Wyandotte; or, the Hutted Knoll . . . Volume 1

James Fenimore Cooper

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PREFACE.

The history of the borders is filled with legends of the sufferings of isolated families, during the troubled scenes of colonial warfare. Those which we now offer to the reader, are distinctive in many of their leading facts, if not rigidly true in the details. The first alone is necessary to the legitimate objects of fiction.

One of the misfortunes of a nation, is to hear little besides its own praises. Although the American revolution was probably as just an effort as was ever made by a people to resist the first inroads of oppression, the cause had its evil aspects, as well as all other human struggles. We have been so much accustomed to hear everything extolled, of late years, that could be dragged into the remotest connection with that great event, and the principles which led to it, that there is danger of overlooking truth, in a pseudo patriotism. Nothing is really patriotic, however, that is not strictly true and just; any more than it is paternal love to undermine the constitution of a child by an indiscriminate indulgence in pernicious diet. That there were demagogues in 1776, is as certain as that there are demagogues in 1843, and will probably continue to be demagogues as long as means for misleading the common mind shall exist.

A great deal of undigested morality is uttered to the world, under the disguise of a pretended public virtue. In the eye of reason, the man who deliberately and voluntarily contracts civil engagements is more strictly bound to their fulfilment, than he whose whole obligations consist of an accident over which he had not the smallest control, that of birth; though the very reverse of this is usually maintained under the influence of popular prejudice. The reader will probably discover how we view this matter, in the course of our narrative.

Perhaps this story is obnoxious to the charge of a slight anachronism, in representing the activity of the Indians a

year earlier than any were actually employed in the struggle of 1775. During the century of warfare that existed between the English and French colonies, the savage tribes were important agents in furthering the views of the respective belligerents. The war was on the frontiers, and these fierce savages were, in a measure, necessary to the management of hostilities that invaded their own villages and hunting−grounds. In 1775, the enemy came from the side of the Atlantic, and it was only after the struggle had acquired force, that the operations of the interior rendered the services of such allies desirable. In other respects, without pretending to refer to any real events, the incidents of this tale are believed to be sufficiently historical for all the legitimate purposes of fiction.

In this book the writer has aimed at sketching several distinct varieties of the human race, as trueto the governing impulses of their educations, habits, modes of thinking and natures. The red man had his morality, as much as his white brother, and it is well known that even Christian ethics are coloured and governed, by standards of opinion set up on purely human authority. The honesty of one Christian is not always that of another, any more than his humanity, truth, fidelity or faith. The spirit must quit its earthly tabernacle altogether, ere it cease to be influenced by its tints and imperfections.

CHAPTER I.

"An acorn fell from an old oak tree,

And lay on the frosty ground

'O, what shall the fate of the acorn be?'

Was whispered all around

By low−toned voices chiming sweet,

Like a floweret's bell when swung

And grasshopper steeds were gathering fleet,

And the beetle's hoofs up−rung."

Mrs. Seba Smith

There is a wide−spread error on the subject of American scenery. From the size of the lakes, the length and breadth of the rivers, the vast solitudes of the forests, and the seemingly boundless expanse of the prairies, the world has come to attach to it an idea of grandeur; a word that is in nearly every case, misapplied. The scenery of that portion of the American continent which has fallen to the share of the Anglo−Saxon race, very seldom rises to a scale that merits this term; when it does, it is more owing to the accessories, as in the case of the interminable woods, than to the natural face of the country. To him who is accustomed to the terrific sublimity of the Alps, the softened and yet wild grandeur of the Italian lakes, or to the noble witchery of the shores of the Mediterranean, this country is apt to seem tame, and uninteresting as a whole; though it certainly has exceptions that carry charms of this nature to the verge of loveliness.

Of the latter character is the face of most of that region which lies in the angle formed by the junction of the Mohawk with the Hudson, extending as far south, or even farther, than the line of Pennsylvania, and west to the verge of that vast rolling plain which composes Western New York. This is a region of more than ten thousand squaremiles of surface, embracing to−day, ten counties at least, and supporting a rural population of near half a million of souls, excluding the river towns.

All who have seen this district of country, and who are familiar with the elements of charming, rather than grand scenery it possesses, are agreed in extolling its capabilities, and, in some instances, its realities. The want of high finish is common to everything of this sort in America; and, perhaps we may add, that the absence of picturesqueness, as connected with the works of man, is a general defect; still, this particular region, and all others resembling it for they abound on the wide surface of the twenty−six states has beauties of its own, that it would be difficult to meet with in any of the older portions of the earth.

They who have done us the honour to read our previous works, will at once understand that the district to which we allude, is that of which we have taken more than one occasion to write; and we return to it now, less with a desire to celebrate its charms, than to exhibit them in a somewhat novel, and yet perfectly historical aspect. Our own earlier labours will have told the reader, that all of this extended district of country, with the exception of belts of settlements along the two great rivers named, was a wilderness, anterior to the American revolution. There was a minor class of exceptions to this general rule, however, to which it will be proper to advert, lest, by conceiving us too literally, the reader may think he can convict us of a contradiction. In order to be fully understood, the explanations shall be given at a little length.

While it is true, then, that the mountainous region, which now contains the counties of Schoharie, Otsego, Chenango, Broome, Delaware, was a wilderness in 1775, the colonial governors had begun to make grants of its lands, some twenty years earlier. The patent of the estate on which we are writing lies before us; and it bears the date of 1769, with an Indian grant annexed, that is a year or two older. This may be taken as a mean date for the portion of country alluded to; some of the deeds being older, and others still more recent. These grants of land were originally made, subject to quit−rents to the crown; and usually on the payment of heavy fees to the colonial officers,after going through the somewhat supererogatory duty of "extinguishing the Indian title," as it was called. The latter were pretty effectually "extinguished" in that day, as well as in our own; and it would be a matter of curious research to ascertain the precise nature of the purchase−money given to the aborigines. In the case of the patent before us, the Indian right was "extinguished" by means of a few rifles, blankets, kettles, and beads; though the grant covers a nominal hundred thousand, and a real hundred and ten or twenty thousand acres of land.

The abuse of the grants, as land became more valuable, induced a law, restricting the number of acres patented to any one person, at any one time, to a thousand. Our monarchical predecessors had the same facilities, and it may be added, the same propensities, to rendering a law a dead letter, as belongs to our republican selves. The patent on our table, being for a nominal hundred thousand acres, contains the names of one hundred different grantees, while three several parchment documents at its side, each signed by thirty−three of these very persons, vest the legal estate in the first named, for whose sole benefit the whole concession was made; the dates of the last instruments succeeding, by one or two days, that of the royal patent itself.

Such is the history of most of the original titles to the many estates that dotted the region we have described, prior to the revolution. Money and favouritism, however, were not always the motives of these large concessions. Occasionally, services presented their claims; and many instances occur in which old officers of the army, in particular, received a species of reward, by a patent for land, the fees being duly paid, and the Indian title righteously "extinguished." These grants to ancient soldiers were seldom large, except in the cases of officers of rank; three or four thousand well−selected acres, being a sufficient boon to the younger sons of Scottish lairds, or English squires, who had been accustomed to look upon a single farm as an estate.

As most of the soldiers mentioned were used to forest life, from having been long stationed at frontier posts, and had thus become familiarized with its privations, and hardened against its dangers, it was no unusual thing for themto sell out, or go on half−pay, when the wants of a family began to urge their claims, and to retire to their "patents," as the land itself, as well as the instrument by which it was granted, was invariably termed, with a view of establishing themselves permanently as landlords.

These grants from the crown, in the portions of the colony of New York that lie west of the river counties, were generally, if not invariably, simple concessions of the fee, subject to quit−rents to the king, and reservations of mines of the precious metals, without any of the privileges of feudal seignory, as existed in the older manors on the Hudson, on the islands, and on the Sound. Why this distinction was made, it exceeds our power to say; but, that the fact was so, as a rule, we have it in proof, by means of a great number of the original patents, themselves, that have been transmitted to us from various sources. Still, the habits of "home" entailed the name, even where the thing was not to be found. Titular manors exist, in a few instances, to this day, where no manorial rights were ever granted; and manor−houses were common appellations for the residences of the landlords of large estates, that were held in fee, without any exclusive privileges, and subject to the reservation named. Some of these manorial residences were of so primitive an appearance, as to induce the belief that the names were bestowed in pleasantry; the dwellings themselves being of logs, with the bark still on them, and the other fixtures to correspond. Notwithstanding all these drawbacks, early impressions and rooted habits could easily transfer terms to such an abode; and there was always a saddened enjoyment among these exiles, when they could liken their forest names and usages to those they had left in the distant scenes of their childhood.

The effect of the different causes we have here given was to dot the region described, though at long intervals, with spots of a semi−civilized appearance, in the midst of the vast nay, almost boundless expanse of forest. Some of these early settlements had made considerable advances towards finish and comfort, ere the war of '76 drove their occupants to seek protection against the inroads of the savages; and long after the influx of immigration which succeeded the peace, the fruits, the meadows, and the tilled fields of these oases in the desert, rendered them conspicuous amidst the blackened stumps, piled logs, and smooty fallows of an active and bustling settlement. At even a much later day, they were to be distinguished by the smoother surfaces of their fields, the greater growth and more bountiful yield of their orchards, and by the general appearance of a more finished civilization, and of greater age. Here and there, a hamlet had sprung up; and isolated places, like Cherry Valley and Wyoming, were found, that have since become known to the general history of the country.

Our present tale now leads us to the description of one of those early, personal, or family settlements, that had grown up, in what was then a very remote part of the territory in question, under the care and supervision of an ancient officer of the name of Willoughby. Captain Willoughby, after serving many years, had married an American wife, and continuing his services until a son and daughter were born, he sold his commission, procured a grant of land, and determined to retire to his new possessions, in order to pass the close of his life in the tranquil pursuits of agriculture, and in the bosom of his family. An adopted child was also added to his cares. Being an educated as well as a provident man, Captain Willoughby had set about the execution of this scheme with deliberation, prudence, and intelligence. On the frontiers, or lines, as it is the custom to term the American boundaries, he had become acquainted with a Tuscarora, known by the English sobriquet of "Saucy Nick." This fellow, a sort of half−outcast from his own people, had early attached himself to the whites, had acquired their language, and owing to a singular mixture of good and bad qualities, blended with great native shrewdness, he had wormed himself into he confidence of several commanders of small garrisons, among whom was our captain. No sooner was the mind of the latter made up, concerning his future course, than he sent for Nick, who was then in the fort; when the following conversation took place:

"Nick," commenced the captain, passing his hand over his brow, as was his wont when in a reflecting mood; "Nick, I have an important movement in view, in which you can be of some service to me."

The Tuscarora, fastening his dark basilisk−like eyes on the soldier, gazed a moment, as if to read his soul; then he jerked a thumb backward, over his own shoulder, and said, with a grave smile

"Nick understand. Want six, two, scalp off Frenchman's head; wife and child; out yonder, over dere, up in Canada. Nick do him what you give?"

"No, you red rascal, I want nothing of the sort it is peace now, (this conversation took place in 1764), and you know I never bought a scalp, in time of war. Let me hear no more of this."

"What you want, den?" asked Nick, like one who was a good deal puzzled.

"I want land good land little, but good. I am about to get a grant a patent "

"Yes," interrupted Nick, nodding; "I know him paper to take away Indian's hunting−ground."

"Why, I have no wish to do that I am willing to pay the red men reasonably for their right, first."

"Buy Nick's land, den better dan any oder."

"Your land, knave! You own no land belong to no tribe have no rights to sell."

"What for ask Nick help, den?"

"What for? Why because you know a good deal, though you own literally nothing. That's what for."

"Buy Nick know, den. Better dan he great fader know, down at York."

"That is just what I do wish to purchase. I will pay you well, Nick, if you will start to−morrow, with your rifle and a pocket−compass, off here towards the head−waters of the Susquehannah and Delaware, where the streams run rapidly, and where there are no fevers, and bring me an account of three or four thousand acres of rich bottom−land, in such a way as a surveyor can find it, and I can get a patent for it. What say you, Nick; will you go?"

"He not wanted. Nick sell 'e captain, his own land; here in 'e fort."

"Knave, do you not know me well enough not to trifle, when I am serious?"

"Nick ser'ous too Moravian priest no ser'ouser more dan Nick at dis moment. Got land to sell."

Captain Willoughby had found occasion to punish theTuscarora, in the course of his services; and as the parties understood each other perfectly well, the former saw the improbability of the latter's daring to trifle with him.

"Where is this land of yours, Nick," he inquired, after studying the Indian's countenance for a moment. "Where does it lie, what is it like, how much is there of it, and how came you to own it?"

"Ask him just so, ag'in," said Nick, taking up four twigs, to note down the question, seriatim.

The captain repeated his inquiries, the Tuscarora laying down a stick at each separate interrogatory.

"Where he be?" answered Nick, taking up a twig, as a memorandum. "He out dere where he want him where he say. One day's march from Susquehanna."

"Well; proceed."

"What he like? Like land, to be sure. T'ink he like water! Got some water no too much got some land got no tree got some tree. Got good sugar−bush got place for wheat and corn."

"Proceed."

"How much of him?" continued Nick, taking up another twig; "much as he want want little, got him want more, got him. Want none at all, got none at all got what he want."

"Go on."

"To be sure. How came to own him? How a pale face come to own America? Discover him ha! Well, Nick discover land down yonder, up dere, over here."

"Nick, what the devil do you mean by all this?"

"No mean devil, at all mean land good land. Discover him know where he is catch beaver dere, three, two year. All Nick say, true as word of honour; much more too."

"Do you mean it is an old beaver−dam destroyed?" asked the captain, pricking up his ears; for he was too familiar with the woods, not to understand the value of such a thing.

"No destroy stand up yet good as ever. Nick dere, last season."

"Why, then, do you tell of it? Are not the beaver of more value to you, than any price you may receive for the land?"

"Cotch him all, four, two year ago rest run away.No find beaver to stay long, when Indian once know, two time, where to set he trap. Beaver cunninger 'an pale face cunning as bear."

"I begin to comprehend you, Nick. How large do you suppose this pond to be?"

"He 'm not as big as Lake Ontario. S'pose him smaller; what den? Big enough for farm."

"Does it cover one or two hundred acres, think you? Is it as large as the clearing around the fort?"

"Big as two, six, four of him. Take forty skin, dere, one season. Little lake; all 'e tree gone."

"And the land around it is it mountainous and rough, or will it be good for corn?"

"All sugar−bush what you want better? S'pose you want corn; plant him. S'pose you want sugar; make him."

Captain Willoughby was struck with this description, and he returned to the subject, again and again. At length, after extracting all the information he could get from Nick, he struck a bargain with the fellow. A surveyor was engaged, and he started for the place, under the guidance of the Tuscarora. The result showed that Nick had not exaggerated. The pond was found, as he had described it to be, covering at least four hundred acres of low bottom−land; while near three thousand acres of higher river−flat, covered with beach and maple, spread around it for a considerable distance. The adjacent mountains too, were arable, though bold, and promised, in time, to become a fertile and manageable district. Calculating his distances with judgment, the surveyor laid out his metes and bounds in such a manner as to include the pond, all the low−land, and about three thousand acres of hill, or mountain, making the materials for a very pretty little "patent" of somewhat more than six thousand acres of capital land. He then collected a few chiefs of the nearest tribe, dealt out his rum, tobacco, blankets, wampum, and gunpowder, got twelve Indians to make their marks on a bit of deer−skin, and returned to his employer with a map, a field−book, and a deed, by which the Indian title was "extinguished." The surveyor received his compensation, and set off on a similar excursion, for a different employer, and in another direction.the spring.

Mrs. Willoughby, and the children, were left with their friends, in Albany; while the captain and his party pioneered their way to the patent, in the best manner they could. This party consisted of Nick, who went in the capacity of hunter, an office of a good deal of dignity, and of the last importance, to a set of adventurers on an expedition of this nature. Then there were eight axe−men, a house−carpenter, a mason, and a mill−wright. These, with Captain Willoughby, and an invalid sergeant, of the name of Joyce, composed the party.

Our adventurers made most of their journey by water. After finding their way to the head of the Canaideraga, mistaking it for the Otsego, they felled trees, hollowed them into canoes, embarked, and, aided by a yoke of oxen that were driven along the shore, they wormed their way, through the Oaks, into the Susquehanna, descending that river until they reached the Unadilla, which stream they ascended until they came to the small river, known in the parlance of the country, by the erroneous name of a creek, that ran through the captain's new estate. The labour of this ascent was exceedingly severe; but the whole journey was completed by the end of April, and while the streams were high. Snow still lay in the woods; but the sap had started, and the season was beginning to show its promise.

The first measure adopted by our adventurers was to "hut." In the very centre of the pond, which, it will be remembered, covered four hundred acres, was an island of some five or six acres in extent. It was a rocky knoll, that rose forty feet above the surface of the water, and was still crowned with noble pines, a species of tree that had escaped the ravages of the beaver. In the pond, itself, a few "stubs" alone remained, the water having killed the trees, which had fallen and decayed. This circumstance showed that the stream had long before been dammed; successions of families of beavers having probably occupied the place, and renewed the works, for centuries, at intervals of generations. The dam in existence, however, was not very old; the animals having fled from their great enemy, man, rather than from any other foe.

To the island Captain Willoughby transferred all his stores, and here he built his hut. This was opposed to thenotions of his axe−men, who, rightly enough, fancied the mainland would be more convenient; but the captain and the sergeant, after a council of war, decided that the position on the knoll would be the most military, and might be defended the longest, against man or beast. Another station was taken up, however, on the nearest shore, where such of the men were permitted to "hut," as preferred the location.

These preliminaries observed, the captain meditated a bold stroke against the wilderness, by draining the pond, and coming at once into the possession of a noble farm, cleared of trees and stumps, as it might be by a coup de main. This would be compressing the results of ordinary years of toil, into those of a single season, and everybody was agreed as to the expediency of the course, provided it were feasible.

The feasibility was soon ascertained. The stream which ran through the valley, was far from swift, until it reached a pass where the hills approached each other in low promontories; there the land fell rapidly away to what might be termed a lower terrace. Across this gorge, or defile, a distance of about five hundred feet, the dam had been thrown, a good deal aided by the position of some rocks that here rose to the surface, and through which the little river found its passage. The part which might be termed the key−stone of the dam, was only twenty yards wide, and immediately below it, the rocks fell away rapidly, quite sixty feet, carrying down the waste water in a sort of fall. Here the mill−wright announced his determination to commence operations at once, putting in a protest against destroying the works of the beavers. A pond of four hundred acres being too great a luxury for the region, the man was overruled, and the labour commenced.

The first blow was struck against the dam about nine o'clock, on the 2d day of May, 1765, and, by evening, the little sylvan−looking lake, which had lain embedded in the forest, glittering in the morning sun, unruffled by a breath of air, had entirely disappeared! In its place, there remained an open expanse of wet mud, thickly covered with pools and the remains of beaver−houses, with a small river winding its way slowly through the slime. The change tothe eye was melancholy indeed; though the prospect was cheering to the agriculturist. No sooner did the water obtain a little passage, than it began to clear the way for itself, gushing out in a torrent, through the pass

already mentioned.

The following morning, Captain Willoughby almost mourned over the works of his hands. The scene was so very different from that it had presented when the flats were covered with water, that it was impossible not to feel the change. For quite a month, it had an influence on the whole party. Nick, in particular, denounced it, as unwise and uncalled for, though he had made his price out of the very circumstance in prospective; and even Sergeant Joyce was compelled to admit that the knoll, an island no longer, had lost quite half its security as a military position. The next month, however, brought other changes. Half the pools had vanished by drainings and evaporation; the mud had begun to crack, and, in some places to pulverize; while the upper margin of the old pond had become sufficiently firm to permit the oxen to walk over it, without miring. Fences of trees, brush, and even rails, enclosed, on this portion of the flats, quite fifty acres of land; and Indian corn, oats, pumpkins, peas, potatoes, flax, and several other sorts of seed, were already in the ground. The spring proved dry, and the sun of the forty−third degree of latitude was doing its work, with great power and beneficence. What was of nearly equal importance, the age of the pond had prevented any recent accumulation of vegetable matter, and consequently spared those who laboured around the spot, the impurities of atmosphere usually consequent on its decay. Grass−seed, too, had been liberally scattered on favourable places, and things began to assume the appearance of what is termed "living."

August presented a still different picture. A saw−mill was up, and had been at work for some time. Piles of green boards began to make their appearance, and the plane of the carpenter was already in motion. Captain Willoughby was rich, in a small way; in other words, he possessed a few thousand pounds besides his land, and had yet to receive the price of his commission. A portion of these means were employed judiciously to advance his establishment;and, satisfied that there would be no scarcity of fodder for the ensuing winter, a man had been sent into the settlements for another yoke of cattle, and a couple of cows. Farming utensils were manufactured on the spot, and sleds began to take the place of carts; the latter exceeding the skill of any of the workmen present.

October offered its products as a reward for all this toil. The yield was enormous, and of excellent quality. Of Indian corn, the captain gathered several hundred bushels, besides stacks of stalks and tops. His turnips, too, were superabundant in quantity, and of a delicacy and flavour entirely unknown to the precincts of old lands. The potatoes had not done so well; to own the truth, they were a little watery, though there were enough of them to winter every hoof he had, of themselves. Then the peas and garden truck were both good and plenty; and a few pigs having been procured, there was the certainty of enjoying a plenty of that important article, pork, during the coming winter.

Late in the autumn, the captain rejoined his family in Albany, quitting the field for winter quarters. He left sergeant Joyce, in garrison, supported by Nick, a miller, the mason, carpenter, and three of the axe−men. Their duty was to prepare materials for the approaching season, to take care of the stock, to put in winter crops, to make a few bridges, clear out a road or two, haul wood to keep themselves from freezing, to build a log barn and some sheds, and otherwise to advance the interests of the settlement. They were also to commence a house for the patentee.

As his children were at school, captain Willoughby determined not to take his family immediately to the Hutted Knoll, as the place soon came to be called, from the circumstance of the original bivouack. This name was conferred by sergeant Joyce, who had a taste in that way, and as it got to be confirmed by the condescension of the proprietor and his family, we have chosen it to designate our present labours. From time to time, a messenger arrived with news from the place; and twice, in the course of the winter, the same individual went back with supplies, and encouraging messages to the different persons left in the clearing. As spring approached, however, the captain beganto make his preparations for the coming campaign, in which he was to be accompanied by his wife; Mrs. Willoughby, a mild, affectionate, true−hearted New York woman, having decided not to let her husband pass another summer in that solitude without feeling the cheering influence of her presence.

In March, before the snow began to melt, several sleigh−loads of different necessaries were sent up the valley of the Mohawk, to a point opposite the head of the Otsego, where a thriving village called Fortplain now stands. Thence men were employed in transporting the articles, partly by means of "jumpers" improviséd for the occasion, and partly on pack−horses, to the lake, which was found this time, instead of its neighbour the Canaderaiga. This necessary and laborious service occupied six weeks, the captain having been up as far as the lake once himself; returning to Albany, however, ere the snow was gone.

CHAPTER II.

All things are new the buds, the leaves,

That gild the elm−tree's nodding crest,

And even the nest beneath the eaves

There are no birds in last year's nest.

Longfellow

"I have good news for you, Wilhelmina," cried the captain, coming into the parlour where his wife used to sit and knit or sew quite half the day, and speaking with a bright face, and in a cheerful voice "Here is a letter from my excellent old colonel; and Bob's affair is all settled and agreed on. He is to leave school next week, and to put on His Majesty's livery the week after."

Mrs. Willoughby smiled, and yet two or three tears followed each other down her cheeks, even while she smiled. The first was produced by pleasure at hearing that her son had got an ensigncy in the 60th, or Royal Americans; and the last was a tribute paid to nature; a mother's fears at consigning an only boy to the profession of arms.

"I am rejoiced, Willoughby," she said, "because you rejoice, and I know that Robert will be delighted at possessing the king's commission; but, he is very young to be sent into the dangers of battle and the camp!"

"I was younger, when I actually went into battle, for then it was war; now, we have a peace that promises to be endless, and Bob will have abundance of time to cultivate a beard before he smells gunpowder. As for myself" he added in a half−regretful manner, for old habits and opinions would occasionally cross his mind "as for myself, the cultivation of turnips must be my future occupation. Well, the bit of parchment is sold, Bob has got his in its place, while the difference in price is in my pocket, and no more need be said and here come our dear girls, Wilhelmina, to prevent any regrets. The father of two such daughters ought, at least, to be happy."

At this instant, Beulah and Maud Willoughby, (for so the adopted child was called as well as the real), entered the room, having taken the lodgings of their parents, in a morning walk, on which they were regularly sent by the mistress of the boarding−school, in which they were receiving what was then thought to be a first−rate American female education. And much reason had their fond parents to be proud of them! Beulah, the eldest, was just eleven, while her sister was eighteen months younger. The first had a staid, and yet a cheerful look; but her cheeks were blooming, her eyes bright, and her smile sweet. Maud, the adopted one, however, had already the sunny countenance of an angel, with quite as much of the appearance of health as her sister; her face had more finesse, her looks more intelligence, her playfulness more feeling, her smile more tenderness, at times; at others, more meaning. It is scarcely necessary to say that both had that delicacy of outline which seems almost inseparable from the female form in this country. What was, perhaps, more usual in that day among persons of their class than it is in our own, each spoke her own language with an even graceful utterance, and a faultless accuracy of pronunciation, equally removed from effort and provincialisms. As the Dutch was in very common use then, at

Albany, and most females of Dutch origin had a slight touch of their mother tongue in theirenunciation of English, this purity of dialect in the two girls was to be ascribed to the fact that their father was an Englishman by birth; their mother an American of purely English origin, though named after a Dutch god−mother; and the head of the school in which they had now beer three years, was a native of London, and a lady by habite and education.

"Now, Maud," cried the captain, after he had kissed the forehead, eyes and cheeks of his smiling little favourite "Now, Maud, I will set you to guess what good news I have for you and Beulah."

"You and mother do n't mean to go to that bad Beaver Manor this summer, as some call the ugly pond?" answered the child, quick as lightning.

"That is kind of you, my darling; more kind than prudent; but you are not right."

"Try Beulah, now," interrupted the mother, who, while she too doted on her youngest child, had an increasing respect for the greater solidity and better judgment of her sister: "let us hear Beulah's guess."

"It is something about my brother, I know by mother's eyes," answered the eldest girl, looking inquiringly into Mrs. Willoughby's face.

"Oh! yes," cried Maud, beginning to jump about the room, until she ended her saltations in her father's arms "Bob has got his commission! I know it all well enough, now I would not thank you to tell me I know it all now dear Bob, how he will laugh! and how happy I am!"

"Is it so, mother?" asked Beulah, anxiously, and without even a smile.

"Maud is right; Bob is an ensign or, will be one, in a day or two. You do not seem pleased, my child?"

"I wish Robert were not a soldier, mother. Now he will be always away, and we shall never see him; then he may be obliged to fight, and who knows how unhappy it may make him?"

Beulah thought more of her brother than she did of herself; and, sooth to say, her mother had many of the child's misgivings. With Maud it was altogether different: she saw only the bright side of the picture; Bob gay and brilliant, his face covered with smiles, his appearance admired, himself, and of course his sisters, happy. Captain Willoughby sympathized altogether with his pet. Accustomed to arms, he rejoiced that a career in which he had partially failed this he did not conceal from himself or his wife that this same career had opened, as he trusted, with better auspices on his only son. He covered Maud with kisses, and then rushed from the house, finding his heart too full to run the risk of being unmanned in the presence of females.

A week later, availing themselves of one of the last falls of snow of the season, captain Willoughby and his wife left Albany for the Knoll. The leave−taking was tender, and to the parents bitter; though after all, it was known that little more than a hundred miles would separate them from their beloved daughters. Fifty of these miles, however, were absolutely wilderness; and to achieve them, quite a hundred of tangled forest, or of difficult navigation, were to be passed. The communications would be at considerable intervals, and difficult. Still they might be held, and the anxious mother left many injunctions with Mrs. Waring, the head of the school, in relation to the health of her daughters, and the manner in which she was to be sent for, in the event of any serious illness.

Mrs. Willoughby had often overcome, as she fancied, the difficulties of a wilderness, in the company of her husband. It is the fashion highly to extol Napoleon's passage of the Alps, simply in reference to its physical obstacles. There never was a brigade moved twenty−four hours into the American wilds, that had not greater embarrassments of this nature to overcome, unless in those cases in which favourable river navigation has offered its facilities. Still, time and necessity had made a sort of military ways to all the more important frontier points

occupied by the British garrisons, and the experience of Mrs. Willoughby had not hitherto been of the severe character of that she was now compelled to undergo.

The first fifty miles were passed over in a sleigh, in a few hours, and with little or no personal fatigue. This brought the travellers to a Dutch inn on the Mohawk, where the captain had often made his halts, and whither he had, from time to time, sent his advanced parties in the courseof the winter and spring. Here a jumper was found prepared to receive Mrs. Willoughby; and the horse being led by the captain himself, a passage through the forest was effected as far as the head of the Otsego. The distance being about twelve miles, it required two days for its performance. As the settlements extended south from the Mohawk a few miles, the first night was passed in a log cabin, on the extreme verge of civilization, if civilization it could be called, and the remaining eight miles were got over in the course of the succeeding day. This was more than would probably have been achieved in the virgin forest, and under the circumstances, had not so many of the captain's people passed over the same ground, going and returning, thereby learning how to avoid the greatest difficulties of the route, and here and there constructing a rude bridge. They had also blazed the trees, shortening the road by pointing out its true direction.

At the head of the Otsego, our adventurers were fairly in the wilderness. Huts had been built to receive the travellers, and here the whole party assembled, in readiness to make a fresh start in company. It consisted of more than a dozen persons, in all; the black domestics of the family being present, as well as several mechanics whom Captain Willoughby had employed to carry on his improvements. The men sent in advance had not been idle, any more than those left at the Hutted Knoll. They had built three or four skiffs, one small batteau, and a couple of canoes. These were all in the water, in waiting for the disappearance of the ice; which was now reduced to a mass of stalactites in form, greenish and sombre in hue, as they floated in a body, but clear and bright when separated and exposed to the sun. The south winds began to prevail, and the shore was glittering with the fast−melting piles of the frozen fluid, though it would have been vain yet to attempt a passage through it.

The Otsego is a sheet that we have taken more than one occasion to describe, and the picture it then presented, amidst its frame of mountains, will readily be imagined by most of our readers. In 1765, no sign of a settlement was visible on its shores; few of the grants of land in that vicinity extending back so far. Still the spot began to be known; and hunters had been in the habit of frequentingits bosom and its shores, for the last twenty years or more. Not a vestige of their presence, however, was to be seen from the huts of the captain; but Mrs. Willoughby assured her husband, as she stood leaning on his arm, the morning after her arrival, that never before had she gazed on so eloquent, and yet so pleasing a picture of solitude as that which lay spread before her eyes.

"There is something encouraging and soothing in this bland south wind, too," she added, "which seems to promise that we shall meet with a beneficent nature, in the spot to which we are going. The south airs of spring, to me are always filled with promise."

"And justly, love; for they are the harbingers of a renewed vegetation. If the wind increase, as I think it may, we shall see this chilling sheet of ice succeeded by the more cheerful view of water. It is in this way, that all these lakes open their bosoms in April."

Captain Willoughby did not know it, while speaking, but, at that moment, quite two miles of the lower, or southern end of the lake, was clear, and the opening giving a sweep to the breeze, the latter was already driving the sheets of ice before it, towards the head, at a rate of quite a mile in the hour. Just then, an Irishman, named Michael O'Hearn, who had recently arrived in America, and whom the captain had hired as a servant of all work, came rushing up to his master, and opened his teeming thoughts, with an earnestness of manner, and a confusion of rhetoric, that were equally characteristic of the man and of a portion of his nation.

"Is it journeying south, or to the other end of this bit of wather, or ice, that yer honour is thinking of?" he cried. "Well, and there'll be room for us all, and to spare; for divil a bir−r−d will be left in that quarter by night, or forenent twelve o'clock either, calculating by the clock, if one had such a thing; as a body might say."

As this was said not only vehemently, but with an accent that defies imitation with the pen, Mrs. Willoughby was quite at a loss to get a clue to the idea; but, her husband, more accustomed to men of Mike's class, was sufficiently lucky to comprehend what he was at.

"You mean the pigeons, Mike, I suppose," the captainanswered, good−humouredly. "There are certainly a goodly number of them; and I dare say our hunters will bring us in some, for dinner. It is a certain sign that the winter is gone, when birds and beasts follow their instincts, in this manner. Where are you from, Mike?"

"County Leitrim, yer honour," answered the other, touching his cap.

"Ay, that one may guess," said the captain, smiling; "but where last?"

"From looking at the bir−r−ds, sir! Och! It's a sight that will do madam good, and contains a sartainty there'll be room enough made for us, where all these cr'atures came from. I'm thinking, yer honour, if we don't ate them, they'll be wanting to ate us. What a power of them, counting big and little; though they're all of a size, just as much as if they had flown through a hole made on purpose to kape them down to a convanient bigness, in body and feathers."

"Such a flight of pigeons in Ireland, would make a sensation, Mike," observed the captain, willing to amuse his wife, by drawing out the County Leitrim−man, a little.

"It would make a dinner, yer honour, for every mother's son of 'em, counting the gur−r−rls, in the bargain! Such a power of bir−r−ds, would knock down 'praties, in a wonderful degree, and make even butthermilk chape and plenthiful. Will it be always such abundance with us, down at the Huts, yer honour? or is this sight only a delusion to fill us with hopes that's never to be satisfied?"

"Pigeons are seldom wanting in this country, Mike, in the spring and autumn; though we have both birds and beasts, in plenty, that are preferable for food."

"Will it be plentthier than this? Well, it's enough to destroy human appetite, the sight of 'em! I'd give the half joe I lost among them blackguards in Albany, at their Pauss, as they calls it, jist to let my sister's childer have their supper out of one of these flocks, such as they are, betther or no betther. Och! its pleasant to think of them childer having their will, for once, on such a power of wild, savage bir−r−ds!"

Captain Willoughby smiled at this proof of naiveté in his new domestic, and then led his wife back to the hut; it being time to make some fresh dispositions for the approaching movement. By noon, it became apparent to those who were waiting such an event, that the lake was opening; and, about the same time, one of the hunters came in from a neighbouring mountain, and reported that he had seen clear water, as near their position as three or four miles. By this time it was blowing fresh, and the wind, having a clear rake, drove up the honeycomb−looking sheet before it, as the scraper accumulates snow. When the sun set, the whole north shore was white with piles of glittering icicles; while the bosom of the Otsego, no longer disturbed by the wind, resembled a placid mirror.

Early on the following morning, the whole party embarked. There was no wind, and men were placed at the paddles and the oars. Care was taken, on quitting the huts, to close their doors and shutters; for they were to be taverns to cover the heads of many a traveller, in the frequent journeys that were likely to be made, between the Knoll and the settlements. These stations, then, were of the last importance, and a frontier−man always had the same regard for them, that the mountaineer of the Alps has for his "refuge."

The passage down the Otsego was the easiest and most agreeable portion of the whole journey. The day was pleasant, and the oarsmen vigorous, if not very skilful, rendering the movement rapid, and sufficiently direct. But one drawback occurred to the prosperity of the voyage. Among the labourers hired by the captain, was a

Connecticut man, of the name of Joel Strides, between whom and the County Leitrim−man, there had early commenced a warfare of tricks and petty annoyances; a warfare that was perfectly defensive on the part of O'Hearn, who did little more, in the way of retort, than comment on the long, lank, shapeless figure, and meagre countenance of his enemy. Joel had not been seen to smile, since he engaged with the captain; though three times had he laughed outright, and each time at the occurrence of some mishap to Michael O'Hearn, the fruit of one of his own schemes of annoyance.

On the present occasion, Joel, who had the distribution of such duty, placed Mike in a skiff, by himself, flattering the poor fellow with the credit he would achieve, by rowinga boat to the foot of the lake, without assistance. He might as well have asked Mike to walk to the outlet on the surface of the water! This arrangement proceeded from an innate love of mischief in Joel, who had much of the quiet waggery, blended with many of the bad qualities of the men of his peculiar class. A narrow and conceited selfishness lay at the root of the larger portion of this man's faults. As a physical being, he was a perfect labour−saving machine, himself; bringing all the resources of a naturally quick and acute mind to bear on this one end, never doing anything that required a particle more than the exertion and strength that were absolutely necessary to effect his object. He rowed the skiff in which the captain and his wife had embarked, with his own hands; and, previously to starting, he had selected the best sculls from the other boats, had fitted his twhart with the closest attention to his own ease, and had placed a stretcher for his feet, with an intelligence and knowledge of mechanics, that would have done credit to a Whitehall waterman. This much proceeded from the predominating principle of his nature, which was, always to have an eye on the interests of Joel Strides; though the effect happened, in this instance, to be beneficial to those he served.

Michael O'Hearn, on the contrary, thought only of the end; and this so intensely, not to so say vehemently, as generally to overlook the means. Frank, generous, selfdevoted, and withal accustomed to get most things wrong−end−foremost, he usually threw away twice the same labour, in effecting a given purpose, that was expended by the Yankee; doing the thing worse, too, besides losing twice the time. He never paused to think of this, however. The masther's boat was to be rowed to the other end of the lake, and, though he had never rowed a boat an inch in his life, he was ready and willing to undertake the job. "If a certain quantity of work will not do it," thought Mike, "I'll try as much ag'in; and the divil is in it, if that won't sarve the purpose of that little bit of a job."

Under such circumstances the party started. Most of the skiffs and canoes went off half an hour before Mrs. Willoughby was ready, and Joel managed to keep Mike for the last, under the pretence of wishing his aid in loading hisown boat, with the bed and bedding from the hut. All was ready, at length, and taking his seat, with a sort of quiet deliberation, Joel said, in his drawling way, "You'll follow us, Mike, and you can't be a thousand miles out of the way." Then he pulled from the shore with a quiet, steady stroke of the sculls, that sent the skiff ahead with great rapidity, though with much ease to himself.

Michael O'Hearn stood looking at the retiring skiff, in silent admiration, for two or three minutes. He was quite alone; for all the other boats were already two or three miles on their way, and distance already prevented him from seeing the mischief that was lurking in Joel's hypocritical eyes.

"Follow yees!" soliloquized Mike "The divil burn ye, for a guessing yankee as ye ar' how am I to follow with such legs as the likes of these? If it was n't for the masther and the missus, ra'al jontlemen and ladies they be, I'd turn my back on ye, in the desert, and let ye find that Beaver estate, in yer own disagreeable company. Ha! well, I must thry, and if the boat wont go, it'll be no fault of the man that has a good disposition to make it."

Mike now took his seat on a board that lay across the gunwale of the skiff at a most inconvenient height, placed two sculls in the water, one of which was six inches longer than the other, made a desperate effort, and got his craft fairly afloat. Now, Michael O'Hearn was not left−handed, and, as usually happens with such men, the inequality between the two limbs was quite marked. By a sinister accident, too, it happened that the longest oar got into the strongest hand, and there it would have staid to the end of time, before Mike would think of changing

it, on that account. Joel, alone, sat with his face towards the head of the lake, and he alone could see the dilemma in which the county Leitrim−man was placed. Neither the captain nor his wife thought of looking behind, and the yankee had all the fun to himself. As for Mike, he succeeded in getting a few rods from the land, when the strong arm and the longer lever asserting their superiority, the skiff began to incline to the westward. So intense, however, was the poor fellow's zeal, that he did not discover the change in his course until he had so far turned as to give him a glimpse of hisretiring master; then he inferred that all was right, and pulled more leisurely. The result was, that in about ten minutes, Mike was stopped by the land, the boat touching the north shore again, two or three rods from the very point whence it had started. The honest fellow got up, looked around him, scratched his head, gazed wistfully after the fast−receding boat of his master, and broke out in another soliloquy.

"Bad luck to them that made ye, ye one−sided thing!" he said, shaking his head reproachfully at the skiff: "there's liberty for ye to do as ye ought, and ye 'll not be doing it, just out of contrairiness. Why the divil can't ye do like the other skiffs, and go where ye 're wanted, on the road towards thim beavers? Och, ye 'll be sorry for this, when ye 're left behind, out of sight!"

Then it flashed on Mike's mind that possibly some article had been left in the hut, and the skiff had come back to look after it; so, up he ran to the captain's deserted lodge, entered it, was lost to view for a minute, then came in sight again, scratching his head, and renewing his muttering

"No," he said, "divil a thing can I see, and it must be pure contrairiness! Perhaps the baste will behave betther next time, so I'll thry it ag'in, and give it an occasion. Barring obstinacy, 't is as good−lookin' a skiff as the best of them."

Mike was as good as his word, and gave the skiff as fair an opportunity of behaving itself as was ever offered to a boat. Seven times did he quit the shore, and as often return to it, gradually working his way towards the western shore, and slightly down the lake. In this manner, Mike at length got himself so far on the side of the lake, as to present a barrier of land to the evil disposition of his skiff to incline to the westward. It could go no longer in that direction, at least.

"Divil burn ye," the honest fellow cried, the perspiration rolling down his face; "I think ye 'll be satisfied without walking out into the forest, where I wish ye war' with all my heart, amang the threes that made ye! Now, I'll see if yer contrairy enough to run up a hill."

Mike next essayed to pull along the shore, in the hope that the sight of the land, and of the overhanging pines andhemlocks, would cure the boat's propensity to turn in that direction. It is not necessary to say that his expectations were disappointed, and he finally was reduced to getting out into the water, cool as was the weather, and of wading along the shore, dragging the boat after him. All this Joel saw before he passed out of sight, but no movement of his muscles let the captain into the secret of the poor Irishman's strait.

In the meanwhile, the rest of the flotilla, or brigade of boats, as the captain termed them, went prosperously on their way, going from one end of the lake to the other, in the course of three hours. As one of the party had been over the route several times already, there was no hesitation on the subject of the point to which the boats were to proceed. They all touched the shore near the stone that is now called the "Otsego Rock," beneath a steep wooded bank, and quite near to the place where the Susquehannah glanced out of the lake, in a swift current, beneath a high−arched tracery of branches that were not yet clothed with leaves.

Here the question was put as to what had become of Mike. His skiff was nowhere visible, and the captain felt the necessity of having him looked for, before he proceeded any further. After a short consultation, a boat manned by two negroes, father and son, named Pliny the elder, and Pliny the younger, or, in common parlance, "old Plin" and "young Plin," was sent back along the west−shore to hunt him up. Of course, a hut was immediately prepared for the reception of Mrs. Willoughby, upon the plain that stretches across the valley, at this point. This was on the site

of the present village of Cooperstown, but just twenty years anterior to the commencement of the pretty little shire town that now exists on the spot.

It was night ere the two Plinies appeared towing Mike, as their great namesakes of antiquity might have brought in a Carthaginian galley, in triumph. The county Leitrim−man had made his way with excessive toil about a league ere he was met, and glad enough was he to see his succour approach. In that day, the strong antipathy which now exists between the black and the emigrant Irishman was unknown, the competition for household service commencing more than half a century later. Still, as the negro lovedfun constitutionally, and Pliny the younger was somewhat of a wag, Mike did not entirely escape, scot−free.

"Why you drag 'im like ox, Irish Mike?" cried the younger negro "why you no row 'im like other folk?"

"Ah you're as bad as the rest of 'em," growled Mike. "They tould me Ameriky was a mighty warm country, and war−r−m I find it, sure enough, though the wather isn't as warm as good whiskey. Come, ye black divils, and see if ye can coax this contrairy cr'athure to do as a person wants."

The negroes soon had Mike in tow, and then they went down the lake merrily, laughing and cracking their jokes, at the Irishman's expense, after the fashion of their race. It was fortunate for the Leitrim−man that he was accustomed to ditching, though it may be questioned if the pores of his body closed again that day, so very effectually had they been opened. When he rejoined his master, not a syllable was said of the mishap, Joel having the prudence to keep his own secret, and even joining Mike in denouncing the bad qualities of the boat. We will only add here, that a little calculation entered into this trick, Joel perceiving that Mike was a favourite, and wishing to bring him into discredit.

Early the next morning, the captain sent the negroes and Mike down the Susquehannah a mile, to clear away some flood−wood, of which one of the hunters had brought in a report the preceding day. Two hours later, the boats left the shore, and began to float downward with the current, following the direction of a stream that has obtained its name from its sinuosities.

In a few minutes the boats reached the flood−wood, where, to Joel's great amusement, Mike and the negroes, the latter having little more calculation than the former, had commenced their operations on the upper side of the raft, piling the logs on one another, with a view to make a passage through the centre. Of course, there was a halt, the females landing. Captain Willoughby now cast an eye round him in hesitation, when a knowing look from Joel caught his attention.

"This does not seem to be right," he said "cannot we better it a little?"

"It's right wrong, captain," answered Joel, laughing like one who enjoyed other people's ignorance. "A sensible crittur' would begin the work on such a job, at the lower side of the raft."

"Take the direction, and order things to suit yourself."

This was just what Joel liked. Head−work before all other work for him, and he set about the duty authoritatively and with promptitude. After rating the negroes roundly for their stupidity, and laying it on Mike without much delicacy of thought or diction, over the shoulders of the two blacks, he mustered his forces, and began to clear the channel with intelligence and readiness.

Going to the lower side of the jammed flood−wood, he soon succeeded in loosening one or two trees, which floated away, making room for others to follow. By these means a passage was effected in half an hour, Joel having the prudence to set no more timber in motion than was necessary to his purpose, lest it might choke the stream below. In this manner the party got through, and, the river being high at that season, by night the travellers

were half−way to the mouth of the Unadilla. The next evening they encamped at the junction of the two streams, making their preparations to ascend the latter the following morning.

The toil of the ascent, however, did not commence, until the boats entered what was called the creek, or the small tributary of the Unadilla, on which the beavers had erected their works, and which ran through the "Manor." Here, indeed, the progress was slow and laborious, the rapidity of the current and the shallowness of the water rendering every foot gained a work of exertion and pain. Perseverance and skill, notwithstanding, prevailed; all the boats reaching the foot of the rapids, or straggling falls, on which the captain had built his mills, about an hour before the sun disappeared. Here, of course, the boats were left, a rude road having been cut, by means of which the freights were transported on a sledge the remainder of the distance. Throughout the whole of this trying day, Joel had not only worked head−work, but he had actually exerted himself with his body. As for Mike, never before had he made such desperate efforts. He felt all the disgrace of his adventure on the lake, and was disposed to wipe it out by hisexploits on the rivers. Thus Mike was ever loyal to his employer. He had sold his flesh and blood for money, and a man of his conscience was inclined to give a fair penny's−worth. The tractable manner in which the boat had floated down the river, it is true, caused him some surprise, as was shown in his remark to the younger Pliny, on landing.

"This is a curious boat, afther all," said Pat. "One time it's all contrariness, and then ag'in it's as obliging as one's own mother. It followed the day all's one like a puppy dog, while yon on the big wather there was no more dhriving it than a hog. Och! it's a faimale boat, by its whims!"

CHAPTER III.

"He sleeps forgetful of his once bright flame;

He has no feeling of the glory gone;

He has no eye to catch the mounting flame

That once in transport drew him on;

He lies in dull oblivious dreams, nor cares

Who the wreathed laurel bears."

Percival

The appearance of a place in which the remainder of one's life is to be past is always noted with interest on a first visit. Thus it was that Mrs. Willoughby had been observant and silent from the moment the captain informed her that they had passed the line of his estate, and were approaching the spot where they were to dwell. The stream was so small, and the girding of the forest so close, that there was little range for the sight; but the anxious wife and mother could perceive that the hills drew together, at this point, the valley narrowing essentially, that rocks began to appear in the bed of the river, and that the growth of the timber indicated fertility and a generous soil.

When the boat stopped, the little stream came brawling down a ragged declivity, and a mill, one so arranged as to grind and saw, both in a very small way, however, gave the first signs of civilization she had beheld since quitting the last hut near the Mohawk. After issuing a few orders, the captain drew his wife's arm through his own, and hurried up the ascent, with an eagerness that was almost boyish, to show her what had been done towards the improvement of the "Knoll." There is a pleasure in diving into a virgin forest and commencing the labours of civilization, that has no exact parallel in any other human occupation. That of building, or of laying out grounds,

has certainly some resemblance to it, but it is a resemblance so faint and distant as scarcely to liken the enjoyment each produces. The former approaches nearer to the feeling of creating, and is far more pregnant with anticipations and hopes, though its first effects are seldom agreeable, and are sometimes nearly hideous. Our captain, however, had escaped most of these last consequences, by possessing the advantage of having a clearing, without going through the usual processes of chopping and burning; the first of which leaves the earth dotted, for many years, with unsightly stumps, while the rains and snows do not wash out the hues of the last for several seasons.

An exclamation betrayed the pleasure with which Mrs. Willoughby got her first glimpse of the drained pond. It was when she had clambered to the point of the rocks, where the stream began to tumble downward into the valley below. A year had done a vast deal for the place. The few stumps and stubs which had disfigured the basin when it was first laid bare, had all been drawn by oxen, and burned. This left the entire surface of the four hundred acres smooth and fit for the plough. The soil was the deposit of centuries, and the inclination, from the woods to the stream, was scarcely perceptible to the eye. In fact, it was barely sufficient to drain the drippings of the winter's snows. The form of the area was a little irregular; just enough so to be picturesque; while the inequalities were surprisingly few and trifling. In a word, nature had formed just such a spot as delights the husbandman's heart, and placed it beneath a sun which, while its fierceness is relieved by winters of frost and snow, had a power to bring out all its latent resources.

Trees had been felled around the whole area, with the open spaces filled by branches, in a way to form what is termed a brush fence. This is not a sightly object, and thecaptain had ordered the line to be drawn within the woods, so that the visible boundaries of the open land were the virgin forest itself. His men had protested against this, a fence, however unseemly, being in their view an indispensable accessory to civilization. But the captain's authority, if not his better taste, prevailed; and the boundary of felled trees and brush was completely concealed in the back−ground of woods. As yet, there was no necessity for cross−fences, the whole open space lying in a single field. One hundred acres were in winter wheat. As this grain had been got in the previous autumn, it was now standing on the finest and driest of the soil, giving an air of rich fertility to the whole basin. Grass−seed had been sown along both banks of the stream, and its waters were quietly flowing between two wide belts of fresh verdure, the young plants having already started in that sheltered receptacle of the sun's rays. Other portions of the flat showed signs of improvement, the plough having actually been at work for quite a fortnight.

All this was far more than even the captain had expected, and much more than his wife had dared to hope. Mrs. Willoughby had been accustomed to witness the slow progress of a new settlement; but never before had she seen what might be done on a beaver−dam. To her all appeared like magic, and her first question would have been to ask her husband to explain what had been done with the trees and stumps, had not her future residence caught her eye. Captain Willoughby had left his orders concerning the house, previously to quitting the Knoll; and he was now well pleased to perceive that they had been attended to. As this spot will prove the scene of many of the incidents we are bound to relate, it may be proper, here, to describe it, at some length.

The hillock that rose out of the pond, in the form of a rocky little island, was one of those capricious formations that are often met with on the surface of the earth. It stood about thirty rods from the northern side of the area, very nearly central as to its eastern and western boundaries, and presented a slope inclining towards the south. Its greatest height was at its northern end, where it rose out of the rich alluvion of the soil, literally a rock of some forty feet inperpendicular height, having a summit of about an acre of level land, and falling off on its three sides; to the east and west precipitously; to the south quite gently and with regularity. It was this accidental formation which had induced the captain to select the spot as the site of his residence; for dwelling so far from any post, and in a place so difficult of access, something like military defences were merely precautions of ordinary prudence. While the pond remained, the islet was susceptible of being made very strong against any of the usual assaults of Indian warfare; and, now that the basin was drained, it had great advantages for the same purpose. The perpendicular rock to the north, even over−hung the plain. It was almost inaccessible; while the formation on the other sides, offered singular facilities, both for a dwelling and for security. All this the captain, who was so

familiar with the finesse of Indian stratagem, had resolved to improve in the following manner:

In the first place, he directed the men to build a massive wall of stone, for a hundred and fifty feet in length, and six feet in height. This stretched in front of the perpendicular rock, with receding walls to its verge. The latter were about two hundred feet in length, each. This was enclosing an area of two hundred, by one hundred and fifty feet, within a blind wall of masonry. Through this wall there was only a single passage; a gate−way, in the centre of its southern face. The materials had all been found on the hill itself, which was well covered with heavy stones. Within this wall, which was substantially laid, by a Scotch mason, one accustomed to the craft, the men had erected a building of massive, squared, pine timber, well secured by cross partitions. This building followed the wall in its whole extent, was just fifteen feet in elevation, without the roof, and was composed, in part, by the wall itself; the latter forming nearly one−half its height, on the exterior. The breadth of this edifice was only twenty feet, clear of the stones and wood−work; leaving a court within of about one hundred by one hundred and seventy−five feet in extent. The roof extended over the gateway even; so that the space within was completely covered, the gates being closed. This much had been done during the preceding fall and winter; the edifice presenting an appearance of rude completenesson the exterior. Still it had a sombre and goal−like air; there being nothing resembling a window visible; no aperture, indeed, on either of its outer faces, but the open gate−way, of which the massive leaves were finished, and placed against the adjacent walls, but which were not yet hung. It is scarcely necessary to say, this house resembled barracks, more than an ordinary dwelling. Mrs. Willoughby stood gazing at it, half in doubt whether to admire or to condemn, when a voice, within a few yards, suddenly drew her attention in another direction.

"How you like him?" asked Nick, who was seated on a stone, at the margin of the stream, washing his feet, after a long day's hunt. "No t'ink him better dan beaver skin? Cap'in know all 'bout him; now he give Nick some more last quit−rent?"

"Last, indeed, it will be, then, Nick; for I have already paid you twice for your rights."

"Discovery wort' great deal, cap'in see what great man he make pale−face."

"Ay, but your discovery, Nick, is not of that sort."

"What sort, den?" demanded Nick, with the rapidity of lightning. "Give him back 'e beaver, if you no like he discovery. Grad to see 'em back, ag'in; skin higher price dan ever."

"Nick, you 're a cormorant, if there ever was one in this world! Here there is a dollar for you; the quit−rent is paid for this year, at least. It ought to be for the last time."

"Let him go for all summer, cap'in. Yes, Nick wonderful commerant! no such eye he got, among Oneida!"

Here the Tuscarora left the side of the stream, and came up on the rock, shaking hands, good−humouredly, with Mrs. Willoughby, who rather liked the knave; though she knew him to possess most of the vices of his class.

"He very han'som beaver−dam," said Nick, sweeping his hand gracefully over the view; "bye 'nd bye, he'll bring potatoe, and corn, and cider all 'e squaw want. Cap'in got good fort, too. Old soldier love fort; like to live in him."

"The day may come, Nick, when that fort may serve us all a good turn, out here in the wilderness," Mrs. Willoughby observed, in a somewhat melancholy tone; for her tender thoughts naturally turned towards her youthful and innocent daughters.

The Indian gazed at the house, with that fierce intentness which sometimes glared, in a manner that had got to be, in its ordinary aspects, dull and besotted. There was a startling intelligence in his eye, at such moments; the feelings of youth and earlier habit, once more asserting their power. Twenty years before, Nick had been foremost on the war−path; and what was scarcely less honourable, among the wisest around the council−fire. He was born a chief, and had made himself an outcast from his tribe, more by the excess of ungovernable passions, than from any act of base meanness.

"Cap'in tell Nick, now, what he mean by building such house, out here, among ole beaver bones?" he said, sideling up nearer to his employer, and gazing with some curiosity into his face.

"What do I mean, Nick? Why I mean to have a place of safety to put the heads of my wife and children in, at need. The road to Canada is not so long, but a red−skin can make one pair of moccasins go over it. Then, the Oneidas and Mohawks are not all children of heaven."

"No pale−face rogue, go about, I s'pose?" said Nick, sarcastically.

"Yes, there are men of that class, who are none the worse for being locked out of one's house, at times. But, what do you think of the hut? You know I call the place the 'Hut,' the Hutted Knoll."

"He hole plenty of beaver, if you cotch him! But no water left, and he all go away. Why you make him stone, first; den you make him wood, a'ter; eh? Plenty rock; plenty tree."

"Why, the stone wall can neither be cut away, nor set fire to, Nick; that 's the reason. I took as much stone as was necessary, and then used wood, which is more easily worked, and which is also drier."

"Good Nick t'ought just dat. How you get him water if Injen come?"

"There 's the stream, that winds round the foot of thehill, Nick, as you see; and then there is a delicious spring, within one hundred yards of the very gate."

"Which side of him?" asked Nick, with his startling rapidity.

"Why, here, to the left of the gate, and a little to the right of the large stone "

"No no," interrupted the Indian, "no left no right which side inside gate; outside gate?"

"Oh! the spring is outside the gate, certainly; but means might be found to make a covered way to it; and then the stream winds round directly underneath the rocks, behind the house, and water could be raised from that, by means of a rope. Our rifles would count for something, too, in drawing water, as well as in drawing blood."

"Good. Rifle got long arm. He talk so, Ingin mind him. When you t'ink red−skin come ag'in your fort, cap'in, now you got him done?"

"A long time first, I hope, Nick. We are at peace with France, again; and I see no prospect of any new quarrel, very soon. So long as the French and English are at peace, the red men will not dare to touch either."

"Dat true as missionary! What a soldier do, cap'in, if so much peace? Warrior love a war−path."

"I wish it were not so, Nick. But my hatchet is buried, I hope, for ever."

"Nick hope cap'in know where to find him, if he want to? Very bad to put anyt'ing where he forget; partic'larly tomahawk. Sometime quarrel come, like rain, when you don't tink."

"Yes, that also cannot be denied. Yet, I fear the next quarrel will be among ourselves, Nick. The government at home, and the people of the colonies, are getting to have bad blood between them."

"Dat very queer! Why pale−face mo'der and pale−face darter no love one anoder, like red−skin?"

"Really, Nick, you are somewhat interrogating this evening; but, my squaw must be a little desirous of seeing the inside of her house, as well as its outside, and I must refer you to that honest fellow, yonder, for an answer. His name is Mike; I hope he and you will always be good friends."

So saying, the captain nodded in a friendly manner, and led Mrs. Willoughby towards the hut, taking a foot−path that was already trodden firm, and which followed the sinuosities of the stream, to which it served as a sort of a dyke. Nick took the captain at his word, and turning about he met the county Leitrim−man, with an air of great blandness, thrusting out a hand, in the pale−face fashion, as a sign of amity, saying, at the same time

"How do, Mike? Sago Sago grad you come good fellow to drink Santa Cruz, wid Nick."

"How do, Mike!" exclaimed the other, looking at the Tuscarora with astonishment, for this was positively the first red man the Irishman had ever seen. "How do Mike! Ould Nick be ye? well ye look pretty much as I expected to see you pray, how did ye come to know my name?"

"Nick know him know every t'ing. Grad to see you, Mike hope we live together like good friend, down yonder, up here, over dere."

"Ye do, do ye! Divil burn me, now, if I want any sich company. Ould Nick's yer name, is it?"

"Old Nick young Nick saucy Nick; all one, all to'ther. Make no odd what you call; I come."

"Och, yer a handy one! Divil trust ye, but ye 'll come when you arn't wanted, or yer not of yer father's own family. D 'ye live hereabouts, masther Ould Nick?"

"Live here out yonder in he hut, in he wood where he want. Make no difference to Nick."

Michael now drew back a pace or two, keeping his eyes fastened on the other intently, for he actually expected to see some prodigious and sudden change in his appearance. When he thought he had got a good position for manly defence or rapid retreat, as either might become necessary, the county Leitrim−man put on a bolder front and resumed the discourse.

"If it's so indifferent to ye where ye dwell," asked Mike, "why can't you keep at home, and let a body carry these cloaks and bundles of the missuses, out yonder to the house wither she's gone?"

"Nick help carry 'em. Carry t'ing for dat squaw hundred time."

"That what! D'ye mane Madam Willoughby by yer blackguard name?"

"Yes; cap'in wife cap'in squaw, mean him. Carry bundle, basket, hundred time for him."

"The Lord preserve me, now, from sich atrocity and impudence!" laying down the cloaks and bundles, and facing the Indian, with an appearance of great indignation "Did a body ever hear sich a liar! Why, Misther Ould Nick,

Madam Willoughby would n't let the likes of ye touch the ind of her garments. You would n't get the liberty to walk in the same path with her, much less to carry her bundles. I'll answer for it, ye 're a great liar, now, ould Nick, in the bottom of your heart."

"Nick great liar," answered the Indian, good−naturedly; for he so well knew this was his common reputation, that he saw no use in denying it. "What of dat? Lie good sometime."

"That's another! Oh, ye animal; I've a great mind to set upon ye at once, and see what an honest man can do wid ye, in fair fight! If I only knew what ye 'd got about yer toes, now, under them fine−looking things ye wear for shoes, once, I 'd taich ye to talk of the missus, in this style."

"Speak as well as he know how. Nick never been to school. Call 'e squaw, good squaw. What want more?"

"Get out! If ye come a foot nearer, I'll be at ye, like a dog upon a bull, though ye gore me. What brought ye into this paiceful sittlement, where nothing but virtue and honesty have taken up their abode?"

What more Mike might have said is not known, as Nick caught a sign from the captain, and went loping across the flat, at his customary gait, leaving the Irishman standing on the defensive, and, to own the truth, not sorry to be rid of him. Unfortunately for the immediate enlightenment of Mike's mind, Joel overheard the dialogue, and comprehending its meaning, with his native readiness, he joined his companion in a mood but little disposed to clear up th error.

"Did ye see that crathure?" asked Mike, with emphasis.

"Sartain he is often seen here, at the Hut. He may be said to live here, half his time."

"A pritty hut, then, ye must have of it! Why do ye tolerate the vagabond? He's not fit for Christian society."

"Oh! he's good company, sometimes, Mike. When you know him better, you'll like him better. Come; up with the bundles, and let us follow. The captain is looking after us, as you see."

"Well may he look, to see us in sich company! Will he har−r−m the missus?"

"Not he. I tell you, you'll like him yourself when you come to know him."

"If I do, burn me! Why, he says himself, that he's Ould Nick, and I'm sure I never fancied the crathure but it was in just some such for−r−m. Och! he's ill−looking enough, for twenty Ould Nicks."

Lest the reader get an exaggerated notion of Michael's credulity, it may be well to say that Nick had painted a few days before, in a fit of caprice, and that one−half of his face was black, and the other a deep red, while each of his eyes was surrounded with a circle of white, all of which had got to be a little confused in consequence of a night or two of orgies, succeeded by mornings in which the toilet had been altogether neglected. His dress, too, a blanket with tawdry red and yellow trimmings, with ornamented leggings and moccasins to correspond, had all aided in maintaining the accidental mystification. Mike followed his companion, growling out his discontent, and watching the form of the Indian, as the latter still went loping over the flat, having passed the captain, with a message to the barns.

"I'll warrant ye, now, the captain wouldn't tolerate such a crathure, but he's sent him off to the woods, as ye may see, like a divil, as he is! To think of such a thing's spakeing to the missus! Will I fight him? That will I, rather than he'll say an uncivil word to the likes of her! He's claws they tell me, though he kapes them so well covered in his fine brogues; divil burn me, but I'd grapple him by the toes."

Joel now saw how deep was Michael's delusion, and knowing it must soon be over, he determined to make amerit of necessity, by letting his friend into the truth, thereby creating a confidence that would open the way to a hundred future mischievous scenes.

"Claws!" he repeated, with an air of surprise "And why do you think an Injin has claws, Mike?"

"An Injin! D'ye call that miscoloured crathure an Injin, Joel. Isn't it one of yer yankee divils?"

"Out upon you, for an Irish ninny. Do you think the captain would board a devil! The fellow's a Tuscarora, and is as well known here as the owner of the Hut himself. It's Saucy Nick."

"Yes, saucy Ould Nick I had it from his very mout', and even the divil would hardly be such a blackguard as to lie about his own name. Och! he's a roarer, sure enough; and then for the tusks you mintion, I didn't see 'em, with my eyes; but the crathure has a mouth that might hould a basket−full."

Joel now perceived that he must go more seriously to work to undeceive his companion. Mike honestly believed he had met an American devil, and it required no little argumentation to persuade him of the contrary. We shall leave Joel employed in this difficult task, in which he finally succeeded, and follow the captain and his wife to the hut.

The lord and lady of the manor examined everything around their future residence, with curious eyes. Jamie Allen, the Scotch mason mentioned, was standing in front of the house, to hear what might be said of his wall, while two or three other mechanics betrayed some such agitation as the tyro in literature manifests, ere he learns what the critics have said of his first work. The exterior gave great satisfaction to the captain. The wall was not only solid and secure, but it was really handsome. This was in some measure owing to the quality of the stones, but quite as much to Jamie's dexterity in using them. The wall and chimneys, of the latter of which there were no less than six, were all laid in lime, too; it having been found necessary to burn some of the material to plaster the interior. Then the gates were massive, being framed in oak, filled in with four−inch plank, and might have resisted a very formidable assault. Their strong iron hinges were all in their places, but the heavy job of hanging had been deferredto a leisure moment, when all the strength of the manor might be collected for that purpose. There they stood, inclining against the wall, one on each side of the gate−way, like indolent sentinels on post, who felt too secure from attack to raise their eyes.

The different mechanics crowded round the captain, each eager to show his own portion of what had been done. The winter had not been wasted, but, proper materials being in abundance, and on the spot, captain Willoughby had every reason to be satisfied with what he got for his money. Completely shut out from the rest of the world, the men had worked cheerfully and with little interruption; for their labours composed their recreation. Mrs. Willoughby found the part of the building her family was to occupy, with the usual offices, done and furnished. This comprised all the front on the eastern side of the gate−way, and most of the wing, in the same half, extending back to the cliff. It is true, the finish was plain; but everything was comfortable. The ceilings were only ten feet high certainly, but it was thought prodigious in the colony in that day; and then the plastering of Jamie was by no means as unexceptionable as his stone−work; still every room had its two coats, and white−wash gave them a clean and healthful aspect. The end of the wing that came next the cliff was a laundry, and a pump was fitted, by means of which water was raised from the rivulet. Next came the kitchen, a spacious and comfortable room of thirty by twenty feet; an upper−servant's apartment succeeded; after which were the bed−rooms of the family, a large parlour, and a library, or office, for the captain. As the entire range, on this particular side of the house, extended near or quite two hundred and fifty feet, there was no want of space or accommodation.

The opposite, or western half of the edifice, was devoted to more homely uses. It contained an eating−room and divers sleeping−rooms for the domestics and labourers, besides store−rooms, garners, and omnium gatherums of all sorts. The vast ranges of garrets, too, answered for various purposes of household and farming economy. All

the windows, and sundry doors, opened into the court, while the whole of the exterior wall, both wooden and stone, presented a perfect blank, in the way of outlets. It was the captain'sintention, however, to cut divers loops through the logs, at some convenient moment, so that men stationed in the garrets might command the different faces of the structure with their musketry. But, like the gates, these means of defence were laid aside for a more favourable opportunity.

Our excellent matron was delighted with her domestic arrangements. They much surpassed any of the various barracks in which she had dwelt, and a smile of happiness beamed on her handsome face, as she followed her husband from room to room, listening to his explanations. When they entered their private apartments, and these were furnished and ready to receive them, respect caused the rest to leave them by themselves, and once more they found that they were alone.

"Well, Wilhelmina," asked the gratified husband gratified, because he saw pleasure beaming in the mild countenance and serene blue eyes of one of the best wives living "Well, Wilhelmina," he asked, "can you give up Albany, and all the comforts of your friends' dwellings, to be satisfied in a home like this? It is not probable I shall ever build again, whatever Bob may do, when he comes after me. This structure, then, part house, part barrack, part fort, as it is, must be our residence for the remainder of our days. We are hutted for life."

"It is all−sufficient, Willoughby. It has space, comfort, warmth, coolness and security. What more can a wife and a mother ask, when she is surrounded by those she most loves? Only attend to the security, Hugh. Remember how far we are removed from any succour, and how sudden and fierce the Indians are in their attacks. Twice have we, ourselves, been near being destroyed by surprises, from which accident, or God's providence, protected us, rather than our own vigilance. If this could happen in garrisons, and with king's troops around us, how much more easily might it happen here, with only common labourers to watch what is going on!"

"You exaggerate the danger, wife. There are no Indians, in this part of the country, who would dare to molest a settlement like ours. We count thirteen able−bodied men in all, besides seven women, and could use seventeen or eighteen muskets and rifles on an emergency. No tribe would dare commence hostilities, in a time of general peace, and so near the settlements too; and, as to stragglers, who might indeed murder to rob, we are so strong, ourselves, that we may sleep in peace, so far as they are concerned."

"One never knows that, dearest Hugh. A marauding party of half−a−dozen might prove too much for many times their own number, when unprepared. I do hope you will have the gates hung, at least; should the girls come here, in the autumn, I could not sleep without hanging the gates."

"Fear nothing, love," said the captain, kissing his wife, with manly tenderness. "As for Beulah and Maud, let them come when they please; we shall always have a welcome for them, and no place can be safer than under their father's eyes."

"I care not so much for myself, Hugh, but do not let the gates be forgotten until the girls come."

"Everything shall be done as you desire, wife of mine, though it will be a hard job to get two such confounded heavy loads of wood on their hinges. We must take some day when everybody is at home, and everybody willing to work. Saturday next, I intend to have a review; and, once a month, the year round, there will be a muster, when all the arms are to be cleaned and loaded, and orders given how to act in case of an alarm. An old soldier would be disgraced to allow himself to be run down by mere vagabonds. My pride is concerned, and you may sleep in peace."

"Yes, do, dearest Hugh." Then the matron proceeded through the rooms, expressing her satisfaction at the care which had been had for her comfort, in her own rooms in particular.

Sooth to say, the interior of the Hut presented that odd contrast between civilization and rude expedients, which so frequently occurs on an American frontier, where persons educated in refinement often find themselves brought in close collision with savage life. Carpets, in America, and in the year of our Lord 1765, were not quite as much a matter of course in domestic economy, as they are to−day. Still they were to be found, though it was rare, indeed, that they covered more than the centre of the room. One of these great essentials, without which no place can appear comfortablein a cold climate, was spread on the floor of Mrs. Willoughby's parlour a room that served for both eating and as a sala, the Knight's Hall of the Hut, measuring twenty by twenty−four feet though in fact this carpet concealed exactly two−thirds of the white clean plank. Then the chairs were massive and even rich, while one might see his face in the dark mahogany of the tables. There were cellarets the captain being a connoisseur in wines bureaus, secretaries, beaufets, and other similar articles, that had been collected in the course of twenty years' housekeeping, and scattered at different posts, were collected, and brought hither by means of sledges, and the facilities of the water−courses. Fashion had little to do with furniture, in that simple age, when the son did not hesitate to wear even the clothes of the father, years and years after the tailor had taken leave of them. Massive old furniture, in particular, lasted for generations, and our matron now saw many articles that had belonged to her grandfather assembled beneath the first roof that she could ever strictly call her own.

Mrs. Willoughby took a survey of the offices last. Here she found, already established, the two Plinies, with Mari', the sister of the elder Pliny, Bess, the wife of the younger, and Mony alias Desdemona a collateral of the race, by ties and affinities that garter−king−at−arms could not have traced genealogically; since he would have been puzzled to say whether the woman was the cousin, or aunt, or step−daughter of Mari', or all three. All the women were hard at work, Bess singing in a voice that reached the adjoining forest. Mari' this name was pronounced with a strong emphasis on the last syllable, or like Maria, without the final vowel Mari' was the head of the kitchen, even Pliny the elder standing in salutary dread of her authority; and her orders to her brother and nephew were pouring forth, in an English that was divided into three categories; the Anglo−Saxon, the Low Dutch, and the Guinea dialect; a medley that rendered her discourse a droll assemblage of the vulgar and the classical.

"Here, niggers," she cried, "why you don't jump about like Paus dance? Ebbery t'ing want a hand, and some want a foot. Plate to wash, crockery to open, water tob'ile, dem knife to clean, and not'ing missed. Lord, here's a madam, and 'e whole kitchen in a diffusion."

"Well, Mari'," exclaimed the captain, good−naturedly, "here you are, scolding away as if you had been in the place these six months, and knew all its faults and weaknesses."

"Can't help a scold, master, in sich a time as dis come away from dem plates, you Great Smash, and let a proper hand take hold on 'em."

Here we ought to say, that captain Willoughby had christened Bess by the sobriquet of Great Smash, on account of her size, which fell little short of two hundred, estimated in pounds, and a certain facility she possessed in destroying crockery, while 'Mony went by the milder appellation of "Little Smash;" not that bowls or plates fared any better in her hands, but because she weighed only one hundred and eighty.

"Dis is what I tell 'em, master," continued Mari', in a remonstrating, argumentative sort of a tone, with dogmatism and respect singularly mingled in her manner "Dis, massa, just what I tell 'em all. I tell 'em, says I, this is Hunter Knoll, and not Allbonny here no store no place to buy t'ing if you break 'em; no good woman who know ebbery t'ing, to tell you where to find t'ing, if you lose him. If dere was only good woman, dat somet'ing; but no fortun'−teller out here in de bushes no, no when a silber spoon go, here, he go for good and all Goody, massy" staring at something in the court "what he call dat, sa?"

"That oh! that is only an Indian hunter I keep about me, to bring us game you'll never have an empty spit, Mari', as long as he is with us. Fear nothing; he will not harm you. His name is Nick."

"De Ole Nick, massa?"

"No, only Saucy Nick. The fellow is a little slovenly to−day in his appearance, and you see he has brought already several partridges, besides a rabbit. We shall have venison, in the season."

Here all the negroes, after staring at Nick, quite a minute, set up a loud shout, laughing as if the Tuscarora had been created for their special amusement. Although the captain was somewhat of a martinet in his domestic discipline, it had ever altogether exceeded his authority, or his art, to prevent these bursts of merriment; and he led his wife away from the din, leaving Mari', Great Smash, and Little Smash, with the two Plinies, in ecstasies at their own uproar. Burst succeeded burst, until the Indian walked away, in offended dignity.

Such was the commencement of the domestication of the Willoughbys at the Hutted Knoll. The plan of our tale does not require us to follow them minutely for the few succeeding years, though some further explanation may be necessary to show why this settlement varied a little from the ordinary course.

That very season, or, in the summer of 1765, Mrs. Willoughby inherited some real estate in Albany, by the death of an uncle, as well as a few thousand pounds currency, in ready money. This addition to his fortune made the captain exceedingly comfortable; or, for that day, rich; and it left him to act his pleasure as related to his lands. Situated as these last were, so remote from other settlements as to render highways, for some time, hopeless, he saw no use in endeavouring to anticipate the natural order of things. It would only create embarrassment to raise produce that could not be sent to market; and he well knew that a population of any amount could not exist, in quiet, without the usual attendants of buying and selling. Then it suited his own taste to be the commander−in−chief of an isolated establishment like this; and he was content to live in abundance, on his flats, feeding his people, his cattle, and even his hogs to satiety, and having wherewithal to send away the occasional adventurer, who entered his clearing, contented and happy.

Thus it was that he neither sold nor leased. No person dwelt on his land who was not a direct dependant, or hireling, and all that the earth yielded he could call his own. Nothing was sent abroad for sale but cattle. Every year, a small drove of fat beeves and milch cows found their way through the forest to Albany, and the proceeds returned in the shape of foreign supplies. The rents, and the interests on bonds, were left to accumulate, or were applied to aid Robert in obtaining a new step in the army. Lands began to be granted nearer and nearer to his own, and here and there some old officer like himself, or a solitary farmer, began to cut away the wilderness; but none in his immediate vicinity.

Still the captain did not live altogether as a hermit. He visited Edmeston of Mount Edmeston, a neighbour less than fifty miles distant; was occasionally seen at Johnson Hall, with Sir William; or at the bachelor establishment of Sir John, on the Mohawk; and once or twice he so far overcame his indolence, as to consent to serve as a member for a new county, that was called Tryon, after a ruling governor.

CHAPTER IV.

Hail! sober evening! Thee the harass'd brain

And aching heart with fond orisons greet;

The respite thou of toil; the balm of pain;

To thoughtful mind the hour for musing meet;

'Tis then the sage from forth his lone retreat,

The rolling universe around espies;

'Tis then the bard may hold communion sweet

With lovely shapes unkenned by grosser eyes,

And quick perception comes of finer mysteries.

Sands

In the preceding chapter we closed the minuter narrative with a scene at the Hut, in the spring of 1765. We must now advance the time just ten years, opening, anew, in the month of May, 1775. This, it is scarcely necessary to tell the reader, is bringing him at once up to the earliest days of the revolution. The contest which preceded that great event had in fact occurred in the intervening time, and we are now about to plunge into the current of some of the minor incidents of the struggle itself.

Ten years are a century in the history of a perfectly new settlement. The changes they produce are even surprising, though in ordinary cases they do not suffice to erase the signs of a recent origin. The forest is opened, and the light of day admitted, it is true; but its remains are still to be seen in multitudes of unsightly stumps, dead standing trees, and ill−looking stubs. These vestiges of the savage stateusually remain a quarter of a century; in certain regions they are to be found for even more than twice that period. All this, however, had captain Willoughby escaped, in consequence of limiting his clearing, in a great measure, to that which had been made by the beavers, and from which time and natural decay had, long before his arrival, removed every ungainly object. It is true, here and there a few acres had been cleared on the firmer ground, at the margin of the flats, where barns and farm buildings had been built, and orchards planted; but, in order to preserve the harmony of his view, the captain had caused all the stumps to be pulled and burnt, giving to these places the same air of agricultural finish as characterized the fields on the lower land.

To this sylvan scene, at a moment which preceded the setting of the sun by a little more than an hour, and in the first week of the genial month of May, we must now bring the reader in fancy. The season had been early, and the Beaver Manor, or the part of it which was cultivated, lying low and sheltered, vegetation had advanced considerably beyond the point that is usual, at that date, in the elevated region of which we have been writing. The meadows were green with matted grasses, the wheat and rye resembled rich velvets, and the ploughed fields had the fresh and mellowed appearance of good husbandry and a rich soil. The shrubbery, of which the captain's English taste had introduced quantities, was already in leaf, and even portions of the forest began to veil their sombre mysteries with the delicate foliage of an American spring.

The site of the ancient pond was a miracle of rustic beauty. Everything like inequality or imperfection had disappeared, the whole presenting a broad and picturesquely shaped basin, with outlines fashioned principally by nature, an artist that rarely fails in effect. The flat was divided into fields by low post−and−rail fences, the captain making it a law to banish all unruly animals from his estate. The barns and out−buildings were neatly made and judiciously placed, and the three or four roads, or lanes, that led to them, crossed the low−land in such graceful curves, as greatly to increase the beauty of the landscape. Here and there a log cabin was visible, nearly buried in the forest, with a few necessary and neat appliances around it; thehomes of labourers who had long dwelt in them, and who seemed content to pass their lives in the same place. As most of these men had married and become fathers, the whole colony, including children, notwithstanding the captain's policy not to settle, had grown to considerably more than a hundred souls, of whom three−and−twenty were able−bodied men. Among the latter were the millers; but, their mills were buried in the ravine where they had been first placed, quite out of sight from the picture above, concealing all the unavoidable and ungainly−looking objects of a saw−mill yard.

As a matter of course, the object of the greatest interest, as it was the most conspicuous, was the Hutted Knoll, as the house was now altogether called, and the objects it contained. Thither, then, we will now direct our attention, and describe things as they appeared ten years after they were first presented to the reader.

The same agricultural finish as prevailed on the flats pervaded every object on the Knoll, though some labour had been expended to produce it. Everything like a visible rock, the face of the cliff on the northern end excepted, had disappeared, the stones having been blasted, and either worked into walls for foundations, or walls for fence. The entire base of the Knoll, always excepting the little precipice at the rivulet, was encircled by one of the latter, erected under the superintendence of Jamie Allen, who still remained at the Hut, a bachelor, and as he said himself, a happy man. The southern face of the Knoll was converted into lawn, there being quite two acres intersected with walks, and well garnished with shrubbery. What was unusual in America, at that day, the captain, owing to his English education, had avoided straight lines, and formal paths; giving to the little spot the improvement on nature which is a consequence of embellishing her works without destroying them. On each side of this lawn was an orchard, thrifty and young, and which were already beginning to show signs of putting forth their blossoms.

About the Hut itself, the appearance of change was not so manifest. Captain Willoughby had caused it to be constructed originally, as he intended to preserve it, and it formed no part of his plan to cover it with tawdry colours.There it stood, brown above, and grey beneath, as wood or stone was the material, with a widely projecting roof. It had no piazzas, or stoups, and was still without external windows, one range excepted. The loops had been cut, but it was more for the benefit of lighting the garrets, than for any other reason, all of them being glazed, and serving the end for which they had been pierced. The gates remained precisely in the situation in which they were, when last presented to the eye of the reader! There they stood, each leaning against the wall on its own side of the gate−way, the hinges beginning to rust, by time and exposure. Ten years had not produced a day of sufficient leisure in which to hang them: though Mrs. Willoughby frequently spoke of the necessity of doing so, in the course of the first summer. Even she had got to be so familiarized to her situation, and so accustomed to seeing the leaves where they stood, that she now regarded them as a couple of sleeping lions in stone, or as characteristic ornaments, rather than as substantial defences to the entrance of the dwelling.

The interior of the Hut, however, had undergone many alterations. The western half had been completed, and handsome rooms had been fitted up for guests and inmates of the family, in the portion of the edifice occupied by the latter. Additional comforts had been introduced, and, the garners, cribs and lodgings of the labourers having been transferred to the skirts of the forest, the house was more strictly and exclusively the abode of a respectable and well−regulated family. In the rear, too, a wing had been thrown along the verge of the cliff, completely enclosing the court. This wing, which overhung the rivulet, and had, not only a most picturesque site, but a most picturesque and lovely view, now contained the library, parlour and music−room, together with other apartments devoted to the uses of the ladies, during the day; the old portions of the house that had once been similarly occupied being now converted into sleeping apartments. The new wing was constructed entirely of massive squared logs, so as to render it bullet−proof, there being no necessity for a stone foundation, standing, as it did, on the verge of a cliff some forty feet in height. This was the part of the edifice which had external windows, the elevation removing it from the danger of inroads, orhostile shot, while the air and view were both grateful and desirable. Some extra attention had been paid to the appearance of the meadows on this side of the Knoll, and the captain had studiously kept their skirts, as far as the eye could see from the windows, in virgin forest; placing the barns, cabins, and other detached buildings, so far south as to be removed from view. Beulah Willoughby, a gentle, tranquil creature, had a profound admiration of the beauties of nature; and to her, her parents had yielded the control of everything that was considered accessary to the mere charms of the eye; her taste had directed most of that which had not been effected by the noble luxuriance of nature. Wild roses were already putting forth their leaves in various fissures of the rocks, where earth had been placed for their support, and the margin of the little stream, that actually washed the base of the cliff, winding off in a charming sweep through the meadows, a rivulet of less than twenty feet in width, was garnished with willows and alder. Quitting this sylvan spot, we will return to the little shrubadorned area in front of the Hut. This spot the captain called his glacis, while his daughters

termed it the lawn. The hour, it will be remembered, was shortly before sunset, and thither nearly all the family had repaired to breathe the freshness of the pure air, and bathe in the genial warmth of a season, which is ever so grateful to those who have recently escaped from the rigour of a stern winter. Rude, and sufficiently picturesque garden−seats, were scattered about, and on one of these were seated the captain and his wife; he, with his hair sprinkled with grey, a hale, athletic, healthy man of sixty, and she a fresh−looking, mild−featured, and still handsome matron of forty−eight. In front, stood a venerable−looking personage, of small stature, dressed in rusty black, of the cut that denoted the attire of a clergyman, before it was considered aristocratic to wear the outward symbols of belonging to the church of God. This was the Rev. Jedidiah Woods, a native of New England, who had long served as a chaplain in the same regiment with the captain, and who, being a bachelor, on retired pay, had dwelt with his old messmate for the last eight years, in the double capacity of one who exercised the healing art as well for the soul as for the body. To his other offices, he addedthat of an instructor, in various branches of knowledge, to the young people. The chaplain, for so he was called by everybody in and around the Hut, was, at the moment of which we are writing, busy in expounding to his friends certain nice distinctions that existed, or which he fancied to exist, between a tom−cod and a chub, the former of which fish he very erroneously conceived he held in his hand at that moment; the Rev. Mr. Woods being a much better angler than naturalist. To his dissertation Mrs. Willoughby listened with great good−nature, endeavouring all the while to feel interested; while her husband kept uttering his "by all means," "yes," "certainly," "you're quite right, Woods," his gaze, at the same time, fastened on Joel Strides, and Pliny the elder, who were unharnessing their teams, on the flats beneath, having just finished a "land," and deeming it too late to commence another.

Beulah, her pretty face shaded by a large sun−bonnet, was superintending the labours of Jamie Allen, who, finding nothing just then to do as a mason, was acting in the capacity of gardener; his hat was thrown upon the grass, with his white locks bare, and he was delving about some shrubs, with the intention of giving them the benefit of a fresh dressing of manure. Maud, however, without a hat of any sort, her long, luxuriant, silken, golden tresses covering her shoulders, and occasionally veiling her warm, rich cheek, was exercising with a battledore, keeping Little Smash, now increased in size to quite fourteen stone, rather actively employed as an assistant, whenever the exuberance of her own spirits caused her to throw the plaything beyond her reach. In one of the orchards, near by, two men were employed trimming the trees. To these the captain next turned all his attention, just as he had encouraged the chaplain to persevere, by exclaiming, "out of all question, my dear sir" though he was absolutely ignorant that the other had just advanced a downright scientific heresy. At this critical moment a cry from Little Smash, that almost equalled a downfall of crockery in its clamour, drew every eye in her direction.

"What is the matter, Desdemona?" asked the chaplain, a little tartly, by no means pleased at having his natural history startled by sounds so inapplicable to the subject."How often have I told you that the Lord views with displeasure anything so violent and improper as your out−cries?"

"Can't help him, dominie nebber can help him, when he take me sudden. See, masser, dere come Ole Nick!"

There was Nick, sure enough. For the first time, in more than two years, the Tuscarora was seen approaching the house, on the long, loping trot that he affected when he wished to seem busy, or honestly earning his money. He was advancing by the only road that was ever travelled by the stranger as he approached the Hut; or, he came up the valley. As the woman spoke, he had just made his appearance over the rocks, in the direction of the mills. At that distance, quite half a mile, he would not have been recognised, but for this gait, which was too familiar to all at the Knoll, however, to be mistaken.

"That is Nick, sure enough!" exclaimed the captain. "The fellow comes at the pace of a runner; or, as if he were the bearer of some important news!"

"The tricks of Saucy Nick are too well known to deceive any here," observed Mrs. Willoughby, who, surrounded by her husband and children, always felt so happy as to deprecate every appearance of danger.

"These savages will keep that pace for hours at a time," observed the chaplain; "a circumstance that has induced some naturalists to fancy a difference in the species, if not in the genus."

"Is he chub or tom−cod, Woods?" asked the captain, throwing back on the other all he recollected of the previous discourse.

"Nay," observed Mrs. Willoughby, anxiously, "I do think he may have some intelligence! It is now more than a twelvemonth since we have seen Nick."

"It is more than twice twelvemonth, my dear; I have not seen the fellow's face since I denied him the keg of rum for his 'discovery' of another beaver pond. He has tried to sell me a new pond every season since the purchase of this."

"Do you think he took serious offence, Hugh, at that refusal? If so, would it not be better to give him what he asks?"

"I have thought little about it, and care less, my dear. Nick and I know each other pretty well. It is an acquaintance of thirty years' standing, and one that has endured trials by flood and field, and even by the horse−whip. No less than three times have I been obliged to make these salutary applications to Nick's back, with my own hands; though it is, now, more than ten years since a blow has passed between us."

"Does a savage ever forgive a blow?" asked the chaplain, with a grave air, and a look of surprise.

"I fancy a savage is quite as apt to forgive it, as a civilized man, Woods. To you, who have served so long in His Majesty's army, a blow, in the way of punishment, can be no great novelty."

"Certainly not, as respects the soldiers; but I did not know Indians were ever flogged."

"That is because you never happened to be present at the ceremony but, this is Nick, sure enough; and by his trot I begin to think the fellow has some message, or news."

"How old is the man, captain? Does an Indian never break down?"

"Nick must be fairly fifty, now. I have known him more than half that period, and he was an experienced, and, to own the truth, a brave and skilful warrior, when we first met. I rate him fifty, every day of it."

By this time the new−comer was so near, that the conversation ceased, all standing gazing at him, as he drew near, and Maud gathering up her hair, with maiden bashfulness, though certainly Nick was no stranger. As for Little Smash, she waddled off to proclaim the news to the younger Pliny, Mari', and Great Smash, all of whom were still in the kitchen of the Hut, flourishing, sleek and glistening.

Soon after, Nick arrived. He came up the Knoll on his loping trot, never stopping until he was within five or six yards of the captain, when he suddenly halted, folded his arms, and stood in a composed attitude, lest he should betray a womanish desire to tell his story. He did not even pant, but appeared as composed and unmoved, as if he had walked the half−mile he had been seen to pass over on a trot.

"Sago Sago," cried the captain, heartily "you are welcome back, Nick; I am glad to see you still so active."

"Sago" answered the guttural voice of the Indian, who quietly nodded his head.

"What will you have to refresh you, after such a journey, Nick our trees give us good cider, now."

"Santa Cruz better," rejoined the sententious Tuscarora.

"Santa Cruz is certainly stronger," answered the captain laughing, "and, in that sense, you may find it better. You shall have a glass, as soon as we go to the house. What news do you bring, that you come in so fast?"

"Glass won't do. Nick bring news worth jug. Squaw give two jug for Nick's news. Is it barg'in?"

"I!" cried Mrs. Willoughby "what concern can I have with your news. My daughters are both with me, and Heaven be praised! both are well. What can I care for your news, Nick?"

"Got no pap−poose but gal? T'ink you got boy officer great chief up here, down yonder over dere."

"Robert! Major Willoughby! What can you have to tell me of my son?"

"Tell all about him, for one jug. Jug out yonder; Nick's story out here. One good as t'other."

"You shall have all you ask, Nick." These were not temperance days, when conscience took so firm a stand between the bottle and the lips. "You shall have all you ask, Nick, provided you can really give me good accounts of my noble boy. Speak, then; what have you to say?"

"Say you see him in ten, five minute. Sent Nick before to keep moder from too much cry."

An exclamation from Maud followed; then the ardent girl was seen rushing down the lawn, her hat thrown aside, and her bright fair hair again flowing in ringlets on her shoulders. She flew rather than ran, in the direction of the mill, where the figure of Robert Willoughby was seen rushing forward to meet her. Suddenly the girl stopped, threw herself on a log, and hid her face. In a few minutes she was locked in her brother's arms. Neither Mrs. Willoughby nor Beulah imitated this impetuous movement on the part of Maud; but the captain, chaplain, and even Jamie Allen,hastened down the road to meet and welcome the young major. Ten minutes later, Bob Willoughby was folded to his mother's heart; then came Beulah's turn; after which, the news having flown through the household, the young man had to receive the greetings of Mari', both the Smashes, the younger Pliny, and all the dogs. A tumultuous quarter of an hour brought all round, again, to its proper place, and restored something like order to the Knoll. Still an excitement prevailed the rest of the day, for the sudden arrival of a guest always produced a sensation in that retired settlement; much more likely, then, was the unexpected appearance of the only son and heir to create one. As everybody bustled and was in motion, the whole family was in the parlour, and major Willoughby was receiving the grateful refreshment of a delicious cup of tea, before the sun set. The chaplain would have retired out of delicacy, but to this the captain would not listen; he would have everything proceed as if the son were a customary guest, though it might have been seen by the manner in which his mother's affectionate eye was fastened on his handsome face, as well as that in which his sister Beulah, in particular, hung about him, under the pretence of supplying his wants, that the young man was anything but an every−day inmate.

"How the lad has grown!" said the captain, tears of pride starting into his eyes, in spite of a very manful resolution to appear composed and soldier−like.

"I was about to remark that myself, captain," observed the chaplain. "I do think Mr. Robert has got to his full six feet every inch as tall as you are yourself, my good sir."

"That is he, Woods and taller in one sense. He is a major, already, at twenty−seven; it is a step I was not able to reach at near twice the age."

"That is owing, my dear sir," answered the son quickly, and with a slight tremor in his voice, "to your not having as kind a father as has fallen to my share or at least one not as well provided with the means of purchasing."

"Say none at all, Bob, and you can wound no feeling, while you will tell the truth. My father died a lieutenant−colonel when I was a school−boy; I owed my ensigncy to my uncle Sir Hugh, the father of the present Sir HarryWilloughby; after that I owed each step to hard and long service. Your mother's legacies have helped you along, at a faster rate, though I do trust there has been some merit to aid in the preferment."

"Speaking of Sir Harry Willoughby, sir, reminds me of one part of my errand to the Hut," said the major, glancing his eye towards his father, as if to prepare him for some unexpected intelligence.

"What of my cousin?" demanded the captain, calmly. "We have not met in thirty years, and are the next thing to strangers to each other. Has he made that silly match of which I heard something when last in York? Has he disinherited his daughter as he threatened? Use no reserve here; our friend Woods is one of the family."

"Sir Harry Willoughby is not married, sir, but dead."

"Dead!" repeated the captain, setting down his cup, like one who received a sudden shock. "I hope not without having been reconciled to his daughter, and providing for her large family?"

"He died in her arms, and escaped the consequences of his silly intention to marry his own housekeeper. With one material exception, he has left Mrs. Bowater his whole fortune."

The captain sat thoughtful, for some time; every one else being silent and attentive. But the mother's feelings prompted her to inquire as to the nature of the exception.

"Why, mother, contrary to all my expectations, and I may say wishes, he has left me twenty−five thousand pounds in the fives. I only hold the money as my father's trustee."

"You do no such thing, Master Bob, I can tell you!" said the captain, with emphasis.

The son looked at the father, a moment, as if to see whether he was understood, and then he proceeded

"I presume you remember, sir," said the major, "that you are the heir to the title?"

"I have not forgot that, major Willoughby; but what is an empty baronetcy to a happy husband and father like me, here in the wilds of America? Were I still in the army, and a colonel, the thing might be of use; as I am, I would rather have a tolerable road from this place to the Mohawk, than the duchy of Norfolk, without the estate."

"Estate there is none, certainly," returned the major, in a tone of a little disappointment, "except the twenty−five thousand pounds; unless you include that which you possess where you are; not insignificant, by the way, sir."

"It will do well enough for old Hugh Willoughby, late a captain in His Majesty's 23d Regiment of Foot, but not so well for Sir Hugh. No, no, Bob. Let the baronetcy sleep awhile; it has been used quite enough for the last hundred years or more. Out of this circle, there are probably not ten persons in America, who know that I have any claims to it."

The major coloured, and he played with the spoon of his empty cup, stealing a glance or two around, before he answered.

"I beg your pardon, Sir Hugh my dear father, I mean but to own the truth, never anticipating such a decision on your part, I have spoken of the thing to a good many friends I dare say, if the truth were known, I've called you the baronet, or Sir Hugh, to others, at least a dozen times."

"Well, should it be so, the thing will be forgotten. A parson can be unfrocked, Woods, and a baronet can be un−baroneted, I suppose."

"But, Sir William" so everybody called the well−known Sir William Johnson, in the colony of New York "But, Sir William found it useful, Willoughby, and so, I dare say, will his son and successor, Sir John," observed the attentive wife and anxious mother; "and if you are not now in the army, Bob is. It will be a good thing for our son one day, and ought not to be lost."

"Ah, I see how it is, Beulah; your mother has no notion to lose the right of being called Lady Willoughby."

"I am sure my mother, sir, wishes to be called nothing that does not become your wife; if you remain Mr. Hugh Willoughby, she will remain Mrs. Hugh Willoughby. But, papa, it might be useful to Bob."

Beulah was a great favourite with the captain, Maud being only his darling; he listened always to whatever the former said, therefore, with indulgence and respect. He often told the chaplain that his daughter Beulah had the true feelings of her sex, possessing a sort of instinct for whatever was right and becoming, in woman.

"Well, Bob may have the baronetcy, then," he said, smiling. "Major Sir Robert Willoughby will not sound amiss in a despatch."

"But, Bob cannot have it, father," exclaimed Maud "No one can have it but you; and it's a pity it should be lost."

"Let him wait, then, until I am out of the way; when he may claim his own."

"Can that be done?" inquired the mother, to whom nothing was without interest that affected her children. "How is it, Mr. Woods? may a title be dropped, and then picked up again? how is this, Robert?"

"I believe it may, my dear mother it will always exist, so long as there is an heir, and my father's disrelish for it will not be binding on me."

"Oh! in that case, then, all will come right in the end though, as your father does not want it, I wish you could have it, now."

This was said with the most satisfied air in the world, as if the speaker had no possible interest in the matter herself, and it closed the conversation, for that time. It was not easy to keep up an interest in anything that related to the family, where Mrs. Willoughby was concerned, in which heart did not predominate. A baronetcy was a considerable dignity in the colony of New York in the year of our Lord, 1775, and it gave its possessor far more importance than it would have done in England. In the whole colony there was but one, though a good many were to be found further south; and he was known as "Sir John," as, in England, Lord Rockingham, or, in America, at a later day, La Fayette, was known as "The Marquis." Under such circumstances, then, it would have been no trifling sacrifice to an ordinary woman to forego the pleasure of being called "my lady.' But the sacrifice cost our matron no pain, no regrets, no thought even. The same attachments which made her happy, away from the world, in the wilderness where she dwelt, supplanted all other feelings, and left her no room, or leisure, to think of such vanities. When the discourse changed, it was understood that "Sir Hugh" was not to be "Sir Hugh," and that "Sir Robert" must bide his time.

"Where did you fall in with the Tuscarora, Bob?" suddenlyasked the captain, as much to bring up another subject, as through curiosity. "The fellow had been so long away, I began to think we should never see him again."

"He tells me, sir, he has been on a war path, somewhere out among the western savages. It seems these Indians fight among themselves, from time to time, and Nick has been trying to keep his hand in. I found him down at Canajoharie, and took him for a guide, though he had the honesty to own he was on the point of coming over here, had I not engaged him."

"I'll answer for it he didn't tell you that, until you had paid him for the job."

"Why, to own the truth, he did not, sir. He pretended something about owing money in the village, and got his pay in advance. I learned his intentions only when we were within a few miles of the Hut."

"I'm glad to find, Bob, that you give the place its proper name. How gloriously Sir Hugh Willoughby, Bart., of The Hut, Tryon county, New York, would sound, Woods! Did Nick boast of the scalps he has taken from the Carthaginians?"

"He lays claim to three, I believe, though I have seen none of his trophies."

"The Roman hero! Yet, I have known Nick rather a dangerous warrior. He was out against us, in some of my earliest service, and our acquaintance was made by my saving his life from the bayonet of one of my own grenadiers. I thought the fellow remembered the act for some years; but, in the end, I believe I flogged all the gratitude out of him. His motives, now, are concentrated in the little island of Santa Cruz."

"Here he is, father," said Maud, stretching her light, flexible form out of a window. "Mike and the Indian are seated at the lower spring, with a jug between them, and appear to be in a deep conversation."

"Ay, I remember on their first acquaintance, that Mike mistook Saucy Nick, for Old Nick. The Indian was indignant for a while, at being mistaken for the Evil Spirit, but the worthies soon found a bond of union between them, and, before six months, he and the Irishman became sworn friends. It is said whenever two human beings love acommon principle, that it never fails to make them firm allies."

"And what was the principle, in this case, captain Willoughby?" inquired the chaplain, with curiosity.

"Santa Cruz. Mike renounced whiskey altogether, after he came to America, and took to rum. As for Nick, he was never so vulgar as to find pleasure in the former liquor."

The whole party had gathered to the windows, while the discourse was proceeding, and looking out, each individual saw Mike and his friend, in the situation described by Maud. The two amateurs connoisseurs would not be misapplied, either had seated themselves at the brink of a spring of delicious water, and removing the corn−cob that Pliny the younger had felt it to be classical to affix to the nozzle of a quart jug, had, some time before, commenced the delightful recreation of sounding the depth, not of the spring, but of the vessel. As respects the former, Mike, who was a wag in his way, had taken a hint from a practice said to be common in Ireland, called "potatoe and point," which means to eat the potatoe and point at the butter; declaring that "rum and p'int" was every bit as entertaining as a "p'int of rum." On this principle, then, with a broad grin on a face that opened from ear to ear whenever he laughed, the county Leitrim−man would gravely point his finger at the water, in a sort of mock−homage, and follow up the movement with such a suck at the nozzle, as, aided by the efforts of Nick, soon analyzed the upper half of the liquor that had entered by that very passage. All this time, conversation did not flag, and, as the parties grew warm, confidence increased, though reason sensibly diminished. As a part of this discourse will have some bearing on what is to follow, it may be in place to relate it, here.

"Yer'e a jewel, ye be, ould Nick, or young Nick!" cried Mike, in an ecstasy of friendship, just after he had completed his first half−pint. "Yer'e as wilcome at the Huts, as if ye owned thim, and I love ye as I did my own brother, before I left the county Leitrim paice to his sowl!"

"He dead?" asked Nick, sententiously; for he had lived enough among the pale−faces to have some notions of their theory about the soul.

"That's more than I know but, living or dead, the man must have a sowl, ye understand, Nicholas. A human crathure widout a sowl, is what I call a heretick; and none of the O'Hearns ever came to that."

Nick was tolerably drunk, but by no means so far gone, that he had not manners enough to make a grave, and somewhat dignified gesture; which was as much as to say he was familiar with the subject.

"All go ole fashion here?" he asked, avoiding every appearance of curiosity, however.

"That does it that it does, Nicholas. All goes ould enough. The captain begins to get ould; and the missus is oulder than she used to be; and Joel's wife looks a hundred, though she isn't t'irty; and Joel, himself, the spalpeen he looks " a gulp at the jug stopped the communication.

"Dirty, too?" added the sententious Tuscarora, who did not comprehend more than half his friend said.

"Ay, dir−r−ty he's always that. He's a dirthy fellow, that thinks his yankee charactur is above all other things."

Nick's countenance became illuminated with an expression nowise akin to that produced by rum, and he fastened on his companion one of his fiery gazes, which occasionally seemed to penetrate to the centre of the object looked at.

"Why pale−face hate one anoder? Why Irishman don't love yankee?"

"Och! love the crathure, is it? You'd betther ask me to love a to'd" for so Michael would pronounce the word 'toad.' "What is there to love about him, but skin and bone! I'd as soon love a skiliten. Yes an immortal skiliten."

Nick made another gesture, and then he endeavoured to reflect, like one who had a grave business in contemplation. The Santa Cruz confused his brain, but the Indian never entirely lost his presence of mind; or never, at least, so long as he could either see or walk.

"Don't like him" rejoined Nick. "Like anybody?"

"To be sure I does I like the capt'in och, he's a jontleman and I likes the missus; she's a laddy and I likes Miss Beuly, who's a swate young woman and then there's Miss Maud, who's the delight of my eyes. Fegs, but isn't she a crathure to relish!"

Mike spoke like a good honest fellow, as he was at thebottom, with all his heart and soul. The Indian did not seem pleased, but he made no answer.

"You've been in the wars then, Nick?" asked the Irishman, after a short pause.

"Yes Nick been chief ag'in take scalps."

"Ach! That's a mighty ugly thrade! If you'd tell 'em that in Ireland, they'd not think it a possibility."

"No like fight in Ireland, hah?"

"I'll not say that no, I'll not say that; for many's the jollification at which the fighting is the chafe amusement. But we likes thumping on the head not skinning it."

"That your fashion my fashion take scalp. You thump; I skin which best?"

"Augh! skinnin' is a dreadthful operation; but shillaleh−work comes nately and nat'rally. How many of these said scalps, now, may ye have picked up, Nick, in yer last journey?"

"T'ree all man and woman no pappoose. One big enough make two; so call him four."

"Oh! Divil burn ye, Nick; but there's a spice of your namesake in ye, afther all. T'ree human crathures skinned, and you not satisfied, and so ye'll chait a bit to make 'em four! D'ye never think, now, of yer latther ind? D'ye never confess?"

"T'ink every day of dat. Hope to find more, before last day come. Plenty scalp here; ha, Mike?"

This was said a little incautiously, perhaps, but it was said under a strong native impulse. The Irishman, however, was never very logical or clear−headed; and three gills of rum had, by no means, helped to purify his brain. He heard the word "plenty," knew he was well fed and warmly clad, and just now, that Santa Cruz so much abounded, the term seemed peculiarly applicable.

"It's a plinthiful place it is, is this very manor. There's all sorts of things in it that's wanted. There's food and raiment, and cattle, and grain, and porkers, and praiching yes, divil burn it, Nick, but there's what goes for praiching, though it's no more like what we calls praiching than yer'e like Miss Maud in comeliness, and ye'll own, yourself, Nick, yer'e no beauty."

"Got handsome hair," said Nick, surlily "How she look widout scalp?"

"The likes of her, is it! Who ever saw one of her beauthy without the finest hair that ever was! What do you get for your scalps? are they of any use when you find 'em?"

"Bring plenty bye'm bye. Whole country glad to see him before long den beavers get pond ag'in."

"How's that how's that, Indian? Baiver get pounded? There's no pound, hereabouts, and baivers is not an animal to be shut up like a hog!"

Nick perceived that his friend was past argumentation, and as he himself was approaching the state when the drunkard receives delight from he knows not what, it is unnecessary to relate any more of the dialogue. The jug was finished, each man very honestly drinking his pint, and as naturally submitting to its consequences; and this so much the more because the two were so engrossed with the rum that both forgot to pay that attention to the spring that might have been expected from its proximity.

CHAPTER V.

The soul, my lord, is fashioned like the lyre.

Strike one chord suddenly, and others vibrate.

Your name abruptly mentioned, casual words

Of comment on your deeds, praise from your uncle,

News from the armies, talk of your return,

A word let fall touching your youthful passion,

Suffused her cheek, call'd to her drooping eye

A momentary lustre, made her pulse

Leap headlong, and her bosom palpitate.

Hillhouse

The approach of night, at sea and in a wilderness, has always something more solemn in it, than on land in the centre of civilization. As the curtain is drawn before his eyes, the solitude of the mariner is increased, while even his sleepless vigilance seems, in a measure, baffled, by the manner in which he is cut off from the signs of the hour. Thus, too, in the forest, or in an isolated clearing, the mysteries of the woods are deepened, and danger is robbed of its forethought and customary guards. That evening, MajorWilloughby stood at a window with an arm round the slender waist of Beulah, Maud standing a little aloof; and, as the twilight retired, leaving the shadows of evening to thicken on the forest that lay within a few hundred feet of that side of the Hut, and casting a gloom over the whole of the quiet solitude, he felt the force of the feeling just mentioned, in a degree he had never before experienced.

"This is a very retired abode, my sisters," he said, thoughtfully. "Do my father and mother never speak of bringing you out more into the world?"

"They take us to New York every winter, now father is in the Assembly," quietly answered Beulah. "We expected to meet you there, last season, and were greatly disappointed that you did not come."

"My regiment was sent to the eastward, as you know, and having just received my new rank of major, it would not do to be absent at the moment. Do you ever see any one here, besides those who belong to the manor?"

"Oh! yes" exclaimed Maud eagerly then she paused, as if sorry she had said anything; continuing, after a little pause, in a much more moderated vein "I mean occasionally. No doubt the place is very retired."

"Of what characters are your visiters? hunters, trappers, settlers savages or travellers?"

Maud did not answer; but, Beulah, after waiting a moment for her sister to reply, took that office on herself.

"Some of all," she said, "though few certainly of the latter class. The hunters are often here; one or two a month, in the mild season; settlers rarely, as you may suppose, since my father will not sell, and there are not many about, I believe; the Indians come more frequently, though I think we have seen less of them, during Nick's absence, than while he was more with us. Still we have as many as a hundred in a year, perhaps, counting the women. They come in parties, you know, and five or six of these will make that number. As for travellers, they are rare; being generally surveyors, land−hunters, or perhaps a proprietor who is looking up his estate. We had two of the last in the fall, before we went below."

"That is singular; and yet one might well look for an estate in a wilderness like this. Who were your proprietors?"

"An elderly man, and a young one. The first was a sort of partner of the late Sir William's, I believe, who has a grant somewhere near us, for which he was searching. His name was Fonda. The other was one of the Beekmans, who has lately succeeded his father in a property of considerable extent, somewhere at no great distance from us, and came to take a look at it. They say he has quite a hundred thousand acres, in one body."

"And did he find his land? Tracts of thousands and tens of thousands, are sometimes not to be discovered."

"We saw him twice, going and returning, and he was successful. The last time, he was detained by a snow−storm, and staid with us some days so long, indeed, that he remained, and accompanied us out, when we went below. We saw much of him, too, last winter, in town."

"Maud, you wrote me nothing of all this! Are visiters of this sort so very common that you do not speak of them in your letters?"

"Did I not? Beulah will scarce pardon me for that. She thinks Mr. Evert Beekman more worthy of a place in a letter, than I do, perhaps."

"I think him a very respectable and sensible young man," answered Beulah quietly, though there was a deeper tint on her cheek than common, which it was too dark to see. "I am not certain, however, he need fill much space in the letters of either of your sisters."

"Well, this is something gleaned!" said the major, laughing "and now, Beulah, if you will only let out a secret of the same sort about Maud, I shall be au fait of all the family mysteries."

"All!" repeated Maud, quickly "would there be nothing to tell of a certain major Willoughby, brother of mine?"

"Not a syllable. I am as heart−whole as a sound oak, and hope to remain so. At all events, all I love is in this house. To tell you the truth, girls, these are not times for a soldier to think of anything but his duty. The quarrel is getting to be serious between the mother country and her colonies."

"Not so serious, brother," observed Beulah, earnestly, "as to amount to that. Evert Beekman thinks there will be trouble, but he does not appear to fancy it will go as far as very serious violence."

"Evert Beekman! most of that family are loyal, I believe; how is it with this Evert?"

"I dare say, you would call him a rebel," answered Maud, laughing, for now Beulah chose to be silent, leaving her sister to explain. "He is not fiery; but he calls himself an American, with emphasis; and that is saying a good deal, when it means he is not an Englishman. Pray what do you call yourself, Bob?"

"I! Certainly an American in one sense, but an Englishman in another. An American, as my father was a Cumberland−man, and an Englishman as a subject, and as connected with the empire."

"As St. Paul was a Roman. Heigho! Well, I fear I have but one character or, if I have two, they are an American, and a New York girl. Did I dress in scarlet, as you do, I might feel English too, possibly."

"This is making a triffing misunderstanding too serious," observed Beulah. "Nothing can come of all the big words that have been used, than more big words. I know that is Evert Beekman's opinion."

"I hope you may prove a true prophet," answered the major, once more buried in thought. "This place does seem to be fearfully retired for a family like ours. I hope my father may be persuaded to pass more of his time in New York. Does he ever speak on the subject, girls, or appear to have any uneasiness?"

"Uneasiness about what? The place is health itself; all sorts of fevers, and agues, and those things being quite unknown. Mamma says the toothache, even, cannot be found in this healthful spot."

"That is lucky and, yet, I wish captain Willoughby Sir Hugh Willoughby could be induced to live more in New York. Girls of your time of life, ought to be in the way of seeing the world, too."

"In other words, of seeing admirers, major Bob," said Maud, laughing, and bending forward to steal a glance in her brother's face. "Good night. Sir Hugh wishes us to send you into his library when we can spare you, and my lady has sent us a hint that it is ten o'clock, at which hour it is usual for sober people to retire."

The major kissed both sisters with warm affection Beulah fancied with a sobered tenderness, and Maud thought kindly and then they retired to join their mother, while he went to seek his father.

The captain was smoking in the library, as a room of all−head−work was called, in company with the chaplain. The practice of using tobacco in this form, had grown to be so strong in both of these old inmates of garrisons, that they usually passed an hour, in the recreation, before they went to bed. Nor shall we mislead the reader with any notions of fine−flavoured Havana segars; pipes, with Virginia cut, being the materials employed in the indulgence. A little excellent Cogniac and water, in which however the spring was not as much neglected, as in the orgies related in the previous chapter, moistened their lips, from time to time, giving a certain zest and comfort to their enjoyments. Just as the door opened to admit the major, he was the subject of discourse, the proud parent and the partial friend finding almost an equal gratification in discussing his fine, manly appearance, good qualities, and future hopes. His presence was untimely, then, in one sense; though he was welcome, and, indeed, expected. The captain pushed a chair to his son, and invited him to take a seat near the table, which held a spare pipe or two, a box of tobacco, a decanter of excellent brandy, a pitcher of pure water, all pleasant companions to the elderly gentlemen, then in possession.

"I suppose you are too much of a maccaroni, Bob, to smoke," observed the smiling father. "I detested a pipe at your time of life; or may say, I was afraid of it; the only smoke that was in fashion among our scarlet coats being the smoke of gunpowder. Well, how comes on Gage, and your neighbours the Yankees?"

"Why, sir," answered the major, looking behind him, to make sure that the door was shut "Why, sir, to own the truth, my visit, here, just at this moment, is connected with the present state of that quarrel."

Both the captain and the chaplain drew the pipes from their mouths, holding them suspended in surprise and attention.

"The deuce it is!" exclaimed the former. "I thought I owed this unexpected pleasure to your affectionate desire tolet me know I had inherited the empty honours of a baronetey!"

"That was one motive, sir, but the least. I beg you to remember the awkwardness of my position, as a king's officer, in the midst of enemies."

"The devil! I say, parson, this exceeds heresy and schism! Do you call lodging in your father's house, major Willoughby, being in the midst of enemies? This is rebellion against nature, and is worse than rebellion against the king."

"My dear father, no one feels more secure with you, than I do; or, even, with Mr. Woods, here. But, there are others besides you two, in this part of the world, and your very settlement may not be safe a week longer; probably would not be, if my presence in it were known."

Both the listeners, now, fairly laid down their pipes, and the smoke began gradually to dissipate, as it might have been rising from a field of battle. One looked at the other, in wonder, and, then, both looked at the major, in curiosity.

"What is the meaning of all this, my son?" asked the captain, gravely. "Has anything new occurred to complicate the old causes of quarrel?"

"Blood has, at length, been drawn, sir; open rebellion has commenced!"

"This is a serious matter, indeed, if it be really so. But do you not exaggerate the consequences of some fresh indiscretion of the soldiery, in firing on the people? Remember, in the other affair, even the colonial authorities justified the officers."

"This is a very different matter, sir. Blood has not been drawn in a riot, but in a battle."

"Battle! You amaze me, sir! That is indeed a serious matter, and may lead to most serious consequences!"

"The Lord preserve us from evil times," ejaculated the chaplain, "and lead us, poor, dependent creatures that we are, into the paths of peace and quietness! Without his grace, we are the blind leading the blind."

"Do you mean, major Willoughby, that armed and disciplined bodies have met in actual conflict?"

"Perhaps not literally so, my dear father; but the minute−men of Massachusetts, and His Majesty's forces, have metand fought. This I know, full well; for my own regiment was in the field, and, I hope it is unnecessary to add, that its second officer was not absent."

"Of course these minute−men rabble would be the better word could not stand before you?" said the captain, compressing his lips, under a strong impulse of military pride.

Major Willoughby coloured, and, to own the truth, at that moment he wished the Rev. Mr. Woods, if not literally at the devil, at least safe and sound in another room; anywhere, so it were out of ear−shot of the answer.

"Why, sir," he said, hesitating, not to say stammering, notwithstanding a prodigious effort to seem philosophical and calm "To own the truth, these minute−fellows are not quite as contemptible as we soldiers would be apt to think. It was a stone−wall affair, and dodging work; and, so, you know, sir, drilled troops wouldn't have the usual chance. They pressed us pretty warmly on the retreat."

"Retreat! Major Willoughby!"

"I called it retreat, sure enough; but it was only a march in, again, after having done the business on which we went out. I shall admit, I say, sir, that we were hard pressed, until reinforced."

"Reinforced, my dear Bob! Your regiment, our regiment could not need a reinforcement against all the Yankees in New England."

The major could not abstain from laughing, a little, at this exhibition of his father's esprit de corps; but native frankness, and love of truth, compelled him to admit the contrary.

"It did, sir, notwithstanding," he answered; "and, not to mince the matter, it needed it confoundedly. Some of our officers who have seen the hardest service of the last war, declare, that taking the march, and the popping work, and the distance, altogether, it was the warmest day they remember. Our loss, too, was by no means insignificant,

as I hope you will believe, when you know the troops engaged. We report something like three hundred casualties."

The captain did not answer for quite a minute. All this time he sat thoughtful, and even pale; for his mind was teeming with the pregnant consequences of such an outbreak. Then he desired his son to give a succinct, but connected history of the whole affair. The major complied, beginning his narrative with an account of the general state of the country, and concluding it, by giving, as far as it was possible for one whose professional pride and political feelings were too deeply involved to be entirely impartial, a reasonably just account of the particular occurrence already mentioned.

The events that led to, and the hot skirmish which it is the practice of the country to call the Battle of Lexington, and the incidents of the day itself, are too familiar to the ordinary reader, to require repetition here. The major explained all the military points very clearly, did full justice to the perseverance and daring of the provincials, as he called his enemies for, an American himself, he would not term them Americans and threw in as many explanatory remarks as he could think of, by way of vindicating the "march in, again." This he did, too, quite as much out of filial piety, as out of self−love; for, to own the truth, the captain's mortification, as a soldier, was so very evident as to give his son sensible pain.

"The effect of all this," continued the major, when his narrative of the military movements was ended, "has been to raise a tremendous feeling, throughout the country, and God knows what is to follow."

"And this you have come hither to tell me, Robert," said the father, kindly. "It is well done, and as I would have expected from you. We might have passed the summer, here, and not have heard a whisper of so important an event."

"Soon after the affair or, as soon as we got some notion of its effect on the provinces, general Gage sent me, privately, with despatches to governor Tryon. He, governor Tryon, was aware of your position; and, as I had also to communicate the death of Sir Harry Willoughby, he directed me to come up the river, privately, have an interview with Sir John, if possible, and then push on, under a feigned name, and communicate with you. He thinks, now Sir William is dead, that with your estate, and new rank, and local influence, you might be very serviceable in sustaining the royal cause; for, it is not to be concealed that this affairis likely to take the character of an open and wide−spread revolt against the authority of the crown."

"General Tryon does me too much honour," answered the captain, coldly. "My estate is a small body of wild land; my influence extends little beyond this beaver meadow, and is confined to my own household, and some fifteen or twenty labourers; and as for the new rank of which you speak, it is not likely the colonists will care much for that, if they disregard the rights of the king. Still, you have acted like a son in running the risk you do, Bob; and I pray God you may get back to your regiment, in safety."

"This is a cordial to my hopes, sir; for nothing would pain me more than to believe you think it my duty, because I was born in the colonies, to throw up my commission, and take side with the rebels."

"I do not conceive that to be your duty, any more than I conceive it to be mine to take sides against them, because I happened to be born in England. It is a weak view of moral obligations, that confines them merely to the accidents of birth, and birth−place. Such a subsequent state of things may have grown up, as to change all our duties, and it is necessary that we discharge them as they are; not as they may have been, hitherto, or may be, hereafter. Those who clamour so much about mere birth−place, usually have no very clear sense of their higher obligations. Over our birth we can have no control; while we are rigidly responsible for the fulfilment of obligations voluntarily contracted."

"Do you reason thus, captain?" asked the chaplain, with strong interest "Now, I confess, I feel, in this matter, not only very much like a native American, but very much like a native Yankee, in the bargain. You know I was born in the Bay, and the major must excuse me but, it ill−becomes my cloth to deceive I hope the major will pardon me I I do hope "

"Speak out, Mr. Woods," said Robert Willoughby, smiling "You have nothing to fear from your old friend the major."

"So I thought so I thought well, then, I was glad yes, really rejoiced at heart, to hear that my countrymen, down−east, there, had made the king's troops scamper."

"I am not aware that I used any such terms, sir, in connectionwith the manner in which we marched in, after the duty we went out on was performed," returned the young soldier, a little stiffly. "I suppose it is natural for one Yankee to sympathize with another; but, my father, Mr. Woods, is an Old England, and not a New−England−man; and he may be excused if he feel more for the servants of the crown."

"Certainly, my dear major certainly, my dear Mr. Robert my old pupil, and, I hope, my friend all this is true enough, and very natural. I allow captain Willoughby to wish the best for the king's troops, while I wish the best for my own countrymen."

"This is natural, on both sides, out of all question, though it by no means follows that it is right. 'Our country, right or wrong,' is a high−sounding maxim, but it is scarcely the honest man's maxim. Our country, after all, cannot have nearer claims upon us, than our parents for instance; and who can claim a moral right to sustain even his own father, in error, injustice, or crime? No, no I hate your pithy sayings; they commonly mean nothing that is substantially good, at bottom."

"But one's country, in a time of actual war, sir!" said the major, in a tone of as much remonstrance as habit would allow him to use to his own father.

"Quite true, Bob; but the difficulty here, is to know which is one's country. It is a family quarrel, at the best, and it will hardly do to talk about foreigners, at all. It is the same as if I should treat Maud unkindly, or harshly, because she is the child of only a friend, and not my own natural daughter. As God is my judge, Woods, I am unconscious of not loving Maud Meredith, at this moment, as tenderly as I love Beulah Willoughby. There was a period, in her childhood, when the playful little witch had most of my heart, I am afraid, if the truth were known. It is use, and duty, then, and not mere birth, that ought to tie our hearts."

The major thought it might very well be that one child should be loved more than another, though he did not understand how there could be a divided allegiance. The chaplain looked at the subject with views still more narrowed, and he took up the cudgels of argument in sober earnest,conceiving this to be as good an opportunity as another, for disposing of the matter.

"I am all for birth, and blood, and natural ties," he said, "always excepting the peculiar claims of Miss Maud, whose case is sui generis, and not to be confounded with any other case. A man can have but one country, any more than he can have but one nature; and, as he is forced to be true to that nature, so ought he morally to be true to that country. The captain says, that it is difficult to determine which is one's country, in a civil war; but I cannot admit the argument. If Massachusetts and England get to blows, Massachusetts is my country; if Suffolk and Worcester counties get into a quarrel, my duty calls me to Worcester, where I was born; and so I should carry out the principle from country to country, county to county, town to town, parish to parish; or, even household to household."

"This is an extraordinary view of one's duty, indeed, my dear Mr. Woods," cried the major, with a good deal of animation; "and if one−half the household quarrelled with the other, you would take sides with that in which you happened to find yourself, at the moment."

"It is an extraordinary view of one's duty, for a parson;" observed the captain. "Let us reason backward a little, and ascertain where we shall come out. You put the head of the household out of the question. Has he no claims? Is a father to be altogether overlooked in the struggle between the children? Are his laws to be broken his rights invaded or his person to be maltreated, perhaps, and his curse disregarded, because a set of unruly children get by the ears, on points connected with their own selfishness?"

"I give up the household," cried the chaplain, "for the bible settles that; and what the bible disposes of, is beyond dispute 'Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee' are terrible words, and must not be disobeyed. But the decalogue has not another syllable which touches the question. 'Thou shalt not kill,' means murder only; common, vulgar murder and 'thou shalt not steal,' 'thou shalt not commit adultery,' don't bear on civil war, as I see. 'Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy' 'Thou shalt notcovet the ox nor the ass' 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain' none of these, not one of them, bears, at all, on this question."

"What do you think of the words of the Saviour, where he tells us to 'render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's?' Has Cæsar no rights here? Can Massachusetts and my Lord North settle their quarrels in such a manner as to put Cæsar altogether out of view?"

The chaplain looked down a moment, pondered a little, and then he came up to the attack, again, with renewed ardour.

"Cæsar is out of the question here. If His Majesty will come and take sides with us, we shall be ready to honour and obey him; but if he choose to remain alienated from us, it is his act, not ours."

"This is a new mode of settling allegiance! If Cæsar will do as we wish, he shall still be Cæsar; but, if he refuse to do as we wish, then down with Cæsar. I am an old soldier, Woods, and while I feel that this question has two sides to it, my disposition to reverence and honour the king is still strong."

The major appeared delighted, and, finding matters going on so favourably, he pleaded fatigue and withdrew, feeling satisfied that, if his father fairly got into a warm discussion, taking the loyal side of the question, he would do more to confirm himself in the desired views, than could be effected by any other means. By this time, the disputants were so warm as scarcely to notice the disappearance of the young man, the argument proceeding.

The subject is too hackneyed, and, indeed, possesses too little interest, to induce us to give more than an outline of what passed. The captain and the chaplain belonged to that class of friends, which may be termed argumentative. Their constant discussions were a strong link in the chain of esteem; for they had a tendency to enliven their solitude, and to give a zest to lives that, without them, would have been exceedingly monotonous. Their ordinary subjects were theology and war; the chaplain having some practical knowledge of the last, and the captain a lively disposition to the first. In these discussions, the clergyman was good−natured, and the soldier polite; circumstances that tendedto render them far more agreeable to the listeners than they might otherwise have proved.

On the present occasion, the chaplain rang the changes diligently, on the natural feelings, while his friend spoke most of the higher duties. The ad captandum part of the argument, oddly enough, fell to the share of the minister of the church; while the intellectual, discriminating, and really logical portion of the subject, was handled by one trained in garrisons and camps, with a truth, both of ethics and reason, that would have done credit to a drilled casuist. The war of words continued till past midnight, both disputants soon getting back to their pipes, carrying

on the conflict amid a smoke that did no dishonour to such a well−contested field. Leaving the captain and his friend thus intently engaged, we will take one or two glimpses into different parts of the house, before we cause all our characters to retire for the night.

About the time the battle in the library was at its height, Mrs. Willoughby was alone in her room, having disposed of all the cares, and most of the duties of the day. The mother's heart was filled with a calm delight that it would have been difficult for herself to describe. All she held most dear on earth, her husband, her kind−hearted, faithful, long−loved husband; her noble son, the pride and joy of her heart; Beulah, her own natural−born daughter, the mild, tractable, sincere, true−hearted child that so much resembled herself; and Maud, the adopted, one rendered dear by solicitude and tenderness, and now so fondly beloved on her own account, were all with her, beneath her own roof, almost within the circle of her arms. The Hutted Knoll was no longer a solitude; the manor was not a wilderness to her; for where her heart was, there truly was her treasure, also. After passing a few minutes in silent, but de−lightful thought, this excellent, guileless woman knelt and poured out her soul in thanksgivings to the Being, who had surrounded her lot with so many blessings. Alas! little did she suspect the extent, duration, and direful nature of the evils which, at that very moment, were pending over her native country, or the pains that her own affectionate heart was to endure! The major had not suffered a whisper of the real nature of his errand to escape him, except to hisfather and the chaplain; and we will now follow him to his apartment, and pass a minute, tête−à−tête, with the young soldier, ere he too lays his head on his pillow.

A couple of neat rooms were prepared and furnished, that were held sacred to the uses of the heir. They were known to the whole household, black and white, as the "young captain's quarters;" and even Maud called them, in her laughing off−handedness, "Bob's Sanctum." Here, then, the major found everything as he left it on his last visit, a twelvemonth before; and some few things that were strangers to him, in the bargain. In that day, toilets covered with muslin, more or less worked and ornamented, were a regular appliance of every bed−room, of a better−class house, throughout America. The more modern "Duchesses," "Psychés," "dressing−tables," of our own extravagant and benefit−of−the−act−taking generation, were then unknown; a moderately−sized glass, surrounded by curved, gilded ornaments, hanging against the wall, above the said muslin−covered table, quite as a matter of law, if not of domestic faith.

As soon as the major had set down his candle, he looked about him, as one recognises old friends, pleased at renewing his acquaintance with so many dear and cherished objects. The very playthings of his childhood were there; and, even a beautiful and long−used hoop, was embellished with ribbons, by some hand unknown to himself. "Can this be my mother?" thought the young man, approaching to examine the well−remembered hoop, which he had never found so honoured before; "can my kind, tender−hearted mother, who never will forget that I am no longer a child, can she have really done this? I must laugh at her, to−morrow, about it, even while I kiss and bless her." Then he turned to the toilet, where stood a basket, filled with different articles, which, at once, he understood were offerings to himself. Never had he visited the Hut without finding such a basket in his room at night. It was a tender proof how truly and well he was remembered, in his absence.

"Ah!" thought the major, as he opened a bundle of knit lamb's−wool stockings, "here is my dear mother again, with her thoughts about damp feet, and the exposure of service.And a dozen shirts, too, with 'Beulah' pinned on one of them how the deuce does the dear girl suppose I am to carry away such a stock of linen, without even a horse to ease me of a bundle? My kit would be like that of the commander−in−chief, were I to take away all that these dear relatives design for me. What's this? a purse! a handsome silken purse, too, with Beulah's name on it. Has Maud nothing, here? Why has Maud forgotten me! Ruffles, handkerchiefs, garters yes, here is a pair of my good mother's own knitting, but nothing of Maud's Ha! what have we here? As I live, a beautiful silken scarf netted in a way to make a whole regiment envious. Can this have been bought, or has it been the work of a twelvemonth? No name on it, either. Would my father have done this? Perhaps it is one of his old scarfs if so, it is an old new one, for I do not think it has ever been worn. I must inquire into this, in the morning I wonder there is nothing of Maud's!"

As the major laid aside his presents, he kissed the scarf, and then I regret to say without saying his prayers the young man went to bed.

The scene must now be transferred to the room where the sisters in affection, if not in blood were about to seek their pillows also. Maud, ever the quickest and most prompt in her movements, was already in her night−clothes; and, wrapping a shawl about herself, was seated waiting for Beulah to finish her nightly orisons. It was not long before the latter rose from her knees, and then our heroine spoke.

"The major must have examined the basket by this time," she cried, her cheek rivalling the tint of a riband it leaned against, on the back of the chair. "I heard his heavy tramp tramp tramp as he went to his room how differently these men walk from us girls, Beulah!"

"They do, indeed; and Bob has got to be so large and heavy, now, that he quite frightens me, sometimes. Do you not think he grows wonderfully like papa?"

"I do not see it. He wears his own hair, and it's a pity he should ever cut it off, it's so handsome and curling. Then he is taller, but lighter has more colour is so much younger and everyway so different, I wonder you think so. I do not think him in the least like father."

"Well, that is odd, Maud. Both mother and myself were struck with the resemblance, this evening, and we were both delighted to see it. Papa is quite handsome, and so I think is Bob. Mother says he is not quite as handsome as father was, at his age, but so like him, it is surprising!"

"Men may be handsome and not alike. Father is certainly one of the handsomest elderly men of my acquaintance and the major is so−so−ish but, I wonder you can think a man of seven−and−twenty so very like one of sixty−odd. Bob tells me he can play the flute quite readily now, Beulah."

"I dare say; he does everything he undertakes uncommonly well. Mr. Woods said, a few days since, he had never met with a boy who was quicker at his mathematics."

"Oh! All Mr. Wood's geese are swans. I dare say there have been other boys who were quite as clever. I do not believe in non−pareils, Beulah."

"You surprise me, Maud you, whom I always supposed such a friend of Bob's! He thinks everything you do, too, so perfect! Now, this very evening, he was looking at the sketch you have made of the Knoll, and he protested he did not know a regular artist in England, even, that would have done it better."

Maud stole a glance at her sister, while the latter was speaking, from under her cap, and her cheeks now fairly put the riband to shame; but her smile was still saucy and wilful.

"Oh! nonsense," she said "Bob's no judge of drawings He scarce knows a tree from a horse!"

"I'm surprised to hear you say so, Maud," said the generous−minded and affectionate Beulah, who could see no imperfection in Bob; "and that of your brother. When he taught you to draw, you thought him well skilled as an artist."

"Did I? I dare say I'm a capricious creature but, somehow, I don't regard Bob, just as I used to. He has been away from us so much, of late, you know and the army makes men so formidable and, they are not like us, you know and, altogether, I think Bob excessively changed."

"Well, I'm glad mamma don't hear this, Maud. She looks upon her son, now he is a major, and twenty−seven, just as she used to look upon him, when he was in petticoats nay, I think she considers us all exactly as so many little children."

"She is a dear, good mother, I know," said Maud, with emphasis, tears starting to her eyes, involuntarily, almost impetuously "whatever she says, does, wishes, hopes, or thinks, is right."

"Oh! I knew you would come to, as soon as there was a question about mother! Well, for my part, I have no such horror of men, as not to feel just as much tenderness for father or brother, as I feel for mamma, herself."

"Not for Bob, Beulah. Tenderness for Bob! Why, my dear sister, that is feeling tenderness for a Major of Foot, a very different thing from feeling it for one's mother. As for papa dear me, he is glorious, and I do so love him!"

"You ought to, Maud; for you were, and I am not certain that you are not, at this moment, his darling."

It was odd that this was said without the least thought, on the part of the speaker, that Maud was not her natural sister that, in fact, she was not in the least degree related to her by blood. But so closely and judiciously had captain and Mrs. Willoughby managed the affair of their adopted child, that neither they themselves, Beulah, nor the inmates of the family or household, ever thought of her, but as of a real daughter of her nominal parents. As for Beulah, her feelings were so simple and sincere, that they were even beyond the ordinary considerations of delicacy, and she took precisely the same liberties with her titular, as she would have done with a natural sister. Maud alone, of all in the Hut, remembered her birth, and submitted to some of its most obvious consequences. As respects the captain, the idea never crossed her mind, that she was adopted by him; as respects her mother, she filled to her, in every sense, that sacred character; Beulah, too, was a sister, in thought and deed; but, Bob, he had so changed, had been so many years separated from her; had once actually called her Miss Meredith somehow, she knew not how herself it was fully six years since she had begun to remember that he was not her brother.

"As for my father," said Maud, rising with emotion, and speaking with startling emphasis "I will not say I love him I worship him!"

"Ah! I know that well enough, Maud; and to say the truth, you are a couple of idolators, between you. Mamma says this, sometimes; though she owns she is not jealous. But it would pain her excessively to hear that you do not feel towards Bob, just as we all feel."

"But, ought I? Beulah, I cannot!"

"Ought you! Why not, Maud? Are you in your senses, child?"

"But you know I'm sure you ought to remember "

"What?" demanded Beulah, really frightened at the other's excessive agitation.

"That I am not his real true born sister!"

This was the first time in their lives, either had ever alluded to the fact, in the other's presence. Beulah turned pale; she trembled all over, as if in an ague; then she luckily burst into tears, else she might have fainted.

"Beulah my sister my own sister!" cried Maud, throwing herself into the arms of the distressed girl.

"Ah! Maud, you are, you shall for ever be, my only, only sister."

CHAPTER VI.

O! It is great for our country to die, where ranks are contending;

Bright is the wreath of our fame; Glory awaits us for aye

Glory, that never is dim, shining on with light never ending

Glory, that never shall fade, never, O! never away.

Percival

Notwithstanding the startling intelligence that had so unexpectedly reached it, and the warm polemical conflict that had been carried on within its walls, the night passed peacefully over the roof of the Hutted Knoll. At the return of dawn, the two Plinys, both the Smashes, and all the menials were again afoot; and, ere long, Mike, Saucy Nick,Joel, and the rest were seen astir, in the open fields, or in the margin of the woods. Cattle were fed, cows milked, fires lighted, and everything pursued its course, in the order of May. The three wenches, as female negroes were then termed, ex officio, in America, opened their throats, as was usual at that hour, and were heard singing at their labours, in a way nearly to deaden the morning carols of the tenants of the forest. Mari', in particular, would have drowned the roar of Niagara. The captain used to call her his clarion.

In due time, the superiors of the household made their appearance. Mrs. Willoughby was the first out of her room, as was ever the case when there was anything to be done. On the present occasion, the "fatted calf" was to be killed, not in honour of the return of a prodigal son, however, but in behalf of one who was the pride of her eyes, and the joy of her heart. The breakfast that she ordered was just the sort of breakfast, that one must visit America to witness. France can set forth a very scientific dejeuner à la fourchette, and England has laboured and ponderous imitations; but, for the spontaneous, superabundant, unsophisticated, natural, all−sufficing and all−subduing morning's meal, take America, in a better−class house, in the country, and you reach the ne plus ultra, in that sort of thing. Tea, coffee, and chocolate, of which the first and last were excellent, and the second respectable; ham, fish, eggs, toast, cakes, rolls, marmalades, were thrown together in noble confusion; frequently occasioning the guest, as Mr. Woods naively confessed, an utter confusion of mind, as to which he was to attack, when all were inviting and each would be welcome.

Leaving Mrs. Willoughby in deep consultation with Mari', on the subject of this feast, we will next look after the two sweet girls whom we so abruptly deserted in the last chapter. When Maud's glowing cheeks were first visible that morning, signs of tears might have been discovered on them, as the traces of the dew are found on the leaf of the rose; but they completely vanished under the duties of the toilet, and she came forth from her chamber, bright and cloudless as the glorious May−morning, which had returned to cheer the solitude of the manor. Beulah followed, tranquil, bland, and mild as the day itself, the living image of the purity of soul, and deep affections, of her honest nature.

The sisters went into the breakfast−room, where they had little lady−like offices of their own to discharge, too, in honour of the guest; each employing herself in decorating the table, and in seeing that it wanted nothing in the proprieties. As their pleasing tasks were fulfilled, the discourse did not flag between them. Nothing, however, had been said, that made the smallest allusion to the conversation of the past night. Neither felt any wish to revive that subject; and, as for Maud, bitterly did she regret ever having broached it. At times, her cheeks burned with blushes, as she recalled her words; and yet she scarce knew the reason why. The feeling of Beulah was different. She wondered her sister could ever think she was a Meredith, and not a Willoughby. At times she feared some unfortunate over−sight of her own, some careless allusion, or indiscreet act, might have served to remind Maud of the circumstances of her real birth. Yet there was nothing in the last likely to awaken unpleasant reflections, apart

from the circumstance that she was not truly a child of the family into which she had been transplanted. The Merediths were, at least, as honourable a family as the Willoughbys, in the ordinary worldly view of the matter; nor was Maud, by any means, a dependant, in the way of money. Five thousand pounds, in the English funds, had been settled on her, by the marriage articles of her parents; and twenty years of careful husbandry, during which every shilling had been scrupulously devoted to accumulation, had quite doubled the original amount. So far from being penniless, therefore, Maud's fortune was often alluded to by the captain, in a jocular way, as if purposely to remind her that she had the means of independence, and duties connected with it. It is true, Maud, herself, had no suspicion that she had been educated altogether by her "father," and that her own money had not been used for this purpose. To own the truth, she thought little about it; knew little about it, beyond the fact, that she had a fortune of her own, into the possession of which she must step, when she attained her majority. How she came by it, even, was a question she never asked; though there were moments when tender regrets and affectionatemelancholy would come over her heart, as she thought of her natural parents, and of their early deaths. Still, Maud implicitly reposed on the captain and Mrs. Willoughby, as on a father and mother; and it was not owing to them, or anything connected with their love, treatment, words, or thoughts, that she was reminded that they were not so in very fact, as well as in tenderness.

"Bob will think you made these plum sweetmeats, Beulah," said Maud, with a saucy smile, as she placed a glass plate on the table "He never thinks I can make anything of this sort; and, as he is so fond of plums, he will be certain to taste them; then you will come in for the praise!"

"You appear to think, that praise he must. Perhaps he may not fancy them good."

"If I thought so, I would take them away this instant," cried Maud, standing in the attitude of one in doubt. "Bob does not think much of such things in girls, for he says ladies need not be cooks; and yet when one does make a thing of this sort, one would certainly like to have it well made."

"Set your heart at ease, Maud; the plums are delicious much the best we ever had, and we are rather famous for them, you know. I'll answer for it, Bob will pronounce them the best he has ever tasted."

"And if he shouldn't, why should I care that is, not very much about it. You know they are the first I ever made, and one may be permitted to fail on a first effort. Besides, a man may go to England, and see fine sights, and live in great houses, and all that, and not understand when he has good plum sweetmeats before him, and when bad. I dare say there are many colonels in the army, who are ignorant on this point."

Beulah laughed, and admitted the truth of the remark; though, in her secret mind, she had almost persuaded herself that Bob knew everything.

"Do you not think our brother improved in appearance, Maud," she asked, after a short pause. "The visit to England has done him that service, at least."

"I don't see it, Beulah I see no change. To me, Bob is just the same to−day, that he has ever been; that is, eversince he grew to be a man with boys, of course, it is different. Ever since he was made a captain, I mean."

As major Willoughby had reached that rank the day he was one−and−twenty, the reader can understand the precise date when Maud began to take her present views of his appearance and character.

"I am surprised to hear you say so, Maud! Papa says he is better 'set up,' as he calls it, by his English drill, and that he looks altogether more like a soldier than he did."

"Bob has always had a martial look!" cried Maud, quickly "He got that in garrison, when a boy."

"If so, I hope he may never lose it!" said the subject of the remark, himself, who had entered the room unperceived, and overheard this speech. "Being a soldier, one would wish to look like what he is, my little critic."

The kiss that followed, and that given to Beulah, were no more than the usual morning salutations of a brother to his sisters, slight touches of rosy cheeks; and yet Maud blushed; for, as she said to herself, she had been taken by surprise.

"They say listeners never hear good of themselves," answered Maud, with a vivacity that betokened confusion. "Had you come a minute sooner, master Bob, it might have been an advantage."

"Oh! Beulah's remarks I do not fear; so long as I get off unscathed from yours, Miss Maud, I shall think myself a lucky fellow. But what has brought me and my training into discussion, this morning?"

"It is natural for sisters to speak about their brother after so long "

"Tell him nothing about it, Beulah," interrupted Maud. "Let him listen, and eaves−drop, and find out as he may, if he would learn our secrets. There, major Willoughby, I hope that is a promise of a breakfast, which will satisfy even your military appetite!"

"It looks well, indeed, Maud and there, I perceive, are some of Beulah's excellent plums, of which I am so fond I know they were made especially for me, and I must kiss you, sister, for this proof of remembrance."

Beulah, to whose simple mind it seemed injustice to appropriate credit that belonged to another, was about to tellthe truth; but an imploring gesture from her sister induced her to smile, and receive the salute in silence.

"Has any one seen captain Willoughby and parson Woods this morning?" inquired the major. "I left them desperately engaged in discussion, and I really feel some apprehension as to the remains left on the field of battle."

"Here they both come," cried Maud, glad to find the discourse taking so complete a change; "and there is mamma, followed by Pliny, to tell Beulah to take her station at the coffee, while I go to the chocolate, leaving the tea to the only hand that can make it so that my father will drink it."

The parties mentioned entered the room, in the order named; the usual salutations followed, and all took their seats at table. Captain Willoughby was silent and thoughtful at first, leaving his son to rattle on, in a way that betokened care, in his view of the matter, quite as much as it betokened light−heartedness in those of his mother and sisters. The chaplain was rather more communicative than his friend; but he, too, seemed restless, and desirous of arriving at some point that was not likely to come uppermost, in such a family party. At length, the impulses of Mr. Woods got the better of his discretion, even, and he could conceal his thoughts no longer.

"Captain Willoughby," he said, in a sort of apologetic, and yet simple and natural manner, "I have done little since we parted, seven hours since, but think of the matter under discussion."

"If you have, my dear Woods, there has been a strong sympathy between us; I have scarcely slept. I may say I have thought of nothing else, myself, and am glad you have broached the subject, again."

"I was about to say, my worthy sir, that reflection, and my pillow, and your sound and admirable arguments, have produced an entire change in my sentiments. I think, now, altogether with you."

"The devil you do, Woods!" cried the captain, looking up from his bit of dry toast, in astonishment. "Why, my dear fellow this is odd excessively odd, if the truth must be said. To own the real state of the case, chaplain,

you have won me over, and I was just about to make proper acknowledgments of your victory!"

It need scarcely be added that the rest of the company were not a little amazed at these cross−concessions, while Maud was exceedingly amused. As for Mrs. Willoughby, nothing laughable ever occurred in connection with her husband; and then she would as soon think of assailing the church itself, as to ridicule one of its ministers. Beulah could see nothing but what was right in her father, at least; and, as for the major, he felt too much concerned at this unexpected admission of his father's, to perceive anything but the error.

"Have you not overlooked the injunction of scripture, my excellent friend?" rejoined the chaplain. "Have you left to the rights of Cæsar, all their weight and authority? 'The king's name is a tower of strength.' "

"Have not you, Woods, forgotten the superior claims of reason and right, over those of accident and birth that man is to be considered as a reasoning being, to be governed by principles and ever−varying facts, and not a mere animal left to the control of an instinct that perishes with its usefulness?"

"What can they mean, mother?" whispered Maud, scarce able to repress the laughter that came so easily to one with a keen sense of the ludicrous.

"They have been arguing about the right of parliament to tax the colonies, I believe, my dear, and over−persuaded each other, that's all. It is odd, Robert, that Mr. Woods should convert your father."

"No, my dearest mother, it is something even more serious than that." By this time, the disputants, who sat opposite each other, were fairly launched into the discussion, again, and heeded nothing that passed "No, dearest mother, it is far worse than even that. Pliny, tell my man to brush the hunting−jacket and, see he has his breakfast, in good style he is a grumbling rascal, and will give the house a bad character, else you need not come back, until we ring for you yes, mother, yes dearest girls, this is a far more serious matter than you suppose, though it ought not to be mentioned idly, among the people. God knows how they may take it and bad news flies swift enough, of itself."

"Merciful Providence!" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby "What can you mean, my son?"

"I mean, mother, that civil war has actually commenced in the colonies, and that the people of your blood and race are, in open arms, against the people of my father's native country in a word, against me."

"How can that be, Robert? Who would dare to strike a blow against the king?"

"When men get excited, and their passions are once inflamed, they will do much, my mother, that they might not dream of, else."

"This must be a mistake! Some evil−disposed person has told you this, Robert, knowing your attachment to the crown."

"I wish it were so, dear madam; but my own eyes have seen I may say my own flesh has felt, the contrary."

The major then related what had happened, letting his auditors into the secret of the true state of the country. It is scarcely necessary to allude to the degree of consternation and pain, with which he was heard, or to the grief which succeeded.

"You spoke of yourself, dear Bob," said Maud, naturally, and with strong feeling "You were not hurt, in this cruel, cruel battle."

"I ought not to have mentioned it, although I did certainly receive a smart contusion nothing more, I assure you here in the shoulder, and it now scarcely inconveniences me."

By this time all were listening, curiosity and interest having silenced even the disputants, especially as this was the first they had heard of the major's casualty. Then neither felt the zeal which had warmed him in the previous contest, but was better disposed to turn aside from its pursuit.

"I hope it did not send you to the rear, Bob?" anxiously inquired the father.

"I was in the rear, sir, when I got the hurt," answered the major, laughing. "The rear is the post of honour, on a retreat, you know, my dear father; and I believe our march scarce deserves another name."

"That is hard, too, on king's troops! What sort of fellows had you to oppose, my son?"

"A rather intrusive set, sir. Their object was to persuadeus to go into Boston, as fast as possible; and, it was a little difficult, at times, not to listen to their arguments. If my Lord Percy had not come out, with a strong party, and two pieces of artillery, we might not have stood it much longer! Our men were fagged like hunted deer, and the day proved oppressively hot."

"Artillery, too!" exclaimed the captain, his military pride reviving a little, to unsettle his last convictions of duty. "Did you open your columns, and charge your enemies, in line?"

"It would have been charging air. No sooner did we halt, than our foes dispersed; or, no sooner did we renew the march, than every line of wall, along our route, became a line of hostile muskets. I trust you will do us justice, sir you know the regiments, and can scarce think they misbehaved."

"British troops seldom do that; although I have known it happen. No men, however, are usually more steady, and then these provincials are formidable as skirmishers. In that character, I know them, too. What has been the effect of all this on the country, Bob? You told us something of it last night; complete the history."

"The provinces are in a tumult. As for New England, a flame of fire could scarce be more devastating; though I think this colony is less excited. Still, here, men are arming in thousands."

"Dear me dear me" ejaculated the peacefully−inclined chaplain "that human beings can thus be inclined to self−destruction!"

"Is Tryon active? What do the royal authorities, all this time?"

"Of course they neglect nothing feasible; but, they must principally rely on the loyalty and influence of the gentry, until succour can arrive from Europe. If that fail them, their difficulties will be much increased."

Captain Willoughby understood his son; he glanced towards his unconscious wife, as if to see how far she felt with him.

"Our own families are divided, of course, much as they have been in the previous discussions," he added. "The De Lanceys, Van Cortlandts, Philipses, Bayards, and mostof that town connection, with a large portion of the Long Island families, I should think, are with the crown; while the Livingstons, Morrises, Schuylers, Rensselaers, and their friends, go with the colony. Is not this the manner in which they are divided?"

"With some limitations, sir. All the De Lanceys, with most of their strong connections and influence, are with us with the king, I mean while all the Livingstons and Morrises are against us. The other families are divided as

with the Cortlandts, Schuylers, and Rensselaers. It is fortunate for the Patroon, that he is a boy."

"Why so, Bob?" asked the captain, looking inquiringly up, at his son.

"Simply, sir, that his great estate may not be confiscated. So many of his near connections are against us, that he could hardly escape the contamination; and the consequences would be inevitable."

"Do you consider that so certain, sir? As there are two sides to the question, may there not be two results to the war?"

"I think not, sir. England is no power to be defied by colonies insignificant as these."

"This is well enough for a king's officer, major Willoughby; but all large bodies of men are formidable when they are right, and nations these colonies are a nation, in extent and number are not so easily put down, when the spirit of liberty is up and doing among them."

The major listened to his father with pain and wonder. The captain spoke earnestly, and there was a flush about his fine countenance, that gave it sternness and authority. Unused to debate with his father, especially when the latter was in such a mood, the son remained silent, though his mother, who was thoroughly loyal in her heart meaning loyal as applied to a sovereign and who had the utmost confidence in her husband's tenderness and consideration for herself, was not so scrupulous.

"Why, Willoughby," she cried, "you really incline to rebellion! I, even I, who was born in the colonies, think them very wrong to resist their anointed king, and sovereign prince."

"Ah, Wilhelmina," answered the captain, more mildly, "you have a true colonist's admiration of home. But I was old enough, when I left England, to appreciate what I saw and knew, and cannot feel all this provincial admiration."

"But surely, my dear captain, England is a very great country," interrupted the chaplain "a prodigious country; one that can claim all our respect and love. Look at the church, now, the purified continuation of the ancient visible authority of Christ on earth! It is the consideration of this church that has subdued my natural love of birth−place, and altered my sentiments."

"All very true, and all very well, in your mouth, chaplain; yet even the visible church may err. This doctrine of divine right would have kept the Stuarts on the throne, and it is not even English doctrine; much less, then, need it be American. I am no Cromwellian, no republican, that wishes to oppose the throne, in order to destroy it. A good king is a good thing, and a prodigious blessing to a country; still, a people needs look to its political privileges if it wish to preserve them. You and I will discuss this matter another time, parson. There will be plenty of opportunities," he added, rising, and smiling good−humouredly; "I must, now, call my people together, and let them know this news. It is not fair to conceal a civil war."

"My dear sir!" exclaimed the major, in concern "are you not wrong? precipitate, I mean Is it not better to preserve the secret, to give yourself time for reflection to a wait events? I can discover no necessity for this haste. Should you see things differently, hereafter, an incautious word uttered at this moment might bring much motive for regret."

"I have thought of all this, Bob, during the night for hardly did I close my eyes and you cannot change my purpose. It is honest to let my people know how matters stand; and, so far from being hazardous, as you seem to think, I consider it wise. God knows what time will bring forth; but, in every, or any event, fair−dealing can scarcely injure him who practises it. I have already sent directions to have the whole settlement collected on the

lawn, at the ringing of the bell, and I expect every moment we shall hear the summons."

Against this decision there was no appeal. Mild and indulgent as the captain habitually was, his authority was not to be disputed, when he chose to exercise it. Some doubts arose, and the father participated in them, for a moment, as to what might be the effect on the major's fortunes; for, should a very patriotic spirit arise among the men, two−thirds of whom were native Americans, and what was more, from the eastern colonies, he might be detained; or, at least, betrayed on his return, and delivered into the hands of the revolted authorities. This was a very serious consideration, and it detained the captain in the house, some time after the people were assembled, debating the chances, in the bosom of his own family.

"We exaggerate the danger," the captain, at length, exclaimed. "Most of these men have been with me for years, and I know not one among them who I think would wish to injure me, or even you, my son, in this way. There is far more danger in attempting to deceive them, than in making them confidants. I will go out and tell the truth; then we shall, at least, have the security of self−approbation. If you escape the danger of being sold by Nick, my son, I think you have little to fear from any other."

"By Nick!" repeated half−a−dozen voices, in surprise "Surely, father surely, Willoughby surely, my dear captain, you cannot suspect as old and tried a follower, as the Tuscarora!"

"Ay, he is an old follower, certainly, and he has been punished often enough, if he has not been tried. I have never suffered my distrust of that fellow to go to sleep it is unsafe, with an Indian, unless you have a strong hold on his gratitude."

"But, Willoughby, he it was who found this manor for us," rejoined the wife. "Without him, we should never have been the owners of this lovely place, this beaver−dam, and all else that we so much enjoy."

"True, my dear; and without good golden guineas, we should not have had Nick."

"But, sir, I pay as liberally as he can wish," observed the major. "If bribes will buy him, mine are as good as another's."

"We shall see under actual circumstances, I think weshall be, in every respect, safer, by keeping nothing back, than by telling all to the people."

The captain now put on his hat, and issued through the undefended gate−way, followed by every individual of his family. As the summons had been general, when the Willoughbys and the chaplain appeared on the lawn, every living soul of that isolated settlement, even to infants in the arms, was collected there. The captain commanded the profound respect of all his dependants, though a few among them did not love him. The fault was not his, however, but was inherent rather in the untoward characters of the disaffected themselves. His habits of authority were unsuited to their habits of a presuming equality, perhaps; and it is impossible for the comparatively powerful and affluent to escape the envy and repinings of men, who, unable to draw the real distinctions that separate the gentleman from the low−minded and grovelling, impute their advantages to accidents and money. But, even the few who permitted this malign and corrupting tendency to influence their feelings, could not deny that their master was just and benevolent, though he did not always exhibit this justice and benevolence precisely in the way best calculated to soothe their own craving self−love, and exaggerated notions of assumed natural claims. In a word, captain Willoughby, in the eyes of a few unquiet and bloated imaginations among his people, was obnoxious to the imputation of pride; and this because he saw and felt the consequences of education, habits, manners, opinions and sentiments that were hidden from those who not only had no perception of their existence, but who had no knowledge whatever of the qualities that brought them into being. Pope's familiar line of "what can we reason but from what we know?" is peculiarly applicable to persons of this class; who are ever for dragging all things down to standards created by their own ignorance; and who, slaves of the basest and meanest

passions, reason as if they were possessors of all the knowledge, sensibilities and refinements of their own country and times. Of this class of men, comes the ordinary demagogue, a wretch equally incapable of setting an example of any of the higher qualities, in his own person or practice, and of appreciating it when exhibited by others. Such men abound under allsystems where human liberty is highly privileged, being the moral fungi of freedom, as the rankest weeds are known to be the troublesome and baneful productions of the richest soils.

It was no unusual thing for the people of the Hutted Knoll to be collected, in the manner we have described. We are writing of a period, that the present enlightened generation is apt to confound with the darker ages of American knowledge, in much that relates to social usages at least, though it escaped the long−buried wisdom of the Mormon bible, and Miller's interpretations of the prophecies. In that day, men were not so silly as to attempt to appear always wise; but some of the fêtes and festivals of our Anglo−Saxon ancestors were still tolerated among us; the all−absorbing and all swallowing jubilee of "Independence−day" not having yet overshadowed everything else in the shape of a holiday. Now, captain Willoughby had brought with him to the colonies the love of festivals that is so much more prevalent in the old world than in the new; and it was by no means an uncommon thing for him to call his people together, to make merry on a birth−day, or the anniversary of some battle in which he had been one of the victors. When he appeared on the lawn, on the present occasion, therefore, it was expected he was about to meet them with some such announcement.

The inhabitants of the manor, or the estate of the Hutted Knoll, might be divided into three great physical, and we might add moral categories, or races, viz: the Anglo−Saxon, the Dutch, both high and low, and the African. The first was the most numerous, including the families of the millers, most of the mechanics, and that of Joel Strides, the landoverseer; the second was composed chiefly of labourers; and the last were exclusively household servants, with the exception of one of the Plinys, who was a ploughman, though permitted to live with his kinsfolk in the Hut. These divisions, Maud, in one of her merry humours, had nick−named the three tribes; while her father, to make the enumeration complete, had classed the serjeant, Mike, and Jamie Allen, as supernumeraries.

The three tribes, and the three supernumeraries, then, were all collected on the lawn, as the captain and his family approached. By a sort of secret instinct, too, they had divided themselves into knots, the Dutch keeping a little aloof from the Yankees; and the blacks, almost as a matter of religion, standing a short distance in the rear, as became people of their colour, and slaves. Mike and Jamie, however, had got a sort of neutral position, between the two great divisions of the whites, as if equally indifferent to their dissensions or antipathies. In this manner all parties stood, impatiently awaiting an announcement that had been so long delayed. The captain advanced to the front, and removing his hat, a ceremony he always observed on similar occasions, and which had the effect to make his listeners imitate his own courtesy, he addressed the crowd.

"When people live together, in a wilderness like this," commenced the captain, "there ought to be no secrets between them, my friends, in matters that touch the common interests. We are like men on a remote island; a sort of colony of our own; and we must act fairly and frankly by each other. In this spirit, then, I am now about to lay before you, all that I know myself, concerning an affair of the last importance to the colonies, and to the empire." Here Joel pricked up his ears, and cast a knowing glance at 'the miller,' a countryman and early neighbour of his own, who had charge of the grinding for the settlement, and who went by that appellation 'par excellence!' "You all know," continued the captain, "that there have been serious difficulties between the colonies and parliament, now, for more than ten years; difficulties that have been, once or twice, partially settled, but which have as often broken out, in some new shape, as soon as an old quarrel was adjusted."

Here the captain paused a moment; and Joel, who was the usual spokesman of 'the people,' took an occasion to put a question.

"The captain means, I s'pose," he said, in a sly, half−honest, half−jesuitical manner, "the right of parliament to tax us Americans, without our own consent, or our having any members in their legyslatoore?"

"I mean what you say. The tax on tea, the shutting the port of Boston, and other steps, have brought larger bodies of the king's troops among us, than have been usual. Boston, as you probably know, has had a strong garrison, now, forsome months. About six weeks since, the commander−in−chief sent a detachment out as far as Concord, in New Hampshire, to destroy certain stores. This detachment had a meeting with the minute−men, and blood was drawn. A running fight ensued, in which several hundreds have been killed and wounded; and I think I know both sides sufficiently well, to predict that a long and bloody civil war is begun. These are facts you should know, and accordingly I tell them to you."

This simple, but explicit, account was received very differently, by the different listeners. Joel Strides leaned forward, with intense interest, so as not to lose a syllable. Most of the New Englanders, or Yankees, paid great attention, and exchanged meaning glances with each other, when the captain had got through. As for Mike, he grasped a shillelah that he habitually carried, when not at work, looking round, as if waiting for orders from the captain, on whom to begin. Jamie was thoughtful and grave, and, once or twice, as the captain proceeded, he scratched his head in doubt. The Dutch seemed curious, but bewildered, gaping at each other like men who might make up their minds, if you would give them time, but who certainly had not yet. As for the blacks, their eyes began to open like saucers, when they heard of the quarrel; when it got to the blows, their mouths were all grinning with the delight of a thing so exciting. At the mention of the number of the dead, however, something like awe passed over them, and changed their countenances to dismay. Nick alone was indifferent. By the cold apathy of his manner, the captain saw at once that the battle of Lexington had not been a secret to the Tuscarora, when he commenced his own account. As the captain always encouraged a proper familiarity in his de−pendants, he now told them he was ready to answer any questions they might think expedient to put to him, in gratification of their natural curiosity.

"I s'pose this news comes by the major?" asked Joel.

"You may well suppose that, Strides. My son is here, and we have no other means of getting it."

"Will yer honour be wishful that we shoulther our fire−arms, and go out and fight one of them sides, or t'other?" demanded Mike.

"I wish nothing of the sort, O'Hearn. It will be time enough for us to take a decided part, when we get better ideas of what is really going on."

"Does'nt the captain, then, think matters have got far enough towards a head, for the Americans to make up their minds conclusively, as it might be?" put in Joel, in his very worst manner.

"I think it will be wiser for us all to remain where we are, and as we are. Civil war is a serious matter, Strides, and no man should rush blindly into its dangers and difficulties."

Joel looked at the miller, and the miller looked at Joel. Neither said anything, however, at the time. Jamie Allen had been out in the 'forty−five,' when thirty years younger than he was that day; and though he had his predilections and antipathies, circumstances had taught him prudence.

"Will the pairliament, think ye, no be bidding the soldiery to wark their will on the puir unairmed folk, up and down the country, and they not provided with the means to resist them?"

"Och, Jamie!" interrupted Mike, who did not appear to deem it necessary to treat this matter with even decent respect "where will be yer valour and stomach, to ask sich a question as that! A man is always reathy, when he has his ar−r−ms and legs free to act accorthing to natur'. What would a rigiment of throops do ag'in the likes of sich a place as this? I'm sure it's tin years I've been in it, and I've niver been able to find my way out of it. Set a souldier to rowing on the lake forenent the rising sun, with orders to get to the other ind, and a pretty job he'd

make of marching on that same! I knows it, for I've thried it, and it is not a new beginner that will make much of sich oars; barring he knows nothin' about them."

This was not very intelligible to anybody but Joel, and he had ceased to laugh at Mike's voyage, now, some six or seven years; divers other disasters, all having their origin in a similar confusion of ideas, having, in the interval, supplanted that calamity, as it might be, seriatim. Still it was an indication that Mike might be set down as a belligerent, who was disposed to follow his leader into the battle, without troubling him with many questions concerning the meritsof the quarrel. Nevertheless, the county Leitrim−man acknowledged particular principles, all of which had a certain influence on his conduct, whenever he could get at them, to render them available. First and foremost, he cordially disliked a Yankee; and he hated an Englishman, both as an oppressor and a heretic; yet he loved his master and all that belonged to him. These were contradictory feelings, certainly; but Mike was all contradiction, both in theory and in practice.

The Anglo−Saxon tribe now professed a willingness to retire, promising to think of the matter, a course against which Mike loudly protested, declaring he never knew any good come of thinking, when matters had got as far as blows. Jamie, too, went off scratching his head, and he was seen to make many pauses, that day, between the shovels−full of earth he, from time to time, threw around his plants, as if pondering on what he had heard. As for the Dutch, their hour had not come. No one expected them to decide the day they first heard of argument.

The negroes got together, and began to dwell on the marvels of a battle in which so many christians had been put to death. Little Smash placed the slain at a few thousands; but Great Smash, as better became her loftier appellation and higher spirit, affirmed that the captain had stated hundreds of thousands; a loss, with less than which, as she contended, no great battle could possibly be fought.

When the captain was housed, Serjeant Joyce demanded an audience; the object of which was simply to ask for orders, without the least reference to principles.

CHAPTER VII.

We are all here!

Father, mother,

Sister, brother,

All who hold each other dear.

Each chair is fill'd we're all at home;

To−night let no cold stranger come:

It is not often thus around

Our old familiar hearth we're found:

Bless, then, the meeting and the spot;

For once be every care forgot;

Let gentle Peace assert her power,

And kind Affection rule the hour;

We're all all here.

Sprague

Although most of the people retired to their dwellings, or their labours, as soon as the captain dismissed them, a few remained to receive his farther orders. Among these last were Joel, the carpenter, and the blacksmith. These men now joined the chief of the settlement and his son, who had lingered near the gateway, in conversation concerning the alterations that the present state of things might render necessary, in and about the Hut.

"Joel," observed the captain, when the three men were near enough to hear his orders, "this great change in the times will render some changes in our means of defence prudent, if not necessary."

"Does the captain s'pose the people of the colony will attack us?" asked the wily overseer, with emphasis.

"Perhaps not the people of the colony, Mr. Strides, for we have not yet declared ourselves their enemies; but there are other foes, who are more to be apprehended than the people of the colony."

"I should think the king's troops not likely to trouble themselves to ventur' here the road might prove easier to come than to return. Besides, our plunder would scarce pay for such a march."

"Perhaps not but there never has yet been a war in these colonies that some of the savage tribes were not engaged in it, before the whites had fairly got themselves into line."

"Do you really think, sir, there can be much serious danger of that!" exclaimed the major, in surprise.

"Beyond a question, my son. The scalping−knife will be at work in six months, if it be not busy already, should one−half of your reports and rumours turn out to be true. Such is American history."

"I rather think, sir, your apprehensions for my mother and sisters may mislead you. I do not believe the American authorities will ever allow themselves to be driven into a measure so perfectly horrible and unjustifiable; and were the English ministry sufficiently cruel, or unprincipled, to adopt the policy, the honest indignation of so humane a people would be certain to drive them from power."

As the major ceased speaking, he turned and caught the expression of Joel's countenance, and was struck with the look of intense interest with which the overseer watched his own warm and sincere manner.

"Humanity is a very pretty stalking−horse for political orations, Bob," quietly returned the father; "but it will scarcely count for much with an old campaigner. God send you may come out of this war with the same ingenuous and natural feelings as you go into it."

"The major will scarce dread the savages, should he be on the side of his nat'ral friends!" remarked Joel; "and if what he says about the humanity of the king's advisers be true, he will be safe from them."

"The major will be on the side to which duty calls him, Mr. Strides, if it may be agreeable to your views of the matter," answered the young man, with a little more hauteur than the occasion required.

The father felt uneasy, and he regretted that his son had been so indiscreet; though he saw no remedy but by drawing the attention of the men to the matter before them.

"Neither the real wishes of the people of America, nor of the people of England, will avail much, in carrying on this war," he said. "Its conduct will fall into the hands of those who will look more to the ends than to the means;and success will be found a sufficient apology for any wrong. This has been the history of all the wars of my time, and it is likely to prove the history of this. I fear it will make little difference to us on which side we may be in feeling; there will be savages to guard against in either case. This gate must be hung, one of the first things, Joel; and I have serious thoughts of placing palisades around the Knoll. The Hut, well palisaded, would make a work that could not be easily carried, without artillery."

Joel seemed struck with the idea, though it did not appear that it was favourably. He stood studying the house and the massive gates for a minute or two, ere he delivered his sentiments on the subject. When he did speak, it was a good deal more in doubt, than in approbation.

"It's all very true, captain," he said; the house would seem to be a good deal more safe like, if the gates were up; but, a body don't know; sometimes gates be a security, and sometimes they isn't. It all depends on which side the danger comes. Still, as these are made, and finished all to hanging, it's 'most a pity, too, they shouldn't be used, if a body could find time."

"The time must be found, and the gates be hung," interrupted the captain, too much accustomed to Joel's doubting, 'sort−o'−concluding manner, to be always patient under the infliction. "Not only the gates, but the palisades must be got out, holes dug, and the circumvallation completed."

"It must be as the captain says, of course, he being master here. But time's precious in May. There's half our plantin' to be done yet, and some of the ground hasn't got the last ploughin'. Harvest won't come without seedtime; for no man, let him be great, or let him be small and it does seem to me a sort o' wastin' of the Lord's blessin's, to be hangin' gates, and diggin' holes for that the thing the captain mentioned when there's no visible danger in sight to recommend the measure to prudence, as it might be."

"That may be your opinion, Mr. Strides, but it is not mine. I intend to guard against a visible danger that is out of sight, and I will thank you to have these gates hung, this very day."

"This very day! The captain's a mind to be musicalabout the matter! Every hand in the settlement couldn't get them gates in their places in less than a week."

"It appears to me, Strides, you are 'playing on the music,' as you call it, yourself, now?"

"No, indeed, captain; them gates will have to be hung on the mechanic principle; and it will take at least two or three days for the carpenter and blacksmith to get up the works that's to do it. Then the hanging, itself, I should think would stand us in hand a day for each side. As for the circumvalley, what between the cuttin', and haulin', and diggin', and settin', that would occupy all hands until after first hoein'. That is, hoein' would come afore the plantin'."

"It does not appear to me, Bob, such a heavy job as Joel represents! The gates are heavy, certainly, and may take us a day or two; but, as for stockading I've seen barracks stockaded in, in a week, if I remember right. You know something of this what is your opinion?"

"That this house can be stockaded in, in the time you mention; and, as I have a strong reluctance to leave the family before it is in security, with your permission I will remain and superinted the work."

The offer was gladly accepted, on more accounts than one; and the captain, accustomed to be obeyed when he was in earnest, issued his orders forthwith, to let the work proceed. Joel, however, was excused, in order that he might finish the planting he had commenced, and which a very few hands could complete within the required

time. As no ditch was necessary, the work was of a very simple nature, and the major set about his portion of it without even re−entering the house.

The first thing was to draw a line for a trench some six or seven feet deep, that was to encircle the whole building, at a distance of about thirty yards from the house. This line ran, on each side of the Hut, on the very verge of the declivities, rendering the flanks far more secure than the front, where it crossed the lawn on a gently inclining surface. In one hour the major had traced this line, with accuracy; and he had six or eight men at work with spades, digging the trench. A gang of hands was sent into the woods, with orders to cut the requisite quantity of young chestnuts; and, by noon, a load of the material actually appeared on the ground. Still, nothing was done to the gates.

To own the truth, the captain was now delighted. The scene reminded him of some in his military life, and he bustled about, giving his orders, with a good deal of the fire of youth renewed, taking care, however, in no manner to interfere with the plans of his son. Mike buried himself like a mole, and had actually advanced several feet, before either of the Yankees had got even a fair footing on the bottom of his part of the trench. As for Jamie Allen, he went to work with deliberation; but it was not long before his naked gray hairs were seen on a level with the surface of the ground. The digging was not hard, though a little stony, and the work proceeded with spirit and success. All that day, and the next, and the next, and the next, the Knoll appeared alive, earth being cast upward, teams moving, carpenters sawing, and labourers toiling. Many of the men protested that their work was useless, unnecessary, unlawful even; but no one dared hesitate under the eyes of the major, when his father had once issued a serious command. In the mean time, Joel's planting was finished, though he made many long pauses while at work on the flats, to look up and gaze at the scene of activity and bustle that was presented at the Knoll. On the fourth day, towards evening, he was obliged to join the general "bee," with the few hands he had retained with himself.

By this time, the trench was dug, most of the timber was prepared, and the business of setting up the stockade was commenced. Each young tree was cut to the length of twenty feet, and pointed at one end. Mortices, to receive cross−pieces, were cut at proper distances, and holes were bored to admit the pins. This was all the preparation, and the timbers were set in the trench, pointed ends uppermost. When a sufficient number were thus arranged, a few inches from each other, the cross−pieces were pinned on, bringing the whole into a single connected frame, or bent. The bent was then raised to a perpendicular, and secured, by pounding the earth around the lower ends of the timbers. The latter process required care and judgment, and it was entrusted to the especial supervision of the deliberate Jamie; the major having discovered that the Yankees, in general,were too impatient to get on, and to make a show. Serjeant Joyce was particularly useful in dressing the rows of timber, and in giving the whole arrangement a military air.

"Guid wark is far better than quick wark," observed the cool−headed Scotchman, as he moved about among the men, "and it's no the fuss and bustle of acteevity that is to give the captain pleasure. The thing that is well done, is done with the least noise and confusion. Set the stockades mair pairpendic'lar, my men."

"Ay dress them, too, my lads" added the venerable ex−serjeant.

"This is queer plantin', Jamie," put in Joel, "and queerer grain will come of it. Do you think these young chestnuts will ever grow, ag'in, that you put them out in rows, like so much corn?"

"Now it's no for the growth we does it, Joel, but to presairve the human growth we have. To keep the savage bairbers o' the wilderness fra' clippin' our polls before the shearin' time o' natur' has gathered us a' in for the hairvest of etairnity. They that no like the safety we're makin' for them, can gang their way to 'ither places, where they'll find no forts, or stockades to trouble their een."

"I'm not critical at all, Jamie, though to my notion a much better use for your timber plantation would be to turn it into sheds for cattle, in the winter months. I can see some good in that, but none in this."

"Bad luck to ye, then, Misther Sthroddle," cried Mike, from the bottom of the trench, where he was using a pounding instrument with the zeal of a paviour "Bad luck to the likes of ye, say I, Misther Strides. If ye've no relish for a fortification, in a time of war, ye've only to shoulther yer knapsack, and go out into the open counthry, where ye'll have all to yer own satisfaction. Is it forthify the house, will we? That we will, and not a hair of the missuss's head, nor of the young ladies' heads, nor of the masther's head, though he's mighty bald as it is, but not a hair of all their heads shall be harmed, while Jamie, and Mike, and the bould ould serjeant, here, can have their way. I wish I had the trench full of yer savages, and a gineral funeral we'd make of the vagabonds! Och! They're the divil's imps, I hear from all sides, and no love do I owe them."

"And yet you're the bosom friend of Nick, who's anything but what I call a specimen of his people."

"Is it Nick ye 're afther? Well, Nick's half−civilized accorthin' to yer Yankee manners, and he's no spicimen, at all. Let him hear you call him by sich a name, if ye want throuble."

Joel walked away muttering, leaving the labourers in doubt whether he relished least the work he was now obliged to unite in furthering, or Mike's hit at his own peculiar people. Still the work proceeded, and in one week from the day it was commenced, the stockade was complete, its gate excepted. The entrance through the palisades was directly in front of that to the house, and both passages still remained open, one set of gates not being completed, and the other not yet being hung.

It was on a Saturday evening when the last palisade was placed firmly in the ground, and all the signs of the recent labour were removed, in order to restore as much of the former beauty of the Knoll as possible. It had been a busy week; so much so, indeed, as to prevent the major from holding any of that confidential intercourse with his mother and sisters, in which it had been his habit to indulge in former visits. The fatigues of the days sent everybody to their pillows early; and the snatches of discourse which passed, had been affectionate and pleasant, rather than communicative. Now that the principal job was so near being finished, however, and the rubbish was cleared away, the captain summoned the family to the lawn again, to enjoy a delicious evening near the close of the winning month of May. The season was early, and the weather more bland, than was usual, even in that sheltered and genial valley. For the first time that year, Mrs. Willoughby consented to order the tea−equipage to be carried to a permanent table that had been placed under the shade of a fine elm, in readiness for any fête champêtre of this simple character.

"Come, Wilhelmina, give us a cup of your fragrant hyson, of which we have luckily abundance, tax or no tax. I should lose caste, were it known how much American treason we have gulped down, in this way; but, a little tea, up here in the forest, can do no man's conscience any great violence, in the long run. I suppose, major Willoughby,His Majesty's forces do not disdain tea, in these stirring times."

"Far from it, sir; we deem it so loyal to drink it, that it is said the port and sherry of the different messes, at Boston, are getting to be much neglected. I am an admirer of tea, for itself, however, caring little about its collateral qualities. Farrel" "turning to his man, who was aiding Pliny the elder, in arranging the table "when you are through here, bring out the basket you will find on the toilet, in my room."

"True, Bob," observed the mother, smiling "that basket has scarce been treated with civility. Not a syllable of thanks have I heard, for all the fine things it contains."

"My mind has been occupied with care for your safety, dear mother, and that must be my excuse. Now, however, there is an appearance of security which gives one a breathing−time, and my gratitude receives a sudden impulse. As for you, Maud, I regret to be compelled to say that you stand convicted of laziness; not a single thing do I owe

to your labours, or recollection of me."

"Is that possible!" exclaimed the captain, who was pouring water into the tea−pot. "Maud is the last person I should suspect of neglect of this nature; I do assure you, Bob, no one listens to news of your promotions and movements with more interest than Maud."

Maud, herself, made no answer. She bent her head aside, in a secret consciousness that her sister might alone detect, and form her own conclusions concerning the colour that she felt warming her cheeks. But, Maud's own sensitive feelings attributed more to Beulah than the sincere and simple−minded girl deserved. So completely was she accustomed to regard Robert and Maud as brother and sister, that even all which had passed produced no effect in unsettling her opinions, or in giving her thoughts a new direction. Just at this moment Farrel came back, and placed the basket on the bench, at the side of his master.

"Now, my dearest mother, and you, girls" the major had begun to drop the use of the word 'sisters' when addressing both the young ladies "Now, my dearest mother, and you, girls, I am about to give each her due. In the first place, I confess my own unworthiness, and acknowledge, that I do not deserve one−half the kind attention I have received in these various presents, after which we will descend to particulars."

The major, then, exposed every article contained in the basket, finding the words "mother" and "Beulah" pinned on each, but nowhere any indication that his younger sister had even borne him in mind. His father looked surprised at this, not to say a little grave; and he waited, with evident curiosity, for the gifts of Maud, as one thing after another came up, without any signs of her having recollected the absentee.

"This is odd, truly," observed the father, seriously; "I hope, Bob, you have done nothing to deserve this? I should be sorry to have my little girl affronted!"

"I assure you, sir, that I am altogether ignorant of any act, and I can solemnly protest against any intention, to give offence. If guilty, I now pray Maud to pardon me."

"You have done nothing, Bob said nothing, Bob thought nothing to offend me," cried Maud, eagerly.

"Why, then, have you forgotten him, darling, when your mother and sister have done so much in the way of recollection?" asked the captain.

"Forced gifts, my dear father, are no gifts. I do not like to be compelled to make presents."

This was uttered in a way to induce the major to throw all the articles back into the basket, as if he wished to get rid of the subject, without further comment. Owing to this precipitation, the scarf was not seen. Fortunately for Maud, who was ready to burst into tears, the service of the tea prevented any farther allusion to the matter.

"You have told me, major," observed captain Willoughby, "that your old regiment has a new colonel; but you have forgotten to mention his name. I hope it is my old messmate, Tom Wallingford, who wrote me he had some such hopes last year."

"General Wallingford has got a light−dragoon regiment general Meredith has my old corps; he is now in this country, at the head of one of Gage's brigades."

It is a strong proof of the manner in which Maud Maud Willoughby, as she was ever termed had become identified with the family of the Hutted Knoll, that, with two exceptions, not a person present thought of her, when the name of this general Meredith was mentioned; though, in truth, he was the uncle of her late father. The exceptions were the major and herself. The former now never heard the name without thinking of his beautiful

little playfellow, and nominal sister; while Maud, of late, had become curious and even anxious on the subject of her natural relatives. Still, a feeling akin to awe, a sentiment that appeared as if it would be doing violence to a most solemn duty, prevented her from making any allusion to her change of thought, in the presence of those whom, during childhood, she had viewed only as her nearest relatives, and who still continued so to regard her. She would have given the world to ask Bob a few questions concerning the kinsman he had mentioned, but could not think of doing so before her mother, whatever she might be induced to attempt with the young man, when by himself.

Nick next came strolling along, gazing at the stockade, and drawing near the table with an indifference to persons and things that characterized his habits. When close to the party he stopped, keeping his eye on the recent works.

"You see, Nick, I am about to turn soldier again, in my old days," observed the captain. "It is now many years since you and I have met within a line of palisades. How do you like our work?"

"What you make him for, cap'in?"

"So as to be secure against any red−skins who may happen to long for our scalps."

"Why want your scalp? Hatchet hasn't been dug up, a−tween us bury him so deep can't find him in ten, two, six year."

"Ay, it has long been buried, it is true; but you red gentlemen have a trick of digging it up, with great readiness, when there is any occasion for it. I suppose you know, Nick, that there are troubles in the colonies?"

"Tell Nick all about him," answered the Indian, evasively "No read no hear don't talk much talk most wid Irisher can't understand what he want say t'ing one way, den say him, anoder."

"Mike is not very lucid of a certainty," rejoined the captain, laughing, all the party joining in the merriment "buthe is a sterling good fellow, and is always to be found, in a time of need."

"Poor rifle nebber hit shoot one way, look t'other?"

"He is no great shot, I will admit; but he is a famous fellow with a shillaleh. Has he given you any of the news?"

"All he say, news much news ten time, as one time. Cap'in lend Nick a quarter dollar, yesterday."

"I did lend you a quarter, certainly, Nick; and I supposed it had gone to the miller for rum, before this. What am I to understand by your holding it out in this manner? that you mean to repay me!"

"Sartain good quarter just like him cap'in lent Nick. Like as one pea. Nick man of honour; keep his word."

"This does look more like it than common, Nick. The money was to be returned to−day, but I did not expect to see it, so many previous contracts of that nature having been vacated, as the lawyers call it."

"Tuscarora chief alway gentleman. What he say, he do. Good quarter dollar, dat, cap'in?"

"It is unexceptionable, old acquaintance; I'll not disdain receiving it, as it may serve for a future loan."

"No need bye'm−by take him, now cap'in, lend Nick dollar; pay him to−morrow."

The captain protested against the sequitur that the Indian evidently wished to establish; declining, though in a good−natured manner, to lend the larger sum. Nick was disappointed, and walked sullenly away, moving nearer to the stockade, with the air of an offended man.

"That is an extraordinary fellow, sir!" observed the major "I really wonder you tolerate him so much about the Hut. It might be a good idea to banish him, now that the war has broken out."

"Which would be a thing more easily said than done. A drop of water might as readily be banished from that stream, as an Indian from any part of the forest he may choose to visit. You brought him here yourself, Bob, and should not blame us for tolerating his presence."

"I brought him, sir, because I found he recognised me even in this dress, and it was wise to make a friend of him. Then I wanted a guide, and I was well assured he knewthe way, if any man did. He is a surly scoundrel, however, and appears to have changed his character, since I was a boy."

"If there be any change, Bob, it is in yourself. Nick has been Nick these thirty years, or as long as I have known him. Rascal he is, or his tribe would not have cast him out. Indian justice is stern, but it is natural justice. No man is ever put to the ban among the red men, until they are satisfied he is not fit to enjoy savage rights. In garrison, we always looked upon Nick as a clever knave, and treated him accordingly. When one is on his guard against such a fellow, he can do little harm, and this Tuscarora has a salutary dread of me, which keeps him in tolerable order, during his visits to the Hut. The principal mischief he does here, is to get Mike and Jamie deeper in the Santa Cruz than I could wish; but the miller has his orders to sell no more rum."

"I hardly think you do Nick justice, Willoughby," observed the right−judging and gentle wife. "He has some good qualities; but you soldiers always apply martial−law to the weaknesses of your fellow−creatures."

"And you tender−hearted women, my dear Wilhelmina, think everybody as good as yourselves."

"Remember, Hugh, when your son, there, had the canker−rash, how actively and readily the Tuscarora went into the forest to look for the gold−thread that even the doctors admitted cured him. It was difficult to find, Robert; but Nick remembered a spot where he had seen it, fifty miles off; and, without a request even, from us, he travelled that distance to procure it."

"Yes, this is true" returned the captain, thoughtfully "though I question if the cure was owing to the gold−thread, as you call it, Wilhelmina. Every man has some good quality or other; and, I much fear, some bad ones also. But, here is the fellow coming back, and I do not like to let him think himself of sufficient consequence to be the subject of our remarks."

"Very true, sir it adds excessively to the trouble of such fellows, to let them fancy themselves of importance."

Nick, now, came slowly back, after having examined the recent changes to his satisfaction. He stood a moment insilence, near the table, and then, assuming an air of more dignity than common, he addressed the captain.

"Nick ole chief," he said. "Been at Council Fire, often as cap'in. Can't tell, all he know; want to hear about new war."

"Why, Nick, it is a family quarrel, this time. The French have nothing to do with it."

"Yengeese fight Yengeese um?"

"I am afraid it will so turn out. Do not the Tuscaroras sometimes dig up the hatchet against the Tuscaroras?"

"Tuscarora man kill Tuscarora man good he quarrel, and kill he enemy. But Tuscarora warrior nebber take scalp of Tuscarora squaw and pappoose! What you t'ink he do dat for? Red man no hog, to eat pork."

"It must be admitted, Nick, you are a very literal logician 'dog won't eat dog,' is our English saying. Still the Yankee will fight the Yengeese, it would seem. In a word, the Great Father, in England, has raised the hatchet against his American children."

"How you like him, cap'in um? Which go on straight path, which go on crooked? How you like him?"

"I like it little, Nick, and wish with all my heart the quarrel had not taken place."

"Mean to put on regimentals hah! Mean to be cap'in, ag'in? Follow drum and fife, like ole time?"

"I rather think not, old comrade. After sixty, one likes peace better than war; and I intend to stay at home."

"What for, den, build fort? Why you put fence round a house, like pound for sheep?"

"Because I intend to stay there. The stockade will be good to keep off any, or every enemy who may take it into their heads to come against us. You have known me defend a worse position than this."

"He got no gate," muttered Nick "What he good for, widout gate? Yengeese, Yankees, red man, French man, walk in just as he please. No good to leave such squaw wid a door wide open."

"Thank you, Nick," cried Mrs. Willoughby. "I knew you were my friend, and have not forgotten the gold−thread."

"He very good," answered the Indian, with an importantlook. "Pappoose get well like not'ing. He a'most die, today; to−morrow he run about and play. Nick do him, too; cure him wid gold−thread."

"Oh! you are, or were quite a physician at one time, Nick. I remember when you had the smallpox, yourself."

The Indian turned, with the quickness of lightning, to Mrs. Willoughby, whom he startled with his energy, as he demanded

"You remember dat, Mrs. cap'in! Who gib him who cure him um?"

"Upon my word, Nick, you almost frighten me. I fear I gave you the disease, but it was for your own good it was done. You were inoculated by myself, when the soldiers were dying around us, because they had never had that care taken of them. All I inoculated lived; yourself among the number."

The startling expression passed away from the fierce countenance of the savage, leaving in its place another so kind and amicable as to prove he not only was aware of the benefit he had received, but that he was deeply grateful for it. He drew near to Mrs. Willoughby, took her still white and soft hand in his own sinewy and dark fingers, then dropped the blanket that he had thrown carelessly across his body, from a shoulder, and laid it on a mark left by the disease, by way of pointing to her good work. He smiled, as this was done.

"Ole mark," he said, nodding his head "sign we good friend he nebber go away while Nick live."

This touched the captain's heart, and he tossed a dollar towards the Indian, who suffered it, however, to lie at his feet unnoticed. Turning to the stockade, he pointed significantly at the open gate−ways.

"Great danger go t'rough little 'ole," he said, sententiously, walking away as he concluded. "Why you leave big 'ole open?"

"We must get those gates hung next week," said the captain, positively; "and yet it is almost absurd to apprehend anything serious in this remote settlement, and that at so early a period in the war."

Nothing further passed on the lawn worthy to be recorded. The sun set, and the family withdrew into the house,as usual, to trust to the overseeing, care of Divine Providence, throughout a night passed in a wilderness. By common consent, the discourse turned upon things noway connected with the civil war, or its expected results, until the party was about to separate for the night, when the major found himself alone with his sisters, in his own little parlour, dressing−room, or study, whatever the room adjoining his chamber could properly be called.

"You will not leave us soon, Robert," said Beulah, taking her brother's hand, with confiding affection, "I hardly think my father young and active enough, or rather alarmed enough, to live in times like these!"

"He is a soldier, Beulah, and a good one; so good that his son can teach him nothing. I wish I could say that he is as good a subject: I fear he leans to the side of the colonies."

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed Beulah "Oh! that his son would incline in the same direction."

"Nay, Beulah," rejoined Maud, reproachfully; "you speak without reflection. Mamma bitterly regrets that papa sees things in the light he does. She thinks the parliament right, and the colonies wrong."

"What a thing is a civil war!" ejaculated the major "Here is husband divided against wife son against father brother against sister. I could almost wish I were dead, ere I had lived to see this!"

"Nay, Robert, it is not so bad as that, either," added Maud. "My mother will never oppose my father's will or judgment. Good wives, you know, never do that. She will only pray that he may decide right, and in a way that his children will never have cause to regret. As for me, I count for nothing, of course."

"And Beulah, Maud; is she nothing, too? Here will Beulah be praying for her brother's defeat, throughout this war. It has been some presentiment of this difference of opinion that has probably induced you to forget me, while Beulah and my mother were passing so many hours to fill that basket."

"Perhaps you do Maud injustice, Robert," said Beulah, smiling. "I think I can say none loves you better thanour dear sister or no one has thought of you more, in your absence."

"Why, then, does the basket contain no proof of this remembrance not even a chain of hair a purse, or a ring nothing, in short, to show that I have not been forgotten, when away."

"Even if this be so," said Maud, with spirit, "in what am I worse than yourself. What proof is there that you have remembered us?"

"This," answered the major, laying before his sisters two small packages, each marked with the name of its proper owner. "My mother has her's, too, and my father has not been forgotten."

Beulah's exclamations proved how much she was gratified with her presents; principally trinkets and jewelry, suited to her years and station. First kissing the major, she declared her mother must see what she had received, before she retired for the night, and hurried from the room. That Maud was not less pleased, was apparent by her glowing cheeks and tearful eyes; though, for a wonder, she was far more restrained in the expression of her feelings. After examining the different articles, with pleasure, for a minute or two, she went, with a quick

impetuous movement, to the basket, tumbled all its contents on the table, until she reached the scarf, which she tossed towards the major, saying, with a faint laugh

"There, unbeliever heathen is that nothing? Was that made in a minute, think you?"

"This!" cried the major, opening the beautiful, glossy fabric in surprise. "Is not this one of my father's old sashes, to which I have fallen heir, in the order of nature?"

Maud dropped her trinkets, and seizing two corners of the sash, she opened it, in a way to exhibit its freshness and beauty.

"Is this old, or worn?" she asked, reproachfully. "Your father never even saw it, Bob. It has not yet been around the waist of man."

"It is not possible! This would be the work of months is so beautiful you cannot have purchased it."

Maud appeared distressed at his doubts. Opening the folds still wider, she raised the centre of the silk to the light, and pointed to certain letters that had been wrought into the fabric, so ingeniously as to escape ordinary observation, and yet so plainly as to be distinctly legible when the attention was once drawn to them. The major took the sash into his own hands altogether, held it opened before the candles, and read the words "Maud Meredith" aloud. Dropping the sash, he turned to seek the face of the donor, but she had fled the room. He followed her footsteps and entered the library, just as she was about to escape from it, by a different door.

"I am offended at your incredulity," said Maud, making an effort to laugh away the scene, "and will not remain to hear lame excuses. Your new regiment can have no nature in it, or brothers would not treat sisters thus."

"Maud Meredith is not my sister," he said, earnestly, "though Maud Willoughby may be. Why is the name Meredith?"

"As a retort to one of your own allusions did you not call me Miss Meredith, one day, when I last saw you in Albany?"

"Ay, but that was in jest, my dearest Maud. It was not a deliberate thing, like the name on that sash."

"Oh! jokes may be premeditated as well as murder; and many a one is murdered, you know. Mine is a prolonged jest."

"Tell me, does my mother does Beulah know who made this sash?"

"How else could it have been made, Bob? Do you think I went into the woods, and worked by myself, like some romantic damsel who had an unmeaning secret to keep against the curious eyes of persecuting friends!"

"I know not what I thought scarce know what I think now. But, my mother; does she know of this name?"

Maud blushed to the eyes; but the habit and the love of truth were so strong in her, that she shook her head in the negative.

"Nor Beulah? She, I am certain, would not have permitted 'Meredith' to appear where 'Willoughby' should have been."

"Nor Beulah, either, major Willoughby," pronouncing the name with an affectation of reverence. "The honourof the Willoughbys is thus preserved from every taint, and all the blame must fall on poor Maud Meredith."

"You dislike the name of Willoughby, then, and intend to drop it, in future I have remarked that you sign yourself only 'Maud,' in your last letters never before, however, did I suspect the reason."

"Who wishes to live for ever an impostor? It is not my legal name, and I shall soon be called on to perform legal acts. Remember, Mr. Robert Willoughby, I am twenty; when it comes to pounds, shillings, and pence, I must not forge. A little habit is necessary to teach me the use of my own bonâ fide signature."

"But ours the name is not hateful to you you do not throw it aside, seriously, for ever!"

"Yours! What, the honoured name of my dear, dearest father of my mother of Beulah of yourself, Bob!"

Maud did not remain to terminate her speech. Bursting into tears, she vanished.

CHAPTER VIII.

The village tower 'tis joy to me! I cry, the Lord is here!

The village bells! They fill the soul with ecstasy sincere.

And thus, I sing, the light hath shined to lands in darkness hurled;

Their sound is now in all the earth, their words throughout the world.

Coxe

Another night past in peace within the settlement of the Hutted Knoll. The following morning was the Sabbath, and it came forth, balmy, genial, and mild; worthy of the great festival of the Christian world. On the subject of religion, captain Willoughby was a little of a martinet; understanding by liberty of conscience, the right of improving by the instruction of those ministers who belonged to the church of England. Several of his labourers had left him because he refused to allow of any other ministrations on his estate; his doctrine being that every man had a right to do as he pleased in such matters; and as he did not choose to allowof schism, within the sphere of his owh influence, if others desired to be schismatics they were at liberty to go elsewhere, in order to indulge their tastes. Joel Strides and Jamie Allen were both disaffected to this sort of orthodoxy, and they had frequent private discussions on its propriety; the former in his usual wily and jesuitical mode of sneering and insinuating, and the latter respectfully as related to his master, but earnestly as it concerned his conscience. Others, too, were dissentients, but with less repining; though occasionally they would stay away from Mr. Wood's services. Mike, alone, took an open and manly stand in the matter, and he a little out−Heroded Herod; or, in other words, he exceeded the captain himself in strictness of construction. On the very morning we have just described, he was present at a discussion between the Yankee overseer and the Scotch mason, in which these two dissenters, the first a congregationalist, and the last a seceder, were complaining of the hardships of a ten years' abstinence, during which no spiritual provender had been fed out to them from a proper source. The Irishman broke out upon the complainants in a way that will at once let the reader into the secret of the county Leitrim−man's principles, if he has any desire to know them.

"Bad luck to all sorts of religion but the right one!" cried Mike, in a most tolerant spirit. "Who d'ye think will be wishful of hearing mass and pr'aching that comes from any of your heretick parsons? Ye're as dape in the mire yerselves, as Mr. Woods is in the woods, and no one to lade ye out of either, but an evil spirit that would rather

see all mankind br'iling in agony, than dancing at a fair."

"Go to your confessional, Mike," returned Joel, with a sneer "It's a month, or more, sin' you seen it, and the priest will think you have forgotten him, and go away offended."

"Och! It's such a praist, as the likes of yees has no nade of throubling! Yer conscience is aisy, Misther Straddle, so that yer belly is filled, and yer wages is paid. Bad luck to sich religion!"

The allusion of Joel related to a practice of Michael's that is deserving of notice. It seems that the poor fellow, excluded by his insulated position from any communicationwith a priest of his own church, was in the habit of resorting to a particular rock in the forest, where he would kneel and acknowledge his sins, very much as he would have done had the rock been a confessional containing one authorized to grant him absolution. Accident revealed the secret, and from that time Michael's devotion was a standing jest among the dissenters of the valley. The county Leitrim−man was certainly a little too much addicted to Santa Cruz, and he was accused of always visiting his romantic chapel after a debauch. Of course, he was but little pleased with Joel's remark on the present occasion; and being, like a modern newspaper, somewhat more vituperative than logical, he broke out as related.

"Jamie," continued Joel, too much accustomed to Mike's violence to heed it, "it does seem to me a hardship to be obliged to frequent a church of which a man's conscience can't approve. Mr. Woods, though a native colonist, is an Old England parson, and he has so many popish ways about him, that I am under considerable concern of mind" concern, of itself, was not sufficiently emphatic for one of Joel's sensitive feelings "I am under considerable concern of mind about the children. They sit under no other preaching; and, though Lyddy and I do all we can to gainsay the sermons, as soon as meetin' is out, some of it will stick. You may worry the best Christian into idolatry and unbelief, by parseverance and falsehood. Now that things look so serious, too, in the colonies, we ought to be most careful."

Jamie did not clearly understand the application of the present state of the colonies, nor had he quite made up his mind, touching the merits of the quarrel between parliament and the Americans. As between the Stuarts and the House of Hanover, he was for the former, and that mainly because he thought them Scotch, and it was surely a good thing for a Scotchman to govern England; but, as between the Old countries and the New, he was rather inclined to think the rights of the first ought to predominate; there being something opposed to natural order, agreeably to his notions, in permitting the reverse of this doctrine to prevail. As for presbyterianism, however, even in the mitigated form of New England church government, he deemed it to be so much better than episcopacy, that he would have taken up arms, old as he was, for the party that it could be made to appear was fighting to uphold the last. We have no wish to mislead the reader. Neither of the persons mentioned, Mike included, actually knew anything of the points in dispute between the different sects, or churches, mentioned; but only fancied themselves in possession of the doctrines, traditions, and authorities connected with the subject. These fancies, however, served to keep alive a discussion that soon had many listeners; and never before, since his first ministration in the valley, did Mr. Woods meet as disaffected a congregation, as on this day.

The church of the Hutted Knoll, or, as the clergyman more modestly termed it, the chapel, stood in the centre of the meadows, on a very low swell of their surface, where a bit of solid dry ground had been discovered, fit for such a purpose. The principal object had been to make it central; though some attention had been paid also to the picturesque. It was well shaded with young elms, just then opening into leaf; and about a dozen graves, principally of very young children, were memorials of the mortality of the settlement. The building was of stone, the work of Jamie Allen's own hands, but small, square, with a pointed roof, and totally without tower, or belfry. The interior was of unpainted cherry, and through a want of skill in the mechanics, had a cold and raw look, little suited to the objects of the structure. Still, the small altar, the desk and the pulpit, and the large, square, curtained pew of the captain, the only one the house contained, were all well ornamented with hangings, or cloth, and gave the place somewhat of an air of clerical comfort and propriety. The rest of the congregation sat on benches, with kneeling−boards before them. The walls were plastered, and, a proof that parsimony had no connection with the

simple character of the building, and a thing almost as unusual in America at that period as it is to−day in parts of Italy, the chapel was entirely finished.

It has been said that the morning of the particular Sabbath at which we have now arrived, was mild and balmy. The sun of the forty−third degree of latitude poured out its genial rays upon the valley, gilding the tender leaves of the surrounding forest with such touches of light as are bestknown to the painters of Italy. The fineness of the weather brought nearly all the working people of the settlement to the chapel quite an hour before the ringing of its little bell, enabling the men to compare opinions afresh, on the subject of the political troubles of the times, and the women to gossip about their children.

On all such occasions, Joel was a principal spokesman, nature having created him for a demagogue, in a small way; an office for which education had in no degree unfitted him. As had been usual with him, of late, he turned the discourse on the importance of having correct information of what was going on, in the inhabited parts of the country, and of the expediency of sending some trustworthy person on such an errand. He had frequently intimated his own readiness to go, if his neighbours wished it.

"We're all in the dark here," he remarked, "and might stay so to the end of time, without some one to be relied on, to tell us the news. Major Willoughby is a fine man" Joel meant morally, not physically "but he's a king's officer, and nat'rally feels inclined to make the best of things for the rig'lars. The captain, too, was once a soldier, himself, and his feelin's turn, as it might be, unav'idably, to the side he has been most used to. We are like people on a desart island, out here in the wilderness and if ships won't arrive to tell us how matters come on, we must send one out to l'arn it for us. I'm the last man at the Dam" so the oi polloi called the valley "to say anything hard of either the captain or his son; but one is English born, and the other is English bred; and each will make a difference in a man's feelin's."

To this proposition the miller, in particular, assented; and, for the twentieth time, he made some suggestion about the propriety of Joel's going himself, in order to ascertain how the land lay.

"You can be back by hoeing," he added, "and have plenty of time to go as far as Boston, should you wish to."

Now, while the great events were in progress, which led to the subversion of British power in America, an undercurrent of feeling, if not of incidents, was running in this valley, which threatened to wash away the foundations of the captain's authority. Joel and the miller, if not downrightconspirators, had hopes, calculations, and even projects of their own, that never would have originated with men of the same class, in another state of society; or, it might almost be said, in another part of the world. The sagacity of the overseer had long enabled him to foresee that the issue of the present troubles would be insurrection; and a sort of instinct which some men possess for the strongest side, had pointed out to him the importance of being a patriot. The captain, he little doubted, would take part with the crown, and then no one knew what might be the consequences. It is not probable that Joel's instinct for the strongest side predicted the precise confiscations that subsequently ensued, some of which had all the grasping lawlessness of a gross abuse of power; but he could easily foresee that if the owner of the estate should be driven off, the property and its proceeds, probably for a series of years, would be very apt to fall under his own control and management. Many a patriot has been made by anticipations less brilliant than these; and as Joel and the miller talked the matter over between them, they had calculated all the possible emolument of fattening beeves, and packing pork for hostile armies, or isolated frontier posts, with a strong gusto for the occupation. Should open war but fairly commence, and could the captain only be induced to abandon the Knoll, and take refuge within a British camp, everything might be made to go smoothly, until settling day should follow a peace. At that moment, non est inventus would be a sufficient answer to a demand for any balance.

"They tell me," said Joel, in an aside to the miller, "that law is as good as done with in the Bay colony, already; and you know if the law has run out there, it will quickly come to an end, here. York never had much character

for law."

"That's true, Joel; then you know the captain himself is the only magistrate hereabout; and, when he is away, we shall have to be governed by a committee of safety, or something of that natur'."

"A committee of safety will be the thing!"

"What is a committee of safety, Joel?" demanded the miller, who had made far less progress in the arts of the demagogue than his friend, and who, in fact, had much lessnative fitness for the vocation; "I have heer'n tell of them regulations, but do not rightly understand 'em, a'ter all."

"You know what a committee is?" asked Joel, glancing inquiringly at his friend.

"I s'pose I do it means men's takin' on themselves the trouble and care of public business."

"That's it now a committee of safety means a few of us, for instance, having the charge of the affairs of this settlement, in order to see that no harm shall come to anything, especially to the people."

"It would be a good thing to have one, here. The carpenter, and you, and I might be members, Joel."

"We'll talk about it, another time. The corn is just planted, you know; and it has got to be hoed twice, and topped, before it can be gathered. Let us wait and see how things come on at Boston."

While this incipient plot was thus slowly coming to a head, and the congregation was gradually collecting at the chapel, a very different scene was enacting in the Hut. Breakfast was no sooner through, than Mrs. Willoughby retired to her own sitting−room, whither her son was shortly summoned to join her. Expecting some of the inquiries which maternal affection might prompt, the major proceeded to the place named with alacrity; but, on entering the room, to his great surprise he found Maud with his mother. The latter seemed grave and concerned, while the former was not entirely free from alarm. The young man glanced inquiringly at the young lady, and he fancied he saw tears struggling to break out of her eyes.

"Come hither, Robert" said Mrs. Willoughby, pointing to a chair at her side with a gravity that struck her son as unusual "I have brought you here to listen to one of the old−fashioned lectures, of which you got so many when a boy."

"Your advice, my dear mother or even your reproofs would be listened to with far more reverence and respect, now, than I fear they were then," returned the major, seating himself by the side of Mrs. Willoughby, and taking one of her hands, affectionately, in both his own. "It is only in after−life that we learn to appreciate the tenderness and care of such a parent as you have been; though what Ihave done lately, to bring me in danger of the guard−house, I cannot imagine. Surely you cannot blame me for adhering to the crown, at a moment like this!"

"I shall not interfere with your conscience in this matter, Robert; and my own feelings, American as I am by birth and family, rather incline me to think as you think. I have wished to see you, my son, on a different business."

"Do not keep me in suspense, mother; I feel like a prisoner who is waiting to hear his charges read. What have I done?"

"Nay, it is rather for you to tell me what you have done. You cannot have forgotten, Robert, how very anxious I have been to awaken and keep alive family affection, among my children; how very important both your father and I have always deemed it; and how strongly we have endeavoured to impress this importance on all your minds. The tie of family, and the love it ought to produce, is one of the sweetest of all our earthly duties. Perhaps

we old people see its value more than you young; but, to us, the weakening of it seems like a disaster only a little less to be deplored than death."

"Dearest dearest mother! What can you what do you mean? What can I what can Maud have to do with this?"

"Do not your consciences tell you, both? Has there not been some misunderstanding perhaps a quarrel certainly a coldness between you? A mother has a quick and a jealous eye; and I have seen, for some time, that there is not the old confidence, the free natural manner, in either of you, that there used to be, and which always gave your father and me so much genuine happiness. Speak, then, and let me make peace between you."

Robert Willoughby would not have looked at Maud, at that moment, to have been given a regiment; as for Maud, herself, she was utterly incapable of raising her eyes from the floor. The former coloured to the temples, a proof of consciousness, his mother fancied; while the latter's face resembled ivory, as much as flesh and blood.

"If you think, Robert," continued Mrs. Willoughby, "that Maud has forgotten you, or shown pique for any little former misunderstanding, during your last absence, you do her injustice. No one has done as much for you, in theway of memorial; that beautiful sash being all her own work, and made of materials purchased with her own pocketmoney. Maud loves you truly, too; for, whatever may be the airs she gives herself, while you are together, when absent, no one seems to care more for your wishes and happiness, than that very wilful and capricious girl."

"Mother! mother!" murmured Maud, burying her face in both her hands.

Mrs. Willoughby was woman in all her feelings, habits and nature. No one would have been more keenly alive to the peculiar sensibilities of her sex, under ordinary circumstances, than herself; but she was now acting and thinking altogether in her character of a mother; and so long and intimately had she regarded the two beings before her, in that common and sacred light, that it would have been like the dawn of a new existence for her, just then, to look upon them as not really akin to each other.

"I shall not, nor can I treat either of you as a child," she continued, "and must therefore appeal only to your own good sense, to make a peace. I know it can be nothing serious; but, it is painful to me to see even an affected coldness among my children. Think, Maud, that we are on the point of a war, and how bitterly you would regret it, should any accident befall your brother, and your memory not be able to recall the time passed among us, in his last visit, with entire satisfaction."

The mother's voice trembled; but tears no longer struggled about the eyelids of Maud. Her face was pale as death, and it seemed as if every ordinary fountain of sorrow were dried up.

"Dear Bob, this is too much!" she said eagerly, though in husky tones. "Here is my hand nay, here are both. Mother must not think this cruel charge is can be true."

The major arose, approached his sister, and impressed a kiss on her cold cheek. Mrs. Willoughby smiled at these tokens of amity, and the conversation continued in a less earnest manner.

"This is right, my children," said the single−hearted Mrs. Willoughby, whose sensitive maternal love saw nothing but the dreaded consequences of weakened domestic affections; "and I shall be all the happier for having witnessedit. Young soldiers, Maud, who are sent early from their homes, have too many inducements to forget them and those they contain; and we women are so dependent on the love of our male friends, that it is wisdom in us to keep alive all the earlier ties as long and as much as possible."

"I am sure, dearest mother," murmured Maud, though in a voice that was scarcely audible, "I shall be the last to wish to weaken this family tie. No one can feel a warmer a more proper a more sisterly affection for Robert,

than I do he was always so kind to me when a child and so ready to assist me and so manly and so everything that he ought to be it is surprising you should have fancied there was any coldness between us!"

Major Willoughby even bent forward to listen, so intense was his curiosity to hear what Maud said; a circumstance which, had she seen it, would probably have closed her lips. But her eyes were riveted on the floor, her cheeks were bloodless, and her voice so low, that nothing but the breathless stillness he observed, would have allowed the young man to hear it, where he sat.

"You forget, mother" rejoined the major, satisfied that the last murmur had died on his ears "that Maud will probably be transplanted into another family, one of these days, where we, who know her so well, and have reason to love her so much, can only foresee that she will form new, and even stronger ties than any that accident may have formed for her here."

"Never never" exclaimed Maud, fervently "I can never love any as well as I love those who are in this house."

The relief she wanted stopped her voice, and, bursting into tears, she threw herself into Mrs. Willoughby's arms, and sobbed like a child. The mother now motioned to her son to quit the room, while she remained herself to soothe the weeping girl, as she so often had done before, when overcome by her infantile, or youthful griefs. Throughout this interview, habit and single−heartedness so exercised their influence, that the excellent matron did not, in the most remote manner, recollect that her son and Maud were not natural relatives. Accustomed herself to see the latter every day, and to think of her, as she had from the moment whenshe was placed in her arms, an infant of a few weeks old, the effect that separation might produce on others, never presented itself to her mind. Major Willoughby, a boy of eight when Maud was received in the family, had known from the first her precise position; and it was perhaps morally impossible that he should not recall the circumstance in their subsequent intercourse; more especially as school, college, and the army, had given him so much leisure to reflect on such things, apart from the influence of family habits; while it was to be expected that a consequence of his own peculiar mode of thinking on this subject, would be to produce something like a sympathetic sentiment in the bosom of Maud. Until within the last few years, however, she had been so much of a child herself, and had been treated so much like a child by the young soldier, that it was only through a change in him, that was perceptible only to herself, and which occurred when he first met her grown into womanhood, that she alone admitted any feelings that were not strictly to be referred to sisterly regard. All this, nevertheless, was a profound mystery to every member of the family, but the two who were its subjects; no other thoughts than the simplest and most obvious, ever suggesting themselves to the minds of the others.

In half an hour, Mrs. Willoughby had quieted all Maud's present troubles, and the whole family left the house to repair to the chapel. Michael, though he had no great reverence for Mr. Wood's ministrations, had constituted himself sexton, an office which had devolved on him in consequence of his skill with the spade. Once initiated into one branch of this duty, he had insisted on performing all the others; and it was sometimes a curious spectacle to see the honest fellow, busy about the interior of the building, during service, literally stopping one of his ears with a thumb, with a view, while he acquitted himself of what he conceived to be temporal obligations, to exclude as much heresy as possible. One of his rules was to refuse to commence tolling the bell, until he saw Mrs. Willoughby and her daughter, within a reasonable distance of the place of worship; a rule that had brought about more than one lively discussion between himself and the leveling−minded, if not heavenly−minded Joel Strides. On the present occasion, this simple process did not pass altogether without a dispute.

"Come, Mike; it's half−past ten; the people have been waiting about the meetin' 'us, some time; you should open the doors, and toll the bell. People can't wait, for ever, for anybody; not even for your church."

"Then let 'em just go home, ag'in, and come when they 're called. Because, the ould women, and the young women, and the childer, and the likes o' them, wishes to scandalize their fellow cr'atures, Christians I will not call 'em, let 'em mate in the mill, or the school−house, and not come forenent a church on sich a business as that. Is it

toll the bell, will I, afore the Missus is in sight? No not for a whole gineration of ye, Joel; and every one o' them, too, a much likelier man than ye bees yerself."

"Religion is no respecter of persons" returned the philosophical Joel. "Them that likes masters and mistresses may have them, for all me; but it riles me to meet with meanness."

"It does!" cried Mike, looking up at his companion, with a very startling expression of wonder. "If that be true, ye must be in a mighty throubled state, most of the live−long day, ye must!"

"I tell you, Michael O'Hearn, religion is no respecter of persons. The Lord cares jist as much for me, as he does for captain Willoughby, or his wife, or his son, or his darters, or anything that is his."

"Divil burn me, now, Joel, if I believe that!" again cried Mike, in his dogmatic manner. "Then that understands knows the difference between mankind, and I'm sure it can be no great sacret to the Lord, when it is so well known to a poor fellow like myself. There's a plenthy of fellowcr'atures that has a mighty good notion of their own excellence, but when it comes to r'ason and thruth, it's no very great figure ye all make, in proving what ye say. This chapel is the master's, if chapel the heretical box can be called, and yonder bell was bought wid his money; and the rope is his; and the hands that mane to pull it, is his; and so there's little use in talking ag'in rocks, and ag'in minds that's made up even harder than rocks, and to spare."

This settled the matter. The bell was not tolled untilMrs. Willoughby, and her daughters, had got fairly through the still unprotected gateway of the stockade, although the recent discussion of political questions had so far substituted discontent for subordination in the settlement, that more than half of those who were of New England descent, had openly expressed their dissatisfaction at the delay. Mike, however, was as unmoved as the little chapel itself, refusing to open the door until the proper moment had arrived, according to his own notion of the fitness of things. He then proceeded to the elm, against which the little bell was hung, and commenced tolling it with as much seriousness as if the conveyer of sounds had been duly consecrated.

When the family from the Hut entered the chapel, all the rest of the congregation were in their customary seats. This arrival, however, added materially to the audience, Great Smash and Little Smash, the two Plinys, and some five or six coloured children, between the ages of six and twelve, following in the train of their master. For the blacks, a small gallery had been built, where they could sit apart, a proscribed, if not a persecuted race. Little did the Plinys or the Smashes, notwithstanding, think of this. Habit had rendered their situation more than tolerable, for it had created notions and usages that would have rendered them uncomfortable, in closer contact with the whites. In that day, the two colours never the together, by any accident; the eastern castes being scarcely more rigid in the observance of their rules, than the people of America were on this great point. The men who would toil together, joke together, and pass their days in familiar intercourse, would not sit down at the same board. There seemed to be a sort of contamination, according to the opinions of one of these castes, in breaking bread with the other. This prejudice often gave rise to singular scenes, more especially in the households of those who habitually laboured in company with their slaves. In such families, it not unfrequently happened that a black led the councils of the farm. He might be seen seated by the fire, uttering his opinions dogmatically, reasoning warmly against his own master, and dealing out his wisdom ex cathedra, even while he waited, with patient humility, when he might approach, and satisfy his hunger, after all of the other colour had quitted the table.

Mr. Woods was not fortunate in the selection of his subject, on the occasion of which we are writing. There had been so much personal activity, and so much political discussion during the past week, as to prevent him from writing a new sermon, and of course he was compelled to fall back on the other end of the barrel. The recent arguments inclined him to maintain his own opinions, and he chose a discourse that he had delivered to the garrison of which he had last been chaplain. To this choice he had been enticed by the text, which was, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," a mandate that would be far more palatable to an audience composed of royal troops, than to one which had become a good deal disaffected by the arts and arguments of Joel Strides and

the miller. Still, as the sermon contained a proper amount of theological truisms, and had a sufficiency of general orthodoxy to cover a portion of its political bearing, it gave far more dissatisfaction to a few of the knowing, than to the multitude. To own the truth, the worthy priest was so much addicted to continuing his regimental and garrison course of religious instruction, that his ordinary listeners would scarcely observe this tendency to loyalty; though it was far different with those who were eagerly looking for causes of suspicion and denunciation, in the higher quarters.

"Well," said Joel, as he and the miller, followed by their respective families, proceeded towards the mill, where the household of the Strides' were to pass the remainder of the day, "well, this is a bold sermon for a minister to preach in times like these! I kind o' guess, if Mr. Woods was down in the Bay, 'render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsars,' wouldn't be doctrine to be so quietly received by every congregation. What's your notion about that, Miss Strides?"

Miss Strides thought exactly as her husband thought, and the miller and his wife were not long in chiming in with her, accordingly. The sermon furnished material for conversation throughout the remainder of the day, at the mill, and divers conclusions were drawn from it, that were ominous to the preacher's future comfort and security.

Nor did the well−meaning parson entirely escape comment in the higher quarters.

"I wish, Woods, you had made choice of some othersubject," observed the captain, as he and his friend walked the lawn together, in waiting for a summons to dinner, "In times like these, one cannot be too careful of the political notions he throws out; and to own the truth to you, I am more than half inclined to think that Cæsar is exercising quite as much authority, in these colonies, as justly falls to his share."

"Why, my dear captain, you have heard this very sermon three or four times already, and you have more than once mentioned it with commendation!"

"Ay, but that was in garrison, where one is obliged to teach subordination. I remember the sermon quite well, and a very good one it was, twenty years since, when you first preached it; but "

"I apprehend, captain Willoughby, that 'tempora mutantur, et, nos mutamus in illis.' That the mandates and maxims of the Saviour are far beyond the mutations and erring passions of mortality. His sayings are intended for all times."

"Certainly, as respects their general principles and governing truths. But no text is to be interpreted without some reference to circumstances. All I mean is, that the preaching which might be very suitable to a battalion of His Majesty's Fortieth might be very unsuitable for the labourers of the Hutted Knoll; more especially so soon after what I find is called the Battle of Lexington."

The summons to dinner cut short the discourse, and probably prevented a long, warm, but friendly argument.

That afternoon and evening, captain Willoughby and his son had a private and confidential discourse. The former advised the major to rejoin his regiment without delay, unless he were prepared to throw up his commission and take sides with the colonists, altogether. To this the young soldier would not listen, returning to the charge, in the hope of rekindling the dormant flame of his father's loyalty.

The reader is not to suppose that captain Willoughby's own mind was absolutely made up to fly into open rebellion. Far from it. He had his doubts and misgivings on the subjects of both principles and prudence, but he inclined strongly to the equity of the demands of the Americans. Independance, or separation, if thought of at all in 1775, entered into the projects of but very few; the warmest wish of the most ardent of the whigs of the colonies being directed toward compromise, and a distinct recognition of their political franchises. The events that

followed so thickly were merely the consequences of causes which, once set in motion, soon attained an impetus that defied ordinary human control. It was doubtless one of the leading incidents of the great and mysterious scheme of Divine Providence for the government of the future destinies of man, that political separation should commence, in this hemisphere, at that particular juncture, to be carried out, ere the end of a century, to its final and natural conclusion.

But the present interview was less to debate the merits of any disputed question, than to consult on the means of future intercourse, and to determine on what was best to be done at the present moment. After discussing the matter, pro and con, it was decided that the major should quit the Knoll the next day, and return to Boston, avoiding Albany and those points of the country in which he would be most exposed to detection. So many persons were joining the American forces that were collecting about the besieged town, that his journeying on the proper road would excite no suspicion; and once in the American camp, nothing would be easier than to find his way into the peninsula. All this young Willoughby felt no difficulty in being able to accomplish, provided he could get into the settlements without being followed by information of his real character. The period of spies, and of the severe exercise of martial−law, was not yet reached; and all that was apprehended was detention. Of the last, however, there was great danger; positive certainly, indeed, in the event of discovery; and major Willoughby had gleaned enough during his visit, to feel some apprehensions of being betrayed. He regretted having brought his servant with him; for the man was a European, and by his dulness and speech might easily get them both into difficulties. So serious, indeed, was this last danger deemed by the father, that he insisted on Robert's starting without the man, leaving the last to follow, on the first suitable occasion.

As soon as this point was settled, there arose the question of the proper guide. Although he distrusted the Tuscarora,captain Willoughby, after much reflection, came to the opinion that it would be safer to make an ally of him, than to give him an opportunity of being employed by the other side. Nick was sent for, and questioned. He promised to take the major to the Hudson, at a point between Lunenburg and Kinderhook, where he would be likely to cross the river without awakening suspicion; his own reward to depend on his coming back to the Hutted Knoll with a letter from the major, authorizing the father to pay him for his services. This plan, it was conceived, would keep Nick true to his faith, for the time being, at least.

Many other points were discussed between the father and son, the latter promising if anything of importance occurred, to find the means of communicating it to his friends at the Knoll, while Farrel was to follow his master, at the end of six weeks or two months, with letters from the family. Many of the captain's old army−friends were now in situations of authority and command, and he sent to them messages of prudence, and admonitions to be moderate in their views, which subsequent events proved were little regarded. To general Gage he even wrote, using the precaution not to sign the letter, though its sentiments were so much in favour of the colonies, that had it been intercepted, it is most probable the Americans would have forwarded the missive to its direction.

These matters arranged, the father and son parted for the night, some time after the house−clock had struck the hour of twelve.

CHAPTER IX.

Though old in cunning, as in years,

He is so small, that like a child

In face and form, the god appears,

And sportive like a boy, and wild;

Lightly he moves from place to place,

In none at rest, in none content;

Delighted some new toy to chase

On childish purpose ever bent.

Beware! to childhood's spirits gay

Is added more than childhood's power;

And you perchance may rue the hour

That saw you join his seeming play.

Griffin

The intention of the major to quit the Knoll that day, was announced to the family at breakfast, on the following morning. His mother and Beulah heard this intelligence, with a natural and affectionate concern, that they had no scruples in avowing; but Maud seemed to have so schooled her feelings, that the grief she really felt was under a prudent control. To her, it appeared as if her secret were constantly on the point of exposure, and she believed that would cause her instant death. To survive its shame was impossible in her eyes, and all the energies of her nature were aroused, with the determination of burying her weakness in her own bosom. She had been so near revealing it to Beulah, that even now she trembled as she thought of the precipice over which she had been impending, strengthening her resolution by the recollection of the danger she had run.

As a matter of necessary caution, the intended movements of the young man were kept a profound secret from all in the settlement. Nick had disappeared in the course of the night, carrying with him the major's pack, having repaired to a designated point on the stream, where he was to be joined by his fellow−traveller at an hour named. There were several forest−paths which led to the larger settlements.That usually travelled was in the direction of old Fort Stanwix, first proceeding north, and then taking a south−eastern direction, along the shores of the Mohawk. This was the route by which the major had come. Another struck the Otsego, and joined the Mohawk at the point more than once mentioned in our opening chapters. As these were the two ordinary paths if paths they could be called, where few or no traces of footsteps were visible it was more than probable any plan to arrest the traveller would be laid in reference to their courses. The major had consequently resolved to avoid them both, and to strike boldly into the mountains, until he should reach the Susquehanna, cross that stream on its flood−wood, and finding one of its tributaries that flowed in from the eastward, by following its banks to the high land, which divides the waters of the Mohawk from this latter river, place himself on a route that would obliquely traverse the water−courses, which, in this quarter of the country, have all a general north or south direction. Avoiding Schenectady and Albany, he might incline towards the old establishments of the descendants of the emigrants from the Palatinate, on the Schoharie, and reach the Hudson at a point deemed safe for his purposes, through some of the passes of the mountains in their vicinity. He was to travel in the character of a land−owner who had been visiting his patent, and his father supplied him with a map and an old field−book, which would serve to corroborate his assumed character, in the event of suspicion, or arrest. Not much danger was apprehended, however, the quarrel being yet too recent to admit of the organization and distrust that subsequently produced so much vigilance and activity.

"You will contrive to let us hear of your safe arrival in Boston, Bob," observed the father, as he sat stirring his tea, in a thoughtful way "I hope to God the matter will go no farther, and that our apprehensions, after all, have given this dark appearance to what has already happened."

"Ah, my dear father; you little know the state of the country, through which I have so lately travelled!" answered the major, shaking his head. "An alarm of fire, in an American town, would scarce create more movement, and not so much excitement. The colonies are alive, particularly those of New England, and a civil war is inevitable; though I trust the power of England will render it short."

"Then, Robert, do not trust yourself among the people of New England" cried the anxious mother. "Go rather to New York, where we have so many friends, and so much influence. It will be far easier to reach New York than to reach Boston."

"That may be true, mother, but it will scarcely be as creditable. My regiment is in Boston, and its enemies are before Boston; an old soldier like captain Willoughby will tell you that the major is a very necessary officer to a corps. No no my best course is to fall into the current of adventurers who are pushing towards Boston, and appear like one of their number, until I can get an opportunity of stealing away from them, and join my own people."

"Have a care, Bob, that you do not commit a military crime. Perhaps these provincial officers may take it into their heads to treat you as a spy, should you fall into their hands!"

"Little fear of that, sir; at present it is a sort of colonial scramble for what they fancy liberty. That they will fight, in their zeal, I know; for I have seen it; but matters have not at all gone as far as you appear to apprehend. I question if they would even stop Gage, himself, from going through their camp, were he outside, and did he express a desire to return."

"And yet you tell me, arms and ammunition are seized all over the land; that several old half−pay officers of the king have been arrested, and put under a sort of parole!"

"Such things were talked of, certainly, though I question if they have yet been done. Luckily for yourself, under your present opinions at least, you are not on half−pay, even."

"It is fortunate, Bob, though you mention it with a smile. With my present feelings, I should indeed be sorry to be on half−pay, or quarter−pay, were there such a thing. I now feel myself my own master, at liberty to follow the dictates of my conscience, and the suggestions of my judgment."

"Well, sir, you are a little fortunate, it must be acknowledged. I cannot see how any man can be at liberty tothrow off the allegiance he owes his natural sovereign. What think you, Maud?"

This was said half in bitterness, half in jest, though the appeal at its close was uttered in a serious manner, and a little anxiously. Maud hesitated, as if to muster her thoughts, ere she replied.

"My feelings are against rebellion," she said, at length; "though I fear my reason tells me there is no such thing as a natural sovereign. If the parliament had not given us the present family, a century since, by what rule of nature would it be our princes, Bob?"

"Ah! these are some of the flights of your rich imagination, my dear Maud; it is parliament that has made them our princes, and parliament, at least, is our legal, constitutional master."

"That is just the point in dispute. Parliament may be the rightful governors of England, but are they the rightful governors of America?"

"Enough," said the captain, rising from table "We will not discuss such a question, just as we are about to separate. Go, my son; a duty that is to be performed, cannot be done too soon. Your fowling−piece and

ammunition are ready for you, and I shall take care to circulate the report that you have gone to pass an hour in the woods, in search of pigeons. God bless you, Bob; however we may differ in this matter you are my son my only son my dear and well−beloved boy God for ever bless you!"

A profound stillness succeeded this burst of nature, and then the young man took his leave of his mother and the girls. Mrs. Willoughby kissed her child. She did not even weep, until she was in her room; then, indeed, she went to her knees, her tears, and her prayers. Beulah, all heart and truth as she was, wept freely on her brother's neck; but Maud, though pale and trembling, received his kiss without returning it; though she could not help saying with a meaning that the young man had in his mind all that day, ay, and for many succeeding days "be careful of yourself, and run into no unnecessary dangers; God bless you, dear, dear Bob."

Maud alone followed the movements of the gentlemen with her eyes. The peculiar construction of the Hut preventedexternal view from the south windows; but there was a loop in a small painting−room of the garret that was especially under her charge. Thither, then, she flew, to ease her nearly bursting heart with tears, and to watch the retiring footsteps of Robert. She saw him, accompanied by his father and the chaplain, stroll leisurely down the lawn, conversing and affecting an indifferent manner, with a wish to conceal his intent to depart. The glass of the loop was open, to admit the air, and Maud strained her sense of hearing, in the desire to catch, if possible, another tone of his voice. In this she was unsuccessful; though he stopped and gazed back at the Hut, as if to take a parting look. Her father and Mr. Woods did not turn, and Maud thrust her hand through the opening and waved her handkerchief. "He will think it Beulah or I," she thought, "and it may prove a consolation to him to know how much we love him." The major saw the signal, and returned it. His father unexpectedly turned, and caught a glimpse of the retiring hand, as it was disappearing within the loop. "That is our precious Maud," he said, without other thought than of her sisterly affection. "It is her painting−room; Beulah's is on the other side of the gate−way; but the window does not seem to be open."

The major started, kissed his hand fervently, five or six times, and then he walked on. As if to change the conversation, he said hastily, and with a little want of connection with what had just passed

"Yes, sir, that gate, sure enough have it hung, at once, I do entreat of you. I shall not be easy until I hear that both the gates are hung that in the stockade, and that in the house, itself."

"It was my intention to commence to−day," returned the father, "but your departure has prevented it. I will wait a day or two, to let your mother and sisters tranquillize their minds a little, before we besiege them with the noise and clamour of the workmen."

"Better besiege them with that, my dear sir, than leave them exposed to an Indian, or even a rebel attack."

The major then went on to give some of his more modern military notions, touching the art of defence. As one of the old school, he believed his father a miracle of skill; butwhat young man, who had enjoyed the advantages of ten or fifteen years of the most recent training in any branch of knowledge, ever believed the educations of those who went before him beyond the attacks of criticism. The captain listened patiently, and with an old man's tolerance for inexperience, glad to have any diversion to unhappy thoughts.

All this time Maud watched their movements from the loop, with eyes streaming with tears. She saw Robert pause, and look back, again and again; and, once more, she thrust out the handkerchief. It was plain, however, he did not see it; for he turned and proceeded, without any answering signal.

"He never can know whether it was Beulah or I," thought Maud; "yet, he may fancy we are both here."

On the rocks, that overhung the mills, the gentlemen paused, and conversed for quite a quarter of an hour. The distance prevented Maud from discerning their countenances; but she could perceive the thoughtful, and as she

fancied melancholy, attitude of the major, as, leaning on his fowling−piece, his face was turned towards the Knoll, and his eyes were really riveted on the loop. At the end of the time mentioned, the young soldier shook hands hastily and covertly with his companions, hurried towards the path, and descended out of sight, following the course of the stream. Maud saw him no more, though her father and Mr. Woods stood on the rocks quite half an hour longer, catching occasional glimpses of his form, as it came out of the shadows of the forest, into the open space of the little river; and, indeed, until the major was within a short distance of the spot where he was to meet the Indian. Then they heard the reports of both barrels of his fowling−piece, fired in quick succession, the signals that he had joined his guide. This welcome news received, the two gentlemen returned slowly towards the house.

Such was the commencement of a day, which, while it brought forth nothing alarming to the family of the Hutted Knoll, was still pregnant with important consequences. Major Willoughby disappeared from the sight of his father about ten in the morning; and before twelve, the settlement was alive with the rumours of a fresh arrival. Joel knew not whether to rejoice or to despair, as he saw a party of eight or ten armed men rising above the rock, and holding their course across the flats towards the house. He entertained no doubt of its being a party sent by the provincial authorities to arrest the captain, and he foresaw the probability of another's being put into the lucrative station of receiver of the estate, during the struggle which was in perspective. It is surprising how many, and sometimes how pure patriots are produced by just such hopes as those of Joel's. At this day, there is scarce an instance of a confiscated estate, during the American revolution, connected with which racy traditions are not to be found, that tell of treachery very similar to this contemplated by the overseer; in some instances of treachery effected by means of kinsmen and false friends.

Joel had actually got on his Sunday coat, and was making his way towards the Knoll, in order to be present, at least, at the anticipated scene, when, to his amazement, and somewhat to his disappointment, he saw the captain and chaplain moving down the lawn, in a manner to show that these unexpected arrivals brought not unwelcome guests. This caused him to pause; and when he perceived that the only two among the strangers who had the air of gentlemen, were met with cordial shakes of the hand, he turned back towards his own tenement, a half−dissatisfied, and yet half−contented man.

The visit which the captain had come out to receive, instead of producing any uneasiness in his family, was, in truth, highly agreeable, and very opportune. It was Evert Beekman, with an old friend, attended by a party of chain−bearers, hunters, on his way from the "Patent" he owned in the neighbourhood that is to say, within fifty miles and halting at the Hutted Knoll, under the courteous pretence of paying his respects to the family, but, in reality, to bring the suit he had now been making to Beulah for quite a twelvemonth, to a successful termination.

The attachment between Evert Beekman and Beulah Willoughby was of a character so simple, so sincere, and so natural, as scarce to furnish materials for a brief episode. The young man had not made his addresses without leave obtained from the parents; he had been acceptable to thedaughter from the commencement of their acquaintance; and she had only asked time to reflect, ere she gave her answer, when he proposed, a day or two before the family left New York.

To own the truth, Beulah was a little surprised that her suitor had delayed his appearance till near the close of May, when she had expected to see him at the beginning of the month. A letter, however, was out of the question, since there was no mode of transmitting it, unless the messenger were sent expressly; and the young man had now come in person, to make his own apologies.

Beulah received Evert Beekman naturally, and without the least exaggeration of manner, though a quiet happiness beamed in her handsome face, that said as much as lover could reasonably desire. Her parents welcomed him cordially, and the suitor must have been dull indeed, not to anticipate all he hoped. Nor was it long before every doubt was removed. The truthful, conscientious Beulah, had well consulted her heart; and, while she blushed at her own temerity, she owned her attachment to her admirer. The very day of his arrival they became formally betrothed. As our tale, however, has but a secondary connection with this little episode, we shall not dwell on it

more than is necessary to the principal object. It was a busy morning, altogether; and, though there were many tears, there were also many smiles. By the time it was usual, at that bland season, for the family to assemble on the lawn, everything, even to the day, was settled between Beulah and her lover, and there was a little leisure to think of other things. It was while the younger Pliny and one of the Smashes were preparing the tea, that the following conversation was held, being introduced by Mr. Woods, in the way of digressing from feelings in which he was not quite as much interested as some of the rest of the party.

"Do you bring us anything new from Boston?" demanded the chaplain. "I have been dying to ask the question these two hours ever since dinner, in fact; but, somehow, Mr. Beekman, I have not been able to edge in an inquiry."

This was said good−naturedly, but quite innocently; eliciting smiles, blushes, and meaning glances in return. Evert Beekman, however, looked grave before he made his reply.

"To own the truth, Mr. Woods," he said, "things are getting to be very serious. Boston is surrounded by thousands of our people; and we hope, not only to keep the king's forces in the Peninsula, but, in the end, to drive them out of the colony."

"This is a bold measure, Mr. Beekman! a very bold step to take against Cæsar!"

"Woods preached about the rights of Cæsar, no later than yesterday, you ought to know, Beekman," put in the laughing captain; "and I am afraid he will be publicly praying for the success of the British arms, before long."

"I did pray for the Royal Family," said the chaplain, with spirit, "and hope I shall ever continue to do so."

"My dear fellow, I do not object to that. Pray for all conditions of men, enemies and friends alike; and, particularly, pray for our princes; but pray also to turn the hearts of their advisers."

Beekman seemed uneasy. He belonged to a decidedly whig family, and was himself, at the very moment, spoken of as the colonel of one of the regiments about to be raised in the colony of New York. He held that rank in the militia, as it was; and no one doubted his disposition to resist the British forces, at the proper moment. He had even stolen away from what he conceived to be very imperative duties, to secure the woman of his heart before he went into the field. His answer, in accordance, partook essentially of the bias of his mind.

"I do not know, sir, that it is quite wise to pray so very willingly for the Royal Family," he said. "We may wish them worldly happiness, and spiritual consolation, as part of the human race; but political and specific prayers, in times like these, are to be used with caution. Men attach more than the common religious notion, just now, to prayers for the king, which some interpret into direct petitions against the United Colonies."

"Well," rejoined the captain, "I cannot agree to this, myself. If there were a prayer to confound parliament and its counsels, I should be very apt to join in it cordially; but I am not yet ready to throw aside king, queen, princes and princesses, all in a lump, on account of a few taxes, and a little tea."

"I am sorry to hear this from you, sir," answered Evert. "When your opinions were canvassed lately at Albany, I gave a sort of pledge that you were certainly more with us than against us."

"Well then, I think, Beekman, you drew me in my true outlines. In the main, I think the colonies right, though I am still willing to pray for the king."

"I am one of those, captain Willoughby, who look forward to the most serious times. The feeling throughout the colonies is tremendous, and the disposition on the part of the royal officers is to meet the crisis with force."

"You have a brother a captain of foot in one of the regiments of the crown, colonel Beekman what are his views in this serious state of affairs?"

"He has already thrown up his commission refusing even to sell out, a privilege that was afforded him. His name is now before congress for a majority in one of the new regiments that are to be raised."

The captain looked grave; Mrs. Willoughby anxious; Beulah interested; and Maud thoughtful.

"This has a serious aspect, truly," observed the first. "When men abandon all their early hopes, to assume new duties, there must be a deep and engrossing cause. I had not thought it like to come to this!"

"We have had hopes major Willoughby might do the same; I know that a regiment is at his disposal, if he be disposed to join us. No one would be more gladly received. We are to have Gates, Montgomery, Lee, and many other old officers, from regular corps, on our side."

"Will colonel Lee be put at the head of the American forces?"

"I think not, sir. He has a high reputation, and a good deal of experience, but he is a humourist; and what is something, though you will pardon it, he is not an American born."

"It is quite right to consult such considerations, Beekman; were I in congress, they would influence me, Englishman as I am, and in many things must always remain."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Willoughby," exclaimed the chaplain "right down rejoiced to hear you say so! A man is bound to stand by his birth−place, through thick and thin."

"How do you, then, reconcile your opinions, in this matter, to your birth−place, Woods?" asked the laughing captain.

To own the truth, the chaplain was a little confused. He had entered into the controversy with so much zeal, of late, as to have imbibed the feelings of a thorough partisan; and, as is usual with such philosophers, was beginning to over−look everything that made against his opinions, and to exaggerate everything that sustained them.

"How?" he cried, with zeal, if not with consistency "Why, well enough. I am an Englishman too, in the general view of the case, though born in Massachusetts. Of English descent, and an English subject."

"Umph! Then Beekman, here, who is of Dutch descent, is not bound by the same principles as we are ourselves?"

"Not by the same feelings, possibly; but, surely, by the same principles. Colonel Beekman is an Englishman by construction, and you are by birth. Yes, I'm what may be called a constructive Englishman."

Even Mrs. Willoughby and Beulah laughed at this, though not a smile had crossed Maud's face, since her eye had lost Robert Willoughby from view. The captain's ideas seemed to take a new direction, and he was silent some little time before he spoke.

"Under the circumstances in which we are now placed, as respects each other, Mr. Beekman," he said, "it is proper that there should be no concealments on grave points. Had you arrived an hour or two earlier, you would have met a face well known to you, in that of my son, major Willoughby."

"Major Willoughby, my dear sir!" exclaimed Beekman, with a start of unpleasant surprise; "I had supposed him with the royal army, in Boston. You say he has left the Knoll I sincerely hope not for Albany."

"No I wished him to go in that direction, at first, and to see you, in particular; but his representations of the state of the country induced me to change my mind; he travels by a private way, avoiding all the towns of note, or size."

"In that he has done well, sir. Near to me as a brother of Beulah's must always seem, I should be sorry to see Bob, just at this moment. If there be no hope of getting him to join us, the farther we are separated the better."

This was said gravely, and it caused all who heard it fully to appreciate the serious character of a quarrel that threatened to arm brother against brother. As if by common consent, the discourse changed, all appearing anxious, at a moment otherwise so happy, to obliterate impressions so unpleasant from their thoughts.

The captain, his wife, Beulah and the colonel, had several long and private communications in the course of the evening. Maud was not sorry to be left to herself, and the chaplain devoted his time to the entertainment of the friend of Beekman, who was in truth a surveyor, brought along partly to preserve appearances, and partly for service. The chain−bearers, hunters, had been distributed in the different cabins of the settlement, immediately on the arrival of the party.

That night, when the sisters retired, Maud perceived that Beulah had something to communicate, out of the common way. Still, she did not know whether it would be proper for her to make any inquiries, and things were permitted to take their natural course. At length Beulah, in her gentle way, remarked

"It is a fearful thing, Maud, for a woman to take upon herself the new duties, obligations and ties of a wife."

"She should not do it, Beulah, unless she feels a love for the man of her choice, that will sustain her in them. You, who have real parents living, ought to feel this fully, as I doubt not you do."

"Real parents! Maud, you frighten me! Are not my parents yours? Is not all our love common?"

"I am ashamed of myself, Beulah. Dearer and better parents than mine, no girl ever had. I am ashamed of my words, and beg you will forget them."

"That I shall be very ready to do. It was a great consolation to think that should I be compelled to quit home, as compelled I must be in the end, I should leave with my father and mother a child as dutiful, and one that loves them as sincerely as yourself, Maud."

"You have thought right, Beulah. I do love them to my heart's core! Then you are right in another sense; for I shall never marry. My mind is made up to that."

"Well, dear, many are happy that never marry many women are happier than those that do. Evert has a kind, manly, affectionate heart, and I know will do all he can to prevent my regretting home; but we can never have more than one mother, Maud!"

Maud did not answer, though she looked surprised that Beulah should say this to her.

"Evert has reasoned and talked so much to my father and mother," continued the fiancée, blushing, "that they have thought we had better be married at once. Do you know, Maud, that it has been settled this evening, that the ceremony is to take place to−morrow!"

"This is sudden, indeed, Beulah! Why have they determined on so unexpected a thing?"

"It is all owing to the state of the country. I know not how he has done it but Evert has persuaded my father, that the sooner I am his wife, the more secure we shall all be, here at the Knoll."

"I hope you love Evert Beekman, dearest, dearest Beulah?"

"What a question, Maud! Do you suppose I could stand up before a minister of God, and plight my faith to a man I did not love? Why have you seemed to doubt it?"

"I do not doubt it I am very foolish, for I know you are conscientious as the saints in heaven and yet, Beulah, I think I could scarce be so tranquil about one I loved."

The gentle Beulah smiled, but she no longer felt uneasiness. She understood the impulses and sentiments of her own pure but tranquil nature too well, to distrust herself; and she could easily imagine that Maud would not be as composed under similar circumstances.

"Perhaps it is well, sister of mine," she answered laughing, though blushing, "that you are so resolved to remain single; for one hardly knows where to find a suitor sufficiently devoted and ethereal for your taste. No one pleased you last winter, though the least encouragement would have brought a dozen to your feet; and here there is no one you can possibly have, unless it be dear, good, old Mr. Woods."

Maud compressed her lips, and really looked stern, so determined was she to command herself; then she answered somewhat in her sister's vein

"It is very true," she said, "there is no hero for me to accept, unless it be dear Mr. Woods; and he, poor man, has had one wife that cured him of any desire to possess another, they say."

"Mr. Woods! I never knew that he was married. Who can have told you this, Maud?"

"I got it from Robert" answered the other, hesitating a little. "He was talking one day of such things."

"What things, dear?"

"Why of getting married I believe it was about marrying relatives or connections or, some such thing; for Mr. Woods married a cousin−german, it would seem and so he told me all about it. Bob was old enough to know his wife, when she died. Poor man, she led him a hard life he must be far from the Knoll, by this time, Beulah!"

"Mr. Woods! I left him with papa, a few minutes since, talking over the ceremony for to−morrow!"

"I meant Bob "

Here the sisters caught each other's eyes, and both blushed, consciousness presenting to them, at the same instant, the images that were uppermost in their respective minds. But, no more was said. They continued their employments in silence, and soon each was kneeling in prayer.

The following day, Evert Beekman and Beulah Willoughby were married. The ceremony took place, immediately after breakfast, in the little chapel; no one being present but the relatives, and Michael O'Hearn, who quieted his conscience for not worshipping with the rest of the people, by acting as their sexton. The honest county Leitrim−man was let into the secret as a great secret, however at early dawn; and he had the place swept and in order in good season, appearing in his Sunday attire to do honour to the occasion, as he thought became him.

A mother as tender as Mrs. Willoughby, could not resign the first claim on her child, without indulging her tears. Maud wept, too; but it was as much in sympathy for Beulah's happiness, as from any other cause. The marriage, in other respects, was simple, and without any ostentatiousmanifestations of feeling. It was, in truth, one of those rational and wise connections, which promise to wear well, there being a perfect fitness, in station, wealth, connections, years, manners and habits, between the parties. Violence was done to nothing, in bringing this discreet and well−principled couple together. Evert was as worthy of Beulah, as she was worthy of him. There was confidence in the future, on every side; and not a doubt, or a misgiving of any sort, mingled with the regrets, if regrets they could be called, that were, in some measure, inseparable from the solemn ceremony.

The marriage was completed, the affectionate father had held the weeping but smiling bride on his bosom, the tender mother had folded her to her heart, Maud had pressed her in her arms in a fervent embrace, and the chaplain had claimed his kiss, when the well−meaning sexton approached.

"Is it the likes of yees I wish well to!" said Mike "Ye may well say that; and to yer husband, and childer, and all that will go before, and all that have come afther ye! I know'd ye, when ye was mighty little, and that was years agone; and niver have I seen a cross look on yer pretthy face. I've app'inted to myself, many's the time, a consait to tell ye all this, by wor−r−d of mouth; but the likes of yees, and of the Missus, and of Miss Maud there och! isn't she a swate one! and many's the pity, there's no sich tall, handsome jontleman to take her, in the bargain, bad luck to him for staying away; and so God bless ye, all, praist in the bargain, though he's no praist at all; and there's my good wishes said and done."

CHAPTER X.

Ho! Princes of Jacob! the strength and the stay

Of the daughters of Zion; now up, and away;

Lo, the hunters have struck her, and bleeding alone

Like a pard in the desert she maketh her moan;

Up with war−horse and banner, with spear and with sword,

On the spoiler go down in the might of the Lord!

Lunt

The succeeding fortnight, or three weeks, brought no material changes, beyond those connected with the progress of the season. Vegetation was out in its richest luxuriance, the rows of corn and potatoes, freshly hoed, were ornamenting the flats, the wheat and other grains were throwing up their heads, and the meadows were beginning to exchange their flowers for the seed. As for the forest, it had now veiled its mysteries beneath broad curtains of a green so bright and lively, that one can only meet it, beneath a generous sun, tempered by genial rains, and a mountain air. The chain−bearers, and other companions of Beekman, quitted the valley the day after the wedding, leaving no one of their party behind but its principal.

The absence of the major was not noted by Joel and his set, in the excitement of receiving so many guests, and in the movement of the wedding. But, as soon as the fact was ascertained, the overseer and miller made the pretence of a 'slack−time' in their work, and obtained permission to go to the Mohawk, on private concerns of their own. Such journeys were sufficiently common to obviate suspicion; and, the leave had, the two conspirators started off, in company, the morning of the second day, or forty−eight hours after the major and Nick had disappeared. As the

latter was known to have come in by the Fort Stanwix route, it was naturally enough supposed that he had returned by the same; and Joel determined to head him on the Mohawk, at some point near Schenectady, where he might make a merit of his own patriotism, by betraying the son of his master.The reader is not to suppose Joel intended to do all this openly; so far from it, his plan was to keep himself in the back−ground, while he attracted attention to the supposed toryism of the captain, and illustrated his own attachment to the colonies.

It is scarcely necessary to say that this plan failed, in consequence of the new path taken by Nick. At the very moment when Joel and the miller were lounging about a Dutch inn, some fifteen or twenty miles above Schenectady, in waiting for the travellers to descent the valley of the Mohawk, Robert Willoughby and his guide were actually crossing the Hudson, in momentary security at least. After remaining at his post until satisfied his intended prey had escaped him, Joel, with his friend, returned to the settlement. Still, the opportunity had been improved, to make himself better acquainted with the real state of the country; to open communications with certain patriots of a moral calibre about equal to his own, but of greater influence; to throw out divers injurious hints, and secret insinuations concerning the captain; and to speculate on the propriety of leaving so important a person to work his will, at a time so critical. But the pear was not yet ripe, and all that could now be done was to clear the way a little for something important in future.

In the meantime, Evert Beekman having secured his gentle and true−hearted wife, began, though with a heavy heart, to bethink him of his great political duties. It was well understood that he was to have a regiment of the new levies, and Beulah had schooled her affectionate heart to a degree that permitted her to part with him, in such a cause, with seeming resignation. It was, sooth to say, a curious spectacle, to see how these two sisters bent all their thoughts and wishes, in matters of a public nature, to favour the engrossing sentiments of their sex and natures; Maud being strongly disposed to sustain the royal cause, and the bride to support that in which her husband had enlisted, heart and hand.

As for captain Willoughby, he said little on the subject of politics; but the marriage of Beulah had a powerful influence in confirming his mind in the direction it had taken after the memorable argument with the chaplain. ColonelBeekman was a man of strong good sense, though without the least brilliancy; and his arguments were all so clear and practical, as to carry with them far more weight than was usual in the violent partisan discussions of the period. Beulah fancied him a Solon in sagacity, and a Bacon in wisdom. Her father, without proceeding quite as far as this, was well pleased with his cool discriminating judgment, and much disposed to defer to his opinions. The chaplain was left out of the discussions as incorrigible.

The middle of June was passed, at the time colonel Beekman began to think of tearing himself from his wife, in order to return into the active scenes of preparation he had quitted, to make this visit. As usual, the family frequented the lawn, at the close of the day, the circumstance of most of the windows of the Hut looking on the court, rendering this resort to the open air more agreeable than might otherwise have been the case. Evert was undecided whether to go the following morning, or to remain a day longer, when the lawn was thus occupied, on the evening of the 25th of the month, Mrs. Willoughby making the tea, as usual, her daughters sitting near her, sewing, and the gentlemen at hand, discussing the virtues of different sorts of seed−corn.

"There is a stranger!" suddenly exclaimed the chaplain, looking towards the rocks near the mill, the point at which all arrivals in the valley were first seen from the Hut. "He comes, too, like a man in haste, whatever may be his errand."

"God be praised," returned the captain rising; "it is Nick, on his usual trot, and this is about the time he should be back, the bearer of good news. A week earlier might have augured better; but this will do. The fellow moves over the ground as if he really had something to communicate!"

Mrs. Willoughby and her daughters suspended their avocations, and the gentlemen stood, in silent expectation, watching the long, loping strides of the Tuscarora, as he came rapidly across the plain. In a few minutes the Indian

came upon the lawn, perfectly in wind, moving with deliberation and gravity, as he drew nearer to the party. Captain Willoughby, knowing his man, waited quite another minute, after the red−man was leaning against an apple−tree, before he questioned him.

"Welcome back, Nick," he then said. "Where did you leave my son?"

"He tell dere," answered the Indian, presenting a note, which the captain read.

"This is all right, Nick; and it shows you have been a true man. Your wages shall be paid to−night. But, this letter has been written on the eastern bank of the Hudson, and is quite three weeks old why have we not seen you, sooner?"

"Can't see, when he don't come."

"That is plain enough; but why have you not come back sooner? That is my question."

"Want to look at country went to shore of Great Salt Lake."

"Oh! Curiosity, then, has been at the bottom of your absence?"

"Nick warrior no squaw got no cur'osity."

"No, no I beg your pardon, Nick; I did not mean to accuse you of so womanish a feeling. Far from it; I know you are a man. Tell us, however, how far, and whither you went?"

"Bos'on," answered Nick, sententiously.

"Boston! That has been a journey, indeed. Surely my son did not allow you to travel in his company through Massachusetts?"

"Nick go alone. Two path; one for major; one for Tuscarora. Nick got dere first."

"That I can believe, if you were in earnest. Were you not questioned by the way?"

"Yes. Tell 'em I'm Stockbridge pale−face know no better. T'ink he fox; more like wood−chuck."

"Thank you, Nick, for the compliment. Had my son reached Boston before you came away?"

"Here he be" answered the Indian, producing another missive, from the folds of his calico shirt.

The captain received the note which he read with extreme gravity, and some surprise.

"This is in Bob's hand−writing," he said, "and is dated'Boston, June 18th, 1775;' but it is without signature, and is not only Bob, but Bob Short."

"Read, dear Willoughby," exclaimed the anxious mother. "News from him, concerns us all."

"News, Wilhelmina! They may call this news in Boston, but one is very little the better for it at the Hutted Knoll. However, such as it is, there is no reason for keeping it a secret, while there is one reason, at least, why it should be known. This is all. 'My dearest sir Thank God I am unharmed; but we have had much to make us reflect; you know what duty requires my best and endless love to my mother, and Beulah and dear, laughing, capricious,

pretty Maud. Nick was present, and can tell you all. I do not think he will "extenuate, or aught set down in malice.'" And this without direction, or signature; with nothing, in fact, but place and date. What say you to all this, Nick?"

"He very good major dere; he know. Nick dere hot time a t'ousand scalp coat red as blood."

"There has been another battle!" exclaimed the captain; "that is too plain to admit of dispute. Speak out at once, Nick which gained the day; the British or the Americans?"

"Hard to tell one fight, t'other fight. Red−coat take de ground; Yankee kill. If Yankee could take scalp of all he kill, he whip. But, poor warriors at takin' scalp. No know how."

"Upon my word, Woods, there does seem to be something in all this! It can hardly be possible that the Americans would dare to attack Boston, defended as it is, by a strong army of British regulars."

"That would they not," cried the chaplain, with emphasis. "This has been only another skirmish."

"What you call skirmge?" asked Nick, pointedly. "It skirmge to take t'ousand scalp, ha?"

"Tell us what has happened, Tuscarora?" said the captain, motioning his friend to be silent.

"Soon tell soon done. Yankee on hill; reg'lar in canoe. Hundred, t'ousand, fifty canoe full of red−coat. Great chief, dere! ten six two all go togeder. Come ashore parade, pale−face manner march booh booh dem cannon; pop, pop dem gun. Wah! how he run"

"Run! who ran, Nick? Though I suppose it must have been the poor Americans, of course."

"Red−coat run," answered the Indian, quietly.

This reply produced a general sensation, even the ladies starting, and gazing at each other.

"Red−coat run" repeated the captain, slowly. "Go on with your history, Nick where was this battle fought?"

"T'other Bos'on over river go in canoe to fight, like Injin from Canada."

"That must have been in Charlestown, Woods you may remember Boston is on one peninsula, and Charlestown on another. Still, I do not recollect that the Americans were in the latter, Beekman you told me nothing of that?"

"They were not so near the royal forces, certainly, when I left Albany, sir," returned the colonel. "A few direct questions to the Indian, however, would bring out the whole truth."

"We must proceed more methodically. How many Yankees were in this fight, Nick? Calculate as we used to, in the French war."

"Reach from here to mill t'ree, two deep, cap'in. All farmer; no sodger. Carry gun, but no carry baggonet; no carry knapsack. No wear red−coat. Look like town−meetin'; fight like devils."

"A line as long as from this to the mill, three deep, would contain about two thousand men, Beekman. Is that what you wish to say, Nick?"

"That about him pretty near just so."

"Well, then, there were about two thousand Yankees on this hill how many king's troops crossed in the canoes, to go against them?"

"Two time one time, so many; t'other time, half so many. Nick close by; count him."

"That would make three thousand in all! By George, this does look like work. Did they all go together, Nick?"

"No; one time go first; fight, run away. Den two time go, fight good deal run away, too. Den try harder set fire to wigwam go up hill; Yankee run away."

"This is plain enough, and quite graphical. Wigwam on fire? Charlestown is not burnt, Nick?"

"Dat he Look like old Council Fire, gone out. Bigcanoe fire booh booh Nick nebber see such war before wah! Dead man plenty as leaves on tree; blood run like creek!"

"Were you in this battle, Nick? How came you to learn so much about it?"

"Don't want to be in it better out no scalp taken. Red−man not'in' to do, dere. How know about him? See him dat all. Got eye; why no see him, behind stone wall. Good see, behind stone wall."

"Were you across the water yourself, or did you remain in Boston, and see from a distance?"

"Across in canoe tell red−coat, general send letter by Nick major say, he my friend let Nick go."

"My son was in this bloody battle, then!" said Mrs. Willoughby. "He writes, Hugh, that he is safe?"

"He does, dearest Wilhelmina; and Bob knows us too well, to attempt deception, in such a matter."

"Did you see the major in the field, Nick after you crossed the water, I mean?"

"See him, all. Six two seven t'ousand. Close by; why not see major stand up like pine no dodge he head, dere. Kill all round him no hurt him! Fool to stay dere tell him so; but he no come away. Save he scalp, too."

"And how many slain do you suppose there might have been left on the ground or, did you not remain to see?"

"Did see stay to get gun knapsack oder good t'ing plenty about; pick him up, fast as want him." Here Nick coolly opened a small bundle, and exhibited an epaulette, several rings, a watch, five or six pairs of silver buckles, and divers other articles of plunder, of which he had managed to strip the dead. "All good t'ing plenty as stone have him widout askin'."

"So I see, Master Nick and is this the plunder of Englishmen, or of Americans?"

"Red−coat nearest got most t'ing, too. Go farder, fare worse; as pale−face say."

"Quite satisfactory. Were there more red−coats left on the ground, or more Americans?"

"Red−coat so," said Nick, holding up four fingers "Yankee, so;" holding up one. Take big grave to hold red−coat. Small grave won't hold Yankee. Hear what he count; most red−coat. More than t'ousand warrior! British groan, like squaw dat lose her hunter."

Such was Saucy Nick's description of the celebrated, and, in some particulars, unrivalled combat of Bunker Hill, of which he had actually been an eye−witness, on the ground, though using the precaution to keep his body well covered. He did not think it necessary to state the fact that he had given the coup−de−grace, himself, to the owner of the epaulette, nor did he deem it essential to furnish all the particulars of his mode of obtaining so many buckles. In other respects, his account was fair enough, "nothing extenuating, or setting down aught in malice." The auditors had listened with intense feeling; and Maud, when the allusion was made to Robert Willoughby, buried her pallid face in her hands, and wept. As for Beulah, time and again, she glanced anxiously at her husband, and bethought her of the danger to which he might so soon be exposed.

The receipt of this important intelligence confirmed Beekman in the intention to depart. The very next morning he tore himself away from Beulah, and proceeded to Albany. The appointment of Washington, and a long list of other officers, soon succeeded, including his own as a colonel; and the war may be said to have commenced systematically. Its distant din occasionally reached the Hutted Knoll; but the summer passed away, bringing with it no event to affect the tranquillity of that settlement. Even Joel's schemes were thwarted for a time, and he was fain to continue to wear the mask, and to gather that harvest for another, which he had hoped to reap for his own benefit.

Beulah had all a young wife's fears for her husband; but, as month succeeded month, and one affair followed another, without bringing him harm, she began to submit to the anxieties inseparable from her situation, with less of self−torment, and more of reason. Her mother and Maud were invaluable friends to her, in this novel and trying situation, though each had her own engrossing cares on account of Robert Willoughby. As no other great battle, however occurred in the course of the year '75, Beekman remained in safety with the troops that invested Boston, and the major with the army within it. Neither was much exposed, andglad enough were these gentle affectionate hearts, when they learned that the sea separated the combatants.

This did not occur, however, until another winter was passed. In November, the family left the Hut, as had been its practice of late years, and went out into the more inhabited districts to pass the winter. This time it came only to Albany, where colonel Beekman joined it, passing a few happy weeks with his well−beloved Beulah. The ancient town mentioned was not gay at a moment like that; but it had many young officers in it, on the American side of the question, who were willing enough to make themselves acceptable to Maud. The captain was not sorry to see several of these youths manifesting assiduity about her he had so long been accustomed to consider as his youngest daughter; for, by this time, his opinions had taken so strong a bias in favour of the rights of the colonies, that Beekman himself scarce rejoiced more whenever he heard of any little success alighting on the American arms.

"It will all come right in the end," the worthy captain used to assure his friend the chaplain. "They will open their eyes at home, ere long, and the injustice of taxing the colonies will be admitted. Then all will come round again; the king will be as much beloved as ever, and England and America will be all the better friends for having a mutual respect. I know my countrymen well; they mean right, and will do right, as soon as their stomachs are a little lowered, and they come to look at the truth, coolly. I'll answer for it, the Battle of Bunker's Hill made us" the captain had spoken in this way, now, for some months "made us a thousand advocates, where we had one before. This is the nature of John Bull; give him reason to respect you, and he will soon do you justice; but give him reason to feel otherwise, and he becomes a careless, if not a hard master."

Such were the opinions captain Willoughby entertained of his native land; a land he had not seen in thirty years, and one in which he had so recently inherited unexpected honours, without awakening a desire to return and enjoy them. His opinions were right in part, certainly; for they depended on a law of nature, while it is not improbable they were wrong in all that was connected with the notions ofany peculiarly manly quality, in any particular part of christendom. No maxim is truer than that which teaches us "like causes produce like effects;" and as human beings are governed by very similar laws all over the face of this round world of ours, nothing is more certain than the similarity of their propensities.

Maud had no smiles, beyond those extracted by her naturally sweet disposition, and a very prevalent desire to oblige, for any of the young soldiers, or young civilians, who crowded about her chair, during the Albany winter mentioned. Two or three of colonel Beekman's military friends, in particular, would very gladly have become connected with an officer so much respected, through means so exceedingly agreeable; but no encouragement emboldened either to go beyond the attention and assiduities of a marked politeness.

"I know not how it is," observed Mrs. Willoughby, one day, in a tête−à−tête with her husband; "Maud seems to take less pleasure than is usual with girls of her years, in the attentions of your sex. That her heart is affectionate warm even tender, I am very certain; and yet no sign of preference, partiality, or weakness, in favour of any of these fine young men, of whom we see so many, can I discover in the child. They all seem alike to her!"

"Her time will come, as it happened to her mother before her," answered the captain. "Whooping−cough and measles are not more certain to befall children, than love to befall a young woman. You were all made for it, my dear Willy, and no fear but the girl will catch the disease, one of these days; and that, too, without any inoculation."

"I am sure, I have no wish to separate from my child" so Mrs. Willoughby always spoke of, and so she always felt towards Maud "I am sure, I have no wish to separate from my child; but as we cannot always remain, it is perhaps better this one should marry, like the other. There is young Verplanck much devoted to her; he is everyway a suitable match; and then he is in Evert's own regiment."

"Ay, he would do; though to my fancy Luke Herring is the far better match."

"That is because he is richer and more powerful, Hugh you men cannot think of a daughter's establishment, withoutimmediately dragging in houses and lands, as part of the ceremony."

"By George, wife of mine, houses and lands in moderation, are very good sweeteners of matrimony!"

"And yet, Hugh, I have been very happy as a wife, nor have you been very miserable as a husband, without any excess of riches to sweeten the state!" answered Mrs. Willoughby, reproachfully. "Had you been a full general, I could not have loved you more than I have done as a mere captain."

"All very true, Wilhelmina, dearest," returned the husband, kissing the faithful partner of his bosom with strong affection "very true, my dear girl; for girl you are and ever will be in my eyes; but you are one in a million, and I humbly trust there are not ten hundred and one, in every thousand, just like myself. For my part, I wish dear, saucy, capricious little Maud, no worse luck in a husband, than Luke Herring."

"She will never be his wife; I know her, and my own sex, too well to think it. You are wrong, however, Willoughby, in applying such terms to the child. Maud is not in the least capricious, especially in her affections. See with what truth and faithfulness of sisterly attachment she clings to Bob. I do declare I am often ashamed to feel that even his own mother has less solicitude about him than this dear girl."

"Pooh, Willy; don't be afflicted with the idea that you don't make yourself sufficiently miserable about the boy. Bob will do well enough, and will very likely come out of this affair a lieutenant−colonel. I may live yet to see him a general officer; certainly, if I live to be as old as my grandfather, Sir Thomas. As for Maud, she finds Beulah uneasy about Beekman; and having no husband herself, or any lover that she cares a straw about, why she just falls upon Bob as a pis aller. I'll warrant you she cares no more for him than any of the rest of us than myself, for instance; though as an old soldier, I don't scream every time I fancy a gun fired over yonder at Boston."

"I wish it were well over. It is so unnatural for Evert and Robert to be on opposite sides."

"Yes, it is out of the common way, I admit; and yet'twill all come round, in the long run. This Mr. Washington is a clever fellow, and seems to play his cards with spirit and judgment. He was with us, in that awkward affair of Braddock's; and between you and me, Willhelmina, he covered the regulars, or we should all have laid our bones on that accursed field. I wrote you at the time, what I thought of him, and now you see it is all coming to pass."

It was one of the captain's foibles to believe himself a political prophet; and, as he had really both written and spoken highly of Washington, at the time mentioned, it had no small influence on his opinions to find himself acting on the same side with this admired favourite. Prophecies often produce their own fulfilment, in cases of much greater gravity than this; and it is not surprising that our captain found himself strengthened in his notions by the circumstance.

The winter passed away without any of Maud's suitors making a visible impression on her heart. In March, the English evacuated Boston, Robert Willoughby sailing with his regiment for Halifax, and thence with the expedition against Charleston, under Sir Henry Clinton. The next month, the family returned to the Knoll, where it was thought wiser, and even safer to be, at a moment so critical, than even in a more frequented place. The war proceeded, and, to the captain's great regret, without any very visible approaches towards the reconciliation he had so confidently anticipated. This rather checked his warmth in favour of the colonial cause; for, an Englishman by birth, he was much opposed at bottom to anything like a dissolution of the tie that connected America with the mother country; a political event that now began seriously to be talked of among the initiated.

Desirous of thinking as little as possible of disagreeable things, the worthy owner of the valley busied himself with his crops, his mills, and his improvements. He had intended to commence leasing his wild lands about this time, and to begin a more extended settlement, with an eye to futurity; but the state of the country forbade the execution of the project, and he was fain to limit his efforts by their former boundaries. The geographical position of the valley put it beyond any of the ordinary exactions of military service;and, as there was a little doubt thrown around its owner's opinions, partly in consequence of his son's present and his own previous connection with the royal army, and partly on account of Joel's secret machinations, the authorities were well content to let the settlement alone, provided it would take care of itself. Notwithstanding the prominent patriotism of Joel Strides and the miller, they were well satisfied, themselves, with this state of things; preferring peace and quietness to the more stirring scenes of war. Their schemes, moreover, had met with somewhat of a check, in the feeling of the population of the valley, which, on an occasion calculated to put their attachment to its owner to the proof, had rather shown that they remembered his justice, liberality, and upright conduct, more than exactly comported with their longings. This manifestation of respect was shown at an election for a representative in a local convention, in which every individual at the Hutted Knoll, who had a voice at all, the two conspirators excepted, had given it in favour of the captain. So decided was this expression of feeling, indeed, that it compelled Joel and the miller to chime in with the cry of the hour, and to vote contrary to their own wishes.

One, dwelling at the Hutted Knoll, in the summer of 1776, could never have imagined that he was a resident of a country convulsed by a revolution, and disfigured by war. There, everything seemed peaceful and calm, the woods sighing with the airs of their sublime solitude, the genial sun shedding its heats on a grateful and generous soil, vegetation ripening and yielding with all the abundance of a bountiful nature, as in the more tranquil days of peace and hope.

"There is something frightful in the calm of this valley, Beulah!" exclaimed Maud one Sunday, as she and her sister looked out of the library window amid the breathing stillness of the forest, listening to the melancholy sound of the bell that summoned them to prayers. "There is a frightful calm over this place, at an hour when we know that strife and bloodshed are so active in the country. Oh! that the hateful congress had never thought of making this war!"

"Evert writes me all is well, Maud; that the times will lead to good; the people are right; and America will nowbe a nation in time, he thinks, a great, and a very great nation."

"Ah! It is this ambition of greatness that hurries them all on! Why can they not be satisfied with being respectable subjects of so great a country as England, that they must destroy each other for this phantom of liberty? Will it make them wiser, or happier, or better than they are?"

Thus reasoned Maud, under the influence of one engrossing sentiment. As our tale proceeds, we shall have occasion to show, perhaps, how far was that submission to events which she inculcated, from the impulses of her true character. Beulah answered midly, but it was more as a young American wife:

"I know Evert thinks it all right, Maud; and you will own he is neither fiery nor impetuous. If his cool judgment approve of what has been done, we may well suppose that it has not been done in too much haste, or needlessly."

"Think, Beulah," rejoined Maud, with an ashen cheek, and in trembling tones, "that Evert and Robert may, at this very moment, be engaged in strife against each other. The last messenger who came in, brought us the miserable tidings that Sir William Howe was landing a large army near New York, and that the Americans were preparing to meet it. We are certain that Bob is with his regiment; and his regiment we know is in the army. How can we think of this liberty, at a moment so critical?"

Beulah did not reply; for in spite of her quiet nature, and implicit confidence in her husband, she could not escape a woman's solicitude. The colonel had promised to write at every good occasion, and that which he promised was usually performed. She thought, and thought rightly, that a very few days would bring them intelligence of importance; though it came in a shape she had little anticipated, and by a messenger she had then no desire to see.

In the meantime, the season and its labours advanced. August was over, and September with its fruits had succeeded, promising to bring the year round without any new or extraordinary incidents to change the fortunes of the inmates of the Hutted Knoll. Beulah had now been married more than a twelvemonth, and was already a mother; and of course all that time had elapsed since the son quitted hisfather's house. Nick, too, had disappeared shortly after his return from Boston; and throughout this eventful summer, his dark, red countenance had not been seen in the valley.

CHAPTER XI.

And now 'tis still! no sound to wake

The primal forest's awful shade;

And breathless lies the covert brake,

Where many an ambushed form is laid:

I see the red−man's gleaming eye,

Yet all so hushed the gloom profound,

That summer birds flit heedlessly,

And mocking nature smiles around.

Lunt

The eventful summer of 1776 had been genial and generous in the valley of the Hutted Knoll. With a desire to

drive away obtrusive thoughts, the captain had been much in his fields, and he was bethinking himself of making a large contribution to the good cause, in the way of fatted porkers, of which he had an unusual number, that he thought might yet be driven through the forest to Fort Stanwix, before the season closed. In the way of intelligence from the seat of war, nothing had reached the family but a letter from the major, which he had managed to get sent, and in which he wrote with necessary caution. He merely mentioned the arrival of Sir William Howe's forces, and the state of his own health. There was a short postscript, in the following words, the letter having been directed to his father: "Tell dearest Maud," he said, "that charming women have ceased to charm me; glory occupying so much of my day−dreams, like an ignis fatuus, I fear; and that as for love, all my affections are centred in the dear objects at the Hutted Knoll. If I had met with a single woman I admired half as much as I do her pretty self, I should have been married long since." This was written in answer to some thoughtless rattle that the captain had volunteered to put in his last letter, as coming from Maud, who had sensitively shrunk from sending a message when asked; and it was read by father, mother, and Beulah, as the badinage of a brother to a sister, without awaking a second thought in either. Not so with Maud, herself, however. When her seniors had done with this letter, she carried it to her own room, reading and re−reading it a dozen times; nor could she muster resolution to return it; but, finding at length that the epistle was forgotten, she succeeded in retaining it without awakening attention to what she had done. This letter now became her constant companion, and a hundred times did the sweet girl trace its characters, in the privacy of her chamber, or in that of her now solitary walks in the woods.

As yet, the war had produced none of those scenes of ruthless frontier violence, that had distinguished all the previous conflicts of America. The enemy was on the coast, and thither the efforts of the combatants had been principally directed. It is true, an attempt on Canada had been made, but it failed for want of means; neither party being in a condition to effect much, as yet, in that quarter. The captain had commented on this peculiarity of the present struggle; all those which had preceded it having, as a matter of course, taken the direction of the frontiers between the hostile provinces.

"There is no use, Woods, in bothering ourselves about these things, after all," observed captain Willoughby, one day, when the subject of hanging the long−neglected gates came up between them. "It's a heavy job, and the crops will suffer if we take off the hands this week. We are as safe, here, as we should be in Hyde Park; and safer too; for there house−breakers and foot−pads abound; whereas, your preaching has left nothing but very vulgar and every−day sinners at the Knoll."

The chaplain had little to say against this reasoning; for, to own the truth, he saw no particular cause for apprehension. Impunity had produced the feeling of security, until these gates had got to be rather a subject of amusement, than of any serious discussion. The preceding year, when the stockade was erected, Joel had managed to throw so many obstacles in the way of hanging the gates, that the duty was not performed throughout the whole of the present summer, the subject having been mentioned but once ortwice, and then only to be postponed to a more fitting occasion.

As yet no one in the valley knew of the great event which had taken place in July. A rumour of a design to declare the provinces independent had reached the Hut in May; but the major's letter was silent on this important event, and positive information had arrived by no other channel; otherwise, the captain would have regarded the struggle as much more serious than he had ever done before; and he might have set about raising these all−important gates in earnest. As it was, however, there they stood; each pair leaning against its proper wall or stockade, though those of the latter were so light as to have required but eight or ten men to set them on their hinges, in a couple of hours at most.

Captain Willoughby still confined his agricultural schemes to the site of the old Beaver Pond. The area of that was perfectly beautiful, every unsightly object having been removed, while the fences and the tillage were faultlessly neat and regular. Care had been taken, too, to render the few small fields around the cabins which skirted this lovely rural scene, worthy of their vicinage. The stumps had all been dug, the surfaces levelled, and the orchards

and gardens were in keeping with the charms that nature had so bountifully scattered about the place.

While, however, all in the shape of tillage was confined to this one spot, the cattle ranged the forest for miles. Not only was the valley, but the adjacent mountain−sides were covered with intersecting paths, beaten by the herds, in the course of years. These paths led to many a glen, or lookout, where Beulah and Maud had long been in the habit of pursuing their rambles, during the sultry heats of summer. Though so beautiful to the eye, the flats were not agreeable for walks; and it was but natural for the lovers of the picturesque to seek the eminences, where they could overlook the vast surfaces of leaves that were spread before them; or to bury themselves in ravines and glens, within which the rays of the sun scarce penetrated. The paths mentioned led near, or to, a hundred of these places, all within a mile or two of the Hut. As a matter of course, then, they were not neglected.

Beulah had now been a mother several months. Her little Evert was born at the Knoll, and he occupied most of those gentle and affectionate thoughts which were not engrossed by his absent father. Her marriage, of itself, had made some changes in her intercourse with Maud; but the birth of the child had brought about still more. The care of this little being formed Beulah's great delight; and Mrs. Willoughby had all that peculiar interest in her descendant, which marks a grandmother's irresponsible love. These two passed half their time in the nursery, a room fitted between their respective chambers; leaving Maud more alone than it was her wont to be, and of course to brood over her thoughts and feelings. These periods of solitude our heroine was much accustomed to pass in the forest. Use had so far emboldened her, that apprehension never shortened her walks, or lessened their pleasure. Of danger, from any ordinary source, there was literally next to none, man never having been known to approach the valley, unless by the regular path; while the beasts of prey had been so actively hunted, as rarely to be seen in that quarter of the country. The panther excepted, no wild quadruped was to be in the least feared in summer; and, of the first, none had ever been met with by Nick, or any of the numerous woodsmen who had now frequented the adjacent hills for two lustrums.

About three hours before the setting of the sun, on the evening of the 23d of September, 1776, Maud Willoughby was pursuing her way, quite alone, along one of the paths beaten by the cattle, at some little distance from a rocky eminence, where there was a look−out, on which Mike, by her father's orders, had made a rude seat. It was on the side of the clearing most remote from all the cabins; though, once on the elevation, she could command a view of the whole of the little panorama around the site of the ancient pond. In that day, ladies wore the well−known gipsey hat, a style that was peculiarly suited to the face of our heroine. Exercise had given her cheeks a rich glow; and though a shade of sadness, or at least of reflection, was now habitually thrown athwart her sweet countenance, this bloom added an unusual lustre to her eyes, and a brilliancy to her beauty, that the proudest belle of any drawing−room might have been glad to possess. Although living so retired her dressalways became her rank; being simple, but of the character that denotes refinement, and the habits and tastes of a gentlewoman. In this particular, Maud had ever been observant of what was due to herself; and, more than all, had she attended to her present appearance since a chance expression of Robert Willoughby's had betrayed how much he prized the quality in her.

Looking thus, and in a melancholy frame of mind, Maud reached the rock, and took her place on its simple seat, throwing aside her hat, to catch a little of the cooling air on her burning cheeks. She turned to look at the lovely view again, with a pleasure that never tired. The rays of the sun were streaming athwart the verdant meadows and rich corn, lengthening the shadows, and mellowing everything, as if expressly to please the eye of one like her who now gazed upon the scene. Most of the people of the settlement were in the open air, the men closing their day's works in the fields, and the women and children busied beneath shades, with their wheels and needles; the whole presenting such a picture of peaceful, rural life, as a poet might delight to describe, or an artist to delineate with his pencil.

"The landscape smiles

Calm in the sun; and silent are the hills

And valleys, and the blue serene of air."

The Vanished Lark

"It is very beautiful!" thought Maud. "Why cannot men be content with such scenes of loveliness and nature as this, and love each other, and be at peace, as God's laws command? Then we might all be living happily together, here, without trembling lest news of some sad misfortune should reach us, from hour to hour. Beulah and Evert would not be separated; but both could remain with their child and my dear, dear father and mother would be so happy to have us all around them, in security and, then, Bob, too perhaps Bob might bring a wife from the town, with him, that I could love as I do Beulah" It was one of Maud's day−dreams to love the wife of Bob, and make him happy by contributing to the happiness of those he most prized "No; I could never love her as I do Beulah; but I should make her very dear to me, as I ought to, since she would be Bob's wife."

The expression of Maud's face, towards the close of this mental soliloquy, was of singular sadness; and yet it was the very picture of sincerity and truth. It was some such look as the windows of the mind assume, when the feelings struggle against nature and hope, for resignation and submission to duty.

At this instant, a cry arose from the valley! It was one of those spontaneous, involuntary outbreakings of alarm, that no art can imitate, no pen describe; but which conveys to the listener's ear, terror in the very sound. At the next instant, the men from the mill were seen rushing up to the summit of the cliff that impended over their dwellings, followed by their wives dragging children after them, making frantic gestures, indicative of alarm. The first impulse of Maud was to fly; but a moment's reflection told her it was much too late for that. To remain and witness what followed would be safer, and more wise. Her dress was dark, and she would not be likely to be observed at the distance at which she was placed; having behind her, too, a back−ground of gloomy rock. Then the scene was too exciting to admit of much hesitation or delay in coming to a decision; a fearful species of maddened curiosity mingling with her alarm. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that Maud continued gazing on what she saw, with eyes that seemed to devour the objects before them.

The first cry from the valley was followed by the appearance of the fugitives from the mill. These took the way towards the Hut, calling on the nearest labourers by name, to seek safety in flight. The words could not be distinguished at the rock, though indistinct sounds might; but the gestures could not be mistaken. In half a minute, the plain was alive with fugitives; some rushing to their cabins for their children, and all taking the direction of the stockade, as soon as the last were found. In five minutes the roads and lanes near the Knoll were crowded with men, women and children, hastening forward to its protection, while a few of the former had already rushed through the gate−ways, as Maud correctly fancied, in quest of their arms.

Captain Willoughby was riding among his labourers when this fearful interruption to a tranquillity so placid first broke upon his ear. Accustomed to alarms, he galloped forwardto meet the fugitives from the mill, issuing orders as he passed to several of the men nearest the house. With the miller, who thought little of anything but safety at that instant, he conversed a moment, and then pushed boldly on towards the verge of the cliffs. Maud trembled as she saw her father in a situation which she thought must be so exposed; but his cool manner of riding about proved that he saw no enemy very near. At length he waved his hat to some object, or person in the glen beneath; and she even thought she heard his shout. At the next moment, he turned his horse, and was seen scouring along the road towards the Hut. The lawn was covered with the fugitives as the captain reached it, while a few armed men were already coming out of the court−yard. Gesticulating as if giving orders, the captain dashed through them all, without drawing the rein, and disappeared in the court. A minute later, he re−issued, bearing his arms, followed by his wife and Beulah, the latter pressing little Evert to her bosom.

Something like order now began to appear among the men. Counting all ages and both colours, the valley, at this particular moment, could muster thirty−three males capable of bearing arms. To these might be added some ten or fifteen women who had occasionally brought down a deer, and who might be thought more or less dangerous,

stationed at a loop, with a rifle or a musket. Captain Willoughby had taken some pains to drill the former, who could go through some of the simpler light−infantry evolutions. Among them he had appointed sundry corporals, while Joel Strides had been named a serjeant. Joyce, now an aged and war−worn veteran, did the duty of adjutant. Twenty men were soon drawn up in array, in front of the open gate−way on the lawn, under the immediate orders of Joyce; and the last woman and child, that had been seen approaching the place of refuge, had passed within the stockade. At this instant captain Willoughby called a party of the stragglers around him, and set about hanging the gates of the outer passage, or that which led through the palisades.

Maud would now have left the rock, but, at that moment, a dark body of Indians poured up over the cliffs, crowning it with a menacing cloud of at least fifty armed warriors. The rivulet lay between her and the Hut, and the nearestbridge that crossed it would have brought her within reach of danger. Then it would require at least half an hour to reach that bridge by the circuitous path she would be compelled to take, and there was little hope of getting over it before the strangers should have advanced. It was better to remain where she could behold what was passing, and to be governed by events, than to rush blindly into unseen risks.

The party that crowned the cliffs near the mills, showed no impatience to advance. It was evidently busy in reconnoitring, and in receiving accessions to its numbers. The latter soon increased to some seventy or eighty warriors. After waiting several minutes in inaction, a musket, or rifle, was fired towards the Hut, as if to try the effect of a summons and the range of a bullet. At this hint the men on the lawn retired within the stockade, stacked their arms, and joined the party that was endeavouring to get the gates in their places. From the circumstance that her father directed all the women and children to retire within the court, Maud supposed that the bullet might have fallen somewhere near them. It was quite evident, however, that no one was injured.

The gates intended for the stockade, being open like the rest of that work, were materially lighter than those constructed for the house itself. The difficulty was in handling them with the accuracy required to ehter the hinges, of which there were three pairs. This difficulty existed on account of their great height. Of physical force, enough could be applied to toss them over the stockade itself, if necessary; but finesse was needed, rather than force, to effect the principal object, and that under difficult circumstances. It is scarcely possible that the proximity of so fierce an enemy as a body of savages in their war−paint, for such the men at the mill had discovered was the guise of their assailants, would in any measure favour the coolness and tact of the labourers. Poor Maud lost the sense of her own danger, in the nervous desire to see the long−forgotten gates hung; and she rose once or twice, in feverish excitement, as she saw that the leaf which was raised fell in or out, missing its fastenings. Still the men persevered, oneor two sentinels being placed to watch the Indians, and give timely notice of their approach, should they advance.

Maud now kneeled, with her face bowed to the seat, and uttered a short but most fervent prayer, in behalf of the dear beings that the Hut contained. This calmed her spirits a little, and she rose once more to watch the course of events. The body of men had left the gate at which they had just been toiling, and were crowding around its fellow. One leaf was hung! As an assurance of this, she soon after saw her father swing it backward and forward on its hinges, to cause it to settle into its place. This was an immense relief, though she had heard too many tales of Indian warfare, to think there was any imminent danger of an attack by open day, in the very face of the garrison. The cool manner in which her father proceeded, satisfied her that he felt the same security, for the moment; his great object being, in truth, to make suitable provision against the hours of darkness.

Although Maud had been educated as a lady, and possessed the delicacy and refinement of her class, she had unavoidably caught some of the fire and resolution of a frontier life. To her, the forest, for instance, possessed no fancied dangers; but when there was real ground for alarm, she estimated its causes intelligently, and with calmness. So it was, also, in the present crisis. She remembered all she had been taught, or had heard, and quick of apprehension, her information was justly applied to the estimate of present circumstances.

The men at the Hut soon had the second leaf of the gate ready to be raised. At this instant, an Indian advanced across the flat alone, bearing a branch of a tree in his hand, and moving swiftly. This was a flag of truce, desiring to communicate with the pale−faces. Captain Willoughby met the messenger alone, at the foot of the lawn, and there a conference took place that lasted several minutes. Maud could only conjecture its objects, though she thought her father's attitude commanding, and his gestures stern. The red−man, as usual, was quiet and dignified. This much our heroine saw, or fancied she saw; but beyond this, of course, all was vague conjecture. Just as the two were about to part, and had even made courteous signs of their intention, ashout arose from the workmen, which ascended, though faintly, as high as the rock. Captain Willoughby turned, and then Maud saw his arm extended towards the stockade. The second leaf of the gate was in its place, swinging to and fro, in a sort of exulting demonstration of its uses! The savage moved away, more slowly than he had advanced, occasionally stopping to reconnoitre the Knoll and its defences.

Captain Willoughby now returned to his people, and he was some time busied in examining the gates, and giving directions about its fastenings. Utterly forgetful of her own situation, Maud shed tears of joy, as she saw that this great object was successfully effected. The stockade was an immense security to the people of the Hut. Although it certainly might be scaled, such an enterprise would require great caution, courage, and address; and it could hardly be effected, at all, by day−light. At night, even, it would allow the sentinels time to give the alarm, and with a vigilant look−out, might be the means of repelling an enemy. There was also another consideration connected with this stockade. An enemy would not be fond of trusting himself inside of it, unless reasonably certain of carrying the citadel altogether; inasmuch as it might serve as a prison to place him in the hands of the garrison. To recross it under a fire from the loops, would be an exploit so hazardous that few Indians would think of undertaking it. All this Maud knew from her father's conversations, and she saw how much had been obtained in raising the gates. Then the stockade, once properly closed, afforded great security to those moving about within it; the timbers would be apt to stop a bullet, and were a perfect defence against a rush; leaving time to the women and children to get into the court, even allowing that the assailants succeeded in scaling the palisades.

Maud thought rapidly and well, in the strait in which she was placed. She understood most of the movements, on both sides, and she also saw the importance of her remaining where she could note all that passed, if she intended to make an attempt at reaching the Hut, after dark. This necessity determined her to continue at the rock, so long as light remained. She wondered she was not missed, butrightly attributed the circumstance to the suddenness of the alarm, and the crowd of other thoughts which would naturally press upon the minds of her friends, at such a fearful moment. "I will stay where I am," thought Maud, a little proudly, "and prove, if I am not really the daughter of Hugh Willoughby, that I am not altogether unworthy of his love and care! I can even pass the night in the forest, at this warm season, without suffering."

Just as these thoughts crossed her mind, in a sort of mental soliloquy, a stone rolled from a path above her, and fell over the rock on which the seat was placed. A footstep was then heard, and the girl's heart beat quick with apprehension. Still she conceived it safest to remain perfectly quiet. She scarce breathed in her anxiety to be motionless. Then it occurred to her, that some one beside herself might be out from the Hut, and that a friend was near. Mike had been in the woods that very afternoon, she knew; for she had seen him; and the true−hearted fellow would indeed be a treasure to her, at that awful moment. This idea, which rose almost to certainty as soon as it occurred, induced her to spring forward, when the appearance of a man, whom she did not recognise, dressed in a hunting−shirt, and otherwise attired for the woods, carrying a short rifle in the hollow of his arm, caused her to stop, in motionless terror. At first, her presence was not observed; but, no sooner did the stranger catch a glimpse of her person, than he stopped, raised his hands in surprise, laid his rifle against a tree, and sprang forward; the girl closing her eyes, and sinking on the seat, with bowed head, expecting the blow of the deadly tomahawk.

"Maud dearest, dearest Maud do you not know me!" exclaimed one, leaning over the pallid girl, while he passed an arm round her slender waist, with an affection so delicate and reserved, that, at another time, it might have attracted attention. "Look up, dear girl, and show that at least you fear not me!"

"Bob," said the half−senseless Maud. "Whence come you? Why do you come at this fearful instant! Would to God your visit had been better timed!"

"Terror makes you say this, my poor Maud! Of all the family, I had hoped for the warmest welcome from you.We think alike about this war then you are not so much terrified at the idea of my being found here, but can hear reason. Why do you say this, then, my dearest Maud?"

By this time Maud had so far recovered as to be able to look up into the major's face, with an expression in which alarm was blended with unutterable tenderness. Still she did not throw her arms around him, as a sister would clasp a beloved brother; but, rather, as he pressed her gently to his bosom, repelled the embrace by a slight resistance. Extricating herself, however, she turned and pointed towards the valley.

"Why do I say this? See for yourself the savages have at length come, and the whole dreadful picture is before you."

Young Willoughby's military eye took in the scene at a glance. The Indians were still at the cliff, and the people of the settlement were straining at the heavier gates of the Hut, having already got one of them into a position where it wanted only the proper application of a steady force to be hung. He saw his father actively employed in giving directions; and a few pertinent questions drew all the other circumstances from Maud. The enemy had now been in the valley more than an hour, and the movements of the two parties were soon related.

"Are you alone, dearest Maud? are you shut out by this sudden inroad?" demanded the major, with concern and surprise.

"So it would seem. I can see no other though I did think Michael might be somewhere near me, in the woods, here; I at first mistook your footsteps for his."

"That is a mistake" returned Willoughby, levelling a small pocket spy−glass at the Hut "Mike is tugging at that gate, upholding a part of it, like a corner−stone. I see most of the faces I know there, and my dear father is as active, and yet as cool, as if at the head of a regiment."

"Then I am alone it is perhaps better that as many as possible should be in the house to defend it."

"Not alone, my sweet Maud, so long as I am with you. Do you still think my visit so ill−timed?"

"Perhaps not, after all. Heaven knows what I should have done, by myself, when it became dark!"

"But are we safe on this seat? May we not be seen by the Indians, since we so plainly see them?"

"I think not. I have often remarked that when Evert and Beulah have been here, their figures could not be perceived from the lawn; owing, I fancy, to the dark back−ground of rock. My dress is not light, and you are in green; which is the colour of the leaves, and not easily to be distinguished. No other spot gives so good a view of what takes place in the valley. We must risk a little exposure, or act in the dark."

"You are a soldier's daughter, Maud" This was as true of major Meredith as of captain Willoughby, and might therefore be freely said by even Bob "You are a soldier's daughter, and nature has clearly intended you to be a soldier's wife. This is a coup−d'−æil not to be despised."

"I shall never be a wife at all" murmured Maud, scarce knowing what she said; "I may not live to be a soldier's daughter, even, much longer. But, why are you here? surely, surely you can have no connection with those savages! I have heard of such horrors; but you would not accompany them, even though it were to protect the

Hut."

"I'll not answer for that, Maud. One would do a great deal to preserve his paternal dwelling from pillage, and his father's grey hairs from violence. But I came alone; that party and its objects being utterly strangers to me."

"And why do you come at all, Bob?" inquired the anxious girl, looking up into his face with open affection "The situation of the country is now such, as to make your visits very hazardous."

"Who could know the regular major in this hunting−shirt, and forest garb? I have not an article about my person to betray me, even were I before a court. No fear for me then, Maud; unless it be from these demons in human shape, the savages. Even they do not seem to be very fiercely inclined, as they appear at this moment more disposed to eat, than to attack the Hut. Look for yourself; those fellows are certainly preparing to take their food; the group that is just now coming over the cliffs, is dragging a deer after it."

Maud took the glass, though with an unsteady hand, and she looked a moment at the savages. The manner in which the instrument brought these wild beings nearer to her eye, caused her to shudder, and she was soon satisfied.

"That deer was killed this morning by the miller," she said; "they have doubtless found it in or near his cabin. We will be thankful, however, for this breathing−time it may enable my dear father to get up the other gate. Look, Robert, and see what progress they make?"

"One side is just hung, and much joy does it produce among them! Persevere, my noble old father, and you will soon be safe against your enemies. What a calm and steady air he has, amid it all! Ah! Maud, Hugh Willoughby ought, at this moment, to be at the head of a brigade, helping to suppress this accursed and unnatural rebellion. Nay, more; he may be there, if he will only listen to reason and duty."

"And this is then your errand here, Bob?" asked his fair companion, gazing earnestly at the major.

"It is, Maud and I hope you, whose feelings I know to be right, can encourage me to hope."

"I fear not. It is now too late. Beulah's marriage with Evert has strengthened his opinions and then "

"What, dearest Maud? You pause as if that 'then' had a meaning you hesitated to express."

Maud coloured; after which she smiled faintly, and proceeded:

"We should speak reverently of a father and such a father, too. But does it not seem probable to you, Bob, that the many discussions he has with Mr. Woods may have a tendency to confirm each in his notions?"

Robert Willoughby would have answered in the affirmative, had not a sudden movement at the Hut prevented.

CHAPTER XII.

From Flodden ridge

The Scots beheld the English host

Leave Barmore wood, their evening post,

And heedful watched them as they crossed

The Till by Twisal Bridge.

Scott

It was just at this instant that most of the women of the settlement rushed from the court, and spread themselves within the stockade, Mrs. Willoughby and Beulah being foremost in the movement. The captain left the gate, too, and even the men, who were just about to raise the last leaf, suspended their toil. It was quite apparent some new cause for uneasiness or alarm had suddenly awoke among them. Still the stack of arms remained untouched, nor was there any new demonstration among the Indians. The major watched everything, with intense attention, through the glass.

"What is it, dear Bob?" demanded the anxious Maud. "I see my dearest mother she seems alarmed."

"Was it known to her that you were about to quit the house, when you came out on this walk?"

"I rather think not. She and Beulah were in the nursery with little Evert, and my father was in the fields. I came out without speaking to any person, nor did I meet any before entering the forest."

"Then you are now first missed. Yes, that is it and no wonder, Maud, it creates alarm. Merciful God! How must they all feel, at a moment like this!"

"Fire your rifle, Bob that will draw their eyes in this direction, and I will wave my handkerchief perhaps that might be seen. Beulah has received such signals from me, before."

"It would never do. No, we must remain concealed, watching their movements, in order to be able to aid themat the proper time. It is painful to endure this suspense, beyond a doubt; but the pain must be borne in order to ensure the safety of one who is so very, very precious to us all."

Notwithstanding the fearful situation in which she was placed, Maud felt soothed by these words. The language of affection, as coming from Robert Willoughby, was very dear to her at all times, and never more than at a moment when it appeared that even her life was suspended, as it might be, by a hair.

"It is as you say," she answered gently, giving him her hand with much of her ancient frankness of manner; "we should be betrayed, and of course lost but what means the movement at the Hut?"

There was indeed a movement within the stockade. Maud's absence was now clearly ascertained, and it is needless to describe the commotion the circumstance produced. No one thought any longer of the half of the gate that still remained to be hung, but every supposable part of the house and enclosure had been examined in quest of her who was missing. Our heroine's last remark, however, was produced by certain indications of an intention to make a descent from one of the external windows of the common parlour, a room it will be remembered that stood on the little cliff, above the rivulet that wound beneath its base. This cliff was about forty feet high, and though it offered a formidable obstacle to any attempt to scale it, there was no great difficulty in an active man's descending, aided by a rope. The spot, too, was completely concealed from the view of the party which still remained on the rock, near the mill, at a distance of quite half a mile from the gates of the stockade. This fact greatly facilitated the little sortie, since, once in the bed of the rivulet, which was fringed with bushes, it would be very practicable, by following its windings, to gain the forest unseen. The major levelled his glass at the windows, and immediately saw the truth of all that has here been mentioned.

"They are preparing to send a party out," he said, "and doubtless in quest of you, Maud. The thing is very feasible, provided the savages remain much longer in their present position. It is matter of surprise to me, that the last havenot sent a force in the rear of the Hut, where the windows are at least exposed to fire, and the forest is so close as to afford a cover to the assailants. In front there is literally none, but a few low fences, which is the reason I presume that they keep so much aloof."

"It is not probable they know the valley. With the exception of Nick, but few Indians have ever visited us, and that rarely. Those we have seen have all been of the most peaceable and friendly tribes; not a true warrior, as my father says, ever having been found among them. Nick is the only one of them all that can thus be termed."

"Is it possible that fellow has led this party? I have never more than half confided in him, and yet he is too old a friend of the family, I should think, to be guilty of such an act of baseness."

"My father thinks him a knave, but I question if he has an opinion of him as bad as that. Besides, he knows the valley, and would have led the Indians round into the rear of the house, if it be a place so much more favourable for the attack, as you suppose. These wretches have come by the common paths, all of which first strike the river, as you know, below the mills."

"That is true. I lost my way, a few miles from this, the path being very blind on the eastern route, which I travelled as having gone it last with Nick, and thinking it the safest. Fortunately I recognised the crest of this mountain above us, by its shape, or I might never have found my way; although the streams, when struck, are certain guides to the woodsman. As soon as I hit the cow−paths, I knew they would lead me to the barns and sheds. See! a man is actually descending from a window!"

"Oh! Bob, I hope it is not my father! He is too old it is risking too much to let him quit the house."

"I will tell you better when he reaches the ground. Unless mistaken ay it is the Irishman, O'Hearn."

"Honest Mike! He is always foremost in everything, though he so little knows how anything but digging ought to be done. Is there not another following him or am I deceived?"

"There is he has just reached the ground, too. This might be spared, did they know how well you are guarded, Maud. By one who would die cheerfully to prevent harm from reaching you!"

"They little dream of that, Bob," answered Maud, in a low tone. "Not a human being in that valley fancies you nearer to him than the royal armies are, at this moment. But they do not send a third I am glad they weaken their own force no further."

"It is certainly best they should not. The men had their rifles slung when they descended, and they are now getting them ready for service. It is Joel Strides who is with Mike."

"I am sorry for it. That is a man I little like, Bob, and I should be sorry he knew of your being here."

This was said quickly, and with a degree of feeling that surprised the major, who questioned Maud earnestly as to her meaning and its reasons. The latter told him she scarce knew herself; that she disliked the man's manner, had long thought his principles bad, and that Mike in his extraordinary way had said certain things to her, to awaken distrust.

"Mike speaks in hieroglyphics," said the major, laughing, in spite of the serious situation in which he and his companion were placed, "and one must never be too sure of his meaning. Joel has now been many years with my father, and he seems to enjoy his confidence."

"He makes himself useful, and is very guarded in what he says at the Hut. Still I wish him not to know of your being here."

"It will not be easy to prevent it, Maud. I should have come boldly into the valley, but for this accidental meeting with you, trusting that my father has no one about him so base as to betray his son."

"Trust not Joel Strides. I'll answer for Mike with my life; but sorry indeed should I be that Joel Strides knew of your being among us. It were better, perhaps, that most of the workmen should not be in the secret. See the two men are quitting the foot of the rocks."

This was true, and Robert Willoughby watched their movements with the glass. As had been expected, they first descended into the bed of the rivulet, wading along its shore, under the cover of the bushes, until they soon became concealed even from the view of one placed on a height aselevated as that occupied by Robert and Maud. It was sufficiently apparent, however, that their intention was to reach the forest in this manner, when they would probably commence their search for the missing young lady. Nor was it long before Robert and Maud plainly saw the two adventurers quit the bed of the stream and bury themselves in the forest. The question now seriously arose as to the best course for the major and his companion to pursue. Under ordinary circumstances, it would have been wisest, perhaps, to descend at once and meet the messengers, who might soon be found at some of the usual haunts of the girl; but against this the latter so earnestly protested, and that in a manner so soothing to the young man's feelings, that he scarce knew how to oppose her wishes. She implored him not to confide in Joel Strides too hastily, at least. It might be time enough, when there was no alternative; until the true character of the party then in the valley was known, it would be premature. Nothing was easier than to conceal himself until it was dark, when he might approach the Hut, and be admitted without his presence being known to any but those on whom the family could certainly rely. The major urged the impossibility of his quitting Maud, until she was joined by the two men sent in quest of her, and then it would be too late, as he must be seen. Although he might escape immediate recognition in his present dress, the presence of a stranger would excite suspicions, and compel an explanation. To this Maud replied in the following manner: Her customary places of resort, when in the woods, were well known; more especially to Michael, who was frequently employed in their vicinity. These were a little water−fall, that was situated a hundred rods up the rivulet, to which a path had been made expressly, and where an arbour, seat, and little table had been arranged, for the purposes of working, reading, or taking refreshments. To this spot the men would unquestionably proceed first. Then, there was a deep ravine, some distance farther, that was often visited for its savage beauty, and whither she more frequently went, perhaps, than to any other place. Thither Michael would be certain to lead his companion. These two places visited, they might infallibly expect to see the men at the rock, where the two were then seated, as thelast spot in which Maud might naturally be expected to be found. It would require an hour to visit the two places first named, and to examine the surrounding woods; and by that time, not only would the sun be set, but the twilight would be disappearing. Until that moment, then, the major might remain at her side, and on the sound of the approaching footsteps of the messengers, he had only to retire behind a projection of the rocks, and afterwards follow towards the Knoll, at a safe distance.

This plan was too plausible to be rejected; and giving Robert an hour of uninterrupted discourse with his companion, it struck him as having more advantages than any other mentioned. The party near the mills, too, remaining perfectly quiet, there was less occasion for any change of their own, than might otherwise have been the case. So far, indeed, from appearing to entertain any hostile intention, not a cabin had been injured, if approached, and the smoke of the conflagration which had been expected to rise from the mills and the habitations in the glen, did not make its appearance. If any such ruthless acts as applying the brand and assaulting the people were in contemplation, they were at least delayed until night should veil them in a fitting darkness.

It is always a great relief to the mind, in moments of trial, to have decided on a course of future action. So the major and Maud now found; for, taking his seat by her side, he began to converse with his companion more connectedly, and with greater calmness than either had yet been able to achieve. Many questions were asked, and

answers given, concerning the state of the family, that of his father and mother, and dear Beulah and her infant, the latter being as yet quite a stranger to the young soldier.

"Is he like his rebel of a father?" asked the royal officer, smiling, but as his companion fancied, painfully; "or has he more of the look of the Willoughbys. Beekman is a good−looking Dutchman; yet, I would rather have the boy resemble the good old English stock, after all."

"The sweet little fellow resembles both father and mother; though the first the most, to Beulah's great delight. Papa says he is true 'Holland's come of,' as they call it, though neither mamma nor I will allow of any such thing.Colonel Beekman is a very worthy man, Bob, and a most affectionate and attentive, husband. Beulah, but for this war, could not be happier."

"Then I forgive him one−half of his treason for the remainder let him take his luck. Now I am an uncle, my heart begins to melt a little towards the rebel. And you, Maud, how do the honours of an aunt sit upon your feelings? But women are all heart, and would love a rat."

Maud smiled, but she answered not. Though Beulah's child were almost as dear to her as one of her own could have been, she remembered that she was not its aunt, in fact; and, though she knew not why, in that company, and even at that grave moment, the obtrusive thought summoned a bright flush to her cheeks. The major probably did not notice this change of countenance, since, after a short pause, he continued the conversation naturally.

"The child is called Evert, is it not, aunt Maud?" he asked, laying an emphasis on 'aunt.'

Maud wished this word had not been used; and yet Robert Willoughby, could the truth have been known, had adverted to it with an association in his own mind, that would have distressed her, just then, still more. Aunt Maud was the name that others, however, were most fond of adopting, since the birth of the child; and remembering this, our heroine smiled.

"That is what Beulah has called me, these six months," she said "or ever since Evert was born. I became an aunt the day he became a nephew; and dear, good Beulah has not once called me sister since, I think."

"These little creatures introduce new ties into families," answered the major, thoughtfully. "They take the places of the generations before them, and edge us out of our hold on the affections, as in the end they supplant us in our stations in life. If Beulah love me only as an uncle, however, she may look to it. I'll be supplanted by no Dutchman's child that was ever born!"

"You, Bob!" cried Maud, starting. "You are its real uncle; Beulah must ever remember you, and love you, as her own brother!"

Maud's voice became suddenly hushed, like one who feared she had said too much. The major gazed at her intently,but he spoke not; nor did his companion see his look, her own eyes being cast meekly and tremblingly on the earth at her feet. A considerable pause succeeded, and then the conversation reverted to what was going on in the valley.

The sun was now set, and the shadows of evening began to render objects a little indistinct beneath them. Still it was apparent that much anxiety prevailed in and about the Hut, doubtless on account of our heroine's absence. So great was it, indeed, as entirely to supersede the hanging of the remaining leaf of the gate, which stood in the gap where it belonged, stayed by pieces of timber, but unhung. The major thought some disposition had been made, however, by which the inmates might pass and repass by the half that was suspended, making a tolerable defence, when all was closed.

"Hist!" whispered Maud, whose faculties were quickened by the danger of her companion; "I hear the voice of Michael, and they approach. No sense of danger can repress poor O'Hearn's eloquence; his ideas seeming to flow from his tongue very much as they rise to his thoughts, chance directing which shall appear first."

"It is true, dear girl; and as you seem so strongly to wish it, I will withdraw. Depend on my keeping near you, and on my presence, should it be required."

"You will not forget to come beneath the windows, Bob," said Maud, anxiously, but in great haste; for the footsteps of the men drew rapidly near; "at the very spot where the others descended."

The major bent forward and kissed a cheek that was chilled with apprehension, but which the act caused to burn like fire; then he disappeared behind the projection of rock he had himself pointed out. As for Maud, she sate in seeming composure, awaiting the approach of those who drew near.

"The divil bur−r−n me, and all the Injins in Ameriky along wid me," said Mike, scrambling up the ascent by a short cut, "but I think we'll find the young Missus, here, or I don't think we'll be finding her the night. It's a cursed counthry to live in, Misther Strides, where a young lady of the loveliness and pithiful beauty of Miss Maud canbe lost in the woods, as it might be a sheep or a stray baste that was for tasting the neighbour's pastures."

"You speak too loud, Mike, and you speak foolishness into the bargain," returned the wary Joel.

"Is it I, you mane! Och! don't think ye're goin' to set me a rowin' a boat once more, ag'in my inclinations and edication, as ye did in ould times. I've rung ye into yer ma'tin', and out of yer m'atin', too, twenty times too often to be catched in that same trap twice. It's Miss Maud I wants, and Miss Maud I'll find, or Lord bless her swate face and morals, and her charackter, and all belonging to her! isn't that, now, a prathy composure for the likes of her, and the savages at the mill, and the Missus in tears, and the masther mighty un'asy, and all of us bothered! See how she sits on that bit of a sate that I puts there for her wid my own hands, as a laddy should, looking jist what she is, the quane of the woods, and the delight of our eyes!"

Maud was too much accustomed to the rhapsodies of the county Leitrim−man to think much of this commencement; but resolute to act her part with discretion, she rose to meet him, speaking with great apparent self−possession.

"Is it possible you are in quest of me?" she said "why has this happened? I usually return about this hour."

"Hoors is it! Don't talk of hoors, beauthiful young laddy, when a single quarther may be too late," answered Mike, dogmatically. "It's your own mother that's not happy at yer being in the woods the night, and yer ould father that has moore un'asiness than he'll confess; long life to the church in which confession is held to be right, and dacent, and accorthing to the gospel of St. Luke, and the whole calender in the bargain. Ye'll not be frightened, Miss Maud, but take what I've to tell ye jist as if ye didn't bel'ave a wo−r−r−d of it; but, divil bur−r−n me, if there arn't Injins enough on the rocks, forenent the mill, to scalp a whole province, and a county along wid it, if ye'll give 'em time and knives enough."

"I understand you, Michael, but am not in the least alarmed," answered Maud, with an air of great steadiness; such, indeed, as would have delighted the captain. "Something of what has been passing below have I seen; but, bybeing calm and reasonable, we shall escape the danger. Tell me only, that all is safe in the Hut that my dear mother and sister are well."

"Is it the Missus? Och, she's as valiant as a peacock, only strick down and overcome about your own self! As for Miss Beuly, where's the likes of her to be found, unless it's on this same bit of a rock? And it's agraable to see the captain, looking for all the wor−r−ld like a commander−in−chaif of six or eight rijiments, ordering one

this−a−way, and another that−a−way By St. Patrick, young laddy, I only hopes them vagabonds will come on as soon as yourself is inside the sticks, jist to give the ould jontleman a better occasion to play souldier on 'em. Should they happen to climb over the sticks, I've got the prattiest bit of a shillaleh ready that mortal eyes iver adorned! 'Twould break a head and niver a hat harmed a thousand's the pities them chaps wears no hats. Howsever, we'll see."

"Thank you, Mike, for the courage you show, and the interest you take in all our welfares Is it not too soon to venture down upon the flats, Joel? I must trust to you as a guide."

"I think Miss Maud would do full as well if she did. Mike must be told, too, not to talk so much, and above all, not to speak so loud. He may be heard, sometimes, a dozen rods."

"Tould!" exclaimed the county Leitrim−man, in heat "And isn't tould I've been twenty times already, by your own smooth conversation? Where's the occasion to tell a thing over and over ag'in, when a man is not wanting in ears. It's the likes of you that loves to convarse."

"Well, Mike, for my sake, you will be silent, I hope," said Maud. "Remember, I am not fitted for a battle, and the first thing is to get safely into the house. The sooner we are down the hill, perhaps, the better it may be. Lead the way, then, Joel, and I will follow. Michael will go next to you, in readiness for any enemy, and I will bring up the rear. It will be better for all to keep a dead silence, until it be necessary to speak."

This arrangement was made, and the party proceeded, Maud remaining a little behind, in order that the major might catch glimpses of her person, in the sombre light ofthe hour and the forest, and not miss the road. A few minutes brought them all upon the level land, where, Joel, instead of entering the open fields, inclined more into the woods, always keeping one of the many paths. His object was to cross the rivulet under cover, a suitable place offering a short distance from the point where the stream glided out of the forest. Towards this spot Joel quietly held his way, occasionally stopping to listen if any movement of importance had occurred on the flats. As for Maud, her eyes were frequently cast behind her, for she was fearful Robert Willoughby might miss the path, having so little acquaintance with the thousand sinuosities he encountered. She caught glimpses of his person, however, in the distance, and saw that he was on the right track. Her chief concern, therefore, soon became an anxiety that he should not be seen by her companions. As they kept a little in advance, and the underbrush was somewhat thick, she had strong hopes that this evil would be avoided.

The path being very circuitous, it took some time to reach the spot Joel sought. Here he, Mike, and Maud, crossed the rivulet on a tree that had been felled expressly to answer the purposes of a rustic foot−bridge; a common expedient of the American forest. As our heroine had often performed this exploit when alone, she required no assistance, and she felt as if half the danger of her critical situation had vanished, when she found herself on the same side of the stream as the Hut. Joel, nothing suspecting, and keeping all his faculties on the sounds and sights that might occur in front, led the way diligently, and soon reached the verge of the woods. Here he paused for his companions to join him.

Twilight had, by this time, nearly disappeared. Still, enough remained to enable Maud to perceive that many were watching for her, either at the windows above the cliff, or through different parts of the stockades. The distance was so small, that it might have been possible, by raising the voice, even to converse; but this would be an experiment too hazardous, as some hostile scouts, at that hour, might very well be fearfully near.

"I see nothing, Miss Maud," observed Joel, after taking a good look around him. "By keeping the path that follows the edge of the brook, though it is so crooked, we shall be certain of good walking, and shall be half hid by the bushes. It's best to walk quick, and to be silent."

Maud bade him go on, waiting herself behind a tree, to let the two men precede her a short distance. This was done, and the major stole up to her side unseen. A few words of explanation passed, when the young lady ran after her guides, leaving Robert Willoughby seated on a log. It was a breathless moment to Maud, that in which she was passing this bit of open land. But the distance was so short, that it was soon gotten over; and the three found themselves beneath the cliff. Here they passed the spring, and following a path which led from it, turned the edge of the rocks, and ascended to the foot of the stockades. It remained to turn these also, in order to reach the so recently suspended gates. As Maud passed swiftly along, almost brushing the timbers with her dress, she saw, in the dim light, fifty faces looking at her, and thrust between the timbers; but she paused not, spoke not scarcely breathed. A profound stillness reigned on the Knoll; but when Joel arrived at the gate, it was instantly opened, and he glided in. Not so with Mike, who stopped and waited until she he had been in quest of entered before him, and was in safety.

Maud found herself in her mother's arms, the instant the gate was passed. Mrs. Willoughby had been at the angle of the cliff, had followed her child, in her swift progress round the stockade, and was ready to receive her, the moment she entered. Beulah came next, and then the captain embraced, kissed, wept over, and scolded his little favourite.

"No reproaches now, Hugh" said the more considerate wife, and gentle woman "Maud has done no more than has long been her custom, and no one could have foreseen what has happened."

"Mother father" said Maud, almost gasping for breath "let us bless God for my safety, and for the safety of all that are dear to us thank you, dear Mr. Woods there is a kiss, to thank you now let us go into the house; I have much to tell you come dear sir come dearest mother, do not lose a moment; let us all go to the library."

As this was the room in which the family devotions were usually held, the auditors fancied the excited girl wished to return her thanks in that mode, one not unfrequent in thatregulated family, and all followed her, who dared, with tender sympathy in her feelings, and profoundly grateful for her safety. As soon as in the room, Maud carefully shut the door, and went from one to another, in order to ascertain who were present. Finding none but her father, mother, sister, and the chaplain, she instantly related all that had passed, and pointed out the spot where the major was, at that moment, waiting for the signal to approach. It is unnecessary to dwell on the astonishment and delight, mingled with concern, that this intelligence produced.

Maud then rapidly recounted her plan, and implored her father to see it executed. The captain had none of her apprehensions on the subject of his people's fidelity, but he yielded to the girl's earnest entreaties. Mrs. Willoughby was so agitated with all the unlooked−for events of the day, that she joined her daughter in the request, and Maud was told to proceed with the affair, in her own way.

A lamp was brought, and placed by Maud in a pantry that was lighted by a single, long, narrow, external window, at the angle of the building next the offices, and the door was closed on it. This lamp was the signal for the major to approach, and with beating hearts the females bent forward from the windows, secure of not being seen in the night, which had now fairly closed on the valley, to listen to his approaching footsteps beneath. They did not wait long ere he was not only heard, but dimly seen, though totally out of the line of sight from all in the Hut, with the exception of those above his head. Captain Willoughby had prepared a rope, one end of which was dropped, and fastened by the major, himself, around his body. A jerk let those above know when he was ready.

"What shall we do next?" asked the captain, in a sort of despair. "Woods and I can never drag that tall, heavy fellow up such a distance. He is six feet, and weighs a hundred and eighty, if he weighs a pound."

"Peace," half−whispered Maud, from a window. "All will be right in a moment." Then drawing in her body, the pale but earnest girl begged her father to have patience. "I have thought of all. Mike and the blacks may be trusted with our lives I will call them."

This was done, and the county Leitrim−man and the two Plinys were soon in the room.

"O'Hearn," said Maud, inquiringly "I think you are my friend?"

"Am I my own! Is it yees, is the question? Well, jist wish for a tooth, and ye may take all in my head for the asking. Och, I'd be a baste, else! I'd ate the remainder of my days wid not'ing but a spoon to obleege ye."

"As for you, Pliny, and your son here, you have known us from children. Not a word must pass the lips of either, as to what you see now pull, but with great care, lest the rope break."

The men did as ordered, raising their load from the ground, a foot or two at a time. In this manner the burthen approached, yard after yard, until it was evidently drawing near the window.

"It's the captain hoisting up the big baste of a hog, for provisioning the hoose, ag'in a saige," whispered Mike to the negroes, who grinned as they tugged; "and when the cr'atur squails, see to it, that ye do not squail yerselves."

At that moment the head and shoulders of a man appeared at the window. Mike let go the rope, seized a chair, and was about to knock the intruder on the head; but the captain arrested the blow.

"It's one of the vagabond Injins that has undermined the hog, and come up in its stead," roared Mike."

"It's my son" answered the captain, mildly "see that you are silent, and secret."

CHAPTER XIII.

And glory long has made the sages smile;

'Tis something, nothing, words, illusion, wind

Depending more upon the historian's style

Than on the name a person leaves behind.

Troy owes to Homer what whist owes to Hoyle;

The present century was growing blind

To the great Marlborough's skill in giving knocks,

Until his late Life by Archdeacon Coxe.

Byron

Major Willoughby's feet were scarcely on the library floor, when he was clasped in his mother's arms. From these he soon passed into Beulah's; nor did his father hesitate about giving him an embrace nearly as warm. As for Maud, she stood by, weeping in sympathy and in silence.

"And you, too, old man," said Robert Willoughby, dashing the tears from his eyes, and turning to the elder black, holding out a hand "this is not the first time, by many, old Pliny, that you have had me between heaven and earth. Your son was my old play−fellow, and we must shake hands also. As for O'Hearn, steel is not truer, and we are

friends for life."

The negroes were delighted to see their young master; for, in that day, the slaves exulted in the honour, appearance, importance and dignity of their owners, far more than their liberated descendants do now in their own. The major had been their friend when a boy; and he was, at present, their pride and glory. In their view of the matter, the English army did not contain his equal in looks, courage, military skill, or experience; and it was treason per se to fight against a cause that he upheld. The captain had laughingly related to his wife a conversation to this effect he had not long before overheard between the two Plinys.

"Well, Miss Beuly do a pretty well" observed the elder; "but, den he all 'e better, if he no get 'Merican 'mission. What you call raal colonel, eh? Have 'e paper from 'e king like Masser Bob, and wear a rigimental like a head of a turkey cock, so! Dat bein' an up and down officer."

"P'rhaps Miss Beuly bring a colonel round, and take off a blue coat, and put on a scarlet," answered the younger.

"Nebber! nebber see dat, Plin, in a rebbleushun. Dis got to be a rebbleushun; and when dat begin in 'arnest, gib up all idee of 'mendment. Rebbleushuns look all one way nebber see two side, any more dan coloured man see two side in a red−skin."

As we have not been able to trace the thought to antiquity, this expression may have been the original of the celebrated axiom of Napoleon, which tells us that "revolutions never go backwards." At all events, such was the notion of Pliny Willoughby, Sen., as the namesake of the great Roman styled himself; and it was greatly admired by Pliny Willoughby, Jun., to say nothing of the opinions of Big Smash and Little Smash, both of whom were listeners to the discourse.

"Well, I wish a colonel Beekman" To this name the fellow gave the true Doric sound of Bakeman "I wish a colonel Beekman only corprul in king's troops, for Miss Beuly's sake. Better be sarjun dere, dan briggerdeer−ginral in 'Merikan company; dat I know."

"What a briggerdeer mean, Plin?" inquired Little Smash, with interest. "Who he keep company wid, and what he do? Tell a body, do so many officer in 'e army, one nebber know all he name."

"'Mericans can't hab 'em. Too poor for dat. Briggerdeer great gentleum, and wear a red coat. Ole time, see 'em in hundreds, come to visit Masser, and Missus, and play wid Masser Bob. Oh! no rebbleushun in dem days; but ebbery body know he own business, and do it, too."

This will serve to show the political sentiments of the Plinys, and may also indicate the bias that the Smashes were likely to imbibe in such company. As a matter of course, the major was gladly welcomed by these devoted admirers; and when Maud again whispered to them the necessity of secresy, each shut his mouth, no trifling operation in itself, as if it were to be henceforth hermetically sealed.

The assistants were now dismissed, and the major was left alone with his family. Again and again Mrs. Willoughbyembraced her son; nor had her new ties at all lessened Beulah's interest in her brother. Even the captain kissed his boy anew, while Mr. Woods shook hands once more with his old pupil, and blessed him. Maud alone was passive in this scene of feeling and joy.

"Now, Bob, let us to business," said the captain, as soon as tranquillity was a little restored. "You have not made this difficult and perilous journey without an object; and, as we are somewhat critically situated ourselves, the sooner we know what it is, the less will be the danger of its not producing its proper effect."

"Heaven send, dear sir, that it fail not in its effect, indeed," answered the son. "But is not this movement in the valley pressing, and have I not come opportunely to take a part in the defence of the house?"

"That will be seen a few hours later, perhaps. Everything is quiet now, and will probably so remain until near morning; or Indian tactics have undergone a change. The fellows have lighted camp−fires on their rocks, and seem disposed to rest for the present, at least. Nor do I know that they are bent on war at all. We have no Indians near us, who would be likely to dig up the hatchet; and these fellows profess peace, by a messenger they have sent me."

"Are they not in their war−paint, sir? I remember to have seen warriors, when a boy, and my glass has given these men the appearance of being on what they call 'a war−path.'"

"Some of them are certainly in that guise, though he who came to the Knoll was not. He pretended that they were a party travelling towards the Hudson in order to learn the true causes of the difficulties between their Great English and their Great American Fathers. He asked for meal and meat to feed his young men with. This was the whole purport of his errand."

"And your answer, sir; is it peace, or war, between you?"

"Peace in professions, but I much fear war in reality. Still one cannot know. An old frontier garrison−man, like myself, is not apt to put much reliance on Indian faith. We are now, God be praised! all within the stockade; and having plenty of arms and ammunition, are not likely to beeasily stormed. A siege is out of the question; we are too well provisioned to dread that."

"But you leave the mills, the growing grain, the barns, even the cabins of your workmen, altogether at the mercy of these wretches."

"That cannot well be avoided, unless we go out and drive them off, in open battle. For the last, they are too strong, to say nothing of the odds of risking fathers of families against mere vagabonds, as I suspect these savages to be. I have told them to help themselves to meal, or grain, of which they will find plenty in the mill. Pork can be got in the houses, and they have made way with a deer already, that I had expected the pleasure of dissecting myself. The cattle roam the woods at this season, and are tolerably safe; but they can burn the barns and other buildings, should they see fit. In this respect, we are at their mercy. If they ask for rum, or cider, that may bring matters to a head; for, refusing may exasperate them, and granting either, in any quantity, will certainly cause them all to get intoxicated."

"Why would not that be good policy, Willoughby?" exclaimed the chaplain. "If fairly disguised once, our people might steal out upon them, and take away all their arms. Drunken men sleep very profoundly."

"It would be a canonical mode of warfare, perhaps, Woods," returned the chaplain, smiling, "but not exactly a military. I think it safer that they should continue sober; for, as yet, they manifest no great intentions of hostility. But of this we can speak hereafter. Why are you here, my son, and in this guise?"

"The motive may as well be told now, as at another time," answered the major, giving his mother and sisters chairs, while the others imitated their example in being seated. "Sir William Howe has permitted me to come out to see you I might almost say ordered me out; for matters have now reached a pass when we think every loyal gentleman in America must feel disposed to take sides with the crown."

A general movement among his auditors told the major the extent of the interest they felt in what was expected to follow. He paused an instant to survey the dark−lookinggroup that was clustering around him; for no lights were in the room on account of the open windows, and he spoke in a low voice from motives of prudence; then he

proceeded:

"I should infer from the little that passed between Maud and myself," he said, "that you are ignorant of the two most important events that have yet occurred in this unhappy conflict?"

"We learn little here," answered the father. "I have heard that my Lord Howe and his brother Sir William have been named commissioners by His Majesty to heal all the differences. I knew them both, when young men, and their elder brother before them. Black Dick, as we used to call the admiral, is a discreet, well−meaning man; though I fear both of them owe their appointments more to their affinity to the sovereign than to the qualities that might best fit them to deal with the Americans."

"Little is known of the affinity of which you speak, and less said in the army," returned the major, "but I fear there is no hope of the object of the commission's being effected. The American congress has declared the colonies altogether independent of England; and so far as this country is concerned, the war is carried on as between nation and nation. All allegiance, even in name, is openly cast aside."

"You astonish me, Bob! I did not think it could ever come to this!"

"I thought your native attachments would hardly endure as strong a measure as this has got to be," answered the major, not a little satisfied with the strength of feeling manifested by his father. "Yet has this been done, sir, and donein a way that it will not be easy to recall. Those who now resist us, resist for the sake of throwing off all connection with England."

"Has France any agency in this, Bob? I own it startles me, and has a French look."

"It has driven many of the most respectable of our enemies into our arms, sir. We have never considered you a direct enemy, though unhappily inclining too much against us; 'but this will determine Sir Hugh,' said the commander−in−chief in our closing interview I suppose you know, my dear father, that all your old friends, knowing what has happened, insist on calling you Sir Hugh. I assure you, I never open my lips on the subject; and yet Lord Howe drank to the health of Sir Hugh Willoughby, openly at his own table, the last time I had the honour to dine with him."

"Then the next time he favours you with an invitation, Bob, be kind enough to thank him. I want no empty baronetcy, nor do I ever think of returning to England to live. Were all I had on earth drummed together, it would barely make out a respectable competency for a private gentleman in that extravagant state of society; and what is a mere name to one in such circumstances? I wish it were transferable, my dear boy, in the old Scotch mode, and you should be Sir Bob before you slept."

"But, Willoughby, it may be useful to Robert, and why should he not have the title, since neither you nor I care for it?" asked the considerate mother.

"So he may, my dear; though he must wait for an event that I fancy you are not very impatient to witness my death. When I am gone, let him be Sir Robert, in welcome. But, Bob for plain, honest Bob must you remain till then, unless indeed you earn your spurs in this unhappy war have you any military tidings for us? We have heard nothing since the arrival of the fleet on the coast."

"We are in New York, after routing Washington on Long Island. The rebels" the major spoke a little more confidently than had been his wont "The rebels have retreated into the high country, near the borders of Connecticut, where they have inveterate nests of the disaffected in their rear."

"And has all this been done without bloodshed? Washington had stuff in him, in the old French business."

"His stuff is not doubted, sir; but his men make miserable work of it. Really I am sometimes ashamed of having been born in the country. These Yankees fight like wrangling women, rather than soldiers."

"How 's this! You spoke honestly of the affair at Lexington, and wrote us a frank account of the murderous work at Bunker Hill. Have their natures changed with the change of season?"

"To own the truth, sir, they did wonders on the Hill, and not badly in the other affair; but all their spirit seems gone. I am quite ashamed of them. Perhaps this declaration of independence, as it is called, has damped their ardour."

"No, my son the change, if change there is, depends on a general and natural law. Nothing but discipline and long training can carry men with credit through a campaign, in the open field. Fathers, and husbands, and brothers and lovers, make formidable enemies, in sight of their own chimney−tops; but the most flogging regiments, we used to say, were the best fighting regiments for a long pull. But, have a care, Bob; you are now of a rank that may well get you a separate command, and do not despise your enemy. I know these Yankees well you are one, yourself, though only half−blooded; but I know them well, and have often seen them tried. They are very apt to be badly commanded, heaven cursing them for their sins, in this form more than any other but get them fairly at work, and the guards will have as much as they can wish, to get along with. Woods will swear to that."

"Objecting to the mode of corroboration, my dear sir, I can support its substance. Inclined as I am to uphold Cæsar, and to do honour to the Lord's anointed, I will not deny my countrymen's courage; though I think, Willoughby, now I recall old times, it was rather the fashion of our officers to treat it somewhat disrespectfully."

"It was, indeed," answered the captain, thoughtfully "and a silly thing it was. They mistook the nature of a mild and pacific people, totally without the glitter and habits of military life, for a timid people; and I have often heard the new hands in the colonies speak of their inhabitantswith contempt on this very head. Braddock had that failing to a great degree; and yet this very major Washington saved his army from annihilation, when it came to truly desperate work. Mark the words of a much older soldier than yourself, Bob; you may have more of the bravery of apparel, and present a more military aspect; may even gain advantages over them by means of higher discipline, better arms, and more accurate combinations; but, when you meet them fairly, depend on it you will meet dangerous foes, and men capable of being sooner drilled into good soldiers than any nation I have met with. Their great curse is, and probably will be, in selecting too many of their officers from classes not embued with proper military pride, and altogether without the collaterals of a good military education."

To all this the major had nothing very material to object, and remembering that the silent but thoughtful Beulah had a husband in what he called the rebel ranks, he changed the subject. Arrangements were now made for the comfort and privacy of the unlooked−for guest. Adjoining the library, a room with no direct communication with the court by means of either door or window, was a small and retired apartment containing a cot−bed, to which the captain was accustomed to retire in the cases of indisposition, when Mrs. Willoughby wished to have either of her daughters with herself, on their account, or on her own. This room was now given to the major, and in it he would be perfectly free from every sort of intrusion. He might eat in the library, if necessary; though, all the windows of that wing of the house opening outward, there was little danger of being seen by any but the regular domestics of the family, all of whom were to be let into the secret of his presence, and all of whom were rightly judged to be perfectly trustworthy.

As the evening promised to be dark, it was determined among the gentlemen that the major should disguise himself still more than he was already, and venture outside of the building, in company with his father, and the chaplain, as soon as the people, who were now crowded into the vacant rooms in the empty part of the house, had taken possession of their respective quarters for the night. In the meantime a hearty supper was provided for the traveller in the library, the bullet−proof window−shutters of which room,and indeed of all the others on that side of the building, having first been closed, in order that lights might be used, without drawing a shot from the

adjoining forest.

"We are very safe, here," observed the captain, as his son appeased his hunger, with the keen relish of a traveller. "Even Woods might stand a siege in a house built and stockaded like this. Every window has solid bullet−proof shutters, with fastenings not easily broken; and the logs of the buildings might almost defy round−shot. The gates are all up, one leaf excepted, and that leaf stands nearly in its place, well propped and supported. In the morning it shall be hung like the others. Then the stockade is complete, and has not a speck of decay about it yet. We shall keep a guard of twelve men up the whole night, with three sentinels outside of the buildings; and all of us will sleep in our clothes, and on our arms. My plan, should an assault be made, is to draw in the sentinels, as soon as they have discharged their pieces, to close the gate, and man the loops. The last are all open, and spare arms are distributed at them. I had a walk made within the ridge of the roofs this spring, by which men can run round the whole Hut, in the event of an attempt to set fire to the shingles, or fire over the ridge at an enemy at the stockades. It is a great improvement, Bob; and, as it is well railed, will make a capital station in a warm conflict, before the enemy make their way within the stockade."

"We must endeavour not to let them get there, sir," answered the major "but, as soon as your people are housed, I shall have an opportunity to reconnoitre. Open work is most to the taste of us regulars."

"Not against an Indian enemy. You will be glad of such a fortress as this, boy, before the question of independence, or no independence, shall be finally settled. Did not Washington entrench in the town?"

"Not much on that side of the water, sir; though he was reasonably well in the ground on Long Island. There he had many thousands of men, and works of some extent."

"And how did he get off the island?" demanded the captain, turning round to look his son in the face. "The arm of the sea is quite half−a−mile in width, at that point how did he cross it in the face of a victorious army? or did he only save himself, while you captured his troops?"

The major coloured a little, and then he looked at Beulah and smiled good−naturedly.

"I am so surrounded by rebels here," he said, "that it is not easy to answer all your questions, sir. Beat him we did, beyond a question, and that with a heavy loss to his army and out of New York we have driven him, beyond a question but I will not increase Beulah's conceit by stating any more!"

"If you can tell me anything kind of Evert, Bob, you will act like a brother in so doing," said the gentle wife.

"Ay, Beekman did well too, they said. I heard some of our officers extolling a charge he made; and to own the truth, I was not sorry to be able to say he was my sister's husband, since a fierce rebel she would marry. All our news of him is to his credit; and now I shall get a kiss for my pains."

The major was not mistaken. With a swelling heart, but smiling countenance, his sister threw herself into his arms, when she kissed and was kissed until the tears streamed down her cheeks.

"It was of Washington I intended to speak, sir," resumed the major, dashing a tear or two from his own eyes, as Beulah resumed her chair. "His retreat from the island is spoken of as masterly, and has gained him great credit. He conducted it in person, and did not lose a man. I heard Sir William mention it as masterly."

"Then by heaven, America will prevail in this contest!" exclaimed the captain, striking his fist upon the table, with a suddenness and force that caused all in the room to start. "If she has a general who can effect such a movement skilfully, the reign of England is over, here. Why, Woods, Xenophon never did a better thing! The retreat of the ten thousand was boy's play to getting across that water. Resides, your victory could have been no great matter,

Bob, or it would never have been done."

"Our victory was respectable, sir, while I acknowledge that the retreat was great. No one among us denies it, and Washington is always named with respect in the army."

In a minute more, Big Smash came in, under the pretence of removing the dishes, but in reality to see Master Bob, and to be noticed by him. She was a woman of sixty, the mother of Little Smash, herself a respectable matron of forty; and both had been born in the household of Mrs. Willoughby's father, and had rather more attachment for any one of her children than for all of their own, though each had been reasonably prolific. The sobriquets had passed into general use, and the real names of Bess and Mari' were nearly obsolete. Still, the major thought it polite to use the latter on the present occasion.

"Upon my word, Mrs. Bess," he said, shaking the old woman cordially by the hand, though he instinctively shrunk back from the sight of a pair of lips that were quite ultra, in the way of pouting, which used often to salute him twenty years before "Upon my word, Mrs. Bess, you improve in beauty, everytime I see you. Old age and you seem to be total strangers to each other. How do you manage to remain so comely and so young?"

"God send 'e fus', Masser Bob, heabben be praise, and a good conscience do 'e las'. I do wish you could make ole Plin hear dat! He nebber t'ink any good look, now−a−day, in a ole wench."

"Pliny is half blind. But that is the way with most husbands, Smash; they become blind to the charms of their spouses, after a few years of matrimony."

"Nebber get marry, Masser Bob, if dat be 'e way."

Then Great Smash gave such a laugh, and such a swing of her unwieldy body, that one might well have apprehended her downfall. But, no such thing. She maintained the equilibrium; for, renowned as she had been all her life at producing havoc among plates, and cups, and bowls, she was never known to be thrown off her own centre of gravity. Another hearty shake of the hand followed, and the major quitted the table. As was usual on all great and joyous occasions in the family, when the emotions reached the kitchen, that evening was remarkable for a "smash," in which half the crockery that had just been brought from the table, fell an unresisting sacrifice. This produced a hot discussion between "The Big" and "The Little," as to the offender, which resulted, as so often happens in these inquiriesinto the accidents of domestic life, in the conclusion that "nobody" was alone to blame.

"How 'e t'ink he can come back, and not a plate crack!" exclaimed Little Smash, in a vindicatory tone, she being the real delinquent "Get in 'e winder, too! Lor! dat enough to break all 'e dish in 'e house, and in 'e mill, too! I do wish ebbery plate we got was an Injin den you see fun! Can nebber like Injin; 'em so red, and so sabbage!"

"Nebber talk of Injin, now," answered the indignant mother "better talk of plate. Dis make forty t'ousand dish you break, Mari', sin' you war' a young woman. S'pose you t'ink Masser made of plate, dat you break 'em up so! Dat what ole Plin say de nigger! He say all men made of clay, and plate made of clay, too well, bot' clay, and bot' break. All on us wessels, and all on us break to pieces some day, and den dey'll t'row us away, too."

A general laugh succeeded this touch of morality, Great Smash being a little addicted to ethical remarks of this nature; after which the war was renewed on the subject of the broken crockery. Nor did it soon cease; wrangling, laughing, singing, toiling, a light−heartedness that knew no serious cares, and affection, making up the sum of the every−day existence of these semi−civilized beings. The presence of the party in the valley, however, afforded the subject of an episode; for a negro has quite as much of the de haut en bas in his manner of viewing the aborigines, as the whites have in their speculations on his own race. Mingled with this contempt, notwithstanding, was a very active dread, neither of the Plinys, nor of their amiable consorts, in the least relishing the idea of being shorn of the wool, with shears as penetrating as the scalping−knife. After a good deal of discussion on this subject, the

kitchen arrived at the conclusion that the visit of the major was ordered by Providence, since it was out of all the rules of probability and practice to have a few half−clad savages get the better of "Masser Bob," who was born a soldier, and had so recently been fighting for the king.

On the latter subject, we ought to have stated that the captain's kitchen was ultra−loyal. The rude, but simple beings it contained, had a reverence for rank and power that even a "rebbelushun" could not disturb, and whichclosely associated, in their minds, royal authority with divine power. Next to their own master, they considered George III. as the greatest man of the age; and there was no disposition in them to rob him of his rights or his honours.

"You seem thoughtful, Woods," said the captain, while his son had retired to his own room, in order to assume a disguise less likely to attract attention in the garrison than a hunting−shirt. "Is it this unexpected visit of Bob's that furnishes food for reflection?"

"Not so much his visit, my dear Willoughby, as the news he brings us. God knows what will befall the church, should this rebellion make serious head. The country is in a dreadful way, already, on the subject of religion; but it will be far worse if these 'canters' get the upper hand of the government."

The captain was silent and thoughtful for a moment; then he laughingly replied

"Fear nothing for the church, chaplain. It is of God, and will outlast a hundred political revolutions."

"I don't know that, Willoughby I don't know that" The chaplain did not exactly mean what he said "'Twouldn't surprise me if we had 'taking up collections,' 'sitting under preaching,' 'providentially happening,' 'exercised in mind,' and 'our Zion,' finding their way into dictionaries."

"Quite likely, Woods" returned the captain, smiling "Liberty is known to produce great changes in things; why not in language?"

"Liberty, indeed! Yes; 'liberty in prayer' is another of their phrases. Well, captain Willoughby, if this rebellion should succeed, we may give up all hopes for the church. What sort of government shall we have, do you imagine, sir?"

"Republican, of course," answered the captain, again becoming thoughtful, as his mind reverted to the important results that were really dependent on the present state of things. "Republican it can be no other. These colonies have always had a strong bias in that direction, and they want the elements necessary to a monarchy. New York has a landed gentry, it is true; and so has Maryland, and Virginia, and the Carolinas; but they are not strong enough to set up a political aristocracy, or to prop a throne; and then this gentry will probably be much weakened by the struggle. Half the principal families are known to be with the crown, as it is; and new men will force them out of place, in a revolution. No, Woods, if this revolution prosper, the monarchy is done in America, for at least a century."

"And the prayers for the king and royal family what will become of them?"

"I should think they must cease, also. I question if a people will continue long to pray for authorities that they refuse to obey."

"I shall stick to the rubrics as long as I have a tongue in my head. I trust, Willoughby, you will not stop these prayers, in your settlement?"

"It is the last mode in which I should choose to show hostility. Still, you must allow it is a little too much to ask a congregation to pray that the king shall overcome his enemies, when they are among those very enemies? The question presents a dilemma."

"And, yet, I have never failed to read that prayer, as well as all the rest. You have not objected, hitherto."

"I have not, for I have considered the war as being waged with parliament and the ministers, whereas it is now clearly with the king. This paper is certainly a plain and forcible document."

"And what is that paper? Not the Westminster Confession of Faith, or the Saybrook Platform, I hope; one of which will certainly supersede the Thirty−nine Articles in all our churches, if this rebellion prosper."

"It is the manifesto issued by congress, to justify their declaration of independence. Bob has brought it with him, as a proof how far matters have been carried; but, really, it seems to be a creditable document, and is eloquently reasoned."

"I see how it is, Willoughby I see how it is. We shall find you a rebel general yet; and I expect to live to hear you talk about 'our Zion' and 'providential accidents.'"

"Neither, Woods. For the first, I am too old; and, for the last, I have too much taste, I trust. Whether I shall always pray for the king is another matter. But, here is the major, ready for his sortie. Upon my word, his masquerade is so complete, I hardly know him myself."

CHAPTER XIV.

He could not rest, he could not stay

Within his tent to wait for day;

But walked him forth along the sand,

Where thousand sleepers strewed the strand.

Siege of Corinth

It was now so late that most of the men of the Hut, and all the women and children, were housed for the night, provided no alarm occurred. There was consequently little risk in the major's venturing forth, disguised as he was, should care be taken not to approach a light. The great number of the latter, streaming through the windows of the western wing of the building, showed how many were now collected within the walls, and gave an unusual appearance of life and animation to the place. Still, the court was clear, the men seeking their pallets, in readiness for their coming watches, while the women were occupied with those great concerns of female life, the care of children.

The captain, major, and chaplain, each carrying a rifle, and the two former pistols, moved rapidly across the court, and passed the gate. The moveable leaf of the latter was left unbarred, it being the orders of the captain to the sentinels without, on the approach of an enemy, to retire within the court, and then to secure the fastenings.

The night was star−light, and it was cool, as is common to this region of country. There being neither lamp nor candle on the exterior of the house, even the loops being darkened, there was little danger in moving about within the stockades. The sentinels were directed to take their posts so near the palisades as to command views of the

open lawn without, a precaution that would effectually prevent the usual stealthy approach of an enemy without discovery. As the alarm had been very decided, these irregula guardians of the house were all at their posts, and exceedingly watchful, a circumstance that enabled the captain to avoid them, and thus further remove the danger of his son's beingrecognised. He accordingly held himself aloof from the men, keeping within the shadows of the sides of the Hut.

As a matter of course, the first object to which our two soldiers directed their eyes, was the rock above the mill. The Indians had lighted fires, and were now apparently bivouacked at no great distance from them, having brought boards from below with that especial object. Why they chose to remain in this precise position, and why they neglected the better accommodations afforded by some fifteen or twenty log−cabins, that skirted the western side of the valley in particular, were subjects of conjecture. That they were near the fires the board shanties proved, and that they were to the last degree careless of the proximity of the people of the place, would seem also to be apparent in the fact that they had not posted, so far as could be ascertained, even a solitary sentinel.

"This is altogether surprising for Indian tactics," observed the captain, in a low voice; for everything that was uttered that night without the building was said in very guarded tones. "I have never before known the savages to cover themselves in that manner; nor is it usual with them to light fires to point out the positions they occupy, as these fellows seem to have done."

"Is it not all seeming, sir?" returned the major. "To me that camp, if camp it can be called, has an air of being deserted."

"There is a look about it of premeditated preparation, that one ought always to distrust in war."

"Is it not unmilitary, sir, for two soldiers like ourselves to remain in doubt on such a point? My professional pride revolts at such a state of things; and, with your leave, I will go outside, and set the matter at rest by reconnoitring."

"Professional pride is a good thing, Bob, rightly understood and rightly practised. But the highest point of honour with the really good soldier is to do that for which he was precisely intended. Some men fancy armies were got together just to maintain certain exaggerated notions of military honour; whereas, military honour is nothing but a moral expedient to aid in effecting the objects for which they are really raised. I have known men so blinded as to assert that a soldier is bound to maintain his honour at the expenseof the law; and this in face of the fact that, in a free country, a soldier is in truth nothing but one of the props of the law, in the last resort. So with us; we are here to defend this house, and those it contains; and our military honour is far more concerned in doing that effectually, and by right means, than in running the risk of not doing it at all, in order to satisfy an abstract and untenable notion of a false code. Let us do what is right, my son, and feel no concern that our honour suffer."

Captain Willoughby said this, because he fancied it a fault in his son's character, sometimes to confound the end with the means, in appreciating the ethics of his profession. This is not an uncommon error among those who bear arms, instances not being wanting in which bodies of men that are the mere creatures of authority, have not hesitated to trample the power that brought them into existence under foot, rather than submit to mortify the feelings of a purely conventional and exaggerated pride. The major was rebuked rather than convinced, it not being the natural vocation of youth to perceive the justice of all the admonitions of age.

"But, if one can be made auxiliary to the other, sir," the son remarked, "then you will allow that professional esprit, and professional prudence, may very well march hand in hand."

"Of that there can be no doubt, though I think it far wiser and more soldier−like, even, to use all proper precautions to guard this house, under our actual circumstances, than to risk anything material in order to satisfy our doubts concerning the state of that camp."

"But the cabins, and all the property that lies exposed to fire and other accidents, including the mills? Is it not worth your while to let me make a little excursion, in order to ascertain the state of things, as connected with them?"

"Perhaps it would, Bob" returned the father, after a little reflection. "It would be a great point gained, to send a man to look after the buildings, and the horses. The poor beasts may be suffering for water; and, as you say, the first thing will be to ascertain where our wild visiters really are, and what they are actually bent on. Woods, go with us to the gate, and let us out. I rely on your saying nothing of our absence, except to explain to the two nearest sentinelswho we are, and to be on the look−out for us, against the moment we may return."

"Will it not be very hazardous to be moving in front of the stockade, in the dark? Some of our own people may fire upon you."

"You will tell them to be cautious, and we shall use great circumspection in our turn. I had better give you a signal by which we shall be known."

This was done, and the party moved from under the shadows of the Hut, down to the gate. Here the two soldiers halted for several minutes, taking a deliberate and as thorough a survey of the scene without, as the darkness permitted. Then the chaplain opened the gate, and they issued forth, moving with great caution down the lawn, towards the flats. As a matter of course, captain Willoughby was perfectly familiar with all the lanes, ditches, bridges and fields of his beautiful possessions. The alluvial soil that lay spread around him was principally the result of ages of deposit while the place was covered with water; but, as the overflowing of the water had been produced by a regular dam, the latter once removed, the meadows were free from the excessive moisture which generally saturates drained lands. Still, there were two or three large open ditches, to collect the water that came down the adjacent mountains, or bubbled up from springs near the margin of the woods. Across these ditches the roads led, by bridges, and the whole valley was laid out, in this manner, equally with a view to convenience and rural beauty. A knowledge of all the windings was of great use, on the present occasion, even on the advance; while, on the retreat, it might clearly be the means of preserving the lives, or liberties, of the two adventurers.

The captain did not proceed by the principal road which led from the Hut to the mills, the great thoroughfare of the valley, since it might be watched, in order to prevent a hostile sortie against the camp; but he inclined to the right, or to the westward, in order to visit the cabins and barns in that quarter. It struck him his invaders might have quietly taken possession of the houses, or even have stolen his horses and decamped. In this direction, then, he and his son proceeded, using the greatest caution in their movements, and occasionally stopping to examine the waning fires at the rock, or to throw a glance behind them at the stockade. Everything remained in the quiet which renders a forest settlement so solemn and imposing, after the daily movements of man have ceased. The deepest and most breathless attention could not catch an unaccustomed sound. Even the bark of a dog was not heard, all those useful animals having followed their masters into the Hut, as if conscious that their principal care now lay in that direction. Each of the sentinels had one of these animals near him, crouched under the stockade, in the expectation of their giving the alarm, should any strange footstep approach. In this manner most of the distance between the Knoll and the forest was crossed, when the major suddenly laid a hand on his father's arm.

"Here is something stirring on our left," whispered the former "It seems, too, to be crouching under the fence."

"You have lost your familiarity with our rural life, Bob," answered the father, with a little more confidence of tone, but still guardedly, "or this fragrant breath would tell you we are almost on a cow. It is old Whiteback; I know her by her horns. Feel; she is here in the lane with us, and within reach of your hand. A gentler animal is not in the settlement. But, stop pass your hand on her udder she will not stir how is it, full or not?"

"If I can judge, sir, it is nothing remarkable in the way of size."

"I understand this better. By Jupiter, boy, that cow has been milked! It is certain none of our people have left the house to do it, since the alarm was first given. This is ominous of neighbours."

The major made no reply, but he felt to ascertain if his arms were in a state for immediate service. After a moment's further pause the captain proceeded, moving with increased caution. Not a word was now uttered, for they were getting within the shadows of the orchard, and indeed of the forest, where objects could not well be distinguished at the distance of a very few yards. A cabin was soon reached, and it was found empty; the fire reduced to a few embers, and quite safe. This was the residence of the man who had the care of the horses, the stables standing directlybehind it. Captain Willoughby was a thoughtful and humane man, and it struck him the animals might now be turned into a field that joined the barn−yard, where there was not only rich pasture, but plenty of sweet running water. This he determined to do at once, the only danger being from the unbridled movements of cattle that must be impatient from unusual privation, and a prolonged restraint.

The major opened the gate of the field, and stationed himself in a way to turn the animals in the desired direction, while his father went into the stable to set them free. The first horse came out with great deliberation, being an old animal well cooled with toil at the plough, and the major had merely to swing his arm, to turn him into the field. Not so with the next, however. This was little better than a colt, a creature in training for his master's saddle; and no sooner was it released than it plunged into the yard, then bounded into the field, around which it galloped, until it found the water. The others imitated this bad example; the clatter of hoofs, though beaten on a rich turf, soon resounding in the stillness of the night, until it might be heard across the valley. The captain then rejoined his son.

"This is a good deed somewhat clumsily done, Bob," observed the father, as he picked up his rifle and prepared to proceed. "An Indian ear, however, will not fail to distinguish between the tramping of horses and a charge of foot."

"Faith, sir, the noise may serve us a good turn yet. Let us take another look at the fires, and see if this tramping has set any one in motion near them. We can get a glimpse a little further ahead."

The look was taken, but nothing was seen. While standing perfectly motionless, beneath the shadows of an apple−tree, however, a sound was heard quite near them, which resembled that of a guarded footstep. Both gentlemen drew up, like sportsmen expecting the birds to rise, in waiting for the sound to approach. It did draw nearer, and presently a human form was seen moving slowly forward in the path, approaching the tree, as if to get within its cover. It was allowed to draw nearer and nearer, until captain Willoughby laid his hand, from behind the trunk, on the stranger'sshoulder, demanding sternly, but in a low voice, "who are you?"

The start, the exclamation, and the tremor that succeeded, all denoted the extent of this man's surprise. It was some little time, even, before he could recover from his alarm, and then he let himself be known by his answer.

"Massy!" exclaimed Joel Strides, who ordinarily gave this doric sound to the word 'mercy' "Massy, captain, is it you! I should as soon thought of seeing a ghost! What in natur' has brought you out of the stockade, sir?"

"I think that is a question I might better ask you, Mr. Strides. My orders were to keep the gate close, and for no one to quit the court−yard even, until sent on post, or called by an alarm."

"True, sir quite true true as gospel. But let us moderate a little, captain, and speak lower; for the Lord only knows who 's in our neighbourhood. Who 's that with you, sir? Not the Rev. Mr. Woods, is it?"

"No matter who is with me. He has the authority of my commands for being here, whoever he may be, while you are here in opposition to them. You know me well enough, Joel, to understand nothing but the simple truth will satisfy me."

"Lord, sir, I am one of them that never wish to tell you anything but truth. The captain has known me now long enough to understand my natur', I should think; so no more need be said about that."

"Well, sir give me the reason and see that it is given to me without reserve."

"Yes, sir; the captain shall have it. He knows we scrambled out of our houses this afternoon a little onthinkingly, Injin alarms being skeary matters. It was an awful hurrying time! Well, the captain understands, too, we don't work for him without receiving our wages; and I have been aying up a little, every year, until I 've scraped together a few hundred dollars, in good half−joes; and I bethought me the money might be in danger, should the savages begin to plunder; and I 've just came out to look a'ter the money."

"If this be true, as I hope and can easily believe to be the case, you must have the money about you, Joel, to prove it."

The man stretched forth his arm, and let the captain feel a handkerchief, in which, sure enough, there was a goodly quantity of coin. This gave him credit for truth, and removed all suspicion of his present excursion being made with any sinister intention. The man was questioned as to his mode of passing the stockade, when he confessed he had fairly clambered over it, an exploit of no great difficulty from the inside. As the captain had known Joel too long to be ignorant of his love of money, and the offence was very pardonable in itself, he readily forgave the breach of orders. This was the only man in the valley who did not trust his little hoard in the iron chest at the Hut; even the miller reposing that much confidence in the proprietor of the estate; but Joel was too conscious of dishonest intentions himself to put any unnecessary faith in others.

All this time, the major kept so far aloof as not to be recognised, though Joel, once or twice, betrayed symptoms of a desire to ascertain who he was. Maud had awakened suspicions that now became active, in both father and son, when circumstances so unexpectedly and inconveniently threw the man in their way. It was consequently the wish of the former to get rid of his overseer as soon as possible. Previously to doing this, however, he saw fit to interrogate him a little further.

"Have you seen anything of the Indians since you left the stockade, Strides?" demanded the captain. "We can perceive no other traces of their presence than yonder fires, though we think that some of them must have passed this way, for Whiteback's udder is empty."

"To own the truth, captain, I haven't. I some think that they 've left the valley; though the Lord only can tell when they 'll be back ag'in. Such critturs be beyond calcilation! They outdo arthmetic, nohow. As for the cow, I milked her myself; for being the crittur the captain has given to Phœbe for her little dairy, I thought it might hurt her not to be attended to. The pail stands yonder, under the fence, and the women and children in the Hut may be glad enough to see it in the morning."

This was very characteristic of Joel Strides. He did not hesitate about disobeying orders, or even to risk his life, in order to secure his money; but, determined to come out, hehad the forethought and care to bring a pail, in order to supply the wants of those who were now crowded within the stockade, and who were too much accustomed to this particular sort of food, not to suffer from its absence. If we add, that, in the midst of all this prudent attention to the wants of his companions, Joel had an eye to his personal popularity and what are called "ulterior events," and that he selected his own cow for the precise reason given, the reader has certain distinctive traits of the man before him.

"This being the case," returned the captain, a good deal relieved at finding that the savages had not been the agents in this milking affair, since it left the probability of their remaining stationary "This being the case, Joel, you had better find the pail, and go in. As soon as day dawns, however, I recommend that all the cows be called up to the stockade and milked generally. They are feeding in the lanes, just now, and will come readily, if

properly invited. Go, then, but say nothing of having met me, and "

"Who else did the captain say?" inquired Joel, curiously, observing that the other paused.

"Say nothing of having met us at all, I tell you. It is very important that my movements should be secret."

The two gentlemen now moved on, intending to pass in front of the cabins which lined this part of the valley, by a lane which would bring them out at the general highway which led from the Knoll to the mill. The captain marched in front, while his son brought up the rear, at a distance of two or three paces. Each walked slowly and with caution, carrying his rifle in the hollow of his arm, in perfect readiness for service. In this manner both had proceeded a few yards, when Robert Willoughby felt his elbow touched, and saw Joel's face, within eighteen inches of his own, as the fellow peered under his hat. It was an action so sudden and unexpected, that the major saw, at once, nothing but perfect coolness could avert his discovery.

"Is 't you, Dan'el" so was the miller named. "What in natur' has brought the old man on this tramp, with the valley filled with Injins?" whispered Joel, prolonging the speech in order to get a better view of a face and form that still baffled his conjectures. "Let 's know all about it."

"You 'll get me into trouble," answered the major, shakingoff his unwelcome neighbour, moving a step further from him, and speaking also in a whisper. "The captain's bent on a scout, and you know he'll not bear contradiction. Off with you, then, and don't forget the milk."

As the major moved away, and seemed determined to baffle him, Joel had no choice between complying and exposing his disobedience of orders to the captain. He disliked doing the last, for his cue was to seem respectful and attached, and he was fain to submit. Never before, however, did Joel Strides suffer a man to slip through his fingers with so much reluctance. He saw that the captain's companion was not the miller, while the disguise was too complete to enable him to distinguish the person or face. In that day, the different classes of society were strongly distinguished from each other, by their ordinary attire; and, accustomed to see major Willoughby only in the dress that belonged to his station, he would not be likely to recognise him in his present guise, had he even known of or suspected his visit. As it was, he was completely at fault; satisfied it was not his friend Daniel, while unable to say who it was.

In this doubting state of mind, Joel actually forgot the savages, and the risks he might run from their proximity. He walked, as it might be mechanically, to the place where he had left the pail, and then proceeded slowly towards the Knoll, pondering at every step on what he had just seen. He and the miller had secret communications with certain active agents of the revolutionists, that put them in possession of facts, notwithstanding their isolated position, with which even their employer was totally unacquainted. It is true, these agents were of that low caste that never fail to attach themselves to all great political enterprises, with a sole view to their own benefit; still, as they were active, cunning and bold, and had the sagacity to make themselves useful, they passed in the throng of patriots created by the times, and were enabled to impart to men of similar spirits much available information.

It was through means like these, that Joel knew of the all−important measure of the declaration of independence, while it still remained a secret to captain Willoughby. The hope of confiscations was now active in the bosoms of all this set, and many of them had even selected the portions ofproperty that they intended should be the reward of their own love of freedom and patriotism. It has been said that the English ministry precipitated the American revolution, with a view to share, among their favourites, the estates that it was thought it would bring within the gift of the crown, a motive so heinous as almost to defy credulity, and which may certainly admit of rational doubts. On the other hand, however, it is certain that individuals, who will go down to posterity in company with the many justly illustrious names that the events of 1776 have committed to history, were actuated by the most selfish inducements, and, in divers instances, enriched themselves with the wrecks of estates that formerly belonged to their kinsmen or friends. Joel Strides was of too low a class to get his name enrolled very high on the

list of heroes, nor was he at all ambitious of any such distinction; but he was not so low that he could not and did not aspire to become the owner of the property of the Hutted Knoll. In an ordinary state of society, so high a flight would seem irrational in so low an aspirant; but Joel came of a people who seldom measure their pretensions by their merits, and who imagine that to boldly aspire, more especially in the way of money, is the first great step to success. The much talked of and little understood doctrine of political equality has this error to answer for, in thousands of cases; for nothing can be more hopeless, in the nature of things, than to convince a man of the necessity of possessing qualities of whose existence he has not even a faint perception, ere he may justly pretend to be put on a level with the high−minded, the just, the educated, and the good. Joel, therefore, saw no other reason than the law, against his becoming the great landlord, as well as captain Willoughby; and could the law be so moulded as to answer his purposes, he had discreetly resolved to care for no other considerations. The thought of the consequences to Mrs. Willoughby and her daughters gave him no concern whatever; they had already possessed the advantages of their situation so long, as to give Phœbe and the miller's wife a sort of moral claim to succeed them. In a word, Joel, in his yearnings after wealth, had only faintly shadowed forth the modern favourite doctrine of "rotation in office."

The appearance of a stranger in company with captain Willoughby could not fail, therefore, to give rise to many conjectures in the mind of a man whose daily and hourly thoughts were running on these important changes. "Who can it be," thought Joel, as he crawled along the lane, bearing the milk, and lifting one leg after the other, as if lead were fastened to his feet. "Dan'el it is not nor is it any one that I can consait on, about the Hut. The captain is mightily strengthened by this marriage of his da'ter with colonel Beekman, that's sartain. The colonel stands wonderful well with our folks, and he'll not let all this first−rate land, with such capital betterments, go out of the family without an iffort, I conclude but then I calcilate on his being killed there must be a disperate lot on 'em shot, afore the war's over, and he is as likely to be among 'em as another. Dan'el thinks the colonel has the look of a short−lived man. Waal; to−morrow will bring about a knowledge of the name of the captain's companion, and then a body may calcilate with greater sartainty!"

This is but an outline of what passed through Joel's mind as he moved onward. It will serve, however, to let the reader into the secret of his thoughts, as well as into their ordinary train, and is essentially connected with some of the succeeding events of our legend. As the overseer approached the stockade, his ideas were so abstracted that he forgot the risk he ran; but walking carelessly towards the palisades, the dogs barked, and then he was saluted by a shot. This effectually aroused Joel, who called out in his natural voice, and probably saved his life by so doing. The report of the rifle, however, produced an alarm, and by the time the astounded overseer had staggered up to the gate, the men were pouring out from the court, armed, and expecting an assault. In the midst of this scene of confusion, the chaplain admitted Joel, as much astonished as the man himself, at the whole of the unexpected occurrence.

It is unnecessary to say that many questions were asked. Joel got rid of them, by simply stating that he had gone out to milk a cow, by the captain's private orders, and that he had forgotten to arrange any signal, by which his return might be known. He ventured to name his employer, because he knew he was not there to contradict him; and Mr. Woods, being anxious to ascertain if his two friends hadbeen seen, sent the men back to their lairs, without delay, detaining the overseer at the gate for a minute's private discourse. As the miller obeyed, with the rest, he asked for the pail with an eye to his own children's comfort; but, on receiving it, he found it empty! The bullet had passed through it, and the contents had escaped.

"Did you see any thing, or person, Strides?" demanded the chaplain, as soon as the two were alone.

"Lord, Mr. Woods, I met the captain! The sight on him came over me a'most as cruelly as the shot from the rifle; for I no more expected it than I do to see you rise up to heaven, in your clothes, like Elijah of old. Sure enough, there was the captain, himself, and and "

Here Joel sneezed, repeating the word "and" several times, in hopes the chaplain would supply the name he so much wished to hear.

"But you saw no savages? I know the captain is out, and you will be careful not to mention it, lest it get to Mrs. Willoughby's ears, and make her uneasy. You saw nothing of the savages?"

"Not a bit the critturs lie cluss enough, if they haven't actually tramped. Who did you say was with the captain, Mr. Woods?"

"I said nothing about it I merely asked after the Indians, who, as you say, do keep themselves very close. Well, Joel, go to your wife, who must be getting anxious about you, and be prudent."

Thus dismissed, the overseer did not dare to hesitate; but he entered the court, still pondering on the late meeting.

As for the two adventurers, they pursued their march in silence. As a matter of course, they heard the report of the rifle, and caught some faint sounds from the alarm that succeeded; but, readily comprehending the cause, they produced no uneasiness; the stillness which succeeded soon satisfying them that all was right. By this time they were within a hundred yards of the flickering fires. The major had kept a strict watch on the shanties at the report of the rifle; but not a living thing was seen moving in their vicinity. This induced him to think the place deserted, and he whispered as much to his father.

"With any other enemy than an Indian," answered thelatter, "you might be right enough, Bob; but with these rascals one is never certain. We must advance with a good deal of their own caution."

This was done, and the gentlemen approached the fires in the most guarded manner, keeping the shantees between them and the light. By this time, however, the flames were nearly out, and there was no great difficulty in looking into the nearest shantee, without much exposure. It was deserted, as proved to be the case with all the others, on further examination. Major Willoughby now moved about on the rock with greater confidence; for, naturally brave, and accustomed to use his faculties with self−command in moments of trial, he drew the just distinctions between real danger and unnecessary alarm; the truest of all tests of courage.

The captain, feeling a husband's and a father's responsibility, was a little more guarded; but success soon gave him more confidence, and the spot was thoroughly explored. The two then descended to the mills, which, together with the adjacent cabins, they entered also, and found uninjured and empty. After this, several other suspected points were looked at, until the captain came to the conclusion that the party had retired, for the night at least, if not entirely. Making a circuit, however, he and his son visited the chapel, and one or two dwellings on that side of the valley, when they bent their steps towards the Knoll.

As the gentlemen approached the stockade, the captain gave a loud hem, and clapped his hands. At the signal the gate flew open, and they found themselves in company with their friend the chaplain once more. A few words of explanation told all they had to say, and then the three passed into the court, and separated; each taking the direction towards his own room. The major, fatigued with the toils of a long march, was soon in a soldier's sleep; but it was hours before his more thoughtful, and still uneasy father, could obtain the rest which nature so much requires.

CHAPTER XV.

"I could teach you,

How to choose right, but then I am forsworn;

So will I never be; so may you miss me;

But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin

That I had been forsworn."

Portia

Captain Willoughby knew that the hour which preceded the return of light, was that in which the soldier had the most to apprehend, when in the field. This is the moment when it is usual to attempt surprises; and it was, in particular, the Indian's hour of blood. Orders had been left, accordingly, to call him at four o'clock, and to see that all the men of the Hut were afoot, and armed also. Notwithstanding the deserted appearance of the valley, this experienced frontier warrior distrusted the signs of the times; and he looked forward to the probability of an assault, a little before the return of day, with a degree of concern he would have been sorry to communicate to his wife and daughters.

Every emergency had been foreseen, and such a disposition made of the forces, as enabled the major to be useful, in the event of an attack, without exposing himself unnecessarily to the danger of being discovered. He was to have charge of the defence of the rear of the Hut, or that part of the buildings where the windows opened outwards; and Michael and the two Plinys were assigned him as assistants. Nor was the ward altogether a useless one. Though the cliff afforded a material safeguard to this portion of the defences, it might be scaled; and, it will be remembered, there was no stockade at all, on this, the northern end of the house.

When the men assembled in the court, therefore, about an hour before the dawn, Robert Willoughby collected his small force in the dining−room, the outer apartment of thesuite, where he examined their arms by lamp−light, inspected their accoutrements, and directed them to remain until he issued fresh orders. His father, aided by serjeant Joyce, did the same in the court; issuing out, through the gate of the buildings, with his whole force, as soon as this duty was performed. The call being general, the women and children were all up also; many of the former repairing to the loops, while the least resolute, or the less experienced of their number, administered to the wants of the young, or busied themselves with the concerns of the household. In a word, the Hut, at that early hour, resembled a hive in activity, though the different pursuits had not much affinity to the collection of honey.

It is not to be supposed that Mrs. Willoughby and her daughters still courted their pillows on an occasion like this. They rose with the others, the grandmother and Beulah bestowing their first care on the little Evert, as if his life and safety were the considerations uppermost in their thoughts. This seemed so natural, that Maud wondered she too could not feel all this absorbing interest in the child, a being so totally dependent on the affection of its friends and relatives to provide for its wants and hazards, in an emergency like the present.

"We will see to the child, Maud," observed her mother, ten or fifteen minutes after all were up and dressed. "Do you go to your brother, who will be solitary, alone in his citadel. He may wish, too, to send some message to his father. Go, then, dear girl, and help to keep up poor Bob's spirits."

What a service for Maud! Still, she went, without hesitation or delay; for the habits of her whole infancy were not to be totally overcome by the natural and more engrossing sentiments of her later years. She could not feel precisely the reserve and self−distrust with one she had so long regarded as a brother, as might have been the case with a stranger youth in whom she had begun to feel the interest she entertained for Robert Willoughby. But, Maud did not hesitate about complying. An order from her mother to her was law; and she had no shame, no reserves on the subject of contributing to Bob's comfort or happiness.

Her presence was a great relief to the young man himself, whom she found in the library. His assistants were posted without, as sentinels to keep off intruders, a disposition that left him quite alone, anxious and uneasy. The

only intercourse he could have with his father was by means of messages; and the part of the building he occupied was absolutely without any communication with the court, except by a single door near the offices, at which he had stationed O'Hearn.

"This is kind, and like yourself, dearest Maud," exclaimed the young man, taking the hand of his visiter, and pressing it in both his own, though he strangely neglected to kiss her cheek, as he certainly would have done had it been Beulah "This is kind and like yourself; now I shall learn something of the state of the family. How is my mother?"

It might have been native coyness, or even coquetry, that unconsciously to herself influenced Maud's answer. She knew not why and yet she felt prompted to let it be understood she had not come of her own impulses.

"Mother is well, and not at all alarmed," she said. "She and Beulah are busy with little Evert, who crows and kicks his heels about as if he despised danger as becomes a soldier's son, and has much amused even me; though I am accused of insensibility to his perfections. Believing you might be solitary, or might wish to communicate with some of us, my mother desired me to come and inquire into your wants."

"Was such a bidding required, Maud! How long has an order been necessary to bring you to console me?"

"That is a calculation I have never entered into, Bob," answered Maud, slightly blushing, and openly smiling, and that in a way, too, to take all the sting out of her words "as young ladies can have more suitable occupations, one might think. You will admit I guided you faithfully and skilfully into the Hut last evening, and such a service should suffice for the present. But, my mother tells me we have proper causes of complaint against you, for having so thoughtlessly left the place of safety into which you were brought, and for going strolling about the valley, after we had retired, in a very heedless and boyish manner!"

"I went with my father; surely I could not have been in better company."

"At his suggestion, or at your own, Bob?" asked Maud, shaking her head.

"To own the truth, it was, in some degree, at my own. It seemed so very unmilitary for two old soldiers to allow themselves to be shut up in ignorance of what their enemies were at, that I could not resist the desire to make a little sortie. You must feel, dear Maud, that our motive was your safety the safety, I mean, of my mother, and Beulah, and all of you together and you ought to be the last to blame us."

The tint on Maud's cheek deepened as Robert Willoughby laid so heavy an emphasis on "your safety;" but she could not smile on an act that risked so much more than was prudent.

"This is well enough as to motive," she said, after a pause; "but frightfully ill−judged, I should think, as to the risks. You do not remember the importance our dear father is to us all to my mother to Beulah even to me, Bob."

"Even to you, Maud! And why not as much to you as to any of us?"

Maud could speak to Beulah of her want of natural affinity to the family; but, it far exceeded her self−command to make a direct allusion to it to Robert Willoughby. Still, it was now rarely absent from her mind; the love she bore the captain and his wife, and Beulah, and little Evert, coming to her heart through a more insidious and possibly tenderer tie, than that of purely filial or sisterly affection. It was, indeed, this every−day regard, strangely deepened and enlivened by that collateral feeling we so freely bestow on them who are bound by natural ties to those who have the strongest holds on our hearts, and which causes us to see with their eyes, and to feel with their affections. Accordingly, no reply was made to the question; or, rather, it was answered by putting another.

"Did you see anything, after all, to compensate for so much risk?" asked Maud, but not until a pause had betrayed her embarrassment.

"We ascertained that the savages had deserted their fires, and had not entered any of the cabins. Whether this weredone to mislead us, or to make a retreat as sudden and unexpected as their inroad, we are altogether in the dark. My father apprehends treachery, however; while, I confess, to me it seems probable that the arrival and the departure may be altogether matters of accident. The Indians are in motion certainly, for it is known that our agents are busy among them; but, it is by no means so clear that our Indians would molest captain Willoughby Sir Hugh Willoughby, as my father is altogether called, at head−quarters."

"Have not the Americans savages on their side, to do us this ill office?"

"I think not. It is the interest of the rebels to keep the savages out of the struggle; they have so much at risk, that this species of warfare can scarcely be to their liking."

"And ought it to be to the liking of the king's generals, or ministers either, Bob!"

"Perhaps not, Maud. I do not defend it; but I have seen enough of politics and war, to know that results are looked to, far more than principles. Honour, and chivalry, and humanity, and virtue, and right, are freely used in terms; but seldom do they produce much influence on facts. Victory is the end aimed at, and the means are made to vary with the object."

"And where is all we have read together? Yes, together, Bob? for I owe you a great deal for having directed my studies where is all we have read about the glory and truth of the English name and cause?"

"Very much, I fear, Maud, where the glory and truth of the American name and cause will be, as soon as this new nation shall fairly burst the shell, and hatch its public morality. There are men among us who believe in this public honesty, but I do not."

"You are then engaged in a bad cause, major Willoughby, and the sooner you abandon it, the better."

"I would in a minute, if I knew where to find a better. Rely on it, dearest Maud, all causes are alike, in this particular; though one side may employ instruments, as in the case of the savages, that the other side finds it its interest to decry. Men, as individuals, may be, and sometimes are, reasonably upright but, bodies of men, I much fear, never. The latter escape responsibility by dividing it."

"Still, a good cause may elevate even bodies of men," said Maud, thoughtfully.

"For a time, perhaps; but not in emergencies. You and I think it a good cause, my good and frowning Maud, to defend the rights of our sovereign lord the king. Beulah I have given up to the enemy; but on you I have implicitly relied."

"Beulah follows her heart, perhaps, as they say it is natural to women to do. As for myself, I am left free to follow my own opinion of my duties."

"And they lead you to espouse the cause of the king, Maud!"

"They will be very apt to be influenced by the notions of a certain captain Willoughby, and Wilhelmina, his wife, who have guided me aright on so many occasions, that I shall not easily distrust their opinions on this."

The major disliked this answer; and yet, when he came to reflect on it, as reflect he did a good deal in the course of the day, he was dissatisfied with himself at being so unreasonable as to expect a girl of twenty−one not to think with her parents, real or presumed, in most matters. At the moment, however, he did not wish further to press the point.

"I am glad to learn, Bob," resumed Maud, looking more cheerful and smiling, "that you met with no one in your rash sortie for rash I shall call it, even though sanctioned by my father."

"I am wrong in saying that. We did meet with one man, and that was no less a person than your bug−bear, Joel Strides as innocent, though as meddling an overseer as one could wish to employ."

"Robert Willoughby, what mean you! Does this man know of your presence at the Knoll?"

"I should hope not think not." Here the major explained all that is known to the reader on this head, when he continued "The fellow's curiosity brought his face within a few inches of mine; yet I do not believe he recognised me. This disguise is pretty thorough; and what betweenhis ignorance, the darkness and the dress, I must believe he was foiled."

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed Maud, breathing more freely. "I have long distrusted that man, though he seems to possess the confidence of every one else. Neither my father nor my mother will see him, as I see him; yet to me his design to injure you is so clear so obvious! I wonder, often wonder, that others cannot view it as I do. Even Beulah is blind!"

"And what do you see so clearly, Maud? I have consented to keep myself incog. in submission to your earnest request; and yet, to own the truth, I can discover no particular reason why Strides is to be distrusted more than any one else in the valley than Mike, for instance."

"Mike! I would answer for his truth with my life. He will never betray you, Bob."

"But why is Joel so much the object of your distrust? and why am I the particular subject of your apprehensions?"

Maud felt the tell−tale blood flowing again to her cheeks; since, to give a simple and clear reason for her distrust, exceeded her power. It was nothing but the keen interest which she took in Robert Willoughby's safety that had betrayed to her the truth; and, as usually happens, when anxiety leads the way in discoveries of this sort, logical and plausible inferences are not always at command. Still, Maud not only thought herself right, but, in the main, she was right; and this she felt so strongly as to be enabled to induce others to act on her impressions.

"Why I believe in Strides' sinister views is more than I may be able to explain to you, in words, Bob," she replied, after a moment's thought; "still, I do believe in them as firmly as I believe in my existence. His looks, his questions, his journeys, and an occasional remark, have all aided in influencing the belief; nevertheless, no one proof may be perfectly clear and satisfactory. Why you should be the subject of his plans, however, is simple enough, since you are the only one among us he can seriously injure. By betraying you, he might gain some great advantage to himself."

"To whom can he betray me, dear? My father is the only person here, in any authority, and of him I have no cause to be afraid."

"Yet, you were so far alarmed when last here, as to change your route back to Boston. If there were cause for apprehension then, the same reason may now exist."

"That was when many strangers were in the valley, and we knew not exactly where we stood. I have submitted to your wishes, however, Maud, and shall lie perdu, until there is a serious alarm; then it is understood I am to be permitted to show myself. In a moment of emergency my unexpected appearance among the men might have a dramatic effect, and, of itself, give us a victory. But tell me of my prospects am I likely to succeed with my father? Will he be brought over to the royal cause?"

"I think not. All common inducements are lost on him. His baronetcy, for instance, he will never assume; that, therefore, cannot entice him. Then his feelings are with his adopted country, which he thinks right, and which he is much disposed to maintain; more particularly since Beulah's marriage, and our late intercourse with all that set. My mother's family, too, has much influence with him. They, you know, are all whigs."

"Don't prostitute the name, Maud. Whig does not mean rebel; these misguided men are neither more nor less than rebels. I had thought this declaration of independence would have brought my father at once to our side."

"I can see it has disturbed him, as did the Battle of Bunker's Hill. But he will reflect a few days, and decide now, as he did then, in favour of the Americans. He has English partialities, Bob, as is natural to one born in that country; but, on this point, his mind is very strongly American."

"The accursed Knoll has done this! Had he lived in society, as he ought to have done, among his equals and the educated, we should now see him at the head Maud, I know I can confide in you."

Maud was pleased at this expression of confidence, and she looked up in the major's face, her full blue eyes expressing no small portion of the heartfelt satisfaction she experienced. Still, she said nothing.

"You may well imagine," the major continued, "that I have not made this journey entirely without an object I mean some object more important, even, than to see you all. The commander−in−chief is empowered to raise several regiments in this country, and it is thought useful to put men of influence in the colonies at their head. Old Noll de Lancey, for instance, so well known to us all, is to have a brigade; and I have a letter in my pocket offering to Sir Hugh Willoughby one of his regiments. One of the Allens of Pennsylvania, who was actually serving against us, has thrown up his commission from congress, since this wicked declaration, and has consented to take a battalion from the king. What think you of all this? Will it not have weight with my father?"

"It may cause him to reflect, Bob; but it will not induce him to change his mind. It may suit Mr. Oliver de Lancey to be a general, for he has been a soldier his whole life; but my father has retired, and given up all thoughts of service. He tells us he never liked it, and has been happier here at the Knoll, than when he got his first commission. Mr. Allen's change of opinion may be well enough, he will say, but I have no need of change; I am here, with my wife and daughters, and have them to care for, in these troubled times. What think you he said, Bob, in one of his conversations with us, on this very subject?"

"I am sure I cannot imagine though I rather fear it was some wretched political stuff of the day."

"So far from this, it was good natural feeling that belongs, or ought to belong to all days, and all ages," answered Maud, her voice trembling a little as she proceeded. 'There is my son,' he said; 'one soldier is enough in a family like this. He keeps all our hearts anxious, and may cause them all to mourn.'"

Major Willoughby was mute for quite a minute, looking rebuked and thoughtful.

"I fear I do cause my parents concern," he at length answered; "and why should I endeavour to increase that of my excellent mother, by persuading her husband to return to the profession? If this were ordinary service, I could not think of it. I do not know that I ought to think of it, as it is!"

"Do not, dear Robert. We are all that is, mother is often miserable on your account; and why would you increase her sorrows? Remember that to tremble for one life is sufficient for a woman."

"My mother is miserable on my account!" answered the young man, who was thinking of anything but his father, at that instant. "Does Beulah never express concern for me? or have her new ties completely driven her brother from her recollection? I know she can scarce wish me success; but she might still feel some uneasiness for an only brother. We are but two "

Maud started, as if some frightful object glared before her eyes; then she sat in breathless silence, resolute to hear what would come next. But Robert Willoughby meant to pursue that idea no farther. He had so accustomed himself had endeavoured even so to accustom himself to think of Beulah as his only sister, that the words escaped him unconsciously. They were no sooner uttered, however, than the recollection of their possible effect on Maud crossed his mind. Profoundly ignorant of the true nature of her feelings towards himself, he had ever shrunk from a direct avowal of his own sentiments, lest he might shock her; as a sister's ear would naturally be wounded by a declaration of attachment from a brother; and there were bitter moments when he fancied delicacy and honour would oblige him to carry his secret with him to the grave. Two minutes of frank communication might have dissipated all these scruples for ever; but, how to obtain those minutes, or how to enter on the subject at all, were obstacles that often appeared insurmountable to the young man. As for Maud, she but imperfectly understood her own heart true, she had conscious glimpses of its real state; but, it was through those sudden and ungovernable impulses that were so strangely mingled with her affections. It was years, indeed, since she had ceased to think of Robert Willoughby as a brother, and had begun to view him with different eyes; still, she struggled with her feelings, as against a weakness. The captain and his wife were her parents; Beulah her dearly, dearly beloved sister; little Evert her nephew; and even the collaterals, in and about Albany, came in for a due share of her regard; while Bob, though called Bob as before; though treated with alarge portion of the confidence that was natural to the intimacy of her childhood; though loved with a tenderness he would have given even his high−prized commission to know, was no longer thought of as a brother. Often did Maud find herself thinking, if never saying, "Beulah may do that, for Beulah is his sister; but it would be wrong in me. I may write to him, talk freely and even confidentially with him, and be affectionate to him; all this is right, and I should be the most ungrateful creature on earth to act differently; but I cannot sit on his knee as Beulah sometimes does; I cannot throw my arms around his neck when I kiss him, as Beulah does; I cannot pat his cheek, as Beulah does, when he says anything to laugh at; nor can I pry into his secrets, as Beulah does, or affects to do, to tease him. I should be more reserved with one who has not a drop of my blood in his veins no, not a single drop." In this way, indeed, Maud was rather fond of disclaiming any consanguinity with the family of Willoughby, even while she honoured and loved its two heards, as parents. The long pause that succeeded the major's broken sentence was only interrupted by himself.

"It is vexatious to be shut up here, in the dark, Maud," he said, "when every minute may bring an attack. This side of the house might be defended by you and Beulah, aided and enlightened by the arm and counsels of that young 'son of liberty,' little Evert; whereas the stockade in front may really need the presence of men who have some knowledge of the noble art. I wish there were a lookout to the front, that one might at least see the danger as it approached."

"If your presence is not indispensable here, I can lead you to my painting−room, where there is a loop directly opposite to the gate. That half of the garrets has no one in it."

The major accepted the proposal with joy, and forthwith he proceeded to issue a few necessary orders to his subordinates, before he followed Maud. When all was ready, the latter led the way, carrying a small silver lamp that she had brought with her on entering the library. The reader already understands that the Hut was built around a court; the portion of the building in the rear, or on the cliff, alonehaving windows that opened outward. This was as true of the roofs as of the perpendicular parts of the structure, the only exceptions being in the loops that had been cut in the half−story, beneath the eaves. Of course, the garrets were very extensive. They were occupied in

part, however, by small rooms, with dormer−windows, the latter of which opened on the court, with the exception of those above the cliff. It was on the roofs of these windows that captain Willoughby had laid his platform, or walk, with a view to extinguish fires, or to defend the place. There were many rooms also that were lighted only by the loops, and which, of course, were on the outer side of the buildings. In addition to these arrangements, the garret portions of the Hut were divided into two great parts, like the lower floor, without any doors of communication. Thus, below, the apartments commenced at the gate−way, and extended along one−half the front; the whole of the east wing, and the whole of the rear, occupying five−eighths of the entire structure. This part contained all the rooms occupied by the family and the offices. The corresponding three−eighths, or the remaining half of the front, and the whole of the west wing, were given to visiters, and were now in possession of the people of the valley; as were all the rooms and garrets above them. On the other hand, captain Willoughby, with a view to keep his family to itself, had excluded every one, but the usual inmates, from his own portion of the house, garret−rooms included.

Some of the garret−rooms, particularly those over the library, drawing−room, and parlour, were convenient and well−furnished little apartments, enjoying dormer−windows that opened on the meadows and forest, and possessing a very tolerable elevation, for rooms of that particular construction. Here Mr. Woods lodged and had his study. The access was by a convenient flight of steps, placed in the vestibule that communicated with the court. A private and narrower flight also ascended from the offices.

Maud now led the way up the principal stairs, Mike being on post at the outer door to keep off impertinent eyes, followed by Robert Willoughby. Unlike most American houses, the Hut had few passages on its principal floor; the rooms communicating en suite, as a better arrangement where thebuildings were so long, and yet so narrow. Above, however, one side was left in open garret; sometimes in front and sometimes in the rear, as the light came from the court, or from without. Into this garret, then, Maud conducted the major, passing a line of humble rooms on her right, which belonged to the families of the Plinys and the Smashes, with their connections, until she reached the front range of the buildings. Here the order was changed along the half of the structure reserved to the use of the family; the rooms being on the outer side lighted merely by the loops, while opposite to them was an open garret with windows that overlooked the court.

Passing into the garret just mentioned, Maud soon reached the door of the little room she sought. It was an apartment she had selected for painting, on account of the light from the loop, which in the morning was particularly favourable, though somewhat low. As she usually sat on a little stool, however, this difficulty was in some measure obviated; and, at all events, the place was made to answer her purposes. She kept the key herself, and the room, since Beulah's marriage in particular, was her sanctum; no one entering it unless conducted by its mistress. Occasionally, Little Smash was admitted with a broom; though Maud, for reasons known to herself, often preferred sweeping the small carpet that covered the centre of the floor, with her own fair hands, in preference to suffering another to intrude.

The major was aware that Maud had used this room for the last seven years. It was here he had seen her handkerchief waving at the loop, when he last departed; and hundreds of times since had he thought of this act of watchful affection, with doubts that led equally to pain or pleasure, as images of merely sisterly care, or of a tenderer feeling, obtruded themselves. These loops were four feet long, cut in the usual bevelling manner, through the massive timbers; were glazed, and had thick, bullet−proof, inside shutters, that in this room were divided in equal parts, in order to give Maud the proper use of the light she wanted. All these shutters were now closed by command of the captain, in order to conceal the lights that would be flickering through the different garrets; and so far had caution become a habit, thatMaud seldom exposed her person at night, near the loop, with the shutter open.

On the present occasion, she left the light without, and threw open the upper−half of her heavy shutter, remarking as she did so, that the day was just beginning to dawn.

"In a few minutes it will be light," she added; "then we shall be able to see who is and who is not in the valley. Look you can perceive my father near the gate, at this moment."

"I do, to my shame, Maud. He should not be there, while I am cooped up here, behind timbers that are almost shot−proof."

"It will be time for you to go to the front, as you soldiers call it, when there is an enemy to face. You cannot think there is any danger of an attack upon the Hut this morning."

"Certainly not. It is now too late. If intended at all, it would have been made before that streak of light appeared in the east."

"Then close the shutter, and I will bring in the lamp, and show you some of my sketches. We artists are thirsting always for praise; and I know you have a taste, Bob, that one might dread."

"This is kind of you, dear Maud," answered the major, closing the shutter; "for they tell me you are niggardly of bestowing such favours. I hear you have got to likenesses little Evert's, in particular."