

DEERSLAYER



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DEERSLAYER
[1894-1909]



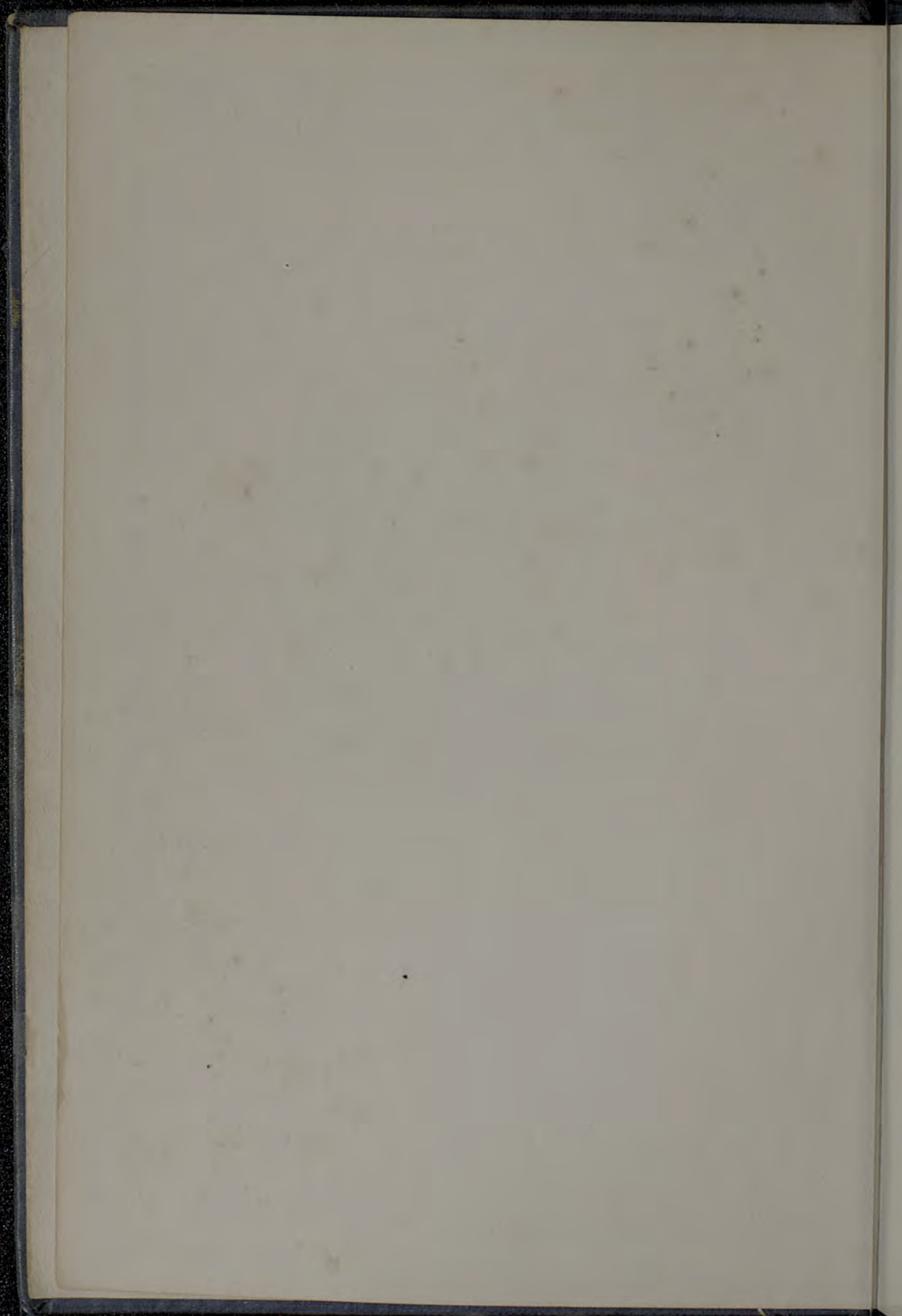
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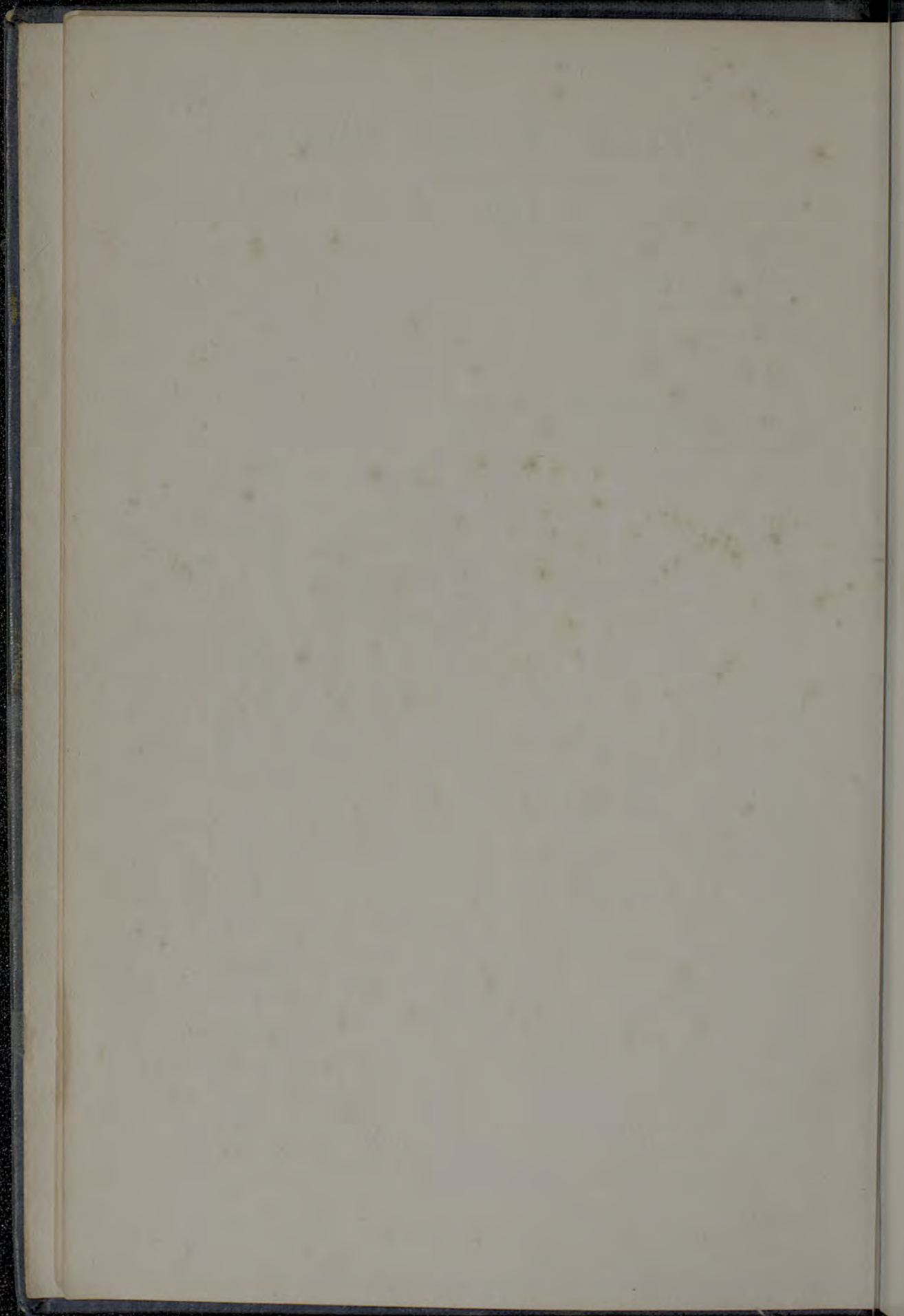


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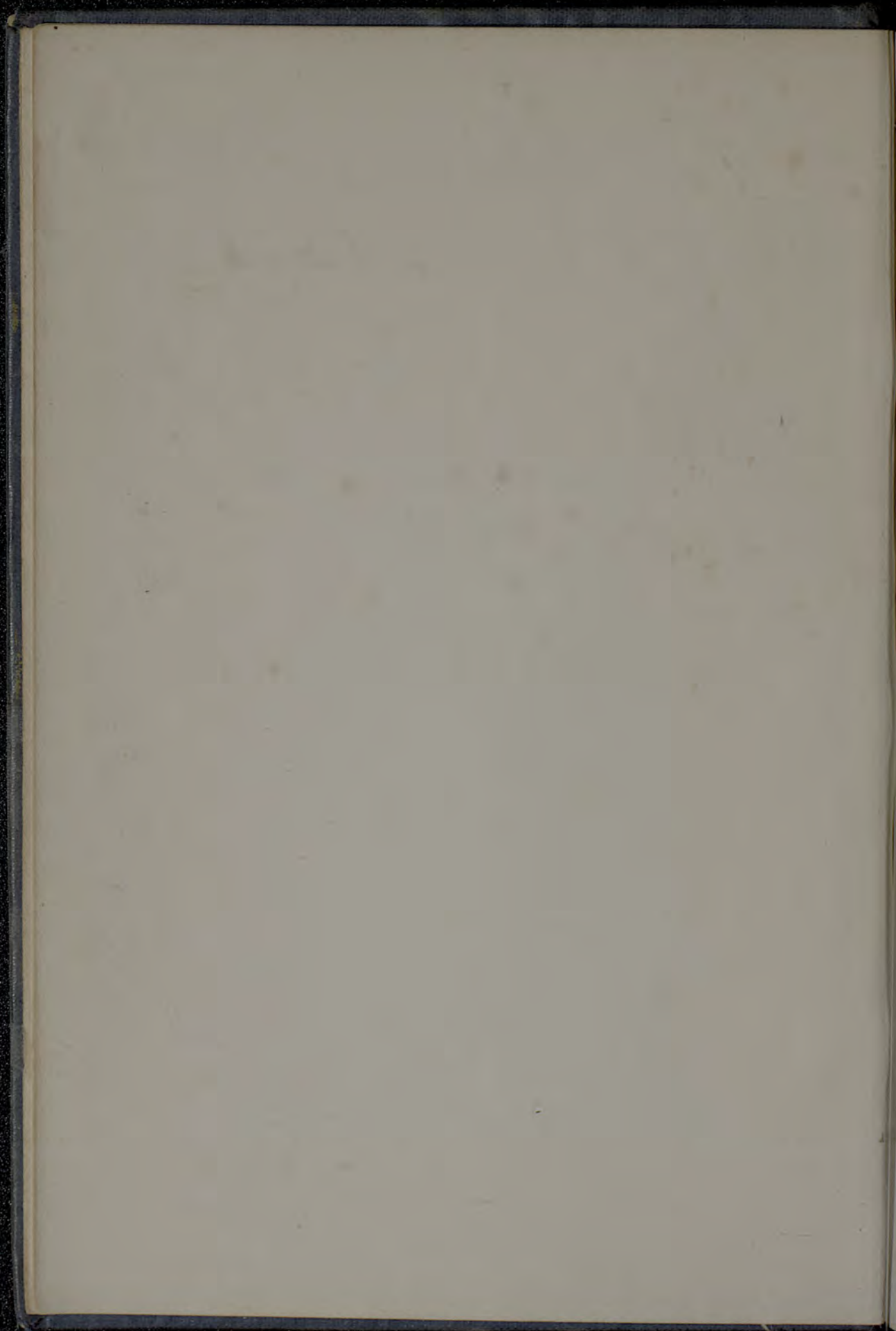
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DEERSLAYER.



To Willie

From D D Teacher

Paiwade

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"THE BOUNDING BOY SKIPPED ABOUT IN FRONT OF THE CAPTIVE."

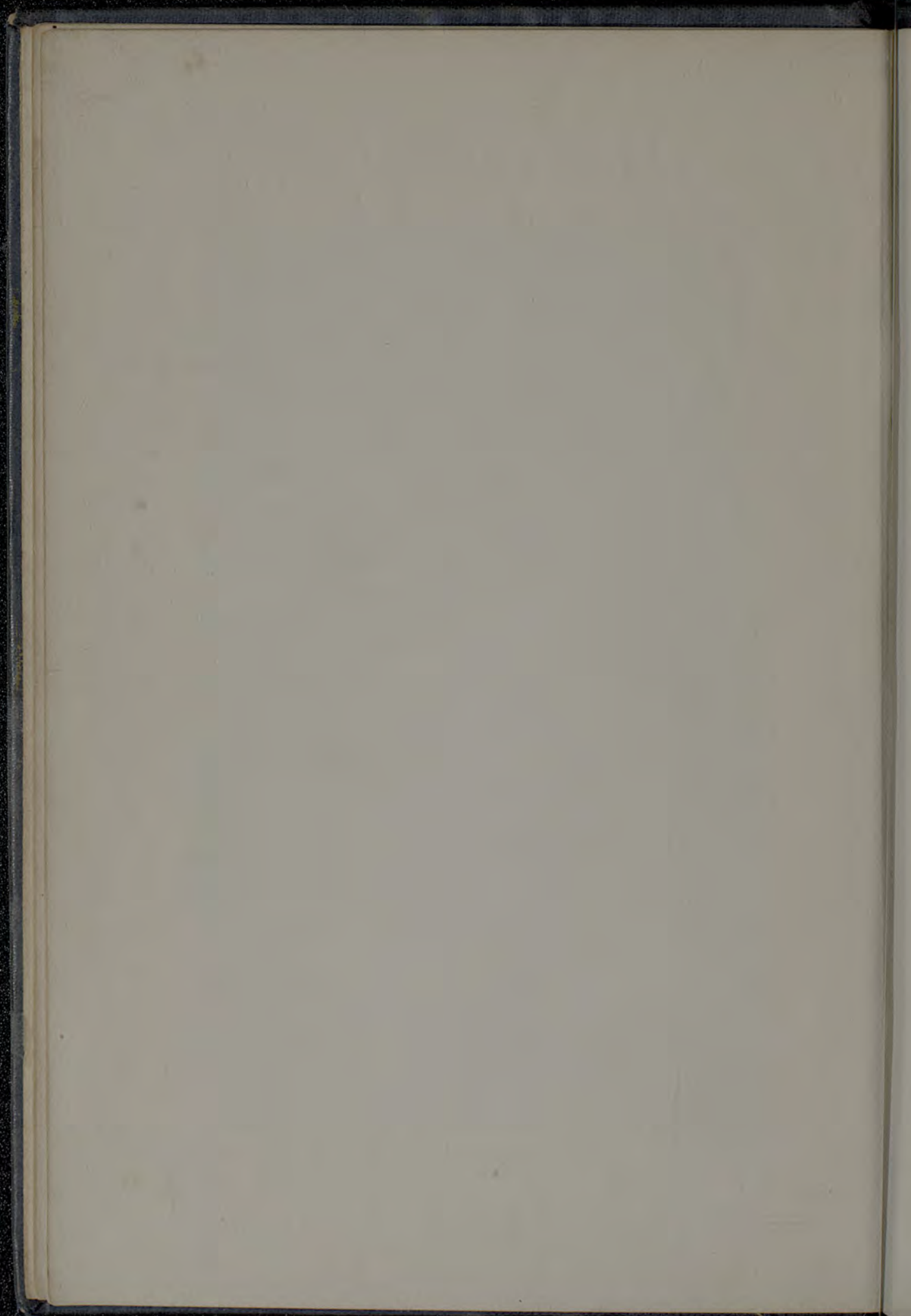
Deerslayer
OR
THE FIRST WAR-PATH

A Tale

BY
J. FENIMORE COOPER

Author of "The Last of the Mohicans", &c.

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DEERSLAYER.

CHAPTER I.

On the human imagination events produce the effects of time. Thus, he who has travelled far and seen much is apt to fancy that he has lived long; and the history that most abounds in important incidents soonest assumes the aspect of antiquity. In no other way can we account for the venerable air that is already gathering around American annals. When the mind reverts to the earliest days of colonial history, the period seems remote and obscure, the thousand changes that thicken along the links of recollections throwing back the origin of the nation to a day so distant as seemingly to reach the mists of time; and yet four lives of ordinary duration would suffice to transmit from mouth to mouth, in the form of tradition, all that civilized man has achieved within the limits of the Republic!

The incidents of this tale occurred between the years 1740 and 1745, when the settled portions of the colony of New York were confined to the four Atlantic counties, a narrow belt of country on each side of the Hudson, extending from its mouth to the falls near its head, and to a few advanced "neighbourhoods" on the Mohawk and the Schoharie. Broad belts of the virgin wilderness not only reached the shores of the first river, but they even crossed it, stretching away into New England, and affording forest covers to the noiseless moccasin of the native warrior as he trod the secret and bloody war-path. A bird's-eye view of the whole region east of the Mississippi must then have offered one vast expanse of woods, relieved by a comparatively narrow fringe of cultivation along the sea, dotted by the glittering surfaces of lakes, and intersected by the waving lines of rivers.

Centuries of summer suns had warmed the tops of the same noble oaks and pines, sending their heats even to the tenacious roots, when voices were heard calling to each other, in the depths of a forest, of which the leafy surface lay bathed in the brilliant light of a cloudless day in June, while the trunks of the trees rose in gloomy grandeur in the shades beneath. The calls were in different tones, evidently proceeding from two men who had lost their way, and were searching in different directions for their path. At length a shout proclaimed success, and presently a man broke out of the tangled labyrinth of a small swamp, emerging into an opening that appeared to have been formed partly by the ravages of the wind and partly by those of fire. This little area, which afforded a good view of the sky, although it was pretty well filled with dead trees, lay on the side of one of the high hills, or low mountains, into which nearly the whole surface of the adjacent country was broken.

"Here is room to breathe in!" exclaimed the liberated forester, as soon as he found himself under a clear sky. "Hurrah! Deerslayer; here is daylight at last, and yonder is the lake."

These words were scarcely uttered when the second forester dashed aside the bushes of the swamp, and appeared in the area. After making a hurried adjustment of his arms and disordered dress, he joined his companion, who had already begun his dispositions for a halt.

"Do you know this spot?" demanded the one called Deerslayer, "or do you shout at the sight of the sun?"

"Both, lad, both; I know the spot, and am not sorry to see so useful a friend as the sun. Now we have got the p'int of the compass in our minds once more, and 'twill be our own faults if we let anything turn them topsy-turvy ag'in, as has just happened. My name is not Hurry Harry if this be not the very spot where the land-hunters 'camped the last summer and passed a week. Much as I like the sun, boy, I've no occasion for it to tell me it is noon; this stomach of mine is as good a timepiece as is to be found in the colony, and it already p'int to half-past twelve. So open the wallet, and let us wind up for another six hours' run."

At this suggestion, both set themselves about making the preparations necessary for their usual frugal but hearty meal. It would not have been easy to find a more noble specimen of vigorous manhood than was offered in the person of him who

called himself Hurry Harry. His real name was Henry March; but the frontier men having caught the practice of giving *sobriquets* from the Indians, the appellation of Hurry was far oftener applied to him than his proper designation. The stature of Hurry Harry exceeded six feet four, and being unusually well-proportioned, his strength fully realized the idea created by his gigantic frame. The face did no discredit to the rest of the man, for it was both good-humoured and handsome. His air was free, and though his manner necessarily partook of the rudeness of a border life, the grandeur that pervaded so noble a physique prevented it from becoming altogether vulgar.

Deerslayer, as Hurry called his companion, was a very different person in appearance, as well as in character. In stature he stood about six feet in his moccasins, but his frame was comparatively light and slender, showing muscles, however, that promised unusual agility, if not unusual strength. His face would have had little to recommend it except youth, were it not for an expression that seldom failed to win upon those who had leisure to examine it and to yield to the feeling of confidence it created. This expression was simply that of guileless truth, sustained by an earnestness of purpose and a sincerity of feeling that rendered it remarkable.

Both these frontier men were still young, Hurry having reached the age of six or eight and twenty, while Deerslayer was several years his junior. Their attire needs no particular description, though it may be well to add that it was composed in no small degree of dressed deer-skins, and had the usual signs of belonging to those who passed their time between the skirts of civilized society and the boundless forests. There was, notwithstanding, some attention to smartness and the picturesque in the arrangements of Deerslayer's dress, more particularly in the part connected with his arms and accoutrements. His rifle was in perfect condition, the handle of his hunting-knife was neatly carved, his powder-horn was ornamented with suitable devices, lightly cut into the material, and his shot-pouch was decorated with wampum.¹ On the other hand, Hurry Harry, either from constitutional recklessness or from a secret consciousness how little his appearance required artificial aids, wore everything in a careless, slovenly manner,

¹ *Wampum*.—Small beads made of shells, and formerly used for money as well as for adornment.

as if he felt a noble scorn for the trifling accessories of dress and ornaments.

"Come, Deerslayer, fall to, and prove that you have a Delaware stomach, as you say you have had a Delaware education," cried Hurry, setting the example by opening his mouth to receive a slice of cold venison steak; "fall to, lad, and prove your manhood on this poor doe with your teeth, as you've already done with your rifle."

"Nay, Hurry, there's little manhood in killing a doe, and that, too, out of season; though there might be some in bringing down a painter or a catamount," returned the other, disposing himself to comply. "The Delawares have given me my name not so much on account of a bold heart, as on account of a quick eye and an active foot."

"The Delawares themselves are no heroes," muttered Hurry through his teeth, "or they would never have allowed them loping vagabonds, the Mingos, to make them women."

"That matter is not rightly understood—has never been rightly explained," said Deerslayer, earnestly; "the Mengwe fill the woods with their lies, and misconceive words and treaties. I have now lived ten years with the Delawares, and know them to be as manful as any other nation when the proper time to strike comes."

"Harkee, Master Deerslayer, since we are on the subject we may as well open our minds to each other in a man-to-man way. Answer me one question: you have had so much luck among the game as to have gotten a title, it would seem, but did you ever hit anything human or intelligible; did you ever pull trigger on an inimy that was capable of pulling one upon you?"

"I never did," answered Deerslayer; "seeing that a fitting occasion never offered. The Delawares have been peaceable since my sojourn with 'em, and I hold it to be onlawful to take the life of man except in open and ginerous warfare."

"What! did you never find a fellow thieving among your traps and skins, and do the law on him with your own hands, by way of saving the magistrates trouble in the settlements?"

"I am no trapper, Hurry," returned the young man, proudly; "I live by the rifle, a we'pon at which I will not turn my back on any man of my years atween the Hudson and the St. Lawrence."

"Ay, ay, this is all very well in the animal way, though it makes but a poor figure alongside of scalps and and-bushes.

Shooting an Indian from an and-bush is acting up to his own principles; and now we have what you call a lawful war on our hands, the sooner you wipe that disgrace of your conscience the sounder will be your sleep. I shall not frequent your society long, friend Natty, unless you look higher than four-footed beasts to practise your rifle on."

"Our journey is nearly ended, you say, Master March, and we can part to-night, if you see occasion. I have a fri'nd waiting for me who will think it no disgrace to consort with a fellow-creatur' that has never yet slain his kind."

"I wish I knew what has brought that skulking Delaware into this part of the country so early in the season," muttered Hurry to himself. "Where did you say the young chief was to give you the meeting?"

"At a small, round rock, near the foot of the lake, where, they tell me, the tribes are given to resorting to make their treaties, and to bury their hatchets. The country is claimed by both Mingos and Mohicans, and is a sort of common territory to fish and hunt through in time of peace."

"Common territory!" exclaimed Hurry. "I should like to know what Floating Tom Hutter would say to that? He claims the lake as his own property in vartue of fifteen years' possession, and will not be likely to give it up to either Mingo or Delaware without a battle for it."

"And what will the colony say to such a quarrel? All this country must have some owner, the gentry pushing their cravings into the wilderness, even where they never dare to ventur', in their own persons, to look at 'em."

"That may do in other quarters of the colony, Deerslayer, but it will not do here. Not a human being owns a foot of s'ile in this part of the country. Pen was never put to paper consarning either hill or valley hereaway, as I've heard Tom say time and ag'in, and so he claims the best right to it of any man breathing; and what Tom claims he'll be very likely to maintain."

"By what I've heard you say, Hurry, this Floating Tom must be an oncommon mortal; neither Mingo, Delaware, nor Pale-face. What's the man's history and natur'?"

"Why, as to old Tom's human natur', it is not much like other men's human natur', but more like a musk-rat's human natur', seeing that he takes more to the ways of that animal than to the ways of any other fellow-creatur'. Some think he was a free liver on the salt-water in his youth, and a com-

panion of a sartain Kidd, who was hanged for piracy long afore you and I were born, and that he come up into these regions, thinking that the king's cruisers could never cross the mountains, and that he might enjoy the plunder peaceably in the woods."

"Then he was wrong, Hurry; very wrong. A man can enjoy plunder *peaceably* nowhere."

"Old Tom seems to enjoy his, if plunder he has really got, with his darters, in a very quiet and comfortable way, and wishes for no more."

"Ay, he has darters, too. I've heard the Delewares who've hunted this-a-way tell of the young woman. Is there no mother, Hurry?"

"There was *once*, as in reason; but she has now been dead these two good years. Poor Judith! There was a little steel in her temper, and as old Hutter is pretty much flint, they struck out sparks once-and-a-while, but on the whole they might be said to live amicable like. When they did kindle, the listeners got some such insights into their past lives. But Judith I shall always esteem, as it's recommend enough to one woman to be the mother of such a creatur' as her darter, Judith Hutter!"

"Ay, Judith was the name the Delawares mentioned. From their discourse I do not think the girl would much please my fancy."

"Thy fancy!" exclaimed March, taking fire equally at the indifference and at the presumption of his companion; "what have you to do with a fancy, and that too consarning one like Judith?"

"It is June, and there is not a cloud atween us and the sun, Hurry, so all this heat is not wanted," answered the other, "any one may have a fancy, and a squirrel has a right to make up his mind touching a catamount."

"Ay, but it might not be wise always to let the catamount know it," growled March. "But you're young and thoughtless, and I'll overlook your ignorance. Come, Deerslayer," he added with a good-natured laugh, "we are sworn fri'nds and will not quarrel about a light-minded, jilting jade, just because she happens to be handsome, more especially as you have never seen her. What did the Delawares say of the hussy?"

"They said she was fair to look on, and pleasant of speech, but over-given to admirers, and light-minded."

"They are fiends incarnate? Who is a match for an Indian in looking into natur'? Some people think they are only good on a trail or the war-path; but I say that they are philosophers, and understand a man as well as they understand a beaver, and a woman as well as they understand either. Now, that's Judith's character to a riband! To own the truth, Deerslayer, I should have married the gal two years since, if it had not been for two particular things, one of which was this very light-mindedness."

"And what may have been the other?" demanded the hunter.

"T'other was an unsartainty about her having me. The hussy is handsome, and she knows it. Boy, not a tree that is growing in these hills is straighter, or waves in the wind with an easier bend, nor did you ever see the doe that bounded with a more nat'ral motion. If that was all, every tongue would sound her praises; but she has such failings that I find it hard to overlook them, and sometimes I swear I'll never visit the lake ag'in."

"Which is the reason that you always come back."

"If you know'd all that I know consarnin' Judith, you'd find a justification for a little strong talk. The officers sometimes stray over to the lake, from the forts on the Mohawk, to fish and hunt, and then the creatur' seems beside herself! You can see it in the manner in which she wears her finery, and the airs she gives herself with the gallants."

"That is unseemly in a poor man's darter," returned Deerslayer, gravely.

"There's the unsartainty and the damper! I have my misgivings about a particular captain, and Jude has no one to blame but her own folly if I'm wrong. Not a dozen white men have ever laid eyes upon her since she was a child, and yet her airs with two or three of these officers are extinguishers!"

"I would think no more of such a woman, but turn my mind altogether to the forest; *that* will never deceive you, being ordered and ruled by a hand that never wavers."

"If you know'd Judith you would see how much easier it is to say this than it would be to do it. Could I bring my mind to be easy about the officers, I would carry the gal off to the Mohawk by force, make her marry me in spite of her whiffling, and leave Old Tom to the care of Hetty, his other child, who, if she be not as handsome or as quick-witted as her sister, is much the most dutiful."

"Is there another bird in the same nest?" asked Deerslayer, "the Delawares spoke to me only of one."

"That's nat'ral enough, when Judith and Hetty Hutter are in question. Hetty is only comely, while her sister, I tell thee, boy, is such another as is not to be found atween this and the sea. Old Tom has a feeling for the gal, weak-minded as she appears to be, and so has Judith, quick-witted and glorious as she is herself; else would I not answer for her being altogether safe among the sort of men that sometimes meet on the lake shore."

"I thought this water an onknown and little-frequented sheet," observed the Deerslayer.

"It's all that, lad, the eyes of twenty white men never having been laid on it; still, twenty true-bred frontier men can do a deal of mischief if they try. 'Twould be an awful thing to me, Deerslayer, did I find Judith married after an absence of six months!"

"Have you the gal's faith to encourage you to hope otherwise?"

"Not at all. I know not how it is—I'm good-looking, boy—and yet I could never get the hussy to a promise, or even a cordial willing smile, though she will laugh by the hour. If she *has* dared to marry in my absence, she'll be like to know the pleasures of widowhood afore she is twenty!"

"You would not harm the man she had chosen, Hurry, simply because she found him more to her liking than yourself?"

"Why not? If an enemy crosses my path, will I not beat him out of it! Look at me—am I a man like to let any sneaking, crawling skin-trader get the better of me in a matter that touches me as near as the kindness of Judith Hutter? And if a man *should* be found dead in the woods, who is there to say who slew him, even admitting that the colony took the matter in hand, and made a stir about it?"

"If that man should be Judith Hutter's husband, after what has passed, I might tell enough, at least, to put the colony on the trail."

"You!—half-grown, venison-hunting bantling! You dare to think of informing against Hurry Harry in so much as a matter touching a mink or a woodchuck?"

"I would dare to speak truth, Hurry, consarning you or any man that ever lived."

March looked at his companion for a moment in silent

amazement; then seizing him by the throat with both hands, he shook his comparatively slight frame with a violence that menaced the dislocation of some of the bones. Whatever might be the real intention of March, and it is probable there was none settled in his mind, it is certain that he was unusually aroused; and most men who found themselves throttled by one of a mould so gigantic, in such a mood and in a solitude so deep and helpless, would have felt intimidated and tempted to yield even the right. Not so, however, with Deerslayer. His countenance remained unmoved; his hand did not shake, and his answer was given in a voice that did not resort to the artifice of louder tones, even by way of proving its owner's resolution.

"You may shake, Hurry, until you bring down the mountain," he said, quietly, "but nothing beside truth will you shake from me. It is probable that Judith Hutter has no husband to slay, and you may never have a chance to waylay one, else would I tell her of your threat in the first conversation I held with the gal."

March released his grip, and sat regarding the other in silent astonishment.

"I thought we had been friends," he at length added; "but you've got the last secret of mine that will ever enter your ears."

"I want none, if they are to be like this. I know we live in the woods, Hurry, and are thought to be beyond human laws—but there is a law and a Law-maker that rule across the whole continent. He that flies in the face of either need not call me fri'nd."

"I believe you are at heart a Moravian, and no fair-minded, plain-dealing hunter, as you've pretended to be!"

"Fair-minded or not, Hurry, you will find me as plain-dealing in deeds as I am in words. But this giving way to sudden anger is foolish, and proves how little you have sojourned with the red men. Judith Hutter no doubt is still single, and you spoke but as the tongue ran, and not as the heart felt. There's my hand, and we will say and think no more about it."

Hurry seemed more surprised than ever; then he burst forth in a loud, good-natured laugh, which brought tears to his eyes. After this he accepted the offered hand, and the parties became friends.

"'Twould have been foolish to quarrel about an idee,"

March cried, as he resumed his meal, "and more like lawyers in the towns than like sensible men in the woods."

"There is no occasion for our following their example, and more especially about a husband that this Judith Hutter may never see, or never wish to see. For my part, I feel more cur'osity about the sister than about your beauty. There's something that comes close to a man's feelin's, when he meets with a fellow creatur' that has all the outward show of an accountable mortal, and who fails of being what he seems only through a lack of reason. This is bad enough in a man; but when it comes to a woman and she a young and maybe a winning creatur', it touches all the pitiful thoughts his natur' has."

"Harkee, Deerslayer,—you know what the hunters, and trappers, and peltry-men in general be, and yet I don't think the man is to be found in all this region who would harm Hetty Hutter, if he could; no, not even a redskin."

"Therein you do the Delawares at least, and all their allied tribes, only justice, for a redskin looks upon a being thus struck by God's power as especially under His care. I rejoice to hear what you say, howsoever; but as the sun is beginning to turn towards the afternoon's sky, had we not better strike the trail ag'in, and make forward, that we may get an opportunity of seeing these wonderful sisters?"

Harry March giving a cheerful assent, the remnants of the meal were soon collected; then the travellers shouldered their packs, resumed their arms, and quitting their little area of light they again plunged into the deep shadows of the forest.

CHAPTER II.

Hurry knew the direction as soon as he had found the open spot and the spring, and he now led on with the confident step of a man assured of his object. The forest was dark, as a matter of course, but it was no longer obstructed by underbrush, and the footing was firm and dry. After proceeding near a mile, March stopped, and began to cast about him with an inquiring look, examining the different objects with care, and occasionally turning his eyes on the trunks of the fallen trees.

"*This* must be the place, Deerslayer," March at length

observed; "here is a beech by the side of a hemlock, with three pines at hand, and yonder is a white birch with a broken top; and yet I see no rock, nor any of the branches bent down, as I told you would be the case."

"Broken branches are onskilful landmarks, as the least exper'enced know that branches don't often break of themselves," returned the other; "and they also lead to suspicion and discoveries. The Delawares never trust to broken branches, unless it is in friendly times, and on an open trail."

"Very true, Deerslayer; but you never calculate on position. Here is a beech and a hemlock—"

"Yes, and there is another beech and a hemlock, and yonder are others, for neither tree is a rarity in these woods. I fear me, Hurry, you are better at trapping beaver and shooting bears than at leading on a blindish sort of trail. Ha! there's what you wish to find, after all?"

"Now, Deerslayer, this is one of your Delaware pretensions; for, hang me, if I see anything but these trees, which do seem to start up around us in a most onaccountable and perplexing manner."

"Look here, in a line with the black oak. Don't you see the crooked sapling that is hooked up in the branches of the bass-wood near it? Now, that sapling never straightened itself, and fastened itself in among the bass-wood branches in the way you see. The hand of man did that act of kindness for it."

"That hand was mine!" exclaimed Hurry; "I found the slender young thing bent to the airth, like an unfortunate creatur' borne down by misfortune, and stuck it up where you see it. After all, Deerslayer, I must allow you're getting to have an uncommon good eye for the woods!"

"'Tis improving, Hurry, I will acknowledge; but 'tis still only a child's eye compared to some I know. There's Tamenund now; Tamenund lets nothing escape his look, which is more like the scent of a hound than the sight of an eye. Then Uncas, the father of Chingachgook, and the lawful chief of the Mohicans, is another that it is almost hopeless to pass unseen."

"And who is this Chingachgook?" asked Hurry; "a loping red-skin at the best, I make no question."

"Not so, Hurry, but the best of loping red-skins, as you call 'em. If he had his rights he would be a great chief; but as it is he is only a brave and just-minded Delaware; respected and even obeyed in some things, 'tis true, but belonging to a

fallen people. Ah! March, 'twould warm the heart within you to sit in their lodges of a winter's night and listen to the traditions of the ancient greatness of the Mohicans!"

"Harkee, fri'nd Nathaniel," said Hurry, "if a man believed all that other people choose to say in their own favour, he might get an oversized opinion of them, and an undersized opinion of himself. These red-skins are notable boasters, and I set down more than half of their traditions as pure talk."

"There's truth in what you say, Hurry, I'll not deny it; for I've seen it and believe it. See; this is the spot you come to find!"

This remark cut short the discourse, and both the men now gave all their attention to the object immediately before them. Deerslayer pointed out to his companion the trunk of a huge linden, or bass-wood, which had fallen by its own weight, and was mouldering under the slow but certain influence of the seasons. The decay, however, had attacked its centre, even while it stood erect in the pride of vegetation. As the trunk lay stretched along the earth, the quick eye of the hunter detected this peculiarity, and, from this and other circumstances he knew it to be the tree of which March was in search.

"Ay, here we have what we want," cried Hurry, looking in at the larger end of the linden; "everything is as snug as if it had been left in an old woman's cupboard. Come, lend me a hand, and we'll be afloat in half an hour."

At this call the hunter joined his companion, and the two went to work and removed some pieces of bark that lay before the large opening in the tree. They then drew out a bark canoe, containing its seats, paddles, and other appliances, even to fishing lines and rods. This vessel was by no means small; but such was its comparative lightness, and so gigantic was the strength of Hurry, that he shouldered it with seeming ease, declining all assistance, even in the act of raising it to the awkward position in which he was obliged to hold it.

"Lead ahead, Deerslayer," said March, "and open the bushes; the rest I can do for myself."

Deerslayer cleared the way for his companion, inclining to the right or to the left, as the latter directed. In about ten minutes they both broke suddenly into the brilliant light of the sun, on a low gravelly point, that was washed by water on quite half its outline.

An exclamation of surprise broke from the lips of Deerslayer

when, on reaching the margin of the lake, he beheld the view that unexpectedly met his gaze. On a level with the point lay a broad sheet of water, so placid and limpid that it resembled a bed of the pure mountain atmosphere compressed into a setting of hills and woods. Its length was about three leagues, while its breadth was irregular, expanding to half a league, or even more, opposite to the point, and contracting to less than half that distance more to the southward. At its northern or nearest end it was bounded by an isolated mountain, lower land falling off east and west, gracefully relieving the sweep of the outline. Still, the character of the country was mountainous; high hills or low mountains rising abruptly from the water on quite nine-tenths of its circuit. Even beyond the parts of the shore that were comparatively low the background was high, though more distant.

But the most striking peculiarities of this scene were its solemn solitude and sweet repose. On all sides, wherever the eye turned, nothing met it but the mirror-like surface of the lake, the placid view of heaven, and the dense setting of woods. The hand of man had never yet defaced or deformed any part of this native scene, which lay bathed in the sunlight, a glorious picture of affluent forest-grandeur, softened by the balminess of June, and relieved by the beautiful variety afforded by the presence of so broad an expanse of water.

"This is grand! 'Tis an edication of itself to look upon!" exclaimed Deerslayer, as he stood leaning on his rifle, and gazing to the right and left, north and south; "not a tree disturbed, but everything left in the ordering of the Lord, to live and die according to His own designs and laws! Hurry, your Judith ought to be a moral and well-disposed young woman, if she has passed half the time you mention in the centre of a spot so favoured."

"That's the truth; and yet the gal has the vagaries. All her time has not been passed here, howsoever, old Tom having the custom, afore I know'd him, of going to spend the winters in the neighbourhood of the settlers, or under the guns of the forts. No, Jude has caught more than is for her good from the settlers."

"If she has, Hurry, this is a school to set her mind right ag'in. But what is this I see off here, abreast of us, that seems too small for an island and too large for a boat, though it stands in the midst of the water."

"Why, that is what these gallanting gentry from the forts

call Muskrat Castle. 'Tis the stationary house, there being two; this, which never moves, and the other that floats, being sometimes in one part of the lake, and sometimes in another. The last goes by the name of the Ark."

"Do you see anything of this ark?"

"'Tis down south, no doubt, or anchored in some of the bays. But the canoe is ready, and fifteen minutes will carry two such paddles as your'n and mine to the castle."

At this suggestion Deerslayer helped his companion to place the different articles in the canoe, which was already afloat. This was no sooner done than the two frontier men embarked. Hurry took the seat in the stern, while Deerslayer placed himself forward, and by leisurely but steady strokes of the paddles the canoe glided across the placid sheet, towards Muskrat Castle. Several times the men ceased paddling, and looked about them at the scene, as new glimpses opened from behind points enabling them to see farther down the lake. The only changes, however, were in the new forms of the hills, the varying curvature of the bays, and the wider reaches of the valley south; the whole earth, apparently, being clothed in a gala-dress of leaves.

"This *is* a sight to warm the heart!" exclaimed Deerslayer; "the lake seems made to let us get an insight into the noble forests; and land and water alike stand in the beauty of God's providence! Do you say, Hurry, that there is no man who calls himself lawful owner of all these glories?"

"None but the king, lad. He may pretend to some right of that natur', but he is so far away that his claims will never trouble old Tom Hutter, who has got possession, and is like to keep it as long as his life lasts."

"I *invy* that man!—I know it's wrong, and I strive agin the feelin', but I *invy* that man!"

"You've only to marry Hetty to inherit half the estate," cried Hurry, laughing; "the gal is comely; nay, if it wasn't for her sister's beauty, she would be even handsome; and then her wits are so small that you may easily convert her into one of your own way of thinking in all things."

"Does game abound?" demanded the other, who paid little attention to March's raillery.

"It has the country to itself. Scarce a trigger is pulled on it; and as for the trappers, this is not a region they greatly frequent. I ought not to be so much here myself, but Jude pulls one way, while the beaver pulls another."

"Do the red-men often visit this lake, Hurry?" continued Deerslayer, pursuing his own train of thought.

"Why, they come and go; sometimes in parties, and sometimes singly. The old man tells me that some sharp ones have been wheedling the Mohawks for an Indian deed, in order to get a title out of the colony; but nothing has come of it, seeing that no one heavy enough for such a trade has yet meddled with the matter."

"So much the better, Hurry. If I was king of England, the man that felled one of these trees without good occasion for the timber should be banished to a forlorn region, in which no four-footed animal ever trod. Right glad am I that Chingachgook app'nted our meeting on this lake, for hitherto eye of mine never looked on such a glorious spectacle!"

"That's because you've kept so much among the Delawares, in whose country there are no lakes. Now, farther north, and farther west, these bits of water abound. But, though there be other lakes, Deerslayer, there's no other Judith Hutter."

At this remark his companion smiled, and then he dropped his paddle into the water, as if in consideration of a lover's haste. Both now pulled vigorously until they got within a hundred yards of the "castle", when they again ceased paddling; the admirer of Judith restraining his impatience the more readily as he perceived that the building was untenanted at the moment.

Muskrat Castle stood in the open lake, at a distance of fully a quarter of a mile from the nearest shore. On every other side the water extended much farther, the precise position being distant about two miles from the northern end of the sheet, and near, if not quite, a mile from its eastern shore. As there was not the smallest appearance of any island, but the house stood on piles, with the water flowing beneath it, and Deerslayer had already discovered that the lake was of a great depth, he was fain to ask an explanation of this singular circumstance. Hurry solved that difficulty by telling him that on this spot alone a long narrow shoal, which extended for a few hundred yards in a north and south direction rose within six or eight feet of the surface of the lake, and that Hutter had driven piles into it, and placed his habitation on them, for the purpose of security.

"The old fellow was burnt out three times, atween the Indians and the hunters; and in one affray with the red-skins he lost his only son, since which time he has taken to the

water for safety. No one can attack him here without coming in a boat, and the plunder and scalps would scarce be worth the trouble of digging out canoes. Then it's by no means sartin which would whip in such a scrimmage, for old Tom is well supplied with arms and ammunition, and the castle, as you may see, is a tight breastwork ag'in light shot."

Deerslayer, who had some theoretical knowledge of frontier warfare, saw that Hurry did not overrate the strength of this position in a military point of view, since it would not be easy to attack it without exposing the assailants to the fire of the besieged. A good deal of art had been manifested in the disposition of the timber of which the building was constructed. The sides and ends were composed of the trunks of large pines, cut about nine feet long, and placed upright, instead of being laid horizontally, as was the practice of the country. These logs were squared on three sides, and had large tenons on each end. The floors were made of smaller logs, similarly squared, and the roof was composed of light poles, firmly united, and well covered with bark. The effect of this ingenious arrangement was to give its owner a house that could be approached only by water, the sides of which were composed of logs closely wedged together, which were two feet thick in their thinnest parts, and which could be separated only by a deliberate and laborious use of human hands. The outer surface of the building was rude and uneven, but the squared surfaces within gave both the sides and floor as uniform an appearance as was desired, either for use or show. The chimney was not the least singular portion of the castle. The material was a stiff clay, properly worked, which had been put together in a mould of sticks, and suffered to harden a foot or two at a time, commencing at the bottom. When the entire chimney had thus been raised, a brisk fire was kindled and kept going until it was burned to something like a brick-red. This part of the work stood on the log-floor, secured beneath by an extra pile.

"Tom is full of contrivances," added Hurry, "and he set his heart on the success of his chimney, which threatened more than once to give out altogether."

"You seem to know the whole history of the castle, Hurry," said Deerslayer, smiling. "Is love so overcoming that it causes a man to study the story of his sweetheart's habitation?"

"Partly that, lad, and partly eyesight," returned the good-natured giant; "there was a large gang of us in at the lake the summer the old fellow built, and we helped him along with

the job. I raised no small part of the weight of them uprights with my own shoulders. Yes, many is the meal I've swallowed in Hutter's cabins; and Hetty, though so weak in the way of wits, has a wonderful particular way about a frying-pan or a gridiron!"

While the parties were thus discoursing, the canoe had been gradually drawing nearer to the "castle", and was now so close as to require but a single stroke of a paddle to reach the landing, which might have been twenty feet square.

"Tom calls this sort of a wharf his door-yard," observed Hurry, as he fastened the canoe, after he and his companion had left it. "'Tis as I supposed; not a soul within, but the whole family is off on a v'y'ge of discovery."

While Hurry was bustling about the "door-yard", examining the fishing-spears, rods, nets, and other appliances of a frontier cabin, Deerslayer entered the building. The interior of the "castle" was as faultlessly neat as its exterior was novel. The entire space, some twenty feet by forty, was subdivided into several small sleeping-rooms; the apartment into which he first entered serving equally for the ordinary uses of its inmates and for a kitchen. The furniture was of the strange mixture that it is not uncommon to find in the remotely situated log-tenements of the interior. Most of it was rude and, to the last degree, rustic; but there was a clock, with a handsome case of dark wood, in a corner, and two or three chairs, with a table and bureau, that had evidently come from some dwelling of more than usual pretension. The kitchen utensils were of the simplest kind, and far from numerous, but every article was in its place, and showed the nicest care in its condition.

After Deerslayer had cast a look about him in the outer room, he raised a wooden latch and entered a narrow passage that divided the inner end of the house into two equal parts. The young man now opened a door, and found himself in a bed-room. A single glance sufficed to show that the apartment belonged to females. The bed was of the feathers of wild geese, and filled nearly to overflowing; but it lay in a rude bunk, raised only a foot from the floor. On one side of it were arranged on pegs various dresses, of a quality much superior to what one would expect to meet in such a place, with ribands, and other similar articles to correspond. Even the pillow on this side of the bed was covered with finer linen than its companion, and it was ornamented with a small ruffle. On the opposite side everything was homely and uninviting,

except through its perfect neatness. The few garments that were hanging from the pegs were of the coarsest materials and of the commonest forms, while nothing seemed made for show. Of ribands there was not one; nor was there either cap or kerchief beyond those which Hutter's daughters might be fairly entitled to wear.

It was now several years since Deerslayer had been in a spot especially devoted to the uses of females of his own colour and race. The sight brought back to his mind a rush of childish recollections; and he lingered in the room with a tenderness of feeling to which he had long been a stranger. He bethought him of his mother, whose homely vestments he remembered to have seen hanging on pegs, like those which he felt must belong to Hetty Hutter; and he bethought himself of a sister, whose incipient and native taste for finery had exhibited itself somewhat in the manner of that of Judith, though necessarily in a less degree. These little resemblances opened a long-hidden vein of sensations; and he quitted the room with a saddened mien, returning slowly and thoughtfully towards the "door-yard".

"Tom has taken to a new calling, and has been trying his hands at the traps," cried Hurry, who had been examining the borderer's implements; "if that is his humour, and you're disposed to remain in these parts, we can make an uncommon comfortable season of it; for, while the old man and I out-knowledge the beaver, you can fish, and knock down the deer, to keep body and soul together."

"Thank'ee, Hurry; thank'ee, with all my heart—but I do a little beavering for myself as occasions offer. 'Tis true the Delawares call me Deerslayer, but it's not so much because I'm pretty fatal with the venison, as because that while I kill so many bucks and does, I've never yet taken the life of a fellow-creatur'!"

"Well, for my part, I account game, a red-skin, and a Frenchman as pretty much the same thing; though I'm as onquarrelsome a man as there is in all the colonies."

"I look upon him as the most of a man who acts nearest the right, Hurry. But this is a glorious spot!"

"'Tis your first acquaintance with a lake; and these ideas come over us all at such times."

The young hunter made no immediate answer, but stood gazing at the dark hills and the glassy water in silent enjoyment.

"Have the king's people given this lake a name?" he suddenly asked, as if struck with a new idea. "If they've not begun to set up their compasses, and line off their maps, it's likely they've not bethought them to disturb natur' with a name."

"They've not got to that yet; and the last time I went in with skins, one of the king's surveyors was questioning me consarning all the region hereabouts."

"I'm glad it has no name," resumed Deerslayer, "or, at least, no pale-face name; for their christenings always foretell waste and destruction. No doubt, howsoever, the red-skins have their modes of knowing it, and the hunters and trappers, too."

"As for the tribes, each has its own tongue, and its own way of calling things. Among ourselves we've got to calling the place the 'Glimmerglass', seeing that its whole basin is so often fringed with pines, cast upwards from its face, as if it would throw back the hills that hang over it."

"There is an outlet, I know, for all lakes have outlets, and the rock at which I am to meet Chingachgook stands near an outlet. Has *that* no Colony-name yet?"

"In that particular they've got the advantage of us, having one end, and that the biggest, in their own keeping; they've given it a name which has found its way up to its source. No doubt, Deerslayer, you've seen the Susquehanna, down in the Delaware country?"

"That have I, and hunted along its banks a hundred times."

"That and this are the same in fact, and, I suppose, the same in sound. I am glad they've been compelled to keep the red-men's name, for it would be hard to rob them of both land and name!"

Deerslayer made no answer; but he stood leaning on his rifle, gazing at the view which so much delighted him. It was not the picturesque alone which so strongly attracted his attention. It was the air of deep repose—the reign of nature, in a word, that gave so much pure delight to one of his habits and turn of mind. Still he felt, though it was unconsciously, like a poet also. If he found a pleasure in studying this large and, to him, unusual opening into the mysteries and forms of the woods, as one is gratified in getting broader views of any subject that has long occupied his thoughts, he was not insensible to the innate loveliness of such a landscape neither,

but felt a portion of that soothing of the spirit which is a common attendant of a scene so thoroughly pervaded by the holy calm of nature.

CHAPTER III.

As soon as Hurry had taken a sufficiently intimate survey of Floating Tom's implements he summoned his companion to the canoe, that they might go down the lake in quest of the family. Previously to embarking, however, Hurry carefully examined the whole of the northern end of the water with a ship's glass that formed a part of Hutter's effects. In this scrutiny no part of the shore was overlooked; the bays and points, in particular, being subjected to a closer inquiry than the rest of the wooded boundary.

"'Tis as I thought," said Hurry, laying aside the glass; "the old fellow is drifting about the south end this fine weather, and has left the castle to defend itself. Well, now we know that he is not up this-a-way, 'twill be but a small matter to paddle down and hunt him up in his hiding-place."

"Does Master Hutter think it necessary to burrow on this lake?" inquired Deerslayer, as he followed his companion into the canoe; "to my eye it is such a solitude as one might open his whole soul in, and fear no one to disarrange his thoughts or his worship."

"You forget your friends, the Mingos, and all the French savages. Is there a spot on 'arth, Deerslayer, to which them disquiet rogues don't go?"

"I hear no good character of them sartainly, Hurry, though I've never been called on as yet to meet them or any other mortal on the war-path, and the Delawares give me such an account of 'em that I've pretty much set 'em down in my own mind as thorough miscreants."

"You may do that with a safe conscience, or, for that matter, any other savage you may happen to meet."

Here Deerslayer protested, and as they went paddling down the lake a hot discussion was maintained concerning the respective merits of the pale-faces and the red-skins.

As the canoe kept close along the western side of the lake, with a view, as Hurry had explained to his companion, of reconnoitring for enemies, before he trusted himself too

openly in sight, the expectations of the two adventurers were kept constantly on the stretch, as neither could foretell what the next turning of a point might reveal.

Each time the canoe passed a point, Hurry turned to look behind him, expecting to see the "ark" anchored or beached in the bay. He was fated to be disappointed, however; and they got within a mile of the southern end of the lake, or a distance of quite two leagues from the "castle", which was now hidden from view by half a dozen intervening projections of the land, when he suddenly ceased paddling, as if uncertain in what direction next to steer.

"It is possible that the old chap has dropped into the river," said Hurry, after looking carefully along the whole of the eastern shore, which was open to his scrutiny for more than half its length; "for he has taken to trapping considerable of late, and, barring flood-wood, he might drop down it a mile or so; though he would have a most scratching time in getting back again!"

"Where is this outlet?" asked Deerslayer. "I see no opening in the banks or the trees that looks as if it would let a river like the Susquehanna run through it."

"You don't see the outlet, because it passes atween high, steep banks; and the pines, and hemlocks, and bass-wood hang over it, as a roof hangs over a house. If old Tom is not in the 'Rat's Cove', he must have burrowed in the river; we'll look for him first in the Cove, and then we'll cross to the outlet."

As they proceeded, Hurry explained that there was a shallow bay, formed by a long, low point, that had got the name of the "Rat's Cove" from the circumstance of its being a favourite haunt of the musk-rat; and which offered so complete a cover for the "ark" that its owner was fond of lying in it, whenever he found it convenient.

"As a man never knows who may be his visitors in this part of the country," continued Hurry, "it's a great advantage to get a good look at 'em before they come too near. Now it's war, such caution is more than commonly useful, since a Canadian, or a Mingo, might get into his hut afore he invited 'em. But Hutter is a first-rate look-outer, and can pretty much scent danger as a hound scents the deer."

"I should think the castle so open that it would be sartin to draw inimies, if any happened to find the lake; a thing unlikely enough, I will allow, as it's off the trail of the forts and settlements."

"Why, Deerslayer, I've got to believe that a man meets with inimies easier than he meets with fri'nds. It's skearful to think for how many causes one gets to be your inimy, and for how few your fri'nd."

"Here is the end of the long p'int you mentioned, and the 'Rat's Cove' can't be far off," said Deerslayer.

This point, instead of thrusting itself forward, like all the others, ran in a line with the main shore of the lake, which here swept within it in a deep and retired bay, circling round south again at the distance of a quarter of a mile. In this bay Hurry felt almost certain of finding the ark, since, anchored behind the trees that covered the narrow strip of the point, it might have lain concealed from prying eyes an entire summer.

"We shall soon see the ark," said Hurry, as the canoe glided round the extremity of the point, where the water was so deep as actually to appear black; "he loves to burrow up among the rushes, and we shall be in his nest in five minutes, although the old fellow may be off among the traps himself."

March proved a false prophet. The canoe completely doubled the point, so as to enable the two travellers to command a view of the whole cove or bay, for it was more properly the last, and no object but those that nature had placed there became visible.

The motion of the canoe had been attended with little or no noise, the frontier men habitually getting accustomed to caution in most of their movements, and it now lay on the glassy water appearing to float in air, partaking of the breathing stillness that seemed to pervade the entire scene. At this instant a dry stick was heard cracking on the narrow strip of land that concealed the bay from the open lake. Both the adventurers started, and each extended a hand towards his rifle.

"'Twas too heavy for any light creatur'," whispered Hurry, "and it sounded like the tread of a man!"

"Not so," returned Deerslayer: "'twas, as you say, too heavy for one, but it was too light for the other. Send the canoe in to that log: I'll land and cut off the creatur's retreat at the p'int, be it a Mingo or be it only a musk-rat."

As Hurry complied, Deerslayer was soon on the shore, advancing into the thicket with a moccasined foot, and a caution that prevented the least noise. In a minute he was in the centre of the narrow strip of land, and moving slowly down

towards its end, the bushes rendering extreme watchfulness necessary. Just as he reached the centre of the thicket the dried twigs cracked again, and the noise was repeated, at short intervals, as if some creature having life walked slowly towards the point. Hurry heard these sounds also, and, pushing the canoe off into the bay, he seized his rifle to watch the result. A breathless minute succeeded, after which a noble buck walked out of the thicket, proceeded with a stately step to the sandy extremity of the point, and began to slake its thirst from the water of the lake. Hurry hesitated an instant; then raising his rifle hastily to his shoulder, he took sight and fired. The report of the weapon had the usual sharp, short sound of the rifle; but, when a few moments of silence had succeeded the sudden crack, it reached the rocks of the opposite mountain, where the vibrations accumulated, and were rolled from cavity to cavity for miles along the hills, awakening the sleeping thunders of the woods. The buck merely shook his head at the whistling of the bullet; but the echoes of the hills awakened his distrust, and, leaping forward, with his four legs drawn under his body, he fell at once into deep water, and began to swim towards the foot of the lake. Hurry dashed forward in chase, and for one or two minutes the water foamed around the pursuer and the pursued. The former was dashing past the point, when Deerslayer appeared on the sand, and signed to him to return.

"'Twas inconsiderate to pull a trigger afore we had recon- n'itred the shore, and made sartain that no inimies harboured near it," said the latter, as his companion slowly and reluctantly complied. "This much I have l'arned from the Dela- wares, in the way of schooling and traditions, even though I've never yet been on a war-path. And, moreover, venison can hardly be called in season now, and we do not want for food."

"'Twas an awful mistake to miss that buck!" exclaimed Hurry, doffing his cap and running his fingers through his handsome but matted curls; "I've not done so onhandy a thing since I was fifteen."

"Never lament it; the creatur's death could have done neither of us any good, and might have done us harm. Them echoes are more awful, in my ears, than your mistake, Hurry. One such call from the mountains is enough to let a whole tribe into the secret of our arrival."

"If it does no other good, it will warn Tom to put the pot over, and let him know visitors are at hand. Come, lad; get

into the canoe, and we will hunt the ark up while there is yet day."

Deerslayer complied, and the canoe left the spot. Its head was turned diagonally across the lake, pointing towards the south-eastern curvature of the sheet. In that direction the distance to the shore, or to the termination of the lake on the course the two were now steering, was not quite a mile, and their progress being always swift, it was fast lessening under the skilful but easy sweeps of the paddles. When about half-way across, a slight noise drew the eyes of the men towards the nearest land, and they saw that the buck was just emerging from the lake, and wading towards the beach. In a minute the noble animal shook the water from his flanks, gazed upward at the covering of trees, and, bounding against the bank, plunged into the forest.

They were now quite near the place that March had pointed out for the position of the outlet, and both began to look for it with a curiosity that was increased by the expectation of finding the ark.

"I've not been down at this end of the lake these two summers," said Hurry, standing up in the canoe the better to look about him. "Ay—there's the rock showing its chin above the water, and I know that the river begins in its neighbourhood."

The men now plied the paddles again, and they were presently within a few yards of the rock—floating towards it, though their efforts were suspended. This rock was not large, being merely some five or six feet high, only half of which elevation rose above the lake.

The incessant washing of the water for centuries had so rounded its summi that it resembled a large bee-hive in shape, its form being more than usually regular and even.

"Here is the river, Deerslayer," said Hurry, "though so shut in by trees and bushes as to look more like an and-bush than the outlet of such a sheet as the Glimmerglass."

Hurry had not badly described the place, which did truly seem to be a stream lying in ambush. The high banks might have been a hundred feet asunder; but on the western side a small bit of low land extended so far forward as to diminish the breadth of the stream to half that width. As the bushes hung in the water beneath, and pines that had the stature of church-steeple rose in tall columns above, until their branches intermingled, the eye at a little distance could not easily de-

tect any opening in the shore to mark the egress of the water. As the canoe slowly advanced, sucked in by the current, it entered beneath an arch of trees, through which the light from the heavens struggled by casual openings, faintly relieving the gloom beneath.

"This is a nat'ral and-bush," whispered Hurry. "Depend on it, Tom has burrowed with the ark somewhere in this quarter. We will drop down with the current a short distance, and ferret him out."

"This seems no place for a vessel of any size," returned the other; "it appears to me that we shall have hardly room enough for the canoe."

Hurry laughed at this suggestion, and, as it soon appeared, with reason; for the fringe of bushes immediately on the shore of the lake was no sooner passed than the adventurers found themselves in a narrow stream, of a sufficient depth of limpid water, with a strong current, and a canopy of leaves, upheld by arches composed of the limbs of hoary trees. Bushes lined the shores, as usual, but they left sufficient space between them to admit the passage of anything that did not exceed twenty feet in width, and to allow of a perspective ahead of eight or ten times that distance.

Neither of our two adventurers used his paddle, except to keep the light bark in the centre of the current, but both watched each turning of the stream, of which there were two or three within the first hundred yards, with jealous vigilance. Turn after turn, however, was passed, and the canoe had dropped down with the current some little distance, when Hurry caught a bush, and arrested its movement so suddenly and silently as to denote some unusual motive for the act. Deerslayer laid his hand on the stock of his rifle as soon as he noted this proceeding; but it was quite as much with a hunter's habit as from any feeling of alarm.

"There the old fellow is!" whispered Hurry, pointing with a finger, and laughing heartily, though he carefully avoided making a noise; "ratting it away just as I supposed; up to his knees in the mud and water, looking to the traps and the bait. But, for the life of me, I can see nothing of the ark; though I'll bet every skin I take this season, Jude isn't trusting her pretty little feet in the neighbourhood of that black mud. The girl's more likely to be braiding her hair by the side of some spring, where she can see her own good looks, and collect scornful feelings ag'in us men."

"You overjudge young women, Hurry—who as often be-think them of their failings as they do of their perfections. I dare say this Judith, now, is no such admirer of herself, and no such scorner of our sex as you seem to think; and that she is quite as likely to be sarving her father in the house, wherever that may be, as he is to be sarving her among the traps."

"It's a pleasure to hear truth from a man's tongue, if it be only once in a girl's life," cried a pleasant, rich, and yet soft female voice, so near the canoe as to make both the listeners start. "As for you, Master Hurry, fair words are so apt to choke you that I no longer expect to hear them from your mouth. But I'm glad to see you keep better society than formerly, and that they who know how to esteem and treat women are not ashamed to journey in your company."

As this was said, a singularly handsome and youthful female face was thrust through an opening in the leaves, within reach of Deerslayer's paddle. Its owner smiled graciously on the young man; and the frown that she cast on Hurry, though simulated and pettish, had the effect to render her beauty more striking, by exhibiting the play of an expressive but capricious countenance.

A second look explained the nature of the surprise. Unwittingly the men had dropped alongside of the ark, which had been purposely concealed in bushes, cut and arranged for the purpose; and Judith Hutter had merely pushed aside the leaves that lay before a window, in order to show her face and speak to them.

CHAPTER IV.

The ark was a very simple contrivance. A large flat, or scow, composed the buoyant part of the vessel; and in its centre, occupying the whole of its breadth, and about two-thirds of its length, stood a low fabric, resembling the castle in construction, though made of materials so light as barely to be bullet-proof. As the sides of the scow were a little higher than usual, and the interior of the cabin had no more elevation than was necessary for comfort, this unusual addition had neither a very clumsy nor a very obtrusive appearance. It was, in short, little more than a modern canal-boat, though more rudely constructed, of greater breadth than common,

and bearing about it the signs of the wilderness, in its bark-covered posts and roof. The scow, however, had been put together with some skill, being comparatively light for its strength, and sufficiently manageable. The cabin was divided into two apartments, one of which served for a sleeping-room of the father, and the other was appropriated to the uses of the daughters. A very simple arrangement sufficed for the kitchen, which was in one end of the scow and standing in the open air; the ark being altogether a summer habitation.

The "and-bush", as Hurry termed it, is quite as easily explained. In many parts of the lake and river, where the banks were steep and high, the smaller trees and larger bushes overhung the stream, their branches not unfrequently growing out in nearly horizontal lines for thirty or forty feet. The water being uniformly deepest near the shores, where the banks were highest and the nearest to a perpendicular, Hutter had found no difficulty in letting the ark drop under one of these covers, where it had been anchored, with a view to conceal its position. Once beneath the trees and bushes, a few stones fastened to the ends of the branches had caused them to bend sufficiently to dip into the river; and a few severed bushes properly disposed did the rest.

The discovery of the ark produced very different effects on our two adventurers. As soon as the canoe could be got round to the proper opening, Hurry leaped on board, and in a minute was closely engaged in a gay and sort of recriminating discourse with Judith, apparently forgetful of the existence of all the rest of the world. Not so with Deerslayer. He entered the ark with a slow, cautious step, examining every arrangement of the cover with curious and scrutinizing eyes. Step by step did he look into the construction of the singular abode, investigate its fastenings and strength, ascertain its means of defence, and make every inquiry that would be likely to occur to one whose thoughts dwelt principally on such expedients. Frontier usages admitting of this familiarity, he passed through the rooms as he had previously done at the castle; and, opening a door, issued into the end of the scow opposite to that where he had left Hurry and Judith. Here he found the other sister employed on some coarse needlework, seated beneath the leafy canopy of the cover.

As Deerslayer's examination was by this time ended, he dropped the butt of his rifle, and, leaning on the barrel with

both hands, he turned towards the girl with an interest the singular beauty of her sister had not awakened. He had gathered from Hurry's remarks that Hetty was considered to have less intellect than ordinarily falls to the share of human beings; and his education among Indians had taught him to treat those who were thus afflicted with more than common tenderness. Nor was there anything in Hetty Hutter's appearance, to weaken the interest her situation excited. Her mind was just enough enfeebled to lose most of those traits that are connected with the more artful qualities, and to retain its ingenuousness and love of truth. It had often been remarked of this girl, by a few who had seen her, that her perception of the right seemed almost intuitive, while her aversion to the wrong formed so distinctive a feature of her mind as to surround her with an atmosphere of pure morality. Her person, too, was agreeable, having a strong resemblance to that of her sister, of which it was a subdued and humble copy. If it had none of the brilliancy of Judith's, the calm, quiet, almost holy expression of her meek countenance seldom failed to win on the observer: and few noted it long that did not begin to feel a deep and lasting interest in the girl. She had no colour, in common, nor was her simple mind apt to present images that caused her cheek to brighten, though she retained a modesty so innate that it almost raised her to the unsuspecting purity of a being superior to human infirmities. Guileless, innocent, and without distrust, equally by nature and from her mode of life, Providence had, nevertheless, shielded her from harm by a halo of moral light.

"You are Hetty Hutter," said Deerslayer, in a way one puts a question unconsciously to himself. "Hurry Harry has told me of you, and I know you must be the child."

"Yes, I'm Hetty Hutter," returned the girl, in a low, sweet voice; "I'm Hetty: Judith Hutter's sister, and Thomas Hutter's youngest daughter."

"I know your history then, for Hurry Harry talks considerable and he is free of speech when he can find other people's consarns to dwell on. You pass most of your life on the lake, Hetty?"

"Certainly. Mother is dead; father is gone a-trapping, and Judith and I stay at home. What's *your* name?"

"That's a question more easily asked than it is answered, young woman; seeing that I'm so young, and yet have borne more names than some of the greatest chiefs in all America."

"But you've *got* a name—you don't throw away one name before you come honestly by another?"

"I hope not, gal. My names have come nat'rally, and I suppose the one I bear now will be of no great lasting, since the Delawares seldom settle on a man's ra'al title until such time as he has an opportunity of showing his true natur', in the council or on the war-path."

"Tell me your names," added Hetty, looking up at him artlessly, "and, maybe, I'll tell you your character."

"There is some truth in that, I'll not deny, though it often fails. Men are deceived in other men's characters, and frequently give 'em names they by no means deserve. I put no great dependence, therefore, on names."

"Tell me *all* your names," repeated the girl earnestly, for her mind was too simple to separate things from professions, and she *did* attach importance to a name; "I want to know what to think of you."

"Well, I've no objection, and you shall hear them all. In the first place, then, I'm Christian and white-born, like yourself; my father was called Bumppo; and I was named after him, of course, the given name being Nathaniel, or Natty, as most people saw fit to tarm it."

"Yes, yes—Natty—and Hetty—" interrupted the girl quickly, and looking up from her work again, with a smile; "you are Natty, and I'm Hetty—though you are Bumppo, and I'm Hutter. Bumppo isn't as pretty as Hutter, is it?"

"Why, that's as people fancy; and yet men have bumped through the world with it. I did not go by this name, how's'ever, very long; for the Delawares soon found out, that I was not given to lying, and they called me firstly, Straight-tongue."

"That's a good name," interrupted Hetty earnestly; "don't tell me there's no virtue in names!"

"I do not say *that*, for perhaps I deserved to be so called, lies being no favourites with me. After a while they found out that I was quick of foot, and then they called me 'The Pigeon'; which, you know, has a swift wing."

"*That* was a *pretty* name!" exclaimed Hetty; "pigeons are pretty birds!"

"Most things that God has created are pretty in their way, my good gal, though they get to be deformed by mankind. From carrying messages and striking blind trails, I got, at last, to following the hunters, when it was thought I was quicker

and surer at finding the game than most lads, and then they called me the 'Lapear', as they said I partook of the sagacity of a hound."

"That is not so pretty," answered Hetty; "I hope you didn't keep that name long."

"Not after I was rich enough to buy a rifle," returned the other, betraying a little pride through his usually quiet and subdued manner; "*then* it was seen I could keep a wigwam in ven'son; and, in time, I got the name of 'Deerslayer', which is that I now bear; homely as some will think it, who set more value on the scalp of a fellow-mortal than on the horns of a buck."

"Well, Deerslayer, I'm not one of them," answered Hetty simply. "Judith likes soldiers, and flary coats, and fine feathers; but they're all naught to me. They make me shudder, for their business is to kill their fellow-creatures. I like your calling better."

"This is nat'ral, in one of your turn of mind, Hetty, and much as I should have expected. They tell me your sister is handsome, and beauty is apt to seek admiration."

"Did you never see Judith?" demanded the girl, with quick earnestness; "if you never have, go at once and look at her. Even Hurry Harry isn't more pleasant to look at; though *she* is a woman, and *he* is a man."

Deerslayer regarded the girl for a moment with concern. Her pale face had flushed a little, and her eye, usually so mild and serene, brightened as she spoke, in a way to betray the inward impulses.

"Ay, Hurry," he muttered to himself, as he walked through the cabin towards the other end of the boat; "this comes of good looks: a light tongue has had no consarn in it. It's easy to see which way that poor creatur's feelin's are leanin', whatever may be the case with your Jude's."

But an interruption was put to the gallantry of Hurry, the coquetry of his mistress, the thoughts of Deerslayer, and the gentle feelings of Hetty, by the sudden appearance of the canoe of the ark's owner, in the narrow opening among the bushes, that served as a sort of moat to his position. It would seem that Hutter recognized the canoe of Hurry, for he expressed no surprise at finding him in the scow. On the contrary, his reception was such as to denote not only gratification, but a pleasure mingled with a little disappointment at his not having made his appearance some days sooner.

"I look'd for you last week," he said, in a half-grumbling, half-welcoming manner; "and was disappointed uncommonly that you didn't arrive. There came a runner through to warn all the trappers and hunters that the Colony and the Canadas were again in trouble; and I felt lonesome up in these mountains, with three scalps to see to, and only one pair of hands to protect them."

"That's reasonable," returned March; "and 'twas feelin' like a parent. No doubt, if I had two such darters as Judith and Hetty, my exper'ence would tell the same story, though in gen'ral I am just as well satisfied with having the nearest neighbour fifty miles off as when he is within call."

"Notwithstanding, you didn't choose to come into the wilderness alone, now you knew that the Canada savages are likely to be stirring," returned Hutter, giving an inquiring glance at Deerslayer.

"Why should I? They say a bad companion on a journey helps to shorten the path; and this young man I account to be a reasonably good one. This is Deerslayer, Tom, a noted hunter among the Delawares, and Christian-born, like you and me. Should we have occasion to defend our traps and the territory, he'll be useful in feeding us all, for he's a regular dealer in ven'son."

"Young man, you are welcome," growled Tom, thrusting a hard, bony hand towards the youth, as a pledge of his sincerity. "In such times a white face is a friend's, and I count on you as a support. Children sometimes make a stout heart feeble, and these two daughters of mine give me more concern than all my traps, and skins, and rights in the country."

"That's nat'ral!" cried Hurry. "Yes, Deerslayer, you and I don't know it yet by exper'ence; but, on the whole, I consider that as nat'ral. If we *had* darters, it's more than probable we should have some such feelin's. As for Judith, old man, I enlist at once as her soldier, and here is Deerslayer to help you to take care of Hetty."

"Many thanks to you, Master March," returned the beauty, with an accuracy of intonation and utterance that she shared in common with her sister, and which showed that she had been better taught than her father's life and appearance would give reason to expect: "but Judith Hutter has the spirit and the experience that will make her depend more on herself than on good-looking rovers like you. Should there be need to face the savages, do you land with my father, instead of

burrowing in the huts under the show of defending us females, and—”

“Girl—girl,” interrupted the father, “quiet that glib tongue of thine, and hear the truth. There are savages on the lake shore already, and no man can say how near to us they may be at this very moment, or when we may hear more from them!”

“If this be true, Master Hutter,” said Hurry, whose change of countenance denoted how serious he deemed the information, though it did not denote any unmanly alarm; “if this be true, your ark is in a most misfortunate position; for, though the cover did deceive Deerslayer and myself, it would hardly be overlooked by an Indian who was out seriously in s’arch of scalps!”

“I think as you do, Hurry, and wish with all my heart we lay anywhere else at this moment than in this narrow stream, which has many advantages to hide in, but which is almost fatal to them that are discovered. The savages are near us, moreover, and the difficulty is to get out of the river without being shot down like deer standing at a lick!”

“Are you sartain, Master Hutter, that the red-skins you dread are ra’al Canadas?” asked Deerslayer, in a modest, but earnest manner. “Have you seen any, and can you describe their paint?”

“I have fallen in with the signs of their being in the neighbourhood, but have seen none of ’em. I was down stream a mile or so, looking to my traps, when I struck a fresh trail crossing the corner of a swamp, and moving northward. The man had not passed an hour; and I know’d it for an Indian footstep by the size of the foot and the in-toe, even before I found a worn moccasin, which its owner had dropped as useless.”

“That doesn’t look much like a red-skin on the war-path!” returned the other, shaking his head. “An exper’enced warrior at least would have burned, or buried such signs of his passage, and your trail is quite likely a peaceable trail. But the moccasin may greatly relieve my mind if you bethought you of bringing it off. I’m come here to meet a young chief myself; and his course would be much in the direction you’ve mentioned. The trail may have been his’n.”

“Hurry, you’re well acquainted with this young man, I hope, who has meetings with savages in a part of the country where he has never been before?” demanded Hutter, in a tone and in a manner that sufficiently indicated the motive of the

question. "Treachery is an Indian virtue; and the whites that live much in their tribes soon catch their ways and practices."

"True—true as the Gospel, Tom; but not personable to Deerslayer, who's a young man of truth, if he has no other recommend."

"I should like to know his errand in this quarter of the country?"

"That is soon told, Master Hutter," said the young man, with the composure of one who kept a clean conscience; "I think, moreover, you've a *right* to ask it."

"If such is your way of thinking, friend, let me hear your story without more words."

"'Tis soon told, as I said afore. No sooner did the news come among the Delawares that wampum and a hatchet were about to be sent in to the tribe, than they wished me to go out among the people of my own colour, and get the exact state of things for 'em. This I did; and after delivering my talk to the chiefs, on my return, I met an officer of the crown on the Schoharie, who had moneys to send to some of the friendly tribes that live further west. This was thought a good occasion for Chingachgook, a young chief who has never struck a foe, and myself to go on our first war-path in company; and an app'ntment was made for us by an old Delaware to meet at the rock near the foot of this lake. I'll not deny that Chingachgook has *another* object in view; but it has no consarn with any here, and is his secret, and not mine; therefore I'll say no more about it."

"'Tis something about a young woman," interrupted Judith hastily, then laughing at her own impetuosity. "If 'tis neither war nor a hunt, it must be love."

"Ay, it comes easy for the young and handsome, who hear so much of them feelin's, to suppose that they lie at the bottom of most proceedin's, but on that head I say nothin'. Chingachgook is to meet me at the rock an hour afore sunset to-morrow evening, after which we shall go our way together, molesting none but the king's inimies, who are lawfully our own. Knowing Hurry of old, who once trapped in our hunting-grounds, and falling in with him on the Schoharie just as he was on the p'int of starting for his summer ha'nts, we agreed to journey in company to shorten a long road."

"And you think the trail I saw may have been that of your friend, ahead of his time?" said Hutter.

"That's my idee, which may be wrong, but if I saw the moccasin I could tell in a minute whether it is made in the Delaware fashion or not."

"Here it is then," said the quick-witted Judith, who had already gone to the canoe in quest of it; "tell us what it says, friend or enemy. You look honest, and I believe all you say, whatever father may think."

"That's the way with you, Jude, for ever finding out friends where I distrust foes," grumbled Tom; "but speak out, young man, and tell us what you think of the moccasin."

"That's not Delaware-made," returned Deerslayer, examining the worn covering for the foot with a cautious eye; "I should say that moccasin has a northern look, and comes from beyond the great lakes."

"If such is the case, we ought not to lie here a minute longer than is necessary," said Hutter, glancing through the leaves of his cover, as if he already distrusted the presence of an enemy on the opposite shore. "It wants but an hour or so of night, and to move in the dark will be impossible, without making a noise that would betray us. Did you hear the echo of a piece in the mountains half an hour since?"

"Yes, and heard the piece itself," answered Hurry, "for the last was fired from my own shoulder."

"I feared it came from the French Indians; still, it may put them on the look-out, and be a means of discovering us. You did wrong to fire in war time, unless there was good occasion."

"So I begin to think myself, Uncle Tom."

Hutter now held a long consultation with his two guests, in which the parties came to a true understanding of their situation. He explained the difficulty that would exist in attempting to get the ark out of so swift and narrow a stream in the dark. Any strollers in their vicinity would keep near the river or the lake; but the former had swampy shores in many places, and was both so crooked and so fringed with bushes that it was quite possible to move by daylight without incurring much danger of being seen. More was to be apprehended, perhaps, from the ear than from the eye, especially as long as they were in the short and canopied reaches of the stream.

"I never drop down into this cover, which is handy to my traps and safer than the lake from curious eyes, without

providing the means of getting out ag'in," continued this singular being; "and that is easier done by a pull than a push. My anchor is now lying above the suction, in the open lake, and here is a line, you see, to haul us up to it. Without some such help, a single pair of hands would make heavy work in forcing a scow like this up stream. I have a sort of a crab, too, that lightens the pull on occasion. Jude can use the oar astarn, as well as myself, and when we fear no enemy, to get out of the river gives us but little trouble."

"What should we gain, Master Hutter, by changing the position?" asked Deerslayer, with a good deal of earnestness. "This is a safe cover, and a stout defence might be made from the inside of this cabin. I've never fou't unless in the way of tradition, but it seems to me we might beat off twenty Mingos with palisades like them afore us."

"Ay, ay; you've never fought except in traditions, that's plain enough, young man! Did you ever see as broad a sheet of water as this above us before you came in upon it with Hurry?"

"I can't say that I ever did," Deerslayer answered modestly. "Youth is the time to l'arn, and I'm far from wishing to raise my voice in council afore it is justified by exper'ence."

"Well, then, I'll teach you the disadvantage of fighting in this position, and the advantage of taking to the open lake. Here, you may see, the savages will know where to aim every shot, and it would be too much to hope that *some* would not find their way through the crevices of the logs. Now, on the other hand, we should have nothing but a forest to aim at. Then we are not safe from fire here, the bark of this roof being little better than so much kindling-wood. Once in the lake, we can be attacked only in boats or on rafts—shall have a fair chance with the enemy—and can protect the castle with the ark. Do you understand this reasoning, youngster?"

"It sounds well—yes, it has a rational sound, and I'll not gainsay it."

"Well, old Tom," cried Hurry, "if we are to move, the sooner we make a beginning the sooner we shall know whether we are to have our scalps for night-caps or not."

As this proposition was self-evident, no one denied its justice. The three men, after a short preliminary explanation, now set about their preparations to move the ark in earnest. The slight fastenings were quickly loosened; and by hauling on the line the heavy craft slowly emerged from the cover.

It was no sooner free from the encumbrance of the branches than it swung into the stream, sheering quite close to the western shore by the force of the current. Not a soul on board heard the rustling of the branches, as the cabin came against the bushes and trees of the western bank, without a feeling of uneasiness; for no one knew at what moment or in what place a secret and murderous enemy might unmask himself. Although the sun had not absolutely set, it had withdrawn its direct rays from the valley; and the hues of evening were beginning to gather around objects that stood uncovered, rendering those within the shadows of the woods still more sombre and gloomy.

No interruption followed the movement, however, and as the men continued to haul on the line, the ark passed steadily ahead, the great breadth of the scow preventing its sinking into the water, and from offering much resistance to the progress of the swift element beneath its bottom. Hutter, too, had adopted a precaution, suggested by experience, which might have done credit to a seaman, and which completely prevented any of the annoyances and obstacles which otherwise would have attended the short turns of the river. As the ark descended, heavy stones attached to the line were dropped in the centre of the stream, forming local anchors, each of which was kept from dragging by the assistance of those above it until the uppermost of all was reached, which got its "backing" from the anchor or grapnel that lay well out in the lake.

Favoured by this foresight, and stimulated by the apprehension of discovery, Floating Tom and his two athletic companions hauled the ark ahead with quite as much rapidity as comported with the strength of the line. At every turn in the stream a stone was raised from the bottom, when the direction of the scow changed to one that pointed towards the stone that lay above. In this manner did Hutter move forward, occasionally urging his friends, in a low and guarded voice, to increase their exertions, and then, as occasions offered, warning them against efforts that might, at particular moments, endanger all by too much zeal. In spite of their long familiarity with the woods, the gloomy character of the shaded river added to the uneasiness that each felt; and when the ark reached the first bend in the Susquehanna, and the eye caught a glimpse of the broader expanse of the lake, all felt a relief that perhaps neither would have been willing to confess.

Here the last stone was raised from the bottom, and the line led directly towards the grapnel, which, as Hutter had explained, was dropped above the suction of the current.

"Thank God!" ejaculated Hurry, "*there* is daylight, and we shall soon have a chance of seeing our inimies, if we are to feel 'em."

"That is more than you, or any man can say," growled Hutter. "There is no spot so likely to harbour a party as the shore around the outlet; and the moment we clear these trees and get into open water will be the most trying time, since it will leave the enemy a cover, while it puts us out of one. Judith, girl, do you and Hetty leave the oar to take care of itself, and go within the cabin, and be mindful not to show your faces at a window. And now, Hurry, we'll step into this outer room ourselves, and haul through the door where we shall all be safe from a surprise at least. Friend Deerslayer, as the current is lighter, and the line has all the strain on it that is prudent, do you keep moving from window to window, taking care not to let your head be seen, if you set any value on life. No one knows when or where we shall hear from our neighbours."

Deerslayer complied with a sensation that had nothing in common with fear, but which had all the interest of a perfectly novel and a most exciting situation. For the first time in his life he was in the vicinity of enemies, or had good reason to think so, and that, too, under all the thrilling circumstances of Indian surprises and Indian artifices. As he took his stand at a window the ark was just passing through the narrowest part of the stream, a point where the water first entered what was properly termed the river, and where the trees fairly interlocked overhead, causing the current to rush into an arch of verdure.

The ark was in the act of passing the last curve of this leafy entrance as Deerslayer, having examined all that could be seen of the eastern bank of the river, crossed the room to look from the opposite window at the western. His arrival at this aperture was most opportune, for he had no sooner placed his eye at a crack than a sight met his gaze that might well have alarmed a sentinel so young and inexperienced. A sapling overhung the water in nearly half a circle, and on it no less than six Indians had already appeared, others standing ready to follow them as they left room; each evidently bent on running out on the trunk, and dropping on the roof of the

ark as it passed beneath. This would have been an exploit of no great difficulty, the inclination of the tree admitting of an easy passage, the adjoining branches offering ample support for the hands, and the fall being too trifling to be apprehended. Deerslayer's knowledge of Indian habits told him at once that they were all in their war-paint, and belonged to a hostile tribe.

"Pull, Hurry," he cried; "pull for your life! Pull, man, pull!"

This call was made to one that the young man knew had the strength of a giant. It was so earnest and solemn, that both Hutter and March felt it was not idly given, and they applied all their force to the line simultaneously, and at a most critical moment. Perceiving that they were discovered, the Indians uttered the war-whoop, and running forward on the tree, leaped desperately towards their fancied prize. All but their leader fell into the water, more or less distant from the ark, as they came sooner or later to the leaping-place. The chief, who had taken the dangerous post in advance, having an earlier opportunity than the others, struck the scow just within the stern. The fall proving so much greater than he had anticipated, he was slightly stunned, and for a moment he remained half bent, and unconscious of his situation. At this instant Judith rushed from the cabin, and throwing all her strength into the effort, she pushed the intruder over the edge of the scow into the river. All this occupied less than a minute, when the arm of Deerslayer was thrown around her waist, and she was dragged swiftly within the protection of the cabin. This retreat was not effected too soon. Scarcely were the two in safety, when the forest was filled with yells, and bullets began to patter against the logs.

The ark being in swift motion all this while, it was beyond the danger of pursuit by the time these events had occurred; and the savages, as soon as the first burst of their anger had subsided, ceased firing, with the consciousness that they were expending their ammunition in vain. When the scow came up above the grapnel, Hutter tripped the latter, and being now beyond the influence of the current, the vessel continued to drift ahead, until fairly in the open lake, when Hutter and March got out two small sweeps, and, covered by the cabin, soon urged the ark far enough from the shore to leave no inducement to their enemies to make any further attempts to injure them.

CHAPTER V

As no danger could now approach unseen, immediate uneasiness had given place to the concern which attended the conviction that enemies were in considerable force on the shores of the lake, and that they might be sure no practicable means of accomplishing their own destruction would be neglected. As a matter of course, Hutter felt these truths the deepest, his daughters having an habitual reliance on his resources, and knowing too little to appreciate fully all the risks they ran; while his male companions were at liberty to quit him at any moment they saw fit. His first remark showed that he had an eye to the latter circumstance, and might have betrayed to a keen observer the apprehension that was just then uppermost.

"We've a great advantage over the Iroquois, or the enemy, whoever they are, in being afloat," he said. "There's not a canoe on the lake that I don't know where it's hid; and now yours is here, Hurry, there are but three more on the land, and they're so snug in hollow logs, that I don't believe the Indians could find them, let them try ever so long."

"There's no telling that," put in Deerslayer: "a hound is not more sartain on the scent than a red-skin, when he expects to get anything by it. Let this party see scalps afore 'em, or plunder, and 'twill be a tight log that hides a canoe from their eyes."

"You're right, Deerslayer," cried March; "and I rej'ice that my bunch of bark is safe enough here, within reach of my arm. I calkilate they'll be at all the rest of the canoes afore to-morrow night, if they are in raal 'arnest to smoke you out, Tom, and we may as well overhaul our paddles for a pull."

Hutter made no immediate reply. He looked about him in silence for quite a minute, examining the sky, the lake, and the belt of forest which inclosed it, as it might be hermetically, like one consulting their signs. Nor did he find any alarming symptoms.

"Judith," called out the father, when he had taken this close but short survey, "night is at hand; find our friends food."

"We're not starving, Hutter," March observed, "for we

filled up just as we reached the lake, and, for one, I prefer the company of Jude even to her supper."

"Natur' is natur'," objected Hutter, "and must be fed. Judith, see to the meal and take your sister to help you. I've a little discourse to hold with you, friends," he continued, as soon as his daughters were out of hearing, "and wish the girls away. You see my situation, and I should like to hear your opinions concerning what is best to be done. This matter looks serious, and your ideas would greatly relieve my mind."

"It's my notion, Tom, that you, and your huts, and your traps, and your whole possessions, hereaway, are in desperate jippardy," returned the matter-of-fact Hurry.

"Then I've children!" continued the father; "daughters, as you know, Hurry, and good girls too."

"You've darters, as you say, and one of them hasn't her equal on the frontiers for good looks, whatever she may have for good behaviour. Give me Jude, if her conduct was only equal to her looks!"

"I see, Hurry, I can only count on you as a fair-weather friend; and I suppose that your companion will be of the same way of thinking," returned the other. "Well, I must depend on Providence."

"If you've understood Hurry, here, to mean that he intends to desert you," said Deerslayer, "I *think* you do him injustice; as I *know* you do me, in supposing I would follow him, was he to leave you in such a strait as this. I've come on this lake, Master Hutter, to rende'vous a fri'nd, and I only wish he was here himself, as I make no doubt he will be at sunset tomorrow."

"May I depend on *you* to stand by me and my daughters, then, Deerslayer?" demanded the old man.

"That may you; and as a brother would stand by a sister—a husband his wife—or a suitor his sweetheart; and, I think, Hurry does discredit to his natur' and wishes if you can't count on him."

"Not he," cried Judith, thrusting her handsome face out of the door: "his nature is hurry as well as his name, and he'll hurry off as soon as he thinks his fine figure in danger. But *you* we will rely on, Deerslayer; for your honest face and honest heart tells us that what you promise you will perform."

This was said as much, perhaps, in affected scorn for Hurry as in sincerity. Still, it was not said without feeling.

"Leave us, Judith," Hutter ordered sternly; "leave us, and

do not return until you come with the venison and fish. The girl has been spoilt by the flattery of the officers, who sometimes find their way up here, March, and you'll not think any harm of her silly words."

"You never said truer syllable, Tom," retorted Hurry; "the youngsters of the garrison have proved her undoing! I shall soon take to admiring her sister, who is getting to be much more to my fancy."

"I'm glad to hear this, Hurry, and look upon it as a sign that you're coming to your right senses. Hetty would make a much safer and more rational companion than Jude."

"No man need wish a safer wife than Hetty," said Hurry, laughing. "But, no matter; Deerslayer has not misconceived me when he told you I should be found at my post. I'll not quit *you*, Tom, just now, whatever may be my feelin's respecting your darter."

Hurry had a respectable reputation for prowess among his associates, and Hutter heard this pledge with a satisfaction that was not concealed. A minute before, Hutter would have been well content to compromise his danger by entering into a compact to act only on the defensive; but no sooner did he feel some security on this point, than the restlessness of man induced him to think of the means of carrying the war into the enemy's country.

"High prices are offered for scalps on both sides," he observed, with a grim smile. "It isn't right, perhaps, to take gold for human blood; and yet when mankind is busy in killing one another, there can be no great harm in adding a little bit of skin to the plunder. What's your sentiments, Hurry?"

"I think no more of a red-skin's scalp than I do of a pair of wolf's ears: and would just as lief finger money for one as for the other."

"That's manly, and I felt from the first that we had only to get you on our side to have you heart and hand," returned Tom. "Deerslayer, I conclude you're of Hurry's way of thinking?"

"I've no such feelin' nor any wish to harbour it," returned the other. "My gifts are not scalpers' gifts, but such as belong to my religion and colour. I'll stand by you, in the ark, or in the castle, but I'll not unhumanize my natur' by falling into ways that God intended for another race. If you and Hurry have got any thoughts that lean towards the

Colony's gold, go by yourselves in s'arch of it, and leave the females to my care. Much as I must differ from you on other p'int, we shall agree that it is the duty of the strong to take care of the weak."

"Hurry Harry, that is a lesson you might learn and practise on to some advantage," said the spirited voice of Judith from the cabin.

"No more of this, Jude," called out the father, angrily. "Move further off."

Hutter did not take any steps, however, to ascertain whether he was obeyed or not, but dropping his voice a little, he pursued the discourse.

"The young man is right, Hurry," he said; "and we can leave the children in his care. Now, my idea is just this; and I think you'll agree that it is rational and correct. There's a large party of these savages on the shore; and there's women among 'em. This I know from moccasin prints; and 'tis likely they are hunters, after all, who have been out so long that they know nothing of the war or of the bounties."

"In which case, Tom, why was their first salute an attempt to cut all our throats?"

"We don't know that their design was so bloody. No doubt they wished to get on board the ark, and that a disapp'nted savage should fire at us is in rule; I think nothing of that. How often have they burned me out—ay, and pulled trigger on me in the most peaceful times?"

"The blackguards will do such things, I allow, and we pay 'em off pretty much in their own c'ine. Women would not be on the war-path, sartainly; and so far there's reason in your idee."

"Nor would a hunter be in his war-paint," returned Deerslayer. "I saw the Mingos, and *know* that they are out on the trail of mortal men."

"There you have it ag'in, old fellow," said Hurry. "In the way of an eye, now, I'd as soon trust this young man as the oldest settler in the Colony: if he says paint, why paint it was."

"Then a hunting-party and a war-party have met, for women must have been with 'em. It may be that warriors have come out to call in their women and children, and to get an early blow."

"You've got it now, Tom," cried Hurry, "and I should like to hear what you mean to make out of it?"

"The bounty!" returned the other. "If there's women, there's children; the Colony pays for all scalps alike."

"More shame to it that it should do so," interrupted Deerslayer; "more shame to it that it don't pay greater attention to the will of God."

"Hearken to reason, lad, and don't cry out afore you understand a case," returned the unmoved Hurry; "the savages scalp your fri'nds, the Delawares or Mohicans; and why shouldn't we scalp? One good turn deserves another all the world over."

"Ay, Master Hurry," again interrupted the voice of Judith, "is it religion to say that one *bad* turn deserves another?"

"I'll never reason ag'in you, Judy, for you beat me with beauty if you can't with sense. Here's the Canadas paying their Indians for scalps, and why not we pay—"

"*Our* Indians!" exclaimed the girl. "Father! think no more of this; listen to the voice of Deerslayer, who *has* a conscience; which is more than I can say of Hurry March."

Hutter now rose, and entering the cabin, he compelled his daughters to go into the adjoining room, when he secured both the doors, and returned. Then he and Hurry pursued the subject; the conference lasting until Judith appeared, bearing the simple but savoury supper. March observed, with a little surprise, that she placed the choicest bits before Deerslayer, and that in the little nameless attentions it was in her power to bestow, she quite obviously manifested a desire to let it be seen that she deemed him the honoured guest. Accustomed, however, to the waywardness and coquetry of the beauty, this discovery gave him little concern, and he ate with an appetite that was in no degree disturbed by any moral causes.

An hour later the scene had greatly changed. The lake was still placid and glassy, but the gloom of the hour had succeeded to the soft twilight of a summer evening, and all within the dark setting of the woods lay in the quiet repose of night. The only sound that was audible was the regular dip of the sweeps, at which Hurry and Deerslayer lazily pushed, impelling the ark towards the castle. Hutter had withdrawn to the stern of the scow, in order to steer, but finding that the young men held the desired course by their own skill, he had permitted the oar to drag in the water, taken a seat on the end of the vessel, and lighted his pipe. He had not been thus placed many minutes ere Hetty came stealthily out of the cabin, and placed herself at his feet. As this movement was

by no means unusual in his feeble-minded child, the old man paid no other attention to it than to lay his hand kindly on her head in an affectionate and approving manner.

After a pause of several minutes, Hetty began to sing. Her voice was low and tremulous, but it was earnest and solemn. The words and the tune were of the simplest form. Hutter never listened to this simple strain without finding his heart and manner softened; facts that his daughter well knew, and by which she had often profited, through the sort of holy instinct that enlightens the weak of mind, more especially in their aims towards good.

Hetty's low, sweet tones had not been raised many moments when the dip of the oars ceased, and the holy strain arose singly on the breathing silence of the wilderness. Though nothing vulgar or noisy mingled in her melody, its strength and melancholy tenderness grew on the ear, until the air was filled with this simple homage of a soul that seemed almost spotless. Hutter was affected, for, rude as he was by early habits, and even ruthless as he had got to be by long exposure to the practices of the wilderness, his nature was of that fearful mixture of good and evil that so generally enters into the moral composition of man.

"You are sad to-night, child," said the father, "we have just escaped from enemies, and ought rather to rejoice."

"You can never do it, father!" said Hetty, in a low, remonstrating manner. "You have talked long with Hurry March; but neither of you will have the heart to do it!"

"Peace, girl! we are at war, and must do to our enemies as our enemies would do to us."

"That's not it, father! I heard Deerslayer say how it was. You must do to your enemies as you *wish* your enemies would do to you. No man wishes his enemies to kill him."

"We kill our enemies in war, girl, lest they should kill us. You know nothing about these things, poor Hetty, and had best say nothing."

"*Judith* says it is wrong, father: and *Judith* hath sense, though I have none."

"Jude understands better than to talk to me of these matters. Which would you prefer, Hetty: to have your own scalp taken and sold to the French, or that we should kill our enemies and keep them from harming us?"

"That's not it, father! Don't kill them, nor let them kill us. Sell your skins, and get more, if you can; but don't sell blood."

"Come, come, child; let us talk of matters you understand. Are you glad to see our old friend March back again? You like Hurry, and must know that one day he may be your brother—if not something nearer."

"That can't be, father," returned the girl. "Hurry has had one father and one mother; and people never have two."

"So much for your weak mind, Hetty. When Jude marries, her husband's father will be her father. If she should marry Hurry, then he will be your brother."

"Judith will never have Hurry," returned the girl. "Judith don't like Hurry."

"That's more than you can know, Hetty. Hurry March is the handsomest, the strongest, and the boldest man that visits the lake; and, as Jude is the greatest beauty, I don't see why they shouldn't come together. He has promised that he will enter into this job with me, on condition that I'll consent."

Hetty began to move her body back and forth, and otherwise to express mental agitation. Her father, accustomed to her manner, and suspecting no immediate cause of concern, continued to smoke in silence.

"Hurry is handsome, father," said Hetty, after a pause.

"I told you so, child," muttered Hutter; "he's the likeliest youth in these parts; and Jude is the likeliest young woman I've met with since her poor mother was in her best days. But let us talk of other matters. How do you like our new acquaintance, Deerslayer?"

"He isn't handsome, father. Hurry is far handsomer than Deerslayer."

"That's true; but they say he is a noted hunter! I did hope he would prove to be as stout a warrior as he is dexterous with the deer. But it takes time, as I know by experience, to give a man a true wilderness heart."

"Have I got a wilderness heart, father,—and Hurry, is *his* heart true wilderness?"

"You ask queer questions, Hetty. Your heart is good, child, and fitter for the settlements than for the woods."

"Why has Judith more reason than I, father?"

"Heaven help thee, child!—this is more than I can answer. Dost thou wish for more sense?"

"Not I. The little I have troubles me; for when I think the hardest, then I feel the unhappiest. I don't believe thinking is good for me, though I *do* wish I was as handsome as Judith."

"Why so, poor child? Thy sister's beauty may cause her trouble. It's no advantage to be so marked for anything as to become an object of envy, or to be sought after more than others."

"Mother was good, if she *was* handsome," returned the girl, the tears starting to her eyes.

Old Hutter, if not equally affected, was moody and silent at this allusion to his wife. He continued smoking, until his simple-minded daughter repeated her remark in a way to show that she felt uneasiness, lest he might be inclined to deny her assertion. Then laying his hand in a sort of rough kindness on the girl's head, he made reply:

"Thy mother was too good for this world, though others might not think so. You have no occasion to mourn that you are not as much like her as your sister. Think less of beauty, child, and more of your duty, and you'll be as happy on this lake as you could be in the king's palace."

"I know it, father; but Hurry says beauty is everything in a young woman."

Hutter made an ejaculation expressive of dissatisfaction, and went forward, passing through the house in order to do so. When he reached the forward end of the scow, he manifested an intention to relieve Deerslayer at the oar, directing the latter to take his own place aft. By these changes the old man and Hurry were again left alone, while the young hunter was transferred to the other end of the ark.

Hetty had disappeared when Deerslayer reached his new post. It was not long, however, before Judith came out of the cabin, as if disposed to do the honours of the place to a stranger engaged in the service of her family. The starlight was sufficient to permit objects to be plainly distinguished when near at hand, and the bright eyes of the girl had an expression of kindness in them, when they met those of the youth, that the latter was easily enabled to discover. Little ceremony is used in the intercourse of the woods; and Judith had acquired a readiness of address, which certainly in no degree lent to her charms the aid of that retiring modesty on which poets love to dwell.

"I thought I should have killed myself with laughing, Deerslayer," the beauty commenced, "when I saw that Indian dive into the river!"

"And I thought they would have killed you with their we'pons, Judith," returned Deerslayer; "it was an awful risk for a female to run in the face of a dozen Mingos!"

"Did *that* make you come out of the cabin, in spite of their rifles, too?" asked the girl, with more real interest than she would have cared to betray.

"Men ar'n't apt to see females in danger and not come to their assistance."

This sentiment was uttered with much simplicity of manner, and Judith rewarded it with a smile so sweet that even Deerslayer, who had imbibed a prejudice against the girl in consequence of Hurry's suspicions of her levity, felt its charm.

"You are a man of deeds and not of words, I see plainly, Deerslayer," continued the beauty. "Hurry has a tongue, and, giant as he is, he talks more than he performs."

"March is your fri'nd, Judith; and fri'nds should be tender of each other when apart."

"We all know what Hurry's friendship comes to! Let him have his own way in everything, and he's the best fellow in the Colony; but 'head him off', and he is master of everything near him but himself. Hurry is no favourite of mine; and I dare say he thinks no better of me than I do of him."

The latter part of this speech was not uttered without uneasiness. Deerslayer felt embarrassed. He well remembered the cruel imputations left by March's distrust; and while he did not wish to injure his associate's suit by exciting resentment against him, his tongue was one that literally knew no guile.

"March has his say of all things in natur', whether of fri'nd or foe," rejoined the hunter. "He's one of them that speak as they feel, while the tongue's a-going, and that's sometimes different from what they'd speak if they took time to consider."

"I dare say March's tongue goes free enough when it gets on the subject of Judith Hutter and her sister," said the girl, as if in careless disdain. "Young women's good names are a pleasant matter of discourse with some that wouldn't dare to be so open-mouthed if there was a brother in the way. Master March may find it pleasant to traduce us, but sooner or later he'll repent!"

"Nay, Judith, this is taking the matter up too much in 'arnest. Hurry has never whispered a syllable ag'in the good name of Hetty, to begin with—"

"I see how it is!" impetuously interrupted Judith. "I am the one he sees fit to scorch with his withering tongue!—Hetty, indeed!—Poor Hetty," she continued, "is beyond and above

his slanderous malice! Poor Hetty! The earth never held a purer being than Hetty, Deerslayer."

"I can believe *that*, Judith; and I hope that the same can be said of her handsome sister."

"I dare say Hurry had some of his vile hints about the people of the garrisons," Judith replied. "He knows they are gentlemen, and can never forgive any one for being what he feels he can never become himself."

"Not in the sense of a king's officer, Judith, sartainly, for March has no turn that-a-way; but in the sense of reality, why may not a beaver-hunter be as respectable as a governor? Since you speak of it yourself, I'll not deny that he *did* complain of one as humble as you being so much in the company of scarlet coats and silken sashes. But 'twas jealousy that brought it out of him, and I think that he mourned over his own thoughts as a mother would have mourned over her child."

Perhaps Deerslayer was not aware of the full meaning that his earnest language conveyed. It is certain that he did not see the colour that crimsoned Judith's face, nor detect the uncontrollable distress that, immediately after, changed its hue to a deadly paleness. A minute or two elapsed in profound stillness, and then Judith arose and grasped the hand of the hunter, almost convulsively, with one of her own.

"Deerslayer," she said, hurriedly, "I'm glad the ice is broke between us. I know how it is—but you are the first man I ever met who did not seem to wish to flatter me—to be an enemy in disguise. Never mind; say nothing to Hurry, and another time we'll talk together again."

As the girl released her grasp, she vanished in the house, leaving the astonished young man standing at the steering-oar, as motionless as one of the pines on the hills.

CHAPTER VI.

Shortly after the disappearance of Judith, a light southerly air arose, and Hutter set a large square sail; and in about two hours the castle was seen in the darkness, rising out of the water, at the distance of a hundred yards. The sail was then lowered, and by slow degrees the scow drifted up to the building, and was secured.

No one had visited the house since Hurry and his companion left it. As an enemy was known to be near, Hutter directed his daughters to abstain from the use of lights, lest they might prove beacons to their foes.

"In open daylight I shouldn't fear a host of savages, behind these stout logs, and they without any cover to skulk into," said Hutter; "for I've three or four trusty weapons always loaded. But it's a different thing at night. A canoe might get upon us unseen in the dark; and the savages have so many cunning ways of attacking that I look upon it as bad enough to deal with 'em under a bright sun. I built this dwelling in order to have 'em at arm's-length, in case we should ever get to blows again. The great object for people posted like ourselves is to command the water. So long as there is no other craft on the lake, a bark canoe is as good as a man-of-war, since the castle will not be easily taken by swimming. Now, there are but five canoes remaining in these parts, two of which are mine, and one is Hurry's. The other canoes are housed on the shore in hollow logs; and the savages will leave no likely place unexamined in the morning, if they're serious in s'arch of bounties—"

"Now, friend Hutter," interrupted Hurry, "the Indian don't live that can find a canoe that is suitably wintered. Deerslayer here knows that I am one that can hide a craft in such a way that I can't find it myself."

"Very true, Hurry," put in Deerslayer, "but you overlook the circumstance that if you couldn't see the trail of the man who did the job, I *could*. I'm of Master Hutter's mind, that it's far wiser to mistrust a savage's ingenuity than to build any great expectations on his want of eyesight. If these two canoes can be got off to the castle, the sooner it's done the better."

"Will you be of the party that's to do it?" demanded Hutter.

"Sartin. I'm ready to enlist in any enterprise that's not ag'in a white man's lawful gifts."

"We know that you can use a paddle, young man," said Hutter, "and that is all we shall ask of you to-night. Let us waste no more time, but get into the canoe and *do*, in place of talking."

As Hutter led the way in the execution of his project, the boat was soon ready, with Hurry and Deerslayer at the paddles. Before the old man embarked himself, however, he held a conference of several minutes with Judith; he then took

his place in the canoe, which left the side of the ark at the next instant.

The darkness had increased, though the night was still clear, and the light of the stars sufficed for all the purposes of the adventurers. Hutter alone knew the places where the two canoes were hid, and he directed the course, while his companions raised and dipped their paddles with proper caution, lest the sounds should be carried to the ears of their enemies. But the bark was too light to require any extraordinary efforts, and skill supplying the place of strength, in about half an hour they were approaching the shore, at a point near a league from the castle.

"Lay on your paddles, men," said Hutter, in a low voice, "and let us look about us for a moment. We must now be all eyes and ears, for these vermin have noses like bloodhounds."

The shores of the lakes were examined closely, in order to discover any glimmering of light that might have been left in a camp. Nothing unusual could be traced; and as the position was at some distance from the outlet, it was thought safe to land. The paddles were plied again, and the bows of the canoe ground upon the gravelly beach with a sound barely audible. Hutter and Hurry immediately landed, leaving Deerslayer in charge of the canoe. The hollow log lay a little distance up the side of the mountain, and the old man led the way towards it, using so much caution as to stop at every third or fourth step, to listen if any tread betrayed the presence of a foe. The same death-like stillness, however, reigned on the midnight scene, and the desired place was reached without an occurrence to induce alarm.

"This is it," whispered Hutter, laying a foot on the trunk of a fallen linden; "Hand me the paddles first, and draw the boat out with care, for the wretches may have left it for a bait after all."

"Keep my rifle handy, butt towards me, old fellow," answered March. "And feel if the pan is full."

"All's right," muttered the other; "move slow when you get your load, and let me lead the way."

The canoe was drawn out of the log with the utmost care, raised by Hurry to his shoulder, and the two began to return to the shore, moving but a step at a time, lest they should tumble down the steep declivity. Towards the end of their little journey, Deerslayer was obliged to land and meet them,

in order to aid in lifting the canoe through the bushes. With his assistance the task was successfully accomplished, and the light craft soon floated by the side of the other canoe.

Hutter now steered towards the centre of the lake. Having got a sufficient distance from the shore, he cast his prize loose, knowing that it would drift slowly up the lake before the light southerly air, and intending to find it on his return. The old man now held his way down the lake, steering towards the point where Hurry had made his fruitless attempt on the life of the deer. They reached the extremity of the point, and landed in safety on the little gravelly beach. The point itself, though long and covered with tall trees, was nearly flat, and for some distance only a few yards in width. Hutter and Hurry landed as before, leaving their companion in charge of the boat.

In this instance, the dead tree that contained the canoe of which they had come in quest lay about half-way between the extremity of the narrow slip of land and the place where it joined the main shore; and knowing that there was water so near him on his left, the old man led the way along the eastern side of the belt with some confidence, walking boldly, though still with caution. There was no difficulty in finding the tree, from which the canoe was drawn, and launched at the nearest favourable spot. As soon as it was in the water, Hurry entered it and paddled round to the point, Hutter following along the beach. As the three men had now in their possession all the boats on the lake, their confidence was greatly increased, and there was no longer the same feverish desire to quit the shore, or the same necessity for extreme caution. The three now landed together, and stood in consultation on the point.

"Let us paddle along this south shore," said Hutter, "and see if there's no sign of an encampment; but first, let me have a better look into the bay."

As Hutter ceased speaking, all three moved in the direction he had named. Scarce had they fairly opened the bottom of the bay, when a general start proved that their eyes had lighted on a common object at the same instant. It was no more than a dying brand, giving out its flickering and failing light. There was not a shadow of doubt that this fire had been kindled at an encampment of the Indians. The situation, sheltered from observation on all sides but one, and even on that except for a very short distance, proved that

more care had been taken to conceal the spot than would be used for ordinary purposes; and Hutter, who knew that a spring was near at hand, as well as one of the best fishing-stations on the lake, immediately inferred that this encampment contained the women and children of the party.

"That's not a warriors' encampment," he growled to Hurry; "and there's bounty enough sleeping round that fire to make a heavy division of head-money. Send the lad to the canoes, for there'll come no good of him in such an onset, and let us take the matter in hand at once, like men."

"There's judgment in your notion, Tom, and I like it to the back-bone. Deerslayer, do you get into the canoe, and paddle off into the lake with the spare one, and set it adrift; after which, you can float along shore, as near as you can get to the head of the bay, keeping outside the point, hows'ever, and outside the rushes too. You can hear us when we want you; and if there's any delay I'll call like a loon. If you hear rifles, and feel like soldiering, why you may close in, and see if you can make the same hand with the savages that you do with the deer."

"If my wishes could be followed, this matter would not be undertaken, Hurry—"

"Quite true—nobody denies it, boy; but your wishes *can't* be followed; and that ends the matter. So just canoe yourself off into the middle of the lake, and by the time you get back there'll be movements in that camp!"

The young man set about complying with a heavy heart. He knew the prejudices of the frontier men too well, however, to attempt a remonstrance. The latter, indeed, under the circumstances might prove dangerous, as it would certainly prove useless. He paddled the canoe, therefore, silently, to a spot near the centre of the placid sheet of water, and set the boat adrift. This expedient had been adopted in both cases, under the certainty that the drift could not carry the light barks more than a league or two before the return of light, when they might easily be overtaken.

No sooner had he set the recovered canoe adrift than Deerslayer turned the bows of his own towards the point on the shore that had been indicated by Hurry. Ten minutes had not elapsed ere it was again approaching the land, having in that brief time passed over fully half a mile of distance. As soon as Deerslayer's eye caught a glimpse of the rushes, he arrested the motion of the canoe, and anchored his boat

by holding fast to the stem of one of the plants. Here he remained, awaiting the result of the hazardous enterprise.

The reader will readily understand how intense must have been the expectation of the young man as he sat in his solitary canoe, endeavouring to catch the smallest sound that might denote the course of things on shore. His training had been perfect, so far as theory could go; and his self-possession would have done credit to a veteran. The visible evidences of the existence of the camp, or of the fire, could not be detected from the spot where the canoe lay, and he was compelled to depend on the sense of hearing alone. Once he thought he heard the cracking of a dried twig, but expectation was so intense it might mislead him. In this manner minute after minute passed, until the whole time since he left his companions was extended to quite an hour. Deerslayer knew not whether to rejoice in or to mourn over this cautious delay, for if it argued security to his associates, it foretold destruction to the feeble and innocent.

It might have been an hour and a half after his companions and he had parted when the profound stillness of night and solitude was broken by a cry so startling as to drive all thought of the melancholy call of the loon from the listener's mind. It was a shriek of agony that came either from one of the female sex, or from a boy so young as not yet to have attained a manly voice. This appeal could not be mistaken. Heartrending terror—if not writhing agony—was in the sounds, and the anguish that had awakened them was as sudden as it was fearful. The young man dashed his paddle into the water—to do he knew not what, to steer he knew not whither. A very few moments, however, removed his indecision. The breaking of branches, the cracking of dried sticks, and the fall of feet were distinctly audible, the sounds appearing to approach the water, though in a direction that led diagonally towards the shore, and a little farther north than the spot that Deerslayer had been ordered to keep near. Following this clue, he urged the canoe ahead, paying but little attention to the manner in which he might betray its presence. He had reached a part of the shore where its immediate bank was tolerably high and quite steep. Men were evidently threshing through the bushes on the summit of this bank, following the line of the shore, as if those who fled sought a favourable place for descending. Just at this instant five or six rifles flashed, and one or two shrieks, like those

which escape the bravest when suddenly overcome by unexpected anguish and alarm, followed; then the threshing among the bushes was renewed in a way to show that man was grappling with man.

"Slippery hound!" shouted Hurry, with the fury of disappointment; "his skin's greased! Take *that* for your cunning!"

The words were followed by the fall of some heavy object among the smaller trees that fringed the bank. Again the flight and pursuit were renewed, and then Deerslayer saw a human form break down the hill and rush several yards into the water. At this critical moment the canoe was just near enough to the spot to allow this movement, which was accompanied by no little noise, to be seen; and feeling that there he must take in his companions, if anywhere, Deerslayer urged the canoe forward to the rescue. His paddle had not been raised twice, when the voice of Hurry was heard filling the air with imprecations, and he rolled on the narrow beach, literally loaded with enemies. While prostrate, the athletic frontier man gave his loon-call in a manner that would have excited laughter under circumstances less terrific. The figure in the water seemed suddenly to repent his own flight, and rushed to the shore to aid his companion, but was met and immediately overpowered by half a dozen fresh pursuers, who came leaping down the bank.

"Let up, you painted riptyles—let up!" cried Hurry; "isn't it enough that I'm withed like a saw-log that ye must choke me too?"

This speech satisfied Deerslayer that his friends were prisoners, and that to land would be to share their fate. He was already within a hundred feet of the shore, when a few timely strokes of the paddle forced him off to six or eight times that distance from his enemies. Luckily for him, all the Indians had dropped their rifles in the pursuit, or this retreat might not have been effected with impunity; though no one had noted the canoe in the first confusion of the *mêlée*.

"Keep off the land, lad," called out Hutter; "the girls depend only on you now. Keep off, and God prosper you, as you aid my children."

There was little sympathy in general between Hutter and the young man, but the bodily and mental anguish with which this appeal was made served at the moment to conceal from the latter the former's faults.

"Put your heart at ease, Master Hutter," Deerslayer called out; "the gals shall be looked to, as well as the castle. My exper'ence is small, but my will is good."

"Ay—ay, Deerslayer," returned Hurry, in his stentorian voice, "you *mean* well enough, but what can you *do*? Your best way, in my judgment, will be to make a straight course to the castle, get the gals into the canoe, with a few eatables, then strike off for the corner of the lake where we came in, and take the best trail for the Mohawk. That's my judgment in the matter; and if Tom here wishes to make his last will and testament in a manner favourable to his darters, he'll say the same."

"I will never do, young man," rejoined Hutter. "The enemy has scouts out at this moment, looking for canoes, and you'll be seen and taken. Trust to the castle, and hold out a week, and parties from the garrisons will drive the savages off."

"I won't be four-and-twenty hours, old fellow, afore these foxes will be rafting off, to storm your castle," interrupted Hurry. "Your advice has a stout sound, but it will have a fatal tarmination. These savages are making signs, Deerslayer, for me to encourage you to come ashore with the canoe; but that I'll never do; it's ag'in reason and natur'. No, no, lad,—you keep off where you are, and after daylight on no account come within two hundred yards—"

This injunction of Hurry's was stopped by a hand being rudely slapped against his mouth. Immediately after the whole group entered the forest, Hutter and Hurry apparently making no resistance to the movement. Just as the sounds of the cracking bushes were ceasing, however, the voice of the father was again heard:

"As you're true to my children, God prosper you, young man!" were the words that reached Deerslayer's ears; after which he found himself left to follow the dictates of his own discretion.

Several minutes elapsed in deathlike stillness, when the party on the shore had disappeared in the woods. Owing to the distance and the obscurity, Deerslayer had been able barely to distinguish the group, and to see it retiring; but even this dim connection with human forms gave an animation to the scene that was strongly in contrast to the absolute solitude that remained. Although the young man leaned forward to listen, not another sound reached his ears to denote the

vicinity of human beings. For an instant, even that piercing shriek which had so lately broken the stillness of the forest, would have been a relief to the feeling of desertion to which it gave rise.

This paralysis of mind and body, however, could not last long in one constituted mentally and physically like Deerslayer. Dropping his paddle into the water, he turned the head of the canoe, and proceeded slowly toward the centre of the lake. After paddling a quarter of a mile, a dark object became visible on the lake, a little to the right; and turning on one side for the purpose, he had soon secured his lost prize to his own boat. Deerslayer now examined the heavens, the course of the air, and the position of the two canoes. Finding nothing in either to induce a change of plan, he lay down and prepared to catch a few hours' sleep, that the morrow might find him equal to its exigencies.

CHAPTER VII.

Day had fairly dawned before the young man again opened his eyes. This was no sooner done than he started up, and looked about him with the eagerness of one who suddenly felt the importance of accurately ascertaining his precise position. His rest had been deep and undisturbed; and when he awoke, it was with a clearness of intellect and a readiness of resources that were much needed at that particular moment. The sun had not risen, but the vault of heaven was rich with the winning softness that "brings and shuts the day", while the whole air was filled with the carols of birds. These sounds first told Deerslayer the risks he ran. The air was still light, but it had increased a little in the course of the night, and as the canoes were mere feathers on the water, they had drifted twice the expected distance; and, what was still more dangerous, had approached very near the base of the mountain that here rose precipitously from the eastern shore. This was not the worst. The third canoe had taken the same direction, and was slowly drifting towards a point where it must inevitably touch, unless turned aside by a shift of wind or human hands.

Deerslayer's attention was first given to the canoe ahead.

It was already quite near the point, and a very few strokes of the paddle sufficed to tell him that it must touch before he could possibly overtake it. Just at this moment, too, the wind inopportunately freshened, rendering the drift of the light craft much more rapid and certain. Feeling the impossibility of preventing a contact with the land, he wisely determined not to heat himself with unnecessary exertions; but, first looking to the priming of his piece, he proceeded warily towards the point.

The canoe adrift, pursued its proper way, and grounded on a small sunken rock at the distance of three or four yards from the shore. Just at that moment Deerslayer had got abreast of the point, and turned the bows of his own boat towards the land; first casting loose his tow that his movements might be unencumbered. The canoe hung an instant on the rock; then it rose a hair's-breadth on an almost imperceptible swell of the water, swung round, floated clear, and reached the strand. All this the young man noted, but it neither quickened his pulses or hastened his hand. If any one had been lying in wait for the arrival of the waif, he must be seen, and the utmost caution in approaching the shore became indispensable; if no one was in ambush, hurry was unnecessary.

As Deerslayer drew nearer to the land, the stroke of his paddle grew slower, his eye became more watchful, and his ears and nostrils almost dilated with the effort to detect any lurking danger. 'Twas a trying moment for a novice, yet, notwithstanding all these circumstances, the most experienced veteran in forest warfare could not have done better. Equally free from recklessness and hesitation, his advance was marked by a sort of philosophical prudence that appeared to render him superior to all motives but those which were best calculated to effect his purpose.

When about a hundred yards from the shore, Deerslayer rose in the canoe, gave three or four vigorous strokes with the paddle, sufficient of themselves to impel the bark to land, and then quickly laying aside the instrument of labour, he seized that of war. He was in the very act of raising the rifle, when a sharp report was followed by the buzz of a bullet that passed so near his body as to cause him involuntarily to start. The next instant Deerslayer staggered and fell his whole length in the bottom of the canoe. A yell followed, and an Indian leaped from the bushes upon the open area of the point, bounding towards the canoe. This was the moment the

young man desired. He rose on the instant, and levelled his own rifle at his uncovered foe; but his finger hesitated about pulling the trigger on one whom he held at such a disadvantage. This little delay probably saved the life of the Indian, who bounded back into the cover as swiftly as he had broken out of it. In the meantime Deerslayer had been swiftly approaching the land, and his own canoe reached the point just as his enemy disappeared. As its movements had not been directed it touched the shore a few yards from the other boat; and though the rifle of his foe had to be loaded, there was not time to secure his prize and to carry it beyond danger before he would be exposed to another shot. Under the circumstances, therefore, he did not pause an instant, but dashed into the woods and sought a cover.

Deerslayer knew that his adversary must be employed in reloading, unless he had fled. The former proved to be the case, for the young man had no sooner placed himself behind a tree than he caught a glimpse of the arm of the Indian, his body being concealed by an oak, in the very act of forcing the leathered bullet home. Nothing would have been easier than to spring forward, and decide the affair by a close assault on his unprepared foe; but every feeling of Deerslayer revolted at such a step, although his own life had just been attempted from a cover. Instead, therefore, of advancing to fire, he dropped his rifle to the usual position of a sportsman in readiness to catch his aim, and muttered to himself—

“No, no—that may be red-skin warfare, but it’s not a Christian’s gifts. Let the miscreant charge, and then we’ll take it out like men; for the canoe he *must* not and *shall* not have.”

All this time the Indian had been so intent on his own movements that he was even ignorant that his enemy was in the wood. His only apprehension was that the canoe would be recovered and carried away before he might be in readiness to prevent it. His rifle was no sooner loaded than he glanced around him, and advanced incautiously as regarded the real, but stealthily as respected the fancied, position of his enemy, until he was fairly exposed. Then Deerslayer stepped from behind his own cover, and hailed him.

“This-a-way, red-skin, if you’re looking for me!” he called out. “It rests on yourself whether it’s peace or war atween us; for my gifts are white gifts, and I’m not one of them that thinks it v’bant to slay human mortals singly in the woods.”

The savage was a good deal startled by this sudden discovery of the danger he ran. He had a little knowledge of English, however, and caught the drift of the other's meaning. He was also too well schooled to betray alarm, but dropping the butt of his rifle to the earth, with an air of confidence he made a gesture of lofty courtesy. In the midst of this consummate acting, however, the volcano that raged within caused his eyes to glare, and his nostrils to dilate, like those of some wild beast that is suddenly prevented from taking the fatal leap.

"Two canoe," he said, in the deep guttural tones of his race, "one for you—one for me."

"No, no, Mingo, that will never do. You own neither; and neither shall you have, as long as I can prevent it. I know it's war atween your people and mine, but that's no reason why human mortals should slay each other, like savage creatures that meet in the woods; go your way, then, and leave me to go mine. The world is large enough for us both; and when we meet fairly in battle, why, the Lord will order the fate of each of us."

"Good!" exclaimed the Indian; "my brother missionary."

"Not so, warrior. I'm only a hunter as yet; though afore the peace is made, 'tis like enough there'll be occasion to strike a blow at some of your people. Still, I wish it to be done in fair fight, and not in a quarrel about the ownership of a miserable canoe."

"Good! My brother very young, but he very wise."

"I don't know this, nor do I say it, Indian," returned Deerslayer; "I look forward to a life in the woods, and I only hope it may be a peaceable one. All men must go on the war-path when there's occasion, but war isn't needfully massacre. I've seen enough of the last, this very night, to know that Providence frowns on it; and I now invite you to go your own way, while I go mine."

"Good! My brother has two scalp—grey hair under t'other. Old wisdom—young tongue."

Here the savage advanced with confidence, his hand extended, his face smiling, and his whole bearing denoting amity and respect. Deerslayer met his offered friendship in a proper spirit, and they shook hands cordially.

"All have his own," said the Indian; "my canoe, mine; your canoe, your'n. Go look; if your'n, you keep; if mine, I keep."

"That's just, red-skin; though you must be wrong in

thinking the canoe your property. Hows'ever, seein' is believin', and we'll go down to the shore, where you may look with your own eyes."

They walked, side by side, towards the shore. There was no apparent distrust in the manner of either, the Indian moving in advance, as if he wished to show his companion that he did not fear turning his back to him. As they reached the open ground, the former pointed towards Deerslayer's boat, and said, emphatically:

"No mine—pale-face canoe. *This* red man's. No want other man's canoe."

"You're wrong, red-skin. This canoe was left in old Hutter's keeping, and is his'n. Here's the seats and the stitching of the bark to speak for themselves. No man ever know'd an Indian to turn off such work."

"Good! My brother little old—big wisdom. Indian no make him. White man's work."

"I'm glad you think so, for holding out to the contrary might have made ill blood atween us. I'll just shove the canoe out of reach of dispute at once, as the quickest way of settling difficulties."

While Deerslayer was speaking, he put a foot against the end of the light boat, and giving a vigorous shove, he sent it out into the lake a hundred feet or more. The savage started at this ready and decided expedient; the change of manner, however, was but momentary, and then the Iroquois resumed his air of friendliness and a smile of satisfaction.

"Good!" he repeated. "Know how to settle quarrel. Farewell, brother. He go to house in water—Indian go to camp; tell chief no find canoe."

Deerslayer was not sorry to hear this proposal, and he took the offered hand of the Indian very willingly. The parting words were friendly; and while the red man walked calmly towards the wood, with the rifle in the hollow of his arm, without once looking back in uneasiness or distrust, the white man moved towards the remaining canoe, carrying his piece in the same pacific manner, but keeping his eyes fastened on the movements of the other. He began to push the canoe from the shore, and to make his other preparations for departing, but, happening to turn his face towards the land, his quick and certain eye told him at a glance the imminent jeopardy in which his life was placed. The black, ferocious eyes of the savage were glancing on him through a small opening in the

bushes, and the muzzle of his rifle seemed already to be opening in a line with his body.

Then, indeed, the long practice of Deerslayer as a hunter did him good service. Accustomed to fire with the deer on the bound, and often when the precise position of the animal's body had in a manner to be guessed at, he used the same expedients here. To cock and poise his rifle were the acts of a moment; then, aiming almost without sighting, he fired into the bushes where he knew a body ought to be, in order to sustain the countenance which alone was visible. So rapid were his movements that both parties discharged their pieces at the same instant, the concussions mingling in one report. Deerslayer dropped his piece, and stood with head erect, while the savage gave a yell, leaped through the bushes, and came bounding across the open ground, flourishing a tomahawk. Still Deerslayer stood with his unloaded rifle fallen against his shoulders, while his hands were mechanically feeling for the powder-horn and charger. When about forty feet distant, the savage hurled his weapon; but it was with a hand so feeble, that the young man caught it by the handle as it was flying past him. At that instant the Indian staggered and fell.

"I know'd it!" exclaimed Deerslayer; "I know'd it must come to this as soon as I had got the range from the creatur's eyes. The riptyle's bullet has just grazed my side—but, say what you will, for or ag'in 'em, a red-skin is by no means as sartain with powder and ball as a white man. Their gifts don't seem to lie that-a-way."

By this time the piece was reloaded, and Deerslayer, after tossing the tomahawk into the canoe, advanced to his victim and stood over him, leaning on his rifle in melancholy attention. The Indian was not dead, though shot directly through the body. He lay on his back motionless, but his eyes, now full of consciousness, watched each action of his victor. The man probably expected the fatal blow which was to precede the loss of his scalp. Deerslayer read his thoughts, and he found a melancholy satisfaction in relieving the apprehensions of the helpless savage.

"No, no, red-skin," he said; "you've nothing more to fear from me. I am of a Christian stock, and scalping is not of my gifts. I'll just make sartain of your rifle, and then come back and do you what sarvice I can."

The piece was found where its owner had dropped it, and was immediately put into the canoe. Laying his own rifle at

its side, Deerslayer then returned, and stood over the Indian again.

"All inimity atween you and me's at an ind, red-skin," he said; "and you may set your heart at rest on the score of the scalp, or any further injury."

"Water!" ejaculated the unfortunate creature; "give Indian water."

"Ay, water you shall have; I'll just carry you down to it, that you may take your fill."

So saying, Deerslayer raised the Indian, and carried him to the lake. Here he first helped him to take an attitude in which he could appease his burning thirst; after which he seated himself on a stone, and took the head of his wounded adversary in his own lap, and endeavoured to soothe his anguish in the best manner he could.

"It would be sinful in me to tell you your time hadn't come, warrior," he commenced, "and therefore I'll not say it. You'll find your happy hunting-grounds if you've been a just Indian; if an unjust, you'll meet your desarts in another way. I've my own idees about these things; but you're too old and exper'enced to need any explanations from one as young as I."

"Good!" ejaculated the Indian; "young head—old wisdom!"

"It's sometimes a consolation, when the ind comes, to know that them we've harmed, or *tried* to harm, forgive us. Now, as for myself, I overlook altogether your designs ag'in my life, because I can bear no ill-will to a dying man, whether heathen or Christian. So put your heart at ease, as far as I'm con-sarned."

With the high innate courtesy that so often distinguishes the Indian warrior before he becomes corrupted by too much intercourse with the worst class of the white men, the dying man endeavoured to express his thankfulness for the other's good intentions, and to let him understand that they were appreciated.

"Good!" he repeated; "good—young head; young *heart*, too. *Old* heart tough; no shed tear. Hear Indian when he die, and no want to lie—what he call him?"

"Deerslayer is the name I bear now."

"That good name for boy—poor name for warrior. He get better quick. No fear *there*"—the savage had strength sufficient to raise a hand and tap the young man on the breast—"eye sartain—finger lightning—aim death—great warrior soon. No Deerslayer—Hawkeye. Shake hand."

Deerslayer—or Hawkeye, as the youth was then first named, for in after years he bore the appellation throughout all that region—Deerslayer took the hand of the savage, whose last breath was drawn in that attitude, gazing in admiration at the countenance of a stranger who had shown so much readiness, skill, and firmness, in a scene that was equally trying and novel.

“His spirit has fled!” said Deerslayer, in a suppressed, melancholy voice. “No, no, warrior; hand of mine shall never molest your scalp, and so your soul may rest in peace on the p'int of making a decent appearance when your body comes to join it in your own land of spirits.”

Deerslayer rose as he spoke, and placed the body of the dead man in a sitting posture, with its back against the little rock, taking the necessary care to prevent it from falling, or in any way settling into an attitude that might be thought unseemly by the sensitive though wild notions of a savage.

While thus engaged, his reflections received a startling interruption by the sudden appearance of a second Indian on the lake shore, a few hundred yards from the point. This man—evidently another scout, who had probably been drawn to the place by the reports of the rifles—broke out of the forest with so little caution, that Deerslayer caught a view of his person before he himself was discovered. When the latter event did occur, however, the savage gave a loud yell, which was answered by a dozen voices from different parts of the mountain-side. There was no longer any time for delay, and in another minute the boat was quitting the shore under long and steady sweeps of the paddle.

As soon as Deerslayer believed himself to be at a safe distance, he ceased his efforts, permitting the little bark to drift while he took a survey of the state of things. The canoe first sent adrift was floating before the air quite a quarter of a mile above him, and a little nearer to the shore than he wished, now that he knew more of the savages were near at hand. The canoe shoved from the point was within a few yards of him. The warrior who had shown himself from the forest had already vanished, but in a few minutes the scouts of the enemy burst out of the thicket upon the naked point, filling the air with yells of fury at discovering the death of their companion. These cries were immediately succeeded by shouts of delight when they reached the body and clustered eagerly round it. The yell was the customary lamentation at the loss

of a warrior, the shout a sign of rejoicing that the conqueror had not been able to secure the scalp, the trophy without which a victory was never considered complete. The distance at which the canoes lay probably prevented any attempts to injure the conqueror.

As Deerslayer had no longer any motive to remain near the point, he prepared to collect his canoes. The nearest was soon in tow, when he proceeded in quest of the other, which was all this time floating up the lake. His eye was no sooner fastened on this last boat than it struck him that it was nearer to the shore than it would have been had it merely followed the course of the gentle current of air. He began to suspect the influence of some unseen current in the water, and quickened his exertions in order to regain possession of it before it could drift into dangerous proximity to the woods. On getting nearer, he thought that the canoe had a perceptible motion through the water, and as it lay broadside to the air, that this motion was taking it towards the land. A few vigorous strokes of the paddle carried him still nearer, when the mystery was explained. Something was evidently in motion on the off-side of the canoe, and closer scrutiny showed that it was a naked arm. An Indian was lying in the bottom of the canoe, and was propelling it slowly, but certainly, to the shore, using his hand as a paddle. A savage had swum off to the boat while he was occupied with his enemy on the point, got possession, and was using these means to urge it to the shore.

Satisfied that the man could have no arms, Deerslayer dashed close alongside the boat, without deeming it necessary to raise his own rifle. As soon as the wash of the water which he made became audible to the savage, the latter sprang to his feet, and uttered an exclamation that proved how completely he was taken by surprise.

"If you've enjoyed yourself enough in that canoe, red-skin," Deerslayer coolly observed, "you'll do a prudent act by taking to the lake ag'in."

The savage did not understand a word of English, and was indebted to the gestures of Deerslayer, and to the expression of his eye, for an imperfect comprehension of his meaning. Perhaps, too, the sight of the rifle that lay so near his hand quickened his decision. He uttered a yell, and the next instant his naked body had disappeared in the water. When he rose to take breath, it was at the distance of several yards from the canoe, and the hasty glance he threw behind him

denoted how much he feared the arrival of a fatal messenger from the rifle of his foe. But the young man made no indication of any hostile intention. Deliberately securing the canoe to the others, he began to paddle from the shore, and by the time the Indian reached the land his dreaded enemy was already beyond rifle-shot, on his way to the castle.

When Deerslayer drew near, Judith and Hetty stood on the platform before the door, awaiting his approach with manifest anxiety; the former, from time to time, taking a survey of his person, and of the canoes, through the old ship's spy-glass. Never probably did this girl seem more brilliantly beautiful than at that moment; the flush of anxiety and alarm increasing her colour to its richest tints, while the softness of her eyes, a charm that even poor Hetty shared with her, was deepened by intense concern. Such, at least, were the opinions of the young man as his canoes reached the side of the ark, where he carefully fastened all three before he put his foot on the platform.

CHAPTER VIII.

Neither of the girls spoke, as Deerslayer stood before them alone, his countenance betraying all the apprehension he felt on account of the two absent members of their party.

"Father!" Judith at length exclaimed, succeeding in uttering the word, as it might be, by a desperate effort.

"He's met with misfortune, and there's no use in concealing it," answered Deerslayer. "He and Hurry are in Mingo hands, and Heaven only knows what's to be the termination. I've got the canoes safe, and that's a consolation, since the vagabonds will have to swim for it, or raft off, to come near this place. At sunset we'll be reinforced by Chingachgook, if I can manage to get him into a canoe: and then I think we two can answer for the castle, till some of the officers in the garrisons hear of this war-path, which sooner or later must be the case, when we may look for succour from that quarter, if from no other."

"The officers!" exclaimed Judith, impatiently, her colour deepening, and her eye expressing a lively but passing emotion. "We are sufficient of ourselves to defend the castle. But what of my father, and poor Hurry Harry?"

"'Tis natural you should feel this consarn for your own parent, Judith, and I suppose it's equally so that you should feel it for Hurry too."

Deerslayer then commenced a narrative of all that occurred during the night, in no manner concealing what had befallen his two companions, or his own opinion of what might prove to be the consequences. The girls listened with profound attention, but neither betrayed that feminine apprehension and concern which would have followed such a communication when made to those who were less accustomed to the hazards and accidents of a frontier life. To the surprise of Deerslayer, Judith seemed the most distressed, Hetty listening eagerly, but appearing to brood over the facts in melancholy silence, rather than betraying any outward signs of feeling. The former's agitation the young man did not fail to attribute to the interest she felt in Hurry, quite as much as to her filial love. Little was said by either, Judith and her sister busying themselves in making the preparations for the morning meal. The plain but nutritious breakfast was taken by all three in sombre silence. The meal was nearly ended before a syllable was uttered; then, however, Judith spoke in the convulsive and hurried manner in which feeling breaks through restraint.

"Father would have relished this fish!" she exclaimed; "he says the salmon of the lakes is almost as good as the salmon of the sea."

"Your father has been acquainted with the sea, they tell me, Judith," returned the young man. "Hurry Harry tells he was once a sailor."

Judith first looked perplexed; then, influenced by feelings that were novel to her in more ways than one, she became suddenly communicative.

"If Hurry knows anything of father's history, I would he had told it to me!" she cried. "Sometimes I think too he was once a sailor, and then again, I think he was not. If that chest were open, or if it could speak, it might let us into his whole history."

Deerslayer turned to the chest in question, and for the first time examined it closely. The wood was dark, rich, and had once been highly polished, though the treatment it had received left little gloss on its surface; and various scratches and indentations proved the rough collisions that it had encountered with substances still harder than itself. The corners were firmly bound with steel, elaborately and richly

wrought, while the locks, of which it had no less than three, and the hinges, were of a fashion and workmanship that would have attracted attention even in a warehouse of curious furniture. The chest was large too; and when Deerslayer endeavoured to raise an end by its massive handle, he found that the weight fully corresponded with the external appearance.

"Did you never see that chest opened, Judith?" the young man demanded with frontier freedom.

"Never. Father has never opened it in my presence, if he ever opens it at all. No one here has ever seen its lid raised."

"Now, you're wrong, Judith," Hetty quietly answered. "Father *has* raised the lid, and *I've* seen him do it."

"When and where did you ever see that chest opened, Hetty?"

"Here. Father often opens it when *you* are away, though he don't in the least mind my being by, and seeing all he does, as well as hearing all he says."

"And what is it that he does, and what does he say?"

"That I cannot tell *you*, Judith," returned the other, in a low but resolute voice. "*Father's* secret's are not *my* secrets."

"Secrets! this is stranger still, Deerslayer: that father should tell them to Hetty, and not tell them to me!"

"There's good reason for that, Judith, though you're not to know it. Father's not here to answer for himself, and I'll say no more about it."

Judith and Deerslayer looked surprised, and for a minute the first seemed pained. But suddenly recollecting herself, she turned away from her sister, and addressed the young man.

"You've told but half your story," she said, "breaking off at the place where you went to sleep in the canoe."

"When the day dawned," answered Deerslayer, "I was up and stirring as usual, and then I went in chase of the two canoes, lest the Mingos should lay hands on 'em."

"You have not told us all," said Judith, earnestly. "We heard rifles under the eastern mountain; the echoes were full and long, and came so soon after the reports that the pieces must have been fired on or quite near to the shore."

"They've done their duty, gal, this time; yes, they've done their duty. One warrior has gone to his happy hunting-grounds, and that's the whole of it."

Judith listened almost breathlessly; and when Deerslayer,

in his quiet, modest manner, seemed disposed to quit the subject, she rose, and, crossing the room, took a seat by his side. The manner of the girl had nothing forward about it, though it betrayed the quick instinct of female sympathy.

"You have been fighting the savages, Deerslayer, singly and by yourself!" she said. "In your wish to take care of us, you've fought the enemy bravely."

"I've fou't, Judith; yes I *have* fou't the inimy, and that, too, for the first time in my life. What has been done is no great matter; but should Chingachgook come to the rock this evening, as is agreed atween us, and I get him off it, then may we all look to something like warfare afore the Mingos shall get possession of either the castle or yourselves."

"Who is this Chingachgook?—from what place does he come?—and *why* does he come *here*?"

"The questions are nat'ral and right, I suppose, though the youth has a great name already in his own part of the country. Chingachgook is a Mohican by blood, consorting with the Delawares by usage, as is the case with most of his tribe, which has long been broken up by the increase of our colour. He is of the family of the great chiefs; Uncas, his father, having been the considerablest warrior and counsellor of his people. Well, this war having commenced in 'arnest, the Delaware and I rendezvous'd an app'intment to meet this evening at sunset, on the rendezvous-rock, at the foot of this very lake, intending to come out on our first hostile expedition ag'in the Mingos."

"A Delaware can have no unfriendly intentions towards us," said Judith, "and we know you to be friendly."

"Treachery is the last crime I hope to be accused of," returned Deerslayer; "and, least of all, treachery to my own colour."

"No one suspects *you*, Deerslayer," the girl impetuously cried. "No, no—your honest countenance would be a sufficient surety for the truth of a thousand hearts! If all men had as honest tongues, and no more promised what they did not mean to perform, there would be less wrong done in the world, and fine feathers and scarlet cloaks would not be thought excuses for baseness and deception."

The girl spoke with strong feeling, and her fine eyes, usually so soft and alluring, flashed fire as she concluded. Deerslayer could not but observe this extraordinary emotion; but, with the tact of a courtier, he avoided not only any allusion to the

circumstance, but succeeded in concealing the effect of his discovery on himself. Judith gradually grew calm again, and, as she was obviously anxious to appear to advantage in the eyes of the young man, she was soon able to renew the conversation as composedly as if nothing had occurred to disturb her.

"I have no right to look into your secrets, or the secrets of your friend, Deerslayer," she continued, "and am ready to take all you say on trust. If we can really get another ally to join us at this trying moment, it will aid us much; and I am not without hope that when the savages find that we are able to keep the lake, they will offer to give up their prisoners in exchange for skins, or at least for the keg of powder that we have in the house."

The young man had the words "scalps" and "bounty" on his lips, but a reluctance to alarm the feelings of the daughters prevented him from making the allusion he had intended to the probable fate of their father. Still, so little was he practised in the arts of deception, that his expressive countenance was, of itself, understood by the quick-witted Judith.

"I understand what you mean," she continued, hurriedly, "and what you would say, but for the fear of hurting me. But this is not as we think of Indians. They never scalp an unhurt prisoner, but would rather take him away alive, unless, indeed, the fierce wish for torturing should get the mastery of them. I fear nothing for my father's scalp, and little for his life. Could they steal on us in the night, we should all probably suffer in this way; but men taken in open strife are seldom injured—not, at least, until the time of torture comes."

"That's tradition, I'll allow, and it's according to practice; but, Judith, do you know the a'r'nd on which your father and Hutter went ag'in the savages?"

"I do; and a cruel errand it was! But what will you have? Men will be men, and some even that flaunt in their gold and silver, and carry the king's commission in their pockets, are not guiltless of equal cruelty. But the Indians think so little of the shedding of blood, and value men so much for the boldness of their undertakings, that did they know the business on which their prisoners came, they would be more likely to honour than to injure them for it."

"For a time, Judith. But when that feelin' dies away,

then will come the love of revenge. We must indavour, Chingachgook and I, to see what we can do to get Hurry and your father free."

"You think this Delaware can be depended on, Deerslayer?" demanded the girl, thoughtfully.

"As much as I can myself. You say you do not suspect *me*, Judith?"

"*You!*" taking his hand, and pressing it between her own with warmth; "I would as soon suspect a brother! I have known you but a day, Deerslayer, but it has awakened the confidence of a year. Your name, however, is not unknown to me; for the gallants of the garrisons frequently speak of the lessons you have given them in hunting, and all proclaim your honesty."

"Do they ever talk of the shooting, gal?" inquired the other eagerly. "Arms, as they call it, is their trade, and yet there's some among 'em that know very little how to use 'em!"

"Such, I hope, will not be the case with your friend Chingachgook, as you call him. What is the English of his Indian name?"

"Big Sarpent—so called for his wisdom and cunning. Uncas is his ra'al name."

"If he has all this wisdom, we may expect a useful friend in him, unless his own business in this part of the country should prevent him from serving us."

"I see no great harm in telling you his a'r'nd, after all; and as you may find means to help us, I will let you and Hetty into the whole matter, trusting that you'll keep the secret as if it was your own. You must know that Chingachgook is a comely Indian, and is much looked upon and admired by the young women of his tribe, both on account of his family, and on account of himself. Now, there is a chief that has a daughter called Wah-ta!-Wah, the rarest gal among the Delawares, and the one most craved for a wife by all the young warriors of the nation. Well, Chingachgook, among others, took a fancy to Wah-ta!-Wah, and Wah-ta!-Wah took a fancy to him." Here Deerslayer paused an instant; for, as he got thus far in his tale, Hetty Hutter arose, approached, and stood attentive at his knee. "Yes, he fancied her, and she fancied him," resumed Deerslayer, after casting a friendly glance at the interesting girl; "and when that is the case, and all the elders are agreed, it does not often happen that the

young couple keep apart. Chingachgook couldn't well carry off such a prize without making inimies among them that wanted her as much as he did himself. A sartain Briarthorn took it most to heart, and we mistrust him of having a hand in all that followed. Wah-ta!-Wah went with her father and mother, two moons ago, to fish for salmon on the western streams, and while thus emply'd the gal vanished. For several weeks we could get no tidings of her; but here, ten days since, a runner that came through the Delaware country brought us a message, by which we l'arn that Wah-ta!-Wah was stolen from her people—we think, but do not know it, by Briarthorn's sarcumventions—and that she was now with the inimy, who had adopted her, and wanted her to marry a young Mingo. The message said that the party intended to hunt and forage through this region for a month or two, afore it went back into the Canadas, and that if we could contrive to get on a scent in this quarter, something might turn up that would lead to our getting the maiden off."

"And how does that concern *you*, Deerslayer?" demanded Judith, a little anxiously.

"It consarns me, as all things that touches a fri'nd consarns a fri'nd. I'm here as Chingachgook's aid and helper, and if we can get the young maiden he likes back ag'in, it will give me almost as much pleasure as if I had got back my own sweetheart."

"And where, then, is *your* sweetheart, Deerslayer?"

"She's in the forest, Judith,—hanging from the boughs of the trees, in a soft rain—in the dew on the open grass—the clouds that float about in the blue heavens—the birds that sing in the woods—and in all the other glorious gifts that come from God's Providence!"

"You mean that as yet you love best your haunts, and your own manner of life."

"That's just it. I am white—have a white heart, and can't in reason love a red-skinned maiden, who must have a red-skin heart and feelin's. No; I'm sound enough in them particulars, and hope to remain so, at least till this war is over. I find my time too much taken up with Chingachgook's affairs to wish to have one of my own on my hands afore that is settled."

"The girl that finally win's you, Deerslayer, will at least win an *honest* heart: one without treachery or guile."

As Judith uttered this, her beautiful face had a resentful

frown on it. Her companion observed the change, and had sufficient native delicacy to understand that it might be well to drop the subject.

As the hour when Chingachgook was expected still remained distant, Deerslayer had time enough to examine into the state of the defences, and to make such additional arrangements as were in his power. The experience and foresight of Hutter had left little to be done in these particulars; still, several precautions suggested themselves to the young man. The distance between the castle and the nearest point on the shore prevented any apprehension on the subject of rifle-bullets thrown from the land. The house was within musket-shot, in one sense, it was true, but aim was entirely out of the question, and even Judith professed a perfect disregard of any danger from that source. So long, then, as the party remained in possession of the fortress, they were safe; unless their assailants could find the means to come off and carry it by fire or storm.

Little was to be apprehended during the day. Nevertheless, Deerslayer well knew that a raft was soon made, and as dead trees were to be found in abundance near the water, did the savages seriously contemplate the risks of an assault, it would not be a very difficult matter to find the necessary means. Deerslayer thought it more than possible that the succeeding night would bring matters to a crisis, and in this precise way. This impression caused him to wish ardently for the presence of his Mohican friend, and to look forward to the approach of sunset with an increasing anxiety.

At length the hour arrived when it became necessary to proceed to the place of rendezvous appointed with Chingachgook. As the plan had been matured by Deerslayer, and fully communicated to his companions, all three set about its execution in concert, and intelligently. Hetty passed into the ark, and fastening two of the canoes together, she entered one, and paddled up to a sort of gateway in the palisades that surrounded the building, through which she carried both, securing them beneath the house by chains that were fastened within the building. Canoes thus *docked* were, in a measure, hid from sight, and as the gate was properly barred and fastened, it would not be an easy task to remove them, even in the event of their being seen. Previously, however, to closing the gate, Judith also entered the inclosure with the third canoe, leaving Deerslayer busy securing the door and windows

inside the building. As everything was massive and strong, and small saplings were used as bars, it would have been the work of an hour or two to break into the building when Deerslayer had ended his task, even allowing the assailants the use of any tools but the axe, and to be unresisted.

As soon as all was fast in the inside of the dwelling, Deerslayer appeared at a trap, from which he descended into the canoe of Judith. When this was done, he fastened the door with a massive staple and stout padlock. Hetty was then received in the canoe, which was shoved outside of the palisades. The next precaution was to fasten the gate, and the keys were carried into the ark. The three were now fastened out of the dwelling, which could only be entered by violence, or by following the course taken by the young man in quitting it.

The glass had been brought outside as a preliminary step, and Deerslayer next took a careful survey of the entire shore of the lake, as far as his own position would allow. Not a living thing was visible, a few birds excepted. All the nearest points, in particular, were subjected to severe scrutiny, in order to make certain that no raft was in preparation, the result everywhere giving the same picture of calm solitude.

"Nothing is stirring," exclaimed Deerslayer, as he lowered the glass, and prepared to enter the ark: "if the vagabonds do harbour mischief in their minds, they are too cunning to let it be seen. They can't guess that we are about to quit the castle, and if they did, they've no means of knowing where we intend to go."

"This is so true, Deerslayer," returned Judith, "that now all is ready, we may proceed at once, and without the fear of being followed—else we shall be behind our time."

"No, the matter needs management; for though the savages are in the dark as to Chingachgook and the rock, they've eyes and legs, and will see in what direction we steer, and will be sartain to follow us. I shall strive to baffle 'em, hows'ever, by heading the scow in all manner of ways, until they get tired of tramping after us."

In less than five minutes after this speech was made, the whole party was in the ark, and in motion. There was a gentle breeze from the north; and boldly hoisting the sail, the young man laid the head of the unwieldy craft in such a direction as would have brought it ashore a couple of miles down the lake, and on its eastern side. The sailing of the ark was

never very swift, though, floating as it did on the surface, it was not difficult to get it in motion, or to urge it along over the water, at the rate of some three or four miles in the hour. Knowing the punctuality of an Indian, Deerslayer had made his calculations closely, and had given himself a little more time than was necessary to reach the place of rendezvous, with a view to delay or to press his arrival, as might prove most expedient.

It was a glorious June afternoon, and never did that solitary sheet of water seem less like an arena of strife and bloodshed. The light air scarce descended as low as the bed of the lake, hovering over it, as if unwilling to disturb its deep tranquillity.

"Must we reach the rock exactly at the moment the sun sets?" Judith demanded of the young man, as they stood near each other, while Deerslayer held the steering-oar. "Will a few minutes sooner or later alter the matter? It will be very hazardous to remain long near the shore at that rock!"

"That's it, Judith; that's the very difficulty! The rock's within p'int blank for a shot-gun, and 'twill never do to hover about it too close and too long. Now you see, Judith, that I do not steer towards the rock at all, but here to the eastward of it, whereby the savages will be tramping off in that direction, and get their legs a-wearied, and all for no advantage."

"You think, then, they see us, and watch our movements? I was in hopes they might have fallen back into the woods, and left us to ourselves for a few hours."

"That's altogether a woman's consait. There's no let-up in an Indian's watchfulness when he's on a war-path; and eyes are on us at this minute, 'though the lake presarves us. We must draw near the rock on a calculation, and indivour to get the miscreants on a false scent."

In this manner the time passed away; and when the sun was beginning to glow behind the fringe of pines that bounded the western hill, or about twenty minutes before it actually set, the ark was nearly as low as the point where Hutter and Hurry had been made prisoners. With a view to aid his plan of deception, Deerslayer stood as near the western shore as was at all prudent; and then, causing Judith and Hetty to enter the cabin, and crouching himself so as to conceal his person by the frame of the scow, he suddenly threw the head of the latter round, and began to make the best of his way towards the outlet. Favoured by an increase in the wind, the progress of the ark was such as to promise the complete

success of this plan, though its crab-like movement compelled the helmsman to keep its head in a direction very different from that in which it was actually moving.

CHAPTER IX.

In the position in which the ark had now got, the castle was concealed from view by the projection of a point, as indeed was the northern extremity of the lake itself. A respectable mountain, forest-clad, and rounded like all the rest, limited the view in that direction, stretching immediately across the whole of the fair scene, with the exception of a deep bay that passed its western end, lengthening the basin for more than a mile. The manner in which the water flowed out of the lake, beneath the leafy arches of the trees that lined the sides of the stream, has already been mentioned; and it has also been said that the rock, which was a favourite place of rendezvous throughout all that region, and where Deerslayer now expected to meet his friend, stood near this outlet, and at no great distance from the shore. It was a large isolated stone, that rested on the bottom of the lake, and which had obtained its shape from the action of the elements, during the slow progress of centuries. The height of this rock could scarcely equal six feet, and, as has been said, its shape was not unlike that which is usually given to bee-hives. It stood and still stands within fifty feet of the bank, and in water that was only two feet in depth, though there were seasons in which its rounded apex was covered by the lake. Many of the trees stretched so far forward as almost to blend the rock with the shore, when seen from a little distance; and one tall pine in particular overhung it in a way to form a noble and appropriate canopy to a seat that had held many a forest chieftain.

When distant some two or three hundred feet from the shore, Deerslayer took in his sail, and dropped his grapnel as soon as he found the ark had drifted in a line that was directly to windward of the rock. The motion of the scow was then checked, when it was brought head to wind by the action of the breeze. As soon as this was done, Deerslayer "paid out line", and suffered the vessel to "set down" upon the rock, as fast as the light air would force it to leeward. Floating en-

tirely on the surface, this was soon effected, and the young man checked the drift when he was told that the stern of the scow was within fifteen or eighteen feet of the desired spot.

In executing this manœuvre, Deerslayer had proceeded promptly; for, while he did not in the least doubt that he was both watched and followed by the foe, he believed he had distracted their movements by the apparent uncertainty of his own. Notwithstanding the celerity and decision of his movements, he did not, however, venture so near the shore without taking due precautions to effect a retreat in the event of its becoming necessary. He held the line in his hand, and Judith was stationed at a loop on the side of the cabin next the shore, where she could watch the beach and the rocks, and give timely notice of the approach of either friend or foe. Hetty was also placed to keep the trees overhead in view, lest some enemy might ascend one, and by completely commanding the interior of the scow, render the defences of the hut or cabin useless.

The sun had disappeared from the lake and valley when Deerslayer checked the ark. Still it wanted a few minutes to the true sunset, and he knew Indian punctuality too well to anticipate any unmanly haste in his friend. The great question was, whether, surrounded by enemies, he had escaped their toils. It was true he came prepared to encounter the party that withheld his promised bride, but he had no means of ascertaining the extent of the danger he ran, or the precise positions occupied by either friends or foes.

"Is the rock empty, Judith?" inquired Deerslayer, as soon as he had checked the drift of the ark, deeming it imprudent to venture unnecessarily near the shore. "Is anything to be seen of the Delaware chief?"

"Nothing, Deerslayer."

"Keep close, Judith,—keep close, Hetty. 'Twould grieve me to the heart did any harm befall either of you."

"And *you*, Deerslayer!" exclaimed Judith, bestowing a gracious and grateful look on the young man; "do *you* 'keep close', and have a care that the savages do not catch a glimpse of you! A bullet might be as fatal to *you* as to one of us; and the blow that you felt would be felt by all."

"No fear of me, Judith,—no fear of me, my gal. Do not look this-a-way, but keep your eyes on the rock and the shore, and the—"

Deerslayer was interrupted by a slight exclamation from the girl, who, in obedience to his hurried gestures, had immediately bent her looks again in the opposite direction.

"What is't, Judith?" he hastily demanded. "Is anything to be seen?"

"There is a man on the rock!—an Indian warrior, in his paint, and armed!"

"Where does he wear his hawk's feather?" eagerly added Deerslayer. "Is it fast to the warlock, or does he carry it above the left ear?"

"'Tis above the left ear; he smiles, too, and utters the word 'Mohican'."

"God be praised, 'tis the Sarpent at last!" exclaimed the young man, suffering the line to slip through his hands, until, hearing a light bound in the other end of the craft, he instantly checked the rope and began to haul it in again, under the assurance that his object was effected.

At that moment the door of the cabin was opened hastily, and a warrior, darting through the little room, stood at Deerslayer's side, simply uttering the exclamation "Hugh!" At the next instant Judith and Hetty shrieked, and the air was filled with the yells of twenty savages, who came leaping through the branches, down the bank, some actually falling headlong into the water in their haste.

"Pull, Deerslayer!" cried Judith, hastily barring the door, in order to prevent an inroad by the passage through which the Delaware had just entered; "pull for life and death—the lake is full of savages, wading after us!"

The young men needed no second bidding, but they applied themselves to their task in a way that showed how urgent they deemed the occasion.

"Pull, Deerslayer, for heaven's sake!" cried Judith again at the loop. "The wretches rush into the water like hounds following their prey! Ah!—the scow moves! and now the water deepens to the arm-pits of the foremost; still they rush forward, and will seize the ark!"

A slight scream, and then a joyous laugh, followed from the girl: the first produced by a desperate effort of their pursuers and the last by its failure; the scow, which had now got fairly in motion, gliding ahead into deep water, with a velocity that set the designs of their enemies at nought.

"What now, Judith? Do the Mingos still follow, or are we quit of 'em for the present?" demanded Deerslayer, when he

felt the scow was going fast, ahead, and heard the scream and the laugh of the girl, almost in the same breath.

"They have vanished;—one, the last, has disappeared in the shadows of the trees! You have got your friend, and we are all safe!"

The two men now made another great effort, pulled the ark up swiftly to the grapnel, tripped it, and when the scow had shot some distance, and lost its way, they let the anchor drop again; then, for the first time since their meeting, they ceased their efforts. As the floating house now lay several hundred feet from the shore, and offered a complete protection against bullets, there was no longer any danger, or any motive for immediate exertion.

The manner in which the two friends now recognized each other was highly characteristic. Chingachgook, a noble, tall, handsome, and athletic young Indian, first examined his rifle with care, opening the pan to make sure the priming was not wet; and, assured of this important fact, he next cast furtive but observant glances around him at the strange habitation, and at the two girls; still he spoke not, and most of all did he avoid the betrayal of a womanish curiosity by asking questions.

"Judith and Hetty," said Deerslayer, with an untaught natural courtesy, "this is the Mohican chief of whom you've heard me speak, Chingachgook. I know'd it must be he by the hawk's feather over the left ear, most other warriors wearing 'em on the warlock."

Although Chingachgook both understood and spoke English, he was unwilling to communicate his thoughts in it, like most Indians; and when he had met Judith's cordial shake of the hand, and Hetty's milder salute, in the courteous manner that became a chief, he turned away, apparently to await the moment when it might suit his friend to enter into an explanation of his future intentions. The other understood his meaning, and discovered his own mode of reasoning in the matter by addressing the girls.

"This wind will soon die away altogether, now the sun is down," he said, "and there is no need of rowing ag'in it. In half an hour or so, it will either be a flat calm, or the air will come off from the south shore, when we will begin our journey back ag'in to the castle; in the meanwhile, the Delaware and I will talk over matters, and get correct ideas of each other's notions consarning the course we ought to take."

No one opposed this proposition, and the girls withdrew into the cabin to prepare the evening meal, while the two men took their seats on the head of the scow, and began to converse.

It is unnecessary to enter into the details first related by Deerslayer, who gave a brief narrative of the facts that are already familiar to the reader.

When Deerslayer ended, the Delaware took up the narrative, which was both clear and short. On reaching the Susquehannah, which was at a point only half a mile south of the outlet, he had soon struck a trail, which gave him notice of the probable vicinity of enemies. Being prepared for such an occurrence, the object of the expedition calling him directly into the neighbourhood of the party of Iroquois that was known to be out, he considered the discovery as fortunate, rather than the reverse, and took the usual precaution to turn it to account. First following the river to its source, and ascertaining the position of the rock, he met another trail, and had actually been hovering for hours on the flanks of his enemies, watching equally for an opportunity to meet his mistress and to take a scalp. He kept near the lake, occasionally venturing to some spot where he could get a view of what was passing on its surface. The ark had been watched, from the moment it hove in sight, though the young chief was necessarily ignorant that it was to be the instrument of effecting the desired juncture with his friend. The uncertainty of its movements, and the fact that it was unquestionably managed by white men, led him to conjecture the truth, however, and he held himself in readiness to get on board whenever a suitable occasion might offer.

Although Chingachgook had been closely watching his enemies for hours, their sudden and close pursuit as he reached the scow was as much a matter of surprise to himself as it had been to his friend. He could only account for it by the fact of their being more numerous than he had at first supposed, and by their having out parties of the existence of which he was ignorant.

"Well, Sarpent," said Deerslayer, when the other had ended his narrative, "as you've been scouting around these Mingos, have you anything to tell us of their captives: the father of these young women, and another, who, I somewhat conclude, is the lover of one of 'em."

"Chingachgook has seen them. An old man and a young warrior."

"Were the men bound, or in any manner suffering torture? I ask on account of the young women, who, I dare say, would be glad to know."

"The pale-faces are treated like brothers to-day; to-morrow they will lose their scalps."

"Yes, that's red natur', and must be submitted to! Judith and Hetty, here's comforting tidings for you, the Delaware telling me that neither your father nor Hurry Harry is in suffering; but, bating the loss of liberty, as well off as we are ourselves."

"I rejoice to hear this, Deerslayer," returned Judith; "and now we are joined by your friend, I make no manner of question that we shall find an opportunity to ransom them. If there are any women in the camp, I have articles of dress that will catch their eyes; and, should the worst come to the worst, we can open the good chest, which I think will be found to hold things that may tempt the chiefs."

"Judith," said the young man, looking up at her with a smile, "can you find it in your heart to part with your finery to release prisoners; even though one be your own father, and the other is your sworn suitor and lover?"

The flush on the face of the girl arose in part from resentment, but suppressing the angry sensation with instinctive quickness, she answered with a readiness and truth that caused her sister to draw near to listen.

"Deerslayer," answered Judith, "I shall be honest with *you*. I confess that the time *has* been when what you call finery was to me the dearest thing on earth; but I begin to feel differently. Though Hurry Harry is nought to me, nor never can be, I would give all I own to set him free. If I would do this for him, you may judge what I would do for my own father."

"This sounds well, and is according to woman's gifts."

"Would the savages let father go, if Judith and I gave them all our best things?" demanded Hetty, in her innocent, mild manner.

"Their women might interfere, good Hetty; yes, their women might interfere with such an ind in view. But tell me, Sarpent, how is it as to squaws among the knaves—have they many of their own women in the camp?"

"Six," said the Indian, holding up all the fingers of one hand, and the thumb of the other, "besides *this*." The last number denoted his betrothed, whom he described by laying his hand on his heart.

"Did you see her, chief?"

"No, Deerslayer; but," and the young warrior turned his dark face towards his friend, with a smile on it that illuminated its fierce-looking paint, and naturally stern lineaments, with a bright gleam of human feeling, "Chingachgook heard the laugh of Wah-ta!-Wah; he knew it from the laugh of the women of the Iroquois."

"Ay, trust a lover's ear for that; and a Delaware's ear for all sounds that are ever heard in the woods. I know not why it is so, Judith, but when young men—and I dares to say it may be the same with young women too—but when they get to have kind feelin's towards each other, it's wonderful how pleasant the laugh or the speech becomes to the other person."

"And *you*, Deerslayer?" said Judith quickly, "have *you* never felt how pleasant it is to listen to the laugh of the girl you love?"

"Lord bless you, gal!—why, I've never lived enough among my own colour to drop into these sort of feelin's—no, never!"

Judith walked slowly and pensively away, nor was there any of her ordinary calculating coquetry in the light tremulous sigh that, unconsciously to herself, arose to her lips. Left alone, Deerslayer and his friend resumed their discourse.

"Has the young pale-face hunter been long on this lake?" demanded the Delaware, after courteously waiting for the other to speak first.

"Only since yesterday noon, Sarpent; though that has been long enough to see and do much."

The gaze that the Indian fastened on his companion was so keen that it seemed to mock the gathering darkness of the night. Deerslayer understood the meaning of this glowing gaze, and answered evasively, as he fancied would best become the modesty of a white man's gifts.

"'Tis as you suspect, Sarpent; yes, 'tis somewhat that-a-way. I *have* fell in with the inimy, and I suppose it may be said I've fou't them too."

An exclamation of delight and exultation escaped the Indian; and then, laying his hand eagerly on the arm of his friend, he asked if there were any scalps taken.

"That I *will* maintain, in the face of all the Delaware tribe, old Tamenund, and your father, the great Uncas, as well as the rest, is ag'in white gifts!"

"Did no warrior fall? Deerslayer did not get his name by being slow of sight, or clumsy with the rifle."

"In that particular, chief, you're nearer reason, and therefore nearer being right. I may say one Mingo fell."

"A chief?" demanded the other with startling vehemence.

"Nay, that's more than I know, or can say. He was artful, and treacherous, and stout-hearted, and may well have gained popularity enough with his people to be named to that rank."

"My brother and friend struck the body?"

"That was uncalled for, seeing that the Mingo died in my arms. The truth may as well be said at once; he fou't like a man of red gifts, and I fou't like a man with gifts of my own colour. God gave me the victory; I couldn't fly in the face of His providence by forgetting my birth and natur'."

"Good! Deerslayer is a pale-face, and has pale-face hands. A Delaware will look for the scalp and hang it on a pole, and sing a song in his honour when we go back to our people. The honour belongs to the tribe; it must not be lost."

"This is easy talking, but t'will not be as easy doing. The Mingo's body is in the hands of his fri'nds, and no doubt is hid in some hole, where Delaware cunning will never be able to get at the scalp."

It was now quite dark, the heavens having become clouded, and the stars hid. The north wind had ceased, and a light air arose from the south. This change favouring the design of Deerslayer, he lifted his grapnel, and the scow immediately and quite perceptibly began to drift more into the lake. The sail was set, when the motion of the craft increased to a rate not much less than two miles in the hour. As this superseded the necessity of rowing, Deerslayer, Chingachgook, and Judith seated themselves in the stern of the scow, where the first governed its movements by holding the oar. Here they discoursed on their future movements, and on the means that ought to be used in order to effect the liberation of their friends.

In this dialogue Judith held a material part; the Delaware readily understanding all she said, while his own replies and remarks were occasionally rendered into English by his friend. Judith rose greatly in the estimation of her companion in the half hour that followed. Prompt of resolution and firm of purpose, her suggestions and expedients partook of her spirit and sagacity, both of which were of a character to find favour

with men of the frontier. The events that had occurred since their meeting, as well as her isolated and dependent situation, induced the girl to feel towards Deerslayer like the friend of a year, instead of an acquaintance of a day; and so completely had she been won by his guileless truth of character and of feeling, that his peculiarities had excited her curiosity, and created a confidence that had never been awakened by any other man.

In this manner half an hour passed, during which time the ark had been slowly stealing over the water, the darkness thickening around it; though it was easy to see that the gloom of the forest at the southern end of the lake was getting to be distant, while the mountains that lined the sides of the beautiful basin were overshadowing it nearly from side to side. There was, indeed, a narrow strip of water in the centre of the lake, where the dim light that was still shed from the heavens fell upon its surface in a line extending north and south; and along this faint tract the scow held her course, he who steered well knowing that it led in the direction he wished to go.

"'Tis a gloomy night," observed Judith, after a pause of several minutes. "I hope we may be able to find the castle."

"Little fear of our missing *that*, if we keep this path in the middle of the lake," returned the young man.

"Do you hear nothing, Deerslayer? It seemed as if the water was stirring quite near us!"

"Sartainly something *did* move the water, oncommon like; it must have been a fish. Ha! *that* sounds like a paddle, used with more than common caution."

At this moment the Delaware bent forward, and pointed significantly into the boundary of gloom, as if some object had suddenly caught his eye. Both Deerslayer and Judith followed the direction of his gesture, and each got a view of a canoe at the same instant. The glimpse of this startling neighbour was dim, though to those in the ark the object was evidently a canoe, with a single individual in it, standing erect and paddling.

"I can easily bring down the paddler," whispered Deerslayer; "but we'll first hail him, and ask his a'r'nd." Then, raising his voice, he continued in a solemn manner, "Hold! If you come nearer I must fire. Stop paddling and answer!"

"Fire, and slay a poor defenceless girl," returned a soft, tremulous voice, "and God will never forgive you! Go your way, Deerslayer, and let me go mine!"

"Hetty!" exclaimed the young man and Judith in a breath; and the former sprang instantly to the spot where he had left the canoe they had been towing. It was gone, and he understood the whole affair. As for the fugitive, frightened at the menace, she ceased paddling, and remained dimly visible, resembling a spectral outline of a human form standing on the water. At the next moment the sail was lowered, to prevent the ark from passing the spot where the canoe lay. This last expedient, however, was not taken in time; for the momentum of so heavy a craft soon set her by, bringing Hetty directly to windward, though still visible, as the change in the positions of the two boats now placed her in that strip of light which has been mentioned.

"What can this mean, Judith?" demanded Deerslayer.

"You know she is feeble-minded, poor girl! and she has her own ideas of what ought to be done. She loves her father more than most children love their parents—and then—"

"Then what, gal? This is a trying moment; one in which truth must be spoken!"

Judith felt a generous and womanly regret at betraying her sister, and she hesitated ere she spoke again. But once more urged by Deerslayer she could refrain no longer.

"I fear poor Hetty has not been able to see the vanity, and madness, and folly that lie hid behind the handsome face of Hurry Harry. She talks of him in her sleep, and sometimes betrays the inclination in her waking moments."

"You think, Judith, that your sister is now bent on some mad scheme to serve her father and Hurry, which will, in all likelihood, give them riptyles, the Mingos, the mastership of a canoe?"

"Such, I fear, will turn out to be the fact, Deerslayer."

All this while the canoe, with the form of Hetty erect in one end of it, was dimly perceptible, though the greater drift of the ark rendered it at each instant less and less distinct. It was evident no time was to be lost, lest it should altogether disappear. The two men seized the oars, and began to sweep the head of the scow round in the direction of the canoe. Hetty took the alarm at these preparations, and started off like a bird that had been suddenly put up by the approach of unexpected danger.

As Deerslayer and his companion rowed with the energy of those who felt the necessity of straining every nerve, the chase would have quickly terminated in the capture of the

fugitive, had not the girl made several short and unlooked-for deviations in her course. These turnings had the effect of gradually bringing both canoe and ark within the deeper gloom cast by the shadows from the hills, until Judith called out to her companions to cease rowing, for she had completely lost sight of the canoe.

When this announcement was made, Hetty was actually so near as to understand every syllable her sister uttered. She stopped paddling at the same moment, and waited the result with an impatience that was breathless, equally from her late exertions and her desire to land. A dead silence immediately fell on the lake, during which the three in the ark were using their senses differently, in order to detect the position of the canoe. All was vain, however, for neither sound nor sight rewarded their efforts.

The pause continued several minutes, during which Deerslayer and the Delaware conferred together. Then the oars dipped again, and the ark moved away, with as little noise as possible. It steered in the direction of the encampment of the enemy. Having reached a point at no great distance from the shore, and where the obscurity was intense on account of the proximity of the land, it lay there near an hour waiting for the expected approach of Hetty, who, it was thought, would make the best of her way to that spot as soon as she believed herself relieved from the danger of pursuit. No success rewarded this little blockade, however, and disappointed at the failure, and conscious of the importance of getting possession of the fortress before it could be seized by the enemy, Deerslayer now took his way towards the castle, with the apprehension that all his foresight in securing the canoes would be defeated by this unguarded movement on the part of the feeble-minded Hetty.

CHAPTER X.

Fear, as much as calculation, had induced Hetty to cease paddling when she found that her pursuers did not know in which direction to proceed. She remained stationary until the ark had pulled in near the encampment, when she resumed the paddle, and made the best of her way towards the western shore. In order to avoid her pursuers, however, the head of

the canoe was pointed so far north as to bring her to land on a point that thrust itself into the lake at the distance of near a league from the outlet. Nor was this altogether the result of a desire to escape, for, feeble-minded as she was, Hetty was perfectly aware of the importance of keeping the canoes from falling into the hands of the Iroquois; and long familiarity with the lake had suggested one of the simplest expedients by which this great object could be rendered compatible with her own purpose.

The point in question was the first projection that offered on that side of the lake where a canoe, if set adrift with a southerly air, would float clear of the land, and where it would be no great violation of probabilities to suppose it might even hit the castle, the latter lying above it, almost in a direct line with the wind. Such, then, was Hetty's intention, and she landed on the extremity of the gravelly point, with the intention of shoving the canoe off from the shore, in order that it might drift up towards her father's insulated abode.

The girl was quite an hour finding her way to the point; but she was no sooner on the gravelly beach than she prepared to set the canoe adrift in the manner mentioned. While in the act of pushing it from her, she heard low voices that seemed to come from among the trees behind her. Startled at this unexpected danger, Hetty was on the point of springing into the canoe again, when she recognized the tones of Judith's voice. She now understood that the ark was approaching from the south, and so close in with the western shore as necessarily to cause it to pass the point within twenty yards of the spot where she stood. Here, then, was all she could desire! The canoe was shoved off into the lake, leaving its late occupant alone on the narrow strand.

When this act of self-devotion was performed, Hetty remained, watching with intense anxiety the result of her expedient, intending to call the attention of the others to the canoe with her voice, should they appear to pass without observing it. The ark approached under its sail again, Deerslayer standing in its bow, with Judith near him, and the Delaware at the helm.

"Lay her head more off the shore, Delaware," said Deerslayer; "we have got embayed here, and needs keep the mast clear of the trees. Judith, there's a canoe!"

Deerslayer's hand was on his rifle ere the words were fairly out of his mouth. But the truth flashed on the mind of the

quick-witted girl, and she instantly told her companion that the boat *must* be that in which her sister had fled.

"Keep the scow straight, Delaware,—there, I have it!"

The canoe was seized, and immediately secured to the side of the ark. The next moment the sail was lowered, and the motion of the ark arrested by means of the oars.

"Hetty!" called out Judith, concern, even affection, betraying itself in her tones. "Are you within hearing, sister? Hetty! dear Hetty!"

"I'm here, Judith,—here on the shore, where it will be useless to follow me, as I will hide in the woods."

"Oh, Hetty! Remember that the woods are filled with savages and wild beasts!"

"Neither will harm a poor half-witted girl, Judith. God is as much with me here as He would be in the ark or in the hut. I am going to help my father and Hurry, who will be tortured unless some one cares for them."

"We all care for them, and intend to-morrow to send them a flag of truce, to buy their ransom. Come back, sister. Trust to us, who will do all we can for father."

"I must go to father and poor Hurry. Do you and Deerslayer keep the castle, sister; leave me in the hands of God."

"God is with us all, Hetty,—in the castle or on the shore,—father as well as ourselves, and it is sinful not to trust to His goodness. You will lose your way in the forest, and perish for want of food."

"God will not let that happen to a poor child that goes to serve her father."

"Come back for this night only. In the morning we will put you ashore, and leave you to do as you may think right."

"You *say* so, Judith, and you *think* so; but you would not. Besides, I've got a thing to tell the Indian chief that will answer all our wishes, and I'm afraid I may forget it if I don't tell it to him at once. You'll see that he will let father go as soon as he hears it!"

"Poor Hetty! What can *you* say to a ferocious savage that will be likely to change his purpose?"

"That which will frighten him, and make him let father go," returned the simple-minded girl, positively. "You'll see, sister; you'll see how soon it will bring him to, like a gentle child!"

"Will you tell *me*, Hetty, what you intend to say?" asked Deerslayer. "I know the savages well, and can form some idee how far fair words will be likely to work on their natur's."

"Well, then," answered Hetty, dropping her voice to a low, confidential tone; "well, then, Deerslayer, I will tell *you*. I mean not to say a word to any of the savages until I get face to face with their head chief. Then I'll tell him that God will not forgive murder and thefts, and that if father and Hurry did go after the scalps of the Iroquois, he must return good for evil, for so the Bible commands, else he will go into everlasting punishment. When he hears this, and feels it to be true—how long will it be before he sends father, and Hurry, and me to the shore opposite the castle, telling us all three to go our way in peace?"

Deerslayer was dumbfounded at this proof of guileless feebleness of mind. The snapping of twigs and the rustling of leaves, however, made them aware that Hetty had quitted the shore, and was already burying herself in the forest. To follow her would have been bootless, since the darkness, as well as the dense cover that the woods everywhere afforded, would have rendered her capture next to impossible. After a short and melancholy discussion, therefore, the sail was again set, and the ark pursued its course towards its moorings. Here all was found as it had been left, and the reverse of the ceremonies had to be taken in entering the building that had been used on quitting it.

When Hetty left the shore, she took her way unhesitatingly into the woods, with a nervous apprehension of being followed. The night was so intensely dark beneath the branches of the trees that her progress was very slow, and the direction she went altogether a matter of chance, after the first few yards. The formation of the ground, however, did not permit her to deviate far from the line in which she desired to proceed. On one hand, it was bounded by the hill; while the lake, on the other, served as a guide.

For two hours did this simple-minded girl toil through the mazes of the forest. Her feet often slid from beneath her, and she got many falls, though none to do her injury; but, by the end of the period mentioned she had become so weary as to want strength to go any farther. Rest was indispensable; and she set about preparing a bed, with the readiness and coolness of one to whom the wilderness presented no unnecessary terrors.

As soon as Hetty had collected a sufficient number of the dried leaves to protect her person from the damps of the ground, she kneeled beside the humble pile, clasped her raised

hands in an attitude of deep devotion, and in a soft, low voice repeated the Lord's Prayer. This duty done, she lay down and disposed herself to sleep.

Hetty had brought with her a coarse, heavy mantle, which, when laid over the body, answered all the useful purposes of a blanket. Thus protected, she dropped asleep in a few minutes, as tranquilly as if watched over by the guardian care of that mother who had so recently been taken from her for ever. Hour passed after hour in a tranquillity as undisturbed and a rest as sweet as if angels, expressly commissioned for that object, watched around her bed. Not once did her soft eyes open, until the gray of the dawn came struggling through the tops of the trees, falling on their lids, and, united to the freshness of a summer's morning, giving the usual summons to awake.

Ordinarily, Hetty was up ere the rays of the sun tipped the summits of the mountains; but on this occasion her fatigue had been so great, and her rest was so profound, that the customary warnings failed of their effect. The girl murmured in her sleep, threw an arm forward, smiled as gently as an infant in its cradle, but still slumbered. In making this gesture, her hand fell on some object that was warm, and, in the half-unconscious state in which she lay, she connected the circumstance with her habits. At the next moment a rude attack was made on her side, as if a rooting animal were thrusting its snout beneath, with a desire to force her position; and then, uttering the name of "Judith", she awoke.

As the startled girl arose to a sitting attitude, she perceived that some dark object sprang from her. Opening her eyes, and recovering from the first confusion and astonishment of her situation, Hetty perceived a bear's cub balancing itself on its hinder legs, and still looking towards her, as if doubtful whether it would be safe to trust itself near her person again.

The first impulse of Hetty, who had been mistress of several of these cubs, was to run and seize the little creature as a prize, but a low growl warned her of the danger of such a procedure. Recoiling a few steps, the girl looked hurriedly round, and perceived the dam watching her movements with fiery eyes at no great distance. Happily, Hetty did not fly. Though not without terror she knelt with her face towards the animal, and with clasped hands and uplifted eyes repeated the prayer of the previous night.

As the girl rose from her knees, the bear dropped on its feet

again, and the dam, collecting the cubs around her, permitted them to draw their natural sustenance. Hetty was delighted with this proof of tenderness in an animal that has but a very indifferent reputation for the gentler feelings; and as a cub would quit its mother to frisk and leap about in wantonness, she felt a strong desire again to catch it up in her arms, and play with it. But, admonished by the growl, she had self-command sufficient not to put this dangerous project in execution; and recollecting her errand among the hills, she tore herself away from the group, and proceeded on her course along the margin of the lake. To her surprise, though not to her alarm, the family of bears arose and followed her steps, keeping a short distance behind her, apparently watching every movement, as if they had a near interest in what she did.

In this manner, escorted by the dam and cubs, the girl proceeded nearly a mile. She then reached a brook that had dug a channel for itself into the earth, and went brawling into the lake between steep and high banks covered with trees. Here Hetty performed her ablutions; then, drinking of the pure mountain water, she went her way refreshed and lighter of heart, still attended by her singular companions. Her course now lay along a part of the valley where the mountains ran obliquely, forming the commencement of a plain that spread between the hills southward of the sheet of water.

Hetty knew by this circumstance that she was getting near to the encampment, and had she not, the bears would have given her warning of the vicinity of human beings. Snuffing the air, the dam refused to follow any further, though the girl looked back and invited her to come by childish signs. It was while making her way slowly through some bushes in this manner, with averted face and eyes riveted on the immovable animals, that the girl suddenly found herself arrested by a human hand that was laid lightly on her shoulder.

"Where go?" said a soft female voice, speaking hurriedly, and in concern. "Indian—red man—savage—that-a-way."

This unexpected salutation alarmed the girl no more than the presence of the fierce inhabitants of the woods. It took her a little by surprise, it is true, but she was in a measure prepared for some such meeting; and the creature who stopped her was as little likely to excite terror as any who ever appeared in the guise of an Indian. It was a girl not much older than herself, whose smile was sunny as Judith's in her brightest moments, and whose voice was melody itself.

She was dressed in a calico mantle that effectually protected all the upper part of her person, while a short petticoat of blue cloth, edged with gold lace, that fell no lower than her knees, leggings of the same, and moccasins of deer-skin completed her attire. Her hair fell in long dark braids down her shoulders and back, and was parted above a low smooth forehead in a way to soften the expression of eyes that were full of archness and natural feeling. Her face was oval, with delicate features; the teeth were even and white, while the mouth expressed a tender melancholy. In a word, this was the betrothed of Chingachgook, who, having succeeded in lulling their suspicions, was permitted to wander around the encampment of her captors.

But Wah-ta!-Wah's father, during her childhood, had been much employed as a warrior by the authorities of the colony; and dwelling for several years near the forts, she had caught a knowledge of the English tongue, which she spoke in the usual abbreviated manner of an Indian.

"Where go?" repeated Wah-ta!-Wah, returning the smile of Hetty; "*wicked* warrior, that-a-way,—*good* warrior, far off."

"What's your name?" asked Hetty, with the simplicity of a child.

"Wah-ta!-Wah. I no Mingo—good Delaware—Yengeese friend. Come here, where no eyes."

Wah-ta!-Wah now led her companion towards the lake, descending the bank so as to place its overhanging trees and bushes between them and any probable observers; nor did she stop until they were both seated, side by side, on a fallen log, one end of which actually lay buried in the water.

"*Why* you come for?" the young Indian then inquired; "*where* you come from?"

Hetty explained the situation of her father, and stated her desire to serve him, and, if possible, to procure his release.

"Why your fader come to Mingo camp in night?" asked the Indian girl. "He know it war-time. Why he come night-time, try scalp Delaware girl?"

"You!" said Hetty, almost sickening with horror; "did he try to scalp *you*?"

"Why no? Delaware scalp sell for much as Mingo scalp. Wicked t'ing for pale-face to scalp. No his gifts, as Deerslayer always tell me."

"And do *you* know Deerslayer?" said Hetty, colouring with delight and surprise. "I know him too. He is now in the

ark, with Judith, and a Delaware, who is called the Big Serpent. A bold and handsome warrior is this Serpent, too!"

Spite of the rich deep colour that nature had bestowed on the Indian beauty, the tell-tale blood deepened on her cheeks, until the blush gave new animation and intelligence to her jet-black eyes. Raising a finger in an attitude of warning, she dropped her voice nearly to a whisper, as she continued the discourse.

"Chingachgook!" she said, sighing out the harsh name in sounds so softly guttural as to cause it to reach the ear in melody. "His father, Uncas—great chief of the Mahicanni—next to old Tamenund! *You* know Serpent?"

"He joined us last evening, and was in the ark with me for two or three hours before I left it. I'm afraid, Hist, he has come after scalps, as well as my poor father and Hurry Harry!"

"Why he shouldn't, ha? Chingachgook red warrior, scalp make his honour."

"Did he really come all this distance to torment his fellow-creatures, and do so wicked a thing?"

This question at once appeased the growing ire of the half-offended Indian beauty. At first, she looked around her suspiciously, as if distrusting eavesdroppers; then she gazed wistfully into the face of her attentive companion; after which she covered her face with both her hands, and laughed in a strain that might well be termed the melody of the woods. Dread of discovery, however, soon put a stop to this naive exhibition of feeling, and removing her hands, this creature of impulses gazed again wistfully into the face of her companion, as if inquiring how far she might trust a stranger with her secret. Then, yielding to an impulse of tenderness, she threw her arms around Hetty, and embraced her with an emotion so natural that it was only equalled by its warmth.

"*You* good," whispered the young Indian; "you good, I know; it is so long since Wah-ta!-Wah have a friend—anybody to speak her heart to! you Hist friend; don't I say trut'?"

"I never had a friend," answered Hetty, returning the warm embrace with unfeigned earnestness; "I've a sister, but no friend. Judith loves me, and I love Judith; but that's natural, and as we are taught in the Bible; but I *should* like to have a friend! I'll be your friend, with all my heart; for I like your voice, and your smile."

These preliminaries settled to their mutual satisfaction, the two girls began to discourse of their several hopes and projects. As the quickest-witted, Hist was the first with her interrogatories. Folding an arm about the waist of Hetty, she bent her head so as to look up playfully into the face of the other, and asked:

"Hetty got broder, as well as fader? Why no talk of broder as well as fader?"

"I have no brother, Hist. I had one once, they say; but he is dead many a year, and lies buried in the lake, by the side of mother."

"No got broder—got a young warrior; love him, almost as much as fader, eh? Very handsome, and brave-looking; fit to be chief, if he *good* as he *seem* to be."

"It's wicked to love any man as well as I love my father, and so I strive not to do it, Hist," returned the conscientious Hetty, "though I sometimes think wickedness will get the better of me, if Hurry comes so often to the lake. I *must* tell you the truth, dear Hist, because you ask me; but I should fall down and die in the woods, if he knew it!"

"Why he no ask you, himself? Brave-looking—why not bold speaking? Young warrior ought to ask young girl; no make young girl speak first."

"Ask me *what*?" the startled girl demanded. "Ask me if I like him as well as I do my own father! Oh! I hope he will never put such a question to *me*, for I should have to answer, and that would *kill* me!"

"No—no kill, *quite* almost," returned the other, laughing in spite of herself. "Make blush come; but he no stay great while; then feel happier than ever. Young warrior must tell girl he want to make wife, else never can live in his wigwam."

"Hurry don't want to marry me—nobody will ever want to marry me, Hist."

"How you can know? Why nobody want to marry you?"

"I am not full-witted, they say. Father often tells me this; and so does Judith, when she is vexed; but I shouldn't so much mind them as I did mother. *She* said so *once*; and then she cried as if her heart would break; and so I *know* I'm not full-witted."

Hist gazed at the gentle, simple girl for a minute without speaking; when the truth appeared to flash on her mind. Pity, reverence, and tenderness seemed struggling together

in her breast; and then, rising suddenly, she indicated a wish to her companion that she would accompany her to the camp, which was situated at no great distance. This unexpected change from the precaution that Hist had previously manifested a desire to use, in order to prevent being seen, to an open exposure of the person of her friend, arose from the perfect conviction that no Indian would harm a being whom the Great Spirit had disarmed, by depriving it of its strongest defence—reason.

Hetty accompanied her new friend without apprehension or reluctance. It was her wish to reach the camp; and, sustained by her motives, she felt no more concern for the consequences than did her companion herself.

"Hist prisoner, and Mingo got large ear," said the Indian girl, as they went along. "No speak of Chingachgook when they by. Promise Hist that, good Hetty."

Hetty understood this appeal, and promised the Delaware girl not to make any allusion to the presence of Chingachgook.

"Maybe he get off Hurry and fader, as well as Hist, if let him have his way," whispered Wah-ta!-Wah to her companion, in a confiding way, just as they got near enough to the encampment to hear the voices of several of their own sex, who were apparently occupied in the usual toil of women of their class. "Think of that, Hetty, and put finger on mouth."

A better expedient could not have been adopted to secure the silence and discretion of Hetty than that which was now presented to her mind. Thus assured, Hist tarried no longer, but immediately and openly led the way into the encampment of her captors.

CHAPTER XI.

That the party to which Hist compulsorily belonged was not one that was regularly on the war-path, was evident by the presence of females. It was a small fragment of a tribe that had been hunting and fishing within the English limits, where it was found by the commencement of hostilities; and after passing the winter and spring by living on what was strictly the property of its enemies, it chose to strike a hostile blow before it finally retired.

The encampment being temporary, it offered to the eye no more than the rude protection of a bivouac. One fire, that had been kindled against the roots of a living oak, sufficed for the whole party, the weather being too mild to require it for any purpose but cooking. Scattered around this centre of attraction were some fifteen or twenty low huts made of the branches of trees, put together with some ingenuity, and uniformly topped with bark that had been stripped from fallen trees. A few children strayed from hut to hut, giving the spot a little the air of domestic life; and the suppressed laugh and low voices of the women occasionally broke in upon the deep stillness of the forest. As for the men, they either ate, slept, or examined their arms. They conversed but little, and then usually apart; whilst an air of untiring watchfulness and apprehension of danger seemed to be blended even with their slumbers.

As the two girls came near the encampment, Hetty uttered a slight exclamation on catching a view of the person of her father. He was seated on the ground with his back to a tree, and Hurry stood near him, indolently whittling a twig. Apparently they were as much at liberty as any others in or about the camp. Wah-ta!-Wah led her friend quite near them, and then modestly withdrew, that her own presence might be no restraint on her feelings. But Hetty was not sufficiently familiar with outward demonstrations of fondness to indulge in any outbreak of feeling. She merely approached, and stood at her father's side without speaking, resembling a silent statue of filial affection. The old man expressed neither alarm nor surprise at her sudden appearance. Nor did the savages themselves betray the least sign of emotion at this sudden appearance of a stranger among them. Still, a few warriors collected, and it was evident by the manner in which they glanced at Hetty, that she was the subject of their discourse.

Hutter was inwardly much moved by the conduct of Hetty. He knew the simple, single-hearted fidelity of his child, and understood why she had come, and the total disregard of self that reigned in all her acts.

"This is not well, Hetty," he said. "These are fierce Iroquois, and as little apt to forget an injury as a favour."

"Tell me, father," returned the girl looking furtively about her, as if fearful of being overheard, "did God let you do the cruel errand on which you came?"

"You should not have come hither, Hetty; these brutes will not understand your nature, or your intentions!"

"How was it, father? Neither you nor Hurry seem to have anything that look like scalps."

"If that will set your mind at peace, child, I can answer you—no. I had caught the young creatur' who came here with you, but her screeches soon brought down upon me a troop of the wild cats that was too much for any single Christian to withstand."

"Thank you for that, father. Now I can speak boldly to the Iroquois, and with an easy conscience. I hope Hurry, too, has not been able to harm any of the Indians?"

"Why, as to that matter, Hetty," returned the individual in question, "Hurry has not been *able*, and that is the long and short of it. Here was your father and myself, bent on a legal operation, thinking no harm, when we were set upon by critturs that were more like a pack of hungry wolves than mortal savages even, and there they had us tethered like two sheep in less time than it has taken me to tell you the story."

"You are free now, Hurry," returned Hetty, glancing timidly at the unfettered limbs of the young giant. "You have no cords or withes to pain your arms or legs now."

"Not I, Hetty. Natur' is natur', and freedom is natur', too. My limbs have a free look, but that's pretty much the amount of it, sin' I can't use them in the way I should like. For was the old man or I to start one single rod beyond our gaol limits, like as not four or five rifle bullets would be travelling after us, carrying so many invitations to curb our impatience."

"It's best so, Hurry," she said. "It is best father and you should be quiet and peaceable till I have spoken to the Iroquois, when all will be well and happy. As soon as all is settled, and you are at liberty to go back to the castle, I will come and let you know it."

Hetty spoke with so much simple earnestness, and seemed so confident of success, that when she quitted them they offered no obstacle, though they saw she was about to join the group of chiefs who were consulting apart.

When Hist quitted her companion, she strayed near one or two of the elder warriors who had shown her most kindness in her captivity. In taking this direction the shrewd girl did so to invite inquiry. Even her affected indifference stimulated curiosity: and Hetty had hardly reached the side of her father

before the Delaware girl was brought within the circle of the warriors by a secret but significant gesture. Here she was questioned as to the presence of her companion, and the motives that had brought her to the camp. She explained the manner in which she had detected the weakness of Hetty's reason, and then related the object of the girl in venturing among her enemies. As soon as her purpose was attained, Hist withdrew to a distance, where she set about the preparation of a meal that was to be offered to her new friend as soon as she might be at liberty to partake of it.

As Hetty approached the chiefs, they opened their little circle with a deference of manner that would have done credit to men of more courtly origin. A fallen tree lay near, and the oldest of the warriors made a sign for the girl to be seated on it, taking his place at her side with the gentleness of a father. The others arranged themselves around the two, and then the girl began to reveal the object of her visit. The moment she opened her mouth to speak, however, the old chief gave a gentle sign for her to forbear, said a few words to one of his juniors, and then waited until the latter had summoned Hist to the party. This interruption proceeded from the chief's having discovered that there existed a necessity for an interpreter.

Wah-ta!-Wah was not sorry to be called upon to be present at the interview, and least of all in the character in which she was now wanted. She was aware of the hazards she ran in attempting to deceive one or two of the party, but was none the less resolved to use every means that offered, to conceal the fact of the vicinity of her betrothed.

As soon as Hist was seated by Hetty's side the old chief desired her to ask "the fair young pale-face" what had brought her among the Iroquois.

"Tell them, Hist, who I am—Thomas Hutter's youngest daughter. And then tell them that I've come here to convince them they ought not to harm father and Hurry, but let them go in peace. Now tell them all this plainly, Hist, and fear nothing for yourself or me; God will protect us."

Wah-ta!-Wah did as the other desired, taking care to render the words of her friend as literally as possible. The chiefs heard this opening explanation with grave decorum; the two who had a little knowledge of English intimating their satisfaction with the interpreter by furtive but significant glances of the eyes.

"And now, Hist," continued Hetty, "I wish you to tell these red men, word for word, what I am about to say. Tell them, first, that father and Hurry came here with an intention to take as many scalps as they could; for the wicked governor and the province have offered money for scalps, and the love of gold was too strong for their hearts to withstand it. Tell them this, dear Hist, just as you have heard it from me, word for word."

Contrary to what a civilized man would have expected, the admission of the motives and of the errands of their prisoners produced no visible effect on either the countenances or the feelings of the listeners.

"And now, Hist," resumed Hetty, "ask them if they know there is a God, who reigns over the whole earth, and is ruler and chief of all who live, let them be red, or white, or what colour they may?"

Wah-ta!-Wah put the question as literally as possible, and received a grave answer in the affirmative.

"This is right," continued Hetty, "and my duty will now be light. This Great Spirit has caused a book to be written that we call a Bible; and in this book have been set down all His commandments, and His holy will and pleasure, and the rules by which all men are to live, and directions how to govern the thoughts even, and the wishes, and the will. Here, this is one of these holy books, and you must tell the chiefs what I am about to read to them from its sacred pages."

As Hetty concluded, she reverently unrolled a small English Bible from its envelope of coarse calico. As she slowly proceeded in her task, the grim warriors watched each movement with riveted eyes; and when they saw the little volume appear, a slight expression of surprise escaped one or two of them. Hetty held it out towards them in triumph, as if she expected the sight would produce a visible miracle; and then turned eagerly to her new friend, in order to renew the discourse.

"This is the sacred volume, Hist," she said, "and these words all came from God. You can tell these chiefs that throughout this book men are ordered to forgive their enemies; to treat them as they would brethern; and never to injure their fellow-creatures. Do you think you can tell them this so that they will understand it, Hist?"

"Tell them well enough; but he no easy to understand."

Hist then conveyed the ideas of Hetty, in the best manner she could, to the attentive Indians. Before she resumed,

Hetty inquired earnestly of Hist if the chiefs had understood her, and receiving an evasive answer, was fain to be satisfied.

"I will now read to the warriors some of the verses that it is good for them to know," continued the girl, "and they will remember that they are the very words of the Great Spirit. First, then, ye are commanded to '*Love thy neighbour as thyself*'."

"Neighbour for Indian no mean pale-face," answered the Delaware girl.

"You forget, Hist, these are the words of the Great Spirit, and the chief must obey them as well as others. Here is another commandment: '*Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also*'."

"What that mean?" demanded Hist.

Hetty explained that it was an order not to resent injuries, but rather to submit to receive fresh wrongs from the offender.

"And hear this too, Hist," she added, "'*Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you*'."

By this time Hetty had become excited; her eye gleamed with the earnestness of her feelings, her cheeks flushed, and her voice, usually so low and modulated, became stronger and more impressive. To translate half she said in her pious earnestness, Wah-ta!-Wah would have found impracticable, had she made the effort; but wonder held her tongue-tied, equally with the chiefs; and the young simple-minded enthusiast had fairly become exhausted with her own efforts before the other opened her mouth again to utter a syllable. Then, indeed, the Delaware girl gave a brief translation of the substance of what had been both read and said. One or two old men had heard similar doctrines from the missionaries, and they felt a desire to occupy an idle moment by pursuing a subject that they found so curious.

"This is the Good Book of the pale-faces," observed one of these chiefs, taking the volume from the unresisting hand of Hetty. "This is the law by which my white brethren profess to live?" Hist, to whom this question was addressed, answered simply in the affirmative.

"Tell my young sister," said the Huron, "that I will open my mouth and say a few words."

"The Iroquois chief go to speak—my pale-face friend listen," said Hist.

"I rejoice to hear it!" exclaimed Hetty. "God has touched his heart, and he will now let father and Hurry go."

"This is the pale-face law," resumed the chief. "It tells him to do good to them that hurt him, and when his brother asks him for his rifle, to give him the powder-horn too."

"Not so—not so," answered Hetty, earnestly, when these words had been interpreted. "There is not a word about rifles in the whole book."

"Why, then, does the pale-face use them? If he is ordered to *give* double to him that asks only for one thing, why does he *take* double from the poor Indians, who ask for *no* thing? He comes from beyond the rising sun with his book in his hand, and he teaches the red man to read it; but why does he forget himself all it says?"

When Hetty had got this formidable question fairly presented to her mind in the translation, she became more and more embarrassed, until, overcome with the apprehension that she had failed in her object, and that the lives of her father and Hurry would be the forfeit of some blunder of her own, she burst into tears.

"Stop cry—no cry," said Hist, wiping the tears from the face of Hetty, as she would have performed the same office for a child, and stopping to press her occasionally to her bosom with the affection of a sister; "why you so trouble? You no make he book, if he be wrong."

Hetty soon recovered from this sudden burst of grief, and then her mind reverted to the purpose of her visit, with all its single-hearted earnestness. Perceiving that the grim-looking chiefs were still standing around her in grave attention, she hoped that another effort to convince them of the right might be successful.

"Listen, Hist," she said, struggling to suppress her sobs, "tell the chiefs that it matters not what the wicked do—right is right—the words of the Great Spirit are the words of the Great Spirit—and no one can go harmless for doing an evil act because another has done it before him. '*Render good for evil*' says this book, and that is the law for the red man as well as for the white man."

"Never hear such a law among Delaware," answered Hist, soothingly. "No good to tell chiefs any such law as *that*."

Hist was about to proceed, notwithstanding, when a tap on the shoulder from the finger of the oldest chief caused her to look up. She then perceived that one of the warriors had left the group, and was already returning to it with Hutter

and Hurry. In a few seconds the prisoners stood face to face with the principal men of the captors.

"Daughter," said the senior chief to the young Delaware, "ask this graybeard why he came into our camp?"

The question was put by Hist, in her own imperfect English, but in a way that was easy to be understood. Hutter was too stern and obstinate by nature to shrink from the consequences of any of his acts, and he was also too familiar with the opinions of the savages not to understand that nothing was to be gained by equivocation, or an unmanly dread of their anger. Without hesitating, therefore, he avowed the purpose with which he had landed. This frank avowal was received by the Iroquois with evident satisfaction. Hurry, when interrogated, also confessed the truth.

As soon as the chiefs had received the answers to their questions, they walked away in silence, like men who deemed the matter disposed of. Hetty and Hist were now left alone with Hutter and Hurry, no visible restraint being placed on the movements of either; though all four, in fact, were vigilantly and unceasingly watched. The two men had been long enough in the camp, and were sufficiently observant, to have ascertained that Hist also was a sort of captive; and, presuming on the circumstance, Hutter spoke in her presence more openly than he might otherwise have thought it prudent to do.

"I'll not blame you, Hetty, for coming on this errand, which was well meant, if not very wisely planned," commenced the father, seating himself by the side of his daughter; "but preaching and the Bible are not the means to turn an Indian from his ways. Has Deerslayer sent any message?"

"Father," returned Hetty, "neither Deerslayer nor Judith knew of my coming until I had left the ark. They are afraid the Iroquois will make a raft and try to get off to the hut, and think more of defending *that* than of coming to aid you."

"No, no," said Hist, hurriedly, though in a low voice, "Deerslayer different man. He no t'ink of defending 'self with a friend in danger. Help one another, and all get to hut."

"This sounds well, Tom," said Hurry. "Give me a ready-witted squaw for a fri'nd, and I'll defy an Iroquois."

"No talk loud," said Hist; "some Iroquois got Yengeese tongue, and all got Yengeese ear."

"Have we a friend in you, young woman?" inquired Hutter.

"If so, you may calculate on a solid reward, and nothing will be easier than to send you to your own tribe if we can once fairly get you off with us to the castle."

"Listen," said Hist, quickly, and with an earnestness that proved how much her feelings were concerned, "Wah-ta!-Wah no Iroquois, all over Delaware. She prisoner too. One prisoner help t'other prisoner. No good talk more now. Darter stay with father. Wah-ta!-Wah come see friend. All look right—*then* tell what he do."

This was said in a low voice, but in a manner to make an impression. As soon as it was uttered, the girl arose and left the group, walking composedly towards the hut she occupied, as if she had no further interest in what might pass between the three pale-faces."

CHAPTER XII.

We left Judith and her companions respectively in the castle and the ark. Once or twice in the course of the night, Deerslayer or the Delaware arose and looked out upon the tranquil lake, when, finding all safe, they returned to their pallets, and slept like men who were not easily deprived of their natural rest. But ere the sun had shown himself over the eastern hills all were up and afoot, even the tardy in that region seldom remaining on their pallets after the appearance of the great luminary.

Chingachgook was in the act of arranging his forest toilet when Deerslayer entered the cabin of the ark, and threw him a few coarse but light summer vestments that belonged to Hutter.

"Judith hath given me them for your use, chief," said the latter, as he cast the jacket and trousers at the feet of the Indian, "for it's ag'in all prudence and caution to be seen in your war-dress and paint. Wash off all them fiery streaks from your cheeks, put on these garments, and here is a hat that will give you a sort of civilization. Remember that Hist is at hand, and what we do for the maiden must be done while we are doing for others."

Chingachgook eyed the vestments with strong disgust, but he saw the usefulness of the disguise, if not its absolute necessity. Should the Iroquois discover a red man in or about the

castle, it might, indeed, place them more on their guard, and give their suspicions a direction towards their female captive. Anything was better than a failure as it regarded his betrothed, and after turning the different garments round and round, examining them with a species of grave irony, the chief submitted to the directions of his companion, and finally stood forth, so far as the eye could detect, a red man in colour alone.

The meeting at the morning meal of the three islanders, if we may use the term, was silent, grave, and thoughtful. A few words of courtesy passed between Deerslayer and the girl in the course of the breakfast, but no allusion was made to their situation. At length Judith, whose heart was full, introduced the subject, and this in a way to show how much of her thoughts it had occupied in the course of the last sleepless night.

"It would be dreadful, Deerslayer," she exclaimed, "should anything befall my father and Hetty! We cannot remain quietly here, and leave them in the hands of the Iroquois."

"I'm ready, Judith, to sarve them, could the way to do it be p'inted out. It's no trifling matter to fall into red-skin hands, when men set out on an a'r'nd like that which took Hutter and Hurry ashore; I wouldn't wish my worst inimy in such a strait. Have you any scheme that you would like to have the Sarpent and me indivour to carry out?"

"I know of no other means to release the prisoners than by bribing the Iroquois. They are not proof against presents; and we might offer enough, perhaps, to make them think it better to carry away what to them will be rich gifts, than to carry away poor prisoners: if, indeed, they should carry them away at all!"

"This is well enough, Judith, if the inimy is to be bought, and we can find articles to make the purchase with. There's the piece your father calls Killdeer might count for something, and I understand there's a keg of powder about, which might be a make-weight, sartain; and yet two able-bodied men are not to be bought off for a trifle—besides—"

"Besides what?" demanded Judith impatiently.

"Why, Judith, the Frenchers offer bounties as well as our own side; and the price of two scalps would purchase a keg of powder and a rifle; though I'll not say one of the latter altogether as good as Killdeer there."

"This is horrible!" muttered the girl, struck by the homely manner in which her companion was accustomed to state his

facts. "But you overlook my own clothes, Deerslayer; and they, I think, might go far with the women of the Iroquois."

"No doubt they would; no doubt they would, Judith," returned the other, looking at her keenly, as if he would ascertain whether she were really capable of making such a sacrifice. "But are you certain you could find it in your heart to part with your own finery for such a purpose?"

Although Judith coloured, and for an instant her eyes flashed fire, she could not find it in her heart to be really angry with one whose very soul seemed truth and manly kindness. Look her reproaches she did; but conquering the desire to retort, she succeeded in answering in a mild and friendly manner.

"Try me," she said quietly; "if you find that I regret either riband or feather, silk or muslin, then may you think what you please of my heart, and say what you think."

"That's justice! The rarest thing to find on 'arth is a truly just man."

"Very true, Deerslayer," rejoined Judith, losing every trace of displeasure in a bright smile; "and I hope to see you act on this love of justice in all matters in which I am concerned. But let us talk of my father and his ransom. 'Tis as you say, Deerslayer: the Indians will not be likely to give up their prisoners without a heavier bribe than my clothes can offer, and father's rifle and powder. There is the chest."

"Ay, there is the chist, as you say, Judith; and when the question gets to be between a secret and a scalp, I should think most men would prefer keeping the last. Did your father ever give you any downright command consarning that chist?"

"Never. He has always appeared to think its locks, and its steel bands, and its strength, its best protection."

"'Tis a rare chist, and altogether of curious build," returned Deerslayer, rising and approaching the thing in question, on which he seated himself, with a view to examine it with greater ease. "Judith, the chist itself would buy your father's freedom."

"The purchase might be cheaper made, perhaps, Deerslayer. The chest is full, and it would be better to part with half than to part with the whole. Besides, father values that chest highly."

"He would seem to prize what it holds more than the chest itself, judging by the manner in which he treats the outside and secures the inside. Here are three locks, Judith; is there no key?"

"I've never seen one; and yet key there must be, since Hetty told us *she* had often seen the chest opened."

"Keys no more lie in the air, or float on the water, than humans, gal; if there is a key, there must be a place in which it is kept."

"That is true, and it might not be difficult to find it, did we dare to search!"

"This is for you, Judith; it is altogether for you. The chest is your'n or your father's; and Hutter is your father, not mine. If the chest has articles for ransom, it seems to me they would be wisely used in redeeming their owner's life; but that is a matter for your judgment, and not for ourn. We therefore leave you to say whether the chest shall or shall not be opened."

"I hope you do not believe I can hesitate, when my father's life's in danger, Deerslayer! If we can find the key, I will authorize you to open the chest, and to take such things from it as you may think will buy father's ransom."

"First find the key, gal; we'll talk of the rest afterwards. Sarpent, you've eyes like a fly, and a judgment that's seldom out: can you help us in calculating where Floating Tom would be apt to keep the key of a chest that he holds to be as private as this?"

The Delaware had taken no part in the discourse until he was thus directly appealed to, when he quitted the chest, and cast about him for a place in which a key would be likely to be concealed under such circumstances. As Judith and Deerslayer were not idle the while, all three were soon engaged in an anxious and spirited search. In this manner the outer room was thoroughly but fruitlessly examined, when they entered the sleeping apartment of Hutter; but as Judith had all the rest of the keys, it was soon rummaged without bringing to light the particular key desired.

They now entered the bed-room of the daughters. Chingachgook was immediately struck with the contrast between the articles and the arrangement of that side of the room that might be called Judith's and that which more properly belonged to Hetty. A slight exclamation escaped him, and he alluded to the fact in a low voice.

"As you think, Sarpent," answered Deerslayer. "'Tis just so, as any one may see; and 'tis all founded in natur'."

"And the 'Feeble-Mind' has seen the chest opened?" inquired Chingachgook.

"Sartain; that much I've heard from her own lips. It seems her father doesn't misgive *her* discretion, though he does that of his eldest darter."

"Then the key is hid only from the Wild Rose!" for so Chingachgook had begun to term Judith.

"That's just it! One he trusts and the other he doesn't."

"Where could a key be put, so little likely to be found by the Wild Rose, as among coarse clothes?"

"Your name's well bestowed, Sarpent!" replied Deerslayer, with a smile. "Sure enough, where would a lover of finery be so little likely to s'arch as among garments as coarse and unseemly as those of poor Hetty. Take down the garment, Delaware, and let us see if you are ra'ally a prophet."

Chingachgook did as desired, but no key was found. A coarse pocket, apparently empty, hung on the adjoining peg, and this was next examined.

"These are only the clothes of poor Hetty," said Judith; "nothing we seek would be likely to be there."

The words were hardly out of the handsome mouth of the speaker when Chingachgook drew the desired key from the pocket. Judith was too quick of apprehension not to understand the reason a hiding-place so simple and exposed had been used. She bit her lip, though she continued silent. Deerslayer now led the way into the adjoining room, and applying the key to a lock, ascertained that the right instrument had actually been found. He removed the three locks, loosened the hasps, raised the lid a little to make certain it was loose, and then drew back from the chest several feet, signing to his friend to follow.

"This is a family chist, Judith," he said, "and 'tis like to hold family secrets. The Sarpent and I will go into the ark, while you examine it by yourself, and find out whether anything that will be a makeweight in a ransom is or is not among the articles. When you've got through, give us a call, and we'll all sit in council together touching the value of the articles."

"Stop, Deerslayer!" exclaimed the girl; "not a single thing will I touch unless you are present. Father and Hetty have seen fit to keep the inside of this chest a secret from me, and

on no account will I open the chest alone. Stay with me, then. I want witnesses of what I do."

"I rather think, Sarpent, that the gal is right! Judith has a right to ask us to be present. We *will* stay with you, Judith; but first let us take a look at the lake and the shore, for this chist will not be emptied in a minute."

The two men now went out on the platform, and Deerslayer swept the shore with the glass. Nothing was visible, and assured of their temporary security, the three collected around the chest again.

Finding that both her companions were watching her movements in grave silence, Judith placed a hand on the lid, and endeavoured to raise it. Her strength, however, was insufficient, and it appeared to the girl that she was resisted in an unhallowed attempt by some supernatural power.

"I cannot raise the lid, Deerslayer," she said; "had we not better give up the attempt, and find some other means of releasing the prisoners?"

"Not so, Judith. No means are as sartain and easy as a good bribe," answered the other. "As for the lid, 'tis held by nothing but its own weight.

As Deerslayer spoke, he applied his own strength to the effort, and succeeded in raising the lid against the timbers of the house, where he took care to secure it by a sufficient prop.

"Here's a full cargo," said he, eyeing the arrangement; "and we had needs go to work leisurely, and at our ease."

When the canvas was removed, the first articles that came in view were some of the habiliments of the male sex. These were of fine materials, and, according to the fashions of the age, were gay in colours and rich in ornaments. One coat in particular was of scarlet, and had button-holes worked in gold thread. Still it was not military, but was part of the attire of a civilian of condition, at a period when social rank was rigidly respected in dress. Chingachgook could not refrain from an exclamation of pleasure as soon as Deerslayer opened this coat, and held it up to view; for, notwithstanding all his trained self-command, the splendour of the vestment was too much for the philosophy of an Indian.

"If this coat was ever made for your father, you've come honestly by the taste for finery," said Deerslayer.

"That coat was never made for father," answered the girl, quickly: "it is much too long; while father is short and square."

"Cloth was plenty if it was, and glitter cheap," answered Deerslayer, with his silent, joyous laugh.

The tempting garment was laid aside, and the examination proceeded. A beautiful dress of brocade, a little the worse from negligent treatment, followed; and this time open exclamations of delight escaped the lips of Judith. Her rapture was almost childish; nor would she allow the inquiry to proceed until she had attired her person in a robe so unsuited to her habits and her abode. With this end she withdrew into her own room, and soon stood forth in the gay tints of the brocade. The dress happened to fit the fine, full person of Judith, and certainly it had never adorned a being better qualified by natural gifts to do credit to its really rich hues and fine texture. When she returned, both Deerslayer and Chingachgook arose in surprise, each permitting exclamations of wonder and pleasure to escape him in a way so unequivocal as to add new lustre to the eyes of Judith, by flushing her cheeks with a glow of triumph. Affecting, however, not to notice the impression she had made, the girl seated herself with the stateliness of a queen, desiring that the chest might be looked into further.

"I don't know a better way to treat with the Mingos, gal," cried Deerslayer, "than to send you ashore as you be, and to tell 'em that a queen has arrived among 'em! They'll give up old Hutter, and Hurry, and Hetty too, at such a spectacle!"

"I thought your tongue too honest to flatter, Deerslayer," returned the girl, gratified at this admiration more than she would have cared to own.

"'Tis truth, Judith, and nothing else. Never did eyes of mine gaze on as glorious a lookin' creetur' as you be yourself at this very moment!"

The glance of delight which the girl bestowed on the frank-speaking hunter in no degree lessened the effect of her charms; and as the humid eyes blended with it a look of sensibility, perhaps Judith never appeared more truly lovely than at that moment.

Several minor articles of female dress now came to view, all of a quality to correspond with the gown. When these two remarkable suits were removed, another canvas covering separated the remainder of the articles from the part of the chest which they had occupied. As soon as Deerslayer perceived this arrangement, he paused, doubtful of the propriety of proceeding any further."

"Every man has his secrets, I suppose," he said; "and all men have a right to their enjoyment: we've got low enough in this chist, in my judgment, to answer our wants, and it seems to me we should do well by going no farther."

"Do you mean, Deerslayer, to offer these clothes to the Iroquois as ransom?" demanded Judith, quickly.

"Sartin. What are we prying into another man's chist for but to sarve its owner in the best way we can? This coat, alone would be very apt to gain over the head-chief of the riptyles; and if his wife or darter should happen to be out with him, that there gownd would soften the heart of any woman that is to be found atween Albany and Montreal.

"To you it may seem so, Deerslayer," returned the disappointed girl; "but of what use could a dress like this be to any Indian woman?"

"All very true, gal; but what is it to us how the finery is treated, so long as it answers our wishes? I do not see that your father can make any use of such clothes; and it's lucky he has things that are of no valie to himself, that will bear a high price with others."

"Then you think, Deerslayer, that Thomas Hutter has no one in his family--no daughter, to whom this dress may be thought becoming, and whom you could wish to see in it, once and a while, even though it should be at long intervals, and only in playfulness?"

"I understand you, Judith--yes, I understand your meaning. That you are as glorious in that dress as the sun when it rises or sets in a soft October day, I'm ready to allow; but that gownd was made for the child of some governor, or a lady of high station; and it was intended to be worn among fine furniture and in rich company. In my eyes, Judith, a modest maiden never looks more becoming than when becomingly clad, and nothing is suitable that is out of character. Besides, gal, if there's a creetur' in the colony that can afford to do without finery, and to trust to her own good looks and sweet countenance, it's yourself."

"I'll take off the rubbish this instant, Deerslayer," cried the girl, springing up to leave the room; "and never do I wish to see it on any human being again."

The two men had now a little discussion together touching the propriety of penetrating any further into the chest of Hutter, when Judith reappeared, divested of her robes, and in her own simple frock again.

"Thank you, Judith," said Deerslayer; "I know it went a little ag'in the nat'ral cravings of women to lay aside so much finery as it might be in a lump. But you're more pleasing to the eye as you stand, than if you had a crown on your head and jewels dangling from you hair. The question now is whether to lift this covering, to see what will be ra'ally the best bargain we can make for Master Hutter."

Judith looked very happy. Accustomed as she was to adulation, the humble homage of Deerslayer had given her more true satisfaction than she had ever yet received from the tongue of man. It was not the terms in which this admiration had been expressed that produced so strong an impression; nor yet their novelty, or their warmth of manner, nor any of those peculiarities that usually give value to praise; but the unflinching truth of the speaker, that carried his words so directly to the heart of the listener. She had actually pined for his praise, and she had now received it; and that in the form which was most agreeable to her weaknesses and habits of thought.

"If we knew all that chest holds, Deerslayer," returned the girl, "we could better determine on the course we ought to take."

"That's not onreasonable, gal, though it's more a pale-face than a red-skin gift to be prying into other people's secrets."

"Curiosity is natural, and it is expected that all human beings should have human failings. Whenever I've been at the garrisons, I've found that most in and about them had a longing to learn their neighbour's secrets."

"Yes, and sometimes to fancy them when they couldn't find them out! that's the difference atween an Indian gentleman and a white gentleman. The Sarpent here would turn his head aside if he found himself onknowingly lookin' into another chief's wigwam."

"But this is not another man's wigwam; it belongs to my father; these are his things, and they are wanted in his service."

"That's true, gal, and it carries weight with it. Well, when all is before us we may, indeed, best judge which to offer for the ransom, and which to withhold."

Judith was not altogether as disinterested in her feelings as she affected to be. She remembered that the curiosity of Hetty had been indulged in connection with this chest, while her own had been disregarded; and she was not sorry to

possess an opportunity of being placed on a level with her less gifted sister in this one particular.

The articles that lay uppermost when the curtain was again raised on the contents of the chest were a pair of pistols, curiously inlaid with silver. What occurred on the discovery of these weapons will appear in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

No sooner did Deerslayer raise the pistols than he turned to the Delaware and held them up for his admiration.

"Child gun," said the Serpent, smiling, while he handled one of the instruments as if it had been a toy.

"Not it, Sarpent; not it. 'Tis made for a man, and would satisfy a giant if rightly used. But stop! let me look if care has been given to these we'pons."

As Deerslayer spoke, he took the weapon from the hand of his friend, and opened the pan. The last was filled with priming, caked like a bit of cinder by time, moisture, and compression. An application of the ramrod showed that both the pistols were charged, although Judith could testify that they had probably lain for years in the chest.

"This is white neglect," said Deerslayer, shaking his head, "and scarce a season goes by that some one in the settlements doesn't suffer from it. Well, we shall do a good turn to the owner if we fire these pistols for him; and as they're novelties to you and me, Sarpent, we'll try our hands at a mark. Freshen that priming, and I'll do the same with this, and then we'll see who is the best man with a pistol."

In a minute or two they were both standing on the platform, selecting some object in the ark for their target. Judith was led by curiosity to their side.

"Stand back, gal, stand a little back; these we'pons have been long loaded," said Deerslayer; "and some accident may happen in the discharge."

"Then *you* shall not fire them! Give them both to the Delaware; or it would be better to unload them without firing."

"That's ag'in usage. We must fire 'em, Judith, though I

foresee that neither will have any great reason to boast of his skill."

Chingachgook raised the weapon several times, endeavoured to steady it by using both hands, and finally drew the trigger with a sort of desperate indifference, without having, in reality, secured any aim at all. The consequence was that instead of hitting the knot which had been selected for the mark, he missed the ark altogether.

"Well done, Sarpent!" cried Deerslayer, laughing with his noiseless glee: "you've hit the lake, and that's an expl'ite for some men! I know'd it, and as much as said it here, to Judith; for your short we'pons don't belong to red-skin gifts. Now stand back, and let us see what white gifts can do with a white we'pon."

The aim of Deerslayer was both quick and steady, and the report followed almost as soon as the weapon rose. Still the pistol hung fire, and fragments of it flew in a dozen directions. Judith screamed, and when the two men turned anxiously towards her, she was as pale as death.

"She's wounded, Sarpent, though one couldn't foresee it, standing where she did. We'll lead her into a seat, and we must do the best for her that our knowledge and skill can afford."

Judith suffered herself to be supported to a seat, swallowed a mouthful of the water that the Delaware offered her in a gourd, and after a violent fit of trembling, burst into tears.

"The pain must be borne, Judith," said Deerslayer, soothingly; "though I am far from wishing you not to weep; for weeping often lightens galish feelin's. Where can she be hurt, Sarpent? I see no signs of blood, nor any rent of skin or garments?"

"I am uninjured, Deerslayer," stammered the girl through her tears. "It's fright—nothing more, I do assure you; and God be praised! no one, I find, has been hurt by the accident."

"This is extr'or'nary!" exclaimed the unsuspecting hunter. "I thought, Judith, you'd been above settlement weaknesses, and that you was a gal not to be frightened by the sound of a bursting we'pon."

Shame kept Judith silent. There had been no acting in her agitation, but all had fairly proceeded from sudden and uncontrollable alarm. Wiping away the traces of tears, however, she smiled again, and was soon able to join in the laugh at her own folly

"And you, Deerslayer," she at length succeeded in saying, "are you indeed altogether unhurt? It seems almost miraculous that a pistol should have burst in your hand, and you escape without the loss of a limb, if not of life!"

"Such wonders ar'n't uncommon at all among worn-out arms. The first rifle they gave me play'd the same trick, and yet I lived through it. Now draw near, and let us look further into the inside of the chist."

Judith by this time had so far got the better of her agitation as to resume her seat, and the examination went on.

"They say," continued Deerslayer, "he has been a mariner, and no doubt this chist, and all that it holds—ha! what have we here?"

Deerslayer had opened a small bag, from which he was taking, one by one, the pieces of a set of chessmen. They were of ivory, much larger than common, and exquisitely wrought. Each piece represented the character or thing after which it is named; the knights being mounted, the castles stood on elephants, and even the pawns possessed the heads and busts of men. Even Judith expressed wonder as these novel objects were placed before her eyes, and Chingachgook fairly forgot his Indian dignity in admiration and delight. But the elephants gave him the greatest pleasure. The "hughs!" that he uttered, as he passed his fingers over their trunks, and ears, and tails, were very distinct. This exhibition lasted several minutes, during which time Judith and the Indian had all the rapture to themselves. Deerslayer sat silent, thoughtful, and even gloomy. Not an exclamation of pleasure nor a word of commendation passed his lips. At length his companions observed his silence; and then, for the first time since the chessmen had been discovered, did he speak.

"Judith," he asked, earnestly, "did your parents ever talk to you of religion?"

The girl coloured. Deerslayer had given her so strong a taste for truth, however, that she did not waver in her answer, replying simply:

"My mother did, often," she said. "My father *never*."

"That I can believe. He has no god—no such god as it becomes a man of white skin to worship, or even a red-skin. Them things are idols!"

Judith started, and for a moment she seemed hurt. Then she laughed.

"And you think, Deerslayer, that these ivory toys are my

father's gods? I have heard of idols, and know what they are."

"Them are idols!" repeated the other, positively.

"Would he keep his gods in a bag, and locked up in a chest? No, Deerslayer; my poor father carries his god with him wherever he goes, and that is in his own cravings."

"I am glad of it, Judith, for I do not think I could have mustered the resolution to help a white idolater out of his difficulties! That animal seems to give you great satisfaction, Sarpent, though it's an idolatrous head at the best."

"It is an elephant," interrupted Judith. "I've often seen pictures of such animals at the garrisons; and mother had a book in which there was a printed account of them."

"Elephant or no elephant, 'tis an idol," returned the hunter, "and not fit to remain in Christian keeping."

"Good for Iroquois," said Chingachgook, parting with one of the castles with reluctance, as his friend took it from him to replace it in the bag. "Elephon buy whole tribe—buy Delaware almost!"

"Ay, that it would, as any one who comprehends red-skin natur' must know," answered Deerslayer; "but the man that passes false money, Sarpent, is as bad as he who makes it. I know that a few of these idols—perhaps *one* of them elephants—would go far towards buying Hutter's liberty; but it goes ag'in conscience to pass such counterfeit money."

"If idolatry is a *gift*, Deerslayer—and *gifts* are what you seem to think them—idolatry in such people can hardly be a sin," said Judith.

"God grants no such gifts to any of His creetur's, Judith," returned the hunter, seriously. "*He* must be adored under some name or other, and not creetur's of brass or ivory. It matters not whether the Father of all is called God or Manitou, Deity or Great Spirit, He is none the less our common Maker and Master."

"After all, Deerslayer, these pieces of ivory may not be idols at all. I remember now to have seen one of the officers at the garrison with a set of fox and geese made in such a design as these; and here is something hard, wrapped in cloth, that may belong to your idols."

Deerslayer took the bundle the girl gave him, and unrolling it, he found the board within. Putting the whole in conjunction, the hunter, though not without many misgivings, slowly came over to Judith's opinion, and finally admitted that the

fancied idols must be merely the curiously carved men of some unknown game.

This discovery of the uses of the extraordinary-looking little images settled the affair of the proposed ransom. It was agreed generally that nothing could be more likely to tempt the cupidity of the Iroquois than the elephants in particular. Luckily, the whole of the castles were among the pieces, and these four tower-bearing animals it was finally determined should be the ransom offered. The remainder of the men, and, indeed, all the rest of the articles in the chest were replaced. When this was done, the lid was lowered, the padlocks replaced, and the key turned.

More than an hour was consumed in settling the course proper to be pursued, and in returning everything to its place. Deerslayer, indeed, appeared to be the first who was conscious of the time that had been thus wasted, and to call the attention of his companions to the necessity of doing something towards putting the plan of ransoming into execution.

"Well, Judith," said he, rising, "'tis pleasant conversing with you, and settling all these matters, but duty calls us another way. All this time, Hurry and your father, not to say Hetty—"

This word was cut short in the speaker's mouth, for at that critical moment a light step was heard on the platform, a human figure darkened the doorway, and the person last mentioned stood before him. The low exclamation that escaped Deerslayer and the slight scream of Judith were hardly uttered, when an Indian youth, between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, stood beside her. These two entrances had been made with moccasined feet, and consequently almost without noise; but unexpected as they were, they had not the effect to disturb Deerslayer's self-possession. His first measure was to speak rapidly in Delaware to his friend, cautioning him to keep out of sight, while he stood on his guard; the second was to step to the door to ascertain the extent of the danger. No one else, however, had come; and a simple contrivance in the shape of a raft, that lay floating at the side of the ark, at once explained the means that had been used in bringing Hetty off. Two dead and dry logs of pine were bound together with pines and withes, and a little platform of riven chestnut had been rudely placed on their surfaces. Here Hetty had been seated on a billet of wood, while the young Iroquois had rowed the primitive and slow-moving, but perfectly safe, craft from the shore.

As soon as Deerslayer had taken a close survey of this craft, he shook his head, and muttered in his soliloquizing way—

“This comes of prying into another man’s chest! It opens the way, howsoever, to a treaty for the ransom, and I will hear what Hetty has to say.”

Judith, as soon as her surprise and alarm had a little abated, discovered a proper share of affectionate joy at the return of her sister. At Judith’s request, Hetty then took a seat, and entered into an account of her adventures since they had parted. Her tale commenced just as Deerslayer returned, and he also became an attentive listener, while the young Iroquois stood near the door, seemingly as indifferent to what was passing as one of its posts.

The narrative of the girl was sufficiently clear until she reached the moment when Hist quitted her in the abrupt manner already stated. The sequel of the story may be told in her own language.

“When I read the texts to the chiefs, Judith, you could not have seen that they made any changes on their minds,” she said; “but if seed is planted, it *will* grow. God planted the seeds of all the trees, and you see to what a height and shade they have grown! So it is with the Bible. You may read a verse this year and forget it, and it will come back to you a year hence, when you least expect to remember it.”

“And did you find anything of this among the savages, Hetty?”

“Yes, Judith, and sooner than I had hoped. I did not stay long with father and Hurry, but went to get my breakfast with Hist. As soon as we had done, the chiefs came to us, and said what I had read from the good book was right—it *must* be right—it sounded *right*; and they told me to come back and say as much to the great warrior who had slain one of their braves; and to tell it to you, and to say how happy they should be to come to church here in the castle, and hear me read more of the sacred volume—and to tell you that they wish you would lend them some canoes, that they can bring father and Hurry and their women to the castle, that we might all sit on the platform here and listen to the singing of the pale-face Manitou.”

“If it were true, ’twould be a miracle indeed, Hetty. But all this is no more than Indian cunning and Indian treachery, striving to get the better of us by management, when they find it is not to be done by force.”

"Do you doubt the Bible, sister, that you judge the savages so harshly?"

"I do not doubt the Bible, Hetty, but I much doubt an Indian and an Iroquois. What do you say, Deerslayer?"

"First let me talk a little with Hetty," returned Deerslayer; "was this raft made after you had got your breakfast, gal?"

"Oh! no. The raft was ready made, and in the water—could that have been by a miracle, Judith?"

"Yes—an Indian miracle," rejoined the hunter. "They're expert enough in them sort of miracles. And you found the raft ready made, and in the water, and in waiting like for its cargo?"

"It was all as you say. The raft was near the camp, and the Indians put me on it, and had ropes of bark, and they dragged me to the place opposite to the castle, and then they told that young man to row me off here."

"And the woods are full of the vagabonds, waiting to know what is to be the upshot of the miracle. We comprehend this affair now, Judith, and I'll first get rid of this young Canadian bloodsucker, and then we'll settle our own course. Do you and Hetty leave us together, first bringing me the elephants, which the Sarpent is admiring; for 'twill never do to let this loping deer be alone a minute, or he'll borrow a canoe without asking."

Judith did as desired, first bringing the pieces, and retiring with her sister into their own room. Deerslayer knew enough Iroquois to hold a dialogue in the language. Beckoning to the lad, therefore, he caused him to take a seat on the chest, when he placed two of the castles suddenly before him. Up to that moment this youthful savage had not expressed a single intelligible emotion or fancy. The instant, however, the eyes of the savage fell upon the wrought ivory, and the images of the wonderful, unknown beasts, surprise and admiration got the mastery of him. His eyes became riveted on the elephants, one of which, after a short hesitation, he even presumed to handle. When he thought sufficient time had been allowed to produce the desired effect, the hunter laid a finger on the naked knee of the youth, and drew his attention to himself.

"Listen," he said; "I want to talk with my young friend. Let him forget that wonder for a minute."

"Where t'other pale brother?" asked the boy, looking up.

"He sleeps—or if he isn't fairly asleep, he is in the room where the men do sleep," returned Deerslayer. "How did my friend know there was another?"

"See him from the shore. Iroquois have got long eyes."

"Well, the Iroquois are welcome. Can you tell me what your chiefs intend to do with the captives? or haven't they yet made up their minds?"

The lad looked a moment at the hunter, then he put the end of his fore-finger on his own head, just above the left ear, and passed it round his crown.

"When?" demanded Deerslayer. "And why not take them to your wigwams?"

"Road too long, full of pale-faces. Small scalp, much gold."

"Well, that explains it. There's no need of being any plainer. Now you know, lad, that the oldest of your prisoners is the father of these two young women, and the other is the suitor of one of them. The gals will give them two ivory creetur's as ransom—one for each scalp. Go back and tell this to your chiefs, and bring me the answer before the sun sets."

The boy entered zealously into this project, and with a sincerity that left no doubt of his executing his commission with intelligence and promptitude. As he stood on the platform, ready to step aboard of the raft, he hesitated, and turned short with a proposal to borrow a canoe, as the means most likely to shorten the negotiation. Deerslayer quietly refused the request, and after lingering a little longer, the boy rowed slowly away from the castle, taking the direction of a thicket on the shore, less than half a mile distant.

During the interview between Deerslayer and the lad, a different scene took place in the adjoining room. Hetty had inquired for the Delaware, and being told why and where he remained concealed, she joined him. The reception which Chingachgook gave his visitor was respectful and gentle. He understood her character; and no doubt his disposition to be kind to such a being was increased by the hope of learning some tidings of his betrothed. As soon as the girl entered, she took a seat, and invited the Indian to place himself near her; and then she continued silent, as if she thought it decorous for him to question her before she consented to speak on the subject she had on her mind. But as Chingachgook did not understand this feeling, he remained respectfully attentive to anything she might be pleased to tell him.

"You are Chingachgook, ar'n't you?" the girl at length commenced.

"Chingachgook," returned the Delaware, with grave dignity.

Hetty informed him that she had a message for him from Wah-ta!-Wah, and then proceeded:

"Hist told me to say, in a very low voice, that you mustn't trust the Iroquois in anything. They are more artful than any Indians she knows. Then she says that there is a large bright star, that comes over the hill about an hour after dark, and just as that star comes in sight, she will be on the point where I landed last night, and that you must come for her in a canoe."

"Good—Chingachgook understand well enough now."

Hetty repeated her words, more fully explaining what star was meant, and mentioning the part of the point where he was to venture ashore. She now proceeded in her own unsophisticated way to relate her intercourse with the Indian maid, and to repeat several of her expressions and opinions, that gave great delight to the heart of her betrothed. She also explained, with sufficient clearness, the present state of the enemy, and the movements they had made since morning. Hist had been on the raft with her until it had quitted the shore, and was now somewhere in the woods, opposite to the castle, and did not intend to return to the camp until night approached, when she hoped to be able to slip away from her companions, as they followed the shore on their way home, and conceal herself on the point. All this had Hist communicated to Hetty while the Indians were dragging them along shore; the distance, which exceeded six miles, affording abundance of time.

"Hist don't know herself whether they suspect her or not, or whether they suspect *you*; but she hopes neither is the case."

Chingachgook bowed, and before there was time for Hetty to resume her communications, the voice of Deerslayer was heard calling on his friend in the outer room. At this summons the Serpent arose to obey, and Hetty joined her sister.

CHAPTER XIV.

The first act of the Delaware, on rejoining his friend, was to proceed gravely to disencumber himself of his civilized attire, and to stand forth an Indian warrior again. The protest of Deerslayer was met by his communicating the fact that the presence of an Indian in the hut was known to the Iroquois, and that his maintaining the disguise would be more likely to direct suspicions to his real object than if he came out openly as a member of a hostile tribe. When the latter understood the truth, and was told that he had been deceived in supposing the chief had succeeded in entering the ark undiscovered, he cheerfully consented to the change, since further attempt at concealment was useless. A gentler feeling than the one avowed, however, lay at the bottom of the Indian's desire to appear as a son of the forest. He had been told that Hist was on the opposite shore; and nature so far triumphed over all distinctions of habit, and tribes, and people, as to reduce this young savage warrior to the level of a feeling which would have been found in the most refined inhabitant of a town under similar circumstances. There was a mild satisfaction in believing that she he loved could see him; and as he walked out on the platform in his scanty native attire, an Apollo of the wilderness, a hundred of the tender fancies that fleet through lovers' brains beset his imagination and softened his heart.

Deerslayer soon recalled his companion to a sense of their actual condition, by summoning him to a sort of council-of-war, in which they were to settle their future course. In the dialogue that followed, Chingachgook was told the history of the treaty about the ransom; and Deerslayer heard the whole of Hetty's communications. The latter listened with generous interest to his friend's hopes, and promised cheerfully all the assistance he could lend.

"'Tis our main a'r'nd, Sarpent, as you know; this battling for the castle and old Hutter's darters coming in as a sort of accident. I've always encouraged you, chief, in that liking. If a women of red skin and red gifts could get to be near enough to me to wish her for a wife, I'd s'arch for just such another, but that can *never* be. I'm glad Hetty has met with

Hist, hows'ever; for though the first is a little short of wit and understanding, the last has enough for both."

"I will go to the Iroquois camp," returned the Delaware, gravely. "No one knows Chingachgook but Wah! and a treaty for lives and scalps should be made by a chief! Give me the strange beasts, and let me take a canoe."

Deerslayer dropped his head, and for a minute or two played with the end of a fish-pole in the water. Then he said, "Serpent, you can't be in airnest, and therefore I shall say but little to your offer. But you're a chief, and will soon be sent out on the war-path at the head of parties, and I'll just ask if you'd think of putting your forces into the inimy's hands afore the battle is fou't?"

"Wah!" ejaculated the Indian.

"Ay—Wah!—I know well enough it's Wah! and altogether Wah! R'ally, Serpent, I'm consarned and mortified about you! I never heard so weak an idee come from a chief, and he, too, one that's already got a name for being wise. Canoe you sha'n't have so long as the v'ice of fri'ndship and warning can count for anything."

"My pale-face friend is right. A cloud came over the face of Chingachgook, and weakness got into his mind, while his eyes were dim."

"Say no more about it, chief; but if another of them clouds blow near you, do your endivour to get out of its way. Now let us calculate our movements a little, for we shall soon either have a truce and a peace, or we shall come to an actyve and bloody war. You see, the vagabonds can make logs serve their turn; and it would be no great expl'ite for them to invade us in a body. I've been thinking of the wisdom of putting all old Tom's stores into the ark, and of taking to it altogether. That is movable, and by keeping the sail up, and shifting places, we might worry through a great many nights, without them Canada wolves finding a way into our sheepfold."

Chingachgook listened to this plan with approbation. Did the negotiation fail, there was now little hope that the night would pass without an assault: and the enemy had sagacity enough to understand that, in carrying the castle, they would probably become masters of all it contained, the offered ransom included, and still retain the advantages they had hitherto gained. Some precaution of the sort appeared to be absolutely necessary; for now the numbers of the Iroquois were known,

a night attack could scarcely be successfully met. For a few minutes both the men thought of sinking the ark in the shallow water, of bringing the canoes into the house, and of depending altogether on the castle for protection. But reflection satisfied them that in the end this expedient would fail. It was so easy to collect logs on the shore, and to construct a raft of almost any size, that it was certain the Iroquois would resort to them seriously. After deliberating maturely, and placing all the considerations fairly before them, the two young beginners in the art of forest warfare settled down into the opinion that the ark offered the only available means of security.

The reader will readily understand that Floating Tom's worldly goods were of no great amount. A couple of beds, some wearing apparel, the arms and amunition, a few cooking utensils, with the mysterious and but half-examined chest, formed the principal items. These were all soon removed, the ark having been hauled on the eastern side of the building, so that the transfer could be made without being seen from the shore. As great caution was necessary in removing the different objects, most of which were passed out of a window, it required two or three hours before all could be effected. By the expiration of that time the raft made its appearance, moving from the shore. Deerslayer immediately had recourse to the glass, by the aid of which he perceived that two warriors were on it, though they appeared to be unarmed. As the progress of the raft was slow, there was time to make the proper dispositions for the reception of the two dangerous visitors. The Serpent and the girls retired into the building, where the former stood near the door well provided with rifles, while Judith watched the proceedings without through a loop. As for Deerslayer, he had brought a stool to the edge of the platform, at the point towards which the raft was advancing, and taken his seat, with his rifle leaning carelessly between his legs.

When the heavy-moving craft was within fifty feet of him, Deerslayer hailed the Hurons, directing them to cease rowing, it not being his intention to permit them to land. Compliance, of course, was necessary, and the two grim-looking warriors instantly quitted their seats, though the raft continued slowly to approach until it had driven in much nearer to the platform.

"Are ye chiefs?" demanded Deerslayer, with dignity, "or have the Mingos sent me warriors without names on such an

a'r'nd? If so, the sooner ye go back the sooner the one will be likely to come that a warrior can talk with."

"Hugh!" exclaimed the elder of the two on the raft. "My brother is very proud, but Rivenoak is a name to make a Delaware turn pale."

"That's true, or it's a lie, Rivenoak, as it may be. What's your ar'n'd, and why do you come among light bark canoes on logs that are not even dug out?"

"The Iroquois are not ducks to walk on water! Let the pale-faces give them a canoe, and they'll come in a canoe."

"That's more rational than likely to come to pass. We have but four canoes, and being four persons, that's only one for each of us. You are welcome, Iroquois, on your logs."

"Thanks, my young pale-face warrior—he has got a name—how do the chiefs call him?"

Deerslayer hesitated a moment; then he smiled, and looking up proudly, he said:

"Mingo, like all who are young and active, I've been known by different names at different times. One of your warriors, whose spirit started for the happy grounds of your people as lately as yesterday morning, thought I deserved to be known by the name of Hawkeye; and this because my sight happened to be quicker than his own when it got to be life or death atween us."

The effect of these words on the Iroquois was an exclamation of surprise; then such a smile of courtesy and wave of the hand succeeded as would have done credit to Asiatic diplomacy. The two warriors spoke to each other in low tones, and both drew near the end of the raft that was closest to the platform.

"My brother, Hawkeye, has sent a message to the Hurons," resumed Rivenoak, "and it has made their hearts very glad. They hear he has images of beasts with two tails! Will he show them to his friends?"

"Inimies would be truer," returned Deerslayer; "but here is one of the images; I toss it to you under faith of treaties. If it's not returned, the rifle will settle the p'int atween us."

The Iroquois seemed to acquiesce in the conditions, and the little piece of ivory was soon successfully transferred from one hand to the other; and then followed another scene on the raft, in which astonishment and delight got the mastery of Indian stoicism. These two grim old warriors manifested even more feeling as they examined the curiously-wrought chessman than

had been betrayed by the boy. For a few minutes they apparently lost all consciousness of their situation in the intense scrutiny they bestowed on a material so fine, work so highly wrought, and an animal so extraordinary.

"Has my pale-face brother any more such beasts?" at last the senior of the Iroquois asked, in a sort of petitioning manner.

"There's more where them came from, Mingo," was the answer; "one is enough, however, to buy off fifty scalps."

"One of my prisoners is a great warrior—tall as a pine—strong as the moose! Some day be a great chief—lead the army of King George!"

"Tut—tut—Mingo; Harry Hurry is Harry Hurry, and you'll never make more than a corporal of him, if you do that. No, no—you'll never make Hurry's scalp pass for more than a good head of curly hair, and a rattle-pate beneath it!"

"My old prisoner very wise—king of the lake—great warrior!"

"Well, there's them that might gainsay all this too, Mingo. A very wise man wouldn't be apt to be taken in so foolish a manner as befel Master Hutter. A beast with two tails is well worth two such scalps!"

"But my brother has another beast!—He will give two," holding up as many fingers, "for old father?"

"Floating Tom is no father of mine, but he'll fare none the worse for that. As for giving two beasts for his scalp, and each beast with two tails, it is quite beyond reason."

By this time the self-command of Rivenoak had got the better of his wonder, and he began to fall back on his usual habits of cunning in order to drive the best bargain he could. As is not uncommon on such occasions, one of the parties got a little warm in the course of the discussion, for Deerslayer met all the arguments and prevarications of his subtle opponent with his own cool directness of manner and unmoved love of truth.

At length the savage pretended that further negotiation was useless, since he could not be so unjust to his tribe as to part with the honour and emoluments of two excellent, full-grown male scalps for a consideration so trifling as two toys like those he had seen—and he prepared to take his departure. Deerslayer was mortified, for he not only felt for the prisoners, but he also felt deeply for the two girls. The conclusion of the treaty, therefore, left him melancholy and full of regret.

It took some little time to overcome the *vis inertiae* of the

logs, and while this was doing by the silent Indian, Rivenoak stalked over the hemlock boughs that lay between the logs in sullen ferocity, eyeing keenly the while the hut, the platform, and the person of his late disputant. At that moment the watchfulness of Deerslayer had a little abated, for he sat musing on the means of renewing the negotiation without giving too much advantage to the other side. It was perhaps fortunate for him that the keen and bright eyes of Judith were as vigilant as ever.

"Be on your guard, Deerslayer," the girl cried; "I see rifles beneath the hemlock brush, and the Iroquois is loosening them with his feet!"

It was evident by the sudden manner in which his feet ceased their treacherous occupation, and in which the countenance of Rivenoak changed from sullen ferocity to a smile of courtesy, that the call of the girl was understood. Signing to his companion to cease his efforts to set the logs in motion, he advanced to the end of the raft which was nearest to the platform, and spoke—

"Why should Rivenoak and his brother leave any cloud between them?" he said. "They ought to part friends. One beast shall be the price of one prisoner."

"And, Mingo," answered the other, delighted to renew the negotiation on almost any terms, and determined to clinch the bargain, if possible, by a little extra liberality, "you'll see that a pale-face knows how to pay a full price when he trades with an open heart and an open hand. Keep the beast that you had forgotten to give back to me as you was about to start. Show it to your chiefs. When you bring us our fr'inds two more shall be added to it—and—and if we see them afore the sun sets we may find a fourth to make up an even number."

This settled the matter. Every gleam of discontent vanished from the dark countenance of the Iroquois, and he smiled graciously. The piece already in his possession was again examined, and an ejaculation of pleasure showed how much he was pleased with this unexpected termination of the affair.

"Can any faith be put in such wretches?" asked Judith, when she and Hetty had come out on the platform, and were watching the dull movement of the logs as they crossed slowly towards the shore. "Will they not rather keep the toy they have, and send us off some bloody proofs of their getting the better of us in cunning, by way of boasting?"

"No doubt, Judith; no manner of doubt, if it wasn't for

Indian natur'. But I'm no judge of a red-skin if that two-tailed beast doesn't set the whole tribe in a stir. There'll be no peace among 'em until they think they've got possession of everything of the natur' of that bit of carved bone that's to be found among Thomas Hutter's stores!"

"They only know of the elephants, and can have no hopes about the other things."

"That's true, Judith; still, covetousness is a craving feelin'. They'll say, if the pale-faces have these curious beasts with two tails, who knows but they've got some with three, or, for that matter, with four!"

"Do you think, Deerslayer," inquired Hetty, in her simple and innocent manner, "that the Iroquois won't let father and Hurry go?—I read to them several of the very best verses in the whole Bible, and you see what they have done already."

The hunter, as he always did, listened kindly, and even affectionately, to Hetty's remarks; then he replied:

"'Tisn't very likely they'll forget a beast with two tails on account of a varse or two from the Bible. I rather expect they'll give up the prisoners, and trust to some sarcumvention or other to get 'em back ag'in, with us, and all in the castle, and the ark in the bargain. Hows'ever, we must humour the vagabonds first, to get your father and Hurry out of their hands, and next to keep the peace atween us, until the Sarpent can get off his betrothed wife. Rather than have the bargain fall through now, I'd throw in half a dozen of them effigy bow-and-arrow men, such as we've in plenty in the chist."

Judith cheerfully assented. The prospects of success were now so encouraging as to raise the spirits of all in the castle. Hour passed after hour, notwithstanding, and the sun had once more begun to fall towards the summits of the western hills, and yet no signs were seen of the return of the raft. By dint of sweeping the shore with the glass, Deerslayer at length discovered a place in the dense and dark woods where he entertained no doubt the Iroquois were assembled in considerable numbers. It was near the thicket whence the raft had issued, and a little rill that trickled into the lake announced the vicinity of a spring. Here, then, the savages were probably holding their consultation. There was one ground for hope in spite of the delay, however, that Deerslayer did not fail to place before his anxious companions. It was probable that the Indians had left their prisoners in the camp. If such was the fact, it required considerable time to send a messenger

the necessary distance, and to bring the two white men to the spot where they were to embark. Encouraged by these reflections, the declension of the sun was noticed with less alarm.

The result justified Deerslayer's conjecture. Not long before the sun had fairly disappeared, the two logs were seen coming out of the thicket again; and as it drew near, Judith announced that her father and Hurry, both of them pinioned, lay on the bushes in the centre. The Indians seemed to be conscious that the lateness of the hour demanded unusual exertions, and in consequence of their diligence, the raft occupied its old station in about half the time that had been taken in the previous visit.

The Iroquois were compelled to place great reliance on the good faith of their foes, though it was reluctantly given, and was yielded to necessity rather than to confidence. As soon as Hutter and Hurry should be released, the party in the castle numbered two to one, as opposed to those on the raft, and escape by flight was out of the question, as the former had three bark canoes, to say nothing of the defences of the house and the ark. All this was understood by both parties, and it is probable the arrangement never could have been completed had not the honest countenance and manner of Deerslayer wrought their usual effect on Rivenoak.

"My brother knows I put faith in *him*," said the latter, as he advanced with Hutter, whose legs had been released in order to enable the old man to ascend the platform. "One more scalp—one more beast."

"Stop, Mingo," interrupted the hunter; "keep your prisoner a moment. I have to go and seek the means of payment."

This excuse, however, though true in part, was principally a fetch. Deerslayer left the platform, and entering the house he directed Judith to collect all the arms, and to conceal them in her own room. He then spoke earnestly to the Delaware, who stood on guard as before near the entrance of the building, put the three remaining castles in his pocket, and returned.

"You are welcome back to your old abode, Master Hutter," said Deerslayer, as he helped the other up on the platform, slyly passing into the hand of Rivenoak at the same time another of the castles.

"You've come off whole, Hurry, and that's not a little," he continued, giving a hand to the giant, secretly passing to the Indian the remainder of the stipulated ransom, and making an

earnest sign at the same moment for him to commence his retreat. "You are only a little numb, from the tight fit of the withes. Natur' 'll soon set the blood in motion, and then you may begin to dance, to celebrate what I call a most unexpected deliverance."

Deerslayer released the arms of his friends as each landed, and the two were now stamping and limping about on the platform, growling and uttering denunciations, as they endeavoured to help their returning circulation. They had been tethered too long, however, to regain the use of their limbs in a moment; and the Indians being quite as diligent on their return as on their advance, the raft was fully a hundred yards from the castle when Hurry, turning accidentally in that direction, discovered how fast it was getting beyond the reach of his vengeance. Without considering his own situation, he seized the rifle that leaned against the shoulder of Deerslayer, and attempted to cock and present it. The young hunter was too quick for him. Seizing the piece, he wrenched it from the hands of the giant; not, however, until it had gone off in the struggle, when pointed directly upward. The instant the gun went off Hurry yielded, and stumped towards the house. But he had been anticipated by Judith. The whole stock of Hutter's arms, which had been left in the building as a resource in the event of a sudden outbreaking of hostilities, had been removed, and were already secreted, agreeably to Deerslayer's directions. In consequence of this precaution, no means offered by which March could put his designs in execution.

Before darkness had completely set in, and while the girls were preparing the evening meal, Deerslayer related to Hutter an outline of the events that had taken place, and gave him a history of the means he had adopted for the security of his children and property.

CHAPTER XV.

The sun was set, and the rays of the retiring luminary had ceased to gild the edges of the few clouds that had sufficient openings to admit the passage of its fading light. The canopy overhead was heavy and dense, promising another night of darkness, but the surface of the lake was scarcely disturbed by

a ripple. The party in the castle were as gloomy and silent as the scene. The two ransomed prisoners felt humbled and dishonoured, but their humility partook of the rancour of revenge. They were far more disposed to remember the indignity with which they had been treated during the last few hours of their captivity than to feel grateful for the previous indulgence. As for the others, they were thoughtful, equally from regret and joy. Deerslayer and Judith felt most of the former sensation, though from very different causes, while Hetty for the moment was perfectly happy. Under such circumstances and in this mood all were taking the evening meal.

"Tom!" cried Hurry, bursting into a fit of boisterous laughter, "you look'd amazin'ly like a tethered bear as you was stretched on them hemlock boughs, and I only wonder you didn't growl more. They're a bad set, and so is the other brood of 'em down on the river. It's a wonderment to me how you got us off, Deerslayer, and I forgive you the interference that prevented my doing justice on that vagabond for this small service. Was it by lying or by coaxing?"

"By neither, Hurry, but by buying. We paid a ransom for you both."

"A ransom! Tom has paid the fiddler, then, for nothing of mine would have bought off the hair, much less the skin."

Hutter now rose, and signing to Deerslayer, he led him to an inner room, where, in answer to his questions, he first learned the price that had been paid for his release. The old man expressed neither resentment nor surprise at the inroad that had been made on his chest, though he did manifest some curiosity to know how far the investigation of its contents had been carried. The conference soon terminated by the return of the two to the outer room.

"I wonder if it's peace or war between us and the savages," exclaimed Hurry, just as Deerslayer, who had paused for a single instant, listened attentively, and was passing through the outer door without stopping.

"There's an answer to your question, Hurry."

As Deerslayer spoke, he threw on the table a sort of miniature faggot, composed of a dozen sticks bound tightly together with a deer-skin thong. March seized it eagerly, and holding it close to a blazing knot of pine that lay on the hearth, ascertained that the ends of it had been dipped in blood.

"If this isn't plain English," said the reckless frontier man, "it's plain Indian! Here's what they call a dicliration of war

down at York, Judith. How did you come by this defiance, Deerslayer?"

"Fairly enough. It lay not a minut' since in the doorway."

"How came it there?"

Deerslayer had approached a window, and cast a glance out of it on the dark aspect of the lake. As if satisfied with what he beheld, he drew near Hurry, and took the bundle of sticks into his own hand, examining it attentively.

"Yes, this is an Indian declaration of war, sure enough," he said. "The savages may have left the scalp on your head, but they must have taken off the *ears*, else you'd have heard the stirring of the water made by the lad as he come off ag'in on his two logs."

"The prowling wolves! But hand me that rifle, Judith, and I'll send an answer back to the vagabonds through their messenger."

"Not while I stand by, Master March," coolly put in Deerslayer, motioning for the other to forbear. "Faith is faith. The lad lighted a knot, and came off fairly under its blaze, to give us this warning; and no man here should harm him while emplyed on such an a'r'nd. But the boy is too cunning to leave the knot burning now his business is done, and the night is already too dark for a rifle to have any sartainty."

"That may be true enough as to a gun, but there's virtue still in a canoe," answered Hurry, passing towards the door, carrying a rifle in his hands. "The being doesn't live that shall stop me from following, and bringing back that riptyle's scalp."

Judith trembled like the aspen, she scarce knew why herself, though there was the prospect of a scene of violence; for, if Hurry was fierce and overbearing in the consciousness of his vast strength, Deerslayer had about him the calm determination that promises greater perseverance, and a resolution more likely to effect its object. It was the stern, resolute eye of the latter, rather than the noisy vehemence of the first, that excited her apprehensions. Hurry soon reached the spot where the canoe was fastened, but not before Deerslayer had spoken in a quick, earnest voice to the Serpent, in Delaware. As Deerslayer called to him, he stepped into the canoe, and quick as thought removed the paddles. Hurry was furious when he found that he was deprived of the means of proceeding. He first approached the Indian with loud menaces, and

even Deerslayer stood aghast at the probable consequences. March shook his sledge-hammer fists, and flourished his arms, as he drew near the Indian, and all expected he would attempt to fell the Delaware to the earth; one of them, at least, was well aware that such an experiment would be followed by immediate bloodshed. But even Hurry was awed by the stern composure of the chief, and he too knew that such a man was not to be outraged with impunity; he therefore turned to vent his rage on Deerslayer, where he foresaw no consequences so terrible. What might have been the result of this second demonstration, if completed, is unknown, since it was never made.

"Hurry," said a gentle, soothing voice at his elbow, "it's wicked to be so angry, and God will not overlook it. The Iroquois treated you well, and they didn't take *your* scalp, though you and father wanted to take *theirs*."

The influence of mildness on passion is well known. Hetty too, had earned a sort of consideration that had never before been enjoyed by her, through the self-devotion and decision of her recent conduct. The effect of her words was sufficiently instantaneous. Instead of throttling his old fellow-traveller, Hurry turned to the girl, and poured out a portion of his discontent in her attentive ears.

Deerslayer turned away, resolved to waste no more words on the subject, while Hutter pulled Hurry by the sleeve, and led him into the ark. There they sat long in private conference. In the meantime, the Indian and his friend had their secret consultation: for though it wanted some three or four hours to the rising of the star, the former could not abstain from canvassing his scheme, and from opening his heart to the other.

At length their conference was broken up by the reappearance of Hutter on the platform. Here he assembled the whole party, and communicated as much of his intentions as he deemed expedient. Of the arrangement made by Deerslayer to abandon the castle during the night, and to take refuge in the ark, he entirely approved. Now that the savages had turned their attention to the construction of rafts, no doubt could exist of their at least making an attempt to carry the building, and the message of the bloody sticks sufficiently showed their confidence in their own success. The old man viewed the night as critical, and he called on all to get ready as soon as possible to abandon the dwelling.

The castle was secured in the manner already described, the canoes were withdrawn from the dock and fastened to the ark by the side of the other; the few necessaries that had been left in the house were transferred to the cabin, and all embarked.

As usual, a belt of comparative light was stretched through the centre of the lake, while it was within the shadows of the mountains that the gloom rested most heavily on the water. The island, or castle, stood in this belt of comparative light, but still the night was so dark as to cover the departure of the ark. At the distance of an observer on the shore, her movements could not be seen at all. The prevalent wind on the lakes of that region is west, but on the present occasion Hutter himself was at a loss to pronounce which way the wind blew. In common, this difficulty was solved by the clouds which, floating high above the hill-tops, as a matter of course obeyed the currents; but now the whole vault of heaven seemed a mass of gloomy wall. Not an opening of any sort was visible, and Chingachgook was already trembling lest the non-appearance of the star might prevent his betrothed from being punctual to her appointment. Under these circumstances, Hutter hoisted his sail; the air soon filled the cloth, and when the scow was got under command, and the sail properly trimmed, it was found that the direction was southerly, inclining towards the eastern shore.

At first Deerslayer did not know whether to ascribe the course they held to accident or to design; but he now began to suspect the latter. Ere two hours had elapsed it was evident that the ark had got over sufficient space to be within a hundred rods of the shore, directly abreast of the known position of the camp. For a considerable time previously to reaching this point Hurry had been in close conference with the Indian, and the result was now announced by the latter to Deerslayer, who had been a cold, not to say distrusted, looker-on of all that passed.

"My old father, and my young brother, the Big Pine, want to see Huron scalps at their belts," said Chingachgook to his friend. "There is room for some on the girdle of the Serpent, and his people will look for them when he goes back to his village. I know that my brother has a white hand; he will not strike even the dead. He will wait for us; when we come back he will not hide his face from shame for his friend."

"Ay, ay, Sarpent, I see how it is. As for your looking for scalps, it belongs to your gifts, and I see no harm in it. Be merciful, Sarpent; it surely can do no harm to a red-skin's honour to show a little marcy. As for the old man, who might ripen better feelin's in his heart, and Harry March here—as for *them* two I leave 'em in the hands of the white man's God. Still, Sarpent, you can be *merciful*. Don't begin your career with the wails of women and the cries of children."

"My brother will stay here with the scow. Wah will soon be standing on the shore waiting, and Chingachgook must hasten."

The Indian then joined his two co-adventurers, and first lowering the sail, they all three entered a canoe, and left the side of the ark. As soon as the canoe was out of sight, and that occurred ere the paddles had given a dozen strokes, Deerslayer made the best dispositions he could to keep the ark as nearly stationary as possible; and then he sat down in the end of the scow to chew the cud of his own bitter reflections. It was not long, however, before he was joined by Judith, who sought every occasion to be near him.

The controlling influence that led Hutter and Hurry to repeat their experiment against the camp was precisely that which had induced the first attempt, a little heightened, perhaps, by the desire of revenge. In short, the motive that urged them both so soon to go against the Hurons was an habitual contempt of their enemy, acting on the unceasing cupidity of prodigality. The additional chances of success, however, had their place in the formation of the second enterprise. It was known that a large portion of the warriors—perhaps all—were encamped for the night abreast of the castle, and it was hoped that the scalps of helpless victims would be the consequence. This fact had been but slightly alluded to in Hutter's communications with Hurry, and with Chingachgook it had been kept entirely out of view.

Hutter steered the canoe; Hurry had manfully taken his post in the bows, and Chingachgook stood in the centre. The approach to the shore was made with great caution, and the landing was effected in safety. The three now prepared their arms, and began their tiger-like approach upon the camp. The Indian was on the lead. Occasionally a dry twig snapped under the heavy weight of the gigantic Hurry or the blundering clumsiness of the old man; but had the Indian walked on air his step could not have seemed lighter. The great object

was first to discover the position of the fire, which was known to be the centre of the whole position. At length the keen eye of Chingachgook caught a glimpse of this important guide. There was no blaze, but merely a single smouldering brand, as suited the hour; the savages usually retiring and rising with the revolutions of the sun.

As soon as a view was obtained of this beacon the progress of the adventurers became swifter and more certain. In a few minutes they got to the edge of the circle of little huts. Here they stopped to survey their ground, and to concert their movements. The darkness was so deep as to render it difficult to distinguish anything but the glowing brand, the trunks of the nearest trees, and the endless canopy of leaves that veiled the clouded heaven. It was ascertained, however, that a hut was quite near, and Chingachgook attempted to reconnoitre its interior. As he drew near he stooped to his hands and knees, for the entrance was so low as to require this attitude, even as a convenience. Before trusting his head inside, however, he listened long to catch the breathing of sleepers. No sound was audible, and this human serpent thrust his head in at the opening, as another serpent would have peered in on the nest. Nothing rewarded the hazardous experiment; for, after feeling cautiously with a hand, the place was found to be empty.

The Delaware proceeded in the same guarded manner to one or two more of the huts, finding all in the same situation. He then returned to his companions, and informed them that the Hurons had deserted their camp. A little further inquiry corroborated this fact, and it only remained to return to the canoe. The chief, who had landed solely with the hope of acquiring renown, stood stationary, leaning against a tree, waiting the pleasure of his companions. He was mortified and a little surprised, it is true; but he bore all with dignity, falling back for support on the sweeter expectations that still lay in reserve for that evening. On the other hand, Hutter and Hurry, who had been chiefly instigated by the basest of all human motives, the thirst of gain, could scarce control their feelings. They even quarrelled with each other, and serious consequences might have occurred, had not the Delaware interfered to remind them of the necessity of returning to the ark. This checked the dispute, and in a few minutes they were paddling sullenly back to the spot where they hoped to find that vessel.

For a short time after Judith joined Deerslayer, she was silent, and the hunter was ignorant which of the sisters had approached him; but he soon recognized the rich, full voice of the elder, as her feelings escaped in words.

"This is a terrible life for women, Deerslayer!" she exclaimed. "Would to heaven I could see an end of it!"

"The life is well enough, Judith," was the answer, "being pretty much as it is used or abused. What would you wish to see in its place?"

"I should be a thousand times happier to live nearer to civilized beings. A dwelling near one of the forts would be far better than this dreary place where we live."

"Nay, Judith, I can't agree too lightly in the truth of all this. If forts are good to keep off inimies, they sometimes hold inimies of their own. I don't think it would be for your good, or the good of Hetty, to live near one; and if I *must* say what I think, I'm afeard you are a little too near as it is."

"Woman is not made for scenes like these, Deerslayer—scenes of which we shall have no end as long as this war lasts"

"If you mean women of white colour, I rather think you are not far from the truth, gal; but as for the females of the red men, such visitations are quite in character. But—hark! that's your father's voice, gal, and he speaks like a man who's riled at something."

"God save us from any more of these horrible scenes!" exclaimed Judith, bending her face to her knees. "I sometimes wish I had no father!"

This was bitterly said, and the repinings which extorted the words were bitterly felt.

"Judith, I ought to have read a chapter to father and Hurry!" said the innocent but terrified younger sister, who had quietly approached them, "and *that* would have kept them from going again on such an errand. Do you call to them, Deerslayer, and tell them I want them, and that it will be good for them both if they'll return and hearken to my words."

"Ahs me!—Hetty, you little know the cravin's for gold and revenge, if you believe they are so easily turned aside from their longin's! But this is an uncommon business, in more ways than one, Judith! I hear your father and Hurry growling like bears, and yet no noise comes from the mouth of the young chief."

"Justice may have alighted on him, and his death has saved the lives of the innocent."

"Not it—not it; the Sarpent is not the one to suffer, if *that's* to be the law. Sartainly there has been no onset, and 'tis most likely that the camp's deserted, and the men are coming back disapp'inted."

The sail being down, the ark had not drifted far, and ere many minutes he heard Chingachgook, in a low quiet tone, directing Hutter how to steer in order to reach it. In less time than it takes to tell the fact, the canoe touched the scow, and the adventurers entered. Neither Hutter nor Hurry spoke of what had occurred. But the Delaware, in passing his friend, uttered the words, "Fire's out", which sufficiently explained the truth to his listener.

A short conference was now held, when Hutter decided that the wisest way would be to keep in motion, as the means most likely to defeat any attempt at surprise. As the air still baffled and continued light, it was finally determined to sail before it. This point settled, the released prisoners helped to hoist the sail, and then threw themselves on two of the pallets, leaving Deerslayer and his friend to look after the movements of the craft. As neither of the latter was disposed to sleep, on account of the appointment with Hist, this arrangement was acceptable to all parties.

For some time the scow rather drifted than sailed along the western shore, following a light southerly current of the air. The progress was slow, but the two men perceived that it was not only carrying them towards the point they desired to reach, but at a rate that was quite as fast as the hour yet rendered necessary. But little was said the while, and that little had more reference to the rescue of Hist than to any other subject.

Deerslayer kept the craft as much in the bays as was prudent, for the double purpose of sailing within the shadows of the woods, and of detecting any signs of an encampment that might pass on the shore. In this manner they had doubled one low point, and were already in the bay that was terminated north by the goal at which they aimed. The latter was still a quarter of a mile distant, when Chingachgook came silently to the side of his friend, and pointed to a place directly ahead. A small fire was glimmering just within the verge of the bushes that lined the shore on the southern side of the point—leaving no doubt that the Indians had suddenly removed their camp to the very projection of land where Hist had given them the rendezvous!

CHAPTER XVI.

This discovery was of great moment in the eyes of Deerslayer and his friend. In the first place, there was the danger that Hutter and Hurry would make a fresh attempt on this camp, should they awake and ascertain its position. Then there was the increased risk of landing to bring off Hist. As the Delaware was aware that the hour was near when he ought to repair to the rendezvous, he no longer thought of trophies torn from his foes; and one of the first things arranged between him and his associate was to permit the two others to sleep on, lest they should disturb the execution of their plans by substituting some of their own. The Indians, in the wish to conceal their fire from those who were thought to be still in the castle, had placed it so near the southern side of the point as to render it extremely difficult to shut it in by the bushes, though Deerslayer varied the direction of the scow, both to the right and to the left, in the hope of being able to effect that object.

"There's one advantage, Judith, in finding that fire so near the water," he said, while executing these little manoeuvres; "since it shows the Mingos believe we are in the hut, and our coming on 'em from this quarter will be an unlooked-for event. Ha! there—the bushes are beginning to shut in the fire—and now it can't be seen at all!"

Deerslayer waited a little to make certain that he had at last gained the desired position, when he gave the signal agreed on, and Chingachgook let go the grapnel and lowered the sail.

The situation in which the ark now lay had its advantages and its disadvantages. The fire had been hid by sheering towards the shore, and the latter was nearer perhaps than was desirable. Still, the water was known to be very deep farther off in the lake; and anchoring in deep water, under the circumstances in which the party was placed, was to be avoided, if possible. It was also believed no raft could be within miles; and though the trees in the darkness appeared almost to overhang the scow, it would not be easy to get off to her without using a boat.

The intense darkness that prevailed so close in with the forest, too, served as an effectual screen; and so long as care

was had not to make a noise, there was little or no danger of being detected. All these things Deerslayer pointed out to Judith, instructing her as to the course she was to follow in the event of an alarm.

"And now, Judith, as we understand one another, it is time the Sarpent and I had taken to the canoe," the hunter concluded. "The star has not risen yet, it's true; but it soon must, though none of us are likely to be any the wiser for it to-night, on account of the clouds."

"Deerslayer," interrupted the girl, "this is a most dangerous service; why do *you* go on it at all?"

"Anan!—Why, you know, gal, we go to bring off Hist, the Sarpent's betrothed."

"That is all right for the Indian; *you* are not betrothed, and why should *two* risk their lives and liberties to do that which one can just as well perform?"

"Ah!—now I understand you, Judith,—yes, now I begin to take the idee. But you forget this is our a'r'nd here, on the lake, and it would not tell well to forget an a'r'nd just as the pinch came. Then, if love does count for so much with some people, particularly with young women, fri'ndship counts for something too with other some. I dares to say the Delaware can bring off Hist by himself; but he couldn't sarcumvent sarcumventions, or stir up an ambushment, or fight with the savages, and get his sweetheart at the same time, as well by himself as if he had a fri'nd with him to depend on. No, no, Judith, you wouldn't desart one that counted on you at such a moment, and you can't in reason expect me to do it."

"I believe you are right, Deerslayer; and yet I wish you were not to go! Promise me one thing, at least, and that is—not to do anything more than to save the girl. That will be enough for once, and with that you ought to be satisfied."

"Lord bless you, gal; one would think it was Hetty that's talking, and not the quick-witted and wonderful Judith Hutter. Well, it's kind and soft-hearted in you, Judith, to feel this consarn for a fellow-creetur'; and I shall always say that you are kind and of true feelin's, let them that envy your good looks tell as many idle stories of you as they may."

"Deerslayer!" hastily said the girl, interrupting him, "do you believe all you hear about a poor motherless girl? Is the foul tongue of Hurry Harry to blast my life?"

"Not it, Judith. I've told Hurry it wasn't manful to back-bite them, if he couldn't win by fair means."

"If I had a brother he wouldn't dare to do it!" exclaimed Judith, with eyes flashing fire. "But finding me without any protector but an old man whose ears are getting to be as dull as his feelings, he has his way as he pleases."

"Not exactly that, Judith. No man, brother or stranger, would stand by and see as fair a gal as yourself hunted down without saying a word in her behalf. Hurry's in 'arnest in wanting to make you his wife; and the little he does let out ag'in you comes more from jealousy than from anything else. Smile on him when he awakes, and, my life on it, the poor fellow will forget everything but your comeliness."

Deerslayer now intimated to Chingachgook his readiness to proceed. As the young man entered the canoe, the girl stood immovable as stone, lost in the musings that the language and manner of the other were likely to produce.

Chingachgook and his pale-faced friend set forth on their hazardous and delicate enterprise with a coolness and method that would have done credit to men who were on their twentieth instead of being on their first war-path. The Indian took his place in the head of the canoe, while Deerslayer guided its movements in the stern. By this arrangement the former would be the first to land, and of course the first to meet his mistress.

As yet Chingachgook had never fired a shot in anger. It is true he had been hanging about his enemy's camp for a few hours, on his first arrival, and he had even once entered it, but no consequences had followed either experiment. Now, it was certain that an important result was to be effected, or a mortifying failure was to ensue. The rescue or the continued captivity of Hist depended on the enterprise. In a word, it was virtually the maiden expedition of these two ambitious forest soldiers; and while one of them set forth impelled by sentiments that usually carry men so far, both had all their feelings of pride and manhood enlisted in their success.

Instead of steering in a direct line to the point, then distant from the ark less than a quarter of a mile, Deerslayer laid the head of his canoe diagonally towards the centre of the lake, with a view to obtain a position from which he might approach the shore, having his enemies in his front only. So well was the necessity for this measure understood that Chingachgook quietly paddled on, although it was adopted without consulting him, and apparently was taking him in a direction nearly opposite to that one might think he most wished to go. A few

minutes sufficed, however, to carry the canoe the necessary distance, when both ceased paddling, as it were by instinctive consent, and the boat became stationary.

In vain did the Delaware turn his head eastward, to catch a glimpse of the promised star; for, notwithstanding the clouds broke a little near the horizon in that quarter of the heavens, the curtain continued so far drawn as effectually to conceal all behind it. In front lay the point, at a distance of about a thousand feet. As for the ark, though scarcely farther from the canoe than the point, it lay so completely buried in the shadows of the shore that it would not have been visible even had there been many degrees more of light than actually existed.

The adventurers now held a conference in low voices, consulting together as to the probable time. Deerslayer thought it wanted yet some minutes to the rising of the star, while the impatience of the chief caused him to fancy the night further advanced, and to believe that his betrothed was already waiting his appearance on the shore. As might have been expected, the opinion of the latter prevailed, and his friend disposed him to steer for the place of rendezvous. The utmost skill and precaution now became necessary in the management of the canoe. The paddles were lifted and returned to the water in a noiseless manner; and when within a hundred yards of the beach, Chingachgook took in his altogether, laying his hand on his rifle in its stead. The canoe now seemed to move by instinct, so cautious and deliberate were all its motions. Still it continued to advance, until its bows grated on the gravel of the beach. There was, as usual, a narrow strand, but bushes fringed the woods, and in most places overhung the water.

Chingachgook stepped upon the beach, and cautiously examined it for some distance on each side of the canoe; but no Hist rewarded his search. When he returned, they conferred in whispers, the Indian apprehending that they must have mistaken the place of rendezvous. But Deerslayer thought it was probable they had mistaken the hour. While he was yet speaking, he grasped the arm of the Delaware, caused him to turn his head in the direction of the lake, and pointed towards the summits of the eastern mountains, where the selected star was glittering among the branches of a pine. This was every way a flattering omen, and the young men leaned on their rifles, listening intently for the sound of approaching footsteps. Voices they often heard, and mingled with them were the

suppressed cries of children, and the low but sweet laugh of Indian women.

As the natives are habitually cautious, and seldom break out in loud conversation, the adventurers knew by these facts that they must be very near the encampment; but it was not possible where they stood to ascertain exactly how near it was to themselves. Once or twice it seemed as if stragglers from around the fire were approaching the place of rendezvous; but these sounds were either altogether illusions, or those who had drawn near returned again without coming to the shore. A quarter of an hour was passed in this state of intense expectation and anxiety, when Deerslayer proposed that he should circle the point in the canoe, and reconnoitre the Indians, and thus form some conjecture for the non-appearance of Hist. With this understanding, then, they separated.

As soon as Deerslayer was at his post again, in the stern of the canoe, he left the shore with the same precautions and in the same noiseless manner as he had approached it. On this occasion he did not go far from the land, the bushes affording a sufficient cover, by keeping as close in as possible. It would not have been easy to devise any means more favourable to reconnoitring round an Indian camp than those afforded by the actual state of things. The most practised and guarded foot might stir a bunch of leaves or snap a dried stick in the dark, but a bark canoe could be made to float over the surface of smooth water, almost with the noiseless movements of an aquatic bird.

Deerslayer had got nearly in a line between the camp and the ark before he caught a glimpse of the fire. This came upon him suddenly, at first causing an alarm, lest he had incautiously ventured within the circle of light it cast. But perceiving that he was safe from detection so long as the Indians kept near the centre of the illumination, he brought the canoe to a state of rest in the most favourable position he could find.

A large fire had been made, as much to answer the purpose of torches as for the use of their simple cookery; and at this precise moment it was blazing high and bright, having recently received a supply of dried brush. Most of the toil had ceased, and even the hungriest child had satisfied its appetite. In a word, the time was that moment of relaxation and general indolence which is apt to succeed a hearty meal, and when the labours of the day have ended. The hunters and the fishermen had been equally successful, and food being abundant, every

other care appeared to have subsided in the sense of enjoyment dependent on this all-important fact.

Deerslayer saw at a glance that many of the warriors were absent. His acquaintance, Rivenoak, however, was present, his swarthy features illuminated as much by pleasure as by the torch-like flame, while he showed another of the tribe one of the elephants that had caused so much sensation among his people. More in the background, eight or ten warriors lay half recumbent on the ground, or sat with their backs inclined against trees, so many types of indolent repose. Their arms were near them all, sometimes leaning against the same tree as themselves, or were lying across their bodies in careless preparation. But the group that most attracted the attention of Deerslayer was that composed of the women and children. All the females appeared to be collected together, and, almost as a matter of course, their young were near them. Most of the young women seemed to be light-hearted enough; but one old hag was seated apart, with a watchful, soured aspect, which the hunter at once knew betokened that some duty of an unpleasant character had been assigned her by the chiefs. What that duty was he had no means of knowing; but he felt satisfied it must be, in some measure, connected with her own sex, the aged among the women generally being chosen for such offices, and no other.

As a matter of course, Deerslayer looked eagerly and anxiously for the form of Hist. She was nowhere visible. Once or twice he started, as he thought he recognized her laugh; but his ears were deceived by the soft melody that is so common to the Indian female voice. At length the old woman spoke loud and angrily, and then he caught a glimpse of one or two dark figures in the background of trees, which turned as if obedient to the rebuke and walked more within the circle of the light. A young warrior's first came fairly into view; then followed two youthful females, one of whom proved to be the Delaware girl. Deerslayer now comprehended it all. Hist was watched. The known vicinity of those who might be supposed to be her friends, and the arrival of a strange red man on the lake, had induced more than the usual care, and the girl had not been able to slip away from those who watched her, in order to keep her appointment. After strolling about the camp a little longer in affected indifference, the two girls quitted their male escort and took seats among their own sex. As soon as this was done, the old sentinel changed her place

to one more agreeable to herself—a certain proof that she had hitherto been exclusively on watch.

Deerslayer now felt greatly at a loss how to proceed. He well knew that Chingachgook could never be persuaded to return to the ark without making some desperate effort for the recovery of his mistress, and his own generous feelings well disposed him to aid in such an undertaking. Taking all things into consideration, he came to the conclusion it would be better to rejoin his friend, and endeavour to temper his impetuosity by some of his own coolness and discretion. It required but a minute or two to put this plan into execution, the canoe returning to the strand some ten or fifteen minutes after it had left it.

Deerslayer found the Indian at his post, from which he had not stirred, fearful that his betrothed might arrive during his absence. A conference followed, in which Chingachgook was made acquainted with the state of things in the camp. A much greater degree of vigilance than had been previously required was now necessary; and the circumstances that an aged woman was on watch also denoted some special grounds of alarm. All these considerations were briefly discussed before the young men came to any decision. The occasion, however, being one that required acts instead of words, the course to be pursued was soon chosen.

Disposing of the canoe in such a manner that Hist must see it, should she come to the place of meeting previously to their return, the young men looked to their arms, and prepared to enter the wood. The whole projection into the lake contained about two acres of land; and the part that formed the point, and on which the camp was placed, did not compose a surface of more than half that size. The surface of the land was tolerably even, but it had a small rise near its centre, which divided it into a northern and southern half. On the latter the Hurons had built their fire. A brook also came brawling down the sides of the adjacent hills, and found its way into the lake on the southern side of the point. This brook lay west of the encampment, and its waters found their way into the lake quite near to the spot chosen for the fire.

The little rise in the ground that lay behind the Indian encampment greatly favoured the secret advance of the two adventurers. It prevented the light of the fire diffusing itself on the ground directly in their rear, although the land fell away towards the water, so as to leave what might be termed the

left, or eastern, flank of the position unprotected by this covering. Deerslayer did not break through the fringe of bushes immediately abreast of the canoe, which might have brought him too suddenly within the influence of the light, since the hillock did not extend to the water; but he followed the beach northerly until he had got nearly on the opposite side of the tongue of land, which brought him under the shelter of the low acclivity, and consequently more in shadow.

As soon as the friends emerged from the bushes they stopped to reconnoitre. The fire was still blazing behind the little ridge, so that, while the background was in obscurity, the foreground was in strong light, exposing the savages and concealing their foes. Profiting by the latter circumstance, the young men advanced cautiously towards the ridge, Deerslayer in front. It required but a moment to reach the foot of the little ascent, and then commenced the most critical part of the enterprise. Moving with exceeding caution, and trailing his rifle, both to keep its barrel out of view and in readiness for service, the hunter put foot before foot until he had got sufficiently high to overlook the summit, his own head being alone brought into the light. Chingachgook was at his side, and both paused to take another close examination of the camp.

The dim figures which he had formerly discovered must have been on the summit of the ridge, a few feet in advance of the spot where he was now posted. Around the fire were seated thirteen warriors, which accounted for all whom he had seen from the canoe. They were conversing with much earnestness among themselves, the image of the elephant passing from hand to hand. For the time being all else was forgotten, and our adventurers could not have approached at a more fortunate instant.

The females were collected near each other, much as Deerslayer had last seen them, nearly in a line between the place where he now stood and the fire. The distance from the oak against which the young men leaned and the warriors was about thirty yards; the women may have been half that number of yards higher. Although they conversed in their low, soft voices, it was possible, in the profound stillness of the woods, to catch passages of the discourse; and the light-hearted laugh that escaped the girls might occasionally have reached the canoe. Deerslayer felt the tremor that passed through the frame of his friend when the latter first caught the sweet sounds

that issued from the plump, pretty lips of Hist. He even laid a hand on the shoulder of the Indian, as a sort of admonition to command himself. As the conversation grew more earnest, each leaned forward to listen.

In the midst of this scene, the Delaware caused his friend to stoop, so as completely to conceal himself, and then he made a noise so closely resembling the little chirrup of the smallest species of the American squirrel, that Deerslayer himself actually thought it came from one of the little animals skipping about over his head. Hist instantly ceased talking, and sat motionless. Still, she had sufficient self-command to abstain from turning her head. She had heard the signal by which her lover so often called her from the wigwam to the stolen interview, and it affected her as the serenade affects the maiden in the land of song.

From that moment Chingachgook felt certain that his presence was known, and he could now hope for a bolder line of conduct on the part of his mistress than she might dare to adopt under an uncertainty of his situation. It left no doubt of her endeavouring to aid him in his effort to release her. Deerslayer arose as soon as the signal was given, and he was not slow to detect the change that had come over the manner of the girl. She still affected to talk, though it was no longer with the same spirit. At length the girls became wearied, and they rose in a body, as if about to separate. It was now that Hist, for the first time, ventured to turn her face in the direction whence the signal had come. In doing this her movements were natural, but guarded, and she stretched her arm and yawned, as if overcome with a desire to sleep. The chirrup was again heard, and the girl felt satisfied as to the position of her lover, though the strong light in which she herself was placed, and the comparative darkness in which the adventurers stood, prevented her from seeing their heads—the only portions of their forms that appeared above the ridge at all.

The moment now arrived when it became necessary for Hist to act. Luckily, at this instant one of the warriors called to the old woman by name, and bade her bring him water to drink. There was a spring on the northern side of the point, and the hag took a gourd from a branch, and summoning Hist to her side, she moved towards the summit of the ridge, intending to descend and cross the point to the natural fountain. All this was seen and understood by the adventurers, and they fell back into the obscurity, concealing their persons by trees,

until the two females had passed them. In walking, Hist was held tightly by the hand. As she moved by the tree that hid Chingachgook and his friend, the chirrup was repeated, and the Huron woman stopped and traced the tree whence the sounds seemed to proceed, standing at the moment within six feet of her enemies. She expressed her surprise that a squirrel should be in motion at so late an hour, and said it boded evil. Hist answered that she had heard the same squirrel three times within the last twenty minutes, and that she supposed it was waiting to obtain some of the crumbs left from the late supper. This explanation seemed satisfactory, and they moved towards the spring, the men following stealthily and closely. The gourd was filled, and the old woman was hurrying back, her hand still grasping the wrist of the girl, when she was suddenly seized so violently by the throat as to cause her to release her captive, and to prevent her making any other sound than a sort of gurgling, suffocating noise. The Serpent passed his arm round the waist of his mistress, and dashed through the bushes with her, on the north side of the point.

Deerslayer kept playing on the throat of the old woman, like the keys of an organ, occasionally allowing her to breathe, and then compressing his fingers again, nearly to strangling. The brief intervals for breath, however, were well improved, and the hag succeeded in letting out a screech or two that served to alarm the camp. The tramp of the warriors, as they sprang from the fire, was plainly audible; tripping up the heels of his captive, therefore, Deerslayer left her on her back and moved towards the bushes, his rifle at a poise and his head over his shoulders, like a lion at bay.

CHAPTER XVII.

Notwithstanding the pressing nature of the emergency, Deerslayer hesitated a single instant ere he plunged into the bushes that lined the shore. His feelings had been awakened by the whole scene, and a sternness of purpose had come over him to which he was ordinarily a stranger. Four dark figures loomed on the ridge, drawn against the brightness of the fire, and an enemy might have been sacrificed at a glance. The Indians had paused to gaze into the gloom, in search of the screeching

hag; and with many a man less given to reflection than that of the hunter, the death of one of them would have been certain. Luckily, he was more prudent. Although the rifle dropped a little towards the foremost of his pursuers, he did not aim or fire, but disappeared in the cover. To gain the beach, and to follow it round to the place where Chingachgook was already in the canoe with Hist, anxiously waiting his appearance, occupied but a moment. Laying his rifle in the bottom of the canoe, Deerslayer stooped to give the latter a vigorous shove from the shore, when a powerful Indian leaped through the bushes, alighting like a panther on his back. Everything was now suspended by a hair, a false step ruining all. With a generosity that would have rendered a Roman illustrious throughout all time, but which in the career of one so simple and humble would have been for ever lost to the world but for this unpretending legend, Deerslayer threw all his force into a desperate effort, shoved the canoe off with a power that sent it a hundred feet from the shore as it might be in an instant, and fell forward into the lake himself, his assailant necessarily following him.

Although the water was deep within a few yards of the beach, it was not more than breast-high, where the two combatants fell. Still this was quite sufficient to destroy one who had sunk under the great disadvantages in which Deerslayer was placed. His hands were free, however, and the savage was compelled to relinquish his hug to keep his own face above the surface. For half a minute there was a desperate struggle, and then both stood erect, grasping each other's arms, in order to prevent the use of the deadly knife in the darkness. What might have been the issue of this severe personal struggle cannot be known, for half a dozen savages came leaping into the water to the aid of their friend, and Deerslayer yielded himself a prisoner with a dignity that was as remarkable as his self-devotion.

To quit the lake and lead their new captive to the fire occupied the Indians but another minute. So much engaged were they all with the struggle and its consequences that the canoe was unseen, though it lay so near the shore as to render every syllable that was uttered perfectly intelligible to the Delaware and his betrothed; and the whole party left the spot, some continuing the pursuit after Hist along the beach, though most proceeded to the right. Here Deerslayer's antagonist so far recovered his breath and his recollection as

to relate the manner in which the girl had got off. It was now too late to assail the other fugitives, for no sooner was his friend led into the bushes than the Delaware placed his paddle into the water, and the light canoe glided noiselessly away, holding its course towards the centre of the lake until safe from shot, after which it sought the ark.

When Deerslayer reached the fire, he found himself surrounded by no less than eight grim savages, among whom was his old acquaintance Rivenoak. As soon as the latter caught a glimpse of the captive's countenance he spoke apart to his companions, and a low but general exclamation of pleasure and surprise escaped them. They knew that the conqueror of their late friend was in their hands, and subject to their mercy or vengeance. There was no little admiration mingled in the ferocious looks that were thrown on the prisoner.

The arms of Deerslayer were not pinioned, and he was left the free use of his hands, his knife having been first removed. The only precaution that was taken to secure his person was untiring watchfulness, and a strong rope of bark that passed from ankle to ankle, not so much to prevent his walking as to place an obstacle in the way of his attempting to escape by any sudden leap. Even this extra provision against flight was not made until the captive had been brought to the light and his character ascertained. It was, in fact, a compliment to his prowess, and he felt proud of the distinction.

While this admiration and these honours were so unreservedly bestowed on Deerslayer, he did not escape some of the penalties of his situation. He was permitted to seat himself on the end of a log near the fire, in order to dry his clothes, his late adversary standing opposite, now holding articles of his own scanty vestments to the heat, and now feeling his throat, on which the marks of his enemy's fingers were still quite visible. The rest of the warriors consulted together, near at hand, all those who had been out having returned to report that no signs of any other prowlers near the camp were to be found.

Rivenoak now quietly took a seat by Deerslayer's side, and, after a short pause, commenced the following dialogue.

"My pale-face friend is very welcome," said the Indian, with a familiar nod. "The Hurons keep a hot fire to dry the white man's clothes by."

"I thank you, Huron," returned the other; "I thank you for the welcome, and I thank you for the fire. Each is good

in its way, and the last is very good when one has been in a spring as cold as the Glimmerglass."

"The pale-face—but my brother has a name? So great a warrior would not have lived without a name."

"Mingo," said the hunter, "*your* brave called me Hawkeye, I suppose on account of a quick and sartain aim, when he was lying with his head in my lap, afore his spirit started for the happy hunting-grounds."

"'Tis a good name! The hawk is sure of his blow. Hawkeye is not a woman; why does he live with the Delawares?"

"I understand you, Mingo; but Providence placed me among the Delawares young, and, 'bating what Christian usages demand of my colour and gifts, I hope to live and die in their tribe. Still, I do not mean to throw away my *natyve* rights, and shall strive to do a pale-face's duty in red-skin society."

"Good; a Huron is a red-skin. Hawkeye is more of a Huron than of a woman."

"I suppose you know, Mingo, your own meaning. But if you wish to get anything out of me, speak plainer, for bargains cannot be made blind-folded or tongue-tied."

"Good! Hawkeye has not a forked tongue, and he likes to say what he thinks. He is an acquaintance of the Musk-rat, and he has lived in his wigwam, but he is not a friend. He wants no scalps like a miserable Indian, but fights like a stout-hearted pale-face. The Musk-rat is neither white nor red. He looks for scalps, like an outcast. Hawkeye can go back and tell him how he has outwitted the Hurons, how he has escaped; and when his eyes are in a fog, then Hawkeye can open the door for the Hurons. And how will the plunder be divided? Why, Hawkeye will carry away the most, and the Hurons will take what he may choose to leave behind him. The scalps can go to Canada, for a pale-face has no satisfaction in *them*."

"Well, Rivenoak, this is plain English enough, though spoken in Iroquois. I understand all you mean now, and, no doubt, 'twould be easy enough to go back and tell the Musk-rat that I had got away from you, and gain some credit too by the expl'ite."

"Good; that is what I want the pale-face to do."

"Yes, yes—that's plain enough. I know what you want me to do. When inside the house, and eating the Musk-rat's

bread, I might put his eyes into so thick a fog, that he couldn't even see the door, much less the land."

"Good! Hawkeye should have been born a Huron! His blood is not more than half-white."

"There you're out, Huron, as much as if you mistook a wolf for a catamount. I'm white in blood, heart, natur', and gifts, though a little red-skin in feelin's and habits. But when old Hutter's eyes are well be-fogged, and his pretty darters, perhaps, in a deep sleep, and Great Pine is dreaming of anything but mischief, and all suppose Hawkeye is acting as a faithful sentinel, all I have to do is to set a torch for a signal, open the door, and let in the Hurons to knock 'em all on the head."

"Surely my brother is mistaken; he *cannot* be a white! He is worthy to be a great chief among the Hurons!"

"That is true enough, I dares to say, if he could do all this. Now, harkee, Huron, and for once hear a few honest words from the mouth of a plain man. I am a Christian born, and them that come of such a stock, and can listen to the words that were spoken to their fathers, and will be spoken to their children, until 'arth and all it holds perishes, can never lend themselves to such wickedness. No upright pale-face could do what you wish, and to be plain with you, in my judgment no upright Delaware either; with a Mingo it may be different."

The Huron listened to this rebuke with obvious disgust; but affecting to smile, he seemed to listen eagerly, and then pondered on what he had heard.

"Does Hawkeye love the Musk-rat?" he demanded; "or does he love his daughters?"

"Neither, Mingo. Old Tom is not a man to gain my love; and as for the darters, they are comely enough to gain the liking of any young man; but there's reason ag'in any great love for either. Hetty is a good soul, but natur' has laid a heavy hand on her mind, poor thing!"

"And the Wild Rose!" exclaimed the Huron, "is she not sweet enough for my brother?"

Deerslayer remained silent.

"Hawkeye is talking with a friend," he continued. "He knows that Rivenoak is a man of his word, for they have traded together. My friend has come here on account of a little string held by a girl that can pull the whole body of the stoutest warrior?"

"You are nearer the truth now, Huron, than you've been

afore, since we began to talk. But one end of that string was not fast to my heart, nor did the Wild Rose hold the other."

"This is wonderful! Does my brother love in his head, and not in his heart? And can the Feeble-Mind pull so hard against so stout a warrior?"

"The string you mean is fast in the heart of a great Delaware; one of Mohican stock, in fact, living among the Delawares since the dispersal of his own people, and of the family of Uncas—Chingachgook by name."

"But a string has two ends—one is fast to the mind of a Mohican, and the other—?"

"Why, the other was here half an hour since. Wah-ta!-Wah held it in her hand, if she didn't hold it to her heart."

"I understand what you mean, my brother," returned the Indian, for the first time catching a direct clue to the adventures of the evening. "The Great Serpent, being strongest, pulled the hardest, and Hist was forced to leave us."

"I don't think there was much pulling about it," answered the other, laughing, always in his silent manner. "Lord help you, Huron! he likes the gal, and the gal likes him, and it surpassed Huron sarcumvention to keep two young people apart when there was so strong a feelin' to bring 'em together."

"And Hawkeye and Chingachgook came into our camp on this errand only?"

"For what else should we come? Sartain; we came for that, and for no other purpose, and we got what we came for, there's no use in pretending otherwise. Hist is off with a man who is the next thing to her husband, and come what will to me, *that's* one thing detarmined."

"What signal told the young maiden that her lover was nigh?" asked the old Huron.

Deerslayer laughed again, and seemed to enjoy the success of the exploit with as much glee as if he had not been its victim.

"Your squirrels are great gadabouts, Mingo!" he cried, still laughing;—"yes, they are sartainly great gadabouts! When other folks' squirrels are at home and asleep, yourn chirrup and sing in a way that even a Delaware girl can understand their music!"

The Huron looked vexed, though he succeeded in suppress- ing any violent exhibition of resentment. He soon quitted

his prisoner, and joining the rest of his warriors, he communicated the substance of what he had learned. Three or four of them ascended the little acclivity, and gazed at the tree where it was understood the adventurers had posted themselves; and one even descended to it and examined the footprints around its roots, in order to make sure that the statement was true. The result confirmed the story of the captive, and they all returned to the fire with increased wonder and respect.

Down to this moment, the young Indian who had been seen walking in company with Hist and another female, had made no advances to any communication with Deerslayer. He had held himself aloof from his friends even, passing near the bevy of younger women who were clustering together, apart as usual, and conversed in low tones on the subject of the escape of their late companion. Now, however, he moved towards the log on which the prisoner was still seated, drying his clothes.

"This is Catamount!" said the Indian, striking his hand boastfully on his naked breast.

"This is Hawkeye," quietly returned Deerslayer. "My sight is keen: is my brother's leap long?"

"From here to the Delaware villages. Hawkeye has stolen my wife: he must bring her back, or his scalp will hang on a pole and dry in my wigwam."

"Hawkeye has stolen nothing, Huron. He doesn't come of a thieving breed. Wah-ta!-Wah will never be the wife of any red-skin of the Canadas; her mind is in the cabin of a Delaware, and her body has gone to find it."

"The Serpent of the Delawares is a dog; he is afraid to stand on the hard earth like a brave Indian!"

"Well, Huron, that's pretty impudent, considering it's not an hour since the Serpent stood within a hundred feet of you, and would have tried the toughness of your skin with a rifle-bullet when I pointed you out to him, hadn't I laid the weight of a little judgment on his hand."

"Hist laughs at him! she sees he is a poor hunter, and has never been on a war-path. She will take a man for a husband, and not a fool."

"How do you know that, Catamount?" returned Deerslayer, laughing. "As for war-paths, neither the Serpent nor I have much experience, we are ready to own; but what do you call this? Take my advice, Catamount, and s'arch for a wife

among the Huron young women; you'll never get one with a willing mind from among the Delawares."

Catamount's hand felt for his tomahawk; but at this critical moment Rivenoak approached, and, by a gesture of authority, induced the young man to retire, assuming his former position himself on the log, at the side of Deerslayer.

"Hawkeye is right," the Iroquois at length began; "his sight is so strong that he can see truth in a dark night, and our eyes have been blinded. He is an owl—darkness hiding nothing from him. He ought not to strike his friends. He is right."

"I'm glad you think so, Mingo," returned the other, "for a traitor, in my judgment, is worse than a coward. According to my ideas, any sarcumventions, except open war sarcumventions, are ag'in both law and 'gospel' too."

"My pale-face brother is right; he is no Indian to forget his Manitou and his colour. The Hurons know that they have a great warrior for their prisoner, and they will treat him as one. If he is to be tortured, his torments shall be such as no common man can bear; and if he is to be treated as a friend, it will be the friendship of chiefs."

As the Huron uttered this extraordinary assurance of consideration, his eye furtively glanced at the countenance of his listener, in order to discover how he stood the compliment. Deerslayer felt his blood chill at the announcement, even while he maintained an aspect so steeled that his quick-sighted enemy could discover in it no signs of weakness.

"God has put me in your hands, Huron," he answered, "and I suppose you will act your will on me. I shall not boast of what I can do under torment, for I've never been tried, and no man can say till he has been; but I'll do my endivours not to disgrace the people among whom I got my training."

"We shall see. But why should Hawkeye be tormented when the Hurons love him? He is not born their enemy, and the death of one warrior will not cast a cloud between them for ever."

"So much the better, Huron, so much the better that you bear no malice for the loss of a warrior who fell in war; and yet it is ontrue that there is no inimity—"

Deerslayer ceased, for a sort of spectre stood before him that put a sudden stop to his words, and indeed caused him for a moment to doubt the fidelity of his boasted vision.

Hetty Hutter was standing at the side of the fire, as quietly as if she belonged to the tribe.

As soon as Rivenoak perceived the girl, she was recognized, and calling to two or three of the younger warriors, the chief sent them out to reconnoitre, lest her appearance should be the forerunner of another attack. He then motioned to Hetty to draw near.

"I hope your visit is a sign that the Sarpent and Hist are in safety, Hetty," said Deerslayer, as soon as the girl had complied with the Huron's request. "I don't think you'd come ashore ag'in on the a'r'nd that brought you here afore."

"Judith told me to come this time, Deerslayer," Hetty replied; "she paddled me ashore herself in a canoe as soon as the Sarpent had shown her Hist, and told his story. How handsome Hist is to-night, Deerslayer, and how much happier she looks than when she was with the Hurons!"

"That's natur', gal; yes, that may be set down as human natur'. She's with her betrothed, and no longer fears a Mingo husband. Did you say that your sister told you to come ashore? Why should Judith do that?"

"She bid me come to see you, and to try and persuade the savages to take more elephants to let you off; but I've brought the Bible with me—that will do more than all the elephants in father's chest!"

"And your father, Hetty, and Hurry—did they know of your a'r'nd?"

"Nothing. Both are asleep, and Judith and the Sarpent thought it best they should not be woke, lest they might want to come again after scalps, when Hist had told them how few warriors and how many women and children there were in the camp."

"Well, that's remarkable as consarns Judith! Why should she feel so much unsartainty about me? Ay, I see how it is now. Your sister is oneasy lest Harry March should wake and come blundering here into the hands of the inimy ag'in, under some idee that, being a travelling comrade, he ought help me in this matter!"

"Judith don't care for Hurry, though Hurry cares for her," replied Hetty innocently.

"I've heard you say as much as that afore; and yet it isn't true. One don't live in a tribe, not to see something of the way in which liking works in a woman's heart."

"Judith don't like Harry March, and that's the reason she finds fault with him."

"Well, well, my good little Hetty, have it your own way. If we should talk from now till winter, each would think as at present. But Rivenoak has left us, you see, and is talking yonder with his young men; and though too far to be *heard*, I can *see* what he is telling them. Their orders is to watch your movements, and to find where the canoe is to meet you to take you back to the ark, and then to seize all and what they can. I'm sorry Judith sent you, for I suppose she wants you to go back ag'in."

"All that's settled, Deerslayer," returned the girl, in a low, confidential manner; "and you may trust me to outwit the best Indian of them all. I've got *some* sense, and you'll see how I'll use it in getting back, when my errand is done!"

"Ahs me, poor girl! I'm afeard all that's easier said than done. They're a venomous set of riptyles, and their p'ison's none the milder for the loss of Hist."

"Now you put me in mind of a part of my errand that I had almost forgotten, Deerslayer. Judith told me to ask you what *she* had best do to serve you."

"That's as *you* think, Hetty; but when you get back to the ark, tell 'em to keep close, and to keep moving too, most especially at night. Many hours can't go by without the troops on the river hearing of this party, and then your fri'nds may look for relief. 'Tis but a day's march from the nearest garrison."

"What shall I tell Judith about you, Deerslayer? I know she will send me back again if I don't bring her the truth about *you*."

"Then tell her the *truth*. I'm a *captive* in Indian hands, and Providence only knows what will come of it! Hark'ee, Hetty," dropping his voice, "here I am in their hands, after having slain one of their stoutest warriors, and they've been endivouring to work upon me, through fear of consequences, to betray your father and all in the ark. But let your father and Hurry know 'tis all useless."

"But what shall I tell *Judith*? She will certainly send me back if I don't satisfy her mind."

"Well, tell Judith the same. No doubt the savages will try the torments to make me give in, and to revenge the loss of their warrior, but tell Judith to feel no consarn on my account—it will come hard, I know, seeing that a white man's gifts don't run to boasting and singing under torment, for he gene-

rally feels smallest when he suffers most—but you may tell her not to have any consarn. Nothing short of God's abandoning him can make an honest man ontrue to his colour and duty."

Hetty listened with great attention, and her countenance manifested a strong sympathy in the anticipated agony of the supposititious sufferer. But Rivenoak being about to join them, Deerslayer requested the girl to leave him, first enjoining her again to tell those in the ark to have full confidence in his fidelity. Hetty now walked away, and approached the group of females with as much self-possession as if she were one of the tribe. On the other hand the Huron resumed his seat by the side of his prisoner, the one continuing to ask questions with all the wily ingenuity of a practised Indian counsellor, and the other baffling him by confining his answers to the truth, and the truth only.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The young men who had been sent out to reconnoitre on the sudden appearance of Hetty soon returned to report their want of success in making any discovery. It was consequently believed that the girl had come alone, as on her former visit, and on some similar errand. The Iroquois were ignorant that the ark had left the castle, and there were movements projected by this time which also greatly added to the sense of security. A watch was set, therefore, and all but the sentinels disposed themselves to sleep.

Sufficient care was had to the safe keeping of the captive, without inflicting on him any unnecessary suffering; and as for Hetty, she was permitted to find a place among the Indian girls in the best manner she could. She was supplied with a skin, and made her own bed on a pile of boughs a little apart from the huts. Here she was soon in a profound sleep, like all around her.

There were now thirteen men in the party, and three kept watch at a time. One remained in shadow not far from the fire, however. His duty was to guard the captive, to take care that the fire neither blazed up so as to illuminate the spot, nor yet became wholly extinguished, and to keep an eye generally on the state of the camp. Another passed from one beach

to the other, crossing the base of the point; while the third kept moving slowly around the strand on its outer extremity, to prevent a repetition of the surprise that had already taken place that night. Perhaps they placed most of their confidence on the knowledge of what they believed to be passing higher up the lake, and which, it was thought, would fully occupy the whole of the pale-faces who were at liberty, with their solitary Indian ally.

At midnight Hetty awoke, and leaving her bed of skin and boughs, she walked innocently and openly to the embers of the fire, stirring the latter, as the coolness of the night and the woods had a little chilled her. As the flame shot up, it lighted the swarthy countenance of the Huron on watch, whose dark eyes glistened under its light. But Hetty felt no fear, and she approached the spot where the Indian stood. Her movements were so natural that he imagined she had merely arisen on account of the coolness of the night. Hetty spoke to him, but he understood no English. She then gazed near a minute at the sleeping captive, and moved slowly away in a sad and melancholy manner.

The girl took no pains to conceal her movements. Any ingenious expedient of this nature, quite likely, exceeded her powers; still her step was habitually light, and scarcely audible. As she took the direction of the extremity of the point, where Hist had embarked, the sentinel saw her light form gradually disappear in the gloom without uneasiness, or changing his own position.

Hetty found her way to the beach, which she reached on the same side of the point as that on which the camp had been made. By following the margin of the water, taking a northern direction, she soon encountered the Indian who paced the strand as sentinel. This was a young warrior, and when he heard her light tread coming along the gravel, he approached swiftly, though with anything but menace in his manner. The young Huron manifested disappointment when he found whom he had met; for, truth to say, he was expecting his favourite, who had promised to relieve the *ennui* of a midnight watch with her presence. This man was also ignorant of English, but he was at no loss to understand why the girl should be up at that hour. Such things were usual in an Indian village and camp, where sleep is as irregular as the meals. Then poor Hetty's known imbecility stood her friend on this occasion. Vexed at his disappointment, and impatient of the presence

of one he thought an intruder, the young warrior signed for the girl to move forward, holding the direction of the beach. Hetty complied; but, as she walked away she spoke aloud in English, in her usual soft tones, which the stillness of the night made audible at some little distance.

"If you took me for a Huron girl, warrior," she said, "I don't wonder you are so little pleased."

By the time Hetty had said this, she reached the place where the canoes had come ashore. Her voice was hushed by a "hist!" that came from the water, and then she caught a dim view of the canoe, which approached noiselessly, and soon grated on the shingle with its bow. The moment the weight of Hetty was felt in the light craft the canoe withdrew stern foremost, until it was a hundred yards from the shore. Then it turned, and making a wide sweep, it held its way towards the ark. For several minutes nothing was uttered; but believing herself to be in a favourable position to confer with her sister, Judith began a discourse which she had been burning to commence ever since they had quitted the point.

"Here we are safe, Hetty," she said, "and may talk without the fear of being overheard. I was so close to the point, some of the time while you were on it, that I have heard the voices of the warriors, and I heard your shoes on the gravel of the beach even before you spoke."

"I don't believe, Judith, the Hurons know I have left them."

"Quite likely they do not, for a lover makes a poor sentry. Tell me, did you see Deerslayer?"

"Oh, yes—there he was seated near the fire, with his legs tied."

"Well, what did he tell you, child?"

"What did he tell me? why, what do you think, Judith? He told me that he couldn't read!"

"Did you tell him I sent you ashore, Hetty, and how much concern I feel for his misfortune?" asked the other, impatiently.

"I believe I did, Judith. I *did* tell him you brought me ashore. And he told me a great deal that I was to say to you, which I remember well, for it made my blood run cold to hear him. He told me to say that his friends—"

"How you torment me, Hetty! Certainly, I am one of the truest friends he has."

"Torment you! Yes, now I remember all about it. He said

he might be *tormented* by the savages, but he would try to bear it as becomes a Christian white man."

"Did Deerslayer really tell you that he thought the savages would put him to the torture?" asked Judith.

"Yes, he did; and I felt very sorry for him, for Deerslayer took all so quietly and without noise!"

Judith bowed her face, and unseen by any eye but that of Omniscience, groaned and wept.

This paroxysm of feeling, however, lasted but a minute, when she said:

"We must bethink us of the means of getting him out of the hands of the Hurons, Hetty. We have father's chest in the ark, and might try the temptation of more elephants. I am afraid father and Hurry will not be as willing to ransom Deerslayer as Deerslayer was to ransom them!"

"Why not, Judith? Hurry and Deerslayer are friends, and friends should always help one another."

"Alas! poor Hetty, you little know mankind! Seeming friends are often more to be dreaded than open enemies. You'll have to land in the morning, and try again what can be done. Tortured he *shall* not be while Judith Hutter lives and can find means to prevent it."

Judith was expert in the management of a bark canoe, the lightness of which demanded skill rather than strength; and she forced her little vessel swiftly over the water the moment she had ended her conference with Hetty. But no ark was seen. Several times the sisters fancied they saw it, looming up in the obscurity, like a low black rock; but on each occasion it was found to be either an optical illusion or some swell of the foliage on shore. After a search that lasted half an hour, the girls were forced to the unwelcome conviction that the ark had departed.

"It cannot be, Hetty," said Judith, when a thorough search had satisfied them both that no ark was to be found; "it cannot be that the Indians have rafted, or swum off, and surprised our friends as they slept?"

"I don't believe that Hist and Chingachgook would sleep until they had told each other all they had to say after so long a separation."

"Perhaps not, child. There was much to keep them awake, but one Indian may have been surprised even when not asleep, especially as his thoughts may have been on other things. No; 'tis impossible the ark could be taken and I not hear the noise."

And yet it is not easy to believe a father would willingly abandon his children!"

"Perhaps father has thought us in our cabin asleep, Judith, and has moved away to go home."

"There is a little more southern air than there was, and they may have gone up the lake—"

Judith stopped, for as the last word was on her tongue the scene was suddenly lighted, though only for a single instant, by a flash; the crack of a rifle succeeded, and then followed the roll of the echo along the eastern mountains. Almost at the same moment a piercing female cry rent the air in a prolonged shriek. Resolute as she was both by nature and habit, Judith scarcely breathed, while poor Hetty hid her face and trembled.

"That was a woman's cry, Hetty," said the former, solemnly. "If the ark has moved from this spot, it can only have gone north with this air, and the gun and shriek came from the point. Can anything have befallen Hist?"

"Let us go and see, Judith; she may want our assistance."

It was not a moment for hesitation, and ere Judith had ceased speaking her paddle was in the water. The distance to the point was not great, and the impulses under which the girls worked were too exciting to allow them to waste the precious moments in useless precautions. Presently a glare of light caught the eye of Judith through an opening in the bushes, and steering by it she so directed the canoe as to keep it visible, while she got as near the land as was either prudent or necessary.

The scene that was now presented to the observation of the girls was within the woods, and in plain view from the boat. Here all the camp were collected, some six or eight carrying torches of fat-pine, which cast a strong light on all beneath the arches of the forest. With her back supported against a tree, and sustained on one side by the young sentinel whose remissness had suffered Hetty to escape, sat the female whose expected visit had produced his delinquency. It was evident that she was in the agonies of death, while the blood that trickled from her bare bosom betrayed the nature of the injury she had received. There could be no question that she had been shot. Judith understood it all at a glance. The streak of light had appeared on the water a short distance from the point, and the rifle had been either discharged from a canoe, or from the ark in passing. The effect was soon apparent, the

head of the victim dropping, and the body sinking in death. Then all the torches but one were extinguished, and the melancholy train that bore the body to the camp was just to be distinguished by the glimmering light that remained.

Judith sighed heavily, and shuddered as her paddle again dipped, and the canoe moved cautiously around the point. She had seen under the strong glare of all the torches the erect form of Deerslayer standing, with commiseration, and, as she thought, with shame, depicted on his countenance, near the dying female. He betrayed neither fear nor backwardness *himself*; but it was apparent by the glances cast at him by the warriors that fierce passions were struggling in *their* bosoms. All this seemed to be unheeded by the captive, but it remained impressed on the memory of Judith.

No canoe was met hovering near the point. No more could be done, therefore, than to seek a place of safety; and this was only to be found in the centre of the lake. Paddling in silence to that spot, the canoe was suffered to drift northerly, while the girls sought such repose as their situation and feelings would permit.

CHAPTER XIX.

The conjecture of Judith Hutter concerning the manner in which the Indian girl had met her death was accurate in the main. After sleeping several hours her father and March awoke. This occurred a few minutes after she had left the ark to go in quest of her sister, and when, of course, Chingachgook and his betrothed were on board. From the Delaware the old man learned the position of the camp and the recent events, as well as the absence of his daughters. The latter gave him no concern, for he relied greatly on the sagacity of the eldest, and the known impunity with which the younger passed among the savages. In this mood Hutter took a seat in the head of the scow, where he was quickly joined by Hurry; leaving the Serpent and Hist in quiet possession of the other extremity of the vessel.

"Deerslayer has shown himself a boy in going among the savages at this hour, and letting himself fall into their hands," growled the old man. "If he is left to pay for his stupidity with his own flesh, he can blame no one but himself."

"That's the way of the world, Tom," returned Hurry. "Every man must meet his own debts and answer for his own sins. But I say, Master Hutter, do you happen to know what has become of the gals—I see no signs of Judith or Hetty, though I've been through the ark, and looked into all its living creetur's?"

Hutter briefly explained what had been related by the Delaware.

"This comes of a smooth tongue, Tom," exclaimed Hurry, "and a silly gal's inclinations—and you had best look into the matter! You and I were both prisoners, and yet Judith never stirred an inch to do us any service! Let's up kedge, old fellow, and move nearer to this point, and see how matters are getting on."

Hutter had no objections to this movement, and the ark was got under weigh in the usual manner. The sail soon swept the scow so far up the lake as to render the dark outlines of the trees that clothed the point dimly visible. It was impossible to distinguish anything that stood within the shadows of the shore; but the forms of the sail and of the hut were discerned by the young sentinel on the beach. In the moment of surprise an exclamation escaped him. In that spirit of recklessness that formed the essence of Hurry's character, this man dropped his rifle and fired. The ball was sped by accident, and the girl fell.

Hurry's companions did not view his conduct with the same indulgence as that with which he appeared disposed to regard it himself. Hutter growled out his dissatisfaction, for the act led to no advantage, while it threatened to render the warfare more vindictive than ever. Still he commanded himself, the captivity of Deerslayer rendering the arm of the offender of double consequence to him at that moment. Chingachgook arose, and for a single instant the ancient animosity of tribes was forgotten in a feeling of colour; but he recollected himself in season to prevent any of the fierce consequences that, for a passing moment, he certainly meditated.

In the meanwhile the ark swept onward, and by the time the scene with the torches was enacting beneath the trees it had reached the open lake. An hour now passed in gloomy silence, no one appearing disposed to break it. Hist had retired to her pallet, and Chingachgook lay sleeping in the forward part of the scow. Hutter and Hurry alone remained awake, the former at the steering-oar, while the latter brooded

over his own conduct with the stubbornness of one little given to a confession of his errors, and the secret goadings of the worm that never dies.

It was the season of the shortest nights, and it was not long before the deep obscurity which precedes the day began to yield to the returning light. As soon as the light was sufficiently strong to allow of a distinct view of the lake, and more particularly of its shores, Hutter turned the head of the ark directly towards the castle, with the avowed intention of taking possession, for the day at least. By this time Chingachgook was up, and Hist was heard stirring among the furniture of the kitchen. The place for which they steered was distant only a mile, and the air was sufficiently favourable to permit it to be neared by means of the sail. At this moment, too, the canoe of Judith was seen floating northward in the broadest part of the lake, having actually passed the scow in the darkness. Hutter got his glass and took a long and anxious survey; and a slight exclamation like that of joy escaped him as he caught a glimpse of what he rightly conceived to be a part of Judith's dress above the top of the canoe. At the next instant the girl arose, and was seen gazing about her, like one assuring herself of her situation. A minute later Hetty was seen on her knees at the other end of the canoe, repeating the prayers that had been taught her in childhood. As Hutter laid down the glass, still drawn to its focus, the Serpent raised it to his eye and turned it towards the canoe. It was the first time he had ever used such an instrument, and Hist understood by his "Hugh!" the expression of his face, and his entire mien, that something wonderful had excited his admiration; and when her lover managed to bring the glass in a line with the canoe, and her eye was applied to the smaller end, the girl started back in alarm; then she clapped her hands with delight, and a laugh, the usual attendant of untutored admiration, followed. A few minutes sufficed to enable this quick-witted girl to manage the instrument for herself, and she directed it at every prominent object that struck her fancy. Finding a rest in one of the windows, she and the Delaware first surveyed the lake; then the shores, the hills, and finally, the castle attracted their attention. After a long, steady gaze at the latter, Hist took away her eye, and spoke to her lover in a low, earnest manner. Chingachgook immediately placed his eye to the glass, and his look even exceeded that of his betrothed in length and intensity.

Again they spoke together confidentially, appearing to compare opinions, after which the glass was laid aside, and the young warrior quitted the cabin to join Hutter and Hurry.

His manner was calm, but it was evident to the others, who were familiar with the habits of the Indians, that he had something to communicate. Hurry was generally prompt to speak, and he took the lead on this occasion.

"Out with it, red-skin," he cried. "Have you discovered a chip-munk in a tree, or is there a salmon-trout swimming under the bottom of the scow?"

"No good to go to castle," said Chingachgook, with emphasis. "Huron there."

"Huron there! Well, this may be so; but no signs can I see of anything near or about the old hut, but logs, water, and bark."

Hutter took a careful survey of the spot; and then expressed his dissent from the Indian's view.

"You've got the glass wrong end foremost, Delaware," continued Hurry; "neither the old man nor I can see any trail in the lake."

"Water make no trail," said Hist eagerly. "Stop boat—Huron there!"

"Ay, that's it! Stick to the same tale, and more people will believe you."

"No see moccasin!" said Hist impatiently; "why no *look*?"

"Give me the glass, Harry," interrupted Hutter, "and lower the sail. There is truly a moccasin floating against one of the piles: and it may or it may not be a sign that the castle hasn't escaped visitors in our absence."

Hurry had lowered the sail, and by this time the ark was within two hundred yards of the castle, setting in nearer and nearer each moment, but at a rate too slow to excite any uneasiness. Each now took the glass in turn, and the castle and everything near it were subjected to a scrutiny still more rigid than ever. There the moccasin lay, beyond a question, caught by a piece of the rough bark of one of the piles, and floating so lightly that it was scarcely wet. There were many modes, however, of accounting for the presence of the moccasin, without supposing it to have been dropped by an enemy.

Hutter was disposed to regard the omen as a little sinister, while Hurry treated it with his usual reckless disdain. The Indian was of opinion that the moccasin should be viewed as one would regard a trail in the woods, which might or might

not equally prove to be threatening. Hist, however, declared her readiness to take a canoe, and bring away the moccasin. Both the white men were disposed to accept this offer; but the Delaware interfered to prevent the risk. If such a service was to be undertaken, it best became a warrior to expose himself to its execution.

"Well, then, Delaware, go yourself, if you're so tender of your squaw," put in the unceremonious Hurry. "What say you, Sarpent, shall you or I canoe it?"

"Let red man go. Better eyes than pale-face—know Huron trick better, too."

"That I'll gainsay to the hour of my death! Still I suppose the poorest vagabond going, whether Delaware or Huron, can find his way to yonder hut and back ag'in; and so, Sarpent, use your paddle and welcome."

Chingachgook was already in the canoe. Wah-ta!-Wah saw the departure of her warrior on this occasion with the submissive silence of an Indian girl, but with most of the misgivings and apprehensions of her sex.

Chingachgook paddled steadily towards the palisades, keeping his eye on the different loops of the building. Each instant he expected to see the muzzle of a rifle protruded or hear its sharp crack; but he succeeded in reaching the piles in safety. Here he was in a measure protected, having the heads of the palisades between him and the hut; and the chances of any attempt on his life while thus covered were greatly diminished. The Delaware slowly made the circuit of the whole building, deliberately examining every object that should betray the presence of enemies. Not a single sign could be discovered, however, to confirm the suspicions that had been awakened.

The Delaware now approached the moccasin, and threw the ominous article into the canoe by a dexterous and almost imperceptible movement of his paddle. He was now ready to depart; but retreat was even more dangerous than the approach, as the eye could no longer be riveted on the loops. If there was really any one in the castle the motive of the Delaware in reconnoitring must be understood; and it was the wisest way, however perilous it might be, to retire with an air of confidence. Such, accordingly, was the course adopted by the Indian, who paddled deliberately away, taking the direction of the ark, suffering no nervous impulse to quicken the motions of his arms, or to induce him to turn even a furtive glance behind him.

"Well, Sarpent," cried Hurry, when the Indian entered the ark, "what news from the Musk-rats?"

"I no like him," sententiously returned the Delaware. "Too still."

"That's downright Indian—as if anything could make less noise than nothing! What has become of the moccasin?"

"Here," returned Chingachgook, holding up his prize.

The moccasin was examined, and Hist confidently pronounced it to be Huron. Hutter and the Delaware too were decidedly of the same opinion. Admitting all this, however, it did not necessarily follow that its owners were in the castle.

Under the circumstances, Hutter and Hurry were not men to be long deterred from proceeding by proofs as slight as that of the moccasin. They hoisted the sail again, and the ark was soon in motion, heading towards the castle. The Delaware joined Hist in the cabin the instant the scow rubbed against the side of the platform. From the indulgence of the gentler emotions, however, he was aroused by a rude summons from Hurry, who called on him to come forth and help to take in the sail and to secure the ark.

Chingachgook obeyed, and by the time he had reached the head of the scow, Hurry was on the platform, stamping his feet like one glad to touch what, by comparison, might be called *terra firma*, and proclaiming his indifference to the whole Huron tribe. Hutter had hauled a canoe up to the head of the scow, and was already about to undo the fastenings of the gate in order to enter within the dock. March had no other motive in landing than a senseless bravado, and having shaken the door in a manner to put its solidity to the proof, he joined Hutter in the canoe, and began to aid him in opening the gate. Hutter had placed a line in the Delaware's hand on entering the canoe, intimating that the other was to fasten the ark to the platform, and to lower the sail. Instead of following these directions, however, Chingachgook left the sail standing, and throwing the bight of the rope over the head of a pile, he permitted the ark to drift round until it lay against the defences, in a position where it could be entered only by means of a boat, or by passing along the summits of the palisades.

In consequence of this change in the position of the scow, which was effected before Hutter had succeeded in opening the gate of his dock, the Delaware felt comparatively secure, and

no longer suffered the keen apprehensions he had lately experienced in behalf of Hist.

A single shove sent the canoe from the gate to the trap beneath the castle. Here Hutter found all fast, neither padlock, nor chain, nor bar having been molested. The key was produced, the locks removed, the chain loosened, and the trap pushed upward. Hurry now thrust his head in at the opening, the arms followed, and the colossal legs rose without any apparent effort. At the next instant, his heavy foot was heard stamping in the passage above that which separated the chambers of the father and daughters, and into which the trap opened. He then gave a shout of triumph.

"Come on, Tom," the reckless woodsman called out from within the building, "here's your tenement safe and sound. Come, old fellow, hoist yourself up, and we'll open doors and windows and let in the fresh air to brighten up matters."

A moment of silence succeeded, and a noise like that produced by the fall of a heavy body followed. A deep execration from Hurry succeeded, and then the whole interior of the building seemed alive. The noises that now so suddenly, and we may add so unexpectedly, even to the Delaware, broke the stillness within, could not be mistaken. They resembled those that would be produced by a struggle between tigers in a cage. Once or twice the Indian yell was given, but it seemed smothered, and as if it proceeded from exhausted or compressed throats. It appeared as if bodies were constantly thrown upon the floor with violence, and as often rising to renew the struggle. Chingachgook felt greatly at a loss what to do. He had all the arms in the ark, Hutter and Hurry having proceeded without their rifles; but there was no means of using them, or of passing them to the hands of their owners. The combatants were literally caged, rendering it almost as impossible, under the circumstances, to get out as to get into the building. Then there was Hist, to embarrass his movements, and to cripple his efforts. The exigency of the moment did not admit of delay, and the Delaware, seeing no possibility of serving his friends, cut the line, and by a strong shove forced the scow some twenty feet clear of the piles. Here he took the sweeps, and succeeded in getting a short distance to windward. When he ceased rowing, the ark might have been a hundred yards from the platform, and half that distance to the southward of it, the sail being lowered.

All this while the furious struggle continued within the

house. In scenes like these, events thicken in less time than they can be related. From the moment when the first fall was heard within the building, to that when the Delaware ceased his awkward attempts to row, it might have been three or four minutes, but it had evidently served to weaken the combatants. At this instant the door flew open, and the fight was transferred to the platform.

A Huron had undone the fastenings of the door, and three or four of his tribe rushed after him on the narrow space. The body of another followed, pitched headlong through the door with terrific violence. Then March appeared, raging like a lion at bay, [and for an instant freed from his numerous enemies. Hutter was already a captive and bound. There was now a pause in the struggle; the necessity of breathing was coming to all, and the combatants stood watching each other.

Rivenoak and his companion had made the closest observations in their visits to the castle; even the boy had brought away minute and valuable information. By these means the Hurons had obtained a general idea of the manner in which the place was constructed and secured, as well as details that enabled them to act intelligently in the dark. Notwithstanding the care that Hutter had taken to drop the ark on the east side of the building, when he was in the act of transferring the furniture from the former to the latter, he had been watched in a way to render the precaution useless. As soon as it was dark, rafts like that already described approached from both shores to reconnoitre. As had been expected, the castle was found empty. The rafts were immediately sent for a reinforcement to the shore, and two of the savages remained to profit by their situation. These men succeeded in getting on the roof, and, by removing some of the bark, in entering what might be termed the garret. Hatchets now opened a hole through the square logs of the upper floor, through which no less than eight of the most athletic of the Indians dropped into the room beneath. Here they were left, well supplied with arms and provisions, either to stand a siege or to make a sortie, as the case might require. The returning day brought them a view of the approach of the ark. As soon as it was ascertained that the two white men were about to enter by the trap, the chief who directed the proceedings of the Hurons removed all the arms from his own people, even to the knives, and hid them where they could not be found with-

out a search. Had the death of the girl been known, it is probable nothing could have saved the lives of Hurry and Hutter; but that event occurred after the ambush was laid, and at a distance of several miles from the encampment near the castle.

CHAPTER XX.

Accustomed to the rude sports of wrestling and jumping then so common in America, Hurry possessed an advantage, in addition to his prodigious strength, that had rendered the struggle less unequal than it might otherwise appear to be. This alone had enabled him to hold out so long against so many enemies. As yet no one had been seriously hurt, though several of the savages had received severe falls; and he in particular who had been thrown bodily upon the platform might be said to be temporarily *hors de combat*. Some of the rest were limping, and March himself had not entirely escaped from bruises, though want of breath was the principal loss that both sides wished to repair.

Under circumstances like those in which the parties were placed, a truce could not well be of long continuance. The arena was too confined, and the distrust of treachery too great to admit of this. Contrary to what might be expected in this situation, Hurry was the first to recommence hostilities. Whether this proceeded from policy or an idea that he might gain some advantage by making a sudden and unexpected assault, or was the fruit of irritation and his undying hatred of an Indian, it is impossible to say. His onset was furious, however, and at first it carried all before it. He seized the nearest Huron by the waist, raised him from the platform, and hurled him into the water. In half a minute two more were at his side, one of whom received a grave injury by falling on the friend who had just preceded him. But four enemies remained, and in a hand-to-hand conflict, in which no arms were used but those which nature had furnished, Hurry believed himself fully able to cope with that number of red-skins.

"Hurrah! Tom," he shouted, "the rascals are taking to the lake, and I'll soon have 'em all swimming!"

As these words were uttered, a violent kick in the face sent

back the Indian who had caught at the edge of the platform, helplessly and hopelessly into the water. A blow sent into the pit of another's stomach doubled him up like a worm that had been trodden on, and but two able-bodied foes remained to be dealt with. One of these, however, was not only the largest and strongest of the Hurons, but he was also the most experienced of the warriors present, and that one whose sinews were the best strung in fights and by marches on the war-path. Still Hurry did not hesitate; he closed in with this formidable antagonist, endeavouring to force him into the water also. The struggle that succeeded was truly frightful. So fierce did it immediately become, and so quick and changeful were the evolutions of the athletes, that the remaining savage had no chance for interfering, had he possessed the desire; but wonder and apprehension held him spell-bound.

Hurry first attempted to throw his antagonist. With this view, he seized him by the throat and an arm, and tripped with the quickness and force of an American borderer. The effect was frustrated by the agile movements of the Huron, who had clothes to grasp by, and whose feet avoided the attempt with a nimbleness equal to that with which it was made. Hurry, furious at having his strength baffled by the agility and nakedness of his foe, made a desperate effort which sent the Huron from him, hurling his body violently against the logs of the hut. The concussion was so great as momentarily to confuse the latter's faculties. Still he rushed forward again to meet his enemy, conscious that his safety rested on his resolution. Hurry now seized the other by the waist, raised him bodily from the platform, and fell with his own great weight on the body beneath. This additional shock so far stunned the sufferer that his gigantic white opponent now had him completely at his mercy. Passing his hands round the throat of his victim, he compressed them with the strength of a vice, fairly doubling the head of the Huron over the edge of the platform, until the chin was uppermost, with the infernal strength he expended. The eyes of the sufferer seemed to start forward, his tongue protruded, and his nostrils dilated nearly to splitting. At this instant a rope of bark, having an eye, was passed dexterously within the two arms of Hurry; the end threaded the eye, forming a noose, and his elbows were drawn together behind his back, with a power that all his gigantic strength could not resist. Reluctantly, even under such circumstances, did the exasperated borderer see

his hands drawn from the deadly grasp, for all the evil passions were then in the ascendant. Almost at the same instant a similar fastening secured his ankles, and his body was rolled to the centre of the platform as helplessly and as cavalierly as if it were a log of wood.

Hurry owed his defeat and capture to the intensity with which he had concentrated all his powers on his fallen foe. While thus occupied the two Indians he had hurled into the water mounted to the heads of the piles, along which they passed, and joined their companion on the platform. The latter had so far rallied his faculties as to have got the ropes, which were in readiness for use as the others appeared. Thus were the tables turned in a single moment; he who had been so near achieving a victory that would have been renowned for ages lying helpless, bound, and a captive.

Chingachgook and his betrothed had witnessed the whole of this struggle from the ark. When the three Hurons were about to pass the cords around the arms of the prostrate Hurry, the Delaware sought his rifle; but before he could use it the white man was bound, and the mischief was done. He might still bring down an enemy, but a glance at Hist, and the recollection of what might follow, checked any transient wish for revenge. The Delaware was fully aware of the critical situation in which Hist and himself were now placed, should the Hurons take to the canoe that was still lying beneath the trap, and come against them. At one moment he thought of putting Hist into the canoe in his own possession, and taking to the eastern mountain, in the hope of reaching the Delaware villages by direct flight. But many considerations suggested themselves to put a stop to this indiscreet step. It was almost certain that scouts watched the lake on both sides, and no canoe could possibly approach the shore without being seen from the hills. Then a trail could not be concealed from Indian eyes, and the strength of Hist was unequal to a flight sufficiently sustained to outstrip the pursuit of trained warriors. Last, but far from being least, were the thoughts connected with the situation of Deerslayer, a friend who was not to be deserted in his extremity.

Hist in some particulars reasoned differently, though she arrived at the same conclusions. Her own danger disturbed her less than her concern for the two sisters, in whose behalf her womanly sympathies were now strongly enlisted. The

canoe of the girls, by the time the struggles on the platform had ceased, was within three hundred yards of the castle, and here Judith ceased paddling, on the evidences of strife becoming apparent.

The parties in the ark and in the canoe were indebted to the ferocity of Hurry's attack for their momentary security. In any ordinary case the girls would have been immediately captured: a measure easy of execution now the savages had a canoe. It required some little time for the Hurons to recover from the effects of this violent scene; and this so much the more because the principal man of the party had been so great a sufferer. Hist showed herself in the stern of the scow, and made many gestures and signs in vain, in order to induce the girls to make a circuit to avoid the castle, and to approach the ark from the eastward. But these signs were distrusted or misunderstood. Probably Judith was not yet sufficiently aware of the real state of things to put full confidence in either party. Instead of doing as desired, she rather kept more aloof, paddling slowly into the broadest part of the lake, where she could command the widest view, and had the fairest field for flight before her.

Chingachgook lost no time in hoisting the sail. The appearance of the opening dock seemed first to arouse the Hurons from their apathy; and by the time the head of the scow had fallen off before the wind, which it did unfortunately in the wrong direction, bringing it within a few yards of the platform, Hist found it necessary to warn her lover of the importance of covering his person against the rifles of his foes. Accordingly, Chingachgook abandoned the scow to its own movements, forced Hist into the cabin, the doors of which he immediately secured, and then he looked about him for the rifles.

The ark was at this time within sixty yards of the castle, a little to the southward of it, with its sail full, and the steering-oar abandoned. The sail being set, as sailors term it, flying, the air forced the yard forward, though both sheets were fast, the effect on a boat with a bottom that was perfectly flat, and drew only three or four inches of water, being to press the head slowly round to leeward, and to force the whole fabric bodily in the same direction. These changes were exceedingly slow, however, for the wind was not only light, but it was baffling, and twice or thrice the sail shook.

Had there been any keel to the ark, it would inevitably have run foul of the platform, bows on, when nothing could have

prevented the Hurons from carrying it. As it was, the scow wore slowly round, barely clearing that part of the building. The piles projecting several feet, *they* were not cleared, but the head of the slow-moving craft caught between two of them by one of its square corners, and hung. At this moment the Delaware was vigilantly watching through a loop for an opportunity to fire, while the Hurons kept within the building, similarly occupied. The exhausted warrior reclined against the hut, there having been no time to remove him, and Hurry lay, almost as helpless as a log, near the middle of the platform.

"Run out one of the poles, Serpent;" said Hurry, "and shove the head of the scow off, and you'll drift clear of us—and when you've done that good turn for *yourself*, just finish this gagging blackguard for *me*."

Hurry's appeal, however, had no other effect than to draw the attention of Hist to his situation. This quick-witted creature comprehended it at a glance. Putting her mouth near a loop, she said in a low but distinct voice—

"Why you don't roll here, and fall in scow? Chingachgook shoot Huron if he chase!"

"On my life, gal, that's a judgmatical thought, and it shall be tried, if the stern of your scow will only come a little nearer."

This was said at a happy moment, for tired of waiting, all the Indians made a rapid discharge of their rifles, injuring no one, though several bullets passed through the loops. Hist had heard part of Hurry's words, but most of what he said was lost in the sharp reports of the firearms. She undid the bar of the door that led to the stern of the scow, but did not dare to expose her person. All this time the head of the ark hung, but by a gradually decreasing hold, as the other end swung slowly round, nearer and nearer to the platform. Hurry, who now lay with his face towards the ark, watched every change, and at last he saw that the whole vessel was free, and was beginning to grate slowly along the sides of the piles. The attempt was desperate, but it suited the reckless daring of the man's character. Waiting to the last moment, in order that the stern of the scow might fairly rub against the platform, he began to writhe again, as if in intolerable suffering, and then he suddenly and rapidly rolled over and over, taking the direction of the stern of the scow. Unfortunately, Hurry's shoulders required more space to revolve in than his feet, and

by the time he reached the edge of the platform, his direction had so far changed as to carry him clear of the ark altogether; and the rapidity of his revolutions, and the emergency admitting of no delay, he fell into the water. At this instant Chingachgook, by an understanding with his betrothed, drew the fire of the Hurons again, not a man of whom saw the manner in which one whom they knew to be effectually tethered had disappeared. But Hist's feelings were strongly interested in the success of so bold a scheme, and she watched the movements of Hurry as the cat watches the mouse. The moment he was in motion she foresaw the consequences, and this the more readily as the scow was now beginning to move with some steadiness, and she bethought her of the means of saving him. With a sort of instinctive readiness, she opened the door at the very moment the rifles were ringing in her ears, and protected by the intervening cabin, she stepped into the stern of the scow in time to witness the fall of Hurry into the lake. Her foot was unconsciously placed on the end of one of the sheets of the sail, which was fastened aft, and catching up all the spare rope, she threw it in the direction of the helpless Hurry. The line fell on the head and body of the sinking man, and he not only succeeded in grasping separate parts of it with his hands, but he actually got a portion of it between his teeth. Hurry was an expert swimmer, and, tethered as he was, he resorted to the very expedient reflection would have suggested. He had fallen on his back, and instead of floundering and drowning himself by desperate efforts to walk on the water, he permitted his body to sink as low as possible, and was already submerged, with the exception of his face, when the line reached him. In this situation he might possibly have remained until rescued by the Hurons, using his hands as fishes use their fins, had he received no other succour; but the movement of the ark soon tightened the rope, and of course he was dragged gently ahead, holding even pace with the scow.

It has been said that the Hurons did not observe the sudden disappearance of Hurry. In his present situation, he was not only hid from view by the platform, but, as the ark drew slowly ahead, impelled by a sail that was now filled, he received the same friendly service from the piles. The Hurons, indeed, were too intent on endeavouring to slay their Delaware foe, by sending a bullet through some one of the loops or crevices of the cabin, to bethink them at all of one whom they fancied so

thoroughly tied. Their great concern was the manner in which the ark rubbed past the piles, although its motion was lessened at least by one-half by the friction; and they passed into the northern end of the castle in order to catch opportunities of firing through the loops of that part of the building. Chingachgook was similarly occupied, and remained as ignorant as his enemies of the situation of Hurry. As the ark grated along, the rifles sent their little clouds of smoke from one cover to the other, but the eyes and movements of the opposing parties were too quick to permit any injury to be done. At length the scow swung clear of the piles altogether, and immediately moved away, with a materially accelerated motion towards the north.

Chingachgook now first learned the critical condition of Hurry. To have exposed either of their persons in the stern of the scow would have been certain death; but, fortunately, the sheet to which the man clung led forward to the foot of the sail. The Delaware found means to unloosen it from the cleet aft; and Hist, who was already forward for that purpose, immediately began to pull upon the line. At this moment Hurry was towing fifty or sixty feet astern, with nothing but his face above water. As he was dragged out clear of the castle and the piles, he was first perceived by the Hurons, who raised a yell, and commenced to fire at him. At the same instant Hist began to pull upon the line forward—a circumstance that probably saved Hurry's life. The first bullet struck the water directly on the spot where his broad chest was visible through the pure element, and might have pierced his heart, had the angle at which it was fired been less acute. Instead of penetrating the lake, however, it glanced from its smooth surface, rose, and buried itself in the logs of the cabin. A second, and a third, and a fourth bullet followed, all meeting with the same resistance from the surface of the water. Discovering their mistake, the Hurons now changed their plan, and aimed at the uncovered face; but by this time Hist was pulling on the line, and the deadly missiles still fell upon the water. In another moment the body was dragged past the end of the scow, and became concealed. As for the Delaware and Hist, they worked perfectly covered by the cabin, and in less time than it requires to tell it, they had hauled the huge frame of Hurry to the place they occupied. Chingachgook stood in readiness with his keen knife, and bending over the side of the scow, he loosed the limbs of the borderer, where

upon the liberated man scrambled into, and fell, exhausted and helpless, in the bottom of the scow.

The moment the Hurons lost sight of the body of Hurry they gave a yell of disappointment, and three of the most active of their number ran to the trap and entered the canoe. By this time Hurry was in the scow, and the Delaware had his rifles in readiness. As the ark necessarily sailed before the wind, it had now got quite two hundred yards from the castle, and was sliding away each instant farther and farther. The canoe of the girls was quite a quarter of a mile distant from the ark, obviously keeping aloof, in ignorance of what had occurred, and in apprehension of the consequences of venturing too near.

When the three Hurons emerged from behind the palisades, and they found themselves on the open lake, their ardour sensibly cooled. In a bark canoe they were totally without cover, and Indian discretion was entirely opposed to such a sacrifice of life as would most probably follow any attempt to assault an enemy entrenched as effectually as the Delaware. Instead of following the ark, therefore, these three warriors inclined towards the eastern shore, keeping at a safe distance from the rifles of Chingachgook. But this manœuvre rendered the position of the girls exceedingly critical. It threatened to place them, if not between two fires, at least between two dangers, or what they conceived to be dangers; and Judith immediately commenced her retreat in a southern direction, at no very great distance from the shore. At first the Indians paid little or no attention to the other canoe; for, fully apprised of its contents, they deemed its capture of comparatively little moment; while the ark, with its imaginary treasures, the persons of the Delaware and of Hurry, and its means of movement on a large scale, was before them. But this ark had its dangers as well as its temptations; and after wasting near an hour in vacillating evolutions, the Hurons suddenly took their resolution, and gave eager chase to the girls.

At the moment when the Hurons so suddenly changed their mode of attack, their canoe was not in the best possible racing trim. There were but two paddles, and the third man was so much extra and useless cargo. Then the difference in weight between the sisters and the men, more especially in vessels so extremely light, almost neutralized any difference that might proceed from the greater strength of the Hurons, and rendered the trial of speed far from being as unequal as it might seem.

Judith did not commence her exertions until the near approach of the other canoe rendered the object of the movement certain, and then she excited Hetty to aid her with her utmost skill and strength.

"Why should we run, Judith?" asked the simple-minded girl; "the Hurons have never harmed *me*, nor do I think they ever will."

"That may be true as to you, Hetty; but it will prove very different with me. Kneel down and say your prayer, and then rise and do your utmost to help escape. Think of me, dear girl, too, as you pray."

The prayer was quickly said, however, and the canoe was soon in rapid motion. Neither party resorted to their greatest exertions from the outset, both knowing that the chase was likely to be arduous and long. A few minutes sufficed to show the Hurons that the girls were expert, and that it would require all their skill to overtake them.

The canoes now flew, Judith making up for what she wanted in strength by her great dexterity and self-command. For half a mile the Indians gained no material advantage, but the continuance of such great exertions for so many minutes sensibly affected all concerned. The Indians, to give one of their party time to breathe, shifted the paddles from hand to hand, and this, too, without sensibly relaxing their efforts. Judith saw this expedient practised, and immediately began to distrust the result, since her powers of endurance were not likely to hold out against those of men who had the means of relieving each other.

Before she had gained the centre of the lake, Judith perceived that the Hurons were sensibly drawing nearer and nearer. She was not a girl to despair; but there was an instant when she thought of yielding, with the wish of being carried to the camp where she knew the Deerslayer to be a captive; but the considerations connected with the means she hoped to be able to employ in order to procure his release immediately interposed in order to stimulate her to renewed exertions. She accordingly put fresh energy into her strokes, and in a few minutes the Hurons began to be convinced that all their powers must be exerted, or they would suffer the disgrace of being baffled by women. Making a furious effort, one of the stronger of their party broke his paddle, at the very moment when he had taken it from the hand of a comrade to relieve him. This at once decided the matter.

"There, Judith!" exclaimed Hetty, "I hope now you will own that praying is useful! The Hurons have broken a paddle, and they never *can* overtake us."

"I never denied it, Hetty; and sometimes wish that I had prayed more myself, and thought less of my beauty! As you say, we are now safe, and need only go a little south and take breath."

This was done; the enemy giving up the pursuit, as suddenly as a ship that has lost an important spar, the instant the accident occurred. Instead of following Judith's canoe the Hurons turned their bows towards the castle, where they soon arrived and landed, but at the end of an hour their canoe, filled with men, was seen quitting the castle, and steering towards the shore. The girls were without food, and they now drew nearer to the buildings and the ark, having finally made up their minds, from its manœuvres, that the latter contained friends.

The ark was now quite a mile to the northward, but sweeping up towards the buildings with a regularity of motion that satisfied Judith a white man was at the oars. When within a hundred yards of the castle, the girls began to circle it, in order to make sure that it was empty. No canoe was nigh, and this emboldened them to draw nearer and nearer, until they had gone entirely round the piles, and reached the platform.

"Do you go into the house, Hetty," said Judith, "and see that the savages are gone. They will not harm you, and if any of them are still here you can give me the alarm."

Hetty did as desired—Judith retiring a few yards from the platform the instant her sister landed, in readiness for flight. But the last was unnecessary, not a minute elapsing before Hetty returned to communicate that all was safe.

"I've been in all the rooms, Judith," said the latter, "and they are empty, except father's; he is in his own chamber, sleeping: though not as quietly as we could wish. He seems to be overtaken with liquor."

"This is strange!—Would the savages have drunk with him, and then leave him behind? But we will not go near him till he wakes."

A groan from the inner room, however, changed this resolution, and the girls ventured into Hutter's room. He was seated, reclining in a corner of the narrow room, and Judith perceived from the quivering and raw flesh, the bared veins

and muscles, and all the other disgusting signs of mortality, as they are revealed by tearing away the skin from the head, that her father had been scalped.

CHAPTER XXI.

The reader must imagine the horror that daughters would experience at unexpectedly beholding the shocking spectacle that was placed before the eyes of Judith and Esther. The mutilated head was bound up, and the unseemly blood wiped from the face of the sufferer, and there was time to inquire into the more serious circumstances of the case. In the struggle with the Hurons, Hutter had been stabbed by the knife of the old warrior, who had used the discretion to remove the arms of every one but himself. Being hard pushed by his sturdy foe, his knife had settled the matter. When the three Hurons returned from the chase, and it was determined to abandon the castle and join the party on the land, Hutter was simply scalped to secure the usual trophy, and was left to die by inches. Had the injury been confined to his head, he might have recovered, however: for it was the blow of the knife that proved mortal.

"Oh! Judith," exclaimed Hetty, as soon as their first care had been bestowed on the sufferer. "Father went for scalps himself, and now where is his own?"

"Hush, sister—he opens his eyes; he may hear and understand you. 'Tis as you say and think; but 'tis too dreadful to speak of!"

"Water!" ejaculated Hutter, his voice frightfully deep and strong, for one so near death—"water—foolish girls—will you let me die of thirst?"

Water was brought and administered to the sufferer.

"Father," said Judith, inexpressedly pained by his deplorable situation—"can we do anything for you?"

"Father!" repeated the old man. "No,—I'm no father. *She* was your mother, but I'm no father. Look in the chest—'tis all there—more water."

The girls complied; and Judith, whose early recollections extended farther back than her sister's, and who, on every account, had more distinct impressions of the past, felt an

uncontrollable impulse of joy as she heard these words. With Hetty the feeling was different. Incapable of making all the distinctions of her sister, her very nature was full of affection, and she *had* loved her reputed parent, though far less tenderly than the real parent; and it grieved her now to hear him declare he was not naturally entitled to that love.

"Father," she said, "shall I read the Bible to you?—You don't know how much good the Bible can do, for you've never tried it; now, I'll read a chapter, and it will soften your heart, as it softened the hearts of the Hurons."

She turned to the Book of Job and read the chapter beginning, "Is there not an appointed time for man on earth?" When she had finished reading she said,—“Don't you feel better now, father? Mother was always better when she had read the Bible.”

"Water," returned Hutter; "give me water, Judith. I wonder if my tongue will always be so hot! Hetty, isn't there something in the Bible about cooling the tongue of a man who was burning in hell-fire?"

Judith turned away shocked; but Hetty eagerly sought the passage, which she read aloud to the conscience-stricken victim of his own avaricious longings.

"That's it, Hetty; yes, that's it. My tongue wants cooling *now*; what will it be *hereafter*?"

This appeal silenced even Hetty, for she had no answer ready for a confession so fraught with despair. Even Judith prayed. As for Hetty, as soon as she found that her efforts to make her father listen to her texts were no longer rewarded with success, she knelt at his side, and devoutly repeated the words which the Saviour left behind Him as a model for human petitions. This she continued to do at intervals, as long as it seemed to her that the act could benefit the dying man. Hutter, however, lingered longer than the girls had believed possible when they first found him.

During the whole of this painful time, neither of the sisters bethought her sufficiently of the Hurons to dread their return; and when the sound of oars was at length heard, even Judith, who alone had any reason to apprehend the enemy, did not start, but at once understood that the ark was near. She went upon the platform fearlessly; for should it turn out that Hurry was not there, and that the Hurons were masters of the scow also, escape was impossible. But there was no cause for any new alarm, Chingachgook, Hist, and Hurry all stand-

ing in the open part of the scow, cautiously examining the building, to make certain of the absence of the enemy. A word sufficed to explain that there was nothing to be apprehended, and the ark was soon moored in her old berth.

Judith said not a word concerning the condition of her father, but Hurry knew her too well not to understand that something was more than usually wrong. He led the way, though with less of his confident bold manner than usual, into the house, and, penetrating to the inner room, found Hutter lying on his back, with Hetty sitting at his side, fanning him with pious care.

Hurry was not only shocked when he found his late associate in this desperate situation, but he was greatly surprised.

"How now! Tom," he said, "have the vagabonds got you at an advantage, where you're not only down, but are likely to be kept down?"

Hutter opened his glassy eyes, and stared wildly at the speaker.

"Who are you?" he asked in a husky whisper. "Who are you?—You look like the mate of the *Snow*—he was a giant too, and near overcoming us."

"I'm your mate, Tom, and your comrade, but have nothing to do with any snow. It's summer now, and Harry March always quits the hills as soon after the frosts set in as is convenient."

"I know you—Hurry Skurry—I'll sell you a scalp!—a sound one, and of a full-grown man;—what'll you give?"

"Poor Tom! That scalp business hasn't turned out at all profitable, and I've pretty much concluded to give it up, and to follow a less dangerous calling."

"Have you got any scalp? Mine's gone—How does it feel to have a scalp?—I know how it feels to lose one—fire and flames about the brain—and a wrenching at the heart—no, no—kill *first*, Hurry, and scalp *afterwards*."

"What does the old fellow mean, Judith? He talks like one that is getting tired of the business as well as myself. Why have you bound up his head?"

"They have done that for *him* which you and he, Harry March, would have so gladly done for *them*."

Judith spoke with a strong effort to appear composed, but it was neither in her nature nor in the feeling of the moment to speak altogether without bitterness.

"These are high words to come from Thomas Hutter's darter, as Thomas Hutter lies dying before her eyes," retorted Hurry.

"God be praised for that!—whatever reproach it may bring on my poor mother, I am *not* Thomas Hutter's daughter."

"Not Thomas Hutter's darter!—Don't disown the old fellow in his last moments, Judith, for *that's* a sin the Lord will never overlook. If you're not Thomas Hutter's darter, whose darter be you?"

This question rebuked the rebellious spirit of Judith.

"I cannot tell you, Hurry, who my father was," she answered more mildly; "I hope he was an honest man, at least."

"Which is more than you think was the case with old Hutter?"

Judith made no reply; for just then Hutter opened his eyes, and tried to feel about him with a hand—a sign that sight was failing. A minute later his breathing grew ghastly; a pause totally without respiration followed; and then succeeded the last, long-drawn sigh, in which the spirit is supposed to quit the body. This sudden termination of the life of one who had hitherto filled so important a place in the narrow scene on which he had been an actor, put an end to all discussion.

The day passed by without further interruption, the Hurons, though possessed of a canoe, appearing so far satisfied with their success as to have relinquished all immediate designs on the castle. In the meanwhile, preparations were made for the interment of Hutter. To bury him on the land was impracticable, and it was Hetty's wish that the body should lie by the side of that of her mother, in the lake.

The hour chosen for the ceremony was just as the sun was setting, and a moment and a scene more suited to paying the last office to one of calm and pure spirit could not have been chosen. When Judith was told that all was ready, she went upon the platform, passive to the request of her sister. The body was in the scow enveloped in a sheet, and quite a hundredweight of stones, that had been taken from the fireplace, were enclosed with it, in order that it might sink. No other preparation seemed to be thought necessary, though Hetty carried her Bible beneath her arm.

When all were on board, the ark was set in motion. Hurry was at the oars. In his powerful hands, indeed, they seemed little more than a pair of sculls, which were wielded without

effort, and, as he was expert in their use, the Delaware remained a passive spectator of the proceedings.

Hetty acted as pilot, directing Hurry how to proceed to find that spot in the lake which she was in the habit of terming "mother's grave". She had marks on the land by which she usually found the spot, although the position of the buildings, the general direction of the shoal, and the beautiful transparency of the water all aided her, the latter even allowing the bottom to be seen. By these means the girl was enabled to note their progress, and at the proper time she approached March, whispering—

"Now, Hurry, you can stop rowing. We have passed the stone on the bottom, and mother's grave is near."

March ceased his efforts, immediately dropping the kedge and taking the warp in his hand, in order to check the scow. The ark turned slowly round under this restraint, and when it was quite stationary Hetty was seen at its stern, pointing into the water, the tears streaming from her eyes in ungovernable natural feeling.

March cast his eyes below, and through the transparent medium of the clear water, which was almost as pure as air, he saw what Hetty was accustomed to call "mother's grave". It was a low straggling mound of earth, fashioned by no spade, out of the corner of which gleamed a bit of the white cloth that formed the shroud of the dead. After the body had been lowered to the bottom, Hutter had brought earth from the shore and let it fall upon it, until all was concealed. Even the most rude and brawling are chastened by the ceremonies of a funeral. March felt no desire to indulge his voice in any of its coarse outbreakings, and was disposed to complete the office he had undertaken in decent sobriety. Perhaps he reflected on the retribution that had alighted on his late comrade, and bethought him of the frightful jeopardy in which his own life had so lately been placed. He signified to Judith that all was ready, received her directions to proceed, and with no other assistant than his own vast strength, raised the body and bore it to the end of the scow. Two parts of a rope were passed beneath the legs and shoulders, as they are placed beneath coffins, and then the corpse was slowly lowered beneath the surface of the lake.

"There's an end of Floating Tom!" exclaimed Hurry, bending over the scow, and gazing through the water at the body. "Don't weep, Judith; don't be overcome, Hetty, for the right—"

ousest of us all must die. Your father will be a loss to you, no doubt; but there's a way to cure that evil, and you're both too young and handsome to live long without finding it out. When it's agreeable to hear what an honest and onpretending man has to say, Judith, I should like to talk a little with you apart."

Judith was weeping at the recollection of her mother's early tenderness, and painful images of long-forgotten lessons and neglected precepts were crowding her mind. The words of Hurry, however, recalled her to the present time, and abrupt and unreasonable as was their import, they did not produce those signs of distaste that one might have expected from the girl's character. On the contrary, she appeared to be struck with some sudden idea, gazed intently for a moment at the young man, dried her eyes, and led the way to the other end of the scow, signifying her wish for him to follow. The decision and earnestness with which all this was done a little intimidated her companion, and Judith found it necessary to open the subject herself.

"You wish to speak to me of marriage, Harry March," she said, "and I have come here, over the grave of my poor, dear mother, to hear what you have to say."

"This is uncommon, and you have a skearful way with you this evening, Judith," answered Hurry; "but you well know, gal, that I've long thought you the comeliest young woman my eyes ever beheld, and that I've made no secret of that fact."

"Yes, I've heard this before," answered Judith, with feverish impatience.

"When a young man holds such language of any particular young woman, it's reasonable to calculate he sets store by her."

"True, Hurry—all this you've told me again and again."

"Well, if it's agreeable, I should think a woman couldn't hear it too often."

"No doubt; but this is an uncommon moment, Hurry, and vain words should not be too freely used. I would rather hear you speak plainly."

"You shall have your own way, Judith. You must have obsarved that I've never asked you in up and down tarms to marry me."

"I have," returned the girl, a smile struggling about her beautiful mouth; "I have, and have thought it remarkable for a man of Harry March's decision and fearlessness."

"There's been a reason, gal; but as matters stand, it's time to think of a change and a husband, and if you'll accept of me, all that's past shall be forgotten, and there's an end on't."

Judith hardly allowed the young man to conclude, so eager was she to bring him to the point, and so ready to answer.

"There, Hurry—that's enough," she said; "I understand you: you prefer me to other girls, and you wish me to become your wife."

"You put it in better words than I can do, Judith."

"They're plain enough, Hurry, and 'tis fitting they should be so. Now listen to my answer, which shall be as sincere as your offer. There is a reason why I should not, *can* not, ever be your wife, that you seem to overlook, and which it is my duty now to tell you as plainly as you have asked me to consent to become so. I do not, and I am certain I never shall, love you well enough to marry you; and when I tell you this frankly I suppose you yourself will thank me for my sincerity."

"Take time, Judith, and think better of this."

"I want no time; my mind has long been made up, and I have only waited for you to speak plainly to answer plainly."

The impetuous earnestness of the girl awed the young man, for never before had he seen her so serious and determined. In most of their previous interviews she had met his advances with evasion or sarcasm; but these Hurry had mistaken for female coquetry, and had supposed might easily be converted into consent. Now that the refusal came, and that in terms so decided as to put all cavilling out of the question, he was so much mortified and surprised as to feel no wish to attempt to change her resolution.

"The Glimmerglass has now no great use for me," he exclaimed, after a minute's silence.

"Then leave it. You see it is surrounded by dangers, and there is no reason why you should risk your life for others. Go to-night; we'll never accuse you of having done anything forgetful or unmanly."

"If I do go, 'twill be with a heavy heart, Judith."

"I will land you in one of the canoes as soon as it is dark, and you can strike a trail for the nearest garrison. When you reach the fort, if you send a party—"

Judith smothered the words.

"I understand *what* you would say, and *why* you don't say it," replied Hurry. "If I get safe to the fort, a party shall start on the trail of these vagabonds, and I'll come with it

myself; for I should like to see you and Hetty in a place of safety before we part for ever."

"Ah, Harry March, had you always spoken thus, felt thus, my feelings towards you might have been different."

"Is it too late now, Judith?"

"It is too late, March. I can never feel towards you, or any other man but *one*, as you would wish to have me. As soon as it is dark, I or the Delaware will put you on the shore; you will make the best of your way to the nearest garrison, and send all you can to our assistance. And, Hurry, we are now friends, and I may trust you, may I not?"

"Sartain, Judith."

Judith hesitated for a moment; then, as if determined to accomplish her purposes at every hazard, she spoke more plainly.

"You will find a captain of the name of Warley at the nearest post," she said, pale as death; "I think it likely he will wish to head the party; I would greatly prefer it should be another. If Captain Warley *can* be kept back, 'twould make me very happy!"

"That's easier said than done, Judith; for these officers do pretty much as they please. The major will order, and captains, lieutenants, and ensigns must obey. I know the officer you mean; a red-faced, gay sort of a gentleman, who swallows Madeira enough to drown the Mohawk, and yet a pleasant talker. I don't wonder he is your dislike, Judith, for he's a very general lover, if he isn't a general officer."

Judith did not answer, though her frame shook, and her colour changed from pale to crimson, and from crimson back again to the hue of death. Then she arose, and signified to Hurry that she had no more to communicate.

CHAPTER XXII.

Judith joined her sister with an air of dignity and solemnity it was not her practice to show; and though the gleamings of anguish were still visible on her beautiful face, when she spoke it was firmly and without tremor.

"Sister," said Judith, kindly, "I have much to say to you;

we will get into this canoe, and paddle off to a distance from the ark—the secrets of two orphans ought not to be heard by every ear.”

“Let Hurry lift the grapnel and move away with the ark, and leave us here, near the graves of father and mother, to say what we may have to say.”

This was soon and simply done, the ark moving with measured strokes of the sweeps a hundred yards from the spot.

“The death of Thomas Hutter,” Judith commenced, after a short pause had prepared her sister to receive her communications, “has altered all our prospects, Hetty. If he was *not* our father, we are *sisters*, and must feel alike and live together.”

“If we are not Thomas Hutter’s children, Judith, no one will dispute our right to his property. We have the castle, and the ark, and the canoes, the same as when he was living; and what can prevent us from staying here, and passing our lives just as we have ever done?”

“No, no, sister. This can no longer be. Two girls would not be safe here, even should these Hurons fail in getting us into their power. We must quit this spot, Hetty, and remove into the settlements.”

“I am sorry you think so, Judith,” returned Hetty, dropping her head on her bosom. “I would rather stay here, where, if I wasn’t born, I’ve passed my life. I don’t like the settlements—they are full of wickedness and heart-burnings, while God dwells unoffended in these hills! You are handsome, and one day you will marry, and then you will have a husband and I a brother to take care of us, if women can’t really take care of themselves in such a place as this.”

“Ah! if this *could* be so, Hetty, then indeed I could *now* be a thousand times happier in these woods than in the settlements! *Once* I did not feel thus, but *now* I do. Yet where is the man to turn this beautiful place into such a garden of Eden for us?”

“Harry March loves you, sister,” returned Hetty. “He would be glad to be your husband, I’m sure; and a stouter and a braver youth is not to be met with the whole country round.”

“Harry March and I understand each other, and no more need be said about *him*. There is one—but no matter. It is all in the hands of Providence, and we must shortly come to some conclusion about our future manner of living. Remain

here alone we cannot, and perhaps no occasion will ever offer for remaining in the manner you think of. The old chest is now our property, and we have a right to look into it, and learn all we can by what it holds. Mother was so very different from Thomas Hutter that now I know we are not his children I burn with a desire to know whose children we can be. There are papers in that chest I am certain, and those papers may tell us all about our parents and natural friends."

"Well, Judith, you know best. Now father and mother are dead, I don't much care for any relations but you. If you don't like to marry Hurry, I don't see who you can choose for a husband, and then I fear we shall have to quit the lake after all."

"What do you think of Deerslayer, Hetty?" asked Judith, bending forward and endeavouring to conceal her embarrassment. "Would he not make a brother-in-law to your liking?"

"Deerslayer!" repeated the other, looking up in unfeigned surprise; "why, Judith, Deerslayer isn't in the least comely, and is altogether unfit for one like you!"

"He is not ill-looking, Hetty; and beauty in a man is not of much matter."

"Do you think so, Judith. I know that beauty is of no great matter in man or woman in the eyes of God; but it is very pleasant to the eye in both. I think if I were a man I should pine more for good looks than I do as a girl. A handsome man is a more pleasing sight than a handsome woman."

"Poor child! you scarce know what you say or what you mean! Beauty in our sex *is* something, but in man it passes for little. A man ought to be tall, but others are tall as well as Hurry; and I am certain I can name a youth who is braver!"

"This is strange, Judith. I didn't think the earth held a handsomer, or a braver man than Hurry Harry!"

"Well, well, Hetty—say no more of this. I dislike to hear *you* talking in this manner. Let Harry March go. He quits us to-night, and no regret of mine will follow him, unless it be that he has stayed so long and to so little purpose."

"Ah, Judith, this is what I've long feared; and I did so hope he might be my brother-in-law."

"Never mind it now; let us talk of other things."

"We will never quit this spot if you say so, Judith, and will let Hurry go where he pleases."

"I am willing enough to consent to the last, but I cannot answer for the first, Hetty. We must live in future as becomes respectable young women, and cannot remain here to be the talk and jest of all the rude trappers and hunters that may come upon the lake. Come, the sun has set; let us paddle up to the scow and consult with our friends. This night I shall look into the chest, and to-morrow shall determine what we are to do. As for the Hurons, now we can use our stores without fear of Thomas Hutter, they will be easily bought off. Let me get Deerslayer once out of their hands, and a single hour shall bring things to an understanding."

Judith spoke with decision and authority, a habit she had long practiced towards her feeble-minded sister.

"You forget, Judith, what has brought us here," Hetty said. "This is mother's grave, and we have just laid the body of father by her side. We have done wrong to talk so much of ourselves at such a spot, and ought now to pray God to forgive us, and ask *Him* to teach us where we are to go, and what we are to do."

Judith involuntarily laid aside her paddle, while Hetty dropped on her knees and was soon lost in her devout but simple petitions. Her sister did not pray; but assumed in her attitude some of that devotion in which her stubborn spirit refused to unite.

When Hetty rose from her knees, her countenance had a glow and serenity that rendered a face that was always agreeable positively handsome.

"Now you may go, if you want to, Judith," she said: "God has been kind to me and lifted a burden off my heart."

As the canoe moved slowly away from the place under the gentle impulsion of Judith's paddle, she said,—

"Is not that a canoe just passing behind the castle?—here, more in the direction of the point, I mean; it is hid now, but certainly I saw a canoe stealing behind the logs."

"I've seen it sometime," Hetty quietly answered; "but I did not think it right to talk about such things over mother's grave. The canoe came from the camp, Judith, and was paddled by a single man. He seemed to be Deerslayer."

"Deerslayer!" returned the other. "That can't be! Deerslayer is a prisoner. Why did you fancy it Deerslayer, child?"

"You can look for yourself, sister; there comes the canoe in sight again, on this side of the hut."

Sure enough, the light boat had passed the building, and was now steadily advancing towards the ark, the persons on board of which were already collecting in the head of the scow to receive their visitor. A single glance sufficed to assure Judith that her sister was right, and that Deerslayer was alone in the canoe. His approach was so calm and leisurely, however, as to fill her with wonder. By this time the day was fairly departing, and objects were already seen dimly under the shores. As the two canoes approached each other—for Judith and her sister had plied their paddles, so as to intercept the unexpected visitor ere he reached the ark—even Deerslayer's sun-burnt countenance wore a brighter aspect than common, under the pleasing tints that seemed to dance in the atmosphere.

"Welcome, Deerslayer!" exclaimed the girl, as the canoes floated at each other's sides; "we have had a melancholy day, but your return is at least one misfortune the less. Have the Hurons become more humane and let you go, or have you escaped by your own courage and skill?"

"Neither, Judith—neither one nor t'other. The Mingos are Mingos still, and will live and die Mingos. As for outwitting them, that might have been done, and it *was* done, too, atween the Sarpent yonder and me when we were on the trail of Hist"—here the hunter stopped to laugh in his own silent fashion—"but it's no easy matter to sarcumvent the sarcumvented."

"But if you have not escaped from the savages, how came you here?"

"You may well call them Mingos savages, for savage enough will they act if you once give them an opportunity. They feel their loss here in the late skrimmage to their hearts' cores, and are ready to revenge it on any creetur' of English blood that may fall in their way."

"They have killed father: that ought to satisfy their wicked cravings for blood," observed Hetty, reproachfully.

"I know it, gal—I know the whole story—partly from what I've seen from the shore, and partly from their threats ag'in myself, and their other discourse. If you've lost a fri'nd Providence will raise up new ones in his stead; and since our acquaintance has begun in this oncommon manner, I shall take it as a hint that it will be a part of my duty in futur', should

the occasion offer, to see you don't suffer from want of food in the wigwam."

"We understand you, Deerslayer," returned Judith, hastily, "and take all that falls from your lips as it is meant, in kindness and friendship. Would to heaven all men had tongues as true, and hearts as honest!"

"In that respect men *do* differ, of a sartainty, Judith."

"You are an unaccountable being, Deerslayer," returned the girl, not a little puzzled with the childish simplicity of character that the hunter so often betrayed. "I often do not know how to understand you. But never mind just now: you have forgotten to tell us by what means you are here."

"I!—oh! That's not very onaccountable. I'm out on furlough."

"Furlough! I do not know what the word signifies when used by a prisoner."

"A furlough is when a man has leave to quit a camp, or a garrison, for a sartain specified time, at the end of which he is to come back and shoulder his musket, or submit to his torments—just as he may happen to be a soldier or a captive. Being the last, I must take the chances of a prisoner."

"Have the Hurons suffered you to quit them in this manner, without watch or guard?"

"Sartain—I couldn't have come in any other manner, unless, indeed, it had been by a bold sarcumvention."

"What pledge have they that you will ever return?"

"My word," answered the hunter, simply. "Yes, I own I gave 'em *that*, and big fools would they have been to let me come without it! Why, in that case, I shouldn't have been obliged to go back and undergo any torments their fury may invent, but might have shouldered my rifle and made the best of my way to the Delaware villages."

"Is it possible you mean to do this act of self-destruction?"

"Anan!"

"I ask if it can be possible that you will put yourself again in the power of such ruthless enemies, by keeping your word?"

Deerslayer looked at his fair questioner for a moment as in doubt. Then the expression of his guileless face suddenly changed, lighting as by a quick illumination of thought, and he said:

"Don't be under any oneasiness, gal; I shall go back according to the furlough. How could I do otherwise?"

Judith made no answer for some little time. All her feelings

as a woman revolted at the cruel fate that she fancied Deerslayer was drawing down upon himself, while the sense of right which God has implanted in every human breast told her to admire an integrity as indomitable and unpretending as that which the other so unconsciously displayed.

"When is your furlough out, Deerslayer?" she asked, after both canoes were heading towards the ark.

"To-morrow noon: and you may depend on it, Judith, I sha'n't quit what I call Christian company to go and give myself up an instant sooner than is necessary. They begin to fear a visit from the garrisons, and wouldn't lengthen the time a moment; and it's pretty well understood atween us that, should I fail in my a'r'nd, the torments are to take place when the sun begins to fall, that they may strike upon their home trail as soon as it is dark."

"Are they bent on revenging their losses?" Judith asked, faintly.

"Downright, if I can judge of Indian inclinations by the symptoms."

"Oh, Deerslayer! they will think better of this, since they have given you until to-morrow noon to make up your mind!"

"I judge not, Judith; yes, I judge not. An Indian is an Indian, gal, and it's pretty much hopeless to think of swarving him when he's got the scent, and follows it with his nose in the air. But this is talking of nothing but myself, when you have had trouble enough, and may want to consult a fri'nd about your own matters. Is the old man laid in the water, where I should think his body would like to rest?"

"It is, Deerslayer," answered Judith, almost inaudibly. "That duty has just been performed. You are right in thinking that I wish to consult a friend; and that friend is yourself. Hurry Harry is about to leave us: when he is gone, I hope you will give me an hour alone. Hetty and I are at a loss what to do."

"That's quite nat'ral, coming as things have, suddenly and fearfully. But here's the ark, and we'll say more of this when there is a better opportunity."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The meeting between Deerslayer and his friends in the ark was grave and anxious. The two Indians, in particular, read in his manner that he was not a successful fugitive, and a few sententious words sufficed to let them comprehend the nature of what their friend had termed his "furlough".

In a few minutes, however, something like a general plan for the proceedings of the night was adopted. It was now getting to be dark, and it was decided to sweep the ark up to the castle, and secure it in its ordinary berth. This decision was come to, in some measure, on account of the fact that all the canoes were again in the possession of their proper owners; but principally from the security that was created by the representations of Deerslayer. He had examined the state of things among the Hurons, and felt satisfied that they meditated no further hostilities during the night. Then he had a proposition to make—the object of his visit: and if this were accepted, the war would at once terminate between the parties.

As soon as the ark was properly secured, the women busied themselves in preparations for the evening meal, sad and silent, but ever attentive to the first wants of nature.

Hurry set about repairing his moccasins by the light of a blazing knot; Chingachgook seated himself in gloomy thought; while Deerslayer proceeded, in a manner equally free from affectation and concern, to examine "Killdeer", the rifle that has been already mentioned. The piece was a little longer than usual, and had evidently been turned out from the workshop of some manufacturer of a superior order. It had a few silver ornaments; though, on the whole, it would have been deemed a plain piece by most frontier men; its great merit consisting in the accuracy of its bore, the perfection of the details, and the excellence of the metal. Again and again did the hunter apply the breech to his shoulder and glance his eye along the sights, and as often did he poise his body and raise the weapon slowly, as if about to catch an aim at a deer, in order to try the weight and to ascertain its fitness for quick and accurate firing. All this was done by the aid of Hurry's torch, simply, but with an earnestness and abstraction that would have been found touching by any spectator who happened to know the real situation of the man.

"'Tis a glorious we'pon, Hurry!" Deerslayer at length exclaimed, "and it may be thought a pity that it has fallen into the hands of women. The hunters have told me of its expl'ites; and by all I have heard I should set it down as sartain death in exper'enced hands. I never *did* see so true a bore, Hurry, that's sartain!"

"Ay, Tom used to give the piece a character, though he wasn't the man to particularize the ra'al natur' of any sort of fire-arms in practice," returned March. "I have had hopes that Judith might consait the idee of giving Killdeer to me."

"There's no saying what young women may do, that's a truth, Hurry; and I suppose you're as likely to own the rifle as another. Still, when things are so very near perfection, it's a pity not to reach it entirely."

"What do you mean by that? Would not that piece look as well on my shoulder as on any man's?"

"As for looks, I say nothing. You are both good-looking, and might make what is called a good-looking couple. But more deer would fall in one day by that piece in some men's hands than would fall in a week in your'n, Hurry! I've seen you try; you remember the buck t'other day?"

"That buck was out of season; and who wishes to kill venison out of season?"

"Well, have it as you say. But this is a lordly piece, and would make a steady hand and quick eye the King of the Woods."

"Then keep it, Deerslayer, and become King of the Woods," said Judith, who had heard the conversation. "It can never be in better hands than it is at this moment; there I hope it will remain these fifty years."

"Judith, you can't be in 'arnest!" exclaimed Deerslayer. "Such a gift would be fit for a ra'al king to make; yes, and for a ra'al king to receive."

"I never was more in earnest in my life, Deerslayer; and I am as much in earnest in the wish as in the gift."

"Well, gal; we'll find time to talk of this ag'in."

Shortly after the supper was ready; it was eaten in silence, as is so much the habit of those who consider the table as merely a place of animal refreshment. When the humble preparations had been removed the whole party assembled on the platform to hear the expected intelligence from Deerslayer on the subject of his visit. It had been evident he was in no

haste to make his communications; but the feelings of Judith would no longer admit of delay.

"Now, Deerslayer," she commenced, "tell us all the Hurons have to say, and the reason why they have sent you to make us some offer."

"Well, if the message must be given, it must; and perhaps there is no use in putting it off. Hurry will soon be wanting to set out on his journey to the river, and the stars rise and set just as if they cared for neither Indian nor message. Ah's me! 'tisn't a pleasant, and I know it's a useless, a'r'nd; but it must be told."

"Hark'ee, Deerslayer," put in Hurry, "when a thing is to be told, why, tell it, and don't hang back like a Yankee lawyer pretending he can't understand a Dutchman's English, just to get a double fee out of him."

"Well, the simple fact is this: When the party came back from the castle, the Mingos held a council, and bitter thoughts were uppermost, and they didn't hesitate to speak their minds, which is just this—You see the state of things. The lake and all on it, they fancy, lie at their marcy. Hutter is deceased, and as for Hurry, they've got the idee he has been near enough to death to-day not to wish to take another look at him this summer. Therefore, they account all your forces as reduced to Chingachgook and the two young women, and while they know the Delaware to be of a high race, and a born warrior, they know he's now on his first war-path. As for the gals, of course they set them down much as they do women in general."

"You mean that they despise us!" interrupted Judith, with eyes that flashed so brightly as to be observed by all present.

"That will be seen in the end. They hold that all on the lake lies at their marcy, and therefore they send by me this belt of wampum," showing the article in question to the Delaware as he spoke, "with these words:—Tell the Sarpent, they say, that he has done well for a beginner; he may now strike across the mountains for his own villages, and no one shall look for his trail. If he has found a scalp, let him take it with him; the Huron braves have hearts, and can feel for a young warrior who doesn't wish to go home empty-handed. If he is nimble, he is welcome to lead out a party in pursuit. Hist, howsever, must go back to the Hurons; when she left them in the night, she carried away, by mistake, that which doesn't belong to her."

"That *can't* be true!" said Hetty, earnestly. "Hist is no such girl, but one that gives everybody his due—"

How much more she would have said in remonstrance cannot be known, inasmuch as Hist put her hand across the speaker's mouth in a manner to check the words.

"You don't understand Mingo messages, Hetty," resumed Deerslayer, "which seldom mean what lies exactly uppermost. Hist has brought away with her the inclinations of a young Huron, and they want her back again, that the poor young man may find them where he last saw them!"

"They are very obliging and thoughtful, in supposing a young woman can forget all her own inclinations in order to let this unhappy youth find his," said Judith, ironically.

"The next message is to you, Judith. They say the Muskrat has dove to the bottom of the lake—that he will never come up again, and that his young will soon be in want of wigwams, if not of food. The Huron huts, they think, are better than the huts of York; they wish you to come and try them. A great warrior among them has lately lost his wife, and he would be glad to put the Wild Rose on her bench at his fireside. As for the Feeble-Mind, she will always be honoured and taken care of by red warriors. Moreover, they lost a young maiden by violence lately, and 'twill take two pale-faces to fill her seat!"

"And do *you* bring such a message to *me*!" exclaimed Judith. "Am I a girl to be an Indian's slave?"

"If you wish my honest thought on this p'int, Judith, I shall answer that I don't think you'll willingly ever become any man's slave, red-skin or white. You're not to think hard, howsoever, of my bringing the message, as near as I could in the very words in which it was given to me. Them was the conditions on which I got my furlough, and a bargain is a bargain, though it is made with a vagabond."

When all had rejected the proposal of the Hurons except Judith, Deerslayer turned to her and said:

"Now, Judith, your turn comes next, and then this business will be over."

Judith manifested a reluctance to give her reply that had awakened a little curiosity in the messenger. Judging from her known spirit, he had never supposed the girl would be less true to her feelings and principles than Hist or Hetty; and yet there was a visible wavering of purpose that rendered him slightly uneasy.

"Tell me first, Deerslayer," she commenced, "what effect will our answers have on your fate? If you are to be the sacrifice of our spirit, it would have been better had we all been more wary as to the language we use. What, then, are likely to be the consequences to yourself?"

"Lord, Judith, you might as well ask me which way the wind will blow next week! I can only say that their faces look a little dark upon me, but it doesn't thunder every time a black cloud rises. That's a question, therefore, much more easily put than answered."

"So is this message of the Iroquois to me," answered Judith, rising, as if she had determined on her own course for the present. "My answer shall be given, Deerslayer, after you and I have talked together alone, when the others have laid themselves down for the night."

There was a decision in the manner of the girl that disposed Deerslayer to comply, and this he did the more readily as the delay could produce no material consequences, one way or the other. The meeting now broke up, Hurry announcing his resolution to leave them speedily.

The hour of nine soon arrived, when it had been determined that Hurry should commence his journey. Judith gave him her hand, but it was quite as much in gladness as with regret, while the two Delawares were not sorry to find he was leaving them. Of the whole party, Hetty alone betrayed any real feeling. Bashfulness, and the timidity of her sex and character, kept even her aloof, so that Hurry entered the canoe, where Deerslayer was already waiting for him, before she ventured near enough to be observed. Then she approached just as the little bark was turning from the ark, with a movement so light and steady as to be almost imperceptible. An impulse of feeling now overcame her timidity, and Hetty spoke.

"Good-bye, Hurry"—she called out in her sweet voice—"good-bye, dear Hurry. Take care of yourself in the woods, and don't stop once till you reach the garrison. The leaves on the trees are scarcely plentier than the Hurons round the lake, and they'd not treat a strong man like you as kindly as they treat me."

The ascendancy which March had obtained over this feeble-minded but right-thinking and right-feeling girl, arose from a law of nature. Her senses had been captivated by his personal advantages; and her moral communications with him had

never been sufficiently intimate to counteract an effect that must have been otherwise lessened, even with one whose mind was as obtuse as her own.

Hurry received so little sympathy at his departure that the gentle tones of Hetty, as she thus called after him, sounded soothingly. He checked the canoe, and with one sweep of his powerful arm brought it back to the side of the ark. This was more than Hetty, whose courage had risen with the departure of her hero, had expected, and she now shrank timidly back at his unexpected return.

"You're a good gal, Hetty, and I can't quit you without shaking hands," said March. "Judith, after all, isn't worth as much as you, though she may be a trifle better-looking."

"Don't say anything against Judith, Hurry," returned Hetty, imploringly.

"Well, if we ever meet ag'in, Hetty, you'll find a fri'nd in me, let your sister do what she may."

"Good-bye, Hurry," said Hetty, who now wanted to hasten the young man off as ardently as she had wished to keep him only the moment before. "Take care of yourself in the woods; don't halt till you reach the garrison. I'll think of you in my prayers."

Shaking the girl cordially by the hand Hurry re-entered the canoe. In another minute the two adventurers were a hundred feet from the ark, and half-a-dozen had not elapsed before they were completely lost to view.

For some time Deerslayer and his companion paddled ahead in silence. It had been determined to land Hurry at the point where, in the commencement of our tale, he embarked; not only as a place little likely to be watched by the Hurons, but because he was sufficiently familiar with the signs of the woods at that spot to thread his way through them in the dark. Less than a quarter of an hour sufficed to bring them thither, when, being within the shadows of the shore, and quite near the point they sought, each ceased his efforts in order to make their parting communications out of ear-shot of any possible straggler.

"You will do well to persuade the officers at the garrison to lead out a party ag'in these vagabonds, as soon as you git in, Hurry," Deerslayer commenced; "and you'll do better if you volunteer to guide it up yourself. Strike at the Huron camp first, and follow the signs that will then show themselves. There'll be a fine opportunity to fall on the Mingo trail, and

to make a mark on the memories of the blackguards that they'll be apt to carry with 'em a long time."

"And as for yourself, Nathaniel," Hurry inquired: "what do you think is likely to turn up?"

"The Lord in His wisdom only can tell, Henry March! He in His wisdom can only determine my fate, or your'n!"

"This is a black business, and ought to be put a stop to in some way or other," answered Hurry. "I heartily wish old Hutter and I had scalped every creetur' in their camp the night we first landed with that object!"

"'Twould have been better had you said you wished you had never attempted to do what it little becomes any white man's gifts to undertake."

Hurry, by way of answer, dashed his paddle into the water, and began to urge the canoe towards the shore. His companion humoured his feverish desire for change, and in a minute or two the bows of the boat grated lightly on the shingle of the beach.

"You cannot mean to give yourself up ag'in to them murdering savages, Deerslayer!" said Hurry, in angry remonstrance. "'Twould be the act of a madman or a fool!"

"There's them that thinks it madness to keep their words, and there's them that don't, Hurry Harry. I'm out on a furlough, and if I've strength and reason, I'll go in on a furlough afore noon to-morrow!"

"What's an Indian, or a word passed or a furlough taken from creetur's like them?"

"This furlough is not, as you seem to think, a matter altogether atween me and the Mingos, seeing it is a solemn bargain atween me and God. Farewell, Hurry; we may not meet ag'in."

March was now glad again to escape; and he broke away with an impatience that caused him secretly to curse the folly that could induce a man to rush, as it were, on his own destruction. Deerslayer, on the contrary, manifested no such excitement. Sustained by his principles, he regarded all before him as a matter of course, and no more thought of making any unworthy attempt to avoid it than a Mussulman thinks of counteracting the decrees of Providence. Sighing heavily, he pushed the canoe from the land, and took his way back with steady diligence towards the ark and the castle.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Judith was waiting the return of Deerslayer on the platform with stifled impatience when the latter reached the hut. As soon as she got a glimpse of the canoe, she ceased her hurried walk up and down the platform, and stood ready to receive the young man, whose return she had now been anxiously expecting for some time. She helped him to fasten the canoe, and when this was done, in answer to an inquiry of his, she informed him of the manner in which their companions had disposed of themselves.

"And now, Deerslayer," Judith continued, "you see I have lighted the lamp, and put it in the cabin of the ark. That is never done with us, unless on great occasions, and I consider this night as the most important of my life. Will you follow me, and see what I have to show you—hear what I have to say?"

The hunter was a little surprised; but making no objections, both were soon in the room that contained the light. Here two stools were placed at the side of the chest, with the lamp on another, and a table near by to receive the different articles as they might be brought to view. All the padlocks were removed, and it only remained to raise the heavy lid, and to expose the treasures of this long-secreted hoard.

"I see, in part, what all this means," observed Deerslayer; "but why is not Hetty present? She is one of the owners of these curiosities, and ought to see them opened and handled."

"Hetty sleeps," answered Judith, hastily. "Besides, she has this night given her share of all that the chest may hold to me, that I may do with it as I please."

"Is poor Hetty composs enough for that, Judith?" demanded the just-minded young man. "It's a good rule, and a righteous one, never to take when those that give don't know the valie of their gifts."

Judith was hurt at this rebuke; but she smothered the passing sensation in the desire to come to the great object she had in view.

"Hetty will not be wronged," she mildly answered; "she even knows not only what I am about to do, Deerslayer, but *why* I do it. I shall be disappointed if something is not found

to tell us more of the history of Thomas Hutter and my mother."

"Why Thomas Hutter, Judith, and not your father?"

"I have long suspected that Thomas Hutter was not *my* father, though I did think he might have been Hetty's; but now we know he was the father of neither. He acknowledged that much in his dying moments."

Deerslayer now took his seat, and proceeded once more to raise the different articles that the chest contained from their places.

"Ay, if some bundles could speak, they might tell wonderful secrets," he observed, deliberately undoing the folds of a piece of course canvas, in order to come at the contents of the roll that lay on his knees; "though this doesn't seem to be one of that family, seeing 'tis neither more nor less than a sort of flag; though of what nation it passes my larnin' to say."

"That flag must have some meaning to it," Judith hurriedly interposed. "Open it wider, Deerslayer, that we may see the colours."

"Well, I pity the ensign that has to shoulder this cloth, and to parade it about in the field. Why, 'tis large enough, Judith, to make a dozen of such colours!"

"A ship might carry it, Deerslayer. Have you never heard stories about Thomas Hutter's having once been concerned with the people they call buccaneers?"

"Not I—not I! Hurry did tell me something about its being supposed that he had formerly, in some way, dealings with sartain sea-robbers; but it can't surely give you any satisfaction to make out that ag'in your mother's own husband."

"Anything will give me satisfaction that tells me who I am, and helps to explain the dreams of childhood. Go on, now, and let us see what the square-looking bundle holds."

Deerslayer complied, and he found that it contained a small trunk of pretty workmanship, but fastened. The next point was to find a key; but search proving ineffectual, it was determined to force the lock. This Deerslayer soon effected by the aid of an iron instrument, and it was found that the interior was nearly filled with papers. Many were letters, some fragments of manuscripts, memorandums, accounts, and other similar documents. The hawk does not pounce upon the chicken with a more sudden swoop than Judith sprang forward to seize this mine of hitherto concealed knowledge. Her education, as the reader will have perceived, was far superior to her situation

in life, and her eye glanced over page after page of the letters with a readiness that her schooling supplied, and with an avidity that found its origin in her feelings. At length, having spent two hours in the perusal of these documents, she threw herself back in her seat, and desired her companion to finish the examination of the other articles in the chest, as it might yet contain something of importance.

"I'll do it, Judith," returned the patient Deerslayer; "but if there's many more letters to read, we shall see the sun ag'in afore you've got through with the reading of them!"

"They tell me of my parents, Deerslayer, and have settled my plans for life. I am sorry to have kept you waiting."

"Never mind me, gal. It matters little whether I sleep or watch; but, though you be pleasant to look at, Judith, it is not altogether agreeable to sit so long to behold you shedding tears. I'd rather see you smile at any time, than see you weep."

This gallant speech was rewarded with a sweet, though a melancholy smile. Judith took no part in the search, leaving everything to the young man, looking listlessly herself at the different articles that came uppermost, though nothing of much interest or value was found. It struck both Judith and the Deerslayer, notwithstanding, that some of these things might be made useful in effecting a negotiation with the Iroquois.

"Deerslayer," said Judith, "any part, or all, of what you have seen in the chest will be cheerfully given by me and Hetty to set you at liberty."

"Well, that's ginerous—yes, downright ginerous! However, while I thank you both just as much as if the bargain was made, there's two principal reasons why it can never come to pass, which may be as well told at once."

"What reason *can* there be, if Hetty and I are willing to part with the trifles for your sake, and the savages are willing to receive them?"

"That the Mingos will be willing to receive these things is probable enough; but whether they'll pay valie for 'em is quite another matter. Ask yourself, Judith, if any one should send you a message to say that for such or such a price you and Hetty might have that chist and all it holds, whether you'd think it worth your while to waste many words on the bargain?"

"But there is no reason why we should purchase what is already our own."

"Just so the Mingos calculate! They say the chist is theirs

already, or as good as theirs; and they'll not thank anybody for the key."

"I understand you, Deerslayer; surely we are yet in possession of the lake, and we can keep possession of it until Hurry sends troops to drive off the enemy. This we may certainly do, provided you will stay with us, instead of going back and giving yourself up a prisoner again."

"Judith, I put it to your heart and conscience: would you, *could* you, think of me as favourably as I hope and believe you now do, was I to forget my furlough and not go back to the camp?"

"To think *more* favourably of you than I now do, Deerslayer, would not be easy; but a world wouldn't tempt me to let you do anything that might change my opinion of you."

"Then don't try to entice me to overlook my furlough, gal!"

"I believe you are right, Deerslayer," returned the girl, after a little reflection, and in a saddened voice; "*you* must indeed go back. You shall not have it to say Judith—I scarce know by what name to call myself, now!"

"And why not, gal? Children take the names of their parents nat'rally, and why shouldn't you and Hetty do as others have done afore ye? Hutter was the old man's name, and Hutter should be the name of his darters—at least until you are given away in lawful and holy wedlock."

"I am Judith, and Judith only," returned the girl, positively, "until the law gives me a right to another name. Never will I use that of Thomas Hutter again. Hutter was not his real name, and he was not my father, thank Heaven, though I may have no reason to be proud of him that *was*!"

"This is strange," said Deerslayer, looking steadily at the excited girl. "Thomas Hutter wasn't Thomas Hutter, and his darters weren't his darters! Who, then, could Thomas Hutter be? and who are his darters?"

"Did you never hear anything whispered against the former life of this person, Deerslayer?" demanded Judith.

"I'll not deny it, Judith. Sartain things have been said, but I'm not very credible as to reports. Hurry Harry spoke pretty plainly of the whole family, as we journeyed this-a-way; and he did hint something consarning Thomas Hutter's having been a free-liver on the water in his younger days."

"He told you he was a pirate—there's no need of mincing matters between friends. Well, Hutter was a pirate, and being no father of mine, I cannot wish to call him one."

"If you dislike the name of that man, there's the name of your mother, Judith. Her name may serve you just as good a turn."

"I do not know it. I've looked through those papers, Deerslayer, in the hope of finding some hint by which I might discover who my mother was, but in vain."

"That's both uncommon and unreasonable. Parents are bound to give their offspring a name, even though they give 'em nothing else. Now, I come of a humble stock, though we have white gifts and a white natur'; but we are not so poorly off as to have no name. Bumppo we are called."

"The name is a good one, Deerslayer, and either Hetty or myself would a thousand times rather be called Hetty Bumppo, or Judith Bumppo, than be called Hetty or Judith Hutter."

"That's a moral impossible," returned the hunter good-humouredly, "unless one of you should so far demean herself as to marry me."

Judith could not refrain from smiling when she found how simply and naturally the conversation had come round to the very point at which she had aimed to bring it.

"I do not think Hetty will ever marry, Deerslayer," she said; "if your name is to be borne by either of us, it must be borne by me."

"A woman like you, that is handsome enough to be a captain's lady, and fine enough, and, so far as I know, has education enough, would be little apt to think of becoming my wife. I suppose young gals that feel themselves to be smart, and know themselves to be handsome, find a sartain satisfaction in passing their jokes ag'in them that's neither, like a poor Delaware hunter."

"You do me injustice if you suppose I have any such thought or wish," she answered, earnestly. "Never was I more serious in my life, or more willing to abide by any agreement that we may make to-night. I have had many suitors, Deerslayer—nay, scarce an unmarried trapper or hunter has been in at the lake these four years who has not offered to take me away with him."

"Ay, I'll warrant that!" interrupted the other—"I'll warrant all that!"

"Not one of them would I—could I listen to; happily for myself, perhaps, has it been that such was the case. There have been well-looking youths among them, too, as you may have seen in your acquaintance—Henry March."

"You're wonderful handsome, and enticing, and pleasing to look upon, Judith!" exclaimed Deerslayer in his simplicity; "and I'm not astonished that Hurry Harry went away soured as well as disapp'nted!"

"Would you have had me, Deerslayer, become the wife of such a man as Henry March?"

"There's that which is in his favour, and there's that which is ag'in him. To my taste, Hurry wouldn't make the best of husbands, but I fear that the tastes of most young women here-away wouldn't be so hard upon him."

"No, no—Judith without a name would never consent to be called Judith March! Anything would be better than *that*."

"Judith Bumpo wouldn't sound as well, gal; and there's many names that would fall short of March in pleasing the ear."

"Ah! Deerslayer; the pleasantness of the sound in such cases does not come through the ear, but through the heart. Everything is agreeable when the heart is satisfied. Were Natty Bumpo Henry March, and Henry March Natty Bumpo, I might think the name of March better than it is; or were he you, I should fancy the name of Bumpo horrible!"

"Yes, that's just it—yes, that's the reason of the matter. The feelin's make all the difference in the world, Judith, in the natur' of sounds; ay, even in that of looks too."

"This is so true, Deerslayer, that I am surprised you should think it so remarkable a girl who may have some comeliness herself should not think it necessary that her husband should have the same advantage. To me, looks in a man are nothing, provided his countenance be as honest as his heart."

"Yes, honesty is a great advantage in the long run; and I'm glad that *you* look at the thing in it's true light, and not in the way in which so many is apt to deceive themselves."

"I do thus look at it, Deerslayer," returned the girl, with emphasis, "and can say from the bottom of my heart, that I would rather trust my happiness to a man whose truth may be depended on than to a false-tongued and false-hearted wretch that had chests of gold, and houses, and lands—yes, though he were even seated on a throne!"

"These are brave words, Judith; they're downright brave words; but do you think that the feelin's would keep 'em company did the ch'ice actually lie afore you? If a gay

gallant in a scarlet coat stood on one side, and on the other, one that has passed his days in the open air till his forehead is as red as his cheek: if both these men stood here as suitor for your feelin's, which do you think would win your favour?"

"As God is my judge," the girl solemnly answered, "did both these men stand before me, my choice, if I know my own heart, would be the latter. I have no wish for a husband who is in any way better than myself."

"This is pleasant to listen to, and might lead a young man in time to forget his own unworthiness, Judith! A man like me is too rude and ignorant for one that has had such a mother to teach her."

"Then you do not know of what a woman's heart is capable! Rude *you* are not, Deerslayer; nor can one be called ignorant that has studied what is before his eyes as closely as you have done."

"Judith, you come of people altogether above mine in the world; and unequal matches, like unequal friendships, can't often terminate kindly. I speak of this matter altogether as a fanciful thing, since it's not likely that *you*, at least, would be able to treat it as a matter that can ever come to pass."

Judith fastened her deep blue eyes on the open, frank, countenance of her companion, as if she would read his soul. Nothing there betrayed any covert meaning, and she was obliged to admit to herself that he regarded the conversation as argumentative rather than positive, and that he was still without any active suspicion that her feelings were seriously involved in the issue. At that critical instant a change of plan flashed on her mind, and with a readiness of invention that is peculiar to the quick-witted, she adopted a scheme by which she hoped effectually to bind him to her person.

"I certainly have no reason to boast of parentage, after what I have seen this night," she answered in a saddened voice. "I had a mother, it is true; but of her name even I am ignorant; and as for my father, it is better perhaps that I do not know who he was, lest I speak too bitterly of him."

"Judith," said Deerslayer, taking her hand kindly, and with a manly sincerity that went directly to the girl's heart, "'tis better to say no more to-night. Sleep on what you've seen and felt; in the morning things that now look gloomy may look more cheerful. Above all, never do anything in bitterness, or because you feel as if you'd like to take revenge on yourself for other people's backslidings. It is time to get

a little rest, for to-morrow is like to prove a trying day to some of us."

Deerslayer arose as he spoke, and Judith had no choice but to comply.

CHAPTER XXV.

Hist and Hetty arose with the return of light, leaving Judith still buried in sleep. It took but a minute for the first to complete her toilet. When attired, she left her companion employed in household affairs, and went herself on the platform, to breathe the pure air of the morning. Here she found Chingachgook studying the shores of the lake, the mountains, and the heavens with the sagacity of a man of the woods, and the gravity of an Indian.

The meeting between the lovers was simple, but affectionate. Neither spoke, unless it were with the eyes, though each understood the other as fully as if a vocabulary of words and protestations had been poured out. The stools used the previous night were still standing on the platform. Placing two against the walls of the hut, he seated himself on one, making a gesture to his companion to take the other. Then the young warrior stretched his arm before him, as if to point out the glories of the scene at that witching hour. The girl followed the movement with pleased wonder, smiling as each new beauty met her gaze.

"Hugh!" exclaimed the chief, in admiration of a scene so unusual even to him. "This is the country of the Manitou! It is too good for Mingos; but the curs of that tribe are howling in packs through the woods. They think that the Delawares are asleep over the mountains."

"All but one of them is, Chingachgook. There is one here, and he is of the blood of Uncas!"

"What is one warrior against a tribe? The path to our villages is very long and crooked, and I am afraid, Honey-suckle of the Hills, that we shall travel it alone!"

Hist understood the allusion, and it made her sad, though it sounded sweet to her ears to be compared by the warrior she so loved to the most fragrant and the pleasantest of all the wild flowers of her native woods.

"When the sun is thus," continued the Delaware, pointing

to the zenith, "the great hunter of our tribe will go back to the Hurons to be treated like a bear, that they roast and skin even on full stomachs."

"The Great Spirit may soften their hearts, and not suffer them to be so bloody-minded."

"They have lost warriors; their women will call out for vengeance. The pale-face has the eyes of an eagle, and can see into a Mingo's heart; he looks for no mercy."

A long, thoughtful pause succeeded, during which Hist stealthily took the hand of the chief, as if seeking his support.

"What will the son of Uncas do?" the girl at length timidly asked. "What does his heart tell him is wisest? Does the head, too, speak the same words as the heart?"

"What does Wah-ta!-Wah say at a moment when my dearest friend is in such danger? The smallest birds sing the sweetest. I wish I could hear the Wren of the Woods in my difficulty; its note would reach deeper than the ear."

Again Hist experienced the profound gratification that the language of praise can always awaken when uttered by those we love. The "Honeysuckle of the Hills" was a term often applied to the girl by the young men of the Delawares, though it never sounded so sweet in her ears as from the lips of Chingachgook; but the latter alone had ever styled her the Wren of the Woods.

"Wah-ta!-Wah says that neither she nor the Great Serpent could ever laugh again, should the Deerslayer die under a Mingo tomahawk, and they do nothing to save him."

"Good! The husband and the wife will have but one heart."

Just at this instant Deerslayer came out of the cabin of the ark and stepped upon the platform. His first look was at the cloudless heavens. Then his rapid glance took in the entire panorama of land and water, when he had leisure for a friendly nod at his friends, and a cheerful smile for Hist.

"Well," he said, in his usual composed manner and pleasant voice, "he that sees the sun set in the west, and wakes 'arly enough in the morning, will be sartain to find him coming back ag'in in the east, like a buck that is hunted round his ha'nts."

"When the sun is in the top of that pine to-morrow, where will my brother Deerslayer be?"

The hunter started, and he looked intently at his friend. Then he signed for him to follow, and led the way into the

ark. Here he stopped, and pursued the conversation in a more confidential tone.

"Twas a little unreasonable in you, Sarpent," he said, "to bring up such a subject before Hist, and when the young woman of my own colour might overhear what was said. Howsoever, the question is easier put than answered. No mortal can say where he will be when the sun rises to-morrow. I will ask you the same question, Sarpent."

"Chingachgook will be with his friend, Deerslayer: if he be in the land of spirits, the Serpent will crawl at his side."

"I understand you, Delaware," returned the other, touched with the simple self-devotion of his friend. "Such language is as plain in one tongue as in another; it comes from the heart, and goes to the heart, too. But you are no longer alone in life; for though you have the lodges to change, and other ceremonies to go through afore Hist becomes your lawful wife, yet are you as good as married. No, Hist must not be deserted because a cloud is passing atween you and me."

"Hist is a daughter of the Mohicans; she knows how to obey her husband. Where he goes she will follow. *Both* will be with the Great Hunter of the Delawares when the sun shall be in the pine to-morrow."

"The Lord bless and protect you! Chief, this is downright madness. Can either or both of you alter a Mingo natur'? Will your grand looks, or Hist's tears and beauty, change a wolf into a squirrel, or make a catamount as innocent as a fa'an? No, Sarpent, you will think better of this matter, and leave me in the hands of God. After all, it's by no means sartain that the scamps design the torments, for they may yet be pitiful, and bethink them of the wickedness of such a course; though it *is* but a hopeless expectation to look forward to a Mingo's turning aside from evil, and letting marcy get uppermost in his heart. Nevertheless, no one knows to a sartainty what will happen; and young creetur's like Hist ar'n't to be risked on onsartainties. This marrying is altogether a different undertaking from what some young men fancy. Now, if you was single, or as good as single, Delaware, I should expect you to be actyve, and stirring about the camp of the vagabonds from sunrise to sunset, sarcumventing and contriving, as restless as a hound off the scent, and doing all manner of things to help me and to distract the inimy; but two are oftener feebler than one, and we must take things as they are, and not as we want 'em to be."

"Listen, Deerslayer," returned the Indian. "If Chingachgook was in the hands of the Hurons, what would my pale-face brother do? Sneak off to the Delaware villages, and say—'See! here is Wah-ta!-Wah: she is safe, but a little tired; and here is the son of Uncas, safe also.' Would he do this?"

"I understand you, Delaware, and truth won't allow me to say otherwise. Still, it's not easy to answer, for this plain reason. You wish me to say what I would do if I had a betrothed as you have here on the lake, and a fri'nd yonder in the Huron camp in danger of the torments. That's it, isn't it?"

The Indian bowed his head silently.

"Well, I never had a betrothed: never had the kind of feelin's towards any young woman that you have towards Hist; my heart, as they call it in such matters, isn't touched, and therefore I can't say what I would do. A fri'nd pulls strong; but, by all that I've seen consarnin' love, I think a betrothed pulls stronger."

"True; but the betrothed of Chingachgook does not pull towards the lodges of the Delawares; she pulls towards the camp of the Hurons."

"She's a noble gal, and like the stock of her sires! Well, what is it, Sarpent? for I conclude she hasn't changed her mind, and mean to turn Huron wife. What is it you want?"

"Wah-ta!-Wah will never live in the wigwam of an Iroquois," answered the Delaware, dryly. "My brother will see what we can do when the time shall come, rather than let him die under Mingo torments."

"Attempt nothing heedlessly, Delaware," said the other, earnestly. "Nothing can so soon break down my spirit as to find that you and Hist have fallen into the power of the inimy in striving to do something for my good."

"The Delawares are prudent. The Deerslayer will not find them running into a strange camp with their eyes shut."

Hetty now announced that the breakfast was ready, and the whole party were soon seated around the simple board in the usual primitive manner of borderers. Judith was the last to take her seat, pale, silent, and betraying in her countenance that she had passed a painful if not a sleepless night. At this meal scarce a syllable was exchanged, all the females manifesting want of appetite, though the two men were unchanged in this particular. It was early when the party arose, and when

they had finished breakfast, Deerslayer turned to Judith and said:

"Step into the ark with me, Judith, for a minute. I wish to converse with you."

Judith complied with a willingness she could scarce conceal. Following the hunter into the cabin, she took a seat on a stool, while the young man brought Killdeer, the rifle she had given him, out of a corner, and placed himself on another, with the weapon laid upon his knees.

"I understood you, Judith, to say that you gave me this rifle," he said. "The we'pon ought of right to be carried by some known and sure hand, for the best reputation may be lost by careless and thoughtless handling."

"Can it be in better hands than those in which it is now, Deerslayer? Hutter seldom missed with it; with you it must be—"

"Sartain death!" interrupted the hunter, laughing. "But how long will it be likely to remain in my hands? Atween us, the truth may be said, though I shouldn't like to have it known to Sarpent and Hist; but to *you* the truth may be spoken, since *your* feelin's will not be as likely to be tormented by it as those of them that have known me longer and better. How long am I like to own this rifle, or any other? This is a serious question for our thoughts to rest on, and should that happen which is so likely to happen, Killdeer would be without an owner."

Judith listened with apparent composure, though the conflict within came near overpowering her. Her great self-command, however, enabled her to pursue the subject in a way to deceive Deerslayer.

"What would you have me do with the weapon," she asked, "should that which you seem to expect take place?"

"That's just what I wanted to speak to you about, Judith. There's Chingachgook, now, though far from being perfect sartainty with a rifle, he is respectable, and is coming on. Now, I should like to leave Killdeer to the Sarpent, should anything happen to keep me from doin' credit and honour to your precious gift, Judith."

"Leave it to whom you please, Deerslayer; the rifle is your own, to do with as you please."

No boy could have been more eager to exhibit the qualities of his trumpet or his cross-bow than this simple forester now was to prove those of his rifle. Returning to the platform, he

first took the Delaware aside, and informed him that this celebrated piece was to become his property, in the event of anything serious befalling himself.

"This is a new reason why you should be wary, Sarpent, and not run into any oncalculated danger," the hunter added; "for it will be a victory of itself to a tribe to own such a piece as this!"

"One rifle like another, Deerslayer," returned the Indian in English. "All kill; all wood and iron."

"Not so, my fri'nd! Come, such another occasion may never offer ag'in, and I feel a strong craving for a trial with this piece. You shall bring out your own rifle, and I will just sight Killdeer in a careless way, in order that we may know a few of its secret vartues."

As this proposition served to relieve the thoughts of the whole party by giving them a new direction, while it was likely to produce no unpleasant result, every one was willing to enter into it, the girls bringing forth the firearms with an alacrity bordering on cheerfulness.

"Now, Sarpent, we'll begin in an humble way, using old Tom's commoners first, and coming to your we'pon and Killdeer as the winding-up observations," said Deerslayer. "Here's birds in abundance—some in, and some over the lake. Speak your mind, Delaware, and p'int out the creetur' you wish to alarm. Here's a diver nearest in, and that's a creetur' that buries itself at the flash, and will be like enough to try both piece and powder."

Chingachgook was a man of few words. No sooner was the bird pointed out to him than he took his aim and fired. The duck dove at the flash, as had been expected, and the bullet skipped harmlessly along the surface of the lake. Deerslayer laughed, but stood keenly watching the sheet of placid water. Presently a dark spot appeared, and then the duck arose to breathe, and shook its wings. While in this act, a bullet passed through its breast, actually turning it over lifeless on its back.

"There's no great trial of the pieces in that!" he said, as if anxious to prevent a false impression of his own merit. "No; that's proof neither for nor ag'in the rifles, seeing it was all quickness of hand and eye. But here's just the bird we want; for it's as good for the fire as it is for the aim, and nothing should be lost that can be turned to just account. There, farther north, Delaware."

The latter looked in the required direction, and he soon saw a large black duck floating in stately repose on the water. Chingachgook, as usual, spared his words, and proceeded to execution. This time his aim was more careful than before, and his success in proportion. The bird had a wing crippled, and fluttered along the water screaming, materially increasing its distance from its enemies.

"That bird must be put out of pain," exclaimed Deerslayer, "and this is the rifle and the eye to do it."

The duck was still floundering along, when the fatal bullet overtook it, severing the head from the neck as neatly as if it had been done with an axe. The chief uttered the usual exclamation of pleasure, and his smile proved how much he admired and how little he envied.

"Now, Sarpent," said Deerslayer laughing, "here is a bird overhead that will put the pieces to the proof; I challenge you to an upward aim, with a flying target. That's a ra'al proof, and one that needs sartain rifles as well as sartain eyes."

An eagle was hovering at a considerable height above the hut, greedily watching for an opportunity to make a swoop. Chingachgook turned a new piece against this bird, and after carefully watching his time, fired. A wider circuit than common denoted that the messenger had passed through the air, at no great distance from the bird, though it missed its object. Deerslayer fired as soon as it was certain his friend had missed, and the deep swoop that followed left it momentarily doubtful whether the eagle was hit or not. The marksman himself, however, proclaimed his own want of success, calling on his friend to seize another rifle.

"I made him wink, Sarpent, but no blood has yet been drawn, nor is that old piece fit for so nice and quick a sight. Quick, Delaware! you've now a better rifle, and, Judith, bring out Killdeer, for this is the occasion to try his merits, if he has 'em."

The eagle had made a wide circuit after his low swoop, and fanning his way upward, once more hovered nearly over the hut, at a distance even greater than before. Chingachgook gazed at him, and then expressed his opinion of the impossibility of striking a bird at that great height, and while he was so nearly perpendicular as to the range. But a low murmur from Hist produced a sudden impulse, and he fired. The result showed how well he had calculated, the eagle not even varying its flight.

"Now, Judith," cried Deerslayer laughing, with glistening and delighted eyes, "we'll see if Killdeer isn't Killeagle too!"

A careful sight followed, the bird continuing to rise higher and higher. Then followed the flash and the report. At the next instant the bird turned on its side and came swooping down, until, having described several complete circles around the spot, it fell heavily into the end of the ark. On examining the body, it was found that the bullet had pierced it about half-way between one of its wings and the breast-bone.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"We've done an onthoughtful thing, Sarpent,—yes, Judith, we've done an onthoughtful thing in taking life with an object no better than vanity!" exclaimed Deerslayer, when the Delaware held up the enormous bird by its wings, and exhibited the dying eyes riveted on its enemies with the gaze that the helpless ever fasten on their destroyers. "'Twas more becomin' two boys to gratify their feelin's in this onthoughtful manner than two warriors on a war-path, even though it be their first. Ah's! me; well, as a punishment I'll quit you at once, and when I find myself alone with them bloody-minded Mingos, it's more than like I'll have occasion to remember that life is sweet, even to the beasts of the woods and the fowls of the air."

Little did Deerslayer know, while thus indulging in feelings that were natural to the man, and so strictly in accordance with his own unsophisticated principles, that in the course of the inscrutable Providence which so mysteriously covers all events with its mantle, the very fault he was disposed so severely to censure was to be made the means of determining his own earthly fate. As for the young man, he now slowly left the ark, like one sorrowing for his misdeeds, and seated himself in silence on the platform. By this time the sun had ascended to some height, and its appearance, taken in connection with his present feelings, induced him to prepare to depart. The Delaware got the canoe ready for his friend, as soon as apprised of his intention, and when all was ready he and Hist returned to the side of Judith and Hetty, neither of whom had moved from the spot where the young hunter sat.

"The best fri'nds must often part," the last began, when he

saw the whole party grouped around him. "Yes, fri'ndship can't alter the ways of Providence; and let our feelin's be as they may, we must part. I've often thought there's moments when our words dwell longer on the mind than common, and when advice is remembered, just because the mouth that gives it isn't likely to give it ag'in. No one knows what will happen in the world; and therefore it may be well, when fri'nds separate under a likelihood that the parting may be long, to say a few words in kindness, as a sort of keepsakes."

As the meaning of the speaker was understood, the two Indians immediately withdrew, leaving the sisters still standing at the young man's side.

"You can talk with Hetty as you land," said Judith, hastily; "I intend that she shall accompany you to the shore."

"Is this wise, Judith? It's true that under common circumstances a feeble mind is a great protection among red-skins; but when their feelin's are up, and they're bent on revenge, it's hard to say what may come to pass. Besides—"

"What were you about to say, Deerslayer?" asked Judith, whose gentleness of voice and manner amounted nearly to tenderness.

"Why, simply that there are sights and doin's that one even as little gifted with reason and memory as Hetty might better not witness."

"Never fear for me, Deerslayer," put in Hetty; "I'm feeble-minded, and that, they say, is an excuse for going anywhere; and what that won't excuse will be overlooked on account of the Bible I always carry."

"I think you have got the least ground to fear any injury, Hetty," answered the sister, "and therefore I shall insist on your going to the Huron camp with our friend. You being there can do no harm, not even to yourself, and may do great good to Deerslayer."

"This is not a moment to dispute, and so have the matter your own way," returned the young man. "Get yourself ready, Hetty, and go into the canoe, for I've a few parting words to say to your sister."

Judith and her companion continued silent until Hetty had so far complied as to leave them alone, when Deerslayer said:

"Judith, I intend to speak to you like a brother, seein' I'm not old enough to be your father. In the first place, I wish to caution you ag'in your inimies, of which two may be said to ha'nt your very footsteps, and to beset your ways. The first

is uncommon good looks, which is as dangerous a foe to some young women as a whole tribe of Mingos could prove, and which calls for great watchfulness. *They* are lent for a short time in youth to be used and not abused; and as I never met with a young woman to whom Providence has been so bountiful as it has to you, Judith, in this partic'lar, I warn you, as it might be with my dyin' breath, to beware of the inimy; fri'nd or inimy, as we deal with the gift."

It was so grateful to Judith to hear these unequivocal admissions of her personal charms that much would have been forgiven to the man who made them, let him be who he might.

"I understand your meaning, Deerslayer," returned the girl, "and hope to be able to profit by it. But you have mentioned only one of the enemies I have to fear; who or what is the other?"

"The other is givin' way afore your own good sense and judgment, I find, Judith; yet, he's not so dangerous as I supposed."

How much longer the young man would have gone on in his simple and unsuspecting, but well-intentioned manner, it might not be easy to say, had he not been interrupted by his listener's bursting into tears and giving way to an outbreak of feeling which was so much the more violent from the fact that it had been with so much difficulty suppressed. At first her sobs were so violent and uncontrollable that Deerslayer was a little appalled. He arose as if an adder had stung him, and the accents of the mother that soothes her child were scarcely more gentle and winning than the tones of his voice as he now expressed his contrition at having gone so far.

"It was well meant, Judith," he said, "but it was not intended to hurt your feelin's so much. Howsever, I acknowledge I've overdone the matter, and as I've a ra'al and strong regard for you, I rej'ice to say it, inasmuch as it proves how much better you are than my own vanity and consaits had made you out to be."

Judith now removed her hands from her face, her tears had ceased, and she unveiled a countenance so winning, with the smile which rendered it even radiant, that the young man gazed at her for a moment with speechless delight.

"Say no more, Deerslayer," she hastily interposed; "it pains me to hear you find fault with yourself. I know my own weakness all the better now I see that you have discovered it; but we will not talk any longer of these things, for I do not

feel myself brave enough for the undertaking. Farewell, Deerslayer; may God bless and protect you as your honest heart deserves blessing and protection."

Feeling had flushed the face and illuminated the countenance of the girl, and her beauty was never more resplendent than when she cast a parting glance at the youth. That glance was filled with anxiety, interest, and gentle pity. At the next instant she darted into the hut, and was seen no more.

After a few words to Hist and the chief, Deerslayer said:

"Well, Delaware, there's my hand; you know it's that of a fri'nd, and will shake it as such, though it never has done you one-half the good its owner wishes it had."

The Indian took the offered hand, and returned its pressure warmly. Then falling back on his acquired stoicism of manner, he drew up in reserve, and prepared to part from his friend with dignity. Deerslayer, however, was more natural; nor would he have at all cared about giving way to his feelings had not the recent conduct and language of Judith given him some secret, though ill-defined, apprehensions of a scene.

"God bless you, Sarpent,—God bless you!" cried the hunter, as he stepped into the canoe. "Your Manitou and my God only know when and where we shall meet ag'in. I shall count it a great blessing and a full reward for any little good I may have done on 'arth if we shall be permitted to know each other hereafter, as we have so long done in these pleasant woods afore us!"

Chingachgook waved his hand. Drawing the light blanket he wore over his head, as a Roman would conceal his grief in his robes, he slowly withdrew into the ark, in order to indulge his sorrow and his musings alone. Deerslayer did not speak again until the canoe was half-way to the shore. Then he suddenly ceased paddling at an interruption that came from the mild, musical voice of Hetty.

"Why do *you* go back to the Hurons, Deerslayer?" demanded the girl. "They say *I* am feeble-minded, and such they never harm; but you have as much sense as Hurry Harry, and more too, Judith thinks, though I don't see how that can well be."

"My war-path has been short, and is like soon to have an end; but I can see that the wanderings of a warrior aren't altogether among brambles and difficulties."

"And why should your war-path, as you call it, come so near to an end, Deerslayer?"

"Because, my dear girl, my furlough comes so near to an end. They're likely to have pretty much the same termination as regards time—one following on the heels of the other as a matter of course."

"I don't understand your meaning, Deerslayer," returned the girl, looking a little bewildered.

"Well, then, Hetty, the simple truth is this. You know that I'm now a captive to the Hurons, and captives can't do in all things as they please—"

"But how can you be a captive," eagerly interrupted the girl, "when you are out here on the lake in father's bark canoe, and the Indians are in the woods with no canoe at all?"

"I wish with all my heart and soul, Hetty, that you was right, and that I was wrong. Free as I seem to your eyes, gal, I'm bound hand and foot in reality."

"Well, it is a great misfortune not to have sense! Now, I can't see or understand that you are a captive, or bound in any manner."

The girl ceased paddling, as if her mind was too much distracted to admit of other employment. Then she resumed the dialogue.

"Do you think the Hurons will have the heart to put you to torment, Deerslayer?" she asked; "I have found them kind and harmless."

"That's true enough as consarns one like you, Hetty; but it's a very different affair when it comes to an open enemy, and he too the owner of a pretty sartain rifle. I look for no mercy, Hetty, at their hands."

"The Hurons shall *not* harm you, Deerslayer," cried the girl. "Do you think I would stand by and see you tormented?"

"I hope not, Hetty, I hope not; and, therefore, when the moment comes, I expect you will move off, and not be a witness of what you can't help, while it would grieve you. Put the paddle in motion ag'in, gal, and we'll push for the shore, for the sun is nearly up, and my furlough is almost out."

The canoe now glided ahead, holding its way towards the point where Deerslayer well knew that his enemies expected him, and where, he now began to be afraid, he might not arrive in season to redeem his plighted faith. Hetty perceiving his impatience, without very clearly comprehending its cause, however, seconded his efforts in a way that soon rendered their timely return no longer a matter of doubt. Then, and then only, did the young man suffer his exertions to flag,

and Hetty began again to prattle in her simple confiding manner, though nothing farther was uttered that it is necessary to relate.

CHAPTER XXVII.

One experienced in the signs of the heavens would have seen that the sun wanted but two or three minutes of the zenith when Deerslayer landed on the point where the Hurons were now encamped, nearly abreast of the castle. This spot was similar to the one already described, with the exception that the surface of the land was less broken and less crowded with trees. If it was a point of honour with the Indian warrior to redeem his word, when pledged to return and meet his death at a given hour, so was it a point of characteristic pride to show no womanish impatience, but to reappear as nearly as possible at the appointed moment. It was well not to exceed the grace accorded by the generosity of the enemy, but it was better to meet it to a minute.

It was an imposing scene into which Deerslayer now found himself advancing. All the old warriors were seated on the trunk of the fallen tree, waiting his approach with grave decorum. On the right stood the young men armed, while the left was occupied by the women and children. In the centre was an open space of considerable extent, always canopied by leaves, but from which the underbrush, dead wood, and other obstacles had been carefully removed.

As was not unusual among the tribes and wandering bands of the aborigines, two chiefs shared, in nearly equal degrees, the principal and primitive authority that was wielded over these children of the forest. It was also in conformity with practice that one of the chiefs was indebted to his mind for his influences, whereas the other owed his distinction altogether to qualities that were physical. One was a senior, well known for eloquence in debate, wisdom in council, and prudence in measures; while his great competitor, if not his rival, was a brave, distinguished in war, notorious for ferocity, and remarkable in the way of intellect for nothing but the cunning and expedients of the war-path. The first was Rivenoak, while the last was called the Panther. This appellation was supposed to indicate the qualities of the warrior, agreeably to

a practice of the red man's nomenclature; ferocity, cunning, and treachery being, perhaps, the distinctive features of his character.

Rivenoak and the Panther sat side by side, awaiting the approach of their prisoner, as Deerslayer put his moccasined foot on the strand; nor did either move or utter a syllable until the young man had advanced into the centre of the area, and proclaimed his presence with his voice.

"Here I am, Mingos," he said, in the dialect of the Delawares; "here I am, and there is the sun. I am your prisoner; do with me what you please."

A murmur of approbation escaped even the women at this address, and for an instant there was a strong desire to adopt into the tribe one who owned so brave a spirit. Still there were dissenters from this wish, among the principal of whom might be classed the Panther and his sister, le Sumach, who was the widow of le Loup Cervier, known to have fallen by the hand of the captive. Native ferocity held one in subjection, while the corroding passion of revenge prevented the other from admitting any gentler feeling at the moment. Not so with Rivenoak. This chief paid his compliments with an ease and dignity that a prince might have envied.

"Pale-face, you are honest," said the Huron orator. "My people are happy in having captured a man, and not a skulking fox. We now know you; we shall treat you like a brave. It is a pleasure to make such a prisoner; should my warriors say that the death of le Loup Cervier ought not to be forgotten, and that he cannot travel towards the land of spirits alone, that his enemy must be sent to overtake him, they will remember he fell by the hand of a brave, and send you after him with such signs of our friendship as shall not make him ashamed to keep your company."

"True enough, Mingo," returned the simple-minded hunter; "you *have* spoken, and I *do* know not only what you have *said*, but what you *mean*. I dare to say your warrior was a stout-hearted brave, and worthy of your friendship and respect; but I do not feel unworthy to keep his company without any passport from your hands. Nevertheless, here I am, ready to receive judgment from your council, if, indeed, the matter was not determined among you afore I got back."

"My old men would not sit in council over a pale-face until they saw him among them," answered Rivenoak, looking around him a little ironically.

Rivenoak made a sign, and then a short conference was held among the chiefs. As soon as the latter ended, three or four young men fell back from among the armed group and disappeared. Then it was signified to the prisoner that he was at liberty to go at large on the point, until a council was held concerning his fate. There was more of seeming than of real confidence, however, in this apparent liberality, inasmuch as the young men mentioned already formed a line of sentinels across the breadth of the point inland, and escape from any other part was out of the question.

Nor was Deerslayer unconscious of his opportunities. Could he now have seen any probable opening for an escape, the attempt would not have been delayed a minute. But the case seemed desperate. As he walked about the point, he even examined the spot to ascertain if it offered no place of concealment; but its openness, its size, and the hundred watchful glances that were turned towards him, even while those who made them affected not to see him—prevented any such expedient from succeeding.

In the meantime the business of the camp appeared to proceed in its regular train. The chiefs consulted apart, admitting none but the Sumach to their councils; for she, the widow of the fallen warrior, had an exclusive right to be heard on such an occasion. The young men strolled about in indolent listlessness, awaiting the result with Indian patience, while the females prepared the feast that was to celebrate the termination of the affair, whether it proved fortunate or otherwise for our hero. In this condition of the camp an hour soon glided away.

Suspense is, perhaps, the feeling of all others that is most difficult to be supported. When Deerslayer landed, he fully, in the course of a few minutes, expected to undergo the tortures of an Indian revenge, and he was prepared to meet his fate manfully; but the delay proved far more trying than the nearer approach of suffering, and the intended victim began seriously to meditate some desperate effort at escape as it might be from sheer anxiety to terminate the scene, when he was suddenly summoned to appear once more in front of his judges, who had already arranged the band in its former order in readiness to receive him.

“Killer of the Deer,” commenced Rivenoak, as soon as his captive stood before him, “my aged men have listened to wise words; they are ready to speak. One of our best lodges has

lately been emptied by the death of its master; it will be a long time before his son can grow big enough to sit in his place. There is his widow; she will want venison to feed her and her children. By your hand has this great calamity befallen her. We know you, Killer of the Deer. You are honest; when you say a thing it is so. What you say, that will you do. When you have done wrong, it is your wish to do right again as soon as you can. Here is the Sumach; she is alone in her wigwam, with children crying around her for food; yonder is a rifle; take it—go forth and shoot a deer—bring the venison and lay it before the widow of le Loup Cervier—feed her children—call yourself her husband. After which le Sumach's ears will not hear the cries of her children; my people will count the proper number of warriors."

"I feared this, Rivenoak," answered Deerslayer, when the other had ceased speaking. "Howsoever, the truth is soon told, and that will put an end to all expectations on this head. Mingo, I'm white, and Christian born; 'twould ill become me to take a wife, under red-skin forms, from among heathen. As for feeding the young of your dead warrior, I would do that cheerfully, could it be done without discredit; but it cannot, seeing that I can never live in a Huron village. No, no, Huron; my gifts are white, so far as wives are consarned; it is Delaware in all things touching Indians."

These words were scarcely out of the mouth of Deerslayer before a common murmur betrayed the dissatisfaction with which they had been heard. The aged women, in particular, were loud in their expressions of disgust; and the gentle Sumach herself, a woman quite old enough to be our hero's mother, was not the least pacific in her denunciations. But all the other manifestations of disappointment and discontent were thrown into the background by the fierce resentment of the Panther. The animal from which he got his name does not glare on his intended prey with more ferocity than his eyes gleamed on the captive; nor was his arm backward in seconding the fierce resentment that almost consumed his breast.

"Dog of the pale-faces!" he exclaimed, "go yell among the curs of your own evil hunting-grounds!"

Even while speaking his arm was lifted, and the tomahawk hurled. So great was the dexterity with which the weapon was thrown, and so deadly the intent, that it would have

riven the skull of the prisoner had he not stretched forth an arm and caught the handle in one of its turns. The projectile force was so great, notwithstanding, that when Deerslayer's arm was arrested, his hand was raised above and behind his own head, and in the very attitude necessary to return the attack. His eye kindled, and a small red spot appeared on each cheek, while he cast all his energy into the effort of his arm, and threw back the weapon at his assailant. The unexpectedness of this blow contributed to its success. The keen little axe struck the victim in a perpendicular line with the nose, directly between the eyes, literally braining him on the spot. A common rush to his relief left the captive for a single instant quite without the crowd; and willing to make one desperate effort for life, he bounded off with the activity of a deer. There was but a breathless instant, when the whole band, old and young, women and children, abandoning the lifeless body of the Panther where it lay, raised the yell of alarm and followed in pursuit.

Although the shores of the point were not fringed with bushes, it was owing altogether to the circumstance that the spot had been so much used by hunters and fishermen. This fringe commenced on what might be termed the main land, extending in long lines both north and south. In the latter direction Deerslayer held his way, running for some forty or fifty yards in the water, which was barely knee-deep, offering as great an obstacle to the speed of his pursuers as it did to his own. As soon as a favourable spot presented, he darted through the line of bushes, and issued into the open woods.

Several rifles were discharged at him while in the water, and more followed as he came out into the comparative exposure of the clear forest. But the direction of his line of flight, the haste with which the weapons had been aimed, and the general confusion that prevailed in the camp, prevented any harm from being done. The delay caused by these fruitless attempts was of great service to the fugitive, who had gained more than a hundred yards on even the leading men of the Hurons ere something like concert and order had entered into the chase.

Deerslayer knew too well the desperate nature of the struggle in which he was engaged to lose one of the precious moments. He held his way in a diagonal direction up the acclivity, which was neither very high nor very steep in this

part of the mountain, but was sufficiently toilsome for one contending for life to render it painfully oppressive. There, however, he slackened his speed to recover breath, proceeding even at a quick walk or a slow trot along the more difficult parts of the way. The summit of the first hill was now quite near him, and he saw, by the formation of the land, that a deep glen intervened before the base of a second could be reached. Walking deliberately to the summit, he glanced eagerly about him in every direction in quest of a cover. None offered in the ground; but a fallen tree lay near him; to leap on it, and then to force his person as close as possible under its lower side, took but a moment.

The footsteps of those who toiled up the opposite side of the acclivity were now audible, and presently voices and treads announced the arrival of the pursuers. The foremost shouted as they reached the height; then, fearful that their enemy would escape under favour of the descent, each leaped upon the fallen tree and plunged into the ravine, trusting to get a sight of the pursued ere he reached the bottom. Presently all were in the bottom of the glen, quite a hundred feet below him. This was the critical moment; believing that no more pursuers remained behind, and hoping to steal away unseen, Deerslayer suddenly threw himself over the tree, and fell on the upper side. This achievement appeared to be effected successfully, and hope beat high in the bosom of the fugitive. Rising to his hands and feet, the young man next scrambled to the top of the hill, a distance of only ten yards, in the expectation of getting its brow between him and his pursuers, and himself so far under cover. Even this was effected, and he rose to his feet, walking swiftly but steadily along the summit, in a direction opposite to that in which he had first fled. No sooner did he reach the height than he was seen, and the chase renewed. As it was better footing on the level ground, Deerslayer now avoided the hill-side, holding his flight along the ridge; while the Hurons, judging from the general formation of the land, saw that the ridge would soon melt into the hollow, and kept to the latter, as the easiest mode of heading the fugitive.

The situation of Deerslayer was now more critical than it ever had been. He was virtually surrounded on three sides, having the lake on the fourth. When he found that he was descending towards the glen, by the melting away of the ridge, he turned short, at right angles to his previous course,

and went down the declivity with tremendous velocity, holding his way towards the shore. Some of his pursuers came panting up the hill in direct chase, while most still kept on in the ravine, intending to head him at its termination.

Abandoning now all thoughts of escape by the woods, he made the best of his way towards the canoe. He knew where it lay; could it be reached, he had only to run the gauntlet of a few rifles, and success would be certain. Everything seemed propitious to the execution of this plan, and the course being a continued descent, the young man went over the ground at a rate that promised a speedy termination to his toil.

As Deerslayer approached the point, several women and children were passed, but though the former endeavoured to cast dried branches between his legs, the terror inspired by his bold retaliation on the redoubted Panther was so great that none dared come near enough seriously to molest him. He went by all triumphantly, and reached the fringe of bushes. Plunging through these, our hero found himself once more in the lake, and soon stood at the side of the canoe. The first glance told him that the paddles had been removed! Preparing himself duly, and giving a right direction to its bows, he ran off into the water, bearing the canoe before him, threw all his strength and skill into a last effort, and cast himself forward so as to fall into the bottom of the light craft, without materially impeding its way. Here he remained on his back, both to regain his breath and to cover his person from the deadly rifle. As he lay in the bottom of the canoe, he watched its movements by studying the tops of the trees on the mountain-side, and judged of his distance by the time and the motion. Voices on the shore were now numerous, and he heard something said about manning the raft.

Suddenly all the voices ceased, and a deathlike stillness pervaded the spot. By this time the canoe had drifted so far as to render nothing visible to Deerslayer, as he lay on his back, except the blue void of space. It was not possible to endure this uncertainty long. The young man well knew that the profound stillness foreboded evil, the savages never being so silent as when about to strike a blow. He took out a knife, and was about to cut a hole through the bark, in order to get a view of the shore, when he paused from a dread of being seen in the operation, which would direct the enemy where to

aim their bullets. At this instant a rifle *was* fired, and the ball pierced both sides of the canoe, within eighteen inches of the spot where his head lay. This was close work, but our hero lay still half a minute longer, and then he saw the summit of an oak coming slowly within his narrow horizon.

Unable to account for this change, Deerslayer could restrain his impatience no longer. Hitching his body along with the utmost caution, he got his eye at the bullet-hole, and fortunately commanded a very tolerable view of the point. The canoe, by one of those imperceptible impulses that so often decide the fate of men, had inclined southerly, and was slowly drifting down the lake. It drifted so near the point as to bring the tops of two or three trees within the range of the young man's view, and, indeed, to come in quite as close proximity with the extremity of the point as was at all safe. The distance could not much have exceeded a hundred feet, though fortunately a light current of air from the south-west began to set it slowly off shore.

Deerslayer now felt the urgent necessity of resorting to some expedient to get farther from his foes, and, if possible, to apprise his friends of his situation. Before quitting the shore, and as soon as he perceived that the paddles were gone, Deerslayer had thrown a bit of dead branch into the canoe. Removing the cap he wore, he put it on the end of the stick, and just let it appear over the edge of the canoe, as far as possible from his own person. This *ruse* was scarcely adopted, before the young man had a proof how much he had underrated the intelligence of his enemies. In contempt of an artifice so shallow and common-place, a bullet was fired directly through another part of the canoe, which actually razed his skin. He dropped the cap, and instantly raised it immediately over his head as a safeguard.

Deerslayer lay passive a few minutes longer, his eye at the bullet-hole, and much did he rejoice at seeing that he was drifting gradually farther and farther from the shore. He now bethought him of the stick, which was crooked, and offered some facilities for rowing. The experiment succeeded better even than he had hoped, though his great embarrassment was to keep the canoe straight. That his present manœuvre was seen soon became apparent by a bullet entering the stern of the canoe, traversing its length, whistling between his arms, and passing out at the head. He was making a stronger push than common, when another messenger from the point broke the

stick out-board, and at once deprived him of his oar. Deerslayer now determined to leave all to the drift until he believed himself beyond the reach of bullets.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

By this time Deerslayer had been twenty minutes in the canoe, and he began to grow a little impatient for some signs of relief from his friends. At length, wearied with fruitless watchfulness, he turned himself on his back, closed his eyes, and awaited the result in determined acquiescence.

Some additional ten minutes may have passed in this quiescent manner, on both sides, when Deerslayer thought he heard a slight noise, like a low rubbing against the bottom of his canoe. He opened his eyes in expectation of seeing the face or arm of an Indian rising from the water, and found that a canopy of leaves was impending directly over his head. Starting to his feet, the first object that met his eye was Rivenoak, who had so far aided the slow progress of the boat as to draw it on the point, the grating on the strand being the sound that had first given Natty the alarm.

"Come," said the Huron, quietly; "my friend has sailed about till he is tired."

"You've the best of it, Huron," returned Deerslayer, stepping from the canoe, and passively following his leader; "Providence has helped you in an unexpected manner."

"My young friend is a moose!" exclaimed the Huron.

"Ay, have your talk, Rivenoak; make the most of your advantage. I'm your capt/ve; work your will on me."

"My brother has had a long run on the hills, and a pleasant sail on the water," returned Rivenoak. "Perhaps he has seen enough to change his mind, and make him hear reason."

"Speak out, Huron."

"That is straight! There is no turning in the talk of my pale-face friend, though he is a fox in running. I will speak to him; his ears are now open wider than before, and his eyes are not shut. The Sumach is poorer than ever. Once she had a brother and a husband; but the Panther yelled, and followed the husband on the path of death. Who shall feed her and her young? The man who told her husband and her

brother to quit her lodge that there might be room for him to come into it. He is a great hunter, and we know that the woman will never want."

"Ay, Huron, this is soon settled. I've heard of men's saving their lives this-a-way; but for my part, I do not seek my end; nor do I seek matrimony."

"The pale-face will think of this while my people get ready for the council. Go: when we want him, the name of Deerslayer will be called."

Rivenoak walked up the vista of trees, as soon as he ceased speaking, leaving Deerslayer by himself. The chief disappeared behind the covers of the forest, and one unpractised in such scenes might have believed the prisoner left to the dictates of his own judgment. Affecting an indifference he was far from feeling, he strolled about the area, gradually getting nearer and nearer to the spot where he had landed, when he suddenly quickened his pace, though carefully avoiding all appearance of flight, and, pushing aside the bushes, he stepped upon the beach. The canoe was gone, nor could he see any traces of it.

Deerslayer now perceived that he was a prisoner on the narrow tongue of land, vigilantly watched beyond a question, and with no other means of escape than that of swimming. He again thought of this last expedient, but the certainty that the canoe would be sent in chase, and the desperate nature of the chances of success deterred him from the undertaking. He gazed wistfully towards the castle, but there all seemed to be silent and desolate; and a feeling of loneliness and desertion came over him to increase the gloom of the moment.

"God's will be done!" murmured the young man, as he walked sorrowfully away from the beach; "God's will be done on 'arth, as it is in heaven! I did hope that my days would not be numbered so soon: but it matters little after all."

While this soliloquy was being pronounced, the hunter advanced into the area, where to his surprise he saw Hetty alone. Moving nearer, Deerslayer spoke.

"Poor Hetty," he said, "times have been so troublesome of late that I'd altogether forgotten you. I wonder what has become of Chingachgook and Wah?"

"Deerslayer," returned the girl, "do you mean to marry Sumach, now she has neither husband nor brother to feed her?"

"Are such your ideas of matrimony, Hetty? Ought the

young to wive with the old—the Christian with the heathen? It's ag'in reason and natur', and so you'll see if you think of it a moment."

"I've always heard mother say," returned Hetty, "that people should never marry until they loved each other better than brothers and sisters: and I suppose that is what you mean."

"Ay, and she's red, and I'm white. But tell me, Hetty, what has become of all the Hurons, and why they let you roam about the p'int, as if you too was a prisoner?"

"I'm no prisoner, Deerslayer, but a free girl, and go when and where I please. Nobody dare hurt *me*! If they did, God would be angry—as I can show them in the Bible. No, no—Hetty Hutter is not afraid; *she's* in good hands. The Hurons are up yonder in the woods, and keep a good watch on us both, I'll answer for it, since all the women and children are on the look-out."

Here the stirring of leaves and the cracking of dried twigs apprised Deerslayer of the approach of his enemies. The Hurons closed around the spot that had been prepared for the coming scene, and in the centre of which the intended victim now stood, in a circle—the armed men being so distributed among the feebler members of the band, that there was no safe opening through which the prisoner could break. But the latter no longer contemplated flight; the recent trial having satisfied him of his inability to escape when pursued so closely by numbers. On the contrary, all his energies were aroused in order to meet his expected fate with a calmness that should do credit to his colour and his manhood.

When Rivenoak reappeared in the circle, he occupied his old place at the head of the area. Several of the elder warriors stood near him; but, now that the brother of Sumach had fallen, there was no longer any recognized chief present whose influence and authority offered a dangerous rivalry to his own.

"Killer of the Deer," recommenced Rivenoak, with calmness and dignity; "Killer of the Deer, it is time that my people knew their minds. The sun is no longer over our heads; tired of waiting on the Hurons, he has begun to fall near the pines on this side of the valley. My people must go back to their home. But two lodges are empty; a scalp, living or dead, is wanted at each door."

"Then take 'em dead, Huron," returned the captive. "My hour is come, I suppose; and what must be, must."

Rivenoak now directed the proper persons to bind the captive. This expedient was adopted with the design of making him feel his helplessness, and of gradually sapping his resolution, by undermining it, as it might be, little by little. Deerslayer offered no resistance. As soon as his body was withed in bark sufficiently to create a lively sense of helplessness, he was carried to a young tree, and bound against it in a way that effectually prevented him from moving.

The young men showed an impatience to begin to torture that Rivenoak understood, and as his elder associates manifested no disposition to permit any longer delay, he was compelled to give the signal for the infernal work to proceed.

No sooner did the young men understand that they were at liberty to commence, than some of the boldest and most forward among them sprang into the arena, tomahawk in hand. Here they prepared to throw that dangerous weapon, the object being to strike the tree as near as possible to the victim's head without absolutely hitting him. In the truest hands it was seldom that the captive escaped injury in these trials; and it often happened that death followed even when the blow was not premeditated.

The first youth who presented himself for the trial was called the Raven, having as yet had no opportunity of obtaining a more warlike *sobriquet*. He was remarkable for high pretensions rather than for skill or exploits; and those who knew his character thought the captive in imminent danger when he took his stand, and poised the tomahawk. After a suitable number of flourishes and gesticulations, the Raven let the tomahawk quit his hand. The weapon cut a chip from the sapling to which the prisoner was bound, within a few inches of his cheek, and stuck in a large oak that grew several yards behind him. This was decidedly a bad effort, and a common sneer proclaimed as much, to the great mortification of the young man. On the other hand, there was a general but suppressed murmur of admiration at the steadiness with which the captive stood the trial.

The Raven was succeeded by the Moose. He took his stand quietly, but with an air of confidence, poised his little axe but a single instant, advanced a foot with a quick motion, and threw. The tomahawk actually bound the head of the captive to the tree, by carrying before it some of his hair, and burying itself deep beneath the soft bark. A general yell expressed the delight of the spectators.

The Bounding Boy next skipped about in front of the captive, menacing him with his tomahawk, now on one side, and now on another, and then again in front, in the vain hope of being able to extort some sign of fear by this parade of danger. At length Deerslayer's patience became exhausted by all this mummery, and he spoke for the first time since the trial had actually commenced.

"Throw away, Huron!" he cried, "or your tomahawk will forget it's a'r'nd."

The words were scarcely past the lips of the speaker than the tomahawk left the hand of the Indian. Nor was it cast without good-will, and a fierce determination to slay. The aim was uncertain, and the weapon glanced near the cheek of the captive, slightly cutting the shoulder in its evolutions.

To this irritable person succeeded several other young warriors, who not only hurled the tomahawk, but who cast the knife, a far more dangerous experiment, with reckless indifference; yet they always manifested a skill that prevented any injury to the captive. Several times Deerslayer was grazed, but in no instance did he receive what might be termed a wound. The unflinching firmness with which he faced his assailants, more especially in the sort of rally with which this trial terminated, excited a profound respect in the spectators.

Rivenoak now told his people that the pale-face had proved himself to be a man. He wished to know whether it was the desire of the Hurons to proceed any further. Even the gentlest of the females, however, had received too much satisfaction in the late trials to forego their expectations of a gratifying exhibition; and there was but one voice in the request to proceed. The chief therefore called four or five of the best marksmen to him, and bid them put the captive to the proof of the rifle, while, at the same time, he cautioned them touching the necessity of their maintaining their own credit by the closest attention to the manner of exhibiting their skill.

When Deerslayer saw the chosen warriors step into the circle with their arms prepared for service, he felt some such relief as the miserable sufferer who has long endured the agonies of disease feels at the certain approach of death. He now fully expected the end of his career, and experienced a sort of melancholy pleasure in the idea that he was to fall by a weapon as much beloved as the rifle. But a slight interruption took place before the business was allowed to proceed.

Hetty witnessed all that passed, and the scene at first had

pressed upon her feeble mind in a way to paralyse it entirely; but by this time she had rallied, and was growing indignant at the unmerited suffering the Indians were inflicting on her friend. She now appeared in the circle, gentle, even bashful in mien, as usual, but earnest in her words and countenance.

"Why do you torment Deerslayer?" she asked. "What has he done that you trifle with his life? Who has given you the right to be judges? In harming Deerslayer you injure your own friend; when father and Hurry Harry came after your scalps, he refused to be of the party. You are tormenting your friend in tormenting this young man!"

The Hurons listened with grave attention, and then Rivenoak replied: "Go, daughter, and sit by Sumach, who is in grief. Let the Huron warriors show how well they can shoot; let the pale-face show how little he cares for their bullets."

Hetty did as told, seating herself passively on a log by the side of the Sumach, and averting her face from the painful scene that was occurring within the circle.

The warriors now resumed their places, and again prepared to exhibit their skill. The distance was small, and in one sense safe. But in diminishing the distance taken by the tormentors, the trial to the nerves of the captive was essentially increased. The face of Deerslayer, indeed, was just removed sufficiently from the ends of the guns to escape the effects of the flash.

Shot after shot was made, all the bullets coming in close proximity to the Deerslayer's head without touching it. Still no one could detect even the twitching of a muscle on the part of the captive, or the slightest winking of an eye.

Rivenoak now said: "We have bound the Deerslayer too tight; the thongs keep his limbs from shaking and his eyes from shutting. Loosen him; let us see what his own body is really made of."

The proposal of the chief found instant favour, and several hands were immediately at work, cutting and tearing the ropes of bark from the body of our hero. In half a minute Deerslayer stood as free from bonds as when, an hour before, he had commenced his flight on the side of the mountain.

To find himself so unexpectedly liberated, in possession of his strength, and with a full command of limb, acted on Deerslayer like a sudden restoration to life, reanimating hopes that he had once absolutely abandoned. From that instant all his plans changed. From the instant that his buoyancy of feeling

revived, his thoughts were keenly bent on the various projects that presented themselves as modes of evading the designs of his enemies; and he again became the quick-witted, ingenious, and determined woodsman, alive to all his own powers and resources. The change was so great that his mind resumed its elasticity; and no longer thinking of submission, it dwelt only on the devices of the sort of warfare in which he was engaged.

The band now divided itself in a circle round him, in order to hedge him in; and the desire to break down his spirit grew in them precisely as they saw proofs of the difficulty there would be in subduing it. The honour of the band was now involved in the issue; and even the sex lost all its sympathy with suffering in the desire to save the reputation of the tribe. The voices of the girls, soft and melodious as nature had made them, were heard mingling with the menaces of the men; and the wrongs of Sumach suddenly assumed the character of injuries inflicted on every Huron female. This had gone on for some time when a sudden and unlooked-for announcement, that proceeded from one of the look-outs, a boy of ten or twelve years old, put a momentary check to the whole proceeding.

CHAPTER XXIX.

It exceeded Deerslayer's power to ascertain what had produced the sudden pause in the movements of his enemies, until the fact was revealed in due course. It required but a minute, however, to bring an explanation of this singular pause, which was soon terminated by the appearance of Judith on the exterior of the line of bodies, and her ready admission within its circle.

If Deerslayer was startled by this unexpected arrival, well knowing that the quick-witted girl could claim none of that exemption from the penalties of captivity that was so cheerfully accorded to her feeble-minded sister, he was equally astonished at the guise in which she came. All her ordinary forest attire had been laid aside for the brocade that has been already mentioned, and which had once before wrought so great and magical an effect in her appearance. Nor was this all. Accustomed to see the ladies of the garrison in the formal

gala attire of the day, the girl had managed to complete her dress in a way to leave nothing strikingly defective in its details, or even to betray an incongruity that would have been detected by one practised in the mysteries of the toilet.

The effect of such an apparition had not been miscalculated. The instant Judith found herself within the circle, she was in a degree compensated for the fearful personal risk she ran by the unequivocal sensation of surprise and admiration produced by her appearance. The grim old warriors uttered their favourite exclamation, "Hugh!" The younger men were still more sensibly overcome, and even the women were not backward in letting open manifestations of pleasure escape them. Deerslayer himself was astounded, and this quite as much by the brilliant picture the girl presented, as at the indifference to consequences with which she had braved the danger of the step she had taken.

"Which of these warriors is the principal chief?" demanded Judith of Deerslayer.

Deerslayer quietly pointed to Rivenoak.

"I can believe this, Huron," resumed Judith, enacting her assumed part with a dignity that did credit to her powers of imitation. "I can believe you to be the principal person of this party; I see in your countenance the marks of thought and reflection. To you, then, I must make my communication."

"Let the Flower of the Woods speak," returned the old chief, courteously. "If her words are as pleasant as her looks they will never quit my ears."

This admiration was grateful to one constituted like Judith, and it contributed to aid her self-possession quite as much as it fed her vanity.

"Now, Huron," she continued, "listen to my words. Your eyes tell you that I am no common woman. I will not say I am the queen of this country; but under our gracious monarchs there are many degrees of rank; one of these I fill. You *see* what I am; you must *feel* that in listening to my words you listen to one who can be your friend or your enemy, as you treat her."

Judith waited with anxiety to hear the answer. Rivenoak answered as promptly as comported with the notions of Indian decorum.

"My daughter is handsomer than the wild roses of Ontario; her voice is pleasant to the ear as the song of the wren," answered the cautious and wily chief; "but the Hurons will be

ashamed to go back to their village and tell their people that they are not able to give the *name* of the bird. They do not know how to say whether it is a wren or a cat-bird. This would be a great disgrace; my young men would not be allowed to travel in the woods without taking their mothers with them to tell them the names of the birds."

"You can ask my name of your prisoner," returned the girl. "It is Judith; and there is a great deal of the history of Judith in the pale-faces' best book, the Bible. If I am a bird of fine feathers, I have also my name."

"No," answered the wily Huron, betraying the artifice he had so long practised, by speaking in English, with tolerable accuracy; "I not ask prisoner. He tired; want rest. I ask my daughter with feeble-mind. She speak truth. Come here, daughter; you answer. *Your name Hetty?*"

"Yes, that's what they call me," returned the girl; "though it's written Esther in the Bible."

"He write *him* in Bible too! All write in Bible. No matter—what's *her* name?"

"That's Judith, and it's so written in the Bible, though father sometimes called her Jude. That's my sister, Judith, Thomas Hutter's daughter."

A smile of triumph gleamed on the hard-wrinkled countenance of the chief, when he found how completely his appeal to the truth-loving Hetty had succeeded. As for Judith herself, the moment her sister was questioned she saw that all was lost; for no entreaty could have induced the right-feeling girl to utter a falsehood. She saw her bold and ingenious expedient for liberating the captive fail, through one of the simplest and most natural causes that could be imagined. She turned her eye on Deerslayer, therefore, as if imploring him to interfere to save them both.

"It will not do, Judith," said the young man, in answer to this appeal. "'Twas a bold idee, and fit for a general's lady; but yonder Mingo"—Rivenoak had withdrawn to a little distance, and was out of ear-shot—"is an uncommon man, and not to be deceived by any unnat'ral sarcumventions. 'Twas too much to attempt making him fancy that a queen, or a great lady, lived in these mountains."

"At all events, Deerslayer, my presence here will save you for a time. They will hardly attempt torturing you before my face."

"Why not, Judith? Do you think they will treat a women

of the pale-faces more tenderly than they treat their own? I wish you hadn't come, my good Judith; it can do no good to me, while it may do great harm to yourself."

"I can share your fate," the girl answered, with generous enthusiasm. "They shall not injure you while I stand by, if in my power to prevent it—besides—"

"Besides what, Judith? What means have you to stop Indian cruelty, or to avert Indian torments?"

"None, perhaps, Deerslayer," answered the girl with firmness; "but I can suffer with my friends—die with them, if necessary."

"Ah! Judith—suffer you may; but die you will not until the Lord's time shall come. It's little likely that one of your sex and beauty will meet with a harder fate than to become the wife of a chief, if, indeed, your white inclinations can stoop to match with an Indian. 'Twould have been better had you stayed in the ark. You was about to say something, when you stopped at 'besides'?"

"It might not be safe to mention it here, Deerslayer," the girl answered in a low tone; "half an hour is all in all to us. None of your friends are idle."

The hunter replied merely by a grateful look. Then he turned towards his enemies, as if ready again to face the torments. A short consultation had passed among the elders of the band, and by this time they also were prepared with their decision. The merciful purpose of Rivenoak had been much weakened by the artifice of Judith. He had abandoned the wish of saving the prisoner, and was no longer disposed to retard the most serious part of the torture. This change of sentiment was communicated to the young men, who were already eagerly engaged in making their preparations. Fragments of dried wood were collected near the sapling, and the thongs were already produced that were again to bind the victim to the tree. When the warriors advanced to bind him, however, the young man glanced at Judith, as if to inquire whether resistance or submission were most advisable. By a significant gesture she counselled the last; and in a minute he was once more fastened to the tree, a helpless object of any insult or wrong that might be offered. The fire was immediately lighted in the pile, and the end of all was anxiously expected.

It was not the intention of the Hurons absolutely to destroy the life of their victim by means of fire. In the end they

fully intended to carry his scalp with them into their village; but it was their wish first to break down his resolution, and to reduce him to the level of a complaining sufferer. With this view, the pile of brush and branches had been placed at a proper distance, or one at which it was thought the heat would soon become intolerable, though it might not be immediately dangerous. The distance, however, had been miscalculated, and the flames began to wave their forked tongues in a proximity to the face of the victim that would have proved fatal in another instant, had not Hetty rushed through the crowd, armed with a stick, and scattered the blazing pile in a dozen directions. More than one hand was raised to strike the presumptuous intruder to the earth; but the chiefs prevented the blows. Hetty herself was insensible to the risk she ran, but as soon as she had performed this bold act, she stood looking about her in frowning resentment, as if to rebuke the crowd of attentive savages for their cruelty.

"God bless you, dearest sister, for that brave and ready act!" murmured Judith, herself unnerved so much as to be incapable of exertion.

"'Twas well meant, Judith," rejoined the victim; "'twas excellently meant, and 'twas timely, though it may prove untimely in the end! What is to come to pass must come to pass soon, or 'twill quickly be too late."

"Cruel, heartless Hurons!" exclaimed the still indignant Hetty; "would you burn a man and a Christian as you would burn a log of wood?"

A gesture from Rivenoak caused the scattered brands to be collected; fresh wood was brought, and the flame was just kindling a second time, when an *Indian* female pushed through the circle, advanced to the heap, and with her foot dashed aside the lighted twigs, in time to prevent a conflagration. A yell followed this second disappointment; but when the offender turned towards the circle and presented the countenance of Hist, it was succeeded by exclamations of pleasure and surprise. Young and old crowded around the girl in haste to demand an explanation of her sudden and unlooked-for return. At this critical instant Hist spoke to Judith in a low voice, placed some small object, unseen, in her hand, and then turned to meet the salutations of the Huron girls. Judith recovered her self-possession, and acted promptly. The small keen-edged knife that Hist had given to the other was passed by the latter into the hands of Hetty, as the safest and least suspected

medium of transferring it to Deerslayer. But instead of first cutting loose the hands of the victim, and then concealing the knife in his clothes, in readiness for action at the most available instant, she went to work herself to cut the thongs that bound his head, that he might not again be in danger of inhaling flames. Of course this deliberate procedure was seen and arrested ere she had more than liberated the upper portion of the captive's body. This discovery at once pointed distrust towards Hist; and to Judith's surprise, when questioned on the subject, that spirited girl was not disposed to deny her agency in what had passed.

"Why should I not help Deerslayer?" the girl demanded, in the tones of a firm-minded woman. "He is the brother of a Delaware chief; my heart is all Delaware. Come forth miserable Briarthorn, and wash the Iroquois paint from your face; stand before the Hurons the crow that you are. Put him face to face with Deerslayer, chiefs and warriors; I will show you how great a knave you have been keeping in your tribe."

This bold language, uttered in their own dialect, and with a manner full of confidence, produced a deep sensation among the Hurons. Treachery is always liable to distrust; and though the recreant Briarthorn had endeavoured to serve the enemy well, his exertions and assiduities had gained for him little more than toleration. Thus summoned, however, it was impossible to remain in the background. But when he stood in the centre of the circle, he was so disguised in his new colours that, at first, the hunter did not recognize him. He assumed an air of defiance, notwithstanding, and haughtily demanded what any could say against "Briarthorn".

"Ask yourself that," continued Hist, with spirit. "Ask that of your own heart, sneaking wood-chuck of the Delawares; come not here with the face of an innocent man."

"Who wishes Briarthorn?" he sternly asked. "If this pale-face is tired of life, speak, Rivenoak; I will send him after the warriors we have lost."

"No, chief; no, Rivenoak," eagerly interrupted Hist. "The Deerslayer fears nothing! Unbind him—place him face to face with this cawing bird; then let us see which is tired of life."

Hist made a forward movement, as if to take a knife from a young man, and perform the office she had mentioned in person; but an aged warrior interposed at a sign from Rivenoak. Her proposal to release Deerslayer rejected, the disappointed

Hist found herself driven back from the sapling at the very moment she fancied herself about to be successful. Rivenoak now announced the intention of the old men again to proceed.

"Stop, Huron!" exclaimed Judith, in agitation; "for heaven's sake, a single minute longer—"

The words were cut short by another and a still more extraordinary interruption. A young Indian came bounding through the Huron ranks, leaping into the very centre of the circle, in a way to denote the utmost confidence, or a temerity bordering on foolhardiness. Three steps carried the warrior to the side of Deerslayer, whose withes were cut in the twinkling of an eye. Not till this was effected did the stranger bestow a glance on any other object; then he turned, and showed the astonished Hurons the noble brow, fine person, and eagle eye of a young warrior, in the paint and panoply of a Delaware. He held a rifle in each hand, the butts of both resting on the earth, while from one dangled its proper pouch and horn. This was Killdeer, which even as he looked in defiance on the crowd around him, he suffered to fall back into the hands of its proper owner. The presence of two armed men, though it was in their midst, startled the Hurons. Still, they had too much self-possession to betray fear.

"Hurons," said the young chief, "this earth is very big. The great lakes are big, too; there is room beyond them for the Iroquois; there is room for the Delawares on this side. This is my betrothed; that pale-face is my friend. My heart was heavy when I missed him. All the Delaware girls are waiting for Wah! they wonder that she stays away so long. Come, let us say farewell, and go on our path."

"Hurons, this is your mortal enemy, the Great Serpent of them you hate!" cried Briarthorn. "If he escape, blood will be in your moccasin prints from this spot to the Canadas."

As the last words were uttered the traitor cast his knife at the naked breast of the Delaware. A quick movement of the arm on the part of Hist turned aside the blow, the dangerous weapon burying its point in a pine. At the next instant, a similar weapon glanced from the hand of the Serpent, and quivered in the recreant's heart. A minute had scarcely elapsed from the moment in which Chingachgook bounded into the circle and that in which Briarthorn fell, like a log, dead in his tracks. The rapidity of events had prevented the Hurons from acting; but this catastrophe permitted no farther delay. A common exclamation followed, and the whole party

was in motion. At this instant, a sound unusual to the woods was heard, and every Huron, male and female, paused to listen with ears erect and faces filled with expectation. The sound was regular and heavy, as if the earth were struck with beetles. Objects became visible among the trees of the background, and a body of troops was seen advancing with measured tread. They came upon the charge, the scarlet of the king's livery shining among the bright green foliage of the forest.

A general yell burst from the inclosed Hurons; it was succeeded by the hearty cheers of England. Still, not a musket or rifle was fired, though that steady measured tramp continued, and the bayonet was seen gleaming in advance of a line that counted nearly sixty men. Each warrior rushed for his arms, and then all on the point—man, woman, and child—eagerly sought cover. In this scene of confusion and dismay nothing could surpass the coolness of Deerslayer. He threw himself on a flank of the retiring Hurons, and watching his opportunity, and finding two of his recent tormentors in a range, his rifle brought both down at one discharge. This drew a general fire from the Hurons, and the rifle and war-cry of the Serpent were heard in the clamour. Still the trained men returned no answering volley, but presently the shrieks, groans, and denunciations that usually accompany the use of the bayonet, followed. The scene that succeeded was one of those of which so many have occurred in our own times, in which neither age nor sex forms an exception to the lot of a savage warfare.

CHAPTER XXX.

When the sun rose on the following morning, every sign of hostility and alarm had vanished from the basin of the Glimmerglass. Nothing was changed but the air and movement of life that prevailed in and around the castle. Here, indeed, a sentinel, who wore the light-infantry uniform of a royal regiment, paced the platform with measured tread, and some twenty men of the same corps lounged about the place. Two officers stood examining the shore with the ship's glass so often mentioned. Their looks were directed to that fatal point where scarlet coats were still to be seen gliding among

the trees, and where the instrument also showed spades at work, and the sad duty of interment going on. Several of the common men bore proofs on their persons that their enemies had not been overcome entirely without resistance; and the youngest of the two officers on the platform wore an arm in a sling.

A sergeant approached to make a report. He addressed the senior of the officers as Captain Warley, while the other was alluded to as Mr. Thornton.

"Craig is covering us with benedictions," observed the first-named officer, with an air of indifference, as he shut the glass and handed it to his servant: "to say the truth, not without reason; it is certainly more agreeable to be here in attendance on Miss Judith Hutter, than to be burying Indians. But your arm is troublesome, and we'll go ourselves and see what has become of Graham."

The surgeon who had accompanied the party was employed very differently from what the captain supposed. When the assault was over, and the dead and wounded were collected, poor Hetty had been found among the latter. A rifle bullet had passed through her body, inflicting an injury that was known at a glance to be mortal. Captain Warley and his ensign found their surgeon in the principal room of the ark. He was just quitting the pallet of Hetty with an expression of sorrowful regret on his hard, pock-marked, Scottish features that it was not usual to see there. All his assiduity had been useless, and he was compelled reluctantly to abandon the expectation of seeing the girl survive many hours. Poor Hetty had been placed on her own bed, and was reclining in a half-seated attitude, with the approaches of death on her countenance, though they were singularly dimmed by the lustre of an expression in which all the intelligence of her entire being appeared to be concentrated. Judith and Hist were near her; while Deerslayer stood at the end of the pallet leaning on Killdeer. The Serpent was in the background of the picture, erect and motionless as a statue. Hurry completed the group, being seated on a stool near the door.

"Who is that in scarlet?" asked Hetty, as soon as the captain's uniform caught her eye. "Tell me, Judith, is it the friend of Hurry?"

"'Tis the officer who commands the troops that have rescued us all from the hands of the Hurons," was the low answer of the sister.

"I have got my Bible here, Judith!" returned her sister, in a voice of triumph. "It's true I can't read any longer; there's something the matter with my eyes—you look dim and distant—and so does Hurry, now I look at him. Well, I never could have believed that Henry March could have so dull a look! What can be the reason, Judith, that I see so badly to-day?"

Again Judith groaned in the pure, heartfelt sorrow of sisterly love, heightened by a sense of the meek humility and perfect truth of the being before her. At that moment she would gladly have given up her own life to save that of Hetty. As the last, however, was beyond the reach of human power, she felt there was nothing left her but sorrow.

"Are you the officer that came with Hurry?" Hetty asked, as her eye caught sight of Captain Warley. "If you are, we ought all to thank you; for though I am hurt, the rest have saved their lives. Did Harry March tell you where to find us?"

"The news of the party reached us by means of a friendly runner," returned the captain, "and I was immediately sent out to cut it off. It was fortunate, certainly, that we met Hurry, for he acted as a guide; and it was not less fortunate that we heard a firing, which I now understand was merely a shooting at the mark, for it not only quickened our march but called us to the right side of the lake. The Delaware saw us on the shore with the glass, it would seem, and he and his squaw did us excellent service."

A long pause—one of more than two hours—succeeded. By this time Judith had got to be inactive, through grief, and Hist alone was performing the little offices of feminine attention that are so appropriate to the sick-bed. Hetty herself had undergone no other apparent change than the general failing that indicated the near approach of dissolution. All that she possessed of mind was as clear as ever.

"Don't grieve for me so much, Judith," said the gentle sufferer, after a pause; "I shall soon see mother. Perhaps, when I'm dead, God will give me all my mind, and I shall become a more fitting companion for mother than I ever was before."

"You will be an angel in heaven, Hetty," sobbed the sister; "no spirit there will be more worthy of its holy residence!"

"I don't understand it quite; still I know it must be all true; I've read it in the Bible. How dark it's becoming! Can it be night so soon? I can hardly see you at all; where is Hist?"

"I here, poor girl; why you no see me?"

"I do see you; but I couldn't tell whether 'twas you or Judith. I believe I sha'n't see you much longer, Hist."

"Sorry for that, poor Hetty. Never mind; pale-face got a heaven for girl as well as for warrior."

"Sister, where are you? I can't see now anything but darkness. It must be night, surely!"

"Oh! Hetty, I am here at your side; these are my arms that are round you," sobbed Judith. "Speak, dearest; is there anything you wish to say or have done in this awful moment?"

There was no answer; Hetty's sight had now entirely failed her. Nevertheless, death approached with less than usual of its horrors, as if in tenderness to one of her half-endowed faculties.

"Hurry is here, dearest Hetty," whispered Judith, with her face so near the sufferer as to keep the words from other ears. "Shall I tell him to come and receive your good wishes?"

A gentle pressure of the hand answered in the affirmative, and then Hurry was brought to the side of the pallet. He allowed Judith to put his hard, colossal hand between those of Hetty, and stood waiting the result in awkward silence.

"This is Hurry, dearest," whispered Judith, bending over her sister; "speak to him, and let him go."

"Good-bye, Hurry," murmured the girl, with a gentle pressure of his hand;—"I wish you would try and be more like Deerslayer."

These words were uttered with difficulty; a faint flush succeeded them for a single instant, then the hand was relinquished, and Hetty turned her face aside as if done with the world.

"Of what are you thinking, my sweet sister?" whispered Judith after a pause.

"Mother—I see mother now, and bright beings around her in the lake—Farewell, Judith!"

The last words were uttered after a pause, and her sister had hung over her some time in anxious watchfulness before she perceived that the gentle spirit had departed.

The day that followed proved a melancholy one. Hour dragged on after hour, until evening arrived, and then came the last solemn offices in honour of poor Hetty. Her body was laid in the lake, by the side of that of the mother she had so loved and revered.

The business of the day closed with this pious duty. By order of the commanding officer, all retired early to rest, for it was intended to begin the march homeward with the return of light.

When a hasty and frugal breakfast had been taken, the party began its movement towards the shore with a regularity and order that prevented noise or confusion.

The soldiers embarked in the ark, with the captain at their head. When all were on board, the sweeps were manned, and the ark moved in its sluggish manner towards the distant point. Deerslayer and Chingachgook now barred the windows and doors, and the house was left by means of the trap. On quitting the palisades, Hist was seen in the remaining canoe, where the Delaware immediately joined her, and paddled away, leaving Judith standing alone on the platform. Owing to this prompt proceeding, Deerslayer found himself alone with the beautiful and still weeping mourner. Too simple to suspect anything, the young man swept the light boat round, and received its mistress in it, when he followed the course already taken by his friend.

The direction to the point led diagonally past, and at no great distance from, the graves of the dead. As the canoe glided by, Judith, for the first time that morning, spoke to her companion, asking him to stop for a minute or two ere she left the place.

"I may never see this spot again, Deerslayer," she said; "and it contains the bodies of my mother and sister! Is it not possible, think you, that the innocence of one of these beings may answer, in the eyes of God, for the salvation of both?"

"I don't understand it so, Judith; though I'm no missionary. Each spirit answers for its own backslidings, though a hearty repentance will satisfy God's laws."

"Then *must* my poor, poor mother be in heaven! Surely her sufferings in this life ought to count as something against her sufferings in the next!"

"All this goes beyond me, Judith. I strive to do right here, as the surest means of keeping all right hereafter. Hetty was uncommon, and her soul was as fit to consort with angels the hour it left its body as that of any saint in the Bible!"

"I do believe you only do her justice! Move the canoe a little farther east, Deerslayer, the sun so dazzles my eyes that I cannot see the graves.

The girl gazed into the water near a minute in silence: then she turned her eyes to the castle.

"This lake will soon be entirely deserted," she said,—“and this, too, at a moment when it will be a more secure dwelling-place than ever. What has so lately happened will prevent the Iroquois from venturing again to visit it for a long time to come.”

“That it will!—yes, that may be set down as settled,” replied Deerslayer.

“Deerslayer,” said Judith after a pause, “this is not a moment for affectation, deception, or a want of frankness of any sort. I will, therefore, speak to you without reserve, and without any dread of being misunderstood. You are but an acquaintance of a week, but it appears to me as if I had known you for years. So much has taken place within that short time, that the sorrows, and dangers, and escapes of a whole life have been crowded into a few days; and they who have suffered and acted together in such scenes ought not to feel like strangers. I know that what I am about to say might be misunderstood by most men, but I hope for a generous construction of my course from you. Do I make myself understood?”

“Sartain, Judith; few converse better than yourself, and none more agreeable like. Your words are as pleasant as your looks.”

“It is the manner in which you have so often praised those looks that give me courage to proceed. Still, Deerslayer, it is not easy for one of my sex and years to forget all her lessons of infancy, and say openly what her heart feels!”

“Why not, Judith? Why shouldn't women as well as men deal fairly and honestly by their fellow-creatures?”

“I will—I *must* deal as plainly with you as I would with poor dear Hetty, were that sweet child living!” she continued, turning pale; “yes, I will smother all other feelings in the one that is now uppermost. You love the woods and the life that we pass here in the wilderness, away from the dwellings and towns of the whites?”

“As I loved my parents, Judith, when they were living. This very spot would be all creation to me could this war be fairly over once, and the settlers kept at a distance.”

“Why quit it, then? It has no owner—at least none who can claim a better right than mine, and *that* I freely give to you. Let us then return to it, after we have seen the priest

at the fort, and never quit it again until God calls us away to that world where we shall find the spirits of my poor mother and sister."

A long, thoughtful pause succeeded; Judith having covered her face with both her hands, after forcing herself to utter so plain a proposal, and Deerslayer musing equally in sorrow and surprise on the meaning of the language he had just heard. At length the hunter broke the silence, speaking in a tone that was softened to gentleness by his desire not to offend.

"You haven't thought well of this, Judith," he said—"no, your feelin's are awakened by all that has lately happened, and believin' yourself to be without kindred in the world, you are in too great haste to find some to fill the places of them that's lost."

"Were I living in a crowd of friends, Deerslayer, I should still think as I think,—say as I now say," returned Judith.

"Thank you, gal,—thank you, from the bottom, of my heart. Howsoever, I am not one to take advantage of a weak moment, when you're forgetful of your own great advantages, and fancy 'arth and all it holds is in this little canoe. No, no, Judith, 'twould be onginerous in me; what you've offered can never come to pass!"

"It all may be, and that without leaving cause of repentance to any," answered Judith. "We can cause the soldiers to leave our goods on the road till we return, when they can easily be brought back to the house; all your skins may be readily sold at the garrison; there *you* can buy the few necessaries we shall want, for I wish never to see the spot again."

"Ah's me—you're a winning and a lovely creetur', Judith; yes, you *are* all that. These pictur's are pleasant to the thoughts, but they mightn't prove so happy as you now think 'em. Forget it all, therefore, and let us paddle after the Sarpent and Hist, as if nothing had been said on the subject."

Judith was deeply mortified; and, what is more, she was profoundly grieved. Still there was a steadiness and quiet in the manner of Deerslayer that completely smothered her hopes, and told her that for once her exceeding beauty had failed to excite the admiration and homage it was wont to receive.

"God forbid that we lay up regrets in after-life through any want of sincerity now," she said. "I hope we understand each other, at least. You will not accept me for a wife, Deerslayer?"

"'Tis better for both that I shouldn't take advantage of your own forgetfulness, Judith. We can never marry."

"You do not love me—cannot find it in your heart, perhaps, to esteem me, Deerslayer?"

"Everything in the way of fri'ndship, Judith,—everything, even to sarvices and life itself. Yes, I'd risk as much for you at this moment as I would risk in behalf of Hist; and that is sayin' as much as I can say in favour of any darter of woman."

"This is enough!" answered Judith, in a smothered voice; "I understand all that you mean. Marry you cannot without loving; and that love you do not feel for me. Make no answer if I am right, for I shall understand your silence."

Deerslayer obeyed her, and made no reply. For more than a minute the girl riveted her eyes on him as if to read his soul, while he sat playing with the water like a corrected schoolboy. Then Judith herself dropped the end of her paddle, and urged the canoe away from the spot with a movement as reluctant as the feelings which controlled it. Deerslayer quietly aided the effort, and they were soon on the trackless line taken by the Delaware.

The ark had already arrived, and the soldiers had disembarked, before the canoe of the two loiterers reached the point. Chingachgook had preceded it, and was already some distance in the wood, at a spot where the two trails—that to the garrison, and that to the villages of the Delawares—separated. The soldiers, too, had taken up their line of march. All this Judith saw, but she heeded it not. The Glimmer-glass had no longer any charms for her; and when she put her foot on the strand, she immediately proceeded on the trail of the soldiers, without casting a single glance behind her.

"Wait you here, Sarpent," said Deerslayer, as he followed in the footsteps of the dejected beauty, while passing his friend. "I will just see Judith among her party, and come and j'ine you."

A hundred yards had hid the couple from those in front, as well as those in the rear, when Judith turned and spoke.

"This will do, Deerslayer," she said sadly, "I understand your kindness, but shall not need it. In a few minutes I shall reach the soldiers. As you cannot go with me on the journey of life, I do not wish you to go further on this. But stop: before we part I would ask you a single question. Tell me, Deerslayer, if anything light of me that Henry March has said may not have influenced your feelings?"

Truth was the Deerslayer's polar star. It was nearly impossible for him to avoid uttering it, even when prudence demanded silence. Judith read his answer in his countenance; and with a heart nearly broken by the consciousness of undeserving, she signed to him an adieu, and buried herself in the woods. For some time Deerslayer was irresolute as to his course; but in the end he retraced his steps, and joined the Delaware. That night the three "camped" on the head waters of their own river, and the succeeding evening they entered the village of the tribe; Chingachgook and his betrothed in triumph, their companion honoured and admired, but in a sorrow that it required months of activity to remove.

The war that then had its rise was stirring and bloody. The Delaware chief rose among his people, until his name was never mentioned without eulogiums; while Deerslayer, under the *sobriquet* of Hawkeye, made his fame spread far and near, until the crack of his rifle became as terrible to the ears of the Mingos as the thunders of the Manitou.

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