skilled in the art of reading the human heart through all its mysterious workings.

We do not say that Gertrude Wilburn was in love; but we *have* said that love is oftentimes strange in its operations; and we *do* say, that Gertrude's apparent indifference concerning George Graham, considering all that had

gone before, was certainly very curious and inconsistent; and had we been present, with the little experience in human nature which we now possess, we should undoubtedly have suggested a different cause for her almost cold reserve than the one assigned by her friends.

Days passed on, and weeks elapsed from the first confinement of Graham; and yet so slow was his recovery, that even now he was barely able to sit up and walk about the house. Gertrude, meantime, had regained her health; though her features were paler than before, and she appeared more pensive, abstracted, and less buoyant, than was her wont. She often waited upon Graham, and saw that he did not want for anything; but her manner was that of one who felt it to be a duty, rather than that of one who found any pleasure in the employment. If he chanced to address her, she answered him; but answered him briefly—sometimes with a heightened color—yet always in such a way as to check, rather than prolong, the conversation.

All these things he noticed; and, being very sensitive, noticed them with pain; for he felt that he was in some sort an intruder; and he ardently desired strength, that he might get away, and no longer be a burden upon the family: though once or twice, on hinting such a thing to Hargrave, the Major, who neither knew nor suspected the source whence such an idea originated, seemed much hurt, and assured his guest, in the most cordial manner, that he should be welcome to make his poor house his home for years, if he in return could make himself contented to remain that long and put up with his humble fare.

“Mr. Graham,” he said, in reply to the second hint of this nature from his guest, “I beg you will never mention the matter again—for it hurts my feelings more than you can be aware of. That you wish to leave, I have no doubt

—for what attraction is there for you here? and Heaven send you a speedy recovery—but to suppose that I, or any my family, consider you in the light of an intruder, or a burden upon us, is to suppose us dead to every feeling of gratitude. Why, sir, had it not been for you—for your noble, manly behaviour at the time you received those wounds, which have bound you here a prisoner, in a place unfitted for you—this dwelling would now be a house of mourning, and every head in it would be bowed with grief. A burden upon us indeed! Poh! poh! preposterous supposition!”

“Well, well—perhaps I was wrong,” replied Graham; “and I will never again wound your feelings by such another allusion. But do not mention the matter to any of your family, Major—not even to your wife. Promise me this!”

“I do, sir; I give you my word, I will not, at least while you remain with us, mention the matter to a living soul,” replied Hargrave.

He kept his word; and the conversation having occurred when the two were alone together, Gertrude knew nothing about it; and, consequently, her manner toward Graham remained unchanged.

In the preceding chapter, at the time when the bewildered and frightened Gertrude turned over the body of her preserver, as he lay weltering in his blood, we stated that the face of the wounded man was striking, noble, and intellectual. That same face was now pale and thin, being much wasted by long confinement and suffering—but it was still very handsome. There was the high, broad forehead; the straight, chiselled nose; the full, proud lips; the curved and rounded chin; and the eye of blue, large and full, and very expressive; while the whole countenance had the appearance of being lighted up from within by a manly, noble soul. Pride, decision, energy, and command,

were stamped upon every lineament—softened by benevolence, gentleness, and suavity—and ennobled by veneration, true dignity, and proper self-respect. His skin was smooth and fair, his hair light and curly, his stature medium, his carriage graceful, and his manners polished. Such was the appearance of George Graham, in his hunter-dress, at a period some ten days subsequent to the conversation just recorded, when, with his health and strength sufficiently restored to enable him to walk with considerable ease in the open air, he began seriously to think about taking his departure.

Approaching Hargrave, one day, where he was at work, not far from the dwelling, he said:

“Well, Major, I have come to speak with you concerning taking my leave; though this time, I trust, I shall not wound your feelings by mentioning the subject—for I am not even going to hint that my presence in your family is the least inconvenience; but I think the time has arrived that will safely permit me to attempt a long journey.”

“I am heartily rejoiced, Mr. Graham, that you find yourself strong enough to *think* about leaving,” replied Hargrave, cordially; “but I do not like the idea, that you intend to leave us soon, nevertheless. Can you not content yourself to remain at least a couple of weeks longer? Remember! a long journey is a hard task, when one has his full strength, which you have not.”

“That is true,” returned Graham; “but I am so anxious to get home, and among my friends, that I think seriously of making the trial. Recollect, I have been confined six weeks in your house—during which time I have not heard a word from home, nor seen the face of a single friend or acquaintance, your own family excepted.”

“You think then of going home?” said Hargrave, thoughtfully.

"Yes, that is my intention. Colonel Warden, the venerable gentleman you mentioned as being so kindly solicitous about my fate—and who is at the head of the topographical corps, to which I had the honor to belong at the time of receiving my wounds—has forgotten, doubtless, that any such person as my poor self ever existed; or, if he remembers me at all, he doubtless thinks I am safely under the sod; and, consequently, that there is no further need of troubling himself about me. Well, one thing is certain—I shall not soon forget him."

This was spoken with a flashing eye, a contracted brow, a compressed lip, and in the bitter, sarcastic tone of a proud man who feels he has been carelessly neglected by his friends.

"We should be very careful, Mr. Graham," replied Hargrave, in a soothing tone—intended to allay the excitement, console, and soften down the acrimony of the proud-spirited, sensitive young man,—“We should be very careful how we render judgment against absent friends, for what seems careless or wilful neglect, until we can get the most positive proof that they are really deserving of our censure. Now as regards the gentleman you term Colonel Warden, I saw him shed tears as he gazed upon you; and from the manner in which he spoke of you, I am sure you have not been forgotten. Why he has not since visited you, or sent to learn your fate, or forwarded intelligence to your friends, is more than I can say; though I am inclined to believe that all three have been attempted, and frustrated by some unforeseen cause. You should bear in mind, that it is no very easy matter to get a message conveyed through a pathless wilderness for a distance of one or two hundred miles!”

"True—true," returned Graham, in an altered tone; "and in thinking myself intentionally neglected, I may

have done the Colonel great injustice. I trust I have—for I should be sorry to lose my esteem for him. Well, to let that pass, and return to that which most interests me. Will you lend me a horse?"

"No; but I will give you one, and the best one I own, if you will accept of it," answered Hargrave. "But, surely, Mr. Graham, you do not intend to leave us immediately?"

"I should like to set out the day after to-morrow, Major."

"Alone? without a guide?"

"Of necessity, I suppose I must—since there is no one to be a companion or guide."

"You must not go alone, Mr. Graham," said Hargrave, thoughtfully. "Where did you tell me your father resides?"

"In Augusta county, some two hundred miles from here."

"Two hundred miles," repeated Hargrave; "two hundred miles; a long, hard, perilous journey; and, even with good luck, one could scarcely go and return in less than three weeks. And then my family—"

"Do not think of accompanying me yourself, Major!" interrupted Graham; "I would not hear to such a thing."

"But you cannot go alone?"

"Why not, sir? I have a pocket compass, a good rifle, and, with a good horse, I shall get along very well."

"Can I not prevail on you to defer your journey for a couple of weeks, Mr. Graham?" said Hargrave, anxiously. "Come, now—what say you? Something tells me, that within that time you will hear from your friends."

"Thank you, Major, for your solicitude on my behalf; but I feel confident I shall get through without difficulty; and having fixed my mind upon starting the day after to-

morrow, I could not easily reconcile myself to a postponement."

"Have you mentioned your intention of leaving to my wife or Gertrude?"

"To neither, sir."

"Well, do so; and you will thus have an opportunity of ascertaining to what extent you are welcome here."

"I do not know what Mrs. Hargrave may say," returned Graham; "but I do not think Miss Wilburn will care whether I go or stay; or rather, I mean to say, I do not think she will care how soon I go."

"Ah! I see!" rejoined Hargrave, as one struck with a new thought; "I see! I now, I think, detect the cause of your former hints, Mr. Graham, that you might be a burden upon us. You think Gertrude is indifferent about your fate?"

"Cold," was the answer; "cold as an iceberg."

Hargrave mused.

"Strange!" he said; "very strange! It is not her nature—for a warmer, or more affectionate, heart does not beat. Why, sir, if one of my servants should get a scratch, he would be sure of sympathy from Gertrude, even though all others should laugh at or make light of it. And you are her preserver! and your life was risked for hers! and she was never known to be wanting in gratitude. And then, the way she hung over you while you remained unconscious! doing everything for you that the fondest sister could have done—and even by her close attention, impairing her own health! It is certainly strange, very strange, her manner toward you of late—and I do not know how to account for it."

"Perhaps I have unconsciously given her offence," replied the other; "at least, I am satisfied she dislikes me."

"Well, Mr. Graham," rejoined the Major, thoughtfully,

"see her alone, tell her you are about to leave, and watch her countenance. Women are curious beings—some of them at least—and should we always judge them by appearances, we should often judge wrongly. Will you act upon my suggestion, Mr. Graham, and let me know the result?"

"Certainly, Major, if you desire it—though I doubt that she scarcely makes me a reply."

"And I," said Hargrave to himself, "think she will reply in a way you little expect."

In a musing mood, George Graham returned to the dwelling.

"Gertrude Wilburn!" he soliloquized, as he walked slowly along: "I do wonder if I have so mistaken her nature! Ah me! there is something fascinating about her, with all her coldness; and if she could—But pshaw! what am I thinking of? she cares nothing for me; and I would let this proud heart break, sooner than any one should know I cared for a woman who had not reciprocal feelings. Ha!" he added, looking up, as he drew near the house; "yonder she sits, under the old oak, alone. A good opportunity to carry out the Major's suggestion! I will speak to her."

CHAPTER XII.

THE INTERVIEW AND DEPARTURE.

GERTRUDE WILBURN was seated on a rough bench, under the oak, near the cabin, with her eyes apparently fixed on some object in the distance; but she really saw nothing; for her mind was completely abstracted from the external sense of seeing, and her quick-coming thoughts had no connection with the scene before her. Her features were unusually pale, and wore an expression of melancholy; and it would have been evident to the most casual observer, could he have seen her as she then appeared, that something preyed deeply upon her mind. Her look was toward the south; and as young Graham approached from an opposite direction, she did not see him; and her mind being so intensely occupied, she did not hear his steps; so that he at length actually stood beside her, without her being aware of his presence.

"Miss Wilburn," he said, "I hope I may be pardoned for so unceremoniously intruding upon your meditations!"

At the first sound of his voice, Gertrude gave a sudden start; and as she turned quickly toward him, he saw the hot blood rush upward, till her neck, face, forehead, and temples, were one continuous glow. She rose to her feet, in much seeming agitation, and her first effort to make some reply was unsuccessful.

"Again let me crave pardon for disturbing you!" said Graham.

"No disturbance, sir—Mr. Graham—not in the least—

I assure you," replied Gertrude, with no little embarrassment. "This is a favorite seat of mine," she continued; "and I often pass an idle hour here under the shade. I must have been unusually occupied just now, I think—for I was not aware of any one being near, till I heard your voice, which rather startled me."

"You seemed to be lost in a very deep revery," returned the other; "and I fear I did not right in breaking in upon it."

"Yes, Mr. Graham, I was thinking—"

She paused suddenly, in some confusion, and left the sentence unfinished. Observing her closely, for a moment or two, her companion said, in a grave tone:

"It was with no idle purpose, Miss Wilburn, that I joined you here. I had a few words to say to you, which, for a reason, I wished to speak with no third party present. Not to prolong the matter, I would in the first place inquire what I have done to offend you?"

"Offend *me*, Mr. Graham?" exclaimed Gertrude, turning to the other with an air of the most unbounded surprise.

"Yes, Miss Wilburn, to speak frankly, I have for a long time been under the impression that I had at some time given you offence—though as to when, and in what manner, I have never been able to determine."

"Oh! sir, what has led you to think thus?" rejoined Gertrude, in some agitation.

"Merely your manner towards me, which has ever been cold and distant—at least, so far as I have been conscious of it; though when I lay at the point of death, as I have been informed, no fond sister could have been more unremitting in her attentions than you were. And this brings me to say, that, owing my life to you, as I believe I do, I

wish to thank you, from my very soul, for your kindness and care."

While Graham was speaking, Gertrude stood gazing upon him as one taken by surprise—her features alternately flushing and paling; and it was some moments after his voice had ceased, ere she seemed to be aware of the fact. Then, in a tone tremulous with deep feeling, she replied:

"Mr. Graham, do not thank me for what I did for you—but rather let me thank you, with my whole heart, that I am now living. Sir! believe me, I feel more gratitude than I can find words to express. I was in danger—in imminent danger—in deadly peril—when you, so to speak, stepped between that danger and me, and drew it upon yourself. In my defence you received those terrible wounds, which have for weeks kept you upon a bed of pain; and now, for merely giving you some little attention then, you come and thank me, as if I had been *your* preserver instead of your having been *mine*. And then to suppose you had given me offence! Offence!" she repeated; "offence! Great Heaven! has my manner indeed been so cold? Erase that impression from your mind, Mr. Graham, or I shall never forgive myself."

"I will—I have erased it—or rather, your present words have, Miss Wilburn," replied the other, quickly, and with feeling. "I perceive I have misjudged you; and Heaven knows how gladly I acknowledge my error!"

Gertrude, who still seemed much embarrassed, made no reply to this—but with flushed features, and eyes bent on the ground, stood silently, as if waiting and expecting to hear something more. For a few moments, the young man regarded her with a peculiar expression of countenance; and then, with his eyes rivetted upon her features, as if to catch every passing thought and emotion, he continued, in

a tone of much gentleness, prefaced by something like a sigh:

"It is a great relief to me, Miss Wilburn, to know, from your own lips, that whatever cause there may have been for the apparent coldness of your manner toward me, it did not arise from any act of mine. And this is the more satisfactory to me now, that, in taking my leave of you, perhaps forever, I can be certain we part as friends."

"Taking your leave of me?" cried Gertrude, looking up suddenly, turning deadly pale, and sinking upon the seat from which she had so lately risen. For a few moments, she seemed struggling to repress some violent emotions; and then, having partially succeeded, she inquired, in an unsteady voice: "What am I to understand from your words, Mr. Graham? that you are about to leave us?"

"Such is my present intention, Miss Wilburn," answered Graham, in a tone that indicated he was not an indifferent spectator to the strong manifestation of feeling in his fair companion which his previous words had excited. "I have just spoken with the Major," he continued, "and have made arrangements for my departure."

"When do you go?" asked Gertrude, without looking up, and evidently making a great effort to keep down her feelings, and appear calm and composed.

"I have thought of starting the day after to-morrow."

"But your wounds, Mr. Graham?"

"They are nearly healed, and do not trouble me now."

"But your strength?"

"Is so nearly recovered, that I think I may venture upon a long journey without fear."

"A long journey, say you?"

"It is some two hundred miles to my father's," replied the other; "and some would deem that a long journey, to

travel through a pathless wilderness, without a companion or guide."

"Two hundred miles, through a pathless wilderness, without a companion or guide!" repeated Gertrude, with a slight shudder. "And you in your present condition! This must not be, Mr. Graham—you must not think of attempting it yet: you might faint by the way—to say nothing of the dangers there are to encounter, of which you have already had some sad experience."

"All is settled, nevertheless—and, Heaven willing, I shall start at the appointed time," replied the other, with a perversity unnatural to him; and which, all things considered, must have arisen from some of those strange workings of the human heart, such as had operated upon Gertrude to produce that change in her manner of which we have already spoken.

As Graham declared his intention of leaving in such positive tones, he kept his eyes rivetted upon his fair companion, as if to read her inmost thoughts. For a short time, the struggle with her feelings appeared to be greater than ever; and then she seemed suddenly to grow calm and composed. Rising steadily from her seat, she turned her face toward him; and though he saw it was very pale, and that there was a slight contraction of some of the muscles, as one in pain, and a slight quivering of the ashy lips—yet, to his surprise, her voice was clear, and full, and without a tremor in its tone, as she said:

"I am really sorry to hear, Mr. Graham, that you have determined to leave us so soon; for, seriously, I do not think you equal to the task of such a long, fatiguing journey. I am fully aware there is no inducement for you to remain here, unless it may be for the purpose of regaining your wonted strength; but still, when one contemplates an undertaking in which strength amounts almost to life, this

is something of importance, and should have due consideration. Do you not think, Mr. Graham, you had better reconsider the matter, and remain with us a few days longer? I need not add, I suppose, that the noble and gallant preserver of my life, will be most heartily welcome to all that our impoverished circumstances can give."

As Gertrude said this, Graham colored to the temples; and he looked keenly at the fair speaker, as if he suspected the words were spoken ironically. But he could detect nothing to give this suspicion the presumption of certainty; all appeared to be fair and well meant, though more coldly expressed than he could have desired; and after some little hesitation, he replied, in a tone of assumed indifference:

"Your argument against my speedy departure, Miss Wilburn, is, in effect, if not in precise language, the same as that of the Major; but the truth is, as I told him, I am anxious to get home, among my friends; and having settled in my mind the time of my departure, it would be very difficult for me to reconcile myself to any postponement."

"Pardon me, then, Mr. Graham, for having made any suggestion in opposition to your fixed determination!" rejoined Gertrude, her voice very slightly faltering, in spite of her efforts to the contrary. "I was in hope that you had not so seriously decided on starting at a given time, or I should not have presumed to speak as I did." Then, after a slight pause, during which she again seemed struggling to suppress some rising emotions, she continued, in a tone that was certainly tremulous: "Well, sir, go—since go you must—and may the choicest of Heaven's blessings go with you! Whatever may be your fate or mine, I shall never forget, Mr. Graham, that I owe my life to your generous daring; and may this heart cease to beat, when I cease to remember you with gratitude! God bless you,

sir! and prosper both you and yours! I will not say farewell now—but reserve that word for our final parting.”

Saying this, Gertrude turned slowly away, and began to move forward toward the dwelling. For a few moments, her companion stood irresolute, his features alternately flushing and paling; and then, a gush of feeling seeming to get the mastery, he exclaimed:

“Stay! Miss Wilburn—stay! one moment;” and as Gertrude halted, he sprung to her side, seized her hand, and continued, hurriedly, as if he feared to dwell upon the words he uttered: “Something in your language, much in your manner, leads me to think, that—that—I——” He stopped short, and quickly added: “In a word, Miss Wilburn, would it give you pleasure, should I alter my design and remain longer?”

Ere Gertrude, confused and embarrassed, could frame a reply, Simple Roley, with a loud laugh, came bounding from behind the oak; and, running up to Graham, exclaimed:

“Certainly, sir! certainly—stay as long as you like. Haven’t you eyes? can’t you see? If you haven’t, sir, borrow a fool’s—I’ll lend you mine;” and again he laughed loud and long.

Graham bit his lips in vexation, and uttered some sharp exclamation; while Gertrude, suffused with crimson blushes, hastened into the dwelling, without saying a word.

“There she goes,” continued the simpleton; “and, though out of sight, the trail’s broad, and you can follow.”

“Why should I?” said Graham, turning to the moonling with a look of displeasure.

“Why shouldn’t you?” returned Jacob, simply.

“Because it does not suit my present humor,” rejoined the young man, in a tone that showed he was still much vexed at the interruption.

“Do you always follow the bent of your humor, Mr. Graham?” inquired Simple Roley, looking up demurely into the other’s face.

“What if I do or don’t?” was the sharp reply.

“Oh, not much—only I’d like to know.”

“Well, then, generally, I do.”

“So do I,” returned the moonling, with a leer. “So you see, Mr. Graham,” he added, with a kind of foolish laugh, “there’s not so great a difference between you and me as some people think.”

“I begin to think you are more knave than fool,” rejoined Graham, sharply; and turning angrily away, he sauntered off toward the wood.

“I wonder if he’d like to carry out my idea of growing dry wood?” muttered the simpleton, looking after him. “Perhaps I had better ask him. I will. But not now,” he added; “for just now it wouldn’t be the bent of his humor.” And striking up,

“He’s gone, he’s gone, to the green, green wood,”

he strolled off in an opposite direction.

What might have been the result of the interview between Graham and Gertrude, had they not been interrupted, it is not our province to say; but, as a true chronicler, we must here record the fact, that they did not meet again alone; and neither, for the time, touched upon a matter, which, perhaps, lay nearest the hearts of both. When they met again, in the presence of the family, both seemed not a little embarrassed, and only the ordinary civilities of the day passed between them. Graham persisted in his design of leaving at the appointed time; and nothing that the Major, or Mrs. Hargrave, could say to the contrary,

seemed to have the least effect in shaking his determination.

"Well," said Hargrave, "if you will go, I will equip and mount you as best I can, and may Heaven guard you safely home! But should fortune ever send you this way again, Mr. Graham, you will of course call upon us: let me have your promise to that."

Graham glanced toward Gertrude ere he answered; but seeing her face averted, so that he could not catch its expression, he replied, with some warmth:

"Thank you, sir! thank you, Major! Should it ever be my lot to journey this way again, I shall avail myself of your kind invitation; for I shall henceforth count you and your family among my warmest friends."

On the morning of Graham's departure, the household of Hargrave collected in front of the palisade, to take a final leave of him. With an appearance of much feeling, the young man distributed some coins among the negroes and children, not forgetting Simple Roley, and said a friendly parting word to each. It was with an exhibition of still greater feeling, or deeper emotion, that he shook hands with the Major and Mrs. Hargrave. But when he approached Gertrude, the last of all, who stood a little back, pale and sorrowful, the hand which he extended to her, perceptibly trembled; nor was his agitation diminished, when, clasping her hand, he found, by the quivering of its every nerve, that she was also deeply affected.

"Miss Wilburn," he said, in a low, faltering voice—"I am about to bid you farewell: I——"

He stopped—looked full into her sweet, sad, pale countenance, for a few moments—gave her hand, still clasped in his, a warm pressure—and then, without adding another word, turned quickly away, mounted the horse which Cuba

was holding by the bit, and, waving a general adieu to the party, dashed off down the knoll at headlong speed.

"There goes a noble fellow," said Hargrave, as he saw him disappear among the trees of the forest: "May God protect him from all evil!"

He turned to speak a word to Gertrude—but found, to his surprise, she was no longer present.

Poor Gertrude! With a dizzy brain, and swimming eyes, she beheld the form of George Graham borne swiftly away; and staggering into the dwelling, she sought her own little apartment, sunk heavily upon a seat, bowed her fair face upon her hands, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XIII.

MYSTERY.

It now becomes our duty to pass our story rapidly on, to scenes of general excitement, general alarm, general danger, and, alas! that we are obliged to add, general woe. We may linger yet a little while over matters of minor import—for time still lies in the gap between the incidents which have transpired, and those of more startling interest which are to follow.

One evening, about a week from the departure of Graham, as Major Hargrave was sitting just without the door of his cabin, but within the enclosure of the stockade, the heavy gate to which was always securely fastened at nightfall, he heard the distant tramp of a horse, which seemed to be approaching the dwelling at a slow, steady pace.

"Ha! what can this mean?" he exclaimed, rousing himself and listening.

"What is it, Edward?" asked Mrs. Hargrave, anxiously, who was standing in the door-way.

"It sounds like the tread of a horse, and is evidently coming this way. Cuba, are you sure you yarded all the horses?"

"Yes, Mas'er," answered the black, who was stretched out on the ground, but who instantly got up, and endeavored to peer through a loop-hole in the stockade.

"One of our neighbors, probably—who, having ridden away from home, and got belated, is coming here to stop over night," observed the Major, in a tone of indifference,

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which had in part the desired effect of quieting the fears of Mrs. Hargrave.

As the Major said this, he rose to his feet, stretched out his arms with a yawn, and then sauntering to another loop-hole, apparently looked through it with a listless air. We say apparently—for in truth Hargrave felt considerable uneasiness, which he wished to conceal from his wife.

Meantime, the steady tramp of the animal grew more and more audible, till at length the dim outline of a horse and rider could be discerned coming slowly up the slope of the knoll. In front of the gate the beast was reined in, with a loud "Whoa! old hoss!" and then the same voice exclaimed:

"Hello!"

"Well, sir! what is wanted?" replied Hargrave.

"That you, Squire?" returned the voice outside; and as the rider spoke, he began to dismount, with an awkwardness that showed he was by no means master of the art equestrian. "Wall, I reckon you know me by this time—hey?" continued the new-comer, moving close up to the palisade.

"I think I do," replied Hargrave, undoing the fastenings of the gate, and throwing it open. "If I am not mistaken, it is Mr. Gibbs."

"Gibbs it is—all 'o that, Squire: Gid Gibbs, Tomahawk Gibbs, and so on—but—the mister! I never could stand that thar handle, no how. Wall, how ar' ye all? how's the old woman? and the young ones? and the niggers? and—and—wall, you know who, Squire—ha! ha! ha!"

"We are all about," answered the Major—"though, I am sorry to say, we do not all enjoy good health. The children are complaining, and Miss Wilburn is really quite indisposed."

"What's that?" asked Gibbs.

"Why, something between sickness and health."

"Oh, yes, I see!" returned Gibbs, thoughtfully: "a kind o' settlement disorder, I 'spect. Hadn't nothing to do with your gitting out o' bread, and so on, had it, Squire?"

"I think not," answered the Major, with a hearty laugh.

"Now, Squire," said Gibbs, seriously, "don't go for to make fun of that thar gal, for she don't deserve it. Wall, to fotch matters to a pint—you going to let me camp here to-night?"

"Certainly! certainly!—come in! come in!"

"But the hoss, Squire?"

"Cuba will take care of him," answered the Major; and the black immediately approached the animal, and took hold of the bridle. "By-the-by," continued Hargrave, "how is it I see you mounted, Gibbs? I thought you were too much of a hunter to ride through the forest."

"Wall, so I is, Squire, that's a fact; but I kind o' stumbled on to the critter like, and hated to let it go. And another thing; I thought it war like you moughtn't hev got no hard corn yit, and I could ride round and pick up a lettle. I done so, and hev fatched you two bushel of the rale stripe."

"Thank you!" returned Hargrave; "and it will not come amiss; for though mine has begun to harden, it is still too soft for pounding."

"De Lor' golly, Mas'er!" suddenly cried Cuba, leaving the horse and running up to the Major, with a frightened look; "dat dar's a succumstance de mos' suspershus ob dis chile's experience."

"What is the matter?" inquired Hargrave, quickly.

"Dat dar hoss!" dat dar hoss!" exclaimed Cuba, pointing to the beast, and showing a complete circle of white

around both eyes, as he looked alternately at Gibbs and the Major.

"Well, what of the horse? what is the matter with him?" demanded Hargrave, anxiously and sternly.

"Out with it, old nigger!" said Gibbs; who saw by the light which shone from the dwelling, that Cuba was eyeing him suspiciously, and seemingly doubtful about the propriety of speaking in his presence. "Ef you've got anything agin that thar hoss, or me as rid him, let her come!"

"Blockhead!" cried Hargrave, angrily—"why don't you speak! and not keep us in suspense."

"Why, why, Mas'er Hargrave," said Cuba, edging round so as to get the Major between himself and Gibbs, "de succumstance am dis—dat dar hoss am yourn!"

"Mine?" cried Hargrave, in astonishment; and springing forward, he made a hurried examination of the animal. "As I live, it is true!" he exclaimed, turning quickly round to the hunter. "How is this, sir?" he sternly demanded. "This horse is mine—or *was* mine—how came he in your possession?"

"Yourn?" exclaimed Gibbs, in his turn as much astonished as the Major. "Yourn, Squire? That thar critter yourn?"

"He *was* mine, sir; but a few days since I presented him to a very worthy young man, who left here for the interior of the colony. Perhaps you and he met, and you *purchased* the animal!" he added, fixing his eyes keenly upon the singular being he addressed.

"No, Squire—no!" returned Gibbs, in a frank, hearty tone, that tended much to disarm the Major of a growing suspicion that there had been foul work afoot. "No, Squire, I didn't meet nobody, and never bought the critter. I told you fust, I kind o' stumbled on to him—and so I did."

I seed the critter, bridled and saddled, strolling about the wood, and looking kind o' skeered like; and so I cotched him; and arter trying a right smart chance of a while to find a owner, I concluded he mought as well be mine as the wolves, and so I rid him along."

"Heaven grant that no harm has befallen young Graham!" exclaimed the Major.

The remark was heard by Mrs. Hargrave and Gertrude, both of whom were standing in the door; and both came running up to the party, the latter deadly pale, and wearing an expression of the deepest anxiety and alarm.

"How d'ye do, gal?" said Gibbs, looking at Gertrude, taking a large quid of tobacco from his mouth, and making an awkward attempt at a bow.

Gertrude returned the salutation by a quick nod, and exclaimed:

"What is it, Edward? what is it? What news concerning Mr. Graham?"

"This is the horse on which he rode away; and Mr. Gibbs says he found the beast in the woods, but could not find the owner."

"Ah!" cried Gertrude, impulsively giving way to her feelings—"I knew it! my heart foreboded it! I warned him his strength was not equal to the journey—but he heeded not my words. He has fainted by the way! he is dead!" and covering her face with her hands, she leaned against the pallisade for support. Then suddenly bethinking her that perhaps she had said too much, and exposed the secret of her heart and the cause of her recent dejection and indisposition, she started up quickly, withdrew her hands, and continued hurriedly, addressing Gibbs: "Perhaps you think it strange, sir, that this intelligence concerning Mr. Graham should so affect me; but he once

saved my life, and only with life can I cease to remember him with the deepest emotions of gratitude."

"Yes, gal—that is, I mean, yes, Miss," stammered Gibbs, who felt himself called upon to say something in return. "Yes, exactly—I know: that is, gal—Miss, I mean—I don't know nothing about it;" and the confused speaker took off his cap, tried to make a bow, dug his huge fingers into his matted hair, and finally ended by cramming his capacious mouth with the Virginia weed.

"Do you know anything about Mr. Graham?" inquired Mrs. Hargrave, anxiously.

"No, marm," answered Gibbs, working his huge jaws rapidly—"not a darn thing."

"He was very stubborn, sir—very stubborn was Mr. Graham!" chimed in Simple Roley, thrusting himself forward. "I tried him once on my dry wood project; but it was no use, sir—no use. He either could not comprehend me—or, comprehending, would not act—perhaps the latter."

As the simpleton began to speak, Gertrude took occasion to steal into the house unobserved; and seeking her own little apartment, she did not make herself visible again that night.

"Poor fellow!" said Hargrave, referring to George Graham—"I fear it is all over with him. And if so," he added, in a low tone, addressing his wife, "I fear that Gertrude will never be happy again."

"She loved him, without question," sighed Mrs. Hargrave, shaking her head; "but she is not aware that we know the secret of her heart; and it is best, perhaps, Edward, that she should never know. Time, I trust, will restore her to health and happiness."

"I do not know," returned the Major, thoughtfully. "First love at two-and-twenty, is not the love of seventeen; and when, at the former age, the affections of a

heart like Gertrude's are for the first time fully centered upon a worthy object, there is seldom, if ever, any change in the strength of the attachment, be after circumstances what they may. The loss of that object will be felt throughout life; and though time may soften the grief, I do not think it can ever heal. There is one thing, in the present case, that has troubled me not a little, Sarah; I fear Gertrude was not loved in return."

"I cannot say," replied his wife.

"Graham was a noble young man," he said, reflectively; "and deeply shall I regret to learn that any new misfortune has befallen him; but his penetration was evidently no better than our own—for he seemed to think that Gertrude had taken a dislike to him. Ah! had he only known her heart, as we now know it, matters might have turned out differently. Well, well, as I said before, he was a noble fellow; and as the preserver of Gertrude's life, it now becomes my duty to endeavor to solve the mystery of his horse being returned in so singular a manner. The story of Gibbs is simple and straight-forward," he mused; "and his manner of telling it was not that of a man guilty of crime; but still, for all that, I would not like to say it is true, or believe it is false. I think, however, by questioning him further, I shall be able to judge pretty accurately."

This conversation between Hargrave and his wife, being carried on in a low tone, was not overheard by Gibbs, who was now busying himself about the animal whose unexpected appearance and recognition was the cause of so much excitement. Turning to the man of the forest, the Major raised his voice, and inquired:

"How far should you judge it to be from here to the place where you found the horse, Gibbs?"

"Can't say, Squire, exactly—but I've rid the critter two days and a half," replied the one addressed.

"Do you think you could return to the spot where you caught the beast?"

"*Think!*" echoed Gibbs, emphatically: "I *know* it! I could go back on the trail as true as a hound."

"*Will* you do so? will you guide me to the place, if I pay you for your time?"

"I'll guide ye to the place, Squire," answered the backwoodsman; "but as to taking pay for my time, that's all—nonsense—'cause, ye see, jest now, my time arn't wo'th nothing."

"Well, then," rejoined Hargrave, "if you have no objections, we will set out to-morrow."

"I'm your man," was the answer.

This being settled, Gibbs was invited into the dwelling, and a supper prepared for him; while Cuba and Dick unloaded the weary beast, and saw him well taken care of. Often, in the course of the evening, the eyes of Gibbs wandered around the cabin, in quest of Gertrude; but, as we before stated, she did not again leave her own little private apartment, and so of course his desire to see her was not gratified. Just before retiring to rest, he called the Major aside, and, after some little hesitation, said:

"Squire! you know—that is—dang it all! how about the gal?"

"Miss Wilburn, you mean?"

"Wall, yes—rayther."

"She is not at all well—her health has been on the decline for some time."

"I don't mean that, Squire," rejoined Gibbs, fidgetting. "You know what we talked over, like, when I's here afore."

"Oh! ah! yes!" returned the Major, as one who suddenly recollected: "you allude to your proposal of marriage?"

"Wall, yes—rayther: leastways courting, Squire."

"I mentioned what you said to Gertrude—but she respectfully declined your proposal."

"She did, hey?" rejoined Gibbs, thoughtfully, with somewhat heightened color. "Wall, she's a neat, trim critter, and looks to hev good sense—but she mought hev did better nor throwed me off afore she knowed me. Howsomever, thar's heaps o' gals about; and some on 'em may want a feller o' my inches, to hunt for 'em and take car' on 'em."

"Undoubtedly," responded Hargrave, smiling to himself.

"Who's Graham?" asked Gibbs, suddenly; after a short pause.

Hargrave briefly put him in possession of all the facts he knew concerning him.

"So the b'ar that was arter the gal—Miss Wilburn, I mean—got the better o' Graham in a rough and tumble, hey?" replied Gibbs, with some deliberation; "and she's powerful grateful 'cause he didn't git killed, hey? Wall, Squire, (after a pause) you jest tell her for me, that I'll agree to perfect her agin every critter that walks atween the Ohio and the salt water, and never git so much as a scratch. May be that thar 'ud hev so'thing to do in fotch-ing her squar' round to the courting mark."

"I think not, Gibbs," said the Major, laughing.

"Wall, you'll tell her?"

"Oh, yes—the first convenient opportunity."

"Ef that thar *don't* do, she kin slide," rejoined Gibbs; "for I've not got no other recommend."

The next day, the Major, with Gibbs and Dick, each mounted on a good horse, and all well armed, set off into the wilderness, for the purpose of discovering some trace of George Graham, and with a faint hope of finding him

alive. They were gone four days—during which time Mrs. Hargrave and Gertrude remained in a state of anxious suspense and alarm. About sunset on the fourth day, Mrs. Hargrave, with a cry of delight, announced the return of the party in safety. She first descried them emerging from the wood; and, with her little children, she ran out to meet them, and give the husband and father a warm welcome home.

"What of Mr. Graham?" she inquired, as soon as the first joyful congratulations and affectionate endearments were over.

Hargrave shook his head sadly.

"Alas!" he sighed—"we could discover no trace of him whatever."

"Poor fellow!" returned Mrs. Hargrave; "I fear the worst has befallen him. And poor Gertrude!" she added, in a lower tone—"this will be sad news for her."

"How is she?" inquired the Major, quickly.

"Very, very unhappy," replied his wife. "She does not say anything on the subject—but she is pale and dejected, scarcely tastes of food, sighs often, and sometimes, when she thinks no one sees her, weeps. If the name of Graham is suddenly mentioned in her presence, she starts, turns red and pale, and generally, in a confused manner, leaves the room. Ah me! I fear something serious will come of this unfortunate attachment."

"Heaven forefend!" rejoined Hargrave, earnestly. "Have you never spoken to her on the subject, Sarah?"

"I have not," was the answer. "Several times, though, I have been on the point of doing so; but, somehow, something has always occurred to prevent."

"I think, on the whole, you had better speak to her, Sarah; and if you can get her to make you her confidant, her mind will perhaps in some measure be relieved."

Major Hargrave entered the dwelling with his wife, and found Gertrude seated near the door, looking very pale and anxious; while her respiration was that of one laboring under suppressed, but intense, excitement. As soon as she perceived the husband of her sister, she flew to him, threw her arms around his neck, and gave him a sisterly kiss of affection. Without waiting for her to inquire concerning what the Major now knew she was most anxious to be informed of, he said, in a gentle tone:

"My dear Gertrude, we could find no trace of him we sought."

"Do you think he is dead, Edward?" she inquired, in a low, tremulous tone, averting her face.

"I cannot say that I do," replied the Major. "On the contrary, it is possible his horse may have strayed away from him, at some stopping place, and, not being able to find the beast, he continued his journey on foot. Do not be uneasy, Gertrude! it is possible we shall hear from him again before long."

Gertrude did not reply to this; but after making several inquiries of her brother-in-law concerning his journey, and mentioning a few trifling incidents that had occurred during his absence, she complained of weariness and headache, and made these an excuse for retiring early. Seeking her own little apartment, she threw herself upon her humble couch, and passed a night of mental anguish, feverish sleep, and startling dreams.

Tomahawk Gibbs spent another night under the roof of Hargrave; and the next day he received twenty-five dollars from the Major, in liquidation of his singular claim. He seemed to take the money with considerable reluctance; and repeatedly declared that he was willing to wait till another time—or, if the Major thought it too much, he would be satisfied with less.

"And now, Gibbs," said Hargrave, "having settled one claim, what shall I pay you for your services as guide?"

"Pay be ——," cried the woodsman, making his jaws press the juice from the weed with great vigor. "See here, Squire," he continued, "I reckon you don't quite know me yit, and both on us lose by it. This tomahawk pay is kinder sorter in the way of business like—and so I tuk your money, ye see; but ef ever I tech a penny on't for doing you a favor, may I be chawed up by rattle-snakes. And I'll tell ye so'thing more. This here hoss as I rid, with the bridle and fixings, ayther belongs to you or Graham, and so I'm going to leave him whar he is."

"I will give you another in exchange," said the Major.

"No," responded Gibbs, positively, "I'm going to foot it. When I'm on the 'arth, I know whar I is; but when I'm on one o' them thar —— jolting, wriggle-wraggle critters, I al'ays feel most powerful onsartin."

The Major laughed, and said he supposed a horse would not be of much benefit to a professional hunter.

On taking his final leave, Gibbs seized the Major by the hand, held it long, squeezed it hard, and said:

"Squire, you're a hoss—thar's no doubt about it—and I like you jam up. I'm going away now, and I don't know's I'll ever see you agin—though I hope I shall. But the gal don't keer a —— for me, that's sartin; and so thar won't be nothing to fotch me back for a spell, unless it's to do you a sarvice. I 'spect I'll likely go among the Injuns some; and may be I'll hear so'thing that's wo'th your while to know; ef I do, I'll come agin."

"Thank you!" returned Hargrave, with some feeling, giving the old hunter's hand a hearty shake: "thank you! Should you hear aught betokening danger to the white settlers of this region, pray give us timely warning, and you shall not go unrewarded."

"I'll do it, Squire, I will. Thar—good-bye! good-bye!"

Saying this, Tomahawk Gibbs gave the Major's hand another shake, and, with long, quick strides, was soon buried in the dark forest. He did not look back; but ere he disappeared, Hargrave saw, by the motion of his arm, that his hand was at least once drawn quickly across his eyes, as if to dash away a tear.

From the departure of Gibbs, for a period of several months, no incidents occurred which we deem worthy of special notice. The family, for the most part, remained in tolerably good health. The children complained more or less, and so did their elders—but there was no serious sickness. The crops came in well; and the Major saw, with the earnest joy of a fond husband and father, that his family would not want for food till the harvest time of another year.

The winter set in cold, and deep snows fell; but wood was plenty; and the large fire-place never lacked fuel, and the fire in it was never allowed to go out, night nor day. Nor was it an unpleasant sight, in the long, cold, winter evenings, to see the whole family, white and black, old and young, gathered into a semicircle before the cheerful blaze, all more or less engaged—the older persons in some useful employment, and the children in building "cob-houses," and other like simple and innocent amusements.

Time, however, passed rather heavily with Gertrude; and though she strove to appear cheerful and contented, she could not entirely conceal the fact, that her cheerfulness and contentedness were in appearance only, not in reality. Since the departure of George Graham, no intelligence had been received concerning him; and Gertrude often wept in secret over what she believed to be his untimely death. And though she reasoned that, had he lived, he would have been nothing to her—still he had preserved

her life; and this, she was fain to argue, gave his memory a claim to her tears.

The winter passed without anything occurring to alarm the settlers of that region; but with the opening of spring, came rumors that the Indians were becoming dissatisfied with what they termed the encroachment of the whites upon their territory; and in consequence, fears began to be entertained that the hatchet would not much longer remain buried. Some of these rumors reached Hargrave through neighboring settlers; and though he carefully concealed them from his family, and strove to reason himself into the belief that nothing serious would follow, yet his heart sadly misgave him, and he often shuddered at the picture of horror which his troubled imagination evoked.

And alas! in sober truth we must add, the picture drawn in the mind, was but the foreshadowing of a quick-coming, terrible reality.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEATH.

IT was toward the close of a warm, pleasant day, in the spring of 1774, that Major Hargrave sat beside the humble couch, on which, in a state of unconsciousness, reposed the dear partner of his bosom. His features were pale, careworn, and expressive of the deepest anguish; and his hand, which held one of hers, trembled, his breast heaved, and his lip quivered, as his eye rested upon her pallid face. At the foot of the bed sat Gertrude, weeping and sobbing as if her heart would break; and behind her stood Aunt Chloe, crying and wringing her hands, and occasionally murmuring:

"Oh! my poor dear missus! Oh! my poor dear missus! De Lord save her! De Lord save her!"

These were all the living that were present—for Cuba, Dick, and the simpleton had been sent out with the children, that they might not disturb the sufferer. We say these were all the *living* that were present; but on a small, rude table near, covered over with a snow-white cloth, lay a little cold human form, which had opened its eyes in a world of sin, but whose spirit was now gone forever from the troubles of earth and time. To speak more explicitly, Mrs. Hargrave had, some eight-and-forty hours previous to the opening of this chapter, given birth to her fourth child, whose mortal career had closed as the shadow of the oak fell eastward on the eventful day of which we are writing. Of this, however, she was unconscious; for fearful convulsions had preceded and followed the advent of the little

one; and raving in a wild delirium, it had at times required the whole strength of the grief-stricken husband to keep her fragile form upon the bed.

For more than two days and nights, Hargrave had been almost constantly by the side of her he loved, a prey to such feelings as only a fond husband and father may experience; and in all this time he had scarcely tasted food, and had never once closed his eyes in sleep. Gertrude, at the earnest solicitation, we might almost say the command, of the Major, had twice retired to rest; but her sleep had been feverish and broken, and filled with startling dreams—so that she had each time arisen pale, haggard, and unrefreshed.

At the point of time we have chosen to place the painful scene before the reader, Mrs. Hargrave seemed to be in a deep, sound sleep, which had already lasted more than an hour; but the belief entertained by her husband, and expressed to Gertrude, that from this sleep she would never awake, was the cause of that manifestation of grief of which we have spoken.

"Oh! do not, do not, Edward, tell me there is no hope!" at length burst from the affectionate Gertrude.

"Would to God I could say otherwise!" groaned the afflicted husband: "but it is best that your mind should be prepared for the painful truth, which, all too soon, I fear, it will have to receive."

"Oh! de good Lord protect us?" cried Aunt Chloe, still sobbing and wringing her hands. "Poor missus! poor missus! what'll come on us? what'll come on us?"

"Hush!" said Hargrave: "do not speak so loud, Chloe."

"See!" said Gertrude, approaching and bending over her sister: "See! Edward—she seems to sleep sweetly.

May we not hope it is a sleep from which she will awake refreshed?"

The Major, still holding the hand of his wife, arose, and, stooping over her, stood, for a few moments, with his eyes rivetted upon her pale, death-like countenance—while Gertrude watched every expression of his features with the most intense anxiety.

"She does indeed seem sleeping sweetly," he at length said, in a low tone; "and oh! God grant that from that sleep she may wake to bless us with the voice of reason, even if she be not restored to health! Only let her speak to me again, as it was her wont to speak, and I will try to say 'God's will, not mine, be done,' even though she soon be called to the other world. Ah! Gertrude," continued the Major, in a voice that trembled with deep emotion, "I feel it would be more than I could bear, to part from her without once more hearing her speak, even though she utter only my name, coupled with the solemn word farewell!"

"And do you, then, still think—that—that—she will die?" Gertrude rather gasped than said.

To this Hargrave made no reply; but kept his eyes rivetted upon the pallid face of his wife, as if in them there was a spell which could call back consciousness and reason.

"Hist!" he whispered, at length, in some agitation. "Do not speak! There is a perceptible change—a warm glow is suffusing her cheeks, and her respiration grows stronger—God grant it be a good omen!"

A few minutes of silent suspense, amounting to agony, now passed; and then slowly and naturally the lids of the sufferer's eyes unclosed; and the eyes themselves, soft and languid in expression, rested upon the Major, with a gleam of intelligence.

"Do you know me, dear Sarah?" he inquired, in a low, anxious, tender tone.

Mrs. Hargrave looked at him steadily a few moments—then at Gertrude—and then let her gaze wander around the apartment, as one who, surprised at the question and her situation, was endeavoring to remember what had recently occurred.

"Oh! speak to me, dear Sarah! speak to me! and tell me you know me!" said Hargrave, scarcely able to control his feelings.

"Know you, Edward?" repeated the sufferer, wonderingly: "know you? What mean you by that?"

The Major passionately pressed his lips to hers; and then, sinking upon a seat, and covering his eyes with his hands, he burst into tears, the first he had shed during her illness.

"Oh, God!" he murmured—"Thou hast heard my prayer! and my heart swells with gratitude."

"Gertrude," pursued Mrs. Hargrave, turning her eyes upon her sister, down whose pale cheeks hot tears of joy were chasing each other—"pray tell me what all this means! Why are you, and Edward, and Chloe weeping? what has happened?"

"Thank God!" cried Gertrude, bending over and kissing the wondering questioner, again and again: "Thank God! dear, dear Sarah, we are weeping for joy! You have been very, very ill—but are now, we hope and pray, beyond danger."

"Ill?" echoed the other: "ill, say you?—Ah! yes—I feel very weak," she continued, as with difficulty she raised her hand to her temples. "Strange, though, that I have no recollection of it! What has been the matter with me?"

"You have had some fever, attended with delirium, dear

Sarah," Hargrave hastened to reply—for he feared, in her present critical state, to tell her the whole truth. "I do not wonder you are weak," he continued, "for you have not tasted food for upwards of two days. Do you think you could now venture to take a little weak broth?"

"I will try, Edward, for I feel very faint," answered the other, in a low tone.

"You hear, Chloe!" said the Major. "Hasten for the love of Heaven, and prepare what is wanted! I do not know as there is anything in the house suitable for the broth," he added, with some uneasiness; "but perhaps a piece of deer meat——"

"Dar's de Lord's blessing, in de shape of a pa'tridge, in de pantry, dat Cube cotched dis very day," interrupted Chloe, bounding away with a light step and a lighter heart.

At this moment the children, looking pale and anxious, came stealing into the house on tip-toe—the little boy acting as leader—who, at every step, whispered "Hist," to his companions, and motioned with his hand for them to be silent. As his eye caught his father's, he said, in a low tone:

"We couldn't stay away no longer from our dear mamma, papa—we will be very still."

His mother heard him, and said, quickly:

"Come here, Joseph—come here, my little dears—I am better now."

The affectionate little boy bounded forward with a cry of joy, and the others did not lag behind.

"Oh, my dear mamma!" said Joseph, bursting into tears—"I was afraid you was going to die!"

"Papa said you'd die, just like little baby did," exclaimed the youngest, trying to climb upon the bed to give her mother a kiss.

"Hush! hush! child," cried the Major, with a look of alarm.

But the fearful truth had been spoken, and the fond mother had heard the words.

"Baby?" she repeated, wonderingly, looking alternately at her husband and sister, and perceiving, by their blanched faces, that something was wrong. "What does the child mean? Speak! Edward—speak! Gertrude—you have concealed something from me;" and her look began to grow wild and wandering.

"Oh, Fanny means her toy-baby," said Hargrave, affecting to laugh. "Come, children, run away—you disturb your mother. Here, Fanny," he said, laying hold of the child, "I have something pretty for you."

"I want my mamma," cried the child, clinging to the sufferer. "Don't let me go, mamma! don't let me go! I haint told no story; it was a live baby that died, it was."

The Major, with a groan of anguish, took the child rudely from the bed, and handed her to Gertrude, who quickly bore her out of the house—but not till more than one protestation, "that she had told no story, and that it was a live baby who had died," reached her mother's ears.

"Speak! Edward," cried Mrs. Hargrave, wildly: "speak! tell me the truth! you are deceiving me—you are deceiving me;" and she tried to raise herself into a sitting posture, but fell back with a groan.

"For the love of Heaven, Sarah—dear, dear Sarah—be quiet! be calm!" said the Major; and the anguish of his spirit at that moment was so great, that cold drops of sweat, forced through his feverish skin, stood like beads all over his face.

"What is that?" cried the mother, fixing her eyes, as

if by some fatality, with a wild glare, upon the white cloth which shrouded the remains of her youngest born.

"Be calm, Sarah, my wife! my dear wife, be calm!" pleaded the agonized husband, in a soothing tone.

"What is that, I say?" almost screamed the sufferer, keeping her eyes, with the same wild, glaring expression, upon the snowy cloth.

"That is nothing—nothing—don't you see it is nothing?" cried Hargrave, with a reeling brain. "There, there, Sarah—dear, dear Sarah—for your own dear sake—for my sake—for your children's sake—be composed!—try and be calm,—do! dear wife—do!"

Mrs. Hargrave, without once removing her eyes from the object which had rivetted her attention, slowly raised herself in bed, with an unnatural strength, and said, slowly, in a deep, solemn, and, all things considered, an awful tone:

"Bring on the shroud, the coffin, and the pall! for I am about to start on my last journey!"

"Oh, God!" groaned Hargrave, covering his eyes, while an icy shudder shook his whole frame.

"Oh! don't! dear mamma—don't look so!" cried Joseph, springing upon the bed, and throwing his arms around her who had given him being; while little Ellen burst into tears, and buried her face in the pillow; and Aunt Chloe, who had left her work and drawn near, now stood wringing her hands and crying piteously.

"Take off that cloth! I will see what lies beneath!" shrieked Mrs. Hargrave, in a frenzy of delirium; and she strove to push the boy from her.

"Don't! mamma—don't!" he cried, still clinging to her.

"You have all conspired against me!" she shrieked again: "you want to murder me!—but I am strong, and I

will do what you refuse to do;" and throwing off the boy, as if he had been an infant, she suddenly sprung from the bed; and ere her husband or Chloe, both taken wholly by surprise, could interfere to prevent her, she had reached the table, and torn the cloth from the little lifeless form which it covered.

The Major bounded to her side, and, throwing an arm around her waist, was about to lift and bear her back to the bed; but noting the peculiar expression with which her eye dwelt upon the little round face of the dead infant, he paused a few moments, to see what would be the result—hoping, fearing, and trembling with anxiety.

"It is very sweet—very pretty," said the delirious mother, in a low, gentle, quiet tone. "But it is very cold," she continued, passing her hand over its little face. "Why is it so neglected? some one should tell its mother. She certainly cannot know it—for true mothers never neglect their little ones. Hark! it sings! Whose is it? I wish it were mine. I—"

She stopped suddenly, and looked quickly and wildly around; and then, as if the truth had reached her, through all the vagaries of a diseased mind, she uttered one shrill, terrible, prolonged shriek, and fell heavily into her husband's arms.

Hargrave, scarcely conscious of what he did, lifted and bore her senseless form to the bed, and laid her gently upon it.

Gertrude, who had heard the shriek, and could not longer endure the torture of absence and suspense, now rushed into the house, and to the side of the humble couch. The Major was bending over his wife, and his lips were pressed to hers.

"How is she now?" asked the anxious, trembling, and alarmed sister.

Hargrave slowly raised his head, and turned toward her a face deadly pale; and from his ashy, quivering lips, came the awful words, in a hollow, sepulchral tone:

"She is dead!"

With a shriek of woe, Gertrude threw herself almost frantically upon the corpse; and the Major slowly sunk down upon a seat, with the look of one completely overwhelmed with despair.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MOURNERS.

WHATEVER may be the joys and glories of that world to which we are hastening, there is very little of unalloyed happiness to be found in this; and yet, though the Angel of Death may sometimes be a messenger of gladness to the weary spirit longing for its eternal release from the troubles and woes of mortality, he is oftener a messenger of dread, if not of terror, to those to whom he brings the fatal summons. Notwithstanding, therefore, that we live in a world abounding with misery, and oftentimes reason that our condition will be bettered when we join the spirits departed, yet there are the very fewest number living that can truly say they are ready for the solemn change. We form ties of love and affection here, that link into and entwine around our inmost being; and the thought of severing these ties, or of withdrawing from beloved association, even though it may be for a very brief season, will many times fill us with dread, and rack our very souls, when surrounded with all the enjoyments which human life can give. And this is not that we think so much of ourselves, perhaps, as that we picture the grief, the heart desolation, of those dearly loved ones whom we shall leave behind to mourn our departure.

And great and terrible is the prostrating woe of a fond husband or wife, when he or she stands beside the clay-cold corpse of that being who had been bound to him or her by ties the most sacred and holy, and which death

alone could sever. How the heart swells with anguish! and the spirit groans with agony! and the brain reels with maddening thoughts! till the frame trembles, and totters, and sinks prostrate beside those loved remains, and nothing is felt and known but blank despair, to which no voice nor words can give utterance. And is it any consolation in such moments of awful grief, and wretchedness, and misery, to see children of tender years, some of whom are too young to comprehend the meaning of death, hovering around the cold, senseless form of that dear parent, and speaking endearing words to the lifeless corpse, calling upon it in terms of infantile tenderness and love, and wondering, with tearful eyes, why no answer is returned? Is it any consolation, we say, to the bereaved living parent, to be present at such a heart-touching, soul-harrowing scene, and have such words piercing his or her spirit like ten thousand daggers, even though the little questioners be never so dear to him or her? We think not. In such moments of spirit-agony, the soul longs to be alone, in solitude and silence, to commune only with itself and its God.

But through such a scene of trial Major Hargrave was doomed to pass; and he passed through it like a man—or rather, perhaps we should say, like one whose iron-nerved constitution could bear the blow and keep reason on her throne. Yet he did not weep—for that boon of relief was denied him; but like some sturdy old oak, which stands erect amid the howling blasts of the tornado, even while it quivers to the very core, he bore up against the blasts of fate, and presented an exterior to the view which gave little indication of the quivering grief within.

For more than an hour, he sat silently upon the seat where we left him at the close of the preceding chapter, and, save bowing his head forward upon his hands, without changing his position, and apparently without moving a

muscle. Yet he was not unconscious of what was taking place around him. He heard distinctly the lamentations of Gertrude, and the children, the servants, and even of the poor simpleton, as all gradually collected around the bed of death, and gazed upon the sweet, pallid face of the dear departed. He heard little Fanny plead for “her mamma to give her a kiss, only one, because she had told the truth about the live baby, and no story;” and the response of little Joseph, in tremulous accents, followed by a passionate burst of tears, that “dear mamma was dead, like little baby, and would never kiss any one again;” he heard the feet of the simpleton stepping up and down in quick succession, accompanied with alternate shouts of laughter and shrieks of woe; he heard Gertrude weeping, sobbing, moaning, and groaning, as if the affliction were more than she could bear; he heard the negroes crying, and sighing, and wringing their hands, and Aunt Chloe uttering wild, hysterical exclamations of endearment and sorrow, and sometimes praying “de Lord to gin her missus back, or take her to her missus:” Hargrave heard all these outpourings of sorrow, we say, as he sat there, with his face bowed upon his hands; and yet he moved not, spoke not—but really *felt* more crushing agony of spirit than all the rest combined.

Gradually the sounds of lamentation ceased; and when all had become comparatively quiet, Hargrave looked up, and saw that the shades of night had already settled around his lonely habitation.

“Strike a light, Chloe,” he said; “and prepare the evening meal for such as want it.”

At the sound of his voice, his little children, who had refrained from disturbing him—perhaps through fear of reproof, or a dim comprehension of his great grief, or both combined—and who, having wept the fountains of their

tears dry, had huddled themselves together near their only parent—little Joseph holding Fanny in his lap, with Ellen clinging to his neck,—at the sound of their father's voice, we say, these little motherless beings started up and silently gathered around him, the youngest making an effort to climb upon his knee. The Major gently lifted her into his lap, parted the disordered curls from her childish brow, kissed her, and pressed her to his bosom. He then placed her on one knee, took little Ellen upon the other, and drew little Joseph between the two. Then kissing each affectionately, he locked his hands behind them, and held them together in a long, silent embrace—the two sisters twining their delicate arms about his neck, and the boy clasping his body.

"Now, my dear children," he said, at length, in a tone of almost unnatural calmness, "you must try and eat some supper, and let Aunt Chloe put you to bed."

"I don't want to eat," sobbed Joseph.

"I don't feel hungry, papa," whined Ellen.

"Won't dear mamma eat, too?" asked little Fanny.

"No," said her father, in a tremulous voice; "poor mamma will never eat again!"

"Josey says as how she won't never kiss me again, nother—but she will, won't she, papa?"

"No, my child—no—your dear mamma is dead."

"I don't know what dead is, papa," she said, after a thoughtful pause, while Joseph and Ellen began to sob anew.

"Happy ignorance!" murmured the almost heart-broken parent; "would to Heaven it were mine!"

"But what is dead, papa?"

"Why, it is when one has stopped seeing, and eating, and speaking, and moving, and breathing, my child."

"Well," pursued the little one, "if mamma don't never move again, how's she going to get off the bed?"

"We shall take her off, and dig a hole, and put her into the ground, and cover her up there."

"With the cold dirt, papa?"

"Yes!" gasped Hargrave, who began to find himself unequal to the task of longer replying to an inquisitor whose every question was a rack of torture. "There, my children, you must leave me now. I do not feel well. Go and talk to Aunt Chloe—or sit down by yourselves, till it be time to go to bed."

"Let them come and talk to me," said Gertrude, getting up from the foot of the bed, upon which she had thrown herself to give vent to her grief.

The negroes and the simpleton, had, ere this, all retired to the other end of the cabin, where Chloe was pretending to busy herself about the evening's meal, according to orders, though she was really laboring under so much excitement as to be hardly conscious of what she was doing. She had lit the lamp, however, and placed it on the table; and by its feeble rays the Major and Gertrude each caught a glimpse of the other's face, as the latter advanced to lead away the children. Both slightly started—for each beheld in the countenance of the other such marks of sorrow as only may be traced when the tendrils of the heart are rent and torn by the volcanic upheavings of unspeakable emotions. Neither spoke to the other; but Gertrude, taking little Fanny in her arms, and Ellen by the hand, said, in a low, gentle, quavering tone:

"Come, my pretty dears, and talk to me; your poor papa is not at all well."

"I want to kiss my dear mamma," said Ellen, bursting into tears.

"Me, too," cried Fanny: "and then may be mamma 'll just move enough to kiss me back again."

Gertrude, fairly choking with her feelings, was barely

able to articulate, "You shall!" and she put each upon the bed, by their dead mother.

There was just sufficient light here for the children to trace the outlines of the pale, still features of her who had given them being, and had so often caressed and fondled them in life; and all looked at that face with the feeling of awe which death naturally excites. For some time they kept perfectly still and silent; and then little Fanny whispered, "Mamma!" and looked as if expecting some sign of recognition. In a moment or two she repeated the word; and seeing no movement, and hearing no answer, fear began to steal over her little heart; and she drew back with a shudder, keeping her eyes fixed upon the face till Gertrude took her away. Ellen and Joseph followed—neither venturing to press their lips to lips that were closed by the seal of death.

In a short time the children retired to their beds—which during their mother's illness, had been removed to the apartment overhead—and the servants and the simpleton, at the Major's request, soon followed, leaving him and Gertrude alone with the deceased.

"Gertrude," now said the Major, in a tone of remarkable calmness, "I must insist that you try and get some sleep. You are neither strong nor well, and you must take care of your health."

"But I have slept recently," replied Gertrude, scarcely able to command her voice; "while you have not closed your eyes for more than two days and nights. Do you retire, Edward, and let me watch by the remains of my dear sister—at least a part of the night."

"No," returned Hargrave, "my place is here, and I wish to be alone."

"But you will be overcome with fatigue," said Gertrude, anxiously.

"Then I will lie down on the bed. Go, Gertrude; and do not think hard of me for saying, that I do not wish to hear a human voice again to-night—not even your own."

"Good-night, then," said Gertrude; "and may God enable you to bear up under this terrible affliction."

"Amen!" rather groaned than said the Major.

With tottering steps, Gertrude now sought her own little room—which, as the reader will remember, was only divided from the general apartment by a partition of tent-cloth—and, throwing herself upon the bed, without even removing a garment, soon sobbed herself to sleep.

As soon as he found himself entirely alone, the Major kneeled down beside the bed of death, on which the remains of one so dear to him still reposed, and there, for more than an hour, communed in secret with his God. He then arose, and bending over the corpse, looked long and steadily at the face, which he could faintly perceive by the dim light of the lamp, which still stood on the table at some distance. During this time his breast heaved convulsively, and it was only by a great effort he could suppress the groans of agony by which his spirit sought to give vent to its sufferings. At length a tear started in his eye, and was followed by another; and now, the channel of relief being opened, they came in quick succession; and rolling down his face in large, scalding drops, fell thick and fast upon that cold face which felt them not.

"I thank Thee, oh! my God, that at last I can weep!" murmured the afflicted husband.

Some half an hour later, he laid himself down upon the bed, and gradually fell into a sound sleep, from which he did not awake till the first dawn of another day; and then he awoke, heavy of heart, but much refreshed in body. Gertrude, who had slept well through the night, also awoke in a far better physical condition than when she retired;

and, we may add, in a better mental condition for sustaining the great trial of sorrow through which she was yet doomed to pass.

The morning's meal was silently prepared by Aunt Chloe; and Hargrave, Gertrude, the children, and the simpleton, all sat down to it in gloomy silence, and all ate sparingly. This over, Gertrude, assisted by Aunt Chloe, commenced the painful duty of dressing the dead for the grave; while the bereaved father set about preparing a rude coffin, to enclose the remains of a wife and child.

We shall not pause here to describe his feelings, as he worked at his mournful task—nor those of Gertrude—nor those of the motherless little ones, who watched every proceeding with the painful interest of grief mingled with curiosity. Suffice it to say, that the corpse was decently laid out; and, together with the infant, which had unconsciously been the cause of so much sorrow, was placed in a rude coffin, and carried by the mourners to the grave, which had been dug by the negroes just behind the cabin within the stockade. Here, white and black, old and young, collected in a circle, all weeping violently. The Major now read a chapter from the Bible, appropriate to the occasion, in a solemn, tremulous voice; and then the coffin, with its silent tenants, was lowered into the cold ground, and Cuba and Dick covered it forever from the sight of the living.

Such was the death and burial, in the lonely wilderness, of a dearly beloved wife and mother—of one whose absence left an aching void in the hearts that loved her—of one whose place, in the circle of home, could never again be filled.

CHAPTER XVI.

STARTLING TIDINGS.

ON the same day which witnessed the interment of the remains of Mrs. Hargrave and the nameless infant, and scarcely an hour from the closing of the solemn rite of sepulture, as the afflicted husband and father was walking to and fro in front of his dwelling, within the palisade, giving vent to his anguish in tears and stifled groans, his ears were greeted with the clattering sound of a horse's hoofs, urged over the ground at a speed which nothing less than danger, or great alarm, would seem to justify. Quickly he stepped without the gate, and looked eagerly in the direction whence the sound proceeded; and at the same instant he caught a glimpse of a horseman, borne through the wood with a startling velocity.

"Alas!" thought the Major, "what new calamity is about to supersede the one I mourn?"

He had little time for conjecture, ere a foaming steed, bearing a comely, youthful rider, was reined in by his side. The face of the youth was pale with excitement, if not alarm—but its expression combined an unusual degree of decision, firmness, and energy.

"What news?" cried Hargrave.

"Bad, sir—bad!" replied the boy, throwing himself from the horse. "The Indians are collecting in great force; and it is rumored that the work of butchery has already begun on the extreme frontier. You are not safe here a minute."

"Merciful God!" groaned the Major; "what next! what next! But tell me, lad—do you know any cause for this sudden rising of the savages?"

"It is caused, I believe, by the brutal murder, by some vagabond whites, of a small party of Indians, at the mouth of Yellow Creek, on the Ohio, some thirty or forty miles above Fort Fincastle*—at least so my father says."

"Will you tell me your father's name, and where you are from?"

"My father's name is Zane, and I am from Fort Fincastle; Colonel Zane, who commands the garrison, is my uncle."

"Ha! indeed! and pray whither are you bound?"

"I am riding post to Bush's Fort."

"You are young, to set off on an expedition so full of peril."

"I can ride a horse as well as any—and my life is certainly not worth more than a man's," replied the dauntless youth. "And now, sir," continued the boy, who had apparently not seen more than fifteen or sixteen years, "if you will give me something to eat, and let me change horses with you, I will be off—for there is no time to waste."

"Why, surely, you will not go further to-night, my lad?" said Hargrave, in surprise. "See! the sun is scarcely an hour high."

"Well, if I could start now, I could get over some ten miles before dark."

"And where would you lodge?"

"Oh, there are three settlers within ten miles of here, on my route. I have been over the ground before, and

* This fort was subsequently named Henry, in honor of the illustrious Patrick Henry.

know the way; though you, sir, were not here at the time I refer to."

"And where is Bush's Fort?"

"Nearly south from here, about thirty or forty miles."

"Is it a place of safety?" asked the Major, anxiously.

"Not very safe, I should think—at least it wasn't when I saw it last," replied young Zane. "In fact, the fort is nothing more than a double cabin, with a stockade round it; something like yours here, only larger."

"And why, then, are you sent there in particular?"

"I am bearer of a despatch for Governor Dunmore, which I have volunteered to take as far as there; at which place I expect to find some one who will take it forward to the next station, and so on till it reaches him. I have also made it my business to give the alarm to all the settlers living upon my route, which has delayed me not a little."

"A good reason, both for your journey and for speed," replied Hargrave; "but still I shall insist that you go no further to-night. You look weary; how far have you ridden to-day?"

"I left Fincastle at daylight this morning."

"Good Heavens! my son—why that is at least sixty miles distant."

"I know every inch of the ground," returned the boy. "But what is sixty miles? I have known men ride a hundred, only stopping to change horses once, and thought that no great feat."

"But you have not the strength and endurance of a man!"

Young Zane's eyes sparkled, as he quickly replied:

"I have not the strength of a man, I know—nor perhaps the endurance, if you name some occupations; but I have a first rate rifle at the fort, and I'll bet it against its equal, that there is not a man on the borders can ride more

miles between sun and sun than myself. Sixty miles! pshaw! I would have been twenty or thirty further along on my journey by this time, if I had not stopped at every cabin within a mile of my direct course, to give the alarm. And besides, I changed horses once, and this beast is not the equal in speed of the one I rode from the fort. But, sir," he added, placing his foot in the stirrup, as if preparing to remount, "one word for all, for my business admits of no delay: will you change horses with me, and give me something to eat?"

"You will not spend the night with me then?"

"No, sir, I thank you!" was the courteous but positive answer.

"Certainly, my lad, you shall have all you want," rejoined Hargrave; and calling to Cuba and Dick, he ordered them to catch the horse ridden by Graham, and change the saddle and bridle from the one just arrived to that, in the shortest space of time possible.

"Graham!" said the boy, thoughtfully; "Graham! There was a trader and hunter at the fort when I left, who mentioned something about Graham—but I have forgotten what he said. Ah! stop! yes—now I recollect. He wished me to be sure and tell somebody, who knew somebody by the name of Graham, that the sooner he could get his family into a strong fort, the better it would be for him and them. I should have forgotten his message, had I not heard the name of Graham again mentioned. Perhaps you are the person to whom he alluded?"

"Did he not say to whom this message was to be delivered?"

"No, he had forgotten the name," he said; "but if I found anybody who had loaned a horse to a young man called Graham, which had been mysteriously returned, that was the person."

"I think I am the individual, then, for whom the message was intended," returned Hargrave. "Was the hunter's name Gibbs?"

"Yes—Tomahawk Gibbs, we call him."

"I would to Heaven he had come with you!"

"He spoke about coming," replied the youth—"but said the danger was so great, that no rifle could now be spared from the extreme frontier. The whites there are mustering all the force they can, to attack the Indians in a body, in hope to keep them in check, till the settlers further east can get into the neighboring forts with their families."

"Good Heaven! is the danger then so pressing?" cried the Major, in alarm.

"It is, indeed, sir!" replied the boy; "and, as I told you before, you are not safe here a minute."

"Quick! then, for the love of Heaven! tell me all you know!" said Hargrave, anxiously. "When did these murders of the Indians take place?"

"The murders took place some days ago," replied the boy, hurriedly; "and the consequences, it is thought, will be fatal to the peace of the frontiers for years to come. The facts, so far as I know, are briefly these: a party of whites, at the head of which was a notorious Indian hater, named Greathouse, encamped on the Ohio—on the opposite bank of which, near the mouth of Yellow Creek, was at the same time encamped a small party of Indians. Six of these Indians—and, among the number, a squaw with her pappoose—crossed over to the whites, who treated them with great apparent kindness, and offered them as much liquor as they could drink. Three of the Indians soon got beastly drunk—but the other three, including the squaw, would not taste a drop. The two sober men were now invited to shoot at a mark—which they did; but the moment their pieces were emptied, the whites shot them and the squaw, and tomahawked the others."

"May the curse of Heaven light on the bloody assassins!" cried the Major, with a burst of justifiable indignation.

"As soon as the party of Indians on the other side of the river," continued the boy, hurriedly, "found out that their companions were killed, they started down the Ohio in canoes, and were seen passing Fort Fincastle about the time the news reached there of the massacre above. Captain Cresap, who was at the fort at the time, having just come in from an exploring expedition, declared, with an oath, that these Indians must not escape to spread the news, or we should have all the tribes down upon us for revenge. So, with a number of his men, he immediately set out in pursuit; and about thirty or forty miles below, overtook the fugitives and had a fight with them. In a day or two he returned, bringing back one of his men badly wounded, and only one Indian scalp—the rest of the Indians, he said, had escaped.

"My father and uncle now declared we must get ready for war; and word was sent to all the settlers round about, that they had better come into the fort with their families, and the most of them have done so. After Cresap's fight, until yesterday, all was left to conjecture—but yesterday Tomahawk Gibbs arrived, who told my uncle he had just come from the Indian towns on the Scioto, and that he was there when the Indians, who had twice escaped massacre, came in. He said it was impossible to describe the rage of the other savages, when they heard the news of the murders, and he expected every minute to be tomahawked himself. He also said, that, a short time before this, the Indians had called a council, for the purpose of declaring war against the whites—but had been pacified by the speeches of a noble old chief, called Logan; but that now this same Logan was as eager for war as any—for three of the party murdered, were his father, brother, and sister."

"Great Heaven!" ejaculated Hargrave; "his father, brother, and sister, *murdered!* who can blame him for seeking revenge?"

"He will have it, too," pursued the boy; "for it is said he has sworn to take ten scalps for one. Well, sir, such as I have told you, was the news received yesterday from Gibbs; and it was thought best to send a statement of the facts to Lord Dunmore, our Governor, and pray him to raise a large force for our protection, lest we be overpowered and slaughtered. As the men were all needed at the fort, I volunteered to take the dispatch as far as Bush's Fort, and I am so far on my way. When I left this morning, a rumor was circulating, that a large body of Indians was not far off, and that several whites had been killed. I do not know whether the report is true or not; but, all things considered, I should not like to remain long in such an exposed situation as this."

"No! no!" cried Hargrave, quickly, and with a shudder, as he thought of his family, and his poor, motherless little ones in particular. "No! no! I must leave here—leave here; but where shall I go? I fear to venture toward Fincastle, after what you have told me, my lad, and I know not where to go."

"Perhaps your best plan, then, would be to seek Bush's Fort," suggested the youth.

"But could I find it without a guide?"

"Oh, yes, sir—easily. Cross the Monongahela here, and go up the left bank till you come to it. It is not more than fifty miles distant, by the course of the river—though I shall go a nearer route."

"And would I be safe there, do you think?"

"Safer than here, at all events," replied the boy; "for the fort is stronger than your cabin; and there are many men there besides. And then, if the place shouldn't suit

you, you could continue on to Fort Savannah, or Fort Lewis—either of which would be better still.”

“I will then, God willing, set out for Bush’s Fort tomorrow,” replied the Major, with a suppressed groan of anguish, as he reflected on the fact that the remains of his dear partner must be left behind. “I came hither,” he pursued, in a kind of soliloquy, “hoping to live in peace—and, by hard, honest labor, acquire a sufficiency for my family, ere it should please God to remove me: but one is already numbered with the dead, and the others are in peril; and so I must leave my home, perhaps to become a wanderer, without place to lay my head.”

“Those who leave a settled country for the wilderness,” replied the boy, sympathetically, “have generally but a faint idea of the trials, hardships, and perils of a border life. But yonder I see comes the horse I am to ride; and so, sir, I will bid you good-bye. If the beast I leave with you, should not prove of as much value as yours, my father, sir, if you mention the matter to him, at any future time, will pay you the difference.”

“But stay!” cried the Major, as young Zane moved away toward the horse—which Cuba, with his eyes bent on the ground, and a countenance expressive of deep sorrow, was slowly leading up to the speakers. “Stay! my lad—and come in and get something to eat. I have kept you standing here talking, entirely forgetful of your request for food. But you must excuse me. The fact is,” he continued, in a faltering tone, “I have just buried my wife, and my mind is not quite so clear as I would have it.”

“Ah! I see! returned the youth, with a look of sympathy. “You are perfectly excusable, sir. I am not very hungry—I have eaten once since morning—and now the sun, yonder, tells me I have no time to lose.”

As he concluded, he vaulted upon the back of the horse,

and gathered up the reins for a start. Hargrave instantly sprung forward, caught the animal by the bit, and said:

“You must eat before you go—I insist upon it.”

“Then give me something in my hand, if you please, and I will eat as I ride.”

Hargrave himself hurried into the house; and without saying a word to Aunt Chloe, or Gertrude—both of whom sat weeping, with the children gathered around them—he took a small corn cake from the shelf or pantry, and a couple of slices of venison steak, and hastened back to the youth, with an apology for having nothing better to offer.

“I want nothing better,” was the reply. “Good-bye, sir—good-bye!” and scarcely were the words uttered, ere the high-spirited beast was plunging down the knoll, bearing swiftly away his daring, fearless, but youthful rider.

For a few minutes, the Major stood like one half-stupefied, gazing after him; and then, with a heavy heart, he turned away, and re-entered the dwelling, to communicate to the mourners within the fearful tidings he had just heard. Gertrude, with little Fanny clasped to her bosom—with the heads of Ellen and Joseph buried in her lap—was seated near the bed of death, giving vent to her grief in sobs and moans; and at a little distance sat Aunt Chloe, bemoaning the loss of her dear mistress, with the simpleton stretched out on the floor at her feet.

Toward this sorrowing group the bereaved father moved, with a slow, heavy step; and Gertrude, as she saw him approach, made an effort to appear composed, that her own grief might in no manner add to the weight of his. As he drew near, she thought she detected, in the expression of his pale countenance, a something more than mere sorrow—an expression of painful anxiety, if not alarm—more especially as his eye rested upon the children; and with a newly

awakened, almost breathless interest, she waited for him to speak. He stopped near her, and for a moment or two stood silent, as one who has unpleasant tidings to communicate, and is fearful of their effect upon the listener.

"Gertrude," he said, in a deep, solemn tone, "it is to me a most painful task, to be obliged to speak words that will add to the sorrows of all here; but it is my duty, and one from which I cannot shrink."

"Speak! Edward," cried Gertrude, growing even paler with alarm.

"I must!" returned Hargrave, compressing his lips. "I have just seen a messenger from Fort Fincastle, who says that hostilities have already begun between the whites and savages on the extreme frontier, and that consequently no settler is safe outside the walls of a fort."

"Merciful Heaven!" cried Gertrude, clasping her hands; while Aunt Chloe and the children uttered cries of alarm, and looked fearfully around them, as if expecting to see the ruthless savage, with gleaming knife and uplifted tomahawk, standing ready to begin the work of butchery.

"Whar's Cube?" yelled Aunt Chloe, starting to her feet, and looking wildly around. "Dat dar nigger 'll jus' lose de head off his scalp, afore he knows whar hisse'f is." And she immediately sprung to the door, screaming: "Cube! Cube, I say! come to de arms of your nâteral born wife, afore de red Injuns shoot your good-for-not'ing head off wid dar tom'hawks!"

Cuba and Dick, who stood just outside, came rushing in, trembling with terror—for this was the first alarming news they had heard, and they naturally supposed the Indians were close upon them.

"Shut de gate!" cried Chloe; and no one heeding her, she darted out, closed, and barred it.

A scene of alarm and confusion now prevailed through-

out the cabin—much of it as wildly ludicrous as that which occurred in the tent, on the mountain, on the night of the storm, as depicted in a preceding chapter.

It was sometime before the Major could succeed in quitting the different parties, so as to restore anything like order and silence. He repeatedly assured them that the Indians were far away, and that there was no immediate danger; and finally threatened to put the first one outside, who should persist in creating further disturbance within; and this, more than anything else, had the effect to bring about a state of quiescence.

"What is to be done, Edward?" anxiously inquired Gertrude, as Hargrave returned and took a seat by her side.

"We must immediately pack up what few necessary things we can conveniently carry, and early to-morrow morning set out for a place called Bush's Fort, which I am told stands on the left bank of the river, about fifty miles above here."

"And will dear mamma go too?" inquired little Fanny, who stood along side, an earnest listener.

"Hush! child—hush!" cried her father, with a burst of emotion he could not control.

As soon as he could again compose his mind, he took Gertrude aside, and briefly recounted what he had heard; and then the two held a hurried consultation about plans for the future. This over, the Major called to Dick, and ordered him to drive all the horses within the stockade, and see them well fed on corn; and bade Cuba fill with water two large troughs that stood in the cabin.

Both of the blacks seemed very loth to venture out to execute these orders; but the Major handed each a loaded rifle, and told them there was no danger at present; and at length they went forth with fear and trembling—their

master taking the wise precaution to keep the gate shut and fastened during their absence, and make a careful inspection of the palisade, not knowing how soon this rude wall might be his main safe-guard against the designs of a savage foe.

By the time the frightened negroes had completed their tasks, the shades of night were beginning to steal over the earth, filling each heart with gloom and dread.

The Major now entered the cabin, ate a light supper, and gave the necessary directions for preparing for an early start on the morrow. Then taking down the rifles, he looked carefully to the condition of each—examined his stock of ammunition—and, putting all back on the hooks, save his own hunting-piece, he threw this over his shoulder, and went out to stand sentinel and guard those who might be disposed to sleep.

His features, before his family, had assumed a look of quiet composure; but his heart was heavy with grief, and filled with dire forebodings.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WATCH.

FOR a single cabin, intended for the use of only one family, without any pretensions to being considered a fort, the dwelling of Major Hargrave, both from its position and defences, was better calculated to withstand the assaults of a savage foe, than the generality of log-houses, erected in that region of country, at the period of which we write. Situated on the summit of a knoll, now entirely clear of trees and brush, it commanded a view of every near approach, be it from what quarter it might. The stockade, with which the Major had surrounded it, was also high, strong, compact, and in good condition—so that it could not be forced, nor easily scaled. This stockade consisted of a double row of posts, of about a foot in diameter, planted deeply in the ground, and reaching upward from the earth to an elevation of twelve feet. It formed a square—or parallelogram, rather—and entirely surrounded the dwelling, at a distance of fifteen feet—thus leaving an open space, or enclosure, of the above dimensions. Twelve loop-holes had been cut through this wooden wall, three on each side, about five feet from the ground—so that those within could look out in every direction—and fire out, if need required; but to guard against exposure to the fire of an enemy in return, each loop-hole had a thick block exactly fitted into the aperture, with strong, wooden cross bars to keep it from being removed by any one outside.

Into this enclosure, as we will term it, the horses had

been driven, and were now feeding on dry corn, on the north side of the cabin; and within this enclosure, where the remains of his beloved wife also reposed, Major Hargrave had resolved to stand guard, through the long, lonely hours which lay between the present and the dawn of another day.

The night set in clear, but not cold—for the spring was advanced to the renewal of leaf and blade and blossom, and the light breeze from the south had a genial temperature. The moon, in her first quarter, sailing above an ocean of blue, shed a pale lustre over the scene, but sufficient to cast shadows where her rays were intercepted, and enable one to distinguish objects at no great distance. By her mild light, for day had now passed into night, Hargrave took a careful survey of the knoll through different loopholes; but without expecting to see any object to excite his apprehension, and, we may add, without seeing any. It was merely done as a matter of precaution—any neglect of which, in his present situation, and after the fearful tidings he had received, he could not consider justifiable.

Having finished his survey, the Major closed the loopholes, one after the other, and made them secure; and then, with a slow, solemn step, he repaired to the grave of that gentle being, whom it had been his greatest joy to love, and his proudest ambition to provide for, cherish and protect, through many years of trial and trouble, if not of abiding sorrow. The grave lay in deep shadow—for the moon did not ride high enough in the heavens to pour her silvery light upon it above the surrounding wall; but still a small rise of damp, fresh earth was distinctly visible to the lonely, almost heart-broken mourner; and upon it he gazed, with eyes tearful and feverish; while lips strangely quivering, and a breast convulsively heaving, told truthfully of the great anguish which his imprisoned spirit suffered.

"Oh, God!" he groaned, at length, clasping his hands despairingly—"could she not have been spared to me a few years longer, with the little infant that reposes on her breast?"

Impulsively he threw himself upon the grave, that strong man of iron nerve, and clasped it in an agony of despair, as if it had been the object of his affection. Then raising himself to his knees, he folded his hands, and prayed long and fervently, asking strength from on high, to sustain him under his heavy affliction, and imploring protection for himself and family against the dangers that threatened. Just as he concluded, he heard a low, deep sob; and looking up, he saw the simpleton standing by his side, in an attitude of deep sorrow and dejection.

"She'll never come back, will she?" said Jacob, as soon as he perceived the Major noticed him.

"No, my poor fellow—no!" replied Hargrave, mournfully.

"But we can go to her, and that's some consolation," rejoined Simple Roley.

"And we may go sooner than we expect," added Hargrave, gloomily.

"I care not how soon, Major," was the reply. "I think if we were where she is, we should be happier than now."

"I hope so, Roley—I hope so."

"I know so," said the moonling, positively.

A long pause succeeded this remark.

"Come, Jacob," said Hargrave, at length, "you had better go in and go to bed."

"I should like to sit up and watch with you, Major—or you may sleep, and I'll watch alone."

"No, Roley, I am going to watch to-night, and one is enough. Go you in, go to bed, get your sleep, and be

ready for the morrow—for to-morrow I expect we shall all start on a journey to some place of greater safety."

Simple Roley was turning slowly away, to comply with the other's request; but stopped, stood still a moment, and then said, quickly:

"Major Hargrave, there is danger near."

"Ha! why do you think so?"

"I know it," replied the simpleton.

"Well, tell me how you know it?"

"See!" and the moonling pointed toward the western sky, at an angle of about forty-five degrees.

The Major looked up, and an exclamation of surprise and alarm passed his lips. The sky, at the point mentioned, had a reddish tinge. Springing to the nearest loop-hole, he withdrew the block, and looked through the aperture.

"Heaven be merciful!" he said, in a low, startled tone. "My neighbor's cabin is on fire! and I fear the savages are upon us! May God protect us! I hoped to escape, but I fear it is too late! Go in, Jacob, and send Cuba and Dick hither; but give no alarm—make no noise."

The simpleton glided away, to obey the order; and Hargrave remained standing at the loop-hole, gazing forth, with feelings so conflicting and powerful, that we shall make no attempt to analyze or describe them. The distant fire every moment grew brighter; and though the cabin to which he alluded was, at his precise line of observation, hidden from view by some intervening trees, he nothing doubted of its being the structure which fed the flames, and fully believed the Indians had begun their work of butchery and devastation in what might be called his own neighborhood.

"And if so," he groaned, "we shall not long escape their notice, and my plan of departure will be frustrated."

Suddenly the idea occurred to him of attempting an immediate flight; but a moment's consideration dispelled it; for if the savages were really near, they would discover his trail; and then his family, without any protection, would be at their mercy.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, the simpleton returned, and with him the two negroes. Both Cuba and Dick were much alarmed; but both possessed that degree of courage which generally results in deeds of bravery when pressed by an emergency that has no alternative. Turning to them, the Major said:

"I have sent for you, boys, to tell you that there are indications of a body of Indians being near us, and that it is not improbable we shall be attacked before morning. Now you are not children, and must not behave yourselves as such, or you will most assuredly lose your scalps and your lives. Let what will happen, I wish you to be calm, resolute, courageous; for all *may* depend on your conduct whether we survive or perish. I believe you love me, my children, and Miss Gertrude; and if so, do not forget that each life is as valuable as your own; and that if you falter in your duty, the savages may force an entrance and put us all to death; but, on the contrary, if you stand firm, and do as I direct, we may be able to withstand the attack of a large force, and all eventually escape. For an emergency like this, I taught you how to load and fire a rifle before we came hither; and now I shall expect you to make use of that knowledge for the benefit of all parties. Remember! let happen what will, you must be silent—and, in the hour of danger, brave—and in that case, I think, with the defences which we have, we shall be able to hold this place against a host. Now go in, and tell Aunt Chloe she must be silent also; and be you in readiness to come to me the moment you hear the

report of my rifle. I shall keep watch here alone; and unless my piece is discharged, you need not come forth again to-night."

This address was well-timed, and had a good effect upon the blacks, who promised obedience, and retired into the dwelling. For an hour longer, the Major stood at the loop-hole, gazing out toward the west, his mind busy with a thousand thoughts of a nature the most unpleasant. By this time the light of the fire was no longer visible; and only the pale rays of the moon illumined a scene, which a combination of circumstances made appear most gloomy to the eyes of the mourning, solitary watcher, who now carefully closed the aperture, and, with slow, heavy steps, paced to and fro beside the lonely grave of his beloved wife. At length he turned away, and stealthily entered the dwelling, where he found the children asleep, and Cuba and Dick stretched out on the floor before the dying fire. Without disturbing any one, he took down all the rifles, powder-horns, and bullet-pouches, and with these returned to his post.

Some three or four hours now passed in a silence broken only by the cheerless hooting of an owl, or the distant howl of some hungry wolf. The moon now went down, darkness stretched its sable pall over the earth, and a thousand bright stars became visible in the azure vault above. It was now the Major felt that vigilance was most needed—for if the savages were near, and meditating an attack, it was now that they would begin to put their plan in execution. Accordingly, he took a survey of the scene outside—beginning at the southern loop-holes and ending at the western—but without seeing anything to excite his alarm. At the central loop-hole, on the western side, he was still lingering, and congratulating himself that his fears of a night assault would probably prove groundless, when his eye

chanced upon a dark object at no great distance, which he at first believed to be a stump, but which, notwithstanding, he eyed with a strange interest that he could not account for. While looking steadily at this object, he fancied it drew nearer: certainly it either moved, or his eyes deceived him. With awakened suspicion, he now rivetted his gaze upon it, and watched it with breathless attention.

He was not long kept in doubt—for, in less than a minute, the dark object had drawn so near to the stockade that he could no longer see it. What was it? was the next query to be settled. Could it be an Indian? If so, it was an Indian creeping upon his hands and knees—for it had not, while in sight, assumed an upright posture. The Major listened, but he could hear no sound. All was still—a gloomy, oppressive stillness—a stillness that seemed foreboding, like that which precedes the burst of a tempest.

Still keeping his position at the loop-hole, Hargrave now ran his eyes hurriedly over the dim scene, in eager search of some other object to give a sad confirmation to his worst fears; but hoping the while, with a faint, tremulous hope, that nothing to excite further apprehension might be seen. While looking, he heard the soft notes of a whippoorwill, so close to him, that he fancied the bird must be sitting on the top of the palisade above his head. He took a step back, and turned his eyes upward—but nothing in the shape of the nocturnal warbler was visible on the dark line which the stockade drew against the clear sky. Resuming his place at the aperture, he again peered through; and as he did so, the music of the bird ceased, and the dismal hooting of an owl, not quite so near, fell upon his ear. This continued but a few moments, and then all became as silent as before.

Hargrave now began to indulge the belief that the dark object he had seen was merely some prowling animal, and

consequently that there was no cause for fresh alarm; and he was just on the point of closing the aperture and turning away, when he was again startled, by seeing some ten or twelve moving objects, not unlike the first, within a few yards of him, and all approaching at the same slow pace. One of these objects, ere it drew so close to the stockade as to be to him invisible, suddenly elongated vertically, and displayed the figure of a human being.

All hope of danger being distant was now banished—all doubt concerning the objects he had seen was now dispelled. He knew he was surrounded by a band of hostile savages, all eager to begin their bloody work; and he rightly conjectured that what he had believed to be the notes of the whippoorwill and owl, were merely the signals of a scout to his dusky brethren, conveying some intelligence by which their first movements were to be determined.

Major Hargrave was, in the full sense of the term, a brave man; and one who could bear up unshrinkingly against much that would appall some, who, though of weaker nerve, might prove themselves heroes on the field of battle; but in this terrible moment of grief and danger—danger not only to himself, but to all he loved—he was completely unmanned; and with the first consciousness that a blood-thirsty foe stood within a few feet of him—a consciousness derived at the very point of time, too, when the elastic spring of hope was raising his depressed spirits—he was seized with a violent trembling; and his knees fairly smote together, as did those of the ancient king, Belshazzar, when he saw the spirit-fingers write his destiny on the wall of his palace.

Happily, this nervous fear was only of short duration; and then the Major collected his scattered faculties, grew composed, and prepared to act as became one in his situation. Cautiously, carefully, silently, he closed the aper-

ture, gathered up his rifles, etcetera, and, stealthily advancing to the door of his dwelling, pushed it open, without noise, and entered. He found the two negroes still stretched before the fire-place, and fast asleep; and his little children asleep on the bed so lately occupied by the cold remains of their dear mother. He bent over them, and, with lips that trembled with deep emotion—for who could say this might not be the last time—pressed a father's warm kiss upon each little upturned face. Then moving away, with a noiseless step, without disturbing their innocent slumbers, he sought the apartment of Gertrude, and whispered her name.

She started up in bed, for dark fancies had kept her awake, and in a low, eager tone, inquired:

"What is it, Edward?"

"Hush!" he whispered—"do not speak above your breath! Try and be firm," he continued; "and, so far as you are able, act the part of a heroine—for you are about to be put to a fearful trial. We are surrounded by a body of savages, of whose numbers I know nothing, and ere long they will begin their attack."

"Oh, merciful God!" groaned Gertrude, in horror.

"Hush!" he again whispered—"do not let them hear a sound that can make them aware that we are cognizant of their presence. I am about to go outside again, to render what defence I can, and shall take Cuba and Dick with me. You had better get up and keep the door; but do not disturb Aunt Chloe, or the simpleton, who I trust are asleep above—for neither, in such a time, would be of any service." He then advanced to her side, pressed his lips to hers, and added, in much agitation: "Should I fall, let this be our farewell kiss. Should I fall, and you and the dear children escape, be as a mother to them, dear Gertrude—be as a mother to them—and tell them their father

died in their defence. There! there! farewell! farewell! and may God have mercy on us all!"

Saying this, he made a hasty retreat, leaving poor Gertrude trembling with horror, and more dead than alive. Advancing to the negroes, he roused each with a shake, and said, in a fearful whisper:

"Hush! be silent—not a word—not a breath. Get up and follow me as stealthily as a cat. The least noise may cost you your lives. We are surrounded by Indians, and nothing but bravery can save us from a horrible butchery. Here is a rifle and ammunition for each of you. I charge you not to speak—scarcely to breathe! When we go out, I will station each of you. You must watch, with eagle glance, the top of the stockade; and if either of you see a human head rise above it, give it the contents of your rifle. There—come! come! for delay may be fatal."

Neither of the blacks replied; but both silently arose, trembling with terror, and each mechanically took his rifle and followed the Major. At the south-west angle of the palisade he stationed Dick, and at the north-west Cuba; and as he left each, he grasped his arm, without speaking, and pointed upward, as a sign that he must keep his eyes fixed on the upper line of the wooden wall.

This done, the Major, with stealthy steps, repaired to the gate, and placed himself in such a position that he could command a view of one half of the stockade—of all, in fact, that could not be seen by the blacks. Now came moments of painful suspense—of a suspense that seemed to have in it more of horror than would the certainty of real action. Minute succeeded minute, and, save an occasional movement of some of the horses, not a sound was heard, and nothing to indicate the presence of a savage foe eager for blood. Minute succeeded minute, and a quarter of an hour passed away, and yet all remained still and quiet; and the wondering and expectant Major was beginning to

hope that his senses had deceived him—or, if not, that the Indians, finding him so well fortified, had gone to seek other and less guarded victims—when he fancied he heard a slight noise at the gate. Cautiously he drew up to it, and placed his ear against the timbers. No! his sense of hearing had not deceived him. There was a noise here—a very slight noise—a noise as of some one slowly and carefully climbing.

"It is as I expected," thought Hargrave. "They will first assist one of their number to scale the wall, to reconnoitre and unfasten the gate. It is a perilous venture for him."

He clutched his rifle with an iron grip, set his teeth hard, and, gently cocking his piece, raised it to the position of an upward aim, and then fairly held his breath with anxiety.

He had not long to wait. First one dark, shadowy-looking hand, then another, was seen to grasp the top of the post above him; and then slowly—very, very slowly—a dark, shadowy-looking head and face rose into view. A single moment the Major glanced at that grim, shadowy face along the barrel of his rifle, and then his finger pressed quick and hard against the trigger.

A sharp report, and a spasmodic groan, simultaneously followed; and then a dull, leaden sound, as of the fall of some body heavily to the earth.

The next moment there arose upon the still midnight air a series of such horrible yells as the bravest have never heard without quailing—yells that sounded as if all the demons of hell had suddenly been let loose; and with the infernal screeches mingled the reports of at least twenty firearms, the balls of which lodged in the stout posts of the stockade without doing any injury. For perhaps a minute, these yells and screeches continued without cessation; and then, as suddenly as they had burst upon the ear, they ceased, and the silence without became awfully impressive.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ATTACK.

FOR a few moments after the savage outburst of rage and fury had subsided, not a human sound was heard, as if terror had for the time paralyzed every tongue. Then arose a series of wild cries within the cabin, and voices were heard calling to each other in tones of frenzied alarm.

The Major knew enough of the Indian mode of warfare, to feel satisfied that no concerted attack would commence till the latter had taken time to deliberate upon the facts, that their presence was known, that their first attempt to gain an entrance had proved a failure, and that the besieged were armed and resolved to dispute possession with their lives. Accordingly, he reloaded his rifle, even while the demoniac yells of his disappointed foes were ringing in his ears; and then hurried to Dick and Cuba, to see what effect the startling events recorded had produced upon them, and be able to judge what amount of dependence he could place upon them in the moments of greatest peril and sorest need. He found each at his post, watching the upper line of the palisade as he had directed; and though both were much frightened, he rejoiced to perceive that neither would be likely to prove craven-hearted in the hour of dangerous trial.

Calling them together, he hurriedly related what had taken place; complimented them on the courage they had displayed, in remaining where he had stationed them, and doing their duty, under circumstances calculated to appall

the bravest; and said that with vigilance, caution, and firm resolution, he nothing doubted being able to keep the savages outside the walls, till such time as succor might arrive, or they, becoming weary of the contest, might be glad to raise the siege and depart.

"Remember, boys," he continued, impressively, "all will depend on you. If you stand firm, and act courageously, all may be saved—if you falter, and, coward-like, shrink from your duty, we are lost. Yet I will not ask you to risk your lives for me and mine without the hope of further reward than the mere saving of your own lives. If, by reason of your good conduct and bravery, we escape from our foes, you, Dick, and you, Cuba, with your wife, shall each and all have your liberty. I promise on my own part, and I take the responsibility of promising on the part of Miss Gertrude, that you shall be set free, to be your own masters, and go where you like."

The address of the Major roused the pride of the negroes, who felt they were appealed to as freemen, rather than as servants in bondage; and his offer to make them freemen indeed, touched their finer feelings, and affected them deeply.

"God bless you, Mas'er," cried Cuba, "and Missus Gertrude, and de childrens! I'll do what I can for ye all, de Lord help us! and I's jus't say for myse'f, dat dar was no need ob dat dar compli'tary succumstance ob de liberties, to make dis ole nigger do his best—dar."

"'Sider what Cube says, said for me," chimed in Dick, sententiously.

"Well, now, each to his post, and be wary," rejoined the Major. "There is no telling what moment the savages may begin the attack in a body, and we must all be prepared to give them a warm reception. If you have occasion to fire, remember to load your piece the very first thing you do, and as expeditiously as possible. By-the-by, I will

provide each of you with a knife and an axe, which will be serviceable weapons should we come to close quarters with the enemy, which God forbid! I will now speak to those in the house—for they know not what has happened, and are in a state of wild alarm and terrible suspense."

Saying this, Hargrave hastened around to the front of the cabin, passing three or four horses on his way, which, with heads up and ears erect, were snuffing and snorting, and exhibiting other signs of alarm, occasioned by the fearful and unfamiliar sounds they had so recently heard. Making a quick but keen survey of the top of the wall, to be certain that no other Indian had ventured upon the experiment which had cost the first one his life, he advanced to the door, and gave several heavy knocks with the breech of his rifle.

"Who is there?" called out Gertrude.

"It is I—Edward—all is so far safe—do not be alarmed."

"Thank God! thank God!" ejaculated Gertrude: "I was afraid you were killed. Come in!" she added, opening the door.

As Hargrave was about to comply with her request, the simpleton darted out past him.

"Here, Jacob," he called, "you must remain inside."

If Jacob heard, he did not heed, but turned the corner of the house with a bound, and came nigh receiving the contents of Dick's rifle—who, startled at his sudden approach, and supposing him to be an Indian, brought his piece to a level, and only became aware of his mistake as his finger rested on the trigger.

"I have had great trouble to keep him from undoing the fastenings of the door and rushing out," said Gertrude.

"Well, let him go—I will see to him;" and then the Major, in as few words as possible, related what had occurred since he was last in the house.

Again taking a hurried look at the upper line of the

stockade, Hargrave entered the dwelling, to get the knives and axes before mentioned. He found the children awake, crying, and terrified, and Aunt Chloe in a similar state of excitement. Somewhat pacifying the former, by a few hasty words, kindly spoken, and rebuking the latter in a stern tone of displeasure, he caught up the implements he sought, and hurried out, bidding Gertrude keep the door fastened, and be ready to admit him at a moment's notice.

"Is there any hope that we may escape falling into the hands of these monsters?" asked the latter, in a low, anxious tone, as she was about closing the door.

"There is hope, Gertrude," replied Hargrave; "but I should not conceal from you, that we can only save ourselves by a desperate struggle. The savages are quiet now—but is it only because they are plotting how best to circumvent us—and ere long the contest will begin in earnest.

"May God have mercy on us, and deliver us!" rejoined the other, retiring and closing the door.

The Major now repaired to the negroes, and handed each an axe and a knife.

"Where is Jacob?" he asked, looking round.

"Dar, Mas'er," answered Dick, pointing to the southwestern angle of the stockade, where the simpleton was crouching down, to avoid being seen by Hargrave.

"Come, Roley," said the Major, kindly, "this is no place for you—you must go in, and stay with Gertrude and the children."

The moonling got up, came slowly toward Hargrave, and began to cry.

"I don't want to go in," he said.

"Why not, Roley?"

"Because I couldn't do anything in the house to help you."

"Nor here either, my poor fellow."

"You think me of no account, and all because I'm a fool," sobbed the simpleton.

"On the contrary," returned Hargrave, in a gentle tone, "I think you of so much account, that I should grieve if harm befell you; and therefore I wish you to go inside, where you will be safe so long as we shall be able, to withstand the attacks of our bloodthirsty foes. If you—"

The sentence was left unfinished—for at that instant a hurtling arrow passed between the speaker and the simpleton, and quivered in the logs beyond. Hargrave recoiled a pace, with an exclamation of surprise and alarm—for the arrow, in an oblique line downward, had passed within an inch of his face. He looked up, but no foe was to be seen; and calling to the negroes to be on their guard, he hurried away to his own particular post, trembling lest he should find his temporary absence had given a fatal advantage to his enemies.

Hastily sweeping the top of the wall with his eye, he next looked to the fastenings of the gate; and finding all secure, he drew a long breath of relief, and resolved henceforth to be more watchful and guarded. He then reprimed his rifle, keeping a wary look out for the enemy; and leaning the piece against the stockade, he took up another, (he had four altogether) which he had placed there after arming the blacks, previous to his shooting the savage. This he likewise reprimed, and returned to its place, putting the axe beside it; and then bracing his back against one of the palisade posts, and bringing his favorite weapon into a good position for a quick aim, he awaited in anxious silence the next hostile movement of the enemy.

As for the simpleton, the moment Hargrave left him, he turned to the arrow, which had so nearly proved fatal to his benefactor, and the point of which had been driven deeply into one of the logs of the cabin, and drawing it forth, coolly examined it, with an air of idle curiosity.

While standing thus, he heard a distant twang, a whizzing sound, and, almost at the same instant, another shaft, with lightning velocity, passed close by his head, and buried its point in the same log as the first, and within an inch of the same spot.

"O-ho, Mr. Savage! is that your game?" he muttered, looking up. "You shoot from the sky, do you? But you don't stand on nothing, as any fool might know; and so on what do you stand is clearly manifest."

Drawing the second arrow from the log, he quickly advanced to the stockade, to avoid further exposure, and followed this round till he came to Hargrave.

"See!" he whispered, holding out the arrow; "here are two of Beelzebub's cards, inviting us to a goblin frolic."

"Two?" returned Hargrave, in surprise.

"Yes, Major—one came since you left—but don't let us accept the invitation."

"Ha!" said Hargrave, uneasily: "two arrows shot into the enclosure, and the Indian living to repeat the daring feat! I fear Dick's eyes are not quick and keen enough for his post!"

"Why, sir, you shouldn't blame Dick, for not seeing what is not to be seen," returned Jacob. "You were there when the first arrow arrived—did you see where it came from?"

"Some Indian must have climbed the stockade, and shot it from the top. True, I did not see him—but I think, if I had been in Dick's position, I should have seen him the second time."

"No!" said the simpleton, positively: "no, Major, you would not. I know where the Indian was and is," he continued; "and he was and is where you do not suspect him to be."

"And where is he, then? if you know, speak!" said Hargrave, quickly.

The simpleton was about to give a correct answer, when his hand accidentally rested on the barrel of the rifle that stood leaning against the palisade. Had it been light enough to have seen his features at that moment, the observer would have been struck with the expression of idiotic cunning which they displayed.

"In the air, Major—in the air," he said, in reply to Hargrave's question.

"Go, Roley—go into the house," rejoined the Major, kindly. "Heaven never made you for such scenes as these—and you will only get killed, without doing us any service."

The simpleton seemed to slink away as Hargrave ceased speaking—but, unperceived by the latter, he carried the rifle with him. As soon as he believed himself entirely beyond the Major's observation, he both laughed and danced, but without making any noise. When he had thus given sufficient vent to his hilarious feelings, he began a series of operations, the design of which, if design there was, might have puzzled any one of more brains than Jacob to make out. He first crept round to the spot where the arrows had lodged, and, laying his rifle down along side the cabin, deliberately took off his coat, keeping his person the while as close to the ground as possible. Then placing the coat over the muzzle of the piece, he laid himself flat on his back, and raising the garment high above his head, moved it slowly to and fro, keeping his eyes at the same time on the upper line of the stockade.

The ruse was successful; for in less than a minute, an arrow, from an unseen source, pierced the garment, and pinned it to the cabin. We say from an unseen source came the arrow—for he who shot it remained invisible, and not so much as a shadow was seen along the top of the wall.

The simpleton, however, seemed perfectly satisfied with

the result, and at no loss what to do next. With great caution he removed the coat from the arrow, leaving the latter sticking in the log; and then carefully cocking the rifle, he placed the breech against the cabin, a little below the point of the shaft, and clasped the latter and the barrel of his piece with his left hand. The moment that he got his weapon so adjusted that the barrel and the shaft were on a line, he pulled the trigger, at the same time muttering:

"Where the arrow came from, let the ball go to."

This novel mode of aiming at an unseen foe, was, strange to say, fatal. As the report of the rifle broke upon the still air, a yell of pain was heard, and a heavy body descended swiftly through the branches of the tall oak which overlooked the stockade. Hargrave heard the cry of pain, and the fall of the savage; and the place of the latter's concealment was no longer a mystery; but he believed the rifle had been fired by Cuba or Dick, and his estimation of the efficiency of the blacks was proportionably increased.

The Indians, now enraged at the loss of another of their number, whom they had thought secure against danger, if not detection, simultaneously burst forth in horrible screeches and yells, and rushed in a body against the gate. For a moment Hargrave trembled for the result; but finding the gate withstand the shock, without suffering the least damage, he again breathed more freely. Low, smothered voices now reached his ear, and made him aware that the savages were holding a sort of council-of-war close under the wall. Presently all became still; and then the silence was broken by another general yell; and at the same instant some fifteen or twenty hatchets were struck into the timbers of the gate, and the Indians began to hew away with great fury.

"So! this is your game now, is it?" thought the Major. "Well, for your light blows we must strike a heavy one."

Knowing the gate to be thick enough to withstand this

mode of attack for some considerable time, Hargrave did not experience any new alarm—yet he had no idea of remaining idle, and letting his foes have matters all their own way. Accordingly he hastened round to the blacks; and calling them together, inquired, in a tone scarcely audible:

"Has each of you his rifle loaded?"

The reply was in the affirmative.

"Which of you shot the Indian?"

"I didn't, Mas'er," replied Cuba.

"Nor me," said Dick.

"What!" cried the Major, in astonishment: "neither of you? Who did, then?"

"I's t'ought you did, Mas'er," rejoined Dick.

"How? me? I did not. This is very strange! Can it be that we have a friend outside?"

"De gun was fired in de 'closure, for I seen de light," said Dick.

"Ha! I have it!" rejoined the Major, as he thought of the extra rifle in connection with the simpleton.

He hurried back to the gate, and at once felt for the weapon in question. To his surprise, his utter astonishment, he found it on the very spot where he had placed it.

"This is wonderful!" he said to himself, as he returned to the negroes.

But danger was pressing, and he made no further remark to them on the subject. After giving them some instructions in a low tone, the three advanced to the front wall. Carefully withdrawing the block from the loop-hole nearest the gate, the Major, exercising the greatest caution, peered through the aperture. Within a few feet of him, stood a number of dusky, half-naked savages, all seemingly intent upon their task of hewing down the gate.

Perceiving he was not observed, the Major drew back; and then slowly and cautiously the muzzles of the three rifles were pushed through the little opening, in an oblique

direction. The moment these were fairly brought to bear upon the group of dusky forms, Hargrave, in a tone that was intentionally raised to a perfect yell, cried:

"Fire!"

Like one piece, with a single report, the three rifles belched forth their deadly contents; and four savages, one dead, two mortally wounded, dropped to the earth, with cries of pain. For a moment their companions stood paralyzed with surprise and terror; and then, with screeches and yells, loud and wild, they suddenly bounded away down the knoll, leaving the wounded at the mercy of their foes.

"It was now that Hargrave, acting wholly from impulse, and with a reckless daring worthy of a madman, threw down his rifle, seized his axe, tore open the gate, rushed out, brained the deserted Indians, gathered up their weapons, and bounded into the enclosure, escaping unharmed. All this was the work, as it were, of a single minute; and not till it was over, did the Major fairly comprehend his own fool-hardiness. Then, trembling at the thought, that he had for the time perilled not only his own life, but the lives of those he held more dear than his own, he grew weak as a child, and leaned against the stockade for support.

"What a thing is man, when reason loses control!" he muttered: "a mariner without a compass—a vessel without a helm."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FIGHT.

HAVING himself reloaded the rifles, whose simultaneous discharge had been attended with consequences so fatal to a portion of his foes and so important to himself, the Major took up the piece that stood leaning against the stockade, and threw back the hammer, in order to reassure himself that the priming was in good condition. To his surprise, he found the pan empty. This led him to try the rifle with the ramrod. The depth which it entered, and the ringing sound which followed, assured him the barrel was empty also.

"Ha!" he said—"this has been discharged, and the mysterious marksman must have been Simple Roley. I have underrated his abilities—Heaven forgive me! and now I will seek him and do him justice."

It was some time before the simpleton could be found, with both the negroes and Hargrave on the search for him. At length he was discovered in the rear of the cabin, lying down on the earth, close up against the foundation log. Under a vague impression that he had done something for which he was going to be blamed, he got up, and, trembling for fear of a severe reproof, began to cry.

"Don't drive me into the house, Major!" he said, imploringly. "I'll be very quiet, and do nothing more to vex you."

"Was it indeed you who shot the Indian on the oak?" inquired Hargrave, in a kindly tone, calculated to reassure

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the poor fellow and restore confidence. "Speak, Roley—for if it was you, I shall praise rather than blame."

"I couldn't help it," pleaded Jacob; "something made me do it."

"Then it was you," said the Major: and, after a thoughtful pause, he added: "Well, it is very strange! I did not know you could shoot a rifle, and especially with a fatal aim! Surely, Heaven must have guided your ball!"

"And must I be driven into the house?" inquired the moonling, in a timid voice.

"No!" said Hargrave; "you shall be considered a man, and stay with us."

"Please to say that again, sir," returned Jacob, who was fearful he had not heard aright.

The Major repeated his words.

Simple Roley now fairly laughed and danced with delight.

"Let my dry-wood project go, then," he cried; "and from this hour let mankind be forgiven for their ignorance and stupidity." Stooping down, he picked up three arrows; and handing Hargrave two, firmly clinched the third, and shook it toward the oak, saying: "This was the last he shot, or will ever shoot, and better for him had he kept it for the bounding deer. Let them come," he continued, referring to the Indians; "we know they are mortal, and can die, and their death is our triumph. Let them come; we know they are mortal, and that they cannot conquer four determined men. For all are men," he added, solemnly, "who bravely fight for them—Heaven help them!—who cannot fight for themselves."

"Yes, my brave fellow!" rejoined Hargrave, with enthusiasm; "*all* shall be counted *men*, who bravely fight for the protection of the dear beings within, who can only pray for our success. We have so far done well," he con-

tinued, encouragingly, addressing the negroes and the simpleton; "and while some five or six of our enemies have bitten the dust, we have escaped unharmed. Only let us continue as we have begun, and victory shall be ours. Come, Cuba and Dick, to your posts again—we cannot be too cautious. Jacob, come with me. God bless you for what you have done! I feel as if I had received a recruit to my force. The rifle you used so well, shall henceforth be yours."

Saying this, he returned to the front of the cabin, the simpleton accompanying him, and shedding tears of pride and joy. The Major now handed him the rifle, stationed him near the gate, bade him watch and listen, and, should he see a foe, to shoot him, or, should he hear ought betokening danger, to acquaint him without delay, but with such caution that the enemy might not be put upon his guard. Simple Roley shouldered his weapon, and took his place with a swelling heart. Poor fellow! The little intellect he possessed, had more than once enabled him to comprehend his mental deficiency; and, strange as it may seem, he had more than once, alone, in solitude, unknown to his friends, shed tears of grief at the thought, that men regarded him as a fool or idiot. Now he fancied himself a man—a human being, not wholly made in vain—and that hour of danger was to him the happiest and the proudest of his life.

We have previously stated, that when Hargrave rushed out and brained the dying savages, he collected their weapons and brought them within the stockade. These consisted of a bow, a sheaf of arrows, two muskets, three tomahawks, and three scalping-knives, besides a quantity of powder and ball. Throwing the bow, arrows, and knives aside, he leaned the muskets against the wall, where they could be grasped in a moment of need, and sticking one

of the tomahawks in his belt, went and gave the others to the blacks—remarking, as he did so:

"We are certainly well armed; and if we come to close quarters with the savages, I trust we shall make them *painfully* aware of the fact."

He now entered the house, informed Gertrude what had taken place, and cheered up the drooping spirits of all with words of hope; and then, reappearing without, took up his position near the cabin, to await, in painful anxiety, the renewal of the contest.

For a long time silence now seemed to reign supreme, and the hoot of the owl and the howl of the wolf were no longer heard. Minute succeeded minute, an hour passed, and then another, and still all remained quiet without, and nothing occurred to indicate the proximity of a savage foe. At length Hargrave began to hope that the Indians, finding greater resistance than they had expected, and becoming discouraged after the loss of so many of their number, had made a sudden retreat, and would not again molest him, at least without a reinforcement. During this time, he kept himself so still, and so much in one position, that, almost unconsciously, a heavy drowsiness began to steal over his senses, and more than once he caught himself nodding, and his mind wandering, and mingling fact with fancy, as in the incipient stages of a dream. At last, after a longer nod than usual, which ended in a violent jerk of the neck and head, he opened his eyes with a start, and beheld the simpleton standing directly before him. With a vague apprehension that something had occurred of an alarming nature, he said quickly, in a whisper:

"What is it, Roley?"

"Why, Major," returned the moonling, in a whisper also, "I think I had better go and join the Indians."

"Why so, Roley?" inquired the other, in surprise.

"Because I think my scientific project would prosper with them; for I have no doubt that, in a short time, they could be induced to adopt my plan of growing dry wood."

"Pshaw!" said Hargrave, almost angrily.

"No 'pshaw' about it, sir!" returned the simpleton: "it is a fact, Major—a fact, sir. Even you will soon have to admit, Major, that dry wood is of so much importance to them, that they spend time to collect it in the midst of difficulties."

"What do you mean, Jacob?" inquired Hargrave, quickly, a suspicion of the truth now flashing across his mind.

"Why, for instance," answered the moonling coolly, "I think if you were to open the gate now, you would find as pretty a pile of dry wood against it as one could wish to see—I do indeed, sir."

"Great Heaven! say you so?" rejoined the Major, in alarm: "this needs attention! Ha! look! by my soul! the villains have fired it already."

As he spoke, a bright flame shot upward outside the gate, and the scene instantly became lighted by a lurid glare. Hargrave, shouting to the negroes to come to his assistance, sprung forward to the gate, in a half bewildered state of mind, without any fixed plan of operations, and only thinking that the fire must be put out at all hazards. At this moment he heard three or four shots in quick succession, the cries of the blacks and the yells of the savages commingled. Looking round, he saw two dusky forms drop into the enclosure from the top of the stockade; and instinctively bringing his rifle to his eye, he sighted it in an instant, and fired. The savage nearest him gave a loud yell, staggered back, and fell; while his companion, uttering the shrill war-whoop of his tribe, bounded forward toward the Major, discharging his musket at the latter while in

motion. The ball passed through the garments of Hargrave, on the left side, near the heart, just grazing the skin, but doing him no injury. Dropping his rifle, and grasping the axe, the Major swung it round in the air, leaped forward, and the next moment cleaved the head of the advancing savage in twain—the force of the blow carrying the blade of the weapon through skull and brain into the very neck of his foe.

As the bloody and quivering trunk sunk to the earth, the Major, jerking the axe loose, sprung over it, and rushed to the assistance of the negroes, whom, by the sounds of strife, he knew must be engaged in a close hand-to-hand combat, in the rear of the cabin. As he turned the corner of the house, he heard the report of a gun on the other side, and beheld Cuba and Dick each grappled with a grim savage, and both fighting desperately. At the same instant, he barely caught a glimpse of another half-naked, dusky form disappearing on the other side of the dwelling; and believing it to be the design of this savage to reach the gate and open it for the entrance of those of his companions who were still on the outside of the stockade, Hargrave, without attempting to aid either of his servants, instantly turned and ran back with all his might.

Both the savage and the Major met at the gate; and the former, perceiving he was baffled in his design, and knowing his only chance of escape now lay in overcoming his white antagonist, turned desperately upon him, with a howl of fury, and aimed a blow at his head with a tomahawk. With great presence of mind and dexterity, Hargrave succeeded in parrying the stroke, and, in return, aimed a blow at the head of the Indian with his axe. The latter, with an agility which few could equal, bounded aside at the critical time; and Hargrave, finding the axe swiftly descending, without meeting any obstruction, was

forced to let go the helve or wound himself. He let go, therefore, and instantly seized the already uplifted arm of the savage. This brought the two combatants to the strife of strength—the Indian endeavouring to release himself and strike down his antagonist, and the Major struggling to keep back the intended blow, and wrench the weapon from the grasp of his adversary.

The struggle now became fearful, involving as it did life and death; and no one, to have seen it, could have predicted with certainty how it would end. The contending parties were nearly of equal size and weight; and though the preponderance of strength might be on the side of Hargrave, the savage was the more active and supple of the two. At length the Major, watching his opportunity, suddenly threw himself forward, and locking his hands behind the back of the Indian, pinioned his arms. Then, exerting all his strength, and at the same time placing his left foot behind his adversary, he bore him violently to the earth, falling with all his weight upon him. As he struck the ground, the savage fairly groaned with the pain which the shock caused him; but, without relaxing a muscle, he still struggled as fiercely as before.

The Major now felt he had gained some advantage, and he strove most desperately to make it fatal to his enemy. He thought if he could succeed in drawing his knife, without getting wounded meantime, the contest might soon end in his own victory. Suddenly withdrawing an arm from under the savage, he brought the hand to his belt; but before he could grasp the weapon he sought, the Indian, gathering and expending all his strength in the same moment, dexterously turned him, and came uppermost. He now succeeded in striking Hargrave on the head with his tomahawk, inflicting a frightful wound; and at the same instant, the disengaged knife of the Major was plunged into his side, half way to the hilt. Still both

parties fought on—the Indian seeming to gain rather than lose strength, while Hargrave felt himself each moment growing weaker. Several slight wounds had now been given and received on both sides, since the principal ones just mentioned, and still neither seemed to be certain of any advantage over his enemy.

How the strife might have terminated between these two well-matched combatants, had no third party interfered, it is not for us to say; but at this moment the muzzle of a musket was thrust against the head of the Indian and discharged. With scattered brains, the savage gave one long, convulsive quiver, and, partly rolling over, lay still in death. Hargrave looked up, and beheld the simpleton standing quietly by his side, with the discharged musket in his hand. Gathering himself upon his feet, but partially stunned and bewildered, the Major grasped the hand of Simple Roley, and uttering a faint "God bless you, lad!" staggered back, and leaned against the stockade for support.

At this moment the door of the cabin was thrown suddenly open, and Gertrude, with a wild cry, burst forth, and sprung to the side of the Major.

"Oh! my God!" she exclaimed, as she looked upon his ghastly and bloody features—for the blood was trickling down his face from the long, deep gash on the upper part of his forehead—"you are killed! you are killed!"

"No!" returned Hargrave, with some effort: "no, Gertrude—only a little stunned—a little faint. But this is no place for you—you must keep in the house with the children; it is your only hope—their only safety."

"But the fire!" cried Gertrude: "the fire! it is fast doing its work; the gate will soon be burned through; and then nothing but the direct providence of God can save us!"

"True," said Hargrave, faintly—"I had forgotten the fire: we must quench it, or die in the attempt."

He started forward as he spoke; but reeled, and sunk down upon the earth, still conscious, but too weak to proceed. Gertrude would have sprung to his assistance; but she knew that unless the fire could be put out immediately, the Indians would soon have possession of the place, and then death would be the least of the terrors to follow. Calling on the negroes for help, but getting no answer, she, with a wonderful presence of mind, considering her timid nature, ran into the house, and, seizing the ladder which led to the loft, bore it to and leaned it against the gate. Then darting again into the dwelling, she caught up a bucket of water, and, hurrying back to the ladder, immediately began to ascend, with a heroic determination worthy the wife and mother of a Spartan.

Suddenly a group of dusky, half-naked savages, who were standing only a few paces distant without, watching the progress of the flames and listening for any sounds that would indicate the state of affairs within, were surprised, and almost startled, at the sight of a beautiful apparition. A female head, with a pale, lovely face, and hair partially dishevelled, rose suddenly above the wall; and ere they had recovered from their surprise, a bucket of water descended upon the fire, half smothering it, and checking its fearful progress; and in the fainter light the head and face as suddenly disappeared.

With yells of fury, the savages, who now became aware that their white foes within had triumphed over their own party, rushed in a body against the gate, hoping and expecting to force it; but the timbers, though charred on the outside, still stood firm, and their design proved a failure. Had a portion of them now scaled the walls, they would have found an easy victory; but this they did not know; and consequently they drew back in dismay—yet ready and determined to fire upon whoever next might venture above the defence to cast water upon the flames.

Seemingly nothing daunted or dismayed—her features now glowing with the lofty look of a heroine prepared for any danger, or any consequence—Gertrude again hurried into the house, refilled the bucket, and returned to the ladder. As she was about to ascend the second time—and this time, doubtless, to a certain and bloody death—the simpleton, who had so far watched her proceedings with an indifferent, listless, and somewhat vacant air, suddenly sprung forward, seized the bucket, and exclaimed:

“You must go no more, Mistress Gerty—this peril belongs by right to me.”

“Nay, Roley,” said the unselfish Gertrude, anxiously, “you must not—you will be killed.”

“Better me than you,” was the answer of the moonling, as he hurried up the ladder, dragging the heavy bucket after him.

With a recklessness that could not have been justified in one of sound mind, the simpleton stopped not till he stood with one half of his body above the wall. Gertrude, greatly alarmed for his safety, was just on the point of calling to him to throw the water and descend, ere too late, when her ears were greeted with the simultaneous discharge of some ten or fifteen fire-arms. Involuntarily closing her eyes, with a shudder, she stood for a moment, almost paralyzed; and then opened them, expecting to behold the mangled corse of the moonling at her feet. To her perfect astonishment, she saw him coolly standing where she last beheld him, apparently unharmed, and just in the act of dashing the water on the fire. As soon as he had done this, and almost quenched the flames, he slowly descended the ladder, and stood by her side.

“Are you wounded, Roley?” she cried.

“No, Mistress Gerty,” he quietly replied; “the bullet is not moulded that can harm me. Another bucket is wanted, Mistress Gerty;” and hurrying into the house

himself, he filled it and returned—Gertrude looking on in a kind of speechless amazement.

Again ascending the ladder to the same height as before, the moonling stood for a few moments, and quietly surveyed the scene before him. He saw a group of savages not far off—saw them raise their muskets and fire at his person; and as the balls whizzed past, cutting his clothes, but leaving him unharmed, he uttered a loud, idiotic laugh of defiance. He then, with great care, poured the water upon the smoking fire; and uttering another defiant laugh, descended in safety. This he three times repeated, and saw the last spark extinguished. But not another shot was fired at him by the superstitious Indians. Believing him some wonderful being, under the protection of the Great Spirit—whom they, however ignorant, barbarous, and blood-thirsty, ever reverence with a devotion which many professing Christians of the nineteenth century would do well to imitate—they regarded his person as sacred, and his life beyond their reach. Slowly they retired to a safe distance to take counsel of each other—each and all impressed with a feeling of solemn awe.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

It was not till she found herself wrapped in darkness by the extinguishment of the fire, and the simpleton had descended for the last time, and removed the ladder, that Gertrude seemed to recover from what appeared to be a state of inactive bewilderment. Then looking quickly and wildly around, and remembering that Hargrave, badly wounded, perhaps even unto death, was lying upon the earth within a few feet of her, she flew to his side, and, bending over him, exclaimed:

“Oh! Edward, forgive me for my seeming forgetfulness! How do you feel?”

“I am weak, Gertrude,” he said, faintly—“very weak—and am suffering some pain. And—and—it is a horrible thought—I fear I shall soon lose my senses.”

“Oh! God forbid!” cried Gertrude, wringing her hands.

“Oh! what will become of us? Oh! Father in Heaven! what will become of us?”

“It seems very dark here—is the fire out?”

“It is, Edward—it is, thank God!”

“Thank God, indeed!” returned the other, in a feeble tone. “I was almost afraid to ask: I feared I was losing my sight. Yes, the fire is out, thank God, indeed!” he repeated, slowly and thoughtfully; “and who knows but you and the dear children may escape after all. Oh! be as a mother to them, dear Gertrude—be as a mother to them! I know you will—you have a kind heart—God bless you!”

"What means this language, Edward?" asked Gertrude, wildly.

"It means, dear Gertrude—oh! would to Heaven I could conceal the truth from you! but to attempt it would be deception, and you would soon know it: it means that I have run my race, have done my work, and shall soon go to join Sarah."

"Oh! no! no! no!" screamed Gertrude, distractedly: "say not so, Edward! say not so! You must not die—you *shall* not die! You are wounded—badly wounded—but not mortally: oh! Heaven! not mortally! Think of your children, Edward—think of your gentle little ones: think of me—and live! live! Let the thought of us chain your spirit here!"

Hargrave groaned with mental anguish, rather than bodily pain; and, after one or two fruitless efforts to speak, said, faintly, in a choking voice:

"I do, Gertrude; and if thinking of them and you could save me, I should live—I should not die."

"Oh! do not despair, Edward! take heart! your wounds may not be mortal after all!" cried Gertrude, scarcely knowing what she said. "Come! let us convey you into the house. Here, Roley—quick! help me to raise your friend, your benefactor, and remove him into the dwelling ere he dies!"

The simpleton, who now stood at some little distance, patting the neck of his favorite horse, gave no heed to the words of Gertrude. He heard, but did not comprehend them—for he was now in one of his vacant moods; and his mind—we use the term by way of convenience—was a perfect blank.

"Alas! I fear we can hope for nothing from him now!" pursued Gertrude. "I will go and call Aunt Chloe."

"Stay!" said Hargrave: "with your assistance I will try to get up and walk—I think I can."

He made the effort, and got upon his feet; and leaning heavily on the support of Gertrude, staggered forward into the dwelling. Conducting him to the bed, and seeing him carefully deposited thereon, Gertrude flew for the light, and made a hasty examination of the Major's wounds. The principal one, as we before stated, was that on his head, made by the tomahawk of the savage. It was frightful to look at, and Gertrude shuddered as she beheld it, and grew sick and faint. From the front of the right temple, in an oblique direction upward, the flesh was laid bare to the skull, which was plainly visible, and the blood had flowed copiously over face and neck, fairly saturating the upper garments. The wound was still bleeding—but not very freely—and the red current was coagulating around the roots of the hair and upper part of the face. Besides this, there were some five or six other wounds, and three or four contusions. The lower lip was divided, the right arm was gashed in two places, and there were three cuts, not very deep, across the breast.

"Well," said the Major, watching the countenance of Gertrude with great anxiety; "what do you think? can I recover?"

"Oh! I pray God you may, Edward!" she answered, clasping her hands; "but I am no surgeon—I can give no opinion."

"How does the wound on the head look?"

"Horrible! horrible!"

"Is the skull fractured?" he inquired, in a tone of forced calmness.

"Heaven forbid! I do not know—I cannot tell."

Hargrave raised his hand, and, pushing back the flesh, deliberately ran his finger along the bone, pressing hard against it in several places.

"Gertrude, I have hope," he said, in a more ani-

mated tone. "I do not think the wound is necessarily mortal."

"Oh! God be praised!" rejoined the poor girl, sinking upon her knees by his side and bursting into tears. "I will dress it, and with such care!" she added, springing to her feet.

She hastened to get a dish of water and some cloths, in order to cleanse and bandage it.

"Where are Chloe and the children?" now inquired Hargrave, looking around him, and speaking in a tone of some alarm.

"Overhead," replied Gertrude. "Before I ventured out, I made them go up there, hoping they might be preserved, even if I fell a victim. Through the window I beheld you struggling with the Indian, and saw the flames rising above the gate; and thinking I might in some way be useful, I resolved to go out. As I thought it not unlikely I should be killed, I told them if they would secrete themselves in the loft, and keep perfectly still, the savages, who knew nothing of our numbers, might not, even if they triumphed, discover them, and so they would escape."

"Ah! Gertrude, Gertrude," said the Major, in a low tone, tremulous with deep emotion, "how few there are like you! always thinking of others—never of yourself. May God reward you! as He surely will, either in this world or the next."

"Shall I call them?" inquired Gertrude.

"No, no—let them remain there; they are safer there than here; and it would frighten the children to see me as I am now."

In the course of a quarter of an hour, Gertrude had succeeded in cleansing and bandaging the principal wound of Hargrave, and removing the blood from his face; and having drank a cup of water, he declared he felt much better, and thought he would get up, see how the strife had termi-

nated outside, and make some preparations against another attack.

"You shall not, Edward—I insist upon it—it might cost you your life."

"And of what use will my life be, dear Gertrude, if the Indians renew the attack with me lying here?"

"They may not, Edward: at all events, you shall not get off the bed at present."

"Alas!" groaned the Major—"I fear I am the only male protector you have now, Gertrude. The poor blacks, God bless them! I doubt not have fallen in our defence. When I last saw them, both were fighting desperately; and silence in that quarter is significant of victory purchased with life. Ha!" he said, quickly, as another thought flashed across his mind; "perhaps they may not be dead, but wounded: I did not think of that—Heaven forgive me! and here I have been attending to myself and neglecting them! I must rise, Gertrude, and go to them—it is unmanly, cruel, to do less."

"No! no!" returned Gertrude; "I will go—you must stay here."

"But you are a woman, weak and timid, and could not endure to look upon the horrible sights you would encounter."

"The weak and timid become strong and brave, when nerved by necessity and a high purpose," was the reply. "I am resolved, Edward; I shall go; and oh! as you love me—as you love your children—I charge you not to rise during my absence—which will not be long!"

Saying this, and without waiting for a reply, Gertrude hurried out to seek the negroes. Her step was firm till she passed the threshold; and then the thought of what she might encounter, made her timid as a child, and she could scarcely summon resolution enough to go forward. And indeed, nothing less than the necessity and high purpose of which she had spoken, could have sufficiently nerved her

for the trying duty. Humanity demanded that some one should go; and, save the Major and herself, there was no one equal to the task—and so she ventured alone.

It was very dark; and as she turned the north-east angle of the house, she unconsciously stepped in a small pool of blood, her foot slipped, and she stumbled over the dead body of the Indian whom the Major had brained with his axe. Horrified and faint, she recovered her feet, and, staggering forward, stumbled over the second, the one he had shot with his rifle.

"Oh, God! sustain me!" she groaned, reeling against the house, and clinging to its rough logs for support.

For a few moments she was unable to proceed; and then, keeping hold of the logs, she began to move slowly forward, carefully feeling her way, lest a third sudden encounter with the dead should prove too much for her system to bear. In the north-west angle of the enclosure she beheld some three or four of the horses huddled together, keeping very quiet, but seemingly a good deal frightened—for they occasionally snuffed the blood-tainted air, and crouched, and trembled.

Turning this angle of the dwelling, and moving along a few feet, Gertrude summoned her voice, and, in a low, tremulous tone, pronounced the names of the faithful blacks.

"Who's dat?" said a low, feeble voice, in reply.

"Heaven be praised!" murmured our heroine; "there is one at least yet living to speak to me." And she added, in a louder tone: "It is I, Cuba—I—Gertrude."

"God bress you, Missus, and save you!" was the response, in the same feeble tone.

"Where are you, Cuba? where are you? are you wounded?" inquired Gertrude, anxiously.

"Here I is, Missus, what dar am lef' ob dis old nigger."

Gertrude moved forward, and found the black sitting on

the ground, with his back against the house. She bent down beside him, and said, in a kind, but tremulous tone:

"Are you wounded, Cuba?"

"Yes, Missus, yes," he groaned: "I's spect dis ole nigger's done for dis time."

"Heaven forbid! where are you hurt?"

"In de side here—de blood's running away."

"Try and get up, and come into the house, and I will dress your wound."

"Can't do it, Missus, and it's no use—I's jus' crawled here to die. I's knows I can't lib long. I killed de Injin—but he stuck me wid his knife—and dat dar succumstance 'll be de extermination ob dis chile. Take care youse'f, Missus, and leave de ole nigger go."

"By no means, Cuba—you may be saved," returned Gertrude. "Your wound may not be so serious as you think. Come! let me assist you into the house."

"Whar's Mas'er? God bress him!" asked Cuba. "Dis is no place for de likes ob you, Missus Gertrude."

"Your master is in the cabin, badly wounded."

"Den it's all up wid de whole on us," groaned Cuba.

"Go 'way, Missus—go 'way—let dis chile die whar I is. Tell Chlo' I t'ought on her when I's goin' de last journey. Dar! dar! Missus Gertrude—no use—no use; go 'way; and tell Mas'er I's did my best—and kiss all de childrens—de Lord bress dem!—for old Cube."

"No, no, Cuba!" cried Gertrude, anxiously; "I will not leave you—you must come with me. Come! I am strong, and I will assist you."

"Whar's Dick?" asked Cuba, faintly.

"I have not seen him—is he not here?"

"De last I seen on him, he was fighting wid a Injin," returned Cuba, speaking in a very low tone, and with much difficulty. "Dat dar succumstance, wid de other,

looks suspershus. Dar's so'thing dark down dar;" and the negro slowly pointed with his finger.

Gertrude sprung forward, and bent over the dark object. A near inspection proved it to be two human bodies locked in a close embrace—the embrace of death. Dick and the savage had grappled, and closed the struggle with life. Both were dead. Gertrude, with a cry of horror, announced the fact to Cuba, who merely said:

"I's soon go to—dat's de trufh."

"No! no! you must not think so, my poor fellow!" returned Gertrude. "Come! I will assist you into the house. Oh! in Heaven's name! do not remain here! If you persist in doing so, you will drive me distracted—for my poor brain can bear but little more. Come, Cuba, make the attempt to rise! If not for your own sake, at least for mine!"

Thus appealed to, the negro, with Gertrude's assistance, got upon his feet; and supporting him with all her strength, she succeeded, after much difficulty, in getting him into the cabin, where, with a groan, he sunk down on the floor. As Gertrude ran to get the light, which stood near the bed, she perceived, with a feeling of alarm, that the Major was not upon it. She called his name, but received no answer. As she was returning to the black, however, he entered the apartment from without, bearing in his arms several rifles.

"Oh! Edward," she exclaimed, "why have you been so imprudent?"

"I feel stronger—better—thank God!" he answered; "and were it not so—were I even dying, as a short time since I believed myself to be—I should have crawled from the bed, to try and do my duty to the last. Ah! poor Cuba!" he added, bending over the negro—who, covered with blood, was lying on the floor, too much exhausted, from his recent exertion, to speak—"poor Cuba! it is as I feared! What of Dick, Gertrude?"

"He is dead," was the reply.

"Thus we go, one by one!" returned Hargave, gloomily.

The principal wound of the black was in the left breast, some two or three inches below the heart; and cutting away his garments, the Major examined it. It seemed to be deep, and was evidently made by a knife.

"Well, Edward?" said Gertrude, who had been anxiously waiting to hear his opinion.

"Call his wife!" returned the Major, in a low, sad tone; "she should be with him in his last moments."

"Great Heaven! is he then so near his end?"

"He cannot live an hour!" was the startling reply.

The lips of the Major quivered as he said this; and staggering to his feet, he began to pace the floor, with irregular steps; while Gertrude, scarcely knowing what she did, got the ladder, returned it to its place, and ascended to the loft. She called to Chloe—but the black was too terrified to answer. The children, however, hearing her voice, came forward, sobbing and trembling; and, throwing their arms about her neck, begged her not to leave them again. To the little boy, Gertrude hurriedly communicated the principal facts which had occurred; for though voices had been heard below, all had been so frightened, that none had ventured forward to the place of descent to listen, and therefore knew not till now but that the enemy had full possession of the dwelling. Joseph ran back to Aunt Chloe, and informed her that Cuba was wounded and dying; and the scene that ensued, as she, terrified and distracted, flew to the ladder and descended, followed by the children, we shall not attempt to describe.

In the midst of the confusion, the simpleton sidled into the room; and seeing Cuba wounded, and his wife hanging over him, giving way to the wildest grief and lamentation, he sat down beside him, and looked on with an expression of idiotic compassion. The Major now closed and bolted

the door, and proceeded to load the rifles, against a time of need—though he scarcely expected the attack would be again renewed that night. This done, he permitted Gertrude to dress the remainder of his wounds; and then, complaining that he felt very weak, lay down upon the bed.

Cuba, from the moment he entered the dwelling, and sunk upon the floor, never spoke but once. For something more than an hour, he remained in a state of unconsciousness—alternately panting, gasping, and choking. Then suddenly opening his eyes, and seeing his wife bending over him, he fondly clasped her around the neck, and murmuring, in a feeble tone, “Good-bye, Chlo’—I’s g’wine to left you,” he fetched one long, convulsive gasp, and expired in her arms.

Day dawned at last, and the sun rose slowly above the eastern hills; but his welcome light revealed a bloody scene—a scene of grief, and misery, and woe unspeakable.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BURNING ARROWS.

WITH the two negroes dead, and himself badly wounded, Major Hargrave felt it would be useless at this time for him to go forth and attempt to stand guard for the purpose of warding off the next deadly blow of his enemies; for should the Indians again rush to the attack, he knew they would carry the exterior defences of his premises, in spite of anything he could do; and therefore he judged it best to remain now with his family, and trust to Providence—his only hope. Besides, he was not now in a condition to make a strong resistance, even if close pressed. He was worn down with grief, excitement, exertion, and want of rest—suffering with pain, and weak from the loss of blood—and so he kept to his bed, in that state of apathetic despair which renders one almost regardless of what may follow.

In this condition of mind and body he gradually fell asleep, and slept for several hours; and when he awoke, he was surprised to find that all the rest of the household had imitated his example. His children had crawled upon his bed, and were slumbering by his side; Gertrude, seated near, with her arms resting on the table, and her head bowed upon them, was asleep also; Chloe, overcome by grief and fatigue, was stretched out by the remains of Cuba, unconscious of her sorrow; and the simpleton, motionless as a rock, sat doubled up in the chimney corner, his hands clasped over his knees, and his head buried be-

tween them. It was some moments ere Hargrave could realize his terrible situation, and the horrible scenes through which he had passed; and then he almost wished that his late sleep had been the sleep of death.

Unwilling to disturb the sleepers, whom Heaven had so kindly relieved of their misery for a short period, he crept softly from the bed, and, stealing to the window, looked out. Everything appeared to be quiet, and there was no evidence that the foe had entered the enclosure, or was in the vicinity. The gate was fastened; the Indian with whom he had fought, and who had been directly killed by the simpleton, still lay where he had fallen, a hideous spectacle; and some two or three of the horses were lying down in sight.

While standing at the window, the Major felt a gentle touch on his arm; and looking around, he found Gertrude by his side. Her features were very pale, her eyes swollen and red, her hair dishevelled, and her appearance generally that of one who had endured a long vigil, and suffered mentally all that nature could bear without destroying consciousness.

"Well, Edward?" she said, in a low, timid tone, accompanied with a look of the most painful anxiety.

"I see no signs of the enemy, Gertrude," he replied.

"Oh! do you think the savages have gone? and will not again molest us?" she cried, clasping her hands.

"I cannot say—pray God it be so!"

"Oh! God grant it be so indeed!" she rejoined. "Oh! Edward, these words of hope infuse new life into me! I already feel like another being."

"Yet our hopes may not be anchored on a certainty," returned Hargrave, thoughtfully. "The Indian mode of warfare is so unlike that of the European, that we never know when we are safe; for when danger is least apparent to his enemy, the savage often strikes his deadliest blow."

"But consider, in this case, Edward, how many hours have elapsed since their last attack! Surely, if our foes had designed to renew the bloody contest, they would not have left us so many hours of rest!"

"The last does not follow from the first, Gertrude," rejoined Hargrave. "You must bear in mind, that, in every stratagem and attack, the savages were detected and defeated; and that, first and last, they must have lost at least ten of their men, which would naturally make them very cautious. Besides, not one who entered the enclosure returned to tell our numbers to his fellows; and from the fact that none who scaled the wall escaped, they cannot be aware of our weakness, and must suppose us to be much stronger than we are. And, furthermore, you must consider that it is now broad day; that our position is on a cleared knoll, which has no cover to enable them to steal up to us unseen; and that it is reasonable for them to conclude, from what has passed, that we have a watch set, so that we cannot be approached unawares."

"And will not these very facts that you have mentioned, be sufficient to deter them from attacking us again at all?" inquired Gertrude.

"I hope so," was the reply; "but I have my doubts. Without knowing our exact force, they must know it is inferior to their own; and a desire to conquer us, and take revenge for their slain, will be likely to keep them prowling about us, waiting to catch us off our guard."

"Then you really think they have not left the vicinity, Edward?"

"I do not know—I fear they have not."

"And if not," groaned Gertrude, with a renewed feeling of despair, "we are certainly lost."

"We will hope for the best, at all events. Heaven has so far preserved us, and we know not what Heaven may have in store for us. Hope is the one great blessing which

seldom leaves us till the breath leaves the body; and while we have it, we should not too much despond; and even when it is lost, as it was in my case a few hours since, you see it sometimes returns. When, after my struggle with the Indian, I sunk down on the earth, I did not think I should ever rise again; that I should even be living now; and yet, you perceive, I am not only still alive, but comparatively strong."

"Pardon me, Edward, for not sooner inquiring!" returned Gertrude, anxiously; "but how do you feel now?"

"As one who has taken a new lease of life. Should we not be molested again, I think I shall get along very well. My wounds pain me some—but I am now satisfied that none are mortal, and that all combined will not confine me to my bed. The only thing I now fear is, that the Indians will renew the attack—in which case, they will, without doubt, be successful."

"And you think, then, the attack will be renewed, sooner or later, Edward?"

"I cannot say I do not, Gertrude. They may not molest us while day lasts—but I dread the coming night."

"Oh! may God save us!" ejaculated the other.

"Amen!" returned the Major, solemnly. "It is barely possible that, if they leave us alone to-day, succor may arrive; though the disturbed state of the whole frontier gives me no reason to hope for such an event; and yet hope does not always have reason on its side, and so I venture to hope. On further consideration, as I am somewhat rested after last night's fatigue, I think I will break my fast, and resume my watch outside; for, in doing so, I may be able to ward off danger in some shape; and, situated as I am, I feel I have no right to neglect anything which may tend to the safety of those under my protection; and besides, I must try and bury these bodies, ere

putrefaction renders them as destructive dead as they were living."

"Oh! Edward, I feel almost afraid to let you venture forth again; and yet it may be for the best. Are you sure your wounds are not more serious than you have represented?"

"Quite sure, my fair trembler," returned Hargrave, with a feeble attempt at a smile.

"But perhaps they require dressing again?"

"Not yet, Gertrude: I will let you know when I need your assistance. Come, now, think more of yourself, and less of me. Suppose you lie down and get some rest, while there is an opportunity: you are worn out, and need sleep; and should we live through the coming night, it is altogether probable the enemy will give us no chance for slumber."

Gertrude, who stood looking out of the window, while the Major was speaking, suddenly started, and exclaimed:

"Ha! what is that, Edward?"

"What do you see, Gertrude?"

"Something passed overhead, that looked like a ball of fire. Perhaps the enemy——" She broke the sentence short, and added, in the next breath: "There! see! the same thing again."

The Major, startled at her words, eagerly looked out; but after standing a few moments, said:

"I see nothing, Gertrude; you are excited, and your fancy deceived you."

"No! there! look!"

This time Hargrave beheld the object to which Gertrude had twice alluded; and exclaimed, in a tone of despair:

"God save us! our foes are near—they are shooting burning arrows upon the roof!"

"Then we are lost indeed!" cried Gertrude.

"The clap-boards are not dry, and perhaps they may not take fire; but still the burning missiles should not remain on the roof, and I will take the ladder and go and try to keep them off. I may lose my life—but the risk is scarcely greater than remaining where I am."

"No! no!" exclaimed Gertrude, detaining him, as he was moving away; "you must not go, Edward!"

"Then we may all perish together, Gertrude."

"Let Roley go: he can do all that is required as well as you, and he appears to be bullet-proof," said Gertrude, hurriedly.

"No! no! I must risk none where I go not myself, Gertrude: it is not right—it is cowardly."

"But you are needed here: think of your children!"

"God save them!" groaned the Major.

"And besides," pursued Gertrude, "it was he that put out the fire."

"Indeed! I thought you did that—I believe my senses were wandering then. I know that he shot the Indian with whom I was contending; but—"

"But did not know that he put out the fire," interrupted the simpleton, who, hearing the conversation, had stolen up to the speakers unperceived. "Well, he did put out the fire, Major—I—me—the fool—and it was made of dry wood too."

"And stood a target for two volleys," said Gertrude.

"And escaped unharmed, you may add, Mistress Gerty. Well, what next?"

"The Indians are shooting burning arrows upon the roof, Roley," replied Gertrude, hurriedly. "Oh! for my sake, Jacob, take the ladder, ascend, and throw them off."

"For your sake, Mistress Gerty, I would do anything," rejoined the moonling. "So! the Indians are putting dry wood to green again, are they? but firing the dry wood

first? Well, there is some philosophy in that, at all events."

"Oh! Jacob, will you go?" cried Gertrude.

"No! no! let him stay here—I will go," said Hargrave; and he ran and got the ladder.

"Major," said the simpleton, intercepting him on his way to the door, "I seldom take upon myself the responsibility of dictation—of command—but I do so now. You must not go—you shall not go. Give me the ladder!"

"But you will be killed, Jacob!"

"So Mistress Gerty said, when I insisted on going up to put out the fire at the gate; but I wasn't, you see—or else this is not me." He said this with a kind of idiotic laugh; but immediately added, with a grave, sorrowful, melancholy expression: "And suppose I am killed, Major—what of it? I am of no account in the world, and why should I live? No! no! let me die, if die I must—there will be one fool the less to live on the hard gains of others."

"Jacob!" said Hargrave, reproachfully.

"No reflections on you, Major—you have been very kind to me—very kind;" and the poor fellow's eyes filled with tears. "But give me the ladder and let me go!" he continued, with unusual energy. "I claim it as my right; and unless you yield to my solicitation, I will not live with you another day—not another day, Major—mark my words!"

"Oh! do let him go, Edward!" urged Gertrude, as she saw that Hargrave still hesitated.

"Well, go, Jacob," returned the Major, reluctantly yielding to the desires of both; "and may God preserve you!"

Simple Roley seized the ladder, with the same joyful eagerness that a child does a toy; and as the Major cautiously opened the door, he darted out. By the time the door was again closed and securely fastened, he had placed

the ladder against the eaves, and began his ascent. On reaching the roof, he found two burning arrows lying in such a position, that, unless removed, they would communicate fire to the building. Creeping up to these, he picked them up, examined them attentively, and cast them down into the enclosure. He then cautiously continued his ascent; and, gaining the ridge-pole, sat himself astride of it, and looked around him, with the air of a person perfectly at his ease. For some time he could see no signs of the enemy in any direction; but at length his eye fastened upon a cluster of bushes, that grew upon the verge of the clearing, in a south-eastern direction; and, looking long and steadily, he thought he saw the bushes move.

"So, you are there, Mr. Savages?" he soliloquized; "keeping your bodies concealed, while mine is exposed. I think if I had a rifle here, I could make some of you wish you had kept yourselves further off—I do indeed. Suppose I get one and try? Why not? I will."

As he said this, he began to descend, and soon reached the ground. Going to the window, he requested the Major to hand him a rifle.

"I think it will do better in my hands," replied Hargrave; and cautiously opening the door, he came out, loaded with weapons. "Where are they, Roley? where are they?" he said, in an eager whisper.

At this moment another burning missile passed over their heads and lodged on the roof. The shaft seemed spent of its force, as if having come from a distance.

"Give me a rifle—quick!" exclaimed the simpleton.

"No!" returned Hargrave—"leave the weapons with me, Roley—I can use them best. Hasten up the ladder, and see that the building does not take fire. Go, Jacob," he pursued, as the moonling hesitated, "and tell me what you see; you will thus do me a greater service than in attempting to shoot an Indian."

The simpleton said no more, but quietly returned to the roof; while Hargrave advanced to one of the loop-holes, cautiously withdrew the block, and looked out upon the knoll. He had noted the direction whence the arrow came; and taking this as a guide for his observation, his eye settled upon the very cluster of bushes which had attracted the attention of Simple Roley. After looking at them steadily, for perhaps a minute, he placed all his weapons conveniently to his hand, and, raising his favorite piece to his eye, took a deliberate aim, and fired:

Whether the discharge proved fatal to any of his foes or not, Hargrave never knew; but ere the report had died away to silence, the bushes became violently agitated, loud and furious yells were heard in that direction, and some six or eight savages, bursting from the thicket, began to run up the knoll toward him. This he had expected, and for this he had prepared himself. Snatching up another rifle, he took a deliberate aim at the foremost, and fired again. This time he felt certain he had not missed his mark; for the Indian suddenly stopped, staggered, and fell; but immediately got upon his feet again, turned, and ran back with all his might. His frightened companions imitated his example; but ere the thicket was gained, the Major fired once more, and had the satisfaction to perceive that another of the party limped out of sight. He then caught up two other pieces, and discharged them at random, merely for the purpose of making the savages believe that his little fortress was well garrisoned. These several discharges at least produced one much desired result—not another Indian showed himself throughout the day—nor was there another burning missile sent on its mission of destruction.

For something like half an hour, the Major kept his position at the loop-hole; loading his rifles, meantime, so as

to be ready for a new assault. Seeing no further signs of the enemy in that quarter, he visited all the other loop-holes, and scanned the knoll in every direction—but saw nothing to excite further apprehension. Bidding the simpleton remain on the roof, and keep a good look-out, he next fed and watered his horses, and then proceeded to dig a trench for the dead bodies.

The further events of the day, unimportant in themselves, we will not detail. Suffice it to say, that the bodies of the two blacks, as well as the remains of the savages killed within the stockade, were consigned to the earth, and buried forever from the sight of the living—Cuba being followed to his last home by his wife, whose lamentations for his loss were truly heart-rending.

For the approaching night the Major strove to nerve himself, fearing it was destined to be the last that either himself or family would ever behold.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

FROM one of the western loop-holes the Major saw the sun go down; and he gazed upon it with a melancholy air, believing he would never behold it again. He was now fixed in the belief, that the next attack would be fatal to himself; for should the savages again assail him, he nothing doubted they would do it in such numbers as to carry everything before them. He had now entirely lost the faint hope of succor which he had mentioned to Gertrude in the morning; and his only remaining hope, if hope it could be called, was that the enemy had gone to seek victims in another quarter.

At length he closed the loop-hole, and commenced pacing to and fro in the deepening twilight. His step was slow and heavy—for a terrible weight now seemed pressing upon his spirit—a presentiment that his end was drawing near. He tried to shake it off, but could not. He reasoned that he had once of late thought himself dying, and that his fears having in that instance deceived him, they might do so in the present case. But it was in vain his intellectual powers did battle against his secret conviction. The more he struggled to overcome the latter, the more firmly was he convinced that he was doomed to a speedy and bloody death. He strove to reconcile his mind to his fate—but the effort was futile. He thought of Gertrude, and shuddered—of his motherless children, and wept. It was a terrible idea; but it haunted him—he could not get rid of it.

Death soon, speedy and bloody, like so many words, seemed ringing in his ears—ringing like the knell which tells of one already gone. He fervently prayed that the bitter cup might pass from him; but it seemed as if his prayers were not heard—or heard only to be answered—

“Mortal! presume not to hope that the great fiat of God can be changed!”

With cold drops of perspiration standing on his face, he advanced to the door of his lonely dwelling, and called Gertrude to him. His voice had a strange, almost unearthly sound, as he said:

“Gertrude, I have come to take my leave of you, and my dear children: there is something within, that tells me I shall never behold another sun.”

Poor Gertrude, alarmed, bewildered, was scarcely able to make a reply.

“What means this strange language, Edward?” she rather gasped than said.

“I feel that I am doomed,” he replied. “I have a presentiment, that the night of death, like the night of day, is closing around me.”

Gertrude endeavoured to reason this conviction away—but did not succeed; although the Major, in order not to distress her, finally said that perhaps it might be nothing more than an unusual depression of spirits, caused by his wounds, over excitement, and fatigue. He then called his children to him, kissed them fondly, and prayed Heaven to bless them; after which, he returned to his solitary watch and walk.

While moving slowly around his dwelling, listening for any sounds that might indicate the presence of his foes, his mind occupied with the same melancholy anticipations, he heard a voice, outside the stockade, utter words in the English language.

“Who is there?” he inquired.

“Me, Squire—me—Gibbs: just open the gate, and let me in, afore the — varmints smell me out.”

Hargrave hurried to the gate, and undid the fastenings; and as it swung back on its hinges, Tomahawk Gibbs darted into the enclosure. The moment the gate was again shut and fastened, he grasped the Major's hand, and wrung it hard.

“I'm powerful glad to see ye, Squire,” he said—“though I hoped you mought be further off. Did you see the boy—young Zane?”

“I did, Gibbs; and the fearful tidings he gave me, have since been awfully confirmed,” replied the Major, in a tone of deep sadness.

“I see the red varmints haint got you yit,” rejoined Gibbs; “though you do look as ef you'd had a right smart chance of a fight. What's the matter with your head?”

“We had a hard struggle last night; and in contending, single handed, with one of the enemy, I was seriously wounded.”

“Indeed, Squire? Anybody else hurt? How's the good woman, Miss Gertrude, the children, and the niggers? I hope none of them's come to harm.”

Hargrave grasped the arm of the hunter, with a grip of iron, and, in a low, husky tone, said:

“Come with me, Gibbs—come with me.”

He led the wondering woodsman to the rear of the cabin; and pointing to a small rise of earth, continued, in a choking voice:

“Do you see that, Gibbs?”

“Wall, yes—rayther.”

“My wife lies there.”

“Good heavens, Squire!”

“Here!” continued Hargrave, almost dragging him along a few feet: “You see here is another fresh mound?”

"Yes."

"The two faithful blacks lie there."

"No, Squire?" cried Gibbs, in astonishment.

"And here, you see, is another mound, Gibbs!"

"Don't tell me thar's more dead, Squire! don't!"

"You see this mound is larger than the others!" the Major continued, in a tone that now had something of bitter satisfaction in it. "Under the earth here, lie the bodies of six Indians—two of whom I killed myself, and four of whom were killed by the negroes and the simpleton. I dug the graves to-day, excepting that of my wife, and buried them with my own hands."

Gibbs ripped out an oath, and exclaimed:

"Them thar dead Injuns is the only good news you've told me, Squire; but 'stead o' six, I wish thar was six hundred a-rotting here. You've had a most powerful time on't, thar's no mistake about it. The wife dead! and the niggers!" he continued, in a thoughtful, sympathetic tone. "Wall, wall—this here is hard—powerful. Any more, Squire?"

"No more of my friends, thank Heaven! but we killed some five or six more of the savages outside of the stockade."

"No! did ye, though? You're a hoss, Squire, by thunder! Gin us your fist." He seized the Major's hand, and shook it hard. "How's the rest?" he inquired.

"The rest are in the dwelling, unhurt, but nearly worn out with grief, excitement, and fatigue."

"Yes, I expect. How war she killed?" pointing to the grave of Mrs. Hargrave.

"She was not killed—she died a natural death," the Major replied, in a low, tremulous tone; and he proceeded to give the woodsman, in as few words as possible, a sketch of all that had occurred.

"Squire, I feel for ye—I do indeed!" rejoined the

other, drawing his hand across his eyes. "But you're not the only one that's suffered. I tell you it's terrible times for them as haint got into a fort! The Injuns hev been quick this time; and they're spread over the hull country, doing thar devilish work in every direction. I've seen the ashes of ten cabins this very day; and more'n one dead white man alongside: I hev, Squire."

"And how did you escape? and why are you here alone? The boy said you were at the fort when he left."

"So I war; and I didn't 'spect to come then, Squire; for I thought the Injuns war further off, and that you'd hev plenty time to git to a fort. But arter he left, a scout come in, and said as how a big body of savages had crossed the Ohio in the night, and he 'spected they'd spread out all over the country, this here way, to murder the settlers afore they knowed thar danger. I thought o' you, Squire, and wanted to do you a good turn—for I'd tuk a liking to you, like—and so I tell'd 'em at the fort I war going to make a ventur' for a friend, and put out. Sence yesterday forenoon, I've been on the tramp—'cept a liddle while last night, when I clim' a tree, to sleep—and here I is, arter some powerful close dodging o' the varmints."

"God bless you!" cried the Major, warmly: "'a friend in need, is a friend indeed:' how can I repay you for thus perilling your life for me and mine, who are little better than strangers to you?"

"Now don't say that, Squire! you don't seem as ef you war strangers to me; and I tell'd you last year, ef I could do you a sarvice, I'd do it. Now as to pay—you oughter know by this time, Squire, that I don't do everything for pay."

"Pardon me, Gibbs! I did not mean that I would insult you, by offering you money for an act like this: I only meant that it would be beyond my power to do an act in return which might counterbalance yours."

"Wall, wall—we'll talk 'bout that thar arter the danger's over."

"Ere then, Gibbs, I shall be numbered with the dead!" replied Hargrave, in a tone of mournful solemnity.

"Poh! poh! don't talk that thar way, Squire! you're good for twenty year yit."

"No, Gibbs, my end is near. I feel it—I know it: there is a something that tells me so."

"A little skeer like, Squire," returned the other. "I've had a tech of that thar same feeling, afore to-day—but nothing come on't."

"I only hope you may be right, Gibbs; but I cannot shake off my impression, nevertheless," rejoined Hargrave, gloomily. "Well, let that pass; though, should anything happen to me, Gibbs, and you and my family escape, will you endeavor to guide them to a place of safety?"

"I will, Squire—I'll do my best for 'em all—Heaven help me!"

"Thank you! thank you! and may Heaven reward you!" returned the other, in a tone of deep feeling. "Were it not for them, my friend, I believe I could meet death as a man should; but when I think of them, I feel unnerved."

"But how'd you git the notion in your head that you're going to die first?" asked Gibbs.

"I have such a presentiment; but let us say no more about it. Pray tell me—did you see any signs of the enemy near here?"

"Not a sign. I reckon you've skeered the varmints off."

"Heaven grant it be so! But come! you must be hungry, after your long journey."

"A lettle, Squire—a lettle—I must own. I swallowed the last feed I had this morning; and I didn't like to shoot nothing, for fear I'd hev the Injuns arter me. It war powerful close dodging 'em I had, without letting off my rifle to tell 'em whar they mought find another scalp."

"Well, come in—I will try and find something for you—though I fear our fare is now reduced to corn-bread."

"Wall, once when I war here," said Gibbs, as the Major led the way to the door, "it war reduced to cl'ar meat—but feed changes as well as times."

As the two entered the dwelling, Hargrave explained to Gertrude how that Gibbs had braved the dangers of the wilderness to come to their assistance.

"Heaven bless and reward you, generous sir!" returned Gertrude, her eyes filling with tears of gratitude, as she offered the woodsman her hand.

"Don't say no more!" rejoined Gibbs, not a little confused: "I'd do twice as much right over agin, for sich a speech as that thar, from sich lips as yourn;" and in his hearty earnestness, he almost crushed the little hand that Gertrude placed in his huge palm.

"I trust you remember me, sir?" said the simpleton, sidling up to the hunter, and thus relieving Gertrude from a rather unpleasant situation.

"Oh, yes, I know you like a book," said Gibbs, as he took the moonling's proffered hand.

"The recognition is mutual," returned Simple Roley, with ludicrous dignity. "How do you do, Mr. Gibbs?"

"Wall and hearty, my lad—how's yourself?"

"Somewhat fatigued, sir—somewhat fatigued," replied the simpleton, with a condescending air. "We've had something to do here lately, Mr. Gibbs."

"Wall, yes—rayther," rejoined the hunter, scarcely able to keep his countenance. "The Squire tells me you helped kill some of the——savage varmints."

"The Major you mean, doubtless," said the moonling, with a grave air; "Major Hargrave: he's no Squire, sir—at least not to my knowledge, and I've known him several years."

"Wall, I call him Squire, 'cause it's the shortest cut, and I hate most powerful to be bothered with names," answered Gibbs, humoring the simpleton.

"There is no rule by which a Major can be changed into an Esquire," rejoined Simple Roley, with the same grave, condescending air. "Every person and thing should have a name, and by that name be called. However, sir, you meant well enough, no doubt—and so let that pass. Speaking of killing Indians, Mr. Gibbs—I may say I shot three—only three, sir."

"Only three?" said Gibbs, slowly, with a look of surprise: "only three? Wall, — me, but you're a hoss, too."

The Major now invited the hunter to partake of some food, which he had himself placed on the table; for Aunt Chloe was so overcome with her recent affliction and terrors, that no one thought of calling on her for anything. Having satisfied his hunger, and said a kindly word to each of the children, Gibbs reprimed his rifle, and, accompanied by Hargrave and Simple Roley, went out into the enclosure, the Major cautioning Gertrude to keep the door fastened.

The last signs of day had now departed, and the pale quarter-moon was riding in the heavens above a somewhat hazy atmosphere. By the dim light, Hargrave and Gibbs looked out upon the knoll through the different loop-holes, but saw nothing of the foe.

"They did not make their appearance last night till after the moon went down," said the Major; "and they may not do so to-night."

"Wall, ef they shouldn't come at all, I 'spect nobody about these here diggins 'ud cry for their company," returned Gibbs, dryly.

Hargrave and the hunter now entered into a desultory conversation—but which, as it has no direct bearing on our

story, we need not record. In this manner an hour or two glided away; when Simple Roley, who, for the most of the time, had remained apart, communing with himself, softly approached the speakers, and whispered:

"Hush! I hear a noise."

"Where?" demanded Hargrave, in an eager whisper.

"Yonder!" and the simpleton pointed to the northern wall.

The Major grasped the arm of Gibbs, and, still speaking in a whisper, said:

"Remember, my friend, what I have told you!"

Accompanied by the hunter, he then, in the most stealthy manner, advanced to the part of the stockade indicated by the moonling, and, putting his ear against the logs, listened. In this position he remained for perhaps a minute; and then, motioning to the hunter to keep silence, he began to remove the block from the nearest loop-hole—using the utmost care, so as not to make the least noise. Having done this, he cautiously put his face to the aperture; but immediately started back, with an exclamation of alarm. At the same moment there came a flash, a report, and Major Hargrave sunk down dead, pierced through the brain by a ball from a musket in the hands of a savage.

His presentiment had been awfully realized, and his spirit was now in the eternal world.

Instantly the welkin rung with demoniac yells of exultation, and some six or eight dark forms were seen to rise above the stockade and drop into the enclosure. Gibbs, taken wholly by surprise, and knowing it would be folly carried to madness to contend against such odds, immediately sprung to the door of the cabin, and shouted to Gertrude to open it, quick, in the name of Heaven!

Gertrude removed the bars as fast as her trembling hands would let her; but ere the door swung back on its hinges,

two fierce savages turned the angle of the building, and, with yells of triumph, rushed upon the hunter. Gibbs, who had prudently reserved his fire, instantly shot one, and, clubbing his rifle, struck the other a blow on the head, which staggered him, but did not bring him to the ground. He then, without waiting to repeat the blow, bounded into the house, and closed the door; but had barely done so, when not less than six savages reached the threshold; who, finding their white foe had killed one of their number and made a temporary escape, gave forth such yells of rage as fairly caused the blood of those within the cabin to curdle in their veins.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CAPTURE.

"GREAT Heaven!" cried Gertrude, as soon as she could make her voice heard; "where is Major Hargrave?"

"He's dead," answered Gibbs; "the first gun you heard sent a bullet through his brain."

"Oh, God!" was the only response of the poor girl, as she staggered to a seat, and sunk down, in hopeless despair; while Aunt Chloe and the children, with screams of grief and terror, ran distractedly about the room, not knowing what they did.

"Wall, he's only got a lettle the start on us," said Gibbs, compressing his lips and knitting his brows, as he proceeded to load his rifle.

All had now become comparatively quiet outside—but the quiet was not of long duration. Presently there was a rush against the door; but though every timber creaked, it did not give way.

"Try it agin, you yelling devils!" said Gibbs; "and then, ef you git in, one o' you'll git my parting gift, and old Satan 'll git a fresh hand."

Gertrude, roused by the noise, now started up; and in that moment of awful despair, a new idea flashed across her brain. She sprung to the hunter, and grasped his arm.

"Should the Indians break in, and meet with no resistance, do you think they would murder all of us?" she cried.

"Why, it's liddle marcy as can be hoped from them, arter what's happened," replied the woodsman.

"But they sometimes take prisoners, do they not?"

"Sometimes they does, Miss Gertrude: but who wants to be a captvye to them—hey? I've been among 'em, and traded among 'em, and all that thar sort of thing—but, —me, ef I'd like to be thar prisoner, and git roasted over a slow fire! No, Miss, old Tomahawk Gibbs 'ud rayther die game, and lose his ha'r at once."

"But I think you can escape, Mr. Gibbs."

Gibbs looked at the fair speaker, as if he doubted her sanity.

"What! *me*?" he said: "*escape*? I'd jest like to know how!"

"The Indians are probably by this time all in the enclosure."

"Wall, yes—rayther."

"There is the chimney. Perhaps you might climb up inside, and, by a good leap, clear the palisade, without being seen!"

"By thunder!" exclaimed the hunter—"I believe it mought be done, that's a fact. Wall, wall—who'd a thought a gal fresh from the settlements could hev got hold o' sech a idee as that, at sech a time as this!"

"Quick! then—make the trial—and may God save you from harm!"

"Will you foller me?"

"No, I could not—I will remain here."

"And you 'spect I'll desart to save my life, Miss Gertrude? Ef I do, may I——"

"You do not understand me," interrupted Gertrude, breathless with excitement. "I am more selfish than you think. If you escape, and we are taken prisoners, perhaps you will be able to raise a force and rescue us."

Gibbs, in his admiration of the fair speaker, ripped out a tremendous oath.

"I say, gal—Miss Gertrude, I mean," he replied; "ef you don't let some good-looking borderer make a wife o' you, then you'll spile natur's intentions."

At this moment there came another and more tremendous rush against the door—but still the fastenings held it.

"There! quick! fly!" cried Gertrude; "or you will be too late—and my only hope lies in your escape."

"I'll try it," said Gibbs; "for thar's no telling but I may do you a sarvice; and though I'd made up my mind to die, I'd jest as lief live a liddle longer as not. You won't come with me?"

"No! no! I would not desert these poor orphan children if I could."

"Ah! poor things!" said Gibbs, looking round: "I'd a'most forgot them. Poor little things!"

"Fly, then, to save them! you are losing time! and every moment is so precious."

"But ef thar's not so'thing to divart thar attention, the imps 'll see and hear me jump," returned Gibbs, speaking hurriedly. "Ha! I hev it! here's a musket!" he continued, seizing upon one of the pieces which had been taken from the Indians, and which the Major had left in the cabin. "This 'll do, ef you kin only shoot at the right time. Can you shoot, gal?"

"I do not know—I will try, if necessary," answered Gertrude, quickly.

"Wall, it's easy enough," said Gibbs, cocking the piece, which he had already ascertained to be loaded. "Thar—so—jest keep it so," he pursued, resting the barrel on the table, and pointing it toward the shutter of the window, which, opening inside, was now closed. "Put your finger agin this little thing here, the trigger, and when you hear me say ready, pull away on it like the —; but be per-

tikler you don't pull *afore* I tell ye. Thar—good-bye! good-bye! and may we meet agin in better times.”

Saying this, he grasped the hand of Gertrude, held it for a moment, and then, letting go, sprung to the chimney, up which he clambered, encumbered by his rifle, which he was determined to carry with him. Gertrude, nerved by a high purpose, and rendered passive by extreme desperation, quietly laid her finger on the trigger, and, turning her ear in the proper direction, calmly stood and listened for the hunter's signal. She fancied she could hear him clambering up the logs; but there were so many other sounds without and within, that she was not certain; and she much feared she might not hear his voice, so as to discharge the piece at the proper moment.

At length, as if all had suddenly been made aware that something unusual was taking place, every sound became hushed; and even the children, huddled together in one corner with Aunt Chloe, scarcely seemed to breathe. With palpitating heart, our fair heroine now listened for the signal of Gibbs; but, instead, there burst forth, instantaneously, that peculiar whoop by which the savage announces an unexpected triumph in the capture of an enemy. This was accompanied, or followed, by a number of yells, and by what appeared to Gertrude to be a confusion of words, as if several were speaking at once. Believing the hunter had been taken, she was about to put aside the musket, when she heard him pronounce her name.

“Well?” answered Gertrude.

“I think they've got the simple feller,” rejoined Gibbs; “leastways they've got so'thing, and now's our time. One moment, gal—git ready. Now then—all right—fire!”

Gertrude pulled the trigger; and the musket, springing back by the discharge, fell from her hands to the ground. But the effect of this upon the savages was exactly the reverse of what had been expected. Instead of the noise

without being increased by the report of the weapon, every sound ceased, and a dead silence succeeded. This, to the surprise of Gertrude, was at length broken again by the voice of the simpleton.

“I think, Mistress Gerty,” he said, close under the window, “you had better open the door and surrender; for several Indians have gone to collect dry wood, and this time I shall not be able to put out their fire.”

“In Heaven's name! are you alone?” inquired Gertrude, greatly astonished at hearing herself thus addressed.

“Oh, no—not alone, Mistress Gerty—there are many Indians all around me.”

“You are then a prisoner?”

“No, I am free—the Indians just now found me—but I can't get them to kill me.”

“And if I open the door, will they also spare me and the children, do you think, Jacob?”

“I don't know. At all events, they will get in soon—so perhaps you had better open the door at once.”

“I know not what to do,” said Gertrude, greatly perplexed.

“Wall, I'll tell ye what to do,” whispered Gibbs, who, having heard the first words of the simpleton, and fearing their effect upon Gertrude, had descended the chimney in haste, and now stood by her side. “I'll tell ye all about it—for I see you don't understand the varmints. The simple feller is perfectly safe; the savages won't tech him, as he says; but it's no sign they won't butcher you, and the rest, when they git a chance. Now it's powerful cl'ar to me, they're going to burn down the door; and jest you take the children, and go up the ladder thar, and let 'em do it.”

“And you?” inquired Gertrude.

“I'll go up the chimbley agin; and when I hear 'em burst into the house, I'll make the leap.”

This arrangement being agreed upon, Gertrude made haste to execute the part that belonged to herself. The children and Aunt Chloe were easily persuaded to follow her; and as soon as Gibbs had seen them all safely up the ladder, he again ascended the chimney. The voice of the moonling was now heard calling to Gertrude, urging her to open the door, before the Indians should set fire to it: but getting no answer, he soon ceased speaking, and relapsed into one of his silent moods.

Presently Gertrude heard a noise outside, as of the piling of brush and sticks against the door; and soon after she saw, through the cracks in the eaves, a few fitful flashes, followed by a more steady light, and knew that the flames had begun the work of destruction, and that but a few minutes could elapse ere herself, and the few tender beings gathered around her, would be at the mercy of a revengeful, blood-thirsty foe. She shuddered as she thought upon it—for she could not be conscious of it and be wholly indifferent; but the terrible scenes and trials through which she had so recently passed, had much dulled her sensibilities, and prepared her to look forward to this awful terminus as a something that might relieve her from a heart-sickening suspense. She felt that death itself would be a welcome relief from the horrors which had accumulated around her, and the miseries which had been heaped upon her, within the last few days; and were it not for the dear beings who now had no one to care for them but herself, she felt that she could die without a regret. It takes much trouble and affliction to bring the mind to a desire for death as a relief,—as a rest,—but such would have been the desire of Gertrude, only for the reason named: she was too unselfish, even in this bitter moment, to think of herself before others; and she felt she would yet cling tenaciously to life, if only to benefit those under her charge.

With the children clasped in her arms, all trembling, but

terrified to silence, Gertrude, seated upon the rough puncheons which composed the floor of the loft, kept her eye upon the crevices, through which the devouring flames made themselves visible. Minute succeeded minute of awful suspense—each one seemingly measured by the beatings of the hearts of that forlorn and unprotected little group. In this manner something like a quarter of an hour passed away—a period of time which became an age of mental torture to those who there experienced the horrors which belonged to their awful situation—death staring them in the face—a barbarous captivity their only alternative.

At length a loud whoop was given, and a rush made against the door. The weakened timbers trembled, cracked, and almost gave way. Another rush, and the door was split in twain, and some eight or ten savages, with hideous yells of triumph, burst into the lower apartment, brandishing their weapons, and seeking victims to glut their hellish appetites for blood. Presently Gertrude heard their cries of disappointment; and by the movement of the ladder, the top of which projected above the floor of the loft, she became aware that some one had hold of the bottom; and she shuddered as she looked—for she expected each moment to see a grim, savage face protruded through the opening.

But whoever had hold of the ladder, seemed to hesitate about ascending it; and Gertrude, conceiving that each believed the foremost adventurer would meet a certain death, happily bethought her, that now had arrived the proper moment for conciliation, and determined to improve it. Disengaging herself, therefore, from her trembling charges, who were too greatly terrified to speak or make any resistance, she advanced to the opening, and, seeing a number of savages grouped together, speaking, looking up,

and gesticulating furiously, she placed her foot upon the ladder, and began to descend.

The Indians, the moment they caught a glimpse of her person, suspended their conversation, and looked at her in surprise, mingled with admiration. The savage admires heroism, even in an enemy; and a few of those present had seen her once before, when she showed her pale face above the stockade wall to cast water on the flames at the gate. We say a few of those present had seen her before—for several were here now that had been elsewhere during the attack of the night previous; and, in truth, we may add, in this connection, that had it not been for this reinforcement, this last assault would not have been made.

With firmness, dignity, and grace combined—qualities which excite the admiration of the red-man as well as the white—Gertrude descended the ladder, unmolested, and immediately found herself surrounded by the very beings she had always been taught to look upon with abhorrence. Half naked, and hideously painted, the forms and faces she now beheld, close-circled around her, would, at any period prior to the last three or four days of tribulation, have been sufficient to overcome her with fright, and render her incapable of action; but now she stood erect, as if with pride, and her dark eye turned from face to face, with an unquailing glance.

"Is there one among you who speaks the English tongue?" she inquired, in a clear, silvery tone.

"Me speak," said a tall, athletic Indian, whose bearing and costume seemed to indicate that he was in some sort superior to the rest. "Me speak Englee—much—good: me chief;" and with a dignified gesture, he placed his hand on his breast.

"Then to you let me appeal for mercy!" cried Gertrude, laying her soft, lily hand on his rough, sinewy, painted arm, and looking pleadingly into his grim face.

"Where big warrior?" inquired the savage, with a fierce look. "Pale face girl brave—big white warrior squaw."

"He is gone," replied Gertrude.

"Who there?" demanded the chief, pointing to the loft.

"Those for whom I crave mercy—three dear little children, and a black servant."

"Good scalp," grunted the chief.

"Oh! no! no! say not so: you will not harm them: oh! you will not harm them: they have never harmed you, or yours, and never will."

"Child make man—warrior—want Injun ground—warrior fight," returned the savage, sententiously.

"Two of them are girls," said Gertrude.

"Ugh! good scalp," grunted the Indian.

"Oh! no! no! harm them not, chief!" pleaded Gertrude. "Kill me, if you will; but harm not those innocent little beings!"

"Where big warrior? squaw warrior?" demanded the savage again, his eyes fairly flashing fire.

"He is gone—fled—escaped," replied our heroine, using three different words to express her meaning, so that the savage might have no difficulty in understanding her.

"That lie!" replied the chief, brandishing his tomahawk with menacing gestures. "No gone—no 'scape—here." Gertrude pointed to the chimney.

"Up there," she said.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the Indian; and then said something to those around him, in his native tongue.

Instantly three or four warriors sprung to the chimney, looked up, and then darted out through the door. The chief again addressed a few words to the fierce beings who remained with him, and then seemed to wait for the return of those who had gone out by his direction. In a few moments they entered in haste; and Gertrude could see, by

their gestures, as they communicated with their leader, that they were disappointed and angry.

The chief now turned suddenly upon our heroine, with a ferocious look, and, grasping her by the hair of her head, raised his tomahawk, and uttered a fierce yell. This appeared to be the bloody signal so long waited for—for it was echoed and re-echoed by all present; and each clutching his weapon, sprung to the ladder, and there was a strife to see who should get up first. Thinking more of others than herself, even in this moment of deadly peril, Gertrude exclaimed:

“For God’s sake! spare them! spare them!”

“Give back dead warrior, or give scalp!” cried the infuriated chief, swinging his tomahawk round his head, as if preparing for the fatal blow.

At this moment Gertrude saw, with shadowy indistinctness, the moonling glide up to her side—heard several fearful shrieks above—and, completely overcome by her feelings, sunk lifeless to the ground.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RESCUE.

It may be thought by some, that our scenes have a too tragical termination for the effeminately sentimental reader: perhaps they have: but we can say, in justification, that they are not of our own creation; and that, as a truthful chronicler, we are obliged to portray them as they really existed. If it is painful in this our day to merely *read* of the horrors of frontier life, how must it have been with our fathers, who were the actors in those bloody life-dramas? and how much reason have we to thank God, that we can sit by our peaceful firesides, in a land of plenty, and know of these things only through history and tradition? And it is well, we think, that we should know of, and study, the past—the annals of our own country especially—if only to realize, by contrast, the almost numberless blessings we enjoy, which were unknown to the hardy and daring pioneers who cleared the path for our advancement to this high and happy state of being.

Nor have we, as we do here boldly assert, overstepped the bounds of nature and of fact in what we have recorded in these pages. In truth, we have fallen short of, rather than exceeded, the reality. The troubles, on what was known, at the period of which we write, as the north-western frontier, began in the manner we have stated, with the damnable murders of the friends and relations of the immortal Logan—a noble chief, whose heart was with the whites, till this deed of unmitigated atrocity steeled it

against them, and, from a warm friend, changed him into a bitter enemy. Till this event, even through that sanguinary struggle known as the French war, Logan had ever been a friend to the Colonists; and by his acts, and peaceful counsels, had done much to check the revengeful ferocity, and soften down the vindictive acrimony, of his red brethren: but now, stabbed to the heart of his dearest affections, by the hand he had grasped in amity, the lamb became a tiger, and cried for blood. The Indians, before dissatisfied with the encroachments and aggressions of their white neighbors, and only kept in check by the pacific counsels of him whose powerful eloquence they admired, and whose noble person and qualities they venerated and loved, needed but his voice, as the electric spark, to fire the explosive train. As one man, the several nations rose and rushed to battle. Knowing well that he who strikes the first blow gains so much advantage over his adversary, they made no unnecessary delay in their preparations; but, with the velocity and destructive power of the thundering avalanche, and the fury of the whirlwind, they came down upon their white foes, sweeping all before them, and leaving desolation behind. Had it not been that intelligence of their approach, in some slight degree, preceded them, few, if any, of the bold borderers, would have escaped to tell the tale. Dividing and subdividing their mighty force, they spread themselves over the whole frontier; and the scenes of horror that ensued, would sicken us to relate. Whole families were butchered in every direction; and the man of strength, the grey-haired veteran, the matron, the youth, the blooming maid, the prattling child, and the unconscious infant, alike fell victims to their thirst for blood and vengeance.

And even those who escaped from the sudden doom of the rifle, tomahawk, or scalping knife, by taking shelter within some neighboring fort, in too many instances only

prolonged their misery, to meet death at last, in another, but not less horrible form. The crowding into the few scattering forts of many families, who, in their hasty flight, had not been able to bring provisions with them, soon exhausted the food already there; and then famine, sickness, and contagious disease did their work, and filled many a lonely and now forgotten grave—the living scarce weeping for the dead, who were better off than they.

A few of the hardiest and boldest of the men, leaving their families in a fortress, afterward went back to their desolate lands, and endeavored to till the soil, that those who should chance to survive the summer, might not perish of starvation in the autumn and winter. But many of these lonely adventurers never returned to tell their own tales of suffering. Exposed, through the destruction of their dwellings, to all kinds of weather—sleeping, some of them, in hollow trunks and tree-tops—the privations they endured, even when fortunate enough to again escape the outlying foe, broke down the constitutions of a part, afflicted with malignant disease others, and consigned a large portion to their final rest.

Such, in brief, are some of the trials, sufferings, and horrors, which attended that furious outbreak of the united tribes, designated in history as Lord Dunmore's war; and which took place on the frontier, ere forces could be raised to drive the savage enemy back to his home. Having thus given a general view of what was occurring in every direction throughout the entire border, that the reader may see we have not chosen the most repulsive of the terrible scenes to place before him, we will now return to our heroine.

When consciousness again returned to Gertrude Wilburn, she found herself seated on the ground, on the open knoll, partially reclining against a stump, and partially against the breast of Simple Roley, who was giving vent to his

feelings in sobs and moans. It was so light that she could see around her in every direction; and with that confusion of ideas which not unfrequently occurs with the first arousing from a swoon, or the first awakening from a dream, she for the moment fancied she had sat down to rest herself, after a long, fatiguing walk in the heat of a summer's day. We say she fancied this for the moment—for the happy illusion was scarcely of longer duration—and then she awoke indeed to the terrible reality of her situation.

At a little distance from her, was a group of half-naked savages, who seemed, by their earnest gestures, to be engaged in a dispute, or an important consultation. Turning her eyes from them, with a shudder of mingled horror and disgust, her gaze rested upon the source of light; and it was only by a powerful effort that she was able to suppress a shriek of agony. The cabin which for a year had been her home—the dwelling which for a year had contained herself and friends—the seat and centre of her own little world—was now in flames. And where were those who had tenanted it with her? Were they all gone—all dead—save the poor fellow moaning by her side?

"Oh, God! have they all—all—perished?" she groaned aloud.

At the sound of her voice, the simpleton looked up, and appeared for the first to comprehend that consciousness had returned to his companion in misery.

"No, Mistress Gerty," he said, in a low, tender, but melancholy tone; "all are not dead—I'm here, and I'll never desert you—never."

"Poor Roley!" returned Gertrude, raising herself from his support, and turning to look upon his face, while large, scalding tears began to chase each other adown her own: "are you all that is left of those I loved so dearly? oh! Heaven only knows how dearly!"

"And do you love me? poor, simple me?" inquired the moonling, in a very sad, but somewhat eager tone.

"Heaven knows I do, Roley! But tell me—"

She stopped; her heart rose to her throat; she could not again ask concerning what she most wished to know.

"Of them?" said Jacob, inquiringly, pointing toward the burning building.

Gertrude nodded, and held her breath, but did not speak.

"They are all dead—only you and I are left," was the mournful reply.

"May God have mercy on me, and take me too!" groaned Gertrude, bowing her head forward upon her hands, and giving way to her grief in choking sobs, for it was too great for words.

"Would you go and leave me all alone, Mistress Gerty?" said the poor fellow, in a sad, reproachful tone.

"No! no!" murmured Gertrude; "that would be selfish; but my misery seems greater than I can bear."

"Don't cry, Mistress Gerty! don't!" pleaded the simpleton, in the accents of pure affection; "may-be God, who is so good, will let us both die together."

"And why have the savages spared us, and slain the rest?" said Gertrude, the thought suddenly crossing her mind in the shape of mystery. "The last that I remember, the blow, which would have set my spirit free, seemed about to descend—why am I living to mourn that the hand was stayed?"

"I came between you and the blow," answered Jacob.

"And why were you spared, Roley?"

"Because they wouldn't take my life," answered the other. "I plead with them to kill me—for after I saw the Major shot down, I wanted to die—but none of them would touch me. Then I thought perhaps they would spare you and the children, and I was willing to live. So I waited till I saw that they were determined to kill all; and then

I ran up to get the blow intended for you; but the monster who held the weapon, walked away, and wouldn't strike; and then I took you up in my arms, and brought you here; and this is all I know about it, Mistress Gerty."

A lucid interval had enabled the moonling to retain in his memory, and narrate to Gertrude, the manner in which her life had been preserved; but why her life and his own had been spared, in that moment of savage fury, was far beyond his limited comprehension. We will, however, explain the mystery, if mystery there be, by saying that several of the Indians, having recognized him as the person at whom two volleys had been fired—and having at the same time discovered, with that intuitive perception, which, in the savage, often amounts to a quick, unerring instinct, that he was deficient in his mental capacity—they regarded him as a something sacred; and he among them who, after knowing this, had been guilty of raising his hand against him, would, by their simple creed, have been guilty of sacrilege, and would have drawn down upon his own head the special anger of the Great Spirit. And he, being sacred in the eyes of these untutored children of the forest, Gertrude became alike sacred while his hand rested upon her person. Thus the infuriated chief, with his tomahawk raised for the fatal blow, had, by the timely interference of the simpleton, been obliged to turn away disappointed from his intended victim. And thus, too, had Simple Roley known of his talismanic power, he might have saved the others from destruction, by merely taking them under his protection.

"And what will become of us now?" said Gertrude, pursuing the conversation in a despairing tone.

"I'm afraid we'll have to live," was the reply. "If they won't kill us, we can't make them—can we, Mistress Gerty?"

"Live! and in captivity!" said Gertrude, with a shud

der. "Oh! this is worse than death, a thousand times. Ha!" she exclaimed, as a new thought flashed across her mind: "Gibbs—the hunter—he escaped, did he not, Roley?"

"I hope so," answered the other; "but I don't know how."

"He went up the chimney for the purpose of leaping over the stockade."

"Did he?" returned the moonling, simply. "Well, that was very wise in him."

"You are sure he was not taken prisoner?"

Simple Roley made no answer to this; and on turning to him, to repeat the question, Gertrude was struck with his attitude, and the singular expression of his countenance. He had risen to his feet, and was standing with his head bent forward, and his eyes apparently riveted on some object in the distance; while his unusually flushed cheeks, expanded nostrils, and half-open mouth, seemed to denote that something strange and important was occurring within the range of his vision.

"What is it, Jacob? what do you see?" asked Gertrude, eagerly, with a wildly palpitating heart.

Getting no answer, she sought in vain for the cause of his intense abstraction, and then repeated her question.

"Hark!" returned the moonling, impressively, making a gesture for silence, but retaining the same attitude and expression of countenance. "Hark! I hear them—they come—their numbers are not inferior—and they are brave. They tread softly, but I hear them—they move stealthily, but I see them."

"Hear and see whom, Roley?" inquired Gertrude, who began to think the mind of the simpleton had again passed under a cloud.

"They are led on by him who was dead and is alive—whose heart responds to the heart that mournfully throbs

to his memory," rejoined Simple Roley, mystically. "I have heard—I have seen—I have uttered; and now the senses are sealed, and I wait."

As he said this, the strange expression passed from his countenance, the limbs and muscles relaxed from their rigidity, and looking carelessly around, he again seated himself by the side of Gertrude.

"What did you see, Roley, just now, that caused you to act so strangely?" asked Gertrude.

The moonling stared at her, but did not seem to comprehend the question; and Gertrude, believing him now unconscious of what he had just uttered, did not repeat it. Casting her eyes toward the group of Indians, she saw that some four or five had separated from the others, and were coming toward her, headed by their chief; and believing her fate had been sealed by the council just held, she trembled at the thought of what might be her doom. On coming up to her, the chief, folding his arms across his breast, and looking her full in the eye, said, with Indian dignity, pointing to the burning cabin:

"Pale-face girl no home."

"Alas! too true!" cried Gertrude, bursting into tears: "I am homeless and friendless now."

"Pale-face girl brave—handsome—got scalp—good!" returned the savage. "Me chief—got wigwam—want wife."

"No! no!" cried Gertrude: "kill me! kill me! for I would sooner die than live with the monsters whose hands are red with the blood of my friends."

"Stand!" said the chief, making a gesture for her to rise.

Gertrude complied with his request, and stood upon her feet.

"Meshepeshe* great chief," said the Indian, striking his breast: "want wife—take pale-face girl—come!" and he laid his hand upon her arm.

* Shawanoese for panther.

Gertrude involuntarily shrunk from the touch, with a shudder of disgust, and was about to cry for help; but recollecting that she was alone, and unprotected, and that there were none now to come to her assistance, she suppressed the words that were trembling on her lips, and was fain to indulge in the faint hope that something might intervene between her and the fate she so much dreaded. The chief now called his warriors around him, and said a few words to them in his own tongue; and then the whole party, numbering some twenty persons, including Gertrude and her simple companion, began to move away toward the forest, leaving the devouring flames to do their work without further human aid.

When about half-way down the knoll toward the nearest cover, an Indian suddenly burst through a thick cluster of bushes which skirted the clearing, and came bounding up to the larger party, who halted to receive him. He appeared to be a messenger of important intelligence; for having spoken a few words to the chief, accompanied by violent gestures, the latter quickly communicated something to his followers; and immediately some half-a-dozen, eagerly clutching their weapons, darted away in different directions, and were soon hid from the view of Gertrude, who looked on with the interest of awakened hope, yet knew not whether most to hope or fear.

The chief now beckoned to the simpleton, who was walking by the side of Gertrude, to step apart with him; and the moment the two had become separated, several warriors rushed between them; and two of the latter, seizing each an arm of our heroine, hurried her forward to the wood. She uttered no word, and made no resistance—for knowing herself to be entirely in their power, she was resolved to do nothing to irritate them, and thus provoke them to violent usage.

On entering the wood, the two savages, who had Ger

trude in charge, immediately produced thongs of deer-skin, and, throwing her upon the ground, quickly bound her, hand and foot. This done, they sprung up and darted away, leaving her alone in that perfectly helpless condition. As to what was next to happen, poor Gertrude had not the remotest idea; and looking up to Heaven, through the green, quivering leaves, which seemed to have a tinge of blood, where the ruddy light of her burning home flashed upon them, she fervently prayed that the next change might be a change from the dreary shadows of mortality to the eternal brightness of immortal life.

Several minutes now passed in a deep, oppressive stillness—or, at least, a stillness only broken by the crackling of the distant flames, and a slight rustling of the breeze-stirred leaves. Not an Indian was to be seen—not a human sound could be heard; and Gertrude, with a feeling of relief, mingled with horror, began to fancy that the chief had suddenly changed his design toward herself, and had departed, leaving her alone to die of starvation, or perchance be devoured by the wild beasts of the wilderness.

Suddenly a burst of savage yells, at no great distance, accompanied by a discharge of several fire-arms, thrilled her through every nerve, and seemed to drive the coursing blood back to her very heart. These savage yells were instantly followed by others of a different nature, though scarcely less wild and savage, and by several rapid discharges, all indicating that an enemy had been met, and a deadly strife begun.

And who was that enemy? Could it be that friends were near? that deliverance was at hand? Who shall portray the feelings of the poor, trembling girl—trembling with hope and fear—as she lay there, bound hand and foot, and listened to these sounds of conflict?

For something like half an hour the melee continued—a portion of the combatants being, some of the time, so near

to Gertrude, that she could even hear the quick-coming breath, as they closed and struggled together for victory; and more than one oath, or exclamation in English, assured her that men of her own race were fighting against her foes.

At length the sounds of conflict grew more and more distant—as if one party were retreating and the other pursuing—and soon after, a long, loud shout—a shout that thrilled the bosom of Gertrude with joy—announced that the whites were masters of the field.

With a silent prayer of thanksgiving to the Almighty for her deliverance, Gertrude now raised her voice, and called for help. Waiting a few moments, and fearful she had not been heard, she repeated the call, in a still louder tone. Presently there were sounds as of persons running; and as their steps drew nearer, she could distinguish voices speaking in quick and anxious tones. Soon after, a single voice, apparently within a dozen yards of her, exclaimed:

“Where? where? which way?”

What was there in those words, or in the tone of him who spoke, that could send such an electric thrill through the frame of our heroine? that could change the answer, which she would have returned, to a faint shriek, and still the very beatings of her heart?

A moment more, and the bushes were parted by an eager hand; a human figure bounded through them, paused by her side, and bent quickly over her; and Gertrude faintly saw, by the dim light of the dying fire, the noble face and form of one most dearly loved and sadly mourned. Yes! George Graham, long wept as dead, had returned—returned as he first came, to be her deliverer from an awful doom; and if she gazed upon him with a pulseless heart, a seething brain, and voiceless thoughts—as upon one given back from the spirit world—it is not strange.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN ECSTASY.

"GERTRUDE! Miss Wilburn!" exclaimed Graham, laboring under the most intense excitement, as he bent over her prostrate form; "in Heaven's name, speak to me! and let your lips assure me that you are living! Oh! speak!" he continued—"if only one word—that word my name—that I may know you live, and are conscious who is now by your side!"

But Gertrude spoke not: not a muscle moved: there was not even a quiver of her bloodless lips: all the faculties, save that of consciousness, were lost: the mind knew—the mind saw—the mind heard—the mind felt; but the tenement, the body, was for the time dead. The eyes were wide open, and fixed upon the face of Graham; but the pupils had the bright and glassy look of the eyes we sometimes see in figures of wax. There was not even a twinkle—not the slightest movement of the long, dark lashes. The breath too had stopped, the heart had ceased to beat, the blood no longer coursed through its regular channels, and the limbs had become hard, rigid, and inflexible. Yet the mind, as we said before, was conscious—doubly conscious, if we may use the term; for Gertrude not only saw what was taking place, but seemingly beyond, into the future—she not only heard what was said, but seemingly the unuttered thoughts.

It was a great, a terrible shock, this sudden deliverance from an awful fate, by the hand of one she had deeply,

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though secretly, loved, and long mourned as dead, and no one could tell what might be the result. Nature had previously been tried too far. Wild, almost delirious excitement, had stimulated the system to bear up against crushing griefs, appalling horrors, direful calamities, want of needful food, and loss of rest; but sudden deliverance, sudden joy, acting directly and powerfully upon the heart, through the tender chords of love, produced a too sudden reaction, and plunged her into what medical men would probably term an ecstasy.

Cutting the cords which bound her limbs, Graham, still pleading for her to speak to him, lifted the rigid form of Gertrude from where it lay, and bore her through the bushes, about half way up the knoll, and laid her gently on the ground; while a number of his men—for he was the leader of the party who had come to the rescue—silently gathered around him.

"Oh! my God!" he exclaimed, in thrilling tones; "if she be not already dead, hear a poor mortal's prayer, and restore her to life. Here, Doctor—here—quick!" he continued, looking hurriedly around upon the by-standers—"in Heaven's name, tell me if the spirit be fled!"

"Dr. Hartwell is not here, Captain," said one of the men; "he is yonder, with the poor fellows that are wounded;" and he pointed to another part of the knoll, where, by the light of the dying fire, another group of persons could be seen, toward whom smaller parties were advancing, each bearing a dead or wounded comrade.

"Run, some one, and bid him come here, without delay. I would not ask it for myself—but here is a life, if life there be, dearer than my own. And, Carson, and Baker, as you love me, fly to yonder stream, and bring water! Quick! quick! perhaps she may be saved."

Three of the party instantly bounded away to do his bidding; and Graham immediately fell to chafing the rigid

limbs of Gertrude, not knowing better what to do, in the faint hope of restoring animation. He was thus occupied, when Dr. Hartwell joined the group. The latter was a venerable man, and a man of skill, having once been a surgeon in the regular army. He was also an old and familiar acquaintance of the young Captain—the father of the latter being his intimate friend.

“Well, George,” he said, hastily—“what’s this? what’s this?”

“This is she of whom you have heard me speak, Doctor,” replied Graham; “and if not dead, the only one, I fear, of Major Hargrave’s household, who has escaped being butchered by our hellish foes. Quick! Doctor—tell me if she lives?”

The surgeon stooped down; and after a careful, but hurried examination of the fair sufferer, replied:

“I think she yet lives, George—I think life is still here—the rigidity of the limbs and body indicate life; but it is a very critical case, my friend—a very critical case.”

“Oh! Doctor, save her! save her!” cried Graham; “and my gratitude shall know no limit.”

“I will do what I can—but God alone can save her,” answered the surgeon.

He ripped up the sleeves of Gertrude as he spoke; and immediately tying a bandage around her arm, he took out his lancet, and opened a vein. But the blood did not follow.

“I fear it is a hopeless case, George,” he said.

Graham groaned aloud with the agony of his feelings.

“Try the other arm!” he gasped.

At this moment, the men who had been for water returned, with their drinking cups filled, which they proffered to their leader. Almost snatching the cups from their hands, the excited young Captain, without a moment’s hesitation, dashed the contents of both upon the upturned face

of Gertrude. A slight spasmodic start followed this sudden application, and at the same instant the blood started forth.

“Thank God for that!” cried the Doctor: “there is some hope now.”

“Oh, sir! do you think she will live?” inquired the Captain, in a low, eager, tremulous tone.

“I think we shall bring back life—but God only knows whether we shall be able to keep it or not,” was the answer.

The blood was now spurting forth in a strong, steady stream; and the surgeon gazed upon it with a degree of satisfaction which he did not attempt to conceal. For some two or three minutes not another word was spoken; and every eye, rivetted upon the face and form of the fair patient, watched her with breathless interest. At length the rigid muscles began to relax, the stiffened limbs began to grow pliable, the glassy look began to disappear from the eyes, the lids began to quiver and droop, and the lips, slightly parting, began to move, as if about to give utterance to intelligible sounds.

“I thank you, friends,” was now faintly murmured—so faintly, indeed, that the words could just be caught by those who breathlessly listened.

As this was said, the lids were raised again, as by an effort, and the eyes, gleaming with intelligence, were for a single moment fixed upon the anxious countenance of George Graham. There seemed to be a world of meaning in that look, brief as it was; and as the lids closed again, concealing the expression, and a deathly languor stole over those now pale, lovely features, he felt his heart beat and throb with a strange, indescribable sensation. He grasped the Doctor’s arm, with a trembling hand, and in a voice that seemed to come from the very depths of his soul, said:

“Can she live?”

"I do not know—perhaps—the symptoms are favorable," was the reply of the man of science, as he proceeded to remove the bandage and stop the flow of blood. He then felt her pulse, and added: "The symptoms are favorable, George; but she is weak—very weak—her whole system seems to be prostrated; and only care, great care, can save her."

"Great Heaven! what is to be done?" exclaimed the other. "There is not even a hut left, in all this region, to give her shelter; and exposure, in the open air, will surely be fatal to her. What can we do, Doctor? what can be done?"

"I know not what to advise," returned the surgeon, with a troubled look—for he deeply felt for his young friend—and had, besides, already begun to take a warm interest in the fair patient herself. "The best that we can do, under the circumstances, I think," he continued, thoughtfully, "is to construct a litter, and bear her slowly forward. It is possible, should we escape being attacked by the savages, that we may be able to take her safely through to Bush's Fort—but the Lord only knows."

"Would it not be better, Doctor, to throw up some kind of a hut, and delay removing her till her strength is in some measure restored?" inquired Graham, anxiously. "Besides, there are several of our men wounded, who could be taken care of at the same time."

"I cannot say I like the plan," was the reply. "In all probability, some prowling band of Indians would discover us, and every life be sacrificed."

"Will you allow me to make a suggestion, Captain?" said one of the men who had been for water.

"Certainly, Carson—certainly—speak! I feel the need of advice in this strait."

"There is a kind of boat on the river below here, and perhaps she could be transported by water."

"Ha! the very thing!" said the Doctor; "and our wounded can be conveyed in that also."

"Yes," rejoined Graham, much excited, "Providence seems to favor us in this extremity. How is she now, Doctor?" he inquired.

"Much the same, George—much the same."

"No worse, Doctor, eh?"

"No worse, my friend. There! calm yourself, and see her removed to the boat as soon as possible."

Gertrude, who was lying as if asleep, breathing easily, now opened her eyes, looked around, and then closed them again, with something like a sigh.

"Well, Doctor? well?" whispered Graham, turning to his medical friend, and noting the expression of his countenance, his own the while giving evidence of the deepest anxiety.

"There is no change, George, either for the better or the worse; but do try and be composed. All that can be done, we will do, and leave the rest to God. Let her be removed to the boat, while I go and look after others who are suffering extreme bodily pain, and stand so much in need of my assistance."

"And as soon as you can, Doctor, let the wounded be conveyed to the boat also," rejoined the Captain.

He then, with the assistance of Carson, gently lifted Gertrude from the ground, and set forward toward the boat. At this moment, to the astonishment of the party, the simpleton was seen running up the hill from the wood; and the moment he reached the side of Gertrude, he took one anxious look at her pale features, and, uttering a loud cry of grief, exclaimed:

"And is she dead too, sirs? is Mistress Gerty dead too? have the Indians killed her?"

"Hush!" said Graham, anxiously; "you must not speak

so loud. The Indians have not killed her; she is not dead; but she is very low—in a very precarious state—and if you would have her live, you must not disturb her.”

The moonling turned and looked wonderingly at the speaker, and then said, in a low tone:

“I know you, I think; you are he that preserved her life; you are he that she loved; you are he that was lost; you are he that she mourned as dead; you are George Graham.”

“I am George Graham,” returned the other, in some confusion; “but I did not know that—Miss Wilburn—that she—that—I was mourned as dead. But where do you come from, Roley? where were you during the fight?”

“They took Mistress Gerty away from me, and hid her; and then, sir, I hid from them in a tree top.”

“Have any of the rest of Major Hargrave’s family escaped?” inquired Graham.

“We are all,” replied the simpleton, mournfully. “We wanted the savages to kill us—but they wouldn’t.”

“Poor Gertrude!” murmured Graham, in a tone so low that none heard him. “Poor Gertrude! what must she have suffered, to wish for death. May God save her now, or I shall never know peace of mind again!”

On reaching the boat, Graham took off his coat, Carson did the same, and spreading these on the bottom, as a sort of bed, they laid Gertrude gently upon them. Some few of the party had brought blankets with them, and Graham dispatched his companion to procure these. When he had departed, only the moonling remained with the Captain—for the others had gone back to see after their wounded comrades. Taking advantage of this opportunity, he bent down, pressed a kiss upon the forehead of the gentle being whose life was now dearer to him than his own, and, in a low, tremulous tone of affection, breathed her name. By

the now dim, fading light, he was barely enabled to perceive that the lids of the eyes languidly unclosed, and that the eyes themselves looked upon him.

“Do you know me, Gertrude? dear Gertrude?” he murmured, fairly holding his breath to catch the response, if response there should be.

The eyes slowly closed again, but the lips moved; and turning his ear to catch the utterance, he heard a faint “yes,” which seemed to thrill through his very soul.

He then took her fair soft hand in his, and, in a low, choking voice, and with eyes swimming in tears, rejoined:

“Dear Gertrude—and permit me so to address you—you are very low; but with great care, and God’s grace, I trust to see you restored to health. Do not attempt to speak again, and have no concern on your mind—for you are now with friends—and I will not leave your side for a moment, till I see you to a place of safety. Nor then,” he added, in a still lower tone, “if—if—you—I mean—unless—your feelings toward me have changed.”

To this Gertrude made no reply in words; but the hand which Graham held, slightly trembled, and, to his great joy, he fancied there was a slight pressure. It was enough. It assured him he had been heard; and more—that he was answered according to his now fondest desire. Gently changing her position, and seating himself so as to support her in a reclining posture—while the moonling came and stood by his side, looking on with a sorrowful air—he awaited, in silence, the return of Carson.

In the course of half an hour, every arrangement was completed for the departure of the little boat. A couch of blankets had been prepared for Gertrude to lie on; and besides one to cover her, another was stretched over her, in the form of an awning, to keep off the damps and dews

and sun. The wounded, three in number—the only ones who, surviving their injuries, were unable to proceed on foot—were also placed in the boat, in as comfortable positions as circumstances would allow; and with the surgeon, Graham, and one to row, these made as large a party as the little boat could conveniently carry. The boat, now ready for its voyage, was pushed off from the shore, and kept stationary on the water, till the others had collected and buried their dead comrades. Then the party on land began their homeward march, along the banks of the river; and the little craft, at the same time, glided forward over the glassy bosom of the stream.

After a couple of hours' labor with the paddle, the man who had used it went ashore, and another of the party on foot took his place; and he, in like manner, when fatigued, resigned his place to another; and so the little vessel, with its human freight, was kept in motion till day-light, when a halt was ordered for refreshment and rest.

Throughout the night, Gertrude slept sweetly; and awoke in the morning, to the great joy of the anxious Captain, much refreshed, though still weak. One of the men now shot a duck; and from this a broth was prepared, of which she drank freely, and found herself much strengthened. The doctor now pronounced her out of danger; but positively forbade her holding conversation with any one; so that scarcely a word was exchanged between her and Graham, who ardently longed for the moment when he might unburden his soul to her in that language which, coming fresh from the heart, is in all ages and nations the same in fervor and truth.

After a halt of some three hours, during most of which the men, overcome with fatigue, lay down upon the bare earth and slept, the journey was resumed. As it is not important that we should give a detailed account of the

slow and toilsome progress of our friends toward their destination, we will merely say here, that Bush's Fort was safely reached on the following night; and Gertrude, seemingly no worse for her voyage, was transferred to the best accommodations which the crowded state of the little station could afford.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DECLARATION.

WE shall not attempt to describe the feelings of Gertrude, as she slowly and gradually recovered from that state of prostration which had so nearly proved fatal to her. And were we to make the attempt, it would be a vain one; for though language may excite sympathy, and rouse imagination, it can no more portray the feelings of a heart torn with all the varied emotions which belong to the human soul, than the colors of the artist can transfer to canvass the thunders of the belching volcano. Poor Gertrude! what indeed must her feelings have been? her dear sister, her sister's husband, their children, her own faithful servants—all—all dead! and she, an orphan, alone in the world, poor, friendless, sick, and among strangers!

Did we say friendless? We must recall that word; and thank Heaven we can do so! No, not friendless—for she is not friendless who has one to care more for her welfare than his own. And Gertrude had two such friends—the simpleton and Graham—either of whom would, without a moment's hesitation, have stepped between her and danger or death. Throughout her illness, the faithful and affectionate Roley rarely left her side; and though there were times when he seemed not to feel his own misery, or comprehend why he was with her, yet a sort of instinct appeared to take the place of reason, and enchain him, as it were, to the only being on earth who now cared for him.

And Graham! with what anxious solicitude he noted the

gradual recovery of one he now admitted to himself he most passionately and devotedly loved! Every care was bestowed upon her—every attention given—every want supplied; and a hundred times a day he asked the good-natured surgeon if he thought she was better or worse, or if there was any danger of a relapse.

Bush's Fort, as we have elsewhere remarked, was small—being merely a double cabin, surrounded by a stockade—and it was also, at this time, much crowded with families, who had fled to it as a place of safety; but wealth and influence could do much, even here, amid the horrors of the period, to render the situation of one superior to that of another or others; and all that wealth and influence could do, was done by Graham, to better the condition of Gertrude. She had the best of female attendance, and everything around her was kept as quiet as exciting circumstances would permit.

Thus a couple of weeks passed away; and at the end of this time, Dr. Hartwell informed Graham that he thought his patient so far recovered, as to be able to resume the journey homeward.

"But ere she leaves here, should there not be a proper understanding between us, Doctor?" inquired the other.

"Certainly, George—certainly; but I thought that matter settled long ago."

"Then you were in error, sir. Since the night of the rescue, you know your orders have been very strict, forbidding me to hold any conversation with her, on any topic, without your permission."

"True, George, true."

"Well, Doctor, I have never taken advantage of your absence, to overstep the limits prescribed; and, consequently, have held no conversation with Miss Wilburn, either in relation to the past, the present, or the future.

In fact, so little have I said to her, that I fear I have run into the other extreme, and caused her much uneasiness, by thus leading her to think me, to a certain degree, cold and indifferent."

"Well, my friend, if such has been the case, I think the restrictions I imposed upon you, have been the means of doing as much harm as good. You had better see her then, at once, and explain everything to her satisfaction."

The heart of Graham beat tumultuously at this announcement. The moment he had hoped for, and prayed for, was now at hand—the moment when he might speak to her as his heart should dictate. Eagerly he sought her, and found her just on the point of leaving the dwelling, to take a walk in the open air, within the enclosure of the stockade.

"Happily met," said Graham, with deepened color. "I was coming to see you."

A slight flush mantled the pale and now lovely features of Gertrude, as she said:

"I hope, Mr. Graham, you are not the bearer of further sad news—though of late, it seems, I hear no other."

"I trust," returned Graham, in a low, pointed tone, "that what I have to say to you now, will not be so considered."

He proffered his arm as he spoke, and the two walked to the rear of the building, where they found themselves beyond ear-shot of the different groups who were standing about the enclosure. It was a warm, pleasant day, and the gentle breeze, which played around them, seemed to have come from the sunny lands of the South. A rude bench stood against the dwelling; and seating themselves upon this, Graham resumed:

"I have just been conversing with my good friend, Dr. Hartwell, and have obtained his permission to speak to you on matters which concern us both. I do not know, Ger-

trude—permit me so to address you—whether or not you are cognizant of the fact, that, during your illness, up to the present time, I have been, by the doctor's positive orders, debarred the pleasure of speaking with you on any subject calculated to excite your feelings."

"I was not aware that such was the case," replied Gertrude, in a low tone, casting her eyes down upon the ground.

"Indeed! I feared so. Then perhaps you have formed the idea that I had no desire to converse with you relative to the past?"

"I must admit, Mr. Graham—"

"Will you not be less formal, Gertrude," interrupted the other, "and address me by my Christian name, as I do you?"

The color mantled the features of Gertrude, and for a moment she remained silent. Then she resumed, in a lower and more tremulous tone:

"I must admit, George, that I thought it somewhat strange, that you never inquired after—my—my dear friends."

She stopped, and burst into tears—for the remembrance of the terrible past came upon her with nearly the force of a new calamity.

"It was not, Gertrude, that I had forgotten them, or cared not to inquire after them, but because I was forbid to speak of them," said Graham. "And now I see, and I trust you do also, that the doctor was right; for in your weak state, the bare mention of their names might have led to a deplorable result. Even now, the thought of them is as much as you can bear; and though I am anxious to have the particulars from your lips, regarding their fate, I fear the subject is too exciting for your present condition."

"In a word," said Gertrude, with a fresh burst of grief,

and scarcely able to articulate so as to be understood, "they are all—all—dead: oh! my God! all—all."

"So the poor simpleton informed me."

"Poor fellow!" murmured Gertrude: "Heaven forgive me, for forgetting him! Yes, he was spared—he and I—but we are all that live of that once happy family."

"Would it pain you too much, dear Gertrude, to give me some particulars of the attack?" inquired Graham.

"I think it would relieve my mind, to speak of my departed friends now," was the reply; "for I feel it to be a duty which I owe to their memories."

"Then speak, dear Gertrude, and I will listen."

In as few words as she could, often choked with sobs and sighs, Gertrude proceeded to relate what had occurred—beginning with the illness of her sister, and ending with her own capture and release.

"Oh! what sufferings have been yours, dear Gertrude!" rejoined Graham, in a low, tender tone, when she had finished her narration; "and it is a wonder to me, that you have survived to tell the tale."

"I prayed for death," returned Gertrude; "for when I found that all were gone, I knew they must be happier than I; and I wished to join them in that world where there is no more parting, and where, I trust in God, there is no more sorrow for those who have rightly lived in this."

"And—and—since you have seen me," said George, in a low, hesitating tone: "have—have you—prayed for death?"

Gertrude partially averted her face, and with her eyes still bent on the ground, and a still deeper color on her lovely features, at length faintly murmured, in reply:

"No! no! it was before I saw you—before I knew you were living."

"And did you really think me dead, dear Gertrude?"

"I did. The horse on which you rode away, was re-

turned by Mr. Gibb's who went back with Major Hargrave to search for you; but no traces being found of you, I thought you had fainted by the way and perished."

"And did that thought cause you sorrow?"

"Could I think him dead, who had saved my life, and not grieve?" returned Gertrude.

"And had your grief anything more than the sorrow which gratitude might excite?" inquired the other, in an unsteady voice, as he gently took her hand and watched the changing color of her lovely countenance.

To this question Gertrude made no reply; but she seemed much agitated, and her hand trembled violently; and after a short pause, during which these indications of the state of her mind were noted by Graham, with thrilling but pleasant emotions, he resumed, in a tone that denoted he was himself far from being calm and indifferent:

"Dear Gertrude," he said, "have you forgotten the hour I met you under the shade of the oak, and informed you of my intention to depart for my home? Have you forgotten what passed between us then?"

"Do you remember?" inquired Gertrude, faintly and tremulously.

"Yes!" replied the other; "I do remember every syllable that was then uttered by either of us—for they are engraved on the tablets of my heart, where neither time nor eternity can efface them. Do I remember indeed?" he pursued, in a warmer, a more emphatic, a more impassioned tone. "Oh! Gertrude, if you could but know how, of all time, that hour has haunted me, bringing alternate hopes, and joys, and deep regrets in its train, you would not ask me, do I remember it!" He paused a few moments, and added: "Gertrude, can you forgive me for the past?"

"I do not know what I have to forgive," was the scarce audible reply.

"For having misunderstood and misconstrued your actions and your words, and for having left you in the manner I did. Ah! little did I know your heart then—little did I know my own; but time and reflection have taught me what I shall never forget. Gertrude," he continued, lowering his voice, and speaking in a tone that betrayed strong emotions, "I remember, as if it were yesterday, the moment when, arousing from my unconscious state, after being wounded, I fixed my eyes upon your pale, lovely countenance, and thought I beheld an inhabitant of another world. Recollection soon left me again, you remember; and while I remained under the same roof with you, the memory of this event was lost; but after I left you, it returned—first as a dream, then as a reality—and with it came such emotions as I shall not attempt to describe. I somehow felt as if my own heart had not before been known to myself; but now I knew I loved the being I had then and there seen—loved her as I had never loved mortal before—loved her as a something hallowed and set apart from the rest of mankind.

"I remember, too," continued Graham, "the first time I beheld you after my delirious fever; but I was weaker then, and the recollection is less vivid; and, besides, what subsequently occurred, probably tended to wear off the impression. But still that impression afterward came back upon me; and I remember now, that I gazed upon you with feelings new and strange. There was something about you which seemed to fascinate me—to give me a new joy; yet being very weak, and often suffering much pain, I did not then analyze the new emotion, and knew not it was the germ of love, which, in its after development, would prove to be so powerful. And besides, dear Gertrude, as I slowly recovered, I fancied you avoided me through a feeling of dislike; and my too haughty pride being aroused, I resolved that you should see nothing in any act of mine

to lead you to believe I cared more for you than any other member of the family. It was more difficult, I found, to keep to this resolution, than to make it; for at times, even with what I believed to be a coldness on your part, arising from aversion, I was so irresistibly attracted toward you, that, unless in your presence, I was perfectly miserable. Still I had no idea that you entertained a single sentiment of affection for me, and thought your many acts of kindness arose solely from your sense of duty toward one who had been the means of preserving your life.

"Judge, then, dear Gertrude," Graham went on, "how much I was taken by surprise, by your words and manner, when I announced to you my intention of soon taking my departure! I fancied I saw that what I had hitherto attributed to coldness, indifference, or aversion, had sprung from the very opposite feelings; but this discovery, while it seemed to infuse into my heart a thrilling joy, also vexed me, and excited a desire for retaliation—a kind of petty revenge. I was determined, now that I had, as I thought, found out your secret, that you should not easily discover mine; and when you urged me to remain a few days longer, I was resolved to leave, if for no other purpose than to act in opposition to your desire. More than once, however, I think I did betray my real feelings; and had we not been interrupted by the simpleton, at a very important moment, I think my impulsive nature would have forced from me an avowal that would have saved both of us many after regrets.

"For a short time after the sudden breaking off of our interview, I was resolved to find another opportunity, and expose the real sentiments of my heart; but I found, on reflection, I did not know them myself; and had I been put under oath then, I do not think I could have told which of the two passions, love or hate, had the preponderance. Not that I believe I really hated you; but it somehow seemed that while I prized your happiness above my own, I could

only find delight in crossing your wishes; and it was a kind of angry pleasure, if I may use the term, to cause you to think me indifferent about your welfare.

"Well, as you know, dear Gertude, I left at the appointed time; but when I approached you to say the parting words, I found myself so carried away with my feelings, that it became necessary for me to break off abruptly, or say what I did not wish others to hear. So I sprung away, mounted my horse, and, more mad than sane, dashed down the knoll, at headlong speed.

"I will not at this time enter into anything like detail of what afterward occurred to me. Suffice it to say, that, feeling much fatigued one day, I stopped to rest in a pleasant valley, and turned my horse loose, to crop the green blade. I fell asleep before I was aware of it; and when I awoke, the beast was gone, and all my search for him proved fruitless. I had no choice then but to perish where I was, or continue my journey on foot; and so, weak almost to fainting, I set out for home. I will not tell you what I suffered before I reached my father's house. Nature gave me support till I crossed the threshold; and then, completely exhausted, I sunk down upon the floor, unable to rise. I was immediately conveyed to a bed, which I never left for three long, weary months, and it was even a much longer time before I was able to quit the house.

"To say that, in all this time, dear Gertrude, I thought of you daily, almost hourly, is only to speak the truth; and I believe this constant dwelling on one theme, without a confidant to whom I could unbosom my heart, did much to retard my recovery. After I found my strength restored again, I one day had an interview with my father, and revealed to him all that had taken place. His reply was, that if I had found in you such qualities as would make me happy, I had better not cross the line which destiny seemed to have marked out for me. This stimulated

my desire to see you again immediately; but one occurrence and another prevented my carrying my design into effect so speedily as I anticipated. At length spring opened, and rumors reached us that the Indians were likely, ere long, to prove hostile; and thinking first of you, and the family of Major Hargrave, and then that I might be of service on the frontier, I set about raising a company of volunteers.

"To be brief, I succeeded in getting together a number of resolute, daring spirits, who chose me for their leader; but, unfortunately, we delayed our departure until too late to render that service to the defenceless settlers which we might have done, perhaps, could we have foreknown the time of the general rising of the savages. We had just reached this station, when a youthful messenger arrived from Fort Fincastle, bringing the alarming intelligence that the Indians had already begun their work of butchery and devastation. Need I add, that, thinking of you and your friends, I immediately set off with my men, and continued on, by forced marches, till I met your captors, within sight of your burning home? What then took place, and since, dear Gertrude, is known to you; and it is with a heart swelling with gratitude to God, that I am able to say, I was in time to save a life dearer than my own."

He paused, and Gertrude, greatly agitated by a thousand strong emotions, rejoined, in a tremulous tone, that was barely audible:

"Twice have you saved me—once from an awful death—once from a fate worse than death."

"And will you now, dear Gertrude, give me the right to be your protector, henceforth and forever?" rejoined the other, eagerly. "I know my heart now; you know it; it beats only for you; and oh! let me hear, from your own sweet lips, that the greatest boon I have to crave, will not be denied me!"

"Save you, and poor Roley," returned Gertrude, in a choking voice, "I know not that I have a true friend on earth."

"God bless you!" cried Graham, impulsively clasping her in his arms; "and may this heart cease to beat, ere I give you cause to say that earthly being ever had a friend more true."

At this moment a rude hand was laid upon the shoulder of Graham, and a voice fairly hissed in his ear:

"Liar and deceiver!"

He started back, and turned to confront the intruder; while Gertrude, looking up in confusion and alarm, immediately uttered, in a tone of surprise, the name of—"Kingsley."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE QUARREL.

IF Graham was surprised at hearing a term, so grossly insulting, applied to him at such time, he was not less surprised, on turning to face the speaker, to perceive that an utter stranger, in the undress uniform of an English officer, stood before him. Looking him steadily in the eye, for a few moments, he said, with sternness:

"Well, sir! I trust you are now ready to apologize, for having made a *slight* mistake in the individual you intended to address!"

"Is not your name George Graham?" demanded the other, whom Gertrude had already recognized as the person calling himself Kingsley.

"My name is George Graham," replied our hero, with increased astonishment.

"Then I have made no mistake, and shall offer no apology, unless it be to this lady, Miss Wilburn, with whom I have a slight acquaintance," was the rejoinder.

"Who are you, sir?" demanded Graham, flushing with anger.

"That you have a right to know, and I will answer. Miss Wilburn," bowing to Gertrude, who was all astonishment, "recognizes me as a Mr. Kingsley; but you, sir, must know me as Charles Bertrand, Captain in His Majesty's — Regiment of Foot."

"Well, sir! I cannot say that I am at all enlightened by your answer," replied Graham, haughtily. "The name

of Kingsley, it is true, I did hear Major Hargrave once or twice mention, and therefore it is not altogether strange; but, sir! (and this was said with cutting sarcasm) I am not aware that I ever before had the distinguished honor of knowing that such an individual as Charles Bertrand, Captain in His Majesty's — Regiment of Foot, had either a terrestrial or celestial existence."

The dark eyes of Kingsley—or Bertrand, as we shall henceforth term him—on hearing this, emitted a strange, sullen gleam of deadly hate, his face turned white with anger, and his thin, bloodless lips became tightly compressed, as one who, convulsed with passion, is endeavoring to suppress its external appearance. For some moments he stood silent, his black eye rivetted upon the unquailing eye of Graham; and then, drawing in his breath, and speaking through his shut teeth, he rejoined:

"Perhaps, sir, the name of Cora Allen is also unknown to you?"

At the mention of this name, Graham started, changed color, and instantly exclaimed:

"Ha! Cora Allen! what know you of her?"

"Enough, sir, to damn you in the eyes of every moral and virtuous woman."

"'Tis false!" cried Graham; "you have been deceived."

"Not I, sir!" returned Bertrand, with an ironical smile. "She was deceived, if you will; this lady has been deceived, if you like; but I know what I speak to be the truth."

"Oh! what is this?" now cried Gertrude, grasping the arm of Graham, and looking wildly into his face. "What new calamity is this that has come upon me? Oh, Heaven! have I not already drank enough from the cup of woe, but it must be again pressed to my lips?"

"It is some mistake, Gertrude," replied Graham, in an agitated voice. "A few words with Captain Bertrand, I

trust, will set the matter right. I pray you go in, and leave us to ourselves. Come! I will escort you to the door."

"If I leave you to yourselves, in this state of mind, you will certainly quarrel, perhaps fight," exclaimed Gertrude, hurriedly. "Oh! George, if there is nothing I should not hear, I pray you let me remain! for my presence, perhaps, may restrain you from acts of violence! Nay," she added, quickly, observing that Graham appeared somewhat confused, "do not misunderstand me! I do not wish to pry into your secrets: I will stand beyond hearing while you converse: I only wish to prevent bloodshed."

"So far as I am concerned, Miss Wilburn, you may remain, and hear all, if you choose," said Bertrand; "and if there is something more than friendship between you and George Graham, it may be best that you should hear. However, please yourselves—it concerns you most."

"There is no act of my life, Gertrude, that I fear to make known to you," said Graham, speaking in a low, husky tone, and evidently laboring under a good deal of excitement; "but for reasons that I do not wish to name, I should like my conference with Captain Bertrand to be strictly private."

"Promise me, then, that you will not proceed to acts of violence! that you will confine yourself to words alone!" said Gertrude.

"I solemnly promise that I will not be the aggressor, dearest," whispered Graham.

"I will go," returned Gertrude; "but, alas! I take with me sad forebodings. Oh! George," she added, in a low, tremulous tone, that only reached his ear, "you have said that you love me; I believe you; and perhaps it may be proper, under the circumstances, for me to acknowledge in return, that my heart is yours, and yours alone; and by

this mutual love, I do conjure you, to let no provocation tempt you into a quarrel involving life! I am alone, desolate, almost broken-hearted, and, save you, have no one I can claim as a friend, or look up to as a protector. Should you fall, what have I to live for? should another fall by your hand, then, painful as it may be to think of, an impassable gulf would yawn between you and me forever."

On hearing this, Graham appeared to be more deeply agitated than before; but he said hurriedly, in as calm and even a tone of voice as he could command:

"Believe me, dear Gertrude, I prize you and your happiness above every thing earthly, save my own honor; and be assured I will guard against aught that may bring upon you further misery."

"Do you sacredly promise this?"

"I do! I do!"

"I will retire then; but remember! I shall be trembling with fear till I see you again."

"Which shall be soon, dearest," said Graham.

As Gertrude was moving slowly away, Captain Bertrand stepped quickly to her side, and said:

"Pardon me, Miss Wilburn, if I have seemed rude and ungentlemanly, in interposing myself between you and George Graham! But if you knew all, I am sure you would attach no blame to me. I see that he has a hold upon your affections, and I deeply regret it—for I speak honestly, when I say, I believe him to be a villain."

"Sir!" cried Gertrude, indignantly, drawing herself up with such an air of pride and scorn as she had never before displayed; "if you have anything to say concerning George Graham, say it to him, not to me! One word for all, sir! I would believe his assertion before yours; and so you must get his testimony to corroborate yours, ere I can accept it as truth."

"Very well, Miss Wilburn," rejoined Bertrand, biting his lips to keep down his passion; "go headlong to destruction, if you choose—but do not ever say that you were not warned. I owed you this much for your previous kindness to me; and I am one who can never forget a kindness or an injury. I am angry now, I will not deny—for I feel that you have deeply and intentionally insulted me; but as these are probably the last words I shall ever say to you, I say, in all sincerity, I wish you well."

On hearing this, the generous feelings of Gertrude were touched, and pride and anger no longer had dominion over her. For a few moments she stood with her eyes cast upon the ground, and then turned to offer some apology for what she now considered her own rudeness. But discovering that Bertrand had walked away, and now stood with his back toward her, as if with the design of listening to no reply, she moved slowly forward, and entered the building, her heart filled with sad misgivings concerning the termination of a hostile interview between two men of such temperaments as Graham and Bertrand.

As soon as Gertrude was out of sight, Graham, who had been pacing to and fro, in a fever of excitement, immediately confronted Bertrand, and said:

"Sir! in the presence of a lady, you applied to me the terms of 'liar and deceiver.' We are alone now, and I demand an explanation!"

"I thought, sir, I gave it, when I mentioned the name of Cora Allen," replied Bertrand.

"No, sir! that was no explanation. The mention of that unfortunate lady's name, at such a time, suddenly recalled associations that I never reflect on without strong emotions; but there is nothing in the history of my acquaintance with that lady, that can give a shadow of truth to the opprobrious epithets you applied to me. And even if there were, sir," continued Graham, with angry vehe-

mence, and flashing eyes, "I should still demand by what right you, a stranger to me, interfere in a matter that does not concern you."

"But this does concern me, as you shall find, to your cost, ere I have done with you," said Captain Bertrand, pale with rage. "That lady, sir—Cora Allen—was my cousin."

"Well, sir, if she were even your sister, it could not excuse the base, ungentlemanly manner in which you introduced yourself to me," rejoined Graham.

"I am ready to answer for what I have said and done, at any time, at any place, and in any way you may see fit to name," returned Bertrand. "And furthermore, let me tell you, George Graham, that our meeting is no accidental meeting, and that the epithets I applied to you, were not spoken in the heat of passion, nor without due consideration. I have travelled some hundreds of miles, expressly to see you, and deliberately insult you; and having accomplished this part of my mission, I trust, if you have a spark of manhood in your composition, you will meet me as one gentleman should meet another."

"Your right to be met as a gentleman, I seriously question," retorted Graham, with a scornful curl of his lip. "Nothing in your present conduct, I am certain—and nothing in your previous conduct, so far as I can understand—gives you any claim to the title you have mentioned. You come to me in the undress uniform of an English officer, for the express purpose, as you admit, of insulting me; and after having accomplished your purpose, in a way that would disgrace a common bully, you claim to be a Captain in the regular army. What reason, sir, have I to suppose you are speaking the truth now, when I take into consideration that, a year ago, you were prowling about the country, in the disguise of a savage, and passing yourself off for a totally different person? I think if either of us is a liar and deceiver, you have proved your-

self best entitled to the unworthy distinction; and until you give a satisfactory explanation of your former mysterious conduct, I shall treat you with that contempt which every *gentleman* must feel for a base impostor."

Bertrand knit his brows, clenched his hands, and bit his nether lip till the blood sprung through. For a few moments he seemed unable to keep his anger within bounds; and twice he turned his back to Graham, as if to avoid striking him while under the influence of a delirious passion. At length he seemed to conquer himself so far as to command his voice, and replied:

"From no desire to give *you* satisfaction on any point, but merely because it suits my humor, I will say that, at the time you refer to, I was acting under the secret instructions of Lord Dunmore."

"Umph!" sneered Graham; "a base tool of a base Governor. It is nothing to your credit, sir, to avow yourself as then acting under the secret instructions of one whom the people of this Colony regard as a traitor to their interests; and if ever you return to your master, you can tell him that it is more than hinted in this part of the country, that to his secret agents, of whom perhaps you are one, we are mainly indebted for this furious outbreak of the savages.* If the suspicion has a good foundation, and I think it has, may his conscience prove a mill-stone, and drag him down to the lowest hell!"

By this time, a number of persons, among whom were several of Graham's friends, having heard loud and angry words, began to collect around the speakers, and one said:

"What's the meaning of all this?"

"The devil preaching morality," answered Bertrand, nodding toward Graham. "He accuses Lord Dunmore of

* Such was the general belief of the Virginians; and to this day the stigma has never been removed from the name of Lord Dunmore.

being a traitor, and me of being one of his tools, and all because I would accuse him of accomplishing the ruin of a young lady, who, to save herself from a living disgrace, committed suicide."

"Well," replied another, one of Graham's men, "as to Lord Dunmore being a traitor to the interests of the people of this Colony, there is pretty much of one opinion in these parts; and if you are one of his agents, or tools, you are no better than you should be; but if you come here to accuse Captain Graham of being the cause of Miss Allen's death—for I suppose you allude to her—you come to utter a damnable lie! and the sooner you take yourself off, the better it will be for you."

"Well, I do come to accuse him of being the cause of her putting an end to her miserable existence," replied Bertrand, pale with rage. "I bring the proofs, too, to substantiate the charge; and if he is a *man*, and not a *coward*, he will give me the satisfaction which, as the cousin of that injured and unfortunate lady, I have a right to demand."

"Show us your proofs!" cried several voices.

"I will, gentlemen," said Bertrand, much excited, "on condition, that, if I do prove what I have asserted, you will show me fair play."

"Yes! yes!" was the response of several voices: "prove what you have asserted, and you shall have fair play."

"Read that, then!" exclaimed Bertrand, thrusting his hand into his bosom, and bringing out a letter, which he handed to one who stood nearest him.

The man, hastily glancing at the superscription, tore it open; while the others, crowding around, cried:

"Read it! read it aloud!"

The epistle was short, and ran as follows:

"Augusta County, March 4th, 1774.

"DEAR COUSIN CHARLES:

"Long ere this reaches you, I shall be no more. I have been disgraced, and cannot live. I have resolved on self-destruction; and within twenty-four hours from the time the messenger sets off with this, I shall be cold in death, and my guilty soul will be before the judgment seat of God. Forgive me, dear Charles, for this rash act! I have family pride, and cannot live disgraced. If you knew all, you would not wish me to live. I can say no more: I can hardly write this—my brain is in such a whirl. I could not leave the world without saying farewell to one who has been so kind to me—to one who, in my innocent days, was always my truest friend. Farewell! farewell!

"Your unfortunate, ill-fated cousin,

"CORA.

"P. S. If you desire to know more, seek out George Graham, of Graham Lodge: he can, if he will, unfold a damning secret. C."

"What say you to that, sir?" cried Bertrand, looking fiercely at Graham, as the person to whom he had given the letter finished reading it aloud.

"Had you first showed me that, and civilly asked for an explanation, I would have given it, and treated you with respect," replied Graham, much excited.

"*You* give an explanation!" sneered Bertrand: "it would have been a *lying* explanation, then!"

Scarcely had the words passed the lips of Bertrand, when Graham, maddened by passion, and losing all self-control, made a single bound forward, and struck his insulter to the ground.

A deadly struggle would probably have ensued on the spot, had not the friends of Graham instantly seized and borne him away. The moment his anger had so cooled down as to enable him to reflect on what he had done, he deeply regretted his impulsive rashness—but it was now too late.

In the course of half an hour, a gentleman waited upon Graham, and desired to know the time when, the place where, and the weapons with which, he would meet Captain Bertrand, and give him that satisfaction which he now had a right to demand.

"I refer you to my friend, Dr. Hartwell," replied Graham: "he knows my wishes, and you and he can settle all preliminaries."

A few minutes later, George Graham, with a heavy heart, and faltering steps, was on his way to seek one who was dearer to him than life, and for whom he would have made any sacrifice save that which might involve his honor.

"Alas!" he said, mentally; "there is no alternative save disgrace, and this may be our last meeting!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A PAINFUL INTERVIEW.

GRAHAM found Gertrude seated by a window, which looked into the enclosure, and the simpleton standing by her side. As he approached, she turned quickly toward him, and eagerly glancing at his pale, anxious countenance, rather gasped than said:

"Well?"

"Nay, but, Mistress Gerty," interposed the moonling, "it is not well—for when a noble life is in peril, it is never well. Why will you use wrong terms? Say ill, and not well, and you will speak the truth."

Graham seated himself by the side of Gertrude, and took her hand; but it was not till she again addressed him, that he spoke:

"I have sad news for you," he said, at length, with a deep sigh; "and I scarcely know how to begin my communication."

"Speak!" she exclaimed; "and let me hear the worst at once—for suspense, in such a case, makes a double torture."

"In a word, then," replied her lover, speaking hurriedly, "the quarrel, which begun as you know how, is about to have a serious termination."

"How? in what way? what do you mean?" cried Gertrude, breathless with anxiety.

"It is arranged that Captain Bertrand and myself are

to meet, to settle the affair by what is termed the code of honor."

"Another wrong term," said Simple Roley; "the code of dishonor is the proper name;" and with this he walked away, leaving the lovers to themselves.

"Oh, Heaven!" groaned Gertrude; "my heart foreboded this! my heart foreboded this! Ah me! what next? what next?—death, I hope and pray."

"For your sake, dear Gertrude, I would have avoided this," returned George, speaking in a low, husky tone.

"And could you not? can you not, even now?" was the anxious inquiry.

"No! it is too late," sighed Graham: "there is no honorable alternative. I have been drawn into the snare, the net is sprung, and there is no escape."

"Explain your meaning, George!" and the hand of Gertrude convulsively closed upon his that held it.

"Captain Bertrand, according to his own statement," replied Graham, "expressly sought me out, to force a quarrel upon me, and he has succeeded in his fiendish purpose. He is mistaken in what he supposes to be true—but that now goes for nothing—for the quarrel no longer rests on that basis. Having prejudged me, he came determined to listen to no explanation; and having insulted me beyond endurance, I, in the heat of passion, not knowing what I did, raised my hand and felled him to the earth."

"Oh! George, did you not promise me you would not be the aggressor?" rejoined Gertrude, reproachfully.

"And was I, Gertrude? I think not; for he is the aggressor who provokes the quarrel. Had he come to me as a gentleman should have come, I would have treated him as a gentleman, and given him every satisfaction, in the way of explanation, he could possibly have required. I told him so; and what was his answer? that it would have been a lying explanation. Could I tamely bear such re-

peated insults? No! my hot nature asserted its supremacy over my cooler judgment; and ere I was aware what I was doing, he lay stretched out at my feet, by a blow from my hand. By the law of public opinion, public sentiment, he who strikes a blow, cannot shrink from the consequences and be respected. The person struck has the right of challenge; and the challenged party must either fight, or take the disgraceful alternative of being branded as a coward. Now life, dear Gertrude, with such a stigma attached to it, would be a burden to me; and even you could hardly wish me to live without the respect of my friends."

"It is an unholy sentiment, be it public or private, which consigns to infamy the man who will not make himself a target for his foe, the while he seeks himself to take a human life," rejoined Gertrude.

"Granted it be so, it avails me nothing, you see."

"Alas!" sighed Gertrude; "woe is me! Would to Heaven I were dead! Oh! why was I spared, when my friends, one after another, fell around me? May God, in His mercy, take me, ere tottering reason departs forever from this poor brain!"

"Do not despair, dear Gertrude! do not wholly despair!" said Graham, with anxious tenderness. "The present hour is full of darkness and gloom—but the next may be bright and joyful."

"Do you believe it will be so, George?" said Gertrude, earnestly.

"I hope it may be so, dearest."

"And on what is your hope founded?"

"I may return to you in safety."

"And what if you come to me with the blood of your enemy on your soul?"

"He will have fallen in honorable combat."

"Honorable is a worldly term," said Gertrude; "but you could not then say he had fallen in righteous combat."

"I know not that any combat may be termed righteous," was the reply.

"Yes! that of self-defence, or in defence of friends, or of country," rejoined Gertrude.

"And this may be called a combat in self-defence, so far as I am concerned," returned Graham; "for the quarrel has been thrust upon me, and I act only on the defensive."

"No! no! George," replied Gertrude, solemnly; "such reasoning is mere sophistry. A duel is a combat between two parties, each of whom has deliberately consented to do a murder. Ah! you may well start at the term! for the killing of your enemy in a duel, is murder; and wilful murder, too—for it is done with malice aforethought; and the fact that he consents to be murdered, for a consideration—the consideration of having an equal chance to murder you—takes nothing from the crime in the sight of God, however it may be viewed by man."

"And should I, in this case, chance to kill my antagonist, would you, dear Gertrude, consider me guilty of murder?"

"I do not wish to say," replied Gertrude, shuddering at the thought; "but this I feel it my duty to say—that if Captain Bertrand be slain by you, this hand can never be yours."

"Great Heaven! what a dilemma!" groaned the other: "on the one hand public disgrace—on the other the loss of life, or what I prize more than life!" He sprung up in much agitation, and for a few moments hurriedly paced the floor to and fro: then stopping suddenly, he resumed his seat and continued: "Gertrude, I have resolved upon my course. I must meet my antagonist—I have not the moral courage to do otherwise; but by my hopes of happiness, here and hereafter, I solemnly pledge you, I will endeavor not to take his life. As I feel, however, that he deserves severe punishment, for bringing this trouble upon

us both, I do not say I will let him go scathless; but unless fate directs my ball where I would not, his life shall be spared."

"Oh! do not, do not take his life!" cried Gertrude, laboring under the most intense excitement. "In God's holy name, I charge you, do not take his life! for to behold you again, with the guilt of murder upon your soul, would drive me mad—rather would I see you dead."

"And dead you may see me," answered the other, gloomily.

"Oh! no, George—say not that!" cried poor Gertrude, almost frantically.

"Dear Gertrude," returned the other, again taking her hand—"for what *may* happen, we should prepare ourselves—what *will* happen, God only knows. This may, or may not, be our last earthly meeting; but considering all things, it is no more than proper that we should anticipate the worst. To prepare for the worst then, I have come to say a few words to you of much importance. In the first place, I feel it to be my duty to give you some explanation concerning the remote cause of this quarrel, lest you should unconsciously harbor the suspicion that I have been guilty of such an act of baseness as my soul abhors."

"It is enough, dear George," said Gertrude, "for you to say you are innocent, to clear you in my eyes, without your giving me further proof."

"Thank you, dearest—thank you! for your confidence in my integrity and honor," returned Graham, much affected. "But though a mere assertion, without an explanation, may be sufficient to satisfy you, I feel it to be my duty, as it is my choice, to clear up the mystery."

"Cora Allen, whose name you heard mentioned by Captain Bertrand, was a beautiful being, the daughter of a neighboring settler. Her family and mine were on terms

of intimacy, and she and I were in childhood warm friends and playmates. Many a long ramble, in the wild wood, did I take with the beautiful Cora, and the remembrance brings back one of the happiest periods of my life. As often happens with those who were intimate in childhood, Cora and I, as years passed on, gradually became estranged; until at last, when we met, we met with all the formality of strangers. Still our families visited back and forth; and by means of gatherings and parties, we were generally thrown together several times in the course of each year. I felt nothing of dislike toward her—nor do I think she harbored any unkind feeling against me; but so it was—a coldness had grown up between us, and time never brought a change.

“To be brief, dear Gertrude, two years ago business called me to the Capital of Virginia; and while there, I formed the acquaintance of one I then believed to be a gentleman—though I have since had reason to think he had no claim to that honorable title. Our acquaintance soon ripened into friendship; and after my return, he paid me a visit, and spent several weeks at my father’s house. As we were one day riding out, we passed Mr. Allen’s residence, and Cora was standing at the door. I have said she was beautiful; and my friend—for so I then esteemed him—appeared to be enraptured at the glimpse he caught of her while passing. He begged me to introduce him, and I could do no less. During the remainder of his stay with me, he called daily upon Miss Allen; and in a short time a rumor went abroad, that the parties were soon to be made one by marriage.

“Mr. Wickford—for so the person in question was named—after remaining a few days beyond the time he had set for returning, took leave of all, of Cora last, and departed for his home—report said to put everything in order for his forthcoming nuptials. He did not come back as soon as some expected; but he did come back, and spent

a month in the vicinity, though not this time with me. The predicted marriage, however, did not take place at the time specified by the newsmongers—nor, in fact, did it ever take place. Wickford came and went at different intervals; but after leaving the last time, Cora was observed to be less gay than was her wont; and soon it was perceived she began to grow pale and thin, and rumor said some fearful secret was preying upon her mind. Within two months from the final departure of Wickford, the whole settlement was startled with the news that Cora Allen had committed suicide, by leaping from a very high precipice in the vicinity.

“This is the story, dear Gertrude, and I am just as innocent of being the cause of her death as I have made appear. It is true, I did introduce Mr. Wickford to her, as my friend; and the fact that he proved himself to be a villain, is the only thing that can be laid to my charge. Still, I have often been obliged to reflect severely on myself, as being in some degree the cause of her untimely end; and I never hear her name mentioned, that I do not feel the blood quicken in my veins, and my heart throb with painful, and sometimes powerful, emotions.”

“And is it for this that Mr. Kingsley, or Captain Bertrand, insults you?” inquired Gertrude.

“No! he evidently supposes I stand in the place of Wickford, and is too self-willed and hot-brained to listen to any explanation. It seems that he was cousin to the ill-fated Cora; and I remember, now, of having heard her speak of him in the highest terms of praise, though I am not aware that we ever met before. Previous to her committing the rash act, she addressed to him a short epistle, in which she stated what she was about to do—that she could not live disgraced, and so on—and concluded by telling him, if he wished to know more, to call on me, as I could, if I would, unfold a damning secret. What secret is meant,

further than what I have just divulged, I know not; but Bertrand doubtless inferred, from the way in which my name was mentioned, that I was guilty of bringing such wretchedness upon Cora as led her to fly to death for relief."

"And is it for this you are to fight?" cried Gertrude.

"No, not for this, dearest—for I would not have consented to enter the field against him on a false charge; but having insulted me, as I told you before, till my hand was raised against him, he now demands reparation to his *injured honor*."

"But you must not fight!" cried Gertrude. "An explanation can be made by a third party, and the affair be amicably adjusted."

"No, no, Gertrude—it is now too late. I would sooner die than have an explanation come from my side, as the quarrel stands; for the motive would be misinterpreted, and only further insult would result from it; and my pride would ever after reprove me, for having stooped to further intercourse with one who has shown himself so little entitled to be treated as a gentleman."

"But you should consider, dear George, that he was angry through error; and believing you no gentleman, he made use of wrong terms; but if—"

"Nay, dear Gertrude, why pursue the subject?" interrupted Graham, with a slight display of irritation. "Let us talk of other matters; for time passes, and I have but a few minutes longer to remain with you. I wish now to speak of yourself. It was known to my family, when I left, that I had serious intentions of bringing back with me a fair and gentle being, who would have almost equal claim with myself to their affection. Need I say that she, whom I had selected from all others, now sits beside me? and that scarcely an hour has elapsed since my heart was leaping for joy at the thought that my brightest anticipations were on the

point of being realized? and to-morrow, had nothing intervened, my journey homeward would have been resumed. As matters now stand, it is proper to take into consideration that by to-morrow, I may no longer be able to be the companion of her I love; but I have already made provision against her future wants; and should I fall, dear Gertrude, it is my most earnest desire that you will permit my design, in regard to yourself, to be carried into effect."

"Oh! do not speak of this, dear George!" cried Gertrude, with a strong burst of emotion.

"But I must speak of it, dearest; for should my soul quit my body with this unsaid, it seems as if it would be forced to return to say it. In a word, dear Gertrude, I have more than enough of this world's goods; and although you, as yet, have no legal claim to my possessions, I feel that, in the sight of Heaven, you are as justly entitled to them, as if the solemn rite, which makes two hearts one, had been performed. To my friend and yours, Dr. Hartwell, I have communicated my wishes; and it only remains for you to give me your solemn promise, that you will suffer those wishes to be carried into effect, to put my mind on that point at ease."

We need not repeat all that passed between Graham and Gertrude at that painful interview. Suffice it to say, that the latter was at length, by many earnest pleadings, prevailed upon to yield assent to what the other most desired. Soon after this, came the parting scene; and a painful one it was; for each felt that the great veil of eternity might drop between them ere another meeting.

"Oh, God!" murmured Gertrude, as she sat alone, with her fair face bowed upon her hands, and the scalding tears pressing through her trembling fingers: "Oh, God! hear, I beseech Thee, the prayer of the almost friendless orphan, and leave me not entirely desolate!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

A CATASTROPHE.

It was arranged and settled by the seconds of Graham and Bertrand, that the duel should come off in an open valley, about half a mile from the fort—the hour of meeting to be twelve, the weapons rifles, the distance thirty paces, and the positions back to back, to wheel at the word fire. The troubled state of the country rendered it highly imprudent to allow all who had a desire to witness the combat to accompany the parties; and so Graham decided that only three of his command, besides the Surgeon, should go with him; and in order to show no partiality, these three were selected by drawing lots. As the time drew near for his departure, he called his men together, made them a short but feeling address, and bade them farewell, shaking hands with each. The scene was solemn and affecting; for the young commander was greatly beloved, and there was no certainty that those who remained behind would ever behold him again in life.

As Graham was passing through the gate, with his friends, Simple Roley touched him on the shoulder, and begged him to step aside, as he wished to say a few words to him in private. Thinking the simpleton might be the bearer of a message from Gertrude, the young officer eagerly complied with his request, and the two walked apart from the others.

"What is it, Jacob? what is it?" Graham hastily demanded.

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"Why," answered the simpleton, with a very grave air, "I should like you to tell me what *honor* is?"

"Pshaw! is this all?" exclaimed Graham impatiently. "I thought you had something of importance to communicate."

"At least I have something of importance to speak of," said Roley.

"Well! well! quick! what is it?"

"Honor!" returned the moonling.

"Pshaw!" cried Graham again, stamping his foot with vexation. "Do not detain me, Roley! Is this all?"

"And is it not enough, sir?" answered the other. "If you think it so trifling to speak about, why do you peril your life for it, and the life of one who loves you?"

"What do you mean by perilling her life, Jacob?" inquired Graham, with a change of countenance.

"Do you not know that if you die, she will not live?"

"Heaven forbid!"

"Why say Heaven forbid?" rejoined the moonling, sternly. "Why not say honor forbid? Is not honor greater than Heaven?—then call on honor when you pray. And if honor be not greater than Heaven, why do you sacrifice Heaven for it?"

"There! good-bye, Roley," said Graham, extending his hand to the simpleton, who eagerly grasped it. "My friends are waiting, and I must go."

"And do you not know, sir," answered the moonling, whose countenance began to glow and brighten with one of his flashes of inspiration, "that your going now may cause your friends to wait for you forever? And whither are you going? to victory or to death? If to victory, will honor cancel the crime that gives the laurel? If to death, will honor serve you in the other world?" Simple Roley paused a moment; and then fixing his eyes upon Graham, with such a look of intelligence gleaming from them that

the latter was almost startled at the expression, he continued, in a tone of deep solemnity: "Mortal! mark! In you the line of life is drawn so near the verge of death, that life and death seem to conjoin. It is decreed, if he who seeks your life fall not by other hands, you must by his; but whether life or death prevail with you, there will be in the field more foes than friends—more friends than foes. This is a riddle—go solve it."

Saying this, the moonling stalked away; and Graham, not a little surprised at his altered appearance and singular language, hastened to rejoin his friends. It would not be truth to say, however, that the words of the simpleton made any deeper impression on him, than to excite a few brief reflections on the curious vagaries of an unsound mind.

The place selected for the settlement of the *affaire d'honneur*, was a pleasant valley, which, for two or three years preceding, had been under cultivation, and was now entirely clear of trees, stumps, and brush. It was some quarter of a mile in width, and about half a mile in length; and was completely surrounded by sloping hills, and, with the exception of a narrow opening or outlet, by a dark, heavy forest. That neither party might have advantage of the sun, the seconds had arranged that the principals should stand in a line east and west, near the wood on the north.

Captain Bertrand, and Mr. Bently, his second, were first on the ground; and when Graham appeared with his friends, the former was pacing to and fro, and seemed to be laboring under a good deal of nervous excitement.

As Graham drew near the fatal ground, he perceived Bentley approaching; and taking the Surgeon aside, he grasped his hand, and said, in a calm, even tone of voice, though his features were very pale:

"It cannot now be long, my dear friend, ere the worst

will be known; and for the worst I think I have prepared myself as well as circumstances would permit. To die now, in the prime of life, with everything to make life desirable, is a fate not to be prayed for, nor one to be contemplated without a shudder; but as there is no honorable alternative, I must submit to whatever Providence may will. This quarrel has been forced upon me, as you know; but as I hope to be forgiven, I forgive him who has, through error, arrayed himself against me, a deadly enemy. And remember this, Doctor! whatever may happen, I do solemnly avow, in the face of Heaven, that I will not intentionally take his life! If I fall, you know my wishes! and oh! be a father to her who is an orphan. There! I will not detain you longer—Mr. Bentley waits."

While the seconds were conversing, Graham shook hands with his other friends, and bade them adieu; and then took his place on the spot from which the seconds had started to pace off the prescribed distance. In a few minutes Dr. Hartwell returned, alone, and handed Graham a rifle.

"Are you ready?" he inquired, in a voice that betrayed some emotion.

"I am," replied Graham, with slightly quivering lips; "as ready now as I ever shall be;" and as he spoke, he turned his back to his antagonist—this being the position agreed upon, as before remarked.

"I am to give the word," rejoined the surgeon; "and as I believe Captain Bertrand to be a dead shot, I think your only chance will be in wheeling and firing as quick as possible. There! God bless you! and God save you!"

Saying this, Dr. Hartwell grasped the hand of his young friend, wrung it hard, and, hurrying away, hastily brushed a tear from his eye. The seconds now met about half way between the principals, and, together with the others, retired to a safe distance down the valley. A few moments

of breathless suspense now followed ; and then the surgeon's voice was heard, clear and distinct :

"Ready, gentlemen!" There was a momentary pause, and then was heard the word, "Fire!"

Both Graham and Bertrand together turned on their heels ; but ere either could bring his rifle to bear on his antagonist, a volley was discharged from the nearest wood ; and at the same instant more than forty savages burst from their covert, and, with appalling screeches and yells, came bounding down toward the whites. Two balls had cut the dress of our hero—but he himself was still unharmed ; and with wonderful presence of mind, considering the suddenness of the surprise, he looked hurriedly around, gathered instantly the horrible truth, and calculated the possibility of his own escape. Every man, save himself, had been brought down by that murderous fire ; and toward himself, the dead, and the dying, a portion of the savages were rushing ; while the others, dividing, were spreading along the line of the forest, to the right and left, to cut off his retreat. Only one chance of life he saw remained, and this was wholly dependent on speed. If he could run down the valley with sufficient velocity to gain what we have termed the outlet, before it could be reached by his foes, there was a possibility of his getting safely to the fort ; and knowing that he could render no assistance to his friends, even if any were still living, his desire for life nerved him for the fearful trial, and away he sped with the fleetness of the startled deer.

It was an exciting race, that race between our hero and his foes. If he won, the prize was life—if he lost, a horrible death awaited him ; and he made every limb, every nerve, and every faculty do its duty. But after running a short time, he saw, to his horror, that the foremost of those on the hill-side had already reached a line with him.

Still, success was life, and failure death ; and he pressed forward with increased energy, though scarcely with increased speed. He still carried his rifle ; and he was resolved, if possible, to retain it—for it might serve him in an extremity where speed could not.

By slow degrees, the foremost savage, on either hill-side, to use a military term, turned his right and left flank ; and then each gradually diverged towards the centre, at such an angle as would strike his line of running ere he could reach the outlet of the valley. Graham saw this with dismay ; but he still struggled onward, placing his hope on that Divine Providence which had already preserved him unharmed through the first deadly fire of his enemies. More than once he was tempted to throw away his rifle, and, by doing this, be able to increase his speed ; but he feared even this increase would not enable him to clear his foes ; and so he clung to it as a dernier hope. Giving one quick glance behind him, he perceived, with a thrill of joy, that all, save the two mentioned, had given up the chase, and this seemed to add new vigor to his drooping spirits.

Nearer and nearer he drew toward the point at which he aimed—and which was scarcely more than a rifle-shot's distance from the fort, though the latter was concealed from view by an intervening hill, covered with trees,—and in the same ratio, the more fleet-footed savages, who were striving to cut him off, drew nearer and nearer to himself. They had cast aside all their weapons, save their tomahawks and scalping knives, and Graham noted this with a fresh gleam of hope.

At length he reached a point within a hundred yards of the narrow opening in the woods ; but less than fifty yards distant, on either side, was a grim, athletic savage, straining every muscle to gain the same outlet at the same moment.

Suddenly our hero changed his course, and turned up the hill to the right. This movement brought him nearer to one of his foes, but left the distance between himself and the other the same as before; and thinking this opportunity as good as any he might have to test his last dependence, he made a sudden halt, brought his rifle to his eye, took a quick aim, and fired. The shot was effectual; and the Indian, who was bounding down the hill toward him, made a sudden leap into the air, and pitched headlong forward to the earth, within a few feet of him—wildly throwing his tomahawk as he fell, gnashing his teeth with fury, and uttering a howl of rage and pain.

There was now one foe the less, and but one left to fear. But though such was the case, Graham saw that his chance of escape was scarcely better than before. His momentary pause had been improved by his remaining enemy, who had already passed over half the distance which had intervened previous to the discharge of his rifle; and therefore not more than twenty, or twenty-five paces, divided him from one whom he felt would be more than his equal in single combat. Besides, he now had no weapon—for his discharged rifle he had already thrown away, as being no longer of any use—and the distance between himself and the wood, toward which he was straining every nerve, was more than a hundred yards, and his direct course lay up a steep acclivity. Panting and nearly exhausted, he still struggled onward; but his savage foe, made more eager by the loss of his companion, came leaping after, uttering yells of triumph, and gaining on him at every step.

Presently our hero fancied he actually felt the breath of his pursuer; and looking up, he saw, with despair, that the wood was at least fifty paces distant; and even could he gain it, with the Indian thus near to him, he knew it could give him no protection. It was now that his last faint

hope deserted him; and with a cry to God for mercy, he fell prostrate on the earth. With a single bound, and a yell of furious triumph, the savage fairly landed upon his back, and raised his tomahawk for the fatal blow.

But the blow was never given. At that instant, so critical to the fate of our hero, a ball pierced the heart of the savage, who fell back dead, with scarcely a groan. Graham felt the hand relax its grasp, at the same moment that the report of a rifle reached his ear; and looking up the hill, as he lay panting on the ground, he beheld a tall, ungainly figure leaping forward through the curling smoke that had issued from his fatal piece. Immediately after, he heard himself greeted with:

"Wall, stranger, I reckon I did it; but ef it warn't about the nearest go that ever I seed, then chaw old Tomahawk Gibbs up with rattlesnakes."

"God bless you, sir! you have saved my life!" said Graham, with emotion, gathering himself upon his feet, and extending his hand to the worthy hunter. "Is it possible that in my preserver I behold the person known as Tomahawk Gibbs?"

"Wall, yes—rayther: leastways they call me so for want o' so'thing better."

"Again I say, God bless you! I have heard of you before; and this time, if we both live, your noble conduct shall not go unrewarded. Perhaps my name may not be unfamiliar to you—I am called George Graham."

"Hello!" cried Gibbs, with a look of surprise; "you him? you the feller that fit the b'ar, and saved the gal—Miss Wilburn, I mean—and got nearly killed, and lost your hoss, and died in the woods, and so on?"

"I am the person you allude to," replied Graham, unable to repress a smile at the ludicrous jumble of his singular

preserver; "though I never actually died in the woods, you perceive."

"Wall, it warn't o' no use your saving that thar gal, arter all," returned the old woodsman, with something like a sigh.

"How so?"

"Why, the cussed varmints kim down upon the Squire and his family, a spell ago, killed the hull on 'em, burnt the house, and so on. I got thar afore it war all over, and seed the Squire killed with my own eyes, I did; and finding the Injuns war too many for me, I tuk Miss Wilburn's advice, and put out for help. But I couldn't git none; and the next day I went back, and seed the hull shanty in ashes, and the bones of the dead among the ruins. It war a powerful sight, that thar; and when I thought o' the gal, I a'most wished I'd stayed and died with her."

"And saw you no traces of there having been a fight in the vicinity?" inquired Graham.

"I didn't look: what I did see war enough for me."

"But did it not occur to you, that Miss Wilburn might have been taken prisoner? and that, by finding the Indian trail, you might be able to follow and rescue her?"

"No, I didn't look: thar war too many bones in sight; and I knowed hers war among them; and that thar war enough for me."

"Then for once, Mr. Gibbs, I am happy to inform you, you were mistaken," said Graham. "Miss Wilburn is alive and well, and in the fort just below here. I came to her rescue just in time to save her."

At this announcement, Gibbs opened his mouth, and stared at his companion in perfect amazement; but before he could frame a reply, Graham exclaimed:

"Good Heaven! why do we stand here? Come! let us down to the fort, and give the alarm. I have men enough

there to make a sally; and these savages must not escape the punishment they deserve—the blood of my friends cries for vengeance!"

He looked hurriedly around as he spoke, and perceived that, from his position, a view of the enemy was cut off by a slight bend in the hill.

"We may be able to take them by surprise!" he added, as, with his companion, he darted up the hill to the wood.

Gibbs kept close to his side, muttering to himself as he ran:

"The gal saved, and I not know it! the gal saved, and I not know it! jest chaw me up with rattle-snakes arter that—for I'm not fit to be called a hunter agin. It war the nigger's bones, then, that I seed, and not the gal's! Wall, wall—old Tomahawk Gibbs, arter that thar — mistake, you kin slide."

Just as Graham entered the wood, he, to his great joy, encountered about twenty of his men coming to his relief. They had heard the firing, and the yells nearest the fort; and divining that an attack had been made upon their friends, had sallied forth for their protection, leaving enough behind to render the place secure.

Informing them, in a few words, what had occurred, Graham sent back one of the number for a reinforcement; and placing himself at the head of the others, he led them round through the wood, opposite the place where his slaughtered friends were lying. Most of the Indians were here collected in a large group, evidently holding a brief consultation concerning their next proceedings, and under the belief that the two fleet pursuers had destroyed the flying Captain, the only one that could tell the tale and give the alarm.

"Now, my men," said Graham, in a low tone, "make every shot tell, and let the heathen see with whom they have to deal. Fire!"

At the last word, a well directed volley was poured into the dusky group; and so well was each piece aimed, that two-thirds of the number were cut down, like so many blades of grass before the scythe of the mower. The unharmed remainder, for a moment or two, stood paralyzed with surprise and terror; but perceiving their foes bounding from the wood, with cries but little less savage than their own, they screeched out their astonishment and fear, and fled up the opposite slope, and into the shelter of the opposite wood.

When the infuriated borderers gained the spot where the dead and dying lay, they dispatched the living, without exception, as fast as their weapons could do their work; and tore the scalps from the heads of the slain, in imitation of their barbarous foes.

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Graham, as he stood over the mangled remains of his friends: "what a sight for reflection is this! Here, bloody in death, lie those who, a short time since, bade me farewell, with a prayer for my safety, little dreaming how near their own spirits were to the unseen world. And yonder (pointing to the body of Bertrand) lies he who came hither to take my life; and who, had he not fallen by our common foe, would doubtless have accomplished his purpose. Ah! my dear friend," he continued, bending over the body of the surgeon, "the tears which would have been shed over my remains, must now be dropped upon yours. Great God! how strange are Thy ways! and how little do we finite beings know of Thy designs, which are hidden behind the impenetrable veil of the future! Could we but lift that! ah! could we but lift that! How often do our friends grieve for our hastening doom, and yet leave us behind to weep over them! But such is life."

Graham now gave orders to have the bodies of his friends,

as well as those of Bentley and Bertrand removed to the fort; and for fear the savages might rally and return to take a last revenge, the whole party hurried from the ill-fated ground. On their way to the fort they met the reinforcement, and all returned together—it being thought best not to attempt a pursuit of the Indians under present circumstances.

On being asked how he chanced to save the life of the Captain, Gibbs replied that, being out on a scouting expedition, he was approaching the station, when, hearing the Indian yells, he secreted himself in a thicket, and, as good fortune would have it, on the very spot where, and at the very time when, he could easily render this effectual service.

"Heaven must have sent you to save my life," said Graham, with emotion; "and while I thank God, I will not forget his humble instrument."

Great was the excitement in the station, when the men returned, bringing in their dead comrades. All were eager for the news; but none more eager than poor Gertrude, who, unlike the others, kept herself apart from the anxious throng, and stood leaning against the stockade, looking more like a marble statue than a living being.

At once bounding to her side, Graham exclaimed:

"Dear, dearest Gertrude, behold I am again with you, and no crime upon my soul!"

"I thank Thee, oh! my God! that Thou hast heard my prayer!" she returned, in a choking voice; and the next moment, regardless of curious eyes, her arms were clasped around the neck of him she loved, and, half fainting, and weeping for joy, she lay heavily against his manly breast.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCLUSION.

THE events of the preceding chapter created an alarm among the inmates of Bush's Fort, particularly among the more timid, that did not readily die away. It was thought by many, that the savages who had escaped, would, sooner or later, return with a large reinforcement, and attempt to carry the place by siege or storm; and in consequence of this, those having families prevailed upon Graham to remain several days beyond the time he had fixed upon for taking his final leave. While there appeared to be any reason to apprehend an attack, he did not like to weaken the garrison by withdrawing his own force; but as provisions began to run short, it was finally thought advisable to reduce the number of consumers, lest famine within should prove more destructive than foes without. It may have been a matter of wonder to some, how so many persons could have been accommodated with in so small a station as Bush's Fort; but when we say that the larger portion of them slept on the floors of the different apartmente; and that most of the families, who had fled here for protection, had brought provisions with them; and that something had been added almost daily, by small scouting parties; we think the matter will be explained to the satisfaction of all.

It was the design of Graham, and so expressed to Gertrude, to escort her to his father's house, have their marriage duly celebrated, and then return to take an active part in the border struggle. But as he did not think it neces-

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sary for his safety to take all his men home with him, he divided his command, and sent one division to Fort Savannah, there to remain till he should rejoin them, and with the other set off across the mountains, Gertrude being mounted on a horse procured expressly for her use.

After a fatiguing march of several days, the settlement where the parents of our hero resided, was reached in safety; and Gertrude found herself welcomed as a dear, expected, but heretofore unseen, friend. The story of her sorrows and sufferings excited the deepest sympathy in the breasts of all who heard it; and as her sweet, gentle nature won the hearts of all who came in contact with her, she soon found she could no longer say she was poor, friendless and alone in the world.

The home of him she loved was, comparatively speaking, a little paradise; and many were the guests who thronged the mansion on that eventful eve which saw her united to him in the holy bonds that bind alike in time and in eternity. And of the guests there present, on that joyful and yet solemn occasion, there were some whose names have come down to us, linked with their country's history, and rendered illustrious by immortal virtues and immortal deeds.

Nor was he least among them who gave her his heart, his hand, and his name. No! by a noble patriotism, and deeds of valor—not only in the warfare of the borders, but throughout that revolutionary struggle which marks an era in the world's history—George Graham rose to distinction—to high command—and was one of the few who enjoyed the confidence of the Father of his Country, and received that praise from his lips which was only given to the truly deserving, and which thus became more honorable than the titles bestowed by kings and emperors.

Need we add that poor Gertrude, after all her trials and sufferings, was happy at last? happy in love—happy in pride—and happy in hope? As the past had filled her

cup with woe, so the future filled it with bliss ; and henceforth she drank of the waters of joy, till the Angel of Death summoned her to sit by the Fountains of Eternal Life.

Simple Roley lived many years with her he loved, the same singular and eccentric being we have described him ; and then passed gently away from earth, to a better existence.

Gibbs took an active part in the revolutionary struggle, but confined his exploits to border warfare. After peace was declared, he returned to his original pursuits, and died as he had lived, a hunter and trader. Graham kept his promise of not letting him go unrewarded ; but the only thing he could prevail on him to accept, was a silver mounted rifle—which ever after, till the close of his career, became his constant companion.

The bones of Major Hargrave, and his family, were collected and decently interred, and a monument erected over them, with a suitable inscription.

Reader ! our tale is told. That it might have been different—that it might have been less gloomy—that it might have been more to your liking—we do not gainsay ; but we are not prepared to admit that we could have made it more *truthful*. It was our design, in setting out, to give you a picture of border life—of life in the wilderness—and, to the best of our humble ability, we have accomplished our task ; and if, in doing this, you find we have shaded heavily—have often dipped our pencil in sombre colours—have portrayed many dark and terrible scenes—you must bear in mind that we have copied from awful realities ; and remember, also, that the first wave of advancing civilization, seldom washes a pebbly strand, or laves a flowery shore. And if you, by your peaceful fireside, with cur-

tained window, carpeted floor, and cushioned seat, can feel a single painful thrill pervade your frame at the mere recital of the woes your fathers suffered, then to their memories give a thought, a sigh, a tear, forget your petty ills, and thank your God you live in better times !

THE END.