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JAMES FENimore CLARK

THE WEPT

OF

WISH-TON-WISH:

A Tale;

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE PIONEERS, PRAIRIE, &c. &c.

"But she is dead to him, to all;
Her lute hangs silent on the wall,
And on the stairs, and at the door,
Her fairy step is heard no more."

ROGERS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

A NEW EDITION.

Philadelphia:
CAREY, LEA, & BLANCHARD.

1836.
Eastern District of Pennsylvania, to wit:

***** BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the tenth day of Octo
ber, in the fifty-fourth year of the independence of the United
***** States of America, A. D. 1829, CAREY, LEA & CAREY, of the
said district, have deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right
whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words following, to wit:

"The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish: A Tale. By the author of the Pioneers,
Prairie, &c. &c.

'But she is dead to him, to all;
Her lute hangs silent on the wall,
And on the stairs, and at the door,
Her fairy step is heard no more.'—Rogers."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, enti-
tled, "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the
copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors
of such copies, during the times therein mentioned." And also to the
Act entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled 'An Act for
the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts,
and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies, during the
times therein mentioned,' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts
of designing, engraving, and etching, historical and other Prints."

D. CALDWELL, Clerk of the
Eastern District of Pennsylvania.
TO

THE REV. J. R. C.

OF

***** PENNSYLVANIA.

The kind and disinterested manner in which you have furnished the materials of the following tale, merits a public acknowledgment. As your reluctance to appear before the world, however, imposes a restraint, you must receive such evidence of gratitude, as your own prohibition will allow.

Notwithstanding there are so many striking and deeply interesting events in the early history of those from whom you derive your being, yet are there hundreds of other families in this country, whose traditions, though less accurately and minutely preserved than the little narrative you have submitted to my inspection, would supply the materials of many moving tales. You have every reason to exult in your descent, for, surely, if any man may claim to be a citizen and a proprietor in the Union, it is one, that, like
yourself, can point to a line of ancestors whose origin is lost in the obscurity of time. You are truly an American. In your eyes, we of a brief century or two, must appear as little more than denizens quite recently admitted to the privilege of a residence. That you may continue to enjoy peace and happiness, in that land where your fathers so long flourished, is the sincere wish of your obliged friend,

THE AUTHOR.
PREFACE.

At this distant period, when Indian traditions are listened to with the interest that we lend to the events of a dark age, it is not easy to convey a vivid image of the dangers and privations that our ancestors encountered, in preparing the land we enjoy for its present state of security and abundance. It is the humble object of the tale that will be found in the succeeding pages, to perpetuate the recollection of some of the practices and events peculiar to the early days of our history.

The general character of the warfare pursued by the natives is too well known to require any preliminary observations; but it may be advisable to direct the attention of the reader, for a few moments, to those leading circumstances in the history of the times, that may have some connexion with the principal business of the legend.

The territory which now compôses the three states of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode-Island, is said, by the best-informed of our annalists, to have been formerly occupied by four great nations of Indians, who were, as usual, subdivided into numberless dependent tribes. Of these people, the Massachusetts possessed a large portion of the land which now compôses the state of that name; the Wampanoags dwelt in what was once the Colony of Plymouth, and in the northern districts of the Providence Plantations; the Narragansetts held the well-known islands of the beautiful bay which receives its name from their nation, and the more southern counties of the Plantations; while the Pequots, or, as it is ordinarily written and pronounced, the Pequods.
were masters of a broad region that lay along the western boundaries of the three other districts.

There is great obscurity thrown around the polity of the Indians, who usually occupied the country lying near the sea.

The Europeans, accustomed to despotic governments, very naturally supposed that the chiefs, found in possession of power, were monarchs to whom authority had been transmitted in virtue of their birth-rights. They consequently gave them the name of kings.

How far this opinion of the governments of the aborigines was true remains a question, though there is certainly reason to think it less erroneous in respect to the tribes of the Atlantic states, than to those who have since been found further west, where, it is sufficiently known, that institutions exist which approach much nearer to republics than to monarchies. It may, however, have readily happened that the son, profiting by the advantages of his situation, often succeeded to the authority of the father, by the aid of influence, when the established regulations of the tribe acknowledged no hereditary claim. Let the principle of the descent of power be what it would, it is certain the experience of our ancestors proves, that, in very many instances, the child was seen to occupy the station formerly filled by the father; and, that in most of those situations of emergency, in which a people so violent were often placed, the authority he exercised was as summary as it was general. The appellation of Uncas came, like those of the Cæsars and Pharosahs, to be a sort of synonyme for chief with the Mohegans, a tribe of the Pequods, among whom several warriors of this name were known to govern in due succession. The renowned Metacom, or, as he is better known to the whites, King Philip, was certainly the son of Massasoit, the Sachem of the
Wampanoags that the emigrants found in authority when they landed on the rock of Plymouth. Miantonimoh, the daring but hapless rival of that Uncas who ruled the whole of the Pequot nation, was succeeded in authority, among the Narragansetts, by his not less heroic and enterprising son, Conanchet; and, even at a much later day, we find instances of this transmission of power, which furnish strong reasons for believing that the order of succession was in the direct line of blood.

The early annals of our history are not wanting in touching and noble examples of savage heroism. Virginia has its legend of the powerful Powhatan and his magnanimous daughter, the ill-requited Pocahontas; and the chronicles of New-England are filled with the bold designs and daring enterprises of Miantonimoh, of Metacom, and of Conanchet. All the last-named warriors proved themselves worthy of better fates, dying in a cause and in a manner, that, had it been their fortunes to have lived in a more advanced state of society, would have enrolled their names among the worthies of the age.

The first serious war, to which the settlers of New-England were exposed, was the struggle with the Pequods. This people was subdued after a fierce conflict; and from being enemies, all, who were not either slain or sent into distant slavery, were glad to become the auxiliaries of their conquerors. This contest occurred within less than twenty years after the Puritans had sought refuge in America.

There is reason to believe that Metacom foresaw the fate of his own people, in the humbled fortunes of the Pequods. Though his father had been the earliest and constant friend of the whites, it is probable that the Puritans owed some portion of this amity to a dire
necessity. We are told that a terrible malady had raged among the Wampanoags but a short time before the arrival of the emigrants, and that their numbers had been fearfully reduced by its ravages. Some authors have hinted at the probability of this disease having been the yellow fever, whose visitations are known to be at uncertain, and, apparently, at very distant intervals. Whatever might have been the cause of this destruction of his people, Massasoit is believed to have been induced, by the consequences, to cultivate the alliance of a nation, who could protect him against the attacks of his ancient and less afflicted foes. But the son appears to have viewed the increasing influence of the whites with eyes more jealous than those of the father. He passed the morning of his life in maturing his great plan for the destruction of the strange race, and his later years were spent in abortive attempts to put this bold design in execution. His restless activity in plotting the confederation against the English, his fierce and ruthless manner of waging the war, his defeat, and his death, are too well known to require repetition.

There is also a wild and romantic interest thrown about the obscure history of a Frenchman of that period. This man is said to have been an officer of rank in the service of his king, and to have belonged to the privileged class which then monopolized all the dignities and emoluments of the kingdom of France. The traditions, and even the written annals of the first century of our possession of America, connect the Baron de la Castine with the Jesuits, who were thought to entertain views of converting the savages to Christianity, not unmingled with the desire of establishing a more temporal dominion over their minds. It is, however, difficult to say whether taste, or religion, or policy, or
necessity, induced this nobleman to quit the saloons of Paris for the wilds of the Pnobscoat. It is merely known that he passed the greater part of his life on that river, in a rude fortress that was then called a palace; that he had many wives, a numerous progeny, and that he possessed a great influence over most of the tribes that dwelt in his vicinity. He is also believed to have been the instrument of furnishing the savages, who were hostile to the English, with ammunition, and with weapons of a more deadly character than those used in their earlier wars. In whatever degree he may have participated in the plan to exterminate the Puritans, death prevented him from assisting in the final effort of Metacom.

The Narragansetts are often mentioned in these pages. A few years before the period at which the tale commences, Miantonimoh had waged a ruthless war against Uncas, the Pequod or Mohegan chief. Fortune favored the latter, who, probably assisted by his civilized allies, not only overthrew the bands of the other, but succeeded in capturing the person of his enemy. The chief of the Narragansetts lost his life, through the agency of the whites, on the place that is now known by the appellation of "the Sachem's plain."

It remains only to throw a little light on the leading incidents of the war of King Philip. The first blow was struck in June, 1675, rather more than half a century after the English first landed in New-England, and just a century before blood was drawn in the contest which separated the colonies from the mother country. The scene was a settlement near the celebrated Mount Hope, in Rhode-Island, where Metacom and his father had both long held their councils. From this point, bloodshed and massacre extended along the whole frontier of New-England. Bodies of horse and foot were
enrolled to meet the foe, and towns were burnt, and 
lives were taken by both parties, with little, and often 
with no respect for age, condition, or sex.

In no struggle with the native owners of the soil was 
the growing power of the whites placed in so great 
jeopardy, as in this celebrated contest with King Philip. 
The venerable historian of Connecticut estimates the 
loss of lives at nearly one-tenth of the whole number 
of the fighting men, and the destruction of houses and 
other edifices to have been in an equal proportion. One 
family in every eleven, throughout all New-England, 
was burnt out: As the colonists nearest the sea were 
exempt from the danger, an idea may be formed, from 
this calculation, of the risk and sufferings of those who 
dwelt in more exposed situations. The Indians did not 
escape without retaliation. The principal nations, al-
ready mentioned, were so much reduced as never after-
wards to offer any serious resistance to the whites, who 
have since converted the whole of their ancient hunting-
grounds into the abodes of civilized man. Metacom, 
Miantonimoh, and Conanchet, with their warriors, have 
become the heroes of song and legend, while the de-
scendants of those who laid waste their dominions, and 
destroyed their race, are yielding a tardy tribute to the 
high daring and savage grandeur of their characters.
THE WEPT

OF

WISH-TON-WISH.

CHAPTER I.

"I may disjoin my hand, but not my faith."  
SHAKESPEARE.

THE incidents of this tale must be sought in a remote period of the annals of America. A colony of self-devoted and pious refugees from religious persecution had landed on the rock of Plymouth, less than half a century before the time at which the narrative commences; and they, and their descendants, had already transformed many a broad waste of wilderness into smiling fields and cheerful villages. The labors of the emigrants had been chiefly limited to the country on the coast, which, by its proximity to the waters that rolled between them and Europe, afforded the semblance of a connexion with the land of their forefathers and the distant abodes of civilization. But enterprise, and a desire to search for still more fertile domains, together with the temptation offered by the vast and unknown regions that lay along their western and northern borders, had induced many bold adventurers to penetrate more deeply into the forests. The precise spot, to which we desire to transport the imagination of the reader, was one of these establishments of what may, not inaptly, be called the forlorn-hope, in the march of civilization through the country.

So little was then known of the great outlines of the American continent, that, when the Lords
Say and Seal, and Brooke, connected with a few associates, obtained a grant of the territory which now composes the state of Connecticut, the King of England affixed his name to a patent, which constituted them proprietors of a country that should extend from the shores of the Atlantic to those of the South Sea. Notwithstanding the apparent hopelessness of ever subduing, or of even occupying a territory like this, emigrants from the mother colony of Massachusetts were found ready to commence the Herculean labor, within fifteen years from the day when they had first put foot upon the well-known rock itself. The fort of Say-Brooke, the towns of Windsor, Hartford, and New-Haven, soon sprang into existence, and, from that period to this, the little community, which then had birth, has been steadily, calmly, and prosperously advancing in its career, a model of order and reason, and the hive from which swarms of industrious, hardy and enlightened yeomen have since spread themselves over a surface so vast, as to create an impression that they still aspire to the possession of the immense regions included in their original grant.

Among the religionists, whom disgust of persecution had early driven into the voluntary exile of the colonies, was more than an usual proportion of men of character and education. The reckless and the gay, younger sons, soldiers unemployed, and students from the inns of court, early sought advancement and adventure in the more southern provinces, where slaves offered impunity from labor, and where war, with a bolder and more stirring policy, oftener gave rise to scenes of excitement, and, of course, to the exercise of the faculties best suited to their habits and dispositions. The more grave, and the religiously-disposed, found refuge in the colonies of New-England. Thither a multitude of private gentlemen transferred their fortunes and
their families, imparting a character of intelligence and a moral elevation to the country, which it has nobly sustained to the present hour.

The nature of the civil wars in England had enlisted many men of deep and sincere piety in the profession of arms. Some of them had retired to the colonies before the troubles of the mother country reached their crisis, and others continued to arrive, throughout the whole period of their existence, until the restoration; when crowds of those who had been dissatisfied to the house of Stuart sought the security of these distant possessions.

A stern, fanatical soldier, of the name of Heathcote, had been among the first of his class, to throw aside the sword for the implements of industry peculiar to the advancement of a newly-established country. How far the influence of a young wife may have affected his decision it is not germane to our present object to consider, though the records, from which the matter we are about to relate is gleaned, give reason to suspect that he thought his domestic harmony would not be less secure in the wilds of the new world, than among the companions with whom his earlier associations would naturally have brought him in communion.

Like himself, his consort was born of one of those families, which, taking their rise in the franklins of the times of the Edwards and Henrys, had become possessors of hereditary landed estates, that, by their gradually-increasing value, had elevated them to the station of small country gentlemen. In most other nations of Europe, they would have been rated in the class of the *petite noblesse*. But the domestic happiness of Capt. Heathcote was doomed to receive a fatal blow, from a quarter where circumstances had given him but little reason to apprehend danger. The very day he landed in the long-wished for

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for asylum, his wife made him the father of a noble boy, a gift that she bestowed at the melancholy price of her own existence. Twenty years the senior of the woman who had followed his fortunes to these distant regions, the retired warrior had always considered it to be perfectly and absolutely within the order of things, that he himself was to be the first to pay the debt of nature. While the visions which Captain Heathcote entertained of a future world were sufficiently vivid and distinct, there is reason to think they were seen through a tolerably long vista of quiet and comfortable enjoyment in this. Though the calamity cast an additional aspect of seriousness over a character that was already more than chastened by the subtleties of sectarian doctrines, he was not of a nature to be unmanned by any vicissitude of human fortune. He lived on, useful and unbending in his habits, a pillar of strength in the way of wisdom and courage to the immediate neighborhood among whom he resided, but reluctant from temper, and from a disposition which had been shadowed by withered happiness, to enact that part in the public affairs of the little state, to which his comparative wealth and previous habits might well have entitled him to aspire. He gave his son such an education as his own resources and those of the infant colony of Massachusetts afforded, and, by a sort of delusive piety, into whose merits we have no desire to look, he thought he had also furnished a commendable evidence of his own desperate resignation to the will of Providence, in causing him to be publicly christened by the name of Content. His own baptismal appellation was Mark; as indeed had been that of most of his ancestors, for two or three centuries. When the world was a little uppermost in his thoughts, as sometimes happens with the most humbled spirits, he had even been heard to speak of a Sir Mark of his family, who had rid-
den a knight in the train of one of the more warlike kings of his native land.

There is some ground for believing, that the great parent of evil early looked with a malignant eye on the example of peacefulness, and of unbending morality, that the colonists of New-England were setting to the rest of Christendom. At any rate, come from what quarter they might, schisms and doctrinal contentions arose among the emigrants themselves; and men, who together had deserted the fire-sides of their forefathers in quest of religious peace, were ere long seen separating their fortunes, in order that each might enjoy, un molested, those peculiar shades of faith, which all had the presumption, no less than the folly, to believe were necessary to propitiate the omnipotent and merciful father of the universe. If our task were one of theology, a wholesome moral on the vanity, no less than on the absurdity of the race, might be here introduced to some advantage.

When Mark Heathcote announced to the community, in which he had now sojourned more than twenty years, that he intended for a second time to establish his altars in the wilderness, in the hope that he and his household might worship God as to them seemed most right, the intelligence was received with a feeling allied to awe. Doctrine and zeal were momentarily forgotten, in the respect and attachment which had been unconsciously created by the united influence of the stern severity of his air, and of the undeniable virtues of his practice. The elders of the settlement communed with him freely and in charity; but the voice of conciliation and alliance came too late. He listened to the reasonings of the ministers, who were assembled from all the adjoining parishes, in sullen respect; and he joined in the petitions for light and instruction, that were offered up on the occasion, with the deep rev-
erence with which he ever drew near to the footstool of the Almighty; but he did both in a temper into which too much positiveness of spiritual pride had entered, to open his heart to that sympathy and charity, which, as they are the characteristics of our mild and forbearing doctrines, should be the study of those who profess to follow their precepts. All that was seemly, and all that was usual, were done; but the purpose of the stubborn sectarian remained unchanged. His final decision is worthy of being recorded.

"My youth was wasted in ungodliness and ignorance," he said, "but in my manhood have I known the Lord. Near two-score years have I toiled for the truth, and all that weary time have I past in trimming my lamps, lest, like the foolish virgins, I should be caught unprepared; and now, when my loins are girded and my race is nearly run, shall I become a backslider and falsifier of the word? Much have I endured, as you know, in quitting the earthly mansion of my fathers, and in encountering the dangers of sea and land for the faith; and, rather than let go its hold, will I once more cheerfully devote to the howling wilderness, ease, offspring, and, should it be the will of Providence, life itself!"

The day of parting was one of unfeigned and general sorrow. Notwithstanding the austerity of the old man's character, and the nearly unbending severity of his brow, the milk of human kindness had often been seen distilling from his stern nature in acts that did not admit of misinterpretation. There was scarcely a young beginner in the laborious and ill-requited husbandry of the township he inhabited, a district at no time considered either profitable or fertile, who could not recall some secret and kind aid which had flowed from a hand that, to the world, seemed clenched in cautious and reserved frugality; nor did any of the faithful of his
vicinity cast their fortunes together in wedlock, without receiving from him evidence of an interest in their worldly happiness, that was far more substantial than words.

On the morning when the vehicles, groaning with the household goods of Mark Heathcote, were seen quitting his door, and taking the road which led to the sea-side, not a human being, of sufficient age, within many miles of his residence, was absent from the interesting spectacle. The leave-taking, as usual on all serious occasions, was preceded by a hymn and prayer, and then the sternly-minded adventurer embraced his neighbors, with a mien, in which a subdued exterior, struggled fearfully and strangely with emotions that, more than once, threatened to break through even the formidable barriers of his acquired manner. The inhabitants of every building on the road were in the open air, to receive and to return the parting benediction. More than once, they, who guided his teams, were commanded to halt, and all near, possessing human aspirations and human responsibility, were collected to offer petitions in favor of him who departed and of those who remained. The requests for mortal privileges were somewhat light and hasty, but the askings in behalf of intellectual and spiritual light were long, fervent, and oft-repeated. In this characteristic manner did one of the first of the emigrants to the new world make his second removal into scenes of renewed bodily suffering, privation and danger.

Neither person nor property was transferred from place to place, in this country, at the middle of the seventeenth century, with the dispatch and with the facilities of the present time. The roads were necessarily few and short, and communication by water was irregular, tardy, and far from commodious. A wide barrier of forest lying between that
portion of Massachusetts-bay from which Mark
Heathcote emigrated, and the spot, near the Con-
necticut river, to which it was his intention to pro-
ceed, he was induced to adopt the latter mode of
conveyance. But a long delay intervened between
the time when he commenced his short journey to
the coast, and the hour when he was finally enabled
to embark. During this detention he and his house-
hold sojourned among the godly-minded of the
narrow peninsula, where there already existed the
germ of a flourishing town, and where the spires
of a noble and picturesque city now elevate them-
selves above so many thousand roofs.

The son did not leave the colony of his birth and
the haunts of his youth, with the same unwavering
obedience to the call of duty, as the father. There
was a fair, a youthful, and a gentle being in the
recently-established town of Boston, of an age,
station, opinions, fortunes, and, what was of still
greater importance, of sympathies suited to his own.
Her form had long mingled with those holy images,
which his stern instruction taught him to keep most
familiarly before the mirror of his thoughts. It is
not surprising, then, that the youth hailed the delay
as propitious to his wishes, or that he turned it to
the account, which the promptings of a pure affec-
tion so naturally suggested. He was united to the
gentle Ruth Harding only the week before the
father sailed on his second pilgrimage.

It is not our intention to dwell on the incidents of
the voyage. Though the genius of an extraor-
dinary man had discovered the world which was
now beginning to fill with civilized men, navigation
at that day was not brilliant in accomplishments.
A passage among the shoals of Nantucket must
have been one of actual danger, no less than of
terror; and the ascent of the Connecticut itself was
an exploit worthy of being mentioned. In due time
the adventurers landed at the English fort of Hartford, where they tarried for a season, in order to obtain rest and spiritual comfort. But the peculiarity of doctrine, on which Mark Heathcote laid so much stress, was one that rendered it advisable for him to retire still further from the haunts of men. Accompanied by a few followers, he proceeded on an exploring expedition, and the end of the summer found him once more established on an estate that he had acquired by the usual simple forms practised in the colonies, and at the trifling cost for which extensive districts were then set apart as the property of individuals.

The love of the things of this life, while it certainly existed, was far from being predominant in the affections of the Puritan. He was frugal from habit and principle, more than from an undue longing after worldly wealth. He contented himself, therefore, with acquiring an estate that should be valuable, rather from its quality and beauty, than from its extent. Many such places offered themselves, between the settlements of Weathersfield and Hartford, and that imaginary line which separated the possessions of the colony he had quitted, from those of the one he joined. He made his location, as it is termed in the language of the country, near the northern boundary of the latter. This spot, by the aid of an expenditure that might have been considered lavish for the country and the age, of some lingering of taste, which even the self-denying and subdued habits of his later life had not entirely extinguished, and of great natural beauty in the distribution of land, water and wood, the emigrant contrived to convert into an abode, that was not more desirable for its retirement from the temptations of the world, than for its rural loveliness.

After this memorable act of conscientious self-
devotion, years passed away in quiet, amid a species of negative prosperity. Rumors from the old world reached the ears of the tenants of this secluded settlement, months after the events to which they referred were elsewhere forgotten, and tumults and wars in the sister colonies came to their knowledge only at distant and tardy intervals. In the mean time, the limits of the colonial establishments were gradually extending themselves, and valleys were beginning to be cleared nearer and nearer to their own. Old age had now begun to make some visible impression on the iron frame of the Captain, and the fresh color of youth and health, with which his son had entered the forest, was giving way to the brown covering produced by exposure and toil. We say of toil, for, independently of the habits and opinions of the country, which strongly reprobed idleness, even in those most gifted by fortune, the daily difficulties of their situation, the chase, and the long and intricate passages that the veteran himself was compelled to adventure in the surrounding forest, partook largely of the nature of the term we have used. Ruth continued blooming and youthful, though maternal anxiety was soon added to her other causes of care. Still, for a long season, nought occurred to excite extraordinary regrets for the step they had taken, or to create particular uneasiness in behalf of the future. The borderers, for such by their frontier position they had in truth become, heard the strange and awful tidings of the dethronement of one king, of the interregnum, as a reign of more than usual vigor and prosperity is called, and of the restoration of the son of him who is strangely enough termed a martyr. To all these eventful and unwonted chances in the fortunes of kings, Mark Heathcote listened with deep and reverential submission to the will of him, in whose eyes crowns and sceptres are merely
the more costly baubles of the world. Like most of his contemporaries, who had sought shelter in the western continent, his political opinions, if not absolutely republican, had a leaning to liberty that was strongly in opposition to the doctrine of the divine rights of the monarch, while he had been too far removed from the stirring passions which had gradually excited those nearer to the throne, to lose their respect for its sanctity, and to sully its brightness with blood. When the transient and straggling visitors that, at long intervals, visited his settlement, spoke of the Protector, who for so many years ruled England with an iron hand, the eyes of the old man would gleam with sudden and singular interest; and once, when commenting after evening prayer on the vanity and the vicissitudes of this life, he acknowledged that the extraordinary individual, who was, in substance if not in name, seated on the throne of the Plantagenets, had been the boon companion and ungodly associate of many of his youthful hours. Then would follow a long, wholesome, extemporaneous homily on the idleness of setting the affections on the things of life, and a half-suppressed, but still intelligible commendation of the wiser course which had led him to raise his own tabernacle in the wilderness, instead of weakening the chances of eternal glory by striving too much for the possession of the treacherous vanities of the world.

But even the gentle and ordinarily little observant Ruth might trace the kindling of the eye, the knitting of the brow, and the flushings of his pale and furrowed cheek, as the murderous conflicts of the civil wars became the themes of the ancient soldier's discourse. There were moments when religious submission, and we had almost said religious precepts, were partially forgotten, as he explained to his attentive son and listening grandchild, the nature of
the onset, or the quality and dignity of the retreat. At such times, his still nervous hand would even wield the blade, in order to instruct the latter in its uses, and many a long winter evening was passed in thus indirectly teaching an art, that was so much at variance with the mandates of his divine master. The chastened soldier, however, never forgot to close his instruction with a petition extraordinary, in the customary prayer, that no descendant of his should ever take life from a being unprepared to die, except in justifiable defence of his faith, his person, or his lawful rights. It must be admitted, that a liberal construction of the reserved privileges would leave sufficient matter, to exercise the subtlety of one subject to any extraordinary propensity to arms.

Few opportunities were however offered, in their remote situation and with their peaceful habits, for the practice of a theory that had been taught in so many lessons. Indian alarms, as they were termed, were not unfrequent, but, as yet, they had never produced more than terror in the bosoms of the gentle Ruth and her young offspring. It is true, they had heard of travellers massacred, and of families separated by captivity, but, either by a happy fortune, or by more than ordinary prudence in the settlers who were established along that immediate frontier, the knife and the tomahawk had as yet been sparingly used in the colony of Connecticut. A threatening and dangerous struggle with the Dutch, in the adjoining province of New-Netherlands, had been averted by the foresight and moderation of the rulers of the new plantations; and though a warlike and powerful native chief kept the neighboring colonies of Massachusetts and Rhode-Island in a state of constant watchfulness, from the cause just mentioned the apprehension of danger was greatly weakened in the breasts of those so remote as the individuals who composed the family of our emigrant.
OF WISH-TON-WISH.

In this quiet manner did years glide by, the surrounding wilderness slowly retreating from the habitations of the Heathcotes, until they found themselves in the possession of as many of the comforts of life, as their utter seclusion from the rest of the world could give them reason to expect.

With this preliminary explanation, we shall refer the reader to the succeeding narrative for a more minute, and we hope for a more interesting account of the incidents of a legend that may prove too homely for the tastes of those, whose imaginations seek the excitement of scenes more stirring, or of a condition of life less natural.

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CHAPTER II.

Sir, I do know you;
And dare, upon the warrant of my art,
Commend a dear thing to you.

King Lear.

At the precise time when the action of our piece commences, a fine and fruitful season was drawing to a close. The harvests of the hay and of the smaller corns had long been over, and the younger Heathcote with his laborers had passed a day in depriving the luxuriant maize of its tops, in order to secure the nutritious blades for fodder, and to admit the sun and air to harden a grain, that is almost considered the staple production of the region he inhabited. The veteran Mark had ridden among the workmen, during their light toil, as well to enjoy a sight which promised abundance to his flocks and herds, as to throw in, on occasion, some wholesome spiritual precept, in which doctrinal subtlety was far more prominent than the rules of practice. The hirelings of his son, for he had long since yielded the management of the estate to Content, were, with
out an exception, young men born in the country
and long use and much training had accustomed
them to a blending of religious exercises with most
of the employments of life. They listened, there-
fore, with respect, nor did an impious smile, or an
impatient glance, escape the lightest-minded of their
number, during his exhortations, though the homi-
lies of the old man were neither very brief, nor par-
ticularly original. But devotion to the one great
cause of their existence, austere habits, and unre-
laxed industry in keeping alive a flame of zeal that
had been kindled in the other hemisphere, to burn
longest and brightest in this, had interwoven the
practice mentioned with most of the opinions and
pleasures of these metaphysical, though simple-
minded people. The toil went on none the less
cheerily for the extraordinary accompaniment, and
Content himself, by a certain glimmering of super-
stition, which appears to be the concomitant of ex-
cessive religious zeal, was fain to think that the sun
shone more brightly on their labors, and that the
earth gave forth more of its fruits, while these holy
sentiments were flowing from the lips of a father
whom he piously loved and deeply reverenced.

But when the sun, usually at that season, in the
climate of Connecticut, a bright unshrouded orb,
fell towards the tree-tops which bounded the western
horizon, the old man began to grow weary with his
own well-doing. He therefore finished his discourse
with a wholesome admonition to the youths to com-
plete their tasks before they quitted the field; and,
turning the head of his horse, he rode slowly, and
with a musing air, towards the dwellings. It is prob-
able that for some time the thoughts of Mark were
occupied with the intellectual matter he had just
been handling with so much power; but when his
little nag stopped of itself on a small eminence,
which the crooked cow-path he was following cross-
ed, his mind yielded to the impression of more worldly and more sensible objects. As the scene, that drew his contemplations from so many abstract theories to the realities of life, was peculiar to the country, and is more or less connected with the subject of our tale, we shall endeavor briefly to describe it.

A small tributary of the Connecticut divided the view into two nearly equal parts. The fertile flats that extended on each of its banks for more than a mile, had been early stripped of their burthen of forest, and they now lay in placid meadows, or in fields from which the grain of the season had lately disappeared, and over which the plow had already left the marks of recent tillage. The whole of the plain, which ascended gently from the rivulet towards the forest, was subdivided in inclosures, by numberless fences, constructed in the rude but substantial manner of the country. Rails, in which lightness and economy of wood had been but little consulted, lying in zigzag lines, like the approaches which the besieger makes in his cautious advance to the hostile fortress, were piled on each other, until barriers seven or eight feet in height, were interposed to the inroads of vicious cattle. In one spot, a large square vacancy had been cut into the forest, and, though numberless stumps of trees darkened its surface, as indeed they did many of the fields on the flats themselves, bright, green grain was sprouting forth, luxuriantly, from the rich and virgin soil. High against the side of an adjacent hill, that might aspire to be called a low rocky mountain, a similar invasion had been made on the dominion of the trees; but caprice or convenience had induced an abandonment of the clearing, after it had ill required the toil of felling the timber by a single crop. In this spot, straggling, girdled, and consequently dead trees, piles of logs, and black and charred stubs, were seen deforming the beauty of a
field, that would, otherwise, have been striking from its deep setting in the woods. Much of the surface of this opening, too, was now concealed by bushes of what is termed the second growth; though, here and there, places appeared, in which the luxuriant white clover, natural to the country, had followed the close grazing of the flocks. The eyes of Mark were bent, inquiringly, on this clearing, which, by an air line, might have been half a mile from the place where his horse had stopped, for the sounds of a dozen differently toned cow-bells were brought, on the still air of the evening, to his ears, from among its bushes.

The evidences of civilization were the least equivocal, however, on and around a natural elevation in the land, which arose so suddenly on the very bank of the stream, as to give to it the appearance of a work of art. Whether these mounds once existed everywhere on the face of the earth, and have disappeared before long tillage and labor, we shall not presume to conjecture; but we have reason to think that they occur much more frequently in certain parts of our own country, than in any other familiarly known to ordinary travellers; unless perhaps it may be in some of the valleys of Switzerland. The practised veteran had chosen the summit of this flattened cone, for the establishment of that species of military defence, which the situation of the country, and the character of the enemy he had to guard against, rendered advisable, as well as customary.

The dwelling was of wood, and constructed of the ordinary frame-work, with its thin covering of boards. It was long, low, and irregular; bearing marks of having been reared at different periods, as the wants of an increasing family had required additional accommodation. It stood near the verge of the natural declivity, and on that side of the
hill where its base was washed by the rivulet, a rude piazza stretching along the whole of its front and overhanging the stream. Several large, irregular, and clumsy chimneys, rose out of different parts of the roofs, another proof that comfort, rather than taste, had been consulted in the disposition of the buildings. There were also two or three detached offices on the summit of the hill, placed near the dwellings, and at points most convenient for their several uses. A stranger might have remarked that they were so disposed as to form, far as they went, the different sides of a hollow square. Notwithstanding the great length of the principal building, and the disposition of the more minute and detached parts, this desirable formation would not, however, have been obtained, were it not that two rows of rude constructions in logs, from which the bark had not even been stripped, served to eke out the parts that were deficient. These primeval edifices were used to contain various domestic articles, no less than provisions; and they also furnished numerous lodging-rooms for the laborers and the inferior dependants of the farm. By the aid of a few strong and high gates of hewn timber, those parts of the buildings which had not been made to unite in the original construction, were sufficiently connected to oppose so many barriers against admission into the inner court.

But the building which was most conspicuous by its position, no less than by the singularity of its construction, stood on a low, artificial mound, in the centre of the quadrangle. It was high, hexagonal in shape, and crowned with a roof that came to a point, and from whose peak rose a towering staff. The foundation was of stone; but, at the height of a man above the earth, the sides were made of massive, squared logs, firmly united by an ingenious combination of their ends, as well as by
perpendicular supporters pinned closely into their sides. In this citadel, or block-house, as from its materials it was technically called, there were two different tiers of long, narrow loop-holes, but no regular windows. The rays of the setting sun, however, glittered on one or two small openings in the roof, in which glass had been set, furnishing evidence that the summit of the building was sometimes used for other purposes than those of defence.

About half-way up the sides of the eminence, on which the dwelling stood, was an unbroken line of high palisadoes, made of the bodies of young trees, firmly knit together by braces and horizontal pieces of timber, and evidently kept in a state of jealous and complete repair. The air of the whole of this frontier fortress was neat and comfortable, and, considering that the use of artillery was unknown to those forests, not unmilitary.

At no great distance from the base of the hill, stood the barns and the stables. They were surrounded by a vast range of rude but warm sheds, beneath which sheep and horned cattle were usually sheltered from the storms of the rigorous winters of the climate. The surfaces of the meadows, immediately around the out-buildings, were of a smoother and richer sward, than those in the distance, and the fences were on a far more artificial, and perhaps durable, though scarcely on a more serviceable plan. A large orchard of some ten or fifteen years' growth, too, added greatly to the air of improvement, which put this smiling valley in such strong and pleasing contrast to the endless and nearly-untamanted woods by which it was environed.

Of the interminable forest, it is not necessary to speak. With the solitary exception on the mountain-side, and of here and there a wind-row, along which the trees had been uprooted, by the furious blasts that sometimes sweep off acres of our trees
in a minute, the eye could find no other object to study in the vast setting of this quiet rural picture, but the seemingly endless maze of wilderness. The broken surface of the land, however, limited the view to an horizon of no great extent, though the art of man could scarcely devise colors so vivid, or so gay, as those which were afforded by the brilliant hues of the foliage. The keen, biting frosts, known at the close of a New-England autumn, had already touched the broad and fringed leaves of the maples, and the sudden and secret process had been wrought upon all the other varieties of the forest, producing that magical effect, which can be nowhere seen, except in regions in which nature is so bountiful and luxuriant in summer, and so sudden and so stern in the change of the seasons.

Over this picture of prosperity and peace, the eye of old Mark Heathcote wandered with a keen degree of worldly prudence. The melancholy sounds of the various toned bells, ringing hollow and plaintively among the arches of the woods, gave him reason to believe that the herds of the family were returning, voluntarily, from their unlimited forest pasturage. His grandson, a fine spirited boy of some fourteen years, was approaching through the fields. The younger drove before him a small flock, which domestic necessity compelled the family to keep at great occasional loss, and at a heavy expense of time and trouble; both of which could alone protect them from the ravages of the beasts of prey. A species of half-witted serving-lad, whom charity had induced the old man to harbor among his dependants, was seen issuing from the woods, nearly in a line with the neglected clearing on the mountain-side. The latter advanced, shouting and urging before him a drove of colts, as shaggy, as wayward, and nearly as untamed, as himself.
"How now, weak one," said the Puritan, with a severe eye, as the two lads approached him, with their several charges, from different directions, and nearly at the same instant: "how now, sirrah! dost worry the cattle in this gait, when the eyes of the prudent are turned from thee? Do as thou wouldst be done by, is a just and healthful admonition; that the learned and the simple, the weak and the strong of mind, should alike recall to their thoughts and their practice. I do not know that an over-driven colt will be at all more apt to make a gentle and useful beast in its prime, than one treated with kindness and care."

"I believe the evil one has got into all the kine, no less than into the foals," sullenly returned the lad; "I've called to them in anger, and I've spoken to them as if they had been my natural kin, and yet neither fair word nor foul tongue will bring them to hearken to advice. There is something frightful in the woods this very sun-down, master; or colts, that I have driven the summer through, would not be apt to give this unfair treatment to one they ought to know to be their friend."

"Thy sheep are counted, Mark?" resumed the grandfather, turning towards his descendant with a less austere, but always an authoritative brow; "thy mother hath need of every fleece, to provide covering for thee and others like thee; thou knowest, child, that the creatures are few, and our winters weary and cold."

"My mother's loom shall never be idle from carelessness of mine," returned the confident boy; "but counting and wishing cannot make seven-and-thirty fleeces, where there are only six-and-thirty backs to carry them. I have been an hour among the briars and bushes of the hill logging, looking for the lost wether, and yet neither lock, hoof, hide, nor horn, is there to say what hath befallen the animal."
"Thou hast lost a sheep!—this carelessness will cause thy mother to grieve."

"Grandfather, I have been no idler. Since the last hunt, the flock hath been allowed to browse the woods; for no man, in all that week, saw wolf, panther, or bear, though the country was up, from the great river to the outer settlements of the colony. The biggest four-footed animal, that lost its hide in the muster, was a thin-ribbed deer, and the stoutest battle given, was between wild Whittal Ring, here, and a wood-chuck that kept him at arm's-length, for the better part of an afternoon."

"Thy tale may be true, but it neither finds that which is lost, nor completeth the number of thy mother's flock. Hast thou ridden carefully throughout the clearing? It is not long, since I saw the animals grazing in that quarter. What hast thou twisting in thy fingers, in that wasteful and unthankful manner, Whittal?"

"What would make a winter blanket, if there was enough of it! wool! and wool, too, that came from the thigh of old Straight-Horns; else have I forgotten a leg, that gives the longest and coarsest hair at the shearing."

"That truly seemeth a lock from the animal that is wanting," exclaimed the other boy. "There is no other creature in the flock, with fleece so coarse and shaggy. Where found you the handful, Whittal Ring?"

"Growing on the branch of a thorn. Queer fruit this, masters, to be seen where young plums ought to ripen!"

"Go, go," interrupted the old man; "thou idlest, and mispendest the time in vain talk. Go, fold thy flock, Mark; and do thou, weak-one, house thy charge with less uproar than is wont. We should remember that the voice is given to man, firstly, that he may improve the blessing in thanksgivings and pe-
tions; secondly, to communicate such gifts as may be imparted to himself, and which it is his bounden duty to attempt to impart to others; and then, thirdly, to declare his natural wants and inclinations."

With this admonition, which probably proceeded from a secret consciousness in the Puritan that he had permitted a momentary cloud of selfishness to obscure the brightness of his faith, the party separated. The grandson and the hireling took their several ways to the folds, while old Mark himself slowly continued his course towards the dwellings. It was near enough to the hours of darkness, to render the preparations we have mentioned prudent; still, no urgency called for particular haste, in the return of the veteran to the shelter and protection of his own comfortable and secure abode. He therefore loitered along the path, occasionally stopping to look into the prospects of the young crops, that were beginning to spring up in readiness for the coming year, and at times bending his gaze around the who'e of his limited horizon, like one who had the habit of exceeding and unremitted care.

One of these numerous pauses promised to be much longer than usual. Instead of keeping his understanding eye on the grain, the look of the old man appeared fastened, as by a charm, on some distant and obscure object. Doubt and uncertainty, for many minutes, seemed to mingle in his gaze. But all hesitation had apparently disappeared, as his lips severed, and he spoke, perhaps unconsciously to himself, aloud.

"It is no deception," were the low words, "but a living and an accountable creature of the Lord's. Many a day has passed since such a sight hath been witnessed in this vale; but my eye greatly deceives me, or yonder cometh one ready to ask for hospitality, and, peradventure, for Christian and brotherly communion."
The sight of the aged emigrant had not deceived him. One, who appeared a wayworn and weary traveller, had indeed ridden out of the forest, at a point where a path, that was easier to be traced by the blazed trees that lay along its route, than by any marks on the earth itself, issued into the cleared land. The progress of the stranger had, at first, been so wary and slow, as to bear the manner of exceeding and mysterious caution. The blind road, along which he must have ridden not only far but hard, or night had certainly overtaken him in the woods, led to one of the distant settlements that lay near to the fertile banks of the Connecticut. Few ever followed its windings, but they who had especial affairs, or extraordinary communion, in the way of religious friendships, with the proprietors of the Wish-Ton-Wish, as, in commemoration of the first bird that had been seen by the emigrants, the valley of the Heathcotes was called.

Once fairly in view, any doubt or apprehension, that the stranger might at first have entertained, disappeared. He rode boldly and steadily forward, until he drew a rein that his impoverished and weary beast gladly obeyed, within a few feet of the proprietor of the valley, whose gaze had never ceased to watch his movements, from the instant when the other first came within view. Before speaking, the stranger, a man whose head was getting gray, apparently as much with hardship as with time, and one whose great weight would have proved a grievous burthen, in a long ride, to even a better-conditioned beast than the ill-favored provincial hack he had ridden, dismounted, and threw the bridle loose upon the drooping neck of the animal. The latter, without a moment's delay, and with a greediness that denoted long abstinence, profited by its liberty, to crop the herbage where it stood.

"I cannot be mistaken, when I suppose that I
have at length reached the valley of the Wish-Ton-Wish," the visiter said, touching a soiled and slouched beaver that more than half concealed his features. The question was put in an English that bespoke a descent from those who dwell in the midland counties of the mother country, rather than in that intonation which is still to be traced, equally in the western portions of England and in the eastern states of the Union. Notwithstanding the purity of his accent, there was enough in the form of his speech to denote a severe compliance with the fashion of the religionists of the times. He used that measured and methodical tone, which was, singularly enough, believed to distinguish an entire absence of affectation in language.

"Thou hast reached the dwelling of him thou seekest; one who is a submissive sojourner in the wilderness of the world, and an humble servitor in the outer temple."

"This then is Mark Heathcote!" repeated the stranger in tones of interest, regarding the other with a look of long, and, possibly, of suspicious investigation.

"Such is the name I bear. A fitting confidence in him who knows so well how to change the wilds into the haunts of men, and much suffering, have made me the master of what thou seest. Whether thou comest to tarry a night, a week, a month, or even for a still longer season, as a brother in care, and I doubt not one who striveth for the right, I bid thee welcome."

The stranger thanked his host, by a slow inclination of the head; but the gaze, which began to par take a little of the look of recognition, was still too earnest and engrossing to admit of verbal reply. On the other hand, though the old man had scanned the broad and rusty beaver, the coarse and well-worn doublet, the heavy boots, and, in short, the whole
attire of his visiter, in which he saw no vain conformity to idle fashions to condemn, it was evident that personal recollection had not the smallest influence in quickening his hospitality.

"Thou hast arrived happily," continued the Puritan: "had night overtaken thee in the forest, unless much practised in the shifts of our young woodsmen, hunger, frost, and a supperless bed of brush, would have given thee motive to think more of the body than is either profitable or seemly."

The stranger might possibly have known the embarrassment of these several hardships; for the quick and unconscious glance he threw over his soiled dress, should have betrayed some familiarity, already, with the privations to which his host alluded. As neither of them, however, seemed disposed to waste further time on matters of such light moment, the traveller put an arm through the bridle of his horse, and, in obedience to an invitation from the owner of the dwelling, they took their way towards the fortified edifice on the natural mound.

The task of furnishing litter and provender to the jaded beast was performed by Whittal Ring, under the inspection, and, at times, under the instructions, of its owner and his host, both of whom appeared to take a kind and commendable interest in the comfort of a faithful hack, that had evidently suffered long and much in the service of its master. When this duty was discharged, the old man and his unknown guest entered the house together; the frank and unpretending hospitality of a country like that they were in, rendering suspicion or hesitation qualities that were unknown to the reception of a man of white blood; more especially if he spoke the language of the island, which was then first sending out its swarms, to subdue and possess so large a portion of a continent that nearly divides the earth in moieties.
CHAPTER III.

"This is most strange: your father's in some passion
That works him strongly."

Tempest.

A few hours made a great change in the occupations of the different members of our simple and secluded family. The kine had yielded their nightly tribute; the oxen had been released from the yoke, and were now secure beneath their sheds; the sheep were in their folds, safe from the assaults of the prowling wolf; and care had been taken to see that every thing possessing life was gathered within the particular defences that were provided for its security and comfort. But while all this caution was used in behalf of living things, the utmost indifference prevailed on the subject of that species of movable property, which, elsewhere, would have been guarded with, at least, an equal jealousy. The homely fabrics of the looms of Ruth lay on their bleaching-ground, to drink in the night-dew; and plows, harrows, carts, saddles, and other similar articles, were left in situations so exposed, as to prove that the hand of man had occupations so numerous and so urgent, as to render it inconvenient to bestow labor where it was not considered absolutely necessary.

Content himself was the last to quit the fields and the out-buildings. When he reached the postern in the palisadoes, he stopped to call to those above him, in order to learn if any yet lingered without the wooden barriers. The answer being in the negative, he entered, and drawing to the small but heavy gate, he secured it with bar, bolt, and lock, carefully and jealously, with his own hand. As this was no more than a nightly and necessary precau-
tion, the affairs of the family received no interrup-
tion. The meal of the hour was soon ended; and
conversation, with those light toils which are pe-
culiar to the long evenings of the fall and winter
in families on the frontier, succeeded as filling em-
ployments to close the business of a laborious and
well-spent day.

Notwithstanding the entire simplicity which
marked the opinions and usages of the colonists at
that period, and the great equality of condition
which even to this hour distinguishes the particular
community of which we write, choice and inclina-
tion drew some natural distinctions in the ordinary
intercourse of the inmates of the Heathcote family.
A fire so bright and cheerful blazed on an enormous
hearth in a sort of upper kitchen, as to render
candles or torches unnecessary. Around it were
seated six or seven hardy and athletic young men,
some drawing coarse tools carefully through the
curvatures of ox-bows, others scraping down the
helves of axes, or perhaps fashioning sticks of birch
into homely but convenient brooms. A demure,
side-looking young woman kept her great wheel
in motion; while one or two others were passing
from room to room, with the notable and stirring
industry of handmaidens, busied in the more familiar
cares of the household. A door communicated with
an inner and superior apartment. Here was a
smaller but an equally cheerful fire, a floor which
had recently been swept, while that without had
been freshly sprinkled with river sand; candles
of tallow, on a table of cherry-wood from the
neighbor ing forest; walls that were wainscoted in
the black oak of the country, and a few other
articles, of a fashion so antique, and of ornaments
so ingenious and rich, as to announce that they had
been transported from beyond sea. Above the
mantel were suspended the armorial bearings of
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the Heathcotes and the Hardings, elaborately blazoned in tent-stitch.

The principal personages of the family were seated around the latter hearth, while a straggler from the other room, of more than usual curiosity, had placed himself among them, marking the distinction in ranks, or rather in situation, merely by the extraordinary care which he took that none of the scrapings should litter the spotless oaken floor.

Until this period of the evening, the duties of hospitality and the observances of religion had prevented familiar discourse. But the offices of the housewife were now ended for the night, the handmaidens had all retired to their wheels, and, as the bustle of a busy and more stirring domestic industry ceased, the cold and self-restrained silence which had hitherto only been broken by distant and brief observations of courtesy, or by some wholesome allusion to the lost and probationary condition of man, seemed to invite an intercourse of a more general character.

"You entered my clearing by the southern path," commenced Mark Heathcote, addressing himself to his guest with sufficient courtesy, "and needs must bring tidings from the towns on the river side. Has aught been done by our councillors, at home, in the matter that pertaineth so closely to the well-being of this colony?"

"You would have me say whether he that now sitteth on the throne of England, hath listened to the petitions of his people in this province, and hath granted them protection against the abuses which might so readily flow out of his own ill-advised will, or out of the violence and injustice of his successors?"

"We will render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and speak reverently of men having authority. I would fain know whether the agent sent by our people hath gained the ears of those who
counsel the prince, and obtained that which he sought?"

"He hath done more," returned the stranger, with singular asperity; "he hath even gained the ear of the Lord's Anointed."

"Then is Charles of better mind, and of stronger justice, than report hath spoken. We were told that light manners and unprofitable companions had led him to think more of the vanities of the world, and less of the wants of those over whom he hath been called by Providence to rule, than is meet for one that sitteth on a high place. I rejoice that the arguments of the man we sent have prevailed over more evil promptings, and that peace and freedom of conscience are likely to be the fruits of the undertaking. In what manner hath he seen fit to order the future government of this people?"

"Much as it hath ever stood; by their own ordinances. Winthrop hath returned, and is the bearer of a Royal Charter, which grantheth all the rights long claimed and practised. None now dwell under the Crown of Britain with fewer offensive demands on their consciences, or with lighter calls on their political duties, than the men of Connecticut."

"It is fitting that thanks should be rendered therefor, where thanks are most due," said the Puritan, folding his hands on his bosom, and sitting for a moment with closed eyes, like one who communed with an unseen being. "Is it known by what manner of argument the Lord moved the heart of the Prince to hearken to our wants; or was it an open and manifest token of his power?"

"I think it must needs have been the latter," rejoined the visitier, with a manner that grew still more caustic and emphatic. "The bauble, that was the visible agent, could not have weighed greatly with one so proudly seated before the eyes of men."

Until this point in the discourse, Content and
Ruth, with their offspring, and the two or three other individuals who composed the audience, had listened with the demure gravity which characterized the manners of the country. The language, united with the ill-concealed sarcasm conveyed by the countenance, no less than the emphasis, of the speaker, caused them now to raise their eyes, as by a common impulse. The word "bauble" was audibly and curiously repeated. But the look of cold irony had already passed from the features of the stranger, and it had given place to a stern and fixed austerity, that imparted a character of grimness to his hard and sun-burnt visage. Still he betrayed no disposition to shrink from the subject, but, after regarding his auditors with a glance in which pride and suspicion were strongly blended, he resumed the discourse.

"It is known," he added, "that the grandfather of him the good people of these settlements have commissioned to bear their wants over sea, lived in the favor of the man who last sat upon the throne of England; and a rumor goeth forth, that the Stuart, in a moment of princely condescension, once decked the finger of his subject, with a ring wrought in a curious fashion. It was a token of the love which a monarch may bear a man."

"Such gifts are beacons of friendship, but may not be used as gay and sinful ornaments," observed Mark, while the other paused like one who wished none of the bitterness of his allusions to be lost.

"It matters not whether the bauble lay in the coffers of the Winthrops, or has long been glittering before the eyes of the faithful, in the Bay, since it hath finally proved to be a jewel of price," continued the stranger. "It is said, in secret, that this ring hath returned to the finger of a Stuart, and it is openly proclaimed that Connecticut hath a Charter!"

Content and his wife regarded each other in melancholy amazement. Such an evidence of wanton
levity and of unworthiness of motive, in one who was intrusted with the gift of earthly government, pained their simple and upright minds; while old Mark, of still more decided and exaggerated ideas of spiritual perfection, distinctly groaned aloud. The stranger took a sensible pleasure in this testimony of their abhorrence of so gross and so unworthy a venality, though he saw no occasion to heighten its effect by further speech. When his host stood erect, and, in a voice that was accustomed to obedience, he called on his family to join, in behalf of the reckless ruler of the land of their fathers, in a petition to him who alone could soften the hearts of Princes, he also arose from his seat. But even in this act of devotion, the stranger bore the air of one who wished to do pleasure to his entertainers, rather than to obtain that which was asked.

The prayer, though short, was pointed, fervent, and sufficiently personal. The wheels in the outer room ceased their hum, and a general movement denoted that all there had arisen to join in the office; while one or two of their number, impelled by deeper piety or stronger interest, drew near to the open door between the rooms, in order to listen. With this singular but characteristic interruption, that particular branch of the discourse, which had given rise to it, altogether ceased.

"And have we reason to dread a rising of the savages on the borders?" asked Content, when he found that the moved spirit of his father was not yet sufficiently calmed, to return to the examination of temporal things; "one who brought wares from the towns below, a few months since, recited reasons to fear a movement among the red men."

The subject had not sufficient interest to open the ears of the stranger. He was deaf, or he chose to affect deafness, to the interrogatory. Lying his two large and weather-worn, though still muscular
hands, on a visage that was much darkened by exposure, he appeared to shut out the objects of the world, while he communed deeply, and, as would seem by a slight tremor, that shook even his powerful frame, terribly, with his own thoughts.

"We have many to whom our hearts strongly cling, to heighten the smallest symptom of alarm from that quarter," added the tender and anxious mother, her eye glancing at the uplifted countenances of two little girls, who, busied with their light needle-work, sate on stools at her feet. "But I rejoice to see, that one who hath journeyed from parts where the minds of the savages must be better understood, hath not feared to do it unarmed."

The traveller slowly uncovered his features, and the glance that his eye shot over the face of the last speaker, was not without a gentle and interested expression. Instantly recovering his composure, he arose, and, turning to the double leathern sack, which had been borne on the crupper of his nag, and which now lay at no great distance from his seat, he drew a pair of horseman's pistols from two well-contrived pockets in its sides, and laid them deliberately on the table.

"Though little disposed to seek an encounter with any bearing the image of man," he said, "I have not neglected the usual precautions of those who enter the wilderness. Here are weapons that, in steady hands, might easily take life, or, at need preserve it."

The young Mark drew near with boyish curiosity, and while one finger ventured to touch a lock, as he stole a conscious glance of wrong-doing towards his mother, he said, with as much of contempt in his air, as the schooling of his manners would allow—

"An Indian arrow would make a surer aim, than bore as short as this! When the trainer from the
Hartford town, struck the wild-cat on the hill clearing, he sent the bullet from a five-foot barrel; besides, this short-sighted gun would be a dull weapon in a hug against the keen-edged knife, that the wicked Wampanoag is known to carry."—

"Boy, thy years are few, and thy boldness of speech marvellous," sternly interrupted his parent in the second degree.

The stranger manifested no displeasure at the confident language of the lad. Encouraging him with a look, which plainly proclaimed that martial qualities in no degree lessened the stripling in his favor, he observed that—

"The youth who is not afraid to think of the fight, or to reason on its chances, will lead to a manhood of spirit and independence. A hundred thousand striplings like this, might have spared Winthrop his jewel, and the Stuart the shame of yielding to so vain and so trivial a bribe. But thou mayst also see, child, that had we come to the death-hug, the wicked Wampanoag might have found a blade as keen as his own."

The stranger, while speaking, loosened a few strings of his doublet, and thrust a hand into his bosom. The action enabled more than one eye to catch a momentary glimpse of a weapon of the same description, but of a size much smaller than those he had already so freely exhibited. As he immediately withdrew the member, and again closed the garment with studied care, no one presumed to advert to the circumstance, but all turned their attention to the long sharp hunting-knife that he deposited by the side of the pistols, as he concluded. Mark ventured to open its blade, but he turned away with sudden consciousness, when he found that a few fibres of coarse, shaggy wool, that were drawn from the loosened joint, adhered to his fingers.
"Straight-Horns has been against a bush sharper than the thorn!" exclaimed Whittal Ring, who had been at hand, and who watched with childish admiration the smallest proceedings of the different individuals. "A steel for the back of the blade, a few dried leaves and broken sticks, with such a carver, would soon make roast and broiled of the old bell-wether himself. I know that the hair of all my colts is sorrel, and I counted five at sun-down, which is just as many as went loping through the underbrush when I loosened them from the hopples in the morning; but six-and-thirty backs can never carry seven-and-thirty growing fleeces of unsheared wool. Master knows that, for he is a scholar and can count a hundred!"

The allusion to the fate of the lost sheep was so plain, as to admit of no misinterpretation of the meaning of the witless speaker. Animals of that class were of the last importance to the comfort of the settlers, and there was not probably one within hearing of Whittal Ring, that was at all ignorant of the import of his words. Indeed, the loud chuckle and the open and deriding manner with which the lad himself held above his head the hairy fibres that he had snatched from young Mark, allowed of no concealment, had it been desirable.

"This feeble-gifted youth would hint, that thy knife hath proved its edge on a wether that is missing from our flock, since the animals went on their mountain range, in the morning," said the host, calmly; though even he bent his eye to the floor, as he waited for an answer to a remark, direct as the one his sense of justice, and his indomitable love of right, had prompted.

The stranger demanded, in a voice that lost none of its depth or firmness, "Is hunger a crime, that they who dwell so far from the haunts of selfishness, visit it with their anger?"
"The foot of Christian man never approached the gates of Wish-Ton-Wish to be turned away in uncharitableness, but that which is freely given should not be taken in licentiousness. From off the hill where my flock is wont to graze, it is easy, through many an opening of the forest, to see these roofs; and it would have been better that the body should languish, than that a grievous sin should be placed on that immortal spirit which is already too deeply laden, unless thou art far more happy than others of the fallen race of Adam."

"Mark Heathcote," said the accused, and ever with an unwavering tone, "look further at those weapons, which, if a guilty man, I have weakly placed within thy power. Thou wilt find more there to wonder at, than a few straggling hairs, that the spinner would cast from her as too coarse for service."

"It is long since I found pleasure in handling the weapons of strife; may it be longer to the time when they shall be needed in this abode of peace. These are instruments of death, resembling those used in my youth, by cavaliers that rode in the levies of the first Charles, and of his pusillanimous father. There were worldly pride and great vanity, with much and damning ungodliness, in the wars that I have seen, my children; and yet the carnal man found pleasure in the stirrings of those graceless days! Come hither, younker; thou hast often sought to know the manner in which the horsemen are wont to lead into the combat, when the broad-mouthed artillery and pattering leaden hail have cleared a passage for the struggle of horse to horse, and man to man. Much of the justification of these combats must depend on the inward spirit, and on the temper of him that striketh at the life of fellow-sinner; but righteous Joshua, it is known, contended with the heathen throughout a supernatural day; and therefore, al-
ways humbly confiding that our cause is just, I will open to thy young mind the use of a weapon that hath never before been seen in these forests."

"I have hefted many a heavier piece than this," said young Mark, frowning equally with the exertion and with the instigations of his aspiring spirit, as he held out the ponderous weapon in a single hand; "we have guns that might tame a wolf with greater certainty than any barrel of a bore less than my own height. Tell, me grand'ther; at what distance do the mounted warriors, you so often name, take their sight?"

But the power of speech appeared suddenly to have deserted the aged veteran. He had interrupted his own discourse, and now, instead of answering the interrogatory of the boy, his eye wandered slowly and with a look of painful doubt from the weapon, that he still held before him, to the countenance of the stranger. The latter continued erect, like one courting a strict and meaning examination of his person. This dumb-show could not fail to attract the observation of Content. Rising from his seat, with that quiet but authoritative manner which is still seen in the domestic government of the people of the region where he dwelt, he beckoned to all present to quit the apartment. Ruth and her daughters, the hirelings, the ill-gifted Whittal, and even the reluctant Mark, preceded him to the door, which he closed with respectful care; and then the whole of the wondering party mingled with those of the outer room, leaving the one they had quitted to the sole possession of the aged chief of the settlement, and to his still unknown and mysterious guest.

Many anxious, and to those who were excluded, seemingly interminable minutes passed, and the secret interview appeared to draw no nearer its close. That deep reverence, which the years, pa-
ternity, and character of the grandfather had inspired, prevented all from approaching the quarter of the apartment nearest to the room they had left; but a silence, still as the grave, did all that silence could do, to enlighten their minds in a matter of so much general interest. The deep, smothered sentences of the speakers were often heard, each dwelling with steadiness and propriety on his particular theme, but no sound that conveyed meaning to the minds of those without passed the envious walls. At length, the voice of old Mark became more than usually audible; and then Content arose, with a gesture to those around him to imitate his example. The young men threw aside the subjects of their light employments, the maidens left the wheels which had not been turned for many minutes, and the whole party disposed themselves in the decent and simple attitude of prayer. For the third time that evening was the voice of the Puritan heard, pouring out his spirit in a communion with that being on whom it was his practice to repose all his worldly cares. But, though long accustomed to all the peculiar forms of utterance by which their father ordinarily expressed his pious emotions, neither Content nor his attentive partner was enabled to decide on the nature of the feeling that was now uppermost. At times, it appeared to be the language of thanksgiving, and at others it assumed more of the imploring sounds of deprecation and petition; in short, it was so varied, and, though tranquil, so equivocal, if such a term may be applied to so serious a subject, as completely to baffle every conjecture.

Long and weary minutes passed after the voice had entirely ceased, and yet no summons was given to the expecting family, nor did any sound proceed from the inner room, which the respectful son was emboldened to construe into an evidence that he
might presume to enter. At length, apprehension
began to mingle with conjectures, and then the hus-
band and wife communed apart, in whispers. The
misgivings and doubt of the former soon mani-
fested themselves in still more apparent forms. He
arose, and was seen pacing the wide apartment;
gradually approaching nearer to the partition which
separated the two rooms, evidently prepared to re-
tire beyond the limits of hearing; the moment he
should detect any proofs that his uneasiness was
without a sufficient cause. Still no sound proceed-
ed from the inner room. The breathless silence
which had so shortly before reigned where he was,
appeared to be suddenly transferred to the spot in
which he was vainly endeavoring to detect the
smallest proof of human existence. Again he re-
turned to Ruth, and again they consulted, in low
voices, as to the step that filial duty seemed to re-
quire at their hands.

"We were not bidden to withdraw," said his gen-
tle companion; "why not rejoin our parent, now
that time has been given to understand the subject
which so evidently disturbed his mind?"

Content, at length, yielded to this opinion. With
that cautious discretion which distinguishes his peo-
ple, he motioned to the family to follow, in order
that no unnecessary exclusion should give rise to
conjectures, or excite suspicions, for which, after all,
the circumstances might prove no justification. Not-
withstanding the subdued manners of the age and
country, curiosity, and perhaps a better feeling, had
become so intense, as to cause all present to obey
this silent mandate, by moving as swiftly towards
the open door as a never-yielding decency of de-
meanor would permit.

Old Mark Heathcote occupied the chair in which
he had been left, with that calm and unbending
gravity of eye and features which were then
thought indispensable to a fitting sobriety of spirit. But the stranger had disappeared. There were two or three outlets by which the room, and even the house, might be quitted, without the knowledge of those who had so long waited for admission; and the first impression led the family to expect the re-appearance of the absent man through one of these exterior passages. Content, however, read in the expression of his father's eye, that the moment of confidence, if it were ever to arrive, had not yet come; and, so admirable and perfect was the domestic discipline of this family, that the questions which the son did not see fit to propound, no one of inferior condition, or lesser age, might presume to agitate. With the person of the stranger, every evidence of his recent visit had also vanished.

Mark missed the weapon that had excited his admiration; Whittal looked in vain for the hunting-knife, which had betrayed the fate of the wether; Mrs. Heathcote saw, by a hasty glance of the eye, that the leathern sacks, which she had borne in mind ought to be transferred to the sleeping apartment of their guest, were gone; and a mild and playful image of herself, who bore her name no less than most of those features which had rendered her own youth more than usually attractive, sought, without success, a massive silver spur, of curious and antique workmanship, which she had been permitted to handle until the moment when the family had been commanded to withdraw.

The night had now worn later than the hour at which it was usual for people of habits so simple to be out of their beds. The grandfather lighted a taper, and, after bestowing the usual blessing on those around him, with an air as calm as if nothing had occurred, he prepared to retire into his own room. And yet, matter of interest seemed to linger on his mind. Even on the threshold of the door, he...
turned, and, for an instant, all expected some explanation of a circumstance which began to wear no little of the aspect of an exciting and painful mystery. But their hopes were raised only to be disappointed.

"My thoughts have not kept the passage of the time," he said. "In what hour of the night are we, my son?"

He was told that it was already past the usual moment of sleep.

"No matter; that which Providence hath bestowed for our comfort and support, should not be lightly and unthankfully disregarded. Take thou the beast I am wont to ride, thyself, Content, and follow the path which leadeth to the mountain clearing; bring away that which shall meet thine eye, near the first turning of the route toward the river towns. We have got into the last quarter of the year, and in order that our industry may not flag, and that all may be stirring with the sun, let the remainder of the household seek their rest."

Content saw, by the manner of his father, that no departure from the strict letter of these instructions was admissible. He closed the door after his retiring form, and then, by a quiet gesture of authority, indicated to his dependants that they were expected to withdraw. The maidens of Ruth led the children to their chambers, and in a few more minutes, none remained in the outer apartment, already so often named, but the obedient son, with his anxious and affectionate consort.

"I will be thy companion, husband," Ruth half-whisperingly commenced, so soon as the little domestic preparations for leaving the fires and securing the doors were ended. "I like not that thou shouldst go into the forest alone, at so late an hour of the night."

"One will be with me, there, who never deserteth
those who rely on his protection. Besides, my Ruth, what is there to apprehend in a wilderness like this? The beasts have been lately hunted from the hills, and, excepting those who dwell under our own roof, there is not one within a long day's ride."

"We know not! Where is the stranger that came within our doors as the sun was setting?"

"As thou sayest, we know not. My father is not minded to open his lips on the subject of this traveller, and surely we are not now to learn the lessons of obedience and self-denial."

"It would, notwithstanding, be a great easing to the spirit to hear at least the name of him who hath eaten of our bread, and joined in our family worship, though he were immediately to pass away for ever from before the sight."

"That may he have done, already!" returned the less curious and more self-restrained husband. "My father will not that we inquire."

"And yet there can be little sin in knowing the condition of one whose fortunes and movements can excite neither our envy nor our strife. I would that we had tarried for a closer mingling in the prayers; it was not seemly to desert a guest who, it would appear, had need of an especial up-offering in his behalf."

"Our spirits joined in the asking, though our ears were shut to the matter of his wants. But it will be needful that I should be afoot with the young men, in the morning, and a mile of measurement would not reach to the turning, in the path to the river towns. Go with me to the postern, and look to the fastenings; I will not keep thee long on thy watch."

Content and his wife now quitted the dwelling, by the only door that was left unbarred. Lighted by a moon that was full, though clouded, they passed a gateway between two of the outer build-
ings, and descended to the palisadoes. The bars and bolts of the little postern were removed, and in a few minutes, the former, mounted on the back of his father's own horse, was galloping briskly along the path which led into the part of the forest he was directed to seek.

While the husband was thus proceeding, in obedience to orders that he never hesitated to obey, his faithful wife withdrew within the shelter of the wooden defences. More in compliance with a precaution that was become habitual, than from any present causes of suspicion, she drew a single bolt and remained at the postern, anxiously awaiting the result of a movement that was as unaccountable as it was extraordinary.

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CHAPTER IV.

"I think the name of something holy, sir, why stand you In this strange stare?"  

Tempest.

As a girl, Ruth Harding had been one of the mildest and gentlest of the human race. Though new impulses had been given to her naturally kind affections by the attachments of a wife and mother, her disposition suffered no change by marriage. Obedient, disinterested, and devoted to those she loved, as her parents had known her, so, by the experience of many years, had she proved to Content. In the midst of the utmost equanimity of temper and of deportment, her watchful solicitude in behalf of the few who formed the limited circle of her existence, never slumbered. It dwelt unpretendingly but active in her gentle bosom, like a great and moving principle of life. Though circum-
stances had placed her on a remote and exposed frontier, where time had not been given for the several customary divisions of employments, she was unchanged in habits, in feelings, and in character. The affluence of her husband had elevated her above the necessity of burthensome toil; and, while she had encountered the dangers of the wilderness, and neglected none of the duties of her active station, she had escaped most of those injurious consequences which are a little apt to impair the peculiar loveliness of woman. Notwithstanding the exposure of a border life, she remained feminine, attractive, and singularly youthful.

The reader will readily imagine the state of mind, with which such a being watched the distant form of a husband, engaged in a duty like that we have described. Notwithstanding the influence of long habit, the forest was rarely approached, after night-fall, by the boldest woodsman, without some secret consciousness that he encountered a positive danger. It was the hour when its roaming and hungry tenants were known to be most in motion; and the rustling of a leaf, or the snapping of a dried twig beneath the light tread of the smallest animal, was apt to conjure images of the voracious and fire-eyed panther, or perhaps of a lurking biped, which, though more artful, was known to be scarcely less savage. It is true, that hundreds experienced the uneasiness of such sensations, who were never fated to undergo the realities of the fearful pictures. Still, facts were not wanting to supply sufficient motive for a grave and reasonable apprehension.

Histories of combats with beasts of prey, and of massacres by roving and lawless Indians, were the moving legends of the border. Thrones might be subverted, and kingdoms lost and won, in distant Europe, and less should be said of the events, by
those who dwelt in these woods, than of one scene of peculiar and striking forest incident, that called for the exercise of the stout courage and the keen intelligence of a settler. Such a tale passed from mouth to mouth, with the eagerness of powerful personal interest, and many were already transmitted from parent to child, in the form of tradition, until, as in more artificial communities, graver improbabilities creep into the doubtful pages of history, exaggeration became too closely blended with truth, ever again to be separated.

Under the influence of these feelings, and perhaps prompted by his never-failing discretion, Content had thrown a well-tried piece over his shoulder; and when he rose the ascent on which his father had met the stranger, Ruth caught a glimpse of his form, bending on the neck of his horse, and gliding through the misty light of the hour, resembling one of those fancied images of wayward and hard-riding sprites, of which the tales of the eastern continent are so fond of speaking.

Then followed anxious moments, during which neither sight nor hearing could in the least aid the conjectures of the attentive wife. She listened without breathing, and once or twice she thought the blows of hoofs, falling on the earth harder and quicker than common, might be distinguished; but it was only as Content mounted the sudden ascent of the hill-side, that he was again seen, for a brief instant, while dashing swiftly into the cover of the woods.

Though Ruth had been familiar with the cares of the frontier, perhaps she had never known a moment more intensely painful than that, when the form of her husband became blended with the dark trunks of the trees. The time was to her impatience longer than usual, and under the excitement of a feverish inquietude, that had no definite ob-
ject, she removed the single bolt that held the postern closed, and passed entirely without the stockade. To her oppressed senses, the palisadoes appeared to place limits to her vision. Still, weary minute passed after minute, without bringing relief. During these anxious moments, she became more than usually conscious of the insulated situation in which he and all who were dearest to her heart were placed. The feelings of a wife prevailed. Quitting the side of the acclivity, she began to walk slowly along the path her husband had taken, until apprehension insensibly urged her into a quicker movement. She had paused only when she stood nearly in the centre of the clearing, on the eminence where her father had halted that evening to contemplate the growing improvement of his estate.

Here her steps were suddenly arrested, for she thought a form was issuing from the forest, at that interesting spot which her eyes had never ceased to watch. It proved to be no more than the passing shadow of a cloud denser than common, which threw the body of its darkness on the trees, and a portion of its outline on the ground near the margin of the wood. Just at this instant, the recollection that she had incautiously left the postern open flashed upon her mind, and, with feelings divided between husband and children, she commenced her return, in order to repair a neglect, to which habit, no less than prudence, imparted a high degree of culpability. The eyes of the mother, for the feelings of that sacred character were now powerfully uppermost, were fastened on the ground, as she eagerly picked her way along the uneven surface; and, so engrossed was her mind by the omission of duty with which she was severely reproaching herself, that they drank in objects without conveying distinct or intelligible images to her brain.

Notwithstanding the one engrossing thought of
the moment, something met her eye that caused
even the vacant organ to recoil, and every fibre in
her frame to tremble with terror. There was a
moment in which delirium nearly heightened terror
to madness. Reflection came only when Ruth had
reached the distance of many feet from the spot
where this startling object had half-unconsciously
crossed her vision. Then for a single and a fearful
instant she paused, like one who debated on the
course she ought to follow. Maternal love prevailed,
and the deer of her own woods scarcely bounds
with greater agility, than the mother of the sleep-
ing and defenceless family now fled towards the
dwellings. Panting and breathless she gained the
postern, which was closed, with hands that perform-
ed their office. more by instinct than in obedience
to thought, and doubly and trebly barred.

For the first time in some minutes, Ruth now
breathed distinctly and without pain. She strove
to rally her thoughts, in order to deliberate on the
course that prudence and her duty to Content, who
was still exposed to the danger she had herself es-
caped, prescribed. Her first impulse was to give
the established signal that was to recall the labor-
ers from the field, or to awake the sleepers, in the
event of an alarm; but better reflection told her
that such a step might prove fatal to him who bal-
anced in her affections against the rest of the world.
The struggle in her mind only ended, as she clearly
and unequivocally caught a view of her husband,
issuing from the forest, at the very point where he
had entered. The return path unfortunately led
directly past the spot where such sudden terror had
seized her mind. She would have given worlds to
have known how to apprise him of a danger with
which her own imagination was full, without com-
municating the warning to other and terrible ears.
The night was still, and though the distance was
considerable, it was not so great as to render the chances of success desperate. Scarcely knowing what she did, and yet preserving, by a sort of instinctive prudence, the caution which constant exposure weaves into all our habits, the trembling woman made the effort.

"Husband! husband!" she cried, commencing plaintively, but her voice rising with the energy of excitement. "Husband, ride swiftly; our little Ruth lyeth in the agony. For her life and thine, ride at thy horse's speed. Seek not the stables, but come with all haste to the postern; it shall be open to thee."

This was certainly a fearful summons for a father's ear, and there is little doubt that, had the feeble powers of Ruth succeeded in conveying the words as far as she had wished, they would have produced the desired effect. But in vain did she call; her weak tones, though raised on the notes of the keenest apprehension, could not force their way across so wide a space. And yet, had she reason to think they were not entirely lost, for once her husband paused and seemed to listen, and once he quickened the pace of his horse; though neither of these proofs of intelligence was followed by any further signs of his having understood the alarm.

Content was now upon the hillock itself. If Ruth breathed at all during its passage, it was more imperceptibly than the gentlest respiration of the sleeping infant. But when she saw him trotting with unconscious security along the path on the side next the dwellings, her impatience broke through all restraint, and throwing open the postern, she renewed her cries, in a voice that was no longer useless. The clattering of the unshodden hoof was again rapid, and in another minute her husband galloped unharmed to her side.

"Enter!" said the nearly dizzy wife, seizing the
bridle and leading the horse within the palisadoes.
"Enter, husband, for the love of all that is thine;
enter, and be thankful."

"What meaneth this terror, Ruth?" demanded Content, in as much displeasure, perhaps, as he could manifest to one so gentle, for a weakness betrayed in his own behalf; "is thy confidence in him whose eye never closeth, and who equally watcheth the life of man and that of the falling sparrow, lost?"

Ruth was deaf. With hurried hands she drew the fastenings, let fall the bars, and turned a key which forced a triple-bolted lock to perform its office. Not till then did she feel either safe herself, or at liberty to render thanks for the safety of him, over whose danger she had so lately watched, in agony.

"Why this care? Hast forgotten that the horse will suffer hunger, at this distance from the rack and manger?"

"Better that he starve, than hair of thine should come to harm."

"Nay, nay, Ruth; dost not remember that the beast is the favorite of my father, who will ill brook his passing a night within the palisadoes?"

"Husband, you err; there is one in the fields!"

"Is there place, where one is not?"

"But I have seen creature of mortal birth, and creature too that hath no claim on thee, or thine, and who trespaseth on our peace, no less than on our natural rights, to be where he lurketh."

"Go to; thou art not used to be so late from thy pillow, my poor Ruth; sleep hath come over thee, whilst standing on thy watch. Some cloud hath left its shadow on the fields, or, truly, it may be that the hunt did not drive the beasts as far from the clearing as we had thought. Come; since thou wilt
cling to my side, lay hand on the bridle of the horse, while I ease him of his burthen."

As Content coolly proceeded to the task he had mentioned, the thoughts of his wife were momentarily diverted from their other sources of uneasiness, by the object which lay on the crupper of the nag, and which, until now, had entirely escaped her observation.

"Here is, indeed, the animal this day missing from our flock!" she exclaimed, as the carcass of a sheep fell heavily on the ground.

"Ay; and killed with exceeding judgment, if not aptly dressed to our hands. Mutton will not be wanting for the husking-feast, and the stalled creature whose days were counted may live another season."

"And where didst find the slaughtered beast?"

"On the limb of a growing hickory. Eben Dudley, with all his sleight in butchering, and in setting forth the excellence of his meats, could not have left an animal hanging from the branch of a sapling, with greater knowledge of his craft. Thou seest, but a single meal is missing from the carcass, and that thy fleece is unharmed."

"This is not the work of a Pequod!" exclaimed Ruth, surprised at her own discovery; "the red men do their mischief with less care."

"Nor has the tooth of wolf opened the veins of poor Straight-Horns. Here has been judgment in the slaughtering, as well as prudence in consumption of the food. The hand that cut so lightly, had intention of a second visit."

"And our father bid thee seek the creature where it was found! Husband, I fear some heavy judgment for the sins of the parents, is likely to befall the children."

"The babes are quietly in their slumbers, and, thus far, little wrong hath been done us. I'll cast
the halter from the stalked animal ere I sleep, and Straight-Horns shall content us for the husking. We may have mutton less savory, for this evil chance, but the number of thy flock will be unaltered."

"And where is he, who hath mingled in our prayers, and hath eaten of our bread; he who counselled so long in secret with our father, and who hath now vanished from among us, like a vision?"

"That indeed is a question not readily to be answered," returned Content, who had hitherto maintained a cheerful air, in order to appease what he was fain to believe a causeless terror in the bosom of his partner, but who was induced by this question to drop his head like one that sought reasons within the repository of his own thoughts. "It mattereth not, Ruth Heathcote; the ordering of the affair is in the hands of a man of many years and great experience; should his aged wisdom fail, do we not know that one even wiser than he, hath us in his keeping? I will return the beast to his rack, and when we shall have jointly asked favor of eyes that never sleep, we will go in confidence to our rest."

"Husband, thou quittest not the palisadoes again this night," said Ruth, arresting the hand that had already drawn a bolt, ere she spoke. "I have a warning of evil."

"I would the stranger had found some other shelter in which to pass his short resting season. That he hath made free with my flock, and that he hath administered to his hunger at some cost, when a single asking would have made him welcome to the best that the owner of the Wish-Ton-Wish can command, are truths that may not be denied. Still is he mortal man, as a goodly appetite hath proven, even should our belief in Providence so far
waver as to harbor doubts of its unwillingness to suffer beings of injustice to wander in our forms and substance. I tell thee, Ruth, that the nag will be needed for to-morrow's service, and that our father will give but ill thanks should we leave it to make a bed on this cold hill-side. Go to thy rest and to thy prayers, trembler; I will close the postern with all care. Fear not; the stranger is of human wants, and his agency to do evil must needs be limited by human power."

"I fear none of white blood, nor of Christian parentage: the murderous heathen is in our fields."

"Thou dreamest, Ruth!"

"'Tis not a dream. I have seen the glowing eyeballs of a savage. Sleep was little like to come over me, when set upon a watch like this. I thought me that the errand was of unknown character, and that our father was exceedingly aged, and that perchance his senses might be duped, and how an obedient son ought not to be exposed.—Thou knowest, Heathcote, that I could not look upon the danger of my children's father with indifference, and I followed to the nut-tree hillock."

"To the nut-tree! It was not prudent in thee—but the postern?"

"It was open; for were the key turned, who was there to admit us quickly, had haste been needed?" returned Ruth, momently averting her face to conceal the flush excited by conscious delinquency. "Though I failed in caution, 'twas for thy safety, Heathcote. But on that hillock, and in the hollow left by a fallen tree, lies concealed a heathen!"

"I passed the nut-wood in going to the shambles of our strange butcher, and I drew the rein to give breath to the nag near it, as we returned with the burthen. It cannot be; some creature of the forest hath alarmed thee."

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“Ay! creature, formed, fashioned, gifted like ourselves, in all but color of the skin and blessing of the faith.”

“This is strange delusion! If there were enemy at hand, would men subtle as those you fear, suffer the master of the dwelling, and truly I may say it without vain-glory, one as likely as another to struggle stoutly for his own, to escape, when an ill-timed visit to the woods had delivered him unsusisting into their hands? Go, go, good Ruth; thou mayst have seen a blackened log—perchance the frosts have left a fire-fly untouched, or it may be that some prowling bear has scented out the sweets of thy lately-gathered hives.”

Ruth again laid her hand firmly on the arm of her husband, who had withdrawn another bolt, and, looking him steadily in the face, she answered by saying solemnly, and with touching pathos—

“Think’st thou, husband, that a mother’s eye could be deceived?”

It might have been that the allusion to the tender beings whose fate depended on his care, or that the deeply serious, though mild and gentle manner of his consort, produced some fresher impression on the mind of Content. Instead of undoing the fastenings of the postern as he had intended, he deliberately drew its bolts again and paused to think.

“If it produce no other benefit than to quiet thy fears, good Ruth,” he said, after a moment of reflection, “a little caution will be well repaid. Stay you, then, here, where the hillock may be watched, while I go wake a couple of the people. With stout Eben Dudley and experienced Reuben King to back me, my father’s horse may surely be stabled.”

Ruth contentedly assumed a task that she was quite equal to perform with intelligence and zeal. “Hie thee to the laborers’ chambers, for I see a
fight still burning in the room of those you seek," was the answer she gave to a proposal that at least quieted the intenseness of her fears for him in whose behalf they had so lately been excited nearly to agony.

"It shall be quickly done; nay, stand not thus openly between the beams, wife. Thou mayst place thyself, here, at the doublings of the wood, beneath the loop, where harm would scarcely reach thee, though shot from artillery were to crush the timber."

With this admonition to be wary of a danger that he had so recently affected to despise, Content departed on his errand. The two laborers he had mentioned by name, were youths of mould and strength, and they were well inured to toil, no less than to the particular privations and dangers of a border life. Like most men of their years and condition, they were practised too in the wiles of Indian cunning; and though the Province of Connecticut, compared to other settlements, had suffered but little in this species of murderous warfare, they both had martial feats and perilous experiences of their own to recount, during the light labors of the long winter evenings.

Content crossed the court with a quick step; for, notwithstanding his steady unbelief, the image of his gentle wife posted on her outer watch hurried his movements. The rap he gave at the door, on reaching the apartment of those he sought, was loud as it was sudden.

"Who calls?" demanded a deep-toned and firm voice from within, at the first blow of the knuckles on the plank.

"Quit thy beds quickly, and come forth with the arms appointed for a sally."

"That is soon done," answered a stout woodsman, throwing open the door and standing before Content
in the garments he had worn throughout the day.

"We were just dreaming that the night was not to
pass without a summons to the loops."

"Hast seen aught?"

"Our eyes were not shut, more than those of
others; we saw him enter that no man hath seen
depart."

"Come, fellow; Whittal Ring would scarce give
wiser speech than this cunning reply of thine. My
wife is at the postern, and it is fit we go to relieve
her watch. Thou wilt not forget the horns of pow-
der, since it would not tell to our credit, were there
service for the pieces, and we lacking in where-
withal to give them a second discharge."

The hirelings obeyed, and, as little time was
necessary to arm those who never slept without
weapons and ammunition within reach of their
hands, Content was speedily followed by his depend-
ants. Ruth was found at her post, but when urged
by her husband to declare what had passed in his
absence, she was compelled to admit that, though
the moon had come forth brighter and clearer from
behind the clouds, she had seen nothing to add to
her alarm.

"We will then lead the beast to his stall, and close
our duty by setting a single watcher for the rest of
the night," said the husband. "Reuben shall keep
the postern, while Eben and I will have a care for
my father's nag, not forgetting the carcass for the
husking-feast. Dost hear, deaf Dudley?—cast the
mutton upon the crupper of the beast, and follow to
the stables."

"Here has been no common workman at my of-

cine," said the blunt Eben, who, though an ordinary
farm-laborer, according to an usage still very gene-

rally prevalent in the country, was also skilful in the
craft of the butcher. "I have brought many a
wether to his end, but this is the first sheep, within
all my experience, that hath kept the fleece while a portion of the body has been in the pot! Lie there, poor Straight-Horns, if quiet thou canst lie after such strange butchery. Reuben, I paid thee, as the sun rose, a Spanish piece in silver, for the trifle of debt that lay between us, in behalf of the good turn thou didst the shoes, which were none the better for the last hunt in the hills. Hast ever that pistareen about thee?"

This question, which was put in a lowered tone, and only to the ear of the party concerned, was answered in the affirmative.

"Give it me, lad; in the morning, thou shalt be paid, with usurer's interest."

Another summons from Content, who had now led the nag loaded with the carcass of the sheep without the postern, cut short the secret conference. Eben Dudley, having received the coin, hastened to follow. But the distance to the out-buildings was sufficient to enable him to effect his mysterious purpose without discovery. Whilst Content endeavored to calm the apprehensions of his wife, who still persisted in sharing his danger, by such reasons as he could on the instant command, the credulous Dudley placed the thin piece of silver between his teeth, and, with a pressure that denoted the prodigious force of his jaws, caused it to assume a beaten and rounded shape. He then slyly dropped the battered coin into the muzzle of his gun, taking care to secure its presence, until he himself should send it on its disenchanting message, by a wad torn from the lining of part of his vestments. Supported by this redoubtable auxiliary, the superstitious but still courageous borderer followed his companion, whistling a low air that equally denoted his indifference to danger of an ordinary nature, and his sensibility to impressions of a less earthly character.

They who dwell in the older districts of America,
where art and labor have united for generations to clear the earth of its inequalities, and to remove the vestiges of a state of nature, can form but little idea of the thousand objects that may exist in a clearing, to startle the imagination of one who has admitted alarm, when seen in the doubtful light of even a cloudless moon. Still less can they who have never quitted the old world, and who, having only seen, can only imagine fields smooth as the surface of tranquil water, picture the effect produced by those lingering remnants, which may be likened to so many mouldering monuments of the fallen forest scattered at such an hour over a broad surface of open land. Accustomed as they were to the sight, Content and his partner, excited by their fears, fancied each dark and distant stump a savage; and they passed no angle in the high and heavy fences without throwing a jealous glance to see that some enemy did not lie stretched within its shadows.

Still no new motive for apprehension arose, during the brief period that the two adventurers were employed in administering to the comfort of the Puritan’s steed. The task was ended, the carcass of the slaughtered Straight-Horns had been secured, and Ruth was already urging her husband to return, when their attention was drawn to the attitude and mien of their companion.

“The man hath departed as he came,” said Eben Dudley, who stood shaking his head in open doubt, before an empty stall; “here is no beast, though with these eyes did I see the half-wit bring hither a well-filled measure of speckled oats, to feed the nag. He who favored us with his presence at the supper and the thanksgiving, hath tided of his company before the hour of rest had come.”

“The horse is truly wanting,” said Content: “the man must needs be in exceeding haste, to have ridden into the forest as the night grew deepest, and
when the longest summer day would scarce bring
a better hack than that he rode to another Chris-
tian dwelling. There is reason for this industry, but
it is enough that it concerns us not. We will now
seek our rest, in the certainty that one watcheth
our slumbers whose vigilance can never fail.”

Though man could not trust himself to sleep in
that country without the security of bars and bolts,
we have already had occasion to say that property
was guarded with but little care. The stable-door
was merely closed by a wooden latch, and the party
returned from this short sortie, with steps that were
a little quickened by a sense of an uneasiness that
beset them in forms suited to their several charac-
ters. But shelter was at hand, and it was speedily
regained.

“Thou hast seen nothing?” said Content to Reu-
ben Ring, who had been chosen for his quick eye,
and a sagacity that was as remarkable as was his
brother’s impotency; “thou hast seen nothing at thy
watch?”

“Nought unusual; and yet I like not yonder billet
of wood, near to the fence against the knoll. If it
were not so plainly a half-burnt log, one might fancy
there is life in it. But when fancy is at work, the
sight is keen. Once or twice I have thought it seem-
ed to be rolling towards the brook; I am not, even
now, certain that when first seen it did not lie eight
or ten feet higher against the bank.”

“It may be a living thing!”

“On the faith of a woodman’s eye, it well may
be,” said Eben Dudley; “but should it be haunted
by a legion of wicked spirits, one may bring it to
quiet from the loop at the nearest corner. Stand
aside, Madam Heathcote,” for the character and
wealth of the proprietors of the valley, gave Ruth
a claim to this term of respect among the laborers;
“let me thrust the piece through the—stop, there
is an especial charm in the gun, which it might be
sinful to waste on such a creature. It may be no
more than some sweet-toothed bear. I will answer
for the charge at my own cost; if thou wilt lend me
thy musket, Reuben Ring."

"It shall not be," said his master; "one known
to my father hath this night entered our dwelling
and fed at our board; if he hath departed in a way
but little wont among those of this Colony, yet hath
he done no great wrong. I will go nigh, and exam-
ine with less risk of error."

There was, in this proposal, too much of that
spirit of right-doing which governed all of those
simple regions, to meet serious opposition. Content,
supported by Eben Dudley, again quitted the pos-
tern, and proceeded directly, though still not with-
out sufficient caution, towards the point where the
suspicious object lay. A bend in the fence had first
brought it into view, for previously to reaching that
point, its apparent direction might for some distance
have been taken under shelter of the shadows of
the rails, which, at the immediate spot where it was
seen, were turned suddenly in a line with the eyes
of the spectators. It seemed as if the movements
of those who approached were watched; for the
instant they left the defences, the dark object was
assuredly motionless; even the keen eye of Reuben
Ring beginning to doubt whether some deception
of vision had not led him, after all, to mistake a
billet of wood for a creature of life.

But Content and his companion were not induced
to change their determination. Even when within
fifty feet of the object, though the moon fell full
and brightly upon the surface, its character baffled
conjecture. One affirmed it was the end of a charred
log, many of which still lay scattered about the
fields, and the other believed it some cringing animal
of the woods. Twice Content raised his piece to
fire, and as often did he let it fall, in reluctance to do injury to even a quadruped of whose character he was ignorant. It is more than probable that his less considerate, and but half-obedient companion would have decided the question soon after leaving the postern, had not the peculiar contents of his musket rendered him delicate of its uses.

"Look to thy weapons," said the former, loosening his own hunting-knife in its sheath. "We will draw near, and make certainty of what is doubtful."

They did so, and the gun of Dudley was thrust rudely into the side of the object of their distrust, before it again betrayed life or motion. Then, indeed, as if further disguise was useless, an Indian lad, of some fifteen years, rose deliberately to his feet, and stood before them in the sullen dignity of a captured warrior. Content hastily seized the stripling by an arm, and followed by Eben, who occasionally quickened the footsteps of the prisoner by an impetus obtained from the breech of his own musket, they hurriedly returned within the defences.

"My life against that of Straight-Horns, which is now of no great value," said Dudley, as he pushed the last bolt of the fastenings into its socket, "we hear no more of this red skin's companions to-night. I never knew an Indian raise his whoop, when a scout had fallen into the hands of the enemy."

"This may be true," returned the other, "and yet must a sleeping household be guarded. We may be brought to rely on the overlooking favor of Providence, working with the means of our own manhood, ere the sun shall arise."

Content was a man of few words, but one of exceeding steadiness and resolution in moments of need. He was perfectly aware that an Indian youth, like him he had captured, would not have been found in that place, and under the circumstances in which he was actually taken, without a
design of sufficient magnitude to justify the haza.

The tender age of the stripling, too, forbade the belief that he was unaccompanied. But he silently agreed with his laboring man that the capture would probably cause the attack, if any such were meditated, to be deferred. He therefore instructed his wife to withdraw into her chamber, while he took measures to defend the dwelling in the last emergency. Without giving any unnecessary alarm, a measure that would have produced less effect on an enemy without, than the imposing stillness which now reigned within the defences, he ordered two or three more of the stoutest of his dependants to be summoned to the palisadoes. A keen scrutiny was made into the state of all the different outlets of the place; muskets were carefully examined; charges were given to be watchful, and regular sentinels were stationed within the shadows of the buildings, at points where, unseen themselves, they could look out in safety upon the fields.

Content then took his captive, with whom he had made no attempt to exchange a syllable, and led him to the block-house. The door which communicated with the basement of this building was always open, in readiness for refuge in the event of any sudden alarm. He entered, caused the lad to mount by a ladder to the floor above, and then withdrawing the means of retreat, he turned the key without, in perfect confidence that his prisoner was secure.

Notwithstanding all this care, morning had nearly dawned before the prudent father and husband sought his pillow. His steadiness however had prevented the apprehensions, which kept his own eyes and those of his gentle partner so long open, from extending beyond the few whose services were, in such an emergency, deemed indispensable to safety. Towards the last watches of the night, only, did
the images of the scenes through which they had just passed, become dim and confused, and then both husband and wife slept soundly, and happily without disturbance.

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CHAPTER V.

"Are you so brave? I'll have you talked with anon."

CORIOLANUS.

The axe and the brand had been early and effectually used, immediately around the dwelling of the Heathcotes. A double object had been gained by removing most of the vestiges of the forest from the vicinity of the buildings: the necessary improvements were executed with greater facility, and, a consideration of no small importance, the cover, which the American savage is known to seek in his attacks, was thrown to a distance that greatly diminished the danger of a surprise.

Favored by the advantage which had been obtained by this foresight, and by the brilliancy of a night that soon emulated the brightness of day, the duty of Eben Dudley and of his associate on the watch was rendered easy of accomplishment. Indeed, so secure did they become towards morning, chiefly on account of the capture of the Indian lad, that more than once, eyes, that should have been differently employed, yielded to the drowsiness of the hour and to habit, or were only opened at intervals that left their owners in some doubt as to the passage of the intermediate time. But no sooner did the signs of day approach, than, agreeably to their instructions, the watchers sought their beds, and for an hour or two, they slept soundly and without fear.

When his father had closed the prayers of the
morning, Content, in the midst of the assembled family, communicated as many of the incidents of the past night as in his judgment seemed necessary. His discretion limited the narrative to the capture of the native youth, and to the manner in which he had ordered the watch for the security of the family. On the subject of his own excursion to the forest, and all connected therewith, he was guardedly silent.

It is unnecessary to relate the manner in which this startling information was received. The cold and reserved brow of the Puritan became still more thoughtful; the young men looked grave, but resolute; the maidens of the household grew pale, shuddered, and whispered hurriedly together; while the little Ruth, and a female child of nearly her own age, named Martha, clung close to the side of the mistress of the family, who, having nothing new to learn, had taught herself to assume the appearance of a resolution she was far from feeling.

The first visitation which befell the listeners, after their eager ears had drunk in the intelligence Content so briefly imparted, was a renewal of the spiritual strivings of his father in the form of prayer. A particular petition was put up in quest of light on their future proceedings, for mercy on all men, for a better mind to those who wandered through the wilderness seeking victims of their wrath, for the gifts of grace on the heathen, and finally for victory over all their carnal enemies, let them come whence or in what aspect they might.

Fortified by these additional exercises, old Mark next made himself the master of all the signs and evidences of the approach of danger, by a more rigid and minute inquiry into the visible circumstances of the arrest of the young savage. Content received a merited and grateful reward for his prudence, in the approbation of one whom he still con-
ed to revere with a mental dependence little
than that with which he had leaned on his
er's wisdom in the days of his childhood.
Thou hast done well and wisely," said his fa-
; "but more remaineth to be performed by thy
om and fortitude. We have had tidings that
heathen near the Providence Plantations are
riet, and that they are lending their minds to
ked counsellors. We are not to sleep in too-
ch security, because a forest journey of a few
's lies between their villages and our own clear-
. Bring forth the captive; I will question him
the matter of this visit."

Until now, so much did the fears of all turn to-
wards the enemies who were believed to be lurking
ear, that little thought had been bestowed on the
isoner in the block-house. Content, who well
w the invincible resolution, no less than the art
of an Indian, had forborne to question him when
taken; for he believed the time to be better suited
to vigilant action, than to interrogatories that the
character of the boy was likely to render perfectly
useless. He now proceeded, however, with an
interest that began to quicken as circumstances
rendered its indulgence less unsuitable, to seek his
captive, in order to bring him before the searching
ordeal of his father's authority.

The key of the lower door of the block-house
hung where it had been deposited; the ladder was
replaced, and Content mounted quietly to the
artment where he had placed his captive. The
room was the lowest of three that the building
contained, all being above that which might be
termed its basement. The latter, having no aperture
but its door, was a dark, hexagonal space, partly
filled with such articles as might be needed in the
event of an alarm, and which, at the same time,
were frequently required for the purposes of do-
mestic use. In the centre of the area was a deep well, so fitted and protected by a wall of stone, as to admit of water being drawn into the rooms above. The door itself was of massive hewn timber. The squared logs of the upper stories projected a little beyond the stone-work of the basement, the second tier of the timbers containing a few loops, out of which missiles might be discharged downwards, on any assailants that approached nearer than should be deemed safe for the security of the basement. As has been stated, the two principal stories were perforated with long narrow slits through the timber, which answered the double purposes of windows and loop-holes. Though the apartments were so evidently arranged for defence, the plain domestic furniture they contained was suited to the wants of the family, should they be driven to the building for refuge. There was also an apartment in the roof, or attic, as already mentioned; but it scarcely entered into the more important uses of the block-house. Still the advantage which it received from its elevation was not overlooked. A small cannon, of a kind once known and much used under the name of grasshoppers, had been raised to the place, and time had been, when it was rightly considered as of the last importance to the safety of the inmates of the dwelling. For some years its muzzle had been seen, by all the straggling aborigines who visited the valley, frowning through one of those openings which were now converted into glazed windows; and there is reason to think, that the reputation which the little piece of ordnance thus silently obtained, had a powerful agency in so long preserving unmolested the peace of the valley.

The word unmolested is perhaps too strong. More than one alarm had in fact occurred, though no positive acts of violence had ever been com-
mitted within the limits which the Puritan claimed as his own. On only one occasion, however, did matters proceed so far that the veteran had been induced to take his post in this warlike attic; where, there is little doubt, had occasion further offered for his services, he would have made a suitable display of his knowledge in the science of gunnery. But the simple history of the Wish-Ton-Wish had furnished another evidence of a political truth, which cannot be too often presented to the attention of our countrymen; we mean that the best preservative of peace is preparation for war. In the case before us, the hostile attitude assumed by old Mark and his dependants had effected all that was desirable, without proceeding to the extremity of shedding blood. Such peaceful triumphs were far more in accordance with the present principles of the Puritan, than it would have been with the reckless temper which had governed his youth. In the quaint and fanatical humor of the times, he had held a family thanksgiving around the instrument of their security, and from that moment the room itself became a favorite resorting-place for the old soldier. Thither he often mounted, even in the hours of deep night, to indulge in those secret spiritual exercises which formed the chiefest solace, and seemingly, indeed, the great employment of his life. In consequence of this habit, the attic of the block-house came in time to be considered sacred to the uses of the master of the valley. The care and thought of Content had gradually supplied it with many conveniences that might contribute to the personal comfort of his father, while the spirit was engaged in these mental conflicts. At length, the old man was known to use the mattress, that among other things it now contained, and to pass the time between the setting and rising of the sun in its solitude. The aperture
originally cut for the exhibition of the grasshopper, had been glazed; and no article of comfort, which was once caused to mount-the difficult ladder that led to the chamber, was ever seen to descend.

There was something in the austere sanctity of old Mark Heathcote, that was favorable to the practices of an anchorite. The youths of the dwelling regarded his unbending brow, and the undisturbed gravity of the eye it shadowed, with a respect akin to awe. Had the genuine benevolence of his character been less tried, or had he mingled in active life at a later period, it might readily have been his fate to have shared in the persecution which his countrymen heaped on those who were believed to deal with influences it is thought impious to exercise. Under actual circumstances, however, the sentiment went no farther than a deep and universal reverence, that left its object, and the neglected little piece of artillery, to the quiet possession of an apartment, to invade which would have been deemed an act bordering on sacrilege.

The business of Content, on the occasion which caused his present visit to the edifice whose history and description we have thought it expedient thus to give at some length, led him no farther than to the lowest of its more military apartments. On raising the trap, for the first time a feeling of doubt came over him, as to the propriety of, having left the boy so long unsolaced by words of kindness, or by deed of charity. It was appeased by observing that his concern was awakened in behalf of one whose spirit was quite equal to sustain greater trials.

The young Indian stood before one of the loops, looking out upon that distant forest in which he had so lately roamed at liberty, with a gaze too riveted to turn aside even at the interruption occasioned by the presence of his captor.
"Come from thy prison, child," said Content, in the tones of mildness; "whatever may have been thy motive in lurking around this dwelling, thou art human, and must know human wants; come forth, and receive food; none here will harm thee."

The language of commiseration is universal. Though the words of the speaker were evidently unintelligible to him for whose ears they were intended, their import was conveyed in the kindness of the accents. The eyes of the boy turned slowly from the view of the woods, and he looked his captor long and steadily in the face. Content now indeed discovered that he had spoken in a language that was unknown to his captive, and he endeavored by gestures of kindness to invite the lad to follow. He was silently and quietly obeyed. On reaching the court, however, the prudence of a border proprietor in some degree overcame his feelings of compassion.

"Bring hither yon tether," he said to Whittal Ring, who at the moment was passing towards the stables; "here is one wild as the most untamed of thy colts. Man is of our nature and of our spirit, let him be of what color it may have pleased Providence to stamp his features; but he who would have a young savage in his keeping on the morrow, must look sharply to his limbs to-day."

The lad submitted quietly, until a turn of the rope was passed around one of his arms; but when Content was fain to complete the work by bringing the other limb into the same state of subjection, the boy glided from his grasp, and cast the fetters from him in disdain. This act of decided resistance was, however, followed by no effort to escape. The moment his person was released from a confinement which he probably considered as implying distrust of his ability to endure pain with the fortitude of a warrior, the lad turned quietly and proudly to his
captor, and, with an eye in which scorn and haughtiness were alike glowing, seemed to defy the fulness of his anger.

"Be it so," resumed the equal-minded Content; "if thou likest not the bonds, which, notwithstanding the pride of man, are often healthful to the body, keep then the use of thy limbs, and see that they do no mischief. Whittal, look thou to the postern, and remember it is forbidden to go afield, until my father hath had this heathen under examination. The cub is seldom found far from the cunning of the aged bear."

He then made a sign to the boy to follow, and proceeded to the apartment where his father, surrounded by most of the family, awaited their coming. Uncompromising domestic discipline was one of the striking characteristics of the sway of the Puritans. That austerity of manner which was thought to mark a sense of a fallen and probationary state, was early taught; for, among a people who deemed all mirth a sinful levity, the practice of self-command would readily come to be esteemed the basis of virtue. But, whatever might have been the peculiar merit of Mark Heathcote and his household in this particular, it was likely to be exceeded by the exhibition of the same quality in the youth who had so strangely become their captive.

We have already said, that this child of the woods might have seen some fifteen years. Though he had shot upwards like a vigorous and thrifty plant, and with the freedom of a thriving sapling in his native forests, rearing its branches towards the light, his stature had not yet reached that of man. In height, form, and attitudes, he was a model of active, natural, and graceful boyhood. But, while his limbs were so fair in their proportions, they were scarcely muscular; still, every movement exhibited a freedom and ease which announced the grace of child-
hood, without the smallest evidence of that restraint which creeps into our air as the factitious feelings of later life begin to assert their influence. The smooth, rounded trunk of the mountain ash is not more upright and free from blemish, than was the figure of the boy, who moved into the curious circle that opened for his entrance and closed against his retreat, with the steadiness of one who came to bestow instead of appearing to receive judgment.

"I will question him," said old Mark Heathcote, attentively regarding the keen and settled eye that met his long, stern gaze as steadily as a less intelligent creature of the woods would return the look of man. "I will question him; and perchance fear will wring from his lips a confession of the evil that he and his have meditated against me and mine."

"I think he is ignorant of our forms of speech," returned Content; "for the words of neither kindness nor anger will force him to a change of feature."

"It is then meet that we commence by asking him, who hath the secret to open all hearts, to be our assistant." The Puritan then raised his voice in a short and exceedingly particular petition, in which he implored the Ruler of the Universe to interpret his meaning, in the forthcoming examination, in a manner that, had his request been granted, would have savored not a little of the miraculous. With this preparation, he proceeded directly to his task. But neither questions, signs, nor prayer, produced the slightest visible effect. The boy gazed at the rigid and austere countenance of his interrogator, while the words were issuing from his lips; but, the instant they ceased, his searching and quick eye rolled over the different curious faces by which he was hemmed in, as if he trusted more to the sense of sight than that of hearing, for the information he naturally sought concerning his future
It was found impossible to obtain from him gesture or sound that should betray either the pur-
port of his questionable visit, his own personal ap-
pellation, or that of his tribe.

"I have been among the redskins of the Provi-
dence Plantations," Eben Dudley at length ventur-
ed to observe; "and their language, though but a
crooked and irrational jargon, is not unknown to
me. With the leave of all present," he continued,
regarding the Puritan in a manner to betray that
this general term meant him alone, "with the leave
of all present, I will put it to the younker in such
a fashion that he will be glad to answer."

Receiving a look of assent, the borderer uttered
certain uncouth and guttural sounds, which, not-
withstanding they entirely failed of their effect, he
stoutly maintained were the ordinary terms of salu-
tation among the people to whom the prisoner was
supposed to belong.

"I know him to be a Narragansett," continued
Eben, reddening with vexation at his defeat, and
throwing a glance of no peculiar amity at the youth
who had so palpably refuted his claim to skill in
the Indian tongues; "you see he hath the shells of
the sea-side worked into the bordering of his moc-
casons; and besides this sign, which is certain as
that night hath its stars, he beareth the look of a
chief that was slain by the Pequods, at the wish of
us Christians, after an affair in which, whether it was
well done or ill done, I did some part of the work
myself."

"And how call you that chief?" demanded Mark.

"Why, he had various names, according to the
business he was on. To some he was known as the
Leaping Panther, for he was a man of an extraor-
dinary jump; and others again used to style him
Pepperage, since there was a saying that neither
bullet nor sword could enter his body: though that
was a mistake, as his death hath fully proven. But his real name, according to the uses and sounds of his own people, was My Anthony Mow."

"My Anthony Mow!"

"Yes; My, meaning that he was their chief; Anthony, being the given name; and Mow, that of the breed of which he came;" rejoined Eben with confidence, satisfied that he had finally produced a sufficiently sonorous appellative and a perfectly lucid etymology. But criticism was diverted from its aim by the action of the prisoner, as these equivocal sounds struck his ear. Ruth recoiled, and clasped her little namesake closer to her side, when she saw the dazzling brightness of his glowing eyes, and the sudden and expressive dilation of his nostrils. For a moment; his lips were compressed with more than the usual force of Indian gravity, and then they slightly severed. A low, soft, and as even the startled matron was obliged to confess, a plaintive sound issued from between them, repeating mournfully—

"Miantonimoh!"

The word was uttered with a distinct, but deeply guttural enunciation.

"The child mourneth for its parent," exclaimed the sensitive mother. "The hand that slew the warrior may have done an evil deed!"

"I see the evident and foreordering will of a wise Providence in this," said Mark Heathcote with solemnity. "The youth hath been deprived of one who might have enticed him still deeper into the bonds of the heathen, and hither hath he been led in order to be placed upon the straight and narrow path. He shall become a dweller among mine, and we will strive against the evil of his mind until instruction shall prevail. Let him be fed and nurtured, equally with the things of life and the things of the world; for who knoweth that which is designed in his behalf?"
If there were more of faith than of rational conclusion in this opinion of the old Puritan, there was no external evidence to contradict it. While the examination of the boy was going on in the dwelling, a keen scrutiny had taken place in the out-buildings, and in the adjacent fields. Those engaged in this duty soon returned, to say that not the smallest trace of an ambush was visible about the place; and as the captive himself had no weapons of hostility, even Ruth began to hope that the mysterious conceptions of her father on the subject were not entirely delusive. The captive was now fed, and old Mark was on the point of making a proper beginning in the task he had so gladly assumed, by an up-offering of thanks, when Whittal Ring broke rudely into the room, and disturbed the solemnity of his preparations, by a sudden and boisterous outcry.

"Away with scythe and sickle," shouted the witling; "it's many a day since the fields of Wish-Ton-Wish have been trodden down by horsemen in buff jerkins, or ambushed by creeping Wampanoags."

"There is danger at hand!" exclaimed the sensitive Ruth. "Husband, the warning was timely."

"Here are truly some riding from the forest, and drawing nigh to the dwelling; but as they are seemingly men of our kind and faith, we have need rather of rejoicing than terror. They bear the air of messengers from the River."

Mark Heathcote listened with surprise, and perhaps with a momentary uneasiness; but all emotion passed away on the instant, for one so disciplined in mind rarely permitted any outward exposure of his secret thoughts. The Puritan calmly issued an order to replace the prisoner in the block-house, assigning the upper of the two principal floors for his keeping; and then he prepared himself to receive guests that were little wont to disturb the quiet of his se
chased valley. He was still in the act of giving forth the necessary mandates, when the tramp of horses was heard in the court, and he was summoned to the door to greet his unknown visitors.

"We have reached Wish-Ton-Wish, and the dwelling of Captain Mark Heathcote," said one, who appeared, by his air and better attire, to be the principal of four that composed the party.

"By the favor of Providence; I call myself the unworthy owner of this place of refuge."

"Then a subject so loyal, and a man who hath so long proved himself faithful in the wilderness, will not turn from his door the agents of his Anointed Master."

"There is one greater than any of earth, who hath taught us to leave the latch free. I pray you to alight, and to partake of that we can offer."

With this courteous but quaint explanation, the horsemen dismounted; and, giving their steeds into the keeping of the laborers of the farm, they entered the dwelling.

While the maidens of Ruth were preparing a repast suited to the hour and to the quality of the guests, Mark and his son had abundant opportunity to examine the appearance of the strangers. They were men who seemed to wear visages peculiarly adapted to the characters of their entertainers, being in truth so singularly demure and grave in aspect, as to excite some suspicion of their being newly-converted zealots to the mortifying customs of the Colony. Notwithstanding their extraordinary gravity, and contrary to the usages of those regions, too, they bore about their persons certain evidence of being used to the fashions of the other hemisphere. The pistols attached to their saddle-bows, and other accoutrements of a warlike aspect, would perhaps have attracted no observation, had they not been accompanied by a fashion in the doublet, the
hat, and the boot, that denoted a greater intercourse with the mother country, than was usual among the less sophisticated natives of those regions. None traversed the forests without the means of defence, but, on the other hand, few wore the hostile implements with so much of a worldly air, or with so many minor particularities of some recent caprice in fashion. As they had however announced themselves to be officers of the King, they, who of necessity must be chiefly concerned in the object of their visit, patiently awaited the pleasure of the strangers, to learn why duty had called them so far from all the more ordinary haunts of men: for, like the native owners of the soil, the self-restrained religionists appeared to reckon an indiscreet haste in any thing, among the more unmanly weaknesses. Nothing for the first half-hour of their visit escaped the guarded lips of men evidently well skilled in their present duty, which might lead to a clue of its purport. The morning meal passed almost without discourse, and one of the party had arisen with the professed object of looking to their steeds, before he, who seemed the chief, led the conversation to a subject, that by its political bearing might, in some degree, be supposed to have a remote connexion with the principal object of his journey to that sequestered valley.

"Have the tidings of the gracious boon that hath lately flowed from the favor of the King, reached this distant settlement?" asked the principal personage, one that wore a far less military air than a younger companion, who, by his confident mien, appeared to be the second in authority.

"To what boon hath thy words import?" demanded the Puritan, turning a glance of the eye at his son and daughter, together with the others in hearing, as if to admonish them to be prudent.

"I speak of the Royal Charter by which the
people on the banks of the Connecticut, and they of
the Colony of New-Haven, are henceforth permitted
to unite in government; granting them liberty of
conscience, and great freedom of self-control."

"Such a gift were worthy of a King! Hath
Charles done this?"

"That hath he, and much more that is fitting
in a kind and royal mind. The realm is finally freed
from the abuses of usurpers, and power now resteth
in the hands of a race long set apart for its privi-
leges."

"It is to be wished that practice shall render
them expert and sage in its uses," rejoined Mark,
somewhat drily.

"It is a merry Prince! and one but little given
to the study and exercises of his martyred father;
but he hath great cunning in discourse, and few
around his dread person have keener wit or more
ready tongue."

Mark bowed his head in silence, seemingly little
disposed to push the discussion of his earthly
master's qualities to a conclusion that might prove
offensive to so loyal an admirer. One inclining to
suspicion would have seen, or thought he saw,
certain equivocal glances from the stranger, while
he was thus lauding the vivacious qualities of the
restored monarch, which should denote a desire to
detect how far the eulogiums might be grateful to
his host. He acquiesced however in the wishes of
the Puritan, though whether understandingly, or
without design, it would have been difficult to say,
and submitted to change the discourse.

"It is likely, by thy presence, that tidings have
reached the Colonies from home," said Content,
who understood, by the severe and reserved ex-
pression of his father's features, that it was a
fitting time for him to interpose.

"There is one arrived in the Bay, within the
Vol. I.
month, by means of a King's frigate; but no trader hath yet passed between the countries, except the ship which maketh the annual voyage from Bristol to Boston."

"And he who hath arrived—doth he come in authority?" demanded Mark; "or is he merely another servant of the Lord, seeking to rear His tabernacle in the wilderness?"

"Thou shalt know the nature of his errand," returned the stranger, casting a glance of malicious intelligence obliquely towards his companions, at the same time that he arose and placed in the hand of his host a commission which evidently bore the Seal of State. "It is expected that all aid will be given to one bearing this warranty, by a subject of a loyalty so approved as that of Captain Mark Heathcote."

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CHAPTER VI.

"But, by your leave,
I am an officer of state, and come
To speak with——"  
CORIOLEANUS.

NOTWITHSTANDING the sharp look which the Messenger of the Crown deliberately and now openly fastened on the master of Wish-Ton-Wish, while the latter was reading the instrument that was placed before his eyes, there was no evidence of uneasiness to be detected in the unmoved features of the latter. Mark Heathcote had too long school-ed his passions, to suffer an unseemly manifestation of surprise to escape him; and he was by nature a man of far too much nerve, to betray alarm at any trifling exhibition of danger. Returning the parch-
ment to the other, he said with unmoved calmness to his son—

"We must open wide the doors of Wish-Ton-Wish. Here is one charged with authority to look into the secrets of all the dwellings of the colony." Then, turning with dignity to the agent of the Crown, he added, "Thou hadst better commence thy duty in season, for we are many and occupy much space."

The face of the stranger flushed a little, it might have been with shame for the vocation in which he had come so far, or it might have been in resentment at so direct a hint that the sooner his disagreeable office should be ended, the better it would please his host. Still, he betrayed no intention of shrinking from its performance. On the contrary, discarding somewhat of that subdued manner which he had probably thought it politic to assume, while sounding the opinions of one so rigid, he broke out rather suddenly in the exhibition of a humor somewhat better suited to the tastes of him he served.

"Come then," he cried, winking at his companions, "since doors are opened, it would speak ill of our breeding should we refuse to enter. Captain Heathcote has been a soldier, and he knows how to excuse a traveller's freedom. Surely one who has tasted of the pleasures of the camp, must weary at times of this sylvan life!"

"The stedfast in faith weary not, though the road be long and the wayfaring grievous."

"Hum—'tis pity that the journeying between merry England and these Colonies is not more brisk. I do not presume to instruct a gentleman who is my senior, and peradventure my better; but opportunity is everything in a man's fortunes. It were charity to let you know, worthy sir, that opinions have changed at home: it is full a twelvemonth since I have heard a line of the Psalms, or a verse
of St. Paul quoted, in discourse; at least by men who are at all esteemed for their discretion.”

“This change in the fashion of speech may better suit thy earthly than thy heavenly master,” said Mark Heathcote, sternly.

“Well, well, that peace may exist between us, we will not bandy words about a text more or less, if we may escape the sermon,” rejoined the stranger, no longer affecting restraint, but laughing with sufficient freedom at his own conceit; a species of enjoyment in which his companions mingled with great good-will, and without much deference to the humor of those under whose roof they found themselves.

A small glowing spot appeared on the pale cheek of the Puritan, and disappeared again, like some transient deception produced by the play of light. Even the meek eye of Content kindled at the insult; but, like his father, the practice of self-denial, and a never-sleeping consciousness of his own imperfections, smothered the momentary exhibition of displeasure.

“If thou hast authority to look into the secret places of our habitations, do thy office,” he said, with a peculiarity of tone which served to remind the other, that though he bore the commission of the Stuart, he was in an extremity of his Empire, where even the authority of a King lost some of its value.

Affecting to be, and possibly in reality conscious of his indiscretion, the stranger hastily disposed himself to the execution of his duty.

“It would be a great and a pain-saving movement,” he said, “were we to assemble the household in one apartment. The government at home would be glad to hear something of the quality of its lieges in this distant quarter. Thou hast doubtless a bell to summon the flock at stated periods.”
"Our people are yet near the dwelling," returned Content: "if it be thy pleasure, none shall be absent from the search."

Gathering from the eye of the other that he was serious in this wish, the quiet Colonist proceeded to the gate, and, placing a shell to his mouth, blew one of those blasts that are so often heard in the forests summoning families to their homes, and which are alike used as the signals of peaceful recall, or of alarm. The sound soon brought all within hearing to the court, whither the Puritan and his unpleasant guests now repaired as to the spot best suited to the purposes of the latter.

"Hallam," said the principal personage of the four visitors, addressing him who might once have been, if he were not still, some subaltern in the forces of the Crown, for he was attired in a manner that bespoke him but a half-disguised dragoon, "I leave thee to entertain this goodly assemblage. Thou mayst pass the time in discoursing on the vanities of the world, of which I believe few are better qualified to speak understandingly than thyself, or a few words of admonition to hold fast to the faith would come with fitting weight from thy lips. But look to it, that none of thy flock wander; for here must every creature of them remain, stationary as the indiscreet partner of Lot, till I have cast an eye into all the cunning places of their abode. So set wit at work, and show thy breeding as an entertainer."

After this irreverent charge to his subordinate, the speaker signified to Content and his father, that he and his remaining attendant would proceed to a more minute examination of the premises.

When Mark Heathcote saw that the man who had so rudely broken in upon the peaceful habits of his family was ready to proceed, he advanced steadily in his front, like one who boldly invited in-
quiry, and by a grave gesture desired him to follow. The stranger, perhaps as much from habit as from any settled design, first cast a free glance around at the bevy of fluttered maidens, leered even upon the modest and meek-eyed Ruth herself, and then took the direction indicated by him who had so unhesitatingly assumed the office of a guide.

The object of this examination still remained a secret between those who made it, and the Puritan, who had probably found its motive in the written warranty which had been submitted to his inspection. That it proceeded from fitting authority, none might doubt; and that it was in some manner connected with the events that were-known to have wrought so sudden and so great a change in the government of the mother country, all believed probable. Notwithstanding the seeming mystery of the procedure, the search was not the less rigid. Few habitations of any size or pretension were erected in those times, which did not contain certain secret places, where valuables and even persons might be concealed, at need. The strangers displayed great familiarity with the nature and ordinary positions of these private recesses. Not a chest, a closet, or even a drawer of size, escaped their vigilance; nor was there a plank that sounded hollow, but the master of the valley was called on to explain the cause. In one or two instances, boards were wrested violently from their fastenings, and the cavities beneath were explored, with a wariness that increased as the investigation proceeded without success.

The strangers appeared irritated by their failure. An hour passed in the keenest scrutiny, and nothing had transpired which brought them any nearer to their object. That they had commenced the search with more than usually confident anticipations of a favorable result, might have been gathered from
the boldness of tone assumed by their chief, and the pointed personal allusions in which, from time to time, he indulged, often too freely, and always at some expense to the loyalty of the Heathcotes. But when he had completed the circuit of the buildings, having entered all parts from their cellars to the garrets, his spleen became so strong as, in some degree, to get the better of a certain parade of discretion, which he had hitherto managed to maintain in the midst of all his levity.

"Hast seen nothing, Mr. Hallam?" he demanded of the individual left on watch, as they crossed the court in retiring from the last of the out-buildings; "or have those traces which led us to this distant settlement proved false? Captain Heathcote, you have seen that we come not without sufficient warrant, and it is in my power to say we come not without sufficient——"

Checking himself as if about to utter more than was prudent, he suddenly cast an eye on the block-house, and demanded its uses.

"It is, as thou seest, a building erected for the purposes of defence," replied Mark; "one to which, in the event of an inroad of the savages, the family may fly for refuge."

"Ah! these citadels are not unknown to me. I have met with others during my journey, but none so formidable or so military as this. It hath a soldier for its governor, and should hold out for a reasonable siege. Being a place of pretension, we will look closer into its mystery."

He then signified an intention to close the search by an examination of this edifice. Content unhesitatingly threw open its door, and invited him to enter.

"On the word of one who, though now engaged in a more peaceful calling, has been a campaigner in his time, 'twould be no child's-play to carry this
tower without artillery. Had thy spies given notice of our approach, Captain Heathcote, the entrance might have been more difficult than we now find it. We have a ladder, here! Where the means of mounting are found, there must be something to tempt one to ascend. I will taste your forest air from an upper room."

"You will find the apartment above, like this below, merely provided for the security of the unoffending dwellers of the habitations," said Content; while he quietly arranged the ladder before the trap, and then led the way himself to the floor above.

"Here have we loops for the musketoons," cried the stranger, looking about him, understandingly, "and reasonable defences against shot. Thou hast not forgotten thy art, Captain Heathcote, and I consider myself fortunate in having entered thy fortress by surprise, or I should rather say, in amity, since the peace is not yet broken between us. But why have we so much of household gear in a place so evidently equipped for war?"

"Thou forgettest that women and children may be driven to this block for a residence," replied Content. "It would show little discretion to neglect matters that might be useful to their wants."

"Is there trouble with the savages?" demanded the stranger, a little quickly; "the gossips of the Colony bade us fear nothing on that head."

"One cannot say at what hour creatures trained in their wild natures may choose to rise. The dwellers on the borders therefore never neglect a fitting caution."

"Hist!" interrupted the stranger; "I hear a footstep above. Ha! the scent will prove true at last! Hilloa, Master Hallam!" he cried from one of the loops, "let thy statues of salt dissolve, and come hither to the tower. Here is work for a regiment;
for well do we know the nature of that we are to deal with."

The sentinel in the court shouted to his companion in the stables, and then, openly and boisterously exulting in the prospects of a final success to a search which had hitherto given them useless employment throughout many a long day and weary ride, they rushed together to the block-house.

"Now, worthy lieges of a gracious master," said the leader, when he perceived himself backed by all his armed followers, and speaking with the air of a man flushed with success, "now quickly provide the means of mounting to the upper story. I have thrice heard the tread of man, moving across that floor; though it hath been light and wary, the planks are tell-tales, and have not had their schooling."

Content heard the request, which was uttered sufficiently in the manner of an order, perfectly unmoved. Without betraying either hesitation or concern, he disposed himself to comply. Drawing the light ladder through the trap below, he placed it against the one above him, and ascending he raised the door. He then returned to the floor beneath, making a quiet gesture to imply that they who chose might mount. But the strangers regarded each other with very visible doubts. Neither of the inferiors seemed disposed to precede his chief, and the latter evidently hesitated as to the order in which it was meet to make the necessary advance.

"Is there no other manner of mounting, but by this narrow ascent?" he asked.

"None. Thou wilt find the ladder secure, and of no difficult height. It is intended for the use of women and children."

"Ay," muttered the officer, "but your women and children are not called upon to confront the devil in a human form. Fellows, are thy weapons
in serviceable condition? Here may be need of spirit, ere we get our—Hist! by the Divine Right of our Gracious Master! there is truly one stirring above. Harkee, my friend; thou knowest the road so well, we will choose to follow thy conduct."

Content, who seldom permitted ordinary events to disturb the equanimity of his temper, quietly assented, and led the way up the ladder, like one who saw no ground for apprehension in the undertaking. The agent of the crown sprang after him, taking care to keep as near as possible to the person of his leader, and calling to his inferiors to lose no time in backing him with their support. The whole mounted through the trap, with an alacrity nothing short of that with which they would have pressed through a dangerous breach; nor did either of the four take time to survey the lodgment he had made, until the whole party was standing in array, with hands grasping the handles of their pistols, or seeking as it were instinctively the hilts of their broadswords.

"By the dark visage of the Stuart!" exclaimed the principal personage, after satisfying himself by a long and disappointed gaze, that what he said was true, "here is nought but an unarmed savage boy!"

"Didst expect to meet else?" demanded the still unmoved Content.

"Hum—that which we expected to meet is sufficiently known to the quaint old gentleman below, and to our own good wisdom. If thou doubtest of our right to look into thy very hearts, warranty for that we do can be forthcoming. King Charles hath little cause to be tender of his mercies to the dwellers of these Colonies, who lent but too willing ears to the whinings and hypocrisies of the wolves in sheeps' clothing, of whom old England hath now so happily gotten rid. Thy buildings shall again be
rummaged from the bricks of the chimney-tops to
the corner-stone in thy cellars, unless deceit and
rebellious cunning shall be abandoned, and the
truth proclaimed with the openness and fairness of
bold-speaking Englishmen."

"I know not what is called the fairness of bold-
speaking Englishmen, since fairness of speech is not
a quality of one people, or of one land; but well I
do know that deceit is sinful, and little of it, I
humbly trust, is practised in this settlement. I am
ignorant of what is sought, and therefore it cannot
be that I meditate treachery."

"Thou hearest, Hallam; he reasoneth on a
matter that toucheth the peace and safety of the
King!" cried the other, his arrogance of manner
increasing with the anger of disappointment. "But
why is this dark-skinned boy a prisoner? dost dare
to constitute thyself a sovereign over the natives
of this continent, and affect to have shackles and
dungeons for such as meet thy displeasure?"

"The lad is in truth a captive; but he has been
taken in defence of life, and hath little to complain
of, more than loss of freedom."

"I will inquiere deeply into this proceeding.
Though commissioned on an errand of different
interest, yet, as one trusted in a matter of moment,
I take upon me the office of protecting every
oppressed subject of the Crown. There may grow
discoveries out of this practice, Hallam, fit to go
before the Council itself."

"Thou wilt find but little here, worthy of the
time and attention of those burthened with the
care of a nation," returned Content. "The youth-
ful heathen was found lurking near our habitations,
the past night; and he is kept where thou
seest, that he may not carry the tidings of our
condition to his people, who are doubtless outlying
in the forest, waiting for the fit moment to work their evil."

"How meanest thou?" hastily exclaimed the other, "at hand, in the forest, didst say?"

"There can be little doubt. One young as this would scarce be found distant from the warriors of his tribe; and that the more especially, as he was taken in the commission of an ambush."

"I hope thy people are not without good provision of arms, and other sufficient muniments of resistance. I trust the palisadoes are firm, and the posterns ingeniously defended."

"We look with a diligent eye to our safety, for it is well known to us dwellers on the borders that there is little security but in untiring watchfulness. The young men were at the gates until the morning, and we did intend to make a strong scouting into the woods as the day advanced, in order to look for those signs that may lead us to conclusions on the number and purposes of those by whom we are environed, had not thy visit called us to other duties."

"And why so tardy in speaking of this intent?" demanded the agent of the King, leading the way down the ladder with suspicious haste. "It is a commendable prudence, and must not be delayed. I take upon me the responsibleness of commanding that all proper care be had in defence of the weaker subjects of the Crown who are here collected. Are our roadsters well replenished, Hallam? Duty, as thou sayest, is an imperative master; it recalls us more into the heart of the Colony. I would it might shortly point the way to Europe!" he muttered as he reached the ground. "Go, fellows; see to our beasts, and let them be speedily prepared for departure."

The attendants, though men of sufficient spirit in open war, and when it was to be exercised in
OF WISH-TON-WISH.

a fashion to which they were accustomed, had, like other mortals, a wholesome deference for unknown and terrific-looking danger. It is a well-known truth, and one that has been proved by the experience of two centuries, that while the European soldier has ever been readiest to have recourse to the assistance of the terrible warrior of the American forest, he has, in nearly every instance, when retaliation or accident has made him the object instead of the spectator of the ruthless nature of his warfare, betrayed the most salutary, and frequently the most abject and ludicrous apprehension of the prowess of his ally. While Content therefore looked so steadily, though still seriously, at the peculiar danger in which he was placed, the four strangers seemingly saw all of its horrors without any of the known means of avoiding them. Their chief quickly abandoned the insolence of office, and the tone of disappointment, for a mien of greater courtesy; and, as policy is often seen suddenly to change the sentiments of even more pretending personages, when interests assume a new aspect, so did his language rapidly take a character of conciliation and courtesy.

The handmaidens were no longer leered at; the mistress of the dwelling was treated with marked deference; and the air of deep respect with which even the principal of the party addressed the aged Puritan, bordered on an exhibition of commendable reverence. Something was said, in the way of apology, for the disagreeable obligations of duty, and of a difference between a manner that was assumed to answer secret purposes, and that which nature and a sense of right would dictate: but neither Mark nor his son appeared to have sufficient interest in the motives of their visitors, to put them to the trouble of repeating explanations that were as
awkward to those who uttered them, as they were unnecessary to those who listened.

So far from offering any further obstacle to the movements of the family, the borderers were seriously urged to pursue their previous intentions of thoroughly examining the woods. The dwelling was accordingly intrusted, under the orders of the Puritan, to the keeping of about half the laborers, assisted by the Europeans, who clung with instinctive attachment to the possession of the block-house; their leader repeatedly and rightly enough declaring that though ready at all times to risk life on a plain, he had an unconquerable distaste to putting it in jeopardy in a thicket. Attended by Eben Dudley, Reuben Ring, and two other stout youths, all well though lightly armed, Content then left the palisadoes, and took his way towards the forest. They entered the woods at the nearest point, always marching with the caution and vigilance that a sense of the true nature of the risk they ran would inspire, and much practice only could properly direct.

The manner of the search was as simple as it was likely to prove effectual. The scouts commenced a circuit around the clearing, extending their line as far as might be done without cutting off support, and each man lending his senses attentively to the signs of the trail, or of the lairs, of those dangerous enemies, who they had reason to think were outlying in their neighborhood. But, like the recent search in the buildings, the scouting was for a long time attended by no results. Many weary miles were passed slowly over, and more than half their task was ended, and no sign of being having life was met, except the very visible trail of their four guests, and the tracks of a single horse along the path leading to the settlements from the quarter by which the visitor of the
previous night had been known to approach. No comments were made by any of the party, as each in succession struck and crossed this path, nearly at the same instant; but a low call from Reuben Ring which soon after met their ears, caused them to assemble in a body at the spot whence the summons had proceeded.

"Here are signs of one passing from the clearing," said the quick-eyed woodsman, "and of one too that is not numbered among the family of Wish-Ton-Wish; since his beast hath had a shodden hoof, a mark which belongeth to no animal of ours."

"We will follow," said Content, immediately striking in upon a straggling trail, that by many unequivocal signs had been left by some animal which had passed that way not many hours before. Their search, however, soon grew to a close. Ere they had gone any great distance, they came upon the half-demolished carcass of a dead horse. There was no mistaking the proprietor of this unfortunate animal. Though some beast, or rather beasts of prey, had fed plentifully on the body, which was still fresh and had scarcely yet done bleeding, it was plain, by the remains of the torn equipments, as well as by the color and size of the animal, that it was no other than the hack ridden by the unknown and mysterious guest, who, after sharing in the worship and in the evening meal of the family of the Wish-Ton-Wish, had so strangely and so suddenly disappeared. The leathern sack, the weapons which had so singularly riveted the gaze of old Mark, and indeed all but the carcass and a ruined saddle, were gone; but what was left, sufficiently served to identify the animal.

"Here has been the tooth of wolf," said Eben Dudley, stooping to examine into the nature of a ragged wound in the neck; "and here, too, has
been cut of knife; but whether by the hand of a red skin, it exceedeth my art to say."

Each individual of the party now bent curiously over the wound; but the results of their inquiries went no further than to prove that it was undeniably the horse of the stranger, that had forfeited its life. To the fate of its master, however, there was not the slightest clue. Abandoning the investigation, after a long and fruitless examination, they proceeded to finish the circuit of the clearing. Night had approached ere the fatiguing task was accomplished. As Ruth stood at the postern waiting anxiously for their return, she saw by the countenance of her husband, that while nothing had transpired to give any grounds of additional alarm, no satisfactory testimony had been obtained to explain the nature of the painful doubts, with which, as a tender and sensitive mother, she had been distressed throughout the day.

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CHAPTER VII.

"Is there not milking-time,
When you go to bed, or kiln-hole,
To whistle off these secrets; but you must be
Tattling before all our guests?"

{Winter's Tale.}

Long experience hath shown that the white man, when placed in situations to acquire such knowledge, readily becomes the master of most of that peculiar skill for which the North American Indian is so remarkable, and which enables him, among other things, to detect the signs of a forest trail, with a quickness and an accuracy of intelligence that amount nearly to an instinct. The fears
of the family were therefore greatly quieted by the reports of the scouts, all of whom agreed in the opinion that no party of savages, that could be at all dangerous to a force like their own, was lying near the valley; and some of whom, the loudest of which number being stout Eben Dudley, boldly offered to answer for the security of those who depended on their vigilance, with their own lives. These assurances had, beyond a doubt, a soothing influence on the apprehensions of Ruth and her handmaidens; but they somewhat failed of their effect, with those unwelcome visitors who still continued to cumber Wish-Ton-Wish with their presence. Though they had evidently abandoned all ideas connected with the original object of their visit, they spoke not of departure. On the contrary, as night approached, their chief entered into council with old Mark Heathcote, and made certain propositions for the security of his dwelling, which the Puritan saw no reason to oppose.

A regular watch was, in consequence, set, and maintained till morning, at the palisades. The different members of the family retired to their usual places of rest, tranquil in appearance, if not in entire confidence of peace; and the military messengers took post in the lower of the two fighting apartments of the citadel. With this simple, and to the strangers particularly satisfactory arrangement, the hours of darkness passed away in quiet; morning returning to the secluded valley, as it had so often done before, with its loveliness unimpaired by violence or tumult.

In the same peaceful manner did the sun set successively three several times, and as often did it arise on the abode of the Heathcotes, without further sign of danger, or motive of alarm. With the passage of time, the agents of the Stuart gradually regained their confidence. Still they never neglect-
ed to withdraw within the protection of the block-
house with the retiring light; a post which the sub-
ordinate named Hallam, more than once gravely
observed, they were, by their disciplined and mili-
ty habits, singularly qualified to maintain. Though
the Puritan secretly chafed under this protracted
visit, habitual self-denial, and a manner so long sub-
dued, enabled him to conceal his disgust. For the
first two days after the alarm, the deportment of
his guests was unexceptionable. All their faculties
appeared to be engrossed with keen and anxious
watchings of the forest, out of which it would seem
they expected momentarily to see issue a band of
ferocious and ruthless savages: but symptoms of re-
turning levity began to be apparent, as confidence
and a feeling of security increased, with the quiet
passage of the hours.

It was on the evening of the third day from that
on which they had made their appearance in the
settlement, that the man called Hallam was seen
strolling, for the first time, through the postern so
often named, and taking a direction which led to-
wards the out-buildings. His air was less distrust-
ful than it had been for many a weary hour, and
his step proportionably confident and assuming. In-
stead of wearing, as he had been wont, a pair of
heavy horseman's pistols at his girdle, he had even
laid aside his broadsword, and appeared more in the
guise of one who sought his personal ease, than in
that cumbersome and martial attire which all of his
party, until now, had deemed it prudent to maintain.
He cast his glance cursorily over the fields of the
Heathcotes, as they glowed under the soft light of
a setting sun; nor did his eye even refuse to wander
vacantly along the outline of that forest, which his
imagination had so lately been peopling with beings
of a fierce and ruthless nature.

The hour was one when rustic economy brings the
labors of the day to a close. Among those who were more than usually active at that busy moment, was a handmaiden of Ruth, whose clear sweet voice was heard, in one of the inclosures, occasionally rising on the notes of a spiritual song, and as often sinking to a nearly inaudible hum, as she extracted from a favorite animal liberal portions of its nightly tribute to the dairy of her mistress. To that inclosure the stranger, as it were by accident, suffered his sauntering footsteps to stroll, seemingly as much in admiration of the sleek herd as of any other of its comely tenants.

"From what thrush hast taken lessons, my pretty maid, that I mistook thy notes for one of the sweetest songsters of thy woods?" he asked, trusting his person to the support of the pen in an attitude of easy superiority. "One might fancy it a robin, or a wren, trolling out his evening song, instead of human voice rising and falling in every-day psalmody."

"The birds of our forest rarely speak," returned the girl; "and the one among them which has most to say, does it like those who are called gentlemen, when they set wit to work to please the ear of simple country maidens."

"And in what fashion may that be?"

"Mockery."

"Ah! I have heard of the creature's skill. It is said to be a compound of the harmony of all other forest songsters; and yet I see the resemblance to the honest language of a soldier, in its manner of utterance."

"It speaketh without much meaning; and oftener to cheat the ear, than in honest reason."

"Thou forgettest that which I told thee in the morning, child. It would seem that they who named thee, have no great cause to exult in their judgment
of character, since Unbelief would better describe thy disposition, than Faith."

"It may be, that they who named me little knew how great must be credulity, to give ear to all I have been required to credit."

"Thou canst have no difficulty in admitting that thou art comely, since the eye itself will support thy belief; nor can one of so quick speech fail to know that her wit is sharper than common. Thus far, I admit, the name of Faith will not surely belie thy character."

"If Eben Dudley hear thee use such vanity-stirring discourse," returned the half-pleased girl, "he might give thee less credit for wit than thou seemest willing to yield to others. I hear his heavy foot among the cattle, and ere long we shall be sure to see a face that hath little more of lightness to boast."

"This Eben Dudley is a personage of no mean importance, I find!" muttered the other, continuing his walk, as the borderer named made his appearance at another entrance of the pen. The glances exchanged between them were far from friendly, though the woodsman permitted the stranger to pass without any oral expression of displeasure.

"The skittish heifer is getting gentle at last, Faith Ring," said the borderer, casting the butt of his musket on the ground with a violence that left a deep impression on the faded sward at his feet. "That brindled ox, old Logger, is not more willing to come into his yoke, than is the four-year-old to yield her milk."

"The creature has been getting kind, since you taught the manner to tame its humor," returned the dairy girl, in a voice that, spite of every effort of maiden pride, betrayed something of the flurry of her spirits, while she plied her light task with violent industry.
"Umph! I hope some other of my teachings may be as well remembered; but thou art quick at the trick of learning, Faith, as is plain by the ready manner in which thou hast so shortly got the habit of discourse with a man as nimble-tongued as yon riding reprobate from over sea."

"I hope that civil listening is no proof of unseemly discourse on the part of one who hath been trained in modesty of speech, Eben Dudley. Thou hast often said, it was the bounden duty of her who was spoken to, to give ear, lest some might say she was of scornful mind, and her name for pride be better earned than that for good-nature."

"I see that more of my lessons than I had hoped are still in thy keeping. So thou listenest thus readily, Faith, because it is meet that a maiden should not be scornful!"

"Thou sayest so. Whatever ill name I may deserve, thou hast no right to count scorn among my failings."

"If I do, may I——" Eben Dudley bit his lip, and checked an expression which would have given grievous offence to one whose habits of decency were as severe as those of his companion. "Thou must have heard much that was profitable to-day, Faith Ring," he added, "considering that thy ear is so open, and that thy opportunities have been great."

"I know not what thou wouldst say by speaking of my opportunities," returned the girl, bending still lower beneath the object of her industry, in order to conceal the glow which her own quick consciousness told her was burning on her cheek.

"I would say that the tale must be long, that needeth four several trials of private speech to finish."

"Four! as I hope to be believed for a girl of truth in speech or deed, this is but the third time that the
stranger hath spoken to me apart, since the sun hath risen."

"If I know the number of the fingers of my hand, it is the fourth!"

"Nay, how canst thou, Eben Dudley, who hast been afield since the crowing of the cock, know what hath passed about the dwellings? It is plain that envy, or some other evil passion, causeth thee to speak angrily."

"How is it that I know! perhaps thou thinkest Faith, thy brother Reuben, only, hath the gift of sight."

"The labor must have gone on with great profit to the Captain, whilst eyes have been roving over other matters! But perhaps they kept the strong of arm for the lookers-out, and have set them of feeble bodies to the toil."

"I have not been so careless of thy life as to forget, at passing moments, to cast an eye abroad, pert-one. Whatever thou mayst think of the need, there would be fine wailings in the butteries and dairies, did the Wampanoags get into the clearing, and were there none to give the alarm in season."

"Truly, Eben, thy terror of the child in the block must be grievous for one of thy manhood, else wouldst thou not watch the buildings so narrowly," retorted Faith, laughing; for with the dexterity of her sex, she began to feel the superiority she was gradually obtaining in the discourse. "Thou dost not remember that we have valiant troopers, from old England, to keep the younker from doing harm. But here cometh the brave soldier himself: it will be well to ask vigilance at his hands, or this night may bring us to the tomahawk in our sleep!"

"Thou speakest of the weapon of the savages!" said the messenger, who had drawn near again with a visible willingness to share in an interview which, while he had watched its progress at a distance,
appeared to be growing interesting. "I trust all fear is over, from that quarter."

"As you say, for this quarter," said Eben, adjusting his lips to a low whistle, and coolly looking up to examine the heavenly body to which he meant allusion. "But the next quarter may bring us a pretty piece of Indian skirmishing."

"And what hath the moon in common with an incursion of the savages? Are there those among them, who study the secrets of the stars?"

"They study deviltries and other wickedness, more than aught else. It is not easy for the mind of man to fancy horrors such as they design, when Providence has given them success in an inroad."

"But thou didst speak of the moon! In what manner is the moon leagued with their bloody plots?"

"We have her now in the full, and there is little of the night when the eye of a watcher might not see a red skin in the clearing; but a different tale may be heard, when' an hour or two of jet darkness shall again fall among these woods. There will be a change shortly; it behoveth us therefore to be on our guard."

"Thou thinkest then, truly, that there are out-lyers waiting for the fitting moment?" said the officer, with an interest so marked as to cause even the but-half-pacified Faith to glance an arch look at her companion, though he still had reason to distrust a wilful expression that lurked in the corner of her eyes, which threatened at each moment to contradict his relation of the sinister omens.

"There may be savages lying in the hills, at a day's journey in the forest; but they know the aim of a white man's musket too well, to be sleeping within reach of its range. It is the nature of an Indian to eat and sleep while he has time for quiet,
and to fast and murder when the killing hour hath come."

"And what call you the distance to the nearest settlement on the Connecticut?" demanded the other, with an air so studiously indifferent as to furnish an easy clue to the inner workings of his mind.

"Some twenty hours would bring a nimble runner to the outer habitations, granting small time for food and rest. He that is wise, however, will take but little of the latter, until his head be safely housed within some such building as yon block, or until there shall stand between him and the forest at least a goodly row of oaken pickets."

"There is no path ridden by which travellers may avoid the forest during the darkness?"

"I know of none. He who quits Wish-Ton-Wish for the towns below, must make his pillow of the earth, or be fain to ride as long as beast can carry."

"We have truly had experience of this necessity, journeying hither. Thou thinkest, friend, the savages are in their resting time, and that they wait the coming quarter of the moon?"

"To my seeming, we shall not have them sooner," returned Eben Dudley; taking care to conceal all qualification of this opinion, if any such he entertained, by closely locking its purport in a mental reservation.

"And what season is it usual to choose for getting into the saddle, when business calls any to the settlements below?"

"We never fail to take our departure about the time the sun touches the tall pine, which stands on yonder height of the mountain. Much experience hath told us it is the safest hour; hand of time-piece is not more sure than yon tree."

"I like the night," said the other, looking about him with the air of one suddenly struck with the promising appearance of the weather. "The black-
ness no longer hangs about the forest, and it seems a fitting moment to push the matter, on which we are sent, nearer to its conclusion."

So saying, and probably believing that he had sufficiently concealed the motive of his decision, the uneasy dragoon walked with an air of soldierly coolness towards the dwellings, signing at the same time to one of his companions, who was regarding him from a distance, to approach.

"Now dost thou believe, witless Dudley, that the four fingers of thy clumsy hand have numbered the full amount of all that thou callest my listenings?" said Faith, when she thought no other ear but his to whom she spoke could catch her words, and at the same time laughing merrily beneath her heifer, though still speaking with a vexation she could not entirely repress.

"Have I spoke long about truth? It is not for such as I to give lessons in journeying, to one who follows the honest trade of a man-hunter. I have said that which all who dwell in these parts know to be reasonable."

"Surely nought else. But truth is made so powerful in thy hands, that it needs be taken, like a bitter healing draught, with closed eyes and at many swallows. One who drinketh of it too freely, may well-nigh be strangled. I marvel that he who is so vigilant in providing for the cares of others, should take so little heed of those he is set to guard."

"I know no thy meaning, Faith. When was danger near the valley, and my musket wanting?"

"The good piece is truer to duty than its master. Thou mayest have lawful license to sleep on thy post, for we maides know nothing of the pleasure of the Captain in these matters; but it would be as seemly, if not as soldierly, to place the arms at the postern and thyself in the chambers, when Vol. I.
next thou hast need of watching and sleeping in
the same hour."

Dudley looked as confused as one of his mould
and unbending temperament might well be, though
he stubbornly refused to understand the allusion of
his offended companion.

"Thou hast not discussed with the trooper from
over sea in vain," he said, "since thou speakest
so wisely of watches and arms."

"Truly he hath much schooled me in the matter."

"Umph! and what may be the amount of his
teaching?"

"That he who sleepeth at a postern should
neither talk too boldly of the enemy, nor expect
maidens to put too much trust—"

"In what, Faith?"

"Thou surely knowest I mean in his watchful-
ness. My life on it, had he happened to pass at a
later hour than common near the night post of that
gentle-spoken soldier, he would not have been found,
like a sentinel of this household, in the second watch
of the night that is gone, dreaming of the good
things of the Madam's buttery."

"Didst truly come then, girl?" said Eben, drop-
ping his voice, and equally manifesting his satisfac-
tion and his shame. "But thou knowest, Faith, that
the labor had fallen behind in behalf of the scout-
ing party, and that the toil of yesterday exceeded
that of our usual burthens. Nevertheless, I keep
the postern again to-night, from eight to twelve, and—"

"Will make a goodly rest of it, I doubt not. No;
he who hath been so vigilant throughout the day,
must needs tire of the task as night draws on.
Fare thee well, wakeful Dudley; if thine eyes
should open on the morrow, be thankful that the
maidens have not stitched thy garments to the
palisadoes!"
OF WISH-TON-WISH.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the young man to detain her, the light-footed girl eluded his grasp, and, bearing her burden towards the dairy, she tripped along the path with a half-averted face, in which triumph and repentance were already struggling for the possession.

In the mean time, the leader of the messengers and his military subordinate had a long and interesting conference. When it was ended, the former took his way to the apartment in which Mark Heathcote was wont to pass those portions of his time that were not occupied in his secret strivings for the faith, or in exercise without, while superintending the laborers in the vine. With some little circumlocution, which was intended to mask his real motives, the agent of the King announced his intention to take his final departure that very night.

"I felt it a duty, as one who has gained experience in arms by some practice in the wars of Europe," he said, "to tarry in thy dwelling while danger threatened from the lurking savage. It would ill become soldiers to speak of their intentions; but had the alarm in truth sounded, thou wilt give faith, when I say that the block-house would not have been lightly yielded! I shall make report to them that sent me, that in Captain Mark Heathcote, Charles hath a loyal subject, and the Constitution a firm supporter. The rumors, of a seemingly mistaken description, which have led us hither, shall be contradicted; and doubtless it will be found, that some accident hath given rise to the deception. Should there be occasion to dwell on the particulars of the late alarm, I trust the readiness of my followers to do good service to one of the King's subjects will not be overlooked."

"It is the striving of an humble spirit to speak nought evil of its fellows, and to conceal no good,"
returned the reserved Puritan. "If thou hast found thy abode in my dwelling to thy liking, thou art welcome; and if duty or pleasure calleth thee to quit it, peace go with thee. It will be useful to unite with us in asking that thy passage through the wilderness may be unharmed; that he who watcheth over the meanest of his creatures should take thee in his especial keeping, and that the savage heathen—"

"Dost think the savage out of his villages?" demanded the messenger, with an indecorous rapidity, that cut short the enumeration of the particular blessings and dangers, that his host thought it meet to include in the leave-taking prayer.

"Thou surely hast not tarried with us to aid in the defence, and yet feel it doubtful that thy services might be useful!" observed Mark Heathcote, drily.

"I would the Prince of Darkness had thee and all the other diabolicals of these woods in his own good gripe!" muttered the messenger between his teeth; and then, as if guided by a spirit that could not long be quelled, he assumed something more of his unbridled and natural air, boldly declining to join in the prayer on the plea of haste, and the necessity of his looking in person to the movements of his followers. "But this need not prevent thee, worthy Captain, from pouring out an asking in our behalf, while we are in the saddle," he concluded; "for ourselves, there remaineth much of thy previously-bestowed pious aliment to be digested; though we doubt not, that should thy voice be raised in our behalf, while journeying along the first few leagues of the forest, the tread of the hacks would not be heavier, and, it is certainty, that we ourselves should be none the worse for the favor."

Then casting a glance of ill-concealed levity at one of his followers, who had come to say that
their steeds awaited, he made the parting salutation with an air, in which the respect that one like the Puritan could scarce fail to excite, struggled with his habitual contempt for things of a serious character.

The family of Mark Heathcote, the lowest dependant included, saw these strangers depart with great inward satisfaction. Even the maidens, in whom nature, in moments weaker than common, had awakened some of the lighter facettes, were gladly rid of gallants, who could not soothe their ears with theunction of flattery, without frequently giving great offence to their severe principles, by light and irreverent allusions to things on which they themselves were accustomed to think with fitting awe. Eben Dudley could scarcely conceal the chuckle with which he saw the party bury themselves in the forest, though neither he, nor any of the more instructed in such matters, believed they incurred serious risk from their sudden enterprise.

The opinions of the scouts proved to be founded on accurate premises. That and many a subsequent night passed without alarm. The season continued to advance, and the laborers pursued their toil to its close, without another appeal to their courage, or any additional reasons for vigilance. Whittal Ring followed his colts with impunity, among the recesses of the neighboring forests; and the herds of the family went and came, as long as the weather would permit them to range the woods, in regularity and peace. The period of the alarm, and the visit of the agents of the Crown, came to be food for tradition; and during the succeeding winter, the former often furnished motive of merriment around the blazing fires that were so necessary to the country and the season.

Still there existed in the family a living memorial of the unusual incidents of that night. The captive
remained, long after the events which had placed him in the power of the Heathcotes were beginning to be forgotten.

A desire to quicken the seeds of spiritual regeneration, which, however dormant they might be, old Mark Heathcote believed to exist in the whole family of man, and consequently in the young heathen as well as in others, had become a sort of ruling passion in the Puritan. The fashions and mode of thinking of the times had a strong leaning towards superstition; and it was far from difficult for a man of his ascetic habits and exaggerated doctrines, to believe that a special interposition had cast the boy into his hands, for some hidden but mighty purpose, that time in the good season would not fail to reveal.

Notwithstanding the strong coloring of fanaticism which tinged the characters of the religionists of those days, they were rarely wanting in worldly discretion. The agents they saw fit to employ, in order to aid the more hidden purposes of Providence, were in common useful and rational. Thus, while Mark never forgot to summon the lad from his prison at the hour of prayer, or to include an especial asking in behalf of the ignorant heathen in general and of this chosen youth in particular, he hesitated to believe that a manifest miracle would be exerted in his favor. That no blame might attach to the portion of duty that was confided to human means, he had recourse to the discreet agency of kindness and unremitting care. But all attempts to lure the lad into the habits of a civilized man, were completely unsuccessful. As the severity of the weather increased, the compassionate and thoughtful Ruth endeavored to induce him to adopt the garments that were found so necessary to the comfort of men who were greatly his superiors in hardihood and in strength. Clothes, decorated in a fashion
suited to the taste of an Indian, were considerately provided, and entreaties and threats were both freely used, with a view to make the captive wear them. On one occasion, he was even forcibly clad by Eben Dudley; and being brought, in the unwonted guise, into the presence of old Mark, the latter offered up an especial petition that the youth might be made to feel the merits of this concession to the principles of a chastened and instructed man. But within an hour, the stout woodsman, who had been made on the occasion so active an instrument of civilization, announced to the admiring Faith that the experiment was unsuccessful; or, as Eben somewhat irreverently described the extraordinary effort of the Puritan, "the heathen hath already resumed his skin leggings and painted waist-cloth, notwithstanding the captain has strove to pin better garments on his back, by virtue of a prayer that might have clothed the nakedness of a whole tribe." In short, the result proved, in the case of this lad, as similar experiments have since proved in so many other instances, the difficulty of tempting one trained in the freedom and ease of a savage, to consent to admit of the restraints of a state of being that is commonly thought to be so much superior. In every instance in which the youthful captive had liberty of choice, he disdainfully rejected the customs of the whites; adhering with a singular, and almost heroic pertinacity to the usages of his people and his condition.

The boy was not kept in his bondage without extraordinary care. Once, when trusted in the fields, he had openly attempted to escape; nor was the possession of his person recovered without putting the speed of Eben Dudley and Reuben Ring to a more severe trial, as was confessed by the athletic young borderers themselves, than any they had hitherto undergone. From that moment, he was
never permitted to pass the palisadoes. When duty called the laborers afield, the captive was invariably secured in his prison, where, as some compensation for his confinement, he was supposed to enjoy the benefit of long and familiar communication with Mark Heathcote, who had the habit of passing many hours of each day, and, not unfrequently, long portions of the night, too, within the retirement of the block-house. During the time only when the gates were closed, or when some one of strength and activity sufficient to control his movements was present, was the lad permitted to stroll, at will, among the buildings of the border fortress. This liberty he never failed to exercise, and often in a manner that overcame the affectionate Ruth with a painful excess of sensibility.

Instead of joining in the play of the other children, the young captive would stand aloof, and regard their sports with a vacant eye, or, drawing near to the palisadoes, he often passed hours in gazing wistfully at those endless forests in which he first drew breath, and which probably contained all that was most prized in the estimation of his simple judgment. Ruth, touched to the heart by this silent but expressive exhibition of suffering, endeavored in vain to win his confidence, with a view of enticing him into employments that might serve to relieve his care. The resolute but still quiet boy would not be lured into a forgetfulness of his origin. He appeared to comprehend the kind intentions of his gentle mistress, and frequently he even suffered himself to be led by the mother into the centre of her own joyous and merry offspring; but it was only to look upon their amusements with his former cold air, and to return, at the first opportunity, to his beloved site at the pickets. Still there were singular and even mysterious evidences of a growing consciousness of the nature of the discourse of which
he was occasionally an auditor, that would have betrayed greater familiarity with the language and opinions of the inhabitants of the valley, than his known origin and his absolute withdrawal from communication could give reason to expect. This important and inexplicable fact was proved by the frequent and meaning glances of his dark eye, when aught was uttered in his hearing that affected, ever so remotely, his own condition; and, once or twice, by the haughty gleamings of ferocity that escaped him, when Eben Dudley was heard to vaunt the prowess of the white men in their encounters with the original owners of the country. The Puritan did not fail to note these symptoms of a budding intelligence, as the pledges of a fruit that would more than reward his pious toil; and they served to furnish a great relief to certain occasional repugnance, which all his zeal could not entirely subdue, at being the instrument of causing so much suffering to one who, after all, had inflicted no positive wrong on himself.

At the period of which we are writing, the climate of these States differed materially from that which is now known to their inhabitants. A winter in the Province of Connecticut was attended by many successive falls of snow, until the earth was entirely covered with firmly compressed masses of the frozen element. Occasional thaws and passing storms of rain, that were driven away by a return of the clear and cutting cold of the north-western gales, were wont at times to lay a covering on the ground, that was congealed to the consistency of ice, until men, and not unfrequently beasts, and sometimes sleighs, were seen moving on its surface, as on the bed of a frozen lake. During the extremity of a season like this, the hardy borderers, who could not toil in their customary pursuits, were wont to range the forest in quest of game, which, driven for food to known
resorting places in the woods, then fell most easily a prey to the intelligence and skill of such men as Eben Dudley and Reuben Ring.

The youths never left the dwellings on these hunts, without exciting the most touching interest in their movements, on the part of the Indian boy. On all such occasions, he would linger at the loops of his prison throughout the day, listening intently to the reports of the distant muskets, as they resounded in the forest; and the only time, during a captivity of so many months, that he was ever seen to smile, was when he examined the grim look and muscular claws of a dead panther, that had fallen beneath the aim of Dudley, in one of these excursions to the mountains. The compassion of all the borderers was powerfully awakened in behalf of the patient and dignified young sufferer, and gladly would they have given their captive the pleasure of joining in the chase, had not the task been one that was far from easy of accomplishment. The former of the woodsmen just mentioned had even volunteered to lead him like a hound in a leash; but this was a species of degradation against which it was certain that a young Indian, ambitious of the character and jealous of the dignity of a warrior, would have openly rebelled.

The quick interest of the observant Ruth had, as it has been seen, early detected a growing intelligence in the boy. The means by which one, who never mingled in the employments, and who rarely seemed to listen to the dialogues of the family, could come to comprehend the meaning of a language that is found sufficiently difficult for a scholar, were however as much of a mystery to her, as to all around her. Still, by the aid of that instinctive tact which so often enlightens the mind of woman; was she certain of the fact. Profiting by this knowledge, she assumed the task of endeavoring to obtain
an honorary pledge from her protegé, that, if permitted to join the hunters, he would return to the valley at the end of the day. But though the language of the woman was gentle as her own kind nature, and her entreaties that he would give some evidence of having comprehended her meaning were zealous and oft repeated, not the smallest symptom of intelligence, on this occasion, could be extracted from her pupil. Disappointed, and not without sorrow, Ruth had abandoned the compassionate design in despair, when, on a sudden, the old Puritan, who had been a silent spectator of her fruitless efforts, announced his faith in the integrity of the lad, and his intention to permit him to make one of the very next party, that should leave the habitations.

The cause of this sudden change in the hitherto stern watchfulness of Mark Heathcote was, like so many other of his impulses, a secret in his own bosom. It has just been said, that during the time Ruth was engaged in her kind and fruitless experiment to extract some evidence of intelligence from the boy, the Puritan was a close and interested observer of her efforts. He appeared to sympathize in her disappointment, but the weal of those unconverted tribes who were to be led from the darkness of their ways by the instrumentality of this youth, was far too important to admit the thought of rashly losing the vantage-ground he had gained, in the gradually-expanding intellect of the boy, by running the hazard of an escape. To all appearance, the intention of permitting him to quit the defences had therefore been entirely abandoned, when old Mark so suddenly announced a change of resolution. The conjectures on the causes of this unlooked-for determination were exceedingly various. Some believed that the Puritan had been favored with a mysterious intimation of the pleasure of Providence,
in the matter; and others thought that, beginning
to despair of success in his undertaking, he was
willing to seek for a more visible manifestation of its
purposes, by hazarding the experiment of trusting
the boy to the direction of his own impulses. All
appeared to be of opinion that if the lad returned,
the circumstance might be set down to the inter-
vention of a miracle. Still, with his resolution once
taken, the purpose of Mark Heathcote remained
unchanged. He announced this unexpected inten-
tion, after one of his long and solitary visits to the
block-house, where it is possible he had held a pow-
erful spiritual strife on the occasion; and, as the
weather was exceedingly favorable for such an ob-
dject, he commanded his dependants to prepare to
make the sortie on the following morning.

A sudden and an uncontrollable gleam of delight
flashed on the dark features of the captive, when
Ruth was about to place in his hands the bow of her
own son, and, by signs and words, she gave him to
understand that he was to be permitted to use it in
the free air of the forest. But the exhibition of plea-
sure disappeared as quickly as it had been betrayed.
When the lad received the weapons, it was rather
with the manner of a hunter accustomed to their
use, than of one to whose hands they had so long
been strangers. As he left the gates of Wish-Ton-
Wish, the handmaidens of Ruth clustered about
him, in wondering interest; for it was strange to see
a youth so long guarded with jealous care, again
free and unwatched. Notwithstanding their ordi-
nary dependence on the secret lights and great wis-
dom of the Puritan, there was a very general im-
pression that the lad, around whose presence there
was so much that was mysterious and of interest to
their own security, was now to be gazed upon for
the last time. The boy himself was unmoved to the
last. Still he paused, with his foot on the threshold
of the dwelling, and appeared to regard Ruth and her young offspring with momentary concern. Then, assuming the calm air of an Indian warrior, he suffered his eye to grow cold and vacant, following with a nimble step the hunters who were already passing without the palisadoes.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Well, I am your theme: you have the start of me: I am dejected; I am not able to answer the Welsh flannel; ignorance itself is a plummet over me: use me as you will."

Merry Wives of Windsor.

Poets, aided by the general longing of human nature, have given a reputation to the Spring, that it rarely merits. Though this imaginative class of writers have said so much of itspalmy airs and odoriferous gales, we find it nearly everywhere the most reluctant, churlish, and fickle of the four seasons. It is the youth of the year, and, like that probationary period of life, most fitted to afford the promise of better things. There is a constant struggle between reality and hope throughout the whole of this slow-moving and treacherous period, which has an unavoidable tendency to deceive. All that is said of its grateful productions is fallacious, for the earth is as little likely to yield a generous tribute without the quickening influence of the summer heats, as man is wont to bring forth commendable fruits without the agency of a higher moral power than any he possesses in virtue of his innate propensities. On the other hand, the fall of the year possesses a sweetness, a repose, and a consistency, which may be justly likened to the decline of a well-spent life. It is, in all countries and in every

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climate, the period when physical and moral causes unite to furnish the richest sources of enjoyment. If the Spring is the time of hope, Autumn is the season of fruition. There is just enough of change to give zest to the current of existence, while there is too little of vissitude to be pregnant of disappointment. Succeeding to the nakedness of Winter, the Spring is grateful by comparison; while the glories of Autumn are enjoyed, after the genial powers of Summer have been lavishly expended.

In obedience to this great law of the earth, let poets sing and fancy as they may, the Spring and Autumn of America partake largely of the universally distinctive characters of the rival seasons. What Nature has done on this Continent, has not been done niggardly; and, while we may boast of a decline of the year that certainly rivals, and, with few exceptions, eclipses the glories of most of the climates of the old world, the opening months rarely fail of equalizing the gifts of Providence, by a very decided exhibition of all the disagreeable qualities for which they are remarkable.

More than half a year had elapsed, between the time when the Indian boy had been found lurking in the valley of the Heathcotes, and that day when he was first permitted to go into the forest, lettered by no other restraint than the moral tie which the owner of the valley either knew, or fancied, would not fail to cause him to return to a bondage he had found so irksome. It was April; but it was April as the month was known a century ago in Connecticut, and as it is even now so often found to disappoint all expectations of that capricious season of the year. The weather had returned suddenly and violently to the rigor of winter. A thaw had been succeeded by a storm of snow and sleet, and the interlude of the spring-time of blossoms had terminated with a biting gale from the north-west, which
had apparently placed a permanent seal on the lingering presence of a second February.

On the morning that Content led his followers into the forest, they issued from the postern clad in coats of skin. Their lower limbs were protected by the coarse leggings which they had worn in so many previous hunts, during the past winter, if that might be called past which had returned, weakened but little of its keenness, and bearing all the outward marks of January. When last seen, Eben Dudley, the heaviest of the band, was moving firmly on the crust of the snow, with a step as sure as if he had trodden on the frozen earth itself. More than one of the maidens declared, that though they had endeavored to trace the footsteps of the hunters from the palissades, it would have exceeded even the sagacity of an Indian eye to follow their trail along the icy path they travelled.

Hour after hour passed, without bringing tidings from the chase. The reports of fire-arms had indeed been occasionally heard, ringing among the arches of the woods; and broken echoes were, for some hours, rolling from one recess of the hills to another. But even these signs of the presence of the hunters gradually receded with the advance of the day; and, long ere the sun had gained the meridian, and its warmth, at that advanced season not without power, was shed into the valley, the whole range of the adjoining forest lay in its ordinary dull and solemn silence.

The incident of the hunt, apart from the absence of the Indian boy, was one of too common occurrence to give birth to any particular motives of excitement. Ruth quietly busied herself among her women, and when the recollection of those who were scouring the neighboring forest came at all to her mind, it was coupled with the care with which she was providing to administer to their comforts,
after the fatigue of a day of extraordinary personal efforts. This was a duty never lightly performed. Her situation was one eminently fitted to foster the best affections of woman, since it admitted of few temptations to yield to other than the most natural feeling; she was, in consequence, known on all occasions to exercise them with the devotedness of her sex.

"Thy father and his companions will look on our care with pleasure," said the thoughtful matron to her youthful image, as she directed a more than usual provision of her larder to be got in readiness for the hunters; "home is ever sweetest after toil and exposure."

"I doubt if Mark be not ready to faint with so weary a march," said the child already introduced by the name of Martha; "he is young to go into the woods, with scouters tall as great Dudley."

"And the heathen," added the little Ruth, "he is young too as Mark, though more used to the toil. It may be, mother, that he will never come to us more!"

"That would grieve our venerable parent; for thou knowest, Ruth, that he hath hopes of working on the mind of the boy, until his savage nature shall yield to the secret power. But the sun is falling behind the hill, and the evening is coming in cool as winter; go to the postern, and look out upon the fields. I would know if there be any signs of thy father and his party."

Though Ruth gave this mandate to her daughter, she did not the less neglect to exercise her own faculties in the same grateful office. While the children went, as they were ordered, to the outer gate, the matron herself ascended to the lower apartment of the block, and, from its different loops, she took a long and anxious survey of the limited prospect. The shadows of the trees, that lined the
western side of the view, were already thrown far across the broad sheet of frozen snow, and the sudden chill which succeeded the disappearance of the sun announced the rapid approach of a night that promised to support the severe character of the past day. A freezing wind, which had brought with it the cold airs of the great lakes, and which had even triumphed over the more natural influence of an April sun, had however fallen, leaving a temperature not unlike that which dwells in the milder seasons of the year among the glaciers of the upper Alps.

Ruth was too long accustomed to such forest scenes, and to such a "lingering of winter in the lap of May," to feel, on their account, any additional uneasiness. But the hour had now arrived when she had reason to look for the return of the hunters. With the expectation of seeing their forms issuing from the forest, came the anxiety which is an unavoidable attendant of disappointment. The shadows continued to deepen in the valley, until the gloom thickened to the darkness of night, without bringing any tidings from those without.

When a delay, which was unusual in the members of a family circumstanced like that of the Wish-Ton-Wish, came to be coupled with various little observations that had been made during the day, it was thought that reasons for alarm were beginning, at each instant, to grow more plausible. Reports of fire-arms had been heard, at an early hour, from opposite points in the hills, and in a manner too distinct to be mistaken for echoes; a certain proof that the different members of the hunt had separated in the forest. Under such circumstances, it was not difficult for the imagination of a wife and a mother, of a sister, or of her who secretly confessed a still more tender interest in some one of the hunters, to conjure to the imagina-
tion the numberless dangers to which those who were engaged in these expeditions were known to be exposed.

"I doubt that the chase hath drawn them further from the valley than is fitting for the hour and the season," observed Ruth to her maidens, who had gathered in a group about her, at a point that overlooked as much of the cleared land around the buildings, as the darkness would allow; "the gravest man becomes thoughtless as the unreflecting child when led by the eagerness of the pursuit. It is the duty of older heads to think for those that want experience—but into what indiscreet complaints are my fears leading! It may be that my husband is even now striving to collect his party, in order to return. Hast any heard his conch sounding the recall?"

"The woods are still as the day the first echo of the axe was heard among the trees," returned Faith. "I did hear that which sounded like a strain of brawling Dudley's songs, but it proved to be no more than the lowing of one of his own oxen. Perchance the animal miseth some of its master's care."

"Whittal Ring hath looked to the beasts, and it may not be that he hath neglected to feed, among others, the creatures of Dudley. Thy mind is given to levity, Faith, in the matter of this young man. It is not seemly that one of thy years and sex should manifest so great displeasure at the name of a youth, who is of an honest nature, and of honest habits, too, though he may appear ungainly to the eye, and have so little favor with one of thy disposition."

"I did not fashion the man," said Faith, biting her lip, and tossing her head; "nor is it aught to me whether he be gainly or not. As to my favor, when he asks it, the man shall not wait long to know the answer. But is not you figure the fellow himself, Madam Heathcote?—here, coming in from the
eastern hill, along the orchard path. The form I mean is just here; you may see it, at this moment, turning by the bend in the brook.”

“There is one of a certainty, and it should be one of our hunting party, too; and yet he doth not seem to be of a size or of a gait like that of Eben Dudley. Thou shouldst have a knowledge of thy kindred, girl; to me it seemeth thy brother.”

“Truly, it may be Reuben Ring; still it hath much of the swagger of the other, though their stature be nearly equal—the manner of carrying the musket is much the same with all the borderers too—one cannot easily tell the form of man from a stump by this light—and—yet do I think it will prove to be the loitering Dudley.”

“Loiterer or not, he is the first to return from this long and weary chase,” said Ruth, breathing heavily, like one who regretted that the truth were so. “Go thou to the postern, and admit him, girl. I ordered bolts to be drawn, for I like not to leave a fortress defended by a female garrison, at this hour, with open gates. I will hie to the dwelling, and see to the comforts of those who are a-hungered, since it will not be long ere we shall have more of them at hand.”

Faith complied, with affected indifference and sufficient delay. By the time she had reached the place of admission, a form was seen ascending the acclivity, and taking the direction which led to the same spot. In the next minute, a rude effort to enter announced an arrival without.

“Gently, Master Dudley,” said the wilful girl, who held the bolt with one hand, though she maliciously delayed to remove it. “We know thou art powerful of arm, and yet the palisadoes will scarcely fall at thy touch. Here are no Sampsons to pull down the pillars on our heads. Perhaps we
may not be disposed to give entrance to them who stay abroad out of all season."

"Open the postern, girl," said Eben Dudley; "after which, if thou hast aught to say, we shall be better conversed for discourse."

"It may be that thy conversation is most agreeable when heard from without. Render an account of thy backslidings, throughout this day, penitent Dudley, that I may take pity on thy weariness. But lest hunger should have overcome thy memory, I may serve to help thee to the particulars. The first of thy offences was to consume more than thy portion of the cold meats; the second was to suffer Reuben Ring to kill the deer, and for thee to claim it; and a third was the trick thou hast of listening so much to thine own voice, that even the beasts fled thee, from dislike of thy noise."

"Thou triflest unseasonably, Faith; I would speak with the Captain, without delay."

"It may be that he is better employed than to desire such company. Thou art not the only strange animal by many who hath roared at the gate of Wish-Ton-Wish."

"Have any come within the day, Faith?" demanded the borderer, with the interest such an event would be likely to create in the mind of one who habitually lived in so great retirement.

"What sayest thou to a second visit from the gentle-spoken stranger? he who favored us with so much gay discourse, the by-gone fall of the year. That would be a guest fit to receive! I warrant me his knock would not be heard a second time."

"The gallant had better beware the moon!" exclaimed Dudley, striking the but of his musket against the ice with so much force as to cause his companion to start, in alarm. "What fool's errand hath again brought him to prick his nag so deep into the forest?"
"Nay, thy wit is ever like the unbroken colt, a headstrong run-away. I said not, in full meaning, that the man had come; I only invited thee to give an opinion in the event that he should arrive unexpectedly, though I am far from certain that any here ever expect to see his face again."

"This is foolish prating," returned the youth, provoked at the exhibition of jealousy into which he had been incautiously betrayed. "I tell thee to withdraw the bolt, for I have great need to speak with the Captain, or with his son."

"Thou mayst open thy mind to the first, if he will listen to what thou hast to say," returned the girl, removing the impediment to his entrance; "but thou wilt sooner get the ear of the other by remaining at the gate, since he has not yet come in from the forest."

Dudley recoiled a pace, and repeated her words in the tone of one who admitted a feeling of alarm to mingle with his surprise.

"Not in from the forest!" he said; "surely there are none abroad, now that I am home!"

"Why dost say it? I have put my jibes upon thee more in payment of ancient transgressions than for any present offence. So far from being last, thou art the first of the hunters we have yet seen. Go in to the Madam without delay, and tell her of the danger, if any there be, that we take speedy measures for our safety."

"That would do little good, truly," muttered the borderer, like one musing. "Stay thou here, and watch the postern, Faith; I will back to the woods; for a timely word, or a signal blown from my conch, might quicken their footsteps."

What madness hath beset thee, Dudley! Thou wouldst not go into the forest again, at this hour and alone, if there be reason for fear! Come farther within the gate, man, that I may draw the bolt;
the Madam will wonder that we tarry here so long."

"Ha!—I hear feet moving in the meadow; I know it by the creaking of the snow; the others are not lagging."

Notwithstanding the apparent certainty of the young man, instead of going forth to meet his friends, he withdrew a step, and with his own hand drew the bolt that Faith had just desired might be fastened; taking care at the same time to let fall a swinging bar of wood, which gave additional security to the fastenings of the postern. His apprehensions, if any such had induced this caution, were however unnecessary; for ere he had time to make, or even to reflect on any further movement, admission was demanded in the well-known voice of the son of him who owned the valley. The bustle of the arrival, for with Content entered a group of companions loaded with venison, put an end to the dialogue. Faith seized the opportunity to glide away in the obscurity, in order to announce to her mistress that the hunters had returned—an office that she performed without entering at all into the particulars of her own interview with Eben Dudley.

It is needless to dwell on the satisfaction with which Ruth received her husband and son, after the uneasiness she had just suffered. Though the severe manners of the Province admitted of no violent exhibition of passing emotions, secret joy was reigning in the mild eyes and glowing about the flushed cheeks of the discreet matron, while she personally officiated in the offices of the evening meal.

The party had returned teeming with no extraordinary incidents; nor did they appear to be disturbed with any of that seriousness of air which had so unequivocally characterized the deportment of him who had preceded them. On the contrary,
each had his quiet tale to relate, now perhaps at
the expense of a luckless companion, and sometimes
in order that no part of his own individual skill, as
a hunter, should be unknown. The delay was ac-
counted for, as similar delays are commonly ex-
plained, by distance and the temptations of an un-
usually successful chase. As the appetites of those
who had passed the day in the exciting toil were
keen and the viands tempting, the first half-hour
passed quickly, as all such half-hours are wont to
pass, in garrulous recitals of personal exploits, and
of the hairbreadth escapes of deer, which, had
fortune not been fickle, should have now been
present as trophies of the skill of the hand by
which they fell. It was only after personal vanity
was sufficiently appeased, and when the hunger even
of a border-man could achieve no more, that the
hunters began to look about them with a diminished
excitement, and to discuss the events of the day
with a fitting calmness, and with a discretion more
suited to their ordinary self-command.

"We lost the sound of thy conch, wandering
Dudley, as we fell into the deep hollow of the
mountain," said Content, in a pause of the discourse;
"since which time, neither eye nor ear of any has
had trace of thy movements, until we met thee at
the postern, stationed like a looker-out on his watch."

The individual addressed had mingled in none
of the gaiety of the hour. While others fed freely,
or joined in the quiet joke, which could escape the
lips of even men chastened as his companions, Eben,
Dudley had tasted sparingly of the viands. Nor had
the muscles of his hard countenance once relaxed
in a smile. A gravity and silence so extraordinary,
in one so little accustomed to exhibit either quality,
did not fail to attract attention. It was universally
ascribed to the circumstance that he had returned
empty-handed from the hunt; and now that one
having authority had seen fit to give such a direc-
tion to the discourse, the imaginary delinquent was
not permitted to escape unscathed.

"The butcher had little to do with this day's
killing," said one of the young men; "as a punish-
ment for his absence from the slaughter, he should
be made to go on the hill and bring in the two bucks
he will find hanging from a maple sapling near to
the drinking spring. Our meat should pass through
his hands in some fashion or other, else will it lack
savor."

"Ever since the death of the straggling wether,
the trade of Eben hath been at a stand," added
another; "the down-hearted youth seems like one
ready to give up his calling to the first stranger
that shall ask it."

"Creatures which run at large prove better
mutton than the stalled wether," continued a third;
"and thereby custom was getting low before this
hunt. Beyond a doubt, he has a full supply for all
who shall be likely to seek venison in his stall."

Ruth observed that the countenance of her hus-
band grew grave, at these allusions to an event he
had always seemed to wish forgotten; and she inter-
posed with a view to lead the minds of those who
listened, back to matter more fitting to be discussed.

"How is this?" she exclaimed in haste; "hath
the stout Dudley lost any of his craft? I have never
counted with greater certainty on the riches of the
table, than when he hath been sent among the hills
for the fat deer, or the tender turkey. It would
much grieve me to learn that he beginneth to lack
the hunter's skill."

"The man is getting melancholy with over-feed-
ing," muttered the wilful tones of one busied among
the vessels, in a distant part of the room. "He
taketh his exercise alone, in order that none need
discover the failing. I think he be much disposed to go over sea, in order to become a trooper."

Until now, the subject of these mirthful attacks had listened like one too confident of his established reputation to feel concern; but at the sound of the last speaker's voice, he grasped the bushy covering of one entire cheek in his hand, and turning a reproachful and irritated glance at the already half-repentant eye of Faith Ring, all his natural spirit returned.

"It may be that my skill hath left me," he said, "and that I love to be alone, rather than to be troubled with the company of some that might readily be named, no reference being had to such gallants as ride up and down the colony, putting evil opinions into the thoughts of honest men's daughters; but why is Eben Dudley to bear all the small shot of your humors, when there is another who, it might seem, hath strayed even further from your trail than he?"

Eye sought eye, and each youth by hasty glances endeavored to read the countenances of all the rest in company, in order to learn who the absentee might be. The young borderers shook their heads, as the features of every well-known face were recognised, and a general exclamation of denial was about to break from their lips, when Ruth exclaimed—

"Truly, the Indian is wanting!"

So constant was the apprehension of danger from the savages, in the breasts of those who dwelt on that exposed frontier, that every man arose at the words, by a sudden and common impulse, and each individual gazed about him in a surprise that was a little akin to dismay.

"The boy was with us when we quitted the forest," said Content, after a moment of death-like stillness. "I spoke to him in commendation of his..."
activity, and of the knowledge he had shown in beating up the secret places of the deer; though there is little reason to think my words were understood."

"And were it not sinful to take such solemn evidence in behalf of so light a matter, I could be qualified on the Book itself, that he was at my elbow as we entered the orchard," added Reuben Ring, a man renowned in that little community for the accuracy of his vision.

"And I will make oath or declaration of any sort, lawful or conscientious, that he came not within the postern when it was opened by my own hand," returned Eben Dudley. "I told off the number of the party as you passed, and right sure am I that no red skin entered."

"Canst thou tell us aught of the lad?" demanded Ruth, quick to take the alarm on a subject that had so long exercised her care, and given food to her imagination.

"Nothing. With me he hath not been since the turn of the day. I have not seen the face of living man from that moment, unless in truth one of mysterious character, whom I met in the forest, may be so called."

The manner in which the woodsman spoke was too serious and too natural, not to give birth in his auditors to some of his own gravity. Perhaps the appearance of the Puritan, at that moment, aided in quieting the levity that had been uppermost in the minds of the young men; for, it is certain, that when he entered, a deeper and a general curiosity came over the countenances of all present. Content waited a moment in respectful silence, till his father had moved slowly through the circle, and then he prepared himself to look further into an affair that began to assume the appearance of matter worthy of investigation."
CHAPTER IX.

"Last night of all,
When you same star, that's westward from the pole,
Had made its course to illumine that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus, and myself,
The bell then beating one——"

"Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!"

Hamlet.

It is our duty, as faithful historians of the events recorded in this homely legend, to conceal no circumstance which may throw the necessary degree of light on its incidents, nor any opinion that may serve for the better instruction of the reader in the characters of its actors. In order that this obligation may be discharged with sufficient clearness and precision, it has now become necessary to make a short digression from the immediate action of the tale.

Enough has been already shown, to prove that the Heathcotes lived at a time, and in a country, where very quaint and peculiar religious dogmas had the ascendancy. At a period when visible manifestations of the goodness of Providence, not only in spiritual but in temporal gifts, were confidently expected and openly proclaimed, it is not at all surprising that more evil agencies should be thought to exercise their power in a manner that is somewhat opposed to the experience of our own age. As we have no wish, however, to make these pages the medium of a theological or metaphysical controversy, we shall deal tenderly with certain important events, that most of the writers, who were cotemporary with the facts, assert took place in the Colonies of New-England, at and about the period of which we are now writing. It is sufficiently known that the
art of witchcraft, and one even still more diabolical and direct in its origin, were then believed to flourish, in that quarter of the world, to a degree that was probably in a very just proportion to the neglect with which most of the other arts of life were treated.

There is so much grave and respectable authority, to prove the existence of these evil influences, that it requires a pen hardier than any we wield, to attack them without a suitable motive. "Flashy people," says the learned and pious Cotton Mather, Doctor of Divinity and Fellow of the Royal Society, "may burlesque these things; but when hundreds of the most sober people, in a country where they have as much mother wit, certainly, as the rest of mankind, know them to be true, nothing but the absurd and sordid spirit of Sadducism can question them." Against this grave and credited authority, we pretend to raise no question of scepticism. We submit to the testimony of such a writer as conclusive; though as credulity is sometimes found to be bounded by geographical limits, and to possess something of a national character, it may be prudent to refer certain readers, who dwell in the other hemisphere, to the Common Law of England, on this interesting subject, as it is ingeniously expounded by Keeble and approved by the twelve judges of that highly civilized and enlightened island. With this brief reference to so grave authorities, in support of what we have now to offer, we shall return to the matter of the narrative, fully trusting that its incidents will throw some additional light on the subject of so deep and so general concern.

Content waited respectfully until his father had taken his seat, and then perceiving that the venerable Puritan had no immediate intention of moving personally in the affair, he commenced the examination of his dependant as follows; opening the mat-
ter with a seriousness that was abundantly warrant-
ed by the gravity of the subject itself.

"Thou hast spoken of one met in the forest," he
said; "proceed with the purport of that interview,
and tell us of what manner of man it was."

Thus directly interrogated, Eben Dudley disposed
himself to give a full and satisfactory answer. First
casting a glance around, so as to embrace every
curious and eager countenance, and letting his look
rest a little longer than common on a half-interested,
half-incredulous, and a somewhat ironical dark eye,
that was riveted on his own from a distant corner
of the room, he commenced his statement as fol-
lows:

"It is known to you all," said the borderer, "that
when we had gained the mountain-top, there was a
division of our numbers, in such a fashion that each
hunter should sweep his own range of the forest, in
order that neither moose, deer, nor bear, might have
reasonable chance of escape. Being of large frame,
and it may be of swifter foot than common, the
young Captain saw fit to command Reuben Ring to
flank one end of the line, and a man, who is nothing
short of him in either speed, or strength, to do the
same duty on the other. There was nothing partic-
ularly worthy of mention that took place on the
flank I held, for the first two hours; unless indeed
the fact, that three several times did I fall upon a
maze of well-beaten deer-tracks, that as often led
to nothing——"

"These are signs common to the woods, and they
are no more than so many proofs that the animal
has its sports, like any other playful creature, when
not pressed by hunger or by danger," quietly ob-
served Content.

"I pretend not to take those deceitful tracks
much into the account," resumed Dudley; "but
shortly after losing the sound of the conchs, I
roused a noble buck from his lair beneath a thicket of hemlocks, and having the game in view, the chase led me wide-off towards the wilderness, it may have been the distance of two leagues."

"And in all that time, had you no fitting moment to strike the beast?"

"None whatever; nor, if opportunity had been given, am I bold to say that hand of mine would have been hardy enough to aim at its life."

"Was there aught in the deer, that a hunter should seek to spare it?"

"There was that in the deer, that might bring a Christian man to much serious reflection."

"Deal more openly with the nature and appearance of the animal," said Content, a little less tranquil than usual; while the youths and maidens placed themselves in attitudes still more strongly denoting attention.

Dudley pondered an instant, and then he commenced a less equivocal enumeration of what he conceived to be the marvels of his tale.

"Firstly," he said, "there was no trail, neither to nor from the spot where the creature had made its lair; secondly, when roused, it took not the alarm, but leaped sportingly ahead, taking sufficient care to be beyond the range of musket, without ever becoming hid from the eye; and lastly its manner of disappearance was as worthy of mention as any other of its movements."

"And in what manner didst thou lose the creature?"

"I had gotten it upon the crest of a hillock, where true eye and steady hand might make sure of a buck of much smaller size, when—didst hear aught that might be accounted wonderful, at a season of the year when the snows are still lying on the earth?"

The auditors regarded one another curiously, each
endeavoring to recall some unwonted sound which might sustain a narrative that was fast obtaining the seducing interest of the marvellous.

"Wast sure, Charity, that the howl we heard from the forest was the yell of the beaten hound?" demanded a handmaiden of Ruth, of a blue-eyed companion, who seemed equally well disposed to contribute her share of evidence in support of any exciting legend.

"It might have been other," was the answer; "though the hunters do speak of their having beaten the pup for restiveness."

"There was a tumult among the echoes, that sounded like the noises which follow the uproar of a falling tree," said Ruth, thoughtfully. "I remember to have asked if it might not be that some fierce beast had caused a general discharge of the musketry, but my father was of opinion that death had undermined some heavy oak."

"At what hour might this have happened?"

"It was past the turn of the day; for it was at the moment I bethought me of the hunger of those who had toiled since light, in the hills."

"That then was the sound I mean. It came not from falling tree, but was uttered in the air, far above all forests. Had it been heard by one better skilled in the secrets of nature——"

"He would say it thundered;" interrupted Faith Ring, who, unlike most of the other listeners, manifested little of the quality which was expressed by her name. "Truly, Eben Dudley hath done marvels in this hunt; he hath come in with a thunderbolt in his head, instead of a fat buck on his shoulders!"

"Speak reverently, girl, of that thou dost not comprehend," said Mark Heathcote, with stern authority. "Marvells are manifested equally to the ignorant and to the learned; and although vain-
minded pretenders to philosophy affirm, that the warring of the elements is no more than nature working out its own purification, yet do we know, from all ancient authorities, that other manifestations are therein exhibited. Satan may have control over the magazines of the air; he can 'let off the ordnance of Heaven.' That 'the Prince of the Powers of Darkness hath as good a share in chemistry as goes to the making of Aurum Fulminans, is asserted by one of the wisest writers of our age.'

From this declaration, and more particularly from the learning discovered in the Puritan's speech, there was no one so hardy as to dissent. Faith was glad to shrink back among the bevy of awe-struck maidens; while Content, after a sufficiently respectful pause, invited the woodsman, who was yet teeming with the most important part of his communication, to proceed.

"While my eye was searching for the lightning, which should in reason have attended that thunder, had it been uttered in the manner of nature, the buck had vanished; and when I rushed upon the hillock, in order to keep the game in view, a man mounting its opposite side came so suddenly upon me, that our muskets were at each other's breasts before either had time for speech."

"What manner of man was he?"

"So far as human judgment might determine, he seemed a traveller, who was endeavoring to push through the wilderness, from the towns below to the distant settlements of the Bay Province; but I account it exceeding wonderful, that the trail of a leaping buck should have brought us together in so unwonted a manner!"

"And didst thou see aught of the deer, after that encounter?"

"In the first hurry of the surprise, it did certainly appear as if an animal were bounding along the
wood into a distant thicket; but it is known how readily one may be led by seeming probabilities into a false conclusion, and so I account that glimpse as delusion. No doubt, the animal, having done that which it was commissioned to perform, did then and there disappear, in the manner I have named."

"It might have been thus. And the stranger—had you discourse with him, before parting?"

"We tarried together a short hour. He related much marvellous matter of the experiences of the people, near the sea. According to the testimony of the stranger, the Powers of Darkness have been manifested in the Provinces in a hideous fashion. Numberless of the believers have been persecuted by the invisibles, and greatly have they endured suffering, both in soul and body."

"Of all this have I witnessed surprising instances, in my day," said Mark Heathcote, breaking the awful stillness that succeeded the announcement of so heavy a visitation on the peace of the Colony, with his deep-toned and imposing voice. "Did he, with whom you conferred, enter into the particulars of the trials?"

"He spoke also of certain other signs that are thought to foretell the coming of trouble. When I named the weary chase that I had made, and the sound which came from the air, he said that these would be accounted trifles in the towns of the Bay where the thunder and its lightnings had done much evil work, the past season; Satan having especially shown his spite, by causing them to do injury to the houses of the Lord."

"There has long been reason to think that the pilgrimage of the righteous, into these wilds, will be visited by some fierce opposition of those envious natures, which, fostering evil themselves, cannot brook to look upon the toiling of such as strive to eep the narrow path. We will now resort to the
only weapon it is permitted us to wield in this controversy, but which, when handled with diligence and zeal, never fails to lead to victory."

So saying, without waiting to hear more of the tale of Eben Dudley, old Mark Heathcote arose, and assuming the upright attitude usual among the people of his sect, he addressed himself to prayer. The grave and awe-struck but deeply confiding congregation imitated his example, and the lips of the Puritan had parted in the act of utterance, when a low, faltering note, like that produced by a wind instrument, rose on the outer air, and penetrated to the place where the family was assembled. A conch was suspended at the postern, in readiness to be used by any of the family whom accident or occupation should detain beyond the usual hour of closing the gates; and both by the direction and nature of this interruption, it would seem that an applicant for admission stood at the portal. The effect on the auditors was general and instantaneous. Notwithstanding the recent dialogue, the young men involuntarily sought their arms, while the startled females huddled together like a flock of trembling and timid deer.

"There is, of a certainty, a signal from without."

Content at length observed, after waiting to suffer the sounds to die away among the angles of the buildings. "Some hunter, who hath strayed from his path, claimeth hospitality."

Eben Dudley shook his head like one who dissented, but, having with all the other youths grasped his musket, he stood as undetermined as the rest concerning the course it was proper to pursue. It is uncertain how long this indecision might have continued, had no further summons been given; but he without appeared too impatient of delay to suffer much time to be lost. The conch sounded again, and with far better success than before. The blast
was longer, louder, and bolder, than that which had first pierced the walls of the dwelling, rising full and rich on the air, as though one well practised in the use of the instrument had placed lips to the shell.

Content would scarcely have presumed to disobey a mandate coming from his father, had it been little in conformity with his own intentions. But second thoughts had already shown him the necessity of decision, and he was in the act of motioning to Dudley and Reuben Ring to follow, when the Puritan bade him look to the matter. Making a sign for the rest of the family to remain where they were, and arming himself with a musket which had more than once that day been proved to be of certain aim, he led the way to the postern which has already been so often mentioned.

"Who sounds at my gate?" demanded Content, when he and his followers had gained a position, under cover of a low earthen mound erected expressly for the purpose of commanding the entrance; "who summons a peaceful family, at this hour of the night, to their outer defences?"

"One who hath need of what he asketh, or he would not disturb thy quiet," was the answer. "Open the postern, Master Heathcote, without fear; it is a brother in the faith, and a subject of the same laws, that asketh the boon."

"Here is truly a Christian man without," said Content, hurrying to the postern; which, without a moment's delay, he threw freely open, saying as he did so, "enter of Heaven's mercy, and be welcome to that we have to bestow."

A tall, and, by his tread, a heavy man, wrapped in a riding-cloak, bowed to the greeting, and immediately passed beneath the low lintel. Every eye was keenly fastened on the stranger, who, after ascending the acclivity a short distance, paused,
while the young men, under their master's orders, carefully and scrupulously renewed the fastenings of the gate. When bolts and bars had done their office, Content joined his guest; and after making another fruitless effort, by the feeble light which fell from the stars, to scan his person, he said, in his own meek and quiet manner—

"Thou must have great need of warmth and nourishment. The distance from this valley to the nearest habitation is wearisome, and one who hath journeyed it, in a season like this, may well be nigh fainting. Follow, and deal with that we have to bestow as freely as if it were thine own."

Although the stranger manifested none of that impatience which the heir of the Wish-Ton-Wish appeared to think one so situated might in all reason feel, thus invited he did not hesitate to comply. As he followed in the footsteps of his host, his tread, however, was leisurely and dignified; and once or twice, when the other half delayed in order to make some passing observation of courtesy, he betrayed no indiscreet anxiety to enter on those personal indulgences which might in reality prove so grateful to one who had journeyed far in an inconstant season, and along a road where neither dwelling nor security invited repose.

"Here is warmth and a peaceful welcome," pursued Content, ushering his guest into the centre of a group of fearfully anxious faces. "In a little time, other matters shall be added to thy comfort."

When the stranger found himself under the glare of a powerful light, and confronted to so many curious and wondering eyes, for a single instant he hesitated. Then stepping calmly forward, he cast the short riding-cloak, which had closely muffled his features, from his shoulders, and discovered the severe eye, the stern lineaments, and the athletic form of him who had once before been known to
enter the doors of Wish-Ton-Wish with little warning, and to have quit them so mysteriously.

The Puritan had arisen, with quiet and grave courtesy, to receive his visitor; but obvious, powerful, and extraordinary interest gleamed about his usually subdued visage, when, as the features of the other were exposed to view, he recognised the person of the man who advanced to meet him.

"Mark Heathcote," said the stranger, "my visit is to thee. It may, or it may not, prove longer than the last, as thou shalt receive my tidings. Affairs of the last moment demand that there should be little delay in hearing that which I have to offer."

Notwithstanding the excess and nature of the surprise which the veteran Mark had certainly betrayed, it endured just long enough to allow those wondering eyes, which were eagerly devouring all that passed, to note its existence. Then, the subdued and characteristic manner, which in general marked his air, instantly returned, and with a quiet gesture, like that which friends use in moments of confidence and security, he beckoned to the other to follow to an inner room. The stranger complied, making a slight bow of recognition to Ruth, as he passed her on the way to the apartment chosen for an interview that was evidently intended to be private.
CHAPTER X.

"Mar. Shall I strike at it with my partizan?"

Hor. Do, if it will not stand.

Mar. 'Tis here!

Hor. 'Tis here!

Mar. 'Tis gone!"

HAMLET.

The time that this unexpected visitor stood un
cloaked and exposed to recognition, before the eyes
of the curious group in the outer-room, did not much
exceed a minute. Still it was long enough to allow
men who rarely overlooked the smallest peculiarity
of dress or air, to note some of the more distinguish-
ing accompaniments of his attire. The heavy horse-
man's pistols, once before exhibited, were in his
girdle, and young Mark got a glimpse of a silver-
handled dagger which had pleased his eye before
that night. But the passage of his grandfather and
the stranger from the room prevented the boy from
determining whether it was entirely of the same
fashion as that, which, rather as a memorial of by-
gone scenes than for any service that it might now
be expected to perform, hung above the bed of the
former.

"The man hath not yet parted with his arms!" ex-
claimed the quick-sighted youth, when he found
that every other tongue continued silent. "I would
he may now leave them with my grand'ther, that
I may chase the skulking Wampanoag to his hid-
ing—"

"Hot-headed boy! Thy tongue is too much given
to levity," said Ruth, who had not only resumed her
seat, but the light employment that had been inter-
rupted by the blast at the gate, with a calmness of
mien that did not fail in some degree to reassure her maidens. "Instead of cherishing the lessons of peace that are taught thee, thy unruly thoughts are ever bent on strife."

"Is there harm in wishing to be armed with a weapon suited to my years, that I may do service in beating down the power of our enemies; and perhaps aid something, too, in affording security to my mother?"

"Thy mother hath no fears," returned the matron gravely, while grateful affection prompted a kind but furtive glance towards the high-spirited though sometimes slyward lad. "Reason hath already taught me the folly of alarm, because one has knocked at our gate in the night-season. Lay aside thy arms, men; you see that my husband no longer clings to the musket. Be certain that his eye will give us warning, when there shall be danger at hand."

The unconcern of her husband was even more strikingly true, than the simple language of his wife would appear to convey. Content had not only laid aside his weapon, but he had resumed his seat near the fire, with an air as calm, as assured, and it might have seemed to one watchfully observant, as understanding, as her own. Until now, the stout Dudley had remained leaning on his piece, immovable and apparently unconscious as a statue. But, following the injunctions of one he was accustomed to obey he placed the musket against the wall, with the care of a hunter, and then running a hand through his shaggy locks, as though the action might quicken ideas that were never remarkably active, he bluntly exclaimed—

"An armed hand is well in these forests, but an armed heel is not less wanting to him who would push a roadster from the Connecticut to the Wish-Ton-Wish, between a rising and a setting sun! The
stranger no longer journeys in the saddle, as is plain by the sign that his boot beareth no spur. When he worried, by dint of hard pricking, the miserable hack that proved food for the wolves, through the forest, he had better appointments. I saw the bones of the animal no later than this day. They have been polished by fowls and frost, till the driven snow of the mountains is not whiter!"

Meaning and uneasy, but hasty glances of the eye were exchanged between Content and Ruth, as Eben Dudley thus uttered the thoughts which had been suggested by the unexpected return of the stranger.

"Go you to the look-out at the western palisades," said the latter; "and see if perchance the Indian may not be lurking near the dwellings, ashamed of his delay, and perchance fearful of calling us to his admission. I cannot think that the child means to desert us, with no sign of kindness, and without leave-taking."

"I will not take upon me to say, how much or how little of ceremony the youngster may fancy to be due to the master of the valley and his kin; but if not gone already, the snow will not melt more quietly in the thaw, than the lad will one day disappear. Reuben Ring, thou hast an eye for light or darkness; come forth with me, that no sign escape us. Should thy sister, Faith, make one of our party, it would not be easy for the red-skin to pass the clearing without a hail."

"Go to," hurriedly answered the female; "it is more womanly that I tarry to see to the wants of him who hath journeyed far and hard, since the rising of the sun. If the boy pass thy vigilance, wakeful Dudley, he will have little cause to fear that of others."

Though Faith so decidedly declined to make one of the party, her brother complied without reluctance. The young men were about to quit the place
OF WISH-TON-WISH.

together; when the latch, on which the hand of Dudley was already laid, rose quietly without aid from his finger, the door opened, and the object of their intended search glided past them, and took his customary position in one of the more retired corners of the room. There was so much of the ordinary, noiseless manner of the young captive in this entrance, that for a moment they who witnessed the passage of his dark form across the apartment, were led to think the movement no more than the visit he was always permitted to make at that hour. But recollection soon came, and with it not only the suspicious circumstance of his disappearance, but the inexplicable manner of his admission within the gates.

"The pickets must be looked to!" exclaimed Dudley, the instant a second look assured him that his eyes in truth beheld him who had been missing. "The place that a stripling can scale, might well admit a host."

"Truly," said Content, "this needeth explanation. Hath not the boy entered when the gate was opened for the stranger?—Here cometh one that may speak to the fact!"

"It is so," said the individual named, who re-entered from the inner room in season to hear the nature of the remark. "I found this native child near thy gate, and took upon me the office of a Christian man to bid him welcome. Certain am I, that one, kind of heart and gently disposed, like the mistress of this family, will not turn him away in anger."

"He is no stranger at our fire, or at our board," said Ruth; "had it been otherwise, thou wouldst have done well."

Eben Dudley looked incredulous. His mind had been powerfully exercised that day with visions of the marvellous, and, of a certainty, there was some
reason to distrust the manner in which the re-ap-
pearance of the youth had been made.
"It will be well to look to the fastenings," he
muttered, "lest others, less easy to dispose of, should
follow. Now that invisible agencies are at work in
the Colony, one may not sleep too soundly!"
"Then go thou to the look-out, and keep the
watch, till the clock shall strike the hour of mid-
night;" said the Puritan, who uttered the command
in a manner to show that he was in truth moved
by considerations far deeper than the vague appre-
hensions of his dependant. "Ere sleep overcome
thee, another shall be ready for the relief."
Mark Heathcote seldom spoke, but respectful
silence permitted the lowest of his syllables to be
audible. On the present occasion, when his voice
was first heard, such a stillness came over all in
presence, that he finished the sentence amid the
nearly imperceptible breathings of the listeners.
In this momentary but death-like quiet, there arose
a blast from the conch at the gate, that might have
seemed an echo of that which had so lately startled
the already-excited inmates of the dwelling. At the
repetition of sounds so unwonted, all sprang to their
feet, but no one spoke. Content cast a hurried and
inquiring glance at his father, who in his turn had
anxiously sought the eye of the stranger. The lat-
ter stood firm and unmoved. One hand was clenched
upon the back of the chair from which he had
 arisen, and the other grasped, perhaps unconsciously,
the handle of one of those weapons which had at-
tracted the attention of young Mark, and which
still continued thrust through the broad leathern
belt that girded his doublet.
"The sound is like that, which one little used to
deal with earthly instruments might raise!" mut-
tered one of those whose mind had been prepared,
by the narrative of Dudley, to believe in any thing marvellous.

"Come from what quarter it may, it is a sum-
mons that must be answered;" returned Content.
"Dudley, thy musket; this visit is so unwonted,
that more than one hand should do the office of
porter."

The borderer instantly complied, muttering be-
tween his teeth as he shook the priming deeper into
the barrel of his piece, "Your over-sea gallants are
quick on the trail to-night!" Then throwing the
musket into the hollow of his arm, he cast a look
of discontent and resentment towards Faith Ring,
and was about to open the door for the passage of
Content, when another blast arose on the silence
without. The second touch of the shell was firmer,
longer, louder, and more true, than that by which
it had just been preceded.

"One might fancy the conch was speaking in
mockery," observed Content, looking with meaning
towards their guest. "Never did sound more re-
semble sound than these we have just heard, and
those thou drew from the shell when asking admi-
SSION."

A sudden light appeared to break in upon the
intelligence of the stranger. Advancing more into
the circle, rather with the freedom of long famili-
arity than with the diffidence of a newly-arrived
guest, he motioned for silence as he said—

"Let none move, but this stout woodsman, the
young captain and myself. We will go forth, and
doubt not that the safety of those within shall be
regarded."

Notwithstanding the singularity of this proposal,
as it appeared to excite neither surprise nor oppo-
tion in the Puritan or his son, the rest of the family
offered no objection. The stranger had no sooner
spoken, than he advanced near to the torch, and
looked closely into the condition of his pistols. Then turning to old Mark, he continued in an under tone—
"Peradventure there will be more worldly strife than any which can flow from the agencies that stir up the unquiet spirits of the Colonies. In such an extremity, it may be well to observe a soldier's caution."

"I like not this mockery of sound," returned the Puritan; "it argueth a taunting and fiend-like temper. We have, of late, had in this Colony tragical instances of what the disappointed malice of Azazel can attempt; and it would be vain to hope that the evil agencies are not vexed with the sight of my Bethel."

Though the stranger listened to the words of his host with respect, it was plain that his thoughts dwelt on dangers of a different character. The member that still rested on the handle of his weapon, was clenched with greater firmness; and a grim, though a melancholy expression was seated about a mouth, that was compressed in a manner to denote the physical, rather than the spiritual resolution of the man. He made a sign to the two companions he had chosen, and led the way to the court.

By this time, the shades of night had materially thickened, and, although the hour was still early, a darkness had come over the valley that rendered it difficult to distinguish objects at any distance from the eye. The obscurity made it necessary that they, who now issued from the door of the dwelling, should advance with caution, lest, ere properly admonished of its presence, their persons should be exposed to some lurking danger. When the three, however, were safely established behind the thick curtain of plank and earth that covered and commanded the entrance, and where their persons, from the shoulders downward, were completely protected, alike from shot and arrow, Content demanded to
know, who applied at his gates for admission at an hour when they were habitually closed for the night. Instead of receiving, as before, a ready answer, the silence was so profound, that his own words were very distinctly heard repeated, as was not uncommon at that quiet hour, among the recesses of the neighboring woods.

"Come it from Devil, or come it from man, here is treachery!" whispered the stranger after a fitting pause. "Artifice must be met by artifice; but thou art much abler to advise against the wiles of the forest, than one trained, as I have been, in the less cunning deceptions of Christian warfare."

"What think'st, Dudley?" asked Content—"Will it be well to sally, or shall we wait another signal from the conch?"

"Much dependeth on the quality of the guests expected," returned he of whom counsel was asked. "As for the braggaft gallants, that are over-valiant among the maidens, and heavy of heart when they think the screech of the jay an Indian whoop, I care not if ye beat the pickets to the earth, and call upon them to enter on the gallop. I know the manner to send them to the upper story of the block, quicker than the cluck of the turkey can muster its young; but——"

"'Tis well to be discreet in language, in a moment of such serious uncertainty!" interrupted the stranger. "We look for no gallants of the kind."

"Then will I give you a conceit that shall know the reason of the music of yon conch. Go ye two back into the house, making much conversation by the way, in order that any without may hear. When ye have entered, it shall be my task to find such a post nigh the gate, that none shall knock again, and no porter be at hand to question them in the matter of their errand."

"This soundeth better," said Content; "and that
it may be done with all safety, some others of the young men, who are accustomed to this species of artifice, shall issue by the secret door and lie in wait behind the dwellings, in order that support shall not be wanting in case of violence. Whatever else thou dost, Dudley, remember that thou dost not undo the fastenings of the postern."

"Look to the support," returned the woodsman; should it be keen-eyed Reuben Ring, I shall feel none the less certain that good aid is at my back. The whole of that family are quick of wit and ready of invention, unless it may be the wight who hath got the form without the reason of a man."

"Thou shalt have Reuben, and none other of his kin," said Content. "Be well advised of the fastenings, and so I wish thee all fitting success, in a deception that cannot be sinful, since it aims only at our safety."

With this injunction, Content and the stranger left Dudley to the practice of his own devices, the former observing the precaution to speak aloud while returning, in order that any listeners without might be led to suppose the whole party had retired from the search, satisfied of its fruitlessness.

In the mean time, the youth left nigh the postern set about the accomplishment of the task he had undertaken, in sober earnest. Instead of descending in a direct line to the palisadoes, he also ascended, and made a circuit among the out-buildings on the margin of the acclivity. Then bending so low as to blend his form with objects on the snow, he gained an angle of the palisadoes, at a point remote from the spot he intended to watch, and, as he hoped, aided by the darkness of the hour and the shadows of the hill, completely protected from observation. When beneath the palisadoes, the sentinel crouched to the earth, creeping with extreme caution along the timber whi

*ted their lower ends, until he*
found himself arrived at a species of sentry-box, that was erected for the very purpose to which he now intended it should be applied. Once within the cover of this little recess, the sturdy woodsman bestowed his large frame, with as much attention to comfort and security as the circumstances would permit. Here he prepared to pass many weary minutes, before there should be further need of his services.

The reader will find no difficulty in believing that one of opinions like those of the borderer, did not enter on his silent watch without much distrust of the character of the guests that he might be called upon to receive. Enough has been shown to prove that the suspicion uppermost in his mind was, that the unwelcome agents of the government had returned on the heels of the stranger. But, notwithstanding the seeming probability of this opinion, there were secret misgivings of the earthly origin of the two last windings of the shell. All the legends, and all the most credited evidence in cases of prestigious agency, as it had been exhibited in the colonies of New-England, went to show the malignant pleasure the Evil Spirits found, in indulging their wicked mockeries, or in otherwise tormenting those who placed their support on a faith, that was believed to be so repugnant to their own ungrateful and abandoned natures. Under the impressions, naturally excited by the communication he had held with the traveller in the mountains, Eben Dudley found his mind equally divided between the expectation of seeing, at each moment, one of the men whom he had induced to quit the valley so unceremoniously, returning to obtain, surreptitiously, admission within the gate, or of being made an unwilling witness of some wicked manifestation of that power which was temporarily committed to the invisibles. In both of these expecta-
tions, however, he was fated to be disappointed. Notwithstanding the strong spiritual bias of the opinions of the credulous sentinel, there was too much of the dross of temporal things in his composition, to elevate him altogether above the weakness of humanity. A mind so encumbered began to weary with its own contemplations; and, as it grew feeble with its extraordinary efforts, the dominion of matter gradually resumed its sway. Thought, instead of being clear and active, as the emergency would have seemed to require, began to grow misty. Once or twice the borderer half arose, and appeared to look about him with observation; and then, as his large frame fell heavily back into its former semi-recumbent attitude, he grew tranquil and stationary. This movement was several times repeated, at intervals of increasing length, till, at the end of an hour, forgetting alike the hunt, the troopers, and the mysterious agents of evil, the young man yielded to the fatigue of the day. The tall oaks of the adjoining forest stood not more immovable in the quiet of the tranquil hour, than his frame now leaned against the side of its narrow habitation.

How much time was thus lost in inactivity, Eben Dudley could never precisely tell. He always stoutly maintained it could not have been long, since his watch was not disturbed by the smallest of those sounds from the woods, which sometimes occur in deep night, and which may be termed the breathing of the forest in its slumbers. His first distinct recollection, was that of feeling a hand grasped with the power of a giant. Springing to his feet, the young man eagerly stretched forth an arm, saying as he did so, in words sufficiently confused—

"If the buck hath fallen by a shot in the head, I grant him to be thine, Reuben Ring; but if struck
in limb or body, I claim the venison for a surer hand."

"Truly, a very just division of the spoil," returned one in an under tone, and speaking as if sounds too loud might be dangerous. "Thou givest the head of the deer for a target to Reuben Ring, and keepest the rest of the creature to thine own uses."

"Who hath sent thee, at this hour, to the postern? Dost not know that there are thought to be strangers, outlying in the fields?"

"I know that there are some, who are not strangers, in-lying on their watch!" said Faith Ring. "What shame would come upon thee, Dudley, did the Captain, and they who have been so strongly exercised in prayer within, but suspect how little care thou hast had of their safety, the while!"

"Have they come to harm? If the Captain hath held them to spiritual movements, I hope he will allow that nothing earthly hath passed this postern to disturb the exercise. As I hope to be dealt honestly by, in all matters of character, I have not once quitted the gate, since the watch was set."

"Else wouldst thou be the famouest sleep-walker in the Connecticut Colony! Why, drowsy one, conch cannot raise a louder blast than that thou soundest, when eyes are fairly shut in sleep. This may be watching, according to thy meaning of the word; but infant in its cradle is not half so ignorant of that which passeth around it, as thou hast been."

"I think, Faith Ring, that thou hast gotten to be much given to backbiting, and evil saying against friends, since the visit of the gallants from over sea."

"Out upon the gallants from over sea, and thee too, man! I am not a girl to be flouted with bold speech from one who doth not know whether he be sleeping or waking. I tell thee, thy good name would be lost in the family, did it come to the ears
of the Captain, and more particularly to the knowledge of that soldier stranger, up in the dwelling, of whom even the Madam maketh so great ceremony, that thou hast been watching with a tuneful nose, an open mouth, and a sealed eye."

"If any but thee hadst said this slander of me girl, it would go nigh to raise hot speech between us! Thy brother, Reuben Ring, knows better than to stir my temper, by such falsity of accusation."

"Thou dealest so generously by him, that he is prone to forget thy misdeeds. Truly he hath the head of the buck, while thou contentest thyself with the offals and all the less worthy parts! Go to, Dudley; thou wast in a heavy dream when I caused thee to awake."

"A pretty time have we fallen upon, when petticoats are used instead of beards and strong-armed men, to go the rounds of the sentinels, and to say who sleepest and who is watchful! What hath brought thee so far from the exercises and so nigh the gates, Mistress Faith, now that there is no oversea gallant to soothe thy ears with lying speech and light declarations."

"If speech not to be credited is that I seek," returned the girl, "truly the errand hath not been without its reward. What brought me hither, sooth! why, the Madam hath need of articles from the outer buttery—and—ay—and my ears led me to the postern. Thou knowest, musical Dudley, that I have had occasion to hearken to thy watchful notes before this night. But my time is too useful to be wasted in idleness; thou art now awake, and may thank her who hath done thee a good turn with no wish to boast of it, that one of a black beard is not the laughing-stock of all the youths in the family. If thou keepest thine own counsel, the Captain may yet praise thee for a vigilant sentinel:
though Heaven forgive him the wrong he will do the truth!"

"Perhaps a little anger at unjust suspicions may have prompted more than the matter needed, Faith, when I taxed thee with the love of backbiting, and I do now recall that word; though I will ever deny that aught more, than some wandering recollection concerning the hunt of this day, hath come over my thoughts, and perhaps made me even forgetful that it was needful to be silent at the postern; and therefore, on the truth of a Christian man, I do forgive thee, the——"

But Faith was already out of sight and out of hearing. Dudley himself, who began to have certain prickings of conscience concerning the ingratitude he had manifested to one who had taken so much interest in his reputation, now bethought him seriously of that which remained to be done. He had much reason to suspect that there was less of the night before him than he had at first believed, and he became in consequence more sensible of the necessity of making some report of the events of his watch. Accordingly, he cast a scrutinizing glance around, in order to make sure that the facts should not contradict his testimony, and then, first examining the fastenings of the postern, he mounted the hill, and presented himself before the family. The members of the latter, having in truth passed most of the long interval of his absence in spiritual exercises, and in religious conversation, were not so sensible of his delay in reporting, as they might otherwise have been.

"What tidings dost thou bring us from without?" said Content, so soon as the self-relieved sentinel appeared. "Hast seen any, or hast heard that which is suspicious?"

Ere Dudley would answer, his eye did not fail to study the half-malicious expression of the counte-
nance of her who was busy in some domestic toil directly opposite to the place where he stood. But reading there no more than a glance of playful though smothered irony, he was encouraged to proceed in his report.

"The watch has been quiet," was the answer; "and there is little cause to keep the sleepers longer from their beds. Some vigilant eyes, like those of Reuben Ring and my own, had better be open until the morning; further than that, is there no reason for being wakeful."

Perhaps the borderer would have dwelt more at large on his own readiness to pass the remainder of the hours of rest in attending to the security of those who slept, had not another wicked glance from the dark, laughing eye of her who stood so favorably placed to observe his countenance, admonished him of the prudence of being modest in his professions.

"This alarm hath then happily passed away," said the Puritan, arising. "We will now go to our pillows in thankfulness and peace. Thy service shall not be forgotten, Dudley; for thou hast exposed thyself to seeming danger, at least, in our behalf."

"That hath he!" half-whispered Faith; "and sure am I, that we maidens will not forget his readiness to lose the sweets of sleep, in order that the feeble may not come to harm."

"Speak not of the trifle," hurriedly returned the other. "There has been some deception in the sounds, for it is now my opinion, except to summon us to the gate, that this stranger might enter—the conch hath not been touched at all to night."

"Then is it a deception which is repeated?" exclaimed Content, rising from his chair as a faint and broken blast from the shell, like that which had first announced their visitor, again struggled among
the buildings, until it reached every ear in the dwelling.

"Here is warning as mysterious as it may prove portentous!" said old Mark Heathcote, when the surprise, not to say consternation of the moment, had subsided. "Hast seen nothing that might justify this?"

Eben Dudley, like most of the auditors, was too much confounded to reply. All seemed to attend anxiously for the second and more powerful blast, which was to complete the imitation of the stranger's summons. It was not necessary to wait long; for in a time as near as might be, to that which had intervened between the two first peals of the horn, followed another, and in a note so true, again, as to give it the semblance of an echo.

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CHAPTER XI.

"I will watch to-night;
Perchance 't will walk again."

HAMELET.

"May not this be a warning given in mercy?" the Puritan, at all times disposed to yield credit to supernatural manifestations of the care of Providence, demanded with a solemnity that did not fail to produce its impression on most of his auditors. "The history of our Colonies is full of the evidences of these merciful interpositions."

"We will thus consider it;" returned the stranger, to whom the question seemed more particularly addressed. "The first measure shall be to seek out the danger to which it points. Let the youth they call Dudley, give me the aid of his powerful frame
and manly courage; then trust the discovery of the meaning of these frequent speakings of the conch, to me."

"Surely, Submission, thou wilt not again be the first to go forth!" exclaimed Mark, in a surprise that was equally manifested by Content and Ruth, the latter of whom pressed her little image to her side as though the bare proposal presented a powerful picture of supernatural danger. "'Twill be well to think maturely on the step, ere thou runnest the hazard of such an adventure."

"Better it should be I," said Content, "who am accustomed to forest signs, and all the usual testimonials of the presence of those who may wish us harm."

"No," said he, who for the first time had been called 'Submission,' a name that savored of the religious enthusiasm of the times, and which might have been adopted as an open avowal of his readiness to bow beneath some peculiar dispensation of Providence. "This service shall be mine. Thou art both husband and father; and many are there who look to thy safety as to their rock of earthly support and comfort, while neither kindred, nor—but we will not speak of things foreign to our purpose! Thou knowest, Mark Heathcote, that peril and I are no strangers. There is little need to bid me be prudent. Come, bold woodsman; shoulder thy musket, and be ready to do credit to thy manhood, should there be reason to prove it."

"And why not Reuben Ring?" said a hurried female voice, that all knew to proceed from the lips of the sister of the youth just named. "He is quick of eye and ready of hand, in trials like these; would it not be well to succor thy party with such aid?"

"Peace, girl," meekly observed Ruth. "This matter is already in the ordering of one used to com-
mand; there needeth no counsel from thy short experience."

Faith shrunk back abashed, the flush which had mantled over her brown cheek deepening to a tint like that of blood.

Submission (we use the appellation in the absence of all others) fastened a searching glance, for a single moment, on the countenance of the girl; and then, as if his intention had not been diverted from the principal subject in hand, he rejoined coolly—

"We go as scouters and observers of that which may hereafter call for the ready assistance of this youth; but numbers would expose us to observation, without adding to our usefulness—and yet," he added, arresting his footstep, which was already turned towards the door, and looking earnestly and long at the Indian boy, "perhaps there standeth one who might much enlighten us, would he but speak!"

This remark drew every eye on the person of the captive. The lad stood the scrutiny with the undismayed and immovable composure of his race. But though his eye met the looks of those around him haughtily and in pride, it was not gleaming with any of that stern defiance which had so often been known to glitter in his glances, when he had reason to think that his fortunes, or his person, was the subject of the peculiar observation of those with whom he dwelt. On the contrary, the expression of his dark visage was rather that of amity than of hatred, and there was a moment when the look he cast upon Ruth and her offspring was visibly touched with a feeling of concern. A glance, charged with such a meaning, could not escape the quick-sighted vigilance of a mother.

"The child hath proved himself worthy to be trusted," she said; "and in the name of him who
looketh into and knoweth all hearts, let him once more go forth."

Her lips became sealed, for again the conch announced the seeming impatience of those without to be admitted. The full tones of the shell thrilled on the nerves of the listeners, as though they proclaimed the coming of some great and fearful judgment.

In the midst of these often-repeated and mysterious sounds, Submission alone seemed calm and unmoved. Turning his look from the countenance of the boy, whose head had dropped upon his breast as the last notes of the conch rang among the buildings, he motioned hurriedly to Dudley to follow, and left the place.

There was, in good truth, that in the secluded situation of the valley, the darkness of the hour, and the nature of the several interruptions, which might readily awaken deep concern in the breasts of men as firm even as those who now issued into the open air, in quest of the solution of doubts that were becoming intensely painful. The stranger, or Submission, as we may in future have frequent occasion to call him, led the way in silence to a point of the eminence, without the buildings, where the eye might overlook the palisadoes that hedged the sides of the acclivity, and command a view beyond of all that the dusky and imperfect light would reveal.

It was a scene that required familiarity with a border life to be looked on, at any moment, with indifference. The broad, nearly interminable, and seemingly trackless forest lay about them, bounding the view to the narrow limits of the valley, as though it were some straitened oasis amidst an ocean of wilderness. Within the boundaries of the cleared land, objects were less indistinct; though even those nearest and most known were now seen only in the confused and gloomy outlines of night.
Across this dim prospect, Submission and his companion gazed long and cautiously.

"There is nought but motionless stumps, and fences loaded with snow," said the former, when his eye had roamed over the whole circuit of the view which lay on the side of the valley where they stood. "We must go forth, that we may look nearer to the fields."

"Thither then is the postern," said Dudley, observing that the other took a direction opposite to that which led to the gate. But a gesture of authority induced him at the next instant to restrain his voice, and to follow whither his companion chose to lead the way.

The stranger made a circuit of half the hill ere he descended to the palisadoes, at a point where lay long and massive piles of wood, which had been collected for the fuel of the family. This spot was one that overlooked the steepest acclivity of the eminence, which was in itself, just there, so difficult of ascent, as to render the provision of the pickets far less necessary than in its more even faces. Still no useful precaution for the security of the family had been neglected, even at this strong point of the works. The piles of wood were laid at such a distance from the pickets as to afford no facilities for scaling them, while, on the other hand, they formed platforms and breast-works that might have greatly added to the safety of those who should be required to defend this portion of the fortress. Taking his way directly amid the parallel piles, the stranger descended rapidly through the whole of their mazes, until he had reached the open space between the outer of the rows and the palisadoes, a space that was warily left too wide to be passed by the leap of man.

"'Tis many a day since foot of mine has been in this spot," said Eben Dudley, feeling his way along
a path that his companion threaded without any apparent hesitation. “My own hand laid this outer pile, some winters since, and certain am I, that from that hour to this, man hath not touched a billet of the wood—And yet, for one who hath come from over sea, it would appear that thou hast no great difficulty in making way among the narrow lanes!”

“He that hath sight may well choose between air and beechen logs,” returned the other, stopping at the palisadoes, and in a place that was concealed from any prying eyes within the works, by triple and quadruple barriers of wood. Feeling in his girdle, he then drew forth something which Dudley was not long in discovering to be a key. While the latter, aided by the little light that fell from the heavens, was endeavoring to make the most of his eyes, Submission applied the instrument to a lock that was artfully sunk in one of the timbers, at the height of a man’s breast from the ground; and giving a couple of vigorous turns, a piece of the palisado, some half a fathom long, yielded on a powerful hinge below, and, falling, made an opening sufficiently large for the passage of a human body.

“Here is a sally-port ready provided for our sortie,” the stranger coolly observed, motioning to the other to precede him. When Dudley had passed, his companion followed, and the opening was then carefully closed and locked.

“Now is all fast again, and we are in the fields without raising alarm to any of mortal birth, at least,” continued the guide, thrusting a hand into the folds of his doublet, as if to feel for a weapon, and preparing to descend the difficult declivity which still lay between him and the base of the hill. Eben Dudley hesitated to follow. The interview with the traveller in the mountains occurred to his heated imagination, and the visions of a prestigious agency revived with all their original force
The whole manner and the mysterious character of his companion, was little likely to reassure a mind disturbed with such images.

"There is a rumor going in the Colony," muttered the borderer, "that the invisibles are permitted for a time to work their evil; and it may well happen that some of their ungodly members shall journey to the Wish-Ton-Wish, in lack of better employment."

"Thou sayest truly," replied the stranger; "but the power that allows of their wicked torments may have seen fit to provide an agent of its own, to defeat their subtleties. We will now draw nearer to the gate, in order that an eye may be kept on their malicious designs."

Submission spoke with gravity, and not without a certain manner of solemnity. Dudley yielded, though with a divided and a disturbed mind, to his suggestion. Still he followed in the footsteps of the stranger, with a caution that might well have eluded the vigilance of any agency short of that which drew its means of information from sources deeper than any of human power.

When the two watches had found a secret and suitable place, not far from the postern, they disposed themselves in silence to await the result. The outbuildings lay in deep quiet, not a sound of any sort arising from all of the many tenants they were known to contain. The lines of ragged fences; the blackened stumps, capped with little pyramids of snow; the taller and sometimes suspiciously-looking stubs; an insulated tree, and finally the broad border of forest,—were alike motionless, gloomy, and clothed in the doubtful forms of night. Still, the space around the well-secured and trebly-barred postern was vacant. A sheet of spotless snow served as a background, that would have been sure to betray the presence of any object passing over its
surface. Even the conch might be seen suspended
from one of the timbers, as mute and inoffensive as
the hour when it had been washed by the waves,
on the sands of the sea-shore.

"Here will we watch for the coming of the
stranger, be he commissioned by the powers of air,
or be he one sent on an errand of earth;" whispered
Submission, preparing his arms for immediate
use, and disposing of his person, at the same time,
in a manner most convenient to endure the weariness
of a patient watch.

"I would my mind were at ease on the question
of right-doing in dealing harm to one who disturbs
the quiet of a border family," said Dudley, in a
tone sufficiently repressed for caution; "it may be
found prudent to strike the first blow, should one
like an over-sea gallant, after all, be inclined to
trouble us at this hour."

"In that strait, thou wilt do well to give little
heed to the order of the offences," gloomily returned
the other. "Should another messenger of England appear——"

He paused, for a note of the conch was heard
rising gradually on the air, until the whole of the
wide valley was filled with its rich and melancholy
sound.

"Lip of man is not at the shell!" exclaimed the
stranger, who like Dudley had made a forward
movement towards the postern, the instant the blast
reached his ear, and who like Dudley recoiled in
an amazement that even his practised self-command
could not conceal, as he undeniably perceived the
truth of that his speech affirmed. "This exceedeth
all former instances of marvellous visitations!"

"It is vain to pretend to raise the feeble nature
of man to the level of things coming from the in-
visible world," returned the woodsman at his side.
"In such a strait, it is seemly that sinful men should
withdrew to the dwellings, where we may sustain our feebleness by the spiritual strivings of the Captain."

To this discreet proposal the stranger raised no objection. Without taking the time necessary to effect their retreat with the precaution that had been observed in their advance, the two adventurers quickly found themselves at the secret entrance through which they had so lately issued.

"Enter," said the stranger, lowering the piece of the palisado for the passage of his companion. "Enter, of a Heaven's sake! for it is truly meet that we assemble all our spiritual succor."

Dudley was in the act of complying, when a dark line, accompanied by a low rushing sound, cut the air between his head and that of his companion. At the next instant, a flint-headed arrow quivered in the timber.

"The heathen!" shouted the borderer, recovering all his manhood as the familiar danger became apparent, and throwing back a stream of fire in the direction from which the treacherous missile had come. "To the palisadoes, men! the bloody heathen is upon us!"

"The heathen!" echoed the stranger, in a deep, steady, commanding voice, that had evidently often raised the warning in scenes of even greater emergency, and levelling a pistol, which brought a dark form that was gliding across the snow to one knee. "The heathen! the bloody heathen is upon us!"

As if both assailants and assailed paused, one moment of profound stillness succeeded this fierce interruption of the quiet of the night. Then the cries of the two adventurers were answered by a burst of yells from a wide circle, that nearly environed the hill. At the same moment, each dark object, in the fields, gave up a human form. The shouts were followed by a cloud of arrows, that
rendered further delay without the cover of the palisadoes eminently hazardous. Dudley entered; but the passage of the stranger would have been cut off, by a leaping, whooping band that pressed fiercely on his rear, had not a broad sheet of flame, glancing from the hill directly in their swarthy and grim countenances, driven the assailants back upon their own footsteps. In another moment, the bolts of the lock were passed, and the two fugitives were in safety behind the ponderous piles of wood.

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CHAPTER XII.

"There need no ghost, my lord, come from the grave,
To tell us this."

HAMLET.

Although the minds of most, if not of all the inmates of the Wish-Ton-Wish, had been so powerfully exercised that night with a belief that the powers of the invisible world were about to be let loose upon them, the danger had now presented itself in a shape too palpable to admit of further doubt. The cry of 'the heathen' had been raised from every lip; even the daughter and elève of Ruth repeated it, as they fled wailing through the buildings; and, for a moment, terror and surprise appeared to involve the assailed in inextricable confusion. But the promptitude of the young men in rushing to the rescue, with the steadiness of Content, soon restored order. Even the females assumed at least the semblance of composure, the family having been too long trained to meet the exigencies of such an emergency, to be thrown entirely off its guard, for more than the first and the most appalling moments of the alarm.
The effect of the sudden repulse was such as all experience had taught the Colonists to expect, in their Indian warfare. The uproar of the onset ceased as abruptly as it had commenced, and a calmness so tranquil, and a stillness so profound, succeeded, that one who had for the first time witnessed such a scene, might readily have fancied it the effects of some wild and fearful illusion.

During these moments of general and deep silence, the two adventurers, whose retreat had probably hastened the assault by offering the temptation of an easy passage within the works, left the cover of the piles of wood, and ascended the hill to the place where Dudley knew Content was to be posted, in the event of a summons to the defences.

"Unless much inquiry hath deceived me in the nature of the heathen's craftiness," said the stranger, "we shall have breathing-time ere the onset be renewed. The experience of a soldier bids me say, that prudence now urges us to look into the number and position of our foes, that we may order our resistance with better understanding of their force."

"In what manner of way may this be done? Thou seest nought about us but the quiet and the darkness of night. Speak of the number of our enemies we cannot, and sally forth we may not, without certain destruction to all who quit the palisadoes."

"Thou forfotttest that we have a hostage in the boy; he may be turned to some advantage, if our power over his person be used with discretion."

"I doubt that we deceive ourselves with a hope that is vain," returned Content, leading the way as he spoke, however, towards the court which communicated with the principal dwelling. "I have closely studied the eye of that lad, since his unaccountable entrance within the works, and little do I find there that should teach us to expect confidence."
It will be happy if some secret understanding with those without, has not aided him in passing the palisadoes, and that he prove not a dangerous spy on our force and movements."

"In regard to that he hath entered the dwelling without sound of conch or aid of postern, be not disturbed," returned the stranger with composure. "Were it fitting, this mystery might be of easy explanation; but it may truly need all our sagacity to discover whether he hath connexion with our foes! The mind of a native does not give up its secrets like the surface of a vanity-feeding mirror."

The stranger spoke like a man who wrapped a portion of his thoughts in reserve, and his companion listened as one who comprehended more than it might be seemly or discreet to betray. With this secret and yet equivocal understanding of each other's meaning, they entered the dwelling, and soon found themselves in the presence of those they sought.

The constant danger of their situation had compelled the family to bring themselves within the habits of a methodical and severely-regulated order of defence. Duties were assigned, in the event of alarm, to the feeblest bodies and the faintest hearts; and during the moments which preceded the visit of her husband, Ruth had been endeavoring to commit to her female subordinates the several necessary charges that usage, and more particularly he emergency of the hour, appeared so imperiously to require.

"Hasten, Charity, to the block," she said; "and look into the condition of the buckets and the ladders, that should the heathen drive us to its shelter, provision of water, and means of retreat, be not wanting in our extremity; and hie thee, Faith, into the upper apartments, to see that no lights may direct their murderous aim at any in the chambers."
Thoughts come tardily, when the arrow or the bullet hath already taken its flight! And now, that the first assault is over, Mark, and we may hope to meet the wiles of the enemy by some prudence of our own, thou mayst go forth to thy father. It would have been tempting Providence too rashly, hadst thou rushed, unbidden and uninformed, into the first hurry of the danger. Come hither, child, and receive the blessing and prayers of thy mother; after which thou shalt, with better trust in Providence, place thy young person among the combatants, in the hope of victory. Remember that thou art now of an age to do justice to thy name and origin, and yet art thou of years too tender to be foremost in speech, and far less in action, on such a night as this."

A momentary flush, that only served to render the succeeding paleness more obvious, passed across the brow of the mother. She stooped, and imprinted a kiss on the forehead of the impatient boy, who scarcely waited to receive this act of tenderness, ere he hurried to place himself in the ranks of her defenders.

"And now," said Ruth, slowly turning her eye from the door by which the lad had disappeared, and speaking with a sort of unnatural composure, "and now will we look to the safety of those who can be of but little service, except as sentinels to sound the alarm. When thou art certain, Faith, that no neglected light is in the rooms above, take the children to the secret chamber; thence they may look upon the fields, without danger from any chance direction of the savages' aim. Thou knowest, Faith, my frequent teaching in this matter; let no sounds of alarm, nor frightful whoopings of the people without, cause thee to quit the spot; since thou wilt there be safer even than in the block, against which many missiles will doubtless be driven,
on account of its seeming air of strength. Timely notice shall be given of the change, should we seek its security. Thou wilt descend, only, shouldst thou see enemies scaling the palisadoes on the side which overhangs the stream; since there have we the fewest eyes to watch their movements. Remember that on the side of the out-buildings and of the fields, our force is chiefly posted; there can be less reason therefore that thou shouldst expose thy lives by endeavoring to look, too curiously, into that which passeth in the fields. Go, my children; and a heavenly Providence prove thy guardian!"

Ruth stooped to kiss the cheek that her daughter offered to the salute. The embrace was then given to the other child, who was in truth scarcely less near her heart, being the orphan daughter of one who had been as a sister in her affections. But, unlike the kiss she had impressed on the forehead of Mark, the present embraces were hasty, and evidently awakened less intense emotion. She had committed the boy to a known and positive danger, but, under the semblance of some usefulness, she sent the others to a place believed to be even less exposed, so long as the enemy could be kept without the works, than the citadel itself. Still, a feeling of deep and maternal tenderness came over her mind, as her daughter retired; and, yielding to its sudden impulse, she recalled the girl to her side.

"Thou wilt repeat the prayer for especial protection against the dangers of the wilderness," she solemnly continued. "In thy asking, fail not to remember him to whom thou owest being, and who now exposeth life, that we may be safe. Thou knowest the Christian's rock; place thy faith on its foundation."

"And they who seek to kill us," demanded the well-instructed child; "are they too of the number of those for whom he died?"
It may not be doubted, though the manner of the dispensation be so mysterious! Barbarians in their habits, and ruthless in their enmities, they are creatures of our nature, and equally objects of his care."

Flaxen locks, that half-covered a forehead and face across which ran the most delicate tracery of veins, added lustre to a skin as spotlessly fair as if the warm breezes of that latitude had never fanned the countenance of the girl. Through this maze of ringlets, the child turned her full, clear, blue eyes, bending her looks, in wonder and in fear, on the dark visage of the captive Indian youth, who at that moment was to her a subject of secret horror. Unconscious of the interest he excited, the lad stood calm, haughty, and seemingly unobservant, cautious to let no sign of weakness or of concern escape him, in this scene of womanly emotion.

"Mother," whispered the still wondering child; "may we not let him go into the forest? I do not love to——"

"This is no time for speech. Go to thy hiding-place, my child, and remember both thy askings and the cautions I have named. Go, and heavenly care protect thy innocent head!"

Ruth again stooped, and bowing her face until the features were lost in the rich tresses of her daughter, a moment passed during which there was an eloquent silence. When she arose, a tear glistened on the cheek of the child. The latter had received the embrace more in apathy than in concern; and now, when led towards the upper rooms, she moved from the presence of her mother, it was with an eye that never bent its riveted gaze from the features of the young Indian, until the intervening walls hid him entirely from her sight.

"Thou hast been thoughtful and like thyself, my good Ruth," said Content, who at that moment en
tered, and who rewarded the self-command of his wife by a look of the kindest approbation. "The youths have not been more prompt in meeting the foe at the stockades, than thy maidens in looking to their less hardy duties. All is again quiet, without; and we come, now, rather for consultation, than for any purposes of strife."

"Then must we summon our father from his post at the artillery, in the block."

"It is not needful," interrupted the stranger. "Time presses, for this calm may be too shortly succeeded by a tempest that all our power shall not quell. Bring forth the captive."

Content signed to the boy to approach, and when he was in reach of his hand, he placed him full before the stranger.

"I know not thy name, nor yet even that of thy people," commenced the latter, after a long pause in which he seemed to study deeply the countenance of the lad; "but certain am I, though a more wicked spirit may still be struggling for the mastery in thy wild mind, that nobleness of feeling is no stranger to thy bosom. Speak; hast thou aught to impart concerning the danger that besets this family? I have learned much this night from thy manner, but to be clearly understood, it is now time that thou shouldst speak in words."

The youth kept his eye fastened on that of the speaker, until the other had ended, and then he bent it slowly, but with searching observation, on the anxious countenance of Ruth. It seemed as if he balanced between his pride and his sympathies. The latter prevailed; for, conquering the deep reluctance of an Indian, he spoke openly, and for the first time, since his captivity, in the language of the hated race.

"I hear the whoops of warriors," was his calm answer. "Have the ears of the pale men been shut?"
OF WISH-TON-WISH.

"Thou hast spoken with the young men of thy tribe in the forest, and thou hadst knowledge of this onset?"

The youth made no reply, though the keen look of his interrogator was met steadily, and without fear. Perceiving that he had demanded more than would be answered, the stranger changed his mode of investigation, masking his inquiries with a little more of artifice.

"It may not be that a great tribe is on the bloody path!" he said; "warriors would have walked over the timbers of the palisadoes, like bending-reeds! 'Tis a Pequot who hath broken faith with a Christian, and who is now abroad, prowling as a wolf in the night."

A sudden and wild expression gleamed over the swarthy features of the boy. His lips moved, and the words that issued from between them were uttered in the tones of biting scorn. Still he rather muttered than pronounced aloud—

"The Pequot is a dog!"

"It is as I had thought; the knaves are out of their villages, that the Yengeese may feed their squaws. But a Narragansett, or a Wampanoag, is a man; he scorns to lurk in the darkness. When he comes, the sun will light his path. The Pequot steals in silence, for he fears that the warriors will hear his tread."

It was not easy to detect any evidence that thine captive listened, either to the commendation or the censure, with answering sympathy; for marble is not colder that were the muscles of his unmoved countenance.

The stranger studied the expression of his features in vain, and drawing so near as to lay his hand on the naked shoulder of the lad, he added—"Boy, thou hast heard much moving matter concerning the nature of our Christian faith, and thou hast been
the subject of many a fervent asking; it may not be that so much good seed hath been altogether scattered by the way-side! Speak; may I again trust thee?"

"Let my father look on the snow. The print of the moccasoon goes and comes."

"It is true. Thus far hast thou proved honest; but when the war-whoop shall be thrilling through thy young blood, the temptation to join the warriors may be too strong. Hast any gage, any pledge, in which we may find warranty for letting thee depart?"

The boy regarded his interrogator with a look that plainly denoted ignorance of his meaning.

"I would know what thou canst leave with me, to show that our eyes shall again look upon thy face, when we have opened the gate for thy passage into the fields."

Still the gaze of the other was wondering and confused.

"When the white man goes upon the war-path and would put trust in his foe, he takes surety for his faith, by holding the life of one dear as a warranty of its truth. What canst offer, that I may know thou wilt return from the errand on which I would fain send thee?"

"The path is open."

"Open, but not certain to be used. Fear may cause thee to forget the way it leads."

The captive now understood the meaning of the other's doubts, but, as if disdaining to reply, he bent his eyes aside, and stood in one of those immovable attitudes which so often gave him the air of a piece of dark statuary.

Content and his wife had listened to this short dialogue, in a manner to prove that they possessed some secret knowledge, which lessened the wonder they might otherwise have felt, at witnessing so obvious proofs of a secret acquaintance between the
speakers. Both however manifested unequivocal signs of astonishment, when they first heard English sounds issuing from the lips of the boy. There was, at least, the semblance of hope in the mediation of one who had received, and who had appeared to acknowledge, so much kindness from herself; and Ruth clung to the cheering expectation with the quickness of maternal care.

"Let the boy depart," she said. "I will be his hostage; and should he prove false, there can be less to fear in his absence than in his presence."

The obvious truth of the latter assertion probably weighed more with the stranger than the meaningless pledge of the woman.

"There is reason in this," he resumed. "Go, then, into the fields, and say to thy people that they have mistaken the path; that, they are on, hath led them to the dwelling of a friend—Here are no Pequot, nor any of the men of the Manhattoes; but Christian Yengeese, who have long dealt with the Indian as one just man dealeth with another. Go, and when thy signal shall be heard at the gate, it shall be open to thee, for readmission."

Thus saying, the stranger motioned to the boy to follow, taking care, as they left the room together, to instruct him in all such minor matters as might assist in effecting the pacific object of the mission on which he was employed.

A few minutes of doubt and of fearful suspense succeeded this experiment. The stranger, after seeing that egress was permitted to his messenger, had returned to the dwelling, and rejoined his companions. He passed the moments in pacing the apartment, with the strides of one in whom powerful concern was strongly at work. At times, the sound of his heavy footstep ceased, and then all listened intently, in order to catch any sound that might instruct them in the nature of the scene that was pass-
ing without. In the midst of one of these pauses, a yell like that of savage delight arose in the fields. It was succeeded by the death-like and portentous calm, which had rendered the time since the momentary attack even more alarming than when the danger had a positive and known character. But all the attention the most intense anxiety could now lend, furnished no additional clue to the movements of their foes. For many minutes, the quiet of midnight reigned both within and without the defences. In the midst of this suspense, the latch of the door was lifted, and their messenger appeared with that noiseless tread and collected mien which distinguish the people of his race.

"Thou hast met the warriors of thy tribe?" hastily demanded the stranger.

"The noise did not cheat the Yengeese. It was not a girl, laughing in the woods."

"And thou hast said to thy people, 'we are friends'?"

"The words of my father were spoken."

"And heard—Were they loud enough to enter the ears of the young men?"

The boy was silent.

"Speak," continued the stranger, elevating his form, proudly, like one ready to breast a more severe shock. "Thou hast men for thy listeners. Is the pipe of the savage filled? will he smoke in peace, or holdeth he the tomahawk in a clenched hand?"

The countenance of the boy worked with a feeling that it was not usual for an Indian to betray. He bent his look, with concern, on the mild eyes of the anxious Ruth; then drawing a hand slowly from beneath the light robe that partly covered his body, he cast at the feet of the stranger a bundle of arrows, wrapped in the glossy and striped skin of the rattlesnake.

"This is warning we may not misconceive!" said
Content, raising the well-known emblem of ruthless hostility to the light, and exhibiting it before the eyes of his less-instructed companion. "Boy, what have the people of my race done, that thy warriors should seek their blood, to this extremity?"

When the boy had discharged his duty, he moved aside, and appeared unwilling to observe the effect which his message might produce on his companions. But thus questioned, all gentle feelings were near being forgotten, in the sudden force of passion. A hasty glance at Ruth quelled the emotion, and he continued calm as ever, and silent.

"Boy," repeated Content, "I ask thee why thy people seek our blood?"

The passage of the electric spark is not more subtle, nor is it scarcely more brilliant, than was the gleam that shot into the dark eye of the Indian. The organ seemed to emit rays coruscant as the glance of the serpent. His form appeared to swell with the inward strivings of the spirit, and for a moment there was every appearance of a fierce and uncontrollable burst of ferocious passion. The conquest of feeling was, however, but momentary. He regained his self-command by a surprising effort of the will, and advancing so near to him who had asked this bold question, as to lay a finger on his breast, the young savage haughtily said—

"See! this world is very wide. There is room on it for the panther and the deer. Why have the Yengeese and the red-men met?"

"We waste the precious moments in probing the stern nature of a heathen," said the stranger. "The object of his people is certain, and, with the aid of the Christian's staff, will we beat back their power. Prudence requireth at our hands, that the lad be secured; after which, will we repair to the stockades and prove ourselves men."

Against this proposal no reasonable objection
could be raised. Content was about to secure the person of his captive in a cellar, when a suggestion of his wife caused him to change his purpose. Notwithstanding the sudden and fierce mien of the youth, there had been such an intelligence created between them by looks of kindness and interest, that the mother was reluctant to abandon all hope of his aid.

"Miantonimoh!" she said, "though others distrust thy purpose, I will have confidence. Come, then, with me; and while I give thee promise of safety in thine own person, I ask at thy hands the office of a protector for my babes."

The boy made no reply; but as he passively followed his conductress to the chambers, Ruth fancied she read assurance of his faith, in the expression of his eloquent eye. At the same moment, her husband and Submission left the house, to take their stations at the palisadoes.

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CHAPTER XIII.

"Thou art, my good youth, my page;
I'll be thy master: walk with me; speak freely."

CYMBELINE.

The apartment, in which Ruth had directed the children to be placed, was in the attic, and, as already stated, on the side of the building which faced the stream that ran at the foot of the hill. It had a single projecting window, through which there was a view of the forest and of the fields on that side of the valley. Small openings in its sides admitted also of glimpses of the grounds which lay further in the rear. In addition to the covering of the roofs, and of the massive frame-work of the
building, an interior partition of timber protected the place against the entrance of most missiles then known in the warfare of the country. During the infancy of the children, this room had been their sleeping apartment; nor was it abandoned for that purpose, until the additional outworks, which increased with time around the dwellings, had emboldened the family to trust themselves, at night, in situations more convenient, and which were believed to be no less equally secure against surprise.

"I know thee to be one who feel'st the obligations of a warrior," said Ruth, as she ushered her follower into the presence of the children. "Thou wilt not deceive me; the lives of these tender ones are in thy keeping. Look to them, Miantonimoh, and the Christian's God will remember thee in thine own hour of necessity!"

The boy made no reply, but in a gentle expression which was visible in his dark visage, the mother endeavored to find the pledge she sought. Then, as the youth, with the delicacy of his race, moved aside in order that they who were bound to each other by ties so near might indulge their feelings without observation, Ruth again drew near her offspring, with all the tenderness of a mother beaming in her eyes.

"Once more I bid thee not to look too curiously at the fearful strife that may arise in front of our habitations," she said. "The heathen is truly upon us, with bloody mind; young, as well as old, must now show faith in the protection of our master, and such courage as besitteth believers."

"And why is it, mother," demanded her child, "that they seek to do us harm? have we ever done evil to them?"

"I may not say. He that hath made the earth hath given it to us for our uses, and reason would
seem to teach that if portions of its surface are vacant, he that needeth truly, may occupy."

"The savage!" whispered the child, nestling still nearer to the bosom of her stooping parent. "His eye glittereth like the star which hangs above the trees."

"Peace, daughter; his fierce nature broodeth over some fancied wrong!"

"Surely, we are here rightfully. I have heard my father say, that when the Lord made me a present to his arms, our valley was a tangled forest, and that much toil only has made it as it is."

"I hope that what we enjoy, we enjoy rightfully! And yet it seemeth that the savage is ready to deny our claims."

"And where do these bloody enemies dwell? have they, too, valleys like this, and do the Christians break into them to shed blood, in the night?"

"They are of wild and fierce habits, Ruth, and little do they know of our manner of life. Woman is not cherished as among the people of thy father's race, for force of body is more regarded than kinder ties."

The little auditor shuddered, and when she buried her face deeper in the bosom of her parent, it was with a more quickened sense of maternal affection, and with a livelier view, than her infant perception had ever yet known, of the gentle charities of kindred. When she had spoken, the matron impressed the final kiss on the forehead of each of the children, and asking, aloud, that God might bless them, she turned to go to the performance of duties that called for the exhibition of very different qualities. Before quitting the room, however, she once more approached the boy, and, holding the light before his steady eye, she said solemnly—

"I trust my babes to the keeping of a young warrior!"
The look he returned was like the others, cold but not discouraging. A gaze of many moments elicited no reply; and Ruth prepared to quit the place, troubled by uncertainty concerning the intentions of the guardian she left with the girls, while she still trusted that the many acts of kindness which she had shown him, during his captivity, would not go without their reward. Her hand rested on the bolt of the door, in indecision. The moment was favorable to the character of the youth, for she recalled the manner of his return that night, no less than his former acts of faith, and she was about to leave the passage for his egress open, when an uproar arose on the air which filled the valley with all the hideous cries and yells of a savage onset. Drawing the bolt, the startled woman descended, without further thought, and rushed to her post, with the hurry of one who saw only the necessity of exertion in another scene.

"Stand to the timbers, Reuben Ring! Bear back the skulking murderers on their bloody followers! The pikes! Here, Dudley is opening for thy valor. The Lord have mercy on the souls of the ignorant heathen!" mingled with the reports of musketry, the whoops of the warriors, the whizzing of bullets and arrows, with all the other accompaniments of such a contest, were the fearful sounds that saluted the senses of Ruth as she issued into the court. The valley was occasionally lighted by the explosion of fire-arms, and then, at times, the horrible din prevailed in the gloom of deep darkness. Happily, in the midst of all this confusion and violence, the young men of the valley were true to their duties. An alarming attempt to scale the stockade had already been repulsed, and, the true character of two or three feints having been ascertained, the principal force of the garrison was now actively employed in resisting the main attack.
“In the name of him who is with us in every danger!” exclaimed Ruth, advancing to two figures that were so busily engaged in their own concerns as not to heed her approach, “tell me how goes the struggle? Where are my husband and the boy?—or has it pleased Providence that any of our people should be stricken?”

“It hath pleased the Devil,” returned Eben Dudley, somewhat irreverently for one of that chastened school, “to send an Indian arrow through jerkin and skin, into this arm of mine! Softly, Faith; dost think, girl, that the covering of man is like the coat of a sheep, from which the fleece may be plucked at will! I am no moulting fowl, nor is this arrow a feather of my wing. The Lord forgive the rogue for the ill turn he hath done my flesh, say I, and amen like a Christian! he will have occasion too for the mercy, seeing he hath nothing further to hope for in this world. Now, Faith, I acknowledge the debt of thy kindness, and let there be no more cutting speech between us. Thy tongue often pricketh more sorely than the Indian’s arrow.”

“Whose fault is it that old acquaintance hath sometimes been overlooked, in new conversations? Thou knowest that, wooed by proper speech, no maiden in the Colony is wont to render gentler answer. Dost feel uneasiness in thine arm, Dudley?”

“Tis not tickling with a straw, to drive a flint-headed arrow to the bone! I forgive thee the matter of too much discourse with the trooper, and all the side-cuts of thy over-ambling tongue, on conditions that——”

“Out upon thee, brawler! wouldst be prating here the night long on pretence of a broken skin, and the savage at our gates? A fine character will the Madam render of thy deeds, when the other youths have beaten back the Indian, and thou loitering among the buildings!”
The discomfited borderer was about to curse in
his heart the versatile humor of his mistress, when
he saw, by a side-glance, that ears which had no
concern in the subject, had liked to have shared in
the matter of their discourse. Seizing the weapon
which was leaning against the foundation of the
block, he hurried past the mistress of the family,
and, in another minute, his voice and his musket
were again heard ringing in the uproar.

"Does he bring tidings from the palisadoes?"
repeated Ruth, too anxious that the young man
should return to his post, to arrest his retreat.
"What saith he of the onset?"

"The savage hath suffered for his boldness, and
little harm hath yet come to our people. Except
that yon block of a man hath managed to put arm
before the passage of an arrow, I know not that
any of our people have been harmed."

"Hearken! they retire, Ruth. The yells are less
near, and our young men will prevail! Go thou to
thy charge among the piles of the fuel, and see that
no lurker remaineth to do injury. The Lord hath
remembered mercy, and it may yet arrive that this
evil shall pass away from us!"

The quick ear of Ruth had not deceived her.
The tumult of the assault was gradually receding
from the works, and though the flashings of the
muskets and the bellowing reports that rang in the
surrounding forest were not less frequent than before,
it was plain that the critical moment of the onset
was already past. In place of the fierce effort to
carry the place by surprise, the savages had now
resorted to means that were more methodical, and
which, though not so appalling in appearance, were
perhaps quite as certain of final success. Ruth
profited by a momentary cessation in the flight of
the missiles, to seek those in whose welfare she had
placed her chief concern.
"Has other, than brave Dudley, suffered by this assault?" demanded the anxious wife, as she passed swiftly among a group of dusky figures that were collected in consultation, on the brow of the declivity; "has any need of such care as a woman's hand may bestow? Heathcote, thy person is unharmed!"

"Truly, one of great mercy hath watched over it, for little opportunity hath been given to look to our own safety. I fear that some of our young men have not regarded the covers with the attention that prudence requires."

"The thoughtless Mark hath not forgotten my admonitions! Boy, thou hast never lost sight of duty so far as to precede thy father?"

"One sees or thinks but little of the redskins, when the whoop is ringing among the timbers of the palisadoes, mother," returned the boy, dashing his hand across his brow, in order that the drops of blood which were trickling from a furrow left by the passage of an arrow, might not be seen. "I have kept near my father, but whether in his front, or in his rear, the darkness hath not permitted me to note."

"The lad hath behaved in a bold and seemly manner," said the stranger; "and he hath shown the metal of his grandsire's stock—ha! what is't we see gleaming among the sheds? A sortie may be needed, to save the granaries and thy folds from destruction!"

"To the barns! to the barns!" shouted two of the youths, from their several look-outs. "The brand is in the buildings!" exclaimed a maiden who discharged a similar duty under cover of the dwellings. Then followed a discharge of muskets, all of which were levelled at the glancing light that was glaring in fearful proximity to the combustible materials which filled the most of the out-buildings. A savage yell, and the sudden extinguishment of the
blazing knot, announced the fatal accuracy of the aim.

"This may not be neglected!" exclaimed Content, moved to extraordinary excitement by the extremity of the danger. "Father!" he called aloud; "'tis fitting time to show our utmost strength."

A moment of suspense succeeded this summons. The whole valley was then as suddenly lighted, as if a torrent of the electric fluid had flashed across its gloomy bed; a sheet of flame glanced from the attic of the block, and then came the roar of the little piece of artillery, which had so long dwelt there in silence. The rattling of a shot among the sheds, and the rending of timber, followed. Fifty dark forms were seen, by the momentary light, gliding from among the out-buildings, in an alarm natural to their ignorance, and with an agility proportioned to their alarm. The moment was propitious. Content silently motioned to Reuben Ring; they passed the postern together, and disappeared in the direction of the barns. The period of their absence was one of intense care to Ruth, and it was not without its anxiety even to those whose nerves were better steeled. A few moments, however, served to appease these feelings; for the adventurers returned in safety, and as silently as they had quitted the defences. The trampling of feet on the crust of the snow, the neighing of horses, and the bellowing of frightened cattle, as the terrified beasts scattered about the fields, soon proclaimed the object of the risk which had just been run.

"Enter!" whispered Ruth, who held the postern with her own hand. "Enter, of Heaven's mercy! Thou hast given liberty to every hoof, that no living creature perish by the flames?"

"All; and truly not too speedily—for, see—the brand is again at work!"

Content had much reason to felicitate himself on
his expedition; for, even while he spoke, half-concealed torches, made as usual of blazing knots of pine, were again seen glancing across the fields, evidently approaching the out-buildings by such indirect and covered paths, as might protect those who bore them from the shot of the garrison. A final and common effort was made to arrest the danger. The muskets of the young men were active, and more than once did the citadel of the stern old Puritan give forth its flood of flame, in order to beat back the dangerous visitants. A few shrieks of savage disappointment and of bodily anguish, announced the success of these discharges; but, though most of those who approached the barns were either driven back in fear, or suffered for their temerity, one among them, more wary or more practised than his companions, found means to effect his object. The firing had ceased, and the besieged were congratulating themselves on success, when a sudden light glared across the fields. A sheet of flame soon came curling over the crest of a wheat-stack, and quickly wrapped the inflammable material in its fierce torrent. Against this destruction there remained no remedy. The barns and inclosures which, so lately, had been lying in the darkness of the hour, were instantly illuminated, and life would have been the penalty paid by any of either party, who should dare to trust his person within the bright glare. The borderers were soon compelled to fall back, even within the shadows of the hill, and to seek such covers as the stockades offered, in order to avoid the aim of the arrow or the bullet.

"This is a mournful spectacle to one that has harvested in charity with all men;" said Content to the trembler who convulsively grasped his arm, as the flame whirled in the currents of the heated air, and, sweeping once or twice across the roof of a shed, left a portion of its torrent creeping insidiously
along the wooden covering. "The in-gathering of a blessed season is about to melt into ashes, before the brand of these accr——"

"Peace, Heathcote! What is wealth, or the fullness of thy granaries, to that which remains? Check these repinings of thy spirit, and bless God that he leaveth us our babes, and the safety of our inner roofs."

"Thou sayest truly," returned the husband, endeavoring to imitate the meek resignation of his companion. "What indeed are the gifts of the world, set in the balance against the peace of mind — ha! that evil blast of wind sealeth the destruction of our harvest! The fierce element is in the heart of the granaries."

Ruth made no reply, for though less moved by worldly cares than her husband, the frightful progress of the conflagration alarmed her with a sense of personal danger. The flames had passed from roof to roof, and meeting everywhere with fuel of the most combustible nature, the whole of the vast range of barns, sheds, granaries, cribs and out-buildings, was just breaking forth in the brightness of a torrent of fire. Until this moment, suspense, with hope on one side and apprehension on the other, had kept both parties mute spectators of the scene. But yells of triumph soon proclaimed the delight with which the Indians witnessed the completion of their fell design. The whoops followed this burst of pleasure, and a third onset was made.

The combatants now sought under a brightness which, though less natural, was scarcely less brilliant than that of noon-day. Stimulated by the prospect of success, which was offered by the conflagration, the savages rushed upon the stockade with more audacity than it was usual to display in their cautious warfare. A broad shadow was cast, by the hill and its buildings, across the fields on the
side opposite to the flames, and through this belt of comparative gloom, the fiercest of the band made their way to the very palisades, with impunity. Their presence was announced by the yell of delight, for too many curious eyes had been drinking in the fearful beauty of the conflagration, to note their approach, until the attack had nearly proved successful. The rushes to the defence, and to the attack were now alike quick and headlong. Volleys were useless, for the timbers offered equal security to both assailant and assailed. It was a struggle of hand to hand, in which numbers would have prevailed, had it not been the good fortune of the weaker party to act on the defensive. Blows of the knife were passed swiftly between the timbers, and occasionally the discharge of the musket, or the twanging of the bow, was heard.

"Stand to the timbers, my men!" said the deep tones of the stranger, who spoke in the midst of the fierce struggle with that commanding and stirring cheerfulness that familiarity with danger can alone inspire. "Stand to the defences, and they are impassable. Ha! 'twas well meant, friend savage," he muttered between his teeth, as he parried, at some jeopardy to one hand, a thrust aimed at his throat, while with the other he seized the warrior who had inflicted the blow, and drawing his naked breast, with the power of a giant, full against the opening between the timbers, he buried his own keen blade to its haft in the body. The eyes of the victim rolled wildly, and when the iron hand which bound him to the wood, with the power of a vice, loosened its grasp, he fell motionless on the earth. This death was succeeded by the usual yell of disappointment, and the assailants disappeared, as swiftly as they had approached.

"God be praised, that we have to rejoice in this advantage!" said Content, enumerating the individ-
nels of his force, with an anxious eye, when all were
again assembled at the stand on the hill, where, fa-
vored by the glaring light, they could overlook, in
comparative security, the more exposed parts of
their defences. “We count our own, though I fear
me, many may have suffered.”

The silence and the occupations of his listeners,
most of whom were stanching their blood, was a
sufficient answer.

“Hist, father!” said the quick-eyed and observant
Mark; “one remaineth on the palisado nearest the
wicket. Is it a savage? or do I see a stump, in the
field beyond?”

All eyes followed the direction of the hand of the
speaker, and there was seen, of a certainty, some-
thing clinging to the inner side of one of the timbers,
that bore a marked resemblance to the human form.
The part of the stockades, where the seeming figure
clung, lay more in obscurity than the rest of the
defences, and doubts as to its character were not
alone confined to the quick-sighted lad who had first
detected its presence.

“Who hangs upon our palisadoes?” called Eben
Dudley. “ Speak, that we do not harm a friend!”

The wood itself was not more immovable than
the dark object, until the report of the borderer’s
musket was heard, and then it came tumbling to
the earth like an insensible mass.

“Fallen like a stricken bear from his tree! Life
was in it, or no bullet of mine could have loosened
the hold!” exclaimed Dudley, a little in exultation,
as he saw the success of his aim.

“I will go forward, and see that he is past——”

The mouth of young Mark, was stopped by the
hand of the stranger, who calmly observed—

“I will look into the fate of the heathen, myself.”
He was about to proceed to the spot, when the sup-
posed dead, or wounded man, sprang to his feet, with
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a yell that rang in echoes along the margin of the forest, and bounded towards the cover of the buildings, with high and active leaps. Two or three muskets sent their streaks of flame across his path, but seemingly without success. Jumping in a manner to elude the certainty of their fire, the unharmed savage gave forth another yell of triumph, and disappeared among the angles of the dwellings. His cries were understood, for answering whoops were heard in the fields, and the foe without again rallied to the attack.

"This may not be neglected," said he who, more by his self-possession and air of authority, than by any known right to command, had insensibly assumed so much authority in the important business of that night. "One like this, within our walls, may quickly bring destruction on the garrison. The postern may be opened to an inroad——"

"A triple lock secures it," interrupted Content. "The key is hid where none know to seek it, other than such as are of our household."

"And happily the means of passing the private wicket are in my possession," muttered the other, in an under tone. "So far, well; but the brand! the brand! the maidens must look to the fires and lights, while the youths make good the stockade, since this assault admitth not of further delay."

So saying, the stranger gave an example of courage by proceeding to his stand at the pickets, where, supported by his companions, he continued to defend the approaches against a discharge of arrows and bullets that was more distant, but scarcely less dangerous to the safety of those who showed themselves on the side of the acclivity, than those which had been previously showered upon the garrison.

In the mean time, Ruth summoned her assistants, and hastened to discharge the duty which had just been prescribed. Water was cast freely on all
the fires, and, as the still raging conflagration continued to give far more light than was either necessary or safe, care was taken to extinguish any torch or candle that, in the hurry of alarm, might have been left to moulder in its socket, throughout the extensive range of the dwellings and the offices.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Thou mild, sad mother—
Quit him not so soon!
Mother, in mercy, stay!
Despair and death are with him; and canst thou,
With that kind, earthward look, go leave him now?"

Dana.

When these precautions were taken, the females returned to their several look-outs; and Ruth, whose duty it was in moments of danger to exercise a general superintendence, was left to her meditations and to such watchfulness as her fears might excite. Quitting the inner rooms, she approached the door that communicated with the court, and for a moment lost the recollection of her immediate cares in a view of the imposing scene by which she was surrounded.

By this time, the whole of the vast range of out-buildings, which had been constructed, as was usual in the Colonies, of the most combustible materials and with no regard to the expenditure of wood, was wrapt in fire. Notwithstanding the position of the intermediate edifices, broad flashes of light were constantly crossing the court itself, on whose surface she was able to distinguish the smallest object, while the heavens above her were glaring with a lurid red. Through the openings between the buildings of the quadrangle, the eye could look out upon the
fields, where she saw every evidence of a sullen intention on the part of the savages to persevere in their object. Dark, fierce-looking, and nearly naked human forms were seen flitting from cover to cover while there was no stump nor log within arrow's-flight of the defences, that did not protect the person of a daring and indefatigable enemy. It was plain the Indians were there in hundreds, and as the assaults continued after the failure of a surprise, it was too evident that they were bent on victory, at some hazard to themselves. No usual means of adding to the horrors of the scene were neglected. Whoops and yells were incessantly ringing around the place, while the loud and often-repeated tones of a conch betrayed the artifice by which the savages had so often endeavored, in the earlier part of the night, to lure the garrison out of the palisades. A few scattering shot, discharged with deliberation and from every exposed point within the works, proclaimed both the coolness and the vigilance of the defendants. The little gun in the block-house was silent, for the Puritan knew too well its real power to lessen its reputation by a too frequent use. The weapon was therefore reserved for those moments of pressing danger that would be sure to arrive.

On this spectacle Ruth gazed in fearful sadness. The long-sustained and sylvan security of her abode was violently destroyed; and in the place of a quiet which had approached as near as may be on earth to that holy peace for which her spirit strove, she and all she most loved were suddenly confronted to the most frightful exhibition of human horrors. In such a moment, the feelings of a mother were likely to revive; and ere time was given for reflection, aided by the light of the conflagration, the matron was moving swiftly through the intricate passages
of the dwelling, in quest of those whom she had placed in the security of the chambers.

"Thou hast remembered to avoid looking on the fields, my children," said the nearly breathless woman as she entered the room. "Be thankful, babes; hitherto the efforts of the savages have been vain, and we still remain masters of our habitations."

"Why is the night so red? Come hither, mother thou mayest look into the wood as if the sun were shining!"

"The heathens have fired our granaries, and what thou seest is the light of the flames. But happily they cannot put brand into the dwellings, while thy father and the young men stand to their weapons. We must be grateful for this security, frail as it seemeth. Thou hast knelt, my Ruth; and hast remembered to think of thy father and brother in thy prayers."

"I will do so again, mother," whispered the child, bending to her knees, and wrapping her young features in the garments of the matron.

"Why hide thy countenance? One young and innocent as thou, may lift thine eyes to Heaven with confidence."

"Mother, I see the Indian, unless my face be hid. He looketh at me, I fear, with wish to do us harm."

"Thou art not just to Miantonimoh, child," answered Ruth, as she glanced her eye rapidly round to seek the boy, who had modestly withdrawn into a remote and shaded corner of the room. "I left him with thee for a guardian, and not as one who would wish to injure. Now think of thy God, child," imprinting a kiss on the cold, marble-like forehead of her daughter, "and have reliance in his goodness, Miantonimoh, I again leave you with a charge to be their protector," she added, quitting her daughter and advancing towards the youth.
"Mother!" shrieked the child, "come to me, or I die!"

Ruth turned from the listening captive, with the quickness of instinct. A glance showed her the jeopardy of her offspring. A naked savage, dark, powerful of frame, and fierce in the frightful masquerade of his war-paint, stood winding the silken hair of the girl in one hand, while he already held the glittering axe above a head that seemed inevitably devoted to destruction.

"Mercy! mercy!" exclaimed Ruth, hoarse with horror, and dropping to her knees, as much from inability to stand as with intent to petition. "Monster, strike me, but spare the child!"

The eyes of the Indian rolled over the person of the speaker, but it was with an expression that seemed rather to enumerate the number of his victims, than to announce any change of purpose. With a fiend-like coolness, that bespoke much knowledge of the ruthless practice, he again swung the quivering but speechless child in the air, and prepared to direct the weapon with a fell certainty of aim. The tomahawk had made its last circuit, and an instant would have decided the fate of the victim, when the captive boy stood in front of the frightful actor in this revolting scene. By a quick, forward movement of his arm, the blow was arrested. The deep guttural ejaculation, which betrays the surprise of an Indian, broke from the chest of the savage, while his hand fell to his side, and the form of the suspended girl was suffered again to touch the floor. The look and gesture with which the boy had interfered, expressed authority rather than resentment or horror. His air was calm, collected, and, as it appeared by the effect, imposing.

"Go," he said in the language of the fierce people from whom he had sprung; "the warriors of the pale men are calling thee by name."
"The snow is red with the blood of our young men," the other fiercely answered; "and not a scalp is at the belt of my people."

"These are mine," returned the boy with dignity, sweeping his arm, while speaking, in a manner to show that he extended protection to all present.

The warrior gazed about him grimly, and like one but half-convinced. He had incurred a danger too fearful, in entering the stockade, to be easily diverted from his purpose.

"Listen!" he continued, after a short pause, during which the artillery of the Puritan had again bellowed in the uproar, without. "The thunder is with the Yengeese! Our young women will look another way and call us Pequots, should there be no scalps on our pole."

For a single moment, the countenance of the boy changed, and his resolution seemed to waver. The other, who watched his eyes with longing eagerness, again seized his victim by the hair, when Ruth shrieked in the accents of despair—

"Boy! boy! if thou art not with us, God hath deserted us!"

"She is mine," burst fiercely from the lips of the lad. "Hear my words, Wompahwisset; the blood of my father is very warm within me."

The other paused, and the blow was once more suspended. The glaring eye-balls of the savage rested intently on the swelling form and stern countenance of the young hero, whose uplifted hand appeared to menace instant punishment, should he dare to disregard the mediation. The lips of the warrior severed, and the word 'Miantonimoh' was uttered as softly as if it recalled a feeling of sorrow. Then, as a sudden burst of yells rose above the roar of the conflagration, the fierce Indian turned in his tracks, and, abandoning the trembling
and nearly insensible child, he bounded away like a hound loosened on a fresh scent of blood.

"Boy! boy!" murmured the mother; "heathen or Christian, there is one that will bless thee!—"

A rapid gesture of the hand interrupted the fervent expression of her gratitude. Pointing after the form of the retreating savage, the lad encircled his own head with a finger, in a manner that could not be mistaken, as he uttered steadily, but with the deep emphasis of an Indian—

"The young Pale-face has a scalp!"

Ruth heard no more. With instinctive rapidity, every feeling of her soul quickened nearly to agony, she rushed below, in order to warn Mark against the machinations of so fearful an enemy. Her step was heard but for a moment in the vacant chambers, and then the Indian boy, whose steadiness and authority had just been so signally exerted in favor of the children, resumed his attitude of meditation, as quietly as if he took no further interest in the frightful events of the night.

The situation of the garrison was now, indeed, to the last degree critical. A torrent of fire had passed from the further extremity of the out-houses to that which stood nearest to the defences, and, as building after building melted beneath its raging power, the palisadoes became heated nearly to the point of ignition. The alarm created by this imminent danger had already been given, and, when Ruth issued into the court, a female was rushing past her, seemingly on some errand of the last necessity.

"Hast seen him?" demanded the breathless mother, arresting the steps of the quick-moving girl.

"Not since the savage made his last onset, but I warrant me he may be found near the western loops, making good the works against the enemy!"

"Surely he is not foremost in the fray! Of whom speakest thou, Faith? I questioned thee of Mark.
There is one, even now, raging within the pickets, seeking a victim."

"Truly, I thought it had been question of—the boy is with his father and the stranger soldier, who does such deeds of valor in our behalf. I have seen no enemy within the palisadoes, Madam Heathcote, since the entry of the man who escaped, by favor of the powers of darkness, from the shot of Eben Dudley's musket."

"And is this evil like to pass from us," resumed Ruth, breathing more freely, as she learned the safety of her son; "or does Providence veil its face in anger?"

"We keep our own, though the savage hath pressed the young men to extremity. Oh! it gladdened heart to see how brave a guard Reuben Ring, and others near him, made in our behalf. I do think me, Madam Heathcote, that, after all, there is real manhood in the brawler Dudley! Truly, the youth hath done marvels in the way of exposure and resistance. Twenty times this night have I expected to see him slain."

"And he that lyeth there?" half-whispered the alarmed Ruth, pointing to a spot near them, where, aside from the movements of those who still acted in the bustle of the combat, one lay stretched on the earth—"who hath fallen?"

The cheek of Faith blanched to a whiteness that nearly equalled that of the linen, which, even in the hurry of such a scene, some friendly hand had found leisure to throw, in decent sadness, over the form.

"That!" said the faltering girl; "though hurt and bleeding, my brother Reuben surely keepeth the loop at the western angle; nor is Whittal wanting in sufficient sense to take heed of danger—This may not be the stranger, for under the covers of the
postern breast-work he holdeth counsel with the young captain."

"Art certain, girl?"

"I saw them both within the minute. Would to God we could hear the shout of noisy Dudley, Madam Heathcote: his cry cheereth the heart, in a moment awful as this!"

"Lift the cloth," said Ruth with calm solemnity, "that we may know which of our friends hath been called to the great account."

Faith hesitated, and when, by a powerful effort, in which secret interest had as deep an influence as obedience, she did comply, it was with a sort of desperate resolution. On raising the linen, the eyes of the two women rested on the pallid countenance of one who had been transfixed by an iron-headed arrow. The girl dropped the linen, and in a voice that sounded like a burst of hysterical feeling, she exclaimed—

"'Tis but the youth that came lately among us! We are spared the loss of any ancient friend."

"'Tis one who died for our safety. I would give largely of this world's comforts, that this calamity might not have been, or that greater leisure for the last fearful reckoning had been accorded. But we may not lose the moments in mourning. Hie thee, girl, and sound the alarm that a savage lurketh within our walls, and that he skulketh in quest of a secret blow. Bid all be wary. If the young Mark should cross thy path, speak to him twice of this danger; the child hath a froward spirit, and may not hearken to words uttered in too great hurry."

With this charge, Ruth quitted her maiden. While the latter proceeded to give the necessary notice, the other sought the spot where she had just learned there was reason to believe her husband might be found.

Content and the stranger were in fact met in
consultation over the danger which threatened de-
struction to their most important means of defence.
The savages themselves appeared to be conscious
that the flames were working in their favor; for
their efforts sensibly slackened, and having already
severely suffered in their attempts to annoy the
garrison, they had fallen back to their covers, and
awaited the moment when their practised cunning
should tell them they might, with more flattering
promises of success, again rally to the onset. A brief
explanation served to make Ruth acquainted with
the imminent jeopardy of their situation. Under a
sense of a more appalling danger, she lost the re-
collection of her former purpose, and with a con-
tracted and sorrowing eye, she stood like her com-
panions, in impotent helplessness, an entranced spec-
tator of the progress of the destruction.

"A soldier should not waste words in useless
plaints," observed the stranger, folding his arms
like one who was conscious that human effort could
do no more, "else should I say, 'tis pity that he who
drew yon line of stockade hath not remembered
the uses of the ditch."

"I will summon the maidens to the wells," said
Ruth.

"'Twill not avail us. The arrow would be among
them, nor could mortal long endure the heat of
yon glowing furnace. Thou seest that the timbers
already smoke and blacken, under its fierceness."

The stranger was still speaking, when a small
quivering flame played on the corners of the palis-
sado nearest the burning pile. The element flutter-
ed like a waving line along the edges of the heated
wood, after which it spread over the whole surface
of the timber, from its larger base to the pointed
summit. As if this had merely been the signal of a
general destruction, the flames kindled in fifty places
at the same instant, and then the whole line of
the stockade, nearest the conflagration, was covered with fire. A yell of triumph arose in the fields, and a flight of arrows, sailing tauntingly into the works, announced the fierce impatience of those who watched the increase of the conflagration.

"We shall be driven to our block," said Content. "Assemble thy maidens, Ruth, and make speedy preparation for the last retreat."

"I go; but hazard not thy life in any vain endeavor to retard the flames. There will yet be time for all that is needful to our security."

"I know not," hurriedly observed the stranger. "Here cometh the assault in a new aspect!"

The feet of Ruth were arrested. On looking upward, she saw the object which had drawn this remark from the last speaker. A small bright ball of fire had arisen out of the fields, and, describing an arc in the air, it sailed above their heads and fell on the shingles of a building which formed part of the quadrangle of the inner court. The movement was that of an arrow thrown from a distant bow, and its way was to be traced by a long trail of light, that followed its course like a blazing meteor. This burning arrow had been sent with a cool and practised judgment. It lighted upon a portion of the combustibles that were nearly as inflammable as gunpowder, and the eye had scarcely succeeded in tracing it to its fall, ere the bright flames were seen stealing over the heated roof.

"One struggle for our habitations!" cried Content—but the hand of the stranger was placed firmly on his shoulder. At that instant, a dozen similar meteor-looking balls shot into the air, and fell in as many different places on the already half-kindled pile. Further efforts would have been useless. Relinquishing the hope of saving his property, every thought was now given to personal safety.

Ruth recovered from her short trance, and has-
tened with hurried steps to perform her well-known office. Then came a few minutes of exertion, during which the females transferred all that was necessary to their subsistence, and which had not been already provided in the block, to their little citadel. The glowing light, which penetrated the darkest passages among the buildings, prevent this movement from being made without discovery. The whoop summoned their enemies to another attack. The arrows thickened in the air, and the important duty was not performed without risk, as all were obliged, in some degree, to expose their persons, while passing to and fro, loaded with necessaries. The gathering smoke, however, served in some measure for a screen; and it was not long before Content received the welcome tidings that he might command the retreat of his young men from the palisadoes. The conch sounded the necessary signal, and ere the foe had time to understand its meaning, or profit by the defenceless state of the works, every individual within them had reached the door of the block in safety. Still, there was more of hurry and confusion than altogether comported with their safety. They who were assigned to that duty, however, mounted eagerly to the loops, and stood in readiness to pour out their fire on whoever might dare to come within its reach, while a few still lingered in the court, to see that no necessary provision for resistance, or of safety, was forgotten. Ruth had been foremost in exertion, and she now stood pressing her hands to her temples, like one whose mind was bewildered by her own efforts.

"Our fallen friend!" she said. "Shall we leave his remains to be mangled by the savage?"

"Surely not; Dudley, thy hand. We will bear the body within the lower—ha! death hath struck another of our family."

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The alarm with which Content made this discovery passed quickly to all in hearing. It was but too apparent, by the shape of the linen, that two bodies lay beneath its folds. Anxious and rapid looks were cast from face to face, in order to learn who was missing; and then, conscious of the hazard of further delay, Content raised the linen, in order to remove all doubts by certainty. The form of the young borderer, who was known to have fallen, was first slowly and reverently uncovered; but even the most self-restrained among the spectators started back in horror, as his robbed and reeking head showed that a savage hand had worked its ruthless will on the unresisting corpse.

"The other!" Ruth struggled to say, and it was only as her husband had half-removed the linen that she could succeed in uttering the words—"Beware the other!"

The warning was not useless, for the linen waved violently as it rose under the hand of Content, and a grim Indian sprang into the very centre of the startled group. Sweeping his armed hand widely about him, the savage broke through the receding circle, and, giving forth the appalling whoop of his tribe, he bounded into the open door of the principal dwelling, so swiftly as utterly to defeat any design of pursuit. The arms of Ruth were frantically extended towards the place where he had disappeared, and she was about to rush madly on his footsteps, when the hand of her husband stopped the movement.

"Wouldst hazard life, to save some worthless trifle?"

"Husband, release me!" returned the woman, nearly choked with her agony—"nature hath slept within me!"

"Fear blindeth thy reason!"

The form of Ruth ceased to struggle. All the
madness, which had been glaring wildly about her eyes, disappeared in the settled look of an almost preternatural calm. Collecting the whole of her mental energy in one desperate effort of self-command, she turned to her husband, and, as her bosom swelled with the terror that seemed to stop her breath, she said in a voice that was frightful by its composure—

"If thou hast a father's heart, release me!—Our babes have been forgotten!"

The hand of Content relaxed its hold, and, in another instant, the form of his wife was lost to view on the track that had just been taken by the successful savage. This was the luckless moment chosen by the foe to push his advantage. A fierce burst of yells proclaimed the activity of the assailants, and a general discharge from the loops of the block-house sufficiently apprised those in the court that the onset of the enemy was now pushed into the very heart of the defences. All had mounted, but the few who lingered to discharge the melancholy duty to the dead. They were too few to render resistance prudent, and yet too many to think of deserting the distracted mother and her offspring without an effort.

"Enter," said Content, pointing to the door of the block. "It is my duty to share the fate of those nearest my blood."

The stranger made no answer. Placing his powerful hands on the nearly stupified husband, he thrust his person, by an irresistible effort, within the basement of the building, and then he signed, by a quick gesture, for all around him to follow. After the last form had entered, he commanded that the fastenings of the door should be secured, remaining himself, as he believed, alone without. But when by a rapid glance he saw there was another gazing in dull awe on the features of the
fallen man, it was too late to rectify the mistake. Yells were now rising out of the black smoke, that was rolling in volumes from the heated buildings, and it was plain that only a few feet divided them from their pursuers. Beckoning the man who had been excluded from the block to follow, the stern soldier rushed into the principal dwelling, which was still but little injured by the fire. Guided rather by chance than by any knowledge of the windings of the building, he soon found himself in the chambers. He was now at a loss whither to proceed. At that moment, his companion, who was no other than Whittal Ring, took the lead, and in another instant, they were at the door of the secret apartment.

"Hist!" said the stranger, raising a hand to command silence as he entered the room. "Our hope is in secrecy."

"And how may we escape without detection?" demanded the mother, pointing about her at objects illuminated by a light so powerful as to penetrate every cranny of the ill-constructed building. "The noon-day sun is scarce brighter than this dreadful fire!"

"God is in the elements! His guiding hand shall point the way. But here we may not tarry, for the flames are already on the shingles. Follow, and speak not."

Ruth pressed the children to her side, and the whole party left the apartment of the attic in a body. Their descent to a lower room was made quickly, and without discovery. But here their leader paused, for the state of things without was one to demand the utmost steadiness of nerve, and great reflection.

The Indians had by this time gained command of the whole of Mark Heathcote's possessions, with the exception of the block-house; and as their first act had been to apply the brand wherever it might
be wanting, the roar of the conflagration was now heard in every direction. The discharge of muskets and the whoops of the combatants, however, while they added to the horrible din of such a scene, proclaimed the unconquered resolution of those who held the citadel. A window of the room they occupied enabled the stranger to take a cautious survey of what was passing without. The court, lighted to the brilliancy of day, was empty; for the increasing heat of the fires, no less than the discharges from the loops, still kept the cautious savages to their covers. There was barely hope, that the space between the dwelling and the block-house might yet be passed in safety.

"I would I had asked that the door of the block should be held in hand," muttered Submission; "it would be death to linger an instant in that fierce light; nor have we any manner of——"

A touch was laid upon his arm, and turning, the speaker saw the dark eye of the captive boy looking steadily in his face.

"Wilt do it?" demanded the other, in a manner to show that he doubted, while he hoped.

A speaking gesture of assent was the answer, and then the form of the lad was seen gliding quietly from the room.

Another instant, and Miantonimoh appeared in the court. He walked with the deliberation that one would have shown in moments of the most entire security. A hand was raised towards the loops, as if to betoken amity, and then dropping the limb, he moved with the same slow step into the very centre of the area. Here the boy stood in the fullest glare of the conflagration, and turned his face deliberately on every side of him. The action showed that he wished to invite all eyes to examine his person. At this moment the yells ceased in the surrounding covers, proclaiming alike the common feeling
that was awakened by his appearance, and the hazard that any other would have incurred by exposing himself in that fearful scene. When this act of exceeding confidence had been performed, the boy drew a pace nearer to the entrance of the block.

"Comest thou in peace, or is this another device of Indian treachery?" demanded a voice, through an opening in the door left expressly for the purposes of parley.

The boy raised the palm of one hand towards the speaker, while he laid the other with a gesture of confidence on his naked breast.

"Hast aught to offer in behalf of my wife and babes? If gold will buy their ransom, name thy price."

Mianitonimoh was at no loss to comprehend the other's meaning. With the readiness of one whose faculties had been early schooled in the inventions of emergencies, he made a gesture that said even more than his figurative words, as he answered—

"Can a woman of the Pale-faces pass through wood? An Indian arrow is swifter than the foot of my mother."

"Boy, I trust thee," returned the voice from within the loop. "If thou deceivest beings so feeble and so innocent, Heaven will remember the wrong."

Mianitonimoh again made a sign to show that caution must be used, and then he retired with a step calm and measured as that used in his advance. Another pause to the shouts betrayed the interest of those whose fierce eyes watched his movements in the distance.

When the young Indian had rejoined the party in the dwelling, he led them, without being observed by the lurking band that still hovered in the smoke of the surrounding buildings, to a spot that commanded a full view of their short but perilous route. At
this moment the door of the block-house half-opened, and was closed again. Still the stranger hesitated, for he saw how little was the chance that all should cross the court unharmed, and to pass it by repeated trials he knew to be impossible.

"Boy," he said, "thou, who hast done thus much, may still do more. Ask mercy for these children, in some manner that may touch the hearts of thy people."

Miantonimoh shook his head, and pointing to the ghastly corpse that lay in the court, he answered coldly—

"The red-man has tasted blood."

"Then must the desperate trial be done! Think not of thy children, devoted and daring mother, but look only to thine own safety. This witless youth and I will charge ourselves with the care of the innocents."

Ruth waved him away with her hand, pressing her mute and trembling daughter to her bosom, in a manner to show that her resolution was taken. The stranger yielded, and turning to Whittal, who stood near him, seemingly as much occupied in vacant admiration of the blazing piles as in any apprehension of his own personal danger, he bade him look to the safety of the remaining child. Moving in front himself, he was about to offer Ruth such protection as the case afforded, when a window in the rear of the house was dashed inward, announcing the entrance of the enemy, and the imminent danger that their flight would be intercepted. There was no time to lose, for it was now certain that only a single room separated them from their foes. The generous nature of Ruth was roused, and catching Martha from the arms of Whittal Ring, she endeavored, by a desperate effort, in which feeling rather than any reasonable motive predominated, to envelop both the children in her robe.
"I am with ye!" whispered the agitated woman "hush ye, hush ye, babes! thy mother is nigh!"

The stranger was very differently employed. The instant the crash of glass was heard, he rushed to the rear; and he had already grappled with the savage so often named, and who acted as guide to a dozen fierce and yelling followers.

"To the block!" shouted the steady soldier while with a powerful arm he held his enemy in the throat of the narrow passage, stopping the approach of those in the rear by the body of his foe. "For the love of life and children, woman, to the block!"

The summons rang frightfully in the ears of Ruth, but in that moment of extreme jeopardy her presence of mind was lost. The cry was repeated, and not till then did the bewildered mother catch her daughter from the floor. With eyes still bent on the fierce struggle in her rear, she clasped the child to her heart and fled, calling on Whittal Ring to follow. The lad obeyed, and ere she had half-crossed the court, the stranger, still holding his savage shield between him and his enemies, was seen endeavoring to take the same direction. The whoops, the flight of arrows, and the discharges of musquetry, that succeeded, proclaimed the whole extent of the danger. But fear had lent unnatural vigor to the limbs of Ruth, and the gliding arrows themselves scarce sailed more swiftly through the heated air, than she darted into the open door of the block. Whittal Ring was less successful. As he crossed the court, bearing the child intrusted to his care, an arrow pierced his flesh. Stung by the pain, the witless lad turned, in anger, to chide the hand that had inflicted the injury.

"On, foolish boy!" cried the stranger, as he passed him, still making a target of the body of the savage that was writhing in his grasp. "On, for thy life, and that of the babe!"
The mandate came too late. The hand of an Indian was already on the innocent victim, and in the next instant the child was sweeping the air, while with a short yell the keen axe flourished above his head. A shot from the loops laid the monster dead in his tracks. The girl was instantly seized by another hand, and as the captor with his prize darted unharmed into the dwelling, there arose in the block a common exclamation of the name of "Miantonimoh!" Two more of the savages profited by the pause of horror that followed, to lay hands on the wounded Whittal and to drag him within the blazing building. At the same moment, the stranger cast the unresisting savage back upon the weapons of his companions. The bleeding and half-strangled Indian met the blows which had been aimed at the life of the soldier, and as he staggered and fell, his vigorous conqueror disappeared in the block. The door of the little citadel was instantly closed, and the savages, who rushed headlong against the entrance, heard the fitting of the bars which secured it against their attacks. The yell of retreat was raised, and in the next instant the court was left to the possession of the dead.
CHAPTER XV.

"Did Heaven look on,
And would not take their part?—
——; Heaven rest them now!"

MACBETH.

"We will be thankful for this blessing," said Content, as he aided the half-unconscious Ruth to mount the ladder, yielding himself to a feeling of nature that said little against his manhood. "If we have lost one that we loved, God hath spared our own child."

His breathless wife threw herself into a seat, and folding the treasure to her bosom, she whispered rather than said aloud—"From my soul, Heathcote, am I grateful!"

"Thou shieldest the babe from my sight," returned the father, stooping to conceal a tear that was stealing down his brown cheek, under a pretence of embracing the child—but suddenly recoiling, he added in alarm—"Ruth!"

Startled by the tone in which her husband uttered her name, the mother threw aside the folds of her dress, which still concealed the girl, and stretching her out to the length of an arm, she saw that, in the hurry of the appalling scene, the children had been exchanged, and that she had saved the life of Martha!

Notwithstanding the generous disposition of Ruth, it was impossible to repress the feeling of disappointment which came over her with the consciousness of the mistake. Nature at first had sway, and to a degree that was fearfully powerful.

"It is not our babe!" shrieked the mother, still holding the child at the length of her arm, and
gazing at its innocent and terrified countenance, with an expression that Martha had never yet seen gleaming from eyes that were, in common, so soft and so indulgent.

"I am thine! I am thine!" murmured the little trembler, struggling in vain to reach the bosom that had so long cherished her infancy. "If not thine, whose am I?"

The gaze of Ruth was still wild, the workings of her features hysterical.

"Madam—Mrs. Heathcote—mother!" came timidly, and at intervals, from the lips of the orphan. Then the heart of Ruth relented. She clasped the daughter of her friend to her breast, and Nature found a temporary relief in one of those frightful exhibitions of anguish, which appear to threaten the dissolution of the link which connects the soul with the body.

"Come, daughter of John Harding," said Content, looking around him with the assumed composure of a chastened man, while natural regret struggled hard at his heart; "this has been God's pleasure; it is meet that we kiss his parental hand. Let us be thankful," he added, with a quivering lip but steady eye, "that even this mercy hath been shown. Our babe is with the Indian, but our hopes are far beyond the reach of savage malignity. We have not 'laid up treasure where moth and rust can corrupt, or where thieves may break in and steal.' It may be that the morning shall bring means of parley, and haply, opportunity of ransom."

There was the glimmering of hope in this suggestion. The idea seemed to give a new direction to the thoughts of Ruth, and the change enabled the long habits of self-restraint to regain something of their former ascendency. The fountains of her tears became dry, and, after one short and terrible struggle, she was again enabled to appear composed. But
at no time during the continuance of that fearful struggle, was Ruth Heathcote again the same ready and useful agent of activity and order that she had been in the earlier events of the night.

It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader that the brief burst of parental agony which has just been related, escaped Content and his wife amid a scene in which the other actors were too much occupied by their exertions to note its exhibition. The fate of those in the block was too evidently approaching its close, to allow of any interest in such an episode to the great tragedy of the moment.

The character of the contest had in some measure changed. There was no longer any immediate apprehension from the missiles of the assailants, though danger pressed upon the besieged in a new and even in a more horrible aspect. Now and then indeed an arrow quivered in the openings of the loops, and the blunt Dudley had once a narrow escape from the passage of a bullet, which, guided by chance, or aimed by a hand surer than common, glanced through one of the narrow slits, and would have terminated the history of the borderer, had not the head it obliquely encountered, been too solid to yield even to such an assault. The attention of the garrison was chiefly called to the imminent danger of the surrounding fire. Though the probability of such an emergency as that in which the family was now placed, had certainly been foreseen, and in some degree guarded against, in the size of the area and in the construction of the block, yet it was found that the danger exceeded all former calculations.

For the basement, there was no reason to feel alarm. It was of stone, and of a thickness and a material to put at defiance any artifices that their enemy might find time to practise. Even the upper stories were comparatively safe; for they
were composed of blocks so solid as to require time to heat them, and they were consequently as little liable to combustion as wood well could be. But the roof, like all of that, and indeed, like most of the present day in America, was composed of short inflammable shingles of pine. The superior height of the tower was some little protection, but as the flames rose roaring above the buildings of the court, and waved in wide circuits around the heated area, the whole of the fragile covering of the block was often wrapped in folds of fire. The result may be anticipated. Content was first recalled from the bitterness of his parental regret, by a cry, which passed among the family, that the roof of their little citadel was in flames. One of the ordinary wells of the habitation was in the basement of the edifice, and it was fortunate that no precaution necessary to render it serviceable in an emergency like that which was now arrived, had been neglected. A well-secured shaft of stone rose through the lower apartment into the upper floor. Profiting by this happy precaution, the handmaidens of Ruth plied the buckets with diligence, while the young men cast water freely on the roof, from the windows of the attic. The latter duty, it may readily be supposed, was not performed without hazard. Flights of arrows were constantly directed against the laborers, and more than one of the youths received greater or less injuries, while exposed to their annoyance. There were indeed a few minutes, during which it remained a question of grave interest how far the risk they ran was likely to be crowned with success. The excessive heat of so many fires, and the occasional contact with the flames, as they swept in eddies over the place, began to render it doubtful whether any human efforts could long arrest the evil. Even the massive and moistened logs of the body of the work began to smoke; and
it was found, by experiment, that the hand could rest but a moment on their surface.

During this interval of deep suspense, all the men posted at the loops were called to aid in extinguishing the fire. Resistance was forgotten in the discharge of a duty that had become still more pressing. Ruth herself was aroused by the nature of the alarm, and all hands and all minds were arduously occupied in a toil that diverted attention from incidents which had less interest, because they were teeming less with instant destruction. Danger is known to lose its terrors by familiarity. The young borderers became reckless of their persons in the ardor of exertion, and as success began to crown their efforts, something like the levity of happier moments got the better of their concern. Stolen and curious glances were thrown around a place that had so long been kept sacred to the secret uses of the Puritan, when it was found that the flames were subdued, and that the present danger was averted. The light glared powerfully through several openings in the shingles, no less than through the windows; and every eye was enabled to scan the contents of an apartment which all had longed, though none had ever before presumed, to enter.

"The Captain looketh well to the body," whispered Reuben Ring to one of his comrades, as he wiped the effects of the toil from a sun-burnt brow. "Thou seest, Hiram, that there is good store of cheer."

"The buttery is not better stored!" returned the other, with the shrewdness and ready observation of a border-man. "It is known that he never toucheth that which the cow yields, except as it comes from the creature, and here we find of the best that the Madam's dairy can yield!"

"Surely yon buff jerkin is like to those worn by
the idle cavaliers at home! I think it be long since the Captain hath ridden forth in such a guise."

"That may be matter of ancient usage, for thou seest he hath relics of the fashion of the English troopers in this bit of steel; it is like, he holdeth deep exercise over the vanities of his youth, while recalling the times in which they were worn."

This conjecture appeared to satisfy the other, though it is probable that a sight of a fresh store of bodily aliment, which was soon after exposed in order to gain access to the roof, might have led to some further inferences, had more time been given to conjectures. But at this moment a new wail proceeded from the maidens who plied the buckets beneath.

"To the loops! to the loops, or we are lost!" was a summons that admitted of no delay. Led by the stranger, the young men rushed below, where, in truth, they found a serious demand on all their activity and courage.

The Indians were wanting in none of the sagacity which so remarkably distinguishes the warfare of this cunning race. The time spent by the family, in arresting the flames, had not been thrown away by the assailants. Profiting by the attention of those within, to efforts that were literally of the last importance, they had found means to convey burning brands to the door of the block, against which they had piled a mass of blazing combustibles, that threatened shortly to open the way into the basement of the citadel itself. In order to mask this design, and to protect their approaches, the savages had succeeded in dragging bundles of straw and other similar materials to the foot of the work, to which the fire soon communicated, and which consequently served both to increase the actual danger of the building and to distract the attention of those by whom it was defended. Although the water that
fell from the roof served to retard the progress of these flames, it contributed to produce the effect of all others that was most desired by the savages. The dense volumes of smoke that arose from the half-smothered fire, first apprised the females of the new danger which assailed them. When Content and the stranger reached the principal floor of their citadel, it required some little time, and no small degree of coolness, to comprehend the situation in which they were now placed. The vapor that rolled upward from the wet straw and hay had already penetrated into the apartment, and it was with no slight difficulty that they who occupied it were enabled to distinguish objects, or even to breathe.

"Here is matter to exercise our utmost fortitude," said the stranger to his constant companion, "We must look to this new device, or we come to the fate of death by fire. Summon the stoutest-hearted of thy youths, and I will lead them to a sortie, ere the evil get past a remedy."

"That were certain victory to the heathen. Thou hearest, by their yells, that 'tis no small band of scouters who beleaguer us; a tribe hath sent forth its chosen warriors to do their wickedness. Better is it that we bestir ourselves to drive them from our door, and to prevent the further annoyance of this cloud, since, to issue from the block, at this moment, would be to offer our heads to the tomahawk; and to ask mercy is as vain as to hope to move the rock with tears."

"And in what manner may we do this needful service?"

"Our muskets will still command the entrance, by means of these downward loops, and water may be yet applied through the same openings. Thought hath been had of this danger, in the disposition of the place."
"Then, of Heaven's mercy! delay not the effort."

The necessary measures were taken, instantly. Eben Dudley applied the muzzle of his piece to a loop, and discharged it downward, in the direction of the endangered door. But aim was impossible in the obscurity, and his want of success was proclaimed by a taunting shout of triumph. Then followed a flood of water, which however was scarcely of more service, since the savages had foreseen its use, and had made a provision against its effects by placing boards, and such vessels as they found scattered among the buildings, above the fire, in a manner to prevent most of the fluid from reaching its aim.

"Come hither with thy musket, Reuben Ring," said Content, hurriedly; "the wind stirreth the smoke, here; the savages still heap fuel against the wall."

The borderer complied. There were in fact moments when dark human forms were to be seen gliding in silence around the building, though the density of the vapor rendered the forms indistinct and their movements doubtful. With a cool and practised eye, the youth sought a victim; but as he discharged his musket, an object glanced near his own visage, as though the bullet had recoiled on him who had given it a very different mission. Stepping backward a little hurriedly, he saw the stranger pointing through the smoke at an arrow which still quivered in the floor above them.

"We cannot long abide these assaults," the soldier muttered; "something must be speedily devised, or we fall."

His words ceased, for a yell that appeared to lift the floor on which he stood, announced the destruction of the door and the presence of the savages in the basement of the tower. Both parties appeared momentarily confounded at this unexpected success; for while the one stood mute with astonishment and
dread, the other did little more than triumph. But this inaction soon ended. The conflict was resumed, though the efforts of the assailants began to assume the confidence of victory, while, on the part of the besieged, they partook fearfully of the aspect of despair.

A few muskets were discharged, both from below and above, at the intermediate floor, but the thickness of the planks prevented the bullets from doing injury. Then commenced a struggle in which the respective qualities of the combatants were exhibited in a singularly characteristic manner. While the Indians improved their advantages beneath, with all the arts known to savage warfare, the young men resisted with that wonderful aptitude of expedient, and readiness of execution, which distinguish the American borderer.

The first attempt of the assailants was to burn the floor of the lower apartment. In order to effect this, they threw vast piles of straw into the basement. But ere the brand was applied, water had reduced the inflammable material to a black and murky pile. Still the smoke had nearly effected a conquest which the fire itself had failed to achieve. So suffocating indeed were the clouds of vapor which ascended through the crevices, that the females were compelled to seek a refuge in the attic. Here the openings in the roof, and a swift current of air, relieved them, in some degree, from its annoyance.

When it was found that the command of the well afforded the besieged the means of protecting the wood-work of the interior, an effort was made to cut off the communication with the water, by forcing a passage into the circular stone shaft, through which it was drawn into the room above. This attempt was defeated, by the readiness of the youths, who soon cut holes in the floor, whence they sent down certain death on all beneath. Perhaps no part of
the assault was more obstinate than that which accompanied this effort; nor did either assailants or assailed, at any time during its continuance, suffer greater personal injury. After a long and fierce struggle, the resistance was effectual, and the savages had recourse to new schemes in order to effect their ruthless object.

During the first moments of their entrance, and with a view to reap the fruits of the victory when the garrison should be more effectually subdued, most of the furniture of the dwelling had been scattered by the conquerors on the side of the hill. Among other articles, some six or seven beds had been dragged from the dormitories. These were now brought into play, as powerful instruments in the assault. They were cast, one by one, on the still burning though smothered flames, in the basement of the block, whence they sent up a cloud of their intolerable effluvia. At this trying moment, the appalling cry was heard in the block, that the well had failed! The buckets ascended as empty as they went down, and they were thrown aside as no longer useful. The savages seemed to comprehend their advantage, for they profited by the confusion that succeeded among the assailed, to feed the slumbering fires. The flames kindled fiercely, and in less than a minute they became too violent to be subdued. They were soon seen playing on the planks of the floor above. The subtle element flashed from point to point, and it was not long ere it was stealing up the outer side of the heated block itself.

The savages now knew that conquest was sure. Yells and whoopings proclaimed the fierce delight with which they witnessed the certainty of their victory. Still there was something portentous in the death-like silence with which the victims within the block awaited their fate. The whole exterior
of the building was already wrapped in flames, and yet no show of further resistance, no petition for mercy, issued from its bosom. The unnatural and frightful stillness, that reigned within, was gradually communicated to those without. The cries and shouts of triumph ceased, and the crackling of the flames, or the falling of timber in the adjoining buildings, alone disturbed the awful calm. At length a solitary voice was heard in the block. Its tones were deep, solemn, and imploring. The fierce beings who surrounded the glowing pile bent forward to listen, for their quick faculties caught the first sounds that were audible. It was Mark Heathcote pouring out his spirit in prayer. The petition was fervent, but steady, and though uttered in words that were unintelligible to those without, they knew enough of the practices of the Colonists, to be aware that it was the chief of the Palé-faces holding communion with his God. Partly in awe, and partly in doubt of what might be the consequences of so mysterious an asking, the dark crowd withdrew to a little distance, and silently watched the progress of the destruction. They had heard strange sayings of the power of the Deity of their invaders, and as their victims appeared suddenly to cease using any of the known means of safety, they appeared to expect, perhaps they did expect, some unequivocal manifestation of the power of the Great Spirit of the stranger.

Still no sign of pity, no relenting from the ruthless barbarity of their warfare, escaped any of the assailants. If they thought at all of the temporal fate of those who might still exist within the fiery pile, it was only to indulge in some passing regret, that the obstinacy of the defence had deprived them of the glory of bearing the usual bloody tokens of victory, in triumph to their villages. But even these peculiar and deeply-rooted feelings were for-
gotten, as the progress of the flames placed the hope of its indulgence beyond all possibility.

The roof of the block rekindled, and, by the light that shone through the loops, it was but too evident the interior was in a blaze. Once or twice, smothered sounds came out of the place, as if suppressed shrieks were escaping the females; but they ceased so suddenly as to leave doubts among the auditors, whether it were more than the deception of their own excited fancies. The savages had witnessed many a similar scene of human suffering, but never one before in which death was met by so unmoved a calmness. The serenity that reigned in the blazing block communicated to them a feeling of awe; and when the pile came a tumbling and blackened mass of ruins to the earth, they avoided the place, like men that dreaded the vengeance of a Deity who knew how to infuse so deep a sentiment of resignation in the breasts of his worshippers.

Though the yells of victory were again heard in the valley that night, and though the sun had arisen before the conquerors deserted the hill, but few of the band found resolution to approach the smouldering pile, where they had witnessed so impressive an exhibition of Christian fortitude. The few that did draw near, stood around the spot rather in the reverence with which an Indian visits the graves of the just, than in the fierce rejoicings with which he is known to glut his revenge over a fallen enemy.
CHAPTER XVI.

"What are these,
So withered, and so wild in their attire;
That look not like the inhabitants of earth,
And yet are on't?"

MACBETH.

That sternness of the season, which has already been mentioned in these pages, is never of long continuance in the month of April. A change in the wind had been noted by the hunters, even before they retired from their range among the hills; and though too seriously occupied to pay close attention to the progress of the thaw, more than one of the young men had found occasion to remark, that the final breaking up of the winter had arrived. Long ere the scene of the preceding chapter reached its height, the southern winds had mingled with the heat of the conflagration. Warm airs, that had been following the course of the Gulf Stream, were driven to the land, and, sweeping over the narrow island that at this point forms the advanced work of the continent, but a few short hours had passed before they destroyed every chilling remnant of the dominion of winter. Warm, bland, and rushing in torrents, the subtle currents penetrated the forests, melted the snows from the fields, and as all alike felt the genial influence, it appeared to bestow a renovated existence on man and beast. With morning, therefore, a landscape very different from that last placed before the mind of the reader, presented itself in the valley of the Wish-Ton-Wish.

The winter had entirely disappeared, and as the buds had begun to swell under the occasional warmth
of the spring, one ignorant of the past would not have supposed that the advance of the season had been subject to so stern an interruption. But the principal and most melancholy change was in the more artificial parts of the view. Instead of those simple and happy habitations which had crowned the little eminence, there remained only a mass of blackened and charred ruins. A few abused and half-destroyed articles of household furniture lay scattered on the sides of the hill, and, here and there, a dozen palisadoes, favored by some accidental cause, had partially escaped the flames. Eight or ten massive and dreary-looking stacks of chimneys rose out of the smoking piles. In the centre of the desolation was the stone basement of the block-house, on which still stood a few gloomy masses of the timber, resembling coal. The naked and unsupported shaft of the well reared its circular pillar from the centre, looking like a dark monument of the past. The wide ruin of the out-buildings blackened one side of the clearing, and, in different places, the fences, like radii diverging from the common centre of destruction, had led off the flames into the fields. A few domestic animals ruminated in the back-ground, and even the feathered inhabitants of the barns still kept aloof, as if warned by their instinct that danger lurked around the site of their ancient abodes. In all other respects, the view was calm, and lovely as ever. The sun shone from a sky in which no cloud was visible. The blandness of the winds, and the brightness of the heavens, lent an air of animation to even the leafless forest; and the white vapor, that continued to rise from the smouldering piles, floated high over the hills, as the peaceful smoke of the cottage curled above its roof.

The ruthless band which had occasioned this sudden change was already far on the way to its villages, or, haply, it sought some other scene of blood.
A skilful eye might have traced the route these fierce creatures of the woods had taken, by fences hurled from their places, or by the carcass of some animal that had fallen, in the wantonness of victory, beneath a parting blow. Of all these wild beings, one only remained; and he appeared to linger at the spot in the indulgence of feelings that were foreign to those passions that had so recently stirred the bosoms of his comrades.

It was with a slow, noiseless step that the solitary loiterer moved about the scene of destruction. He was first seen treading, with a thoughtful air, among the ruins of the buildings that had formed the quadrangle, and then, seemingly led by an interest in the fate of those who had so miserably perished, he drew nearer to the pile in its centre. The nicest and most attentive ear could not have detected the fall of his foot, as the Indian placed it within the gloomy circle of the ruined wall; nor is the breathing of the infant less audible, than the manner in which he drew breath, while standing in a place so lately consecrated by the agony and martyrdom of a Christian family. It was the boy called Miantonimoh, seeking some melancholy memorial of those with whom he had so long dwelt in amity, if not in confidence.

One skilled in the history of savage passions might have found a clue to the workings of the mind of the youth, in the play of his speaking features. As his dark glittering eye rolled over the smouldering fragments, it seemed to search keenly for some vestige of the human form. The element however had done its work too greedily, to have left many visible memorials of its fury. An object resembling that he sought, however, caught his glance, and stepping lightly to the spot where it lay, he raised the bone of a powerful arm from the brands. The flashing of his eye, as it lighted on this sad object, was wild.
and exulting, like that of the savage when he first feels the fierce joy of glutted vengeance; but gentler recollections came with the gaze, and kinder feelings evidently usurped the place of the hatred he had been taught to bear a race, who were so fast sweeping his people from the earth. The relic fell from his hand, and had Ruth been there to witness the melancholy and relenting shade that clouded his swarthy features, she might have found pleasure in the certainty that all her kindness had not been wasted.

Regret soon gave place to awe. To the imagination of the Indian, it seemed as if a still voice, like that which is believed to issue from the grave, was heard in the place. Bending his body forward, he listened with the intensity and acuteness of a savage. He thought the smothered tones of Mark Heathcote were again audible, holding communion with his God. The chisel of the Grecian would have loved to delineate the attitudes and movements of the wondering boy, as he slowly and reverently withdrew from the spot. His look was riveted on the vacancy where the upper apartments of the block had stood, and where he had last seen the family, calling, in their extremity, on their Deity for aid. Imagination still painted the victims, in their burning pile. For a minute longer, during which brief space the young Indian probably expected to see some vision of the Pale-faces, did he linger near; and then, with a musing air and softened mind, he trod lightly along the path which led on the trail of his people. When his active form reached the boundary of the forest, he again paused, and taking a final gaze at the place where fortune had made him a witness to so much domestic peace and of so much sudden misery, his form was quickly swallowed in the gloom of his native woods.
The work of the savages now seemed complete. An effectual check appeared to be placed to the further progress of civilization in the ill-fated valley of the Wish-Ton-wish. Had nature been left to its own work, a few years would have covered the deserted clearing with its ancient vegetation; and half a century would have again buried the whole of its quiet glades, in the shadows of the forest. But it was otherwise decreed.

The sun had reached the meridian, and the hostile band had been gone some hours, before aught occurred likely to affect this seeming decision of Providence. To one acquainted with the recent horrors, the breathing of the airs over the ruins might have passed for the whisperings of departed spirits. In short, it appeared as if the silence of the wilderness had once more resumed its reign, when it was suddenly though slightly interrupted. A movement was made within the ruins of the block. It sounded as if billets of wood were gradually and cautiously displaced, and then a human head was reared slowly, and with marked suspicion, above the shaft of the well. The wild and unearthly air of this seeming spectre, was in keeping with the rest of the scene. A face begrimed with smoke and stained with blood, a head bound in some fragment of a soiled dress, and eyes that were glaring in a species of dull horror, were objects in unison with all the other frightful accessories of the place.

"What seest thou?" demanded a deep voice from within the walls of the shaft. "Shall we again come to our weapons, or have the agents of Moloch departed? Speak, entranced youth! what dost behold?"

"A sight to make a wolf weep!" returned Eben Dudley, raising his large frame so as to stand erect on the shaft, where he commanded a bird's-eye view of most of the desolation of the valley. "Evil though
it be, we may not say that forewarning signs have been withheld. But what is the cunningest man, when mortal wisdom is weighed in the scale against the craft of devils? Come forth! Belial hath done his worst, and we have a breathing-time."

The sounds, which issued still deeper from the well, denoted the satisfaction with which this intelligence was received, no less than the alacrity with which the summons of the borderer was obeyed. Sundry blocks of wood and short pieces of plank were first passed, with care, up to the hands of Dudley, who cast them, like useless lumber, among the other ruins of the building. He then descended from his perch, and made room for others to follow.

The stranger next arose. After him came Content, the Puritan, Reuben Ring, and, in short, all the youths, with the exception of those who had unhappily fallen in the contest. After these had mounted, and each in turn had leaped to the ground, a very brief preparation served for the liberation of the more feeble of body. The readiness of border skill soon sufficed to arrange the necessary means. By the aid of chains and buckets, Ruth and the little Martha, Faith and all of the handmaidens, without even one exception, were successively drawn from the bowels of the earth, and restored to the light of day. It is scarcely necessary to say to those whom experience has best fitted to judge of such an achievement, that no great time or labor was necessary for its accomplishment.

It is not our intention to harass the feelings of the reader, further than is required by a simple narrative of the incidents of the legend. We shall therefore say nothing of the bodily pain, or of the mental alarm, by which this ingenious retreat from the flames and the tomahawk had been effected. The suffering was chiefly confined to apprehension; for as the descent was easy, so had the readiness
and ingenuity of the young men found means, by
the aid of articles of furniture first cast into the
shaft, and by well-secured fragments of the floors
properly placed across, both to render the situation
of the females and children less painful than might
at first be supposed, and effectually to protect them
from the tumbling block. But little of the latter,
however, was likely to affect their safety, as the
form of the building was, in itself, a sufficient se-
curity against the fall of its heavier parts.

The meeting of the family, amid the desolation
of the valley, though relieved by the consciousness
of having escaped a more shocking fate, may easily
be imagined. The first act was to render brief but
solemn thanks for their deliverance, and then, with
the promptitude of people trained in hardship, their
attention was given to those measures which pru-
dence told them were yet necessary.

A few of the more active and experienced of the
youths were dispatched, in order to ascertain the
direction taken by the Indians, and to gain what
intelligence they might concerning their future
movements. The maidens hastened to collect the
kine, while others searched, with heavy hearts,
among the ruins, in quest of such articles of food
and comfort as could be found, in order to administer
to the first wants of nature.

Two hours had effected most of that which could
immediately be done, in these several pursuits. The
young men returned with the assurance that the
trails announced the certain and final retreat of
the savages. The cows had yielded their tribute,
and such provision had been made against hunger
as circumstances would allow. The arms had been
examined, and put, as far as the injuries they had
received would admit, in readiness for instant service.
A few hastily preparations had been made, in order
to protect the females against the cool airs of the
coming night; and, in short, all was done that the intelligence of a border-man could suggest, or his exceeding readiness in expedients could in so brief a space supply.

The sun began to fall towards the tops of the beeches that crowned the western outline of the view, before all these necessary arrangements were ended. It was not till then, however, that Reuben Ring, accompanied by another youth of equal activity and courage, appeared before the Puritan, equipped, as well as men in their situation might be, for a journey through the forest.

"Go," said the old religionist, when the youths presented themselves before him; "Go; carry forth the tidings of this visitation, that men come to our succor. I ask not vengeance on the deluded and heathenish imitators of the worshippers of Moloch. They have ignorantly done this evil. Let no man arm in behalf of the wrongs of one sinful and erring. Rather let them look into the secret abominations of their own hearts, in order that they crush the living worm, which, by gnawing on the seeds of a healthful hope, may yet destroy the fruits of the promise in their own souls. I would that there be profit in this example of divine displeasure. Go; make the circuit of the settlements for some fifty miles, and bid such of the neighbors as may be spared, come to our aid. They shall be welcome; and may it be long ere any of them send invitation to me or mine, to enter their clearings on the like melancholy duty. Depart, and bear in mind, that you are messengers of peace; that your errand toucheth not the feelings of vengeance, but that it is succor, in all fitting reason, and no arming of the hand to chase the savage to his retreats, that I ask of the brethren."

With this final admonition, the young men took their leaves. Still it was evident, by their frowning
brows and compressed lips, that some part of its forgiving principle might be forgotten, should chance, in their journey, bring them on the trail of any wandering inhabitant of the forest. In a few minutes, they were seen passing, with swift steps, from the fields into the depths of the forest, along that path which led to the towns that lay lower on the Connecticut.

Another task still remained to be performed. In making the temporary arrangements for the shelter of the family, attention had been first paid to the block-house. The walls of the basement of this building were still standing, and it was found easy, by means of half-burnt timbers, with an occasional board that had escaped the conflagration, to cover it, in a manner that offered a temporary protection against the weather. This simple and hasty construction, with an extremely inartificial office erected around the stack of a chimney, embraced nearly all that could be done, until time and assistance should enable them to commence other dwellings. In clearing the ruins of the little tower of its rubbish, the remains of those who had perished in the fray were piously collected. The body of the youth who had died in the earlier hours of the attack, was found, but half-consumed, in the court, and the bones of two more, who fell within the block, were collected from among the ruins. It had now become a melancholy duty to consign them all to the earth, with decent solemnity.

The time selected for this sad office was just as the western horizon began to glow with that which one of our own poets has so beautifully termed, "the pomp that brings and shuts the day." The sun was in the tree-tops, and a softer or sweeter light could not have been chosen for such a ceremony. Most of the fields still lay in the soft brightness of the hour, though the forest was rapidly getting the
more obscure look of night. A broad and gloomy margin was spreading from the boundary of the woods, and, here and there, a solitary tree cast its shadow on the meadows without its limits, throwing a dark ragged line, in bold relief, on the glow of the sun’s rays. One, it was the dusky image of a high and waving pine, that reared its dark green pyramid of never-fading foliage nearly a hundred feet above the humbler growth of beeches, cast its shade to the side of the eminence of the block.

Here the pointed extremity of the shadow was seen, stealing slowly towards the open grave,—an emblem of that oblivion in which its humble tenants were so shortly to be wrapped.

At this spot, Mark Heathcote and his remaining companions had assembled. An oaken chair, saved from the flames, was the seat of the father; and two parallel benches, formed of planks placed on stones, held the other members of the family. The grave lay between. The patriarch had taken his station at one of its ends; while the stranger, so often named in these pages, stood with folded arms and a thoughtful-brow at the other. The bridle of a horse, caparisoned in that imperfect manner which the straitened means of the borderers now rendered necessary, was hanging from one of the half-burnt palisadoes, in the back-ground.

“A just, but a merciful hand hath been laid heavily on my household;” commenced the old Puritan, with the calmness of one who had long been accustomed to chasten his regrets by humility. “He that hath given freely, hath taken away; and one, that hath long smiled upon my weakness, hath now veiled his face in anger. I have known him in his power to bless; it was meet that I should see him in his displeasure. A heart that was waxing confident would have hardened in its pride. At that which hath befallen, let no man murmur. Let none
imitate the speech of her who spoke foolishly: 'What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' I would that the feeble-minded of the world, they that jeopard the soul on vanities, they that look with scorn on the neediness of the flesh, might behold the riches of one stedfast. I would that they might know the consolation of the righteous! Let the voice of thanksgiving be heard in the wilderness. Open thy mouths in praise, that the gratitude of a penitent be not hid!"

As the deep tones of the speaker ceased, his stern eye fell upon the features of the nearest youth, and it seemed to demand an audible response to his own lofty expression of resignation. But the sacrifice exceeded the power of the individual to whom had been made this silent, but intelligible, appeal. After regarding the relics that lay at his feet, casting a wandering glance at the desolation which had swept over a place his own hand had helped to decorate, and receiving a renewed consciousness of his own bodily suffering in the shooting pain of his wounds, the young borderer averted his look, and seemed to recoil from so officious a display of submission. Observing his inability to reply, Mark continued.—

"Hath no one a voice to praise the Lord? The bands of the heathen have fallen upon my herds; the brand hath been kindled within my dwellings; my people have died by the violence of the unenlightened, and none are here to say that the Lord is just! I would that the shouts of thanksgiving should arise in my fields! I would that the song of praise should grow louder than the whoop of the savage, and that all the land might speak joyfulness!"

A long, deep, and expecting pause succeeded. Then Content rejoined, in his quiet tones, speaking
firmly, but with the modest utterance he rarely failed to use—

"The hand that hath held the balance is just," he said, "and we have been found wanting. He that made the wilderness blossom hath caused the ignorant and the barbarous to be the instruments of his will. He hath arrested the season of our prosperity, that we may know he is the Lord. He hath spoken in the whirlwind, but his mercy granteth that our ears shall know his voice."

As his son ceased, a gleam of satisfaction shot across the countenance of the Puritan. His eye next turned inquiringly towards Ruth, who sate among her maidens the image of womanly sorrow. Common interest seemed to still the breathing of the little assembly, and sympathy was quite as active as curiosity, when each one present suffered a glance to steal towards her benignant but pallid face. The eye of the mother was gazing earnestly, but without a tear, on the melancholy spectacle before her. It unconsciously sought, among the dried and shrivelled remnants of mortality that lay at her feet, some relic of the cherub she had lost. A shudder and struggle followed, after which her gentle voice breathed so low that those nearest her person could scarce distinguish the words—

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be his holy name!"

"Now know I that he who hath smote me is merciful, for he chasteneth them he loveth," said Mark Heathcote, rising with dignity to address his household. "Our life is a life of pride. The young are wont to wax insolent, while he of many years saith to his own heart, 'It is good to be here.' There is a fearful mystery in one who sitteth on high. The heavens are his throne, and he hath created the earth for his footstool. Let not the vanity of the weak of mind presume to understand it, for who
that hath the breath of life, lived before the hills?" The bonds of the evil one, of Satan, and of the sons of Belial, have been loosened, that the faith of the elect may be purified, that the names of those written, since the foundations of the earth were laid, may be read in letters of pure gold. The time of man is but a moment in the reckoning of him whose life is eternity; earth the habitation of a season! The bones of the bold, of the youthful, and of the strong of yesterday, lie at our feet. None know what an hour may bring forth. In a single night, my children, hath this been done. They whose voices were heard in my halls are now speechless, and they who so lately rejoiced are sorrowing. Yet hath this seeming evil been ordered that good may come thereof. We are dwellers in a wild and distant land," he continued, insensibly permitting his thoughts to incline towards the more mournful details of their affliction; "our earthly home is afar off. Hither have we been led by the flaming pillar of truth, and yet the malice of the persecuters hath not forgotten to follow. One houseless, and sought like the hunted deer, is again driven to flee. We have the canopy of the stars for a roof; none may tarry longer to worship, secretly, within our walls. But the path of the faithful, though full of thorns, leadeth to quiet, and the final rest of the just man can never know alarm. He that hath borne hunger, and thirst, and the pains of the flesh, for the sake of truth, knoweth how to be satisfied; nor will the hours of bodily suffering be accounted weary to him whose goal is the peace of the righteous." The strong lineaments of the stranger grew even more than usually austere, and as the Puritan continued, the hand which rested on the handle of a pistol grasped the weapon, until the fingers seemed imbedded in the wood. He bowed, however, as if to acknowledge the personal allusion, and remained silent.
"If any mourn the early death of those who have rendered up their being, struggling, as it may be permitted, in behalf of life and dwelling," continued Mark Heathcote, regarding a female near him, "let her remember, that from the beginning of the world were his days numbered, and that not a sparrow falleth without answering the ends of wisdom. Rather let the fulfilment of things remind us of the vanity of life, that we may learn how easy it is to become immortal. If the youth hath been cut down, seemingly like unripened grass, he hath fallen by the sickle of one who knoweth best when to begin the in-gathering of the harvest to his eternal garnerers. Though a spirit bound unto his, as one feeble is wont to lean on the strength of man and mourn over his fall, let her sorrow be mingled with rejoicing." A convulsive sob broke out of the bosom of the handmaiden who was known to have been affianced to one of the dead, and for a moment the address of Mark was interrupted. But when silence again ensued, he continued, the subject leading him, by a transition that was natural, to allude to his own sorrows. "Death hath been no stranger in my habitation," he said. "His shaft fell heaviest, when it struck her, who, like those that have here fallen, was in the pride of her youth, and when her soul was glad with the first joy of the birth of a man-child! Thou who sittest on high!" he added, turning a glazed and tearless eye to heaven; "thou knowest how heavy was that blow, and thou hast written down the strivings of an oppressed soul. The burthen was not found too heavy for endurance. The sacrifice hath not sufficed; the world was again getting uppermost in my heart. Thou didst bestow an image of that innocence and loveliness that dwelleth in the skies, and this hast thou taken away, that we might know thy power. To this judgment we bow. If thou hast called our child to the mansions of bliss, she is wholly thine,
and we presume not to complain; but if thou hast
still left her to wander further in the pilgrimage of
life, we confide in thy goodness. She is of a long-
suffering race, and thou wilt not desert her to the
blindness of the heathen. She is thine, she is wholly
thine, King of Heaven! and yet hast thou permit-
ted our hearts to yearn towards her, with the fond-
ness of earthly love. We await some further mani-
festation of thy will, that we may know whether
the fountains of our affection shall be dried in the
certainty of her blessedness—" (scalding tears were
rolling down the cheeks of the pallid and immovable
mother) "or whether hope, nay, whether duty to
thee calleth for the interference of those bound to
her in the tenderness of the flesh. When the blow
was heaviest on the bruised spirit of a lone and sol-
itary wanderer, in a strange and savage land, he
held not back the offspring it was thy will to grant
him in the place of her called to thyself; and now
that the child hath become a man, he too layeth,
like Abraham of old, the infant of his love, a willing
offering at thy feet. Do with it as to thy never-failing
wisdom seemeth best."—The words were interrupt-
ed by a heavy groan, that burst from the chest of
Content. A deep silence ensued, but when the as-
sembly ventured to throw looks of sympathy and
awe at the bereaved father, they saw that he had
arisen and stood gazing steadily at the speaker, as if
he wondered, equally with the others, whence such
a sound of suffering could have come. The Puritan
renewed the subject; but his voice faltered, and for
an instant, as he proceeded, his hearers were op-
pressed with the spectacle of an aged and dignified
man shaken with grief. Conscious of his weakness,
the old man ceased speaking in exhortation, and
addressed himself to prayer. While thus engaged,
his tones again became clear, firm and distinct, and
the petition was ended in the midst of a deep and holy calm.

With the performance of this preliminary office, the simple ceremony was brought to its close. The remains were lowered, in solemn silence, into the grave, and the earth was soon replaced by the young men. Mark Heathcote then invoked aloud the blessing of God on his household, and bowing in person, as he had before done in spirit, to the will of Heaven, he motioned to the family to withdraw.

The interview that succeeded was over the resting-place of the dead. The hand of the stranger was firmly clenched in that of the Puritan, and the stern self-command of both appeared to give way, before the regrets of a friendship that had endured through so many trying scenes.

"Thou knowest that I may not tarry," said the former, as if he replied to some expressed wish of his companion. "They would make me a sacrifice to the Moloch of their vanities; and yet would I fain abide, until the weight of this heavy blow may be forgotten. I found thee in peace, and I quit thee in the depths of suffering!"

"Thou distrustest me, or thou dost injustice to thine own belief," interrupted the Puritan, with a smile, that shone on his haggard and austere visage, as the rays of the setting sun light a wintry cloud. "Seemed I happier when this hand placed that of a loved bride into mine own, than thou now seest me in this wilderness, houseless, stripped of my wealth, and, God forgive the ingratitude! but I had almost said, childless? No, indeed, thou mayest not tarry, for the blood-hounds of tyranny will be on their scent; here is shelter no longer."

The eyes of both turned, by a common and melancholy feeling, towards the ruin of the block. The stranger then pressed the hand of his friend in both his own, and said in a struggling voice—

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"Mark Heathcote, adieu! he that had a roof for
the persecuted wanderer shall not long be houseless;
neither shall the resigned for ever know sorrow."

His words sounded in the ears of his companion
like the revelation of a prophecy. They again
pressed their hands together, and, regarding each
other with looks in which kindness could not be al-
together smothered by the repulsive character of an
acquired air, they parted. The Puritan slowly took
his way to the dreary shelter which covered his fam-
ily; while the stranger was shortly after seen urging
the beast he had mounted, across the pastures of the
valley, towards one of the most retired paths of the
wilderness.

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CHAPTER XVII.

"Together towards the village then we walked,
And of old friends and places much we talked:
And who had died, who left them, would be tell;
And who still in their father's mansion dwell."

Dana.

We leave the imagination of the reader to sup-
ply an interval of several years. Before the thread
of the narrative shall be resumed, it will be neces-
sary to take another hasty view of the condition of
the country in which the scene of our legend had
place.

The exertions of the provincials were no longer
limited to the first efforts of a colonial existence.
The establishments of New-England had passed the
ordeal of experiment, and were become permanent.
Massachusetts was already populous; and Connecti-
cut, the colony with which we have more immediate connexion, was sufficiently peopled to manifest a portion of that enterprise which has since made her active little community so remarkable. The effects of these increased exertions were becoming extensively visible; and we shall endeavor to set one of these changes, as distinctly as our feeble powers will allow, before the eyes of those who read these pages.

When compared with the progress of society in the other hemisphere, the condition of what is called, in America, a new settlement, becomes anomalous. There, the arts of life have been the fruits of an intelligence that has progressively accumulated with the advancement of civilization; while here, improvement is, in a great degree, the consequence of experience elsewhere acquired. Necessity, prompted by an understanding of its wants, incited by a commendable spirit of emulation, and encouraged by liberty, early gave birth to those improvements which have converted a wilderness into the abodes of abundance and security, with a rapidity that wears the appearance of magic. Industry has wrought with the confidence of knowledge, and the result has been peculiar.

It is scarcely necessary to say that, in a country where the laws favor all commendable enterprise, where unnecessary artificial restrictions are unknown, and where the hand of man has not yet exhausted its efforts, the adventurer is allowed the greatest freedom of choice, in selecting the field of his enterprise. The agriculturist passes the heath and the barren, to seat himself on the river-bottom; the trader looks for the site of demand and supply, and the artisan quits his native village to seek employment in situations where labor will meet its fullest reward. It is a consequence of this extraordinary freedom of election, that, while the great
picture of American society has been sketched with so much boldness, a large portion of the filling-up still remains to be done. The emigrant has consulted his immediate interests; and, while no very extensive and profitable territory, throughout the whole of our immense possessions, has been wholly neglected, neither has any particular district yet attained the finish of improvement. The city is, even now, seen in the wilderness, and the wilderness often continues near the city, while the latter is sending forth its swarms to distant scenes of industry. After thirty years of fostering care on the part of the government, the Capital, itself, presents its disjointed and sickly villages, in the centre of the deserted 'old-fields' of Maryland, while numberless youthful rivals are flourishing on the waters of the West, in spots where the bear has ranged and the wolf howled, long since the former has been termed a city.

Thus it is that high civilization, a state of infant existence, and positive barbarity, are often brought so near each other, within the borders of this republic. The traveller, who has passed the night in an inn that would not disgrace the oldest country in Europe, may be compelled to dine in the shanty* of a hunter; the smooth and gravelled road sometimes ends in an impassable swamp; the spires of the town are often hid by the branches of a tangled forest, and the canal leads to a seemingly barren and unprofitable mountain. He that does not return to see what another year may bring forth, commonly

* Shanty, or Shantee, is a word much used in the newer settlements. It strictly means a rude cabin of bark and brush, such as is often erected in the forest for temporary purposes. But the borderers often quaintly apply it to their own habitations. The only derivation which the writer has heard for this American word, is one that supposes it to be a corruption of Chienté, a term said to be used among the Canadians to express a dog-kennel.
OF WISH-TON-WISH.

bears away from these scenes, recollections that conduce to error. To see America with the eyes of truth; it is necessary to look often; and in order to understand the actual condition of these states, it should be remembered, that it is equally unjust to believe that all the intermediate points partake of the improvements of particular places, as to infer the want of civilization at more remote establishments, from a few unfavorable facts gleaned near the centre. By an accidental concurrence of moral and physical causes, much of that equality which distinguishes the institutions of the country is extended to the progress of society over its whole surface.

Although the impetus of improvement was not as great in the time of Mark Heathcote as in our own days, the principle of its power was actively in existence. Of this fact we shall furnish a sufficient evidence, by pursuing our intention of describing one of those changes to which allusion has already been made.

The reader will remember that the age of which we write had advanced into the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The precise moment at which the action of the tale must re-commence, was that period of the day when the gray of twilight was redeeming objects from the deep darkness with which the night draws to its close. The month was June, and the scene such as it may be necessary to describe with some particularity.

Had there been light, and had one been favorably placed to enjoy a bird's-eye view of the spot, he would have seen a broad and undulating field of leafy forest, in which the various deciduous trees of New-England were relieved by the deeper verdure of occasional masses of evergreens. In the centre of this swelling and nearly interminable outline of woods, was a valley that spread between
three low mountains. Over the bottom-land, for the distance of several miles, all the signs of a settlement in a state of rapid and prosperous improvement were visible. The devious course of a deep and swift brook, that in the other hemisphere would have been termed a river, was to be traced through the meadows by its borders of willow and sumach. At a point near the centre of the valley, the waters had been arrested by a small dam; and a mill, whose wheel at that early hour was without motion, stood on the artificial mound. Near it was the site of a New-England hamlet.

The number of dwellings in the village might have been forty. They were, as usual, constructed of a firm frame-work, neatly covered with sidings of boards. There was a surprising air of equality in the general aspect of the houses; and, if there were question of any country but our own, it might be added there was an unusual appearance of comfort and abundance in even the humblest of them all. They were mostly of two low stories, the superior overhanging the inferior, by a foot or two; a mode of construction much in use in the earlier days of the Eastern Colonies. As paint was but little used at that time, none of the buildings exhibited a color different from that the wood would naturally assume, after the exposure of a few years to the weather. Each had its single chimney in the centre of the roof, and but two or three showed more than a solitary window on each side of the principal or outer door. In front of every dwelling was a small neat court, in green sward, separated from the public road by a light fence of deal. Double rows of young and vigorous elms lined each side of the wide street, while an enormous sycamore still kept possession of the spot, in its centre, which it had occupied when the white man entered the forest. Beneath the shade of this tree the inhabit-
ants often collected, to gather tidings of each other's welfare, or to listen to some matter of interest that rumor had borne from the towns nearer the sea. A narrow and little-used wheel-track ran, with a graceful and sinuous route, through the centre of the wide and grassy street. Reduced in appearance to little more than a bridle-path, it was to be traced, without the hamlet, between high fences of wood, for a mile or two, to the points where it entered the forest. Here and there, roses were pressing through the openings of the fences before the doors of the different habitations, and bushes of fragrant lilacs stood in the angles of most of the courts.

The dwellings were detached. Each occupied its own insulated plot of ground, with a garden in its rear. The out-buildings were thrown to that distance which the cheapness of land, and security from fire, rendered both easy and expedient.

The church stood in the centre of the highway, and near one end of the hamlet. In the exterior and ornaments of the important temple, the taste of the times had been fastidiously consulted, its form and simplicity furnishing no slight resemblance to the self-denying doctrines and quaint humors of the religionists who worshipped beneath its roof. The building, like all the rest, was of wood, and externally of two stories. It possessed a tower, without a spire; the former alone serving to betray its sacred character. In the construction of this edifice, especial care had been taken to eschew all deviations from direct lines and right angles. Those narrow-arched passages for the admission of light, that are elsewhere so common, were then thought, by the stern moralists of New-England, to have some mysterious connexion with her of the scarlet mantle. The priest would as soon have thought of appearing before his flock in the vanities of stole and
cassock, as the congregation of admitting the repudiated ornaments into the outline of their severe architecture. Had the Genii of the Lamp suddenly exchanged the windows of the sacred edifice with those of the inn that stood nearly opposite, the closest critic of the settlement could never have detected the liberty, since, in the form, dimensions, and style of the two, there was no visible difference.

A little inclosure, at no great distance from the church, and on one side of the street, had been set apart for the final resting-place of those who had finished their race on earth. It contained but a solitary grave.

The inn was to be distinguished from the surrounding buildings, by its superior size, an open horse-shed, and a sort of protruding air, with which it thrust itself on the line of the street, as if to invite the traveller to enter. A sign swung on a gallows-looking post, that, in consequence of frosty nights and warm days, had already deviated from the perpendicular. It bore a conceit that, at the first glance, might have gladdened the heart of a naturalist, with the belief that he had made the discovery of some unknown bird. The artist, however, had sufficiently provided against the consequences of so embarrassing a blunder, by considerately writing beneath the offspring of his pencil, "This is the sign of the Whip-Poor-Will;" a name, that the most unlettered traveller, in those regions, would be likely to know was vulgarly given to the Wish-Ton-Wish, or the American night-hawk.

But few relics of the forest remained immediately around the hamlet. The trees had long been felled, and sufficient time had elapsed to remove most of the vestiges of their former existence. But as the eye receded from the cluster of buildings, the signs of more recent inroads on the wilderness became apparent, until the view terminated with
oponings, in which piled logs and mazes of felled trees announced the recent use of the axe.

At that early day, the American husbandman, like the agriculturists of most of Europe, dwelt in his village. The dread of violence from the savages had given rise to a custom similar to that which, centuries before, had been produced in the other hemisphere by the inroads of more pretending barbarians, and which, with few and distant exceptions, has deprived rural scenery of a charm that, it would seem, time and a better condition of society are slow to repair. Some remains of this ancient practice are still to be traced in the portion of the Union of which we write, where, even at this day, the farmer often quits the village to seek his scattered fields in its neighborhood. Still, as man has never been the subject of a system here, and as each individual has always had the liberty of consulting his own temper, bolder spirits early began to break through a practice, by which quite as much was lost in convenience as was gained in security. Even in the scene we have been describing, ten or twelve humble habitations were distributed among the recent clearings on the sides of the mountains, and in situations too remote to promise much security against any sudden inroad of the common enemy.

For general protection, in cases of the last extremity, however, a stockaded dwelling, not unlike that which we have had occasion to describe in our earlier pages, stood in a convenient spot near the hamlet. Its defences were stronger and more elaborate than usual, the pickets being furnished with flanking block-houses; and, in other respects, the building bore the aspect of a work equal to any resistance that might be required in the warfare of those regions. The ordinary habitation of the priest was within its gates; and hither most of the sick
were timely conveyed, in order to anticipate the necessity of removals at more inconvenient moments.

It is scarcely necessary to tell the American, that heavy wooden fences subdivided the whole of this little landscape into inclosures of some eight or ten acres in extent; that, here and there, cattle and flocks were grazing without herdsmen or shepherds, and that, while the fields nearest to the dwellings were beginning to assume the appearance of a careful and improved husbandry, those more remote became gradually wilder and less cultivated, until the half-reclaimed openings, with their blackened stubs and barked trees, were blended with the gloom of the living forest. These are, more or less, the accompaniments of every rural scene, in districts of the country where time has not yet effected more than the first two stages of improvement.

At the distance of a short half-mile from the fortified house, or garrison, as by a singular corruption of terms the stockaded building was called, stood a dwelling of pretensions altogether superior to any in the hamlet. The buildings in question, though simple, were extensive; and though scarcely other than such as might belong to an agriculturist in easy circumstances, still they were remarkable, in that settlement, by the comforts which time alone could accumulate, and some of which denoted an advanced condition for a frontier family. In short; there was an air about the establishment, as in the disposition of its out-buildings, in the superior workmanship, in the materials, and in numberless other well-known circumstances, which went to show that the whole of the edifices were re-constructions. The fields near this habitation exhibited smoother surfaces than those in the distance; the fences were lighter and less rude; the stumps had absolutely disappeared, and the gardens and homestead were well planted with flourishing fruit-trees. A conical
eminence arose, at a short distance, in the rear of the principal dwelling. It was covered with that beautiful and peculiar ornament of an American farm, a regular, thrifty, and luxuriant apple-orchard. Still, age had not given its full beauty to the plantation, which might have had a growth of some eight or ten years. A blackened tower of stone, which sustained the charred ruins of a superstructure of wood, though of no great height in itself, rose above the tallest of the trees, and stood a sufficient memorial of some scene of violence, in the brief history of the valley. There was also a small block-house near the habitation; but, by the air of neglect that reigned around, it was quite apparent the little work had been of a hurried construction, and of but temporary use. A few young plantations of fruit-trees were also to be seen in different parts of the valley, which was beginning to exhibit many other evidences of an improved agriculture.

So far as all these artificial changes went, they were of an English character. But it was England devoid alike of its luxury and its poverty, and with a superfluity of space that gave to the meanest habitation in the view, an air of abundance and comfort that is so often wanting about the dwellings of the comparatively rich, in countries where man is found bearing a far greater numerical proportion to the soil, than was then, or is even now the case, in the regions of which we write.

END OF VOL. I.