

THE
WINTER LODGE:

OR,
VOW FULFILLED.

An Historical Novel.

THE SEQUEL TO SIMON KENTON.

BY
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PHILADELPHIA:
LIPPINCOTT, GRAMBO, AND CO.
1854.

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1854, by
LIPPINCOTT, GRAMBO, AND CO.,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States in and
for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

PHILADELPHIA:
T. K. AND P. G. COLLINS, PRINTERS.

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CHAPTER I.

THE Far West? We have no Far West now, gentle reader. Since the reapers have gone forth to gather the gold harvest of California, this familiar cry has been stricken from our vocabulary.

Once beyond the Salt Lakes, the Rocky Mountains, and on the shores of the Pacific, we shake hands then with the children of the East; our journey towards the setting sun is ended; and to us there is no longer a Far West.

Far South? Ay! who knows how soon this may be the hurrying cry of the Saxon emigrant.

Our destiny is beyond the ken of mortal, and it is a weary journey by land to Cape Horn; but let the sturdy pioneer, with his rifle and dog, once turn his face southward, and to your query of "Where going?" answer "Far South," and how long will it be before the wreckers from our eastern shores will be plying at their old calling on the storm-beaten capes of Patagonia?

Five years ago, it was considered a long and perilous, and almost lifetime journey to the Pacific; but at the cry of gold for the gathering, it became a holiday jaunt even for women and children; and since that period, the journey has been made singly, in families, and in companies;

on foot, on horseback, in wagons, and, still more incredible, in wheelbarrows. Now, to go to California is an every-day affair, too tame even to produce excitement.

Ho! then, for the rock-bound shores of Patagonia; the diamond beds and gold placers of the old Incas lie in your way.

But the Far West, at that period of which we are now writing, was the beautiful cane land discovered by Kenton and Boone; the loved hunting-ground of the northern and southern Indians, the dark and bloody territory, the far-famed Kentucky.

Those were stirring times in the history of our old Commonwealth, the last years of the 18th century; and were noted in legend and story, for thrilling and daring adventures, and bloody border strife. It was the battle-field of barbarism and civilization.

Brave men were our sires; and noble and well did they sustain our time-honored Saxon name; and proudly and sternly did those old pioneers meet the fierce beasts of the forest, and the still more savage and determined Indian.

But Boone and Kenton had wandered over the rich pastures of the West; had met the bear in his lonely den; had stricken down the mighty buffalo upon the flowery savanna; had stalked the wild deer and elk through the waving forest, and, returning home, had painted with charmed eloquence, the lovely luxuriance of the "disputed grounds;" and this was enough, more than enough, to hurry farther and still farther westward, the adventurous borderers of Virginia and Carolina.

Their faces once turned towards the setting sun, our fathers never looked back. Treading the trackless forest, they breasted the floods; met with brave hearts the elements, the seasons, the wily savage, and trying privations of a frontier life, bidding defiance to every danger and difficulty, and at last, in spite of all opposition, were conquerors.

Yet, in this mighty and eventful struggle for empire, the early pioneer suffered not a little. Many of them fell

beneath the destroying hand of disease, and not a few by the bullet and steel of their determined foe.

Go ask yon smiling valley,
Whose harvest blooms so fair—
'Twill tell thee a sad story
Of the brave who slumber there.
Go ask yon mountain, rearing
Its forest crest so high—
Each tree upon its summit
Has seen a warrior die.

But in every controversy between barbarism and civilization, wherever civilized man once plants his foot, the power of the savage is gone forever.

So it was in the settlement of Kentucky; and though a hundred well-fought fields told the fierce determination of the Indians to defend to the last their loved hunting-ground from the inroads of the Long-knife, still, they were compelled, in the end, to lower the tomahawk, and yield to the hardihood and indomitable energy of their equally brave, and more skilful Saxon foe.

But it was a gallant contest—that long and bloody struggle of the Shawanee, Delaware, and Wyandot, with our fathers, for the "disputed territory." We can but admire their chivalrous daring and bravery, though, whilst admiring, we have to mourn the loss of many of our race, fallen under the gleaming axe and knife.

Kentucky, as strange as it may appear, although a vast and fertile region, abounding with every species of game, was never settled by any of the Indian tribes, but was held in common, as a mighty hunting-ground, by the Cherokees, Creeks, and Catawbas of the South, and the Shawanees, Delawares, and Wyandots of the North.

It was a famed land to them all, the "disputed territory;" a kind of Castle Dangerous, where the young braves went forth to kill the deer and the buffalo; and, like the tilting border knights of England and Scotland, met each other in bloody conflict. Hence, it became as dear to them, and as famous, in their war songs and dances, as the Holy Sepulchre to the Red Cross Crusaders. Every hill, and dale, and valley, was known and fastened upon their memories by some bloody contest. No wonder, then,

they loved it well, for it was enriched by their blood, and was the common and honored grave of their bravest warriors.

The braves, both of the North and South, considered the luxuriant, flower-bedecked, and game-covered plains of Kentucky, as their common hunting-ground and battle-field; and here were they accustomed, not only to gather food for their lodges, but to seize with bold hand the reeking scalp-lock, and bear it away, the bloody, but triumphant memento of their prowess.

But when the adventurous whites, incited by the glowing descriptions of Boone and his contemporaries, wandered over the Blue Ridge, or dropped down the lucid waters of the Belle River, building their camp fires upon this hitherto unsettled land, and driving, with reckless indifference, their axes into the unscarred giants of the forest; the savage of the Miami, and the Creeks and Cherokees of the South, alike forgot their ancient enmity, and turned, with bloodthirsty zeal and unforgiving hatred, against their common foe.

The Moslem defeated, and the royal banner of Richard, the lion-hearted, waved against the lily of France and double-headed eagle of Austria; but let the crescent appear on the distant horizon, and they were all brothers again, and soldiers of the cross. So it was with the Indian. Before the pale-faced hunter pursued the red deer along the shady paths of their common hunting-ground, they fought with each other; but when the destroyer of their race came, they buried the tomahawk, and turned all their energies to the destruction of the Long-knife.

And that last stand of the retreating savage, against the encroaching tread of civilization, although hopeless, was a memorable one. Like the brave warriors of the Natchez, when contending with the steel-clad followers of De Soto, and afterwards with the French, they were only conquered when no more were left to fight.

But our fathers were at length, after years of anxious watchfulness and strife, victorious; and the Indian tribes, almost annihilated, sullenly retreating, left their "hunting-

ground," the reward of victory, in the quiet possession of the conquerors.

We are now the happy owners of this rich inheritance; and when we remember the dangers and privations undergone by our immediate ancestors in securing it, how sacred, in our estimation, should be the heritage:—

"The dust
Of heroes in the cause of glory fallen,
Hath mingled with the soil and hallowed it."

But, at the period of our story, this rich gift had not been wrested entirely from the hand of the stubborn savage. Barbarism had not yet retreated before civilization; the tomahawk had not yet been lowered to the Long-knife, and society in Kentucky was only in a semi-civilized condition. The northern portion of the State, dotted with forts and stations, and clustering neighborhoods, had, for a year or more, been free from any marauding expedition of the savage. But, loth to give up their favorite hunting-ground, they were still troublesome in the more sparsely settled districts of the south, and along the valleys of Green River; and the hardy settlers of this region, although not confined to stations or block-houses, were still anxiously vigilant, keeping regular spies, old Indian fighters, patrolling the country in every direction, to give immediate alarm upon any threatening appearance.

It is to this section of Kentucky we would now lead you, and at a very early period; only three years after the scenes related in our last chapter.

The immediate locale was a pioneer settlement in the then extensive country of N—, in the neighborhood (as it was at that time called, though indeed some twenty miles distant) of the stations of V— and H—. It was the fall of the year, some time in October, after the frosts, with fairy skill and rapidity, had been painting the heavy green garb of the forest to a more fanciful one of red and gold, when we approach a rough log cabin; in our country, the ever sure forerunner of farm-houses, towns, and palaces. Like all the houses of that day, it was made of two square pens, one story high, made of unhewn

with an open passage between, covered with clapboards, with rough dirt chimneys at each end, without windows to either room, and only lighted by doors, with here and there a loophole, which answered the double purpose of affording air and light, and a secure place of reconnoitring or opposing an enemy. The doors were constructed of heavy solid oak puncheons, by no means tasty or beautiful, made more for defence than ornament, and exhibiting very little of artistic skill. The inclosure immediately around the cabin was seemingly made with the same eye to defence and security, for it was composed of stout stakes driven firmly into the ground and slightly sharpened at the top, with only one entrance, and that safely secured by a heavy gate made of puncheons, very similar to those used in the construction of the doors of the habitation. This would have been a poor defence against the iron hail of civilized warfare; but slight and useless as it appeared to be, defended as it was by the strong arms, brave hearts, and deadly rifles of Bryan Head, Duffe, Kenton, and Titus, it was impregnable to the hurried onsets of the marauding savage; and the hardy borderers slept as quietly and securely in their primitive fortress, as if girdled round with stone walls, and protected by ditch, bastion, and cannon.

During the first year of their sojourn in the West, Bryan and his companions had halted in the older settlements, north of the Kentucky River; but that portion of the country becoming too densely populated to suit the notions of Kenton, who was of a roving and adventurous disposition, and withal much given to Indian fighting, he had persuaded our hero and Duffe to remove south; and the settlement we have just described was the result of their combined labor, and for two years immediately preceding the period at which we resume our story, had been their home.

Although the region of country surrounding this station had for some time back suffered but little from the predatory inroads of the savage, and was rapidly filling up with settlers, it was liable at any time to suffer severely from small roving bands of Indians; and the fear

of the inhabitants, kept alive by every now and then hearing of the massacre of some family or distant station, made them still vigilant, and caused them to continue the employment of skilful hunters and spies to traverse the district, and give alarm upon the first appearance of a moccason within the borders. Kenton, as a well-trying and daring scout, was one of the most trusted and valued of these adventurous characters, and, armed with his old rifle, and followed by the trusty Bang, he spent the greater portion of his time in the woods, frequently making journeys of many days, and even weeks, scouting the borders, sometimes going far beyond the extreme skirts of the white settlements. When his service was not required at the station, Kenton had more than once taken Titus as a companion in his solitary rambles; and the black, under the tuition of so expert a backwoodsman, had become quite a famous and skilful hunter, and withal, as Simon used laughingly to say, "a great brave," for he had taken a scalp, and wore it triumphantly fastened to his pouch, after the manner of his tutor.

As to Bryan and the Sergeant, when not engaged in resisting the occasional attacks of their savage foe, or in making retaliatory excursions into the Indian territory, they were generally occupied in adding improvements to their settlement, in tilling the ground, in hunting—to lay up a winter's supply of meats, or in exploring the country, and visiting the neighboring stations; and with these various employments, were kept pretty busy, at least during the spring and summer months.

Kenton and the black had just returned from one of their expeditions into the Indian country. Wearied with the short, and in his estimation, but little dangerous scouting in the immediate vicinity of the settlements, the Scout had, along with Titus, made a bold push into the territory of the savage now composing the State of Tennessee; but finding everything there quiet, and apparently no marauding expedition in contemplation, had returned to the station to take a short respite from his labors, and enjoy the comforts of companionship with his old friends.

He was now in company with Bryan and Coma, sitting

by the fireside of that room of the cabin appropriated to the use of the Sergeant and his wife, and had been giving an account of his last expedition, good-humoredly painting the terror of Titus, when they had stolen a couple of fine horses from an Indian encampment, lest they should be overtaken and scalped.

Bryan was a shade stouter and more athletic than when we last saw him, and his complexion, from the exposure of a frontier life, a degree darker, but, in the estimation of his fair wife, he was none the worse-looking for that; and, indeed, with his smiling, open, and bronzed features, he looked all the more noble; and for manly beauty, his superior it would be difficult to find, either in city or hamlet. He no longer wore the dress common in the older States, but his garb now was very similar to that worn by Kenton, when first introduced to the reader, only his leather hunting-shirt and moccasins bore evident marks of the refined taste and superior care and attention of his wife, and were well calculated (for no Indian maiden ever ornamented more beautifully, with quill and bead, than Coma) to set off and adorn his lithe and graceful person.

Coma, too, had lost none of her ancient bloom or loveliness by her sudden removal from the refined luxuries of fortune and exalted station to the scanty comforts of a perilous and half savage life. She had suffered many privations, and the toil and fatigue of a frontier life had often been very trying to her delicate frame; but she met them with a smile, and never grumbled; for she knew it had been the labor not only of her devoted husband, but of Duffe and his wife, and even of Kenton, to make her as happy and contented as possible, and to save her, as far as in their power, from all the fatigues necessarily attendant upon a home in the wilderness. Nor had they, as we have already intimated, been disappointed in their kindly endeavors, for Coma's smile was ever the same sunny, contented one, and she had lost none of her brightness or buoyancy since she left the proud mansion of the De Lacys; and no murmur of regrets for past comforts had ever passed her lips, to chill the hearts of her loving and

delighted friends. The wild roses of the forest might have borrowed fresh bloom from her cheeks, and the brilliant eye of the fawn was not more sparkling than hers, as she toyed now with the curls of her sleeping boy, and smiled a proud mother's smile at his broad forehead and dimpled chin. The proudest dame of all the land might have envied her her beauty and happiness, as she sat there, in her lowly cabin in the backwoods, made glad by the love of her husband and child.

The Sergeant was unchanged, save in his apparel, for his old regimentals had long since bid him an eternal adieu; and, like Kenton and Bryan, he had donned the borderer's light and graceful habit. And although it had not added much grace or ease to the soldier's prim person, still, he had become so much attached to his frontier dress, that we doubt whether he would have exchanged it even for a fresh, new uniform of the old continentals. As to Duffe's wife, she was the same silent but cheerful, contented, simple-hearted, and industrious dame of other days; and a most valuable auxiliary had she been to the new settlement; for to her exertions did they owe the most of their household comforts, and the very dresses worn by herself and Coma were the result of her labor and skill. She was never idle (remember, ladies), and even now, when we are describing her, was bowing with hand and foot, twirling her buzzing reel.

And what shall we say of old Titus? Not that he is honest, and faithful, and brave, for he was ever that. Not that he has become a whit darker, for he was always as black as the arch-fiend himself. Not that he has got more comely, for now, as ever, he is as ugly as Caliban; nor has he in any way lost his appetite, for even now, although but a moment ago having finished his supper, he is gazing with watery mouth at some fat bacon hanging over his head, at one side, or rather within the capacious chimney. Then what shall we say of the honest slave? Nothing; for we can see no change since he grinned his happiness on the banks of the Yaddin, and his heart is the same, and the only beautiful thing about him; if we except his teeth, which were white enough,

and sound enough, to make hypochondriacs of all the tooth doctors of this very tooth-doctoring age.

To the Scout's bantering description of his terror, lest the Indians should overtake them with the stolen horses, Titus would have made a stout denial, had he not been forestalled by Bryan remarking:—

"I am not so well satisfied, Simon, of the propriety or policy—to say nothing about the honesty—of these horse-stealing excursions into the territory of the savage. They have made no attack upon us for some time back, and these losses may incite them to make reprisals."

"As to the honesty of the thing, Mr. Bryan," replied Kenton, with a shrug of the shoulders, "we'll jist say nothin' 'bout it; for it's been settled long ago, that the Ingens are our nateral-born inemies, and are nateral-born thieves, to a sartainty. If they hain't—and we don't know that—been out on any of thar scalping 'scursions ag'in us, nor stole any of our horses, 'twarn't because they've got honest, but jist because it wer a losin' bisness to them, and they are afeared of thar darned topknots. They won't do to count on, Mr. Bryan; and if they hain't stole any horses from us, they've made it up in stealin' from our neighbors on the border, and the critters we take from them they stole from the whites. I guess it ar' all fair game, all round, and calculate the red devils don't think half as much 'bout the honesty of the thing as they do 'bout the loss."

"But the policy," said Bryan.

"I reckon thar's somethin' in that ar' objection of yourn, Mr. Bryan, 'bout the policy of the thing; but blast me, if thar's any in the honesty, for that ar' word ain't in the Ingen lingo. But cuss me if I think it ar' a very bad move, after all," continued Simon, a brilliant idea striking him, "for we are gittin' blamed rusty in Ingen fightin', and the neighbors are crowdin' in a little too thick to suit my ideer of comfort, and if we could only stir up the redskins, 'twould help matters 'mazingly—wouldn't it, Bang?"

"Of course; who disputes it?" replied Bang, with a growl, eyeing rather suspiciously the white teeth of the

grinning Titus, as if he thought the negative came from him, and there lay the bone of contention.

"Don't talk of bringing back those dreadful Indians, Simon," exclaimed Coma, looking anxiously at her sleeping child. "We have had quite enough of them, and have been long enough by ourselves to rejoice at the approach of neighbors."

"Don't be afeared, Miss Coma," said the Scout, looking with kindly interest at her and her child, "for the Ingens were never more quiet; and you know Sharp-Eye wouldn't let a moccason trail pass in twenty miles of the settlement without giving the alarm."

"Thank you for the assurance," replied Coma, glancing with tearful interest at her sleeping infant; "for since I have had this darling one to love and watch over, I'm not as brave as I used to be, and tremble, sometimes, lest he should fall into the hands of the cruel savage."

"Fall into the hands of the devil!" exclaimed Simon, with some heat, at the very thought; "how can he, with Mister Bryan, the Sargeant, and Titus and me—to say nothing of Bang and Sally—to guard him, and look after the redskins? Never fear, Miss Coma; it ar' an impossibility; and drat me, if I won't be willin' to straddle a greased streak of lightnin', and be knocked into week after next, if I let a moccason trail come in twenty miles of the bonnie boy."

The father looked well pleased at this positive assurance of the bold borderer. Titus grinned his delight at the electrical steed invoked by the Scout, and the Sergeant, with a laugh, remarked that "Simon had better keep a sharp lookout, if he didn't want to have a faster ride than he ever made upon the back of a stolen horse." But Coma, smiling contentedly, and well satisfied, for she had implicit faith in the vigilance and assurances of Kenton, arose from her seat, saying—

"Come, Simon, I must put my boy to bed now; and you must along with me, and see how beautiful Bryan and the Sergeant have made my winter lodge, with all those nice furs furnished by your bravery and skill."

At the beck of his wife, Bryan, holding in his hand a

candle made from the comb of the wild bee, led the way across the open passage dividing the two apartments, and was quickly followed by Coma, bearing in her arms her sleeping child, the giant form of the Scout bringing up the rear. The next moment they stood within Coma's winter lodge.

Moving hastily forward to a square little box, filled with soft and pliant skins, and which she had dignified with the title of cradle, Coma placed her child gently in it, at the same time throwing over him a rich and warm covering of dark furs, but so as to leave his head and face fully exposed, and in beautiful relief against the sable garniture of his primitive bed.

"Is he not beautiful!" she exclaimed, stopping a moment to gaze with a mother's pride at her lovely boy—"and see what a nice bed he's got! it is soft and rich enough for a prince!"

"Beautiful!" murmured Bryan.

"Glorious!" exclaimed Kenton, with sparkling eye.

"But the bed?" said Coma.

"Taint to be beat!" replied Simon, emphatically, "by any of the 'hogany contraptions of the old States. The grand ladies might turn up their noses, Miss Coma, at young Mister Bryan's crib; but I guess, though they do pay a power of money for their baby toggery, this here consarn, if them ar' furs were taken over the Ridge, would buy a dozen of thar 'hogany fixens!"

"And look at the room, Simon, how nice and warm it is," said Coma, as she stirred up the fire; and with smiling face, pointed to the floor and walls.

"Just as nice as if I had done it myself," replied the Scout approvingly; "and I wish that tarnal rascally cousin of yourn wer' here, to see how well we can do up things in the backwoods."

A slight shade hovered a moment over the face of Coma, at the mention of Captain Jean; but not wishing to disturb the very evident satisfaction of Simon, by showing any sign of uneasiness, she mastered her emotion, saying, with laughing glee—

"Now isn't that an elegant carpet and rich hearth-rug

and look at the walls, how beautifully they are papered; and just sit down a moment in that big arm-chair, and see how warm and comfortable it is; and if you want to see something very rich and warm, take a look at that counterpane on the bed."

"Elegant," said Kenton, throwing himself into the chair, and glancing quickly around at each article of furniture named by Coma, "and fit for a queen! Cuss me if they ain't splendiferous, and no mistake."

And that little room, only some eighteen feet square, ornamented and furnished as it was, presented a rare combination of savage luxury and civilized taste, and was well worthy of the unqualified admiration of the Scout.

The apartment itself, and the furniture of the apartment, was of the roughest and most primitive mould, but we doubt much whether the most splendidly furnished parlors of the most refined and luxurious of the present day, could boast of more comfort, or indeed of more wealth. The loose puncheon floor was entirely concealed and covered with a carpet of buffalo robes, soft, yielding, and springy, even more so than the most costly and expensive Brussels; and two choice, long-haired black bear skins made a striking and unique, but at the same time very handsome and sleep-inviting hearth-rug. The walls of the room were covered, or papered, as Coma laughingly called it, with the dressed skins of the deer and elk, with the hair exposed, and the hides all neatly and evenly pinned down, so as to conceal the unbarked logs and mud chinking of the cabin. The bed, to which Coma had pointed with so much pride, would have been a *chef-d'œuvre*, or rich ornament, to the most princely chamber; for though it was sheeted and pillowed as is usual with beds, and had a few blankets thrown over it, it was also curtained around with the soft, pliant, spotted skin of the fawn, and had thrown over sheet and blanket a counterpane more costly than the richest silk, for it was made entirely and completely of the very rarest furs, richly and beautifully diversified with the purest white, and most glossy black. The arm-chair in which Simon

was setting, was a huge concern, almost large enough for a bed, and if stripped of its covering, would have been a very ungainly piece of furniture, for it was made entirely with the knife and tomahawk; but all these imperfections were hid by soft cushions of bear and buffalo hides, and the whole concealed and ornamented by a flowing canopy of panther skins. The stools and chairs of the apartment were likewise fancifully covered with various kinds of furs and skins; and two immense antlers of the elk, standing out over the fireplace (for there was no mantle), held the trusty rifle of Bryan, and completed the decoration of their backwoods boudoir. It was a strange and motley ornamented room, that "winter lodge" of Coma's; presenting a grotesque combination of savage wealth and wildness, refined and made comfortable and tasteful by the plastic touch of education; and, as the graceful and delicate figure of the young wife glided from point to point, marking out its rare beauties, reminded one of the fabled stories of the Indies, and of the fairies and genii, and the palaces constructed by them, so wonderful to the youthful imagination.

This singular adornment of Coma's room was the result of a hint given by Kenton, by whom most of the skins and furs had been presented; but the execution was far beyond his expectation or conception, for his views only extended to comfort; and now, when he looked around upon everything so comfortable, and at the same time so tasteful and beautiful, he could not restrain the loud expression of his delight and satisfaction.

"Yes, it is beautiful!" said Coma, delighted with the pleasure of the honest Scout, "and no one would expect to see such a rich and cozy chamber in a rough log cabin, out in the backwoods. I wouldn't be ashamed of my lodge in the old States!"

"Darn me! if it ain't jest a little superior to anything I ever saw!" replied Simon, with truthful simplicity and warmth; "and I reckon, Mister Bryan, them ar' palaces, the Britishers used to tell us 'bout, wern't nigh equal to this!"

"Not for comfort—or love—or happiness," replied

Bryan, glancing with beaming eye at the beautiful countenance of his devoted wife; "nor will we ever want a prouder or nobler home than this, or dearer and more loving friends, than we now have around us!"

"Only keep away those horrible Indians, Simon," said Coma with a laugh, which had a faint note of terror mingled with it, "and I will be inexpressibly happy."

"Never fear the red devils, Miss Coma," replied Kenton; "I guess they're 'bout to give up thar hunting-grounds, and will trouble us no more. But I won't trust them for a spell yet, and will keep up my scouten, though I don't much 'pect ever to come 'cross an Indian trail in these parts agin. Good-night," he added, rising to his feet, "I'll go and fasten the gate, give Bang his orders, and then to sleep."

"Good-night!" replied Bryan, "but I see no use of troubling yourself about the gate, Simon, for there is no danger."

"Thar's no tellin'," muttered the cautious spy, "and we had better keep things secure, at any rate. Thar never wer' a scalp lost yet by too much care."

"You are right, Simon," murmured Coma, "but, good-night—and don't forget to keep a strict lookout for Indians."

Kenton, after returning her look of mingled merriment and seriousness with a kind smile of assurance, turned upon his heel, and was gone.

And now, the young father and mother left alone, stood lovingly beside the cradle of their sleeping infant—their hearts filled with happiness and content, and dreaming thrillingly of a joyous future:—

"A shadow, passing light, throws to the ground
Joy's baseless fabric."

CHAPTER II.

AN old man lay on his death-bed. The furniture of the sick room, and the soft couch, upon which the dying man was confined, betokened not only wealth, but even luxury. But little did that old man now care for the riches with which he was surrounded; for his hand was feeble, scarce able to push back the soft coverlet that oppressed, with even its light weight, his panting chest—and his eye was dim, very dim, and clouds were gathering fast over it. He could neither enjoy nor behold the luxuries around him; all to him was now vanity, and worse than vanity. But although there was a cloud fast gathering over the old man's eyes, and his sight was momentarily becoming dimmer and dimmer, there was also a cloud upon his heart; and one darker and even more oppressive than that upon his vision. It was not a cloud of sorrow caused by pain or sickness, or approaching death, for he was old and feeble, and could scarce hope for longer life; but it was the darkest of all clouds, even darker than the valley and shadow of death—a cloud of remorse upon the soul! He was dying now—and dying without having had an opportunity to forgive, or be forgiven, by his only child. The last sun of his existence had arisen, and was fast sinking in the west, and there was no kind hand present to smooth his dying pillow, or loving heart to drop a tear over his departure.

It was an awful death to die; and no wonder there was a cloud upon that old man's heart, and weary heaviness about his soul.

'Tis a dreadful fate to have no one to love, or to be loved by! and we could wish no greater curse to our most hated enemy, if we had one, than that he might outlive his friends.

The world may seek after glory, and long to be feared,

wondered at, or admired, but give us your love, and we are satisfied. For ourselves, we would rather have the love of wife, children, and friends, than to be the emperor of all the Russias, and have millions to tremble with terror at our nod; and we would rather be remembered, when in our grave, with kindly affection by our acquaintances, than to fill a page in history, and be pointed out by the applauding multitude as a great conqueror or statesman.

Yet that old man, friendless and deserted in his death agony (if we take the common impression of the world), had been a greatly blessed and happy man—for he had wealth, and had been honored; and must have been—so think poor foolish men (but, oh! how falsely)—happy. He had been one of the honored of earth; but what to him were his honors now—and what his wealth? and where the great troop of friends made during a long and prosperous life? The first were rapidly sliding from his nerveless grasp, and, of the latter, he had none. His pride of wealth and family had chilled and driven from him every heart, and there was no one left to love that old man now. The only one that he might have looked to with certainty, for sympathy and affection, he had driven forth with curses; and she was now far away, and knew not that the cold damp of the nearing tomb had softened his heart, and destroyed (as it always does) the stubborn pride of his soul.

Death is a great leveller; and the grinning skeleton, with his bloody scythe, soon drives from the heart of poor mortal man his longings after honors, and his desire for or gratification in wealth. 'Tis a chilling thought to know that, of all the goods and luxuries he has gathered together, by a life of danger and toil, he can take nothing with him; and though he be the most honored of earth, if he has not done his duty to God and man, that he cannot be *even the least* in heaven. But it is doubly chilling to the man who has made money his god, and considered wealth the acme of happiness, to die, and without a loving heart near him, and without one loved child or friend to whom he may leave his vast possessions.

Some such thoughts as these had embittered the last illness of De Lacy—for he was the dying man—and were busy now gnawing at his heart; but remorse came too late.

“Wild with despair
He poured his prayer,
Whirled in the giddy tempest round;
His blasted pride
The gods deride,
And all his daring hopes confound.”

But he would not die without one more struggle to make at least a partial atonement for past cruelty and neglect; and the love for his only child, long smothered by fierce pride, came welling up from the secret little fountain of his heart, now that he was about to pass away; and the old man, struggling in the grasp of death, faintly whispered: “Jean! Jean!”

“What would you have?” said Montlack, rising from his comfortable seat by the fire, and approaching the couch of the dying man.

“A pen and paper,” gasped De Lacy.

“What would you with pen and paper now?” said Montlack, quickly, with a suspicious glance at the agitated countenance of the old man.

“A pen and paper quickly, Jean, or I ring for a servant!” exclaimed De Lacy, struggling to a sitting posture, and laying his long, attenuated fingers upon the handle of a small bell.

“You are too feeble to exert yourself, uncle,” said Montlack, with well-assumed care for his dying relative, “and must not fatigue yourself by over-exertion.”

“Will you go?” said the old man, sternly.

“Ay, if it be your will,” replied Montlack, moving slowly (for he wished time for thought) to bring the required articles.

“Too late, too late!” murmured De Lacy; and, as if struck with the necessity of haste, he called out in an eager and trembling voice: “Where have you gone, Jean? make haste, or I shall die, and without giving her my forgiveness.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Montlack to himself, as he caught the sound of the old man’s eager voice, “I would that I knew his design? If I were only certain that my fears were not groundless, he might die, but he should never have pen and paper again.”

“Jean! Jean!” groaned the old man, “will you never come?”

“I am here, uncle!” said Montlack, with affected sorrow, at the same time placing the articles demanded by De Lacy, upon a table, by the side of his couch; “and now, what would you do?”

“This! this!” exclaimed De Lacy, with trembling eagerness, as, rallying his exhausted powers, he began hurriedly to write.

For a few moments the old man wrote on, in silence; Montlack the while, standing with lowering brow, watching the rapid movements of his pen, but not daring to interrupt him.

“Some brandy, Jean! I grow weak!” gasped De Lacy.

Montlack, in silence, handed him a goblet, and after swallowing a mouthful of the sparkling liquid—as if revived and strengthened by the drink, the dying man once more seized his pen, and continued to write.

“Would that you had become weak enough to die, before this mad freak entered your crazy brain!” thought the selfish and trembling Jean; but he made no remark, and only followed with his eyes the rapid movements of his dying relative’s pen.

“Thank God! ’tis finished! ’tis finished!” murmured De Lacy, the pen dropping from his fingers, as he sank back exhausted upon his pillow.

“What is finished?” said Montlack eagerly, in his anxiety drawing a step nearer to the table, and dying man.

“My will, Jean.”

“Ha!” ejaculated Montlack, starting back with surprise, while a heavy frown gathered upon his brow. “You would change your will, would you?”

“I have done it! there it is, Jean, on the table!” said

De Lacy, with a faint effort at a smile, "but I have not forgotten you, as you will see!"

"But why change it at all?" asked Montlack.

"You used to tell me, Jean, when the poor girl first went away, to forgive her, but my heart was hard and cold then, and I would not; 'tis soft now, and I would fain let dear Coma know my forgiveness."

Montlack muttered a curse—for the hypocrite, in attempting to prove to his uncle that he had no selfish motive, had overreached himself; but now, that he might know the worst, he stretched out his hand as if to take up the new will, saying—

"Shall I read it?"

"Not now, Jean! I have not many moments to live, and would devote them to other matters! You will see it soon enough, for I have made you my executor."

"A great honor, for which you will receive my thanks," said Montlack, with an ill concealed sneer, and in a tone which would have been remarked by the dying man, had he been blessed with his usual clearness of intellect.

"Who else could, or would be more faithful than you, Jean?" replied De Lacy, confidently; for he scarce noticed what his nephew said—and had no thought of his manner.

"Ay, who else!" said Montlack, with a meaning smile.

"You are my nearest relative, Jean, except poor Coma, and I knew you would feel more interest in her fate than a stranger, and would gladly bear her the pardon and blessing of a dying father."

"I have only been waiting your death to hunt her up," thought Montlack, "but not to be the messenger of gladness to her, or of wealth to her hated husband."

"I fear we have been too harsh with the poor child," continued the old man, without noticing the silence of his nephew; "and may-be, after all, her husband was innocent—and like his father (I have discovered we were wrong there, Jean), was the victim of some designing enemy."

"You are by no means flattering to him you have chosen as your executor!" said Montlack firmly, and with the look and tone of an injured man, "and did I consider

you in your proper mind, I would not remain to be thus insulted. If you will but remember, I was the prosecutor of this son-in-law of yours, at this late hour acknowledged, and, if he be innocent, then I am guilty!"

De Lacy looked sharply, and even suspiciously into the face of his companion; but his eye, dim with age and approaching death, could trace nothing but honest indignation in the countenance of Captain Jean.

"My proper mind?" he at length muttered, as if communing with his own heart. "My God! I have never been in my proper mind until now! Pride has been my curse through life, and has ever hung like a dark curtain before my vision, shutting out all, but self! Pride! pride! ay, it has been the ruin of my happiness, for it drove from me the only one to whom I could look for love."

"Your late repentance," said Montlack, "has made you strangely forgetful, and ungenerous—and, I might add, unjust. I have never deserted you; and of all the friends of your wealth and power, I alone remain to soothe your last moments; and yet, you seem to look upon me with suspicion—and have not hesitated to insult me, by insinuating ingratitude and want of affection; have I deserved this of you?"

"Pardon me, Jean, if I have said or done anything to wound your feelings," replied the old man, pressing with feeble hand his pale forehead, "for my mind wanders so, I scarce know what I do, or say! You are a De Lacy, and have stood nobly by the last of the name, and may God reward you, boy!"

"I had expected to be rewarded by another!" thought Montlack, but he did not give utterance to his selfish thoughts, only muttering in his disappointment, and scarce knowing what he said.

"But your will?"

"My will! what of it, Jean, what of it! is it not there? and will you not execute my wishes?" gasped the dying man eagerly.

"Ay! I will execute the will of your proper and sane mind, but not this last, unless it be vastly different from what I expect," thought Montlack. But wishing to know

the worst, and whether the former will, which he knew his uncle had made in a moment of anger, just after the marriage of his daughter, and which left him as the sole heir to the De Lacy estate, was still in existence, he only said, "but your former will, what of it?"

"God bless you Jean, for reminding me of it. I had forgotten it; bring it here, quick! quick!" exclaimed the old man, struggling up in his bed and pointing to an escritoire, "it is there! there! and I would not have my curses on the poor child remain when I am dead. Bless you! bless you, boy! it would have broken poor Coma's heart to have read those bitter anathemas of her father."

"Rather curse me," muttered Montlack to himself, "for being such a miserable idiot! But he shall not destroy it," thought the baffled hypocrite, moving off slowly to obey the request of his dying relative; "for if he should cancel this first testament making me his heir, then Coma would be the representative, let what will become of this last!"

"Have you found it, Jean?" asked De Lacy, impatiently.

"Not yet," said Montlack, carelessly tossing about the loose papers found in the escritoire; "but it is of little consequence, uncle, whether I find it or not, or whether I find it now or not!"

The old man made an impatient gesture, but said nothing.

"Let it go," continued Montlack, "this last will cancels the first, and I, as your executor, will have it destroyed!"

"No, no! it must be burned now, and in my sight!" said De Lacy, quickly; "I cannot die in peace with those bitter curses of mine still in existence. 'Tis there, Jean, in the drawer to the right, you cannot mistake it!"

"Ay, here it is!" said Montlack, having no longer an excuse for delay.

"Burn it, burn it!" eagerly gasped the dying man; "let me see it in a blaze, and look at it crumble to ashes, and I will die satisfied; my child shall be my heir!"

"Ha!" thought Montlack, "'tis as I expected, but all is not yet lost; I have it in my possession, the paper

securing me wealth and power, and I will not willingly destroy it."

"Haste! haste, Jean! to the fire with it, or it will be too late! Burn it! burn it! let me see my curses wither into ashes, and I will die content, pouring blessings upon your head; but hesitate, and I curse you!"

Montlack still stood by the escritoire with the will in his hand, but made no motion towards the fire.

"Not yet, Jean?" said the old man, impatiently; adding, as a suspicion of his nephew's design flashed across his mind, "will you fulfil my wishes, or must I ring for the housekeeper, to have my commands executed?"

The threat of the housekeeper brought the Captain to his senses, for he wanted no witnesses to that last interview; and, grinding his teeth with rage, he muttered:—

"It will be time enough to ring for a servant when I refuse!"

"Then burn it, burn it at once, or I ring!" said De Lacy, laying his hand upon the bell.

"I will, I will!" exclaimed Montlack, quickly and eagerly; a sudden thought of villany coming to his rescue at this sore strait. "Here, see it burn, uncle!" he added, stepping to the fire and kindling into a blaze a paper, at that distance very similar in appearance to the will, which he had cunningly dropped back into the drawer.

"I can't see it, Jean!" said the old man sadly, and in a faint voice; "a mist is gathering over my sight, and all to me is night!"

"Now look, uncle, and you'll see the blaze, and, if that will satisfy, may die satisfied!" exclaimed Montlack, boldly walking to the side of the bed, and holding up in his hand the half-consumed paper.

With a desperate effort the old man rallied his sinking powers, and drove back for a moment the heavy mist from his fast fading vision; and as he caught sight of the bright blaze of the burning paper in the hand of his treacherous nephew, with a smile of triumph sunk back upon his pillow. Rejoicing in the success of his deception, Montlack threw from him the burning paper, and, leaning down his head, heard his uncle faintly murmur:

"Thank God, there is no curse of mine resting upon my child now! Bless you, Coma! bless you! bless you!"

The silver cord was loosed, the golden bowl was broken, and, after life's fitful dream, the old man slept in peace. He was dead.

"Thank God!" muttered the dark hypocrite with a sigh of relief, as he beheld the marble seal of eternity settle down upon the shrunken brow and cheek of his deceived relative; "the battle is over at last, and I have won!"

Her father was dead, his last thoughts had been of her, and his last words were a blessing; but she was far away, and knew it not; and poor Coma, will she ever know that she has been forgiven?

"Never!" shouted Montlack, striking his hand heavily upon the table. He had no fear now of arousing the old man, for, without stopping even to close his eyes, the eager villain had grasped his last will, and had been rapidly poring over it. "Never! never!" he again exclaimed, when he had fully learned its contents; "never shall she know that he has forgiven her, or that she is the only heir and representative of De Lacy!"

As if satisfied with this positive declaration of his intentions toward his cousin, Montlack sat a moment in thoughtful silence, with his eyes fastened upon the floor, and a cunning, disagreeable smile playing around his mouth; then, folding up the last will of his uncle he concealed it in his bosom; and then, as if he had nothing else to do, for the first time raised his head and permitted his wandering vision to rest upon the pale countenance of the dead man.

For a moment, the heartless villain shuddered and trembled in his seat, as he caught sight of the cold, stony eyes of the corpse, glaring, as he imagined, full and threateningly upon him; but it was only for a moment; for an instant thought told him those leaden eyes were now sightless, and that his treachery and villainy, both to the dead and the living, were alike unknown and unseen by mortal eye.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, attempting to drive away his uneasy thoughts by forced merriment; "I thought the

old fellow had come to life again, and, sacre! felt anything but easy. But he's safe enough now; and his fortune is safe enough. I have not lived a sycophant, and liar, and villain so long for nothing. The De Lacy estate is worthy of the struggle, and it will take more than the glare of a pair of sightless eyes to turn me back, now that I have wealth and power within my grasp. The hour I have long hoped for has come at last; and fool, worse than fool, was the old idiot, to think that I would now, not only strip myself of riches, but be the messenger of his forgiveness to this scornful cousin of mine, and her upstart husband. Ha! ha! this would be taking a Christian revenge with a vengeance; but it don't suit me; and I'll have other, and to me, more agreeable satisfaction. They think I have forgotten them," added Montlack, a dark scowl of hatred disfiguring his face; "but they will yet awake with a howl of sorrow from their pleasant dream. Vengeance delayed is not vengeance satisfied, and let them beware; for my hour, the hour long hoped and prayed for, has come, and with it my desire for revenge. Jean Montlack has never yet forgotten an injury, or forgiven an enemy; nor has he often permitted a threat to go unfulfilled.

"Your long-delayed blessing, old man, contained in this paper," he continued, striking his hand upon his bosom, "she shall never know or hear from me. But your curses, ha! ha! she shall know them all; they shall burn into her soul, and she shall yet feel the power of her scorned lover. Ha! ha! glare away with your sightless eyes; I fear them not. Your hand is chilled now and stiff, and can never more wield a pen; and your tongue is silent enough; it can neither curse nor bless now; and, what is still better for me, can tell nothing of my villainy. Ha! ha! Monsieur Jean, you are a precious hypocrite and villain; but what matter now, you have won; no longer Montlack, but De Lacy; and, with a princely estate in possession, the world will not pry very closely into my character. Wealth is power; and wealth will cover a multitude of sins."

With this consoling truism, spoken in a tone of chilling

sarcasm, Montlack turned to the table, and taking up the bell, upon which the icy fingers of De Lacy still rested, summoned the housekeeper. On the approach of Mrs. Martin, who filled this important station in the household of De Lacy, Montlack, assuming a look and tone of the deepest sorrow, made known the death of his uncle; and then, after giving some necessary orders to the weeping old woman, quickly left the chamber of death and retired to his own room.

"Poor fellow!" muttered the good dame, as the door closed behind him, "he takes it mighty hard, the death of his uncle. I wonder who's the heir?"

The query of the housekeeper was a very natural one; and a thought of the bright face of Coma flitted across her memory as she made it, but she was too wise a woman to give utterance to that forbidden name in the presence of the dead body of her master, more especially as she was pretty well satisfied that Mister Jean filled that (in her estimation) most important of all stations.

Nor was she mistaken; for although, in truth and justice, he was still nothing more than plain Jean Montlack, and without fortune, yet by the only will of his uncle ever exhibited to the world, he became and assumed (and unquestioned by any one) the ancient name of De Lacy, and along with it the vast estate of his deceased relative.

Poor Coma! she knew not of her father's death, nor had she ever coveted his wealth. She was happy in her winter lodge upon the distant frontier; more happy, perhaps, than if she had been the mistress of the proud mansion of her father. She was as rich as her heart desired, for she was loved by her husband and child, and had them to love. Those gathered in the halls of her ancient home, to attend the stately funeral of the last of the De Lacy's, may have thought of the bright face seen there in other days; but for her, their tongues expressed no sympathy; and in her right, had she appeared to claim her own, no one would have raised a hand against the smiling, plausible, and now popular Captain Jean Montlack.

Wealth is power! and riches cover a multitude of sins; and no one was more aware of this fact than the new owner of the De Lacy estate.

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT three weeks after the events narrated in our last chapter, a solitary horseman picked his way carefully along a first trail or path, winding among the rugged hills, lying off in a southeast direction from the station of Head and Duffe—distant some five-and-twenty miles, and somewhere near the present boundary line of the counties of Logan and Muhlenberg.

It was a wild and desolate scene, a picturesque mingling together of abrupt hills, deep valleys, and moss-covered limestone rocks; the whole made dark, and shadowy, and gloomy and cheerless enough, by a thick matted undergrowth of hazle-nut, pea, and grape-vine, overshadowed and sombre, from the huge wide-spreading boughs of the overtopping forest. The rider seemed to be in doubt as to his road; for he travelled very slowly, frequently stopping on the points of the hills to make observations; and more than once, when the path became very much confused, dismounting from his horse to make a closer examination of the trace he had been pursuing; every now and then, as the trail became more faint and indistinct, and he himself seemed perplexed by the ruggedness of the route, and its tortuous windings along the hills and hollows, having recourse to a small pocket-compass, which always appeared to satisfy him and dispel his hesitation; for, after each examination, he pressed forward with renewed zeal and energy—not, however, without casting many anxious glances around him, as if fearful of or expecting some lurking enemy. He had not the appearance of a borderer or backwoodsman, nor indeed of one accustomed to the hardships of a frontier life; and was dressed with far more care and luxury, and we might add taste, than was usually met with at that early period in Kentucky. Although he knew the use of a compass, and seemed to derive some

benefit from his knowledge, he could not be a surveyor, intent upon locating wild lands, for his face and person were too slight and delicate, and his carefully gloved hand too small and white to be one of that hardy and adventurous class;—and then, if that had been his business, he certainly would have chosen more fertile and cultivable lands than those over which he was now picking his toilsome way. The reader may suppose that the very manner in which he was travelling, alone and on horseback, and without chain or chain carrier, would prove at once that he was not a surveyor, nor engaged in locating lands; but this does not follow at all, or as a necessary consequence; for many of the old surveys in Kentucky, made when wild lands were of very little value, were located just in this reckless and unsatisfactory manner; the locator starting at a given point, and following a certain course to another given point; blazing his way, counting it as so many acres, more or less; and thus entering his survey, to be at some future day a source of almost endless trouble and litigation. But the horseman was not a surveyor, nor was he engaged in locating lands, and his compass was referred to merely to satisfy himself as to the course of the trace, when it became too indistinct for his unpractised eye; nor could he be from the older settlements of Kentucky, for he had not the bold, determined, self-reliant look of one accustomed to the woods, and to the danger of a frontier life. His dress declared him a gentleman, or at least (which does not always constitute a gentleman) one unaccustomed to labor, and familiar with the luxuries and refinements of wealth and civilization; his hesitation and bewilderment showed him to be unskilled in woodcraft; his swarthy complexion spoke the foreigner; his quick, anxious glances and sudden starts exhibited the coward; and his own tongue made him known as an old acquaintance of the reader, and not at all improved in heart since last we saw him.

"Sacre!" he grumblingly exclaimed, as, suddenly descending a steep hill, he found himself in a dark, vine-covered dell: "Did any one ever see such a cursed

country as this? Had I known the half I would undergo in making this trip, nothing could have induced me to undertake it; not even, he added, as a heavy scowl of hatred clouded his sallow countenance, "the hope of revenge, or the certainty of securing to myself a princely fortune. May the devil take me," again muttered the rider, as he peered down into the matted grass and wild vine in search of the lost trail, "if this is what they call a plain bridle-path, they must have eyes sharper than mine, and the scent of a dog, ever to follow it up. I have a strong notion to turn back," he added, in a desponding tone, once more resorting to his compass.

"But no," he continued in a more cheerful tone, and with a better-satisfied look, after examining his compass, and discovering that he was still pursuing the direct route; "as I have come this far, and am now so near the end of my journey, I'll even press on and execute my little plans; for it won't do to be faint-hearted now, after risking so many dangers, and undergoing so many privations in this infernal country."

Sharply touching the flank of his weary horse with the spur, the rider rode forward at a more rapid pace; and the path again becoming visible, his spirits became more buoyant, and, once more giving vent to his secret thoughts, he exclaimed, but now in an elated voice—

"I have found them at last! It was a weary hunt, but they can't escape me now! The old General, curse his hypocrisy, is dead at last! and he thought to swindle me by making a will in favor of my cousin, did he? but he forgot that I would be the first to handle his paper, and so I have just suppressed that cursed maudlin, nonsensical will of his, in favor of Coma, and taken possession myself of the whole estate under the old will, and as the nearest living relation. Ha! ha!" laughed the rider, with devilish glee, "wasn't it a bright idea to report this dear cousin of mine and her noble husband dead—massacred by the Indians; and didn't I mourn her unhappy fate, and curse the bloody savages, and hoodwink the dear neighbors until they considered me the most loving and generous of relations? Sacre! I wish it had been true, that some of

those jolly redskins had thus freed me from my enemies! It would have saved me a sight of trouble and money. But never mind, I have found them at last; they have no thought of what has happened, and, even if they knew, they would never dream that the old General had repented. I took particular pains that he should receive her first letter, and that he should answer it when in a furious passion; cursing and disowning her forever—and that she should receive it. Since that time, to save his feelings, ha! ha! yes, to save his feelings, I have never delivered any of her loving epistles, but have returned them unread, at least by the father; and he has never had an opportunity, even if he had desired it, of letting her know his repentance and forgiveness. Ha! ha!" again laughed the horseman, as if vastly tickled at the remembrance; didn't I, whenever he would talk of Coma, nicely lug in that fellow Head, and his father, and the forgery, and throw him into such a furious passion, that he would forget all about his love and remorse, and such silly stuff, and swear as if all the devils were urging him on? But the old hypocrite tried to make all things right on his death-bed," sneered the Captain; for the rider, as the reader has already discovered, was no other than our old acquaintance, Captain Jean; "and would have left me with a mere pittance, if I had only been fool enough to receive it, and had made known his last will. But I didn't; and that little piece of treachery," exclaimed Montlack bitterly, as if he had been really injured and treated unjustly by the wish of the father to provide for his child, "will bring no little trouble and sorrow to this cousin of mine, or I am vastly mistaken."

Halting a moment, as if to assure himself of the path, which was winding along down into a deep valley, the horseman again applied his spur, and pressed onward, exclaiming, as he did so, and this time in a fierce and angry tone—

"Yes! I will on now; and it will be strange, indeed, if I can't manage in some way, in this wild country, where there are so many reckless and lawless men (and when I have money plenty at control), to get clear of all my ene-

mies at once, and in such a way as to secure not only revenge, but my possessions."

But scarcely had Montlack, or rather De Lacy (for he had along with the estate assumed the name of his uncle), given this confident expression respecting his villanous designs, when his ears were greeted by a deafening yell, and six hideously painted savages, springing from their place of concealment, surrounded his horse, brandishing with threatening violence their gleaming tomahawks. Never the most brave, the horrified Captain now shook with terror, and ere he could gather his wandering thoughts sufficiently, either to make an attempt at defence or flight, was roughly dragged from his horse and made a prisoner. A moment later, and while the Captain still lay upon the ground panting with fright, surrounded by his exulting captors, a seventh savage, or rather, a white man in the garb of an Indian, made his appearance; and to the inexpressible relief of the prisoner, and the no little surprise of both parties, the companions in guilt, the educated and refined scoundrel and the rough, brutal villain, Montlack and Simon Girty were once more in company.

"What in the devil's name ever brought you to this country!" exclaimed Girty, thus roughly giving expression to his astonishment; while at the same time, he contemplated with a smile of derision and contempt, the terror-stricken countenance of his old companion in crime.

"It is a long story, Girty," groaned the Captain, writhing with pain, caused by the tightly drawn thongs with which his arms were bound, "and I can't tell it now; but if you will only free me from these cursed bonds, I'll make a clean breast of it, and, what is more, tell you something greatly to your interest."

"Humph," muttered the renegade, with a glance at the Indians, "you are not my prisoner."

"But you have influence with your savage allies!" exclaimed Montlack, quickly, growing uneasy at the hesitation and gloomy countenance of his old friend.

Girty was a heartless, calculating villain, and in no way troubled with a kindly feeling of sympathy or fellowship

for his own race, and withal shrewd, and cunning, and avaricious. He saw at once that his ancient employer was now completely in his power, and forthwith determined to replenish his purse by playing upon the fears of his prisoner. With this secret determination, to the suggestion of Montlack respecting his influence with the savages, he only replied by shaking his head despondingly, and muttering, with a gloomy look—

"It's a bad business, Captain; if you were my prisoner, I'd cut your bonds at once, but the savages have been out several days in search of some one to put to the torture, and you are the only captive they have made. It will be blasted hard to make them give you up."

"Oh!" moaned Montlack, "I wish I had never thought of visiting this infernal country!"

"It would have been better for you," said Girty, bluntly.

"Come, Simon," continued Montlack, attempting to shake off his fears, "don't be at any of your damned nonsense, but do what you can for an old friend. I was thinking of you not an hour ago, and would have given five hundred dollars to have met you; and now, if you will only stand by me, and procure my freedom, I will make it a thousand dollars, and, moreover, aid you in taking revenge upon an old enemy."

If Girty knew what cord to touch to gain his end, Montlack was not ignorant or unfamiliar with the leading trait of the renegade's character; and at the mention of a reward for his services, the smile of pleasure that stole over the harsh features of the outlaw, told, even before he had spoken, the influence of gold upon his movements.

"At some of your old tricks, Captain, eh?" said Girty, interrogatively, and in a more pleasant voice—for with him, as with the most of men, the hope of gain, and the tinkle of gold, was a great inducement to suavity. "But upon what particular enemy of mine would you aid me in taking vengeance? I know of none, since we roped up the young gentleman at the haunted house on the Yad-kin."

"It is of him I speak," said Montlack.

"The devil!" exclaimed the renegade, becoming more interested, "I thought we had fixed him for at least ten years' sojourn in the penitentiary."

"And so we did," replied Montlack, bitterly exhibiting, notwithstanding his own painful and perilous situation, marked evidence of his anger and rage at the memory of his ancient discomfiture, "but he escaped."

"Ha!"

"And more than that, married my cousin."

"The devil!"

"And eloped to this country; may the fiends confound it and him!"

"Amen!"

"And is now living in this very neighborhood."

"And you were on his trail, to take revenge, when my red friends put a stop to your movements?" said Girty, interrogatively.

"I was," replied Montlack, with emphasis; "and, what is still better for you, Simon, am ready, and able, and willing, to pay handsomely to be rid of him and his friends."

"How would it answer to put him in your place, with these impatient allies of mine?" said Girty, with cold-blooded earnestness, pointing to the savages, who seemed, from their lowering looks, somewhat displeased at the length of the conversation between the outlaw and their prisoner.

"Nothing better!" exclaimed Montlack, eagerly; "and if you will manage to rid me of him and his wife, and his fast friends, Duffe and Kenton, I will be liberal with you, and add another thousand to my offer. But, remember," continued the Captain, with sullen emphasis, "he, and this fellow, Kenton, must die at the stake, and I must see see them tortured."

"But his wife?" said Girty.

"As to my cousin," replied Montlack, after a moment of silent thought, and with a significant look at the renegade, "if I do not conclude to take her myself, you may make her the squaw of one of your savages."

"You have some other motive besides hatred," said

Girty, with a cunning smile, "to make you so anxious for their removal; but that is no business of mine, Captain: and as you pay well, I won't pry into your affairs, but will see what can be done; for, in revenging you, I avenge myself."

"True!" exclaimed Montlack, "and as to any motive I may have, Simon, that is neither here nor there, and with an old friend like you, and at a proper time, I would not hesitate to declare it; but at present, it is enough for you to know that I hate them all, and have cause for hatred and vengeance against them all, not forgetting this fellow, Kenton. Their death alone will satisfy me, and for this satisfaction I am ready to pay well."

"Had I known that you were so anxious for the death of Sharp-Eye, or Kenton," said Girty, "I could have gratified you long ago."

"How?"

"Since we met in Carolina, he was taken prisoner by the Indians, and condemned to the stake; but on account of our old acquaintance, or for some cause I know not what, my heart softened towards him, and I released and furnished him with means of escape!"

"Would that you had allowed the savages to roast him alive!" hissed Montlack, through his compressed teeth.

He had never forgiven the Scout his forced appearance at the marriage of Coma, and hated him with a cordiality not at all inferior to the hatred he bore Bryan.

"Well, never mind, Captain!" laughed Girty, "he shan't escape next time, for my love for him is not equal, by a long way, to my love for money. The devil only knows what induced me to stand his friend then, but I did so; but if you know their whereabouts it matters but little, for we'll soon have them all in our power again!"

"Sacre!" moaned the Captain, now that his fears were removed, once more feeling the pain of his bonds; "cut this cursed cord, Simon; it is anything but agreeable!"

"Easier said than done!" muttered Girty; "but give me your promise that you will make no attempt at escape, and I'll see what can be done."

"You have it, of course!" said Montlack, adding, with

some appearance of alarm, as he glanced at the sullen countenances of his captors; "but do you think, Girty, there is any doubt about my being released?"

"You can't count for certain on a savage in anything, but his taking a scalp whenever he can get it!" said Girty, with a dogged determination against giving any consolation to his old employer.

"But you know," said Montlack, with a quick glance at the sullen countenance of the outlaw, to see the effect of his remark; "if I remain a captive, then you lose the promised reward!"

Girty turned off without making any reply; for although he could but smile at the Captain's evident alarm, yet he was fully impressed with the force of the Captain's last argument; and though he made no answer, for he wished to leave him in as much doubt as possible, and thereby render his own services and protection the more important, still, he saw the necessity of doing something immediately; and with this purpose, when he had turned off from Montlack, approached his savage allies.

The renegade addressed the Indians in their own tongue, and though Montlack strained his ears with suspicious eagerness to hear what he said, he could only catch the deep guttural tones of his voice, and could make out nothing from what he heard. Girty was well aware of the difficulty attending his present design, and had more doubts than he chose to express of his influence with his savage friends; but by skilfully praising them (a sovereign lever with all classes and races of men) for their prowess, and by declaring the prisoner an old friend and a Frenchman, which he proved to them by pointing to his dark skin, and by assuring them that he was an enemy to the white man, and ready to lead them where they could take many scalps and captives, and much booty, he at length bent them to his purposes, and prevailed on them to relieve the Captain from his unpleasant captivity.

Once more upon his feet and unbound, Montlack recovered his spirits immediately, and would fain have had some farther conversation with Girty; but the renegade bidding him to mount, one of the savages at his command

having led forward the horse, would not listen; and with a significant motion of the hand stalked away, closely followed by three of the Indians; the four pursuing a path leading off in an exactly opposite direction to that which would have taken them to the settlements.

Although not a little surprised at the silence of Girty, and at the route he was pursuing, Montlack had no help for it, but to mount and follow, which he did with the best grace possible; the three remaining savages following closely behind him, carefully removing, as they went along, all traces of their trail.

Scarcely had Montlack and his captors passed beyond the little dell where this scene had occurred, when the tall person of Kenton arose from behind the trunk of an uprooted tree some three hundred paces distant, and the Scout, with a gesture of surprise, exclaimed:—

"Well, darn me, if them wern't Shawanees I never saw an Ingen; but how the cursed devils got on this 'ere side of the settlement without leavin' any trail behind rather beats me!"

Hardly a week had elapsed after the return of Simon and Titus from their long and thorough scouting expedition, before Kenton was again on the scout. With untiring industry and perseverance they had trailed down the Ohio River on the north, and circled around to the south in their zeal, pushing boldly into the very territory of the Indians; but without seeing any hostile signs either of the Wyandott or Shawanee, the Creek or the Cherokee. Yet for the last two weeks Sharp-Eye had again been on his lonely wanderings, and as usual had swept around north of the settlement, and was now nearly in a south-eastern direction, and on the eve of completing his circle before returning to the station. No wonder, then, that he expressed surprise at meeting a band of Shawanees, apparently having come from the south, and returning now, along with their captive, in the same direction. Had the marauders been Creeks or Cherokees, or from any of the tribes scattered over the present State of Tennessee, the old Scout would have been in no way astonished; but, as it was, he was completely puzzled, and sitting down

upon the trunk of the tree, behind which he had been concealed, gave expression to his troubled thoughts by exclaiming:—

"Well, Bang, this 'ere sarcumstance rather heads me; for if them wern't Shawanees from north of the river, and led on too by that tarnal thief Girty, then thar's no use in callin' me Sharp-Eye, and I'm no judge of yells and paint, and Ingen toggery. Cuss, me old boy," continued the borderer, looking kindly into the intelligent face of his dog, "if we didn't jist come in a grazer of gettin' ourselves into a snap by followin' after that ar' feller on the horse. We wern't a minute too soon in droppin' behind this 'ere tree, Bang; but howsumever, we did it, and saved our bacon—and now we must jist try our hands to unravel this dratted sarcumstance."

For ten minutes or more, Kenton silently racked his puzzled brain, in vain attempting to account in some reasonable way for the appearance of a band of Shawanees south of the settlements; but at last, giving up the attempt as hopeless, he sprang to his feet, exclaiming—

"I can't do it, Bang," and thar's no use tryin'. This 'ere business is a puzzle to me all round; for if it wern't agin the nater of things in ginerel, I'd swear this 'ere feller they've carried off wer' that drotted yaller Frenchman we left tied, some three years ago, in the Sargeant's cabin out in the Carolina. But come, old boy," he added, his doubting look giving place to one of intelligence and determination, "twon't do for us to be fooled by a chap that ain't neither Ingen nor white man, nothin' but a blasted renegade, as Mister Bryan calls him. Thar's only one way, Bang, to unravel this 'ere matter, and that's to take the trail while it ar' yet warm, and jist follow the bloody thieves to the end of thar journey."

Bang whined his assent to this proposition of his master, and the Scout, as if fully satisfied with its feasibility, without one thought of the danger or toil attending such an undertaking, proceeded at once to take the trail of the savages. Led by the never-failing nose of his dog, the borderer hurried rapidly along, at no time doubting or hesitating as to the trace, though the cunning Indians

had used every precaution to cover up and conceal all mark of their rapid retreat.

For two days, to the continued and increased surprise of Kenton, Girty and his band of Shawanees proceeded to move due south, as if only anxious to escape the country, and with no idea or intention of turning north. But the suspicious Scout was by no means satisfied with their apparent retreat, nor was he lulled into the belief that all danger was passing away from the settlement by this retrograde move of the enemy. On the contrary, his doubts and fears of some sinister intent on the part of the savages, were increased by this strange and unaccountable move of theirs; and so far from its lulling him into inactivity, and putting an end to farther pursuit, it only strengthened his determination to follow, and redoubled his energy and perseverance. On the first night after the retreat of Girty, and pursuit by Kenton, the latter, with bold indifference to all danger, crept near enough to the camp fires of the enemy to assure himself that he was not deceived as to their being Shawanees, or as to the renegade being their leader; and that the captive, who seemed on very friendly terms with his captors, was in truth none other than his old foe, the Frenchman.

Aroused to increased vigilance by this discovery, the iron-hearted and iron-nerved pioneer withdrew to a safe and convenient distance, where, after slaking his thirst from a running branch, and satisfying his hunger with a handful of parched corn and jerked venison, he lay down and slept, and as quietly, with no other guard but his faithful dog, as if surrounded by friends in a fortified camp, or in a peaceful home in the old States. With the first dawn of the succeeding day, he was up again on the alert, and pursuing with the faithfulness and untiring determination of a bloodhound, the fresh trace of the still retreating foe. On the morning of the third day, Girty and his party had reached that broken, hilly, and cavernous section of country, now embraced in the county of Edmonson; and Kenton, following closely upon their footsteps, suddenly, upon descending into a wild gloomy gorge, found himself standing at the mouth of an im-

mense cavern, with the trail of the enemy, both man and horse, leading directly into it. Not daring to enter the cavern, which was none other than the present justly celebrated Mammoth Cave, the Scout, with a full sense of his perilous situation, but with a settled determination to unravel, if possible, the plans of the foe, busied himself in hunting out some farther trace of the enemy. No trail of man or beast ever escaped his sharp vision, and whilst standing at the mouth of the cavern, the Scout's eagle eye quickly caught a faint path leading out therefrom, and running off in a different direction to that made by Girty and his band when entering. Pursuing this trail, it led him at once to the bank of Green River, where, to his inexpressible delight and satisfaction, which he could not help declaring both by look and voice, he discovered, safely moored in a little cove, a dozen or more large Indian canoes.

"Well, blast me!" exclaimed the Scout, with a loud whistle of surprise, on catching sight of the savage flotilla, "if them ar' Shawanees ain't born devils for cunning, then I don't know nothin'. Who'd have thought of them tarnal redskins taking so much trouble to throw the blame of their rascality upon the heads of the Creeks and Cherokees. Drat my buttons, Bang, if I don't see through 'em now—and it's all as plain as the nose on my face. This 'ere Mister Girty, a cunning devil that he is, has just brought up his scalping crew from the mouth of the river, so as to leave no trail behind (but how he passed the station at Vienna, cuss me if I know), and he intends, no doubt, to forage on the settlements from this 'ere side, till he is satisfied, drop down to the Ohio, and leave the Tennessee Ingens to bear the brunt of our vengeance; don't you see it, Bang?"

Bang, like most counsellors of royalty, assented at once to the superior wisdom of his master; and being withal a dog, and not able, even if he had so desired, to give advice or make suggestions, quietly submitted the question without argument.

Some of our legislative bodies, when party measures

are before them, might learn wisdom from the course of Bang.

Leaning his head upon the barrel of his long rifle, Kenton, with a thoughtful brow, ran over in his busy brain the probable designs of the enemy, and the best and most certain plan to defeat them. At length, his eye kindling, and with a joyous laugh, as if some brilliant thought had just flashed upon him, the borderer shouldered his rifle, and, tightening his belt, exclaimed in merry voice, as he struck off through the woods—

"Come, Bang, my old boy, we must be off. I've got a plan to spile the fun of this 'ere Mister Girty and his redskins; and, darn me, if I don't teach 'em a lesson they won't forget in a hurry. It won't be no fool's play, Bang; for I'm gwine to 'larm the settlements, put the boys at Vienna on thar guard, and then lead some of the rangers up here. May-be we won't smoke the tarnal rascals out of this 'ere cussed black hole of ther'n. Go it, old fellow! thar's a scrimmage ahead, to a sartainty."

CHAPTER IV.

TREACHEROUS and deceitful himself, Montlack had very little confidence in the faith of Girty; and during the first day of his captivity and rapid march, was made doubly uneasy by the continued silence of the renegade and unceasing watchfulness of his savage captors. More than once he had flitting thoughts of flight; but when he looked round upon the dense, dark forest, and caught the quick and suspicious glances of the Indians fastened upon him, his dreams of escape were gone almost as soon as created.

But his heart was put at rest at their first halting-place; for Girty, relieved from his duty as pilot and leader, saw proper, after his savage friends had fallen asleep, to unbosom himself to his old employer, and fully

explain his future plans, both for executing the wishes of Montlack, satisfying his own cravings for revenge, and fulfilling at the same time the designs of his Indian allies.

Content with the renegade's skilful and cunning scheme, which jumped with his own wicked desires, the Captain rested easy and well satisfied, and made the following day's march in much better spirits than he had done the day previous. He journeyed with a light heart, almost oblivious of his own situation, so confident was he now of a successful termination to his malignant plottings.

On reaching the mouth of the cave, great as was the astonishment of Montlack to see Girty and his comrades enter without hesitation that yawning gulf, his wonder was increased tenfold when his captors motioned him to follow, and without dismounting from his horse. Entering some five hundred paces, one of the Indians leading his horse, the gloom and Egyptian darkness which had hitherto surrounded him was suddenly dispelled, first by a few bright sparks, dropping from the steel and flint of Girty, and then by a broad and cheering blaze. No sooner had the tall flame, springing up from a pile of dry fuel, interspersed with strips of resinous pine, lighted up the darkness, and exhibiting the grand magnificence of the mighty cavern, than, far away in the distance, was seen another flame, as if an answering signal, and which was immediately greeted by loud yells from Girty and the savages. Montlack started with terror; looking around quickly, and with an uneasy expression, for the yells of the savages, reverberating from point to point in the silence and gloom of that wonderful cave, came echoing back, increased a hundredfold in volume and power, shaking to their very base the ponderous walls and arches of that mighty subterranean city.

Although a prisoner, and surrounded by wily and bloodthirsty savages, and with no assurance of safety but the word of the faithless renegade, Montlack forgot every cause of uneasiness, so totally was he overcome by the grandeur and magnificence of the scene; lighted up as it was, and disclosed to his wondering gaze, by the tall

blaze of the flaming beacon-fire. Around him, as far as eye could reach, was an impenetrable wall of heavy darkness; while, hundreds of feet above his head, reflecting back the light of the fire, faint and shadowy was the dark gray ceiling of rugged limestone, sweeping boldly and magnificently away, as if mocking the vain endeavor of his straining vision to measure their gigantic dimensions. Profound silence reigned around him, unbroken by the sighing of the wind, or the low note of bird or insect; and so deep and still was it, that he could even hear, not only the painful throbbings of his own rapidly pulsating heart, but of his spectre-like companions. The Indians, wishing to impress the mind of their prisoner with the vastness, and solitude, and grandeur of their wonderful subterranean fastness, stood about him like bronze statues, silent and immovable; watching, with burning orbs, the wild emotion painted upon his awe-struck countenance, and disclosed to their eager gaze, by every wayward flash of their now rapidly mouldering beacon. But another yell from the distant fire broke the mystic spell, and his captors, bidding him dismount, after securing his horse to a broken column, once more proceeded onward, deeper and deeper into that seemingly boundless and illimitable cavern. Moving steadily and rapidly forward, down a grand and lofty gallery, which to the eye of Montlack appeared illimitable, both in height and width, they soon arrived at the second fire, and were quickly surrounded by another small party of swarthy and eagerly curious savages. But Girty made no delay at this point, and seizing a flaming torch, the Indians all following his example, pressed quickly onward, waving high over his head the burning flambeaux. They were moving, now, along a broad and lofty avenue, and Montlack, gazing about him with eager curiosity, could distinctly see the rough, dark walls on either side, and the magnificent overhanging arch, sweeping grandly and nobly in the shadowy distance above him.

Now immense stalagmitic columns, incrustated with glittering points, would flash back the bright beams of the waving torches, relieving, for the moment, the sombre

dreariness of those cheerless dark walls; then came a sweet, low, gurgling stream of pure limpid water, flashing across his path, and reminding him of sunshine and green woods, and blessed childhood; and then again, in quick succession, would roll up on either side, immense rugged cliffs, filling his soul with awe at their stately grandeur; and once more would stretch, far away in the distance, dark, gloomy passages, leading off from the main avenue, and made only the more dreary and terrific by the faint and shadowy light of the passing flambeaux. Proceeding in this manner for perhaps a mile, through every species of varied scenery, embracing the wild, the majestic, the grand, the rugged, the beautiful, the cheerful, and the dreary, they all at once, after an abrupt descent of some twenty feet from the level passage they had hitherto been pursuing, entered a spacious circular room, now called the church, but at that time brilliantly lighted up by an immense fire placed directly in its centre, and occupied by a large band of Indians, the main party of Girty's marauding allies.

It was a wildly picturesque scene, that spacious chamber of nature, fashioned by the will of Him who spanned the heavens with his omnipotent hand; and as it spread out in all its grand proportions, more than a hundred feet in diameter, with its arched stone ceiling springing up to the height of seventy feet, the eye of the amazed beholder scanned with curious rapidity its majestic dimensions, and his heart was filled with silent awe.

Nor did the wild groupings of the savages, sleeping, standing, and reclining with graceful naturalness around the flaming fire, detract anything from the grandeur or strange picturesqueness of that mysterious subterranean palace. Their athletic and half-garbed persons, grim and unearthly with paint and barbarous ornament, and reflected dim and shadowy, and often gigantic, against the surrounding wall, rather added to, than detracted from the romantic wildness of that imposing scene.

At the appearance of Girty and his band, along with their pale-faced prisoner, the Indians within the chamber, with the exception of their chief, sprang forward with

loud yells of welcome and savage exultation. The chieftain, however, maintained his seat by the fire, exhibiting no emotion either of pleasure or exultation; but, reclining with easy grace and dignity upon his buffalo-robe, awaited, with all the indifference and kingly nonchalance of his stoic race, the approach and report of his returning warriors.

He could not have been more than five-and-thirty years of age, that haughty, unexcited, and determined-looking savage; and, as he lay there upon his barbarous couch, in his grand subterranean palace, surrounded by his wild warriors, presented a picture of strength and grace, and of manly and uncultivated beauty, but rarely equalled, and seldom if ever excelled.

The proud Shawanee chieftain, in his grandly proportioned but gloomy abode, surrounded by the athletic figures of his dusky and half nude followers, made out a scene very similar to Milton's splendid description of Satan, when hurled from heaven, and sitting in Pandemonium, attended by his infernal peers; and Girty, as he now approached to make his report and speech in behalf of Montlack, was a fit personification of the dark-browed, down-looking, and avaricious Mammon:—

"Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
From heaven;—for even in heaven his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent; admiring more
The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught divine, or holy else enjoyed
In vision, beatific."

Anxious to fulfil the wishes of Montlack, and thereby satisfy his own malevolent feelings towards our hero, and at the same time (which was of far greater weight with him, than either love or hate) gain the large reward offered by his employer, the renegade approached the Indian chieftain with many fears, for he was by no means satisfied that he could bend him to his plan, or even save the life of the trusting Captain. He knew that the savages were determined upon sacrificing some pale-faced prisoner to the spirits of their departed friends, before making their contemplated attack upon the settlements,

and that the great cave, which was a holy and sacred place in their estimation, was to be the scene of the bloody offering. Indeed, he had been sent out to seize the victim; and now only returned, was ignorant that his savage allies had, during his absence, taken a prisoner, and were now waiting his presence, and the coming of the young warriors, to offer him up as a propitiatory sacrifice to the Great Spirit. Ignorant of this fact, which would have greatly relieved his fears, had he only known it, Girty, with many doubts as to the success of his schemes, drew near, and stood without speaking in the presence of the Indian chieftain.

"My white brother will speak?" said the Shawanee, waving his hand to Girty.

"The Great Chief sent his white brother with the young warriors, to spy out the lodges of the pale face. Seven suns have come and gone since we sought the trail of the Long-knife. The young warriors have kept the path, and not slept."

"The ear of the Great Chief is open, he hears the voice of his white brother," muttered the Shawanee.

"The young warriors of the Great Chief," continued Girty, "have seen the wigwams of the pale face. They are scattered thick over the hunting-grounds of my red brother, like the lodges of the Long-knife where the sun rises, beyond the great mountains."

"Tis well," said the Shawanee, with an impatient gesture; "the Great Chief and his warriors will take many scalps. My white brother has not lost his tongue."

"The young warriors," said the renegade with some hesitation, "have not taken any scalps. They were not upon the war-path; but they have followed the dark trail, and can guide the great brave of the Shawanees to the lodges of the sleeping pale face."

"My children are not fools," said the chieftain, with a glance at the party of Girty; "they know when to hunt the tomahawk like warriors, and when to lie like a snake in the tall grass; they have obeyed the command of their father, and done well. The Shawanee warrior will not alarm the buffalo when the tribes are gathering for a

long hunt. My white brother will speak, for the ear of the Great Chief is never closed to the deeds of his young braves."

"My red brothers did not shut their eyes while on the trail of the pale face," continued Girty, with an uneasy glance at Montlack. "They have brought a prisoner to the Great Chief; but the Great Chief will give his hand to the captive, and call him brother, when he hears the words of his white brave."

A murmur of dissatisfaction greeted this speech of the renegade; but the Indian chief, looking gravely around, replied—

"My white brother whispers a strange story into the ear of the Great Chief of the Shawanee braves; but let him speak, for the Great Chief will not shut his ear to the words of his white warrior. His ear is still open, and he will listen to what his white brother has to say; for he knows he will speak the words of wisdom, and not with a forked tongue."

"The prisoner of the young braves is the friend of the Great Chief's white brother," continued Girty, "and his heart is open to the wrongs of the red man. He hates the Long-knife, and is a friend to the Shawanee."

"The Great Chief is not blind," replied the Shawanee, looking sharply into the face of Girty, "and his white brother must not speak with a lying tongue. The young braves have taken the pale face upon their war-path into the country of the Long-knife, and their white brother will not speak with a double tongue, to turn aside the tomahawk of the red warrior."

"The Great Chief of the Shawanees," replied Girty, leading Montlack into the full light of the blazing fire, "is not blind; he has the eye of the soaring eagle, and knows a pale face whenever he sees him. He will look upon the prisoner, and say whether his white warrior has spoken with a lying tongue. The friend of his white brother is a Frenchman, and the brother of the red man. He hates the pale face, and will guide the Great Chief and his warriors where they may take many scalps. My red brother cannot be deceived; let him look upon the

prisoner, and tell his young warriors if their white brother is a fool."

Rolling his burning orbs over the face of Montlack, who, at a hint from Girty, struggled to bear the scrutiny with an air of quiet fearlessness, the Shawanee, at length, as if satisfied, exclaimed with deep and guttural emphasis—

"My white brother has not spoken with a forked tongue! His words are the words of wisdom! The prisoner is not one of our pale-faced enemies, but a follower of our good father over the great waters. He is welcome; the Great Chief of the Shawanees will give his hand to his new brother."

Girty interpreting the wish of the chief, for the conversation had been carried on in the Shawanee tongue, Montlack gladly grasped the proffered hand of his new friend; all parties, or at least the renegade and Captain, being highly delighted that the interview had terminated so pleasantly.

The savages, who had hitherto been standing around in groups, gravely listening to the talk of Girty and their chieftain, no sooner saw Montlack received as a friend by the latter, than with one accord, they began to prove their love for the smirking Frenchman, by giving him many warm and very feeling fraternal hugs. His reception could not have been more affectionate, and the Captain, with the politeness of his nation, strove to receive their savage demonstrations of love in good part; but in spite of all his efforts, much to the amusement of Girty, and also to the seeming delight of the Shawanee leader, gave many shrugs, and no few groans of pain, under the crushing embraces of his brawny red brothers. But at length, having received the welcome, and returned the "how de do, broder," of every savage present, the Captain, with a heated brow, and countenance almost as red as the vermilion-colored faces of his new friends, was left alone, and, at a sign from Girty, took his seat upon a rock, the chieftain, in company with the renegade, and half dozen of the principal Indian braves.

"The Great Chief of the Shawanees," said the leader

of the savages, addressing Montlack, Girty acting as interpreter, "is glad to see his French brother in the mighty lodge of the Great Prophetess of the red man."

"Tis a grand wigwam," replied Montlack, naturally falling into the style of the Shawanee, and throwing out his hands to express a sense of the vastness of the cavern; "a fit lodge for my red brother, the Great Chief of the Shawanees."

"My French brother has seen nothing," replied the chief. "It would take many moons to travel over the Big Lodge of the Great Spirit, and see its many wonders."

"Are the rooms and paths of this mighty lodge all known to my red brother?" inquired Montlack.

"Not all," replied the Shawanee; "they were all known to the father of the Great Chief; but since the coming of the pale face, and departure of the mighty Prophetess of the red man, many of the paths of the Great Lodge have been lost to the Shawanee brave."

"Did the Great Prophetess of my brother," said Montlack, becoming interested in the wild legend of the savage, "live in this mighty lodge now occupied by the Shawanee Chief and his warriors?"

"Many moons ago," replied the savage, "when the father of the Great Chief led the warriors of the Shawanee to battle; before the hunting-grounds of the red man were trailed by the pale-faced hunter, the Great Prophetess held her council-fire in this mighty lodge, and all the tribes of the North and South came every twelve moons to learn wisdom, and hear from their departed friends in the 'happy land' beyond the grave. The Great Camp* of the nations, and burial-place of the mighty braves, was only a short day's journey from the mouth of the Big Lodge. The Chief of the Shawanees has been there, and has seen the walls of the camp, and the mounds covering the bones of

*The Indian Hill lies one mile from Brownsville, in Edmonson County; it is a large hill, and one mile in circumference; its altitude, 84 feet, except on one side, which is easy of ascent on foot, perpendicular. The remains of a fortification are seen around the brow, and a number of mounds and burial-places are scattered over the area. A spring of fine water issues from the rock near the surface.—*Collins's History of Kentucky.*

his fathers. This boundless lodge," continued the chief, with a proud gesture, becoming excited with the memory of the ancient glory of his people, "was then the wigwam of the Great Prophetess, and entrance to the happy hunting-grounds of the red man, beyond the grave. Here she received the spirits of dead warriors, and led them along secret paths to join their departed friends across the 'dark waters;' and here she talked words of wisdom to the living braves, and bore their messages to the warriors gone on their long journey to the spirit-land!"

"And did the Great Prophetess of the red man die?" asked Montlack, becoming more and more interested in the wild tradition of the Shawanee; the vehemence of the swarthy warrior, and the gloomy and unearthly scene around him, giving a force and air of truthfulness to the chief's legend, and lending an interest that would not otherwise have been connected with so strange a story.

"My French brother speaks with the tongue of a silly squaw!" said the Shawanee, scornfully; "the Prophetess of the red man was placed in this great lodge by the Manitou of the Indian, and could not die. She forbade my father, and the tribes of the North, and the red warriors from the South, from building their lodges in this land of the buffalo and elk; and it was kept as a common hunting-ground for all the nations, from the big lakes in the North to the salt waters in the South. The Great Spirit never permitted the game to grow scarce, and at times the dead warriors were brought back from the spirit-land to follow the chase for a season in their old hunting-grounds!"

"Will the Great Chief tell his white brother why the Prophetess of the red man departed from the Big Lodge, given her by the Great Spirit?" inquired Montlack.

"When the pale face came from towards the rising sun," said the chief, gloomily, "and the Great Prophetess saw the white hunter treading over the sacred hunting grounds of her race, she bade the braves of all the tribes dig up the tomahawk and drive out the intruders, when she saw the pale faces, in spite of all opposition, set up their countless lodges where no wigwam of the red man

had ever been permitted to stand; and when she beheld the number of warriors, killed by the Long-knife, trooping to the spirit-land, her heart grew faint and sad, and she departed to another great lodge, somewhere near the setting sun, across the great father of waters. But she did not entirely desert her children!" continued the Shawanee, a gleam of joy spreading over his sad face and driving away its gloom; "for she left her sacred body behind, to guard this last trail of the red man from the keen eye of the pale-faced destroyers of her race, and to warn back the warriors of the spirit-land, when they should again come forth to seek their old hunting-grounds!"

"And does she never return to meet the Shawanee brave, and guide him along the dark paths of her old lodge?" said Montlack.

"The Great Prophetess will not forget her children among the Shawanees!" replied the chief, looking proudly around upon his silent warriors; "she knows they have not yet buried the tomahawk, and are still battling with the pale face for their ancient hunting-ground. Once every twelve moons she enters again her sacred body, left here in this mighty lodge; and, by the will of the Great Spirit, stands once more dressed in all her ornaments, to receive the spirits of fallen braves and guide them safely to the blessed abodes of the dead, beyond the dark waters!"

"Has my red brother ever looked upon the body of the Great Prophetess?" said Montlack, doubtingly.

"The Great Chief never speaks with a lying tongue!" replied the Shawanee, his swarthy face flushing up at the doubt implied by Montlack's question.

"Will my red brother permit his white brother to behold this wonderful sight?" said Montlack, still doubting, although somewhat staggered by the strange legend, supported as it was by the positive affirmation of the grave chieftain.

"That my French brother may no longer think the Shawanee brave to speak with the lying tongue of the pale face, the Great Chief will but speak with his warriors and then lead him to behold the wonders of the Big Lodge,

and to look, if he wills it, upon the holy body of the Great Prophetess!"

"His white brother," replied Montlack, "will not forget the kindness of the Great Chief, and will tell his father, across the salt waters, all the wonders he has seen in the big wigwam of the red man!"

"Tis well!" said the Shawanee; "my white brother speaks with the soft tongue of the singing-bird, and his words, like the voice of the young squaw, are very pleasant to his red brother. But the ear of the Great Chief is now closed; he would talk with his warriors."

The chief having thus signified his intention to hold a council of his braves, at a sign from Girty, Montlack arose from his seat by the fire, and followed him to a distant part of the cavern.

Left to themselves, the Shawanee chieftain and his warriors drew nearer together, and were soon engaged in grave deliberation. The result of their council will be made known in our next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

MEN met together in council, whether civil or military, generally consume much time in discussion or deliberation; and when once determined upon any particular course, it very often happens that they consume as long a period in settling down upon some plan to have the result of their combined wisdom carried into execution. Not so, however, was it with the Shawanee chieftain and his warriors, for, the word of the former having been given to Montlack, to show him the body of the Prophetess, and exhibit the wonders and magnitude of the cave, the only question of discussion was the manner in which it should be done, and as to whether the torture of the prisoner alluded to in our last chapter should be before or after this ceremony. The latter being decided on, the

council, without delay or ceremony, was broken up, each warrior hurrying away to prepare, either to follow the chieftain in his pilgrimage to the body of the Prophetess, or to get ready the necessary materials for consummating the horrid ceremonial to be performed upon his return. At a word from his leader, a dark-browed, sullen warrior picked out some twenty young braves, and with them proceeded at once towards the mouth of the cavern, whilst the remainder of the savages—some thirty in number—their chieftain setting them the example, busied themselves in getting ready for the contemplated visit to the tomb of the Great Prophetess. Viewing it in the light of a religious ceremony, and one of no little importance, in their estimation, the Indians, with superstitious reverence, bent every effort to put themselves in a suitable trim for this solemn expedition. With as much zeal and care as ever a beauty did in her secret boudoir, each warrior added a fresh coat of paint to his already disfigured countenance; and this done to his satisfaction, next sought out some little barbaric ornament to carry with him, and leave with idolatrous devotion at the shrine of the Prophetess. The chief having painted himself with great care, to perfect his toilet, clasped around his neck—and with as proud a smile as ever a queen did when clasping a circlet of diamonds—a necklace of bloody scalp-locks; and then, girding his blanket tightly and gracefully around his athletic person with a brilliant belt of wampum, so as to leave his right arm naked, and unimpeded by his dress, he took from the hand of the nearest warrior a flaming torch of resinous pine, and, with a haughty gesture to his followers, stepping a pace towards Montlack, exclaimed—

“The Great Chief and his braves are ready to look upon the face of their sleeping mother. My white brother, if he would learn the dark paths of the Big Lodge of the Great Prophetess, will follow the trail of the Shawanee warrior.”

Without waiting the reply or assent of Montlack, the Shawanee placed himself at the head of his warriors, and passing from the circular room they had hitherto been

occupying, entered at an easy and regular ascent a broad and lofty avenue. Following this avenue, and moving along in silence, they had gone, perhaps, the third of a mile, and may-be more, when the chief halted suddenly, and pointing upwards with his torch to a narrow gallery sweeping across the main cave, remarked—

“My white brother would see the body of the red man's mother; the big tomb is up there! will he go?”

Montlack expressed his willingness.

“The Great Chief of the Shawanees,” continued the savage, “has promised his pale-faced brother to lead him along the winding paths of the Big Lodge to the body of the Prophetess. He has not a forked tongue, to promise one thing and do another. My white brother is no squaw, and the Great Chief does not follow an unknown trail.”

Moving onward, the chief ascended by a narrow flight of rough steps to the gallery he had pointed out, and, when once there, turning off short to the right, entered a magnificent apartment more than two miles in length, forty feet high, and twenty wide. It was a scene of fairy beauty, and of surpassing magnificence—that long and broad avenue—with its pillars of white and translucent stalagmites, its floor of crystallized salts, and ceiling white and smooth as if made by the cunning hand of the skilful plasterer.

“My white brother sees the tomb of the Great Prophetess,” said the chief, solemnly. “The Good Spirit has made it grand and beautiful, that the braves of her race may not be ashamed of the grave of their mother. The Shawanee warriors will look again upon the face of their Prophetess, and my white brother need not shut his eyes.”

The Indians, proceeding for a short space along this broad avenue, their steps gradually becoming slower and slower, and their faces expressing increased reverence and awe as they approached nearer and nearer the object of their superstitious veneration, the chief again motioned them to halt, this time before an immense hanging stalac-

tite,* and striking it at short intervals with his tomahawk, to the inexpressible wonder of Montlack, it gave forth a smothered solemn sound, like the deep-toned bell of a cathedral; the rocks, and corners, and arches of the old cave echoing back its swelling notes, as if the answering peals of numberless sister churches.

"The Great Chief has sent his mother warning of the approach of her children," said the Shawanee, noticing the astonishment of Montlack and of some of the younger warriors; "he must not steal, like a prowling wolf, into the sacred presence of the Prophetess.

In a deep guttural voice, the chief now commenced a wild chant, which was immediately taken up and repeated by his warriors, and in this manner they continued their solemn march, no longer holding aloft their torches, but pointing them sadly to the earth, in the fashion of soldiers when paying the last rites to a dead comrade. Chanting this barbaric dirge, the savages, with their half nude persons, flaming torches, and grotesquely-painted faces, presented an unearthly, wizard-like assemblage, not unworthy of the gloomy grandeur of that wonderful subterranean chamber. They had progressed in this manner some distance beyond the mysterious bell, when suddenly, at a wave from their chieftain's torch, the savages, kneeling, formed a crescent of flaming fire around a small recess or antechamber, which was now distinctly visible, although elevated some feet above the level of the floor. Within this small chamber, now brilliantly lighted up, by the combined flame of thirty torches, its crystallized formations, and translucent stalactites reflecting back the light with dazzling lustre, Montlack, with a thrill of superstitious awe, beheld the stark bodies of two grim warriors, in a sitting posture, leaning against the extreme wall of the recess, and to all appearance as perfect as if just placed there.

Stepping within the half circle made by his kneeling warriors, the Shawanee chieftain stood a moment, with his

* This wonderful bell is not now in existence, for it was broken several years ago, by a curious traveller.—*Collins's History of Kentucky.*

hands folded across his breast, as if in deep sorrow, then drawing his gleaming tomahawk, he went through with some mystic legendary ritual, after which he brandished it fiercely around his head, and grasping with his left hand the imaginary scalp-lock of some enemy, broke the deep silence of the cavern with a terrific yell. This done, as the wild echo of his voice died away in the distance, with gloomy brow, he chanted:—

"The Great Chief would awaken his red brothers from their long sleep;

"But their ears are closed, and they hear him not.

"The Prophetess of the red man has passed to the spirit-land;

"And along with her the spirits of the slumbering braves.

"They sit now, lonely and silent, by the body of their dead mother;

"The yell of their Shawanee brother will not reach their ears.

"Their eyes are closed and heavy. The gleaming tomahawk of the Great Chief passes unheeded before them.

"The spirits of the Shawanee braves, fallen under the long knife of the pale faces, linger in the dark paths of the Great Lodge.

"They await the coming of their dead mother to guide them to the happy hunting-grounds;

"But she comes not;

"She has gone towards the setting sun, and her sorrowing children mourn her long absence.

"The young braves of the Shawanees are here;

"They would look again upon the face of their great Prophetess.

"They are upon the war track against the pale faces, and would leave gifts with their mother.

"The Great Chief has not come empty-handed to the lodge of his mother;

"He brings rich gifts to place in her lap.

"He will look again upon the cold face of his mother; but the Great Chief is no child, and will not weep.

"He will soon return to where his young warriors keep watch around the weeping pale face;

"But the heart of the Great Chief will be like the flint stone;

"He will not forget his mother.

"The Shawanee braves but wait the coming of the Great Chief to torture the pale face;

"Let my mother hear and be glad."

This wild chant or monody of the chief finished, he beckoned one of his warriors, and approaching the recess, entered the little antechamber. The two living savages stood now immediately between and almost touching the stiff and rigid forms of the fabled champions of the Prophetess. After a moment spent in brushing away a slight covering of fine sand, the chief and the warrior, stooping down, by their united effort, raised a broad slab of stone about four feet long and as many wide, exposing to view a square excavation about three feet deep and as many in length and breadth. This done, the warrior immediately retired, leaving the chief standing alone. He stood perhaps a minute by the side of the pit; but when the warrior had rejoined his comrades, stooped and reverently removed a thin matting made from the inner bark of some tree, fully exposing, as he did so, all the wonders of that mysterious nether subterranean tomb. After a short space of solemn silence, the Shawanee, maintaining his position by the pit, and the Indians kneeling with awe-struck countenances around the former, turned to where Montlack stood, saying:

"The Great Chief is once more in the presence of his mother. Will my white brother look upon the face of the great Prophetess, and know that his red brother does not speak with a lying tongue?"

With some degree of trepidation, which he could not entirely conceal, for his mind was confused, and he was in doubt what to think of the wonderful subterranean abode into which he had been so unexpectedly introduced, and with his thoughts whirling with the strange and mysterious scenes he had already witnessed, Montlack, at the request of the savage, silently entered the little antechamber; but hesitating, he halted near the threshold,

gazing with a look of wondering terror upon the grim and hideous countenances of the two dead warriors.

"My white brother is no squaw," said the Indian, with a slight smile of contempt; "the two braves have been sleeping there since my father led the warriors of the Shawanee to battle. They will never awake again. They have hands, but can never again hurl the tomahawk; have ears, but cannot hear; have mouths, but cannot give the scalp-halloo. They are sleeping their long sleep, my red brothers, and only when the red man has been driven towards the setting sun, across the father of waters, will they wake from their slumber, and go away, by the dark paths of the Big Lodge, to the spirit-land."

Partly shaking off his fears, Montlack drew near to the side of the Indian, and there, at his very feet, in solemn and lonely silence, sat a tall female* in perfect preservation. She had a rich but barbarous robe of skin gathered gracefully around her person, and savage ornaments of various descriptions were scattered profusely about her. It was the traditionary mother of the red man, the Great Prophetess of the Big Lodge. Her body was placed in a sitting posture, with her arms folded up, and with her hands laid across her bosom; whilst around and about her were sheets of fine bark matting, and various kinds of skins, beautifully ornamented with leaves and vines; and at her side lay a pair of moccasins, a knapsack, and a reticule. These latter articles were all made of wove or knit bark, and fancifully and grotesquely ornamented with borders brilliantly colored, and secured by loops and cords; and in and about them were various ornaments, portions of dress, and instruments of female industry.

"My white brother will no longer doubt the word of the Great Chief," said the Shawanee, after waiting a short space for Montlack to satisfy his curiosity; "for he is not blind, and before him is the body of the Great Prophetess."

* The body of this female, and the two Indians, and all the ornaments mentioned, were discovered a few years since in the cave.—*Collins's History of Kentucky.*

"My red brother speaks with the tongue of truth," replied Montlack, "and his white brother is satisfied."

Taking from the excavation the knapsack, the chief opened it, and after drawing therefrom many gaudy head-dresses and mantles, all curiously made of colored quills, and decorated with the rich and brilliant plumage of birds, exclaimed, with a gleam of pride and satisfaction, as he held them up to the gaze of Montlack:—

"These were the ornaments worn by the Prophetess of the red man when she came forth to meet the assembled braves of her race. These," he continued, holding up a necklace made from the red hoof of the fawn, the claw of an eagle, and jaw of a bear, "are emblematical of her sway over the hunting-grounds of our race. These," he added, exhibiting two immense rattlesnake skins, "show that she had all the cunning and wisdom of the snake, and would be a deadly foe. And these," he continued, a shade of gloom flitting across his brow, as he held up two whistles, "were once used by our good mother to summon to her presence the warriors of her race; but now they are only needed when she comes once every twelve moons to gather together the spirits of the braves wandering through the unknown paths of the Big Lodge, to lead them to the happy hunting-grounds across the dark waters."

"And this—why is it here?" said Montlack, pointing to the reticule.

"To hold the gifts of her children," said the chief, at the same time drawing from his bosom a richly ornamented pair of moccasins, and placing them therein—"and now, as my white brother is satisfied, and the Great Chief has looked upon the face of his mother, he will permit the warriors of his tribe to approach and deliver their offerings."

Montlack, at a motion from the chieftain's hand, having retired; at the command of their leader, the savages, one at a time, and by rotation, left the crescent, and entered the little chamber containing the body of the Prophetess. After standing a moment by the side of the pit, looking solemnly down at the lonely figure sitting there in silence

and solitude, they would deposit their gifts, and resume their places in the circle, until the entire band had in a like manner gratified their curiosity, or rather, religious zeal. The chief, and the warrior who had aided him in removing the slab, again replaced it over the tomb; then, throwing a necklace of bear's claws around the neck of each of the dead warriors, the two retired to the main avenue, and the ceremony was ended.

"Does my white brother wish to see more of the Big Lodge?" inquired the chief, as he once more placed himself at the head of his followers.

"The wonders of the Big Lodge are all new to the Great Chief's white brother," replied Montlack; "and if the Shawanee brave will lead, his pale-faced brother will follow."

"Tis well!" said the chief, with a proud smile, "my brother speaks the words of wisdom. The pale face has no lodge like the lodge of the Great Prophetess; and my white brother may tell his father, when he crosses the salt water, all the wonders his Shawanee brother has shown him."

Passing onward, along the same beautiful avenue they had as yet been following, the chief led Montlack through many grand and magnificent apartments, all glittering with pure white pillars, fluted columns, straight and fanciful stalactites, and floor of crystallized salts, relieved now and then by dim and shadowy domes, huge rugged cliffs of dark gray stone, and bright purling streams of pure waters flashing across their path. It was a wild and fairy scene throughout; a mingling together of the grand, the beautiful, and magnificent; and Montlack, forgetting all things else, could only give expression, in broken exclamations of delight, to his continued wonder and astonishment. Turning back and retracing his steps, the savage once more entered the main cave, and after a few minutes' rapid walk, stopped suddenly, and gave a loud, prolonged yell, and his followers, throwing themselves some twenty feet apart, in a continued line, greeted the yell of their chief with an answering shout, at the same time holding aloft their torches, so as to fully illuminate a

magnificent room, several hundred feet in length, fifty or more in width, with a high arched ceiling; and a broad gallery stretching the entire length of the apartment. The floor of this chamber was of smooth and hard sand, like the beach of the ocean; and during the moment of silence following the yell of the savages, Montlack could distinctly hear the faint, distant hum of tumbling waters.

"The Great Chief," said the Shawanee, "has led his white brother to the dance-room of the red man. The war-dance of the various tribes, once every twelve moons, were performed here under the eye of the Prophetess. If my brother would see the war-dance of the Shawanee, the young warriors are ready."

Montlack having signified his desire to witness the performance, at a signal from their chief, about one half of the savages, forming into a ring, commenced their wild and uncouth national dance. It was an unearthly and wizard-like scene; that dance of the Shawanee warrior, by torch-light, in that grand subterranean ball-room; and as their half nude, barbarously painted persons flitted dimly through the mazy evolutions of this barbaric sport, they resembled more a company of fierce demons, moving to the wail of the howling damned, than anything else. But at a wave of their chieftain's torch the sport ceased, the war-song was over, the dance ended; and the great ball-room of the Big Lodge was again lonely and deserted.

Once more proceeding onward, they passed through many vast halls, and avenues, and immense amphitheatres, all grand and lofty and magnificent; and many of them reflecting back with sparkling brilliancy the flashing light of the passing torches, proved to the astonished vision of Montlack, that they too, like the other chambers he had examined, were beautified with rich and fanciful incrustations. But merely passing through these, as if they were nothing uncommon, the Shawanee continued to move rapidly onward, until he had entered a vast and gloomy chamber, with a lofty and scarcely perceptible ceiling; then halting, he with a proud smile threw his hand aloft, exclaiming:—

"If my white brother would see the heavens, let him look! The Great Spirit has covered the Big Lodge of our mother with a tent of stars."

Following with his eyes the upraised hand of the savage, Montlack started back with an exclamation of astonishment; for there, sure enough, far away above him, was to all appearance the firmament,* spread out in all its glory, with its rolling clouds, studded with bright stars; and still further in the distance a flaming comet with its long white tail.

"It is a custom of our race," said the chief, as if in explanation, "to sleep much in the open air under the broad heavens; so that our eyes, when unclosed, if only for a moment, may ever look up at the camp-fires of the good angels. The Great Father of the red man did not forget this custom of his children, and, in building the Big Lodge, covering the paths leading to the happy hunting-grounds beyond the grave, he spread out, as you see, those clouds and stars, to cheer up and make glad the drooping heart of the wandering brave. The Manitou of the red-man is not blind, he knows all things, and is not deaf to the cries of his children. He saw that the braves were sad, wandering through the dark paths of the Big Lodge, when they could not see the camp-fires flaming above them—and he spread out the heavens as a tent of stars to make them glad!"

Halting a few moments to permit Montlack and his followers to enjoy a passing glance at the singular optical illusion exhibited in this chamber of the firmament, with its stars, and comet, and clouds, the Shawanee again resumed his march, and after passing through many winding avenues, and by rich grottos, and at the foot of a beautiful cataract, but without making any stay at either, he at length entered a grand and circular room, the same now called the Temple!

"My white brother," said the Indian, when he had

* The star chamber is still one of the most wonderful apartments of the cave, and presents the most perfect optical illusion; for, in looking up to the ceiling, the spectator seems to see the firmament itself studded with stars.

entered the magnificent apartment, "is standing in the great council-chamber of the red man! Here the warriors of all the tribes, from the rising to the setting sun, were accustomed to assemble when they would learn wisdom from the Great Prophetess! And here would our good mother come, to meet the braves around the council fire, for her ears were as quick as the startled deer to hear the cries of her children! My young warriors," added the chief, turning to his followers, "will light up the council-fires, that their white brother may see the greatness of the council-chamber of their fathers!"

At this request, or rather command of their leader, the savages hurried to kindle into a blaze many heaps of dry wood and cane, placed there at some anterior period; and when the gloom of that immense vault had been fully dispelled by the cheering lights of the flaming fires, the scene exhibited to the staring vision of Montlack, was one of extraordinary grandeur and sublimity! The council-chamber, in all its vast proportion, spreading over an area of more than two acres, and spanned by a single dome, one hundred and twenty feet high, was completely illuminated by the numerous fires lighted up by the savages; and the grandeur and magnificence of the mighty domes of the earth, formed by the power of wealth, and instigated by religious zeal, sank into insignificance, when compared with that hidden and mysterious work of the Great Spirit. The top of the lofty dome spreading over the council-chamber, was formed of a smooth oval slab of gray limestone, and the walls swept away on every side in regular graduated proportions, as if fashioned by the hand of a skilful architect, and measured by the plumb and square. The heart of Montlack, as his eye embraced the stupendous outlines of this mighty subterranean temple, was filled with unspeakable awe! His tongue was hushed and silent, nor did he scarcely breathe, so intent was his excited curiosity! But the fires at length burning low, and the extremities of this vast apartment becoming again shrouded in thick darkness, Montlack, his curiosity by no means sated, was aroused

by the touch of Girty, and once more summoned to follow the footsteps of the Shawanee chieftain.

After leaving the Temple, or Great Council Chamber, the savage again leading his wildly picturesque band of swart warriors, continued steadily onward, until he stood upon the confines of what is now called the Bottomless Pit. Slowly waving his torch, showing close at his feet, the gloomy horrors of that terrible place, the Shawanee king, with a voice of sadness, said to Montlack, who had drawn back with a shudder from the immediate brink of the yawning gulf—

"My white brother beholds the dark entrance leading to the land of the bad spirits; over this bottomless pit," continued the chief, hurling a large stone down into the gloomy chasm, which could be heard bounding from point to point, and rumbling and tossing in the distant darkness, "the spirits of all our race have to pass, before they can reach the happy hunting-grounds beyond the grave. Upon this narrow bridge must they cross," he added, holding his torch to the single trunk of a tree spanning the terrible chasm; "and they who have offended the Great Spirit—the coward, the traitor to his race, and ally of the pale face, never tread upon the farther side. They sink far down into the dark land of the wicked, where there are no forests, and no game, and no light—nothing but wide deserts, and gloom, and snakes, and beasts of prey. The great chief of the Shawanee is ready to pass over; will his white brother go with him?"

Montlack exhibited an evident reluctance about attempting the dangerous passage pointed out by the chief, and was on the eve of declining the offer of the savage, when the Indian, noticing his terror, exclaimed in an angry voice, and with a somewhat suspicious look—

"My brother is a squaw, and dare not follow the Shawanee brave! The young warriors had better make down a couch of buffalo-skins for their pale-faced brother! He speaks with a forked tongue, and is no friend to the red man! His lying heart fears the wrath of the Great Spirit! The step of the good and brave is bold and fearless, and to them the narrow bridge and deep pit brings no terror!

Urged on by Girty, who whispered him that the Indians would have no faith in his assertions of friendship unless he obeyed the wish of their chief, Montlack at length, having partly thrown off his fears, exclaimed—

"The Great Chief doubts the faith of his white brother! He has called him a squaw, and spoken angrily to him, before the young warriors. My red brother did wrong, for his white brother is no squaw, and is a friend to the red man. He has followed the Great Chief through all the dark paths of the Big Lodge, and is ready to go with him over the gloomy pit."

"The Great Chief was wrong," said the savage, quickly, his face clearing up, and extending his brawny hand to Montlack. "Come!" he added, in a proud and confident tone, stepping fearlessly upon the narrow bridge—"Come!" The Great Spirit will protect the good and brave. The coward and traitor had better die!"

Passing quickly and securely over the dizzy and terrible abyss, the chief was immediately followed by Montlack, Girty, and the remainder of the band; but as the last warrior, who had lingered behind, perhaps with conscious guilt, and whose heart had failed him, stepped upon that narrow bridge, he was seen to totter and waver, and scarcely had he passed over one half of the dangerous way before he halted, irresolutely swaying to and fro, as a man upon wire, and then, with a shrill and unearthly yell, he fell headlong, plunging into the gloomy pit below, but still grasping tightly in his hand his flaming torch, and passing thus, as the flash of a meteor, from the eyes of his companions forever.

Montlack trembled with horror, and cold drops of perspiration gathered upon his pale brow, as he witnessed this unexpected and terrible death of the unfortunate savage; but the companions of the dead warrior beheld his horrible fate with the stoic indifference of their race, the chief calmly remarking, as he turned to move away—

"The Great Spirit knows all things; his eye never sleepeth. Our brother was a coward and traitor, and he has gone to the dark land of the bad spirits; the young

squaws of the Shawanee will not mourn his fate; the owl and raven will sing his death song."

Leaving the pit, their way led through an avenue of surpassing beauty, and one of wonderful extent, being more than sixty feet wide, and two miles in length. But the heart of Montlack was in the dark pit behind him, and he could not enjoy the beauty of the rooms through which he now passed. He had seen the flaming torch of the unfortunate warrior vanish in murky darkness, and the wild scream of the doomed Indian was still ringing in his ears. He could not feel or assume the indifference of the savages; and, in spite of every effort to the contrary, the awful scene he had witnessed was ever recurring to his memory, and covering with a mourning veil the wonderful magnificence and fairy beauty of this portion of the cavern. He, however, passed along, intuitively following the footsteps of his conductor; but his eye caught not the smooth floor of pure, white-crusted snow, upon which he was walking, and lingered only with stupid indifference upon its gorgeous ceilings of curled and glittering stalactites. It was only after traversing this long avenue, and descending a narrow winding way to the bank of a broad dark river, that his wandering thoughts were again brought back to the reality of the scene around him, and the stupor which had gathered over him was dispelled; and not then, until the hand of the chief was laid upon his shoulder, and in a deep, earnest tone he exclaimed:—

"My white brother has reached the end of his journey. Before him lies the dark waters over which none but the spirits of the dead can pass. Beyond it are the happy hunting-grounds of the red man. The Great Chief of the Shawanees has made good his promise to his white brother. He has shown him the tomb of the Great Prophetess, and led him along through the winding paths of the Big Lodge to see its wonders. Is he satisfied, or would he hear more? The ear of his red brother is still open."

"The Great Chief has not spoken with a lying tongue!" said Montlack, Girty interpreting and copying the abrupt and emphatic style of the savage; "his white brother has seen the body of the Great Prophetess of the red man, and

beheld with his own eyes the wonders of the Big Lodge. He knows his red brother has spoken nothing but the truth. He will tell his father across the salt waters what he has seen, and the kindness of the Shawanee brave to his son. He will not forget the king of the red warriors. My great father has many children, and many braves, and many lodges, but none like the Big Lodge of the red man!"

"My brother has spoken well!" said the Chief, "and the heart of his red brother is glad. The Great Chief will now return to his camp-fire and the young warriors he left behind!"

But before retracing his steps, the chief arranged his followers in a long line upon the brink of the stream, and this done, gave a loud, long, and peculiar yell. A moment after, and three or more clear and ringing yells came echoing back.

"The happy spirits, beyond the dark waters, have heard the voice of their Shawanee brother!" said the chief, exultingly; "my white brother's ear is not of stone. He heard the shout of the dead warriors greeting their brother!"

"Why cannot the Great Chief paddle his canoe across this dark river, and behold the face of his friends?" said Montlack, inquiringly.

"My white brother speaks with the tongue of silly child!" said the chief; "the Great Spirit has forbidden his children; and the arm of him that would cross these waters would wither like the tall grass of the prairie under the flaming fire. The Prophetess taught our fathers that none could pass over this river unless guided by her in the light canoe, prepared by the good father. Since the Great Prophetess has left the Big Lodge, the spirits of those slain in battle, and the shades of the good braves, are turned into white fishes, and dwell in these waters, until she returns to lead them to the spirit-land; but the Great Spirit has taken away their eyes,* so that

* Numerous white fishes, without eyes, are still found in these subterranean rivers.

they may not see their brothers in the happy hunting-grounds, until their mother comes from her distant lodge beneath the setting sun, to pilot them to the blessed abodes prepared by their good father!"

"But the spirits of the wicked," said Montlack, interested in the wild legend of the savage; "do they all fall into that horrible pit?"

"Not all!" replied the chief; "only the coward and traitor. Those who have angered the Great Spirit by speaking with a double tongue, by theft, or disobedience to the laws of their tribe, are turned into bats,* and for twelve moons inhabit a dark room near the entrance of the Big Lodge. Afterwards, they pass over the bottomless pit, and for another twelve moons are changed into eyeless fishes. They are then permitted to join their friends in the hunting-grounds beyond the dark river, and are happy forever!"

Montlack, as if satisfied with this wild legend of the savage, accounting for the mysterious river, the eyeless fishes, and the bats, made no farther inquiry; and the chief, after another loud yell, in which he was joined by all of his warriors, and which, to their seeming great delight, was returned across the shadowy waters with deafening distinctness, turned about, and retraced his steps to the camp-fire.

CHAPTER VI.

THE savages who had been left behind, greeted the return of their chief from his somewhat dangerous pilgrimage to the tomb of the Prophetess, with loud and repeated yells.

That portion of the band sent forth to prepare the necessary materials for the torture, had fully executed the

* Without knowing anything of the great Samian philosopher, many of the Indian tribes were believers in his philosophy; and this wild tradition of the chief was founded on the myriads of bats found in one of the rooms of the cave.

duty allotted them, and had now for some time been anxiously awaiting the presence of their leader, anxious on account of their fears for his safety; for they regarded the dark mysteries of the cave with dread and awe; and still more anxious on account of their great desire to glut their savage tastes for cruelty, upon the person of their pale-faced prisoner.

The Shawanee chieftain received this boisterous welcome of his followers in dignified silence; and his face, when he resumed his place by the fire, expressed neither pleasure nor dissatisfaction; but was as calm, and indifferent, and unruffled as if nothing had occurred, and he had not been absent.

Not so, however, was it with those who had accompanied him; for while their chief, reclining upon his buffalo robe, calmly and silently smoked his pipe, they on their part were busily engaged in satisfying the eager curiosity of their friends. The low hum of their deep guttural voices filled the apartment, and gave it an air or appearance of life and bustle, not at all in unison with the wild and magnificent scenery of the cavern, and somewhat destroying the effect of its gloom, and loneliness, and grandeur.

Seizing this moment, when the savages all seemed either intent upon taking a short period of rest, after the fatigues of their journey, or in gratifying their curiosity, or in giving vent to their long-restrained loquaciousness, Montlack gazed eagerly around, wishing to make a hurried survey of the changes that had taken place in the chamber during his absence. He had gathered, from the movements of the savages themselves, and from a hint given him by Girty, that it was their intention to put a prisoner to the torture; and now, as his eye wandered over the apartment, catching in its survey a post firmly planted in the sandy floor of the cavern, and around it numerous heaps of dry fagots, his fears and suspicions were fully confirmed. These preparations had all been made during his absence, and Montlack, although ignorant, so far as personal knowledge went, of the barbarous punishment of the stake, could not help shuddering when he beheld these ominous signs of their savage purpose.

He was selfish and cruel himself, when his own hatred or interest was in any way concerned, but now that one of his own race, and a stranger to him, was about to fall a victim to the hellish malice and cruelty of the savages, he could not think of it but with a thrill of horror and repugnance, and with a secret hope that he might be mistaken, or that the wild beings around him would delay the dreaded moment of execution.

But he was not left long in doubt; for the chief, as if satisfied with the short repose he had taken, arose from his recumbent position by the fire, and, moving a few paces, stood a moment contemplating the preparations made for the sacrifice; then, turning to his warriors with a gleam of savage satisfaction playing upon his swarthy countenance, said:—

“My young braves have obeyed the command of their chief; he is satisfied; let them bring forward the pale-faced prisoner!”

With a yell of delight, several of the warriors hastened to a distant part of the same chamber, and soon returned leading in their midst a stout young borderer, securely bound.

The prisoner wore no marks of fear upon his stern and swarthy face, but as he approached, glanced with an eagle eye around upon his captors, as if measuring their force, or running over in his mind the chances of escape. Though apparently in the prime of manhood, and from his look and person not over thirty years of age, the prisoner was an old Indian hunter, and esteemed as one of the bravest and most daring scouts of the country. He was well acquainted with all the wiles and cruelties of the savage, and had, in his time, caused many of their best warriors to bite the dust. He had tracked them on many of their war-paths; had followed them even to their own wigwams; and wore about his person (in the Indian style), when taken captive, many of the bloody trophies of his bravery. His countenance, as we have already remarked, bore no traces of fear, for he seemed entirely ignorant of the pressing danger of his situation; or, if not

ignorant, careless and indifferent as to his fate. But no sooner had his searching eye caught a glimpse of the ominous post, with its attendant fagots, than he was fully aware of the terrible doom that awaited him, for he had once before been a prisoner to the savages, had run the dreaded gauntlet, and had been even tied to the stake. A slight pallor may have gathered over his bronzed and weather-beaten countenance, as he caught sight of the fagot, and torch, and stake, made ready for his own torture and death; but if so, it was not witnessed by his savage captors, and was gone in a moment. He had acquired much of the stoic indifference of the savage to pain and death by his dangerous and hazardous life, and now that he was fully satisfied as to his doom, determined in his own mind to meet it as a soldier, and give his enemies no cause for exultation. His was an Herculean, though not graceful person; but, clothed as it was in the flowing hunting-shirt and moccason of the borderer, would strike the eye of the most careless, and now even elicited a murmur of admiration from his ruthless enemies. Drawing near to their chief, the savages surrounding the prisoner gave way, leaving the triumphant Shawanee and the bold young borderer face to face, and only a few paces apart.

For a moment the savage chieftain and semi-savage scout stood eyeing each other, as if measuring the power and force of the muscles so bountifully developed in the person of either. The Indian, wrapped in his flowing blanket, with his otherwise handsome face disfigured and made hideous with paint, presented a splendid specimen of the pure savage; while the borderer, in his hunting-shirt, leggings, and moccasins, made from the dressed skin of the deer, and ornamented with beads and quills, with his face tanned from exposure to the sun, and with his broad and lofty forehead shaded by the thick masses of black and tangled hair, presented a no less splendid picture of the hardy semi-civilized pioneer.

"The young brave of the pale face is no squaw," at length muttered the chief, with a smile of satisfaction at the undaunted bearing of his prisoner.

"Faith," replied Pat Connelly (for such was the name

of the scout) with a smile, and in a tone of derision, "the chief must have an eagle eye to make this diskivery. Let him ask his warriors; I guess they 've found out I wern't a woman, in man's toggery. Two of them fell under my tomahawk before I submitted to these 'ere bonds, and I reckon the others found more than one scalp-lock about my person. A squaw, indeed! the praist and my mither didn't think so, for they called me Pat, and I guess Pat is a man's name all the world over."

"The young brave of the pale face is not wise," said the chief, a flash of anger mantling over his countenance as Connelly reminded him of the loss of his warriors. "His silly boasting, like the drum of the pheasant when the hunter is near, will only bring death to himself."

"I have scalped many a red devil," replied the borderer, "and many a warrior starting forth on his war-path, jist niver returned to his wigwam, for he fell beneath my bullet, and became food for the wolf and buzzard. They have me now in their power; the stake has been made ready, and Pat Connelly isn't the boy to be crying over spilt milk."

"Ugh!" muttered the chief, "the pale face has a quick eye, as well as a brave heart, but the young braves of the Shawanee drove him headlong, like a senseless buffalo, into the very hands of the waiting warriors."

"True as if St. Patrick had spoken it his own darling self," said the borderer with some heat, "and Pat Connelly desarves to be roasted for being sich a fool. But the warriors," he added, in a better humor at the thought, "did not close their hands upon the silly buffalo, until he had gored more than one of them to death. His horn is yet red with the blood of the Shawanee."

"The pale face is brave now, and speaks with a bold tongue; but when he is tied to the stake he will become as a weeping child!" said the chief.

"The young brave of the Long-knife," said Connelly, "is a broth of a boy, from Ballyrankin, and will show the burrowing foxes of the Shawanees how to die like a gintleman!"

"The Great Chief of the Shawanees has but returned

from looking upon the face of the Prophetess of the red man! He but a moment since heard the yells of the dead braves across the still waters! He told his mother and brother in the spirit-land, that he had a young brave of the pale face, a prisoner, and would burn him at the stake in the Big Lodge! The Great Chief never lies; he has spoken, and the young warrior of the Long-knife must die!"

The savages greeted this conclusion of their chief with loud yells of delight; but the borderer, by no means daunted, and wishing to goad his captors to take his life at once, and thus free him from the pains of the torture, scoffingly exclaimed—

"The Shawanees are all squaws and cowards, and no wonder, since they worship a faint-hearted woman. The Great Chief speaks with a lying tongue, and the yells he heard were the dying yells of his young braves falling beneath the tomahawk of Pat Connelly himself! The chief of the Shawanees and his warriors are sneaking foxes, and had better go home to their lodges, and carry water and wood for their squaws. They are not fit to go forth on the war-path against the Long-knife! They hide and burrow in the ground, and can only get scalps to show their waiting maidens, by sending out twenty warriors to ambush the path of one pale face!"

A howl of fury met these taunts of their prisoner, and the chief, goaded to madness, seemed about to gratify the wish of the borderer, by dashing out his brains at once; but suddenly restraining his rage, and at the same time dropping his upraised tomahawk, he exclaimed, while a gleam of devilish cunning flitted across his swarthy countenance—

"The pale face is a raging buffalo, but no fox! He would escape the torture by a death under the hatchet, but the Great Chief is no fool, and is not blind! The warriors of the Shawanees have said the Long knife must die at the stake, and so must it be! My white brother may talk; the Great Chief does not mind the roar of the stricken bull!"

"Well! may the devil take you all for a pack of murder-

in' thieves," exclaimed the borderer in a fury, seeing that the savage had divined and foiled his design. "It's your natur', and blast me if Pat Connelly is going to say a word agin it. It ain't so cussed comfortable to be roasted like a dog, I'll acknowledge, but as that's your way of disposin' of a prisoner, by the beard of Moses, Pat Connelly sees no help for it, and will have to submit."

"Ugh!" grunted the savage, "the Great Chief does not understand the white brave; he speaks in a dark tongue."

"And why should he?" replied the scout; "Pat Connelly was jist spakin' one of the dead languages, the pure Irish, and talking to a gentleman, and that gentleman none other than his own darling self. O, Pat," he added, again resuming his soliloquy, "and did your old mither ever dreme that her boy would be cooked like a pig on a saint's day; and that too by the hathen, and without the benifit of a praist! Hello!" he continued, becoming furious at the very thought of such an outrage, and wishing, if possible, to escape the roasting; "you Mister Great Chief, Pat Connelly says you are all a set of cowardly powowing squaws, and if you'll jist cut these thongs, he'll clear this big sink-hole of every mother's son of ye in a twinkling."

The chief, by nature chivalrous and brave, was greatly delighted with the dare-devil recklessness of the borderer, and for a moment seemed somewhat inclined to gratify Connelly's strange request; but Girty drawing near, whispered something in his ear, which produced a change in his determination, if a passing thought could be so called; and to the warlike threat and demand of the Irishman, he coldly replied—

"The Shawanee braves have condemned the pale face to the stake; but if the young warrior of the Long-knife will tell the Great Chief how many hunters he will find in the two stations on Green River, his red brother may grant the request of the white brave!"

Connelly, with rapid glance, had scanned the features of Girty as he approached the chief, and no sooner had his dark and eager eye wandered over the sullen counte-

nance of the renegade, than a flash of fury gleamed out from his hitherto careless face, and to the proposition of the Indian, he replied in a stern and scornful voice—

"Pat Connelly does not brother with the redskins. He is no traitor nor black-hearted murderous villain, like that base dog, Simon Girty! He would rather be roasted piecemeal than betray women and children to perish under the tomahawk of a pack of yelling savages! The Great Chief and his warriors are contending for their hunting-grounds, and by my faith, Pat Connelly will be the last man to blame them for taking the scalp of his own mother's son, for 'tis a fair fight, all accordin' to natur', and they don't know any better; but, when a feller is too great a villain to live among his own people, like Simon Girty there, for I know the murderin' knave, and joins with the redskins agin' his own race, he becomes a dispised and hated renegade, and no honest man will ever touch his bloody hand! Pat Connelly, if he ain't jist ready for the next world, is ready to die rather than aid that scoundrel, Girty, in any of his treacherous schemes!"

"We'll see," exclaimed the renegade in a harsh and angry voice. "The first touch of the torch will change your braggart tongue to one of supplication; and you will yet bow your knee with cries for mercy, to that same villain and renegade, Simon Girty!"

"By my faith!" said the scout, tauntingly, "the white-livered son of a Jew, speaks with a big tongue! Pat Connelly has niver yet bowed to any one but the praist, and his God; and a little toastin' by the bloody savages can niver make him pray mercy from a whining, sneaking dog like Simon Girty!"

Stung deeply by the taunts of Connelly, the renegade laid his hand quickly upon the handle of his tomahawk, but withdrawing it as quickly, muttered in an undertone—

"No, no! that is what he wants! I will leave him to die at the stake!"

At a sign from their chief, the Indians, impatient to begin their infernal orgy, seized upon Connelly, and stripping him, bound him to the stake, securing his hands

behind his back, and then with a stout cord to the post, but leaving his feet unfettered!

"Well, Pat, my boy," said the Irishman, when he found himself in this helpless condition, speaking in a half rueful and half comic voice, as if to gain his own consent to the dreadful death about to be inflicted upon him; "sure you never damed when you left the bogs of old Ireland, that you would die the blessed death of a martyr, with your hands bound behind you, and roasted by the hathen? But niver mind, boy, the red divils will hold a most illegant wake over your body, and it won't be your fault if there ain't a St. Pat Connelly! They will be after looking for you at the station, but Pat Connelly has taken his last scout, and will niver agin' pass around the bottle, and sing of the dear little Kathleen he left behind him over the waters! He will niver more wander through the green forest and listen to the little birds, or track the fleeing deer, or follow the trail of the prowling redskin! You have fallen into the hands of the inemy, my boy, and divil a chance of escape can Pat Connelly see! But here goes for the honor of old Ireland," he added, holding his head erect, and looking with undaunted front upon his foes, "if the son of my mither can't live, he knows how to die, and it shall niver be said that Pat Connelly showed the white feather to a thieving Shawanee!"

His mind thus reconciled to his fate, the borderer, with a bold and reckless look, awaited in silence the attack of his ruthless foes.

Hoping to intimidate, or, like the cat, wishing to play for awhile with the fear or rather helplessness of their victim, the savages by turn hurled with skilful hands their tomahawks at the head of the captive, not wishing to strike or destroy, but merely desirous to play with, or tantalize him in his agony, and perhaps force him, for this was their chief design, to exhibit some token of terror. But their endeavors to terrify Connelly were fruitless, for he stood like a statue of marble; and though tomahawk after tomahawk whizzed close by his head, until there was a glittering circlet of gleaming steel trem-

bling in the wood around him, yet never for a moment did his heart sink, or his eye quiver, and he continued ever the same—undaunted, unmoved, and unflinching!

Finding this measure unavailing, and the mind of their prisoner still stoically indifferent, the savages with screams and yells of hellish glee, next applied their burning torches to the naked person of the brave Irishman, all the time dancing around the stake, yelling and tossing about their flaming brands, like so many infuriated demons! The white flesh of poor Connelly hissed beneath the burning coal, and his broad chest soon became dotted like the body of a leper, but still he bore the torture with unshrinking fortitude, meeting their howls, and yells, and taunts with a steady eye of defiance, or mocking them, in the Indian style, as children and squaws, ever and anon pouring forth a torrent of scornful invective upon the head of the scowling renegade!

Approaching the stake, one of the savages, stooping down, began to blow into a blaze the dry wood placed in a circle around the feet of the victim; but Connelly, noticing his design, gave him a sudden and tremendous kick, which sent him rolling to the very feet of his laughing companions! Springing quickly up, the Indian, with a loud yell of rage, hurled his tomahawk at the head of the Irishman, laying open his cheek with a broad and ghastly wound! Not content with thus revenging the insult he had received, the same warrior, with devilish malignity, gathered up a paddle of bright and living coals, and deliberately poured them over the head and shoulders of his unconquered foe! But Connelly met this rain of fire with a laugh of scornful defiance; and though the hissing coals rested upon his head and shoulders, and, rolling down behind, smoldered away upon his fettered hands, he bore the torments he suffered with iron firmness, banteringly asking his tormentor if he had any more such refreshing showers?

This steadiness of the borderer, under the fiendish attack of the revengeful warrior, was unexpectedly the cause of his liberation; for one of the large live coals dropping from his shoulders, rested upon his hands, and

although giving him exquisite pain for the moment, it at the same time burned through the thong with which he was bound, and the bold scout instantly felt and knew that he was free. Summoning up all of his remaining strength, Connelly, with a shout so loud that it drowned even the clamorous yells of his enemies, seized upon one of the tomahawks, still quivering in the post, and with one bound was in the midst of his foes. Before they had recovered from their astonishment, the gleaming hatchet of the borderer was red with the life-blood of two of his tormentors, and dashing the others, as if children, from his path, Connelly, with a shout of defiance, darted away, and was lost in the darkness of the cavern.

With a yell of baffled fury, the Indians started in pursuit, but their captive was lost in the gloom of the lofty avenue leading forth to sunshine and safety; and though Girty, with rankling and calculating hatred, hurried eagerly to the entrance of the cave, and posted there a band of watchful warriors, the fleeing victim never made his appearance; and their search within the cavern, although made with care and diligence, and by torchlight, was met with the like bad success.

Pat Connelly had taken his revenge; and the huge person of the borderer, brandishing his bloody tomahawk, once lost in the gloom of that mysterious cavern, was never again seen by his furious and baffled enemies.

He was gone; but where to, none could say. Whether alive, and hid or lost in the winding paths of that gloomy vault; or whether, in the moment of victory, he had perished by falling into some dark pit, was alike a mystery. Hoping the latter, Girty and his fierce allies, sullen and discomfited, returned from their unsuccessful pursuit only to find the stake without its victim, and near it the bloody bodies of the two warriors who had fallen beneath the tomahawk of the pale face.

The Prophetess had been cheated of her victim; but in return, Pat Connelly sent her the manes of two of her own bloody race!

CHAPTER VII.

WE shift the scene. From the gloomy portals of the great world's wonder, the cave, we once more look out upon the heavens and the blessed light of day.

It was a bright October morning, cool, hazy, and still—what we call in the West, Indian Summer—and the clearing or opening of Bryan and Duffe, like an island upon the bosom of the broad sea, stood forth prominent and cheering, in the encircling embrace of the dark, boundless forest. It was the first step towards civilization, that lovely and diminutive settlement, with its rough, unartistic dwelling; but since that period, the tread of civilization and refinement has been like the fabled work of the genii; and towns, villages, and country villas have sprung up from the damp shades of the forest, as rapidly, and almost as magically as the fairy palaces we read of in Arabian romance.

But at the period of which we are speaking, the dwellings of our race were very rare in Kentucky, and the station of our hero called a settlement some ten miles distant its nearest neighbor. As we have already said, it was a bright October morning, with the early sun casting a mellow and shadowy light through the hazy atmosphere; and there were no sounds abroad to disturb the death-like stillness of the scene about this pioneer settlement other than the soft song of the wild bird, and gay, merry bark of the frolicksome squirrel. The bullet of the hunter had not yet been turned against such small game, and the birds and squirrels gathering from their homes in the forest, looked down inquisitively, and almost without fear, upon the comings and goings of the early settler, thinking much, no doubt, in their quiet way, and greatly puzzled to know the design and intent of these strange intruders upon their hitherto undisputed territory.

To the eye of the unwary and careless observer, there was nothing wrong or unusual in or about the station upon this particular morning; but had the gaze of the ever cautious and watchful Sharp-Eye been turned, at the moment of which we are speaking, upon the forest, beyond the pickets, he might have discovered some ground for uneasiness in the quick and anxious cries of the catbird, flying about as if alarmed by the presence of some unexpected foe, and more than probable the unusual excitement and evident terror of the little songster would have aroused in the suspicious bosom of the wily borderer some thoughts of a lurking savage, or at least a prowling bear. But Sharp-Eye was not there; nor was Bryan or the Sergeant, for they had both obeyed the summons of the Scout, and had gone forth upon the trail of their bloody and ruthless foe. They feared no attack upon the station during their absence; for the savages were far away, and the hardy borderers, for twenty miles around, alarmed by the information of Kenton, were gathering, not to await the coming of their enemy, but to seek them, and hunt them out, from their dark lurking-place, where they had been discovered by the Scout.

Coma and her child, and Sally, guarded by the faithful Titus, were now the only inmates of the station, and with the first peep of the sun, the honest black might have been seen creeping lazily from his couch of buffalo skins, and strolling listlessly about the yard within the pickets; then came forth the bustling wife of Duffe, busy with some household duty; and Titus, at her commands, lost his apparent listlessness; hurrying, with many ringing blows of the sounding axe, to prepare the usual morning fire. Presently, Coma's bright face peeped out from her comfortable lodge, and Sally's broad countenance beamed a pleasant good-morning; while Titus, staying his uplifted axe, grinned a heartfelt welcome. Then bounded forward, with a bleat of joyous recognition, a graceful spotted fawn to receive the caresses of its mistress; and Coma, nothing loth, folded the timid, but loving animal in her arms, and with many soft and endearing words would

fain console it for the loss of mother, and liberty, and the green forest. Nor did she forget her cackling brood, for they were the pride of her innocent heart, and her own peculiar property. Fowls were very scarce in the country at that day, and the mother of the brood had been obtained at much trouble, and she had watched over the young since they escaped from their snowy covering, and now with liberal hand answered their morning call by scattering around a bountiful supply of crumbs.

Turning once more to the low bleat of her fawn, Coma, as she patted it upon the head and looked down into its large liquid eyes, murmured to herself, a shadow flitting across her, but a moment ago, bright and sunny countenance:—

"My poor little pet, you have a sad, sweet cry, and did I not fear that you would fall a victim to the wolf or some ruthless hunter, I would send you forth again to seek your kindred in the deep shades of yonder forest. But do not look so mournfully and inquisitively into my face," she added, seating herself upon the stump of a recently felled tree, and lovingly folding the gentle creature in her arms, "for you fill my heart with sadness, and make me think, when I look into your mild and loving eyes, what would be the fate of my own dear little boy, should he ever be left, like thee, without father and mother, to the indifferent care of strangers. Your gentle-dam, my bonnie pet," she continued, patting the fawn, and looking musingly into its eyes, "led thee lovingly through the quiet glades and along the sunny hills, fleeing as glad and quickly to your plaintive bleat as I to my darling's cry. But she is dead now, slain by the bullet of the reckless hunter; and had not the kind heart of good Simon been touched by your sad call, and had he not brought thee to my caressing arms, you would have long since perished, my beautiful Nan, in loneliness and want. But cheer up, my dear little one; you look so intelligently and trustingly into my face, that I almost fancy thee human, and imagine I behold a gleam of gratitude beaming from those dark orbs of thine. My gentle, loving Nan," she continued, mournfully, a tear dancing

in her soft eye, "shall never know want so long as I have an ear to hear her call, and a heart to greet her plaintive cry: I'll be a mother to thee, my little motherless; never doubt and look so earnestly, for in truth I love thee dearly, and will take good care of thee, and when winter comes will make thee a warm bed by the fire; and my own darling boy will feed thee with his tiny hands."

For a few minutes after this artless monologue, Coma sat in silence with her arms thrown around the neck of her graceful pet, looking wistfully and sadly out on the distant forest, or rather on vacancy, for this communing with herself had excited a vein of melancholy reverie, and her thoughts were now busy with memories of the past and dreams of the future. Her father, her absent husband, and her sleeping child were all trooping through her busy brain; but this wild medley of bitter and sweet memories, crowding thus upon her musing heart, was soon dispelled by the unpoetic voice of Sally; and, starting from her dreams, her face like an April day—half tears, half sunshine—Coma, with a smile at her own emotion, after once more embracing her pet, arose from her seat and returned slowly to the house. Titus, throwing over his shoulder a huge log, and whistling as he went, with active and cheerful tread followed the footsteps of his mistress; and Sally, now left alone in the yard, after finishing the task upon which she had been so intently employed, strolling carelessly to the gate with seeming indifference, as if her thoughts were otherwise engaged, drew back the bars and threw it wide open. A loud yell greeted her appearance, and her air of careless indifference quickly gave place to one of horror and amazement; for no sooner had the gate swung back upon its heavy creaking hinges than twenty savages sprung up from a little coppice not more than twenty paces distant, and with hideous screams, brandishing their tomahawks, rushed madly to the opening.

The good wife of the Sergeant was none of your ethereal ladies, that gasp under a southern zephyr, or faint at the approach of a spider, but was a bold and determined woman, well worthy to be a soldier's companion, and had

no thought either of fainting or screaming, nor did she think of waiting the nearer approach of the savages, but considering discretion the better part of valor, she turned quickly, and fled with all speed to the house. She was not a moment too soon, for, although terror lent additional speed to her flight, as she sprang over the sill, and hurriedly attempted to close the door, a fierce warrior threw his body half within the house, thus rendering her careful and eager endeavors for safety apparently fruitless. But Titus now came to the rescue, and grappling with the struggling Indian, drew him in, leaving his mistress, who still maintained her post, to close and bar the door. She succeeded, and the next instant a score of whooping savages were battering with their light hatchets against the heavy oak puncheons, but finding their immediate attempts at forcing an entrance hopeless, and not knowing the weakness of the garrison, with a yell of disappointment they retreated hastily, beyond the pickets, to await the result of their first attack.

The fierce contest between the negro and Indian was still going on. The latter, cut off from his companions, and dependent upon his own exertions for safety, brought into play every power of his athletic body, and struggled furiously to free his arms from the iron embrace of his sturdy opponent. The black, on the other hand, was battling for his own life and the lives of those equally dear, and who had been confidently left under his care and protection; and now, with all the force of his sinewy arms, maintained his grasp upon the limbs of his enemy. Rolling over and over upon the floor, but still pinioning the arms of the savage, Titus called out to his mistress, who had by this time completed the fastenings of the door:—

"Gor'a mighty, Miss Sally, dis child's bref am nearly gib out. Git de axe and finish dis debil while I'm got him."

Without delay the brave-hearted woman hurried to do as requested by the exhausted negro; but the savage, who was uppermost, and saw her design, hindered, for a moment her purpose, by dodging his head from side to side

so as to destroy the certainty of the blow, and endanger the life of Titus.

"Nebber fear, Miss Sally," exclaimed the black, thinking that she hesitated from conscientious scruples about spilling blood, "it am all right, and 'taint no sin to kill an Ingin. Gor'a mighty," he continued, as the Indian made another desperate effort to free his arms, "split open him dam head, or old Titus will hab to gib up."

Her scruples overcome, if she had any, by Titus's *ipse dixit* as to the propriety and innocence of shedding blood under the circumstances, and catching a favorable opportunity, Sally drove the uplifted axe deep into the brain of the savage, and the black, throwing off the stiffening body of his foe, sprang to his feet, exclaiming, exultingly:—

"Let in anoder of dem bloody debils, Miss Sally, and old Titus will just hold him fast till you crack him war-nut head for him."

But Mrs. Duffe, who by right of being the wife of a military man, had constituted herself commander-in-chief of the besieged station, had no notion of obeying this warlike request of the black. But, taking advantage of the momentary lull in the attack of the savages, which she knew would soon be resumed at some other point, with hurried alacrity she busied herself in making preparations for a brave defence; whilst Titus, under orders, grasping his ready rifle, kept watch through a loophole upon the movements of the enemy without, ever and anon casting, without orders, a grim smile of satisfaction upon the body of his late foe.

Coma, at the first yell of the dreaded enemy, had sunk, overcome with terror, into a chair; but when she witnessed the fierce struggle of the faithful negro and the Indian, and beheld the bloody death of the latter, she lost all consciousness, and Mrs. Duffe, having no time to go to her assistance, or perhaps thinking it would be best to allow her to remain in that condition, with merely a pitying glance at her prostrate person, left her in happy ignorance of their dangerous situation.

The Indians, hearing nothing from their too eager

companion, and taking his death for granted, began now to think of another assault. Peering cautiously over the top of the picket fence, they could see no appearance of an enemy, and were somewhat surprised that their partly exposed persons had not drawn a shot from the besieged. Becoming emboldened by the impunity with which they had been allowed to make these cautious observations, one of the warriors, more reckless or daring than his companions, stepped within the gate, fully exposing his entire person. But old Titus had not been asleep; and although he kept an eye on his late opponent lying on the floor within, he kept the other fastened on his foe without. He had seen the heads of the savage cautiously peering over the fence, but merely grinned a defiance, holding his bullet for a more certain opportunity. The reckless hardihood of the savage, standing fully exposed within the pickets, presented him with the opportunity he sought; and, taking advantage of the temerity of his foe, the black, with deliberate aim, sent a bullet through his heart, exclaiming, with a chuckle of satisfaction, as the Indian bounded high into the air, falling lifeless to the earth:—

"Dar, dam you! take dat to 'member Titus, de black white man."

The Indians, with a yell of rage at the death of their companion, answered the shot and bravado of the black with a harmless volley of bullets; and finding that useless exposure of the person was attended with danger, withdrew from harm's way, by dropping back behind the fence.

Girty, under a private arrangement between himself and Montlack, was the leader of this party of the Indians; the chief, with the remainder of the band, taking along with him Montlack, having hurried on to another settlement; and now, while Titus was congratulating himself upon the success of his shot, and the second disclosure of the foe, the renegade, having skirted the inclosure, was preparing to enter from that side immediately contiguous to the room usually occupied by Bryan. He had noticed that the firing came from the other room of

the cabin, and shrewdly guessed that the apartment he was now approaching with some half score of his followers, was unoccupied, and hoped that, once able to make a lodgement there, he could terrify the inmates of the other (by threats of firing the house) into surrendering. But he was mistaken in his calculation; for the room he was now stealthily approaching; although still and silent, and apparently tenantless, was nevertheless occupied; but not by Bryan, ready to die for his family, nor by the gallant Scout, snuffing the battle afar off; nor yet by the calm and sturdy Sergeant, or indeed by any dangerous foe. The sleeping boy of Coma, forgotten in her first fright, and not yet remembered; on account of her subsequent insensibility; was the only tenant of the deserted apartment, and was still slumbering in innocent unconsciousness of danger, while the gleaming tomahawk of the bloody savage was ready to make his quiet sleep the slumber of eternity.

"De red debils," exclaimed Titus, with a well-pleased grin at his mistress, "won't get dis child's scalp. Dey done, gib him up, and ar' making tracks to some place whar darkeys am scarce, and scalps to be got for de axing. Dis darkey ain't one ob dem sort; he neber gib up him's wool till thar be no use in axing his leave. Hi! hi! I gib dat fellar partikler goss, and dis child wouldn't wonder if dey didn't try dat dar 'speriment agin."

While the black, looking from his loophole, was thus buoying up his heart with thoughts of victory, Mrs. Duffe, scarce hearing what he said, was kneeling by the side of Coma, using the common remedies in such cases, to arouse her once more to sensibility.

"Are those horrible Indians gone? and my precious boy, is he safe?" murmured Coma, slowly reviving, her mind still flighty, and not yet entirely conscious of the absence of her child.

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Madam Duffe, now for the first time remembering the exposed and hazardous situation of the boy, "the child is in the other room!"

"What dat you say?" shouted Titus, leaving his loophole, "little Massa Bryan not be here?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Coma, springing to her feet, and staring with a look of stupid terror into the face of her horrified friend, "have they murdered my beautiful boy?"

"No! no!" replied Duffe's wife, as calmly as her own tortured feelings would allow, and trembling at the terrible agony she saw painted upon the face of the yet unconscious mother; "little Mister Bryan is only in the other room; I'll go and bring him to you."

"Thanks! thanks!" murmured Coma, sinking back into her chair, and pressing her confused brow with her clasped hands.

"Dis old niggarr will go!" said Titus addressing Mrs. Duffe, "him no 'count, nohow; him's chunk be nearly burnt out; let de debils take him's scalp."

But the kind-hearted Sally, telling Titus he was their only defender, and if he was killed all would be lost, turned away from the sorrowing mother and muttering black, with the full determination of attempting the dangerous exploit of going for the sleeping child. But when she neared the door, and when her hand was raised to remove the fastenings, it was suddenly stayed and her heart chilled, by hearing in the passage through which she would have to pass, the confused and rapid tread of the dreaded enemy. It was Girty and his band, and they had gained, unnoticed by the little garrison, the apartment of Coma. Halting, with her hand still uplifted, poor Sally cast a look of agony upon the pale countenance of the bereaved mother; then came distinctly to her ears the murmur of the astonished savages, at the wild and barbarous luxury of the room into which they had entered, followed quickly by a triumphant yell, accompanied by the shrill and startled cry of the child.

Coma's languor and faintness were gone in a moment. She had heard the cry of her terrified boy; and, with a wild scream of agony, springing to her feet, she threw back the simple fastenings of the door, and darted madly into the very midst of the savages.

"De debils can hab my wool," said Titus, rubbing his

head with his hand, and looking sorrowfully after his young mistress, "dar's no use fightin' now."

A fierce warrior stood with uplifted hatchet over the cradle of little Bryan; but the half-crazed mother, regardless of all danger, and thinking only of her child, threw her person devotedly over the body of her boy, looking up beseechingly into the hideous and distorted countenance of the Indian; and he, though a savage, ruthless and cruel by education and nature, as if touched with pity or admiration at the devotion and bravery of the mother, with a muttered exclamation of surprise, restrained the falling blow, and they were saved.

Girty's instructions from Montlack were to save Coma harmless, but to carry her away into captivity; and now that the savage had spared the child—villain though he was, and cruel and bloodthirsty—he had not the heart to destroy or take it from her arms. Madam Duffe and Titus, after the capture of Coma and her child, had no desire to prolong the contest, and so surrendering at discretion, they were all hurried away prisoners together.

A few moments later, and the station, late so joyous and happy, and peaceful, was stripped of its most valuable contents, and left tenantless and deserted. The two dead warriors—the victims of Titus's prowess—were left just where they had fallen, for the Indians were in too great a hurry either to bury or conceal their bodies.

CHAPTER VIII.

"WE 'VE jist had our tramp for nothin'; for the tarnal redskins have gi'n us the slip as sure as shootin'."

It was the day following the departure of the Indians from the cave, that Kenton made this exclamation, as he stood looking down upon the vine-embowered little bay where, but a few days previous, he had seen the flotilla of the savages so snugly moored, but which was now empty,

and without a trace of canoe, or boat of any description.

"From what do you draw this conclusion?" said Bryan, springing to his side.

"Nothing easier, Mr. Bryan," replied the Scout; "it ar' as plain as a buffalo trail to a salt lick;" and after hurrying down to the water's edge, followed by Bryan and some six or more tall borderers, he continued—"thar canoes are all gone to a sartainty, and here you see," he added, pointing to many fresh moccason tracks in the soft sand, "is a broad trace of thar retreat; and not long made, either; for blast my buttons if twelve hours have passed since an Ingen hêel made that ar' trail."

"But the canoes may have been taken by a portion of the savages, to go on some expedition," remarked a young hunter, "and the remainder may yet be in the cave."

"Or they may have been removed to some other point," suggested the Sergeant.

"At any rate, we had better examine the neighborhood before we determine," said another.

"It's no use," replied Simon, in a positive tone; "I'll jist bet my new huntin'-shirt agin the oldest blanket in company, thar ain't a redskin in a day's scout. Did you ever know an Ingen," he added, as proof positive of his opinion, "fond of work? It ar' agin thar natur' to do anything of the kind."

"I can't see how their repugnance to labor," remarked Bryan, somewhat impatiently, "proves that the canoes have not been removed by a portion of the band, or that some of the savages may not still be in the neighborhood."

"Jist the way with you youngsters," retorted Kenton, "who ain't up to the ways of the redskins. But do you think, Mister Bryan, that if only a part of them lazy devils had gone on a scout, they'd have troubled themselves with all the canoes, and left none for thar friends in a case of emergency? No, no," he continued, shaking his head, "they are all gone clear enough; but I won't pretend to say they all went in the canoes, but I'm sartain of this much—that them what did go in the boats

didn't 'spect to return, and didn't leave an Ingen behind."

"You may be right, Simon," said Head; "but although they have given us the slip, they may yet fall into the hands of our friends at the Vienna station."

"Zactly, Mister Bryan," said Simon, "but then we've missed all the fun. Cuss that stubborn, mule-headed Jack Malden," he added, with increased heat, becoming more enraged the more he thought of the matter, "we owe all our bad luck to him. He's ready enough to fight, once we get at it, and is not unworthy of the name he bears—'Jack of the bloody hand'—but blast him, had he not, through jealousy, delayed the march of Colonel Holding almost a day, blame me if we wouldn't have made a clean sweep of them ar' thievin' Shawanees."

"Don't take it so much to heart, Simon," remarked Bryan, smilingly, "for some of us might have lost our scalps had your wish been gratified; and as the savages have retreated without doing any damage to the settlements, then let them go. 'Tis not the first time we've made a forced march, to find our wily game fled."

"I'm not so sartain they've done no injury to the settlements," replied Simon, ascending the bank of the river, and moving off at a quick pace in the direction of the cave; "it ain't nateral for an Ingen to return from his war-path without striking a blow."

Bryan had noticed, with some degree of uneasiness, the traces of doubt and care upon the countenance of Simon, nor was he regardless of the secret fears conveyed in his last remark; but, without referring to either of these sources of disquiet, replied, with an appearance of calmness he was far from really feeling—

"Colonel Holding must be in the neighborhood of the cave by this time, and, as the advanced guard, we should be there to meet and give him the information we have obtained. We may also, when there, find some trace of the enemy, and perhaps be enabled to unravel the design of our wily foe."

Kenton made no reply, but continued to follow back, at a rapid pace, the trail of the Indians leading from the

river to the cavern; and, notwithstanding his positive assurance of their departure, he did not forget his habitual caution, but stalked along in silence, his eye ever roving far and near, with its usual wary vigilance. When only a short distance from the mouth of the cavern, Kenton's sharp eye, ever on the alert, caught sight of a gliding object, creeping cautiously along the point of a neighboring ridge, but on account of the low underbrush, not distinctly in view. Sinking quickly and noiselessly to the earth, the other borderers, without question, following his example, the Scout continued his gaze upon the distant object, as it stole from one covering to another, until at last his watchfulness was rewarded with complete success; for the subject of his suspicious observation, as it approached nearer and nearer to a bald point, gradually assumed the form of a human being, and directly stood out upon the bald point itself, in giant proportion, relieved by the distant sky; grasping a long rifle, and dressed in the usual flowing hunting-shirt of the borderer.

"No one can doubt, when the huge form of Rowen stands out agin the sky," remarked Kenton, quietly, his eagle eye losing its gleam of eager curiosity under the certainty of the distant individual being a friend.

Springing to his feet, the Scout stood forth on the point of a little hillock; but no sooner had he done so, than the person he had been watching, dropped quickly to the ground; nor did he resume his erect position, until Bryan and the Sergeant, with the remainder of the scouting party, stood by the side of Kenton; then, as if satisfied, Rowen again stood boldly forth, gracefully waving his cap around his head; and Simon, returning his salute, the other beckoned with his hand, as if to some one beyond the hill; and soon a powerful gray horse, mounted by a portly rider, stood by his side.

"Colonel Holding, to a sartainty!" exclaimed Kenton, with a pleased look, "and as brave a man as ever drew bead upon a red skin."

It was a wild scene; but a fit picture of the dark and bloody ground, and its early border warriors—that desolate, treeless knob, with its two giant occupants; Rowen

standing, leaning with one hand upon his long rifle, whilst with the other he pointed out the little company of Kenton; and Colonel Holding, mounted upon his powerful gray, and grasping his ready weapon, as with eager eye, he scanned the distant party.

But soon this scene was changed; for Holding, waving his cap, horseman after horseman, to the number of fifty or more, galloped gayly over the ridge; each grasping his inseparable companion—the rifle; and all dressed in the flowing semi-savage frontier garb; a band of as stalwart, hard-riding, brave-hearted hunters, as ever gathered together for a border fray in the wilds of Kentucky.

"A brave sight!" exclaimed Bryan.

"Pity the redskins are gone," chimed in Kenton.

But Holding did not give them much time for remark; for, placing himself at the head of his borderers, he galloped recklessly down the hill, careless alike of stone and gully, and, in a few minutes, stood in the presence of the Scout and his party, exclaiming in a bold, merry voice, as he drew rein—

"What news, Captain Kenton? any chance for a brush with the sayages?"

"The Shawanee thieves have 'scaped this time, Colonel," said Simon; "but I ain't sartain but we may have a brush with them yet. I'll jist take a scout around the mouth of the cave, and may larn something to settle my doubts."

A cloud of disappointment swept over the bold and manly face of Holding, as he heard of the escape of the savages; but, wishing to cheer up his followers, who began to make known their chagrin by sundry uncouth oaths, he quickly resumed his usual dashing, devil-may-care look, exclaiming—

"There's no use crying over spilled milk, boys! It's devilish hard, I acknowledge, to be cheated out of an expected battle, and just when we were listening for the yell of the enemy; but, as the thieves have fled the country, in the devil's name, let them go; we will pay them up all old scores at some other time. Captain Head," he continued, turning to our hero, "you will have to tell us

the result of your scout; for I see that your leader, our old friend Kenton, true to his hatred of the redskins, has gone to the cave, to rouse up, if possible, some trace of our bloody foe; and I, for one, won't be sorry if he rouse up the game."

Bryan, seeing that the Colonel had but spoken the literal truth, and no more, of Kenton, and that the worthy Scout, regardless of all military etiquette, had, indeed, after answering the first question of his commander (for that expedition), walked quietly away, as if more intent upon satisfying his own mind, than that of his leader, proceeded at once to obey the command of Holding, by giving a detailed account of all that had come under his own cognizance, as well as the reasons why Simon, whom they all knew to be well skilled in the ways of the savage, had concluded that their enemy had departed from the neighborhood.

"No doubt of it," said a heavy built and dark-visaged man, in a harsh, half-sneering tone, when Bryan had concluded his narrative, "and no one, with three grains of common sense, could have expected anything else. We have come on a fool's errand; and, like fools, have had a weary ride for nothing. Had my advice been taken, we would have remained at home and awaited their attack, if they ever had any such a notion, which I very much doubt; but, as it was not, all that we can do now, is to turn about upon our own trail, and make the best of a bad job."

"Major Malden has been a croaker throughout this expedition," said Bryan, with some heat; not a little ruffled by the rough, sneering voice of the last speaker, and the covert charge against his absent friend, the Scout. "Had he remained at home, where he so much wished to stay, and not delayed our march for near a day, first by his factious opposition, and then by his dilatory movements, it would have been all the better for us, and I doubt not would have insured the complete success of our scheme against the enemy; for they have not been gone more than twelve hours, if we may judge by the traces left at the river."

"Now, may the fiend take me," shouted Malden, his face furious and dark with malignant passion, and spurring his horse to free himself from the crowding mass, "if I longer submit to such insinuations against my honor and bravery."

"Hold!" exclaimed the clear ringing voice of the Colonel, as he grasped with nervous hand the bridle-rein of Malden; "we came here to spill the blood of a savage foe, and not to mingle in strife with each other. It is a foolish quarrel, Malden, and about nothing! and you, Head, I thought you too cool to become ruffled, because Malden chose, in his rough way, to vent upon the heads of his friends the disappointment he felt in not finding an enemy to fight!"

"But has he not charged me with cowardice?" vociferated Malden, still speaking in high and angry tone.

"I have but spoken the truth," replied Head, firmly; "and if Major Malden chooses to construe my language into a charge of cowardice, then his own conscience is but supplying a reason for the actions with which I have charged him. The cause of his opposition to this expedition, and his delay in getting ready to accompany it, is known only to himself. I have stated facts, and the result of these facts; the reason, if he sees proper, he can give himself!"

Malden was preparing to give an angry reply, which in all probability would have led to a serious difficulty, and perhaps bloodshed, for he was hotheaded and brave; and Bryan, though cool, equally as bold and determined; but Holding, interrupting him, and this time speaking in a firm and authoritative voice, which brooked not opposition, exclaimed:—

"Now, by my soul, gentlemen! I'm your commander during this expedition, and if your own sense of duty does not put a stop at once to this silly controversy, I will—and in manner that will not be the most agreeable."

"While you stand here, quarrelling among yourselves," said Rowen, for he had been sent by Kenton, and luckily arrived at this crisis of the dispute, "the Indians you came out to fight, are sweeping through the unpro-

tected settlements, and tomahawking your wives and children."

"How now, Rowen! what news is this you bring?" asked Holding, turning quickly to the speaker, and forgetting everything else in his eagerness to learn the foundation of this startling intelligence.

"Kenton has discovered a broad trail," said Rowen, "leading out from the cave, and bearing off in the direction of the settlements. He is of the impression, and I doubt not its correctness, that while a part of the savages have dropped down the river in their canoes, a much larger number have passed across the country, for the purpose of pillage and murder."

"By my faith!" said Holding, his face growing pale at the thought of the Indian inroad upon the unprotected settlements, "your news is indeed startling, and I fear the surmise of the Scout is but too true. Call up Kenton, for we must be prompt in our movements."

The strife between Malden and Bryan had been hushed at the first sound of Rowen's deep voice, and forgotten entirely by Head, when he heard the fearful tenor of his intelligence; but by Malden it was neither forgotten nor forgiven, as future events will show; but now, spurring his horse, he exclaimed in a loud tone, and with an angry scowl at our hero:—

"I have been charged with delaying the march hither, but no one shall ever have cause to say I was tardy in revenging the blood of murdered women and children. Ho! for the settlements, and the bloody scalps of the savage! Jack Malden, for one, will not let the moss grow under his horse's hoof."

A loud shout greeted this declaration of Malden, and there was a hurried springing to saddle, and hasty preparation for instant march; but Holding was now engaged in earnest conversation with Kenton, and though eager and impatient to be off, no one obeyed the stirring summons of the angry major.

Bryan and his trusty friend, the Sergeant, trembling for their unprotected station, and the more so since they had learned from the Scout the presence of their old enemy,

had, at the first intimation of the impending danger, sought their horses, and now, as the Colonel concluded his low conversation with Kenton, came galloping up, ready to join the march homeward.

"I have no doubt you are correct, and that such are their intentions," said Holding, in a loud voice, replying to something Kenton had said; "but if we do not overtake them before they reach the settlements, we will at any rate have a chance of revenging our friends ere they cross the Ohio."

"I've no knowledge of Ingen deviltry, if this ain't thar plan," said Simon, "but if they are watchful at Vienna, and we be quick in pursuit, I'll give my head for a football, if one of the tarnal redskins escape us."

"God grant it!" said Holding, solemnly; adding, the moment after, in a voice half command, half inquiry, "but, Captain Kenton, had you not better take your party, and slightly examine this cave? It may result in some discovery; and you can do so, and rejoin us before night-fall."

Simon acquiescing in this suggestion of the Colonel, the latter, without more delay, turning to the impatient borderers, called out—

"Now, gentlemen! if you will but follow my gallant gray, he will lead you all a merry race! A long and hard ride is before us, but haste may yet save our homes from flames, and our wives and children from massacre! Ho, for our homes, for victory, or revenge!"

A long wild shout rang out through the silent hills, in answer to the cheering words of Holding; but long before the rocks, and valleys, and caves around had ceased to send back the dancing echo, the bold Colonel and his fierce and hard-riding troopers had vanished from the sight of Kenton and his companions, and were thundering with headlong speed upon the broad trail of their bloody foe!

"There they go, as brave a set of fellows," exclaimed one of the scouts, "as ever shouted back defiance to an Indian yell; and that Colonel of ours rides as merrily to battle as if going to a wedding."

CHAPTER IX.

HOLDING, with his troopers, gone, Simon lost no time in entering the cave. Like the famous war-horse of Job, he snuffed the battle afar off, and was, therefore, the more anxious to fulfil the commands of the Colonel, that he might the sooner rejoin his friends, in pursuit of the Indians. Nevertheless, Simon had some curiosity to examine into the mysterious hiding-place of the savages, and doubted not, ere he was through with his subterranean scout, to make some important discovery. He had, himself, suggested the propriety of the exploration, although, like a wise man, he had left it to his superior in command to give the order, as if springing from his own breast. The honest Scout was a simple, uneducated child of nature; but although artless and truthful, he was not ignorant of the human heart; and had, therefore, shrewdly given his views and advice to Holding in private; and the Colonel, well knowing his skill in Indian craft, did not hesitate a moment in making the plans of Simon his own. One of the suggestions of Kenton, as we have already hinted, had been to examine the cave, and learn, if possible, whether the savages had any design of returning; but the Colonel, seeing the impatience of his followers to be off upon the trail of the enemy, could only follow up this hint, by ordering the Scout and his small company of spies to make the exploration, whilst he gratified the ardor of his companions, by immediately commencing the pursuit. Simon undertook this duty all the more willingly, since he well knew that, in following up the broad beaten trail of the Colonel and his troopers, which he could do without halting, and at full gallop, a few hours' advance would give them no advantage over himself and comrades, and that he could overtake them long before they reached the settlements,

or there could be any chance of a rencounter with the enemy.

"Blame me, boys, if I hain't made many scouts in my day," exclaimed Kenton, as he picked his way slowly along the dark passage of the cavern, followed by his little troop, "but darn my buttons, if this 'ere one don't jist beat them all, all hollow, and no mistake. The night I rode into the Wyandot camp wer' some, and I thought it a leetle of the darkest, but it wer' nothin', merely a cloudy day, alongside of this black 'hole. I 've hearn tell that somewhar' over the waters, in that ar' country where a feller by the name of Joseph, who war' allfired vartious, had his coat-tail pulled off by a potter's wife, that you can feel the darkness; but cuss me, if ever that can be spoken of in the same day with this; for I swar, this 'ere darkness would float a tomahawk. Whew!" continued the Scout, in the same half serious, half jocular tone; for his companions, overcome by the silence and gloom of the mighty cavern, seemed but little disposed to conversation; "what an elegant place this 'ere tarnal big hole would be for the niggers, for the blackest of them would look a shade white once they got in here, and thar masters wouldn't be more than mulatters."

"See here, boys," remarked Simon, when they had gone near a mile, and were not far distant from the large room where the Indians had encamped, his spirits by this time becoming a little depressed by the continued silence of his comrades, and the extent and gloom of the cavern; "I never did much like the ideer of going under ground, cuss me if I did, and am rather agin graves anyhow; and would jist prefer, if allowed a choice, when my time comes to go on the 'long journey,' as the Ingens have it, to be left out on the top of the earth where the warm sun can git to my bones, and I would a blam'd sight rather be eaten by the wolves, and varments, and birds above ground, than by them ar' crepin' worms under it. It's more nateral-like, boys; give me the wolf and buzard before the worm—them's my sentiments!"

"Don't you think we had better go back?" said a tall fellow immediately behind Simon, at length finding his

tongue, the philosophical remarks of the Scout respecting death and the grave being a little too much for his awe-struck feelings!

"Ain't afraid, Robin, are you?" replied Simon, coolly.

"I ain't afraid of nothin' 'bove ground," retorted the other, with some heat, "and never yet turned my back on friend or foe, and you know it, Simon. But blame me if I wouldn't rather be in the middle of a hundred yellin' Ingens—if it wer' only out in daylight—than be down in this dark hole."

"It ar' a pretty considerable sink-hole, I acknowledge," said the Scout, adding, encouragingly, "but I guess thar's an end to it somewhar", Robin, and when we find it, we'll then seek daylight agin; for, to tell the honest truth, I'd a blame sight rather be out myself."

"But do you see any signs of it?" said the other, somewhat despondingly, and referring to the hoped-for termination of their disagreeable journey.

"Signs on it?—see any signs on it?" replied Simon, with some warmth; "now, Robin, that's axing a leetle too much, even of Sharp-Eye; for I can't see the end of my nose without puttin' my torch close enough to singe my whiskers."

"Who knows whether we'll ever come to the end of it?" said another, in a rather dolorous tone.

"Who knows!" replied Simon, sententiously, and becoming indifferent in proportion to the increasing alarm of his comrades.

"And who cares? darn me if I ever backed out from a scout yet," chimed in a new voice, "and ain't going to do it now; but blame me if I don't jist b'lieve this is the big road to Old Nick's, and the first thing we know, we'll be plump into one of his log-heaps. I wonder if he's got up finger-boards, as the law directs?"

"Hurra for Devil Dick Dobbins!" exclaimed Kenton, his spirits reviving, now that his friends had broken silence; "if anybody knows the road to Old Nick's, he should; and now that we know whar we ar' travellin', we'll jist keep on till we come to the camp of the red-

skins; for I guess we can go as deep into this big sink as the pesky Shawanees."

"Nothing shorter," replied he of the Beelzebubic *sobriquet*, adding, with a laugh, "look out, Robin, for my uncle's log-heaps!"

"There they are!" shouted Robin, in the same breath, starting back in horror, and pointing with his trembling finger. And sure enough, right before them, in the gloom and darkness of the cavern, was a small white flame, now rising, then sinking low again; now bright and distinct, then again faint and flickering, like a dying candle.

"Down with your torches!" exclaimed the Scout, promptly, "and none of your nonsense, Robin, 'bout the devil, and sich like. That fire wer' kindled by the Shawanees, and if you stand gaping thar, like a born nateral, some of the villains—if any of them ar' left behind—may send a bullet through your head."

No sooner had Simon given this very simple explanation, than his hardy followers, forgetting at once their superstitious fears, at the prospect of a fight with the savages, were themselves again, and ready for battle.

Creeping warily towards the fire, expecting every moment to hear the yell of their savage foe, they at length, without interruption, and in silence, stood within the influence of its faint and expiring light. Standing for a moment, with their ears painfully alive to every sound, but hearing nothing, either to arouse their fear or suspicion, Simon at length stepped cautiously to the flaming brand, and throwing thereon an armfull of dry wood found close by, soon the grand and spacious camping-room of the Indians was again made cheerful by a pleasant and brilliant light; and his comrades lending their aid, to increase the size and steadiness of the burning heap, the vast magnificence of this wonderful apartment was at once unfolded to their astonished gaze.

"A pretty fair cabin, this!" exclaimed Devil Dick, looking coolly around; "I wonder, Rob, if my old namesake has many more like it, in this blasted sink-hole of his?"

"See what the tarnal red devils have been at!" shouted

Simon, fiercely, as he caught sight of the stake prepared for Pat Connelly. "That darnation Frenchman has been roasted alive; and though a great villain, blast me if I don't feel sorry for the poor feller, now that he's dead."

"Here are two of the bloody rascals!" shouted one of the company, with some alarm, as he stumbled upon the two savages slain by the Irishman; and Simon and the others rushing to the call of their companion, beheld the grim forms of the two warriors killed by Connelly, placed in a sitting posture against the wall, with their arms folded across their bosoms, and their rifles and tomahawks resting by their sides.

"They'll never wake agin," said the Scout, holding his torch to the faces of the dead Indians, "a strong hand has been before us, and the tomahawk has done its work."

"Sure enough!" replied Devil Dick, stooping down to examine their ghastly wounds; "I'll bet my sweet-ringing rifle, to a blathering old shot-gun, them fellers never kicked twice, after that tomahawk came down upon their bald pates."

"I'll never say another word agin that Frenchman, boys," said Simon, musingly; "for, though he wer' a blasted rascal when I used to know him in the old State, he's dead now, and died game, and them ar' two blows with the hatchet showed he wer' no coward after all. But cuss me," he added, in a lower tone to himself, "if I don't believe yit he had nigger blood in him; for that ar' trick he played me wer' a darned scaly one, and no mistake."

Kenton having traced Montlack to the cavern, and ignorant of the captivity of Connelly, took it for granted that the former had been put to the torture by the savages, and that the two warriors just discovered had fallen under his hand. With the nobleness of a brave heart, he was willing, therefore, to forget all past animosity, and ascribe to his enemy virtues that he would have denied to him had he been living.

The examination of the Indian camp completed, Simon and his companions hurried to leave the cave, but becoming confused by the magnitude of the apartment, and ignorantly believing they had reached the end of the cavern,

they carelessly entered the avenue, leading still deeper into the bowels of the earth, and recklessly continued their march, expecting every moment to catch sight of the anxiously hoped for entrance. When entering the cave, their minds were too much awe-struck, and their lights too dim, to afford them much chance for observation; and now they were not aware of their fatal mistake (though Simon, as he continued on, without catching the welcome sight of day and sunshine, began to have some fears) until the Scout, starting back in horror from the brink of the Bottomless Pit, shouted to Devil Dick, who was recklessly plunging forward, and so occupied in jeering Robin, as to know nothing of what was going on—

"Hold hard, Dick! another step, and you'll never see sunshine agin."

Startled by the fearful cry of Kenton, the young borderer came to a dead halt, and not a moment too soon; for he stood upon the very verge of the pit, and another step would have sent him, with a laugh upon his lips, into eternity.

"Hello! Captain," exclaimed Dobbins, turning back; "what in the devil's name is to pay now? Are the Indians ahead, or has Robin again spied out the log-heaps of my old kinsman?"

"Neither," said the Scout; "but listen, and you'll know," at the same time hurling a huge stone over the precipice, and tossing after it a flaming brand.

"My God!" exclaimed the hair-brained young fellow, stepping quickly back from his fearful position, whilst a chilly and sickening sensation overspread his bold heart, "that was indeed a narrow escape."

"We are lost! we are lost!" ran around the little party in tones of hopeless despondency; but Kenton met their mournful cry by exclaiming, in a cheerful and fearless voice:—

"Not lost, boys, but only taken the wrong trail. We have done the same often before and thought nothing of it. All that we've got to do now is to 'bout face, and call our lost scout lost time."

"But our torches," said one, in a hopeless tone, "they are nearly gone."

"True," replied Simon, sorrowfully, his own undaunted heart quailing beneath this new misfortune, as he looked sadly into the dim faces of his little band, and noticed their fast-expiring brands; "but on boys," he added, in a more cheerful tone, "speed is now our only hope of safety, and we've no time for sorrow."

"May the devil take the hindmost," shouted Dick, as he hurried eagerly forward; "there's nothing like light heels in a bad scrape, and no shame in using them when in a fix like this."

For a short time the alarmed party fled along in silence and safety, but the speed of their flight adding force to the power of the flames, soon one by one their torches burned down to the very hands of the holder, and, like the eager hopes of their bearers, dropped to the earth, and went out forever.

At length there was only one torch left to light them on to life and safety, and that, like a distant star, glimmered away in the upraised hand of Devil Dick.

"Never say, boys," shouted Dick, looking back, and becoming, like a sailor upon a foundering ship, more reckless as his torch burned lower and lower, and his chance of safety more hopeless, "that you didn't run headlong to the devil, and worship even his flaming brand."

Slower and slower went the weary and heavy hearted borderers, crowding closer and closer around that solitary torch, and as it burned lower and lower, and became dimmer and dimmer, their hopes gradually sinking and dying with each trembling flicker, until at last Dick, with a bitter ejaculation, tossed from him the expiring stump. It flamed up a moment, then went out forever, and along with it came death-like darkness, and their hopes were dead.

"Our race is run," said Simon, seating himself, but speaking in a firm voice, as if his mind was made up for the worst.

"And devil the goal we've won," added Dick with a

laugh, recklessly throwing himself full length upon the hard floor.

"Our time's up," said another, solemnly; "we are buried alive, and have chosen our tomb."

"It's big enough in all conscience," replied Dick, "and as there is plenty of room, if it's all the same to you, we'll have no crowding, and I'll thank the gentleman standing on my leg to move his quarters."

So utterly unexpected was this sally of Dick, and so laughingly ridiculous under the circumstances, that, notwithstanding their horrible situation, some of the party, almost as reckless as himself, could not restrain a low laugh.

"This is no time for laughing," remarked he that had spoken so dolorously of their being buried alive, and whose remark had elicited the reply of Dobbins.

"Nor for crying," added Dick, sententiously.

"But what shall we do now?" inquired one, in a low, earnest tone.

"Don't know," said Simon. "If we were only out 'bove ground, where I could see the stars, or feel the wind, or the moss on the trees, I could lead you safe from the darkest and thickest forest that ever grew; but in here, below ground, and without any landmarks, cuss me if I knows anything better than sittin' jist whar we are."

"But we'll starve and die if we remain here," said the other.

"Don't know that," replied Simon; "we may git pretty considerably hungry, and may-be, for who knows, some on us may die; but I calculate the Colonel, after he's done with the darned Ingens, will be back here following on our trail, and get us outter this blasted hole. I've been in a worse fix than this boys; so thar's no use being down in the mouth, and as Dick says, we might as well laugh as cry."

"Them's my sentiments, exactly," said Dick, his mercurial spirit catching at once the hope of rescue held out by Kenton; "and though 'tis dark in here, and no mistake, I guess we'll not be troubled either by Indian or

varmint, and it will only be a few days' starving after all, which won't be much, neighbor (I mean you fellow poking your finger into my peepers, in search of your own), specially when you take into consideration how bear meat and hominy will suffer when we once get out."

The drooping spirits of the party had been decidedly revived by the prospect of escape held out by Kenton; and such was the reaction, that they met Dick's definition of neighbor with quite an audible laugh; the fellow who had been so opposed to laughing himself, joining in the merriment.

"That's right, boys," said Simon, cheerfully, "keep your spirits up, for that's no use in being down-hearted. As for starvin', that's a mere matter of moonshine, and you'll soon get used to it. I've been without food for days and days together, and more than once, and knows all 'bout it. 'Taint the starvin' that's now pesterin' me, but it ar', that while we are cooped up here in this cussed hole, like a drove of ground-hogs, the Colonel and the boys will be scalpin' the bloody Shawanees, and we won't have any hand in the run."

"That's worse than starvin'," exclaimed Dick, with a groan at the very thought; "s'pose we make another push to get out; for blast me if I can stay here, like an old bear laid up for the winter, to suck my paws, and think about the boys having all the fighting to themselves."

"It won't do," said Simon; "Bang could tell you that. Remember the pit."

"I guess I won't forget it soon," replied Dobbins; "and I'd rather lay here and outsleep the Seven Sleepers, than run such another risk."

Bang, on hearing his name called by the Scout, had answered his master with a low whine; and Simon, as if just remembering his presence, and struck with some sudden thought, sprang to his feet, joyfully exclaiming—

"Jist the thing! Bang can do it! Hurra, boys, we are saved!"

"What's to pay now?" shouted Dick.

"Sharp-Eye is a darned fool, and no mistake," replied

Simon; "for here he's been for the last half hour, mopin' like an old woman, because he couldn't get outer this blasted sink, when all the time, close by his side, wer' as good a guide as ever smelled an Ingen track, and jist ready to lead him out for the axing."

"Hurra! hurra!" shouted the whole party with joyous delight, for they understood in a moment the simple plan of the Scout to effect their deliverance, and only wondered that they had not thought of it sooner.

"Here, Bang, my old boy," said Kenton, calling his dog; "your nose has saved your master in worse straits than this, and will do so agin."

Simon drew from his pocket a strong rope made of raw hide, and placing it around the neck of Bang, bade his party fall in a row behind him, and hold on to each other, calling out when they had obeyed this command.

"Now, Bang, take the back track, for we trust in you to get us outer this scrape."

As if fully conscious of the danger of his master, and responsibility of the charge given himself, the faithful brute, with a low bark of satisfaction, bounded away, closely followed by the Scout, holding in his hand the rope; and thus leading swiftly and securely through the heavy darkness of the cavern, his little troop of now joyful and confident followers.

"May I be *banged* to atoms, and pounded to jelly in a hominy mortar," exclaimed Dick, "if I don't think better of dogs from this day, henceforward and forever. Blast me, Captain, if this Bang of your'n don't *bang* out all the dogs in creation, and *bangs* me all hollow."

Pressing steadily forward, Simon made no reply to Dick's eulogy on his dog; noticing it only by a low and knowing laugh; as much as to say, that if he felt so disposed, and Bang needed any praise, he could tell them a few wonders not dreamed of in "their philosophy!"

Fifteen minutes of steady and fast walking brought the rejoicing wanderers in sight of the distant camp-fire; and no longer able to restrain their joy, with a loud shout they deserted the Scout and Bang, rushing pellmell eagerly forward; Dick Dobbins, in the headlong race,

bringing himself up with a pretty severe jolt against the stake prepared for poor Connelly.

"Jist the way of the world!" philosophically remarked the Scout, addressing Bang; "they'll follow man or dog 'till clear of the brush, but let them see a streak of daylight, and nothin' ahead, and whoop, hurra, they are off, caring devil the bit for them what's led 'em to safety!"

"Darn me, if that dig in my bread-basket wern't equal to a but from Amy Adkins," shouted Dick, gasping for breath! "But blame me," he added, once more throwing his arms affectionately around the ominous post, "if this stake don't seem like some dear old friend, and I'll have a kind of liking for such things the balance of my days; always provided, I'm not forced to hug it against my will! Hey, Robin, old Nick's log-heap ain't so darn'd scary now, as it was once on a time."

Leaving the Scout and his party rejoicing over their escape, and preparing once more to leave the cave, we will again return to Pat Connelly.

Springing from the midst of his enemies, as we have already noticed, the Irishman, with scarcely a hope of escape, but determined to make a last effort for life, and at any rate disappoint the savages in their hellish sport, fled madly forward, he knew not whither, quickly followed by his yelling tormentors! All was darkness and gloom before and around him; but so long as no impediment barred his way, the brave borderer continued his flight with unabated speed.

He could see the flaming torches of the Indians far behind him, and could hear their fierce yells of rage; and hope for the first time, like the dancing light of the fire-fly, began to glimmer by degrees and flashes through his agitated bosom, giving renewed zest and desire for life! But suddenly poor Connelly's hopes, as is too often the case in this passing-away world of ours, were cruelly crushed! Like one when laboring under a heavy nightmare, as he leaped gladly forward, all life, and vigor, and hope, he all at once felt himself treading on air, and falling lower, and lower, and lower until, with a sharp pang of pain, he lost all consciousness! He had leaped into a

deep pit, and his head coming in contact with a sharp stone, the blow had rendered him insensible alike to fear or pain. How long he remained in this condition he was ever ignorant, but he heard nothing more of his pursuers; was unconscious of their long and strict search, and knew not of their torches flashing down upon him! The first thing he remembered was, when feeling about with his hand, he was made fully sensible of his dreadful situation, and that he was lying upon the very verge of a still more horrible pit far away below him, into which the stones, agitated and set in motion by his struggles, fell tossing and tumbling from point to point with fearful and chilling distinctness! Believing all chance of escape now hopeless, and overcome by the loss of blood and the horrible consciousness of his miserable fate, insensibility once more came to his relief, and for the time blotted out all memory of his animated or mental agony! Lying in a half-dreamy, half-fainting state, his mind a prey to the wild vagaries of fever and darkness, he heard the steps of Kenton and his party when entering the cave; but, unconscious as to the passage of time, and believing the voice of Simon to be that of Girty; and the tread of the borderer, the footsteps of his enemies in search of himself, with an effort he restrained a groan of agony, and permitted them to pass on without interruption! Combating in his own mind whether he would remain where he was, and die by piecemeal from starvation and loss of blood, or make known his situation to his blood-thirsty foes upon their return from the interior of the cavern, and be killed at once, the sturdy scout had now consumed several hours and was still undecided! While yet engaged in this mournful struggle of deciding between present death by the hand of the savages, or future death from lingering starvation, or roll over the precipice, Connelly heard once more the distant murmur of Simon and his party approaching, and hearing, immediately made up his mind, muttering to himself—

"Pat Connelly has cheated the devils out of their sport, and ain't the boy to make a present of his scalp to a thievin' Shawanee! Let them go! Faith, 'tis but death

at any rate, and starving ain't much worse than tomahawking!"

Thus determined, Connelly remained silent, while friends were passing within twenty feet of the mouth of his horrible tomb! Kenton had already passed, and along with him his entire party, with the exception of Devil Dick, who from some cause, known only to himself, had lingered behind, when the Irishman, believing all were gone, gave vent to his suppressed and struggling emotions in a loud and bitter groan!

"May the devil take me!" exclaimed Dick, looking quickly around, "if I didn't hear a groan, and of one in mortal agony. Hello, Captain," he shouted, hailing Kenton, "something's to pay here!"

Hurrying to the side of Dobbins, so soon as he heard the cause of his shout, Kenton called out—

"If thar's anybody here, let him speak. If you be an Ingen, you can jist take your choice, remain silent and be left whar' you are, or sing out, and be scalped to a sartainty! If a white man, or even that tarnal Frenchman (though cuss me," he added in a lower tone, "if I don't believe he's got nigger blood in him), cry out at once, for friends are at hand!"

No one answering this very considerate speech of the Scout, for poor Connelly, with his last hope of immediate death or escape gone, had again lost consciousness, Simon shook his head, quietly remarking—

"All a mistake, Dick, thar's no one here!"

"Blast me if I didn't hear a groan, and of a man, too, and one in agony," replied Dick, stubbornly! "Here goes to give him another chance before we leave this cussed hole forever!"

"Then hail him yourself!" said Kenton, carelessly.

"Hello! hello there!" shouted Dick, "if you be Indian, white man, squaw, nigger, or old Nick himself, Devil Dick Dobbins gives the hail, and wants an answer!"

"I should know that voice!" called out Connelly from the pit, for he had been aroused from his momentary stupor by the stentorian lungs of Dick, and hastened to make known his whereabouts.

"And I that!" shouted Dick, springing to the mouth of the pit from whence the voice had issued. "Hello, down there!" he added; waving his torch, "ain't that Roaring Pat Connelly, from the upper settlements?"

"Faith! it's what's left of him, Dick Dobbins," shouted back Connelly, again recovering his strength and spirits, at the certainty of escape from his dreadful, and but a moment since, hopeless tomb.

"And how in the name of all that's wonderful did you ever get into that infernal place?" said Dick.

"Hold, Dick!" exclaimed Kenton, "let's git Connelly out o' this 'ere scrape, and then we can hear all about it! Hello! Pat," he added, holding his torch over the mouth of the pit, "'tis Simon Kenton speaking, and he wants to know if you can do anything towards gettin' yourself out?"

"Not much, Captain," said Connelly, "for I am devilish nigh used up; but, if you have a rope, or anything of the kind, I have still my hands and arms left, and we may manage the matter in some way!"

"He will be bruised against the points of the rock," said some one.

"And divil the bit do I care for the bruising," replied Connelly, hearing the remark; "faith, and St. Patrick, if I ain't intirely a big bag of jilly, there's no vartue in being smashed to pieces, and jist no sense at all in bating sausengers!"

"From the way you wag your tongue, Pat," laughed Dick, "after all your bruises, you are not so near dead yet, as to give your scalp for a priest's blessing!"

"Say nothing at all agin the praists, Dick, for Pat Connelly ain't so long from ould Ireland as to forget the church of his mither," replied the Irishman, warmly, adding however, in a lighter tone, "as to that botheration scalp of mine, arrah my darling, jist don't mention it; for may the divil take me if it didn't come as nigh as a blow from the shillalah of a Ballyrankin boy, of being the death of me intirely."

"How do you make that out?" inquired Dick.

"Aisy enough!" said Connelly; "for I got myself into

this swate hole trying to save it; and by the powers, when I heard you passing but a moment ago, thinking you the enemy, I jist made up my mind, like a true son of the sod, to die here, with my wool on, rither than give the bloody redskins a chance of dancing round Pat Connelly's scalp."

Kenton, by this time, having prepared the rope, and fastened to the end of it a flaming torch, it was thrown carefully over into the pit, and lowered down until within the reach of Connelly, who having fastened it around his body and given them the signal to hoist away, by the united efforts of the party, the burly form of the Irishman was soon landed in safety, and stretched out upon the smooth sandy floor of the cavern.

Although accustomed to sights of blood and cruelty, and by no means given to express astonishment at ghastly scenes, Simon and his companions could not help starting back with horror, at the sickening spectacle presented in the person of their rescued friend. From the careless and even merry tones of Connelly's voice, they had expected to find him very little injured; and the reader may fancy their surprise when, by the united light of their torches, they beheld him entirely naked, with his face and head gashed and gory with clotted blood, and his entire person covered with innumerable dark blotches, the effect of fire, and the barbarous torture of the savages.

"Never mind, boys!" exclaimed Connelly, noticing their horror and dismay; "divil the bit does Pat Connelly care for the like of this. He'll live to take yet, as many scalps from the bloody rascals, as they've made bruises upon his own beautiful self, and you can start the count with the two I've already tomahawked, and may the divil take the villains."

"Amen!" shouted Devil Dick, throwing his own hunting-shirt around the shoulders of Connolly; "and when he gets them in his clutches, may he give them a taste to all eternity, of that same darned fire they're so cussedly fond of."

At the request of Kenton, Connelly gave him a hurried

account of his captivity, and all subsequent events, not forgetting to name Girty, and another white man, whose face he did not see, and whether a prisoner like himself or an ally, he was unable to tell.

"It wer' that tarnal Frenchman, no doubt," muttered Simon, "and at some of his diveltry. Blast me, if I didn't always think he had nigger blood in him, and now I know it."

Without longer delay, Simon and his comrades bore Connelly in their arms to the mouth of the cavern, and having sent off for their horses, covered his bruised body with portions of their own garments, and their saddle-cloths, the former ordering two of his party to place him carefully upon one of their horses, and convey him to the station where he belonged.

"Farewell, Connelly," exclaimed Simon, mounting his horse, Dick and the remainder of the party quickly following his example; "we can't stay longer now. Hard-riding Holding and bull-dog Malden are hot upon the trail of the Shawanees, and we must jine them before battle. You may be sartain, Pat, that our blows will be none the lighter, and our hearts not a grain the softer agin the bloody savages, when we 'member all your sufferins."

"Remember Pat Connelly, and death to the savages!" shouted Devil Dick, rising in his stirrups, and brandishing his rifle.

"Remember Pat Connelly!" was fiercely echoed by the others.

"Remember Pat Connelly!" came rolling back from hill and hollow; but the bold spirits who had sent forth this battle-cry were not there to greet its return. They were speeding, with headlong haste, to join the bloody fray.

"Remember Pat Connelly!" said the maimed Irishman with a groan; "faith, and he would jist give his own right hand to be with you, and remimber himself."

CHAPTER X.

THOSE have never known real pleasure who have not been met at the threshold of home by the cheering smile of a loving wife, and the glad and loud welcome of beaming-faced children; nor on the other hand, have they ever known real grief and sorrow, unless they have seen death mowing down these household treasures, and crushing into the silent grave these heart moving and heart cherished welcomers.

"They are all gone!" sighed Bryan, in a hopeless and desponding tone, sinking heavily into a seat, and stupidly staring around upon his disfurnished and disordered apartment at the station.

"All!" muttered Duffe.

"We have ridden hard to save them," continued Bryan, in the same despairing tone; "but the savage has been before us, Duffe; and wife and child, both, both, have fallen under the bloody tomahawk of our ruthless foe. A curse, a double curse on the hour," he added, vehemently, "when we persuaded her to leave the happy home of her childhood, and swore to defend her from all harm, and make her life a long day of sunshine and joy."

"See, Duffe, how we have kept our oaths! the bloody knife has pierced her confiding bosom, and the cruel tomahawk dashed out the brains of her little innocent; and instead of being here to defend her, or die—like senseless fools were far away, and did not even hear her low cry for mercy or assistance."

For a moment the Sergeant made no reply to the wild ravings of the bereft husband; but the fierce workings of his bronzed cheek, and the tear dancing in his eye, told more eloquently than words, the deep agony of his heart. At length there struggled up, from his heaving bosom, the simple, soul-touching, and endearing title—

"My wife!"

"Pardon me!" exclaimed Bryan, his own scorched and feverish eye filling up with emotion when he heard this simple appeal of the Sergeant, "my terrible misfortune has made me selfish and forgetful. We are alike bereft, and alike sorrowers, and our hearts should beat now in sad sympathy, for we can only weep together!"

Duffe stretched out his brawny hand, and Bryan, seizing it in his own, exclaimed with vehement energy—

"My more than father must not take to heart the wild ravings of his foster child. But, oh! is it not horrible; is it not too dreadful to be reality; and how can my tortured and throbbing soul, knowing and feeling the fearful loss it has sustained, still beat with life and agony. My God! death would be happiness, and eternal forgetfulness the dearest boon I could ask, and the greatest favor that could now be granted me."

"'Tis a fearful loss, my boy, and hard to bear," muttered the Sergeant, his manly frame trembling with the excess of his feelings, "but we should meet it as brave men, and soldiers."

"To think," continued Bryan, his vehemence giving place to a low tone of sadness, and his flashing eye again looking bewilderingly around, "that only a few days ago we prepared this room, with so much care and love, to protect her from the cold winds of winter; and we would not have even the chilling air of heaven to blow roughly upon the frail flower we had transplanted to this wild land; and now, Duffe, she is cold enough; and the little floweret she nursed so fondly, is lying all stark and stiff by her side, torn from the parent stem, and she unconscious of its loss. When we had finished our labor of love, she smiled upon us, father; don't you remember her sweet smile? and how she held up her crowing boy to admire, as she called it, her beautiful lodge? But look now! the savages have stripped it; and where are those radiant gems we hid away so carefully in the rich furs, gathered as a mete offering to their loveliness? Hast thou forgotten her tearful eye, and low, trembling voice, bidding us farewell, and murmuring a prayer for our safety when we went forth to drive back the savage enemy? We

left her sad, it is true; but full of life and hope, and surrounded by every comfort; but now look around at this disordered and dismantled room, and weep. It tells us, as plain as words could tell, that those dove-like eyes will never again gleam forth through dancing tears; and that her lute-like tongue is hushed now, and silent, and will never again weep either a sad farewell, or laugh a joyous welcome. She is gone, Duffe; they are all gone; our household ties have been rudely torn asunder; our little world is desolate, and we can but weep over our crushing desolation."

The Sergeant could not and would not attempt any consolation. The two mourning men, the foster-father and his child, wept in silence.

Holding and his followers, well aware of the bloody intent of the savages, upon whose trail they were following, and fully alive to the ruthless manner in which they usually carried on such expeditions, had pushed gallantly forward, making no stop, except to blow their weary horses; travelling day and night; for their hardy frames, excited by their fears and their hopes of vengeance, felt not the toil. Late in the night succeeding the day upon which they had left the cavern, Kenton and his little scouting party joined the main band of borderers, and making known at once their discoveries, and the cruelty of the Indians to Connelly, added fresh fury to their rage, and fresh vigor to their march. The savages, when in striking distance of the settlements, had divided their forces; a portion, under the command of the chief, bearing away in one direction, whilst the remainder, under the lead of Girty, moved forward to the station of Head and Duffe. The whites, wishing to pursue both trails, followed their example; Malden and one party pursuing the trace of the chief, and Holding and the others continuing on after the renegade.

Bryan, Duffe, and Kenton, hurrying on in advance of their comrades, had reached the station a few minutes before the main party. We find the two former overwhelmed with their terrible misfortune; weeping together in the cabin of Bryan; but the latter, although filled with

alarm and affliction, led on by his habitual custom of close and minute examination, had already discovered the dead bodies of the two Indians slain by Titus; and seeing no traces of the inhabitants, had derived some hope and comfort from this fact, which, from a strict examination of the trail of the Indians after they had left the station, where he easily made out the slight foot-prints of Coma, and heavier shoe of Mrs. Duffe, had been fully satisfied; and now, with joyful alacrity, the honest Scout hastened to bear these cheerful tidings to his afflicted friends.

"Hello, Mister Bryan, and you, Sargeant," shouted Simon, bursting in upon the two afflicted husbands; for Holding and his comrades, although now present at the station, had, with genuine sympathy, refrained from intruding upon the privacy of their distressed companions, "this is no time, cuss me if it is," he added, with some warmth to conceal his own emotion, "to be sittin' here, weepin' like a couple of old women!"

"Coma!" murmured Bryan, looking stupidly into the face of the intruder.

"My wife!" muttered the Sergeant.

"May Sharp-Eye be called a bat, and Simon Kenton roasted to death by the bloody redskins," shouted the Scout, "if they didn't both leave the station wearin' thar own scalps; and cuss me for a liar and a coward, if they shan't both return in the same fix, and without losin' a har from their heads."

"How!—what do you say? Coma not dead?" exclaimed Bryan, springing to his feet, and eagerly confronting the Scout.

"Zactly!" said Simon, somewhat puzzled how to answer the rapid inquiries of his friend, "that's jist what I said; and she ain't no more dead than myself; merely carried off a captive by the hathan."

"How do you know this, Simon?" said Bryan, with startling emphasis, and looking anxiously into the face of the Scout. "Do not, for God's sake, raise hopes in my bosom, merely to be cruelly crushed again."

"Aisy enough," said Simon; "and if you had only thought a moment afore you gin up so, you'd have dis-

kivered this same thing, and been up and doin' instead of weepin'. Blast my eyes," he added, suddenly breaking off, and wiping away a gushing tear, "what's got into 'em! I jest b'lieve the darned cobwebs will be the ruin of 'em yet! But as I was going to say, Mr. Bryan, when them cussed eyes of mine, like a doe's when stricken by a bullet, you 've seen 'em', began fillin' up with water, I jist found two of the most beautiful specimens of Titus's handiwork in the Sergeant's room, ever I drew bead on, I mean two of them tarnal Ingens, dead enough, one with his head split open, and the t'other just as satisfactorily killed with a bullet through his gizzard; and looking 'bout for the nigger, blast his woolly scalp, I'll love it for ever and ever after this, I couldn't see nothing at all of him; and so, taking the trail, thar', sure enough, I found his big heel, and the track of Sally, and little tiny foot of Miss Coma, and knew at once, jist as well as if I had seen 'em, they were all carried off by the thievin' Shawanees."

"A blessing on you, Simon, for this hope," exclaimed Bryan, his brow changing from gloom and despair to light and joy; "for though the fierce savage may at any time seal this cruelty, by tomahawking the defenceless captive, still, as long as there is life there is hope, and we will not yet despair. Come! we will once more take the trail."

Grasping their ready rifles, the three friends were preparing to sally forth and join their waiting companions, when the little pet of Coma, alarmed by the unusual noise and bustle without the cabin, came stealing cautiously into the apartment, its large liquid eyes rolling wonderingly and sorrowfully around, as if in search of its absent mistress. But no sooner had it caught sight of the familiar faces of the three borderers, than the intelligent and loving animal, as if aware of safety and protection, with a low bleat of joy, sprang eagerly forward, and was folded kindly in the arms of Bryan.

"Poor thing!" murmured the husband of Coma, tears springing fresh to his eyes at the appearance of his wife's little favorite; "it needed not thy gentle, confiding look to remind me of my terrible loss. She is gone! torn

away from the arms of her protector, like thee, little innocent, from the loving care of thy gentle dam, and may never again fold thee to her pitying bosom. But fear not, Nan, I will love thee still; and will feed thee, and care for thee, in memory of the hand that may now be cold and dead, but which has so often tenderly and lovingly caressed thy smooth brow."

The giant forms of the Sergeant and Scout trembled and shook with emotion. Their rough, unpolished hearts were touched by this simple scene; and those two men, who had witnessed bloodshed and misery from their youth, and had dared death in every shape and form, now wept like children.

"Don't make women of us, Mr. Bryan," muttered the Scout, dashing aside with horny hand the fast falling tear, adding to himself—"The poor brute 'minds me of that ar' morning in the hills, when I was simple enough to turn from the chase, and at its low cry, take it up in my arms, and bear it many miles home, as a present to Miss Coma. Blame me! if I ever know'd the cause of my strange feelins that ar' morning. I 've thought it war' the silence of the forest, or the soft warm sunshine on the hills; or, may-be, it wer' a fairy, and had charmed me with its large black eyes, lookin' so beseechin' and natural-like, for it 'minded me of my little sisters, as they used to seem a long time ago; and, blast me, if I didn't look upon that ar' animal as if it were a child lost in the woods, and would have fought for it then, all the same as if it had been of a woman born. But, put it down, Mr. Bryan," he continued in a firmer tone, as if aroused from his reverie, "we ain't got no time for pity now. 'Tis time we wer' off, lookin' for them ar' pets stolen by the cussed Shawanees, and which are dearer to us than all the animals of God's creation."

Without farther remark, the Scout turned upon his heel and left the apartment, followed quickly by the Sergeant; and Bryan, after tenderly putting down the little favorite of his wife, with another sad look at his dismantled home, pursued their footsteps.

Once beyond the limits of that little room, made sa-

cred and holy in his estimation by the memory of his lost Coma, and which seemed to have so depressing an influence upon him, Bryan at once recovered his natural energy and fire, and was again eager and pressing for immediate pursuit of the enemy. Col. Holding, sympathizing with his anxiety, and having been informed by Kenton of the true state of affairs, and of the captivity of the late occupants of the station, made no opposition to his wishes, but readily acquiesced, preparing at once to continue the pursuit. Refreshed by their short rest and a slight meal of parched corn and jerked beef, the borders, without a thought of fatigue, deserted their horses, now too weary to bear them or speed their march, and upon foot, guided by the quick eye of the Scout, once more took the trail of the Indians, all eager and elated with the hope of soon overtaking the enemy, and revenging with bullet and tomahawk the cruelties of their savage foe. Their rage and desire for battle were not at all diminished by the dreadful traces of their barbarous enemy, everywhere greeting them along their hurried march; and when they were joined by Malden, and the party under his command, and were told of the terrible butcheries committed by the chief and his band, who it seemed had been even more bloodthirsty and destructive than the vindictive renegade himself, a loud shout of fury made known their exasperation; and an eager pressing forward told how anxious they were for the bloody fray.

The Indians, as Kenton had divined, after leaving the settlements, made a bold push straight for the mouth of Green River, and in their retreat took every precaution to cover up and conceal their trail. But the whites were well skilled in all the wiles of the savage, and, led on by the quick eye of the wary Simon, and sharp, unfailing scent of the faithful Bang, never once wavered from the track, or halted in doubt, but continued rapidly and steadily onward.

So close and minute was the vigilant observation of Simon, that he was able at one time to rejoice the hearts of Duffe and Bryan, by quickly pointing out to them the firm and well-defined track of Madam Duffe; and,

near by, the fainter and more delicate footprints of Coma.

"That's Sally's track, as sure as my name's Simon," said the Scout, exultingly, but in a suppressed voice; "and as for that ar' little moccason, I'd swar to its being Miss Coma's 'mong a thousand."

Too willing to be convinced, his hearers raised no objection to these confident assertions; for, indeed, they were satisfied, not only of Simon's shrewdness and quickness in all such matters, but of his truthfulness in the present instance; and in their good-humor, went even so far as to acknowledge, what at any rate was well worthy of a doubt, the broad and almost shapeless footprint of the honest black.

"May I never agin be called Sharp-Eye," said Simon, "if that ain't the track of Titus; and what's more, wer' made a purpose, and for my eye."

"You are darnation sharp on an Ingen trail, I'll acknowledge," said one of the party, "but how you know that track were made a purpose, and for your eye, is just a buttonhole above me, as sure as fallin' off a log."

"It's easy enough to one that's up to sich things," replied Simon, confidently; "and Titus ain't scouted 'long with me for nothin'. Don't you see," he added, with a somewhat contemptuous look at the doubter, "that this ar' a good place to leave a deep trail, and what do you think Titus's foot were doin' out thar' off of the path, and pintin' that ar' way a solitary foot, without its feller, if it warn't to catch my eye? Cuss me, if I don't bet a hundred buffalo hides to a mink skin that the nigger thought of me when he made that ar' track."

Convinced by the reasoning of the Scout, or, to be more truthful, driven, like many persons both before and since that time, from his own opinion, by the bold tone of Kenton, and confident offer of a bet, the doubter gave in at once, and made no farther opposition, being very glad to surrender at discretion.

But the elated hopes of Bryan and Duffe, excited by this slight trace of their lost wives, were doomed to be of but short duration; for only a few hundred yards

further on they met with a horrible and shocking proof of the wanton barbarity of the savages, and were made fully conscious of the slight dependence they could put in the continuance of Indian mercy, by the person of an infant, with its brains dashed out against a tree, and but a few steps distant the mangled body of the mother, slain no doubt for mourning over the fate of her murdered child. A low shout of rage and horror greeted this mournful spectacle, and Bryan was so overcome by dreadful fear that he could scarce totter near enough to satisfy himself that it was not Coma and his own loved boy.

Tenderly laying the corpse of the unfortunate mother beneath the protecting shade of a wide-spread oak, and close by her side the body of her infant, the borderers, with many an oath and vow of revenge, continued their march. They were now in the vicinity where they expected to find the enemy; and, with that caution acquired by long and dangerous hostile intercourse with the treacherous savage, began to move at a slower pace, and with more care and wariness than they had as yet exhibited. To guard against surprise, or an ambuscade, Kenton, with a picked band of the most daring hunters of the company, amongst which were numbered Bryan and Duffe, were thrown out some mile or so in advance of Colonel Holding's command, and in this manner marching in silence and using the utmost caution, the determined pioneers hoped to fall upon the enemy, when unprepared either for escape or resistance, and thus take bloody and signal vengeance.

The Shawanee warriors, glad with their late victories and successful retreat, were rejoicing with savage glee over the bloody trophies of their prowess; their pale-browed prisoners, hopeless of rescue, were weeping over their miserable fate; while but a few miles distant, with stern knit brows, and steady nerves, and grasping their long deadly rifles, came a gallant band of hardy hunters, trooping through the dark forest, ready to turn the rejoicings of the former into howls of woe, and the tears of the latter into smiles and songs of joy.

But the conquerors and conquered were alike ignorant of the presence of friend or foe, alike unconscious of danger and safety; and thus we will leave them while we turn, for a moment, to the Indian encampment.

CHAPTER XI.

THOSE only who have wandered through the grand old forests of Kentucky, more grand and magnificent along the alluvial bottoms even than upon the high and fertile plains of the interior, can, for a moment, imagine the wild picturesqueness of the Indian encampment at the confluence of the Ohio and Green, the two most beautiful rivers of the West. On one hand, stretching far away, gliding along in peaceful majesty and beauty, were the bright waters of the Belle River; while on the other, enshrouded and shaded by the overhanging forest, slept the deep green waves of her fairest daughter. Spring had come and gone; Summer had been there and passed away; and now Autumn, with her magic brush, like some fading beauty, was busy touching the rich, verdant foliage of her sister seasons, and changing their flowing robes of emerald green to a more gaudy vesture of red and gold. The smooth-barked beech, the heaven-touching poplar, and gnarled oak, the offspring of a thousand years, were all there, crowded together, a mingled mass of matted, tangled luxuriance, shutting out the darting rays of the piercing sun, and covering, far and near, the entire earth with the cooling and dark shade of their wide-spreading, over-arching limbs. Mingled with these, springing up from the rich soil beneath, might be seen, like monster serpents, huge grape-vines, winding their parasitic and life-destroying folds, with strong embrace, around these old giants of the woods, and though destroying, adding, with their broad green leaves, and heavy hanging masses of

dark purple grapes, a richer air of magnificence and luxury to the wild scene.

Halting upon this lovely spot, the Indians were somewhat surprised at the non-arrival of their friends with the boats. It had been determined, before they left the cave, in a council of war, that a small number of warriors should drop down Green River, and await the coming of the larger party, at its confluence with the Ohio, that they might embark, at once, with their spoils and prisoners, and following the course of the latter stream to the mouth of the Wabash, proceed up this river to their own country, and thus leave no trace of their flight. Fearful of some mishap to their comrades, whilst anxiously awaiting the coming of their canoes, the savages were not idle, but, on the contrary, were busily engaged, or at least a portion of them, in preparing rafts to cross the Ohio. They wished, at any rate, to put this stream between themselves and any pursuing force; and while a part of the band, under the directions of the renegade, were thus laboring, the others guarded the prisoners, or lounged about, turning many an anxious glance up the waters of the Green, hoping to catch sight of their returning companions.

But their anxious watching met with no success, and as far as the eye could reach, the deep green waves of that silent river continued calm and smooth; unruffled, save by the darting of the playful fish, or the soft bosom of the rejoicing water-fowl. They were ignorant that their companions had all fallen into the snare prepared for them by the Scout; not one of them escaping to guide the light canoe, or bear the dreadful story of their massacre to their waiting chieftain.

"Gor'a mighty! I hope dem tarnal rascals dey are looking out for, may neber come," said Titus, in a low voice, after trying in vain to cheer up his weeping mistress, who was sitting near by, whilst he, with his hands bound behind him, and fastened securely to a tree, was kept in order by the presence of a grim warrior, who stood leaning against the trunk of an oak, but a few paces distant. "Hi! hi!" he continued, with a low chuckle of delight; "dat wer a good notion of Massa Simon to send word to

de settlers at Vienna, to keep a sharp lookout for de Ingen boats, and I hope dey cotch eb'ry dam one of dem. Dis nigger heard Massa Simon tell Mister Bryan dat dey had better do it, and sure's dar's a God in Heben, Miss Coma, it won't be long afore you'll hear de shout of Massa Bryan, and Simon, and de Sargeant, and dat funny Colonel, who jist laugh all de time he fight. O golly, gosh! won't dey make dese dam warments jump Jim Crow, for de way dey treated dis here nigger?"

To these encouraging remarks of the faithful black, Coma made no reply, merely raising her head a moment, then letting it sink again hopelessly upon her bosom, whilst she folded still tighter in her arms the unconscious person of her wearied and sleeping infant.

"Den 'member, Miss Coma," said the black, still hoping to arouse and cheer up his drooping mistress; "dar's dat Captin Montlack, and tho' he wer a bad man when we wer all in de Carolinas, him say he am sorry for it now, and will try and git de Ingens to let us go. Him's an old friend of dat dam willian, Girty, and says him can bribe de rascal to let us loose, and will do 'se; and tho' him wer' a monstrous liar when we know'd him, he talks mighty fair now, and dis child tinks he tell de truth."

To the great surprise of Titus, Coma met this last attempt of his at consolation with even less favor than his former trials; for at the mention of Captain Jean, she shudderingly drew back, looking quickly around, and with a deep sigh, or rather groan, murmured—

"Don't mention that wicked man, I fear him even more than the savages; he talks smooth and cunningly, as he used to do when I believed him good and kind, and found him cruel and false. In spite of his hypocrisy, he could but look glad when he told me my father's heart was still cold against his child. I believe him not, and will not trust him. You don't know him, Titus; and I fear his presence here, although a prisoner himself, has something to do with our captivity, and bodes us no good."

"If Miss Coma say so, him be one dam rascal," muttered the black, making up his mind, if he could not

comfort, at least to agree with his mistress, "and if she say de word, den Titus am ready to tell him so."

"Say nothing, but trust him not," said Coma, quickly.

Somewhat disappointed at the manner in which his mistress had received his offer to make known to the Captain the estimation in which he was held, Titus made no farther remark, but with a tug at his bonds, and a no very devout ejaculation upon the heads of his captors, relapsed into silence.

It may be proper to state just here, that Montlack, with his usual cunning, that he might have a greater influence over the mind of Coma (for he intended, upon a proper occasion, to renew his suit to his cousin, whom he believed to be a widow, as Girty, false and deceitful as himself, and wishing to secure the entire reward, had led him to believe her husband dead), had prevailed without difficulty, upon his renegade associate, to treat him in every respect, at least when in her presence, as a prisoner. The Captain had a double object in view in pursuing this course, the one we have already mentioned, and to secure his own safety, in case his savage allies should meet with defeat, and he fall into the hands of the exasperated settlers, whom he had doubted not, would treat him as the worst of enemies, did they believe him in any way connected with the Indians. Under this garb, then, had he approached, and made himself known to the miserable Coma. He could scarce conceal his exultation at beholding her again in his power; and though he hated her, yet would he make her his wife, to secure his fortune and revenge; and with these objects ever present in his mind, he managed to throw over his hypocritical countenance an air of pity, and even a look of sympathy and kindness, well adapted to deceive an artless and forgiving heart.

But the plotting villain met with no encouragement in his advances; for, after her first surprise at his presence, Coma instinctively shrank away from him, as from the golden folds of the beautiful garter-snake, and would not trust either his smiles or his sighs of sympathy. He had forgotten that the artless heart, though easy enough to

deceive, deceived once, never trusts again, and, therefore, all his cunning calculations about gaining her affections by pretending to share or sympathize in her sorrows, were entirely thrown away. Observing her evident horror at again beholding him, Montlack merely made known his own captivity, and hope of escape through the instrumentality of Girty, promising to use every exertion to secure her the like boon of freedom; and, adding that it would be best for them to be as little together as possible, and act towards each other as perfect strangers, so that the renegade might not discover their relationship, and become extravagant in his demands, turned from her and walked away. The Captain had suggested this fear to save himself the inconvenience of a feigned captivity, which proved rather annoying from the tightness of his bonds. Girty, with a spice of the devil, or low humor, having insisted upon making them very unnecessarily secure.

Uneasy and restless when in his company, Coma made no objection to this plausible suggestion, for she was glad of any cause or excuse that might secure his absence, and relieve her from his loathsome presence.

As yet, they had only had this one meeting, although Montlack had managed to have a long conversation with Titus, and, as the reader may have already gathered, fully persuaded the unsuspecting black of his repentance for past offences, and friendly intentions for the present.

"Miss Sally," said the negro, once more breaking silence, and turning from his mistress to the more philosophical spouse of the Sergeant, who was sitting close by, and who looked for all the world as indifferent as if securely ensconced in her own arm-chair, and by her own fireside—"bime-bye, you'll be hearin' de shout ob Massa Bryan, and de Sergeant, and Massa Simon; and when you does—Ay, golly!—dis nigger jist want you to cut dese dam strings, and let old Titus take a rip at de bloody Ingens."

Madam Duffe, whose war spirit had not yet entirely vanished, readily promised to execute this wish of Titus; and the black, restless and uneasy under his bonds, after

looking up at the slanting rays of the sun—for it was now evening—and then casting his eyes down upon the river, where the savages were still waiting the coming of their canoes, muttered, with a dissatisfied look—

"Dar's a gentleman ob color what am gettin' kind o' obflusticated, for de sun am goin' down, and no Massa Bryan come yit. But de dam Ingen canoe," he added, in a better humor, "no come neither. I golly! dese blasted strings," he continued, after a moment of silence, shaking and jerking his head, and moving restlessly so far as his bonds would permit, "dey jist hold dis nigger's hands tight 'nuff, while dem dam 'sketers eat him up. Whew!" said Titus, blowing out a long breath, as one of his tormentors settled on the end of his nose, and he was unable to brush it off, "did any one eber see sich important critters?"

But Titus's complainings were suddenly broken in upon, by a single loud and exultant shout, followed quickly by a deafening yell; and seeing his guards hurry down to the water's edge, his eyes were turned immediately in that direction, and only removed when, with a pitying look at the pale face of his sorrowing mistress, he muttered—

"De dam Ingen boat, sure 'nuff, and no Massa Bryan come yit!"

But Bryan had come; and now, along with Simon and his little party of scouts, had for some time been concealed only a short distance off, anxiously waiting the approach of Holding. They, too, had heard and were startled by the loud yells of the savages.

"Somethin' has pleased the dratted devils," muttered Kenton, in a low undertone; "see how they are leavin' the prisoners unguarded, and runnin' down to the river!"

"Now, to the rescue!" said Bryan, half springing to his feet, and speaking in a deep and excited whisper.

"Not yet, Bryan!" exclaimed Simon, laying his hand heavily upon the shoulder of the impatient husband, "you'll spile all; it ar' more than probable thar boats have scaped the lookout at Vienna, and the redskins ar' rejoicin' over thar safe arrival. But never mind; let 'em

shout away; I guess we'll soon make 'em sing another tune. The Colonel heard that yell, and won't linger now. Cyss me if they ain't jist welcome to my scalp, if we don't make 'em laugh on t'other side of the mouth."

Although he evidently did it with great reluctance, Bryan at length submitted to the wiser counsel of the more cautious Scout, once more sullenly resuming his recumbent position.

The uproar in the Indian camp had, not, as Kenton imagined, been excited by the appearance of their flotilla, but of a solitary canoe, with a single occupant. It floated slowly, but steadily down the current of the river, and the Indians upon the shore were not a little astonished that the warrior sitting silently at its stern made no motion, either to guide or hasten its progress; nor had he sent back an answering yell to their loud shouts of welcome. The canoe, with its strangely silent occupant, was now opposite the camp, but still the warrior sat silent and immovable, looking neither to the right nor left; nor moved he hand or paddle, but passed steadily onward without any token of recognition to his wondering friends. At a motion of the chieftain's hand, one of the young warriors now dashed fearlessly into the water, and swimming to the side of the canoe, clambered over. For a moment the young Indian stood up in the bow of the little boat, with the water dripping from his naked and athletic person, earnestly regarding the silent warrior sitting in the stern; then, with a wild gesture of astonishment, he threw up his hand, sending forth a loud, peculiar yell.

"The death halloo," muttered Simon, in a smothered undertone; "the boys at Vienna have peppered some of the rascals to a sartainty."

As we have before intimated, the entire flotilla of the savages had fallen into the snare prepared for them by the Scout, and not one of the Indians had escaped. Some of the reckless foresters, however, not satisfied with their complete victory, had, in a moment of thoughtlessness, set one of the canoes adrift, after having first placed therein the body of a dead warrior, dressed out in a rag-

ged old petticoat. It was done in a spirit of wanton mockery, and the reckless youngsters little cared or thought what might be the result; indifferent alike whether it bore news to their friends of the success of their watchfulness, or to the savages, of the defeat and bloody end of their comrades. It is needless for us to say that the canoe, with its strange and silent occupant, which had attracted the attention of the savages, and which the young warrior was now rapidly guiding ashore, bore the body of this mutilated Indian, deprived of his scalp, and still disgraced with the mocking garb thrown around his shoulders by the gibing borderers.

A wild shout of rage and vindictive fury greeted the arrival of the young warrior and the stark occupant of the canoe, followed in quick succession by a shrill and soul-harrowing yell!

"Thar goes the scalp halloo," exclaimed the Scout, with startling emphasis, "we can wait no longer for the Colonel now! To save the prisoners from the tomahawk, we'll have to use all speed!"

Springing to his feet, and quickly followed by his fearless little band, the Scout darted from his place of concealment, and, gliding with rapid bound through the dark foliage of the forest, stood the next minute by the side of the wondering prisoners!

"Down to the ground, all you women," shouted Simon, maintaining to the last his entire self-possession; "I say down, Miss Coma," he added, in a still more emphatic voice, seeing her yet standing, "or you and the baby may receive the bullets intended for stouter hearts!"

Bryan, springing to the side of his wife, forcibly placed her in a sitting position, protected by the trunk of a huge oak, and, with a murmured word of encouragement, hastened back to take his place along with his stout-hearted comrades!

"Member your promise, Miss Sally," shouted Titus, "dis chile don't want to be tied up here and hab no hand in de fight!"

Hearing the call of Titus, the Scout saved Madam Duffe the trouble and danger of fulfilling her promise, which, notwithstanding his caution, she was hastening to

do, by severing with one stroke of his sharp hunting-knife the bonds of the negro!

"Gor'a mighty," exclaimed Titus, looking at his hands, swollen and cut by the thongs of his captors, "de dam Ingen treat old Titus like a nigger; but neber mind, dis child's time come now, and may-be he won't pay 'em back!" But scarcely had Simon and his daring little band finished these hasty preparations for the reception of the savages, before twenty or more of the Indians, darting up from the water-side, made their appearance upon the brow of the shore! For a moment they stood as if overcome with astonishment, at the unexpected presence of the whites; but a deadly volley from the rifles of the Scout and his party stretched several of their number upon the ground, and the others, brought to their senses by the fate of their comrades, recoiled quickly under the protection of the bank! But their retreat was only for a moment, for hardly had the smoke from the rifles of Kenton's party cleared away, before Girty and the chieftain, leading on their yelling crew, poured forth a volley in return, and, brandishing their tomahawks, rushed furiously upon the unshrinking borderers!

It was a trying moment upon the nerves of that little band, for two or more of their number lay dead or wounded upon the ground, and ten times their own force were now rushing forward to the onset! But, like good men and true, they were ready to meet the storm, and had no thought of giving back one inch!

"Remember Pat Connelly!" shouted Devil Dick, springing madly forward over bush, brier, and log; and Kenton, turning his head at the welcome voice of the madcap Dobbins, saw that Holding and his company were only a few paces distant, and speeding with all haste to the rescue.

"Remember Pat Connelly!" was his answering cry; with one sweep of his powerful arm dashing out the brains of a fierce warrior!

"Remember Pat Connelly!" again shouted Dick, springing to his side and driving the point of his tomahawk deep into the skull of the young Shawanee chieftain!

"Here's for Coma," exclaimed Bryan, as his rifle came down with crushing force upon the brow of the furious renegade!

"And here for Sally," shouted the stern Sergeant, cleaving with bloody axe the head of his savage opponent.

"And here for de dam Ingen himself," said old Titus, driving his knife deep into the bosom of his struggling foe!

The battle was now no longer a hand to hand fight; for the Indians having met with such fatal resistance from the determined bravery of Kenton and his party, and noticing the fresh arrival of Holding, with a much larger force, quickly drew back to cover, taking advantage of every covert and tree for concealment and protection, whilst they kept up, in their usual manner, a constant and deadly fire. The whites were not backward in following the example set them by the savages, and soon the dark and silent forest rang with shout and yell and rifle-shot; and the wild fray, pressed from point to point, grew more bloody and fatal, as the Indians, forced back by the superior numbers of the borderers, became from their desperate situation more reckless and daring. Upon the brow of the shore, the savages made one more desperate and gallant struggle for victory; but the hardy settlers were equally brave and determined; and the Indians, exposed to a concentrated fire, were once more compelled to fall back. It was no longer a contest for victory on the part of the savages, but a sullen struggle for life and revenge; and right nobly did those red children of the forest, battling for the ancient rights of their race, continue that bloody, and to themselves most destructive battle. 'Twas the savage against the civilized man; brute force and courage against semi-savage skill and daring. But the fire of the Indians every moment became weaker and weaker, and gradually pressed from tree to tree, and covert to covert, the savages, only a small number now being left alive, at length found themselves forced to the water's edge, standing upon the open beach, and fully exposed to the unerring aim of the furious borderers.

Only one warrior of all that fierce band of Shawanees was now left alive and unwounded; and he, seeing that all hope of escape or revenge was alike almost desperate, with a loud yell of rage and defiance, threw aside his rifle and tomahawk, and sprang boldly into the bright waves of the Ohio.

"A last shot for Pat Connelly!" shouted Devil Dick, drawing up his rifle, and taking deadly aim at the young savage, as he gallantly buffeted the waters, striking out towards the northern shore.

"Not so, Dick!" exclaimed Holding, turning aside his gun; "although an Indian, he's a gallant fellow, and we must give him this last chance for life. Our victory is complete, and our revenge has been sufficiently bloody without his death; so let him go. He'll be a sad messenger to his nation, and a living warning against another expedition on this side of the river."

"You are right, Colonel," said Dick, lowering his rifle, "the poor fellow has already one fierce foe to struggle with ere he gains yonder shore; and Dick Dobbins is the last man alive to show foul play."

Gallantly and nobly did the young savage make this last struggle for life; and those who but a moment ago thirsted for his blood, stood now eagerly watching his exertions, and wishing him every success.

His efforts were at length crowned with success; and his contest with the floods proved more fortunate than his struggle with man. The borderers, watching his course, beheld him at last mount the farther shore; and ere he darted into the wood, heard his loud yell of defiance, to which, now no longer feeling any enmity, they sent back a loud shout of applause and encouragement.

"A noble fellow!" said Holding, turning away, "and I trust he will sleep again in his own wigwam."

"A bloody, murdering villain," replied Malden, in a deep and sullen voice; "and I, for one, trust that he may die of famine, or be eaten by the wolves."

"I wish he had his rifle," said Dick, picking up the

weapon the young savage had thrown away, "he will need it in his long journey through the wilderness."

This was the last struggle ever made by the Indian for his loved hunting-ground; and that solitary warrior, if he escaped the dark wish of Malden, and found his way, through the trackless forest, to the desolate wigwams of his distant tribe, bore the first news of the bloody defeat of his chieftain; and told, as he painted the dread fate of his comrades, the uselessness of ever again raising the tomahawk against the daring hunters of "the dark and bloody ground."

CHAPTER XII.

It is somewhat strange (but nevertheless, when we glance over the history of our country, we find it to be as true as strange) how constant the hatred, and how determined the animosity ever existing between the Anglo-Saxon and Indian race. From the very first settlements made upon the seaboard, to the final extinction of the red man on the eastern side of the Mississippi, we find these two races ever jealous of each other, and ever engaged in bloody hostility. The French, on the other hand, in their settlements upon the lakes—and upon the shores of the Mississippi, and in the Illinois territory—were ever received and treated as friends by the savage, and lived almost without forts or stations—or indeed any very great watchfulness, and comparatively in the most perfect safety and security. It seems as if the Indian had a prescience of his approaching fate, and knew by instinct, that the Saxon was to be his destroyer, and the future possessor of his hunting-grounds. Upon the foot-prints of this race did he ever look with fear and trembling, and against these did he ever turn his wrath and hatred and vengeance. And the Saxon, with like seeming fatality, ever turned with equal bitterness and hatred against the red man.

The French, however, were never regarded by the Indian in the same light as the Saxon; they were not esteemed as foes, or permanent settlers, and were allowed, seemingly, without any fear of their increase, or of future consequences, to build their hamlets, wherever they saw proper. But no sooner had the axe of the Saxon felled a tree, and his rugged cabin reared its humble roof in the forest, than the tomahawk was unburied—the yell of the savage was heard in the lonely valley, and he rushed at once to sweep from the face of the earth the lodge of his hated enemy.

This hatred was at no time and in no place exhibited with more intensity, and with more ferociousness, than in the early settlement of Kentucky; and the battle we have just described, is only one of the many hundreds fought by the Saxon and Indian, warring for the possession of the dark and bloody ground.

But the battle was now over, and night had spread her funeral wing, made more sad and gloomy, and solemn, from the dark and sombre shades of the forest, over the scene of the recent bloody combat between the white and the red man. Many goodly forms, fashioned after the image of their Creator, now lay stark and cold and stiff, careless alike of darkness and night—of victory or defeat, for theirs was not the sleep of ease or weariness, but the long slumber of death. The Indian dying, as warriors wish to die, with the bloody tomahawk gleaming in his hand, and the bullet through his heart, lay close alongside with the grim oppressor of his race. The fierce borderer, still smiling and exultant, slept his long sleep, beneath the sombre shades of the forest he had loved so much in life, looking, as he lay there with his upturned face, still grasping with icy hand his long rifle or bloody knife, as if only resting after a long day's march, and ready at the first note of alarm, to spring up again, and renew the bloody fight. But the Indian brave has made his last foray upon earth, and taken his last scalp, and has gone forth upon his weary path to the happy hunting-grounds of his race; and the half civilized pioneer will never more take the trail of his savage enemy, or shout

back defiance to his wild and soul-chilling yell. In life, they were deadly, unforgiving foes—in death, they sleep together; and the white and the red man are at last friends. They have gone forth upon the long trail of eternity together, and conqueror and conquered, oppressor and oppressed, now stand at the judgment bar of their Creator; and it is beyond the ken of mortal to say, who stood there the most justified.

The last yell of the savage—the solitary defiance of the fleeing warrior, had now died away, and the moans of his dying comrades, stricken down by bullet, tomahawk, and knife, had sunk one by one into the silence of death. The wild shout of the furious white had likewise given place to silence and grief; for although victorious, the victory had been obtained at a bloody sacrifice, and the hardy settlers had to mourn the fall of many brave and daring spirits.

Two large fires kindled upon the point, sent dimly forth their cheering rays, struggling into and lighting up the cheerless darkness of night and forest shade; and around these were now gathered the victors—the unharmed and the wounded; whilst under tree and bush—in coppice and dell, single and in heaps, were scattered around the unconscious dead.

In stern grief, the father sat alone and wept over the fate of his gallant son—the son mourned the gray hairs of his father, dabbled in blood—and the brother, as he recounted the fierce vengeance he had taken, dropped a tear to the memory of his bedmate and playfellow. But others still, who had neither father nor brother nor son to mourn, broke the stillness of night and death, with laughter and shout and jest, and had no thought of the dangers through which they had so recently passed, or of the horrible and ghastly sights they had so lately witnessed. Such scenes to these were a common occurrence; they had often before beheld just such sad sights; and their hearts were now dead and callous to blood and misery, and reckless alike of danger, and sorrow, and death. They may have had a passing thought of grief, and even shed a hasty tear, at the first sight of some near

neighbor, or old comrade in danger, lying stiff and cold in his bloody winding-sheet; but if so, that thought was soon driven away, and that tear soon dried up; and now, if they thought at all, it was only to promise themselves, upon some future occasion, a fearful revenge, as if the poor savage had not already made a sufficiently bloody atonement.

Bryan, happy in the presence of his rescued wife and child, had already forgotten his recent grief and terror. He was now sitting by the light of the flaming fire, holding his sleeping boy in his arms, and, with Coma pressing close to his side, engaged with her in low, earnest conversation; the latter, ever and anon, looking quickly and shudderingly around, as if not yet entirely recovered from her fright, or altogether satisfied of her liberation from captivity, and safety from the dreaded Indians.

The Sergeant and the good Mrs. Duffe were close at hand, but looking easy and indifferent, as if nothing unusual had happened; the former, from his half-closed eye, and the manner in which his head drooped upon his bosom, giving evident token of the effect of weariness and want of sleep; whilst the latter seemed in no way inclined to conversation, or disposed to disturb the uneasy rest of her husband.

Old Titus, however, made up for the silence and taciturnity of the Sergeant and his wife. Surrounded by a little knot of wild young blades, he kept up an unceasing clatter; and if not then and there made out and proven to be a warrior of the first water, and fully entitled to a crown of laurel, it was not because he was any too modest to make known his own daring and bloody deeds; to believe him, he was not only the prime cause of the death of the two Indians at the station; but, indeed, of the greater number of those who had fallen in the late struggle.

"Go it, old snowball!" exclaimed Devil Dick, with a laugh, when Titus had finished his veracious account. "Darn me if I hadn't a slight notion, before you mentioned the matter, that I killed some of the blasted savages myself; but, since you have named it, I guess it was

all a mistake, and that it was your tomahawk, and not mine, that I saw tumbling over the red devils. But, see here, my old beauty, you must loan me some of your trophies; for it will never do for Dick Dobbins to go back to the settlements without a scalp."

"Hi! hi!" laughed old Titus, by no means discomfited, "Massa Dick, you got dis nigger dat time."

"Then you'll let us keep the scalps we've got?" replied Dick, "and acknowledge that you did not kill quite all of the Indians, and that Col. Holding and the rest of us deserve some little credit?"

"Gor'a mighty! to be sure;" said old Titus, "dis nigger was jist speaking figurmentively; for he am only got him own scalp, and am berry glad for dat."

A loud laugh greeted this sincere acknowledgment of the black; and Devil Dick brought real tears into the eyes of old Titus, and tears of laughter into the eyes of his thoughtless comrades, by applying his hand to the woolly pate of the former, and testing, in no very gentle manner, the foundation for his last assertion.

"By the bones of a buffalo bull, boys! old Titus has told the truth this time," exclaimed Dick, "and blast me if he ain't got one scalp fast enough. 'Twould make an elegant soft blanket for a sore-backed horse, and when you die, old snowball, don't forget Dick Dobbins in your will."

"Gor'a mighty, massa Dick!" replied old Titus, rubbing down his ruffled top-knot, "if she ain't gone now, debil de Ingen can eber lift her."

Not many paces distant from this merry crew, but seemingly totally unconscious of their merriment, and frequent bursts of unrestrained laughter, stood Kenton, leaning against a tree, holding in his hand, as was his habit, his old rifle, and with the faithful Bang, as usual, crouching at his feet. From his silence and indifference to the conversation of Titus, and heedless jollity of the knot of youngsters gathered around the garrulous black, one could easily see that the Scout had some heavy and troublesome matter upon his mind; and, from his somewhat dejected look, and his muttered and broken expres-

sions of passion and doubt, an observer, without the spirit of prophecy, could divine that a bitter struggle was then going on in his bosom. It was, indeed, a fierce contest between reason and passion—between justice and gratitude; and these doughty champions shivered many a lance in the honest borderer's heart, and held a bloody tournament there, before either would surrender the field. But at length the baton fell; the field was won; and Passion and Gratitude, as is too often the case in contests between the mind and the heart, strode with bloody spur over the prostrate bodies of Reason and Justice. Raising his head, as if now determined, although his countenance betokened no very great satisfaction at the result of the struggle, the Scout, with a sigh, muttered: "'Tis settled now. I'll do it." Then, as if again in doubt, he continued: "'Tis a blasted shame though, to set such a villain loose; but it can't be helped; for no man shall say that Simon Kenton owed him a debt of gratitude and refused to pay it. He deserves death a thousand times over, that's sartain; but I owe the bloody rascal a life, and a life he shall have, though it cause a thousand deaths. Ay, Bang," added the Scout, somewhat sadly, as he heard the low whine of his dog, who had been aroused from his slumbers by the sound of his master's voice; "'tis a sore trial, sure enough; but we can't help it now, and it must be done. Blast me, old fellow," he continued, looking into the eyes of his dog, "if I don't believe you know I ain't doing the right thing. But, may I never see the light of another blessed sun, and never agin hear the ring of my old rifle, if I wouldn't rather a thousand times that I had been burned to ashes by the tarnal Wyandots, than be guilty of this 'ere treachery to my comrades, and for sich a rascal. But thar's no use thinkin' about it now;" he added, hastily, after a moment of silence, "for the skulkin' thief stood our friend when we were in a bad pinch ourselves, that's sartain, and, bloody villain that he is, he shan't stand Simon Kenton's creditor in the next world. Ain't I right, Bang?"

Bang having barked his acquiescence very much in the same spirit, and for the same reason, that some of our

smaller fry politicians assent to the will of their leaders, because he couldn't do anything else; the Scout, as if unwilling longer to continue the mental struggle, left his station by the tree, and, hurrying along as if not at all confident in the strength of his present purpose, strode hastily towards a small fire, around which were gathered some two or more hunters, guarding with sleepy indifference a well-secured prisoner. Arriving at this fire, Kenton told the sentinels, aroused from their listlessness by the sound of his approaching footsteps, that he would speak awhile with their prisoner, and that, for an hour or more, he would relieve them from duty. Too glad of any excuse to snatch a moment of rest after the severe fatigue of their rapid march, and restrained by no fear of military discipline, the guards at once resigned their place to Kenton, and, without raising an objection to the welcome change, hurried away.

The two Simons now stood face to face. Simon the patriot, the famed borderer and contemporary of Boone, leaning upon his rifle, eyeing steadily and sternly the sullen and ferocious countenance of Simon, the traitor and renegade; and the latter, by no means daunted by his perilous position, or abashed by the scornful smile of the former, with reckless hardihood and indifference, returning look for look! Stunned by the blow of Head, received in the commencement of the battle, Girty had recovered his life and consciousness only to find himself a prisoner in the hands of his exasperated countrymen; and was now, when visited by Kenton, quietly awaiting his doom, for he neither hoped nor expected mercy at the hands of his captors! Wearied at length at the silent and contemptuous scrutiny of Kenton, the renegade with a motion of impatience, while a mocking and derisive smile flitted across his hard features, exclaimed in a harsh smothered undertone—

"Simon Kenton is not blind; does he remember when the Wyandots would have burned him at the stake, and who it was that saved him from the tomahawk and torch?"

"If he didn't, he wouldn't now be here, and would jist

leave Simon Girty, the traitor, to the doom he so richly merits," replied the Scout, sternly.

"Simon Kenton is no doubt well pleased," said Girty, in the same mocking tone, "to find his old friend a prisoner, and may-be is thinking now how he will reward past kindness, by nobly aiding, on to-morrow, in swinging up the traitor by his neck to some of these fine old trees, and leaving him there to hang like a dog, and be devoured by the buzzards!"

"The traitor and skulkin' leader of the bloody Shawanee deserves no better treatment," replied Kenton, bluntly.

"Does the famed Scout of the Long-knife," said Girty, in a taunting manner, and unconsciously adopting the style of his Indian allies, "come to exult over the misfortune of a man he dared not meet until his hands and feet were secured by these cursed bonds?"

"Simon Kenton has never yet seen the Indian or traitor that he dare not meet in open battle, in ambuscade, or lonely glade," replied the Scout, quickly; "and let Simon Girty but say that he will meet me hand to hand, with rifle or knife, and he shall no longer remain a captive, for I'll cut his bonds now, and lead him beyond the camp; and cuss me, if I don't thank him too, for the chance of thus wipin' off old scores, and at the same time wipin' out my own treachery."

So deep an impression had the thought of setting the renegade loose, to prey again upon the community, made upon the mind of Kenton, that he forgot that Girty was still ignorant of his determination, and spoke of his own treachery as if it had already been committed, and the prisoner was fully aware of his intentions. His present proposition, suggested by the taunt of the captive, was joyfully seized upon, for he hoped that it would be accepted, and he would thus have an opportunity of paying off his own debt, and at the same time a chance of warding off the civil consequences of such a step, by ridding the community of so dangerous an enemy. But Girty had no such thought, and to the eager proposal of the Scout, coldly replied—

"When the Wyandots had Simon Kenton bound to

the stake, Simon Girty only thought of saving an old friend, not of shedding his blood; he made no conditions when he led him beyond the Indian camp, and bade him go in safety!"

"True!" exclaimed Kenton, striking his rifle heavily upon the ground, "but thar's a difference between Simon Kenton and Simon Girty! Simon Kenton war' then a prisoner, in the power of the cussed savage, and it wer' but nateral for one white man to help another; but Simon Girty is now in the hands of his own people, and will be judged by Christian men, and it ain't nateral or right to turn him loose to bring back his scalpin' Ingens to murder women and children!"

"I claim no kindred or relationship with any of my race," replied Girty, fiercely; "they were ever my enemies. I have long since thrown them off; and if not by birth or color, I am by adoption, and at heart, an Indian! You did not consider it treachery," he added with a bitter sneer, "when I turned against my friends and allies, and freed from bondage their most determined and daring foe. But now, when the scene is changed, and instead of Simon Kenton bound to the stake, to be tortured with the rising sun, it is Simon Girty who is the captive, to be hung by the neck like a thieving dog with to-morrow's light, Simon Kenton chooses to think otherwise, and talks of trials and treachery, and would fain forget the past, leaving him who once saved his life to death, and the fierce anger of unforgiving enemies! Ha! ha!" laughed the outlaw, with scoffing bitterness, "but what more could I expect from my Christian brethren? 'Tis a trick of theirs to repay kindness with hatred, and rather become an enemy, than bear the burden of gratitude!"

"You are no Indian, Simon Girty, but, in spite of all you say, nothin' more nor less than a base traitor to your own people," replied the Scout, sternly. "You have led the murderin' savage to kill and scalp helpless women and children; and for this deserve to be hung up like a skulkin' wolf, and without pity; but that you saved my life once I'll not deny; and to pay off that debt, and be even with you, I am now here; though blast me if I

wouldn't jist as soon turn a half-starved wolf into a sheep-pen, as to let you go, to agin lead your scalpin' thieves agin the settlements!"

"I am glad to find that my old comrade has not forgotten the past, and has still a kindly feeling for an old friend," replied Girty, his face brightening up at the prospect of safety held out by Kenton, and speaking now in a more conciliatory tone than he had yet seen proper to adopt.

"Thar you are mistaken agin," said the Scout, quickly, meeting Girty's attempt at conciliation with undisguised contempt. "I've not forgotten that you once saved my life, but as for havin' any kindly feelin' or friendship for you, I hain't none at all! I loathe you as I do the rattlesnake, and would as soon think of graspin' the paw of the grisly bear in love, as the bloody hand of Simon Girty in friendship! When I've paid this 'ere debt of mine, if we ever meet again, Simon Girty, remember we meet as deadly foes, with no gratitude on either side, for we've returned life for life, and are now even."

"As you will!" muttered the renegade, sullenly, "for I have no love for any of you, and would as soon have your hatred as friendship! You'll not find me backward, rest assured of that; for I'll not hesitate to take your life, should we ever meet again! Simon Girty will not soon forget the bitter tongue of his white brother, or let slip from his memory the scorn and reproach of his old comrade, Simon Kenton."

"I wouldn't have you backward, nor would I have you to forget," replied the Scout; "you've ever been a traitor to your country, and for that ar' reason I wouldn't have sich a villain to be a creditor of mine! I jist want my hand and heart both free, so that I may strike without pity or regret, and rid the world forever of sich a monster!"

"I want no more of your preaching or abuse!" exclaimed Girty, fiercely, a scowl of dark hatred lowering over his sullen countenance. "I care not why you cut these damned bonds, so you do it at once! Either free me, as you have promised, or leave me to my fate, for it

matters little with me, since I've already revenged myself for past injuries upon the hated race you would have me love, and care not for death, though I would gladly complete my revenge upon the son of my old enemy, which I would have done, had not the fates been against me, and them damned savages permitted themselves to be surprised and the boats taken! How your hunters learned there were canoes upon the river, and were led to lay this trap for the Shawanees, is beyond my knowledge."

"Easy enough!" replied the Scout to this half inquiry of the renegade, "for I was on the trail when you surprised this 'ere Frenchman, and followed you to the cave; I saw your canoes, and jist guessed your design. I alarmed the settlements, sent word to the Vienna station to be on the alert, and, with the same company that defeated you this evening, made a forced march to surprise you at the cave, but were a few hours too late for that, though fast enough to catch you here and scalp every red devil of a Shawanee that had crossed the river. You foiled me once in the old State with your red wig, when you and that ar' darned Frenchman wer' at some of your deviltry, but out here in the woods and on the scout, it takes a smarter man than Simon Girty to throw dust in the eyes of Simon Kenton! But tell me, now?" inquired Kenton, showing some anxiety, "if this 'ere blasted Captain had anything to do with your attack upon the station of Mr. Bryan and the Sargeant?"

A gleam of low cunning, and somewhat exultant, flitted across the countenance of the renegade at this question of the Scout; but, after a moment of silent thought, he only answered it by coolly inquiring—

"Did the Captain escape, and is he alive and free?"

"To be sure he is," replied Kenton; "though cuss me if I have any faith in his smooth words, for he's got nigger blood in his veins, and can't be trusted."

"You saw him when he was taken captive by the Shawanees," said Girty, "and know me well enough to believe that I need no assistance or persuasion when upon the trail of an enemy."

"I know you well enough to believe you guilty of any

sort of rascality," replied the Scout, bluntly; "yet, blast me, if I don't still b'lieve that darned Captain had something to do with the carrying off of Miss Coma, and would like plaguy well to know."

"Which you will never learn from me," replied Girty, doggedly; "and now, if you intend to fulfil your promise, and set me free, do so at once, for these bonds are anything but pleasant; and if you would have me escape, I must put a long trail between myself and your sharp-eyed scouts, before the light of the coming day."

Stepping forward, Kenton, with the assistance of his hunting-knife, soon severed the cords from the renegade's hands and feet; but as the latter made a motion to shake off the now useless bonds, the Scout exclaimed, sternly—

"Let them remain, and stand whar' you are; for you shan't fly till the return of your guard."

"A strange way of paying off the debt of gratitude you owe me," said Girty, sneeringly; "for of what use will it be to me to know that my hands and feet are free, when with the first motion I make, your fellows will send a bullet through me? Simon Girty did not thus leave Simon Kenton when he was in the hands of the Wyandot."

"Your escape will be easy enough!" replied Kenton, "for the sentinels are worn down by fatigue and want of sleep, and believing you securely bound, it won't be long before you may walk off without danger or hindrance."

"But if I go without gun or arms of any kind," said Girty, "even if I should escape the pursuit of your comrades, who will be upon my trail with the dawn of day, I will only escape to die a miserable death by starvation. If such be your kindness, Simon Kenton, I'll remain here and die, for I would rather fall by the bullet or knife, and die at once, than perish thus by piecemeal. When I gave you your life," added the renegade, once more referring to the past, for he well knew the soft point in the Scout's heart, and where to touch to gain his end, "I also furnished you with the means of support and defence, and if you cannot now do the same, I'll accept nothing at your hands, but remain where I am, and Simon Kenton will have the satisfaction of aiding in the death

of one who, at the risk of his own life, saved him from miserably perishing at the stake."

"I'll owe you nothin', Simon Girty," said Kenton, after a moment's deliberation, "for I won't deny that you once stood my friend, and now that I've promised, you may jist rest satisfied, for I'll furnish you with everything necessary to secure your flight. When your guards have fallen asleep, which they'll soon do, go at once down to the river, and there you'll find a canoe, and in it a rifle and food; and then if you don't make good your escape the fault will be upon your own head, and not mine."

Girty proffered his hand, and would have returned his thanks; but Kenton, refusing the first, quickly interrupted him, exclaiming, sternly—

"I take no traitor by the hand, and deserve none of your thanks; for to tell you the truth, Simon Girty, what I do now I do most unwillingly. I would jist almost as soon commit murder myself, as loose the murderer, and send him forth to kill and destroy! If you and your scalping allies should ever agin make an inroad upon the settlements, I will blame myself with all your murders. Remember this—and remember that, when next we meet, there'll be no old score of kindness to wipe away; and, to secure his own peace, Simon Kenton will jist have to rid the world of Simon Girty."

The renegade made no reply, only regarding the Scout with a scowl of deadly malice, which the latter noticing as he turned away, answered with a smile of quiet contempt—whispering, as he pointed his finger menacingly—

"Remember—we are even now."

"Not so even as you think!" said the outlaw sullenly to himself, as the Scout walked away; "for I owe you something, and damn me if I don't have a receipt in full before another moon has passed."

Late that night the borderers were aroused from their heavy slumbers by loud cries and hurried footsteps. Springing to their feet, they found this unexpected tumult caused by the escape of Girty, and with many maledictions upon the heads of the luckless guard, joined eagerly in the useless pursuit. At length, discovering

the canoe gone, and at once divining the mode of the renegade's flight, the pursuers immediately gave up all hope of his recapture—and again retired, grumbling and cursing, to sleep.

*oh who was to think the impossible
of getting a—tender love*

CHAPTER XII.

ONCE more Coma sat in her loved "winter lodge." It may have been a week, or even more since the wild scenes described in our last chapter; and to have seen her now, with all the savage ornaments of her room rearranged, with her boy sleeping pleasantly in his cradle, and herself sitting lovingly at the feet of her husband, no one would have imagined that the storm of Indian war had so lately passed over that quiet household, or that the lovely and tender being before him had so recently been a captive in the hands of the Shawanee.

Yet such had been the case; but these scenes were common in the earlier settlements of Kentucky; and though they created much alarm at the time in the immediate vicinity of the outrage, when once happily terminated, they were soon forgotten by the neighbors, and made almost as slight an impression upon the minds of the parties directly concerned.

The hardy pioneers, never free from danger, had become somewhat accustomed to the bloody excursions of the savage; and rapid devastating inroads, like the one that had just taken place, were expected as a matter of course, and they were only too glad to escape so easily, more especially when they had been so successful in punishing the enemy.

Mrs. Duffe had returned to her home and usual employments with scarcely a thought, or at any rate, without a word respecting her late danger and escape; though we are compelled in truth to say that she received, with a very well satisfied air, the praises of Kenton, for her

brave defence of the station, and the business-like manner in which, with the assistance of Titus, she had dispatched the Indian warrior.

"I hope I did right," was her quiet response, the first time it was mentioned, "for if I had not killed the Indian, he would have scalped Titus, and may-be all of us."

"Gora'mighty, Miss Sally, what make you say dat!" exclaimed the black, thinking his own warlike abilities somewhat lessened by this confession of his mistress; "he no take my scalp; for dis nigger had him tight enough, and jist call on you to split him's head, case him thought you'd like to do it. Bi'ne-by de red thief would come tired out, den dis child would riz, and O golly, how he'd bunged him's eyes! Gora'mighty! him couldn't see sunshine when I'ze done wid him."

The Sergeant's wife was too good-natured, and liked the honest black too much to say anything in opposition to this boast of his manhood, and chose rather to labor under the charge of unnecessarily shedding the blood of the savage, than tell the exact situation of Titus when he claimed her assistance, and called upon her for rescue. She was satisfied, in her own heart, of full justification, from necessity and the extreme urgency of the case; and, as she had no thought of becoming a heroine, or claiming the scalp as a trophy of her prowess, permitted Titus to have it all his own way; not even whispering to the Sergeant himself, the certainty of the black's defeat, had she not settled the contest by appealing to the axe.

It was not so, however, with Coma; for, raised delicately as she had been, and totally unused to danger, and unfamiliar with bloody sights, it took many days, and all the soothing, quieting arguments of her husband and his devoted friends to drive away her terror, and bring the roses back to her pale cheek. But, settled down in her home again, and everything around her looking as quiet, comfortable, and safe as before the attack of the Indians, she soon resumed her cheerfulness, and could even speak of the dread scenes she had witnessed in a steady tone, though not without a passing shudder, and now and then

a snow cloud settling upon her countenance to drive away its roses.

As we have already said, it was some week or more after the defeat of the Indians, and Coma sat before a ruddy fire upon a low stool, at the feet of her husband, and in her own room, decorated with barbaric magnificence, and made not only comfortable, but really singularly tasteful, by the united efforts of herself, her husband, and the Sergeant.

"Your thoughts are troublesome, and your dreams anything but pleasing, dear Bryan," said the wife, looking up confidently into the face of her husband, "if I may judge by the cloud upon your brow, and your long silence. Take Coma into your confidence," she added, with a smile, "for if a sad child in the presence of danger, you will find her a woman and a wife in the hour of sorrow and trouble; and if she cannot drive away your heavy thoughts, she will at least sympathize with you, and thus share the burden."

Head had been sitting for some time seemingly unconscious of the presence of his wife, looking thoughtfully, and with a somewhat sad expression of countenance, into the cheerful fire, as men frequently do when in a musing mood, or engaged in castle-building, or some one of the many vagaries of the busy mind; but at the sound of Coma's low sweet voice, his reverie was broken, and the tinge of melancholy, but a moment since so apparent upon his speaking features, was swept away at once by a beaming smile of love, and, leaning down, he kissed the fair brow of the speaker, replying—

"My heart is thine, Coma, and with thee will I share every thought, even to the wildest vagaries of my shadowy indefinable musings."

"What dark spirit, then, was at work upon your heart but a moment ago, to make those naughty furrows upon your brow, and place that heavy cloud upon your face? If Coma is to share your thoughts, she would also share your sorrows; and sad reveries you must have had, for a wife's eye cannot be mistaken when she is reading the countenance of her husband."

"The face is a hard book to read, my little fairy," said the husband, jestingly; "and many who consider themselves adepts in reading the fitting footprints of thought, often find themselves woefully deceived. A smile does not always betoken pleasure, nor does a tear always signify sorrow; and a gay heart is often found under a thoughtful face, whilst many a sad one weeps beneath a beaming smile."

"The world may be deceived, and a casual observer, studying the face of a stranger, may at times be wrong," replied Coma; "but between husband and wife, and between kindred, sympathizing hearts, this book you speak of is not so difficult; and the wife beholds the first rising cloud upon the soul of her husband, as quick as the sailor notes the first dim speck upon the horizon, when expecting a storm. Confess, now, that I am right, and that your musings were garbed in darkness, rather than light, for I will not be put off thus, with a jest; nor will I be satisfied with philosophic reflections upon the follies of the world. If your heart is mine, then your thoughts should be mine also, and I claim the privilege of knowing and sharing even fancied sorrows or dangers."

"Nor will I conceal anything from you," said the husband, laying his hand upon the dark ringlets of his wife, and looking kindly into her upturned face; "but why burden your heart, dear Coma, with mere fancied dangers?"

"To a wife," was the eager answer of Coma, "it is no burden; or, if so, a pleasing one, to share the troubles of her husband, be they real or imaginary."

"Then be it so," exclaimed Head, fondly, "for I can deny you nothing, Coma, though to acquiesce may cause groundless terror, and bring unnecessary sadness. The cloud upon my brow, I am glad to say, is the offspring of no real calamity or danger, but merely the creature, dim and shadowy, of my own brain, assuming a melancholy tinge, why and wherefore I am unable to explain. My musings, like the 'will-o'-the-wisp,' have led me a weary dance; now upon flowers, and along bright streams with the glad sunshine around me; and then upon briers

and thorns—by gloomy sullen waters, with darkness and death above and about me. When first I looked upon the ruddy blaze of your sparkling fire, my heart was warm and glad, and my dreams were of laughing children, and love, and flowers, and sunny dells, for I was thinking of thee, Coma, and my boy, rescued from captivity, and again happy around our own hearthstone. But, then," his voice now unconsciously changing from the low notes of love to a tone of sadness, "came the form of your cousin Jean, hurrying across my vision, like we have seen a dark cloud tossed by the wind along the disk of the moon; and after that, I know not wherefore, but my dreams were all of a different hue. My thoughts were of death; and shadowy gigantic sorrows came looming up in the distance, like the gathering fog upon the mountain-top, until all was lost in darkness and gloom. Why it is I cannot tell, for I fear him not, but I can never think of this smiling, plotting Captain Jean, without a shudder. In spite of all my efforts to the contrary, I am ever thinking his presence in this country bodes us no good, and Kenton fully believes, notwithstanding his plausible story, that your cousin was in league with that hound Girty, and induced him to lead his savages to attack our station and carry you off a prisoner."

"He is base enough to be guilty of any crime," exclaimed Coma, "and you have but echoed my own thoughts and fears, ever since his smiling face and soft tongue, more loathsome than the fierce savage, startled me, upon my weary path, and made my dreary captivity still more horrible. What motive could have induced him to leave the ease and comfort of my father's house, and undergo the perils and hardships of a journey to these distant lands, I am at a loss to imagine. But the cause must have been great indeed and urgent; for this cousin of mine was never forward in rushing into danger, and by no means fond of undergoing unnecessary fatigue. Yet what could have induced him, and why does he still linger in the country? The base hypocrite sought my hand, only that he might gain my father's fortune; he

lost the one, but gained the other; and what more does he now wish? If he has any fears of my disturbing him in his ill-gained wealth, he may go in peace, for I will never receive the fortune of my father, great as it is, if I had to take it with his curse still upon me! 'Tis strange that my father, who once loved me so well, should so long continue obdurate and hard-hearted towards his child, and merely because she clung to him she loved, rather than take the hand of one she despised, and one so unworthy of esteem or affection."

"But remember, dear Coma," said Head, wishing to soothe the feelings of his wife, and soften down, if possible, the harsh and cruel treatment she had received from her parent, "your father thought quite differently, for this Captain Jean had full possession of his ear, and, I might add, esteem and affection; while, on the other hand, he was induced to believe me all that was mean and contemptible, and, by the base perjury of Captain Montlack, a miserable felon!"

"But was I not his own daughter," his own flesh and blood?" replied Coma, "and had I not ever been a loving child, and did I not tell him of the baseness and treachery of his false kinsman? and still he believed me not, but willingly bent his ear to the lying tongue of Captain Jean, cruelly jesting with my feelings, and to my earnest prayers retorting that my hatred to his kinsman, was the result of shameful and misplaced love for a base-born traitor's son. I was his daughter, and, notwithstanding his sometimes cold and proud mien, had loved him well; but his haughty, contemptuous look, and bitter, ungenerous words upon that occasion, did much to chill the warm gushings of my heart, and tore away many of the golden cords binding me, the child, to him, my father."

"He was proud, very proud of his ancient name and lineage," said Head, still kindly endeavoring to make the cruel treatment of her father, and his subsequent obduracy and forgetfulness, appear in the fairest light possible, "and his pride made him not only unjust to thee, Coma, but led him to treat with contempt every charge made against his kinsman, and blindly believe the false-

hoods of this same treacherous relation. But cheer up, dear Coma, for the hypocrite, though successful for a time, cannot always wear his cloaking garb, and sooner or later, will stand forth in all his deformity, stripped of his borrowed plumes, and hated and scorned by him he has deceived. The hour will yet come, never fear, when your father, undeceived and unswayed by the plausible tongue of Captain Jean, will repent his harshness to his daughter, and once more fold her in love to his bosom."

The hypocrite had already been discovered, and the hour of repentance had already come; but the father will never again look upon the fair brow of his daughter, or the daughter upon the loved face of her parent. They had parted in anger—the parent and child—and both had much to forget and forgive; but he now slumbered with the silent dead, and the last lines traced by a feeble hand, making known his repentance, and pouring out his forgiveness, were unread by the eyes for which they were intended, and safe in the possession of the base kinsman; while she, ignorant of her father's fate, and still believing him obdurate, and cruel, and unjust, wondered at his long silence, and yet waited the removal of his curse. The hope held out by her husband, was not without its effect upon Coma, for tears came gushing into her eyes, as the memory of olden times flashed across her vision, and the thought of again resting upon the bosom of her father, came gleaming upon her heart. She bowed her head and wept, and could only murmur—

"God grant that it may be so; for I would not have him die, believing me an unloving and ungracious child; nor would I live with his curse, be it ever so unjust, forever hanging around my heart."

"Dry your tears, dearest; for a father's curse in a moment of passion is soon repented of, and his heart will not always remain dead to the calls of parental love."

"But Captain Jean!" murmured Coma, mournfully, her anxiety doing more than the consoling words of her husband towards drying up her tears, "what of him? I'll never forget the icy sensation that chilled through my veins, as if the slimy form of a snake was then passing

over my heart, when his familiar voice, bringing back so many sad recollections, so unexpectedly startled my ear. And oh! what a dark smile of triumph flitted across his face, when I asked of my father; and the hypocrite, in spite of all his endeavors to appear kind and forgetful of the past, whispered, and I thought then eagerly, 'that my name was still a forbidden word' in the home of my childhood. Rest assured, dear husband, his heart is still black, and his designs are evil; but I cannot imagine any reasonable motive, either of hatred or interest, to induce his present inexplicable journey to this dangerous country."

"The mind of the pure and artless is often at a loss to unravel the dark and mysterious windings of wickedness; but a thousand motives and inducements to crime are ever at work in the breast of the corrupt; and it is only from mingling with such, and following up their tortuous ways, that we can ever learn half the depravity of the human heart. But I can imagine causes for the Captain's hatred to me and mine, without diving very deep into the inky pool of depravity. He has lost your hand, and notwithstanding you treat that portion of his loss so lightly, and say that he has gained your fortune, which was his principal aim and end, I cannot esteem the boon so slightly; for would he but leave me in quiet possession of the one, he might remain in undisturbed enjoyment of the other; and yet he may have valued the prize, of which I have deprived him—and I could not blame him if he did—of far greater value than all the other possessions of De Lacy, and therefore still have a grudge and hatred against me for the loss of the jewel promised him by your father, and upon the possession of which he at one time counted with so much certainty. Then, again, he may consider you still a dangerous rival in the affections of your father, and tremble for the quiet possession of that wealth for which he has already periled his soul; or, he may yet chafe over the defeat of his cunning plans against myself, and still be in search of that sweet morsel—to the little and cowardly soul—revenge. The wicked are never at a loss for a motive for any species of sin; and depend upon it, Coma, this cousin of thine will

not be much troubled to find a hundred causes for hatred to me. But be not alarmed; for, knowing him as I do, and suspecting treachery in his blandest smiles, he cannot deceive me; and I have no fears, although," added Head, somewhat thoughtfully, "he has already become intimate with that dark-browed, sullen Malden, the only enemy I have in the country."

"My husband is entirely too flattering," replied Coma, with a well-pleased look; for what woman—be she wife, maid, or widow; and we might add with equal truth, what man—be he husband, bachelor, or widower—is not fond of flattery? "and need never think the loss of my poor self a sufficient cause to arouse the hatred of Captain Jean; but while he has so many other causes for malice, beware of him, dear Bryan; for a coward is ever to be more dreaded than a brave man; since the first will strike you in the dark, and without a warning; while the latter, too noble to be an assassin, will give you notice, and a fair chance for life."

"Never fear!" said Head, cheerfully, and fondly returning the affectionate look of his wife, as he toyed with a straggling curl, "I have too much to live for, to die without a struggle; and will not be caught napping, with the prowling foe upon my trail. But away with these melancholy forebodings, Coma! for they are but the shadowy creations of a fit of musing, and there is in reality no danger, and nothing to fear from Captain Montlack. We have no laws here, and no flattering, partial judges to become the engine and tools of the rich man's malice. The strong arm and brave heart is the only law we acknowledge in this country, and they fill the place of judge, law, and executioner; either to defend or punish. Captain Jean will appeal to neither of these, and must return to the old State, where money may buy, and wealth surround him with fawning sycophants, before his hatred may be feared or his anger prove dangerous."

"You may be right," said Coma, doubtingly, and by no means convinced by the bold and fearless tones of her husband, "and our fears may all be groundless, and without reality; but remember, that money is all-power-

ful, and if Captain Jean has evil designs, he is an enemy not to be despised; for wealth, in the hands of the cunning, is a weapon more to be dreaded than the sword."

"Good logic, that! and as true as if spoken by a philosopher!" exclaimed Head, with a laugh; "but come, Coma, it is time we were abed; for you know Simon and myself depart with the earliest light to attend the meeting at Colonel Holding's, and if you would not have him call me a sluggard in the morning, I must now to sleep."

"Isn't he beautiful?" exclaimed Coma, a few moments later, as she stood gazing with a mother's pride upon the fair face of her sleeping child.

"As beautiful as an angel!" said Head, with a father's fervor, and gently kissing the velvet cheek of the unconscious boy.

* * * * *

The inmates of the other room of the station had also been engaged in busy conversation around the fireside of the Sergeant; and the meeting on to-morrow, at Holding's, having suggested the presence of Montlack in the neighborhood, the Scout and his more taciturn companion had not spared the character of Monsieur Jean, but, to judge from the language of Simon, had come to a similar conclusion with Head and his wife, and were by no means satisfied with the Captain's journey West.

"He ain't to be trusted nohow," said Kenton, as if to drive the nail home and settle their doubts at once; "for jist as sartain as Bang's a dog—and more sartain than that, for blame me if Bang ain't considerably more than a dog—then jist as sartain," continued Simon, as if at a loss for a sufficiently expressive figure, "as Titus, thar', ar' a"—

"Gentleman ob color," suggested the black.

"Gentleman of color!" added the Scout, with a twinkle of the eye, "the cussed skulk has got nigger blood in his veins."

"Dar' you be wrong, Massa Simon," exclaimed Titus, with some heat, for he liked not this slur upon his race; "dis dam' captain hain't got no nigger blood in him, for he no smell like a darkey; and whar' did you eber see a

nigger tell so many lies? and he sich a Gora'might, ondacious skunk! He be no nigger, Massa Simon; dis child can tell you dat. But I 'spects him am part Ingen, and dar' whar' he come by his willany!"

"If he wer' a whole nigger, like you, Titus," replied Kenton, wishing to quiet the ruffled feelings of the black; "or even a white man, or Ingen, it wouldn't be so bad, for I'd know whar' to place him, and what to 'spect; but when he ar' neither wolf nor dog, neither white nor black, nor Ingen, but a darned mongrel cur, we can't count on him, and must ever be on our guard, or he'll jist take a snap at our legs, when we ain't 'specting it."

"You be right in dat, Massa Simon; for dar's no 'pendence to be put in one of dese straight-haired mullatters," exclaimed Titus; "dey be dam proud and dam deceivin'; dis child know dat long ago!"

"How so!" inquired Kenton; for the black's look betokened a story; and the Scout, knowing his propensity for yarning, was more than willing to humor him.

"Long time ago," said Titus, as if thus to excuse himself, "when dis old chunk be one berry little house-boy to Massa Bryan's father, he thought him would take a wife; and jist set him's eyes on a yaller gal, what waited on the old mistress. Sure enough, Massa Simon, jist like dem deceitful devils, she 'peared monstrous willin' for a time; making a dam fool of dis child, until he had bought her a new dress, and gib her all his money to buy weddin' fixens; den what did she do, but turn 'round, and turn up her nose; it warn't a bit flat, and jist axe me, all as cool as you please, 'if I 'spected a lady of her color to marry a nigger?' Whew! Massa Simon! may-be dis nigger warn't mad for a time; but him couldn't help himself, no how; and eber since dat gal fooled him, he ain't got no 'pendence in mullatters."

The Scout laughed heartily at Titus's unlucky courtship, and even the Sergeant couldn't help feeling amused at the grave earnestness and doleful expression of the negro's countenance, as he related this episode in his early life; remarking with quiet humor—

"You couldn't have expected anything else, Titus; for

Cupid was made to bless and torment full-blooded whites and blacks, and has no influence over mongrels. Mulattoes are a new race, of recent creation, unknown to the ancients, and which *the gods* had no hand in fashioning."

"It wern't Cupid," said Titus, innocently, thinking the Sergeant spoke of an old fellow-servant of that name, "but a dam mulatter rascal dey called Pompey, dat turned de gal's head; and may-be I didn't gib him particular goss, when I found de ting out!"

"Sarved him right!" exclaimed Simon, a flash of merry humor sparkling in his eye; "and that's jist the way we should treat all these sneakin' half-bloods. It wer' bad enough to steal your sweetheart; but a darned sight worse to steal her after she'd got all your money."

"Zactly," said Titus, with all the gravity of a sage counsellor of state; "and dat's de way dis child considered de ting, when he dived into de 'fections of Mister Pompey."

"And the yaller beauty, what became of her?" said Simon.

"O, Gora'mighty!" exclaimed Titus, showing the white of his eyes, with the burlesque tragic air of a modern stage lover; "she jist marry dat dam Pompey, and what you tink, didn't axe dis child to de weddin'!"

"The unkindest cut of all," said the Sergeant, scarce able to restrain his merriment; "but I 'spose, Titus, you treated this slight with silent contempt?"

"Sure I did! for I jist gib Mister Pompey de most considerable lickin' he eber got in all him's born days; and what's more, made him promise neber to marry de gal agin, widout axing dis darkey to de weddin'."

"A safe promise that, which I guess even a mulatto couldn't break," replied the Sergeant, laughing heartily at the black's notions of "silent contempt." "But come, Simon!" he added, turning to the Scout, whose huge sides were still shaking with merriment; "as you start so early in the morning, it is time you were asleep."

"I slept last night, and the night before, and it makes little difference with me, whether I sleep agin for a week," said the Scout. "To tell you the truth, Sergeant, this

sleepin' on a buffalo-robe in a house, won't do for me. I'm gettin' lazy already, and must take a scout soon, or I'll turn regular squaw, and no mistake. But here goes, Bang! I 'spose we must do it; for Miss Sally," he added, with a nod at the Sergeant's wife, "is a straight up and down sort of woman, and hangs out for regular hours. I'll jist take a peep at the weather, Sergeant, and then shake down for the night."

Titus had already "shook down," and, if allowed to judge from his very effective efforts at snoring, was giving sleep what he gave Pompey, a terrible "lickin'"; but at the same time, by no means treating old Somnus with "silent contempt."

* * * * *

Men often become a prey to melancholy forebodings, and without any tangible cause or known reason. Faint shadowings of evil hang around and oppress them, tinged all their thoughts with sadness; and, in spite of every effort to throw off this waking nightmare, it continues to increase and strengthen with every struggle, until in some instances the unhappy victim has been known to perish, under the dread influence of an imagination thus diseased. We read of animals and even insects, that by instinct know the presence of an enemy, and without farther warning hurry to avoid the approaching danger. We see no reason, then, why men should not be gifted with this same instinctive knowledge of evil; and why, when oppressed with gloomy foreshadowings of danger, they do not use every precaution to ward off the threatened injury. The presence of Montlack, like the rattle of the lurking snake, had excited in the minds, not only of Bryan and Coma, but of Duffe and the Scout, strong forebodings of evil. Nor were their fears aroused without a sufficient cause; for Captain Jean, although apparently repentant of past misdeeds, and to all appearance without any injurious design whatever, was silently preparing his meshes, and only awaited a proper opportunity to drive in the game. The result of his schemes will be seen hereafter. For the present, we leave him, working

or more anxiously in the cause of Sin, than many, who call themselves Christians, labor on account of Heaven.

CHAPTER XIV.

MAJOR MALDEN, Dick Dobbins, or as he was more commonly called by his companions, Devil Dick, along with some eight or ten others, and among these, Captain Jean, were gathered around a rough slab table in the house of Colonel Holding. They had met, by request of the host, to talk over the affairs of the colony, and unite upon some plan best to resist the inroads of the savage, and meet any future attack; but, before entering upon this very necessary duty, they had concluded, and, no doubt, very wisely, for men cannot give good advice or counsel upon an empty stomach, first to appease the calls of appetite, and thus render themselves subject, alone, to the calls of patriotism.

It was late for dinner at that period, in the history of Kentucky, when the appetite was consulted rather than fashion; but we may account for the Colonel's unintentional fashionable hour of dining by saying, that the days were then rather short, cooking by no means a trifling job, when pots and kettles and cooking-stoves were things unknown and unheard of, and the hospitable host having waited to a late hour the arrival of his expected guests, this meal was intended to answer both for dinner and supper, and was, therefore, very humanely served up at a medium period between the two.

The garniture of the table would not have invited the attack of robber or burglar; for, although the Colonel had been accustomed to better things in the old State, and had mingled, in his youth, in good society, he neither had, or could get, the usual or common comforts of civilization out in his new home in the West, and was, therefore, compelled to set out his table with the common fur-

niture of the country, to wit: wooden bowls and platters for the leading dishes, and clean pieces of fresh bark for plates, his guests using their hunting-knives both for killing Indians and cutting up their food.

But, at the time when we introduce this party to the reader, they seemed—to judge from their satisfied looks, and the riddled haunch of venison, surrounded by its attendant dishes of bear meat and wild fowl, all exhibiting evident traces of a recent heavy attack—to have pretty well satisfied their hunger; and were then on the eve of paying their respects to a pail of whiskey toddy; for a bucket of that much esteemed liquor, a rare luxury at that early day, and by no means as common then as at the present time, stood temptingly in the centre of the table, with sundry gourds and tin cups arranged conveniently in and around it, ready to supply the demands of these by no means choice gourmands.

These were times when the rich enjoyed very few more comforts than the poor; and luxuries, if there were any such articles at that day, which, from the best authority, we are disposed to doubt, were the result, alone, of the individual genius and labor of the possessor. We can but smile when we think of the rough fare and furniture of the cabin of the pioneer, and then look around us at the pomp and luxury, and gaudy trappings of a modern establishment. The fathers battled and toiled, and, with careless indifference, endured every species of danger and hardship that their children might live at ease, and enjoy the fruits of their labor. Philosophers laugh, and are disposed to sneer, when they speak of the past; and ask what the effeminate children of the present day would do if placed in a like situation to that occupied by their fathers? We answer that, although many of them, surrounded by the appliances of wealth, and all the luxuries and refinements of civilized society, are disposed to enjoy their ease, and affect effeminateness, they would meet the crisis in the manner of their fathers; and if thrown now upon a border country, and surrounded by a savage foe, would think no more of sleeping upon the ground, and dining upon wooden platters, than did the hardy pioneers

of the age of which we are speaking. Men are but the creatures of time and surrounding circumstances; and I care not what may be the emergency, you will always find ready spirits to meet, and, if necessary, conquer every difficulty. But little over a half century has passed since the savage and semi-civilized hunter met in bloody battle, contending for the possession of the fertile plains, now constituting the State of Kentucky; and behold already the vast change! The bark lodge of the Indian gave place to the humble and ungainly cabin of the early settler; and now those cabins, once the abodes of health and hardy border comfort, have sunk beneath the touch of time and reform, and become a part of mother earth again; while instead thereof, you find only lordly palaces of brick and mortar. The children of the cabin have become the masters of the palace; and many of those, for many of them are still alive, who once thought no bed more pleasant or comfortable than a blanket or buffalo hide upon the puncheon floor or greensward, now rest uneasily upon a couch of down, and complain of a bed of linen and feathers. Such has been the effect of progress and refinement, or, as men are pleased to call it, civilization. But a short time back, we met with a laughable but at the same time most striking illustration of this wonderful change in men and things, in a chance encounter between two of these old pioneers, each representing in their persons, the striking characteristics of which we have just been speaking. They had been boys together in the early occupation of Kentucky, and were splendid specimens, notwithstanding their age, of manly strength and activity; but while one represented, in his bluff and unpolished person, a striking picture of the half civilized pioneer: the other, having mingled in society, and paid some attention to the cultivation of his mind, shadowed forth, in his proud bearing and language, the pioneer, refined and remodelled by the plastic touch of wealth and civilization. The former, a plain tiller of the soil, was delighted to speak of the trying days of the early settlements; and did not hesitate, upon any occasion, to tell of the poverty of his parents, and of the trying shifts

they were put to in their log cabin in the wilderness; while the latter cared not to revert to these early scenes, and preferred rather to speak of the present, boasting, for a republican, very loudly of station and family. Knowing the soft point in his friend's character, after a warm and cordial shake of the hand, the old pioneer, in his usual bluff, off-hand manner, exclaimed—

"Well, Andrew, do you remember when we were boys together, and drank sassafras tea from gourd cups, and without sweetening?"

"Yes," said the other, doggedly, glancing uneasily around at the company.

"And when your parents and mine, with their twelve children, all lived in the same little cabin, fifteen by twenty, on the banks of Green River, and slept on bear skins and buffalo hides, and never once heard tell of sugar and coffee, and feather beds, and such like? do you still remember those times?"

"Yes, damn you!" said the other, with some heat, becoming enraged at the reminiscence; but thinking to get ahead of his tormentor, and close his mouth at once and forever, continued in a loud voice, "and do you remember, John, of what material your mamma's shift was made, when we lived in that same cabin?"

"Buckskin," said the other, coolly.

"And what your sister's?"

"Buckskin," was the second reply, with equal promptitude.

"And what your father's shirt?"

"Buckskin."

"And what your's?"

"Buckskin again," replied the other, with a laugh; "and I hope you haven't forgotten, Andrew, how I used to wipe your nose with the tail of it."

A roar of merriment greeted this unlooked-for exposure, under cover of which, Andrew beat his retreat, good-humoredly cursing the too retentive memory of his old friend.

Hoping that my readers will pardon this little anecdote, which, if not as chaste as it might be, is as true as the best

authenticated history; and proves, as well as a volume, the rough life of a pioneer, we will again return to the Colonel and his guests.

As we have before remarked, the party had finished their dinner, and were upon the eve of trying the Colonel's liquor, when the latter, with some uneasiness, spoke of the non-appearance of Head and the Scout.

"It matters very little whether they come or not," said Malden, with a heavy frown; "and as for myself, I will hold no counsel with this Captain Head, for he is nothing more or less than a jail bird, and fugitive from justice."

Astounded at such a charge against the character of one of the most esteemed citizens of the county, the little company, for a moment, sat in silence, looking inquiringly at the last speaker, until Holding, recovering from his surprise, asked an explanation; remarking that, in the absence of his friend, he would not permit so grave a charge to pass by unnoticed, unless supported by very satisfactory proof.

"Colonel Holding shall have proof in abundance," replied Malden, sneeringly. "I have been waiting for some time the coming of his dear friend, to make this assertion in his presence, and challenge a denial; but as he has not seen proper to favor us with his much-esteemed company, have deemed it right to do so at once, without longer expecting his appearance."

"The proof! the proof!" muttered two or three voices.

"It is present!" said Malden, a flash of pleasure gleaming across his heavy beetle brows, "Captain Montlack is my author; he knew this Head in Carolina, and will tell you all about him."

With well-dissembled backwardness, as if loth to injure any one, even by telling the truth, the Captain, thus appealed to, after a little hesitation, told how that Head had been guilty of forgery, and upon the proof, committed to prison; and how he had escaped, and afterwards clandestinely married the daughter of General De Lacy, not forgetting, as he passed along, to charge him with being the son of a disgraced spy.

"I can scarce believe this; there must be some mistake;

he cannot be such a wretch!" exclaimed Holding, a cloud gathering upon his open brow, and his keen, sharp eyes resting intently upon the smiling face of the unruffled Captain.

"May the devil take me if I believe a word of it!" shouted Dick Dobbins, striking his hand heavily upon the table; "and until Captain Bryan is here, to give it the lie himself, I'll do it for him."

"Do you charge me with lying?" exclaimed Malden, angrily.

"I charge no man with lying," replied Dick, fiercely, "unless he asserts, as true, these charges against Captain Head; and if you do that, Major Malden, then I say, you lie."

"There is my author," said Malden, pointing to Captain Montlack, "he can speak for himself," adding with a sneer, "and if unwilling to vouch for the truth of the charge, I certainly cannot."

"I can excuse the gentleman's heat," remarked the Captain, quietly, "for I honor him in thus standing up in defence of his absent friend; but, nevertheless, the charges I have made against Captain Head, as you are pleased to call him, are all true. Let him but ask his friend the simple question, whether he is not a fugitive from justice, and did not escape from jail when he fled to this country, and he will be more than satisfied that I am no slanderer, and that this man is the infamous character I have painted him."

"Who charges my name with infamy?" asked Head, in a husky voice, stalking boldly into the room, closely followed by the Scout.

During the commotion created by the strange recital of Montlack, and the subsequent angry discussion between Dobbins, Malden, and the Captain, Head had approached the house unseen, and was standing near the door, when Dick, with true friendship, loudly branded the story of the Frenchman as a falsehood, and had heard the remainder of the conversation, interrupting it, as we have shown, by sternly demanding the author of the infamous charge? No sooner was his voice heard, than

Dick, springing to his feet, grasped his hand, and the eyes of the others following the glance of Head himself, rested upon the face of Montlack, who, shrinking back at the appearance of his enemy, had instinctively drawn nearer to Malden, as if counting on, and expecting his support.

"I thank you, Dick, for your generous defence of my character!" exclaimed Head with emotion, wringing warmly the hand of his friend, "but it is nothing more than I expected; for I have always known you to be noble and brave, and such do not allow their friends to be slandered with impunity. As for that base hound," he added, pointing his finger at the shrinking Captain, "I needed not the glance of your eye to discover my enemy. He has long been my secret foe, and a cowardly, dishonored, slandering enemy has he been, totally unworthy either of notice or punishment!"

"And has got nigger blood in his veins to boot!" added the Scout, contemptuously, striking the butt of his rifle heavily and convincingly upon the floor.

"I knew it was false, and that you were innocent!" exclaimed Dick, again extending his hand.

"And I," added Holding, his brow clearing up, advancing with a hearty welcome.

"And I! and I!" shouted several other voices, all of the speakers moving quickly away from the side of Montlack, who stood branded as a coward, liar, and mulatto, leaving him unsupported save by the scowling Malden.

"Bold words these for a felon and fugitive from justice!" remarked Montlack with a supercilious sneer, "and if we would *believe the criminal*, quite sufficient to convince this very willing company of his innocence.

"True!" exclaimed Malden, with a malicious laugh; "and I, for one, must have better proof than his say-so!"

Montlack, who saw plainly that, unless he pressed the charge boldly, and used all of his adroitness to throw doubt upon the minds of his hearers, Head would escape from the toils he had so industriously prepared for him, had ventured this sneer upon their credulity and partiality, and seeing that it was not without effect upon

some of the party, added, with a forced laugh, for he knew the power of a laugh upon most men—

"See the hardihood of guilt! His must be a guilty conscience indeed, and a reckless one, since he has not only branded me as a slanderer, and denied the charge I have made against him, but done so without even knowing what it is!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Malden (willingly aiding the endeavors of Montlack), with a scoff and sneer, "'tis too good; but the gentleman must bring some other proof than a bold denial if he would have me believe him innocent!"

"Put him to the test I have proposed," remarked Montlack with quiet coolness, "and if you are not then satisfied that I have spoken nothing more than the truth, I'll acknowledge that I am a slanderer, and submit to be branded as a liar!"

"Which will be no new thing, for you have often submitted before; a 'tarnal yaller nigger that you are!" exclaimed the Scout, with angry vehemence.

"The test! the test!" shouted Malden. "The test, the test," faintly echoed one or two other voices.

"Ay! state the charges and let him deny them!" repeated Montlack.

"Does any one present," said Head, drawing up his graceful figure, and speaking in a calm, measured tone, as he glanced proudly around, "believe me the guilty wretch this base slanderer would make me?"

"No!" shouted Devil Dick.

"No! no!" echoed a majority of the voices present.

"Ay!" shouted the hoarse voice of Malden, "unless you answer me a few plain questions, and bring some other proof of your innocence than your own word!"

"Major Malden, from some cause, is no friend of mine," replied Head, "but I neither covet his friendship, nor fear his enmity! To satisfy him, I would answer no questions; but to satisfy my friends, and those who believe me innocent; I am ready to answer all he may put, and all that may be suggested by the smooth and plotting tongue of his hypocritical friend!"

"And Simon Kenton is here present," said the Scout, threateningly, "to sustain, with tongue and hand, the truth of all that Mister Bryan may say!"

"A most excellent witness, indeed!" remarked Montlack with a cunning smile, "who promises in advance to indorse the evidence of another!"

"More than any one would do for the like of you," answered the Scout, quickly divining the intent of Montlack; "but you need not expect, with your snaky tongue, to cast a doubt over my testimony; for," added the Scout, proudly, "I am not now among strangers, and all present know Simon Kenton!"

Malden, without noticing the implied threat of Kenton, or the sharp passage between him and Montlack, otherwise than by a transitory frown and smile, replied to Head by saying—

"My enmity, sir, shall not make me forget justice, nor should friendship blind the judgment of these gentlemen!" nodding at Holding and Dobbins. "I would have the truth, and nothing more. Captain Montlack there, who comes to us, bearing at least the name and reputation of a gentleman, declares that you, Captain Head, while a citizen of Carolina, were arrested upon the charge of forgery, and after a fair trial, sent to prison, from whence you made your escape and fled to this country, and that you are, moreover, the son of a traitor and spy! As gentlemen, we are bound to believe him, unless you deny these charges, and show us that he is unworthy of credit. We await your reply; what say you, are these charges true or false?"

"The first two," replied Head, resolutely, "are true; the last as false as hell, or the treacherous heart of the base slanderer that gave it circulation!"

At this unlooked-for and straightforward reply, the countenances of Holding and Dobbins were clouded with doubt and suspicion; and several of those who had sided with them against Montlack drew back as if now satisfied of the guilt of Head; and Malden, with a gleam of malicious triumph, met the exultant smile of Captain Jean with an exclamation of unconcealed satisfaction.

"But," continued Head, with the calmness of innocence, hastening to dispel the doubts of his friends and the triumph of his enemies, "notwithstanding the first two charges made by this plotting hypocrite are true, he well knows, as I will now prove to you, that I was innocent, and but the victim of his own reckless villany. You shall hear all; and then you may judge who is the guilty one, and what faith should be placed in this man."

"Let them have the whole story, Mr. Bryan," exclaimed Kenton, impatiently, "and when they've heard it, if they don't say this tarnal yellow rascal has got nigger blood in him, they may take my head for a football, and jist gin my scalp to a Shawanee squaw."

With artless simplicity, and with an unmistakable air of truthfulness, Head now gave a detailed account of all the cunning plots and villainies of Montlack, in connection with the hated renegade, Girty; appealing, as he went along, to Kenton, for the truth of his story; and which the Scout, whose character and veracity were undoubted, without hesitation substantiated; not sparing, as he went along, the character of Monsieur Jean, charging him not only with the disgrace of his blood, which he considered a very grave offence, but with being now, as he was at the time of which they were speaking, the guilty associate and accomplice of the hated and notorious Girty.

Dark frowns and threatening looks were turned upon the shrinking form of Captain Jean during the recital of Head, which gave place to low murmurs of hatred and scorn as in conclusion he remarked—

"I have now told you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God! Simon Kenton, whom you all know, has borne me out in what I have said; and if you would have still more testimony, and are not yet satisfied of my innocence and the guilt of this traitor, you can have it by calling upon Sergeant Duffe, and (if you will receive the evidence of one who, although a negro, is as trustworthy and truthful as any white man alive) the slave Titus!"

"I, for one, am satisfied, and want no further testimony," exclaimed Holding, extending his hand to Bryan.

"And I!" shouted Dobbins.

"And I, and I!" echoed half a dozen other voices.

"Ay! if you take his word, and the testimony of his slave and associates," sneered Montlack, making a desperate effort to sustain his ground, "there will be no difficulty in his proving himself innocent. He has been tried once before, as he acknowledges, and by an impartial court; and that court, if you believe his own story, were so confident of his guilt as to send him, without hesitation, to prison."

"True!" exclaimed Malden, who had been either so far prejudiced by the artful stories of Montlack as really to remain unconvinced, or, on account of his enmity to Head, was unwilling and determined not to be so, "we must not forget that; and had better not be in too great a hurry to believe his innocence."

The remark of Malden, although thrown out to dampen the feelings of his hearers, and cast, if possible, a doubt upon the defence of Head, and at the same time lessen, may-be, the apparent proof positive of Montlack's guilt, did not seem to have the effect intended; for the former, conscious of no guilt on his part, met the quick glance of his friends with the open and confident calmness of innocence; while the latter, notwithstanding the support thus given him, and the self-possession obtained and made a part of his nature by the long practice of hypocrisy and deceit, could not, in spite of every effort to appear calm, look as unconcerned as he wished under their suspicious and lowering scrutiny.

"That man," said Head, without then noticing the eager support given by Malden to Montlack, pointing his finger at the latter, "for no other reason than that I balked a villanous scheme of his to obtain the wealth of his uncle by securing the hand of his daughter, has for many years been my unforgiving and ruthless foe; following my trail with all the bloody zeal of a slot-hound, and not hesitating to resort to the basest and most cowardly means to work me injury. Once before, I offered to meet him, man to man, and give him an opportunity

of avenging any fancied injury I may have done him; but with a coward's excuse he declined the combat. Now, again," he added, with a stern emphasis, "for I would not have an unscrupulous enemy thus forever dogging my track; although a base knave, and liar, and slanderer, I will give him the same opportunity, if he dare accept it."

As such was the common mode of settling all injuries among the hardy borderers of the West, the party present did not seem at all surprised at the challenge given by Head, but looked to Montlack as if expecting nothing less than his ready acceptance; and, had he only had sufficient nerve to abide by the combat, he would have at least, if not freed himself from the odium of his base course, raised himself greatly in their estimation; for brute bravery with them, as it does now with their more refined and civilized descendants, covered a multitude of sins. But the Captain had no such thought, and to the challenge of his opponent faintly muttered—

"If insulted by a gentleman, or my equal, I will fight him; but the low abuse of a felon and fugitive from prison shall not force me to meet him in honorable combat."

A muttered curse from Malden, and a low sullen murmur of disapprobation from the others, greeted this unexpected reply; but Head was not yet satisfied, for he had not forgotten the malicious eagerness with which the former had pressed the slanderous charges of his cowardly foe; and turning now, with his eye fastened full upon the dark and frowning face of Malden, he remarked, significantly—

"If there is one present who dares uphold this man, and doubts for a moment my innocence, or says he still believes the slander of this wretch, either against myself or the fair fame of my father, then I pronounce him a base knave, and no better than he who stands there now branded as a liar and slanderer."

"I do the same!" exclaimed Kenton, striking his rifle emphatically upon the floor, "and will fight him with bullet or knife—be he the devil, a nigger, or Major Malden."

"Now, by heavens!" shouted Malden, fiercely, springing to his feet, and laying his hand threateningly upon

the handle of his knife; but, at this moment, he was interrupted by the sudden appearance and loud greeting of a strange-looking being; and, as this unexpected appearance was quickly followed by a most ludicrous catastrophe, in which Montlack, the source of the quarrel, became the laughable victim, he never finished his angry retort; but for the time, under the influence of the merriment created by Captain Jean's discomfiture, and the timely and hurried persuasions of Holding, sullenly submitted to the conditional challenges of Head and the Scout, smothering his anger for some future occasion, and by no means forgiving or intending to forget the insult offered him.

The cause of this very opportune interruption, was a well-known and most singular character, rejoicing under the euphonious title of Amy Adkins. Amy, to the eye of a stranger, presented nothing more than a striking personification of a lounging, careless squatter—lank, wiry, and hard-featured; with a dress half savage and half civilized; without much unison either in apparel or features, there being no harmony in anything about him, save an uncommon tendency of both limbs and clothes to dangle loosely about, as if belonging to anybody else but the owner of the bald bullet-head surmounting his shoulders.

Every man has some peculiar hobby or mania; hunting bugs, and easy ways of living without work, are now quite fashionable; but old Amy was possessed of a devil, or mania, as unaccountable and strange as he himself was unique; and his mania was an uncontrollable penchant for "butting." When we say "butting," we mean a very intimate and *striking* acquaintance between the crown of the aforesaid bullet-head and any resisting object; and hence, the baldness of Amy, and the familiar *sobriquet* of the "old goat," which he wore throughout the country. So great was Amy's passion for trying the thickness of his own skull, and running a muck with his head against every opponent, that he has been known to try it upon soft-bark trees, and doors that stood invitingly before him, and upon every species of animal, from the ox down to the sheep. At any moment, one might expect a pleasant salute of this sort from old Amy; and his

wife and children, around the fireside, and in the field at work, without any conceivable reason or notice, have often experienced the unlooked-for and ill effects of this goatish propensity. It was a standing joke (or rather, a *falling* one, for it most generally resulted in the overthrow of the victim) of old Amy's, to seize most cordially by the hand, an acquaintance, or stranger, and, while expressing his pleasure at the meeting, to deal him a most scientific blow with his head in the stomach, which, from its vigor and skill, and unexpectedness, invariably resulted in his very sudden acquaintance with mother earth. If the victim of this craniological movement was a stranger, and unacquainted with the "butting" propensities of Amy, the old man would treat his downfall as purely the result of accident, expressing great astonishment, and a thousand apologies, generally winding up with a second offer of his hand, which, if accepted, was invariably followed by a second butt, and a second overthrow, after which, the old gentleman would make off, highly delighted with his day's sport. But so well known had old Amy become in the country, that his innocent sport was wellnigh destroyed; for, without hearing the cry—"there's straw upon his horns," he was universally shunned by man and beast, and could only gratify his mania at rare intervals, and upon the person of strangers.

Such is a true sketch of the individual so opportunely interrupting the quarrel between Head and Malden. Dancing into the room, with his arms, legs, and head swinging negligently about, as if made of gum-elastic, and totally unconnected with his body, old Amy exclaimed, in a loud nasal tone, for he scorned breathing through any other member than his natural bellows, as he called it—

"Hello, boys! what's to pay now? Old Amy don't allow any fighting when he's present. How are you, Colonel; and you, Dick, and the Major, and all of you, not forgetting this stranger?"

The Colonel and the other knowing ones, kept a wary eye upon the movements of the new-comer, none of them offering him their hands, but all answering his noisy sa-

lute good-humoredly, and bowing with distant politeness, a thing very unusual in that age and generation, when a lusty shake of the hand was considered the greatest mark of a hearty welcome and friendship.

But Dick Dobbins, noticing the inquiring eye of old Amy fixed upon the face of Montlack, and withal, being a kind-hearted fellow, as easy to melt as enrage, and feeling, now that the Captain had been disgraced, some sympathy for his lonely and miserable situation, with all the amiability of his heart fully aroused and excited, determined, for the present, to stand his friend, and introduce him to the kind welcome of the Old Goat.

"Uncle Amy!" he exclaimed, catching the eye of Adkins, and answering it with a sly wink, "let me introduce to your kind consideration, Captain Montlack, of Carolina."

"How de do, Captain? I'm devilish glad to see you," (a solemn truth, for human subjects had been scarce of late,) shouted old Amy, extending his hand; his head, and arms, and limbs all the time flying about like those of a dancing figure in a pantomime.

"Most happy to make your acquaintance," returned Montlack, warmly, for he knew the small number of friends he had present, and wished to make another; "but"—and he was going on to say something more, as he eagerly grasped the offered hand of Amy, but his "but" was met by such a terrible "*rebutter*" from the head of old Amy, that it was driven at once and forever entirely from his recollection, and the next moment the Captain found himself sprawling upon the floor.

"I axe your pardon, Captain!" exclaimed Amy, running to the assistance of Montlack, "old Amy meant no harm in the world; he was merely bowin' to express his pleasure at the honor of your acquaintance, and this darned old head of his went into you 'ginst his knowledge and consent. I hope you ain't worsted much, Captain," continued Adkins, with great apparent sympathy, Montlack having again, with his assistance, recovered his feet, though by no means entirely restored his breath.

"No, not much; I believe not!" gasped the victim.

"You ain't mad, or nothin' of that sort, Captain?" said Adkins, "and don't think hard of old Amy, for this little accident?"

"O, no!" muttered Montlack, his suspicions entirely removed by the apparent kindness and sympathy of Amy.

"Then give us your hand, Captain; for here's old Amy's paw; and when you grasp it agin, as a token that you don't hold a grudge 'ginst me for that little accident, then you may count me yourn till death, both hand and head."

"Here it is!" returned Montlack, again grasping the offered hand of Amy.

"And here's the head, what goes with it!" exclaimed Amy; again dealing the Captain a tremendous butt, laying him out, for the second time, breathless upon the floor.

A loud shout of laughter, greeted this second discomfiture of Montlack; for no one, not even his associate, Malden, felt any sympathy for him in his distress, or expressed any pity at his painful, but ludicrous overthrow.

"Give him my respects, boys," said Adkins, moving off, "and tell him, now don't forget it, not to think hard of old Amy, for it's only one of his ways, and we don't mean any harm by it—more nor than a joke."

Gaining the door (for, notwithstanding his victory, and his victim put *hors de combat*, old Amy seemed desirous to place himself beyond the reach of any contingency in the shape of a bullet), the old fellow with a patronizing air rubbed his head a moment; giving vent, as he did so, to a low chuckle of satisfaction; then turning to the company within, with a profound bow, he again requested them to assure the Captain it was all a joke; after which, without further ado, he mounted his horse, and, with a well-pleased look, rode gayly away.

* * * * *

Amy gone, and the Captain removed from the hard floor to a more pleasant couch, out upon the greensward, in the open air, where it was thought he would soon regain the *quantum sufficit* of breath knocked out of him by the battering-ram of Adkins, Holding hastened to

take advantage of the lull created by these occurrences, to smother the quarrel, on the eve of breaking out between Head, Malden, and the Scout, by proposing that they should at once resume their seats at the table, and finish the business for which they had been called together. Malden, though sullen and discontented, seemed in no way inclined to renew the quarrel, interrupted by the appearance and subsequent doings of old Amy; and no one objecting to this very reasonable proposition of the Colonel, the company present, including now the Scout and Head, once more took their places around the hospitable board of Holding, and were soon engaged in busy, and apparently harmonious conversation.

They had been called together by Holding, as Colonel of the last expedition against the savages, to decide upon the most feasible plan of securing the settlements against any future attack from the Indians. This design accomplished, and Kenton directed to continue scouting upon the borders, the company were upon the eve of breaking up and returning to their homes, when Malden, who had during the consultation been rather more reserved and silent than was usual with him, suddenly interrupted this evident intention, by exclaiming—

"Before we part, gentlemen, there is one more subject to which I would draw your attention, for I think it well deserves some general move in the community. As for the Indians, I think it well enough to be prepared for them, although I have no fears of another attack from that quarter very soon; but we have in our midst men no better than these savages; I mean, a band of horse-thieves; and unless we adopt some plan to defend ourselves against their future depredations, we shall soon be left without a hoof to till our grounds, or go upon a foray."

"You speak very truly, Major Malden," replied Holding, "and I would like right well if you could suggest some way to rid the country of these daring rascals. They have not forgotten to look into my stables, in their recent expeditions; and, no longer than last week, I lost one of my best horses."

"And I! and I!" chimed in three or four other voices, showing that the thieves had been in no way partial.

"As we have no law to punish them," replied Malden, "unless we unite among ourselves, and make it a common duty of the community to see that punishment be inflicted upon the rascals, we might as well grant the scoundrels at once the free privilege of roguery; for no one individual, unless supported by the purse and assistance of his neighbors, can pursue the villains, with any chance of success."

"What do you propose?" asked Holding.

"I have been thinking over this matter lately," answered Malden, while a heavy frown gathered upon his brow, "and have concluded that the best and only plan promising success, is for every gentleman present, and others as we may see them, to pledge their word, and ratify it with an oath, that, upon information given us of any theft, we will as a band, organized for that special purpose, pursue the thief until he is discovered; and when discovered, that we will hang him up, without law or jury, and let his fate stand as a warning to all other knaves."

"An excellent plan, that!" muttered Montlack to himself; for, having recovered from the shock given by old Amy's patent battery, he had drawn sufficiently near to hear what was going on within; "and in cunning hands," he added with a devilish smile, "may be made to work wonders."

"A quick, but happy riddance!" remarked Devil Dick, with a careless laugh; "for we can hang them when we find them, and try them when we have leisure."

"Can you suggest a wiser or better plan, sir?" asked Malden, surlily.

"Not I," answered Dick, with the same reckless indifference; "for I know of no shorter or better plan of ridding the country of these rascals, and at the same time save ourselves unnecessary trouble. We may hang an innocent man now and then; but that is a matter of small consequence, if we are only right in a majority of cases."

Malden looked up as if by no means pleased with the

pleasant and flippant manner in which Dick had treated his grave proposition, but made no reply.

"I must confess," said Holding, "that the mode proposed is a little too bloody and summary to suit my taste; but as we have no law in this wild country but the law of might, and no prisons, and as one victim may act as a scarecrow to all others, I know of no better course, and see no reason why we should not adopt the Major's plan; although I sincerely trust that we may never be called upon to execute it."

"As you say, we have no prisons, and, if we had, I consider confinement entirely too light a punishment for a damned horse-thief," growled Malden. "I, for one, am for death; and here now pledge my word not to shrink, when called upon, but to aid, both with purse and hand, in executing this sentence upon any and every horse-thief."

"And I! and I!" was the exclamation of every one present.

"And I!" hissed Montlack to himself, a gleam of malicious pleasure covering his pale countenance.

"You all swear it?" continued Malden, in a harsh and stern voice, at the same time glancing searchingly around to see that no one shunned the oath.

"We swear!" was the solemn response of each individual.

"Amen to that oath!" muttered Montlack; "for the devil himself could not have made a better mesh to insure me bloody revenge."

"Then," exclaimed Malden, draining a cup of liquor, "here's to the speedy death of every rascally horse-thief in the territory!"

"You shall soon have a taste of blood, my old bear," muttered Montlack, with a low laugh of exultation, as he looked in upon the ferocious countenance of his late friend.

"And here's that the horse-loving gentry may all flee the country forthwith, and never call on us for this hempen cravat we've promised them!" laughed Devil Dick, tossing off his toast.

"Amen!" ejaculated Holding and Head.

"May the devil take me if I say amen to that," growled Malden.

"Nor I," hissed Captain Jean to himself; "for I do not intend this oath to be a mere silly formula. They have sworn; and Captain Jean Montlack has lost all his cunning if that oath does not yet cause death."

CHAPTER XV.

"THERE is no doubt of his guilt; the court would have convicted him without hesitation had he not escaped from prison; and as for that foolish story, trumped up by him and his half-savage companion, it is false from beginning to end, without even the merit, when you look at it coolly, of having the semblance of reason. I am not surprised at that pompous fool, Holding, who thinks, because he was selected to command the last expedition against the Indians, that he must now become the leader and director of the settlement; or at that silly jay, Dobbins, believing such a cock-and-bull story; but I must confess myself somewhat astonished that you, Major Malden, should feel any doubts, or permit yourself thus to be imposed upon."

Such was the artful reply of Montlack to some question of Malden, as the two were passing along together through the woods, near the house of the latter, upon the day following the events narrated in our last chapter. Montlack had already discovered the Major's jealousy of Holding, and had not miscalculated the effect of his artful and somewhat depreciating reference to that gentleman, and his staunch and unswerving supporter, Dick Dobbins. He also well knew the influence of a little flattery; and in his reply, it will be noticed that he had cunningly excited both the jealousy and vanity of Malden with the purpose of strengthening and confirming his dislike to Head, and, at the same time, arraying him in open opposition to the friends and allies of the latter.

"Holding is a silly fool, as you say," growled Malden; "and as for that rattle-brained Dobbins, he is a mere toady of the Colonel's, with only brains enough to be headstrong and dangerous; for, to give the dog his due, he's as brave as the devil. But why, Captain Montlack," continued Malden, looking steadily at his companion, and speaking as if this reference to the bravery of Dobbins had suggested the inquiry, "did you not resent the abuse of this fellow, Head, and accept his challenge? It is not usual, in this country, to permit such abuse to pass unpunished, or a direct challenge, like his, to remain unaccepted."

"I know not the custom of this country; for I am, as you are aware, but a stranger in it," replied Montlack, showing very little, if any, embarrassment at the charge implied by the inquiry of Malden; "but in France, and in the army, it was not the custom with gentlemen to accept the challenge of a disgraced and dishonored man; and, before he had the right to call upon an enemy to meet him in the field, he must first have cleared up every charge against his fair fame, at least to the satisfaction of his brother officers and associates of the same rank and standing in society. Nor was it customary to resent the abuse of those beneath us in rank and station in so honorable a manner. You must acknowledge, Major, there would be but little reason, and less equality, in a gentleman of wealth and rank, risking his life and limbs in a personal combat with a low-born, silly booby, who had everything to gain, and nothing to lose. We are only required to meet our equals; and Captain Montlack has never yet been found backward when thus called upon. As for accepting the challenge of a man I know to be a felon, and a fugitive from justice, as he himself acknowledges, I could not for a moment think of such a thing, and should consider myself disgraced forever, had I done so."

"I believe you have spoken correctly, as to the course pursued by gentlemen in the army, in the old country," said Malden, his doubts of the bravery of his companion being very much lessened by this straightforward, plausible explanation of Montlack; "but I will give you

to understand, Captain, that out here, this old code has exploded; and it is customary with us, to accept all challenges, and meet any one; it matters not whether high or low. But then, Captain," added Malden, still pressing Montlack's refusal, "according to your own code, you should have accepted the challenge of this Mr. Head; for he enjoys the rank of a gentleman, and proved, to the satisfaction of at least a large majority of his associates and equals, his innocence of the charge made against him, and his title to their esteem and respect."

"If I am not mistaken," retorted Montlack, with a sneer, not able to answer his companion in any other way, "this same honorable gentleman gave Major Malden an opportunity of accepting the honor so imprudently rejected by Captain Montlack."

"Captain Montlack," replied Malden, with stern emphasis, his shaggy brows almost meeting over his flashing eye, "may have a chance of proving his bravery, by accepting the challenge of Major Malden, unless he husbands, with more care, his sneers and innuendoes. I am not one to submit to the charge of cowardice, even by implication; and if Captain Montlack would not dare the resentment of him they call the 'Bloody-handed,' he had best not touch upon such a subject."

Montlack, seeing that he had gone too far, and had excited in no small degree the anger of his companion, hastened at once to explain that he meant to give no insult, either by word or implication; and that the bravery of Major Malden was too well established for any one, who had ever heard of his daring deeds, for a moment to doubt.

Mollified by Captain Jean's ready explanation, mingled as it was by flattering allusions to the reputation he enjoyed throughout the territory, the sullen face of Malden again cleared up; but, as if still conscious of there being some grounds for the Captain's sneering remark, at which he had taken such umbrage, without immediately dropping this delicate subject, he continued—

"The challenge you mention was a general one, and conditional; but made, I acknowledge, with a significant

look, that denoted the object, and, by heavens!" he added, his face flaming up with anger, at the very thought, "had not old Adkins interrupted me at the moment, he should not have escaped; I care not what his station or character; be he thief, forger, or convict."

"Damn old Adkins," muttered Montlack, almost losing his breath at the very recollection of Amy's goatish propensity for impressive jokes; "he should be placed in a strait-jacket, and encouraged to butt out his brains, if he has any, against stone walls."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Malden, with the hoarse growl of a bear, forgetting his own anger while enjoying the fury of Montlack; "old Amy came devilish nigh, Captain, butting you into the middle of next week! For the life of me," he continued, seeing that Montlack by no means enjoyed his merriment, "I can't help laughing, when I think how the old goat fooled you."

"Let it pass," retorted Montlack, quickly, "and with it all memory of that cursed meeting; for what occurred there, I find," he sneeringly continued, "by no means very pleasant, either to Major Malden or myself."

"Beware! Captain Montlack," muttered Malden, all traces of merriment gone in a moment at this distant allusion of his companion; "I give but one warning, and that you have already had."

"And that was unnecessary," answered Montlack, "for I am not one to willingly wound the feelings of a friend."

Malden made no reply, and for a few minutes, the two walked on in silence. At length, as if suddenly struck with the thought, the Major turned upon Montlack, and in his usual bluff manner exclaimed—

"But what say you, Captain, to the testimony of Kenton, respecting this charge, made by you, against Head?"

"That it is false from beginning to end; and this Captain Kenton, as he calls himself, no better than Head; and, if the truth was known, a confederate."

"As for this fellow, Head," said Malden, "I never thought much of him; and think, with you, that he is no better than he should be; but as for Kenton, I have known him long and well, and must say, notwithstanding he

exhibits no love for myself, that he is both brave and truthful. But he knows nothing of guile or deceit; and this Head, who appears a smooth, plausible fellow enough, may have deceived him, like he has deceived everybody else. Kenton, blinded by his affection for this man—for he was ever warm-hearted and devoted to his friends—may have been deceived by circumstances; but that he spoke falsely, and did so designedly, I do not, and never will believe."

Montlack was unable to conceal his surprise at this very unexpected defence of the Scout from the mouth of his enemy. He would not have been at all astonished at abuse, or slander, or low innuendo; for base, and treacherous, and unprincipled himself, he never spoke in praise or defence of a friend or acquaintance, except to their face, and to further some selfish end of his own; but was ever ready, behind their backs, to pour out his filthy slime both on friend and enemy alike; and now, to hear an enemy speak well of one known to be hostile, was beyond the comprehension of his narrow soul, and no wonder it excited his unbounded astonishment. Finding, however, from this unlooked-for reply of Malden, that he had been too hasty in his wholesale abuse of Kenton, the cunning Captain about-ship at once, trimming his sails for another tack, by hurriedly explaining that he knew nothing against the character of the Scout, but only judged him by the company he kept. As for Head, feeling that he was on safe ground there, and that Malden, if not entirely convinced of the heavy charges he had made against him, was only too ready to be so, the Captain did not hesitate to reiterate his slanders, calling down upon his own head the most shameful punishments if he misrepresented him one jot or tittle.

The subtle Captain, who was a quick reader of men, saw that his artful words were not without their influence upon his silent companion; but if he had any doubts at all, they were speedily removed by the harsh voice of Malden, exclaiming—

"I doubt it not! I doubt it not! He is a smooth-tongued, plausible knave; but now that my eyes are open, he will

not escape me long. He has twice thrown himself in my path, and twice dared the anger of the 'Bloody-hand;' let him beware of the third offence."

Not caring to press the subject further, Montlack made no answer to this ominous threat, and for a few minutes the two pedestrians walked on in silence.

At length, Montlack, as if no longer desirous of the company of his moody companion, or wearied with the distance he had already come, laid his hand upon the shoulder of Malden, exclaiming—

"By my faith, Major! if I follow you much longer, I had better keep company for the day, for I shall never find my way back."

Looking up into the heavens, as if he would learn the hour of the day by the situation of the sun, Malden made some reply, then drawing his belt tighter around him, as if preparing for a more extended journey, after a few hurried words, the two parted company, the Major taking his way alone through the woods; whilst the Captain, as if wearied with the length of his walk, sat himself down, either to await the return of his companion, or, as he was by no means fond of violent exercise, to rest himself ere he commenced retracing his path.

"There he goes; a rough, headstrong bear," muttered Montlack, as the stout figure of his late companion vanished from sight over a neighboring hill, "and well worthy of the bloody name so flattering to his savage pride."

"Ha! ha! my dear Major," he laughed, sneeringly, "you may be my superior in following the trail of an Indian, and in scalping the savage warrior when you have killed him, but when it comes to cunning, you are but a child in the hands of Captain Jean Montlack. You have brute strength and courage, I grant you that, and so has the bear or mastiff, but what can they do in a combat with mind. O ho! you snap me up with threats and frowns; but wait awhile, my dear friend, and, in spite of your pride and strength, I'll twist you round my finger as I would a string of flax, and make you my base tool, the blind worker of my wishes, even into dyeing your 'bloody hand' with still more gore! Vanity and jealousy can do wonders; but who would have thought this rough

fool could thus be led by the nose, with a little flattery! But hold! let me think awhile, and not rush unprepared to the attack, merely to be driven again, ignominiously, from the field! Damn that fellow, I believe he's in league with the devil; for twice have I netted him, as fairly and securely as cunning could throw the toils, and both times has he escaped me, and not only that, but left me covered with disgrace! But never mind; my time will come yet! Let me think, now, for it is time this silly struggle was ended, and Captain Montlack—no longer Montlack, but De Lacy—was back at the old homestead, enjoying the fruits of his success. Ay, my pretty cousin! you scorned my suit, did you! and your Mr. Head dared step between me and fortune; and you, my honest Duffe, presumed to buffet with your hand the face of a gentleman; and you, Mr. Kenton, or devil, or Scout, or whatever you may be, disgraced the arms of Captain Montlack with a rope, and made him the subject of your low jokes. I have not forgotten any of you, you see; nor will I permit you," hissed the soliloquist between his teeth, "soon to forget me. But let me think; for revenge, wealth, and safety are now at stake, and I must not lose either by too much haste or want of deliberation."

Resting his head upon the palm of his hand, and stretching his body out at full length upon the moss-covered log on which he had been sitting, the plotting Captain was soon lost in thought, and forgetful of the wild scene around him, and all things else, but the dark schemes of his own busy mind.

The sun was shining out brightly, but there was not a breath of wind, and the birds and insects, as if aware of the presence of a wicked spirit, were hushed, and would not sing. A solemn silence—the deep and hushed silence of the forest at rest—which can be compared to nothing but the slumber of death, reigned around, and to any one less busy with his own thoughts than Montlack, could not have passed unnoticed, and would not have been without its mysterious awe-engendering influence upon his soul. But the Captain was plotting death, and no thought of God or nature ever entered his breast. The good spirit

had given place to evil, and was hushed and silent now as the scene around; while the gentle knockings of conscience, even as bird and insect, sent not forth from his dark heart a single note of warning. He was plotting death to his enemies, and thought himself alone; but not far distant, crouching upon the ground, and stealing toward his recumbent figure with the stealthy steps of a panther, came one plotting his own. Unconscious of the danger threatening himself, Montlack continued silent and motionless, scheming only to secure the future; whilst his enemy, for such his motions denoted him to be, now but a few paces distant, rising cautiously to his feet, held aloft in his hand a glittering tomahawk, as if in the very act of springing forward, to change, by one blow, the supposed sleep of his victim to the unending slumber of death.

"May the devil take me," muttered Montlack, at this moment, slightly moving his person, "if it ain't too bad to miss such an opportunity, and be balked in such a glorious plan of revenge, merely for the want of some cut-throat assistant, that I might purchase, soul and body, for a trifle, if only a little better acquainted in this infernal country!"

The uplifted hatchet, but a moment since trembling to speed upon its bloody errand, was immediately lowered at the sound of Montlack's voice, and a grim smile of surprise and pleasure passed over the fierce features of the assassin as he heard this muttered regret of his intended victim.

"*Sacre!*" again muttered Montlack, after a moment of silence, "I would willingly give a thousand dollars to meet now with that damned bloody rascal, Simon Girty!"

"You have but to speak of the devil, Captain, and you know what the old saying is!" exclaimed a harsh, guttural voice, as if in answer to Montlack's earnest wish.

Greatly amazed and terrified at this strange interruption, Montlack sprang quickly to his feet, and there, sure enough, immediately before him, stood the well-known form of the renegade, still holding in his hand the unsheathed tomahawk, and enjoying, with no little satisfaction, the dreadful fright of his old companion.

"I claim the reward, Captain," said Girty, after laughing outright at the ludicrous appearance of the terror-stricken Montlack, "for favoring you with this unexpected pleasure. Remember, you offered a thousand dollars for a look at my beautiful person, and now that you've got your wish, don't think of undervaluing the favor."

"It's yours," exclaimed Montlack, recovering from his fright, although still trembling from the effect of the renegade's startling interruption; "but how in the name of all that's wonderful came you here, and just at that moment when of all others I most desired your company?"

"My presence came devilish nigh proving the death of Captain Montlack," growled Girty, "and had he not spoken just when he did, he would have never wagged tongue again. A moment later, and my tomahawk would have been buried in his brain."

"Why, Girty!" exclaimed Montlack, growing pale at the thought of his narrow escape, "you would not have murdered your old friend?"

"Not when I heard his voice, and very kind wish for the presence of one Simon Girty," replied the renegade, with mocking emphasis; "for then I knew him, and no longer mistook Captain Montlack for one of my sworn foes."

"But how got you here, without arousing my attention?" asked Montlack.

"I thought you one of the borderers; and knowing their quickness, stole upon you as a cat upon her prey; but my caution was unnecessary; for my usual step would not have reached your heavy ear. Take my advice, Captain, and never risk yourself alone in the woods again. It ain't every one that would lower his upraised tomahawk at the sound of your pleasant voice, and you stand no chance of a warning from the soft-treading hunters of this country. Why, blast me if a Wyandot or Shawanee, or even that damned scout, Simon Kenton, couldn't at any time take your scalp and you never be the wiser."

"But you run a great risk in remaining here, after what has occurred," said Montlack, in a tone between a warning and inquiry. "You must be aware that the settlers have no love for Simon Girty, and would treat him as a wild beast did he again fall into their hands."

"I'm not ignorant of their hatred, but there's no love lost between us, and Simon Girty has not yet forgotten how to defend himself. But there is a little unsettled business between you and myself, Captain, and notwithstanding the danger, I have chosen to remain, and have been on the lookout for you ever since my escape."

"True," replied Montlack, his face becoming a little troubled at the remembrance of his promises to the renegade; "I believe there was something said about a thousand dollars I would owe you upon the fulfilment of certain conditions on your part; but then you must remember, Girty, these conditions have not yet been performed, and I am not yet bound to fulfil my part of the agreement."

Montlack ventured upon this reply with no little fear and trembling, for he knew the desperate character of the outlaw, and expected some outbreak; but he dared the venture, hoping that he might thus, by disputing the matter, lower the claims of Girty, or if not, by at last submitting, show his generosity, especially as he never intended to make good his promises.

"Captain Montlack's mind is somewhat forgetful," said Girty, a flash of fury spreading over his face, and, in his rage, speaking calmly—although his hand rested in a threatening manner upon the handle of his hatchet, as if half inclined to settle all accounts, with the death of his debtor; "but he had better not attempt any of his tricks with Simon Girty, for I have a trick worth two of his; and now let him acknowledge himself honestly my debtor for two thousand dollars, or damn me, if I don't give him an Indian receipt by taking his scalp in pay, and leaving his carcass to the wolf and buzzard."

"I have not denied my promise!" exclaimed the Captain, hurriedly, for he saw plainly the outlaw was in a dangerous mood, and not to be crossed; "but merely made this suggestion, thinking, as our schemes had failed

altogether, that you would not claim of me the entire amount."

"Every cent," growled Girty, "for I did all that had to be done on my part; and if the Indians were defeated, and the prisoners rescued, that's no fault of mine. I have never yet failed you, Captain Montlack," added the renegade, sternly, "and beware now that you do not fail Simon Girty, for he does not soon forget or forgive! I never break my promise, whether for good or evil, whether to save or destroy; nor do I permit those who have promised me, to break theirs, and go unpunished."

"You need not work yourself into a passion, Simon," replied Montlack, hastening to remove all doubt from the mind of the renegade, "for if you claim the whole sum, then I have not a word to say; and what is still better for you, if you will only stand by me in a little scheme I have now on hand, and it proves successful—and there's no chance of its being otherwise with your assistance—then I promise you to double the amount of my indebtedness, and at the same time insure you revenge upon an old enemy. A few thousands, more or less, is no object with me, Girty, so that my plans are successful; but these cursed failures have soured me, and make me sometimes forgetful of the services of old friends."

"It is rather dangerous for me to remain long in this neighborhood," said Girty, now completely mollified at the ready acquiescence of Montlack to his demands, coupled, as it cunningly was, with the promise of a still greater reward; "but for the sake of an old friend, and to punish an enemy, if I can be of any assistance, you may count with certainty upon my services; provided, Captain, that to aid you will not detain me too long in the vicinity of that damned cunning scout, Simon Kenton."

"Never fear him," replied Montlack, with a well-satisfied smile; "for, to my own certain knowledge, he has already started, or will, by to-morrow, be off upon a long scout, and before his return we shall have done with his dear friends, and have nothing to fear from him."

"O ho! sets the wind on the same old trail?" exclaimed Girty, feeling more at ease, now that he had the assurance of the Scout's absence.

"The same; and there will it set until they or myself rest in the grave," muttered Montlack, once more seating himself, and motioning with his hand for Girty to do the same.

"As you please, Captain," returned the renegade, seating himself familiarly and without ceremony on the log by the side of Montlack, "but without presuming at all, I'd advise you to be as brief as possible; for if we are seen together, I would not give much for your scalp, Malden, or the 'Bloody-hand,' as the Indians call him, wouldn't think twice before he sent a bullet through you, if found in the company of Simon Girty."

"He left me but a moment since," said Montlack, looking quickly around as if but ill at ease, and somewhat startled by this caution from his companion.

"Then I'll be off at once," exclaimed Girty, rising hastily to his feet, his countenance no longer easy or indifferent; "for I would as soon have the devil in my neighborhood as Jack Malden."

"There's no danger of his company, for he has gone to the station, some miles distant, and will not return before to-morrow," replied Montlack; "so be seated, and I'll explain my plan, and then you may be off as soon as you please! You may rest satisfied that I'll not detain you long, for your company is rather too dangerous to be enjoyed; and I won't be sorry when we part."

Reassured, the renegade resumed his seat and listened without remark as Montlack explained his plan of revenge, and made known the part he wished him to play. More than once during the recital, the outlaw bent his fierce gaze full upon the cunning face of his employer, as if he would fain read his secret thoughts, as he unfolded, step by step, his cold-blooded design; but when Montlack had concluded, no longer able to restrain himself, and while a bitter smile gathered around his stern mouth, Girty muttered—

"Men call Simon Girty a heartless villain, and have set a price upon his head; but, damn me, if here is not a greater scoundrel than Simon Girty ever dare be; and yet, with the cunning smile of a devil, he conceals the

cloven foot, and remains honored and respected. Ha! ha!" laughed the outlaw, mockingly; "you are my master, Captain; your plan is a glorious one, and, with one thing added, must be successful."

"What's that?" inquired Montlack, quickly.

"My co-operation!" growled Girty.

"You've promised it!" said Montlack, a little startled by the tone and manner of the renegade.

"If you agree to my terms."

"I have promised you two thousand, if successful."

"Exactly!" said Girty, very coolly; "but I want something more than your promise."

"What more do you desire?"

"I want this promise, and the *consideration* for it, in writing," returned Girty; "for I find your memory somewhat slack respecting past agreements; and, to save all disputes hereafter, this one must be put down in black and white, or damn me if I raise hand or foot in this nice little affair."

"It can't be done," said Montlack, unwilling to place himself in the hands of Girty, by giving the writing required, and at the same time fearful of refusing; "for I have neither pen, ink, nor paper; and your wish could not be satisfied, even if I were ever so willing."

"It must and shall be!" replied the renegade, peremptorily, "if you would have my assistance."

"Then be it so," said Montlack; "but you must wait until a more suitable time; for to do so now, you see, is impossible."

"You can take your own time, Captain," observed Girty, surlily; "but at the same time I give you to understand that I will not make one move to aid you in your designs until I have your promise, in writing, to pay me the sum agreed upon; and the *consideration*!—remember."

Montlack, in making these promises to Girty, had never intended to fulfil them, and was no little troubled now at this unexpected demand of the outlaw. He knew the danger of the step required of him by his stubborn accomplice; for in case of Girty's death, and this paper

falling into the hands of any one of the settlers, it would secure his own certain destruction; and then, too, he was fearful of treachery; and in case he should escape both of these evils, the Captain had a faint notion that he would somehow or other be compelled to pay the money, which was by no means a very pleasant reflection. But seeing no escape, and Girty remaining firm, Montlack, with a faint thought of the trick he had played upon Head, running in his mind, at last agreed to the unwelcome demand of the renegade, promising to deliver him the paper required, at their next meeting.

"Don't expect to trick me, Captain, as you did this Mr. Head," replied Girty, with a cunning leer, as if he had divined the thoughts of Montlack; "for you can't do it, and might run the risk of losing your scalp by the attempt."

"I have never failed in my engagements with you yet," said Montlack, "and cannot imagine why you are now so cautious and suspicious."

"You've never failed," laughed Girty, "because you've never had a chance; and I don't intend for you to fail now by giving you one. I run a great risk by remaining here to aid you; and am determined, if I do so, to have my pay well secured, and run no risk on that score."

"But as you have mentioned it," retorted Montlack, "suppose, when you present this writing for payment, I should do you as I once did this fellow Head? What then?"

"I don't depend upon your honesty at all," replied the renegade, bluntly; "and would as soon expect such treatment from you as anything else; but I have another hand behind this, and one Captain Montlack dare not meet."

"What is it?" inquired Montlack with some curiosity, for he was a little uneasy at the quiet and indifferent manner of his accomplice.

"Suppose I should say it was this?" retorted Girty, holding up his horny hand to the gaze of Montlack, and laughing at the joke.

"A dangerous hand to meet, I acknowledge," said Montlack, feigning to join in the merriment of the outlaw; "but is that your only dependence to insure my honesty?"

"Quite enough to secure prompt payment, or prompt punishment," growled Girty; "but, that Captain Montlack may see exactly how he stands, and never attempt any of his tricks with me, I will give him to know that I have still behind a stronger reason than the fear of personal chastisement, to insure the performance of his present promises."

"What is it?" asked Montlack, becoming every moment more anxious.

"Has Captain Montlack lost a very valuable paper lately?"

"If so, he has not missed it," replied Montlack, his face becoming a little pale.

"Let him examine, and I dare say he will discover his loss," was the cool remark of the renegade.

"You have not dared," exclaimed Montlack, his face becoming agitated with fear and passion, "to pry into or remove any of my private papers?"

"When you were a prisoner to the Shawanee, your papers were delivered into my hands for inspection," replied Girty, with a cunning smile, "and among them I discovered one, not exactly yours, although in your possession; and that I took the liberty of securing, merely to keep it safe, Captain, as it was very valuable, and I didn't know but what it might be useful to me upon some occasion."

"And you've got it with you?" exclaimed Montlack, a gleam of dark meaning gathering upon his face.

"Not exactly with me, but I have it in a safe place," replied the outlaw, with suspicious caution, his hand quietly dropping upon the handle of his tomahawk, as his eye caught the threatening look of his questioner.

"And that paper was"—asked Montlack—

"The will of General De Lacy, in favor of his daughter Coma, revoking a former one in your favor," said Girty, closely watching the motions of his companion.

"Will you return it to me?" asked Montlack, eagerly; "for it can be of no use to any one but the son of your old enemy."

"I swear by the memory of my ancient wrongs and

hatred!" hissed the outlaw, "he shall never see or hear of it."

"Then why not give it to me at once?"

"I keep it to insure the performance of your promises to myself."

"I swear that I will fulfil them."

"When you do so, then I swear that I will return it; but not before."

"You swear that? By all you hold sacred, you swear it?"

"I do."

"Then go; and when you have secured me my revenge, and the wealth (for you know all now) of my uncle, I'll not only pay you this sum, but still more."

"I doubt it not," muttered Girty, as he walked away; "for you can't now help yourself."

"He knows too much," was the bitter exclamation of Montlack, as the renegade passed from his sight; "but if he knew even more," he added, with a threatening gesture, "the grave would bury all his knowledge. Let him aid me now, and then my motto will be: 'Dead men tell no tales!'"

CHAPTER XVI.

"A BOLD rider you'll make, one of these days, Master Bryan," exclaimed the Scout, playfully tossing upon his knee the little son of Coma; "and mind you don't let the Ingens steal mamma agin, while Uncle Simon's gone."

"Me shoot Ingen," lisped the boy, "and Uncle Simon kill bad man hurt mamma."

"Bless de Lord!" laughed old Titus, showing his white teeth with delight, at the prattle of the child; "what will de boy be doin' next time?"

"Scalpin' the darned redskins, and scoutin' with old Simon," said the Scout, in his joy, tossing up the boy

warrior, and catching him in his arms. "Blame me! if we don't make him the greatest hunter in all Kaintuck; won't we, Bang?"

"I guess we will!" barked the dog, while, with a dignified air, he acknowledged the copartnership by looking wisely into the bright face of the laughing child.

"Gora'mighty!" muttered the black, for he could never exactly understand Bang, and always seemed a little alarmed at his growling replies to the queries of the Scout; "dis nigger b'lieve dat dog de devil, and Massa Simon better look out; for some of dese days, he take him down to de big fire and roast him, like de dam Shawanee."

"You hear that, Bang?" said the Scout; "the black rascal thar' says you are a devil, and worse than an Ingen."

Whether it was the tone of his master, or his significant gesture in the direction of old Titus, or whether the dog actually understood the slanderous remark of the black, we are ignorant; but no sooner had the Scout spoken, than Bang, bristling his hair, with a deep growl, showed his anger, and evident intent to resent the insult offered his dogship.

"Bless de Lord! Massa Simon," said Titus, quickly, and in evident terror; "what for you say dat; de dam dog know ebery word you say, and be on dis nigger in no time, if you don't stop him."

"Do you still call him a devil?" said the Scout, a spark of humor playing around the corners of his mouth, as with a powerful grasp he detained the dog.

"Me no call him debil," exclaimed Titus; "he ain't nuffin' but a dam dog."

"Down, Bang!" shouted Simon, laughing with hearty delight at the superstitious terror of the negro; "he has taken back the charge, and you are no longer a devil, but a dog."

Quick to obey the commands of his master, Bang dropped his bristled hair at once, and quietly laid down at the feet of Simon; but, greatly to the annoyance of

Titus, still kept his eye fastened sharply and knowingly upon the face of his slanderer.

"If dat dog ain't de debil," muttered Titus, emphatically, but too low for the ears of Bang or his master, "den dis nigger gib up dat he jist know nuffin'. Whew!" thought he to himself, "may-be dis child won't treat dat dog wid 'spect, and feed him well too; for, golly! he'll 'member all on us, dat's sartain; and, O Gora'mighty!" he muttered, with a great sinking of the heart, at the dire thought; "won't he roast dis child for calling him de debil, when he want to pass for a dog?"

"Now, Titus," remarked the Scout, gravely putting on, or rather showing out in his true colors, for he was not wholly free from superstition himself, "what you've said agin Bang ain't 'zactly right or perlite, and wer' very unkind in an old friend; but may-be you wern't so far wrong, after all; for Mister Bryan told me one day, when we wer' out in the hills together, and I wer' 'scribin' the strange sort of feelins what come over me sometimes when goin' to cut the throat of a wounded deer, that some people b'lieve that our spirits, when we die, jist pass into animals; and who knows but they may be right, after all; and that Bang, thar', for all he looks darned like any other dog, ain't a gentleman wrapped up in a dog-skin, or, as Mister Bryan called it, some clever fellow transmigrated into a cur? It wouldn't be so cussed strange if he wer', for I've seen many a dog wrapped in a gentleman's skin."

"Gora'mighty! Massa Simon," exclaimed the black, his eyes rolling with astonishment, "I wouldn't be s'prised, for Bang he know eberyting; and, as he say he no debil, den he must be some feller transmigrificated."

"Devil or man in dog skin, I'll say this much for Bang," returned the Scout, "that he's every inch a gentleman, and a darned sight more to be trusted than some of them what pass for sich with the most of people. Blame me, Titus, if I don't half b'lieve them chaps Mister Bryan spoke consarnin' of wer' right; for if Bang ain't got the soul of a man, and sense jist like you and

me, then may Sharp-Eye be caught on his next scout by the redskins, and burnt for a blind owl."

"I hope not," said Coma, in a low voice, for she had for a few minutes been an unseen and greatly amazed listener to this metaphysical disquisition of the Scout and Titus; "for if Sharp-Eye be caught sleeping, what will become of Master Bryan, and the rest of us?"

Twilight had just given way before the silvery rays of night's great luminary, and this conversation between the Scout and Titus had been carried on whilst the two sat upon the door-sill in the open passage between the rooms of Head and Duffe; Simon, during the time, holding in his arms the little son of Coma—now riding him upon his knee, then answering his childish questions about the moon, ever and anon varying these pleasant duties, by familiar intercourse with the honest black. Coma, coming out in search of her child, had, unseen by the wise disputants, and in their zeal quite unnoticed, been standing immediately behind him, admiring the bright face of her infant nursling in the arms of the brawny Scout; and, whilst thus standing, had heard Simon's philosophical remarks upon the dog, and Bang, in particular, interrupting his oath of the latter's humanity in the manner we have stated.

"Never fear, Miss Coma," said the Scout, turning his head quickly, at the sound of her voice; "Bang and me watch by turns, and have been too long scoutin' together to be s'prised now by Creek, Shawnee, or Wyandot."

"Take care, Simon, and do not become careless because you have escaped so long," replied Coma, with kindly interest, "and don't depend too much upon Bang; for though a good and brave dog, yet, after all, he is but a dog, and may fail you at some trying moment."

"Bang fail me?" exclaimed Simon, laying his hand emphatically upon the rough, shaggy mane of his brute companion; "why, Miss Coma, I'd sleep sounder in the very country of an enemy, with Bang for my guard, than if surrounded by a hundred sentinels. You don't know Bang as I do, and ain't laid for hours and hours together in the silent woods, watchin' him when it wer' his time

to stand guard, or you wouldn't say that. He never yit slept upon his post, and never yit has man or beast crept upon our camp-fire without his giving the alarm. No, no; give me Bang for my companion, and I defy beast or Ingen to catch Simon Kenton asleep. Bang fail me, Miss Coma? you ain't past days and days, and weeks and weeks, with no other companion by day, or guard by night, or you wouldn't say that; and whenever he does, then the blasted redskins are jist welcome to my scalp, for I wouldn't live any longer. Bang fail me? Why, who was it gave the alarm when the cunnin' Shawanee came crawlin' through the long grass upon the solitary camp-fire of Sharp-Eye? Bang. And who, when the Creek warrior, decked in his horse-skin, grazed his way 'long side of the sentinel, into our camp, first found out the spy? Bang. And who, when we wer' rushin' like fools right into the ambushade of the Wyandots, seized me by the leg, and held me back till I guessed somethin' were wrong, and by callin' a halt, saved our scalps? Bang. And who, when we wer' all lost in that blasted cave, and had giv' up to die, led us out? Bang. I tell you, Miss Coma, if Bang ar' a dog, he jist knows more than mortals; and when Bang's dead, Simon Kenton will be no longer Sharp-Eye."

Discovering from the eager defence of Simon, that she had unintentionally wounded his feelings by doubting the sagacity and faithfulness of his dog, Coma hurried at once to remove all trace of his anger, by playfully patting Bang upon the head, and warmly praising his bravery and wonderful watchfulness.

"You may well say that," replied the Scout, completely mollified by Coma's praise of his brute companion. "for thar' ain't no man, and not many dogs, like Bang; and though Miss Coma," he added, with an arch look, "ain't slow to watch over Master Bryan—and I dare say, is even now on the hunt of him—I'd jist rather trust Bang to guard him agin danger than her. What do you say, Titus?"

"Gora'mighty! I'se jist got nuffin' to say," exclaimed the black, not wishing either to join against his mistress,

or incur the present or future displeasure of the dog, or devil; for to which of these two titles Bang had the best claim, old Titus was not yet entirely able to determine; though, as all men should do in cases of difficulty, he had split the difference, by thinking if he was not the devil, he was at any rate a devil of a dog.

Laughing good-humoredly at the Scout's great confidence in his dog, Coma asserted her own superior watchfulness, by taking little Bryan from his arms, saying, as she turned to move away—

"Sharp-Eye and Bang are guards sufficient for any treasure; but I hold, Simon, that a mother's eye is even more watchful than scout or dog. 'Tis time now, Master Bryan was in his cradle, and I feel better content when I have him under my own vision; but mind, Simon," she added, shaking her finger good-naturedly, "I don't mean any disrespect to Monsieur Bang."

"Bang's a gentleman, and can't be insulted by a lady," returned the Scout, in the same pleasant tone, "and Miss Coma needn't fear, for we'll watch close over her and hers."

A grateful smile was Coma's only reply.

"Hi! hi!" chuckled old Titus, when his mistress was gone, still suspiciously eyeing Bang; "Missus needn't trouble herself 'bout you needer; for I 'ze always hearn say, Massa Simon, dat de debil will take care of him's own."

An hour later, all the inhabitants of the station, with the exception of Coma and her child, were gathered, as was a usual thing with them, around the fireside of Duffe. The Scout was busy moulding bullets, whilst Titus was as busy heading and preparing them for use; and Bryan and the Sergeant, conversing together, watched the motions of their industrious companions.

"Do you tink, Massa Simon," inquired the black, in a low tone, with a cautious glance around to see whether other ears were listening, "you'll see dat white doe agin', and hab no better luck dis time, 'dan de last?"

"No doubt," muttered the Scout, with an uneasy look, and in the same cautious tone; "I've never yit been on

a scout, when anything wrong happened or wer' about to happen, without first seein' her. She seems to come always, when I'm most in need of food, for all the world as if she would tempt me to shoot, merely to laugh at the best shot in the settlement. I'll shoot at her no more, I'm 'tarmined on that; for she's a witch or somethin' worse to a sartainty, and Sharp-Eye ain't goin' to ruin the character of old Betsy on sich a blasted critter."

"I'ze hearn say," returned Titus, this time resting his eye for a moment, with a look of doubt, upon the quiet face of the sleeping dog, "dat witches and ghosts, and all dem kind of tings, may be shot wid silver bullets, or wid one dat wer' neber moulded, but chewed wid de teeth. 'Spose you try him, Massa Simon, and see what he do den?"

"It won't do!" said the Scout, shaking his head; "I've tried both, and it wer' all the same. The white doe didn't care any more for silver bullet, than one of lead. No, no! she may come as often as she pleases now, but blast me, if I ever raise old Betsy agin the critter agin."

"What's that you say, Simon?" asked Bryan, who, unnoticed by the busy couple, had been listening to the strange story of Kenton. "Is it possible that Sharp-Eye has missed his mark so often?"

"Mister Bryan knows," said the Scout, with gloomy emphasis, "that Sharp-Eye never yit missed his aim, when old Betsy wer' pointed at anything mortal; but what's the use of shootin' at a thing no bullet can touch, and what ain't to be killed by mortal man?"

"Surely, you don't believe any such thing?" said Bryan, touched by the sad look and mournful tones of the old hunter.

"I jist don't know what to b'lieve, Mister Bryan; but this much I do know, that I've seen this white doe more than once, and never without some misfortune happenin' either to myself or some friend, shortly after; and I've shot at her time after time, at point-blank distance, off-hand and at rest, with silver, and leaden bullet, and never yit has she appeared even frightened at the shot. No, no! I'll shoot at her no more; on that I'm 'tarmined,

for she ain't to be killed by mortal man, and what's the use of tryin'?"

"You've had the buck ague!" laughed Bryan, "or you've become so greatly the prey of your superstitious fears, that your hand has become unsteady; and this is the cause of your failure, and not that the doe bears a charmed life."

"Not at all; my nerves wer' never more steady. I'de wager all I'm worth, that, both before, at the time, and immediately after firing at this 'ere witch or devil, or whatever it may be, at seventy paces off-hand, I could strike a dollar; as I've often done, from the fingers of Titus, and never raise the skin."

"'Tis strange!" muttered Bryan, becoming insensibly affected at the wild story of the Scout; "but when saw you this white doe last?"

"No longer ago than this mornin', and only some mile or more away in the hills!" replied Kenton, with an uneasy glance around, and in a dogged, gloomy tone.

"Did you fire at it?"

"Twice; and in as calm and cool a manner as I ever drew trigger in my life, and yet she bounded away untouched. I've made up my mind, Mister Bryan, never to do the like agin; and nothin' now will tempt me ever to raise old Betsy to take the life of that doe."

"And you say some misfortune has always followed the appearance of this strange animal?" said Bryan, musingly, a cloud gathering upon his brow.

"Always, either to myself or some of my friends," replied Simon; "and so sartain am I that sich will now be the case, that, when I think of it, I almost dread to start upon my scout."

"I trust that you may return to us safe and well!" muttered Bryan, scarce knowing, so deep was his reverie, that he had made any remark.

"If misfortun' or danger is hangin' over myself, I care plaguey little about it," replied the Scout, with more spirit and animation than he had yet spoken. "It's on account of them I leave behind I'm troubled."

"Have no care for us," said Bryan, aroused from his

listlessness by the generous and unselfish reply of the noble-hearted borderer; "for here at the station, we are in safety, and no injury can reach us; but be mindful of yourself; for you go upon a long and dangerous journey, where fierce enemies will seek your life, and dangers of every kind beset your path, and it is for you alone that there is any cause of fear."

"Bang and me will go forth upon our lonely journey without a thought of danger; for we've dared the terrors of night, and forest, and savage foe, too often to have any dread of 'em now. But sorrow and death is a strange thing, Mister Bryan, and comes when we ain't lookin' for it, and when there's no reason for 'spectin' it. I've known men to pass through bloody battles without a scratch; have seen 'em 'scape from danger after danger, as if bearin' a charmed life, and at last be killed when they thought they wer' in perfect safety, and had every reason to consider 'emselves free from all danger and every chance of injury. No, no! have no fear for me; for I've carried my life in my own hands for these many years, and he that would take it now, must be both bold and cunnin' to get the better of Sharp-Eye and Bang. Have a care for yourself, and them I leave behind at the station, Mister Bryan; for that ar' blasted doe crossin' my path as she did this mornin', tells of some deviltry on hand, and I'd be only too glad to think it wer' comin' to myself 'sted of any one else."

"The day of omens has passed," said Bryan, in a more cheerful tone, struggling to throw off the gloom produced by the Scout's strange story, "and the presence of the white doe can portend nothing. I'd wager now, Simon," he added, with a forced laugh, "that she would never stand up under my fire; and I'd like right well to put an end to your idle fear, by sending a bullet through the heart of this charmed witch of the forest, and bringing home her fair hide to ornament the lodge of Coma."

Kenton made no reply to this sally of Bryan, merely shaking his head unbelievably; then turning once more to his bullets and lead, evidently wished to drop the disagreeable subject.

For half an hour longer, Simon and Titus continued their occupation; Bryan, during this period, gazing with restless look into the flaming fire, whilst Mrs. Duffe and the Sergeant sat in silence; the former plying, with rapid hand, her yarn and needle, the latter vacantly regarding the movements of the Scout and negro.

At length, Titus, carelessly seizing, by mistake, a bullet hot and steaming from the mould, threw it quickly down, and broke the long silence that had gathered over the little party, by exclaiming, as he blew upon the ends of his fingers—

"He dam hot! massa Simon; ain't you got 'nuff for dis time?"

Simon, with a smile spreading over his face at the mishap of his sable companion, made no reply to his query, other than to throw to one side his ladle, and deposit in his pouch his bullet-mould, this being considered, both by himself and interrogator, as answer sufficient.

"If we are to judge as to the length of your scout by the quantity of ammunition prepared," remarked Duffe, addressing Kenton, "it will be some time before we see you again. You have bullets enough, without counting that hot one dropped by Titus, to last you through a six months' campaign."

"I always like to set out well prepared," replied Simon, "and a bullet don't come amiss on a long scout. I don't know what may turn up before I git back; and what with killin' my game, defendin' myself from wild beasts, shootin' at Ingens, and sharing with the hunters I sometimes meet in the wilderness, I generally manage to empty my pouch."

"But, will you be long absent from the station?" asked Bryan.

"About three weeks," replied Simon, stopping a moment, as if to calculate the probable period it would take to pass over certain distances.

"Many things may happen in that time," muttered Bryan to himself, once more dropping off into the reverie broken by the question of Duffe and reply of the Scout.

"This is the last long scout I'll make this season," con-

tinued Kenton, apparently not noticing the muttered remark of Bryan; "and as it is to be my last, it must be a thorough one, passing entirely around the settlements, and into the territory of the redskins."

"But why not trail the river on the north, and then return to the station?" said Duffe. "I think a few days' rest would better prepare you for the long scout to the south."

"I like best, when I'm once out, to finish and be done with it; and as I intend to stay at home durin' the winter, I'm 'tarmined to have a long bout of it now. The tramp is nothin'; Bang and me have made a hundred sich, and I wouldn't care a straw for the trip, if it wern't," he added in a lower tone, leaning towards the Sergeant, with a cautious glance at Bryan, "for that cussed doe crossin' my path, and the leavin' of that tarnal yaller rascal in the neighborhood."

"Two very heavy reasons for uneasiness, I'll admit," replied the Sergeant, with a slight smile at the Scout's superstition, and divining at once to whom he alluded; "but if Captain Montlack is no more to be feared than this white doe of yours, then I'll not lose much sleep from anxiety, and you need not shorten your journey for fear of any danger to the station."

"You'll rue your hard-headedness yit, Sargeant," retorted Simon, slightly ruffled at the light manner in which Duffe had treated his fears; "and when too late to remedy the evil, will regret that you laughed at my warnin'."

"As to the white doe," said the matter-of-fact Sergeant, "it is all gammon; but as she can't be shot or caught, we'll have to let her pass. But as for this Captain Montlack, we have nothing to fear from him, for he has done his worst; and has not only been defeated but disgraced, and will no doubt leave the country as soon as possible. Old Amy settled him, and the fear of a like misfortune will keep the Captain in order for some time to come."

A slight smile covered the face of the Scout at the mention of old Amy, but it soon passed away, and with grave seriousness he replied—

"He'll never leave till he has had revenge, and will be

at his deviltries till the knife or tomahawk settle him forever. You don't know him, Sergeant; he's too great a coward to forgive or forget, and yet not great enough to submit to disgrace and defeat as long as he can use his lying tongue, and find black hearts to listen to his slanders. If he wer' a white man, a nigger, or even an In-gen, we might know what to 'spect, and whar' to look for him. But he ain't neither, and has got nigger blood in him, and won't do to count on. Remember what I now tell you, Sargeant; you might jist as well 'spect a wolf to go to sleep in a sheepfold, or a buzzard to leave the carcass of a dead buffalo, as to 'spect this blasted yaller devil of sleepin' in the neighborhood of Miss Coma and Mister Bryan, or of leavin' the country as long as thar's a chance of doin' them an injury."

"You are right, Simon," said Bryan, who, aroused from his musings by the excited voice of the Scout, had been listening to his warning, "but you need not fear; for, knowing our enemy as we do, we shall be on our guard, and Captain Montlack will have to be more cunning than I am disposed to give him credit for, if he catches us napping in his dangerous vicinity."

"Gora'mighty," exclaimed Titus, who had been a silent listener to the conversation of his master, and had discovered the cause of their secret uneasiness, "what for you be troubled? If Massa Bryan jist say de word, dis child take de dam Captin's scalp, and him den sleep, and no fear dis mulatter any more."

"The best thing that could be done," muttered Simon, coolly; "for the cussed skunk won't fight like a man, and desarnes to be scalped by a nigger."

After a few minutes' earnest conversation, during which it was arranged that Bryan and Duffe should accompany the Scout some distance upon his first day's journey, the former left the room and retired to bed. Duffe soon after showing by his movements that he too was preparing for sleep, Simon, as was his usual custom on the night prior to setting out on one of his scouting expeditions, whistled to Bang; and, accompanied by his dog and Titus (for the latter had rather a penchant for camp-

ing out on a small scale), retired to the yard, where he spent the remainder of the night, sleeping upon the ground beneath the open sky, wrapped in his blanket, to prepare himself, as he was wont to say, for the approaching campaign. Simon and Titus slept soundly enough; but Bang, who kept watch and ward, at one period of the night became restless and uneasy, often bristling up his hair, and emitting low growls, as if conscious of the presence of some enemy. At last, as if fully satisfied of the approach of some danger, and of the necessity of giving the alarm, he sprang forward with a fierce bark; and as he did so, a head, that had been cautiously peering over the picket fence, was drawn quickly back, and its owner, dropping lightly to the ground, stole cautiously away into the woods.

Alarmed by the warning voice of Bang, the Scout, rifle in hand, was on his feet in a moment; but seeing nothing, after a few minutes of quiet survey, he again flung himself upon the ground, muttering, as he prepared for sleep—

"Only a sneakin' wolf, Bang, but thar's no danger from varmints here. Down, old fellow!" he added drowsily, seeing the dog still restless, "'tis nothin', and you'd better sleep; for once outside of the picket, and we won't git much rest for some time to come."

The prowling wolf had fled; and Bang and his master slept quietly.

CHAPTER XVII.

"A bloody villain, and treacherous, is this dear Captain of mine," muttered Girty, a few days after the departure of Kenton from the station, as he journeyed leisurely along through the forest on his way to a meeting with Montlack, "and he would be dangerous too, had he only courage equal to his rascality. But he pays well; and damn the difference," muttered the renegade,

with a satisfied air, "so long as he does the honest thing with me; and he can't help himself now, for I have him in my power, and he knows it; and what's still better, I'm going to keep him there; for, may the devil take me if he shall ever handle the old General's will again, so long as I can squeeze a cent out of him."

Laughing to himself at the happy thought of thus holding Montlack in his power, and well pleased with the prospect of a golden harvest ahead, the renegade continued his journey. He moved now with greater caution than he had yet exhibited, rapidly scanning, as he went the forest, before and around him, and with the quick rolling glance of one accustomed to wood life, and as if fully conscious of the danger of a chance meeting with some wandering hunter.

"A devilish good place this for an ambuscade," he muttered, halting in a deep narrow dell, covered with thick undergrowth, and viewing it with a critical eye, "but that sort of business is all over now, and my last expedition to Kentucky has proven rather a losing one to my savage friends. But never mind," he continued in a consolatory tone, "it's an ill wind, as the old saying goes, that dont blow some one good, and damn me if I don't think I'll make something of it yet. They're getting too strong for us here now, and the spoils of a few small stations won't pay for the danger of a brush with the settlers, and I for one don't intend to run my head into the halter again. Let this Captain of mine but come down pretty freely with his cash, and though the devils killed and scalped all my Shawanee friends, I guess I'll play quits with them, and be off. I had my revenge at the Blue Licks; and plenty of gold," he added, with a low, unfeeling laugh, "will soon wipe out all recollection of my redskin brothers. But come! before I see the Captain, let me think a little, for he's as slippery as an eel; and blast him, even if he did play the traitor, I couldn't kill him, for then I'd lose all chance of his gold, and only have the scalp of a coward in place of his money. 'Honor among thieves!' there's no truth in that old saying; for a rascal is honest no longer than it is his

interest to be so. At any rate, I'll trust the Captain's honesty no farther than his interest goes. But let me think."

And the renegade, seating himself, silently ran over in his mind his own schemes and plans, and at the same time the probable designs of his employer; ever and anon, as some thoughts would forcibly strike him, bursting out with a bitter exclamation or hoarse laugh; and then again sinking back to silence with a heavy, frowning brow, he would inwardly contemplate his own treacherous heart, fancying the reflection he saw there, but a picture of the deceit he feared at the hands of Montlack.

"A damned villain, sure enough," he at length muttered, clothing his thoughts with words; "as bad, if not worse than I am myself. I am Simon Girty, the renegade, and fugitive from his country, the ally of the savage, and detested foe of my own race, and don't pretend to be anything else; but he, damn him, is just as bad, and sets himself up for a gentleman, while all the time he's creeping about, engaged in some rascality, and has been a traitor ever since he set foot in the country, and no one's the wiser. But never mind! he can't deceive me; and I have him bound by the only tie that will hold a villain—his interest. Ha! ha! he forgot, did he? But he can't forget now, even if he wished. I have something in my hands that will keep him in remembrance, and make the name of Simon Girty a dread sound in his ears as long as he lives. Let him but give me that little paper; and curse me if I make a move until he does, then, for the sake of his gold and revenge, I'll finish this little job on hand, and it's easy enough, now that blasted Scout has gone; but when once finished, Simon Girty is off for Canada, to live like a gentleman, and without another meeting with honest Captain Jean. Ha! ha! once I've done this business for him, it won't do to trust myself any longer in his hands; for the least hint of my presence to 'Bloody-handed Malden' would be certain death. Ay, I see my way clear enough now; so here goes for my last meeting with my dear friend; and may

the devil take me if it won't be a meeting between two precious villains."

Starting up, the renegade hastily resumed his journey, not forgetting, as he hurried along to the appointed rendezvous, his usual caution and watchfulness. Montlack was before him, and, as Girty drew aside, with the practised hand of an expert woodsman, the matted limbs of some tangled undergrowth, and peered cautiously out, he beheld the Captain, sitting upon the trunk of an overthrown tree, and apparently buried in deep thought; for his gun lay by his side, and his face sunk in his hands, gave token of his indifference to all external things, and expressed a carelessness to danger that, in the mind of the renegade, could only be ascribed to his total ignorance of border life.

"Ha! Captain," he shouted, laying his hand heavily upon the shoulder of Montlack; "gone to sleep again! Why damn it, man, won't you never learn any caution? I wouldn't give a button for your scalp, if you stay much longer in this country, and sleep on your post in this manner. The veriest lubber in the settlement could brain you, and Captain Jean Montlack be none the wiser."

Provided the brain is the seat of sense, and the operation mentioned by the renegade had been skillfully performed upon the musing Captain, we doubt not but the latter clause of his remark would have been true; but Montlack, starting up in alarm, was not in a proper state of mind for a metaphysical argument, and so met the salutation of the outlaw by exclaiming, in an angry tone—

"Why don't you give some notice of your approach; and why are you forever startling one in this abrupt way? Have you been long present?" he added, with a suspicious glance at the dark countenance of the renegade.

"Not long enough," retorted Girty, as if divining his thoughts, "to hear any of Captain Montlack's cunning schemes; so you may rest easy, and we'll to business."

"Well, what say you now?" exclaimed Montlack, his suspicions of Girty removed by this blunt reply; "can

my plan be executed, so as not to fail, and secure me revenge?"

"Not so fast, Captain," muttered Girty; "there's something to be done by you, before I answer your question."

"What is it?" said Montlack, a slight cloud gathering upon his brow.

"That little paper you promised me; I would like to see whether it's all right, before we go any further."

"Can't you trust in my promise?" said Montlack.

"A promise is a promise; and business is business," growled Girty; "and if you want any information from me, you must first hand over the paper."

"You doubt my honesty!" suggested Montlack.

"Damn your honesty!" muttered Girty, "I don't doubt it, when you find honesty is your best policy; but I haven't forgot the trick you played upon this fellow, Head; so out with the paper, if you have it; and if not, then that's the end of the matter, and we part company at once."

Seeing that the renegade was determined upon having his bond before he would answer any question, Montlack with reluctance slowly drew it from his pocket, and with a sigh handed it over.

"All right!" muttered Girty; but not until he had twice slowly and cautiously read the obligation of Montlack, and closely scrutinized the signature. "I find you have done the fair thing, Captain, and am now at your service."

"A fair exchange is no robbery," said Montlack, with a miserable attempt at pleasantry; "and as you have my bond, suppose you return me that little paper of mine; it can be of no use to you now, and remember, you promised that you would do so, when I delivered you my obligation."

"I remember no such promise," replied Girty, emphatically, "nor does Captain Montlack."

"But it can be of no benefit to you now," urged Montlack; "for you have my bond, and I have never yet failed to make good my promise."

"No proof that you never will!" sneered the renegade,

"and as to it's being of no use to me, I have my own views on that subject, and think it my only security for the payment of the obligation you have just given me."

"But will you ever return it?" inquired Montlack, with some anxiety.

"When you pay off the bond!"

"But what security have I, that you will then do so?"

"My word!" laughed Girty, "the word of a renegade and murderer. Ain't that enough, Captain?"

Montlack muttered something in reply; to which the renegade growled in answer—

"Damn the other security you'll ever get, so you might as well make up your mind at once, Captain; for you'll never see the General's will again, 'till you down with the gold; you have my word for that. Knowing you as I do, I'm not fool enough to give up the will and permit Captain Montlack to deny this little paper, as he did the one given Head; or swear in some of the courts, where Simon Girty dare not appear, that it was executed to save his scalp, or escape from captivity. Ha! ha! Captain! did I strike you then?" laughed the renegade, seeing the Captain wince, as he suggested the defence he might make; "you see I'm no fool when money is at stake."

"Well, have it as you will!" said Montlack, with a cunning smile, "for it matters very little with me. I intend to pay off the obligation when presented, and as you will then hand over the will, it is of very little consequence, and not worth a quarrel between old friends."

"Exactly!" said Girty, with cool indifference; "I knew, when you thought over the matter, you wouldn't think hard of my keeping the will, merely as a security, you know; for when the money is paid, it will be of no further value to me."

"None in the world," said Montlack, quickly; "but now let me know what's the chance of my getting clear of this Mr. Head?"

"It's just as certain now as that you and me are two of the greatest scoundrels alive!" replied Girty, with a low chuckle at his more truthful than polite asseveration.

"But how have you arranged it?" said Montlack, his

face brightening up at this positive assurance of his accomplice.

"Is there no danger of that prying Scout marring our plot?"

"None in the world, for I've trailed him beyond the settlements, and he'll not return for many weeks."

"Let him go!" hissed Montlack, a gleam of hatred passing over his face, "and would to God some savage or wild beast would forever prevent his return. I have an old score against him, and would like right well to wipe it out now while my hands are in; but as he is gone, in the devil's name let him go!"

"Amen!" growled Girty, "but take the advice of one just now interested in your welfare, Captain; and when this little job we have on hand is finished, don't let the grass grow under your feet between this and the old State."

"You think this Scout will prove a dangerous enemy, do you?" replied Montlack, with the slightest possible sneer.

"If you dont," said Girty, bluffly, "then you are a much greater fool than I took you to be. Simon Kenton, when he returns and finds his friends murdered, will be like a lioness over her lost whelps, and let those that have done the injury beware of his teeth. With less than five hundred miles between me and him, I wouldn't have this damn Scout upon my trail, for double the amount you have promised me."

"Never fear!" replied Montlack, "I'll take good care of myself. Now let me know how you have arranged it, that suspicion will fall certainly upon my enemies?"

"It is all easy enough, now that the Scout has gone; and what I would not have dared to do had he and that cursed dog of his remained at the station, can be done now without any danger, and makes the thing certain."

"*Sacre!*" exclaimed the Captain, with a gesture of impatience; "go on, and tell me what you propose."

"I propose nothing!" said the renegade, surlily; "it is you that proposes."

"Do you wish to run me mad?" shouted Montlack.

"I have no such an intention," laughed Girty; "for I don't want you to be *non compos* when I present that little bond of yours."

"Then tell me your scheme for bringing down the vengeance of Malden and his friends upon my enemies at the station, and do so at once; for my patience was never very great, and at present I have less than usual."

"The scheme is a cunning one, and bound to succeed, Captain; but you deserve all the praise for its concoction, and I only lay the train for you to explode. I've been to the stables of Major Malden, and know exactly what to do there; I've also been to the station, and find that your enemies keep their horse-gear in the open passage between the two cabins, and so to-night I intend to go there; for, the Scout and his dog gone, there's no danger."

"And what will you do?" exclaimed Montlack, interrupting him.

"I'll take a bridle and some other well-known articles of horse-trapping, then away to Malden's, and steal his favorite horse."

"And what then?"

"I'll take him to the little valley at the east side of the station, and fasten him up with the stolen bridle; and the other articles I may lay my hands on, I will scatter around, so as to increase suspicion."

"And then what?"

"I'll make a trail from the horse to the gate of the station."

"And then?"

"And then I'll leave the matter in your hands," growled the renegade, "and I think it won't stop there."

"It couldn't be better!" exclaimed Montlack, "and they are safe enough now; but how about the trail from Malden's?"

"For some two or three hundred paces from the stable, I'll carefully conceal the trail; but do you remember the tall tree shivered by lightning about that distance, immediately south?"

Montlack nodded his head.

"There you will find the trail plain enough, and the

keen eye of Malden will never lose it until he meets with his horse; you may rest easy on that point."

"Excellent! no one could have done it better!" exclaimed Montlack. "But when say you that you'll perform your part in this little drama?"

"To-night."

"And to-morrow?"

"You may aid Jack Malden, or the 'Bloody hand,' to find his steed and discover the thief!"

"Easy enough," said Montlack, with a cold smile, "but what then?"

"Let Malden summon those fools that so sillily took the bloody oath."

"And then?"

"Why, to-morrow night," said the renegade, a dark scowl shading his fierce features—

"My enemies shall know the fate of those who balk the plans of Jean Montlack!" hissed the Captain, between his teeth.

"In other words, be numbered with the dead!" said Girty, with a fiendish laugh.

"Ay! the hunt will then be up, and the game run down."

"And Captain Jean Montlack," sneered the renegade, "satisfied with his bloody revenge, and secure in the property of General De Lacy, will spend the remainder of his days in peace, honored and esteemed by the gaping worshippers of wealth, and die"—

"As he has lived!" muttered Montlack, interrupting him.

"A hypocrite to the last," growled Girty.

"And, Simon Girty," retorted Montlack, aggravated beyond endurance at the bitter irony of the renegade, "what will be his fate?"

"Secured from want by the liberality of his employer, he will seek a home in the kingdom of king George."

"And live"—

"Hated and detested by all men."

"And die!" urged Montlack—

"As he has lived," shouted Girty, a flash of wild fury

distorting his dusky countenance, "a renegade and traitor to his country; but an open and avowed one, cursing his enemies and his race to the last!"

A short space of silence followed this bitter outbreak; but at length the renegade, shouldering his rifle, as if in preparation for his departure, exclaimed, in a harsh and threatening voice—

"I go now, Captain, to perform my part of the contract; and, remember, when I present your bond for payment, there must be no shrinking on your part! You may live and die a hypocrite, and, for aught I care, a traitor to all the world; but beware the day when you deceive Simon Girty. Once false to me, I'll have revenge, though a lifetime roll away between the hour of injury and day of reckoning."

"And remember! I must have back that will," retorted Montlack.

"Ay! I'll remember it," replied Girty, walking away, "and I guess," he added to himself, when beyond the hearing of Montlack, "there will be somebody else that won't forget it soon."

"There he goes!" muttered Montlack, "the thick-skulled fool! to think himself able to match Jean Montlack in cunning! Ha! ha! I wonder if he really thinks I intend to pay him such a sum, or let such a scoundrel bear away the important paper he boasts of possessing? Go your way, Master Girty, for this time. To secure the death of my enemy, I must let you live for the present, but beware of our next meeting! We part now, but will meet again, and then, if the devil does not play me false, I'll have back this precious paper, and leave your rascally self as a rich repast for the snarling wolf! But the villain has played his part well, and no fowler could have set a neater snare, than he has done, to secure my revenge. Let him but execute what he has promised, and all the fiends of hell can't prevent my bloody vengeance. Ha! ha! how he of the 'bloody hand' will rage, when he misses his petted steed! and when once upon the trail, how like a bloodhound will he follow up the track we've marked out for him. The hunt has been a long

one, but it is almost up now. Yet another sun, and death to my hated rival; and then—ay, then, death to my accomplice—and a long life of pleasure to Captain Jean Montlack.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE wicked designs of Montlack were now in a fair way of being completely successful. The renegade, true to his base compact, had stolen the favorite steed of Major Malden; and the latter, discovering his loss, had been furious in his rage, even beyond the hopes or desire of his plotting guest. The trail, for awhile cunningly concealed by Girty, had at first balked the Major's eager hope of discovering the thief, but found at last, accidentally, as it then appeared, by Montlack; but, indeed, just where the arch plotter knew his accomplice would leave the trace; with a ferocious shout, betokening his rage, and desire for bloody vengeance, Malden at once, and with all the skill and perseverance of a bloodhound, followed the footprints, intentionally left by the renegade; nor did he halt, or linger for a moment in his hot pursuit, until the low whining of his horse, greeting his appearance, declared the successful termination of the hunt.

The stolen horse, discovered in the immediate vicinity of the station, and secured by a bridle belonging to Bryan, which was instantly recognized by the quick eye of Malden, he needed no farther proof as to who were the thieves; and the cunning insinuations of his treacherous companion, along with the trail made by Girty, from the horse to the gate of the station, were entirely thrown away and unnecessary; for the situation of the stolen steed, the bridle, and his own hatred to Head, were fully sufficient for Malden, and proof enough to make him determine upon a speedy and bloody reckoning.

In his fury, the hot-headed and unthinking borderer

would have hastened at once without delay to the station to insure the punishment of those he believed guilty; but so dangerous a move met with strenuous opposition from his more cautious comrade.

Persuaded at last by Montlack, that to attempt present punishment would not only be dangerous, but might result in defeat, and that it would be much better and much more certain of success to return home and summon to his aid all those who had taken the oath, with the exception of Holding and Dobbins (for his wicked mentor took great pains to impress upon him the propriety of saying nothing of the theft, or as to who were suspected, to either of these, for fear of opposition), Malden at length yielded to persuasion, saying, with a fierce imprecation, as he shook his hand threateningly towards the distant station—

“They shall not escape me; but, by the gods! Holding and Dobbins took the oath, and I would have them here to see the end of their horse-thieving friends!”

“Nothing would please me better!” replied Montlack, with a devilish smile; “but as they would not believe this fellow guilty, even when he acknowledged himself a fugitive from prison, I fear they would still refuse to believe, although here's evidence sufficient,” pointing with his finger to the horse and bridle, “to convince any one,” he added with a sneer, “unless determined to be blind!”

“By the gods! you speak wisely, Captain,” exclaimed Malden; “and though I'd like much to make Holding and Dobbins aid in the death of their roguish friends, I'll have to forego that pleasure, I suppose, for fear of their mealy-mouthed opposition. But what shall we do with the horse?”

“Leave him, of course!” replied Montlack; “for if we take him away, it might alarm the rogues, and then, you know, it may be well enough to bring our friends here to see for themselves, and be convinced, before we lead them on to punish the thieves!”

“Right again, Captain!” exclaimed Malden, wondering at the quick shrewdness of his companion; “I've a most excellent counsellor in you, for twice you've saved me

from spoiling all by my rashness; first, in wishing to take immediate vengeance; and second, in moving the horse and thereby alarming the thieves. But come, let's be off and prepare!"

"For the death of"—exclaimed Montlack, with a fiendish glare, and would have added, "my enemies," had not Malden, with another menacing gesture towards the station, interrupted him by shouting—

"The damned rogues!"

"Ay! the damned rogues," muttered Montlack, with a low meaning laugh, as he followed the retreating footsteps of Malden, now the base tool of a baser coward, and gone to play another fearful tragedy, by which to make good his claim to the dreadful appellation of "him of the bloody hand."

* * * * *

The slanting rays of the setting sun shot upwards from behind the sweeping forest, gilding with its lingering light of gold the tops of the distant hills and woods, while Coma sat upon the trunk of a fallen tree in the little yard of the station, waiting the coming of her husband. He had been gone since early dawn along with Duffe, on a hunting expedition, and it was now time for his return, and Coma noted with some uneasiness the declining luminary, as there was yet no sign of his approach. Her eye was ever and anon thrown with restless glance beyond the picket to the summit of a distant hill, where she expected to catch the first sight of his well-known figure; but, as time after time she looked thence, and saw nothing but the far-off bald point, with its scattering dwarf growth, now glowing with the last rays of the setting sun, then shrouded with the first shades of eventide, a cloud of disappointment would sweep over her fair face, and something very near akin to fear settle down upon her heart. But as often as she withdrew her anxious gaze, the gambols of her boy, and the playful fawn upon the greensward by her side would attract her attention, and for the time drive away her uneasiness; and then once more would she smile, and encourage with laughing eye and voice their sport, only to return again

to her weary watching. It was by no means an unusual thing for the hunters to remain out as late and even later than it then was; but somehow, Coma knew not why, she felt more uneasy and restless on that particular evening than she had ever done before; and as the sun sank lower and lower, her glances toward the forest became more frequent and searching, and the heaviness of her heart could scarcely be removed by the glad laugh of her romping child.

But as she looked her eye brightened, the cloud upon her brow gave place to a gleam of yellow sunshine, and, springing to her feet with eager joy, she exclaimed—

"Pa's coming, Bryan!"

"Let me see!" shouted the boy, running to her side.

Taking him up in her arms, Coma, with a glowing face, pointed out with her finger the now rapidly approaching person of his father.

"Me see him!" shouted the child, with a leap of sudden joy, clapping his hands, "and uncle Duffe, too; but where's daddy Simon, mamma!"

"Daddy Simon has gone away, and won't be back for a long, long time," said the mother. "Don't you remember, Bryan, how he told you he wouldn't ride you on his knee for so many days?"

"But he has been gone a long time," insisted the child, in a discontented tone, "and I want to see daddy Simon, mamma. When will he come back to ride little Bryan?"

"I don't know," replied the mother, scarce noticing his eager inquiry, or thinking of the answer she gave him, so intent was she engaged in watching the approach of her husband; "but there's papa, and uncle Duffe. See what they've got!"

As she spoke, the hunters were entering the gate of the station; and suspended between them, were the carcasses of two noble deer.

"A pleasant day's sport, if we are to estimate your pleasure by the result of the hunt," exclaimed Coma, with a smile of welcome; "but what kept you so late?"

"You wouldn't ask that question," replied her husband, with an answering smile, to the welcome of his

wife, "if, instead of the Sergeant or myself, you had had the pleasure of packing, some five miles or more, two of the finest bucks killed this season. Eh! what do you think, Sergeant?"

"I think it by no means the most pleasant part of a hunter's life—this packing of his game home, after he has slain it," replied the Sergeant, bluntly, busy the while wiping from his heated brow the gathering perspiration, but at the same time eyeing, with a sportsman's pride, the size and fatness of the noble game lying at his feet.

"'Tis a hunter's lot, and he should never grumble," laughed Coma; "but I suppose your toils have not destroyed your appetites, so I'll away and see to supper."

"We'll answer that question, fair lady," replied Bryan, gayly, "when seated at your hospitable board; and have no fears of being chided for not paying our devours, like men of mould, to the good things of the table."

* * * * *

An hour later, and the two borderers, rested from the fatigue of their day's hunt, with their sharpened appetites fully satisfied by a hearty meal, sat by the fireside of Head, enjoying that luxurious home feeling, so often experienced by the traveller, after a weary day's journey, when safely ensconced by the warm hearthstone of some wayside inn; but which is only enjoyed in all its dreamy beatitude by the hunter, after a toilsome tramp over hill, and dale, and valley, in the eager pursuit of the wary deer.

The Sergeant, almost concealed in a cloud of tobacco-smoke, puffed with earnest good-will from a huge Indian pipe, was seemingly too happy and contented, or too much overcome by the mellowing influences of rest, and warmth, and satisfied hunger, even for conversation; since, to several remarks made by Bryan, and to one or more inquiries from Coma, he merely nodded his head in acquiescence, as if careless or indifferent how his continued nods were understood; or, as was the truth in his case, too much under the sway of his luxurious situation to make any exertion whatever.

Bryan, stretched leisurely out in an easy, abandoned

position, in a huge arm-chair, made soft and comfortable by repeated folds of soft furs, seemed but little behind the honest Sergeant in listlessness, and by no means inclined to loquacity, though he did manage, now and then, with monosyllabic brevity, to answer the questions of Coma, or reply to the unceasing prattle of his little son.

It was a pleasant family scene—all love, warmth, and comfort—and such a one as fully repays a man for all the trouble, toil, and danger ever attending his path along the flowery or thorny journey of life. It was an hour of sunshine among the many of clouds and darkness; and though that happy family were unconscious of danger, and dreamed not of the tempest then gathering, to burst with destructive fury over their devoted heads, yet it was even so; and the storm was then swooping, to sweep away, and forever, all their household joys.

And thus it ever is with man.

In his happiest moments, when all seems bright, and gay, and joyous, and he is anticipating only a long continuance of pleasure, sorrow cometh, and soon his laugh is turned to mourning, his golden dreams to clouds of gloom, and he awakes, with a shudder, to all the stern realities of life. Revelling in wealth, and enjoying all the luxuries of riches, our hearts are elate and proud; but the wind, or fire, or earthquake cometh; there is a roar, and it is all swept away; a crackle, and the fire, with greedy tongue, licks it all up; or a sudden trembling of the earth, and it is gone forever. We strive after fame; our health, our youth, the best days of our manhood, and may-be our very souls are given, and still it is forever eluding our grasp, until old age, with palsied hand and weakened faculty cometh, and death, crowding close after, sweeps us, along with all our hopes and cares, into the grave. At length we sleep in peace. We listen to the glad low tones of our children, and battle with the world (God only knows how fiercely) to clothe them in purple and fine linen, and leave to them wealth. But one by one they fall around us, the diseases of infancy sweeping away some in the first bud; others, in the morning tide of life, go down to the grave; and even in

strong manhood, those that are left may wither before our eyes; and after all, we ourselves sink down into the tomb with none to mourn our departure; and that wealth for which we risked all, and perhaps lost all, passes at length to strangers, or still worse, to greedy and unthankful heirs. Or may-be, in our glad young days, we dreamed of love, and worshipped the sweet smile and bright eye of some fair young creature, and when we had wooed and won her, and transported her to our home, and called her our own, we thought ourselves happy, and beyond the reach of sorrow. But soon her eye grew dim, the roses on her cheek withered away, and the lute-like tones of her voice sank into the low, inarticulate whisper of death, and we followed her, at last, to the grave. Such is life, and such the fleeting joys and sorrows of man! 'Tis scarce worth the struggle we are every day making, and yet how loth are we all to take our long sleep! But Providence has ordained all things wisely. We may be glad to-day and sad to-morrow. We know when the sunshine is around and about us, but we know not of the storm, until the winds and lightnings are playing about our heads. The little family-party gathered in the Winter Lodge of Coma were a pleasant group, reminding one of home comforts and home joys; and the two hunters, lolling listlessly before the fire after their long day's tramp, were fine pictures of abandoned enjoyment.

Busied with some of her household duties, Coma had not yet—although she had received no answer to more than one of her inquiries—remarked the silence of her companions. But at length looking up, after a quiet gaze, first at her husband, and then at the cloud-covered Sergeant, she, with a merry laugh, exclaimed—

"A most amusing couple, indeed! and I owe you many thanks for the very pleasant manner in which I have whiled away the last half hour, not forgetting the grave nods of the one, or interesting 'yes' or 'no' of the other. I trust you won't make 'buck-carrying' the cause of your silence, as you did for your late return."

"Your pardon!" replied Bryan, smiling pleasantly at

her badinage, "but you know, Coma, extreme happiness is as often the cause of a silent tongue as extreme grief; and believe me now, when I say, it is not the fatigue of 'buck-carrying,' as you insinuate, or surliness, that has produced the taciturnity of which you complain; but in truth, nothing else than the indescribable pleasure of rest and fireside influences after a day of toil, is to be blamed for our present sinning."

"Exactly!" muttered the Sergeant, managing to remove his pipe, "it is just what I would have said myself, Bryan."

"Could you have spared the time from your pipe," laughed Coma, interrupting him.

"Exactly!" replied the soldier, with a nod and knowing twinkle of the eye, covering his defeat with a cloud of smoke.

"But, after all," said Coma, "I'm at a loss whether to take your excuse as a compliment, or not; for it is one or the other, just as we ascribe it to the toils of the day, or the soothing influences of home."

"To the latter, of course!" laughed her husband, "for when saw you a hunter complain of fatigue, after an hour's rest and a hearty meal?"

"Always the same, and there's no getting the truth from any of you!" replied Coma, with a merry toss of the head, once more resuming her employment; "for you are all flatterers alike—whether in palace or hovel—whether savage or civilized. But to make us poor women the source of your stupidity, and call it a compliment is too bad, and I'll have nothing more to say to you." •

Ten minutes may have followed this laughing raillery of Coma, when the Sergeant, suddenly withdrawing from his mouth his pipe, started to his feet, with an eager expression of countenance, as if listening intently for some distant sound.

"What is it?" said Bryan, quickly.

"I thought I heard the tramp of horsemen," muttered Duffe, again sinking back in his seat.

"And what think you now?" asked Bryan.

"I hear nothing but the sighing of the winds; but there it is again!" he exclaimed; "I distinctly hear the tramp of horses!"

"I hear nothing!" said Bryan, listening attentively.

"Nor do I, now; but I could not have been mistaken."

"You must have been dreaming, Sergeant," said Head, with a smile at the doubting expression of his companion's face. "Who could be riding through the forest at this time of night? If you heard anything more than the wind, it must have been the tramp of a passing herd of buffalo."

"I may have been mistaken," replied the Sergeant, thoughtfully; "but my ear played me a strange trick if I heard not the regular gallop of horses."

Startled by the abrupt exclamation of Duffe, Coma had stood trembling, during the conversation between him and her husband—her face fully expressing the terror of her beating heart. She was fearful of another attack of the savages upon the station; and since her captivity, her countenance grew pale at the sound of every strange or unusual noise. With her ear now painfully acute from fearful anxiety, she was the first to catch the low tread of cautious footsteps in the yard without the cabin, and, with a dreadful effort to appear calm, whispered with terrified distinctness—

"Hear you not that?"

"What!" exclaimed her husband, alarmed at her paleness and agitation.

"Footsteps in the yard!"

Before he could answer, or well understand the cause of his wife's ill-concealed terror, a hoarse voice from without, shouted—

"Hello! the house!"

Springing to their feet, at this unexpected sound, the two borderers glanced instinctively to the door, and then to their rifles; but before either could make a move at securing the one, or seizing the other, the same voice, with evident impatience, again shouted—

"Hello! the house! are you all asleep?"

"'Tis Gordon, I know his voice!" exclaimed Duffe, with

a smile of relief; his anxious face clearing up in a moment.

"Better be certain!" said Bryan in a low voice, as Duffe moved towards the door, "it may be a strolling band of savages, hailing in this manner, to throw us off our guard."

"No fear of that!" said Duffe, confidently, "for no Indian ever gave that hail; and besides," he added, unhesitatingly drawing back the door, "I know the voice."

He did know the voice; but it was the voice of a friend betraying him to destruction.

The sharp volley of rifles, greeted the appearance of the unsuspecting soldier; and poor Duffe, a victim of treachery, decoyed to death by the voice of an old companion in arms, fell backwards across the threshold he had just passed in the full vigor of health and life, a corpse. He had fought through the battles of the Revolution; the bloody Camden; the daring struggle of Greene at Guilford Court-house; and had joined in many a wild fray upon the border, and escaped from all without a wound, only to die at last by the hand of assassins, and without a blow for life or vengeance. The cradle, the world, and the grave, the three great scenes in life, to him had passed away, and he slept now the quiet sleep of death.

Springing to his rifle, Bryan prepared to sell his life dearly, and avenge, if within his power, the cowardly murder of his foster-father. Nor was he a moment too soon; for a rush of feet followed the fall of Duffe, and Malden, leaping over the dead body of the Sergeant, stood facing his intended victim.

"Ha!" shouted Bryan, startled at his appearance, "no Indian did that coward deed; but Malden of the bloody hand is the murderer."

"Ay!" laughed the regulator, with an oath, as he drew forth a pistol, "and will soon send another rogue to bear him company."

But the dread Major had shed his last blood, and sworn his last oath; for the bullet of Head, sent with unerring aim, passed through his heart, and the "bloody hand,"

leaping upwards, fell without a groan, across the body of his last victim.

The Sergeant had been avenged.

But the struggle was soon over, for, with the death of Malden, his companions pressed in a body upon his destroyer, left now with no weapon of defence but his unloaded rifle, and though Head fought bravely and desperately to the last, superior weapons and superior numbers soon put an end to the fierce conflict; and the gallant young borderer, disfigured with many gory wounds, fell fighting by his own fireside; and in death still wore upon his determined face, the proud smile of a warrior, dying with his harness on, and his face to the foe.

Not caring to witness the agony of the two bereaved widows, and satisfied with the terrible vengeance they had taken upon the supposed horse-thieves, the regulators hastened to remove the body of their unfortunate leader, and quit at once the scene of this bloody tragedy.

No sooner had they done so, than Montlack, who had, with cowardly care for his own safety, hung back during the fray, now that his enemy was dead, and all danger passed by, with a fiendish smile of exultation, entered the doorway, and stood in the presence of his widowed and mourning cousin.

Stricken with horror at the death of the Sergeant, and stupefied with terror and anguish at the subsequent conflict, and bloody murder of her husband, Coma had never once moved from her chair; but, with her hands clasped, her face rigid and pale as marble, and her eyes bloodshot and starting, still sat in the same place, staring wildly about, as if she had not yet realized her dreadful loss, when Montlack, the secret instigator of the assassination, made his appearance.

For a moment, the heartless hypocrite stood eyeing the stern features of his dead foe, as if gloating over the success of his hellish schemes; then, with a snake-like glare, he fastened his cold exulting look upon the maniac countenance of Coma, who sat, staring wildly into his face, but showing no token of recognition, and to all appearance totally unconscious of his hateful presence.

"My cousin gives me but a cold welcome!" sneered Montlack.

At the sound of his icy and measured voice, Coma started, and a shudder passed over her frame; but she made no reply, only motioning with her hand, as if she would drive some loathsome monster from her sight.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the cold-blooded villain; "my dear cousin plays the tragic queen to admiration! 'Tis a pity she has no better audience than my poor self, for in truth, she does her part grandly!"

"You have slain the beautiful and brave," murmured Coma, mournfully, a tear, for the first time, gleaming in her flaming eye. "See! he lies there, all cold and stiff, and with the dark blood yet oozing from his many wounds!"

"The forger and thief!" sneered Montlack.

"Thou liest! Jean, and thou knowest it!" exclaimed the wife, aroused to fury by his cruel taunt. "He was as brave, and honest, and good, as thou art a coward, a knave, and a hypocrite!"

"Ho, ho! my dove-like cousin has found her tongue at last!" exclaimed Montlack, mockingly; "and, by my faith, has not forgotten how to use it!"

"Begone! and free me from your presence!" exclaimed Coma, with a threatening gesture, her eye flashing with wild fury. "Your fiendish malice has pursued him to death; but beware, Jean, the hour of vengeance will yet come!"

"'Tis already here!" muttered Montlack.

"To you, base murderer, it may have already come!" hissed the wife, sternly, "for there lies the body of your victim, and you can do no more! But, remember, Jean! I swear it now, over the corpse of him I loved so well, that to me, made forever miserable by your demoniac enmity, and a widow by your bloody hand, the hour of vengeance is yet to come; and believe me, that hour of reckoning shall be a fearful one to you and yours!"

"The wren makes a dreadful fluttering over her nest, when some truant boy would rob her of her young; but

her threats generally end in harmless noise!" sneered Montlack.

"Him you dared not meet as man to man, has fallen at last beneath the blows of hired assassins!" murmured Coma, her fury once more giving place to a gush of tears. "Begone, now, and leave me to my grief, for you have done your worst!"

"He met the fate of all those that would balk my plans!" muttered Montlack, "but I have not done yet."

"What other victim would you have to gloat your malice?" said Coma, looking fearfully around in search of her child. "If you seek my blood, take it; I offer it freely, for I would not live, now that he is dead; but in mercy's name, spare my orphan boy!"

"I seek neither the blood of mother nor child," said Montlack, coldly; "but there was a time, Coma, when I was driven—ay, Jean Montlack was driven like a dog!" he shouted, his face becoming livid with rage at the very memory of his ignominious situation, "and with his hands tied behind him as a thief, to witness the defeat of all his hopes, and the triumph of his hated rival! Do you remember that scene, Coma?"

Shuddering at his fearful vehemence, and wondering to what this bitter allusion to the past would lead, Coma stared wildly in his face, but made no reply.

"Ay, if *you* don't remember it, *I* do!" he continued, in the same bitter and mocking tone; "I can never forget how that cursed low-born friend of your husband forced me to be present—an unwilling witness of your marriage, and how he then exulted over my defeat—taunting me with his vulgar witticisms! Do you not recollect," he added, with hissing emphasis, "his galling jest when the minister had pronounced the triumph of my hated rival?"

Coma shook her head.

"He's Head this time, Captain! those were his very words!" hissed Montlack, in the low and measured tones of intense passion; "nor have I forgotten or forgiven them! May-be," he added, with a devilish sneer, "though this little piece of pleasantry has escaped the memory of my cousin, she has still some recollection of my reply?"

"No, no! I remember nothing!" murmured Coma, covering her eyes to shut the malignant expression of his countenance, as, with a cold, derisive smile, he awaited her answer.

"I swore then that the time would come when he that was *Head* should be made *Headless*, and the hour to fulfil my vow is now at hand!"

"What more would you do?" exclaimed Coma, shuddering with horror at the dreadful import of his words.

"This!" hissed Montlack, severing the head of his victim from the body, and holding it up before the horrified gaze of the wife.

With devilish glee the brutal villain stood a moment enjoying the agony of the gasping and speechless widow; then tossing the gory head of the husband into the lap of the wife,* he exclaimed, tauntingly—

"If I remember rightly, there was a time when Jean Montlack offered his hand and heart to Coma De Lacy, but she preferred a low-born knave, and scorned his offered gift! I trust," he added, with a mocking laugh, "she'll receive, with better grace, his last present! Ha! ha! he was *Head* once, but is *Headless* now, and my *vow* is fulfilled!"

"But not *childless*!" murmured Coma, mournfully, as she threw her arm around the shrinking form of her little boy, who at this awful moment crept with tearful eyes to her side, and, as he saw his mother kiss the bloody brow of his father, faintly lisped the endearing title—"Papa!"

"De dam bloody villain!" howled old Titus, a tear streaming down his sable countenance. "Gora'mighty, Miss Sally, can't you cut dese dam ropes, and let me at de murderin' scoundrel?"

The black, at the first note of alarm, had rushed to the assistance of his master; but, seized on the way, and overpowered by the regulators, he had been securely bound, and left upon the floor of the passage. After their departure, bearing away with them the body of Malden, he had managed to roll himself to the door of Coma's room,

* Literally true.

and had been a silent witness of the meeting between her and Montlack up to this moment, when, no longer able to restrain his fury, whilst struggling to break his bonds, had thus shouted forth his malediction upon the head of the assassin, and his cry for assistance to the widow of Duffe.

Turning quickly, at the deep, fierce cry of the negro, Montlack, in alarm, drew up his rifle, exclaiming, with an oath, as he pointed it, in a threatening manner, at the weeping widow of the Sergeant—

“Move but one step, and I’ll fire.”

His cowardly threat was needless; for the poor woman, kneeling by the body of her husband, heard neither the cry of the one, nor the menace of the other, and, indifferent alike to both, continued, with low sobs, to pour forth her heavy grief. Seeing that such was the case, and that he had nothing to fear from her interference, Montlack shook his hand menacingly at the slave, muttering—

“Another word, you black rascal, and I’ll soon put an end to your bellowing.”

“If I be black,” growled Titus, surlily, “I’ve got a white heart; and dat’s more dan a dam cowardly murderin’ villian like Captin’ Montlack can say.”

Seeing that the black’s continued and fierce struggles to free himself were hopeless, and not caring to longer bandy epithets with him, Montlack turned away to continue his cruel triumph over Coma.

But the sight that greeted his wondering gaze, when he turned from Titus, filled even the breast of the devilish and soulless Montlack with horror; and with a cry of terror and astonishment he started back, as if about to flee the dreadful spectacle.

Coma had not moved since, with fiendish malignancy, he had thrown the gory head of her husband into her lap; but there she sat, with bowed face, one arm embracing the neck of her frightened child, the other lovingly thrown round the ghastly gift of the destroyer. Her hair, dishevelled, and escaping from its confinement, hung in long, wavy folds around her face, mingled with the dark locks and blood of her husband; but, oh horrible!

even to her malignant enemy, those heavy folds, but a moment since as black as the raven’s wing, were now as white as the driven snow.

Horror, terror, and grief had produced this fearful change, and in one moment of dread supremacy had done the work of years.

Filled with awe, Montlack gazed a minute with shuddering curiosity at the wonderful change wrought by a few moments of intense despair; then turning away—for he no longer had any desire to exult over his victim—with a silent gesture of horror and fear, he stole cautiously, as if fearful of arousing her attention, from the room; and with a wild cry of anguish, fled the dreadful sight.

In vain did he fly; for Remorse had

“flapped
Her fiery wings, and breathed upon his lips.”

The vulture’s bloody beak was now fastened in his heart; and, awake or sleeping, the gory head of his victim, the blanched locks of his mourning cousin, and sad face of her orphan child, will ever press, like a horrid nightmare, upon his soul, and drive away all peace.

* * * * *

With the death of the Sergeant and his foster-child, our story is ended; and although, dear reader, we have let fall the curtain upon a scene of blood, and horror, and despair, we feel confident that you will not blame us, when we assure you that ours is no fancy sketch, but an over true tale of “The Dark and Bloody Ground.”

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