Hudson and Native Stories

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Notice

A September Trip to Catskill

The opening text of this collection is a non-fictional narrative of 1838 in the mode of Washington Irving's reports of his travels in Europe as they appeared, mixed with more conventional fictions, in his widely praised *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1820), or his less celebrated *Tales of a Traveller* (1824) or later on in the sketches of *The Alhambra* (1832). The story told is set in the United States, in the Hudson valley which Irving broadly contributed to popularizing through the stories of Rip van Winkle in the eponymous short story, and of Ichabod Crane in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1819). Numerous allusions to these texts sprinkle the narrative and constitute the main elements which, beyond lyrical descriptions—themselves owing a lot to Irving—, suggest to the reader's mind more authentically fanciful fictional images.

Undoubtedly, the style of the text plagiarizes Irving's to the point of sometimes almost parodying his descriptions of the surrounding landscapes, as the introductory paragraph illustrates when Irving's "fairy mountains" display "the sportive grace of a fay." The oneiric atmosphere of Sleepy Hollow even sometimes permeates the narrator's mind when "his sensations" send him "to dream-land" (54) at sunrise. However, the narrator insists recurrently on architectural metaphors while Irving remains purely lyrical, describing for instance "the old pine tree, by the side of the spring, against which Rip used to rest his gun . . . [as] a fluted column of the same dimensions of some dozen others that ranged on the side-walk as supporters to the piazzas of the rival hotels" (51), or using words such as "architrave," (50) or "mountain cathedral" (57); this endows Nature with a structured quality which makes the author see in God "the architect" (54), but which is also the mark of a more "technical" vision of a pristine Nature already contaminated by progress.

But the stronger echoes of Irving's texts are those of Rip van Winkle himself whose shadowy presence hovers here and there over the narrative, as if he had been a full-fleshed hero who had actually lived in and now still haunts the Catskills. However, the time has

changed, and the narrator's imagination can only satisfy itself by tarrying nostalgically in a still recent past unfortunately gone for ever.

For instance, when the trio of ramblers reaches Balt Bloom's hotel, the narrator cannot refrain from imagining that it stands on the very site where Rip's "club of the sages or philosophers" used to hold its "sessions" on a bench near the Royal George Hotel. Similarly, the "big tree" under which they used to "sit in the shade" has been significantly replaced by a shop, in days when money and commerce govern the world, which makes the author parody Irving's sharp criticism of the mores of his time, exclaiming with a somewhat faked emphasis: "May the Lord forgive the sacrilegious heedlessness of my countrymen!" (52) Not unlike Irving, the author indulges in caricaturing the political life of the early 19th century by introducing two lusty fellows discussing the "comin election," (52), even gibing casually at General Harrison, the future President of the United States, by nicknaming him "the petticoat candidate" in reference to his political opponents' assertion concerning his putative lack of courage.[78] The scene ends up in derision when one of the two fellows shoots at a rooster "as big as any member of Congress" (52) just for the pleasure of betting three meagre shillings immediately pocketed by his greedy wife.

On their arrival at the hotel, the narrator notices a dog, "flying and yelping—tail couchant—from the broom-stick attacks of an enraged milliner" (52) whose attitude evokes that of Wolf, Rip's faithful companion, ceaselessly harassed by Dame van Winkle. But the dog fails to display Wolf's courage and dignity for he is only "un très petit chien" (51), as a French-speaking tourist remarks ironically. Irving's shrew is even brought back to life in the person of Balt's termagant wife whose only words sound "like the echo of one of Dame Van Winkle's highest notes" (52), relevantly about money.

That is precisely what sounds definitely new in this post-Irving text: the narrator insists recurrently on monetary considerations, which are apparently aroused by the growing interest of tourists for the region. At the waterfalls, for instance, the platform allowing sightseeing "has been erected for the use of visiters and the profit of its owner" (55), and worse, tourists have to pay for the water: "Shade of Rip Van Winkle! Thought you, poor ghost, that the free waters of

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[78] See *supra* note 103.

your Kauterskill would have been dammed for money?" (56). After Rip's awakening, Irving portrayed a politicized country which had overthrown his pastoral vision of the once Edenic Catskills; but now, it is the prey of new economic trends, revealed by the presence of hotels and pleasure boats on the Hudson.

Indeed, the transformation of the region has a price and there is something in the atmosphere which weighs on the narrator's mood. Instead of enjoying his lonely evening at the Mountain House Hotel as Rip van Winkle had enjoyed his wanderings in the solitary mountains, far from his wife's too frequent "curtain lectures," he comes to regret his bachelorhood and envies the cosy intimacy of a couple in love sharing his company. He is then the prey of "a desolate retreat of the heart" (53) which brings him to take refuge in "the friendly companionship of a fire that [is] blazing in the drawing-room" (54). These are the Catskills of 1838: Nature has become a commodity and to be alone in it means sadness of the heart.

The close of the text speaks for itself: the narrator's last argument to convince other tourists to come to the Catskills is based on economic considerations as he advises them to come "when the water at the Falls will be sold at a cheaper rate than in July" (57). Things have decidedly changed a great deal in the Catskills and there is no longer a place for lazy dreamers like Rip van Winkle.

Recollections of the Village of ——

This text, published ten years after *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1819), borrows, like the previous one, many fictional and imaginary elements from Irving's short stories. The narrative is unconventionally composed of distinct sections linked by associations of ideas about an ancient wooden construction across the river which literally bridges the past and the present for the narrator, and allows him to unearth old memories, personal and collective. The tone is immediately given by the very first sentence: "This is the golden age of legendary lore" (58), as we are led to a rediscovery of the Hudson valley, beyond "the surface of history," fed with "[l]egends of heroism and enchantment" (58). Straightaway, the author shuffles the cards in his own way, evoking successively

Bunker Hill and Rip van Winkle, as if they belonged to the same "real" world. However, the sequel to the text does not call to mind the legendary sleeper, but Irving's hardly less famous schoolteacher, Ichabod Crane, whose mixture of severity and leniency are echoed in the "little dark looking man with a quick piercing black eye, and withal, the most good humored smile in the world except when he was in a passion" (58). Like in Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1819), the schoolmaster's fiery character is a pretext for tinging the text with humor and to criticize the way education was delivered "in the good old colony times" (60). While Ichabod never hesitated to frighten his pupils with his "authoritative voice . . . in the tone of menace or command, or, peradventure, by the appalling sound of the birch," the "good master" of the village of —— would sometimes resort to "most uncanonical words, though, to say the truth, he would couch them in the learned languages for fear of scandalizing the girls and the younger scholars" (59).

The nostalgic evocation of colonial times incites the author, not unlike Irving, to express regrets about how the world has been radically changed by modernity. As in the preceding text, monetary inflation and the stringency of modern buildings are seen as destructive of man's capability to imagine and to dream. The old "crooked" bridge in particular, built "when timber was cheap, and the ideas of our fathers upon architecture were not the most definite or elegant in the world" (60), allowed the casual stroller who would linger on its irregular arch "to lose [him]self in the fancies suggested by the situation, to wander from reality, and to imagine what had or might have occurred, when Nature presided here in her uncultivated greatness over the land and its inhabitants" (60). In 1830 already, there were unmistakable signs that the world was changing and that progress menaced poetry.

The countryside around the school echoes Sleepy Hollow, notably the lazy river which seems to belong to Irving's story with that "calmness in Nature which extends itself to the mind, and you would not wish to disturb the repose of either by a heavy footstep or the rustling of a leaf" (59). The term referring to the brook, "freshet," is cleverly used in its double meaning—"stream" and "flood"—by the author to evoke less elegiac memories: one concerns a burlesque incident during which youths of the village almost drowned but were

eventually rescued, and another, more dramatic, in which the villagers were *in extremis* saved from a nocturnal raid perpetrated by local Natives who died, swept away by the too rapid waters of the swollen river.

At this point, the ingredients of the narrative are cunningly mixed up to produce an "unreal" effect which transforms alleged historical facts into a local legend. The derogatory description of the Natives, for instance, seems to date back to William Bradford's "hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men",[79] although the tragedy supposedly occurred, "[s]omewhere about the year seventeen hundred and thirty-six" (61). Moreover, the atmosphere favors the surge of irrational fears, which the author expresses with accents evoking Edgar Allan Poe's style: "in darkness and uncertainty reason is lost in the whirl of terrors" (62). Here the author develops arguments to justify the irrationality of the first settlers, forced to adapt to "an unknown land, where the wilderness opens but upon the ocean, or else upon the desert, where no sound of civilization is heard" (62). The unknown, added to material and mental obscurity, generates irrational fears and unbridles the "imagination [which] may go illimitably on" (62).

There is enough here for anyone to be prepared to see the irrational appear in everyday life, and a *natural* phenomenon like a thunderstorm tends to become a *supernatural* manifestation in "a night which seemed fitted for deeds of terror" (62). That is why the settlers were saved by a blaze which seemed to be the outcome of the thunderstorm, as "they were aroused from their slumbers by the bright fire flashes which shone through their windows" (63). Although the narrator provides several rational explanations, doubts remain about the origin of the light: was it due to an improbable strategic mistake of the Natives or to a stroke of lightning which providentially sets fire to the pine-tree? A very Todorovian[80] hesitation suggests here

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[79] William Bradford (1590-1657) was a signer of the Mayflower Compact and the governor of Plymouth Plantation for 30 years. He was a relatively tolerant Puritan, although he was marked by the prejudices of his time. From 1630 on, he wrote his famous *History of Plimoth Plantation,* a detailed chronicle of life in the colony This quotation was written in 1651.

[80] In his *The Fantastic; a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970, trsl. 1973), Tzvetan Todorov (1939-) defines the Fantastic as the blurred line between the Marvelous (the Supernatural) and the Odd, a supernatural phenomenon which can be explained rationally. According to him, the Fantastic appears when the status of the narrative remains unclear and generates hesitation; as such, it depends on the reaction of the reader.

that the narrative becomes supernatural, which seems confirmed by the providential swollen waters of the neighboring creek which precipitates the assailants toward the falls and a death as atrocious as they were wild. When natural elements ally with Providence to save "innocent" people from "fiends," then Nature is likely to appear as Supernature.

Sebago Pond

This short text, written in 1829, is typical of the way Nature was seen in urban literary circles of this age. The style is often conventional, vaguely outdated, borrowing a lot from European classics and clichés. To the modern reader—and it should even have done so to some sharp minds of the time—, it sounds vaguely overdone and almost naive, like in the following lines:

> All nature seemed awakening at the summons of her master, and to be throwing off the veil of darkness which had hidden her beauties from his sight, and the dew drops around us were glittering in his beams, as if the elves, startled at his approach, had fled, and in their haste left their jewels behind them to beautify and adorn the earth. (64)

If this piece had been entirely written in the same vein, it would not have been of much interest and it would appear as a starchy narrative sometimes verging, unpretentiously however, toward philosophical considerations about the limits of the human mind and the benefits of socializing: "When a man cannot have a vent for his perpetually recurring thoughts, they will turn and prey upon his own mind, and render him a gloomy misanthrope," so that a nice walk in the country in good company provides "the materials for new thoughts, the brightness and value of which are doubly increased by being shared with another" (65). Fortunately, things eventually improve when the narrator and his party of excursionists leave their "busy world" to enter the mysterious and magic "solitude of the waters" (65). The transition is accomplished thanks to a geographical element, "a rugged hilly land" (65), which seems, as in Irving's "Rip van Winkle," to be the entry to a quite different world, full of wonders

and secrets, in which, weather permitting, mere islands may be seen "looming up like spectres through the fog" (65), and whose majesty and grandiosity "discourage all attempts to unveil their mysteries" (67). The two worlds, however, are not totally severed from each other, as they are symbolically linked by a "slight bridge," originally playing its part not by bridging the two banks of the river it straddles, but by hyphening the *upstream* beauties of a pristine scenery and the *downstream* "manufactories and machinery of a thickly settled country" (65). In fact, the bridge does not facilitate the passage between the two worlds, but on the contrary it constitutes a line of separation, like a crossing out written on the riverbed.

The sequel of the description of this enchanting region echoes, almost word for word, the opening sentence of "Rip van Winkle." To Irving's "Whoever has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill mountains" is substituted "Whoever has floated on the calm surface of a summer lake may imagine or recollect the happiness of the moment" (66). But having paid tribute to his literary master, the author inflects his description toward sensations which owe little to the marvelous and much to some sort of natural mysticism while he experiences "a deep hush over nature, which communicates itself to the mind" (66) whereas "in the profound stillness, you will feel that breathlessness, that rising of the heart, which is the effect of gazing on silent sublimity" (66). "Nature always wears the colors of the spirit"[81]: seven years before Emerson's "Nature" and sixteen before Thoreau's experiment on the shores of Walden Pond,[82] the narrator's spiritual communion with Nature, a long way from the secular material world, announces Transcendentalism.

After having set the scene by insisting recurrently on "the general softness of the scenery" (67), the narrator excites the curiosity of the reader by mentioning a formidable natural edifice, "an immense ridge of gray rocks" rising "to the height of more than an hundred feet, without a single break to afford a resting place to the foot, or relief to the eye, and casting its sombre shadow over the water, which

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81 Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) *Nature* (1836). In this essay he exposes some of the principles of Transcendentalism, notably the mystical unity of nature and man.

82 Henry David Thoreau, (1817-1762), the most famous disciple of Emerson. His most celebrated book, *Walden* (1854), narrates his two-year solitary life (1845-1847) in close harmony with nature.

at its base, was unfathomably deep" (67). In this grandiose environment, the attention is called to a gloomy cavern "which had probably been opened from the solid rock by some convulsion of the earth," and whose entrance is marked with "rude figures in red paint, bearing some resemblance to the human form" (68). This unexpected oddity is the pretext for the protagonist to supply an explanatory narrative—an aboriginal "tradition"(68)—which he borrows from one of the boatmen.

The boatman's story is, like in the preceding text, based on a violent scene, an Indian raid on an Indian village, "long before the whites had penetrated to this wilderness" (68), when the Natives were still "the *rightful* lords of the soil" (67). The story is classically spiced up with the romantic presence of "an Indian girl, betrothed to a young warrior, who had signalized himself by his desperate valor in the defence" (68) of his village. Unexpectedly, the young girl manages to escape in the dead of night, miraculously escaping her pursuers as she suddenly "appeared to vanish through the solid rock" (69). Despite the Natives' stupefaction, her apparently inexplicable disappearance is no mystery for we have previously been introduced to the peculiar configuration of the premises.

Moreover, we learn that the two vaguely human figures on the entrance of the cave were painted in red —reminding us of "redskins"—by the two lovers in commemoration "of their nocturnal adventure" (69). Nevertheless, if everything seems perfectly rational, one detail remains puzzling: we know that this episode supposedly occurred long before colonial times, *i.e.* more than two hundred years before the narrator's visit to Sabago Pond. The wonder is that the paint, although it had been exposed to foul weather as well as to the erasing heat of the sun, is still visible after so many years, which suggests that it is indelible and will remain there for ever. Undoubtedly, the story echoes Indian legends, but it also borrows from Romanticism by promoting the indestructibility of love, and is eventually not totally devoid of a supernatural dimension. This sets up this narrative at a crossroads of genres, none of them being able to account alone for its subtle originality.

The Totem

This story in two episodes, published in successive issues of the *American Monthly Magazine* (1837), is set during the French and Indian War (1754-1763) seen from the English-American side; their joint military forces are embodied by two English-American couples of officers. To the historical leaders, the British General Edward Braddock and the young American Colonel George Washington, correspond fictional protagonists, the English officer Delancey and his counterpart, the Virginian Melancourt, who, in the first section, compare their respective views on the ongoing conflict in the last moments preceding the battle of Fort Duquesne (July 1755).[83] The general setting and the historical background of the first section evoke McHenry's *The Wilderness, or Braddock's Times*,[84] a romance portraying an immigrant Irish family in Pennsylvania during the French and Indian War.

Significantly enough, the signs announcing the imminence of a battle are seen as an intrusion which frightens "the sylvan inhabitants . . . sleeping in the silence and solitude of nature" (72). To "hundreds of tawny forms" (72) silencing the birds of the forest answers "the full sound of a bugle r[ingi]ng through the leafy arches" accompanied by "a loud trampling . . . in the direction of the road" (72).

The conversation between Braddock and Washington reflects the relationships between the two men and corresponds more or less to the mixture of respect and distrust which historians have reported, but when the American's better knowledge of the country's dangers is condescendingly ignored by the self-important British commander, the reader is made aware of Washington's inner feelings for his superior as his face reveals "a look of inexpressible disgust" (74). This is a too obvious implied reference to the next conflict to come during which the ex-allies became enemies; the nineteenth-century reader would not have missed the allusion and should have relished it as one savors a just revenge. This also tinges the text with a perfume of "truth" which, some sixty years after the Revolution, must have generated a strong reality effect.

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[83] See *supra* note 128.

[84] James McHenry (1785-1845), *The Wilderness, or Braddock's Times, a Tale of the West*, 2 vol. New York, 1823. Dr McHenry, a physician of Irish origins, lived in Philadelphia where he edited the first version of *The American Monthly Magazine* in 1824.

In the same way, Delancey and Melancourt debate apparently less urgent matters but, like their illustrious counterparts, they visibly express opposed views that reveal the existential gap separating the British subjects of Great Britain and those of her American colonies. Delancey's uneasiness in the woods makes him feel as if they were "burrowing with the wild beasts" whereas Melancourt enjoys without any restraint "these vast solitudes of Nature" (74). Whereas the American anchors History in "these glorious trees that have witnessed the flight of ages" (74), Delancey reverences "the smooth meadows of old England with their ivyed castles" which he sees as "relics of a thousand years" (74). The American wilderness is opposed here to the domesticated order of the English countryside. However, in accordance with what History confirmed, they both agree on Washington's value whom they see on his way to a very promising future, which his heroic behavior during the battle unmistakably corroborates.

The way "Nature [i]s exhibited" (79) in the first section is relevant of the ideological background of the author. After having introduced the conflict as the opposition between the "defying roar of the British Lion" and the "challenging shriek of the Gallic Eagle" (70), the author keeps on using animal fictional elements or symbols: no less than twenty-four other animals are quoted, among which insects, owls, whippoorwills, wolves, panthers, woodpeckers, squirrels, snakes, partridges, hawks, grasshoppers, wrens, rabbits, tigers, crickets, reptiles, bears, beavers, deer, etc., all of them *wild* animals. In this bestiary are included the "children of Nature" (90) who are recurrently described not as human beings but as "tawny forms" (72;85) or "wild forms" (85), or simply "forms." By opposing "forms" to "uniforms," the author makes his "savages" belong to the realm of the wild beasts, with the notable exception of Joscelyn-Onwawisset who was raised by Europeans. So it is no wonder if he displays qualities that are supposedly those of a civilized man, in particular that of loyalty, once he is recalled his European background by his brother's presence, when the members of his tribe only seek some "wild" blind vengeance.

The second episode, equally inspired by historical facts, takes place at Fort Oswego in August 1756,[85] and, as in the two precedent

[85] See *supra* note 140.

texts, it stages a nocturnal Indian raid. Classically, the scene begins with the first signs of a storm. Contrary to the first chapter, the wilderness is not praised as darkness makes it frightening and eerie. Moreover, the stress is laid more on the protagonist's feelings than on the surrounding forest. Melancourt experiences so peculiar an emotional state, under the spell of a "foreboding, a presentiment" (83), that he mistakes a cluster of hemlocks for revenants, "so spectral had been their appearance" (83), a prolepsis for the return of the presumably dead warrior-brother. Like in "Recollections of the Village of——," the assaillants resort to fire and torches but this time, the assailed are not saved at the last minute: fire has here a "devilish" function and the providential thunderstorm is replaced by "hot coals . . . falling in showers" (84). Undoubtedly, heaven seems to have forgotten the unfortunate American soldiers.

The narrative assumes another dimension when Melancourt is captured by the Indian sachem, and during the hours the Virginian spends with his captors, Onwawisset undergoes a transformation which makes him abandon his "wild animal" side and recover a more "civilized" character. First portrayed like a "plumaged warrior" (85) with "snake-like eyes" (86) wearing a "beaver robe" (86), he suddenly becomes Joscelyn again as if by magic, thanks to the indestructible link tattooed on his brother's chest and on his own. Here the author's vision of the qualitative gap separating Whites and Natives seems to yield to higher considerations: the deep, sincere feelings inhabiting the two men are both symbolized and brought back to life by the *Indian* totem which bounds them to one another to their death, as the ending of the story corroborates. Moreover, Onwawisset's submission to Western values symbolically transforms him, even in terms of gender identification. When wounded by Melancourt, "he was a woman, and whining like a dying panther" (87) and when he is deeply moved by having found his brother again, his eyes "are wet like a woman's when she clasps her dying child" (91). Let us note that this ambivalence was present in the Christian name given to him by his adoptive family, as Joscelyn is a name given to males or females regardless of sex.

Unquestionably, the values governing the narrative are no longer those of military intelligence or inspired by an overprotective Providence, but those of individual history, sentiments and interests pre-

vailing over their collective equivalents. The triumph of individualism over corporate duties and responsibilities definitely projects the narrative in the field of Romanticism. This, added to the celebration of Nature and the stress laid on heroic behavior to the point of sacrifice evokes Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking's Tales*, making Onwawisset a fictional double of Uncas,[86] the protagonist of *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), a story equally set during the French and Indian War.

Mohegan-Ana: or Scenes and Stories of the Hudson

The story of the "Flying Head" is also based on a supposed Indian legend and is told, according to a literary form quite fashionable at the time, as a secondhand account reported by the narrator, an oral version of the "fake document" effect. The text opens on the description of an "unsettled region" in which Nature can be discovered in her "unmolested fastnesses" (94) under the guidance of one of the few occupiers of the land, Captain Gill, a kind of Native hermit who lives with his only daughter. Both of them are humorously depicted, in particular the Captain's "unhallowed league with *bad spirits*" (95, emphasis added) which refers to his occasional drunkenness but also announces the supernatural substance of his narrative.

The first part of the text follows the classic pattern of a party of hunters, gathered around a campfire after a copious meal, listening to stories told by an old Indian, a scenario previously exploited by Washington Irving in his twin stories "Dolph Heyliger" and "The Storm-ship".[87] After a tempest during which the members of the party were "separated and dispersed in the darkness" by a raging thunderstorm, the mysterious "Flying Head" is casually mentioned by the old Indian who is immediately urged to make himself clearer, which he does quite willingly.

At first, the narrative sounds like one more legend from a region which has "from time immemorial been infested by a class of beings with whom no good man would ever wish to come in contact" (98).

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[86] Uncas (1588–1683) was the chief of the Mohegan.

[87] In *Bracebridge Hall* (1822).

This derogatory way of describing the Natives, recurrent in the text, reveals the author's prejudices, but also serves his literary purpose: what was accomplished in these backward parts—the fathers were collectively slaughtered by the sons—could only be the work of base "degenerate"[88] persons having lost their human qualities. But beyond this horror scene, the gist of the story lies in a supernatural phenomenon, an original variant of the vengeful revenant, whose existence "has never been disputed" (99): the winged head of one of the decapitated elders which, "hovering like a falcon for the stoop" (103), pursues the parricides and "prevent[s] them from finding forgetfulness in repose" for "the glances of the Flying Head would pierce their very eyelids, and steep their dreams in horror" (104). That the Flying Head is an allegory of guilt, a pre-Freudian representation of the return of the repressed, is beyond question, and so is its kinship with other monsters of traditional legends whose veracity is attested by the petrification of the doomed Natives still visible, "though altered by the wearing of the rains in the lapse of long years . . . in those upright rocks which stand like human figures along the shores of some of the neighboring lakes" (104).

In fact, the narrator never takes his guide's account totally in earnest, as he adds here and there comments of his own, mentioning for instance, tongue-in-cheek, that "most Indians have another way of accounting for [the petrified] figures" and that the Flying Head must have lost some of its power for "few Indians who now find their way to this part of the country are never molested except by the white settlers, who are slowly extending their clearings among the wild hills of the north" (99). However, the irony of the narrator does not suffice to spoil the eerie atmosphere of the story, nor its butcherly quality when a bloodthirsty Native "buried his tomahawk in the head of the old man nearest to him" (101), or when it comes to describing the first apparitions of the monster as "a few gory bubbles appeared to float over one smooth and turbid spot" (102). The reader is plunged into a macabre ambiance filled with a mixture of raw cruelty, sordid details, decay and madness, which the "dismal wailing of the loon" (97), evoking ambiguously both a bird and a lunatic, announced premonitorily. These ingredients are those of the Gothic

[88] The narrator mentions successively "the degenerate band that survive at St. Regis" (99) and "these degenerate aborigines" (99). However, the word "degenerate" may be taken in its strict etymological sense of "fallen from their ancestral quality."

romances popularized in England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries by writers such as Horace Walpole[89] or Ann Radcliffe.[90] While medieval castles are here definitely missing, the details of the landscapes echo the labyrinth of underground passages or dungeons typically found in Gothic novels, as the progression of the party of hunters in the maze of "[i]nnumerable streams" (96) and over the always "deeper and more sluggish" (96) waters of the lakes illustrates. Ponds become moats, and islands spring out of them like doomed haunted castles: "their graceful slopes were held in strong contrast by a single islet which shot up in one bold cliff from the centre, and nodded with a crown of pines, around which an eagle was at that moment wheeling" (96). Like in "The Totem," the story is Americanized by substituting natural settings for the tradition of historical ruins and castles.[91] Mixed with European influences, the Indian legend, at the crossroads of genres such as the macabre or the ghost story, becomes, along with some of Poe's or Hawthorne's tales, another typically American form of the Gothic story.

[89] Horace Walpole (1717-1797), the author of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the first Gothic novel in English.

[90] Ann Radcliffe, (1764-1823). In her most famous works, *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) or *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) she uses castles and landscapes to suggest mood and a sense of mystery.

[91] See *infra* page 45 and note 49.

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A September Trip to Catskill.

Grand exceedingly are the hills of Catskill,[92] and noble supporters to the blue dome that sits so lightly on their architrave.[93] Absorbing beyond belief is an undisturbed contemplation of the forests that cover their valleys. You feel as if the curtain of Time was raised, and you looked upon eternity. Sweet beyond parallel is the miniature map of the Valley of the Hudson as you look down from the table-rock in front of the Mountain House,[94] and dally with the topmost tendrils of the hemlock that finds root a hundred and fifty feet below you. Fantastic beyond conception are the gossamer veils that wreath and circle around the rugged brow of the hill at your left, now clasping his old forehead with its misty coronal, then lifting, with the sportive grace of a fay, its vapory circlet far above the discarded object of its late caresses, until, weary of its upward flight, it sinks drooping and dejected into the valley beneath.

The bell of the Erie tolled a warning to those who had yet to bid adieu to their parting friends, and before the cable that had restrained her impatience at the wharf was coiled upon deck, we were dashing up the Hudson against wind and tide at the rate of seventeen miles an hour. It was in the early part of September, and the breeze came whistling down the river freighted with the first frosts from the lakes,

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92 The Catskill mountains are an extension of the Appalachian range situated west of the Hudson River in Upstate New York. Their highest peaks are not more than 4,000 feet high. Originally called "Blue Mountains" by locals, their original Dutch name became popular with the publication of Washington Irving's "Rip van Winkle" (1819).

93 Usually, the lowermost part of an entablature in classical architecture that rests on top of a column.

94 One of the first resort hotels to be built in the Catskills in 1827, in use until 1942. Located on a high steep ridge, it offered a spectacular view on the Hudson valley.

and scarce had we reached the Palasades[95] when a sharp mist was dampening the travelling ardor of some three hundred passengers who were in the motley pursuit of pleasure and business. I buttoned my over-coat up to my throat as I conquered the first inkling of envy that was generated by a peep into the bar-room of the Exchange Hotel on the dock at Poughkeepsie[96]; for there sat a comfortable looking descendant of Adam, reading the Genisee Farmer,[97] with his dexter limb occupying two chairs, before a fire that would have gladdened the heart of a Laplander. Newburgh[98] looked charmingly, though I suppose a slight gleam of sunshine that glanced for a moment along its heights was the cause of its particularly inviting air. The dock at Catskill[99] was slimy from the drizzle of the last six hours, and the cattle attached to the Highlander and Rip Van Winkle stood meekly facing the storm.

Started for the Mountain House, we made our first halt at Van Bergen's,[100] the spot where I suppose the Royal George had once supplied the wherewithal to moisten the husky effects of the pipe of the immortal sleeper, and the old pine tree, by the side of the spring, against which Rip used to rest his gun as he *scooped up* the clear waters of his mountain well, was a fluted column of the same dimensions of some dozen others that ranged on the side-walk as supporters to the piazzas of the rival hotels.

"Un tres petit chien cela,"[101] said the gentleman opposite me to his fair companion, as he pointed to a diminutive specimen of the canine genus that was flying and yelping—tail couchant—from the

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95 The Palasades—or Palisades—is a narrow ridge located along the western shoreline of the Hudson River in southeastern New York.

96 City situated on the Hudson River and settled by the Dutch in 1687. It became the temporary state capital in 1777, and the American Constitution was ratified there in 1788.

97 A monthly journal devoted to agriculture and horticulture, founded by Luther Tucker in 1831 and published in Rochester, NY.

98 This city, founded in 1709 by Palatine Germans, is located on the Hudson River, not far from Poughkeepsie, and was Washington's headquarters from 1782 to 1783. It was in Newburgh that the Continental Army was disbanded.

99 Village on the Hudson River settled by the Dutch in the 17th century. Thomas Cole (1801–1848), the leader of the Hudson River School, America's first painting movement, lived there. His paintings of the Hudson valley and the Catskills made him famous.

100 In 1678, Martin Van Bergen and Sylvester Salisbury purchased land from the Indians in the valley of the Catskill.

101 The French for "What a small dog!"

broom-stick attacks of an enraged milliner in the opposite shop door. That shop was built upon the very spot that was once shaded by "The oak."[102] May the Lord forgive the sacrilegious heedlessness of my countrymen !

The sun had advanced somewhat in the occident, as we passed through the brick yards that skirt the borders of the town, and after a half hour's drive we alighted at Balt Bloom's Hotel. I had never been far westward, but I imagined the scene presented was worthy a soil a thousand miles nearer the setting sun.

Two strapping youths were standing at the entrance of the tavern in an animated discussion about the "comin election," and as the elder of the two dropped the butt of his gun upon the broad toe of his boot, and thrust both arms half way to the elbow into the side pockets of his velveteen hunting-coat, (his right arm forming circular rest for the barrel,) I observed the strong expression of vexation on his countenance as he lamented "that the chap who could fill a game bag like that which hung by the side of his companion, could vote for the Petticoat candidate," as he was pleased to style the Hero of Tippicanoe.[103] He turned as he saw strangers coming, and while one foot was resting upon the primitive floor of the bar-room, he brought his rifle to a sight, and with his left eye closed as if ready for aim, he turned his head around to the bar when the other discovered the object of its search.

"Balt Bloom," said the sportsman, "what'll you take for a shot at that cock that's struttin yender as big as any member of Congress ?"

"Three shillin," sung out a shrill, sharp voice from an inner apartment. It sounded like the echo of one of Dame Van Winkle's highest notes,[104] that had been wandering among these hills since the

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[102] Probably the big tree under which Rip and his friends used to talk in the shade before it was cut down after the Revolution.

[103] In 1811, General William Henry Harrison fought the Shawnees in the battle of Tippecanoe, Indiana. The battle was indecisive but the Natives were repelled and their village destroyed. It sounded the death knell of Tecumseh's hopes to contain the American advance into the Shawnees territory. Known as "Old Tippecanoe," Harrison won the presidency in 1840 and died shortly after from pneumonia. During the "rip-roaring" campaign which led to his election, he was ridiculed by Senator William Allen who was nicknamed "petticoat Allen" because he had declared that the petticoat of the election banners was given to him by an old woman to symbolize his lack of courage.

[104] Irving made of Rip van Winkle the typical henpecked husband...

day its owner had been called to torment the shades of poor Rip and his dog.

"Crack," answered the rifle almost as shrilly.

"He's as dead as Julius Caesar," coolly remarked the sportsman, as he chased some coins about his pocket to pay for this cheap gratification of his vanity as a shot at a hundred yards ; and as the carriage door closed upon me, Balt's wife had the remains of poor chanticleer in one hand, while the other was extended to receive the forthcoming "shillins."

At Sax's we again halted, and thence began the ascent of the mountain. The first gatherings of twilight were closing upon the clouds that were lying in heavy masses upon the sides of the hills that stretched to the north, and as the horses breathed a moment at "The Well," we caught the last glimpse of a pretty landscape below that nestled in the bosom of its mountain protectors.

As night had closed its curtain upon us, we followed suit with the windows of our carriage, and the travelling bonnet of its raven-haired owner fell upon the shoulder next her, I had sufficient discretion, if I grumbled at my bachelor lot, to make myself the only auditor of my complaints.

The wave-like sound of the gong floated upward from hall to hall through the Mountain House, and our party of three were all that answered it in doing honor to the creature comforts that paid tribute to the keen mountain air that had assailed our appetites.

When the last egg had disappeared, I found leisure to take a peep at the appointments of the place.

A solitary lamp glimmered on the table, and its feeble rays made the gloom which hovered around the columns that supported the immense apartment but more shadowy. The couple opposite me were one in every sense, save corporeally ; therefore the darkness of Tartarus[105] would have been sunshine to them. For myself, the leaden gloom was oppressive. The ebon statue at the head of the table stood so motionless that I shuddered. A sense of loneliness—a desolate re-

[105] In Greek mythology, a region below Hades, a place of punishment.

treat of the heart—the eye moistens if you think of your hearthstone —an indescribable something we have all felt some time or other, crept over me ; I courted the friendly companionship of a fire that was blazing in the drawing-room, but the wind moaned piteously around the peaks of the pine orchard in their attempts to keep off the *dyer* from its coronal ; but a return spark of the sensation was fanned by the sighing breeze, and the solitude of the immense apartment gave it a shrine to burn upon. Who has not felt this at midnight, when the only tenant of such a place as the Mountain House, a solitary communicant, with its unbroken stillness ? He imagines that he is the last representative of his race, and the sensation sweeps over the chords of his heart like the faint breeze upon the loosened strings of an Eolean harp.[106] It whispers sadly ; one does not feel this if he has the fellowship of nature, though the throb of his own bosom may have been the first that ever broke upon the virgin silence of the place, he feels that God is the architect, and lives himself a worshipper in

> "That cathedral boundless as our wonder,
> Whose quenchless lamps the sun and moon supply;
> Its choir the winds and waves, its organ, thunder,
> Its dome, the sky." ————————[107]

"Mark."

"Sir."

"Will the sun rise clear in the morning ?"

"Will Mr. L—— be called at half past 5 or at 9 ?"

"At half past 5."

"I think it'll rise clare, sir." The Ethiop vanished. That negro deserves a pension at my hands, for the prediction from one of the initiated that I should see a clear sunrise sent my *sensations* to dreamland, where I followed them. I was sorry I had not given Mark the chance of predicting a misty morning, for at sunrise we were literally in the clouds ; but at ten o'clock the dense mass rose from the valleys, and the silver thread of the Hudson meandered through the

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[106] After Aeolus, the Greek god of wind. A musical instrument invented in the 17th century whose strings are sounded by the wind blowing through them.

[107] Horace Smith (1779–1849), English humorist, poet and novelist, friend of Shelley.

lower fringes of the weeping veil, till its last bead sparkled in a moment's sunshine, and was lost to the gazers from the Mountain House. The struggle between the sun and clouds was long, and victory seemed alternately perched on either banner, till at last the day god triumphed, and sent the rebellious vapors scampering up hill and mountain.

My heart warmed towards my fellow-travellers as I listened to their expressions of delight. They had seen the wonders of the old world, yet they acknowledged the fresh beauties of the new. They were oddities therefore, and my heart acknowledged them as exceedingly worthy of its admiration.

"You are a chubby-cheeked urchin ; tell me your name."

"William Wallace, ma'am."

"Truly a good one for your mountain home," said Mrs. B., who had addressed a boy of five that was playing with a noble dog upon a slight embankment, by which the wagon that was to carry us to the Falls was standing. The child pulled the remnant of his palmeth[108] from his uncombed curls, and gazed with surprise upon the face of the lady-stranger who spoke so kindly to him. Poor boy ! his eyes filled as the lady stepped into the wagon, for he thought that his desolate lot had been pitied. But I should be talking of the mountains, and not its gossip.

These mountain roads are curiosities. The width of your wagon is calculated so nicely, that nitches are cut into the hemlocks that the hubs of your wheel may pass untouched, while the edge of your tire will leave a feathery seam on the moss of the trunk. The drapery, too, of these forests. Their hangings of green and russet. Traveller, if you are capless, Leary will have a call from you when you arrive in town.

It was a breezy September day that smilingly escorted us to the "Falls of the Kauterskill."[109] We stood upon the extremity of the scaffolding that has been erected for the use of visiters and the profit of its owner, and while listening to the lullaby of the Fall, which sent its

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[108] Palmette: a fan-like ornament.

[109] The Kaaterskill Falls, made of two separate falls on Spruce Creek, near Palenville, are the highest falls in the State of New York (260 feet).

gentle music up from the pool into which the tiny brooklet fell, we looked down upon the sea of foliage that waved before us. As far as the eye could reach, until it blended with the horizon, lay the interminable forest. The first breath of Autumn had whispered the warning of its wintry monitor, and the golden dye of the alchymist mingled with the gorgeous coloring of an autumnal sunset. It was an hour to dream in, and the imagination of the young wife, who leaned upon the arm of her husband, settled upon the wings of a golden vapor that slumbered within ten feet of her, and, mounting in its aerial car, pursued its flight *four thousand miles* from the spot where she stood. It returned as a ragged urchin broke the general silence with—

"Will you see the Falls, sir ? "

"I came here for that purpose," answered I.

"How long will you take ? my father lets off the water at a dollar an hour."

Shade of Rip Van Winkle ! Thought you, poor ghost, that the free waters of your Kauterskill would have been dammed for money ?

Following our youthful guide, who bounded over the natural and artificial steps like a mountain kid, we descended flight after flight into the ravine, and stood upon the table rock at the margin of the basin into which the first fall pitches. It was now no longer a tiny brooklet whose bubble we heard from above, but a circular body of water of perhaps four feet diameter. The sunshine sparkled upon its smooth surface, where it turned gracefully over its rocky lip, and fell in an unbroken bow one hundred and eighty feet, and its last gleams lingered among the trees that hung protectingly over it. The effect produced by every waterfall upon the beholder varies with the time, season, and attendant circumstances, more than one will suppose when considering their distinctly marked character. With Niagara,[110] though at all times the spirit is bowed down with the awe which its grandeur imposes, this is as true as with the smallest cascade in the land ; and for years after, even while the thunders from the eternal organ of the former are sounding in our ears, a ludicrous scent at a breakfast table may ever be associated with the memory of its sublimity. The Kauterskill, upon that bright evening, (and the comparis-

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[110] Niagara Falls, on the Niagara River, are 167 feet high on the American side, and 158 on the Canadian side.

on was not far-fetched,) I likened to a stately queen, upon whose face sorrow had left the traces of its visitation. I doffed my hat to the water-fall in most respectful admiration ; but the glen, the crimson and the orange leaf floating in the pool, subdued me, and the first whisperings of the season breathed a melancholy story of their fall.

From the table rock we went under the Fall sheltered by a rocky ceiling, upon whose dome the moss of centuries had collected a verdant livery ; and, while protected by this adamantine roof another opportunity was offered for a survey of that unrivalled forest with its foreground guarded by a bow of rotary crystal, whose organ was fitting music for this mountain cathedral. Opposite our first position, we could look from the first to the second Fall, which throws itself eighty feet into the ravine below, and listen to the deep murmurs of the river as it relied away in the secrecy of its leafy shield. A sunbeam never danced upon its ripple, so sheltered is it. The first advances of twilight reminded us of the road we had to retrace, and after an hour's drive we were again at the Mountain House.

Contemplative reader ! go to Catskill in September, when the mountain air will give you an appetite for the creature comforts of the Mountain House ; when you will not be jostled by the unthinking crowd, who go there because it is fashionable ; when the deep verdure of its woods is relieved by a rainbow here and there ; when the water at the Falls will be sold at a cheaper rate than in July ; and when, if you will not complain of the company, I will greet you a welcome at the table rock.

G. E. L.

THE

AMERICAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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Recollections of the Village of——

This is the golden age of legendary lore. The sober narrative of the settlement of towns and churches, and the detail of the ecclesiastical disputes of the Pilgrims, have lost their interest with the lovers of the marvellous ; and lest the important chronicles of the New England States should be left to slumber in their original mistiness, wonderful untruths must he imagined, or still more wonderful facts must be found among mouldering records, to serve as lures for those who but skim over the surface of history, as you would disguise the healthful medicine of a child in a sweet piece of confectionary.

Legends of heroism and enchantment have already made famous a few of the towns of New England and New York. Posterity will look upon the scene of Lovel's fight[111] and of our own Bunker Hill[112] as the classic land of the West ; and while the Sketch Book[113] is unforgotten, what traveller upon the Hudson will omit to stray along that gorge of the Kaatskills where old Rip Van Winkle passed his long sleep ?

There is a pleasant village in New England in which, in times past, was a little Gothic school house, the high reputation of which used to draw the aspirants after collegiate honors from far and near.

I can remember the good master even now, a little dark looking man with a quick piercing black eye, and withal, the most good humored smile in the world except when he was in a passion. He was a sincerely religious man, but at times, when the higher scholars who were to be entered as Freshmen at the next College Commencement

[111] An Indian battle (May 1725) in Fryeburg, Maine, during which Captain Lovell was killed after valiantly resisting the Pequot army which outnumbered his own.

[112] A place north of Boston, the site of a battle of the Revolution during which the patriot troops heroically fought much more numerous Red Coats. They were decimated, but they had proved they could resist one of the best armies in the world, which enhanced American confidence in a final victory.

[113] *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1820) by Washington Irving (1783-1859) made him the first American author to gain real fame in Europe. The collection includes "Rip van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," both set near the Hudson River.

would become unruly in anticipation of their embryo dignity, and did not bear their honors as meekly as in reverence they should, the old gentleman would be transported beyond all bounds, and I have heard him use most uncanonical words, though, to say the truth, he would couch them in the learned languages for fear of scandalizing the girls and the younger scholars. Thus I have heard him wish a laggard at his Livy lesson,[114] "at the gates of Hades,"[115] and call Jupiter to witness the stupidity of the rising generation, in very classical Greek and Latin.

A mile or so below the village, winds a river which breaks here into the finest scenery which marks its whole course. For miles above it is a deep, silent stream, and there is a gloominess in its waters where the forest trees bend down their branches to the wave. You will fall while on its banks, into that repose of feeling which is so often caused by the sight of quiet waters. There is a calmness in Nature which extends itself to the mind, and you would not wish to disturb the repose of either by a heavy footstep or the rustling of a leaf.

But in a moment all this is changed. We may gather matter for a homily from the changes on the earth. How near together are the sublime and the lowly ! We have but to turn from side to side to enjoy the varieties of Nature, which may raise the mind from the lowest ebb to the highest possible excitement of human feeling. Nay, how often, as we look upon the same well known spot in the varying of its seasons, may we find the waste of winter changed into springtime beauty, and the richness of the earth poured forth from places whose wintry desolation had almost determined us to forswear the haunts of our childhood.

At the point where the river sweeps round the village, it swells into a large basin studded with islands, and lined with craggy, broken rocks. You might think it a small lake but for two waterfalls situated one above the other, which extend the whole width of the river. The space between them is, in a calm day, a clear, glassy surface, where the water reposes for a moment from the upper fall ere it rushes on

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114 Titus Livius (*circa* 59 BC-AD 17). His *Ab Urbe Condita,* a monumental history of Rome, was a classic which exercised a profound influence on historical writing down to the 18th century.

115 In Greek mythology, the world of the dead. The gates of Hades were guarded by the ferocious dog Cerberus.

again with redoubled force. The islands and shores of this basin afford sites for an hundred miles, which continue in a ceaseless clangor from Martinmas[116] till Yule.[117]

At the foot of the lower fall extends, or did extend, a massive bridge. It was a crooked, irregular structure, and showed signs of having been built in the good old colony times, when timber was cheap, and the ideas of our fathers upon architecture were not the most definite or elegant in the world. It had a graceful sinuosity, which made the traveller at one end of it somewhat dubious whether he should pass dry shod to the other side.

On this bridge have I stood through many a summer evening to enjoy the beauty of the scenery, or to lose myself in the fancies suggested by the situation, to wander from reality, and to imagine what had or might have occurred, when Nature presided here in her uncultivated greatness over the land and its inhabitants. I would picture to myself what had been in the olden times, the feats of the hunter of the hills, and I could see in every grassy mound the burial cairn of a warrior, or search some desolate spot for the mementos of Indian warfare. I could imagine the poetry, (as poetry there must have been,) in the early history of our Indians, and each wild cavern which was met with in my wanderings, might be converted into a holy grot, the place of divine communion of some Aboriginal Numa with his forest Egeria,[118] and the relics of greatness might be found in the sublime scenery, as once the dwelling place of a people whose minds must have borne some proportion to the grandeur of their habitation.

But there is enough of interest in reality to those who have lived long in any place of extraordinary natural beauty. It is well to recall the impressions which were made on our minds at the first unfolding of Nature to our view. They will bring back the fresh feelings which commerce with the world has deadened. It is well to revisit every nook which has been the scene of a childish frolic, and to call up the recollection of the more hardy adventures of youth. I could visit the consecrated rock where, as school-boy tradition says, a love lorn swain was wont some score of years by gone to meet his lady-love, and the eddies are still boiling where he had adventured to save her

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116 A Christian feast (November 11) commemorating the death and burial of Saint Martin.

117 The feast or season celebrating Christmas, from December 24 to January 6.

118 Numa was a legendary king of Rome, successor to Romulus, advised by the nymph Egeria whom he met in a secret grove.

from the waves. And I can call to mind some of my own "hair breadth'scapes." The bridge had been once washed away by a spring freshet, and travellers were obliged to cross the river in the canoes of the raftsmen. Late one night a canoe had been procured (i. e. taken unceremoniously from her moorings) to transport a few erratic youths to their home from a country merry-making. All were seated but one, who was just stepping to the boat from a raft which stretched far into the river. He was a careless, jolly fellow, with a corporation like an alderman's. One foot was already in the boat, when the log on which he was standing turned, he lost his balance, overset the canoe, and he alone escaped from the chilly water. For a moment, all was hushed anxiety ; but the crew were good swimmers, and as head after head rose panting to the surface, I can well remember the shout, the clear ringing peals of merriment which burst on the stillness of the clear moonshine. The days when sprites and guardian deities arose to punish the disturbers of their dwelling places, have long been buried in the tombs of the ancient poets ; but had not all the tenants of the imaginary world been banished from New England by the piety of our forefathers, we should have expected them to have arisen to rebuke the bold intruders on their watery domain.

And in connection with this same freshet, I can recollect the naked timbers of what was once a bridge stretching across the abyss, where the waters were bearing everything to destruction. And I can remember the day which followed that night of ruin, how brightly it smiled, and the thousands of trees and logs, which had been destined for the mills, borne out to sea by the rush of waves and the torrent too, so swollen that the falls were on a level with the rest of the river, and the spray which was shining as purely in the sunbeam as if it had no part in the work of destruction which was going on beneath it. And at times a mill shed would be swept from its foundations, and be hurried crashing and rolling through the abyss. There was one poor fellow who had been caught by the rising of the river in a mill on an island rock. He had but time to escape from the shed ere it was swept away, and he was cut off from communication with the main land until the subsiding of the river.

Somewhere about the year seventeen hundred and thirty-six, an attack had been planned by an Indian tribe upon the settlements below the falls. They then consisted of but few inhabitants, who could

have made no effectual resistance to a war party ; and to have been assailed by Indian surprise would have been hopelessly fatal. It was a night which seemed fitted for deeds of terror. There were threatening black clouds clothing the whole vault of the heavens, except a circle of gloomy, lurid light round the horizon, such as we have seen just before a destructive storm. There was a muttering, suppressed noise of thunder, as if the clouds moved heavily with their load of evil ; and the lightning would be seen struggling to appear through the dark masses, and then shoot down until lost in the light below.

There are terrors in Nature which act not with immediate force upon the mind or body, yet which are among the most appalling discouragements to the settlers of a new country. There is an uncertainty and vagueness of fear, which is more disheartening than the worst of palpable evils. Where everything is certain, the mind does not wander from the immediate reality of peril. There is an unchanging point, a fixed range of objects, towards which human energy can be directed to do all that manhood may to avert impending evil, and then even in the death-hour, it may be some consolation for a brave man to know from what certain quarter the ruin comes, and to think that he falls with an unbroken spirit, though the body is overcome by irresistible force. But in darkness and uncertainty reason is lost in the whirl of terrors, and the very brain will grow giddy with it knows not what, and because of its very ignorance. The imagination may go illimitably on, and picture new dangers, which but wait until those which are now impending have had their effect, ere they too follow and overwhelm their victims. In vain may courage and endurance be summoned to face the danger which is before ; above, around and beneath may others lurk, like hidden enemies, to give wounds which no watchfulness can prevent, and no power retaliate.

Such are the perils of the elements in an unknown land, where the wilderness opens but upon the ocean, or else upon the desert, where no sound of civilization is heard, where no cry of suffering will be heeded, and from whence no voice of sympathy will proceed. But fear will whisper that these are not the only enemies to be encountered. There are unseen living beings who look upon the European as the oppressor, in whose view the holiest virtue is vengeance, whom education has taught no touch of human pity, whom watchfulness makes not heavy, who know not fatigue, and who are

ever ready to seize on the slightest negligence as the signal for slaughter.

It was on such a night as I have attempted to describe, that a large war party of savages determined to attack the fair settlement at the falls. Vague rumors had already been afloat of impending dangers, and each sun had sunk and left uncertainty on the minds of the settlers whether they should ever again behold his rising. But the work of death was reserved for the midst of the whirlwind, and the darkness of the night storm. The canoes of the savages had descended almost to their point of destination without the knowledge of a single victim. Scouts had been sent before to raise beacon fires on appointed rocks, that the party might know their vicinity to the falls.

Fortunately, it happened that the very means used to secure the safety of the expedition, proved the cause of its failure. Tradition is uncertain whether the messenger was treacherous, or whether he had mistaken his land murks, or whether the safety of the villagers was owing to the elements. It is known that they were aroused from their slumbers by the bright fire flashes which shone through their windows. There are some who say that the beacon fires were kindled in the wrong places, and others, that an old dead pine which overhung thralls had been fired by lightning. Be it as it may, there was not a heavy eye during the remainder of he night in the village. There were the shouts of men, and the cries of women and children terrified at impending destruction. The suspense was not long. The flame which shed its light over rock and wave, showed a party of canoes hurrying towards the fire as to a rendezvous. The motion of the boats grew more and more rapid and unsteady, until it was evident that they were no longer under the command of their crews. The swoln river was hurrying them on, and as they neared the fatal falls, then were seen the desperate efforts of the savages to save their barks from the current and the sullen plunges, as the prospect of death became more certain. On they came—the canoes hurried and crashed over the falls in one mass of ruin ; and of those who had set out on the errand of death, there remained no trace, save that a broken oar or so, and the bodies of a few Indians were found the next morning where the work was to have been completed.

K. K.

THE

AMERICAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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Sebago Pond.

During a journey through the eastern part of New England, in the May of 18—, I made a pedestrian excursion with an old college friend, from Portland[119] to Sebago Pond, a paradise of waters amid the wilderness of Maine.[120] It was a glorious morning. We were in motion and among the fields, as all true pedestrians should be, in time to see the sun rising from the ocean, a thing of light and life, gladdening every living being and every feature of scenery into beauty and brightness at his approach. All nature seemed awakening at the summons of her master, and to be throwing off the veil of darkness which had hidden her beauties from his sight, and the dew drops around us were glittering in his beams, as if the elves, started at his approach, had fled, and in their haste left their jewels behind them to beautify and adorn the earth. A soft morning breeze was stirring and waving the grass by the road side, as if in harmony with its music. To a melancholy or a speculative man there is an undefinable pleasure in spring-time musings, and in the conversations which grow out of them. The old year has passed away. The tempests of winter have sunk and died before the softening and perhaps enervating influence of spring, and, as if in unison with nature, the invalid who has lingered on in life, during the severity of our northern climate, and who has, during its dreariness, baffled for a while the slow inroads of consumption, brightens at the return of spring, with the

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[119] Portland, Maine, was settled by the British in 1632 and named Falmouth in 1658. The city was several times destroyed by the Wampanoag people, and by the British Navy during the Revolution. In 1786 the citizens of Falmouth formed a separate town in Falmouth Neck and named it Portland. Portland was Maine's capital when it became a state in 1820, until 1832 when it was moved to Augusta.

[120] Sebago (Indian name: "big water") is New England's third largest lake, more than 300 feet deep.

hectic colors "that dazzle as they fall," and at last sinks into his grave just as the flowers have begun to bloom and blossom around him.

With good company, walking, is, for a while, a most excellent means of getting along and enjoying the wayfaring amusement of the traveller. But solitary pleasures, let philosophers say what they will, are dull things. There is more truth than the world, or perhaps even the poets and rhymers who talk about them, imagine, in what they say of the intercourse of tried friends. When a man cannot have a vent for his perpetually recurring thoughts, they will turn and prey upon his own mind, and render him a gloomy misanthrope. It is impossible to be forever thinking. Were it so, the brain would soon be filled, and leave no room for fresh thick-coming fancies. During a walk of live hours in the country every sense is continually conveying to us the materials for new thoughts, the brightness and value of which are doubly increased by being shared with another.

We in due time reached our destination. The approach to Sebago Pond is through a rugged hilly land, which opens a communication between the solitude of the waters and the busy world around them. From an elevation of the path there are suddenly seen a few fishing huts and raftsmen's cabins close beside a slight bridge, which is continually thronged with the most patient of sportsmen. On the lower side of the bridge the pond empties itself into a small river, which in its course to the sea, sets in motion the manufactories and machinery of a thickly settled country, while on the other, the pond lies expanded to the view, "a burnished sheet of living gold."[121] We saw the water in its deep tranquillity. I *have* seen it in storms, (for there are storms even upon our peaceful inland lakes,) when its wooded islands would be dimly seen looming up like spectres through the fog, and the waves would toss angrily about, as if vexed that their banks detained them from mingling with the ocean. But this day, everything was so calm that it seemed hardly possible to disturb the tranquillity of the scene. The numerous small craft of the fishermen were plying silently about in pursuit of their sport ; at intervals, a pleasure boat would be seen containing a party with faces as bright and joyous as the scenes amid which they were moving ; and ever and anon the cry of the raftsmen from far up the lake, would come

[121] From *Narrative Journal of Travels Throughout the Northwestern Regions of the United States* (1821), by Henry Schoolcraft (1793-1864), American ethnologist who dedicated thirty years of his life to the study of Native peoples.

pealing over the waters, making the whole appear like a festival day of the desert.

We soon procured a boat and a boatman, and commenced, in compliance with the custom of all the visiters of Sebago, trailing our lines amid scores of others. Ah, Old Izaak Walton,[122] thou wouldst never more have hung over the narrow streams of old England, couldst thou once have gazed into the clear depths of this beauteous lake ; couldst thou have reclined with thy rod and thy basket and spent the livelong day in "meditation and angling" on its banks, and have seen the noble fish sporting in its waters as if proud of their spacious habitation.

Whoever has floated on the calm surface of a summer lake may imagine or recollect the happiness of the moment. The water around and beneath as clear and as smooth as polished glass, the trees and cliffs and headlands pictured in its depths by the bright sun, and the sun himself in his glory, with all the blue firmament around him, reflected from the wave with a softness which the eye can bear, and with a magnificence only equalled by the intolerable brightness of his real presence in the sky. We seemed to be in the midst of a vast circle, extending beneath, above, and around, as far as the eye reached and the horizon extended ; the centre of a vast globe of earth, and sky, and water, over which two unclouded suns reigned together. At such a time, there is a deep hush over nature, which communicates itself to the mind. The very oarsman will pause, though not from weariness, and in the profound stillness, you will feel that breathlessness, that rising of the heart, which is the effect of gazing on silent sublimity. And then will come stealing along, a gradual swell, under whose power your boat will rock, and bend, and carry your body and mind with it in its every vibration, until it again sinks to its motionless repose. And then a breeze will sweep by, blending earth and water in whimsical forms, as in a distorting mirror, and ruffle the sunny water, making it appear like the folds of a flowing drapery.

As we moved along, we gradually lost sight of our fellow laborers, and a more varied prospect of the lake began to open upon us. It is of a much softer and more delicate character than is the gen-

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[122] Izaak Walton (1593-1683), English author of the famous *The Compleat Angler; or, the Contemplative Man's Recreation* (1653).

erality of our eastern scenery. With one remarkable exception, there are none of the bold rough features so common in New England. But at times would be seen a clearing, filled with the charred stumps of the pines, whose blackened surfaces and desolate cheerlessness, were fit emblems of the ancient nobleness, withered and blasted as it now is, of the *rightful* lords of the soil, the American aborigines. At another point appeared young fields of grain in the bloom of vegetation, and again our course would be altered by tracts of woodland stretching out into the water, while the little islands with which the lake is studded, here a barren rock visited only by the wild fowl, and there a solitary pine which seemed to be growing out of the water, served as marks to note our progress.

I have said that there was a remarkable exception to the general softness of the scenery. At the distance of about five miles from the bridge before mentioned, rises an immense ridge of gray rocks, standing in bold contrast with the softness of the surrounding water and landscape like the habitation of the *genius loci*. At first rose a precipice to the height of more than an hundred feet, without a single break to afford a resting place to the foot, or relief to the eye, and casting its sombre shadow over the water, which at its base, was unfathomably deep. The stupendous height of the precipice, and the gloomy stillness of the lake, seemed to discourage all attempts to unveil their mysteries. But the effect cannot be described. The poet may give glowing descriptions of the calm tranquillity in which Nature sometimes reposes in the midst of her most magnificent creations, or the painter may sketch her productions on his canvass. But still there is something wanting to the imagination. In the real landscape we see her in a deep and pleasing slumber, while in the copy she must appear in the gloomy stillness of death.

Farther on, the rocks became more broken and uneven, towering over each other in the most grotesque forms, arid hanging as if suspended by some unseen enchantment. The fishers and raftsmen had given names to many of the detached masses which bore a real or fancied resemblance to objects which they had met with elsewhere. Midway in air hung the "table," the surface of which was covered by a cloth of the richest verdure, as if nature, by the profusion of her bounties, wished to draw men from the cities, to woo and love her in the wilderness. Hard by stood the "arm chair," offering a place of

rude repose to the wanderer as he climbed towards the summit, and on the summit itself stood the "pulpit-rock," to which in a clear day the laugh and shout would return in a thousand merry echoes from the surrounding crags. But the most remarkable feature of the landscape was a dark cavern, the hollow of which had probably been opened from the solid rock by some convulsion of the earth. Its entrance from the water would admit a small boat. Of its downward course nothing is known. Its depths are hidden by the deep gloom of the waters. But upwards there is a rough winding passage through the mass of stone to the summit of the precipice, the only ascent at the place from the water to the brow of the hill. The entrance to the upper air is narrow, and so well concealed among the scattered masses of granite, as to be unknown except to the people of the vicinity. Directly over the lower entrance, are traced some rude figures in red paint, bearing some resemblance to the human form, and standing as if the guardians of the dark portal beneath, and they have there remained since the first discovery of the country, as fresh and vivid in their coloring, as when they first waked the curiosity of the white man. They are covered with the same veil of mystery as the other parts of the gloomy spot where they are standing. But romance, ever ready to lend her light, when that of truth is obscured, has preserved the following tradition, which we heard in substance from the lips of our boatman.

"Many years ago, long before the whites had penetrated to this wilderness, the inhabitants of an Indian village in the vicinity were surprised by a party of hostile warriors. They had formed their encampment around the point which you see jutting out into the water, and proceeded silently to the abode of their enemy. The forest resounded with the cries of Indian combat. The villagers fought with the energy of desperation, but were at length obliged to yield to superior numbers, and leave their wives, children and property, in the power of their enemies. Among the prisoners was an Indian girl, betrothed to a young warrior, who had signalized himself by his desperate valor in the defence. The enemy remained for a few days at the scene of their triumph, employed in hunting and fishing, preparatory to their return. On the eve of their departure, the moon had risen in a cloudless sky, and was gilding lake and woodland with her light. Every thing on earth was seemingly as peaceful as the heavens.

The party, after having, as they thought, secured their prisoners, had lain down to rest ere the march of the morrow. A slight rustling suddenly aroused a warrior, and on looking up, the captive maiden was seen flying like a deer toward the precipices. The alarm was given, and pursuit instantly commenced. The distance between the pursuers and the fugitive was small, when suddenly she appeared to vanish through the solid rock. A few moments of breathless amazement succeeded, when the plash of oars was heard from the water. The brow of the rock was thronged with the dark forms of the savages, gazing into the abyss. Suddenly a canoe, containing two figures, shot from the cave. The whistling of a few unsuccessful arrow shots, and a shout of triumph from the lake, disturbed for a while the tranquillity of nature, and the wilderness again sunk into the stillness of midnight.

In after times the young warrior and his bride returned to the scene of their nocturnal adventure, and painted these figures in commemoration of it. Time has not impaired their work, or their memory, and to this day the spot retains the name of the "Lovers Cave."

K. K.

THE

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THE TOTEM.

BY A. B. STREET.[123]

THE year 1755 is signalized as the commencement of the long and bloody war between England and France for empire in the forests of the Western world.[124] The erection of Fort Du Quesne at the confluence of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers,[125] and the attack upon Colonel Washington at the Little Meadows,[126] were considered by the former power as the gauntlet thrown by the latter to decide by the sword their respective claims to the vast region lying between the Apalachian chain and the Mississippi.[127]

The defying roar of the British Lion immediately responded to the challenging shriek of the Gallic Eagle ;[128] and, accordingly, General Braddock was dispatched, with a few regiments, by the cabinet of England, to uphold the pretensions of its monarch to the disputed territory.

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123 Alfred Billings Street (1811-1881), American poet, the author of *The Burning of Schenectady, and Other Poems* (1842) and *Frontenac* (1849).

124 The conflict—known as the French and Indian War—opposing Great Britain and France on the American soil actually started in 1754 and was to last seven years (1754-1763), resulting in France's loss of all its possessions on the American mainland.

125 The Monongahela originates in West Virginia and flows north into Pennsylvania where it joins the Allegheny River to form the Ohio River.

126 Probably *Great* Meadows (Fort Necessity) where the Virginian troops were massively attacked by the French (4 July 1754) in retaliation for Washington's capture of a French patrol two months before. The Americans capitulated after having valiantly resisted and the survivors, among whom was Colonel Washington, were allowed to march back to inhabited parts of Virginia.

127 Part of that region was French Louisiana, whose portion east of the Mississippi was to be ceded to Britain in 1763.

128 Symbolizing France.

Fort Du Quesne being of much importance,[129] as its possession gave the French great control over the numerous tribes of Indians inhabiting the Ohio, its capture was first resolved on by the Convention held in Virginia : and the army destined for this enterprise, commanded by Braddock in person,[130] left Cumberland post[131] about the middle of June, in the year above-mentioned, and began its march through the Aboriginal wilderness.

It was at the close of day in the early part of July following the departure of troops that our story opens.[132] The rich crimson and gold of sunset, broken into masses by the intervening forest, were glowing on a bend of the Monongahela ; and streaks of levellight, darting through the thickets, lay upon the green bosom of a glade interspersed with trees, near the bank of the river. The scene was sleeping in the silence and solitude of nature, interrupted only by the sights and sounds characteristic of the forests.

A slanting beam glittered upon the crimson crest of the woodpecker, hammering on the sounding bark, disclosed the root-wreathed grotto of a squirrel chirping among the leaves at its entrance, and bathed the glossy sides of a magnificent deer quietly cropping the rich grass and long fern leaves that covered the spot with verdure. Suddenly the rolling taps of the woodpecker ceased ; the squirrel leaped to its little fortress ; and the deer, rearing his broad antlers, snuffed the air for a moment, and bounding over a thicket of laurel, disappeared in the furthest depths of the wood.

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129 Originally named Fort Prince George, it was erected on the initiative of Virginian Governor Dinwiddie. The French drove the Virginians away in 1754, reinforced the fort and named it after the Marquis de Duquesne, governor-general of New France. The following year, it was the target of an unsuccessful expedition under British General Edward Braddock. The French abandoned their position in 1758 to advancing British General Forbes's troops and burned the fort. It was rebuilt by the English and renamed Fort Pitt, now the site of Pittsburgh.

130 Braddock, Edward (1695–1755), British general appointed commander in chief of the British forces in America against the French. At the head of some 700 colonial militiamen and 1,400 British regulars, he marched toward Fort Duquesne with the aim of capturing it. Progressing too slowly, he accepted George Washington's suggestion that they should leave behind one third of their troops. On July 9, 1775, he was attacked by the joint forces of some 900 men (French, Canadians and Native Americans) under Daniel Beaujeu. Two thirds of the men engaged and almost all the officers were killed by the French; Braddock himself was mortally wounded.

131 The fort, first called Mt. Pleasant, was built in 1754; General Braddock enlarged it in 1755 and renamed it after his friend the Duke of Cumberland.

132 Precisely on 9 July 1775.

The cause of this affright among the sylvan inhabitants was soon explained by the rapid entrance of a form bearing the distinctive marks of an Indian warrior. He was tall and apparently young, his face profusely covered with the war paint ; in one hand he carried a rifle, in his belt a knife and tomahawk, and, mingling with a long tuft upon his head, was the plume of an eagle. He stood a moment in an attitude of intense listening ; and, as a faint sound swelled from the distance, stooped his ear to the earth, and then darted along a wild broken road which led from the glade into the bosom of the forest. Clambering to the highest bough of a gigantic oak which towered from a ledge at the side of the path, he cast his eye over the wide and leafy expanse around him. After a short gaze he descended, and again bounded to the glade ; and giving utterance to a short sharp cry, like the bark of a fox, the whole scene was changed in a moment. Hundreds of tawny forms, armed like the first, started from the hitherto motionless thickets and the innumerable interstices of the trees, and, crowding around the tall form of the warrior, presented a wild circle of glittering weapons and flashing eyeballs.

"Onwawisset," said he with the plume, "has seen the Long Knives[133] on the trail, and they are many. But the tribe of the Eagle are brave ; will they fight with their Sachem ?"

A fierce gleaming of eyes fixed on the young Chief, and a universal clutching of rifles were the answers.

"They are coming like foolish bears to the trap," added he after a short pause. "Listen," as the blast of a distant bugle sounded through the forest, "they cry out like the wolf when he scents the deer, but knows not that the lurking panther is before him." And then, as a nearer swell echoed around, he dashed into the forest, and the whole band, following one after another, and carefully concealing their trail, was lost in the deepening shadows cast from the branches in the approaching twilight.

The warble of the robin was swelling through the silence that had again settled on the scene, when the full sound of a bugle rung through the leafy arches. A loud trampling sounded in the direction of the road ; a banner fluttered among the tree-tops, and a long line of British grenadiers, their red uniforms in striking contrast to the

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133 The Americans were nicknamed "long knives" because of the six-feet-long spontoons (spears) carried by American soldiers of the period.

green tints of the wood, debouched from the narrow opening into the glade ; and a loud command of "halt !" was given. Following these, and mounted, came two officers, one of an elderly aspect, and the other apparently twenty-two or three years of age. The mien of the former was that of a practised soldier, with an expression of great haughtiness in his stern eye and compressed brow. The latter, although he sat straight in his saddle, with much determination in his look, had evidently suffered from recent illness, and was still experiencing some of its consequent weakness from a shade of pallor cast over his fine features, and a slight languor perceptible in his commanding form.[134]

Succeeding, file after file, came the main body of the army with the baggage waggons and field pieces, the green frocks of the Virginia rangers mingling with the uniforms of the artillerists and light infantry.

While the necessary preparations were making for the night encampment, the two officers, having dismounted, were standing beneath the drooping boughs of an old chesnut, viewing the scene but out of earshot.

"Well, Colonel," said the elder to his companion, "we cannot be far from Du Quesne, and a night's rest will do my fellow some good ; and before this time to-morrow I shall plant the banners of my king on the walls of the fort."

"Do you not think, General Braddock," answered the young soldier, respectfully but with firmness, "it will be better to march with more caution, and send out scouts to beat the woods as we approach our destination ? These deep forests may hold many an enemy, and that of the subtlest kind, whose motions are as silent and unseen as the serpent's. I allude to the Indians."

"Tush ! Colonel Washington," responded Braddock, "There are no enemies, unless you call these gigantic trees by that title, for they are the only things I have seen since we left the Little Meadows ; and as for the Indians, one discharge of my cannon would disperse them like a pack of bowling wolves."[135] "But could your Excellency," said Washington, "use your cannon with much effect where every trunk would be a shield, and every thicket a fortress to conceal the foe ?"

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134 Washington, who had suffered from fever during June, only joined Braddock on July 8.

135 Braddock was doubly wrong: *his* men, discouraged by the Natives' unfamiliar way of fighting, put up little resistance to the enemy.

"No more, Colonel Washington, I adopt my own course ; no scouts are necessary ; and let me tell you, sir, that when I took the command of this army, it was not to follow the advice of one who, instead of being my aid, aspires to be my catechist." So saying, the haughty and doomed General turned angrily away from the young soldier, whose features teemed with a look of inexpressible disgust.

The twilight was now assuming the duskiness of night, and deeper shadows were following momentarily over the surface of the Monongahela, upon the glade in which the army was now resting, and amid the boundless ocean-like forests.

In a hollow, thickly covered with delicate moss, a little removed from the glade and shadowed by the branching foliage, through whose parted summits the golden sparkle of a star was brightening, two figures were stretched, one clothed in the uniform of the Virginian rifle corps, while the other displayed the rich dress of the British regulars. The Virginian was amusing himself with picking the scauberry that lay like a crimson drop amid its creeping green embroidery ; the other, after a preliminary yawn, interrupted the silence by saying—

"Of all forests, Melancourt, those in this America of yours I think must be the most interminable. Here have we been tramping for the last four days through a wilderness, without hardly catching a glimpse of the blessed sun. I hope we are near the fort, for I am heartily sick of this burrowing with the wild beasts."

"Without controverting your taste, Delancey," answered his companion, "I for my part like these vast solitudes of Nature. There is something inexpressibly grand to me in the sight of these glorious trees that have witnessed the flight of ages. There is an oak now, I'll warrant you, was a vigorous sapling at the first landing of Raleigh's expedition,[136] and will wear its green coronet of leaves as freshly as now, long after you and I have returned to our original dust."

"Well, you are welcome to your taste for these gigantic excrescences ; but give me the smooth meadows of old England with their ivyed castles. If you admire these things for their antiquity, you ought to reverence those hoary relics of a thousand years."

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[136] Sir Walter Raleigh (1552–1618), English explorer and writer. Involved in the colonisation of Virginia, he was at the origin of the unsuccessful settlement of Roanoke in the 1580s.

"I might dispute your claims," answered Melancourt, "as regards the greater antiquity of the two. This old chesnut, lifting its naked top, dripping with gray moss, I have no doubt has seen as many years as any of your crumbling castles, to which the hermit eagle that has just flown from its summit, if he possessed the gift of speech, might testify." Then, as if wishing to change the theme which might involve him in the mazes of an argument, he added "But to leave speculation for sober realities ; our worthy commander is a brave and skilful officer doubtless, but between you and me, Delancey, he will not do to fight Indians. This incautious manner of going through almost impervious wilds, the very home, too, of our savage enemies, will expose us to great peril, should they strike our trail ; I believe now we shall meet with an ambuscade before we arrive at the fort."

"Let them come," said Delancey, carelessly, "and they will feel the weight of an Englishman's arm."

"Mere courage will never do," responded the other ; "however, we must obey orders if death is the consequence."

"Your countryman, Colonel Washington, is a fine specimen of a soldier," observed Delancey ; "how gallantly he struggled against his sickness."[137]

"Yes," answered Melancourt, "young as he is he has given proofs of talent and energy which, sooner or later, will carry him to greatness."

There was a pause, which was interrupted by Melancourt, who turning to his companion, said :—

"Do you know I have a sort of liking for these red warriors." "Why so ?" asked Delancey, in some surprise.

"On account of an Indian boy who was domesticated for some years under my father's roof," answered the Virginian ; "it was quite a romantic incident."

"Do tell it then ; it will be some consolation for the sting, of these infernal musquitoes that are phlebotomizing me most unmercifully," said Delancey, threshing the air with a leafy branch to repel the attacks of the buzzing insects the marshes of the river had sent forth in clouds.

"When I was about fourteen years old," commenced Melancourt, "an aged Indian, accompanied by a lad of apparently my own

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[137] See note 134.

age, came to our dwelling, and asked lodgings for the night. The old man seemed to be suffering greatly from disease, and my father bade him welcome. In the course of the night we were awakened by the cries of the boy ; and, hastening to the apartment of the aged savage, found him writhing in the agonies of death. He had barely time to inform my father that he was a chief of the Delaware nation,[138] and that, accompanied by this lad, his son was on his way to visit a distant tribe, when he had been attacked with the illness which was now producing his death. He entreated my father to protect his son until means could be taken to send him to his tribe, which was far distant ; and, on receiving the promise, he expired. The young Indian showed so much gratitude and affection, that, after waiting a length of time for some one to claim him, my father, who was a widower, and I his only child, adopted him. Joscelyn, the name we gave him, exhibited frequent evidences of the most daring courage with the most unbounded love for us both ; and saved me once from drowning at the imminent peril of his own life. With an art he had acquired amongst his nation, he tattooed on my breast the figure of an eagle, with the names of Melancourt and Joscelyn surrounded by a chain of wampum." Here the Virginian, parting his garments, disclosed to Delancey, by the aid of a broad pensile of silver cast by the moon rising above the tree-tops, the representation beautifully worked upon his bosom

"About eight years ago, "resumed Melancourt, "my father embarked for England, taking me with him, leaving Joscelyn and an old family servant in charge of his dwelling ; and after a long and stormy passage, we reached the mother country. His intention was to make a short visit, but circumstances delayed us far beyond our time ; and two years elapsed before we again returned to our home in Virginia. Surprised at not finding Joscelyn the first to welcome us, my first inquiries were of him. Our old domestic informed me, that some time after our embarkation, news had reached them that our vessel had been wrecked. Joscelyn gave himself up to an extremity of despair and grief, and a long period having elapsed without further tidings from us, one morning he presented himself to the old servant, dressed in his native garb, bade him an everlasting adieu and left the

[138] A group of Native American peoples from the Delaware and Hudson river valleys. They formed several political alliances after losing their lands to white settlement in the 17th and 18th centuries when they migrated to the West.

dwelling. Since then, nothing had been heard of him. My father and myself have made many inquiries, but with little effect, except floating rumours that he is at present a distinguished "warrior, if not a chief, of one of the tribes about the Ohio."

"Quite a novel relation, upon my honour," said Delancey. "Suppose, lieutenant, you were to meet him in battle in these wild forests."

"I should not wonder," answered Melancourt, smiling ; "but I do not think I should know him, so many years having elapsed since I saw him last."

Here Melancourt was interrupted by a terrific shriek, that swelled through the forests so clear, shrill, and piercing, that it thrilled through the brains of the young soldiers, so as almost to deafen their faculties.

"What the deuce is that !" ejaculated Delancey, starting from his lying posture to his feet, and placing his hands to his head.

"That is the scream of what we natives call a panther," answered Melancourt, laughing.

"Well, if your woods grow such creatures as that, I would rather be excused from being in them again after once escaping. Whew ! my ears ring and tingle with the sound yet."

"It is a common one in our forests," returned the Virginian ; "listen to his whining," as broken tones came from the darkness, succeeded by a sudden crash ; "that is his spring to some lower branch. Now hold your breath for a moment, and you will hear the howl of a wolf."

Delancey listened intently, and borne on the light creeping air-sighs, came a long mournful sound, rising full upon the ear, and sinking again like a dying echo. This tone was taken up by an owl, which, shrouded by the leaves, commenced his jarring seesaw, joined by a whippoorwill, whistling its monotonous notes like an anchorite repeating his orisons to the moon.

"Quite a forest serenade,"said Delancey.

"Well, let us to rest," cried Melancourt; "the sentinels are posted I see, and more of them too than usual ; that shows a little more caution in our general at any rate."

So saying, the two friends left their position for one nearer the glade, and within the circle formed by the baggage-waggons and

pieces of artillery, where the troops were reposing on their ams with the rich grass for their pillows and the foliage of the trace for their canopy. Selecting a mound of soft moss, and stretching their watch-coats over it, the youths composed themselves for sleep. In a short space the scene was silent, except the sweet and continuous murmur of the river ripples—the slumberous sounds of the numberless insects—now and then the pawing of some restless horse, and the clattering of a weapon, as the sleeper turned in his natural couch, with the splendid moon throwing her silver mantle on the summits of the forests, and darting her gleams through the intercepting trees, to scatter them in sprinkled spots and broken streaks on the green surface of the glade.

The clear melody of the brown thresher, the American lark, was sounding from the top of a gigantic pine where he had perched himself, warbling in three distinct gradations, now in a low, liquid tone, then rising higher and fuller, and ending in a clear, shrill flourish, and the gray light was brightening into effulgence, when the reveille rattled through the forest, and each soldier sprang from his lair, obedient to the summons.

"Up, man, up !" said Melancourt to his friend ; "the sunbeams will be dancing in your eyes if you lay there much longer."

"Egad," said Delancey, with a yawn, "that cursed drum woke me from as pleasant a dream as I ever had. I thought I was in England —"Officers, to your post'" commanded the stern voice of Braddock ; "form the order of march !" and, mounting his horse, with Colonel Washington by his side, the whole turned towards the Monongahela, across which the path lay towards the fort.

So much difficulty and delay were experienced in crossing the river, that the sun had nearly attained his meridian before the army had again formed in regular array.

It was one of those brilliant days that sometimes beams from the forehead of the all-powerful and immaculate Essence to brighten his footstool with beauty. Clouds of the most delicate and pearly whiteness floated gently through a sky of softened azure, and wafted sometimes across the sun's disc, streamed over it like veils with fringes of glittering silver.

At intervals the interminable leaves of the boundless forest would tremble in faint stealing sighs of wind, as though the air was

breathing in its deep and regular slumber. The tall shafts of the trees reared their arches and roofs of foliage in a silence, majestic from the grandeur of the scale in which Nature was exhibited.

As the troops proceeded over the wild road which was now indicated by "blazes" on the huge trunks, now choked by clumps of laurel and small saplings, and now showing faint wheel-marks, the brown carpet of withered leaves which had covered the earth gave place to long grass, while the thickets became denser and more frequent.

The broad edges of shadow lay on the moss-mounds that swelled the surface of the road, and darkened the snake-like roots that thrust themselves out from the border of forest on either side.

"How far should you think, Colonel, we were from Du Quesne ?" inquired Braddock of his companion.

"About ten miles, if my recollection serves me," answered Washington.[139] "Is it not best now to send the Virginia riflemen in advance ?"

"No, no, Colonel Washington, there is no danger of an attack, and his Majesty's regulars shall give place to none."

White this conversation was proceeding, Melancourt was marching by the side of his friend, and expatiating on his favourite beauties of forest scenes.

"Is not this as lovely as any in your native England, Delancey ? Observe that tall maple, lifting its leafy mass like a Gothic roof with the broken sunshine sprinkled in golden dots on its leaves. Do you see that startled partridge in the spot of light dropped from the crooked branches of yon birch, swelling its mottled breast and stretching its long neck as if too frightened to fly ? Hark ! there it whirrs away. We are treading on grass as soft and green as velvet, and the very musket of that soldier has trailed over a soot perfectly starred with violets. What a wall of foliage on each side too, Delancey ; and yon hovering hawk seems a dark spot on the cloud hanging over that pine like a snow flake. Here is a place so open you can see the grasshopper springing, and there is a thicket that a wren could hardly penetrate ; ha !" ejaculated he, as he fixed his gaze on a thick clustering bush.

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[139] Washington was sent to the area by governor Dinwiddie in autumn 1753 to challenge the French presence. The construction of Fort Prince George started in January 1774.

"What's the matter now, Melancourt ?" asked Delancey.

"I declare to you," whispered the Virginian," I saw the gleam of an eye from yonder thicket."

"Pshaw ! man," said his friend, "it was only some rabbit looking with astonishment at our red coats and muskets."

"Perhaps so," rejoined Melancourt, doubtingly ; "but I will to my post in the contingency of an attack."

He had barely rejoined his company when the air was rent with loud wild sounds, louder and wilder than the shrieks of a thousand famished eagles—sounds that made the hearts of the boldest tremble, so indicative were they of ferocity and blood ; and with the terrific war-whoops from bush, from tree, and waving grass, came a terrific crash ; the sharp tone of the rifle and the full ring of the musket blended in one fearful simultaneous discharge. Down dropped the soldiers, like leaves of Autumn beneath the roaring hail-stones, while higher and fiercer pealed the whoops, and thicker and faster echoed the reports ; and from the forest in front and on either side rushed fiery, and smoking, and whistling death.

Bewildered and panic-struck, the regulars composing the van of the army recoiled back upon the main body, where Braddock, undaunted, supplying by courage what he lacked in prudence, was vainly endeavouring to form his broken files, momentarily falling beneath the deadly bullets of the invisible foe. "Form, men, form !" shouted he, as he galloped among his soldiers, when a shot struck his steed, which, springing with a convulsive motion, fell headlong to the earth. It required but a moment's lapse for the General to catch another from among the many scouring around riderless, and he was again vainly endeavouring to stem the torrent of havoc confusion, and dismay.

"Form ! Form !" shouted he continually, his voice rising above the cries, groans, and whoopings of the fight. "Does he think it parade day ?" muttered a grim, old sergeant, "that he orders us to form amongst a legion of yelling devils that we can't see ?"

At this junction Colonel Washington galloped up to the Virginia troops, who were using their rifles wherever the gushes of smoke from the bushes betokened the presence of an enemy, and ordered each to his cover. Hitherto the assailants had been concealed ; but, elated by their success, wild countenances were now

glancing above the thickets, with here and there the plumed cap of a Frenchman ; and with a burst of war-whoops, the whole band bounded from their ambush full upon the disordered ranks of the English soldiery. Then it was that the rifles of Virginia did good service, as they poured each from his shelter a destructive fire, fully attested by the fall of many a savage foe.

Melancourt, from behind the tree where he had posted himself, had just discharged his weapon, when his attention was attracted to the tall form of an Indian warrior, with an eagle's plume streaming oven his head, by the activity and courage he displayed. Now crouching with his pointed rifle, now leaping with his brandished tomahawk, he distributed death wherever he appeared. "He fights more like a demon than a man," whispered one of his men to another. At this instant the young Virginian saw Braddock dashing amongst the struggling throng, and the Indian taking deliberate aim at his person ; the next, and the form of the General sunk from his horse and disappeared in the wild surges of the desperate conflict. Then commenced the flight of the soldiery. In vain Washington endeavoured to arrest the backward rush ; in vain with his own hand he wheeled one of the pieces of artillery, and woke its thunder upon the shouting and triumphant foe. Speeding with the impetuosity of fear, the army fled towards the Monongahela to seek shelter on its opposite shore.

Melancourt had again emptied his rifle, and was about joining in the indiscriminate retreat, when his eye once more caught the figure of the Indian before-mentioned engaged in a desperate hand to hand conflict with a British officer, whom he discovered at a glance to be Delancey ; the latter with his sword, and the former with his tomahawk.

To cast his useless weapon aside, whirl his sabre from its sheath and bound to the spot, was the work of a moment for the Virginian.

A single leap would have placed him at the side of his friend, but at that instant the tomahawk made a glittering sweep, and Delancey fell dead at the feet of Melancourt with the weapon buried deep in his temple. The young officer heard the Indian's yell of triumph, and saw the gleam of his rolling and fiery eyes as he clutched his knife and bent back his form for a spring upon his new antagonist ; but as he bounded forward, Melancourt, with a rapid thrust, plunged

his sword into the tawny breast of the savage. The spot had in a measure been screened from sight ; but a near burst of war-whoops meeting the ear of the Virginian, he perceived a large band of Indians advancing upon him, and taking a last look of his friend, he mingled with the retreating crowds which were seeking safety on the other side of the Monongahela.

CHAPTER II.

About a year subsequent to the events related in our last chapter, a small company of rangers, under the command of a young provincial officer, occupied a block-house situated a few leagues from the fort of Oswego in western New York, then the theatre of active operations of the two belligerent powers.[140]

The building was composed of rude logs, and placed in the midst of an open semicircular space, bounded by a deep narrow ravine, through which rushed a small but impetuous stream, and the dense leafy barriers of the universal forests. Within a few feet of the block-house were three or four old hemlocks, lifting their huge trunks and skeleton, leafless branches covered with thick coats of hanging moss.

The sun was setting and tinging the black masses of cloud that curtained the sky with streaks of lurid and sullied red. Seated within the area, and on the very verge of the ravine, were two officers in the military garb of the American provinces.

"A gloomy spot, Lieutenant Grey," observed the elder of the two, looking through a chasm formed by the high broken precipitous walls of the ravine ; "yon torrent has a fearful depth of bed," catching through the hanging branches and clustering thickets glimpses of dashing foam, where the cataract shot through its narrow limits, roaring like some infuriated Titan[141] chained in a hollow of the earth and struggling for his freedom. "Do you think, Grey," resumed he, glan-

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[140] First an important frontier post for British traders, the fort, also named Fort Chouaguen, was built in 1727 on the initiative of New York's governor William Burnet. It was captured by the French, led by General Montcalm, in August 1756. Montcalm destroyed the fort and distributed the British supplies to his Native allies, which encouraged tribes who had been supporting the British to switch to the French side.

[141] The gods who ruled the world until they were discarded by Zeus.

cing across the yawning throat of the ravine, "one could leap this chasm if life depended on the effort ?"

"With such a platform to receive him," answered Grey, pointing to a ledge jutting from the opposite bank.

"I cannot tell why, Grey, but this spot throws a gloom over my feelings. As I look at those dashing surges beneath, they seem to have some connection with my future fate. Have you never felt a foreboding, a presentiment, as it were, of impending evil ?"

"I can't say that I have" answered Grey, smiling.

There was a silence which was soon interrupted by Grey.

"I am glad Colonel Mercer[142] has not forgotten us. When shall we expect the reinforcements ?"

Receiving no answer, Grey turned round, and found his companion gazing fixedly on the chasm. "Captain—Captain Melancourt ! excuse me, sir, but when do you expect the reinforcements from Colonel Mercer ?"

"Tomorrow," answered Melancourt, rousing from his reverie, "his despatches inform me ; but let us in, the wind is chilly from the forests. We shall have a tempestuous night." And rising, the two officers made their way into the block-house.

Night closed around tempestuously and darkly. Along the sky were piled clouds in gigantic shapes, between which streamed now and then an evanescent glance of moonlight, with here and there a solitary star. At intervals the huge forms would rush and roll under the influence of the sweeping blasts, like the billow of ocean in a storm, and then again would settle heavily and sluggishly in their deep and universal frown.

Melancourt stood on the platform of the block-house, now watching the ragged masses shooting above with the velocity of lightning, now gazing over the thick darkness that brooded on the scene, and now listening to the heavy gusts that, crashing through the forests, rushed around the building in hoarse and whistling sounds. A glare of moonlight breaking from the parted edges of a cloud, disclosed to his view the group of old hemlocks—their withered and jagged branches leaping, as it were, out of the darkness under the effect of the sudden and transitory gleam. After they had shrunk back in the gloom, his eye was still fixed upon them, so spectral had been

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142 The British commander of the fort, killed during the onslaught.

their appearance, when he became sensible of spots of red light moving and dancing near the earth where he knew they were planted.

As he crouched behind the parapet, and looked through an embrasure, he saw a fierce gleam, spring up, instantly enlarging into a volume of flame that wreathed around the shaft of a hemlock in darting and spiral curls like the flashing convolutions of a fiery serpent. This was succeeded by another and another, till the whole group of trees was rapped in the crimson mantle of the devouring element, and in the glare shed around, the young soldier saw numerous wild figures that he discovered to be Indians, some with torches pointing to the devoted block-house with the malignant joy of successful demons. Hastily descending to the lower apartment, he found his soldiers apprised of their situation by the light which was flashing through the loop-holes of the little fort. Posting them at their different stations, he commanded them to fire at the forms that were dancing with frantic gestures around the conflagration. The order being instantly obeyed, the air re-echoed with a fierce burst of savage war-whoops, sounding on every aisle of the block-house. Taking Grey aside, Melancourt said,

"We are surrounded, Lieutenant ; should the block-house catch fire, as I fear it will, we must cut our way through. The depth of the ravine excludes all hopes of aid from the water, even should their rifles allow us to make the effort. See how the flames stream towards us in the wind, as if greedy for their prey," added he, glancing through a loophole ; and, as they ascended the ladder that led to the platform, and opened the trap-door, he exclaimed, "the hot coals are falling in showers upon our roof, and, by heaven ! it is smoking now in many places." At this moment two of the trees, that were towering like blazing pyramids, rocked fearfully in one of the violent gusts which came roaring from the forest, and at last, with a thundering crash, toppled headlong upon the block-house, covering the platform with their fiery fragments. The dry materials were soon enveloped in flames ; which sight seemed still more to excite the savages, as yell pealed on yell and shouts of derision testified.

"Our path lies through the whooping fiends," said Melancourt as he descended with his companion ; "grasp your weapons, my boys, and sally upon them." The entrance was thrown open, and the little band rushed out upon the throng of savages, who had all left their

leafy fastness, and stood waiting for the appearance of their prey with the ferocity of lurking tigers. A crash of rifles and a whistling of bullets, mingled with ferocious yells, met the rush of the band from the tottering fort—the thunder of blazing rafters succeeded, and then a leaping of tawny forms, and a flashing of brandished tomahawks.

Melancourt, sword in hand, was advancing forward at the head of his company, when that leaden hail poured upon his ranks. As Grey fell dead at his feet, he heard a shrill whoop of exultation, and saw the tall form of an Indian warrior speeding with terrible bounds upon him, At the same instant that a shot struck his right arm powerless, he felt the iron grasp of the savage upon his throat.

Consternation was mingled with surprise in the bosom of the youth when he saw in his assailant, by the strong glare of the flames, the eagle-plumed warrior he imagined he had slain in the battle of the Monongahela.

The yells of triumph, the shrieks and groans of the dying, the crashing of the falling building, blended in one horrible concert as Melancourt was borne, bound and struggling, away by two of his wild foemen, and brought to his mind the sickening conviction of the fate of his unfortunate soldiers. The scalping knife and tomahawk were never known to spare except for the purposes of torture, which last he felt to be his own doom. He was carried some little distance in the forest, and thrust into a cave in a ledge of rocks. Barely had he touched the cold earthen floor, before the anguish of his wound and the loss of blood he had endured plunged him into a state of utter insensibility. Recovering from this but to relapse into a torpor, which was but the counterfeit of sleep, he was at last aroused by the entrance of his two conductors, who led him from the cavern. The unclouded sunbeams were shining into the forest, and glittering on the weapons and ornaments of savage crowd surrounding an upright stake. To it the young Virginian was led and firmly bound with thongs, while a heap of combustibles was collected around him. Nought met his gaze, wandering in the restlessness of misery and despair, but a wall of wild forms and ferocious visages, with gleaming eyes fixed upon him in deepest silence. A movement was now susceptible in one part of the group, and, striding through the space, the lofty form of the plumaged warrior stood before the helpless and suffering youth.

His hand clutched his crimsoned tomahawk ; from his belt hung scalps clotted with blood ; and his light beaver robe showed the same ruddy coagulated drops.

He rolled his fierce snake-like eye upon the young soldier, and for a short space surveyed him with a glance in which triumph was mingled with the most demoniac hate. At length a disdainful smile crossed his features, and, with a writhing lip, he exclaimed in the English tongue—

"The long knife of the pale face has been red with the blood of Onwawisset ; but he still lives."

No answer was returned by Melancourt, although the gaze of the savage was exchanged by a glance as haughty.

"Is the young chief afraid now that he faces the warriors of the Eagle ?" resumed the Indian with a sneer ; "does he tremble too much to speak to their sachem ?"

This insult aroused the angry feelings of the soldier to such a degree that they overcame his prudence, and he exclaimed,

"Do what you will, but know I can meet my fate with as much firmness as any barbarian of you all."

The chief again, smiled disdainfully, although the flashing of his eye showed that the epithet had been understood and felt.

"Onwawisset is glad that the ears of the pale face are not shut. Are his eyes opened wide that he can see ?" removing his robe, and displaying a scar upon his breast. "What has the young Chief to say ? Can he tell the Sachem of the Eagle he did not make that mark, and not lie ?"

Again the youth vouchsafed not an answer.

"Is the young Chief again a woman ?" tauntingly resumed the savage ; "call the girls of my tribe, that they may talk to him ; he cannot speak to a warrior."

"Base fiend !" shouted Melancourt, lifted above the thoughts of death by the sneers of his enemy ; "I defy you ! this arm inflicted the wound ; would it had reached your life."

The tomahawk of the Indian was lifted, his teeth grated, and his eyes glowed like coals of fire ; but the action was checked as a revulsion of feeling came across his countenance.

"The stake shall not be robbed by my tomahawk. But let the white slave listen," said he fiercely ; "he has shed the blood of On-

wawisset, who is a great Chief, whose father was a Sachem, whose tribe is the tribe of the Eagle. Many moons passed away before he could be again on the war path ; he was a woman, and whining like a dying panther while the warriors of his tribe were adding scalps to their belts. The long knife of the pale face made Onwawisset a woman," growled the Chief in tones of kindling rage ; "he did that which the young men of the Maquas[143] have often tried, and failed. But the Sachem has been long on his trail. He said to his young men, let the pale face be taken for the torture. The tribe of the Eagle are brave ;—he is here. But his hour is come ; Onwawisset will burn out the heart of his slave."

Lashed to the utmost pitch of fury, with a piercing whoop which was echoed by the throng around, the savage snatched a burning knot of pine from one who was pressing eagerly on the captive ; with one hand he rent the garment from the breast of the youth, with the other he thrust the flame of the torch so near that it scorched the naked skin. But something arrested his motion—he started—recoiled—while his eyes seemed as if bursting from their sockets. Full on the exposed breast was the tattooed representation of the Eagle, with the names of Melancourt and Joscelyn, and the circle of mimic wampum.

Doubt, wonder, fear, successively flitted across the countenance of the red warrior as he gazed. He advanced, stepped back, and then rushing to the youth, he placed both hands on his shoulders, and looked with fixed attention into his eyes, as though to pierce his soul.

While the savage was thus agitated by his conflicting feelings, a sudden thought, carrying with it conviction, flashed across the mind of Melancourt. But the words springing to his lips were anticipated by the Indian, who exclaimed, in broken accents,

"Has the Great Spirit sent back one who has long since departed to the land of souls, to make Onwawisset a coward ! That totem—it was made by him, in his days of blossoms, on the breast of his white brother. Let the young Chief speak ; there is something in his eye that stirs the heart of the Sachem."

"Joscelyn !" exclaimed the youth. Lightning is not more rapid than the start which the young Chief again gave ; and while an ex-

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143 Dutch name of the Mohawk people living in northeast New York. They belonged to the Iroquois confederacy, then the allies of the British.

pression of tenderness shot across his visage, with one blow of his tomahawk he severed the thongs that bound Melancourt to the stake.

"Behold !" said he, turning to the crowd of savages, and pointing to the bosom of the youth, behold, warriors of the Eagle, the totem of your tribe ! Onwawisset claims the captive for his brother."

Surprise appeared to be first predominant in the circle, each looking at the other in the profoundest silence. But while Melancourt was congratulating himself upon his escape, a warrior stepped from the assemblage, and placing himself before the young Sachem, exclaimed,

"Has Onwawisset drank of the wysoccan,[144] that he would save the pale face from the torture ? Has he been so long on his trail to make him his brother !"

"Onwawisset is your Chief—he has said it ;" answered the young Indian, haughtily.

"He is a great warrior although his years are few. But he is laughing with his people—he cannot mean to set free the pale face."

"Listen, Wahalaka," said the young Chief fiercely, elevating his lofty form ; "I am of a race of Sachems. I have said the pale-face shall be my brother. He shall be taken to my lodge."

"Wahalaka," resumed the other, fixing his eye, "sees again the battle in the woods. Onwawisset is there with his people, and the people of his French father. The bloody Yengeese[145] are caught in the long grass. The warriors of the Eagle shout as they tear the scalps from their enemies. But who is that writhing on the earth like a crushed snake ? it is Onwawisset ; and over him stands the pale-face, with his long knife dripping with the blood of the Sachem."

The peculiar feelings of an Indian warrior, stirred by this artful appeal, appeared to be again wakening in the bosom of Onwawisset ; for his eye gleamed, and he turned fiercely to Melancourt ; but the impulse was momentary. Grasping the hand of the youth, he addressed himself to his subordinate with great dignity, and with a gesture as if motioning him away.

"Go ; Onwawisset has heard enough from his warrior, he has not two tongues like a serpent ; what he says he will do. Let my young men depart, and prepare my lodge for my brother."

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144 Decoction of *Datura* root used by the Algonquin Indians during initiation ceremonies. It provides a deep intoxication, with loss of memory, which lasts about three weeks.

145 The way American Indians nicknamed the English colonists, hence the word "Yankee."

As he turned away with the hand of Melancourt still locked in his, Wahalaka, frenzied by his disappointment, shouting "Areskoni shall have his sacrifice !" bounded with a startling yell to the side, and raised his knife, pointed at the throat of the Virginian. The tomahawk of Onwawsset made a rapid glittering circle in the air, and hissing as it fell, down dropped the ferocious Wahalaka, and expired at the feet of the Sachem. Fronting his tribe, who stood gazing on the scene with bewildered looks, the young Chief lifted his streaming hatchet.

"Tribe of the Eagle !" exclaimed he rapidly, "the father of Onwawisset was a Sachem of your nation. When the Manitto told him to prepare to tread the path of shadows, I was a feeble boy. When the old pine fell, the sapling that grew from its roots would have perished if my white father, whose hairs were like the mess of the aged hemlock, had not protected it. But I have often told it to you at the council fire ; it is enough. My brother," pointing to Melancourt, is the son of my white father."

Whether the young Sachem had calculated too surely on his influence over, or the aptitude of, his tribe, certain it was that his speech was received with less satisfaction than he anticipated. The gleams of anger that had crossed their wild visages at the death of Wahalaka were not dissipated by the discovery of the son of their Sachem's benefactor in the person of their captive. Low mutterings of wrath ran throughout the circle, and fiery eyes were rendered still more ferocious by the roused passions of the savage nature in possession of a being, and that, too, a member of the hated race on which those passions could be wreaked in torture and flame.

Somewhat staggered by the fierce exhibitions of fury, which, once let lose, the influence of chieftainship would prove frail and insufficient, Onwawisset reared his lofty form, and lowering his tomahawk with his left, extended his right arm towards the tumultuous group, and said, in low deep tones of reproach—

"Are not the warriors of the Eagle satisfied ! Will they tear my brother from me, and bind him to the stake before the eyes of their Sachem. Has the Eagle become a wolf, that it is so ravenous for blood ? Are they all Wahalakas ?"

A yell so loud, so vindicative, so demon-like, burst from the throng that Melancourt involuntarily shuddered, and pressed closer

to the form of the youthful chieftain. Glancing rapidly around the terrific circle of human fiends, Onwawisset saw, in their writhing countenances, and the grasping of their knives and tomahawks, that the fate of the captive was sealed, he gave one look to the unfortunate Melancourt—a look of indescribable emotion, and then in a hoarse voice said—

"My people has spoken, the pale-face must die ;" and then, as a whoop of triumph resounded through the air, elevating his voice to a tone like thunder, added, "he is weak and faint ; my tribe will not let him die like a woman ; let him rest and eat to-night, so that to-morrow he may sing his death-song like a warrior."

"Have you, Joscelyn, deserted me ?" said Melancourt in accents of despair; but he spoke to ears that were closed to entreaty. Is this your gratitude ?" added he, grasping the robe of the Chief, as a fierce-looking savage proceeded to bind his arms with a taunting laugh.

"May God help me," exclaimed he, as Onwawisset turned upon him a countenance that seemed hardened into marble, so destitute was it of sympathy or hope, "for I am indeed helpless."

The proposition of the Sachem, although it deferred the hour when they could glut their ferocious feelings, seemed to have found favour in the eyes of the savages, and accordingly Melancourt was again thrust, bound hand and foot, in the cavern. He was now in utter darkness, the Indians having firmly blocked the entrance, and a prey to those emotions natural to a man severed from all human help, and in the power of those, than whom the wild beasts were not more blood-thirsty and merciless.

In the meanwhile the frequent whoops and bursts of irregular, but solemn chanting, proclaimed that the dance by which these children of Nature celebrated their triumph in the possession of their victim was now progressing, and soon the wild shouts and loud laughs of savage merriment also showed that they had plunged in those unrestrained and drunken orgies that usually ended the terrific ceremony. The rude food which had been placed before the captive was left untouched, and his blood curdled as he listened to the boisterous din without, which he knew was the prelude to those tortures he was to endure at the dawn. Hour after hour crept by—the sounds had long since ceased—the chirp of the cricket and the occasional rustle of

some reptile only echoing in the stillness of the cavern, and he was fast sinking in the apathy of despair. Was it fancy, or did he hear the sound of a voice in the darkness ? The next, a hand fell upon his shoulder, and as he started, expecting the blow of the tomahawk, the tones of the young Sachem fell upon his ear.

"Is my brother awake ?"

"Away, cruel and ungrateful savage !" answered Melancourt in resentful accents, "Leave me to my fate ; or if you have come for that purpose, sink at once your hatchet into my brain ; that will at least save me from the hands of yon ferocious demons, who bear the forms but not the hearts of men."

"The brother of Joscelyn is angry with him. Does he think," added the young Sachem, in broken accents of the deepest reproach. "that Joscelyn would leave him to die ! Does he think that the days when we were both young and happy are hid from the soul of Onwawisset ? No !" cried he, as he cut with the greatest rapidity the thongs from the hands and feet of the captive ; "my brother shall not die while Joscelyn lives, I thought," continued he in a tone of anguish, "when my warriors whooped, that I heard the cry of your gray-haired father calling to his son. Onwawisset's heart is not rock ; I felt it melt within me. The eyes of a Chief," wringing the hand of Melancourt, "are wet like a woman's when she clasps her dying child. But enough ; Joscelyn's heart is his brother's, it will protect him ; his blood is his brother's, it will flow for him. Listen ;" thrusting a rifle into his hands, "the warriors of the Eagle have drank the fire-water till they sleep like bears in the season of snows. Joscelyn will lead out his brother, and no eye will be open to see. He will take him to the stone lodge of his people by the great lake, where he will be safe. Onwawisset is the Sachem of his tribe, but Joscelyn is the slave of his brother."

"I thought the salt waves had long since closed over your head and my white father," continued the Chief, as he led Melancourt along the windings of the cavern in a direction opposite to the entrance. Melancourt in a few words informed him of the false report concerning the death of his father and himself.

"Do the winters fly lightly over the white hair ?" resumed Onwawisset in tones of the deepest affection ; "is the old oak bowed ?"

The Virginian again satisfied the faithful Indian by assuring him of his father's prosperity from the last tidings he had received.

They had now arrived at the opening, and it was with a fooling of grateful joy that Melancourt felt the cool breeze once more breathing over his cheek, bringing with it the certainty of liberty.

It was night, and the moon was in her zenith, quenching the near stars in her excess of splendor, and casting her sprinkled silver through the thick embowering foliage of the forest. Scattered here and there, some in the chequered light and some in shadow, were the forms of the savages, stretched in the lethargy caused by their copious intoxicating libations. Through this array of enemies was the path of the Sachem and his friend. Cautiously Onwawisset passed amid the group, followed by Melancourt, hardly breathing in the excitement and anxiety of the moment. They had passed but a short distance, and the Virginian had but just stepped over a huge cluster of roots that lay massed in the darkness cast by the leaves overhead, when to his astonishment and consternation the supposed cluster sprang from the earth with a loud whoop. Catching Melancourt by the arm, Onwawisset darted on one side to a deep hollow formed by the falling of a huge trunk, and black with the shadow thrown by the broad mass of roots imbedded in the earth torn from its surface by the fall. Casting themselves prostrate, they heard the scene, late so silent, re-echo with shouts and yells in every direction. Apparently the truth had not yet been fully ascertained, for the savage, awakened by the foot of Melancourt, had not sufficiently recovered from his surprise to identify to a certainty the fugitives before they were hidden from his view. But it was soon to be discovered. Not daring to stir from the cover, Onwawisset was peeping through the fern fringe on the side of the hollow, when he grasped the arm of the Virginian, who, looking in the direction where the Sachem was pointing, saw the flashing of torches around the mouth of the cavern. The yells had in a measure ceased in front, but a loud burst of whoops, sent from around the cave, announced that the flight of the captive was discovered. Then, as the torches glided rapidly towards the concealment, Onwawisset whispering, "to the ravine and hide," sprang to his feet, followed by his companion, and together they fled through the forest in front. A fresh burst of yells to the left and in the rear added wings to their footsteps. They had now reached the open space where

the moonlight, spread over like a silver carpet, displayed the blackened ashes of the block-house and the scattered remains of Melancourt's unfortunate hand, but offering no friendly shadow to conceal the flight of the fugitives. But beyond this broad sheet of light was the ravine, spreading its edges of darkness. So rapid had been their flight, they had apparently distanced their pursuers ; and the heart of Melancourt warmed by the prospect of safety seemingly afforded by the abyss. They had now reached the ravine at the point indicated by the young soldier in the opening of this chapter.

The Sachem and the Virginian sprang together over the chasm upon the jutting ledge ; but as Onwawisset was in the act of plunging into the gloom of the ravine, a shot resounded from the opposite thicket, and he saw the form of his friend totter fearfully on the brink of the platform ; the next, and the horror-struck Indian beheld him precipitated into the gloom beneath ; but a streak of moonlight displays him clinging to a branch. Grasp with all thy ebbing strength, young soldier ! for beneath thee are the deadly surges—the spray even now mingles with the gushing blood from thy side—the roar echoes terrifically in thy ears ! in vain ; the faithless bough is bending with thy weight—it cracks—it parts ! What is that shrill sound which instantly is drowned in the thunderings of the torrent ? It is the death-shriek of Melancourt.

Maddened by the sight, as the Indian who had caused the destruction of his friend with a triumphant shout appeared on the edge of the abyss, Onwawisset again leaped the chasm, and with one blow of his tomahawk laid him dead upon the earth.

Then rearing his form proudly, he shouted to an advancing body of the yelling pursuers as he dashed the plume from his brow— "The warriors of the Eagle are cowards ! Onwawisset scorns to be their Sachem ; he goes to join his brother in the land of shadows !" and, with a piercing whoop, he leaped into the frightful gloom that rested upon the wild and dashing sepulchre of waters.

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MOHEGAN-ANA : OR SCENES AND STORIES OF THE HUDSON.

NUMBER ONE

I HAVE wandered a good way in my time—some five or six thousand miles perhaps, over the northern parts of the Union on either side of the mountains, and all for the sake of seeing Nature in what poets call "her wild retreats" of beholding her in those unmolested fastnesses where, like a decorous female as she is, she may freak it about in dishabille without being subjected to that abashing scrutiny that always awaits her when architects and landscape gardeners assist at her toilet in those places where wealth compels her sometimes to hold her court. Like all the rest of the sex she is capricious enough in her choice of what she likes, and leads her admirers many an idle dance with but slight reward ; while her choicest favors often awaits him who stumbles upon her at her retiring moments, in spots where he would least expect such good fortune. Certes, I have never found her more propitious than within thirty miles of Saratoga,[146] among lakes, mountains, and forests ; where, notwithstanding the vicinity of one of the gayest haunts of dissipation, my only rivals for her favors were a sportsman or two who had stumbled upon these retreats as I did.

It was many years since when I went upon my first hunting excursion in that unsettled region about the north-western sources of the Hudson, generally known as "Totten and Crossfield's Purchase,"[147] never in very great repute at land offices, and selling at that

[146] Then a village on the west bank of the Hudson River. In October 1777, British General John Burgoyne was defeated there during the American Revolution.

[147] A wooded area in the Hamilton county, New York.

time for sixpence an acre. The deer were then so abundant that they were often destroyed by the few settlers for their skins alone ; and wolves, and bears, and panthers prowled the thick forest unmolested, save by a few Indians who once or twice throughout the year would straggle in from the Iroquois reservation on the Canadian frontier. The salmon trout that abound in the head waters of the Hudson would sometimes tempt them at the spearing season in July ; and the moose, which is still occasionally shot in this district, used generally to lure them thither in the winter season.

There was one old Mohawk,[148] yclept[149] *Captain Gill*, who alone kept there all the year round, and was a sort of sylvan Sultan of the whole region about. His daughter, Molly Gill, who led a kind of oyster life, (though no one would have mistaken her for a Peri,[150]) in their wigwam on the outlet of lake Pleasant,[151] used to make his mockasons, sew up the rips of his birchen canoe, and dress his venison for him, while the Captain roved far and near in search of whatever might cheer the home enlivened by these two only inmates —a tender fawn cutlet, a trinket sent by some good-natured settler to Molly, or a stoup of vile whiskey secreted in the Captain's hunting pouch for his especial refreshment and delight.

Gill, notwithstanding this unhallowed league with bad spirits, was a capital guide upon sporting excursions whenever the larger kinds of game were the object ; and the companion of my rambles, a young barrister from New-York, took as much pleasure as myself in wandering about among the mountains, or cruising from lake to lake, and camping out on their banks with the old Mohawk for our *decus et tutamen*.[152]

A party of St. Regis Indians[153] — who within two summers have hunted over these grounds— was at that time in the country, and uniting with these we turned out a pretty stout band upon our greater excursions ; our company being often strengthened by Courtenay St. George (a cunning trapper of muskrats, whose slouching

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148 A Native American people then living in northeast New York.

149 "by the name of", the past participle of the verb *clepe*, to call (archaic).

150 In Persian mythology, a fallen angel or fairy, in former times regarded as malevolent and later as benevolent creatures.

151 A lake in the Hamilton county, New York.

152 Quoted from Virgil's *Aeneid* (Book V, line 262), meaning "glory and protection".

153 A Roman Catholic Indian community belonging to the Mohawk people, whose territory straddled the St. Lawrence River.

figure and ferret-like features are in whimsical contrast to his knightly name,) and other woodsmen less known along that border.

As I took no notes of our different "tramps," it is impossible now to trace their various routes through rocky glens and over sagging morasses, amid the labyrinths of lakes that are linked together by innumerable streams and waterfalls among these mountains ; and I may be sufficiently inaccurate while trying to recall some of the tales and anecdotes with which our party used to while away the evenings between the hours of making our camp-fire and the moment of retiring to repose : but neither shall prevent me from attempting to sketch some of these scenes from recollection, and relating the legends connected with them as I now remember them.

Embarking one morning on a small lake called Konjimuc by the Indians, we entered its outlet, and floated many hours down a stream scarcely a pistol shot in breadth, where, from the rapidity of the current, the steering paddle alone was necessary to keep our canoes on their course. The brook wound generally through a wooded morass, where the dense overhanging foliage excluded even a glimpse of the neighboring mountains ; at times, however, it would sweep near enough to their bank to wash a wall of granite, from which the hanging birch and hemlock would fling their branches far over the limpid tide ; and then again it would expand into a broad deep pool, circled with water lilies and animated by large flocks of wild fowl, that would rise screaming from the black tarn as we glided out from the shadow of the forest and skimmed over its smooth surface. Innumerable streams, the inlets and outlets of other lakes, mingled their waters in these frequently occurring ponds, and about sunset we struck one so broad that we determined to change our course, and heading our shallops now against the current, we soon found ourselves upon the outlet of a considerable lake. The water gradually became deeper and more sluggish, and then a pull of a few hundred yards with a sudden turn in the forest, shot us out upon one of the most beautiful sheets of water I ever beheld.

It was about four miles in length, with perhaps half that breadth ; the shores curved with the most picturesque irregularity, and swelling high, but gradually, from the water ; while their graceful slopes were held in strong contrast by a single islet which shot up in one bold cliff from the centre, and nodded with a crown of pines,

around which an eagle was at that moment wheeling. There were then, I believe, but two farms upon the banks of lake Pleasant, a couple of small "clearings" on the brows of opposite promontaries, each waving with wheat and smiling in the light of the setting sun — the only cultivated spots in an unbroken wilderness. Every where else the untamed forest threw its dusky shadow over the lake, while beneath the pendant branches, which in some instances swept the wave, a beach as white as the snowy strand of the ocean glistened around the clear blue water.

The sun was setting in heavy though gorgeous clouds, which at each moment lost some of their brightness in a volume of vapor that rolled along the mountains ; and by the time we reached the upper end of the lake, the broad drops that began to descend warned us to hurry on our course and gain a shelter from the coming storm. We had reached the inlet of the lake, which was only a narrow crooked strait, a few hundred rods in length, connecting it with another sheet of water that covered about the same surface as that through which we had passed ; the promontory between affording, as I afterwards experienced, a commanding view of both the sister lakes. Our destination was the farthest side of the upper lake, and the management of a canoe was no boy's play when we left the sheltered strait and launched out upon the stormy water. The shores were bold and rocky ; and as the wind had now risen into a tempest, the waves beat furiously upon them. The rain blew in blinding sheets against us, and it was almost impossible, while urging our way in its teeth, to keep our canoes from falling off into the trough of the sea ; in which case they would inevitably have been swamped. Our flotilla was soon separated and dispersed in the darkness. We called long to each other as the lightning from time to time revealed a boat still in hail, but our voices were at last only echoed by the dismal wailing of the loon, whose shriek always rises above the storm, and may be heard for miles amidst its wildest raging.

Sacondaga,[154] the lake we were on, the fountain head of the river of that name, is shaped, as an Indian described it to me, "like a bear's paw spread out with an island between the ball of each toe :"* and the different bays and islets, resembling each other to an unprac-

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[154] A lake in the Sacandaga Valley (NY). Settled by Sir William Johnson in the 1700s, it was the home to the Mohawk Indians.

*It is called "Round Lake" by the surveyors, probably *quari lucus, &c.*(*Note of the Author*).

tised eye, might, on a dark night, mislead even the skillful voyageur in making any given point on the shore ; more than one of our canoes must have coasted the greater part of it before they were all successively drawn up on the beach at the place we had fixed for our rendezvous.

"I may say that the Flying Head was abroad to-night," quoth the old Mohawk, in good round English, as he lighted his pipe and looked contentedly around the bark shantee,[155] wherein each of our company, having cheered himself with a hearty supper of dried venison, was lounging about the fire in every variety of indolent attitude. The remark seemed to attract the attention of no one but myself ; but when I asked the speaker to explain its meaning, my mongrel companions eagerly united in a request that "the captain would tell them all about the varmint of which he spoke, be it *painter* (panther) or devil." Gill did not long hesitate to comply ; but the particulars, not to mention the phraseology of his narrative, in the years that have since elapsed, have almost escaped me ; and I shall, therefore, not hesitate to tell the story in my own way while trying to recall it here.

THE FLYING HEAD, A LEGEND OF SACONDAGA LAKE

The country about the head waters of the great Mohegan,[156] though abounding in game and fish, was never, in the recollection of the oldest Indians living, nor in that of their fathers, the permanent residence of any one tribe. From the savage shores of the Scroon,[157] where the eastern fork takes its rise, to the silver strand of lake Pleasant, through which the western branch makes its way after rising in Sacondaga lake, the wilderness that intervenes, and all the mountains round about the fountain heads of the great river, have from time immemorial been infested by a class of beings with whom no good man would ever wish to come in contact.

The young men of the Mohawk have, indeed, often traversed it, when, in years gone by, they went on the war-path after the hostile tribes of the north, and the scattered and wandering remnants of their

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155 "shanty": a small rudimentary dwelling generally made of wood.

156 Mohegan Lake, New York. The Mohegan or Mohican, were the eastern branch of the Mahican settled in the Hudson River.

157 Another lake, in the heart of the Adirondacks (NY).

people, with an occasional hunting party from the degenerate band that survive at St. Regis, will yet occasionally be tempted over these haunted ground in quest of the game that still finds a refuge in that mountain region. The evil shapes that were formerly so troublesome to the red hunter, seem in these later days to have become less restless at his presence ; and, whether it be that the day of their power has gone by, or that their vindictiveness has relented at witnessing the fate which seems to be universally overtaking the people whom they once delighted to persecute—certain it is that the few Indians who now find their way to this part of the country are never molested except by the white settlers, who are slowly extending their clearings among the wild hills of the north.

The Flying Head, which is supposed to have first driven the original possessors of these hunting grounds, whosoever they were, from their homes, and which, as long as tradition runneth, back in the old day before the whites came hither, guarded them from the occupancy of every neighboring tribe, has not been seen for many years by any credible witness ; though there are those who insist that it has more than once appeared to them hovering, as their fathers used to describe it, over the lake in which it first had its bath. The existence of this fearful monster, however, has never been disputed. Rude representations of it are still occasionally met with in the crude designs of these degenerate aborigines who earn a scant subsistence by making birchen baskets and ornamented pouches for travellers, who are curious in their manufacture of wampum and porcupine quills ; and the origin and history of the Flying Head survives, while even the name of the tribe whose crimes first called it into existence has passed away for ever.

It was a season of great severity with that forgotten people whose council files were lighted on the mountain promontory that divides Sacondaga from the sister lake into which it discharges itself.*

A long and severe winter with but little snow, had killed the herbage at its roots, and the moose and the deer had trooped off to the more luxuriant pastures along the Mohawk, whither the hunters of the hills dared not follow him. The fishing too failed ; and the famine became so devouring among the mountains, that whole famil-

*A hamlet is now growing up on this beautiful mountain slope, and the scene in the likely to be soon better known from the enterprise of a Mr. Skidmore, who is about establishing a line of stages between Sacondaga lake and Saratoga springs (*Note of the Author*).

ies, who had no hunters to provide for them, perished outright. The young men would no longer throw the slender product of the chase into the common stock, and the women and children had to maintain life as well they could upon the roots and berries the woods afforded them.

The sufferings of the tribe became at length so galling that the young and enterprising began to talk of migrating from the ancient seat of their people ; and as it was impossible, surrounded as they were by hostile tribes, merely to shift their hunting grounds for a season and return to them at some more auspicious period, it was proposed that if they could effect a secret march to the great lake off to the west of them, they should launch their canoes upon Ontario, and all move away to a new home beyond its broad waters. The wild rice, of which some had been brought into their country by a runner from a distant nation, would, they thought, support them in their perilous voyage along the shores of the great water where it grows in such profusion, and they believed that, once safely beyond the lake, it would be easy enough to find a new home abounding in game, upon those flowery plains which, as they had heard, lay like one immense garden beyond the chain of inland seas.

The old men of the tribe were indignant at the bare suggestion of leaving the bright streams and sheltered vallies, amid which their spring-time of life had passed so happily. They doubted the existence of the garden regions of which their children spoke ; and they thought that if there were indeed such a country, it was madness to attempt to reach it in the way proposed. They said, too, that the famine was scourge which the Master of Life inflicted upon his people for their crimes—that if its plains were endured with the constancy and firmness that became warriors, the visitation would soon pass away ; but that those who fled from it would only war with their destiny, and that chastisement would follow them, in some shape, wheresoever they might flee. Finally, they added, that they would rather die that moment, than, leaving them for ever, to revel in plenty upon stranger plains.

"Be it so—they have spoken !" exclaimed a fierce and insolent youth, springing to his feet and casting a furious glance around the council as the aged chief, who had thus addressed it, resumed his seat. "Be the dotards's words their own, my brothers—let

them die for the crimes they have even now acknowledged. We know of none, our unsullied summers have yet had to blush for. It is they that have drawn this curse upon our people—it is for them that our vitals are consuming with anguish, while our strength wastes away in the search of sustenance we cannot find—or which, when found, we are compelled to share with those for whose misdeeds the Great Spirit hath placed it far from us. They have spoken—let them die. Let them die, if we are to remain, to appease the angry Spirit ; and the food that now keeps life lingering in their shrivelled and useless carcasses may then nerve the limbs of our young hunters, or keep our children from perishing. Let them die, if we are to move hence, for their presence will but bring a curse upon our path — their worn-out frames will give way upon the march, and the raven that hovers over their curses, guide our enemies to the spot, and scent them like wolves upon our trail. Let them die ; my brothers, and, in that they are still our tribes-men, let us give them the death of warriors—and that before we leave this ground."

And with with these words the young barbarian, pealing forth a ferocious whoop, buried his tomahawk in the head of the old man nearest to him. The infernal yell was echoed on every side—a dozen flint hatchets were instantly raised by as many remorseless arms, and the massacre was wrought before one of those thus horribly sacrificed could interpose a plea of mercy. But for mercy they would not have pleaded, had opportunity been afforded them. Even in the moment that intervened between the cruel sentence and its execution, they managed to show that stern resignation to the decrees of fate which an Indian warrior ever exhibits when death is near ; and each of the seven old men that perished thus barbarously, drew his wolf-skin mantle around his shoulders and nodded his head as if inviting the death-blow that followed.

The parricidal deed was done ; and it now became a question, how to dispose of the remains of those whose lamp of life, while twinkling in the socket, had been thus fearfully quenched for ever. The act, though said to have been of not unfrequent occurrence among certain Indian tribes at similar exigencies, was one utterly abhorrent to the nature of most of our aborigines ; who, from their earliest years, are taught the deepest reverence for the aged. In the present instance, likewise, it had been so outrageous a perversion of

their customary views of duty among this simple people, that it was thought but proper to dispense with their wonted mode of sepulture, and dispose of the victims of famine and fanaticism in some peculiar manner. They wished in some way to sanctify the deed, by offering up the bodies of the slaughtered to the Master of Life, and that without dishonoring the dead. It was therefore agreed to decapitate the bodies and burn them ; and as the nobler part could not, when thus dissevered, be buried with the usual forms, it was determined to sink the heads together in the bottom of the lake.

The soul-less trunks were accordingly consumed and the ashes scattered to the winds, and the heads were then deposited singly, in separate canoes, which pulled off in a kind of procession from the shore. The young chief who had suggested the bloody scene of the sacrifice, rowed in advance, in order to designate the spot where they were to disburden themselves of their gory freight. Resting then upon his oars, he received each head in succession from his companions, and proceeded to tie them together by their scalp-locks, in order to sink the whole, with a huge stone, to the bottom. But the vengeance of the Master of Life overtook the wretch before his horrid office was accomplished ; for no sooner did he receive the last head into his canoe, than it began to sink—his feet became entangled in the hideous chain he had been knotting together, and before his horror-stricken companions could come to his rescue, he was dragged shrieking to the bottom. The others waited not to see the water settle over him, but pulled with their whole strength for the shore.

The morning dawned calmly upon that unhallowed water, which seemed at first to show no traces of the deed it had witnessed the night before. But gradually, as the sun rose higher, a few gory bubbles appeared to float over one smooth and turbid spot, which the breeze never crisped into a ripple. The parricides sat on the bank, watching it all the day ; but sluggish, as at first, that sullen blot upon the fresh blue surface still remained. Another day passed over their heads, and the thick stain was yet there. On the third day the floating slime took a greener hue, as if colored by the festering mass beneath : but coarse fibres of darker dye marbled its surface, and on the forth day these began to tremble along the water like weeds growing from the bottom, or the long tresses of a woman's scalp floating in a pool when no wind disturbs it. The fifth morning came, and the con-

science-stricken watchers thought that the spreading scalp—for such now all agreed it was—had raised itself from the water, and become rounded at the top as if there were a head beneath it. Some thought, too, that they could discover a pair of hideous eyes glaring beneath the dripping locks. They looked on the sixth, and there indeed was a monstrous head floating upon the surface, as if anchored to the spot, around which the water—notwithstanding a blast which swept the lake—was calm and motionless as ever.

Those bad Indians then wished to fly, but the doomed parricides had not now the courage to encounter the warlike bands through which they must make their way in fleeing from their native valley. They thought, too, that as nothing about the head except the eyes had motion, it could not harm them, resting quietly as it did upon the bosom of the waters. And though it was dreadful to have that hideous gaze fixed for ever upon their dwellings, yet they thought that if the Master of Life meant this as an expiation for their frenzied deed, they would strive to live on beneath those unearthly glances without shrinking or complaint.

But a strange alteration had taken place in the floating head on the morning of the seventh day. A pair of broad wings, ribbed like those of a bat, and with claws appended to each tendon, had grown out during the night ; and, buoyed up by these, it seemed to be now resting upon the water. The water itself appeared to ripple more briskly near it, as if joyous that it was about to be relieved of its unnatural burden : but still for hours the head maintained its position. At last the wind began to rise, and, driving through the trough of the sea, beneath their expanded membrane, raised the wings from the surface and seemed for the first time to endow them with vitality. They flapped harshly once or twice upon the waves, and the head rose slowly and heavily from the lake.

An agony of fear seized upon the gazing parricides, but the supernatural creation made no movement to injure them. It only remained balancing itself over the lake, and casting a shadow from its wings that wrapped the valley in gloom. But dreadful was it beneath their withering shade to watch that terrific monster, hovering like a falcon for the stoop, and know not upon what victim it might descend. It was then that they who had sown the gory seed from which it sprung to life, with one impulse caught to escape its presence by

flight. Herding together like a troop of deer when the panther is prowling by, they rushed in a body from the scene. But the flapping of the demon pinions was soon heard behind them, and the winged head was henceforth on their track wheresoever it led.

In vain did they cross one mountain barrier after another—plunge into the rocky gorge or thread the mazy swamp to escape their fiendish watcher. The Flying Head would rise on tireless wings over the loftiest summit, or dart in arrowy flight through the narrowest passes without furling its pinions ; while their sullen threshing would be heard even in those vine-webbed thickets, where the little ground bird can scarcely make its way. The very caverns of the earth were in protection to the parricides from its presence for scarcely would they think they had found a refuge in some sparry cell, when, poised midway between the ceiling and the floor, they would behold the Flying Head glaring upon them. Sleeping or waking, the monster was ever near—they paused to rest, but the rushing of its wings, as it swept around their resting-place in never-ending circles, prevented them from finding forgetfulness in repose ; or, if in spite of those blighting pinions that ever fanned them, fatigue did at moments plunge them in uneasy slumbers, the glances of the Flying Head would pierce their very eyelids, and steep their dreams in horror.

What was the ultimate fate of that band of parricides no one has ever known. Some say that the Master of Life kept them always young, in order that their capability of suffering might never wear out ; and these insist that the Flying Head is still pursuing them over the great prairies of the Far West. Others aver that the glances of the Flying Head turned each of them gradually into stone, and these say that their forms, though altered by the wearing of the rains in the lapse of long years may still be recognized in those upright rocks which stand like human figures along the shores of some of the neighboring lakes ; though most Indians have another way of accounting for these figures. Certain it is, however, that the Flying Head always comes back to this part of the country about the times of the Equinox ; and some say even that you may alway hear the flapping of its wings whenever such a storm as that we have just weathered is brewing."

The old hunter had finished his story ; but my companions were still anxious that he should protract the narrative, and give us

the account of the grotesque forms to which he had alluded as being found among these hills. These, however, he told us more properly, belonged to another legend, which he subsequently related, and which I may hereafter endeavor to recall.

C. F. H.
