

The Chainbearer; or, The Littlepage Manuscripts, V2

James Fenimore Cooper

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The Chainbearer; or, The Littlepage Manuscripts, V2

James Fenimore Cooper

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CHAPTER I.

Dans. "Ye boys who pluck the flowers, and spoil the spring, Beware the secret snake that shoots a sting."

Dryden's Eclogues.

For the first half hour after I left Ursula Malbone's hut, I was literally unconscious of whither I was going, or of what I was about. I can recollect nothing but having passed quite near to the Onondago, who appeared desirous of speaking to me, but whom I avoided by a species of instinct rather than with any design. In fact, fatigue first brought me fairly to my senses. I had wandered miles and miles, plunging deeper and deeper into the wilds of the forest, and this without any aim, or any knowledge of even the direction in which I was going. Night soon came to cast its shadows on the earth, and my uncertain course was held amid the gloom of the hour, united to those of the woods. I had wearied myself by rapid walking over the uneven surface of the forest, and finally threw myself on the trunk of a fallen tree, willing to take some repose.

At first, I thought of nothing, felt for nothing but the unwelcome circumstance that the faith of Dus was plighted to another. Had I fallen in love with Priscilla Bayard, such an announcement could not have occasioned the same surprise; for *she* lived in the world, met with men of suitable educations, conditions and opinions, and might be supposed to have been brought within the influence of the attentions and sympathies that are wont to awaken tenderness in the female breast. With Dus, it had been very different: she had gone from the forest to the school, and returned from the school to the forest. It was true, that her brother, while a soldier, might have had some friend who admired Ursula, and whose admiration awakened her youthful sympathies; but this was only a remote probability, and I was left burthened with a load of doubt as respected even the character and position of my rival.

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"At any rate, he must be poor," I said to myself, the moment I was capable of reflecting coolly on the subject, "or he would never have left Dus in that hut, to pass her youth amid chainbearers and the other rude beings of a frontier. If I cannot obtain her love, I may at least contribute to her happiness by using those means which a kind Providence has bestowed, and enabling her to marry at once." For a little while I fancied my own misery would be lessened, could I only see Dus married and happy. This feeling did not last long, however; though I trust the desire to see her happy remained after I became keenly conscious it would require much time to enable me to look on such a spectacle with composure. Nevertheless, the first tranquil moment, the first relieving sensation I experienced, was from the conviction I felt that Providence had placed it in my power to cause Ursula and the man of her choice to be united. This recollection gave me even a positive pleasure for a little while, and I ruminated on the means of effecting it, literally for hours. I was still thinking of it, indeed, when I threw myself on the fallen tree, where weariness caused me to fall into a troubled sleep, that lasted, with more or less of forgetfulness, several hours. The place I had chosen on the tree was among its branches, on which the leaves were still hanging, and it was not without its conveniences.

When I awoke, it was day-light; or, such a day-light as penetrates the forest ere the sun has risen. At first I felt stiff and sore from the hardness of my bed; but, on changing my attitude and sitting up, these sensations soon wore off, leaving me refreshed and calm. To my great surprise, however, I found that a small, light blanket, such as woodmen use in summer, had been thrown over me, to the genial warmth of which I was probably indebted more than I then knew myself. This circumstance alarmed me at first, since it was obvious the blanket could not have come there without hands; though a moment's reflection satisfied me that the throwing it over me, under the circumstances, must have been the act of a friend. I arose, however to my feet, walked along the trunk of the tree until clear of its branches, and looked about me with a lively desire to ascertain who this secret friend might be.

The place was like any other in the solitude of the forest. There were the usual array of the trunks of stately trees, the leafy canopy, the dark shadows, the long vistas, the brown and broken surface of the earth, and the damp coolness of the boundless woods. A fine spring broke out of a hill-side, quite near me, and looking further, with the intention to approach and use its water, the mystery of the blanket was at once explained. I saw the form of the Onondago, motionless as one of the trees which grew around him, leaning on his rifle, and seemingly gazing at some object that lay at his feet. In a minute I was at his side, when I discovered that he was standing over a human skeleton! This was a strange and startling object to meet in the depth of the woods! Man was of so little account, was so seldom seen in the virgin wilds of America, that one naturally felt more shocked at finding such a memorial of his presence, in a place like that, than would have been the case had he stumbled on it amid peopled districts. As for the Indian, he gazed at the bones so intently that he either did not hear, or he totally disregarded my approach. I touched him with a finger before he even looked up. Glad of any excuse to avoid explanation of my own conduct, I eagerly seized the occasion offered by a sight so unusual, to speak of other things.

"This has been a violent death, Sureflint," I said; "else the body would not have been left unburied. The man has been killed in some quarrel of the red warriors."

"*Was* bury," answered the Indian, without manifesting the least surprise at my touch, or at the sound of my voice. "Dere, see grave? 'Arth wash away, and bones come out. Nuttin' else. *Know* he bury, for help bury, myself."

"Do you, then, know anything of this unhappy man, and of the cause of his death?"

"Sartain; know all 'bout him. Kill in ole French war. Fader here; and colonel Follock; Jaap, too. Huron kill 'em all; afterward, we flog Huron. Yes, dat ole story now!"

"I have heard something of this! This must have been the spot, then, where one Traverse, a surveyor, was set upon by the enemy, and was slain, with his chainbearers and axe-men. My father and his friends *did* find the bodies and bury them, after a fashion."

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"Sartain; just so; poor bury, d'ough, else he nebber come out of groun'. Dese bones of surveyor; know 'em well: hab one leg broke, once. Dere; you see mark."

"Shall we dig a new grave, Susquesus, and bury the remains again?"

"Best not, now. Chainbearer mean do dat. Be here by—'m—bye. Got somet'ing else t'ink of now. You own all land 'bout here, so no need be in hurry."

"I suppose that my father and colonel Follock do. These men were slain on the estate, while running out its great lots. I think I have heard they had not near finished their work in this quarter of the patent, which was abandoned on account of the troubles of that day."

"Just so; who own mill, here, den?"

"There is no mill near us, Susquesus; *can* be no mill, as not an acre of the Ridge property has ever been sold or leased."

"May be so mill dough not far off, needer. Know mill when hear him. Saw talk loud."

"You surely do not hear the saw of a mill now, my friend. I can hear nothing like one."

"No hear, now; dat true. But hear him in night. Ear good, in night hear great way off."

"You are right enough, there, Susquesus. And you fancied you heard the stroke of a saw, from this place, during the quiet and heavy air of the past night?"

"Sartain know well; hear him plain enough. Isn't mile off. Out here; find him dere."

This was still more startling than the discovery of the skeleton. I had a rough, general map of the patent in my pocket; and, on examination, I found a mill—stream *was* laid down on it, quite near the spot where we stood. The appearance of the woods, and the formation of the land, moreover, favoured the idea of the proximity of a mill. Pine was plenty, and the hills were beginning to swell into something resembling mountains.

Fasting, and the exercise I had taken, had given me a keen appetite; and, in one sense at least, I was not sorry to believe that human habitations were near. Did any persons dwell in that forest, they were squatters, but I did not feel much personal apprehension in encountering such men; especially when my only present object was to ask for food. The erecting of a mill denoted a decided demonstration, it is true, and a little reflection might have told me that its occupants would not be delighted by a sudden visit from the representative of the owners of the soil. On the other hand, however, the huts were long miles away, and neither Sureflint nor I had the smallest article of food about us. Both were hungry, though the Onondago professed indifference to the feeling, an unconcern I could not share with him, owing to habits of greater self—indulgence. Then I had a strong wish to solve this mystery of the mill, in addition to a feverish desire to awaken within me some new excitement, as a counterpoise to that I still keenly felt in behalf of my disappointed love.

Did I not so well understand the character of my companion, and the great accuracy of Indian senses, I might have hesitated about going on what seemed to be a fool's errand. But circumstances, that were then of recent origin, existed to give some countenance to the conjecture of Sureflint, if conjecture his precise knowledge could be called. Originally, New York claimed the Connecticut for a part of its eastern boundary, but large bodies of settlers had crossed that stream, coming mainly from the adjacent colony of New Hampshire, and these persons had become formidable by their positions and numbers, some time anterior to the Revolution. During that struggle, these hardy mountaineers had manifested a spirit favourable to the colonies, in the main, though every

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indication of an intention to settle their claims was met by a disposition to declare themselves neutral. In a word, they were sufficiently patriotic, if left to do as they pleased in the matter of their possessions, but not sufficiently so to submit to the regular administration of the law. About the close of the war, the leaders of this self-created colony were more than suspected of coquetting with the English authorities; not that they preferred the government of the crown, or any other control, to their own, but because the times were favourable to playing off their neutrality, in this manner, as a means of securing themselves in the possession of lands to which their titles, in the ordinary way, admitted of a good deal of dispute, to say the least. The difficulty was by no means disposed of by the peace of '83; but the counties, that were then equally known by the name of Vermont, and that of the Hampshire Grants, were existing, in one sense, as a people apart, not yet acknowledging the power of the confederacy; nor did they come into the union, under the constitution of 1789, until all around them had done so, and the last spark of opposition to the new system had been extinguished.

It is a principle of moral, as well as of physical nature, that like should produce like. The right ever vindicates itself, in the process of events, and the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, even to the third and fourth generations, in their melancholy consequences. It was impossible that an example of such a wrong could be successfully exhibited on a large scale, without producing its deluded imitators, on another that was better suited to the rapacity of individual longings. It is probable Vermont has sent out, among us, two squatters, and otherwise lawless intruders on our vacant lands, to one of any other of the adjoining States, counting all in proportion to their whole numbers. I knew that the county of Charlotte, as Washington was then called, was peculiarly exposed to inroads of this nature; and did not feel much surprise at this prospect of meeting with some of the fruits of the seed that had been so profusely scattered along the sides of the Green Mountains. Come what would, however, I was determined to ascertain the facts, as soon as possible, with the double purpose of satisfying both hunger and curiosity. As for the Indian, he was passive, yielding to my decision altogether as a matter of course.

"Since you think there is a mill, out here, west of us, Sureflint," I observed, after turning the matter over in my mind, "I will go and search for it, if you will bear me company. You think you can find it, I trust, knowing the direction in which it stands?"

"Sartain find him easy 'nough. Find stream first den find *mill*. Got ear got eye no hard to find him. Hear saw fore great while."

I acquiesced, and made a sign for my companion to proceed. Susquesus was a man of action, and not of words; and, in a minute, he was leading the way towards a spot in the woods that looked as if it might contain the bed of the stream that was known to exist somewhere near by, since it was laid down on the map.

The sort of instinct possessed by the Trackless, enabled him soon to find this little river. It was full of water, and had a gentle current; a fact that the Indian immediately interpreted into a sign that the mill must be above us, since the dam would have checked the course of the water, had we been above *that*. Turning up stream, then, my companion moved on, with the same silent industry as he would have trotted along the path that led to his own wigwam, had he been near it.

We had not been on the banks of the stream five minutes, before the Trackless came to a dead halt; like one who had met an unexpected obstacle. I was soon at his side, curious to know the motive of this delay.

"Soon see mill, now," Susquesus said, in answer to an inquiry of mine. "Board plenty come down stream fast as want him."

Sure enough, boards *were* coming down, in the current of the river, much faster than one who was interested in the property would be apt to wish; unless, indeed, he felt certain of obtaining his share of the amount of sales. These boards were neither in rafts, nor in cribs; but they came singly, or two or three laid together, as if some arrangement had been made to arrest them below, before they should reach any shoals, falls, or rapids. All this

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looked surprisingly like a regular manufacture of lumber, with a view to sales in the markets of the towns on the Hudson. The little stream we were on, was a tributary of that noble river, and, once in the latter, there would be no very material physical obstacle to conveying the product of our hills over the habitable globe.

"This really looks like trade, Sureflint," I said, as soon as certain that my eyes did not deceive me. "Where there are boards made, men cannot be far off. Lumber, cut to order, does not *grow* in the wilderness, though the material of which it is made, may."

"Mill make him. Know'd mill, when hear him. Talk plain 'nough. Pale-face make mill, but red-man got ear to hear wit'!"

This was all true enough; and it remained to ascertain what was to come of it. I will acknowledge, that, when I saw those tell-tale boards come floating down the winding, little river, I felt a thrilling of the nerves, as if assured the sight would be succeeded by some occurrence of importance to myself. I knew that these lawless lumbermen bore a bad name in the land, and that they were generally regarded as a set of plunderers, who did not hesitate to defend themselves and their habits, by such acts of violence and fraud as they fancied their circumstances justified. It is one evil of crime, where it penetrates masses, that numbers are enabled to give it a gloss, and a seeming merit, that unsettle principles; rendering the false true, in the eyes of the ignorant, and generally placing evil before good. This is one of the modes in which justice vindicates itself, under the providence of God; the wrongs committed by communities re-acting on themselves, in the shape of a demoralization that soon brings its own merited punishment.

There was little time for speculation or conjecture, however; for, resuming our march, the next bend in the river brought into view a reach of the stream in which half a dozen men and lads were at work in the water, placing the boards in piles of two or three, and setting them in the current, at points favourable to their floating downwards. Booms, connected with chains, kept the confused pile in a sort of basin beneath some low cliffs, on the margin of which stood the expected mill itself. Here, then, was ocular proof that squatters were systematically at work, plundering the forests, of which I was in charge, of their most valuable trees, and setting everything like law and right at defiance. The circumstances called for great decision, united with the utmost circumspection. I had gone so far, that pride would not suffer me to retreat, had not a sense of duty to my father and colonel Follock, come to increase the determination to go on.

The reader may feel some desire to know how far Dus mingled with my thoughts, all this time. She was never absolutely out of them, though the repulse I had met in my affections given an impetus to my feelings that rendered me more than usually disposed to enter on an adventure of hazard and wildness. If I were naught to Ursula Malbone, it mattered little what else became of me. This was the sentiment that was uppermost, and I have thought, ever since, that Susquesus had some insight into the condition of my feelings, and understood the cause of the sort of desperation with which I was about to rush on danger. We were, as yet, quite concealed, ourselves; and the Indian profited by the circumstance, to hold a council, before we trusted our persons in the hands of those who might feel it to be their interest to make away with us, in preference to permitting us ever to see our friends again. In doing this, however, Sureflint was in no degree influenced by concern for himself, but solely by a desire to act as became an experienced warrior, on a very difficult war-path.

"S'pose you know," said Sureflint. "Em no good men Varmount squatter *you* t'ink own land *dey* tink own land. Carry rifle and do as please. Best watch him."

"I believe I understand you," Susquesus, and I shall be on my guard, accordingly. Did you ever see either of those men before?"

"T'ink have. Must meet all sort of men, when he go up and down in 'e wood. Despret squatter, dat ole man, out yonder. Call himself T'ousandacre say he alway own t'ousand acre when he have mind to find him."

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"The gentleman must be well provided with estates! A thousand acres will make a very pretty homestead for a wanderer, especially when he has the privilege of carrying it about with him, in his travels. You mean the man with grey hairs, I suppose he who is half dressed in buckskin?"

"Sartain; dat ole T'ousandacre nebber want land take him where he find him. Born over by great salt lake, he say, and been travel toward setting sun since a boy. Alway help himself Hampshire Grant man, *dat*. But, Major, why he no got right, well as you?"

"Because our laws give him no right, while it gives to the owner in fee, a perfect right. It is one of the conditions of the society in which we live, that men shall respect each other's property, and this is not his property, but mine or, rather, it is the property of my father and colonel Follock."

"Best not say so, den. No need tell ebbery t'ing. No your land, say no your land. If he t'ink you spy, p'raps he shoot you, eh? Pale-face shoot spy; red man t'ink spy good feller!"

"Spies can be shot only in time of war; but war or peace, you do not think these men will push matters to extremities? They will be afraid of the law."

"Law! What law to him? Nebber see law don't go near law; don't know him."

"Well, I shall run the risk, for hunger is quite as active just now as curiosity and interest. There is no necessity, however, for your exposing yourself, Sureflint; do you stay behind, and wait for the result. If I am detained, you can carry the news to Chainbearer, who will know where to seek me. Stay you here, and let me go on alone adieu."

Sureflint was not to be dropped in this manner. He *said* nothing, but the moment I began to move, he stepped quietly into his accustomed place, in advance, and led the way towards the party of squatters. There were four of these men at work in the river, in addition to two stout lads and the old leader, who, as I afterwards ascertained, was very generally known by the *sobriquet* of Thousandacres. The last remained on dry land, doubtless imagining that his years, and his long services in the cause of lawlessness and social disorganization, entitled him to this small advantage. The evil one has his privileges, as well as the public.

The first intimation our hosts received of this unexpected visit, came from the cracking of a dried stick on which I had trodden. The Indian was not quicker to interpret and observe that well-known sound, than the old squatter, who turned his head like thought, and at once saw the Onondago within a rod of the spot where he himself was standing. I was close on the Indian's heels. At first, neither surprise nor uneasiness was apparent in the countenance of Thousandacres. He knew the Trackless, as he called Susquesus, and, though this was the first visit of the Indian, at that particular `location,' they had often met in a similar manner before, and invariably with as little preliminary notice. So far from any thing unpleasant appearing in the countenance of the squatter, therefore, Susquesus was greeted with a smile, in which a certain leering expression of cunning was blended with that of welcome.

"So it 's only you, Trackless," exclaimed ThousandAcres, or, Thousandacres, as I shall, in future, spell the name "I didn't know but it might be a sheriff. Sitch crittur's do get out into the woods, sometimes, you know; though they don't always get back ag'in. How come you to find us out, in this cunning spot, Onondago!"

"Hear mill, in night. Saw got loud tongue. Hungry; so come get somet'ing to eat."

"Waal, you v'e done wisely, in that partic'lar, for we never have been better off for vi't'als. Pigeons is as plenty as land; and the law hasn't got to that pass, yet, as to forbid a body from taking pigeons, even though it be in another man's stubble. I must keep that saw better greased, nights; though, I s'p'ose, a'ter all, 't was the cut of the teeth you

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heard, and not the rubbing of the plate?"

"Hear him all saw got loud voice, tell you."

"Yes, there 's natur' in that. Come, we 'll take this path, up to the house, and see what Miss Thousandacres can do for you. Breakfast must be ready, by this time; and you, and your fri'nd, behind you, there, is wilcome to what we have, sitch as it is. Now, as we go along," continued the squatter, leading the way up the path he had mentioned "now, as we go along, you can tell me the news, Trackless. This is a desp'rate quiet spot; and all the tidings we get is brought back by the b'ys, when they come up stream, from floating boards down into the river. A desp'rate sight have we got on hand, and I hope to hear that matters be going on so well, in Albany, that boards will bring suthin', soon. It 's high time honest labour met with its reward."

"Don't know nebber sell board," answered the Indian "nebber buy him. Don't care for board. Powder cheap, now 'e war-path shut up. Dat good, s'pose you t'ink."

"Waal, Trackless, I kear more for boards than for powder, I must own; though powder 's useful, too. Yes, yes; a useful thing is powder, in its way. Venison and bear's meat are both healthy, cheap, food; and I *have* eaten catamount. Powder can be used in many ways. Who is your fri'nd, Trackless?"

"*Ole* young frien' know his fader. Live in wood, now, like us, this summer. Shoot deer like hunter."

"He 's wilcome he 's heartily wilcome! All 's wilcome to these parts, but the landlord. You know me, Trackless you 're well acquainted with old Thousandacres; and few words is best, among fri'nds of long standing. But, tell me, Onondago; have you seen anything of the Chainbearer, and his party of lawless surveyors, in the woods, this summer? The b'ys brought up an account of his being at work, somewhere near by, this season, and that he 's at his old tricks, ag'in!"

"Sartain, see him. *Ole* frien', too, Chainbearer. Live wit' him, afore old French war *like* to live with him, when can. Good man, Chainbearer, tell you, Thousandacres. What trick he do, eh?"

The Indian spoke a little sternly, for he loved Andries too well, to hear him disrespectfully named, without feeling some sort of resentment. These men, however, were too much accustomed to plain dealing in their ordinary discourse, to take serious offence at trifles; and the amicable sunshine of the dialogue received no serious interruption from this passing cloud.

"What trick does Chainbearer do, Trackless," answered the squatter "a mortal sight of tricks, with them plaguy chains of his'n! If there warn't no chains and chainbearers, there could be no surveyors; and, if there warn't no surveyors, there could be no boundaries to farms but the rifle; which is the best law-maker, and lawyer, too, that man ever invented. The Indians want no surveyors, Trackless?"

"S'pose he don't. It *be* bad to measure land, will own," answered the conscientious Susquesus, who would not deny his own principles, even while he despised and condemned the man who now asserted them. "Nebber see anyt'ing good in measurin' land."

"Ay, I know'd you was of the true Injin kidney!" exclaimed Thousandacres, exultingly, "and that's it which makes sich fri'nds of us squatters and you red-skins. But Chainbearer is at work hard by, is he, Trackless?"

"Sartain. He measure General Littlepage farm out. Who *your* landlord, eh?"

"Waal, I do s'pose it 's this same Littlepage, and a desp'rate rogue all agree in callin' him."

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I started at hearing my honoured and honourable father thus alluded to, and felt a strong disposition to resent the injury; though a glance from the Indian's eye cautioned me on the subject. I was then young, and had yet to learn that men were seldom wronged without being calumniated. I now know that this practice of circulating false reports of landlords, most especially in relation to their titles, is very general, taking its rise in the hostile positions that adventurers are constantly assuming on their estates, in a country as unsettled and migratory as our own, aided by the common and vulgar passion of envy. Let a man travel through New York, even at this day, and lend his ear to the language of the discontented tavern-brawlers, and he would hardly believe there was such a thing as a good title to an estate of any magnitude within its borders, or a bad one to the farm of any occupant in possession. There is among us a set of declaimers, who come from a state of society in which little distinction exists in either fortunes or social conditions, and who are incapable of even seeing, much less of appreciating the vast differences that are created by habits, opinions, and education, but who reduce all moral discrepancies to dollars and cents. These men invariably quarrel with all above them, and, with them, to quarrel is to calumniate. Leaguings with the disaffected, of whom there always must be some, especially when men are compelled to pay their debts, one of their first acts is to assail the title of the landlord, when there happens to be one in their neighbourhood, by lying and slandering. There seems to be no exception to the rule, the practice being resorted to against the oldest as well as against the most recently granted estates among us. The lie only varies in particulars; it is equally used against the titles of the old families of Van Rensselaer, Livingston, Beckman Van Cortlandt, de Lancey, Schuyler, and others, as against the hundred new names that have sprung up in what is called the western counties, since the revolution. It is the lie of the Father of Lies, who varies it to suit circumstances and believers. "A desp'rate rogue," all agree in calling the man who owns land that they desire to possess themselves, without being put to the unpleasant trouble of purchasing and paying for it.

I so far commanded myself, however, as to make no retort for the injustice done my upright, beloved, and noble-minded father, but left his defence to the friendly feelings and sterling honesty of Sureflint.

"Not so," answered the Indian sternly. "Big lie forked tongue tell *dat* know gen'ral sarve wid him *know* him. Good warrior honest man *dat lie*. Tell him so to face."

"Waal wa-a-I I don't know," drawled out Mr. Thousandacres: how those rascals will "wa-a-I" and "I don't know," when they are cornered in one of their traducing tales, and are met face to face, as the Indian now met the squatter! "Waal wa-a-I, wa-a-I, I don't know, and only repeat what I have heern say. But, here we be at the cabin, Trackless; and I see by the smoke that old Prudence and her gals has been actyve this morning, and we shall soon get suthin' comfortable for the stomach."

Hereupon, Mr. Thousandacres stopped at a convenient place by the side of the stream, and commenced washing his face and hands; an operation that was now performed for the first time that day.

CHAPTER II.

"He stepped before the monarch's chair,
And stood with rustic plainness there,
And little reverence made;
Nor head, nor body, bowed nor bent,
But on the desk his arm he leant,
And words like these he said."

Marmion.

While the squatter was thus occupied in arranging his toilet, previously to taking his morning meal, I had a

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moment of leisure to look about in. We had ascended to the level of the mill, where was an open, half-cleared space, of some sixty acres in extent, that was under a rude cultivation. Stubs and stumps abounded, and the fences were of logs, showing that the occupancy was still of recent date. In fact, as I afterwards ascertained, Thousandacres, with his family of hopeful sons and daughters, numbering in all more than twenty souls, had squatted at that spot just four years before. The mill-seat was admirable, nature having done for it nearly all that was required, though the mill itself was as unartificial and make-shift as such a construction very well could be. Agriculture evidently occupied very little of the time of the family, which tilled just enough land "to make a live on't," while everything in the shape of lumber was "improved" to the utmost. A vast number of noble pines had been felled, and boards and shingles were to be seen in profusion on every side. A few of the first were being sent to market, in order to meet the demands of the moment, in the way of groceries; but, the intention was to wait for the rise in the little stream, after the fallrains, in order to send the bulk of the property into the common artery of the Hudson, and to reap the great reward of the toil of the summer and spring.

I saw, also, that there must be additions to this family, in the way of marriage, as they occupied no less than five cabins, all of which were of logs, freshly erected, and had an air of comfort and stability about them, that one would not have expected to meet where the title was so flimsy. All this, as I fancied, indicated a design not to remove very soon. It was probable that some of the oldest of the sons and daughters were married, and that the patriarch was already beholding a new generation of squatters springing up about him. A few of the young men were visible, lounging about the different cabins, and the mill was sending forth that peculiar, cutting, grating sound, that had so distinctly attracted the attention of Susquesus, even in the depths of the forest.

"Walk in, Trackless," cried Thousandacres, in a hearty, free manner, which proved that what came easily went as freely; "walk in, fri'nd; I don't know your name, but that 's no great matter, where there 's enough for all, and a wilcome in the bargain. Here 's the old woman, ready and willing to sarve you, and looking as smiling as a gal of fifteen."

The last part of this statement, however, was not precisely accurate. "Miss Thousandacres," as the squatter sometimes magnificently called his consort, or the dam of his young brood, was far from receiving us with either smiles or welcomes. A sharp-featured, keen, grey-eyed old woman, her thoughts were chiefly bent on the cares of her brood; and her charities extended little beyond them. She had been the mother of fourteen children herself, twelve of which survived. All had been born amid the difficulties, privations and solitudes of stolen abodes in the wilderness. That woman had endured enough to break down the constitutions and to destroy the tempers of half a dozen of the ordinary beings of her sex; yet she survived, the same enduring, hard-working, self-denying, suffering creature she had been from the day of her bloom and beauty. These two last words might be supposed to be used in mockery, could one have seen old Prudence, sallow, attenuated, with sunken cheeks, hollow, lack-lustre eyes, and broken-mouthed, as I now saw her; but there *were* the remains of great beauty, notwithstanding, about the woman; and I afterwards learned that she had once been among the fairest of the fair, in her native mountains. In all the intercourse I subsequently had with her family, the manner of this woman was anxious, distrustful, watchful, and bore a strong resemblance to that of the dam that is overseeing the welfare of its cubs. As to her welcome at the board, it was neither hearty nor otherwise; it being so much a matter of course for the American to share his meal with the stranger, that little is said or thought of the boon.

Notwithstanding the size of the family of Thousandacres, the cabin in which he dwelt was not crowded. The younger children of the settlement, ranging between the ages of four and twelve, appeared to be distributed among all the habitations indifferently, putting into the dishes wherever there was an opening, much as pigs thrust themselves in at any opening at a trough. The business of eating commenced simultaneously throughout the whole settlement, Prudence having blown a blast upon a conch-shell, as the signal. I was too hungry to lose any time in discourse, and set to, with the most hearty good will, upon the coarse fare, the moment there was an opportunity. My example was imitated by all around our own particular board, it being the refined and intellectual only, who habitually converse at their meals. The animal had too great a preponderance among the squatters, to leave them an exception to the rule.

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At length, the common hunger was appeased, and I could see that those who sat around began to examine me with a little more curiosity than they had previously manifested. There was nothing in the fashion of my attire to excite suspicion, perhaps, though I did feel some little concern on account of its quality. In that day, the social classes were broadly distinguished by dress, no man even affecting to assume the wardrobe of a gentleman, without having certain pretensions to the character. In the woods, however, it was the custom to throw aside every thing like finery, and I wore the hunting-shirt already mentioned, as my outer garment. The articles most likely to betray my station in life were beneath this fortunate covering, and might escape observation. Then our party was small, consisting, besides the parents and the two guests, of only one young man, and one young woman, of about the ages of two and twenty and sixteen, whom the mother addressed as Zephaniah and Lowiny, the latter being one of the very common American corruptions of some fine name taken from a book Lavinia, quite likely. These two young persons departed themselves with great modesty at the table, old Thousandacres and his wife, spite of their lawless lives, having maintained a good deal of the ancient puritan discipline among their descendants, in relation to things of this nature. Indeed, I was struck with the singular contrast between the habitual attention that was paid by all in the settlement to certain appearances of the sort, and that certainty which every one must have possessed that they were living daily in the commission of offences opposed not only to the laws of the land, but to the common, inherent convictions of right. In this particular, they exhibited what is often found in life, the remains of ancient habits and principles, existing in the shape of habits, long after the substance that had produced them had disappeared.

"Have you asked these folks about Chainbearer?" said Prudence abruptly, as soon as the knives and forks were laid down, and while we still continued in our seats at the table. "I feel a consarn of mind, about that man, that I never feel about any other."

"Never fear Chainbearer, woman," answered the husband. "He 's got his summer's work afore him, without coming near us. By the last accounts, this young Littlepage, that the old rogue of a father has sent into the country, has got him out in his own settlement; where he 'll be apt to keep him, I calcerlate, till cold weather sets in. Let me once get off all the lumber we 've cut, and sell it, and I kear very little about Chainbearer, or his master."

"This is bold talk, Aaron; but jist remember how often we 've squatted, and how often we 've been driven to move. I s'pose I 'm talking afore fri'nds, in sayin' what I do."

"No fear of any here, wife. Trackless is an old acquaintance, and has as little relish for law-titles, as any on us; and *his* fri'nd is *our* fri'nd." I confess, that I felt a little uncomfortable, at this remark; but the squatter going on with his conversation, there was no opportunity for saying anything, had I been so disposed. "As for moving," continued the husband, "I never mov'd, but twice, without getting pay for my betterments. Now, I call that a good business, for a man who has squatted no less than seventeen times. If the worst comes to the worst, we 're young enough to make an eighteenth pitch. So that I save the lumber, I kear but little for your Littlepages, or Greatpages; the mill is no great matter, without the gear; and that has travelled all the way from Varmount, as it is, and is used to moving. It can go farther."

"Yes, but the lumber, Aaron! The water 's low, now, and you can never get it to market, until the rivers rise, which mayn't be these three months. Think how many days' labour that lumber has cost you, and all on us, and what a sight of it there would be to lose!"

"Yes, but we *wunt* lose it, woman," answered Thousandacres, compressing his lips, and clenching his hands, in a way to show how intensely he felt on the subject of property, himself, however dishonestly acquired. "My sweat and labour be in them boards; and it 's as good as sap, any day. What a man sweats for, he has a right to."

This was somewhat loose morality, it is true, since a man might sweat in bearing away his neighbour's goods; but a portion of the human race is a good deal disposed to feel and reason on principles but little more sound than this of old Thousandacres.

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"Wa-a-ll," answered the woman, "I 'm sure I don't want to see you and the b'ys lose the fruits of your labours; not I. You 've honestly toiled and wrought at 'em logs, in a way I never seed human beings outdo; and 't would be hard," looking particularly at me, "now that they 've cut the trees, hauled 'em to mill, and sawed the boards, to see another man step in and claim all the property. *That* could never be right, but is ag'in all justice, whether Varmount or York. I s'pose there 's no great harm in jist askin' what your name may be, young man?"

"None in the world," I answered, with a self-command that I could see delighted the Onondago. "My name is Mordaunt."

"Mordaunt!" repeated the woman, quickly. "Don't we know suthin' of that name? Is that a fri'ndly name, to us Varmounters? How is it, Aaron? you ought to know."

"No, I hadn't ought to, for I never heerd tell of any sich name, afore. So long as 'tis n's Littlepage, I kear nothin' about it."

I felt relieved at this reply, for I will own, that the idea of falling into the power of these lawless men was far from pleasant to me. From Thousandacres, down to the lad of seventeen, they all stood six feet in their stockings; and a stouter, more broad-shouldered, sinewy race, was not often seen. The idea of resisting them by force, was out of the question. I was entirely without arms; though the Indian was better provided; but no less than four rifles were laid on brackets in this one cabin; and I made no doubt that every male of the family had his own particular weapon. The rifle was the first necessary, of men of this stamp, being as serviceable in procuring food, as in protecting them from their enemies.

It was at this moment that Prudence drew a long sigh, and rose from table in order to renew her domestic labours. Lowiny followed her motions in submissive silence, and we men sauntered to the door of the cabin, where I could get a new view of the nature of those "betterments" that Thousandacres so highly prized, and of the extent of the depredations that had been committed on colonel Follock and my father. The last were by no means insignificant; and, at a later day, they were estimated, by competent judges, to amount to fully a thousand dollars in value. Of course these were a thousand dollars totally lost, inasmuch as redress, in a pecuniary sense, was entirely out of the question with men of the stamp of Thousandacres and his sons. This class of persons are fond of saying, "I 'll guarantee," and "I 'll bind myself" to do this or that; but the guaranty and obligation are equally without value. In fact, those who are the least responsible are usually the freest with such pledges.

"This is a handsome spot," said Thousandacres, whose real name was Aaron Timberman. "This is a handsome spot, Mr. Mordaunt, and one it would go kind o' hard to give it up at the biddin' of a man who never laid eye on 't. Be you any way acquainted with law?"

"A very little; no more than we all get to be as we move along through life."

"You 've not travelled far on that journey, young man, as any one can see by your face. But you 've had opportunities, as a body can tell by your speech, which isn't exactly like our'n, out here in the woods, from which I had kind o' thought your schoolin' might be more than common. A body can tell, though his own l'arnin' amounts to no great matter."

This notion of Aaron's, that my modes of speech, pronunciation, accent and utterance had come from the schools, was natural enough, perhaps; though few persons ever acquire accuracy in either, except in the familiar intercourse of their childhood. As for the "common schools" of New York, they are perpetuating errors in these respects, rather than correcting them; and one of the largest steps in their improvement would be to have a care that he who teaches, teaches accurately as to *sounds*, as well as to significations. Under the present system, vicious habits are confirmed by deliberate instruction and example, rather than corrected.

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"My schooling," I answered, modestly enough, I trust, "*has* been a little better than common, though it has not been good enough, as you see, to keep me out of the woods."

"All that may be inclination. Some folks have a nat'ral turn for the wilderness, and it's workin' ag'in the grain, and nearly useless, to try to make settlement—bodies of 'em. D 'ye happen to know what lumber is likely to bring this fall?"

"Everything is looking up since the peace, and it is fair to expect lumber will begin to command a price, as well as other property."

"Wa—a—I, it 's time it should! During the whull war a board has been of little more account than a strip of bark, unless it happened to be in the neighbourhood of an army. We lumbermen have had an awful time on it these last eight years, and more than once I 've felt tempted to gi'n in, and go and settle down in some clearin', like quieter folks; but I thought, as the 'arth is to come to an eend, the war must sartainly come to an eend afore it."

"The calculation was a pretty safe one; the war must have truly made a dull time for you; nor do I see how you well got along during the period it lasted."

"Bad enough; though war—times has their wind—falls as well as peace—times. Once, the inimy seized a sight of continental stores, sich as pork, and flour, and New England rum, and they pressed all the teams, far and near, to carry off their plunder, and my sleigh and horses had to go along with the rest on 'em. Waal, *go we did*; and I got as handsome a load as ever you seed laid in a lumber—sleigh; what I call an assortment, and one, too, that was mightily to my own likin', seein' I loaded it up with my own hands. 'T was in a woody country, as you may s'pose, or I wouldn't have been there; and, as I know'd all the by—roads, I watched my chance, and got out of the line without bein' seen, and druv' as straight up to my own hum' as if I 'd just come from tradin' in the nearest settlement. That was the most profitablest journey I ever tuck, and, what is more, it was a short one."

Here old Thousandacres stopped to laugh, which he did in as hearty, frank a manner as if his conscience had never known care. This story, I fancy, was a favourite with him, for I heard no less than three other allusions to the exploit on which it was based, during the short time our communication with each other lasted. I observed the first smile I had seen on the face of Zephaniah, appear at the recital of this anecdote; though I had not failed to notice that the young man, as fine a specimen of rustic, rude, manly proportions as one could wish to see, had kept his eyes on me at every occasion, in a manner that excited some uneasiness.

"That was a fortunate service for you," I remarked, as soon as Aaron had had his laugh; "unless, indeed, you felt the necessity of giving back the property to the continental officers."

"Not a bit of it! Congress was poor enough, I 'm willin' to own, but it was richer than I was, or ever will be. When property has changed hands once, title goes with it; and some say that these very lands, coming from the king, ought now to go to the people, jist as folks happen to want 'em. There 's reason and right, I 'm sartain, in the idee, and I shouldn't wonder if it held good in law, one day!"

Alas! alas! for poor human nature again. Seldom does man commit a wrong but he sets his ingenuity to work to frame excuses for it. When his mind thus gets to be perverted by the influence of his passions, and more especially by that of rapacity, he never fails to fancy new principles to exist to favour his schemes, and manifests a readiness in inventing them, which, enlisted on the side of goodness, might render him a blessing instead of a curse to his race. But roguery is so active, while virtue is so apt to be passive, that in the eternal conflict that is waged between them, that which is gained by the truth and inherent power of the last is, half the time, more than neutralized by the unwearied exertions of the first! This, I fear, may be found to contain the weak spot of our institutions. So long as law represents the authority of an individual, individual pride and jealousy may stimulate it to constant watchfulness; whereas, law representing the community, carries with it a divided responsibility, that

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needs the excitement of intolerable abuses ere it will arouse itself in its own vindication. The result is merely another proof that, in the management of the ordinary affairs of life, men are usually found to be stronger than principles.

"Have you ever had occasion to try one of your titles of possession in a court of law, against that of a landholder who got his right from a grant?" I asked, after reflecting a moment on the truth I have just narrated.

Thousandacres shook his head, looked down a moment, and pondered a little, in his turn, ere he gave me the following answer:

"Sartain," he said. "We all like to be on the right side, if we can; and some of our folks kind o' persuaded me I might make out, once, ag'in a reg'lar landlord. So I stood trial with him; but he beat me, Mr. Mordaunt, just the same as if I had been a chicken, and he the hawk that had me in his talons. You 'll never catch me trusting myself in the claws of the law ag'in, though that happened as long ago as afore the old French war. I shall never trust to law any more. It may do for them that 's, rich, and don't kear whether they win or lose; but law is a desp'rate bad business for them that hasn't got money to go into it, right eend foremost."

"And, should Mr. Littlepage discover your being here, and feel disposed to come to some arrangement with you, what conditions would you be apt to accept?"

"Oh! I 'm never ag'in trade. Trade 's the spirit of life; and seein' that gin'ral Littlepage has *some* right, as I do s'pose is the case, I shouldn't want to be hard on him. If he would keep things quiet, and not make a fuss about it, but would leave the matter out to men, and they men of the right sort, I shouldn't be difficult; for I 'm one of that kind that hates law-suits, and am always ready to do the right thing; and so he 'd find me as ready to settle as any man he ever had on his lands."

"But on what terms? You have not told me the terms."

"As to tarms, I 'd not be hard, by any means. No man can say old Thousandacres ever druv' hard tarms, when he had the best on't. That 's not in my natur', which runs altogether towards reason and what 's right. Now you see, Mordaunt, how matters stand atween this Littlepage and myself. He 's got a paper title, they tell me, and I 've got possession, which is always a squatter's claim; and a good one 'tis, where there 's plenty of pine and a mill-seat, with a handy market!"

Here Thousandacres stopped to laugh again, for he generally indulged in this way, in so hearty and deep a tone, as to render it difficult to laugh and talk in the same breath. As soon as through, however, he did not forget to pursue the discourse.

"No, no man that understands the woods will gainsay them advantages," added the squatter; "and of all on 'em am I now in the enj'ment. Wa-a-l, gin'ral Littlepage, as they call him about here, has a paper title; and I 've got possession. He has the courts on his side, I 'll allow; but here are my betterments sixty-three as large acres chopped over and hauled to mill, as can be found in all Charlotte, or Washington, as they tell me the county is now called."

"But general Littlepage may not fancy it an improvement to have his land stripped of its pine. You know, Thousandacres, as well as I do, that pine is usually thought to greatly add to the value of land hereabouts, the Hudson making it so easy to get it to market."

"Lord! youngster, do you think I hadn't all that in my mind, when I made my pitch here? You can't teach old bones where it 's best to strike the first blow with an axe. Now, I 've got in the creek," (this word is used, in the parlance of the State, for a small river, nine times in ten); "now, I 've got in the creek, on the way to the Hudson,

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in the booms below the mill, and in the mill-yard yonder, a hundred and twenty thousand feet of as handsome stuff as ever was cribbed, or rafted; and there 's logs enough cut and hauled to make more than as much more. I some sort o' think you know this Littlepage, by your talk; and, as I like fair dealin's, and what 's right atween man and man, I 'll just tell you what I 'll do, so that you can tell him, if you ever meet, and the matter should come up atween you, as sich things sometimes do, all in talk like, though a body has no real consarn in the affair; and so you can tell this gin'ral that old Thousandacres is a reasonable man, and is willing to settle on these tarms; but he won't gi'n a grain more. If the gin'ral will let me get all the lumber to market peaceably, and take off the crops the b'ys have put in with their own hands, and carry off all the mill-gear, and take down the doors and windows of the houses, and all the iron-work a body can find about, I 'm willing to agree to quit 'arly enough in the spring to let any man he chooses come into possession in good season to get in spring grain, and make garden. There; them 's my tarms, and I 'll not abate on one on 'em, on no account at all. But that much I 'll do for peace; for I *do* love peace and quiet, my woman says, most desp'ately."

I was about to answer this characteristic communication perfectly characteristic as to feelings, one-sided sense of right, principles and language when Zephaniah, the tall son of the squatter, suddenly laid a hand on his father's arm, and led him aside. This young man had been examining my person, during the whole of the dialogue at the door of the cabin, in a way that was a little marked. I was disposed at first to attribute these attentions to the curiosity natural to youth, at its first meeting with one who might be supposed to enjoy opportunities of ascertaining the newest modes of dress and deportment. Rustics, in America, ever manifest this feeling, and it was not unreasonable to suppose that this young squatter might have felt its influence. But, as it soon appeared, I had altogether mistaken my man. Although both he and his sister, Lowiny, had never turned their eyes from my person, I soon discovered that they had been governed by totally opposing feelings.

The first intimation I got of the nature of the mistake into which I had fallen, was from the manner of Thousandacres, as soon as his son had spoken to him, apart, for a single minute. I observed that the old squatter turned suddenly, and began to scrutinize my appearance with a scowling, but sharp eye. Then he would give all his attention to his son; after which, I came in for a new turn of examination. Of course, such a scene could not last a great while, and I soon felt the relief of being, again, face to face with the man whom I now set down for an enemy.

"Harkee, young man," resumed Thousandacres, as soon as he had returned and placed himself directly before me, "my b'y, Zeph, there, has got a suspicion consarning you, that must be cleared up, fairly a-tween us, afore we part. I like fair dealin's, as I've told you more than once, already, and despise underhandedness from the bottom of my heart. Zeph tells me that he has a kind o' suspicion that you 're the son of this very Littlepage, and have been sent among us to spy us out, and to l'arn how things stood, afore you let on your evil intentions. Is it so, or not?"

"What reason has Zeph for such a suspicion?" I answered, with as much coolness as I could assume. "He is a perfect stranger to me, and I fancy this is the first time we have ever met."

"He agrees to that, himself; but mankind can sometimes see things that isn't put directly afore their eyes. My son goes and comes, frequently, between the Ravensnest settlement and our own, though I don't suppose he lets on any great deal about his proper hum' He has worked as much as two months, at a time, in that part of the country, and I find him useful in carrying on a little trade, once and awhile, with 'squire Newcome."

"You are acquainted, then, with Mr. Jason Newcome, or 'squire Newcome, as you call him?"

"I call him what 's right, I hope!" answered the old man sharply. "He *is* a 'Squire, and should be called a 'Squire. Give the devil his due; that 's my principle. But Zephaniah has been out a considerable spell this summer to work at Ravensnest. I tell him he has a gal in his eye, by his hankering so much after the 'Nest folks, but he won't own it: but out he has been, and he tells me this Littlepage's son was expected to come into the settlement about the time he last left there."

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"And you are acquainted with 'Squire Newcome?' I said, pursuing the subject as its points presented themselves to my own mind, rather than following the thread of the squatter's discursive manner of thinking; "so well acquainted as to *trade* with him?"

"Sartain; *well* acquainted I may say. The 'Squire tuck (took) all the lumber I cut 'arly in the spring, rafting and selling it on his own account, paying us in groceries, womans' cloth, and rum. He made a good job of it, I hear tell, and is hankerin' round a'ter what is now in the creek; but I rather think I 'll send the b'ys off with that. But what 's that to the purpose? Didn't you tell me, young man, that your name is Mordaunt?"

"I did; and in so saying I told no more than the truth."

"And what may you call your given name? A'ter all, old woman," turning to the anxious wife and mother, who had drawn near to listen, having most probably been made acquainted with the nature of her son's suspicions "a'ter all the b'y may be mistaken, and this young man as innocent as any one of your own flesh and blood."

"Mordaunt is what you call my `given name,' I answered, disdainng deception, "and Littlepage " The hand of the Indian was suddenly placed on my mouth, stopping further utterance.

It was too late, however, for the friendly design of the Onondago, the squatters readily comprehending all I had intended to say. As for Prudence, she walked away; and I soon heard her calling all her younger children by name, to collect them near her person, as the hen gathers its chickens beneath the wing. Thousandacres took the matter very differently. His countenance grew dark, and he whispered a word to Lowiny, who departed on some errand with reluctant steps, as I thought, and eyes that did not always look in the direction she was walking.

"I see how it is! I see how it is!" exclaimed the squatter, with as much of suppressed indignation in his voice and mien as if his cause were that of offended innocence; "we 've got a spy among us, and war-time 's too fresh not to let us know how to deal with sich folks. Young man, what 's your arr'n'd down here, in my betterments, and beneath my ruff?"

"My errand as you call it, Thousandacres, is to look after the property that is entrusted to my care. I am the son of General Littlepage, one of the owners of this spot, and the attorney of both."

"Oh! an *attorney* be you!" cried the squatter, mistaking the attorney in fact for an attorney at law a sort of being for whom he necessarily entertained a professional antipathy. "I'll attorney ye! If you or your gin'ral father thinks that Aaron Thousandacres is a man to have his territories invaded by the inimy, and keep his hands in his pockets the whull time, he's mistaken. Send 'em along, Lawiny, send along the b'ys, and let's see if we can't find lodgin's for this young attorney gin'ral, as well as board."

There was no mistaking the aspect of things now. Hostilities had commenced in a certain sense, and it became incumbent on me for the sake of safety to be on the alert. I knew that the Indian was armed; and, determined to defend my person if possible, I was resolved to avail myself of the use of his weapon should it become necessary. Stretching out an arm, and turning to the spot where Susquesus had just stood, to lay hold of his rifle, I discovered that he had disappeared.

CHAPTER III.

"The lawless herd, with fury blind,
Have done him cruel wrong;

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The flowers are gone, but still we find,
The honey on his tongue."

Cowper.

There I stood, alone and unarmed, in the centre of six athletic men, for Lowiny had been sent to assemble her brothers; a business in which she was aided by Prudence's blowing a peculiar sort of blast on her conch; and, as unable to resist, as a child would have been in the hands of its parent. As a fruitless scuffle would have been degrading, as well as useless, I at once determined to submit, temporarily at least, or so long as submission did not infer disgrace, and was better than resistance. There did not seem to be any immediate disposition to lay violent hands on me, however, and there I stood, a minute or two, after I had missed Sureflint, surrounded by the whole brood of the squatter, young and old, male and female; some looking defiance, others troubled, and all anxious. As for myself, I will frankly own my sensations were far from pleasant; for I knew I was in the hands of the Philistines, in the depths of a forest, fully twenty miles from any settlement, and with no friends nearer than the party of the Chainbearer, who was at least two leagues distant, and altogether ignorant of my position as well as of my necessities. A ray of hope, however, gleamed in upon me through the probable agency of the Onondago.

Not for an instant did I imagine that long-known and welltried friend of my father and the Chainbearer false. His character was too well established for that; and it soon occurred to me, that, foreseeing his own probable detention should he remain, he had vanished with a design to let the strait in which I was placed be known, and to lead a party to my rescue. A similar idea probably struck Thousandacres almost at the same instant; for, glancing his eye around him, he suddenly demanded

"What has become of the red-skin? The varmint has dodged away, as I 'm an honest man! Nathaniel, Moses, and Daniel, to your rifles and on the trail. Bring the fellow in, if you can, with a whull skin; but if you can't, an Injin more or less will never be heeded in the woods."

I soon had occasion to note that the patriarchal government of Thousandacres was of a somewhat decided and prompt character. A few words went a great ways in it, as was now apparent; for in less than two minutes after Aaron had issued his decree, those namesakes of the prophets and lawgivers of old, Nathaniel, and Moses, and Daniel, were quitting the clearing on diverging lines, each carrying a formidable, long, American hunting-rifle in his hand. This weapon, so different in the degree of its power from the short military piece that has become known to modern warfare, was certainly in dangerous hands; for each of those young men had been familiar with his rifle from boyhood; gunpowder and liquor, with a little lead, composing nearly all the articles on which they lavished money for their amusement. I trembled for Susquesus; though I knew he must anticipate a pursuit, and was so well skilled in throwing off a chase as to have obtained the name of the Trackless. Still, the odds were against him; and experience has shown that the white man usually surpasses the Indian even in his own peculiar practices, when there have been opportunities to be taught. I could do no more, however, than utter a mental prayer for the escape of my friend.

"Bring that chap in here," added old Thousandacres sternly, the moment he saw that his three sons were off; enough remaining to enforce that or any other order he might choose to issue. "Bring him into this room, and let us hold a court on him, sin' he is sich a lover of the law. If law he likes, law let him have. An attorney is he? I want to know! What has an attorney to do with me and mine, out here in the woods?"

While this was in the course of being said, the squatter, and father of squatters, led the way into his own cabin, where he seated himself with an air of authority, causing the females and younger males of his brood to range themselves in a circle behind his chair. Seeing the folly of resistance, at a hint from Zephaniah I followed, the three young men occupying the place near the door, as a species of guard. In this manner we formed a sort of court, in which the old fellow figured as the investigating magistrate, and I figured as the criminal.

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"An attorney, be you!" muttered Thousandacres, whose ire against me in my supposed, would seem to be more excited than it was against me in my real character. "B'ys, silence in the court; we 'll give this chap as much law as he can stagger under, sin' he 's of a law natur'. Everything shall be done accordin' to rule. Tobit," addressing his oldest son, a colossal figure of about six-and-twenty, "you 've been in the law more than any on us, and can give us the word. What was 't they did with you, first, when they had you up in Hampshire colony; the time when you and that other young man went across from the Varmount settlements to look for sheep? A raft of the crittur's you did get atween you, though you *was* waylaid and robbed of all your hard 'arnin's, afore you got back ag'in in the mountains. They dealt with you accordin' to law, 'twas said; now, what was the first thing done?"

"I was tuck [taken] afore the 'squire," answered Tobit Thousandacres, as he was often called, "who heerd the case, asked me what I had to say for myself, and then permitted me, as it was tarmed; so I went to gaol until the trial came on, and I s'pose you know what come next, as well as I do."

I took it for granted that what "come next" was anything but pleasant in remembrance, the reason Tobit did not relish it even in description, inasmuch as sheep-stealers were very apt to get "forty save one" at the whipping-post, in that day, a species of punishment that was admirably adapted to the particular offence. We are getting among us a set of *soi-disant* philanthropists, who, in their great desire to coddle and reform rogues, are fast placing the punishment of offences on the honest portion of the community, for the especial benefit of their *elevés*. Some of these persons have already succeeded in cutting down all our whipping-posts, thereby destroying the cheapest and best mode of punishing a particular class of crimes that was ever invented or practised. A generation hence, our children will feel the consequences of this mistaken philanthropy. In that day, let those who own fowl-houses, pig-pens, orchards, smoke-houses, and other similar temptations to small depredations, look to it, for I am greatly mistaken if the insecurity of their moveables does not give the most unanswerable of all commentaries on this capital misstep. One whipping-post, discreetly used, will do more towards reforming a neighbourhood than a hundred gaols, with their twenty and thirty days' imprisonments! I have as much disposition to care for the reformation of criminals as is healthful, if I know myself; but the great object of all the punishments of society, viz., its own security, ought never to be sacrificed to this, which is but a secondary consideration. Render character, person and property as secure as possible, in the first place, after which, try as many experiments in philanthropy as you please.

I am sorry to see how far the disposition to economise is extending itself, in the administration of American justice, generally. Under a government like that of this country, it is worse than idle, for it is perfectly futile to attempt to gratify the imagination by a display of its power, through the agency of pomp and representation. Such things, doubtless, have their uses, and are not to be senselessly condemned until one has had an opportunity of taking near views of their effects; though useful, or the reverse, they can never succeed here. But these communities of ours have it in their power to furnish to the world a far more illustrious example of human prescience, and benevolent care, by its prompt, exact, and well-considered administration of justice including the cases in both the civil and the criminal courts. With what pride might not the American retort, when derided for the simplicity of his executive, and the smallness of the national expenditure in matters of mere representation, could he only say "True, we waste nothing on mere parade; but, turn to the courts, and to the justice of the country; which, after all, are the great aim of every good government. Look at the liberality of our expenditures, for the command of the highest talent, in the first place; see, with what generous care we furnish judges in abundance, to prevent them from being overworked, and to avoid ruinous delays to suitors; then, turn to the criminal courts, and into, first, the entire justice of the laws; next, the care had in the selection of jurors; the thorough impartiality of all the proceedings; and, finally, when the right demands it, the prompt, unerring, and almost terrific majesty of punishment." But, to return to something that is a good deal more like truth:

"Yes, yes," rejoined Thousandacres, "there is no use in riling the feelin's, by talking of *that*" (meaning Tobit's sufferings, not at the *stake*, but at the *post*;) "a hint's as good as a description. You was taken afore a magistrate, was you; and he permitted you to prison but, he asked what you had to say for yourself, first? That was only fair, and I mean to act it all out here, accordin' to law. Come, young attorney, what have *you* got to say for

yourself?"

It struck me that, alone as I was, in the hands of men who were a species of outlaws, it might be well to clear myself from every imputation that, at least, was not merited.

"In the first place," I answered, "I will explain a mistake into which you have fallen, Thousandacres; for, let us live as friends or foes, it is always best to understand facts. I am not an attorney, in the sense you imagine I am not a lawyer."

I could see that the whole brood of squatters, Prudence included, was a good deal mollified by this declaration. As for Lowiny, her handsome, ruddy face actually expressed exultation and delight! I thought I heard that girl half suppress some such exclamation as "I know'd he wasn't no lawyer!" As for Tobit, the scowling look, replete with cat-o'-nine-tails, actually departed, temporarily at least. In short, this announcement produced a manifest change for the better.

"No lawyer, a'ter all!" exclaimed Thousandacres "Didn't you say you was an attorney?"

"That much is true. I told you that I was the son of general Littlepage, and that I was *his* attorney, and that of colonel Follock, the other tenant in common of this estate; meaning that I held their *power of attorney* to convey lands, and to transact certain other business, in their names."

This caused me to lose almost as much ground as I had just gained, though, being the literal truth, I was resolved neither to conceal, nor to attempt to evade it.

"Good land!" murmured Lowiny. "Why couldn't the man say nothin' about all that!"

A reproving look from Prudence, rebuked the girl, and she remained silent afterwards, for some time.

"A *power of attornies*, is it!" rejoined the squatter. "Wa-a-l, that's not much better than being a downright lawyer. It 's having the power of an attorney, I s'pose, and without their accursed power it 's little I should kear for any of the breed. Then you 're the son of that Gin'ral Littlepage, which is next thing to being the man himself. I should expect if Tobit, my oldest b'y, was to fall into the hands of some that might be named, it would go hard with him, all the same as if t'was myself. I know that some make a difference atween parents and children, but other some doosen't. What 's that you said about this gin'ral's only being a common tenant of this land? How dares he to call himself its owner, if he 's only a common tenant?"

The reader is not to be surprised at Thousandacres' trifling blunders of this sort; for, those whose rule of right is present interest, frequently, in the eagerness of rapacity, fall into this very kind of error; holding that cheap at one moment, which they affect to deem sacred at the next. I dare say, if the old squatter had held a lease of the spot he occupied, he would at once have viewed the character and rights of a `common tenant,' as connected with two of the most important interests of the country. It happened, now, however, that it was "his bull that was goring our ox."

"How dares he to call himself the owner of the sile, when he 's only a common tenant, I say?" repeated Thousandacres, with increasing energy, when he found I did not answer immediately.

"You have misunderstood my meaning. I did not say that my father was only a `common tenant' of this property, but that he and colonel Follock own it absolutely in common, each having his right in every acre, and not one owning one half while the other owns the other; which is what the law terms being `tenants in common,' though strictly owners in fee."

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"I shouldn't wonder, Tobit, if he turns out to be an attorney, in our meaning, a'ter all!"

"It looks desp'rately like it, father," answered the eldest born, who might have been well termed the heir at law of all his progenitor's squatting and fierce propensities. "If he isn't a downright lawyer, he *looks* more like one than any man I ever seed out of court, in my whull life."

"He 'll find his match! Law and I have been at loggerheads ever sin' the day I first went into Varmount, or them plaguy Hampshire Grants. When law gets me in its clutches, it 's no wonder if it gets the best on 't; but, when I get law in mine, or one of its sarvants, it shall be my fault if law doosen't come out second best. Wa—a—l, we 've heerd the young man's story, Tobit. I 've asked him what he had to say for himself, and he has g'in us his tell tell'd us how he 's his own father's son, and that the gin'ral is some sort of a big tenant, instead of being a landlord, and isn't much better than we are ourselves; and it 's high time I permitted him to custody. *You* had writin's for what they did to you, I dares to say, Tobit?"

"Sartain. The magistrate give the sheriff's deputy a permittimus, and, on the strength of that, they permitted me to gaol."

"Ye—e—es I know all about their niceties and appearances! I have had dealin's afore many a magistrate, in my day, and have onsuited many a chap that thought to get the best on't afore we begun! Onsuiting the man that brings the suit, is the cleanest way of getting out of the law, as I knows on; but it takes a desp'rate long head sometimes to do it! Afore I permit this young man, I 'll show writin's, too. Prudence, just onlock the drawer "

"I wish to correct one mistake before you proceed further," interrupted I. "For the second time, I tell you I am no lawyer, in any sense of the word. I am a soldier have commanded a company in General Littlepage's own regiment, and served with the army when only a boy in years. I saw both Burgoyne and Cornwallis surrender, and their troops lay down their arms."

"Good now! Who'd ha' thought it!" exclaimed the compassionate Lowiny. "And he so young, that you 'd hardly think the wind had ever blown on him!"

My announcement of this new character was not without a marked effect. Fighting was a thing to the whole family's taste, and what they could appreciate better, perhaps, than any other act or deed. There was something warlike in Thousandacres' very countenance and air, and I was not mistaken in supposing he might feel some little sympathy for a soldier. He eyed me keenly; and, whether or not he discovered signs of the truth of my assertion in my mien, I saw that he once more relented in purpose.

"You out ag'in Burg'yne!" the old fellow exclaimed. "Can I believe what you say? Why, I was out again Burg'yne myself, with Tobit, and Moses, and Nathaniel, and Jedidiah with every male crittur' of the family, in short, that was big enough to load and fire. I count them days as among my very best, though they did come late, and a'ter old age had made some head ag'in me. How can you prove you was out ag'in Burg'yne and Cornwallis?"

I knew that there was often a strange medley of *soi-disant* patriotic feeling mixed up with the most confirmed knavery in ordinary matters, and saw I had touched a chord that might thrill on the sympathies of even these rude and supremely selfish beings. The patriotism of such men, indeed, is nothing but an enlargement of selfishness, since they prize things because they belong to themselves, or they, in one sense, belong to the things. They take sides with themselves, but never with principles. That patriotism alone is pure, which would keep the country in the paths of truth, honour and justice; and no man is empowered, in his zeal for his particular nation, any more than in his zeal for himself, to forget the law of right.

"I cannot prove I was out against Burgoyne, standing here where I am, certainly," I answered; "but give me an opportunity, and I will show it to your entire satisfaction."

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"Which rijiment was on the right, Hazen's or Brookes's, in storming the Jarmans? Tell me *that*, and I will soon let you know whether I believe you or not."

"I cannot tell you that fact, for I was with my own battalion, and the smoke would not permit such a thing to be seen. I do not know that either of the corps you mention was in that particular part of the field that day, though I believe both to have been warmly engaged."

"He warnt there," drawled out Tobit, in his most dissatisfied manner, almost showing his teeth, like a dog, under the impulse of the hatred he felt.

"He *was* there!" cried Lowiny, positively; "I *know* he was there!"

A slap from Prudence taught the girl the merit of silence; but the men were too much interested to heed an interruption as characteristic and as bootless as this.

"I see how it is," added Thousandacres; "I must permit the chap a'ter all. Seein', however, that there *is* a chance of his having been out ag'in Burg'yne, I 'll permit him *without* writin's, and he shan't be bound. Tobit, take your prisoner away, and shut him up in the store-'us'. When your brothers get back from their hunt a'ter the Injin, we 'll detarmin' among us what is to be done with him."

Thousandacres delivered his orders with dignity, and they were obeyed to the letter. I made no resistance, since it would only have led to a scuffle, in which I should have sustained the indignity of defeat, to say nothing of personal injuries. Tobit, however, did not offer personal violence, contenting himself with making a sign for me to follow him, which I did, followed in turn by his two double-jointed brothers. I will acknowledge that, as we proceeded towards my prison, the thought of flight crossed my mind; and I might have attempted it, but for the perfect certainty that, with so many on my heels, I must have been overtaken, when severe punishment would probably have been my lot. On the whole, I thought it best to submit for a time, and trust the future to Providence. As to remonstrance or deprecation, pride forbade my having recourse to either. I was not yet reduced so low as to solicit favours from a squatter.

The gaol to which I was "permitted" by Thousandacres was a store-house, or, as he pronounced the word, a "store-'us," of logs, which had been made of sufficient strength to resist depredations, let them come from whom they might; and they were quite as likely to come from some within as from any without. In consequence of its destination, the building was not ill-suited to become a gaol. The logs, of course, gave a sufficient security against the attempts of a prisoner without tools or implements of any sort, the roof being made of the same materials as the sides. There was no window, abundance of air and light entering through the fissures of the rough logs, which had open intervals between them; and the only artificial aperture was the door. This last was made of stout planks, and was well secured by heavy hinges, and strong bolts and locks. The building was of some size, too twenty feet in length, at least one end of it, though then quite empty, having been intended and used as a crib for the grain that we Americans call, *par excellence*, corn. Into this building I entered, after having the large knife that most woodsmen carry taken from my pocket; and a search was made on my person for any similar implement that might aid me in an attempt to escape.

In that day America had no paper money, from the bay of Hudson to Cape Horn. Gold and silver formed the currency, and my pockets had a liberal supply of both, in the shape of joes and half joes, dollars, halves, and quarters. Not a piece of coin, of any sort, was molested, however, these squatters not being robbers, in the ordinary signification of the term, but merely deluded citizens, who appropriated the property of others to their own use, agreeably to certain great principles of morals that had grown up under their own peculiar relations to the rest of mankind, their immediate necessities and their convenience. I make no doubt that every member of the family of Thousandacres would spurn the idea of his or her's being a vulgar thief, drawing some such distinctions in the premises as the Drakes, Morgans, Woodes Rogers' and others of that school, drew between themselves and

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the vulgar every-day sea-robbers of the seventeenth century, though with far less reason. But robbers these squatters were not, except in one mode, and that mode they almost raised to the dignity of respectable hostilities, by the scale on which they transacted business.

I was no sooner "locked up" than I began a survey of my prison and the surrounding objects. There was no difficulty in doing either, the openings between the logs allowing of a clear reconnoissance on every side. With a view to keeping its contents in open sight, I fancy, the "store-'us" was placed in the very centre of the settlement, having the mills, cabins, barns, sheds and other houses, encircling it in a sort of hamlet. This circumstance, which would render escape doubly difficult, was, notwithstanding, greatly in favour of reconnoitring. I will now describe the results of my observations. As a matter of course, my appearance, the announcement of my character, and my subsequent arrest, were circumstances likely to produce a sensation in the family of the squatter. All the women had gathered around Prudence, near the door of her cabin, and the younger girls were attracted to that spot, as the particles of matter are known to obey the laws of affinity. The males, one boy of eight or ten years excepted, were collected near the mill, where Thousandacres, apparently, was holding a consultation with Tobit and the rest of the brotherhood; among whom, I fancy, was no one entitled to be termed an angel. Everybody seemed to be intently listening to the different speakers, the females often turning their eyes towards their male protectors, anxiously and with long protracted gazes. Indeed, many of them looked in that direction, even while they gave ear to the wisdom of Prudence herself.

The excepted boy had laid himself, in a lounging, American sort of an attitude, on a saw-log, near my prison, and in a position that enabled him to see both sides of it, without changing his ground. By the manner in which his eyes were fastened on the "store-'us" I was soon satisfied that he was acting in the character of a sentinel. Thus, my gaol was certainly sufficiently secure, as the force of no man, unaided and without implements, could have broken a passage through the logs.

Having thus taken a look at the general aspect of things, I had leisure to reflect on my situation, and the probable consequences of my arrest. For my life I had no great apprehensions, not as much as I ought to have had, under the circumstances; but, it did not strike me that I was in any great danger on that score. The American character, in general, is not blood-thirsty, and that of New England less so, perhaps, than that of the rest of the country. Nevertheless, in a case of property, the tenacity of the men of that quarter of the country was proverbial, and I came to the conclusion that I should be detained, if possible, until all the lumber could be got to market and disposed of, as the only means of reaping the fruit of past labour. The possibility depended on the escape or the arrest of Sureflint. Should that Indian be taken, Thousandacres and his family would be as secure as ever in their wilderness; but, on the other hand, should he escape, I might expect to hear from my friends in the course of the day. By resorting to a requisition on 'squire Newcome, who was a magistrate, my tenants might be expected to make an effort in my behalf, when the only grounds of apprehension would be the consequences of the struggle. The squatters were sometimes dangerous under excitement, and when sustaining each other, with arms in their hands, in what they fancy to be their hard-earned privileges. There is no end to the delusions of men on such subjects, self-interest seeming completely to blind their sense of right; and I have often met with cases in which parties who were trespassers, and in a moral view, robbers, *ab origine*, have got really to fancy that their subsequent labours (every new blow of the axe being an additional wrong) gave a sort of sanctity to possessions, in the defence of which they were willing to die. It is scarcely necessary to say that such persons look only at themselves, entirely disregarding the rights of others; but, one wonders where the fruits of all the religious instruction of the country are to be found, when opinions so loose and acts so flagrant are constantly occurring among us. The fact is, land is so abundant, and such vast bodies lie neglected and seemingly forgotten by their owners, that the needy are apt to think indifference authorizes invasions on such unoccupied property; and their own labour once applied, they are quick to imagine that it gives them a moral and legal interest in the soil; though, in the eye of the law and of unbiassed reason, each new step taken in what is called the improvement of a "betterment" is but a farther advance in the direction of wrong-doing.

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I was reflecting on things of this sort, when, looking through the cracks of my prison, to ascertain the state of matters without, I was surprised by the appearance of a man on horseback, who was entering the clearing on its eastern side, seemingly quite at home in his course, though he was travelling without even a foot-path to aid him. As this man had a pair of the common saddle-bags of the day on his horse, I at first took him for one of those practitioners of the healing art, who are constantly met with in the new settlements, winding their way through stumps, logs, morasses and forests, the ministers of good or evil, I shall not pretend to say which. Ordinarily, families like that of Thousandacres do their own "doctoring;" but a case might occur that demanded the wisdom of the licensed leech; and I had just decided in my own mind that this must be one, when, as the stranger drew nearer, to my surprise I saw that it was no other than my late agent, Mr. Jason Newcome, and the moral and physical factotum of Ravensnest!

As the distance between the mill that 'squire Newcome leased of me, and that which Thousandacres had set up on the property of Moosridge, could not be less than five-and-twenty miles, the arrival of this visiter at an hour so early was a certain proof that he had left his own house long before the dawn. It was probably convenient to pass through the farms and dwellings of Ravensnest, on the errand on which he was now bent, at an hour of the night or morning when darkness would conceal the movement. By timing his departure with the same judgment, it was obvious he could reach home under the concealment of the other end of the same mantle. In a word, this visit was evidently one, in the objects and incidents of which it was intended that the world at large should have no share.

The dialogues between the members of the family of Thousandacres ceased, the moment 'squire Newcome came in view; though, as was apparent by the unmoved manner in which his approach was witnessed, the sudden appearance of this particular visiter produced neither surprise nor uneasiness. Although it must have been a thing to be desired by the squatters, to keep their "location" a secret, more especially since the peace left landlords at leisure to look after their lands, no one manifested any concern at discovering this arrival in their clearing of the nearest magistrate. Any one might see, by the manner of men, women and children, that 'squire Newcome was no stranger, and that his presence gave them no alarm. Even the early hour of this visit was most probably that to which they were accustomed, the quick-witted intellects of the young fry causing them to understand the reason quite as readily as was the case with their seniors. In a word, the guest was regarded as a friend, rather than as an enemy.

Newcome was some little time, after he came into view, in reaching the hamlet, if the cluster of buildings can be so termed; and when he did alight, it was before the door of a stable, towards which one of the boys now scampered, to be in readiness to receive his horse. The beast disposed of, the 'squire advanced to the spot where Thousandacres and his elder sons still remained to receive him, or that near the mill. The manner in which all parties shook hands, and the cordiality of the salutations generally, in which Prudence and her daughters soon shared, betokened something more than amity, I fancied, for it looked very much like intimacy.

Jason Newcome remained in the family group some eight or ten minutes, and I could almost fancy the prescribed inquiries about the "folks" (*anglice*, folk), the "general state of health," and the character of the "times," ere the magistrate and the squatter separated themselves from the rest of the party, walking aside like men who had matters of moment to discuss, and that under circumstances which could dispense with the presence of any listeners.

CHAPTER IV.

"Peculiar both!

Our soil's strong growth
And our bold natives' hardy mind;
Sure heaven bespoke

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Our hearts and oak
To give a master to mankind."

Young.

Thousandacres and the magistrate held their way directly towards the store-house; and the log of the sentinel offering a comfortable seat, that functionary was dismissed, when the two worthies took his place, with their backs turned towards my prison. Whether this disposition of their persons was owing to a deep-laid plan of the squatter's, or not, I never knew; but, let the cause have been what it might, the effect was to render me an auditor of nearly all that passed in the dialogue which succeeded. It will greatly aid the reader in understanding the incidents about to be recorded, if I spread on the record the language that passed between my late agent and one who was obviously his confidant in certain matters, if not in all that touched my interests in that quarter of the world. As for listening, I have no hesitation in avowing it, inasmuch as the circumstances would have justified me in taking far greater liberties with the customary obligations of society in its every-day aspect, had I seen fit so to do. I was dealing with rogues, who had me in their power, and there was no obligation to be particularly scrupulous on the score of mere conventional propriety, at least.

"As I was tellin' y'e, Thousandacres," Newcome continued the discourse by saying, and that with the familiarity of one who well knew his companion, "the young man is in this part of the country, and somewhere quite near you at this moment" I was much *nearer* than the 'squire, himself, had any notion of at that instant "yes, he 's out in the woods of this very property, with Chainbearer and his gang; and, for 'tinow [for aught I know], measuring out farms within a mile or two of this very spot!"

"How many men be there?" asked the squatter, with interest. "If no more than the usual set, 't will be an onlucky day for *them*, should they stumble on my clearin'!"

"Perhaps they will, perhaps they wunt; a body never knows. Surveyin's 's a sort o' work that leads a man here, or it leads him there. One never knows where a line will carry him, in the woods. That 's the reason I 've kept the crittur's out of my own timber-land; for, to speak to you, Thousandacres, as one neighbour *can* speak to another without risk, there 's desp'rate large pine-trees on the unleased hills both north and east of my lot. Sometimes it 's handy to have lines about a mile, you know, sometimes 't isn't.

"A curse on all lines, in a free country, say I, 'squire," answered Thousandacres, who looked, as he bestowed this characteristic benediction, as if he might better be named *Tenthousandacres*; "they 're an invention of the devil. I lived seven whull years, in Varmount State, as it 's now called, the old Hampshire Grants, you know, next-door neighbour to two families, one north and one south on me, and we chopped away the whull time, jest as freely as we pleased, and not a cross word or an angry look passed atween us."

"I rather conclude, friend Aaron, you had all sat down under the same title?" put in the magistrate, with a sly look at his companion. "When *that* is the case, it would exceed all reason to quarrel."

"Why, I 'll own that our titles was pretty much the same; possession and free axes. Then it was ag'in York Colony landholders that our time was running. What 's your candid opinion about law, on this p'int, 'Squire Newcome? I know you 're a man of edication, college l'arnt some say; though, I s'pose, that 's no better l'arnin' than any other, when a body has once got it but what 's your opinion about possession? Will it hold good in twenty-one years, without writin's, or not? Some say it will, and some say it wunt."

"It wunt. The law is settled; there must be a shadow of title, or possession 's good for nothin'; no better than the scrapin's of a flour-barrel."

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"I 've heer'n say the opposyte of that; and there 's reason why possession should count ag'in everything. By possession, however, I don't mean hangin' up a pair of saddle-bags on a tree, as is sometimes done, but goin' honestly and fairly in upon land, and cuttin' down trees, and buildin' mills, and housen and barns, and cuttin', and slashin', and sawin' right and left, like all creation. *That* 's what I always doos myself, and that 's what I call sich a possession as ought to stand in law ay, and in gospel, too; for I 'm not one of them that flies in the face of religion."

"In that you 're quite right; keep the gospel on your side whatever you do, neighbour Thousandacres. Our Puritan fathers didn't cross the ocean, and encounter the horrors of the wilderness, and step on the rock of Plymouth, and undergo more than man could possibly bear, and that all for nothin'!"

"Wa—a—I, to my notion, the `horrors of the wilderness,' as you call 'em, is no great matter; though, as for crossin' the ocean, I can easily imagine that must be suthin' to try a man's patience and endurance. I never could take to the water. They tell me there isn't a single tree growin' the whull distance atween Ameriky and England! Floatin' saw-logs be sometimes met with, I 've heer'n say, but not a standin' crittur' of a tree from Massachusetts bay to London town!"

"It 's all water and of course trees be scarce, Thousandacres; but let 's come a little clusser to the p'int. As I was tellin' you, the whelp is in, and he 'll growl as loud as the old bear himself, should he hear of all them boards you 've got in the creek to say nothin' of the piles up here that you haven't even begun to put into the water."

"Let him growl," returned the old squatter, glancing surlily towards my prison; "like a good many other crittur's that I 've met with, 't will turn out that his bark is worse than his bite."

"I don't know that, neighbour Thousandacres, I don't by any means know that. Major Littlepage is a gentleman of spirit and decision, as is to be seen by his having taken his agency from me, who have held it so long, and gi'n it to a young chap who has no other claim than bein' a tolerable surveyor; but who hasn't been in the settlement more than a twelvemonth."

"Gi'n it to a surveyor! Is he one of Chainbearer's measurin' devils?"

"Just so; 't is the very young fellow Chainbearer has had with him this year or so, runnin' lines and measurin' land on this very property."

"That old fellow, Chainbearer, had best look to himself! He's thwarted me now three times in the course of his life, and he's gettin' to be desp'rate old; I 'm afraid he won't live long!"

I could now see that Squire Newcome felt uneasy. Although a colleague of the squatter's in what is only too apt to be considered a venial roguery in a new country, or in the stealing of timber, it did not at all comport with the scale of his rascality to menace a man's life. He would connive at stealing timber by purchasing the lumber at sufficiently low prices, so long as the danger of being detected was kept within reasonable limits, but he did not like to be connected with any transaction that did not, in the case of necessity, admit of a tolerably safe retreat from all pains and penalties. Men become very much what not their laws but what the *administration* of their laws makes them. In countries in which it is prompt, sure, and sufficiently severe, crimes are mainly the fruits of temptation and necessity; but such a state of society may exist, in which Justice falls into contempt by her own impotency, and men are led to offend merely to brave her. Thus we have long laboured under the great disadvantage of living under laws that, in a great degree, were framed for another set of circumstances. By the common law it was only trespass to cut down a tree in England; for *trees* were seldom or never stolen, and the law did not wish to annex the penalties of felony to the simple offence of cutting a twig in a wood. With us, however, entire new classes of offences have sprung up under our own novel circumstances; and we probably owe a portion of the vast amount of timber-stealing that has now long existed among us, quite as much to the mistaken lenity of

the laws, as to the fact that this particular description of property is so much exposed. Many a man would commit a trespass of the gravest sort, who would shrink from the commission of a felony of the lowest. Such was the case with Newcome. He had a certain sort of law-honesty about him, that enabled him in a degree to preserve appearances. It is true he connived at the unlawful cutting of timber by purchasing the sawed lumber, but he took good care, at the same time, not to have any such direct connection with the strictly illegal part of the transaction, as to involve him in the penalties of the law. Had timber-stealing been felony, he would have often been an accessory before the act; but, in a case of misdemeanour, the law knows no such offence. Purchasing the sawed lumber, too, if done with proper precaution, owing to the glorious subterfuges permitted by "the perfection of reason," was an affair of no personal hazard in a criminal point of view, and even admitted of so many expedients as to leave the question of property a very open one, after the boards were fully in his own possession. The object of his present visit to the clearing of Thousandacres, as the reader will most probably have anticipated, was to profit by my supposed proximity, and to frighten the squatter into a sale on such terms as should leave larger profits than common in the hands of the purchaser. Unfortunately for the success of this upright project, my proximity was so much greater than even Squire Newcome supposed, as to put it in danger by the very excess of the thing that was to produce the result desired. Little did that honest magistrate suppose that I was, the whole time, within twenty feet of him, and that I heard all that passed.

"Chainbearer is about seventy," returned Newcome, after musing a moment on the character of his companion's last remark. "Yes, about seventy, I should judge from what I 've heard, and what I know of the man. It 's a good old age, but folks often live years and years beyond it. You must be suthin' like that yourself, Thousandacres?"

"Seventy-three, every day and hour on 't, 'squire; and days and hours well drawn out, too. If you count by old style, I b'lieve I 'm a month or so older. But, I 'm not Chainbearer. No man can say of *me*, that I ever made myself troublesome to a neighbourhood. No man can p'int to the time when I ever disturbed his lines. No man can tell of the day when I ever went into court to be a witness on such a small matter as the length or breadth of lots, to breed quarrels atween neighbours. No, 'squire Newcome, I set store by my character, which will bear comparison with that of any other inhabitant of the woods I ever met with. And what I say of myself I can say of my sons and da'ghters, too from Tobit down to Sampson, from Nab to Jeruthy. We 're what I call a reasonable and reconcileable breed, minding our own business, and having a respect for that of other people. Now, here am I, in my seventyfourth year, and the father of twelve living children, and I 've made, in my time, many and many a pitch on't, but *never* was I known to pitch on land that another man had in possession: and I carry my idees of possession farther than most folks, too, for I call it possession to have said openly, and afore witnesses, that a man intends to pitch on any partic'lar spot afore next ploughin' or droppin' time, as the case may be. No, I respect possession, which ought to be the only lawful title to property, in a free country. When a man wants a clearin', or wants to *make* one, my doctrine is, let him look about him, and make his pitch on calcerlation; and when he 's tired of the spot, and wants a change, let him sell his betterments, if he lights of a chap, and if he doos'nt, let him leave 'em open, and clear off all incumbrances, for the next comer."

It is probable that Jason Newcome, Esq. magistrates in America are exceedingly tenacious of this title, though they have no more right to it than any one else but Jason Newcome, Esq., did not carry his notions of the rights of squatters, and of the sacred character of possession, quite as far as did his friend Thousandacres. Newcome was an exceedingly selfish, but, withal, an exceedingly shrewd man. I do not know that the term clever, in its broadest signification, would fitly apply to him, for, in that sense, I conceive it means quickness and intelligence enough to do what is right; but, he was fully entitled to receive it, under that qualification by which we say a man is 'a clever rogue.' In a word, Mr. Newcome understood himself, and his relations to the community in which he lived, too well to fall into very serious mistakes by a direct dereliction from his duties, though he lived in a never-ceasing condition of small divergencies that might at any time lead him into serious difficulties. Nevertheless, it was easy enough to see he had no relish for Thousandacres' allusions to the termination of the days of my excellent old friend, Chainbearer; nor can I say that they gave me any particular concern, for, while I knew how desperate the squatters sometimes became, I had a notion that this old fellow's bark would prove worse than his bite, as he had just observed of myself.

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It would hardly repay the trouble, were I to attempt recording all that passed next between our two colloquists; although it was a sufficiently amusing exhibition of wily management to frighten the squatter to part with his lumber at a low price, on one side, and of sullen security on the other. The security proceeded from the fact that Thousandacres had me, at that very moment, a prisoner in his store-house.

A bargain conducted on such terms was not likely soon to come to a happy termination. After a great deal of chaffering and discussing, the conference broke up, nothing having been decided, by the magistrate's saying

"Well, Thousandacres, I hope you'll have no reason to repent; but I kind o' fear you will."

"The loss will be mine and the b'ys, if I do," was the squatter's answer. "I know I can get all the boards into the creek; and, for that matter, into the river, afore young Littlepage can do me any harm; though there is one circumstance that may yet turn my mind "

Here the squatter came to a pause; and Newcome, who had risen, turned short round, eagerly, to press the doubt that he saw was working in the other's mind.

"I thought you would think better of it," he said; "for, it's out of doubt, should major Littlepage l'arn your pitch, that he'd uproot you, as the winds uproot the fallin' tree."

"No, 'squire, my mind's made up," Thousandacres coolly rejoined. "I'll sell, and gladly; but not on the terms you have named. Two pounds eight the thousand foot, board measure, and taking it all round, clear stuff and refuse, without any store-pay, will carry off the lumber."

"Too much, Thousandacres; altogether too much, when you consider the risks I run. I'm not sartain that I could hold the lumber, even after I got it into the river; for a replevy is a formidable thing in law, I can tell you. One pound sixteen, one-third store-pay, is the utmost farthin' I can offer."

In that day all our calculations were in pounds, shillings and pence.

"Then the bargain's off. I s'pose, squire, you've the old aversion to being seen in my settlements?"

"Sartain sartain," answered Newcome, in haste. "There's no danger of that, I hope. You cannot well have strangers among you!"

"I wunt answer for that. I see some of the b'ys coming out of the woods, yonder; and it seems to me there *is* a fourth man with them. There is, of a sartainty; and it is no other than Susquesus, the Onondago. The fellow is cluss-mouthed, like most red-skins; but you can say best whether you'd like to be seen by him, or not. I hear he's a great fri'nd of Chainbearer's."

It was very evident that the magistrate decided, at once, in the negative. With a good deal of decent haste he dodged round a pile of logs, and I saw no more of him until I caught a distant view of his person in the skirts of the woods, at the point whence he had issued into the clearing, two hours before, and where he now received his horse from the hands of the youngest of Thousandacre's sons, who led the animal to the spot for his especial accommodation. Mr. Newcome was no sooner in possession of his beast, again, than he mounted and rode away into the depths of the forest. So adroitly was this retreat conducted, that no person of ordinary observation could possibly have detected it, unless indeed his attention had been previously drawn to the movement.

What passed, at parting, between Thousandacres and his visiter, I never knew; but they must have been altogether alone, for a few minutes. When the former re-appeared, he came out from behind the logs, his whole attention seemingly fastened on the approaching party, composed of his sons and Susquesus. Those resolute and practised

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men had, indeed, overtaken and captured the Onondago, and were now bringing him, a prisoner, unarmed, in their midst, to receive the commands of their father! Notwithstanding all that I knew of this man, and of his character, there was something imposing in the manner in which he now waited for the arrival of his sons and their prisoner. Accustomed to exercise an almost absolute sway in his own family, the old man had acquired some of the dignity of authority; and as for his posterity, old and young, male and female, not excepting Prudence, they had gained very little in the way of freedom, by throwing aside the trammels of regular and recognised law, to live under the rule of their patriarch. In this respect they might be likened to the masses, who, in a blind pursuit of liberty, impatiently cast away the legal and healthful restraints of society, to submit to the arbitrary, selfish, and ever unjust dictation of demagogues. Whatever difference there might be between the two governments, was in favour of that of the squatter, who possessed the feelings of nature in behalf of his own flesh and blood, and was consequently often indulgent.

It is so difficult to read an Indian's mind in his manner, that I did not expect to ascertain the state of the Onondago's feelings by the countenance he wore, on drawing near. In exterior, this man was as calm and unmoved as if just arrived on a friendly visit. His captors had bound him, fearful he might elude them, in some of the thickets they had been compelled to pass; but the thongs seemed to give him neither mental nor bodily concern. Old Thousandacres was stern in aspect; but he had too much experience in Indian character knew too well the unforgiving nature of the Indians' dispositions, or the enduring memories that forgot neither favours nor injuries, to wantonly increase the feeling that must naturally have been awakened between him and his prisoner.

"Trackless," he said, considerately, "you're an old warrior, and must know that in troubled times every man must look out for himself. I'm glad the b'ys warn't driven to do you any harm; but it would never have done to let you carry the tidings of what has happened here, this morning, to Chainbearer and his gang. How long I may have to keep you, is more than I know myself; but your treatment shall be good, and your wilcome warm, so long as you give no trouble. I know what a red-skin's word is; and maybe, a'ter thinkin' on it a little, I may let you out to wander about the clearin', provided you'd give your parole not to go off. I'll think on't, and let you know to-morrow; but to-day I must put you in the store'us' along with the young chap that you travelled here with."

Thousandacres then demanded of his sons an account of the manner in which they had taken their captive; which it is unnecessary to relate here, as I shall have occasion to give it directly in the language of the Indian himself. As soon as satisfied on this head, the door of my prison was opened, and the Onondago entered it, unbound, without manifesting the smallest shade of regret, or any resistance. Everthing was done in a very lock-up sort of manner; the new prisoner being no sooner `permitted,' than the door was secured, and I was left alone with Sureflint; one of the younger girls now remaining near the building as a sentinel. I waited a moment, to make certain we were alone, when I opened the communications with my friend.

"I am very sorry for this, Sureflint," I commenced, "for I had hoped your knowledge of the woods, and practice on trails, would have enabled you to throw off your pursuers, that you might have carried the news of my imprisonment to our friends. This is a sore disappointment to me; having made sure you would let Chainbearer know where I am."

"W'y t'ink different, now, eh? S'pose, 'cause Injin prisoner, can't help himself?"

"You surely do not mean that you are here with your own consent?"

"Sartain. S'pose no want to come; am no come. You t'ink Thousandacre's b'ys catch Susquesus in woods, and he don't want to? Be sure, winter come, and summer come. Be sure, gray hair come a little. Be sure, Trackless get ole, by-'m-by; but he moccasin leave no trail yet!"

"As I cannot understand why you should first escape, and then wish to come back, I must beg you to explain yourself. Let me know all that has passed, Sureflint how it has passed, and *why* it has passed. Tell it in your own

way, but tell it fully."

"Sartain Why no tell? No harm; all good some t'ing capital! Nebber hab better luck."

"You excite my curiosity, Sureflint; tell the whole story at once, beginning at the time when you slipped off, and carrying it down to the moment of your arrival here."

Hereupon, Susquesus turned on me a significant look, drew his pipe from his belt, filled and lighted it, and began to smoke with a composure that was not easily disturbed. As soon as assured that his pipe was in a proper state, however, the Indian quietly began his story.

"Now listen, you hear," he said. "Run away, 'cause no good to stay here, and be prisoner dat *why*."

"But you *are* a prisoner, as it is, as well as myself; and, by your statement, a prisoner with your own consent."

"Sartain nebber hab been prisoner, won't be prisoner, if don't want to. S'pose shot, den can't help him; but in woods, Injin nebber prisoner, 'less lazy, or drunk. Rum make great many prisoner."

"I can believe all this but tell me the story. Why did you go off at first?"

"S'pose don't want Chainbearer know where be, eh? T'ink T'ousandacre ebber let you go while board in stream? When board go, he go; not afore. Stay all summer; want to live in store—'us' all summer, eh?"

"Certainly not Well, you left me, in order to let our friends know where I was, that they might cast about for the means of getting me free. All this I understand; what next?"

"Next, go off in wood. Easy 'nough to slip off when T'ousandacre no look. Well, went about two mile; leave no trail bird make as much in air. What s'pose meet, eh?"

"I wait for you to tell me."

"Meet Jaap yes meet nigger. Look for young master ebbery body in trouble, and won'er where young chief be. Some look here some look out yonder all look somewhere Jaap look just dere."

"And you told Jaap the whole story, and sent him back to the huts with it!"

"Sartain just so. Make good guess dat time. Den t'ink what do, next. Want to come back and help young pale-face frien'; so t'ought get take prisoner one time. Like to know how he feel to be prisoner one time. No feel so bad as s'pose. Squatter no hard master for prisoner."

"But how did all this happen, and in what manner have you misled the young men?"

"No hard to do at all. All he want is know how. A'ter Jaap get his ar'n'd, and go off, made trail plain 'nough for squaw to find. Travel to a spring sit down and put rifle away off, so no need shoot, and let squatter's boys catch me, by what you call s'prise; yes, 'e pale-faces s'prise redman dat time! Warrant he brag on 't, well!"

Here, then, was the simple explanation of it all! Susquesus had stolen away, in order to apprise my friends of my situation; he had fallen in with Jaap, or Jaaf, in search of his lost master; and, communicating all the circumstances to the negro, had artfully allowed himself to be re-captured, carefully avoiding a struggle, and had been brought back and placed by my side. No explanations were necessary to point out the advantages. By communicating with the negro, who had been familiar for years with the clipped manner of the Indian's mode of

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speaking English, everything would be made known to Chainbearer; by suffering himself to be taken, the squatters were led by Sureflint to suppose our capture and their "pitch" remained secrets; while, by re-joining me, I should have the presence, counsel and assistance of a most tried friend of my father's and Chainbearer's, in the event of necessity.

This brief summary of his reasoning shows the admirable sagacity of the Onondago, who had kept in view every requisite of his situation, and failed in nothing.

I was delighted with the address of Sureflint, as well as touched by his fidelity. In the course of our conversation, he gave me to understand that my disappearance and absence for an entire night had produced great consternation in the huts, and that everybody was out in quest of me and himself, at the time when he so opportunely fell in with Jaap.

"Gal out, too" added the Onondago, significantly. "S'pose good reason for dat."

This startled me a little, for I had a vague suspicion that Susquesus must have been an unseen observer of my interview with Ursula Malbone; and noticing my manner on rushing from her cabin, had been induced to follow me, as has been related. The reader is not to suppose that my late adventures had driven Dus from my mind. So far from this, I thought of her incessantly; and the knowledge that she took so much interest in me as to roam the woods in the search, had no tendency to lessen the steadiness or intensity of my reflections. Nevertheless, common humanity might induce one of her energy and activity to do as much as this; and had I not her own declaration that she was plighted to another!

After getting his whole story, I consulted the Indian on the subject of our future proceedings. He was of opinion that we had better wait the movements of our friends, from whom we must hear in some mode or other, in the course of the approaching night, or of the succeeding day. What course Chainbearer might see fit to pursue, neither of us could conjecture, though both felt assured he never would remain quiet with two as fast friends as ourselves in durance. My great concern was that he might resort at once to force; for old Andries had a fiery spirit, though one that was eminently just; and he had been accustomed to see gunpowder burned from his youth upward. Should he, on the other hand, resort to legal means, and apply to Mr. Newcome for warrants to arrest my captors, as men guilty of illegal personal violence, a course it struck me Frank Malbone would be very apt to advise, what might I not expect from the collusion of the magistrate, in the way of frauds, delays and private machinations? In such a case, there would be time to send me to some other place of concealment, and the forest must have a hundred such that were accessible to my new masters, while their friend Newcome would scarcely fail to let them have timely notice of the necessity of some such step. Men acting in conformity with the rules of right, fulfilling the requirements of the law, and practising virtue, might be so remiss as not to send information of such an impending danger; for such persons are only too apt to rely on the integrity of their own characters, and to put their trust on the laws of Providence; but rogues, certain that they can have no such succour, depend mainly on themselves, recognizing the well-known principle of Frederick the Great, who thought it a safe rule to suppose that "Providence was usually on the side of strong battalions." I felt certain, therefore, that squire Newcome would let his friends at the "clearing" know all that was plotting against them, as soon as he knew it himself.

The squatters were not unkind to us prisoners in the way of general treatment. Certainly I had every right to complain of the particular wrong they did me; but, otherwise, they were sufficiently considerate and liberal throughout that day. Our fare was their own. We had water brought in fresh by Lowiny no fewer than five several times; and so attentive to my supposed wants was this girl, that she actually brought me every book that was to be found in all the libraries of the family. These were but three a fragment of a bible, Pilgrim's Progress, and an almanac that was four years old.

CHAPTER V.

"I mark'd his desultory pace,
His gestures strange, and varying face,
With many a muttered sound;
And ah! too late, aghast, I view'd
The reeking blade, the hand embru'd:
He fell, and groaning grasp'd in agony the ground."

Warton.

In this manner passed that long and wearying day. I could, and did take exercise, by walking to and fro in my prison; but the Indian seldom stirred, from the moment he entered. As for the squatter himself, he came no more near the storehouse, though I saw him, two or three times in the course of the day, in private conference with his elder sons, most probably consulting on my case. At such moments, their manner was serious, and there were instants when I fancied it menacing.

Provision was made for our comfort by throwing a sufficient number of bundles of straw into the prison, and my fellow-captive and myself had each a sufficiently comfortable bed. A soldier was not to be frightened at sleeping on straw, moreover; and, as for Susquesus, he asked for no more than room to stretch himself, though it were even on a rock. An Indian loves his ease, and takes it when it comes in his way; but it is really amazing to what an extent his powers of endurance go, when it becomes necessary for him to exert them.

In the early part of the night I slept profoundly, as I believe did the Indian. I must acknowledge that an uncomfortable distrust existed in my mind, that had some slight effect in keeping me from slumbering, though fatigue soon overcame the apprehensions such a feeling would be likely to awaken. I did not know but Thousandacres and his sons might take it into their heads to make away with the Indian and myself under cover of the darkness, as the most effectual means of protecting themselves against the consequences of their past depredations, and of securing the possession of those that they had projected for the future. We were completely in their power, and, so far as the squatter knew, the secret of our visit would die with us; the knowledge of those of his own flesh and blood possessed on the subject excepted. Notwithstanding these thoughts crossed my mind, and did give me some little uneasiness, they were not sufficiently active or sufficiently prominent to prevent me from slumbering, after I had fairly fallen asleep, without awaking once, until it was three o'clock, or within an hour of the approach of day.

I am not certain that any external cause aroused me from my slumbers. But, I well remember that I lay there on my straw, meditating for some time, half asleep and half awake, until I fancied I heard the musical voice of Dus, murmuring in my ear my own name. This illusion lasted some little time; when, as my faculties gradually resumed their powers, I became slowly convinced that some one was actually calling me, and by name too, within a foot or two of my ears. I could not be mistaken; the fact was so, and the call was in a woman's tones. Springing up, I demanded

"Who is here? In the name of heaven can this really be Miss Malbone Dus!"

"My name is Lowiny," answered my visitor, "and I'm Thousandacres' daughter. But, don't speak so loud, for there is one of the b'ys on the watch at the other end of the store'us', and you 'll wake him up unless you 're careful."

"Lowiny, is it you, my good girl? Not content to care for us throughout the day, you still have a thought for us during the night!"

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I thought the girl felt embarrassed, for she must have been conscious of having a little trespassed on the usages and reserve of her sex. It is rare, indeed, that any mother, and especially an American mother, ever falls so low as completely to become unsexed in feelings and character, and rarer still that she forgets to impart many of the decencies of woman to her daughter. Old Prudence, notwithstanding the life she led, and the many causes of corruption and backslidings that existed around her, was true to her native instincts, and had taught to her girls many of those little proprieties that become so great charms in woman.

Lowiny was far from disagreeable in person, and had the advantage of being youthful in appearance, as well as in fact. In addition to these marks of her sex, she had manifested an interest in my fate, from the first, that had not escaped me; and here she was now doubtless on some errand of which the object was our good. My remark embarrassed her, however, and a few moments passed before she got entirely over the feeling. As soon as she did, she again spoke.

"I don't think anything of bringing you and *the Injin* a little water," she said laying an emphasis on the words I have put in Italics "nor should I had we any beer or sapcider instead. But all our spruce is out; and father said he wouldn't have any more of the cider made, seein' that we want all the sap for sugar. I hope you had a plentiful supper, Mr. Littlepage; and for fear you hadn't, I 've brought you and the red-skin a pitcher of milk and a bowl of hastypudding *he* can eat a'ter *you* 've done, you know."

I thanked my kind-hearted friend, and received her gift through a hole that she pointed out to me. The food, in the end, proved very acceptable, as subsequent circumstances caused our regular breakfast to be forgotten for a time. I was desirous of ascertaining from this girl what was said or contemplated among her relatives, on the subject of my future fate; but felt a nearly unconquerable dislike to be prying into what was a species of family secrets, by putting direct questions to her. Fortunately, the communicative and friendly disposition of Lowiny, herself, soon removed all necessity for any such step; for after executing her main purpose, she lingered with an evident wish to gossip.

"I wish father wouldn't be a squatter any longer," the girl said, with an earnestness that proved she was uttering her real sentiments. "It 's awful to be for ever fighting ag'in law!"

"It would be far better if he would apply to some landowner, and get a farm on lease, or by purchase. Land is so plenty, in this country, no man need go without a legal interest in his hundred acres, provided he be only sober and industrious."

"Father never drinks, unless it 's on the Fourth of July; and the b'ys be all pretty sober, too, as young men go, now-a-days. I believe, Mr. Littlepage, if mother has told father once, she has told him a thousand times, that she *doos* wish he 'd leave off squatting, and take writin's for some piece of land or other. But father says, 'no he warn't made for writin's, nor writin's for him.' He 's desp'ately troubled to know what to do with you, now he 's got you."

"Did Mr. Newcome give no opinion on the subject, while he was with you?"

"Squire Newcome! Father never let on to him a syllable about ever having seen you. He knows too much to put himself in 'squire Newcome's power, sin' his lumber would go all the cheaper for it What 's your opinion, Mr. Littlepage, about our right to the boards, when we 've cut, and hauled, and sawed the logs with our own hands. Don't that make some difference?"

"What is your opinion of your right to a gown that another girl has made out of calico she had taken from your drawer, when your back was turned, and carried away, and cut, and stitched, and sewed with her own hands?"

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"She never *would* have any right to my calico, let her cut it as much as she might. But lumber is made out of trees."

"And trees have owners, just as much as calicoes. Hauling, and cutting, and sawing can, of themselves, give no man a right to another man's logs."

"I was afeard it was so " answered Lowiny, sighing so loud as to be heard. "There 's suthin' in that old bible I lent you that I read pretty much in that way; though Tobit, and most of the b'ys say it don't mean any sich thing. They say there 's nothin' about lumber in the bible, at all."

"And what does your mother tell you on this head?"

"Why, mother don't talk about it. She wants father to lease, or buy: but you know how it is with women, Mr. Littlepage; when their fri'nds act, it 's all the same as a law to them to try to think that they act right. Mother never says any thing to us about the lawfulness of father's doin's, though she often wishes he would live under writin's. Mother wants father to try and get writin's of you, now you 're here, and in his hands. Wouldn't you give us writin's, Mr. Littlepage, if we 'd promise to give you suthin' for rent?"

"If I did, they would be good for nothing, unless I were free, and among friends. Deeds and leases got from men who are `in the hands,' as you call it, of those who take them, are of no value."

"I 'm sorry for that " rejoined Lowiny, with another sigh "not that I wanted you to be driven into any thing, but, I thought if you would only consent to let father have writin's for this clearin', it 's so good a time to do it now, 't would be a pity to lose it. If it can't be done, however, it can't, and there 's no use in complaining. Father thinks he can hold you 'till the water rises, in the fall, and the b'ys have run all the lumber down to Albany; a'ter which, he 'll not be so partic'lar about keepin' you any longer, and may be he 'll let you go."

"Hold me until the water rises! Why that will not take place these three months!"

"Well, Mr. Littlepage, three months don't seem to me sich a desp'ate long time, when a-body is among fri'nds. We should treat you as well as we know how, that you may depend on I 'll answer for it, you shall want for nothin' that we 've got to give."

"I dare say, my excellent girl, but I should be extremely sorry to trouble your family with so long a visit. As for the boards, I have no power to waive the rights of the owners of the land to that property; my power being merely to sell lots to actual settlers."

"I 'm sorry to hear that," answered Lowiny in a gentle tone, that fully confirmed her words; "for father and the b'ys be really awful about any thing that touches their profits for work done. They say their flesh and blood 's in them boards, and flesh and blood shall go, afore the boards shall go. It makes my blood run cold to hear the way they *do* talk! I 'm not a bit skeary; and, last winter when I shot the bear that was a'ter the store-hogs, mother said I acted as well as she could have done herself, and she has killed four bears and near upon twenty wolves, in her time. Yes, mother said I behaved like her own da'ghter, and that she set twice the store by me that she did before."

"You are a brave girl, Lowiny, and an excellent one in the main, I make no question. Whatever become of me, I shall not forget your kindness as long as I live. It will be a very serious matter, however, to your friends to attempt keeping me here three or four months, as mine will certainly have a search for me, when this clearing would be found. I need not tell you what would be the consequence."

"What *can* what *will* father and the b'ys do? I can't bear to think on't Oh! they 'll not have the hearts to try to put you out of the way!"

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"I should hope not, for their own sakes, and for the credit of the American name. We are not a nation addicted to such practices, and I should really regret to learn that we have made so long a step towards the crimes of older countries. But, there is little danger of anything of the sort, after all, my good Lowiny."

"I hope so, too," the girl answered in a low, tremulous voice; "though Tobit is a starn bein' sometimes. He makes father worse than he would be, if let alone, I know. But, I must go, now. It 's near day–light, and I hear 'em stirrin' in Tobit's house. It would cost me dear did any on 'em know I had been out of my bed, talking to you."

As this was said, the girl vanished. Before I could find an aperture to watch her movements, she had disappeared. Susquesus arose a few minutes later, but he never made any allusion to the secret visit of the girl. In this respect, he observed the most scrupulous delicacy, never letting me know by hint, look, or smile, that he had been in the least conscious of her presence.

Day came as usual, but it did not find these squatters in their beds. They appeared with the dawn, and most of them were at work ere the broad light of the sun was shed on the forest. Most of the men went down into the river, and busied themselves, as we supposed, for we could not see them, in the water, with the apples of their eyes, their boards. Old Thousandacres, however, chose to remain near his habitation, keeping two or three well–grown lads about him; probably adverting in his mind to the vast importance it was to all of his race, to make sure of his prisoners. I could see by the thoughtful manner of the old squatter, as he lounged around his mill, among his swine, and walked through his potatoes, that his mind wavered greatly as to the course he ought to pursue, and that he was sorely troubled. How long this perplexity of feeling would have continued, and to what it might have led, it is hard to say, had it not been cut short by an incident of a very unexpected nature, and one that called for more immediate decision and action. I shall relate the occurrence a little in detail.

The day was considerably advanced, and, Thousandacres and the girl who then watched the store–house excepted, everybody was occupied. Even Susquesus had picked up a piece of birch, and, with a melancholy countenance, that I fancied was shadowing forth the future life of a half–civilized red–man, was attempting to make a broom with a part of a knife that he had found in the building; while I was sketching, on a leaf of my pocket–book, the mill and a bit of mountain–land that served it for a back–ground. Thousandacres, for the first time that morning, drew near our prison, and spoke to me. His countenance was severe, yet I could see he was much troubled. As I afterwards ascertained, Tobit had been urging on him the necessity of putting both myself and the Indian to death, as the only probable means that offered to save the lumber.

"Young man," said Thousandacres, "you have stolen on me and mine like a thief at night, and you ought to expect the fate of one. How in natur' can you expect men will give up their hard 'arnin's without a struggle and a fight for 'em? You tempt me more than I can bear!"

I felt the fearful import of these words; but human nature revolted at the thought of being cowed into any submission, or terms unworthy of my character, or late profession. I was on the point of making an answer in entire consonance with this feeling, when, in looking through the chinks of my prison to fasten an eye on my old tyrant, I saw Chainbearer advancing directly towards the store–house, and already within a hundred yards of us. The manner in which I gazed at this apparition attracted the attention of the squatter, who turned and first saw the unexpected visitor who approached. At the next minute, Andries was at his side.

"So, T'ousantacres, I fint you here!" exclaimed Chainbearer. "It 's a goot many years since you and I met, and I 'm sorry we meet now on such business as t'is!"

"The meetin 's of your own seekin', Chainbearer. I 've neither invited nor wished for your company."

"I p'lieve you wit' all my heart. No, no; you wish for no chains and no chainpearers, no surfeyors and no compasses, no lots and no owners, too, put a squatter. You and I haf not to make an acquaintance for t'e first time,

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Thousandacres, after knowin' each other for fifty years."

"Yes, we *do* know each other for fifty years; and seein' that them years haven't sarved to bring us of a mind on any one thing, we should have done better to keep apart, than to come together now."

"I haf come for my poy, squatter my nople poy, whom you haf illegally arrestet, and mate a prisoner, in the teet' of all law and justice. Gif me pack Mortaunt Littlepage, and you 'll soon be rit of my company!"

"And how do you know that I 've ever seen your `Mortaunt Littlepage?' What have I to do with your boy, that you seek him of me? Go your ways, go your ways, old Chainbearer, and let me and mine alone. The world 's wide enough for us both, I tell you; and why should you be set on your own ondoin', by runnin' ag'in a breed like that which comes of Aaron and Prudence Timberman?"

"I care not for you or your preet," answered old Andries sternly. "You 've darest to arrest my frient, against law and right, and I come to demant his liperty, or to warn you of t'e consequences."

"Don't press me too far, Chainbearer, don't press me too far. There 's desp'rate crittur's in this clearin', and them that isn't to be driven from their righteous 'arnin's by any that carry chains or p'int compasses. Go your way, I tell ye, and leave us to gather the harvest that comes of the seed of our own sowin' and plantin'."

"Ye 'll gat'er it, ye 'll gat'er it all, T'ousantacres you and yours. Ye 've sown t'e win't, ant ye 'll reap t'e whirlwints, as my niece Dus Malpone has reat to me often, of late. Ye 'll gat'er in all your harvest, tares ant all, ye will; and t'at sooner t'an ye t'ink for."

"I wish I 'd never seen the face of the man! Go away, I tell you, Chainbearer, and leave me to my hard 'arnin's."

"Earnin's! Do you call it earnin's to chop and pillage on anot'er's lants, and to cut his trees into logs, and to saw his logs into poarts, and sell his poarts to speculators, and gif no account of your profits to t'e rightful owner of it all? Call you such t'ievin' righteous earnin's?"

"Thief back ag'in, old measurer! Do not the sweat of the brow, long and hard days of toil, achin' bones, and hungry bellies, give a man a claim to the fruit of his labours?"

"T'at always hast peen your failin', T'ousantacres; t'at 's t'e very p'int on which you 've proken town, man. You pegin wit' your morals, at t'e startin' place t'at 's most convenient to yourself and your plunterin' crew, instead of goin' pack to t'e laws of your Lort ant Master. Reat what t'e Almighty Got of Heaven ant 'art' sait unto Moses, ant you 'll fint t'at you 've not turnet over leafs enough of your piple. You may chop ant you may hew, you may haul ant you may saw, from t'is tay to t'e ent of time, and you 'll nefer pe any nearer to t'e right t'an you are at t'is moment. T'e man t'at starts on his journey wit' his face in t'e wrong tirection, olt T'ousantacres, wilt nefer reach its ent; t'ough he trafel 'till t'e sweat rolls from his poty like water. You pegin wrong, olt man, and you must ent wrong."

I saw the cloud gathering in the countenance of the squatter, and anticipated the outbreaking of the tempest that followed. Two fiery tempers had met, and, divided as they were in opinions and practice, by the vast chasm that separates principles from expediency, right from wrong, honesty from dishonesty, and a generous sacrifice of self to support the integrity of a noble spirit, from a homage to self that confounded and overshadowed all sense of right, it was not possible that they should separate without a collision. Unable to answer Chainbearer's reasoning, the squatter resorted to the argument of force. He seized my old friend by the throat and made a violent effort to hurl him to the earth. I must do this man of violence and evil the justice to say, that I do not think it was his wish at that moment to have assistance; but the instant the struggle commenced the conch blew, and it was easy to predict that many minutes would not elapse, before the sons of Thousandacres would be pouring in to the rescue. I

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would have given a world to be able to throw down the walls of my prison, and rush to the aid of my sterling old friend. As for Susquesus, he must have felt a lively interest in what was going on, but he remained as immoveable, and seemingly as unmoved as a rock.

Andries Coejemans, old as he was, and it will be remembered he too had seen his three-score years and ten, was not a man to be taken by the throat with impunity. Thousandacres met with a similar assault, and a struggle followed that was surprisingly fierce and well contested, considering that both the combatants had completed the ordinary limits of the time of man. The squatter gained a slight advantage in the suddenness and vigour of his assault, but Chainbearer was still a man of formidable physical power. In his prime, few had been his equals; and Thousandacres soon had reason to know that he had met more than his match. For a single instant Chainbearer gave ground; then he rallied, made a desperate effort, and his adversary was hurled to the earth with a violence that rendered him, for a short time, insensible; old Andries, himself, continuing erect as one of the neighbouring pines, red in the face, frowning, and more severe in aspect than I remembered ever to have seen him before, even in battle.

Instead of pushing his advantage, Chainbearer did not stir a foot after he had thrown off his assailant. There he remained, lofty in bearing, proud and stern. He had reason to believe no one was a witness of his prowess, but I could see that the old man had a soldier's feelings at his victory. At this instant I first let him know my close proximity by speaking.

"Fly for your life take to the woods, Chainbearer," I called to him, through the chinks. "That conch will bring all the tribe of the squatters upon you in two or three minutes; the young men are close at hand, in the stream below the mill, at work on the logs, and have only the banks to climb."

"Got be praiset! Mortaunt, my tear poy, you are not injuret, t'en! I will open t'e toor of your prison, and we will retreat toget'er."

My remonstrances were vain. Andries came round to the door of the store-house, and made an effort to force it open. That was not easy, however; for, opening outwards, it was barred with iron, and secured by a stout lock. Chainbearer would not listen to my remonstrances, but he looked around him for some instrument, by means of which he could either break the lock or draw the staple. As the mill was at no great distance, away he went in that direction, in quest of what he wanted, leaving me in despair at his persevering friendship. Remonstrance was useless, however, and I was compelled to await the result in silence.

Chainbearer was still a very active man. Nature, early training, sobriety of life in the main, and a good constitution, had done this much for him. It was but a moment before I saw him in the mill, looking for the crow-bar. This he soon found, and he was on his way to the store-house, in order to apply this powerful lever, when Tobit came in sight, followed by all the brethren, rushing up the bank like a pack of hounds in close pursuit. I shouted to my friend again to fly, but he came on steadily toward my prison, bent on the single object of setting me free. All this time Thousandacres was senseless, his head having fallen against a corner of the building. Chainbearer was so intent on his purpose that, though he must have seen the crowd of young men, no less than six in number, including well-grown lads, that was swiftly advancing towards him, he did not bestow the least attention on them. He was actually busied with endeavouring to force the bar in between the hasp and the post, when his arms were seized behind, and he was made a prisoner.

Chainbearer was no sooner apprised of the uselessness of resistance, than he ceased to make any. As I afterwards learned from himself, he had determined to become a captive with me, if he could not succeed in setting me free. Tobit was the first to lay hands on the Chainbearer; and so rapidly were things conducted, for it happened this man had the key, that the door was unbarred, opened, and old Andries was thrust into the cage, almost in the twinkling of an eye. The rapidity of the movement was doubtless aided by the acquiescent feeling that happened to be uppermost in the mind of Chainbearer, at that precise moment.

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No sooner was this new prisoner secured, than the sons of Thousandacres raised their father's body, and bore it to his own residence, which was but a few yards distant. Old and young, both sexes and all ages, collected in that building; and there was an hour during which we appeared to be forgotten. The sentinel, who was a son of Tobit's, deserted his post; and even Lowiny, who had been hovering in sight of the store-house the whole morning, seemed to have lost her interest in us. I was too much engaged with my old friend, and had too many questions to ask and to answer, however, to care much for this desertion; which, moreover, was natural enough for the circumstances.

"I rejoice you are not in the hands of that pack of wolves, my good friend!" I exclaimed, after the first salutations had passed between Andries and myself, and squeezing his hand again and again. "They are very capable of any act of violence; and I feared the sight of their father, lying there insensible, might have inflamed them to some deed of immediate violence. There will now be time for reflection, and, fortunately, I am a witness of all that passed."

"No fear for olt T'ousantacres," said Chainbearer, heartily. "He is tough, and is only a little stunnet, because he t'ought himself a petter man t'an he ist. Half an hour will pring him rount, and make him as good a man ast he ever wast. But, Mortaunt, lat, how came you here, and why wast you wantering apout t'e woods at night, wit' Trackless, here, who ist a sensiple ret-skin, and ought to haf set you a petter example?"

"I was hot and feverish, and could not sleep; and so I took a stroll in the forest, and got lost. Luckily, Susquesus had an eye on me, and kept himself at hand the whole time. I was obliged to catch a nap in the top of a fallen tree, and, when I woke in the morning, the Onondago led me here in quest of something to eat, for I was hungry as a famished wolf."

"Tid Susquesus, t'en, know of squatters having mate t'eir pitch on t'is property?" asked Andries, in some surprise, and, as I thought, a little sternly.

"Not he. He heard the saw of the mill in the stillness of night, and we followed the direction of that sound, and came unexpectedly out on this settlement. As soon as Thousandacres ascertained who I was, he shut me up here; and as for Susquesus, Jaap has doubtless told you the story he was commissioned to relate."

"All fery true, lat, all fery true; t'ough I don't half understant, yet, why you shoul't haf left us in t'e manner you tit, and t'at, too, after hafin' a long talk wit' Dus. T'e gal is heart-heafy, Mortaunt, as 'tis plain to pe seen; put I can't get a syllaple from her t'at hast t'e look of a rational explanation. I shall haf to ask you to tell t'e story, lat. I was tryin' to get t'e trut' out of Dus, half of t'e way comin' here; put a gal is as close as "

"Dus!" I interrupted "Half the way coming here? You *do* not, *cannot* mean that Dus is with you."

"Hist, hist pe careful. You speak too lout. I coul't wish not to let t'ese scountrels of squatters know t'at t'e gal is so exposet, put here she ist; or, what is much t'e same, she is in t'e woots out yonter, a looker-on, and I fear must pe in consarn at seein' t'at I, too, am a prisoner."

"Chainbearer, how could you thus expose your niece thus bring her into the very grasp of lawless ruffians?"

"No, Mortaunt, no t'ere is no fear of her peing insultet, or any t'ing of t'at sort. One can reat of such t'ings in pooks, put woman is respectet ant not insultet in America. Not one of T'ousantacres rascals woul't wount t'e ear of t'e gal wit' an improper wort, hat he a chance, which not one of 'em hast, seein' nopody knows t'e gal is wit' me, put ourselves. Come she woul't, and t'ere wast no use in saying her nay. Dus is a goot creature, Mortaunt, and a tutiful gal; put it 's as easy to turn a rifer up stream, as to try to holt her pack when she loves."

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"Is that her character?" I thought. "Then is there little chance, indeed, of her ever becoming mine, since her affections must have gone with her troth." Nevertheless, my interest in the noble-hearted girl was just as strong as if I held her faith, and she was to become mine in a few weeks. The idea that she was at that moment waiting the return of her uncle, in the woods, was agony to me; but I had sufficient self-command to question the Chainbearer, until I got out of him all of the following facts:

Jaap had carried the message of Susquesus, with great fidelity, to those to whom the Indian had sent it. On hearing the news, and the manner of my arrest, Andries called a council, consisting of himself, Dus, and Frank Malbone. This occurred in the afternoon of the previous day; and that same night, Malbone proceeded to Ravensnest, with a view of obtaining warrants for the arrest of Thousandacres and his gang, as well as of procuring assistance to bring them all in, in expectation of having the whole party transferred to the gaol at Sandy Hill. As the warrant could be granted only by Mr. Newcome, I could easily see that the messenger would be detained a considerable time, since the magistrate would require a large portion of the present day to enable him to reach his house. This fact, however, I thought it well enough to conceal from my friend, at the moment.

Early that morning, Chainbearer, Dus, and Jaap, had left the huts, taking the nearest route to the supposed position of the clearing of Thousandacres, as it had been described by the Indian. Aided by a compass, as well as by their long familiarity with the woods, this party had little difficulty in reaching the spot where the Onondago and the negro had met; after which, the remainder of the journey was through a *terra incognita*, as respects the adventurers. With some search, however, a glimpse was got of the light of the clearing, much as one finds an island in the ocean, when the skirts of the wood were approached. A favourable spot, one that possessed a good cover, was selected, whence Chainbearer reconnoitred for near an hour, before he left it. After a time he determined on the course he adopted and carried out, leaving his niece to watch his movements, with instructions to rejoin her brother, should he himself be detained by the squatter. I was a little relieved by the knowledge of the presence of Jaap, for I knew the fidelity of the fellow too well to suppose he would ever desert Dus; but my prison became twice as irksome to me after I had heard this account of Chainbearer's, as it had been before.

CHAPTER VI.

"Was she not all my fondest wish could frame?
Did ever mind so much of heaven partake?
Did she not love me with the purest flame?
And give up friends and fortune for my sake?
 Though mild as evening skies,
 With downcast, streaming eyes,
Stood the stern frown of supercilious brows,
Deaf to their brutal threats, and faithful to her vows."

Shaw.

Dus was then near me in sight of the store-house, perhaps! But, affection for her uncle, and no interest in me, had brought her there. I could respect her attachment to her old guardian, however, and admire the decision and spirit she had manifested in his behalf, at the very moment the consciousness that I had no influence on her movements was the most profound.

"T'e gal woult come, Mortaunt," the Chainbearer continued, after having gone through his narrative; "ant, if you know Dus, you know when she loves she wilt not be deniet. Got pless me! what a wife she woult make for a man who wast desarkin' of her! Oh! here's a pit of a note t'e dear creature has written to one of T'ousantacre's poys, who hast peen out among us often, t'ough I never so much as dreamet t'at t'e squatting olt rascal of a fat'er was on our

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lant, here. Well, Zephaniah, as t'e lat is callet, hast passet much time at t'e Nest, working apout in t'e fielts, and sometimes for us; and, to own the trut' to you, Mortaunt, I do pelieve t'e young chap hast a hankerin' a'ter Dus, and woult pe glat enough to get t'e gal for a wife."

"He! Zephaniah Thousandacres or whatever his infernal name may be *he* a hankering or an attachment for Ursula Malbone he think of her for a wife he presume to love such a perfect being!"

Hoity, toity," cried old Andries, looking round at me in surprise, "why shoult'n't t'e poy haf his feelin's ast well ast anot'er, if he pe a squatter? Squatters haf feelin's, t'ough t'ey haf n't much honesty to poast of. Ant, ast for honesty, you see, Mortaunt, it is tifferent petween T'ousantacres and his poys. T'e lats haf been prought up to fancy t'ere ist no great harm in lif'ing on anot'er man's lants, wherast t'is olt rascal, t'eir fat'er, wast prought up, or *t'inks* he wast prought up, in t'e very sanctum sanctorum of gotliness, among t'e puritans, and t'at t'e 'art' hast not t'eir equals in religion, I 'll warrant you. Ask olt Aaron apout his soul, ant he 'll tell you t'at it 's a petter soul t'an a Dutch soul, and t'at it won't purn at all, it 's so free from eart'. Yes, yes t'at ist t'e itee wit' 'em all in his part of t'e worlt. T'eir gotliness ist so pure even sin wilt do it no great harm."

I knew the provincial prejudices of Chainbearer too well to permit myself to fall into a discussion on theology with him, just at that moment; though, I must do the old man the justice to allow that his opinion of the self-righteousness of the children of the puritans was not absolutely without some apology. I never had any means of ascertaining the fact, but it would have occasioned me no surprise had I discovered that Thousandacres, and all his brood, looked down on us New Yorkers as an especially fallen and sinful race, which was on the high road to perdition, though encouraged and invited to enter on a different road by the spectacle of a chosen people so near them, following the strait and narrow path that leads to heaven. This mingling of God and Mammon is by no means an uncommon thing among us, though the squatters would probably have admitted themselves that they had fallen a little away, and were by no means as good as their forefathers had once been. There is nothing that sticks so close to an individual, or to a community, perhaps, as the sense of its own worth. As "coming events throw their shadows before," this sentiment leaves its shadows behind, long after the substance which may have produced them has moved onward, or been resolved into the gases. But I must return to Zephaniah and the note.

"And you tell me, Chainbearer, that Ursula has actually written a note, a letter, to this young man?" I asked, as soon as I could muster resolution enough to put so revolting a question?

"Sartain; here it ist, ant a very pretty lookin' letter it is, Mortaunt. Dus does everyt'ing so hantily, ant so like a nice young woman, t'at it ist a pleasure to carry one of her letters. Ay t'ere t'e lat ist now, and I 'll just call him, and gif him his own."

Chainbearer was as good as his word, and Zephaniah soon stood at the side of the store-house.

"Well, you wilt own, Zeph," continued the old man, "we didn't cage you like a wilt peast, or a rogue t'at hast been mettlin' wit' what tidn't pelong to him, when you wast out among us. T'ere ist t'at difference in t'e treatment put no matter! Here ist a letter for you, and much goot may it do you! It comes from one who vilt gif goot atvice; ant you 'll be none t'e worse if you follow it. I don't know a wort t'at 's in it, put you 'll fint it a goot letter, I 'll answer for it. Dus writes peautiful letters, and in a hand almost as plain and hantsome as His Excellency's, t'ough not quite so large. Put her own hant isn't as large as His Excellency's, t'ough His Excellency's hant wasn't particularly pig neit'er."

I could scarce believe my senses! Here was Ursula Malbone confessedly writing a letter to a son of Thousandacres the squatter, and that son admitted to be her admirer! Devoured by jealousy, and a thousand feelings to which I had hitherto been a stranger, I gazed at the fortunate being who was so strangely honoured by this communication from Dus, with the bitterest envy. Although, to own the truth, the young squatter was a well-grown, good-looking fellow, to me he seemed to be the very personification of coarseness and vulgarity. It

will readily be supposed that Zephaniah was not entirely free from some very just imputations of the latter character; but, on the whole, most girls of his own class in life would be quite content with him in these respects. But Ursula Malbone was not at all of his own class in life. However reduced in fortune, she was a lady, by education as well as by birth; and what feelings could there possibly be in common between her and her strange admirer? I had heard it said that women were as often taken by externals as men; but in this instance the externals were coarse, and nothing extraordinary. Some females, too, could not exist without admiration; and I had known Dus but a few weeks, after all, and it was possible I had not penetrated the secret of her true character. Then her original education had been in the forest; and we often return to our first loves, in these particulars, with a zest and devotion for which there was no accounting. It was possible this strange girl might have portrayed to her imagination, in the vista of the future, more of happiness and wild enjoyment among the woods and ravines of stolen clearings, than by dwelling amid the haunts of men. In short, there was scarce a conceit that did not crowd on my brain, in that moment of intense jealousy and profound unhappiness. I was as miserable as a dog.

As for Zephaniah, the favoured youth of Ursula Malbone, he received his letter, as I fancied, with an awkward surprise, and lounged round a corner of the building, to have the pleasure, as it might be, of reading it to himself. This brought him nearer to my position; for I had withdrawn, in a disgust I could not conquer, from being near the scene that had just been enacted.

Opening a letter, though it had been folded by the delicate hands of Ursula Malbone, and reading it, were two very different operations, as Zephaniah now discovered. The education of the young man was very limited, and, after an effort or two, he found it impossible to get on. With the letter open in his hand, he found it as much a sealed book to him as ever. Zephaniah *could* read writing, by dint of a considerable deal of spelling; but it must not be a good hand. As some persons cannot comprehend pure English, so he found far more difficulty in spelling out the pretty, even characters before him, than would have been the case had he been set at work on the pot-hooks and trammels of one of his own sisters. Glancing his eyes around in quest of aid, they happened to fall on mine, which were watching his movements with the vigilance of a feline animal, through the chinks of the logs, and at the distance of only three feet from his own face. As for the Indian, he, *seemingly*, took no more note of what was passing, than lovers take of time in a stolen interview; though I had subsequently reason to believe that nothing had escaped his observation. Andries was in a distant part of the prison, reconnoitring the clearing and mills with an interest that absorbed all his attention for the moment. Of these facts Zephaniah assured himself by taking a look through the openings of the logs; then, sidling along nearer to me, he said in a low voice

"I don't know how it is, but, to tell you the truth, Major Littlepage, York larnin' and Varmount larnin' be so different, that I don't find it quite as easy to read this letter as I could wish."

On this hint I seized the epistle, and began to read it in a low tone; for Zephaniah asked this much of me, with a delicacy of feeling that, in so far, was to his credit. As the reader may have some of the curiosity I felt myself, to know what Ursula Malbone could possibly have to say in this form to Zephaniah Thousandacres, I shall give the contents of this strange epistle in full. It was duly directed to "Mr. Zephaniah Timberman, Mooseridge," and in that respect would have passed for any common communication. Within, it read as follows:

"Sir:

"As you have often professed a strong regard for me, I now put you to the proof of the sincerity of your protestations. My dear uncle goes to your father, whom I only know by report, to demand the release of Major Littlepage, who, we hear, is a prisoner in the hands of your family, against all law and right. As it is possible the business of uncle Chainbearer will be disagreeable to Thousandacres, and that warm words may pass between them, I ask of your friendship some efforts to keep the peace; and, particularly, should anything happen to prevent my uncle from returning, that you would come to me in the woods for I shall accompany the chainbearer to the edge of your clearing and let me know it. You will find me there, attended by one of the blacks, and we can

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easily meet if you cross the fields in an eastern direction, as I will send the negro to find you and to bring you to me.

"In addition to what I have said above, Zephaniah, let me also earnestly ask your care in behalf of Major Littlepage. Should any evil befall that gentleman, it would prove the undoing of your whole family. The law has a long arm, and it will reach into the wilderness, as well as into a settlement. The person of a human being is a very different thing from a few acres of timber, and General Littlepage will think far more of his noble son, than he will think of all the logs that have been cut and floated away. Again and again, therefore, I earnestly entreat of you to befriend this gentleman, not only as you hope for my respect, but as you hope for your own peace of mind. I have had some connection with the circumstances that threw Mr. Littlepage into your hands, and shall never know a happy moment again should anything serious befall him. Remember this, Zephaniah, and let it influence your own conduct. I owe it to myself and to you to add, that the answer I gave you at Ravensnest, the evening of the raising, must remain my answer, now and for ever; but, if you have really the regard for me that you then professed, you will do all you can to serve Major Littlepage, who is an old friend of my uncle's, and whose safety, owing to circumstances that you would fully understand were they told to you, is absolutely necessary to my future peace of mind.

"Your friend,

"Ursula Malbone."

What a strange girl was this Dus! I suppose it is unnecessary to say that I felt profoundly ashamed of my late jealousy, which now seemed just as absurd and unreasonable as, a moment before, it seemed justified and plausible. God protect the wretch who is the victim of that evil-eyed passion! He who is jealous of circumstances, in the ordinary transactions of life, usually makes a fool of himself, by seeing a thousand facts that exist in his own brain only; but he whose jealousy is goaded on by love, must be something more than human, not to let the devils get a firm grasp of his soul. I can give no better illustration of the weakness that this last passion induces, however, than the admission I have just made, that I believed it possible Ursula Malbone *could* love Zephaniah Thousandacres, or whatever might be his real name. I have since pulled at my own hair, in rage at my own folly, as that moment of weakness has recurred to my mind.

"She writes a desp'rate letter!" exclaimed the young squatter, stretching his large frame, like one who had lost command of his movements through excitement. "I don't b'lieve, Major, the like of that gal is to be found in York, taken as state or colony! I 've a dreadful likin' for her!"

It was impossible not to smile at this outpouring of attachment; nor, on the whole, would I have been surprised at the ambition it inferred, had the youth been but a very little higher in the social scale. Out of the large towns, and with here and there an exception in favour of an isolated family, there is not, even to this day, much distinction in classes among our eastern brethren. The great equality of condition and education that prevails, as a rule, throughout all the rural population of New England, while it has done so much for the great body of their people, has had its inevitable consequences in lowering the standard of cultivation among the few, both as it is applied to acquirements, and to the peculiar notions of castes; and nothing is more common in that part of the world, than to hear of marriages that elsewhere would have been thought incongruous, for the simple reason of the difference in ordinary habits and sentiments between the parties. Thus it was, that Zephaniah, without doing as much violence to his own, as would be done to our notions of the fitness of things, might aspire to the hand of Ursula Malbone; unattended, as she certainly was, by any of the outward and more vulgar signs of her real character. I could not but feel some respect for the young man's taste, therefore, and this so much the more readily, because I no longer was haunted by the very silly phantom of his possible success.

"Having this regard for Dus," I said, "I hope I may count on your following her directions."

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"What way can I sarve you, Major? I do vow, I 've every wish to do as Ursula asks of me, if I only know'd how."

"You can undo the fastenings of our prison, here, and let us go at once into the woods, where we shall be safe enough against a re-capture, depend on it. Do us that favour, and I will give you fifty acres of land, on which you can settle down, and become an honest man. Remember, it will be something honourable to own fifty acres of good land, in fee."

Zephaniah pondered on my tempting offer, and I could see that he wavered in opinion, but the decision was adverse to my wishes. He shook his head, looked round wistfully at the woods where he supposed Dus then to be, possibly watching his very movements, but he would not yield.

"If a father can't trust his own son, who can he trust, in natur'?" demanded the young squatter.

"No one should be aided in doing wrong, and your father has no just right to shut up us three, in this building, as he has done. The deed is against the law, and to the law, sooner or later, will he be made to give an account of it."

"Oh! as for the law, he cares little for *that*. We 've been ag'in law all our lives, and the law is ag'in us. When a body comes to take the chance of jurors, and witnesses, and lawyers, and poor attorney-gin' rals, and careless prosecutors, law 's no great matter to stand out ag'in, in this country. I s'pose there is countries in which law counts for suthin'; but, hereabouts, and all through Varmount, we don't kear much for the law, unless it 's a matter between man and man, and t'other side holds out for his rights, bulldog fashion. Then, I allow, it 's suthin' to have the law on your side; but it 's no great matter in a trespass case."

"This may not end in a trespass case, however. Your father by the way, is Thousandacres much hurt?"

"Not much to speak on," coolly answered the son, still gazing in the direction of the woods. "A little stunned, but he 's gettin' over it fast, and he 's used to sich rubs. Father 's desp'rate solid about the head, and can stand as much sledgehammering there, as any man I ever seed. Tobit 's tough, too, in that part; and he 's need of it, for he 's for ever getting licks around the forehead and eyes."

"And, as your father comes to, what seems to be his disposition towards us?"

"Nothin' to speak on, in the way of friendship, I can tell you! The old man 's considerable riled; and when that 's the case, he 'll have his own way for all the governors and judges in the land!"

"Do you suppose he meditates any serious harm to us prisoners?"

"A man doosn't meditate a great deal, I guess, with such a rap on the skull. He *feels* a plaguy sight more than he *thinks*; and when the feelin's is up, it doosn't matter much who 's right and who 's wrong. The great difficulty in your matter is how to settle about the lumber that 's in the creek. The water 's low; and the most that can be done with it, afore November, will be to float it down to the next rift, over which it can never go, with any safety, without more water. It 's risky to keep one like you, and to keep Chainbearer, too, three or four months, in jail like; and it wunt do to let you go neither, sin' you 'd soon have the law a'ter us. If we keep you, too, there 'll be a s'arch made, and a reward offered. Now a good many of your tenants know of this clearin', and human natur' can't hold out ag'in a reward. The old man knows that *well*; and it 's what he most afeard on. We can stand up ag'in almost anything better's than ag'in a good, smart reward."

I was amused as well as edified with Zephaniah's simplicity and frankness, and would willingly have pursued the discourse, had not Lowiny come tripping towards us, summoning her brother away to attend a meeting of the family; the old squatter having so far recovered as to call a council of his sons. The brother left me on the instant, but the girl lingered at my corner of the store-house, like one who was reluctant to depart.

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"I hope the hasty-puddin' was sweet and good," said Lowiny, casting a timid glance in at the chink.

"It was excellent, my good girl, and I thank you for it with all my heart. Are you very busy now? can, you remain a moment while I make a request?"

"Oh! there 's nothin' for me to do just now in the house, seein' that father has called the b'ys around him. Whenever he doos that, even mother is apt to quit."

"I am glad of it, as I think you are so kind-hearted and good, that I may trust you in a matter of some importance; may I not, my good Lowiny?"

"Squatters' da'ghters *may* be good, then, a'ter all, in the eyes of grand landholders!"

"Certainly *excellent* even; and I am much disposed to believe that you are one of that class." Lowiny looked delighted; and I felt less reluctance at administering this flattery than might otherwise have been the case, from the circumstance that so much of what I said was really merited.

"Indeed, I know you are, and quite unfitted for this sort of life. But I must tell you my wishes at once, for our time may be very short."

"Do," said the girl, looking up anxiously, a slight blush suffusing her face; the truth-telling sign of ingenuous feelings, and the gage of virtue; "do, for I 'm dying to hear it; as I know beforehand I shall do just what you ask me to do. I don't know how it is, but when father or mother ask me to do a thing, I sometimes feel as if I couldn't; but I don't feel so now, at all."

"My requests do not come often enough to tire you. Promise me, in the first place, to keep my secret."

"*That* I will!" answered Lowiny, promptly, and with emphasis. "Not a mortal soul shall know anything on 't, and I won't so much as talk of it in my sleep, as I sometimes do, if I can any way help it."

"Chainbearer has a niece, who is very dear to him, and who returns all his affection. Her name is "

"Dus Malbone," interrupted the girl, with a faint laugh. "Zeph has told me all about her, for Zeph and I be great fri'nds *he* tells me everything, and *I* tell him everything. It 's sich a comfort, you can't think, to have somebody to tell secrets to; well, what of Dus?"

"She is here."

"Here! I don't see anything on her" looking round hurriedly, and, as I fancied, in a little alarm "Zeph says she 's dreadful han'some!"

"She is thought so, I believe; though, in that respect, she is far from being alone. There is no want of pretty girls in America. By saying she is here, I did not mean here, in the store-house, but here, in the woods. She accompanied her uncle as far as the edge of the clearing look round, more towards the east. Do you see the black stub, in the corn-field, behind your father's dwelling?"

"Sertain that 's plain enough to be seen I wish I could see Albany as plain."

"Now, look a little to the left of that stub, and you will see a large chestnut, in the edge of the woods behind it the chestnut I mean thrusts its top out of the forest, into the clearing, as it might be."

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"Well, I see the chestnut too, and I know it well. There 's a spring of water cluss to its roots."

"At the foot of that chestnut Chainbearer left his niece, and doubtless she is somewhere near it now. Could you venture to stroll as far, without going directly to the spot, and deliver a message, or a letter?"

"To be sure I could! Why, we gals stroll about the lots as much as we please, and it 's berryin' time now. I 'll run and get a basket, and you can write your letter while I 'm gone. La! Nobody will think anything of my goin' a berryin' I have a desp'rate wish to see this Dus! Do you think she 'll have Zeph?"

"Young women's minds are so uncertain, that I should not like to venture an opinion. If it were one of my own sex, now, and he had declared his wishes, I think I could tell you with some accuracy."

The girl laughed; then she seemed a little bewildered, and again she coloured. How the acquired *native* feeling of the sex, will rise up in tell-tale ingenuousness to betray a woman!

"Well," she cried, as she ran away in quest of the basket, "to my notion a gal's mind is as true and as much to be depended on as that of any mortal crittur' living!"

It was now my business to write a note to Dus. The materials for writing my pocket-book furnished. I tore out a leaf, and approached Chainbearer, telling him what I was about to do, and desiring to know if he had any particular message to send.

"Gif t'e tear gal my plessin', Mortaunt. Tell her olt Chainpearer prays Got to pless her t'at ist all. I leaf you to say t'e rest."

I did say the rest. In the first place I sent the blessing of the uncle to the niece. Then, I explained in as few words as possible, our situation, giving it as promising an aspect as my conscience would permit. These explanations made, I entreated Ursula to return to her brother, and not again expose herself so far from his protection. Of the close of this note, I shall not say much. It was brief, but it let Dus understand that my feelings towards her were as lively as ever; and I believe it was expressed with the power that passion lends. My note was ended just as Lowiny appeared to receive it. She brought us a pitcher of milk, as a sort of excuse for returning to the store-house, received the note in exchange, and hurried away towards the fields. As she passed one of the cabins, I heard her calling out to a sister that she was going for blackberries to give the prisoners.

I watched the movements of that active girl with intense interest. Chainbearer, who had slept little since my disappearance, was making up for lost time; and, as for the Indian, eating and sleeping are very customary occupations of his race, when not engaged in some hunt, or on the war-path, or as a runner.

Lowiny proceeded towards a lot of which the bushes had taken full possession. Here she soon disappeared, picking berries as she proceeded, with nimble fingers, as if she felt the necessity of having some of the fruit to show on her return. I kept my eye fastened on the openings of the forest, near the chestnut, as soon as the girl was concealed in the bushes, anxiously waiting for the moment when I might see her form re-appearing at that spot. My attention was renewed by getting a glimpse of Dus. It was but a glimpse, the fluttering of a female dress gliding among the trees; but, as it was too soon for the arrival of Lowiny, I knew it must be Dus. This was cheering, as it left little reason to doubt that my messenger would find the object of her visit. In the course of half an hour after Lowiny entered the bushes I saw her, distinctly, near the foot of the chestnut. Pausing a moment, as if to reconnoitre, the girl suddenly moved into the forest, when I made no doubt she and Dus had a meeting. An entire hour passed, and I saw no more of Lowiny.

In the meanwhile Zephaniah made his appearance again at the side of the store-house. This time he came accompanied by two of his brethren, holding the key in his hand. At first I supposed the intention was to arraign

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me before the high court of Thousandacres, but in this I was in error. No sooner did the young men reach the door of our prison than Zephaniah called out to the Onondago to approach it, as he had something to say to him.

It must be dull work to a red-skin to be shut up like a hog afore it 's wrung," said the youth, drawing his images from familiar objects; "and I s'pose you 'd be right glad to come out here and walk about, something like a free and rational crittur'. What do you say, Injin is sich your desire?"

"Sartain," quietly answered Sureflint. "Great deal radder be out dan be in here."

"So I nat'rally s'posed. Well, the old man says you can come out on promises, if you 're disposed to make 'em. So you 're master of your own movements, you see."

"What he want me do? What he want me say, eh?"

"No great matter, a'ter all, if a body has only a mind to try to do it. In the first place, you 're to give your parole not to go off; but to stay about the clearin', and to come in and give yourself up when the conch blows three short blasts. Will you agree to that, Sus?"

"Sartain no go 'way; come back when he call dat mean stay where he can hear conch."

"Well, that 's agreed on, and it 's a bargain. Next, you 're to agree not to go pryin' round the mill and barn, to see what you can find, but keep away from all the buildin's but the store-'us' and the dwellings, and not to quit the clearin'. Do you agree?"

"Good; no hard to do dat."

"Well, you 're to bring no weepens into the settlement, and to pass nothing but words and food into the other prisoners. Will you stand to *that*?"

"Sartain; willin' 'nough to do dat, too."

"Then you 're in no manner or way to make war on any on us 'till your parole is up, and you 're your own man ag'in. What do you say to that, Trackless?"

"All good; 'gree to do him all."

"Wa-a-I, that 's pretty much all the old man stands out for; but mother has a condition or two that she insists on 't I shall ask. Should the worst come to the worst, and the folks of this settlement get to blows with the folks out of it, you 're to bargain to take no scalps of women or children, and none from any man that you don't overcome in open battle. The old woman will grant you the scalps of men killed in battle, but thinks it ag'in reason to take 'em from sich as be not so overcome."

"Good; don't want to take scalp at all," answered the Indian, with an emotion he could not altogether suppress. "Got no tribe got no young men; what good scalp do? Nobody care how many scalp Susquesus take away how many he leave behind. All dat forgot long time."

"Wa-a-I, that 's *your* affair, not mine. But, as all the articles is agreed to, you can come out, and go about your business. Mind, three short, sharp blasts on the conch is the signal to come in and give yourself up."

On this singular cartel Susquesus was set at liberty. I heard the whole arrangement with astonishment; though, by the manner of the high contracting parties, it was easy to see there was nothing novel in the arrangement, so far as

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they were concerned. I had heard that the faith of an Indian of any character, in all such cases, was considered sacred, and could not but ask myself, as Susquesus walked quietly out of prison, how many potentates and powers there were in Christendom who, under circumstances similarly involving their most important interests, could be found to place a similar confidence in their fellows! Curious to know how my present masters felt on this subject, the opportunity was improved to question them.

"You give the Indian his liberty on parole," I said to Zephaniah "will you refuse the same privilege to us white men?"

"An Injin is an Injin. He has his natur', and we 've our 'n. Suthin' was said about lettin' you out, too, major; but the old man wouldn't hear to it. `He know'd mankind, ' he said, `and he know'd 't would never do.' If you let a white man loose, he sets his wits at work to find a hole to creep out on the bargain goin' back to the creation of the 'arth but he 'll find one. The major will say I was put in ag'in' law, and now I 'm out, I 'll stay out ag'in' promises, or some sich reasonin', and now we have him safe, 't will be best to keep him safe! That 's the substance of the old man's idees, and you can see, major, just as well as any on us, how likely he 'll be to change 'em."

There was no contending with this logic, which in secret I well knew to be founded in fact, and I made no further application for my own release. It appeared, however, that Thousandacres himself was half-disposed to make a concession in favour of Chainbearer, similar to that he had granted to the Indian. This struck me as singular, after the rude collision that had already occurred between the two men but there are points of honour that are peculiar to each condition of life, and which the men of each feel a pride not only in causing to be respected, but in respecting themselves.

"Father had some thoughts of taking your parole, too, Chainbearer," added Zephaniah, "and he concluded he would, hadn't it been that you 've been living out in the settlements so much of late years, that he 's not quite easy in trusting you. A man that passes so much of his time in running boundaries, may think himself privileged to step over them."

"Your fat'er ist welcome to his opinion," answered Andries coolly. "He 'll get no parole of me, nor do I want any favours of him. We are at sword's p'int, young man, and let him look out for himself and his lumper as pest he can."

"Nay," answered Zephaniah, stretching himself, and answering with spirit, though he well knew he was speaking to the uncle of Dus, and thereby endangering his interests with his mistress "nay, Chainbearer, if it comes to *that*, 't will be `hardest fend off.' We are a strong party of stout men, and arn't to be frightened by the crier of a court, or to be druv' off the land by sheep-skin. Catamounts must come ag'in' us in droves, afore we 'll give an inch."

"Go away, go away foolish young fellow you 're your fat'er's son, and t'at 's as much as neet pe said of you. I want no favours from squatters, which ist a preed I tetest and tespise."

I was a little surprised at hearing this answer, and at witnessing this manifestation of feeling in Chainbearer, who, ordinarily, was a cool, and uniformly a courteous man. On reflection, however, I saw he was not so wrong. An exchange of anything like civilities between us and our captors, might seem to give them some claim on us; whereas, by standing on the naked right, we had every advantage of them, in a moral sense, at least. Zephaniah and his brethren left us, on receiving this repulse of Andries; but Susquesus kept loitering around the store-house, apparently little better off, now he was on its outside, than he had been when in it. He had nothing to do, and his idleness was that of an Indian one of a race of such terrible energies, when energy is required, and so frequently listless, when not pressed upon by necessity, pleasure, war, or interest.

Things were in this state, when, some time after the interview just related, we had another visit from a party headed by Tobit. This man came to escort Chainbearer and myself to the cabin of Thousandacres, where all the

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men of the family were assembled; and where, as it now appeared, we were to have something like a hearing, that might seriously affect our fates, for good or for evil. I consulted Chainbearer on the propriety of our lending ourselves to such a measure; but I found Andries disposed to meet the brood of squatters, face to face, and to tell them his mind, let it be when and where it might. Finding my friend in this temper, I made no farther objections myself, but left the storehouse in his company, well guarded by four of the young men, all of whom were armed, holding our way to the seat of justice, in that wild and patriarchal government.

CHAPTER VII.

"When Adam delv'd, and Eve span, Where was then the gentleman?"

Old Saw.

Thousandacres had not altogether neglected forms, though so much set against the spirit of the law. We found a sort of court collected before the door of his dwelling, with himself in the centre, while the principal room contained no one but Prudence and one or two of her daughters. Among the latter was Lowiny, to my surprise; for I had not seen the girl return from the woods, though my eyes had not been long turned from the direction in which I had hopes of catching a glimpse of Dus.

Tobit led us prisoners into the house, placing us near the door, and facing his father; an arrangement that superseded the necessity of much watchfulness, as our only means of escape would necessarily be by rushing through the throng without a thing virtually impracticable. But Chainbearer appeared to have no thought of flight. He entered that circle of athletic young men with perfect indifference; and I remember that it struck me his air resembled that which I had often seen him assume when our regiment was on the eve of serious service. At such moments old Andries could, and often did, appear grand dignity, authority and coolness being blended with sterling courage.

When in the room, Chainbearer and I seated ourselves near the door, while Thousandacres had a chair on the turf without, surrounded by his sons, all of whom were standing. As this arrangement was made amid a grave silence, the effect was not altogether without impressiveness, and partook of some of the ordinary aspects of justice. I was struck with the anxious curiosity betrayed in the countenances of the females in particular; for the decision to which Thousandacres was about to come, would with them have the authority of a judgment of Solomon. Accustomed to reason altogether in their own interests, I make no doubt that, in the main, all of that semi-barbarous breed fancied themselves invested, in their lawless occupation, by some sort of secret natural right; ignorant of the fact that, the moment they reduced their claim to this standard, they put it on the level with that of all the rest of mankind. Nature gives nothing exclusively to an individual, beyond his individuality, and that which appertains to his person and personal qualities; all beyond, he is compelled to share, under the law of nature, with the rest of his race. A title dependent on original possession forms no exception to this rule; for it is merely human convention that gives it force and authority, without which it would form no title at all. But into mysteries like these, none of the family of Thousandacres ever entered; though the still, small voice of conscience, the glimmerings of right, were to be traced occasionally, even amid the confused jumble of social maxims in which their selfishness had taken refuge.

We live in an age of what is called progress, and fancy that man is steadily advancing on the great path of his destiny, to something that we are apt to imagine is to form perfection. Certainly I shall not presume to say what is, or what is not, the divine intention as to the future destination of our species on earth; but years and experience must have taught me, or I should have lived in vain, how little there is among our boasted improvements that is really new; and if we do possess anything in the way of principles that bear on them the impress of inviolability, they are those that have become the most venerable, by having stood the severest tests of time.

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I know not whether the long, silent pause that succeeded our arrival, was the result of an intention to heighten the effect of that strange scene, or whether Thousandacres really wished time to collect his thoughts, and to mature his plans. One thing struck me; notwithstanding the violence that had so recently occurred between Chainbearer and himself, there were no traces of resentment in the hardened and wrinkled countenance of that old tenant of the forest; for he was too much accustomed to those sudden outbreakings of anger, to suffer them long to linger in his recollection. In all that was said, and in all that passed, in the course of that (to me) memorable day, I could trace no manifestation of any feeling in the squatter, in consequence of the rude personal rencontre that he had so lately had with my friend. They had clenched, and he had been overthrown; and that ended the matter.

The silence which occurred after we took our seats must have lasted several minutes. For myself, I saw I was only a secondary person in this interview; old Andries having completely supplanted me in importance, not only in acts, but in the estimation of the squatters. To him they were accustomed, and accustomed, moreover, to regard as a sort of hostile power; his very pursuit being opposed to the great moving principle of their every-day lives. The man who measured land, and he who took it to himself without measurement, were exactly antagonist forces, in morals as well as in physics; and might be supposed not to regard each other with the most friendly eyes. Thus it was that the Chainbearer actually became an object of greater interest to these squatters, than the son of one of the owners of the soil, and the attorney in fact of both. As for the old man himself, I could see that he looked very Dutch; which implied a stubborn resolution bordering on obstinacy; unmoved adherence to what he conceived to be right; and a strong dislike to his present neighbours, in addition to other reasons, on account of their having come from the eastward; a race that he both distrusted and respected; disliked, yet covertly honoured, for many a quality that was both useful and good.

To the next generation, the feeling that was once so active between the descendants of Holland among ourselves, and the people of English birth, who came from the eastern States, will be almost purely a matter of history. I perceive that my father, in the manuscript he has transmitted to me, as well as I myself, have made various allusions to the subject. It is my wish to be understood in this matter. I have introduced it solely as a *fact* that is beyond controversy; but, I trust, without any undue bigotry of opinion. It is possible that both Mr. Cornelius Littlepage and his son, unconsciously to ourselves, may have been influenced by the ancient prejudices of the colonies; though I have endeavoured scrupulously to avoid them. At any rate, if either of us has appeared to be a little too severe, I trust the reader will remember how much has been uttered to the world in reference to this dislike, by the Yankee, and how little by the Dutchman, during the last century and a half, and grant to one who is proud of the little blood from Holland that he happens to possess, the privilege of showing, at least, one of the phases of his own side of the story. But it is time to return to our scene in the hut.

"Chainbearer," commenced Thousandacres, after the pause already mentioned had lasted several minutes, and speaking with a dignity that could only have proceeded from the intensity of his feelings; "Chainbearer, you 've been an inimy to me and mine sin' the day we first met. You 're an inimy by your cruel callin'; yet you 've the boldness to thrust yourself into my very hands!"

"I 'm an enemy to all knaves, T'ousantacres, ant I tont care who knows it," answered old Andries, sternly; "t'at ist my trate, ast well ast carryin' chain; ant I wish it to pe known far and near. Ast for pein' your enemy by callin', I may say as much of yourself; since there coult pe no surveyin,' or carryin' of chain, tit all t'e people help t'emselves to lant, as you haf tone your whole life, wit'out as much as sayin' to t'e owners `py your leaf.'"

"Things have now got to a head atween us, Chainbearer," returned the squatter; "but seein' that you 're in my hands, I 'm ready and willin' to reason the p'int with you, in hopes that we may yet part fri'nds, and that this may be the last of all our troubles. You and I be gettin' to be oldish men, Chainbearer; and it 's fittin' that them that be gettin' near their eends, should sometimes think on 'em. I come from no Dutch colony, but from a part of the world where mankind fears God, and has some thoughts of a futur' state."

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"T'at 's neit'er here nor t'ere, T'ousantacres," cried Andries, impatiently. "Not put what religion is a goot t'ing, and a t'ing to pe venerated, ant honouret, and worshipet; put t'at it 's out of place in a squatter country, and most of all in a squatter's mout'. Can you telt me one t'ing, T'ousantacres, and t'at ist, why you Yankees pray so much, ant call on Got to pless you ever ot'er wort, and turn up your eyes, ant look so temure of Suntays, ant t'en go ant squat yourselfs town on a Tutchman's lant of a Montay? I 'm an olt man, ant haf lifed long ant seen much, ant hope I understant some of t'at which I haf seen ant lifed amongst, put I do not comprehent t'at! Yankee religion ant Tutch religion cannot come out of t'e same piple."

"I should think not, I should think not, Chainbearer; and I *hope* not, in the bargain. I do not wish to be justified by ways like your'n, or a religion like your'n. That which is foreordained will come to pass, let what will happen, and that 's my trust. But, leaving religion out of this matter atween us altogether "

"Ay, you 'll do well to do t'at," growled Chainbearer, "for religion hast, inteet, very little to do wit' it."

"I say," answered Thousandacres, on a higher key, as if resolute to make himself heard, "leaving religion for Sabba' days and proper occasions, I 'm ready to talk this matter over on the footin' of reason, and not only to tell you my say, but to hear your'n, as is right atween man and man."

"I confess a strong desire to listen to what Thousandacres has to say in defence of his conduct, Chainbearer," I now thought it best to put in; "and I hope you will so far oblige me as to be a patient listener. I am very willing that you should answer, for I know of no person to whom I would sooner trust a righteous cause than yourself. Proceed, Thousandacres; my old friend will comply."

Andries did conform to my wishes, thus distinctly expressed, but it was not without sundry signs of disquiet, as expressed in his honest countenance, and a good deal of subdued muttering about "Yankee cunnin' and holy gotliness, t'at is dresset up in wolf's clot'in;" Chainbearer meaning to express the native garment of the sheep by the latter expression, but falling into a confusion of images that is by no means rare among the men of his caste and people. After a pause, the squatter proceeded.

"In talkin' this matter over, young man, I purpose to begin at the beginnin' of things," he said; "for I allow, if you grant any value to titles, and king's grants, and sich sort of things, that my rights here be no great matter. But, beginnin' at the beginnin', the case is very different. You 'll admit, I s'pose, that the Lord created the heavens and the 'arth, and that he created man to be master over the last."

"What of t'at?" eagerly cried Chainbearer. "What of t'at, olt T'ousantacres? So t'e Lort createt yonter eagle t'at is flyin' so far above your heat, put it 's no sign you are to kill him, or he ist to kill you."

"Hear to reason, Chainbearer, and let me have my say; a'ter which I 'm willing to hear you. I begin at the beginnin', when man was first put in possession of the 'arth, to till, and to dig, and to cut saw-logs, and to make lumber, jist as it suited his wants and inclinations. Now, Adam was the father of all, and to him and his posterity was the possession of the 'arth given, by Him whose title 's worth that of all the kings, and governors, and assemblies in the known world. Adam lived his time, and left all things to his posterity, and so has it been from father to son, down to our own day and giniration, accordin' to the law of God, though not accordin' to the laws of man."

"Well, admittin' all you say, squatter, how does t'at make your right here petter t'an t'at of any ot'er man?" demanded Andries, disdainfully.

"Why, reason tells us where a man's rights begin, you 'll see, Chainbearer. Here is the 'arth, as I told you, given to man, to be used for his wants. When you and I are born, some parts of the world is in use, and some parts isn't. We want land, when we are old enough to turn our hands to labour, and I make my pitch out here in the woods,

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say, where no man has pitched afore me. Now, in my judgment, that makes the best of titles, the Lord's title."

"Well, t'en, you 've got your title from t'e Lord," answered Chainbearer, "and you 've got your lant. I s'pose you 'll not take all t'e 'art' t'at is not yet peoplet, and I shoult like to know how you wilt run your lines between you ant your next neighpour. Atmittin' you 're here in t'e woots, how much of t'e lant woult you take for your own religious uses, and how much woult you leaf for t'e next comer?"

"Each man would take as much as was necessary for his wants, Chainbearer, and hold as much as he possessed."

"Put what ist wants, ant what ist possession? Look around you, T'ousantacres, and tell me how much of t'is fery spot you 'd haf a mint to claim, under your Lort's title?"

"How much? As much as I have need on enough to feed me and mine and enough for lumber, and to keep the b'ys busy. It would somewhat depend on sarcumstances: I might want more at one time than at another, as b'ys grew up, and the family increased in numbers."

"Enough for lumper how long? and to keep t'e poys pusy how long? For a tay, or a week, or a life, or a great numper of lifes? You must tell me t'at, T'ousantacres, pefore I gif cretit to your title."

"Don't be onreasonable don't be onreasonable in your questions, Chainbearer; and I 'll answer every one on 'em, and in a way to satisfy you, or any judgmatical man. How long do I want the lumber? As long as I 've use for it. How long do I want to keep the b'ys busy? Till they 're tired of the place, and want to change works. When a man 's a-weary of his pitch, let him give it up for another, selling his betterments, of course, to the best chap he can light on."

"Oh! you 't sell your petterments, woult you! What! sell t'e Lort's title, olt T'ousantacres? Part wit' Heaven's gift for t'e value of poor miseraple silver and golt?"

"You don't comprehend Aaron," put in Prudence, who saw that Chainbearer was likely to get the best of the argument, and who was always ready to come to the rescue of any of her tribe, whether it might be necessary with words, or tooth and nail, or the rifle. "You don't, by no manner of means, comprehend Aaron, Chainbearer. His idee is, that the Lord has made the 'arth for his crittur's; that any one that wants land, has a right to take as much as he wants, and to use it as long as he likes; and, when he has done, to part with his betterments for sich price as may be agreed on."

"I stick to that," joined in the squatter, with a loud hem, like a man who was sensible of relief; "that 's my idee, and I 'm detarmined to live and die by it."

"You 've lifed py it, I know very well, T'ousantacres; ant, now you 're olt, it 's quite likely you 'll tie py it. As for comprehentin', you don't comprehend yourself. I 'll just ask you, in the first place, how much lant do you holt on t'is very spot? You 're here squattet so completely ant finally as to haf puilt a mill. Now tell me how much lant you holt, t'at when I come to squat alongsite of you, our fences may not lap on one anot'er. I ask a simple question, and I hope for a plain ant straight answer. Show me t'e pountaries of your tomain, ant how much of t'e worlt you claim, ant how much you ton't claim."

"I 've pretty much answered that question already, Chainbearer. My creed is, that a man has a right to hold all he wants, and to want all he holds."

"Got help t'e men, t'en, t'at haf to carry chain between you and your neighpours, T'ousantacres; a man's wants to-tay may tiffer from his wants to-morrow, and to-morrow from t'e next tay, ant so on to t'e ent of time! On your toctrine, not'in' woult pe settlet, ant all woult pe at sixes ant sevens."

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"I don't think I'm fully understood, a'ter all that 's been said," returned the squatter. "Here 's two men start in life at the same time, and both want farms. Wa—a—I; there 's the wilderness, or may be it isn't all wilderness, though it once was. One chooses to buy out betterments, and he doos so; t'other plunges in, out o' sight of humanity, and makes his pitch. Both them men 's in the right, and can hold on to their possessions, I say, to the eend of time. That is, on the supposition that right is stronger than might."

"Well, well," answered Chainbearer, a little drily; "ant s'pose one of your men *ton't* want to puy petterments, put follows t'ot'er, ant makes his pitch in t'e wilterness, also?"

"Let him do 't, I say; t'is his right, and the law of the Lord."

"Put, s'pose bot' your young men want t'e same pit of wilt lant!"

"First come, first sarv'd; that 's my maxim. Let the sprigheest chap have the land. Possession 's everything in settling land titles."

"Well, t'en, to please you, T'ousantacres, we 'll let one get aheat of t'ot'er, and haf his possession first; how much shalt he occupy."

"As much as he wants, I 've told you, already."

"Ay, put when his slower frient comes along, ant hast his wants, too, ant wishes to make *his* pitch alongside of his olt neiphour, where is t'e pountary between 'em to be fount?"

"Let 'em agree on't! They must be dreadful poor neighbours, if they can't agree on so small a matter as that," said Tobit, who was getting weary of the argument.

"Tobit is right," added the father; "let 'em agree on their line, and run it by the eye. Curse on all chains and compasses, say I! They 're an invention of the devil, to make ill blood in a neighbourhood, and to keep strife awake, when our bibles tell us to live in peace with all mankind."

"Yes, yes, I understant all t'at," returned Chainbearer, a little disdainfully. "A yankee piple ist a fery convenient pook. T'ere 's authority in it for all sorts of toctrines ant worshipping', ant prayin', ant preachin', ant so forth. It 's what I call a so—forth piple, Mortaunt, ant wilt reat packwards as well ast forwards; put all t'e chapters into one, if necessary, or all t'e verses into chapters. Sometimes St. Luke is St. Paul, and St. John ist St. Matt'ew. I 've he'rt your tominies expount, and no two expount alike. Novelties ist t'e religion of New Englant, ant novelties, in t'e shape of ot'er men's lants, is t'e creet of her lofely chiltren! Oh! yes, I 've seen a yankee piple! Put, this toes'nt settle our two squatters; bot' of whom wants a sartain hill for its lumper; now, which is to haf it?"

"The man that got there first, I 've told you, old Chainbearer, and once tellin' is as good as a thousand. If the first comer looked on that hill, and said to himself, `that hill 's mine,' t' is his'n."

"Well, t'at ist making property fast! Wast t'at t'e way, T'ousantacres, t'at you took up your estate on t'e Mooseridge property?"

"Sartain I want no better title. I got here first, and tuck up the land, and shall continue to tuck it up, as I want it. There 's no use in being mealy—mouthed, for I like to speak out, though the landlord's son be by!"

"Oh! you speak out lout enouf, ant plain enouf, ant I shoultn't wonter if you got tucket up yourself, one tay, for your pains. Here ist a tifficulty, however, t'at I 'll just mention, T'ousantacres, for your consiteration. You take possession of timper—lant, by lookin' at it, you say "

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"Even lookin' at isn't necessary," returned the squatter, eager to widen the grasp of his rights. "It 's enough that a man *wants* the land, and he comes, or sends to secure it. Possession is everything, and I call it possession, to crave a spot, and to make some sort of calkerlation, or works, reasonably near it. That gives a right to cut and clear, and when a clearin's begun, it 's betterments, and everybody allows that betterments may be both bought and sold."

"Well, now we understant each o'ter. Put here ist t'e small tifficulty I woult mention. One General Littlepage and one Colonel Follock took a fancy to t'is spot long pefore t'e olt French war; ant pesites fancyin' t'e place, and sentin' messengers to look at it, t'ey pought out t'e Injin right in t'e first place; t'en t'ey pought of t'e king, who hat all t'e lant in t'e country, at t'at time, ast hatn't o'ter owners. T'en t'ey sent surfeyors to run t'e lines, ant t'em very surfeyors passet along py t'is river, ast I know py t'eir fielt-pooks (fieldbooks): t'en more surfeyors wast sent out to tivite it into great lots, ant now more still haf come to tivite it into small lots: ant t'ey 've paid quit-rents for many years, ant tone o'ter t'ings to prove t'ey want t'is place as much as you want it yourself. T'ey haf hat it more ast a quarter of a century, ant exerciset ownership over it all t'at time; ant wantet it very much t'e whole of t'at quarter of a century, ant, if t'e trut' was sait, want it still."

A long pause followed this statement, during which the different members of the family looked at each other, as if in quest of support. The idea of there being any other side to the question than that they had been long accustomed to consider so intently, was novel to them, and they were a little bewildered by the extraordinary circumstance. This is one of the great difficulties under which the inhabitant of a narrow district labours, in all that pertains to his personal notions and tastes, and a good deal in what relates to his principles. This it is that makes the true provincial, with his narrow views, set notions, conceit, and unhesitating likes and dislikes. When one looks around him and sees how very few are qualified, by experience and knowledge of the world, to utter opinions at all, he is apt to be astonished at finding how many there are that do it. I make no doubt that the family of Thousandacres was just as well satisfied with their land-ethics, as Paley ever could have been with his moral philosophy, or Newton with his mathematical demonstrations.

"I don't wonter you 're callet T'ousantacres, Aaron Timperman," continued Chainbearer, pushing his advantage, "for wit' such a title to your estate, you might as well pe tarmet Ten T'ousantacres at once, ant more, too! Nay, I wonter, while your eyes was trawin' up title teets, t'at you shoult haf peen so moterate, for it was just as easy to possess a patent on t'at sort of right, as to possess a single farm."

But Thousandacres had made up his mind to pursue the subject no further; and, while it was easy to see that fiery passions were burning within him, he seemed now bent on bringing a conference, from which he doubtless expected different results, to a sudden close. It was with difficulty that he suppressed the volcano that was raging within, but he so far succeeded as to command Tobit to shut up his prisoner again.

"Take him away, b'ys, take him back to the store-'us'," said the old squatter, rising and moving a little on one side to permit Andries to pass, as if afraid to trust himself too near; "he was born the sarvent of the rich, and will die their sarvent. Chains be good enough for him, and I wish him no greater harm than to carry chains the rest of his days."

"Oh! you 're a true son of Liperty!" called out the Chainbearer, as he quietly returned to his prison; "a true son of Liperty, accordin' to your own conceit! You want eferyt'ing in your own way, and eferyt'ing in your own pocket. T'e Lort's law is a law for T'ousantacres, put not a law to care for Cornelius Littlepage or Tirck Follock!"

Although my old friend was escorted to his prison, no attempt was made to remove me. On the contrary, Prudence joined her husband without, followed by all her young fry, and for a moment I fancied myself forgotten and deserted. A movement in one corner of the room, however, drew my attention there, and I saw Lowiny standing on tiptoe, with a finger on her lips, the sign of silence, while she made eager gestures with the other hand, for me to enter a small passage that communicated by means of a ladder with the loft of the hut. My moccasins were now of great advantage to me. Without pausing to reflect on consequences, or to look around, I did as directed,

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drawing to the door after me. There was a small window in the sort of passage in which I now found myself alone with the girl, and my first impulse was to force my body through it, for it had neither glass nor sash, but Lowiny caught my arms.

"Lord ha' massy on us!" whispered the girl "you 'd be seen and taken, or shot! For your life don't go out there now. Here 's a hole for a cellar, and there 's the trap go down there, and wait 'till you hear news from me."

There was no time for deliberation, and the sight of Chainbearer's escort, as they proceeded towards the store-house, satisfied me that the girl was right. She held up the trap, and I descended into the hole that answered the purposes of a cellar. I heard Lowiny draw a chest over the trap, and then I fancied I could distinguish the creaking of the rounds of the ladder, as she went up into the loft, which was the place where she usually slept.

All this occurred literally in about one minute of time. Another minute may have passed, when I heard the heavy tread of Thousandacres' foot on the floor above me, and the clamour of many voices, all speaking at once. It was evident that I was missed, and a search had already been commenced. For half a minute, nothing was very intelligible to me; then I heard the shrill voice of Prudence calling for Lowiny.

"Lowiny you Lowiny!" she cried "where *has* the gal got to?"

"I 'm here, mother" answered my friend, from her loft "you told me to come up, and look for your new bible."

I presume this was true; for Prudence had really despatched the girl on that errand, and it must have sufficed to lull any suspicions of her daughter's being connected with my disappearance, if any such had been awakened. The movements of footsteps was now quick over my head, those of several men being among them; and in the confusion of voices, I heard that of Lowiny, who must have descended the ladder and joined in the search.

"He mustn't be allowed to get off, on no account," said Thousandacres, aloud, "or we 're all ondone. Everything we have will fall into their hands, and mill, logs and all, will be utterly lost. We shan't even have time to get off the gear and the household stuff."

"He 's up stairs" cried one "he must be down cellar," said another. Steps went up the ladder, and I heard the chest drawn from the trap; and a stream of light entering the place, notified me that the trap was raised. The place I was in was a hole twenty feet square, roughly walled with stones, and nearly empty, though it did contain a meatbarrel or two, and a few old tubs. In the winter, it would have been filled with vegetables. There was no place to hide in, and an attempt at concealment would have led to a discovery. I withdrew to a corner, in a part of the cellar that was quite dark, but thought myself lost when I saw a pair of legs descending the ladder. Almost at the same moment, three of the men and two of the women came into the hole, a fourth female, whom I afterwards ascertained to be Lowiny herself, standing in the trap in such a way as to double the darkness below. The first man who got down began to tumble the tubs about, and to look into the corners; and the lucky thought occurred to me to do the same thing. By keeping as busy as the rest of them, I actually escaped detection in the dark; and Tobit soon rushed to the ladder, calling out, "the window the window he 's not here the window!" In half a minute the cellar was empty again; or no one remained but myself.

At first I had great difficulty in believing in my good luck; but the trap fell, and the profound stillness of the place satisfied me that I had avoided that danger, at least. This escape was so singular and unexpected, that I could hardly believe in its reality; though real it was, to all intents and purposes. The absurd often strikes the imagination in an absurd way; and so it proved with me on this occasion. I sat down on a tub and laughed heartily, when I felt absolutely certain all was right, holding my sides lest the sound of my voice might yet betray me. Lowiny was similarly infected, for I heard peals of girlish laughter from her, as her brothers tumbled about barrels, and tubs, and bedsteads, in the upper part of the building, in their fruitless and hurried search. This merriment did not pass unrebuked, however; Prudence lending her daughter a box on the side of the head, that, in

one sense, reached even my ears; though it probably aided in saving the girl from the suspicion of being in my secret, by the very natural character of her girlish indulgence. Two or three minutes after the trap closed on me for the second time, the sounds of footsteps and voices overhead ceased, and the hut seemed deserted.

My situation now was far from comfortable. Confined in a dark cellar, with no means of escaping but by the trap, and the almost certainty of falling into the hands of my captors, should I attempt such a thing, I now began to regret having entered so readily into Lowiny's scheme. There would be a certain loss of dignity in a recapture, that was not pleasant in itself; and I will own, I began to have some doubts of my eventual safety, should I again come under the control of such spirits as those of Thousandacres and his eldest son. Buried in that cellar, I was in a manner placed immediately beneath those whose aim it was to secure me, rendering escape impossible, and detection nearly unavoidable.

Such were my meditations when light again streamed into the cellar. The trap was raised, and presently I heard my name uttered in a whisper. Advancing to the ladder, I saw Lowiny holding the door, and beckoning for me to ascend. I followed her directions blindly, and was soon at her side. The girl was nearly convulsed between dread of detection and a desire to laugh; my emerging from the cellar recalling to her imagination all the ludicrous circumstances of the late search.

"Warn't it queer that none on 'em know'd you!" she whispered; then commanding silence by a hasty gesture. "Don't speak; for they 're s'archin' still, cluss by, and some on 'em may follow me here. I wanted to get you out of the cellar, as some of the young-uns will be rummagin' there soon for pork for supper; and *their* eyes are as sharp as needles. Don't you think you could crawl into the mill? It 's stopped now, and wun't be goin' ag'in till this stir 's over.

"I should be seen, my good girl, if any of your people are looking for me near at hand."

"I don't know that. Come to the door, and you 'll see there is a way. Everybody 's lookin' on the right side of this house; and by creepin' as far as them logs, you 'd be pretty safe. If you reach the mill safely, climb up into the loft."

I took a moment to survey the chances. At the distance of a hundred feet from the house there commenced a large bed of saw-logs, which were lying alongside of each other; and the timber being from two to four feet in diameter, it would be very possible to creep among it, up to the mill itself, into which even several of the logs had been rolled. The great difficulty would be in reaching the logs through a perfectly open space. The house would be a cover, as against most of the family, who were busy examining everything like a cover on its opposite side; no one supposing for a moment I could be near the mill, inasmuch as it stood directly in front of the spot where the crowd was collected at the moment of my sudden disappearance. But the boys and girls were flying around in all directions; rendering it uncertain how long they would remain in a place, or how long their eyes would be turned away from my path.

It was necessary to do something, and I determined to make an effort. Throwing myself on the ground, I crawled, rather slowly than fast, across that terrible space, and got safely among the logs. As there was no outcry, I knew I had not been seen. It was now comparatively easy to reach the mill. Another dangerous experiment, however, was to expose my person by climbing up to the loft. I could not do this without running the risk of being seen; and I felt the necessity of using great caution. I first raised my head high enough to survey the state of things without. Luckily the house was still between me and most of my enemies; though the small-fry constantly came into view and vanished. I looked round for a spot to ascend, and took a final survey of the scene. There stood Lowiny in the door of the hut, her hands clasped, and her whole air expressive of concern. She saw my head, I knew, and I made a gesture of encouragement, which caused her to start. At the next instant my foot was on a brace, and my body was rising to the beams above. I do not think my person was uncovered ten seconds; and no clamour succeeded. I now felt there were really some chances of my finally effecting an escape; and glad enough was I to think so.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Alone, amid the shades,
Still in harmonious intercourse they liv'd
The rural day, and talk'd the flowing heart,
Or sigh'd, and look'd unutterable things.

Thomson.

That was a somewhat breathless moment. The intensity with which I listened for any sound that might announce my discovery, was really painful. I almost fancied I heard a shout, but none came. Then I gave myself up, actually believing that footsteps were rushing towards the mill, with a view to seize me. It was imagination; the rushing of the waters below being the only real sound that disturbed the silence of the place. I had time to breathe, and to look about me.

As might be supposed, the mill was very rudely constructed. I have spoken of a loft, but there was nothing that really deserved the term. Some refuse boards were laid about, here and there, on the beams, making fragments of rough flooring; and my first care was to draw several of these boards close together, placing them two or three in thickness, so as to make a place where, by lying down, I could not be seen by any one who should happen to enter the mill. There lay what the millers call a bunch of cherry-wood boards at no great distance from the spot where the roof joined the plate of the building, and within this bunch I arranged my hiding-place. No ostensible change was necessary to complete it, else the experiment might have been hazardous among those who were so much accustomed to note circumstances of that nature. The manner in which the lumber was arranged when I reached the spot was so little different from what it was when I had done with it, as scarcely to attract attention.

No sooner was my hiding-place completed to my mind, than I looked round to see if there were any means of making observations without. The building was not shingled, but the rain was kept out by placing slabs up and down, as is often seen in the ruder, rustic, frontier architecture of America. With the aid of my knife, I soon had a small hole between two of these slabs, at a place favourable to such an object; and, though it was no larger than the eye itself, it answered every purpose. Eagerly enough did I now commence my survey.

The search was still going on actively. Those experienced border-men well knew it was not possible for me to cross the open ground and to reach the woods in the short interval of time between my disappearance and their discovery of the fact, and they consequently felt certain that I was secreted somewhere near the building. Every house had been searched, though no one thought of entering the mill, because my movement, as all supposed, was necessarily in an opposite direction. The fences were examined, and every thing like a cover on the proper side of the house was looked into with care and activity. It would seem that, just as I took my first look through the hole, my pursuers were at fault. The search had been made, and of course without effect. Nothing likely to conceal me remained to be examined. It was necessary to come to a stand, and to concert measures for a further search.

The family of squatters was too much accustomed to their situation and its hazards, not to be familiar with all the expedients necessary to their circumstances. They placed the younger children on the look-out, at the points most favourable to my retreat, should I be in a situation to attempt going off in that quarter of the clearing; and, then, the father collected his older sons around him, and the whole cluster of them, seven in number, came slowly walking towards the mill. The excitement of the first pursuit had sensibly abated, and these practised woodsmen were in serious consultation on the measures next to be taken. In this condition, the whole party entered the mill, taking their seats, or standing in a circle directly beneath my post, and within six feet of me. As a matter of course, I heard all that was said, though completely hid from view.

The Chainbearer; or, The Littlepage Manuscripts, V2

"Here we shall be safe from the long ears of little folks," said the father, as he placed his own large frame on the log that was next to be sawed. "This has been a most onaccountable thing, Tobit, and I 'd no idee at all them 'ere city bred gentry was so expart with their legs. I sometimes think he can't be a Littlepage, but that he 's one of our hill folks, tossed out and mannered a'ter the towns' folks, to take a body in. It seems an onpossibility that the man should get off, out of the midst on us, and we not see or hear anything on him!"

"We may as well give up the lumber and the betterments, at once," growled Tobit, "as let him get clear. Should he reach Ravensnest, the first thing he 'd do would be to swear out warrants ag'in us all, and Newcome is not the man to stand by squatters in trouble. He 'd no more dare deny his landlord, than deny his meetin'."

This expression of Tobit's is worthy of notice. In the estimation of a certain class of religionists among us, the "meetin'," as the young squatter called his church, had the highest place in his estimate of potentates and powers; it is to be feared, often even higher than the dread being for whose worship that "meetin'" existed.

"I don't think as hard of the 'squire as all that," answered Thousandacres. "He 'll never send out a warrant ag'in us, without sendin' out a messenger to let us hear of it, and that in time to get us all out of the way."

"And who 's to get the boards in the creek out of the way afore the water rises? And who 's to hide or carry off all them logs? There 's more than a ton weight of my blood and bones in them very logs, in the shape of hard labour, and I 'll fight like a she-bear for her cubs afore I 'll be driven from them without pay."

It is very surprising that one who set this desperate value on the property he deemed his, should have so little regard for that which belonged to other persons. In this respect, however, Tobit's feeling was no more than submission to the general law of our nature, which reverses the images before our moral vision, precisely as we change our own relations to them.

"It would go hard with *me* afore I should give up the lumber or the clearin'," returned Thousandacres, with emphasis. "We 've fit King George for liberty, and why shouldn't we fight for our property? Of what use *is* liberty at all, if it won't bear a man harmless out of a job of this sort? I despise sich liberty, b'ys, and want none on it."

All the young men muttered their approbation of such a sentiment, and it was easy enough to understand that the elevated notion of personal rights entertained by Thousandacres found an answering echo in the bosom of each of his heroic sons. I dare say the same sympathy would have existed between them, had they been a gang of pickpockets collected in council in a room of the Black Horse, St. Catharine's lane, Wapping, London.

"But what can we do with the young chap, father, should we take him ag'in?" asked Zephaniah; a question, as all will see, of some interest to myself. "He can't be kept a great while without having a stir made a'ter him, and that would break us up, sooner or later. We may have a clear right to the work of our hands; but, on the whull, I rather conclude the country is ag'in squatters."

"Who cares for the country?" answered Thousandacres, fiercely. "If it wants young Littlepage, let it come and s'arch for him, as we 've been doin'. If that chap falls into my hands once more, he never quits 'em alive, unless he gives me a good and sufficient deed to two hundred acres, includin' the mill, and a receipt in full, on his father's behalf, for all back claims. On them two principles my mind is set, and not to be altered."

A long pause succeeded this bold announcement, and I began to be afraid that my suppressed breathing might be overheard in the profound stillness that followed. But Zephaniah spoke in time to relieve me from this apprehension, and in a way to satisfy me that the party below, all of whom were concealed from my sight, had been pondering on what had been said by their leader, and not listening to detect any tell-tale sounds from me.

The Chainbearer; or, The Littlepage Manuscripts, V2

"I 've heern say," Zephaniah remarked, "that deeds gi'n in that way won't stand good in law. 'Squire Newcome was talkin' of sich transactions the very last time I was out at the Nest."

"I wish a body could find out what *would* stand good in law!" growled Thousandacres. "They make their laws, and lay great account in havin' 'em obsarved; and then, when a man comes into court with everything done accordin' to their own rules, five or six attorneys start up and bawl out, `this is ag'in law!' If a deed is to set forth so and so, and is to have the name writ down in such a place, and is to have what they call `hand and seal and date' beside; and sich bein' the law, I want to know why an instrument so made won't hold good by their confounded laws? Law is law, all over the world, I s'pose; and though it 's an accursed thing, if men agree to have it, they ought to stand by their own rules. I 've thought a good deal of squeezin' writin's out of this young Littlepage; and just as my mind 's made up to do 't if I can lay hands on him ag'in, you come out and tell me sich writin's be good for nothin'. Zeph, Zeph you go too often out into them settlements, and get your mind pervarted by their wickedness and talk."

"I hope not, father, though I own I do like to go there. I 've come to a time of life when a man thinks of marryin'; and there bein' no gal here, unless it be one of my own sisters, it 's nat'ral to look into the next settlement. I 'll own sich has been my object in going to the Nest."

"And you 've found the gal you set store by? Out with the whull truth, like a man. You know I 've always been set ag'in lyin', and have ever endeavoured to make the whull of you speak truth. How is it, Zephaniah? have you found a gal to your mind, and who is 't? Ourn is a family into which any body can come by askin', you 'll remember."

"Lord, father! Dus Malbone would no more think of askin' me to have her, than she 'd think of marryin' you! I 've offered three times; and she 's told me, as plain as a woman could speak, that she couldn't no how consent, and that I hadn't ought to think of her any longer."

"Who is the gal, in this part of the country, that holds her head so much higher than one of Thousandacres' sons?" demanded the old squatter, with some such surprise, real or affected, as a Bourbon might be supposed to feel at having his alliance spurned on the score of blood. "I 'd like to see her, and to converse with this young woman. What did you call her name, Zeph?"

"Dus Malbone, father, and the young woman that lives with Chainbearer. She 's his niece, I b'lieve, or something of that sort."

"Ha! Chainbearer's niece, d'ye say? His taken da'ghter? Isn't there some mistake?"

"Dus Malbone calls old Andries `Uncle Chainbearer,' and I s'pose from that she 's his niece."

"And you 've offered to marry the gal three times, d'ye tell me, Zephaniah?"

"Three times, father; and every time she has given `no' for her answer."

"The fourth time, may be, she'll change her mind. I wonder if we couldn't lay hands on this gal, and bring her into our settlement? Does she live with Chainbearer, in his hut, out here in the woods?"

"She doos, father."

"And doos she set store by her uncle? or is she one of the flaunty sort that thinks more of herself and gownd, than she does of her own flesh and blood? Can you tell me *that*, Zeph?"

The Chainbearer; or, The Littlepage Manuscripts, V2

"In my judgment, father, Dus Malbone loves Chainbearer as much as she would, was he her own father."

"Ay, some gals haven't half the riverence and love for their own fathers that they should have. What 's to prevint your goin', Zephaniah, to Chainbearer's pitch, and tell the gal that her uncle 's in distress, and that you don't know what may happen to him, and that she had better come over and see a'ter him? When we get her here, and she understands the natur' of the case, and you put on your Sabba'day clothes, and we send for 'squire Newcome, you may find yourself a married man sooner than you thought for, my son, and settle down in life. A'ter that, there 'll not be much danger of Chainbearer's tellin' on us, or of his great fri'nd here, this major Littlepage's troublin' the lumber afore the water rises."

A murmur of applause followed this notable proposal, and I fancied I could hear a snigger from the young man, as if he found the project to his mind, and thought it might be feasible.

"Father," said Zephaniah, "I wish you 'd call Lowiny here, and talk to her a little about Dus Malbone. There she is, with Tobit's wife and mother, looking round among the cabbages, as if a man could be hid in such a place."

Thousandacres called to his daughter in an authoritative way; and I soon heard the girl's step, as she came, a little hesitatingly as I fancied, into the mill. As it would be very natural to one in Lowiny's situation to suppose, that her connection with my escape occasioned this summons, I could not but feel for what I presumed was the poor girl's distress at receiving it.

"Come here, Lowiny," commenced Thousandacres, in the stern manner with which it was his wont to speak to his children; "come nearer, gal. Do you know anything of one Dus Malbone, Chainbearer's niece?"

"Lord ha' massy! Father, how you *did* frighten me! I thought you might have found the gentleman, and s'posed I 'd a hand in helpin' to hide him!"

Singular as it may seem, this burst of conscience awakened no suspicion in any of the listeners. When the girl thus betrayed herself, I very naturally expected that such an examination would follow as would extort the whole details from her. Not at all, however; neither the father nor any of the sons understood the indiscreet remarks of the girl, but imputed them to the excitement that had just existed, and the circumstance that her mind had, naturally enough, been dwelling on its cause. It is probable that the very accidental manner of my evasion, which precluded the attaching of suspicious facts to what had really occurred, favoured Lowiny on this occasion; it being impossible that she should be suspected from anything of that character.

"Who 's talkin' or thinkin' now of young Littlepage, at all," returned Thousandacres a little angrily. "I ask if you know anything of Chainbearer's niece one Dus Malbone, or Malcome?"

"I *do* know suthin' of her, father," answered Lowiny, willing enough to betray one the lesser of her secrets, in order to conceal the other, which, on all accounts, was much the most important; "though I never laid eyes on her 'till to-day. Zeph has often talked to me of the gal that carried chain with her uncle for a whull month; and he has a notion to marry her if he can get her."

"Never laid eyes on her 'till to-day! Whereabouts have you laid eyes on her *to-day*, gal? Is all creation comin' in upon my clearin' at once? Whereabouts have you seen this gal to-day?"

"She come to the edge of the clearin' with her uncle, and "

"Well, what next? Why don't you go on, Lowiny?"

The Chainbearer; or, The Littlepage Manuscripts, V2

I could have told Thousandacres why his daughter hesitated; but the girl got out of the scrape by her own presence of mind and ingenuity, a little aided, perhaps, by some practice in sins of the sort.

"Why, I went a berryin' this forenoon, and up ag'in the berry lot, just in the edge of the woods, I saw a young woman, and that was the Malbone gal. So we talked together, and she told me all about it. She's waitin' for her uncle to come back."

"So, so; this is news indeed, b'ys! Do you know where the gal is now, Lowiny?"

"Not just now, for she told me she should go deeper into the woods, lest she should be seen; but an hour afore sundown she's to come to the foot of the great chestnut, just ag'in the berry lot; and I promised to meet her, and either bring her in to sleep in one of our housen, or to carry her out suthin' for supper, and to make a bed on."

This was said frankly, and with the feeling and sympathy that females are apt to manifest in behalf of each other. It was evident Lowiny's audience believed every word she had said; and the old man, in particular, determined at once to act. I heard him move from his seat, and his voice sounded like one who was retiring, as he said:

"Tobit b'ys come with me, and we 'll have one more look for this young chap through the lumber and the housen. It may be that he 's stolen in there while our eyes have been turned another way. Lowiny, you needn't come with us, for the flutterin' way of you gals don't do no good in sich a s'arch."

I waited until the last heavy footstep was inaudible, and then ventured to move far enough on my hands, to find a crack that I had purposely left, with a view to take through it an occasional look below. On the log which her father had just left, Lowiny had seated herself. Her eye was roaming over the upper part of the mill, as if in quest of me. At length she said, in a suppressed voice,

"Be you here, still? Father and the b'ys can't hear us now, if you speak low."

"I am here, good Lowiny, thanks to your friendly kindness, and have overheard all that passed. You saw Ursula Malbone, and gave her my note?"

"As true as you are there, I did; and she read it over so often, I guess she must know it by heart."

"But, what did she say? Had she no message for her uncle no answer to what I had written?"

"Oh! she 'd enough to say gals love to talk, you know, when they get with one another, and Dus and I talked together half an hour, or longer. She 'd plenty to say, though it wunt do for me to sit here and tell it to you, lest somebody wonder I stay so long in the mill."

"You can tell me if she sent any message, or answer to my note?"

"She never breathed a syllable about what you 'd writ. I warrant you she 's close-mouthed enough, when she gets a line from a young man. Do you think her so desp'rate handsome as Zeph says she is?"

This boded ill, but it was a question that it was politic to answer, and to answer with some little discretion. If I lost the services of Lowiny, my main stay was gone.

"She is well enough to look at, but I 've seen quite as handsome young women, lately. But handsome or not, she is one of your own sex, and is not to be deserted in her trouble."

The Chainbearer; or, The Littlepage Manuscripts, V2

"Yes, indeed," answered Lowiny, with an expression of countenance that told me at once, the better feelings of her sex had all returned again, "and I 'll not desert her, though father drive me out of the settlement. I am tired of all this squatting, and think folks ought to live as much in one spot as they can. What 's best to be done about Dus Malbone perhaps she 'd like well enough to marry Zeph?"

"Did you see, or hear, any thing while with her, to make you think so? I am anxious to know what she said."

"La! She said sights of things; but most of her talk was about old Chainbearer. She never named *your* name so much as once!"

"Did she name Zephaniah's? I make no doubt that anxiety on account of her uncle was her chief care. What are her intentions, and will she remain near that tree until you come?"

"She stays under a rock not a great way from the tree, and there she 'll stay till I go to meet her, at the chestnut. We had our talk under that rock, and it 's easy enough to find her there."

"How do things look, around us? Might I descend, slip down into the bed of the river, and go round to Dus Malbone, so as to give her notice of the danger she is in?"

Lowiny did not answer me for near a minute, and I began to fear that I had put another indiscreet question. The girl seemed thoughtful, but when she raised her face so high as to allow me to see it, all the expression of the more generous feminine sympathy was visible.

"'T would be hard to make Dus have Zeph, if she don't like him, wouldn't it!" she said with emphasis. "I don't know but t'would be better to let her know what 's coming, so that she can choose for herself."

"She told me," I answered, with perfect truth, "that she is engaged to another, and it would be worse than cruel it would be wicked, to make her marry one man, while she loves another."

"She shan't do 't!" cried the girl, with an animation that I thought dangerous. But she gave me no opportunity for remonstrance, as, all her energies being aroused, she went to work in earnest to put me in the way of doing what I most desired to achieve.

"D'ye see the lower corner of the mill," she continued, hurriedly. "That post goes down to the rock over which the water falls. You can walk to that corner without any danger of being seen, as the ruff hides you, and when you get there, you can wait till I tell you to get on the post. 'T will be easy to slide down that post to the rock, and there 'll be not much of a chance of being seen, as the post will nearly hide you. When you 're on the rock, you 'll find a path that leads along the creek till you come to a foot-bridge. If you cross that log, and take the left-hand path, 'twill bring you out near the edge of the clearin', up on the hill again, and then you 'll have only to follow the edge of the woods a little way, afore you come to the chestnut. The rock is right off, ag'in the chestnut, only about fifty rods."

I took in these directions eagerly, and was at the post almost as soon as the girl ceased speaking. In order to do this I had only to walk on the boards that lay scattered about on the girts of the mill, the roof completely concealing the movement from any on its outside. I made my arrangements, and only waited for a signal, or the direction from Lowiny, to proceed.

"Not yet," said the girl, looking down and affecting to be occupied with something near her feet. "Father and Tobit are walkin' this way, and lookin' right at the mill. Now get ready they've turned their heads, and seem as if they 'd turn round themselves next. They 've turned away ag'in; wait one moment now's a good time don't go away altogether without my seein' you once more."

The Chainbearer; or, The Littlepage Manuscripts, V2

I heard these last words, but it was while sliding down the post. Just as my head came so low as to be in a line with the objects scattered about the floor of the mill, I clung to the post to catch one glimpse of what was going on without. Thousandacres and Tobit were about a hundred yards distant, walking apart from the group of young men, and apparently in deep consultation together. It was quite evident no alarm was taken, and down I slid to the rock. At the next moment I was in the path, descending to the foot-bridge, a tree that had been felled across the stream. Until that tree was crossed, and a slight distance of the ascent on the other side of the stream, along the left-hand path, was overcome, I was completely exposed to the observation of any one who might be in a situation to look down into the glen of the river. At almost any other moment, at that particular season, my discovery would have been nearly certain, as some of the men or boys were always at work in the water; but the events of that morning called them elsewhere, and I made the critical passage, a distance of two hundred yards, or more, in safety. As soon as I entered behind a cover, my speed abated, and, having risen again to the level of the dwellings, or even a little above them, I profited by openings among the small pine bushes that fringed the path, to take a survey of the state of things among the squatters.

There the cluster of heavy, lounging young men was, Thousandacres and Tobit walking apart, as when last seen. Prudence was at the door of a distant cabin, surrounded, as usual, by a collection of the young fry, and conversing herself, eagerly, with the wives of two or three of her married sons. Lowiny had left the mill, and was strolling along the opposite side of the glen, so near the verge of the rocks as to have enabled her to see the whole of my passage across the open space. Perceiving that she was quite alone, I ventured to hem just loud enough to reach her ear. A hurried, frightened gesture, assured me that I had been heard, and, first making a gesture for me to go forward, the girl turned away, and went skipping off towards the cluster of females who surrounded her mother.

As for myself, I now thought only of Dus. What cared I if she did love another? A girl of her education, manners, sentiments, birth and character, was not to be sacrificed to one like Zephaniah, let what might happen; and, could I reach her place of concealment in time, she might still be saved. These thoughts fairly winged my flight, and I soon came in sight of the chestnut. Three minutes later I laid a hand on the trunk of the tree itself. As I had been a quarter of an hour, at least, in making the circuit of that side of the clearing, some material change might have occurred among the squatters, and I determined to advance to the edge of the bushes, in Lowiny's "berry lot," which completely screened the spot, and ascertain the facts, before I sought Dus at her rock.

The result showed that some measures had been decided on between Thousandacres and Tobit. Not one of the males, a lad that stood sentinel at the store-house, and a few of the smaller boys excepted, was to be seen. I examined all the visible points with care, but no one was visible. Even Susquesus, who had been lounging about the whole day, or since his liberation, had vanished. Prudence and her daughters, too, were in a great commotion, hurrying from cabin to cabin, and manifesting all that restlessness which usually denotes excitement among females. I stopped but a moment to ascertain these leading circumstances, and turned to seek the rock. While retiring from among the bushes, I heard the fallen branch of a tree snap under a heavy footstep, and looking cautiously around, saw Jaaf, or Jaap as we commonly called him, advancing towards me, carrying a rifle on each shoulder.

"Heaven's blessings on you, my faithful Jaap!" I cried, holding out an arm to receive one of the weapons. "You come at a most happy moment, and can lead me to Miss Malbone."

"Yes, sah, and glad to do it, too. Miss Dus up here, a bit, in 'e wood, and can werry soon see her. She keep me down here to look out, and I carry bot' rifle, Masser Chainbearer's and my own, 'cause Miss Dus no great hand wid gun-powder. But, where you cum from, Masser Mordaunt? and why you run away so, in night-time?"

"Never mind just now, Jaap in proper time you shall know all about it. Now, we must take care of Miss Ursula. Is she uneasy? has she shown any fear on her uncle's account?"

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"She cry half 'e time, sah Den she look up bold, and resolute, just like ole Masser, sah, when he tell he rijjement 'charge baggonet,' and seem as if she want to go right into T'ousandacres' huts. Lor' bless me, sah, Masser Mordaunt if she ask me one question about *you* to-day, she ask me a hundred!"

"About me, Jaap!" But I arrested the impulsive feeling in good time, so as not to be guilty of pumping my own servant concerning what others had said of me; a meanness I could not easily have pardoned in myself. But I increased my speed, and, having Jaap for my guide, was soon at the side of Dus. The negro had no sooner pointed out to me the object of my search, than he had the discretion to return to the edge of the clearing, carrying with him both rifles; for I returned to him the one I had taken, in my eagerness to hurry forward, the instant I beheld Dus.

I can never forget the look with which that frank, noble-hearted girl received me! It almost led me to hope that my ears had deceived me, and that, after all, I was an object of the highest interest with her. A few tears, half-suppressed, but suppressed with difficulty, accompanied that look; and I had the happiness of holding for some time, and of pressing to my heart, that little hand that was freely nay, warmly extended to me.

"Let us quit this spot at once, dearest Ursula," I cried, the moment I could speak. "It is not safe to remain near that family of wretches, who live by depredation and violence."

"And leave uncle Chainbearer in their hands!" answered Dus, reproachfully. "*You*, surely, would not advise me to do that!"

"If your own safety demands it, yes a thousand times, yes. We must fly, and there is not a moment to lose. A design exists among those wretches to seize you, and to make use of your fears to secure the aid of your uncle in extricating them from the consequences of this discovery of their robberies. It is not safe, I repeat, for you to remain a minute longer here."

The smile that Dus now bestowed on me was very sweet, though I found it inexplicable; for it had as much of pain and suffering in it, as it had of that which was winning.

"Mordaunt Littlepage, have you forgotten the words spoken by me when we last parted?" she asked, seriously.

"Forgotten! I can never forget them! They drove me nearly to despair, and were the cause of bringing us all into this difficulty."

"I told you that my faith was already plighted that I could not accept your noble, frank, generous, manly offer, because another had my troth."

"You did you did Why renew my misery "

"It is with a different object that I am now more explicit That man to whom I am pledged is in those huts, and I cannot desert him."

"Can I believe my senses! *Do you can* you is it possible that one like Ursula Malbone can love Zephaniah Thousandacres a squatter himself, and the son of a squatter?"

The look with which Dus regarded me, said at once that her astonishment was quite as great as my own. I could have bitten off my hasty and indiscreet tongue, the instant it had spoken; and I am sure the rush of tell-tale blood in my face must have proclaimed to my companion that I felt most thoroughly ashamed of myself. This feeling was deepened nearly to despair, when I saw the expression of abased mortification that came over the sweet and usually happy countenance of Dus, and the difficulty she had in suppressing her tears.

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Neither spoke for a minute, when my companion broke silence by saying steadily I might almost add solemnly

"This, indeed, shows how low my fortune has become! But I pardon you, Mordaunt; for, humble as that fortune is, you have spoken nobly and frankly in my behalf, and I exonerate you from any feeling that is not perfectly natural for the circumstances. Perhaps" and a bright blush suffused the countenance of Dus as she said it "Perhaps I may attribute the great mistake into which you have fallen to a passion that is most apt to accompany strong love, and insomuch prize it, instead of throwing it away with contempt. But, between you and me, whatever comes of it, there must be no more mistakes. The man to whom my faith is plighted, and to whom my time and services are devoted, so long as one or both of us live, is uncle Chainbearer, and no other. Had you not rushed from me in the manner you did, I might have told you this, Mordaunt, the evening you were showing so much noble frankness yourself."

"Dus! Ursula! beloved Miss Malbone, have I then no preferred rival?"

"No man has ever spoken to me of love, but this uncouth and rude young squatter, and yourself."

"Is your heart then untouched? Are you still mistress of your own affections?"

The look I now received from Dus was a little saucy; but that expression soon changed to one that had more of the deep feeling and generous sympathy of her precious sex in it.

"Were I to answer `yes,' many women would think I was being no more than true to the rights of a girl who has been so unceremoniously treated; but "

"But what, charming, most beloved Ursula? But what?"

"I prefer truth to coquetry, and shall not attempt to deny what it would almost be treason against nature to suppose. How could a girl, educated as I have been, without any preference to tie her to another, be shut up in this forest, with a man who has treated her with so much kindness and devotion, and manly tenderness, and insensible to his merits? Were we in the world, Mordaunt, I think I should prefer you to all others; being, as we are, in this forest, I *know* I do."

The reader shall not be let into the sacred confidence that followed; any further, at least, than to know the main result. A quarter of an hour passed so swiftly, and so sweetly, indeed, that I could hardly take it on myself to record one-half that was said. Dus made no longer any hesitation in declaring her attachment for me; and, though she urged her own poverty as a just obstacle to my wishes, it was faintly, as most Americans of either sex would do. In this particular, at least, we may fairly boast of a just superiority over all the countries of the old world. While it is scarcely possible that either man or woman should not see how grave a barrier to wedded happiness is interposed by the opinions and habits of social castes, it is seldom that any one, in his or her own proper sphere, feels that the want of money is an insurmountable obstacle to a union more especially when one of the parties is provided with the means of maintaining the household gods. The seniors may, and do often have scruples on this score; but the young people rarely. Dus and myself were in the complete enjoyment of this happy simplicity, with my arms around her waist, and her head leaning on my shoulder, when I was aroused from a state that I fancied Elysium, by the hoarse, raven-throated cry of

"Here she is! Here she is, father! Here they are *both!*"

On springing forward to face the intruders, I saw Tobit and Zephaniah directly before me, with Lowiny standing at no great distance behind them. The first looked ferocious. the second jealous and angry, the third abashed and mortified. In another minute we were surrounded by Thousandacres, and all the males of his brood.

CHAPTER IX.

"My love is young but other loves are young;
And other loves are fair, and so is mine;
An air divine discloses whence he sprung;
He is my love who boasts that air divine."

Shenstone.

A more rude and violent interruption of a scene in which the more gentle qualities love to show themselves, never occurred. I, who knew the whole of the past, saw at once that we had very serious prospects before us; but Dus at first felt only the consciousness and embarrassment of a woman, who has betrayed her most sacred secret to vulgar eyes. That very passion, which a month later, and after the exchange of the marriage vows, it would have been her glory to exhibit in face of the whole community, on the occurrence of any event of moment to myself, she now shrunk from revealing; and I do believe that maiden bashfulness gave her more pain, when thus arrested, than any other cause. As for the squatters, she probably had no very clear conceptions of their true characters; and it was one of her liveliest wishes to be able to join her uncle. But, Thousandacres soon gave us both cause to comprehend how much he was now in earnest.

"So, my young major, you 're caught in the same nest, be you! You 've your ch'ise to walk peaceably back where you belong, or to be tied and carried there like a buck that has been killed a little out in the woods. You never know'd Thousandacres and his race, if you raally thought to slip away from him, and that with twenty miles of woods around you!"

I intimated a wish not to be tied, and professed a perfect willingness to accompany my captors back to their dwellings; for, nothing would have tempted me to desert Dus, under the circumstances. The squatters might have declared the road open to me, but the needle does not point more unerringly to the pole than I should have followed my magnet, though at liberty.

Little more was said until we had quitted the woods, and had reached the open fields of the clearing. I was permitted to assist my companion through the bushes, and in climbing a fence or two; the squatters, who were armed to a man, forming a circle around us, at a distance that enabled me to whisper a few words to Dus, in the way of encouragement. She had great natural intrepidity for a woman, and I believe I ought to escape the imputation of vanity, if I add that we both felt so happy at the explanations which had so lately been had, that this new calamity could not entirely depress us, so long as we were not separated.

"Be not downhearted, dearest Dus," I whispered, as we approached the store-house; "after all, these wretches will not dare to transgress against the law, very far."

"I have few fears, with you and uncle Chainbearer so near me, Mordaunt," was her smiling answer. "It cannot be long before we hear from Frank, who is gone, as you must have been told, to Ravensnest, for authority and assistance. He left our huts at the same time we left them to come here, and must be on his return long before this."

I squeezed the hand of the dear girl, receiving a gentle pressure in return, and prepared myself to be separated from her, as I took it for granted that Prudence and her daughters would hold watch and ward over the female prisoner. I had hesitated, ever since quitting the woods, about giving her notice of the trial that probably awaited her; but, as no attempt to coerce a marriage could be made until the magistrate arrived, I thought it would be rendering her unnecessarily unhappy. The trial, if it did come at all, would come soon enough of itself; and I had

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no apprehension that one of Dus's spirit and character, and who had so recently and frankly admitted that her whole heart was mine, could be frightened into a concession that would give Zephaniah any claim to her. To own the truth, a mountain had been removed from my own breast, and I was too happy on this particular account, to be rendered very miserable on any other, just at that time. I do believe Dus was a little sustained by some similar sentiment.

Dus and I parted at the door of the first house, she being transferred to the keeping of Tobit's wife, a woman who was well bestowed on her brutal and selfish husband. No violence was used, however, towards the prisoner, who was permitted to go at large; though I observed that one or two of the females attached themselves to her person immediately, no doubt as her keepers.

In consequence of our having approached the dwelling of the squatters by a new path, Chainbearer knew nothing of the arrest of his niece, until the fact was communicated by me. He was not even aware of my being retaken, until he saw me about to enter the prison again; though he probably anticipated that such might be my fate. As for Susquesus, he seldom manifested surprise or emotion of any sort, let what would occur.

"Well, Mortaunt, my lat, I knowet you had vanishes, py hook or py crook, ant nopoty knowet how; put I t'ought you woult fint it hart to t'row t'ese rascally squatters off your trail," cried Andries, giving me a hearty shake of the hand as I entered the prison. "Here we are, all t'ree of us, ag'in; ant it 's lucky we 're such goot frients, as our quarters are none of t'e largest or pest. The Injin fount I was alone, so he took pack his parole, ant ist a close prisoner like t'e rest of us, put in one sense a free man. You can tig up t'e hatchet ag'in t'ese squatters whenever you please now; is it not so, Sureflint?"

"Sartain truce done Susquesus prisoner like everybody. Give T'ousandacres p'role back ag'in Injin free man, now."

I understood the Onondago's meaning well enough, though his freedom was of a somewhat questionable character. He merely wished to say that, having given himself up to the squatters, he was released from the conditions of his parole, and was at liberty to make his escape, or to wage war on his captors in any manner he saw fit. Luckily Jaap had escaped, for I could see no signs of even his presence being known to Thousandacres or to his sons. It was something to have so practised a woodsman and so true a friend still at large, and near us; and the information he could impart, should he fall in with Frank Malbone, with the constable and the posse, might be of the utmost service to us. All these points Chainbearer and I discussed at large, the Indian sitting by, an attentive but a silent listener. It was our joint opinion that Malbone could not now be very far distant with succour. What would be the effect of an attack on the squatters it was not easy to predict, since the last might make battle; and, small as was their force, it would be likely to prove very available in a struggle of that nature. The females of such a family were little less efficient than the males, when posted behind logs; and there were a hundred things in which their habits, experience, and boldness might be made to tell, should matters be pushed to extremities.

"Got knows Got only knows, Mortaunt, what will come of it all," rejoined Chainbearer to one of my remarks, puffing coolly at his pipe at intervals, in order to secure the fire he had just applied to it. "Nut'in is more unsartain t'an war, as Sus, here, fery well knows py long exper'ence, ant as you ought to know yourself, my poy, hafin seen sarfice, ant warm sarfice, too. Shoult Frank Malpone make a charge on t'is settlement, as, pein an olt soltier, he will pe fery likely to do, we must make efery effort to fall in on one of his flanks, in orter to cover t'e atvance or t'e retreat, as may happen to pe t'e movement at t'e time."

"I trust it will be the advance, as Malbone does not strike me as a man likely to retreat very easily. But, are we certain 'Squire Newcome will grant the warrant he will ask for, being in such close communion himself with these squatters?"

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"I haf t'ought of all t'at, too, Mortaunt, ant t'ere is goot sense in it. I t'ink he will at least sent wort to T'ousantacres, to let him know what is comin', ant make as many telays as possiple. T'e law is a lazy sarfant when it wishes to pe slow; ant many is t'e rogue t'at hast outrun it, when t'e race hast peen to safe a pack or a fine. Nefert'eless, Mortaunt, t'e man who is right fights wit' great otts in his fafor, ant is fery apt to come out pest in t'e long run. It is a great atvantage to pe always right; a trut' I 've known ant felt from poyhoot, put which hast peen mate more ant more clear to me since t'e peace, ant I haf come pack to lif wit' Dus. T'at gal hast teachet me much on all such matters; ant it would do your heart goot to see her alone wit' an olt ignorant man in t'e woots, of a Suntay, a tryin' to teach him his piple, ant how he ought to lofe ant fear Got!"

"Does Dus do this for you, my old friend? Does that admirable creature really take on herself this solemn office of duty and love! Much as I admired and esteemed her before, for her reverence and affection for you, Chainbearer, I now admire and esteem her the more, for this proof of her most true and deep-seated interest in your welfare."

"I 'll tell you what, poy Dus is petter ast twenty tominies to call a stupporn olt fellow, t'at has got a conscience toughenet ant hardenet by lifin' t'reescore years ant ten in t'e worlt, pack from his wicketness into t'e ways of gotliness and peace. You 're young, Mortaunt, and haf not yet got out of t'e gristle of sin into t'e pone, ant can hartly know how strong ist t'e holt t'at hapit and t'e worlt gets of an olt man; put I hope you may lif long enough to see it all, ant to feel it all," I did not even smile, for the child-like earnestness, and the sincere simplicity with which Andries delivered himself of this wish, concealed its absurdity behind a veil of truth and feeling too respectable to admit of a single disrespectful impulse. "Ant t'at is t'e worst wish I can wish you, my tear poy. You know how it hast peen wit' me, Mortaunt; a chainpearer's callin' is none of t'e pest to teach religion; which toes not seem to flourish in t'e woots; t'ough why I cannot tell; since, as Dus has ag'in ant ag'in shown to me, Got is in t'e trees, ant on t'e mountains, ant along t'e valleys, ant is to pe hearet in t'e prooks ant t'e rifers, as much if not more t'an he ist to pe hearet ant seen in t'e clearin's ant t'e towns. Put my life was not a religious life afore t'e war, ant war is not a business to make a man t'ink of deat' as he ought; t'ough he hast it tay and night, as it might pe, afore his eyes."

"And Dus, the excellent, frank, buoyant, sincere, womanly and charming Dus, adds these admirable qualities to other merits, does she! I knew she had a profound sentiment on the subject of religion, Chainbearer, though I did not know she took so very lively an interest in the welfare of those she loves, in connection with that all-important interest."

"You may well call t'e gal py all t'em fine worts, Mortaunt, for she desarfs efery one of t'em, ant more too. No no Dus isn't known in a tay. A poty may lif in t'e same house wit' her, ant see her smilin' face, ant hear her merry song, mont's ant mont's, ant not l'arn all t'at t'ere ist of gotliness, ant meekness, ant virtue, ant love, ant piety, in t'e pottom of her soul. One tay you 'll t'ink well of Dus, Mortaunt Littlepage."

"I! Tell *me* that I shall think *well* of Ursula Malbone, the girl that I almost worship! Think *well* of her whom I now love with an intensity that I did not imagine was possible, three months since! Think well of *her* who fills all my waking, and not a few of my sleeping thoughts of whom I dream to whom I am betrothed who has heard my vows with favour, and has cheerfully promised, all parties that are interested consenting, to become at some early day my *wife*!"

Old Andries heard my energetic exclamation with astonishment; and even the Indian turned his head to look on me with a gratified attention. Perceiving that I had gone so far, under an impulse I had found irresistible, I felt the necessity of being still more explicit, and of communicating all I had to say on the subject.

"Yes," I added, grasping old Andries by the hand "Yes, Chainbearer, I shall comply with your often-expressed wishes. Again and again have you recommended your lovely niece to me as a wife, and I come now to take you at your word, and to say that nothing will make me so happy as to be able to call you uncle."

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To my surprise, Chainbearer expressed no delight at this announcement. I remarked that he had said nothing to me on his favourite old subject of my marrying his niece, since my arrival at the Nest; and now, when I was not only so ready, but so anxious to meet his wishes, I could plainly see that he drew back from my proposals, and wished they had not been made. Amazed, I waited for him to speak with a disappointment and uneasiness I cannot express.

"Mortaunt! Mortaunt!" at length broke out of the old man's very heart "I wish to Heafen you hat nefer sait t'is! I lofe you, poy, almost as much as I lofe Dus, herself; put it griefts me it griefts me to hear you talk of marryin' t'e gal!"

"You grieve, as much as you astonish me, Chainbearer, by making such a remark! How often have you, yourself, expressed to me the wish that I might become acquainted with your niece, and love her, and marry her! Now, when I have seen her when I *have* become acquainted with her when I *love* her to my heart's core, and wish to make her my wife, you meet my proposals as if they were unworthy of you and yours!"

"Not so, lat not so. Nut'in' would make me so happy as to see you t'e huspant of Dus, supposin' it coult come to pass, ant wrong pe tone to no one; put it cannot pe so. I tid talk as you say, ant a foolish, selfish, conceitet olt man I wast for my pains. I wast t'en in t'e army, ant we wast captains alike; ant I wast t'e senior captain, and might orter you apout, and *tid* orter you apout; ant I wore an epaulette, like any o'er captain, and hat my grantfat'er's swort at my site, ant t'ought we wast equals, ant t'at it wast an honour to marry my niece; put all t'is wast changet, lat, when I came into t'e woots ag'in, ant took up my chain, ant pegan to lif, ant to work, ant to feel poor, ant to see myself as I am. No no Mortaunt Littlepage, t'e owner of Ravensnest, ant t'e heir of Mooseritge, ant of Satanstoe, ant of Lilacsbush, ant of all t'e fine houses, ant stores, ant farms t'at are in York ant up ant town t'e country, is not a suitaple match for Dus Malbone!"

"This is so extraordinary a notion for you to take up, Chainbearer, and so totally opposed to all I have ever before heard from you on the subject, that I must be permitted to ask where you got it?"

"From Dus Malbone, herself yes, from her own mout', ant in her own pretty manner of speech."

"Has, then, the probability of my ever offering to your niece been a subject of conversation between you?"

"T'at hast it t'at hast it, ant time ant ag'in, too. Sit town on t'at log of woot, ant listen to what I haf to say, ant I will tell you t'e whole story. Susquesus, you neetn't go off into t'at corner, like a gentleman as you pe; t'ought it is only an Injin gentleman; for I haf no secrets from such a frient as yourself. Come pack, t'en, Injin, ant take your olt place, close at my site, where you haf so often peen when t'e inemy wast chargin' us poltly in front." Sureflint quietly did as desired, while Chainbearer turned towards me and continued the discourse. "You wilt see, Mortaunt, poy, t'ese here are t'e fery facts ant trut' of t'e of t'e case. When I came first from camp, ant I wast full of the prite, ant aut'ority, ant feelin's of a soltier, I pegan to talk to Dus apout you, as I hat peen accustomet to talk to you apout Dus. Ant I tolt her what a fine, bolt, hantsome, generous, well-principlet young fellow you wast," the reader will overlook my repeating that to which the partiality of the Chainbearer so readily gave utterance "ant I tolt her of your sarfice in t'e wars, ant of your wit, ant how you mate us all laugh, t'ough we might pe marchin' into pattle, ant what a fat'er you hat, ant what a grantfat'er, ant all t'at a goot ant a warm frient ought to say of anot'er, when it wast true, ant when it was tolt to a hantsome ant heart-whole young woman t'at he wishet to fall in love wit' t'at fery same frient. Well, I tolt t'is to Dus, not once, Mortaunt; nor twice; put twenty times, you may depent on it."

"Which makes me the more curious to hear what Dus could, or did say in reply."

"It's t'at reply, lat, t'at makes all t'e present tifficuly petween us. For a long time Dus sait little or not'in'. Sometimes she woult look saucy ant laugh ant you know, lat, t'e gal *can* do bot' of t'em t'ings as well as most

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young women. Sometimes she woult pegin to sing a song, all about fait'less young men, perhaps, ant proken-hearted virgins. Sometimes she woult look sorrowful, ant I coult fint tears startin' in her eyes; ant t'en I pecome as soft and feeple-hearted as a gal, myself, to see one who smiles so easily mate to shet tears."

"But, how did all this end? What can possibly have occurred, to cause this great change in your own wishes?"

"'Tis not so much my wishes t'at be changet, Mortaunt, ast my opinion. If a poty coult haf t'ings just as he wishet, lat, Dus ant you shoult pe man and wife, so far as it tepentet on me, pefore t'e week ist out. Put, we are not our own masters, nor t'e masters of what ist to happen to our nephews and nieces, any more t'an we are masters of what ist to happen to ourselves. Put, I wilt tell you just how it happenet. One tay, as I wast talking to t'e gal in t'e olt way, she listenet to all I hat to say more seriously t'an ast common, ant when she answeret, it wast much in t'is manner: `I t'ank you from t'e pottom of my heart, uncle Chainpearer,' she sait, `not only for all t'at you haf tone for me, t'e orphan da'ghter of your sister, put for all you wish in my pehalf. I perceive t'at t'is itee of my marryin' your young frient, Mr. Mortaunt Littlepage, hast a strong holt on your feelin's, ant it ist time to talk seriously on t'at subject. When you associatet with t'at young gen leman, uncle Chainpearer, you wast captain Coejemans, of t'e New York state line, ant his senior officer, ant it wast nat'ral to s'pose your niece fit to pecome his wife. Put it ist our tuty to look at what we now are, ant are likely to remain. Major Littlepage hast a fa'ter ant a mot'er, I haf he'rt you say, uncle Chainpearer, ant sisters, too; now marriage ist a most serious t'ing. It ist to last for life, ant no one shoult form sich a connection wit'out reflectin' on all its pearin's. It ist hartly possiple t'at people in t'e prosperity ant happiness of t'ese Littlepages woult wish to see an only son, ant t'e heir of t'eir name ant estates, takin' for a wife a gal out of t'e woots; one t'at ist not only a chainpearer's niece, put who hast peen a chainpearer herself, ant who can pring into t'eir family no one t'ing to compensate 'em for t'e sacrifice."

"And you had the heart to be quiet, Andries, and let Ursula say all this!"

"Ah! lat, how coult I help it? You woult have tone it yourself, Mortaunt, coult you haf he'rt how prettily she turnet her periots, as I haf he'rt you call it, ant how efery syllaple she sait come from t'e heart. T'en t'e face of t'e gal wast enough to convince me t'at she wast right; she looket so 'arnest, ant sat, and peautiful, Mortaunt! No, no; when an itee comes into t'e mint, wit' t'e ait of sich worts and looks, my poy, 'tis not an easy matter to get rit of it."

"You do not seriously mean to say, Chainbearer, that you will refuse me Dus?"

"Dus will do t'at herself, lat; for she ist still a chainpearer's niece, ant you are still general Littlepage's son ant heir. Try her, ant see what she wilt say."

"But I *have* tried her, as you call it; *have* told her of my love; *have* offered my hand, and "

"Ant what?"

"Why she does not answer *me* as you say she answered *you* ."

"Hast t'e gal sait she woult haf you, Mortaunt? Hast she said yes?"

"Conditionally she has. If my grandmother cheerfully consent, and my parents do the same; and my sister Kettletas and her husband, and my laughing, merry Kate, then Dus will accept me."

"T'is ist strange! Ah! I see how it is; t'e gal has *seen* you, ant peen much wit' you, ant talket wit' you, ant sung wit' you, ant laughet wit' you; ant I do s'pose, a'ter all, *t'at* will make a tifference in her judgment of you. I 'm a pachelor, Mortaunt, ant haf no wife, nor any sweetheart, put it ist easy enough to comprehend how all t'ese matters must make a fery great tifference. I 'm glat, howsefer, t'at t'e tifference is not so great as to make t'e gal forget all your frients; for if efery poty consents, and ist cheerful, why t'en my pein' a chainbearer, and Dus' pein' so poor

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ant forsaken like, will not be so likely to be remembered hereafter, and bring you bitter thoughts."

"Andries Coejemans, I swear to you, I would rather become your nephew at this moment, than become the son-in-law of Washington himself, had he a daughter."

"That means you'd rather have Dus, than any other gal of your acquaintance. That's natural enough, and may make me look like His Excellency, for a time, in your eyes; but when you come to think and feel more coolly, my dear poy, there is the tangle that you will see some difference between the captain-general and commander-in-chief of all the American armies, and a poor chainbearer, who in his best days was not more than a captain in the New York line. I know you love me, Mordaunt; but there is the tangle that it might not be exactly an uncle and nephew's love in the long run. I am only a poor Tutchman, when all is said, without much education, and without money, and not much more manners; while you've been to college, and you college learn't, and you as gay and gallant a spark as can be found in the States, as we call the old colonies now. Was you a Yankee, Mordaunt, I'd see you married and unmarried twenty times, before I'd own as much as this; but a man may be sensible of his ignorance, and put education, and weaknesses, without wishing to be told of it to his face, and laughed at about it, by every A B C scholar that comes out of New England. No, no I'm a poor Tutchman, I know; and a potty may say as much to a friend, when he would tie before he would own there was anything poor about it to an enemy."

"I would gladly pursue this discourse, Andries, and bring it to a happy termination," I answered; "but here come the squatters in a body, and I suppose some movement or proposal from them is in the wind. We will defer our matter, then; you remembering that I agree to none of your opinions or decisions. Dus is to be mine, if indeed we can protect her against the grasp of these wretches. I have something to say on that subject, too; but this is not the moment to utter it."

Chainbearer seized my hand, and gave it a friendly pressure, which terminated the discourse. On the subject of the intentions of Thousandacres towards Dus, I was now not altogether free from uneasiness; though the tumult of rapturous feeling through which I had just passed, drove it temporarily from my mind. I had no apprehensions that Ursula Malbone would ever be induced, by ordinary means, to become the wife of Zephaniah; but I trembled as to what might be the influence of menaces against her uncle and myself. Nor was I altogether easy on the score of the carrying out of those menaces. It often happens with crime, as in the commission of ordinary sins, that men are impelled by circumstances, which drive them to deeds from which they would have recoiled in horror, had the consummation been directly presented to their minds, without the intervention of any mediate causes. But the crisis was evidently approaching, and I waited with as much calmness as I could assume for its development. As for Chainbearer, being still ignorant of the conversation I had overheard in the mill, he had no apprehensions of evil from the source of my greatest dread.

The day had advanced, all this time, and the sun had set, and night was close upon us, as Tobit and his brethren came to the door of our prison, and called upon Chainbearer and myself to come forth, leaving Susquesus behind. We obeyed with alacrity; for there was a species of liberty in being outside of those logs, with my limbs unfettered, though a vigilant watch was kept over us both. On each side of me walked an armed man, and Chainbearer was honoured with a similar guard. For all this, old Andries cared but little. He knew and I knew that the time could not be very distant when we might expect to hear from Frank Malbone; and every minute that went by added to our confidence in this respect.

We were about half-way between the store-house and the dwelling of Thousandacres, towards which our steps were directed, when Andries suddenly stopped, and asked leave to say a word to me in private. Tobit was at a loss how to take this request; but, there being an evident desire to keep on reasonably good terms with Chainbearer, after a short pause he consented to form an extended ring with his brothers, leaving me and my old friend in its centre.

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"I'll tell you what I t'ink atvisaple in t'is matter," commenced Andries, in a sort of whisper. "It cannot pe long afore Malpone will be pack wit' t'e posse ant constaples, ant so fort'; now, if we tell t'ese rapscallions t'at we want taylight to meet our inimies in, ant t'at we haf no stomach for nightwork, perhaps t'ey'll carry us pack to gaol, ant so gif more time to Frank to get here."

"It will be much better, Chainbearer, to prolong our interview with these squatters, so that you and I may be at large, or at least not shut up in the store-house, when Malbone makes his appearance. In the confusion we may even escape and join our friends, which will be a thousand times better than to be found within four walls."

Andries nodded his head, in sign of acquiescence, and thenceforth he seemed to aim at drawing things out, in order to gain time, instead of bringing them to a speedy conclusion. As soon as our discourse was ended, the young men closed round us again, and we moved on in a body.

Darkness being so close upon us, Thousandacres had determined to hold his court, this time, within the house, having a care to a sufficient watchfulness about the door. There is little variation in the internal distribution of the room of what may be called an American cottage. About two-thirds of the space is given to the principal apartment, which contains the fire-place, and is used for all the purposes of kitchen and sitting-room, while the rest of the building is partitioned into three several subdivisions. One of these subdivisions is commonly a small bed-room; another is the buttery, and the third holds the stairs, or ladders, by which to ascend to the loft, or to descend to the cellar. Such was the arrangement of the dwelling of Thousandacres, and such is the arrangement in thousands of other similar buildings throughout the land. The thriving husbandman is seldom long contented, however, with such narrow and humble accommodations; but the framed house, of two stories in height, and with five windows in front, usually soon succeeds this cottage, in his case. It is rare, indeed, that any American private edifice has more than five windows in front, the few exceptions which do exist to the rule being residences of mark, and the supernumerary windows are generally to be found in wings. Some of our old, solid, substantial, stone country houses occasionally stretch themselves out to eight or nine apertures of this sort, but they are rare. I cannot gossip here, however, about country houses and windows, when I have matters so grave before me to relate.

In the forest, and especially in the newer portions of New York, the evenings are apt to be cool, even in the warm months. That memorable night, I well remember, had a sharpness about it that threatened even a frost, and Prudence had lighted a fire on the yawning hearth of her rude chimney. By the cheerful blaze of that fire, which was renewed from time to time by dried brush, the American frontier substitute for the fagot, were the scenes I am about to mention enacted.

We found all the males, and several of the females, assembled in the large apartment of the building I have described, when Chainbearer and myself entered. The wife of Tobit, with one or two of the sisterhood, however, were absent; doubtless in attendance on Dus. Lowiny, I remarked, stood quite near the fire, and the countenance of the girl seemed to me to be saddened and thoughtful. I trust I shall not be accused of being a coxcomb if I add, that the idea crossed my mind, that the appearance and manners of a youth, so much superior to those with whom she was accustomed to associate, had made a slight impression on this girl's I will not say heart, for imagination would be the better word and had awakened sympathies that manifested themselves in her previous conduct; while the shade that was now cast across her brow came quite as much from the scene she had witnessed between myself and Dus, near the rock, as from seeing me again a prisoner. The friendship of this girl might still be of importance to me, and still more so to Ursula, and I will acknowledge that the apprehension of losing it was far from pleasant. I could only wait for the developments of time, however, in order to reach any certainty on this, as well as on other most interesting topics.

Thousandacres had the civility to order us chairs, and we took our seats accordingly. On looking round that grave and attentive circle, I could trace no new signs of hostility; but, on the contrary, the countenances of all seemed more pacific than they were when we parted. I considered this as an omen that I and my friend should receive

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some propositions that tended towards peace. In this I was not mistaken; the first words that were uttered having that character.

"It's time this matter atween us, Chainbearer," commenced Thousandacres, himself, "should be brought to suthin' like an eend. It keeps the b'ys from their lumberin', and upsets my whull family. I call myself a reasonable man; and be as ready to settle a difficulty on as accommodatin' terms as any parson you 'll find by lookin' up and down the land. Many *is* the difficulty that I 've settled in my day; and I 'm not too old to settle 'em now. Sometimes I 've fit it out, when I 've fell in with an obstinate fellow; sometimes I 've left it out to men; and sometimes I 've settled matters myself. No man can say he ever know'd me refuse to hearken to reason, or know'd me to gi'n up a just cause, so long as there was a morsel of a chance to defend it. When overpowered by numbers, and look'd down by your accursed law, as you call it, I 'll own that, once or twice in my time, when young and inexper'enced, I did get the worst of it; and so was obliged to sort o' run away. But use makes perfect. I 've seen so much, by seventy odd, as to have 'larnt to take time by the forelock, and don't practyse delays in business. I look upon you, Chainbearer, as a man much like myself, reasonable, exper'ne'd, and willin' to accommodate. I see not great difficulty, therefore, in settlin' this matter on the spot, so as to have no more hard feelin's or hot words atween us. Sich be my notions; and I should like to hear your'n."

"Since you speak to me, T'ousantacres, in so polite and civil a manner, I 'm reaty to hear you, ant to answer in t'e same temper," returned old Andries, his countenance losing much of the determined and angry expression with which he had taken his seat in the circle. "T'ere ist nutin' t'at more pecomes a man, t'an moteration; ant an olt man in partic'lar. I do not t'ink, however, t'at t'ere ist much resemblance between you ant me, T'ousantacres, in any one t'ing, except it pe in olt age. We're pot' of us pretty well atvancet, ant haf reachet a time of life when it pehooves a man to examine ant reflect on t'e great trut's t'at are to pe fount in his piple. T'e piple ist a pook, Aaron, t'at ist not enough re't in t'e woots; t'ough Almighty Got hast all t'e same rights to t'e sarfices ant worship of his creatures in t'e forest, as to t'e worship and sarfices of his creatures in t'e settlements. I 'm not a tellin' you t'is, T'ousantacres, py way of showin' off my own l'arnin'; for all I know on the subject, myself, I haf got from Dus, my niece, who ist as goot, ant as willin', ant as hanty in explainin' sich matters, as any tominie I ever talket wit'. I wish you woult listen to her, yourself; you and Prutence; when I t'ink you woult allow t'at her tiscourse ist fery etifyin' ant improfin'. Now you seem in t'e right temper, ist a goot time to pe penefitet in t'at way; for t'ey tell me my niece ist here, ant at hant."

"She is; and I rej'ice that you have brought her name into the discourse so 'arly; as it was my design to mention it myself. I see we think alike about the young woman, Chainbearer, and trust and believe she 'll be the means of reconciling all parties, and of making us good fri'nds. I 've sent for the gal; and she 'll soon be coming along, with Tobit's wife, who sets by her wonderfully already."

"Well, talkin' of wonterful t'ings, wonters wilt never cease, I do believe!" Chainbearer exclaimed, for he really believed that the family of the squatter was taken suddenly with a `religious turn,' and that something like a conversion was about to occur. "Yes, yes; it ist so; we meet wit' wonters when we least expect 'em; and t'at it is t'at makes wonters so wonterful!"

CHAPTER X.

"Yet, Hastings, these are they
Who challenge to themselves thy country's love;
The true, the constant, who alone can weigh,
What glory should demand, or liberty approve!"

Akenside.

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A pause succeeded this little opening, during which the assembly was waiting for the arrival of Ursula Malbone, and that semi-savage guardian that "set" so much by her, as not to leave her out of sight for a moment. All that time Thousandacres was ruminating on his own plans; while old Andries was probably reflecting on the singular circumstance that "wonters shoul pe so wonterful!" At length a little bustle and movement occurred near the door, the crowd collected in it opened, and Dus walked into the centre of the room, her colour heightened by excitement, but her step firm, and her air full of spirit. At first, the blazing light affected her sight, and she passed a hand over her eyes. Then looking around I met her gaze, and was rewarded for all my anxiety by one of those glances, into which affection knows how to infuse so much that is meaning and eloquent. I was thus favoured for a moment only; those eyes still turning until they met the fond answering look of Chainbearer. The old man had arisen, and he now received his niece in his arms as a parent would embrace a beloved child.

That outpouring of feeling lasted but a little while. It had been unpremeditated and impulsive, and was almost as suddenly suppressed. It gave me, however, the happiness of witnessing one of the most pleasant sights that man can behold; that of youth, and beauty, and delicacy, and female tenderness, pouring out their feelings on the bosom of age on the ruder qualities of one, hardened in person by the exposures of a life passed in the forest. To me the contrast between the fair, golden hair of Dus, and the few straggling, bleached locks of her uncle; the downy, peach-like cheek of the girl, and the red, wrinkled, and sun-dried countenance of Chainbearer, was perfectly delightful. It said how deep must lie those sympathies of our nature, which could bring together so closely two so differently constituted in all things, and set at defiance the apparent tendencies of taste and habit.

Dus suffered herself to be thus carried away by her feelings for only a moment. Accustomed in a degree, as she certainly was, to the rough associations of the woods, this was the first time she had ever been confronted with such an assembly, and I could see that she drew back into herself with womanly reserve, as she now gazed around her, and saw in what a wild and unwonted presence she stood. Still, I had never seen her look so supremely lovely as she did that evening, for she threw Pris. Bayard and Kate, with all their advantages of dress, and freedom from exposure, far into the shade. Perhaps the life of Ursula Malbone had given to her beauty the very completeness and fulness, that are most apt to be wanting to the young American girl, who has been educated in the over-tender and delicate manner of our ordinary parental indulgence. Of air and exercise she had already enjoyed enough, and they had imparted to her bloom and person, the richness and development that are oftener found in the subordinate than in the superior classes of the country.

As for Thousandacres, though he watched every movement of Ursula Malbone with jealous interest, he said nothing to interrupt the current of her feelings. As soon as she left her uncle's arms, however, Dus drew back and took the rude seat that I had placed for her close at Chainbearer's side. I was paid for this little act of attention, by a sweet smile from its subject, and a lowering look from the old squatter, that admonished me of the necessity of being cautious of manifesting too much of the interest I felt in the beloved object before me. As is usual in assemblages composed of the rude and unpractised, a long, awkward pause succeeded this introduction of Dus to our presence. After a time, however, Aaron resumed the subject in hand.

"We 've met to settle all our difficulties, as I was sayin'," observed Thousandacres, in a manner as deliberative and considerate as if he were engaged in one of the most blameless pursuits of life, the outward appearances of virtue and vice possessing a surprising resemblance to each other "When men get together on sich a purpose, and in a right spirit, it must be that there 's a fault somewhere, if what 's right can't be come at atween 'em. What 's right atwixt man and man is *my* creed, Chainbearer."

"What 's right between man ant man is a goot creet, T'ousantacres; ant it 's a goot religion, too," answered Andries, coldly.

"That it is! that it is! and I now see that you 're in a reasonable temper, Chainbearer, and that there 's a prospect of business in you. I despise a man that 's so set in his notions that there 's no gettin' him to give in an inch in a transaction don't you hold to that too, captain Andries?"

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"T'at tepents on what t'e notions pe. Some notions do nopoty any goot, ant t'e sooner we 're rit of 'em t'e petter; while some notions pe so fery excellent t'at a man hat pest lay town his life as lay t'em town."

This answer puzzled Thousandacres, who had no idea of a man's ever dying for opinion's sake; and who was probably anxious, just at that moment, to find his companion sufficiently indifferent to principle, to make some sacrifices to expediency. It was quite evident this man was disposed to practise a *ruse* on this occasion, that is often resorted to by individuals, and sometimes by States, when disposed to gain a great advantage out of a very small right; that of demanding much more than they expect to receive, and of making a great merit of yielding points that they never had the smallest claim to maintain. But, this disposition of the squatter's will make itself sufficiently apparent as we proceed.

"I don't see any use in talkin' about layin' down lives," Thousandacres returned to Chainbearer's remark, "seein' this is not a life and death transaction at all. The most that can be made of squattin', give the law its full swing, is trespass and damages, and them an't matters to frighten a man that has stood out ag'in 'em all his days. We 're pretty much sich crittur's as sarcumstances make us. There be men, I don't question, that a body can skear half out of their wits with a writ, while a whull flock of sheep, skins and wool united, wunt intimidate them that 's use to sich things. I go on the principle of doin' what 's right, let the law say what it will of the matter; and this is the principle on which I wish to settle our present difficulty."

"Name your tarms name your tarms!" cried Chainbearer, a little impatiently; "talkin' ist talkin', all t'e worlt ofer, ant actin' ist actin'. If you haf anyt'ing to propose, here we are reaty ant willin' to hear it."

"That 's hearty, and just my way of thinkin' and feelin', and I 'll act up to it, though it was the gospel of St. Paul himself, and I was set on followin' it. Here, then, is the case, and any man can understand it. There 's two rights to all the land on 'arth, and the whull world over. One of these rights is what I call a king's right, or that which depends on writin's, and laws, and sich like contrivances; and the other depends on possession. It stands to reason, that fact is better than any writin' about it can be; but I 'm willin' to put 'em on a footin' for the time bein', and for the sake of accommodatin'. I go all for accommodatin' matters, and not for stirrin' up ill blood; and that I tell Chainbearer, b'ys, is the right spirit to presarve harmony and fri'ndship!"

This appeal was rewarded by a murmur of general approbation in all that part of the audience which might be supposed to be in the squatter interest, while the part that might be called adverse, remained silent, though strictly attentive, old Andries included.

"Yes, that 's my principles" resumed Thousandacres, taking a hearty draught of cider, a liquor of which he had provided an ample allowance, passing the mug civilly to Chainbearer, as soon as he had had his swallow "Yes, that 's my principles, and good principles they be, for them that likes peace and harmony, as all must allow. Now, in this matter afore us, general Littlepage and his partner ripresents writin's, and I and mine ripresent fact. I don't say which is the best, for I don't want to be hard on any man's rights, and 'specially when the accommodatin' spirit is up and doin'; but I 'm fact, and the gin'ral's pretty much writin's. But, difficulties has sprung up atwixt us, and it 's high time to put 'em down. I look upon you, Chainbearer, as the fri'nd of the t'other owners of this sile, and I'm now ready to make proposals, or to hear them, just as it may prove convenient."

"I haf no proposals to make, nor any aut'ority to offer t'em. I 'm nut'in here, put a chainpearer, wit' a contract to survey t'e patent into small lots, ant t'en my tuty ist tone. Put, here ist General Littlepage's only son, ant he ist empoweret, I unterstant, to do all t'at ist necessary on t'is tract, as t'e attorney "

"He is and he isn't an attorney!" interrupted Thousandacres, a little fiercely for one in whom `the accommodatin' spirit was up.' At one moment he says he 's an attorney, and at the next he isn't. I can't stand this onsartainty any very great while."

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"Pooh, pooh! T'ousantacres," returned Chainbearer, coolly, "you 're frightenet at your own shatow; ant t'at comes, let me telt you, from not lifing in `peace ant harmony, ' as you call it, youself, wit' t'e law. A man hast a conscience, whet'er he pe a skinner or a cow-boy, or efen a squatter; ant he hast it, pecause Got hast gifen it to him, ant not on account of any sarfices of his own. T'at conscience it is, t'at makes my young frient Mortaunt, here, an attorney in your eyes, when he ist no more of a lawyer t'an you pe yourself."

"Why has he called himself an attorney, then, and why do *you* call him one. An attorney is an attorney, in my eyes, and little difference is there atween 'em. Rattlesnakes would fare better in a clearin' of Thousandacres', than the smartest attorney in the land!"

"Well, well, haf your own feelin's; for I s'pose Satan has put 'em into you, ant talkin' won't pring t'em out. T'is young gentleman, however, ist no attorney of t'e sort you mean, olt squatter, put he hast peen a soltier, like myself, ant in my own regiment, which wast his fat'ers, ant a prave young man he ist ant wast, ant one t'at hast fou't gallantly for liperty "

"If he 's a fri'nd of liberty, he should be a fri'nd of liberty's people; should give liberty and take liberty. Now, I call it liberty to let every man have as much land as he has need on, and no more, keepin' the rest for them that 's in the same sitation. If he and his father be true fri'nds of liberty, let 'em prove it like men, by giving up all claims to any more land than they want. That 's what I call liberty! Let every man have as much land as he 's need on; that 's my religion, and it 's liberty, too."

"Why are you so moterate, T'ousantacres? why are you so unreasonably moterate? Why not say t'at efery man hast a right to eferyt'ing he hast need of, ant so make him comfortaple at once! T'ere is no wistom in toin' t'ings by hafs, ant it ist always petter to surfey all t'e lant you want, while t'e compass is set ant t'e chains pe goin'. It 's just as much liperty to haf a right to share in a man's tollars, as to share in his lants."

"I don't go as far as that, Chainbearer," put in Thousandacres, with a degree of moderation that ought to put the enemies of his principles to the blush. "Money is what a man 'arns himself, and he has a right to it, and so I say let him keep it; but land is necessary, and every man has a right to as much as he has need on I wouldn't give him an acre more, on no account at all."

"Put money wilt puy lant; ant, in sharin' t'e tollars, you share t'e means of puyin' as much lant as a man hast neet of; t'en t'ere ist a great teal more lant ast money in t'is country, ant, in gifin' a man lant, you only gif him t'at which ist so cheap ant common, t'at he must pe a poor tefil if he can't get all t'e lant he wants wit'out much trouple and any squattin', if you wilt only gif him ever so little money. No, no, T'ousantacres you 're fery wrong; you shoul't pegin to tivite wit' t'e tollars, ant t'at wilt not tisturp society, as tollars are in t'e pocket, ant go ant come efery day; whereast lant is a fixture, ant some people lofe t'eir own hills, ant rocks, ant trees when t'ey haf peen long in a family most especially."

There was a dark scowl gathering on the brow of Thousandacres, partly because he felt himself puzzled by the upright and straight-forward common sense of Chainbearer, and partly for a reason that he himself made manifest in the answer that he quite promptly gave to my old friend's remarks.

"No man need say anything ag'in squattin' that wants to keep fri'nds with me," Thousandacres put in, with certain twitchings about the muscles of the mouth, that were so many signs of his being in earnest. "I hold to liberty and a man's rights, and that is no reason I should be deflected on. My notions be other men's notions, I know, though they be called squatters' notions. Congressmen have held 'em, and will hold 'em ag'in, if they expect much support, in some parts of the country, at election time. I dare say the day will come, when governors will be found to hold 'em. Governors be but men a'ter all, and must hold doctrines that satisfy men's wants, or they won't be governors long. But all this is nuthin' but talk, and I want to come to suthin' like business, Chainbearer. Here 's this clearin', and here 's the lumber. Now, I 'm willin' to settle on some sich tarms as these: I 'll keep the lumber,

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carryin' it off as soon as the water gets to be high enough, agreein' to pay for the privilege by not fellin' another tree, though I must have the right to saw up sich logs as be cut and hauled already; and then, as to the land and clearin', if the writin' owners want 'em, they can have 'em by payin' for the betterments, leavin' the price out to men in this neighbourhood, sin' city-bred folks can't know nothin' of the toil and labour of choppin', and loggin', and ashin', and gettin' in, and croppin' new lands."

"Mortaunt, t'at proposal ist for you. I haf nut'in' to do wit' t'e clearin' put to surfey it; and t'at much will I perform, when I get as far ast t'e place, come t'ere goot, or come t'ere efil of it."

"Survey this clearin'!" put in Tobit, with his raven throat, and certainly in a somewhat menacing tone. "No, no, Chainbearer the man is not out in the woods, that could ever get his chain across this clearin'."

"T'at man, I tell you, is Andries Coejemans, commonly called Chainpearer," answered my old friend, calmly. "No clearin', ant no squatter, ever stoppet him yet, nor do I t'ink he will pe stoppet here, from performin' his tuty. Put praggin' is a pat quality, ant we 'll leaf time to show t'e trut'."

Thousandacres gave a loud hem, and looked very dark, though he said nothing until time had been given to his blood to resume its customary current. Then he pursued the discourse as follows evidently bent on keeping on good terms with Chainbearer as long as possible.

"On the whull," he said, "I rather think, Tobit, t' will be best if you leave this matter altogether to me. Years cool the blood, and allow time to reason to spread. Years be as necessary to judgment as a top to a fruit-tree. I kind o' b'lieve that Chainbearer and I, being both elderly and considerate men, will be apt to get along best together. I dare say, Chainbearer, that if the surveyin' of this clearin' be put to you on the footin' of defiance, that your back would get up, like any body else's, and you 'd bring on the chain, let who might stand in your way. But, that's neither here nor there. You 're welcome to chain out just as much of this part of the patent as you see fit, and t' will help us along so much the better when we come to the trade. Reason 's reason; and I 'm of an accommodatin' spirit."

"So much t'e petter, T'ousantacres; yes, so much t'e petter," answered old Andries, somewhat mollified by the conciliatory temper in which the squatter now delivered himself. "When work ist to pe performet, it *must* be performet; ant, as I'm hiret to surfey and chain t'e whole estate, t'e whole estate *must* pe chainet ant surfeyet. Well, what else haf you to say?"

"I 'm not answered as to my first offer. I 'll take the lumber, agreein' not to cut another tree, and the valie of the betterments can be left out to men."

"I am the proper person to answer this proposal," I thought it now right to say, lest Andries and Thousandacres should get to loggerheads again on some minor and immaterial point, and thus endanger every hope of keeping the peace until Malbone could arrive. "At the same time, I consider it no more than right to tell you, at once, that I have no power that goes so far as to authorize me to agree to your terms. Both colonel Follock and my father have a stern sense of justice, and neither, in my opinion, will feel much of a disposition to yield to any conditions that, in the least, may have the appearance of compromising any of their rights as landlords. I have heard them both say that, in these particulars, `yielding an inch would be giving an ell,' and I confess that, from all I have seen lately of settlers and settlements, I 'm very much of the same way of thinking. My principals may concede something, but they 'll never treat on a subject of which all the right is on their own side."

"Am I to understand you, young man, that you 're on-accommodatin', and that my offers isn't to be listened to, in the spirit in which they 're made?" demanded Thousandacres, somewhat drily.

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"You are to understand me as meaning exactly what I say, sir. In the first place, I have no authority to accept your offers, and shall not assume any, let the consequences to myself be what they may. Indeed, any promises made in duress are good for nothing."

"Anan!" cried the squatter. "This is Mooseridge Patent, and Washington, late Charlotte County and this is the place we are to sign and seal in, if writin's pass atween us."

"By promises made in duress, I mean promises made while the party making them is in confinement, or not absolutely free to make them, or not; such promises are good for nothing in law, even though all the `writings' that could be drawn passed between the parties."

"This is strange doctrine, and says but little for your boasted law, then! At one time, it asks for writin's, and nothin' but writin's will answer; and, then, all the writin's on 'arth be of no account! Yet some folks complain, and have hard feelin's, if a man wunt live altogether up to law!"

"I rather think, Thousandacres, you overlook the objects of the law, in its naked regulations. Law is to enforce the right, and were it to follow naked rules, without regard to principles, it might become the instrument of effecting the very mischiefs it is designed to counteract."

I might have spared myself the trouble of uttering this fine speech; which caused the old squatter to stare at me in wonder, and produced a smile among the young men, and a titter among the females. I observed, however, that the anxious face of Lowiny expressed admiration, rather than the feeling that was so prevalent among the sisterhood.

"There 's no use in talkin' to this young spark, Chainbearer," Thousandacres said, a little impatiently in the way of manner, too; "he 's passed his days in the open country, and has got open-country ways, and notions, and talk; and them 's things I don't pretend to understand. You 're woods, mainly; he 's open country; and I 'm clearin'. There 's a difference atween each; but woods and clearin' come clussest; and so I 'll say my say to you. Be you, now, r'ally disposed to accommodate, or not, old Andries?"

"Anyt'ing t'at ist right, ant just, ant reasonaple, T'ousantacres; ant nut'in' t'at ist not."

"That 's just my way of thinkin'! If the law, now, would do as much as that for a man, the attorneys would soon starve. Wa-a-l, we 'll try now to come to tarms, as soon as possible. You 're a single man, I know, Chainbearer; but I 've always supposed 't was on account of no dislike to the married state; but because you didn't chance to light on the right gal; or maybe on account of the surveyin' principle, which keeps a man pretty much movin' about from tract to tract; though not much more than squattin' doos, neither, if the matter was inquired into."

I understood the object of this sudden change from feesimples, and possessions, and the `accommodatin' spirit,' to matrimony; but Chainbearer did not. He only looked his surprise; while, as to myself, if I looked at all as I felt, I must have been the picture of uneasiness. The beloved, unconscious Dus, sat there in her maiden beauty, interested and anxious in her mind, beyond all question, but totally ignorant of the terrible blow that was meditated against herself. As Andries looked his desire to hear more, instead of answering the strange remark he had just heard, Thousandacres proceeded

"It 's quite nat'ral to think of matrimony afore so many young folks, isn't it, Chainbearer?" added the squatter, chuckling at his own conceits. "Here 's lots of b'ys and gals about me; and I 'm just as accommodatin' in findin' husbands or wives for my fri'nds and neighbours, as I am in settlin' all other difficulties. Anything for peace and a good neighbourhood is my religion!"

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Old Andries passed a hand over his eyes, in the way one is apt to do when he wishes to aid a mental effort by external application. It was evident he was puzzled to find out what the squatter would be at, though he soon put a question that brought about something like an explanation.

"I ton't unterstant you, T'ousantacres; no, I ton't understant you. Is it your tesire to gif me one of your puxom ant fine-lookin' gals, here, for a wife?"

The squatter laughed heartily at this notion, the young men joining in the mirth; while the constant titter that the females had kept up ever since the subject of matrimony was introduced, was greatly augmented in zest. An indifferent spectator would have supposed that the utmost good feeling prevailed among us.

"With all my heart, Chainbearer, if you can persuade any of the gals to have you!" cried Thousandacres, with the most apparent acquiescence. "With such a son-in-law, I don't know but I should take to the chain, a'ter all, and measure out my clearin's as well as the grandee farmers, who take pride in knowin' where their lines be. There 's Lowiny, she 's got no spark, and might suit you well enough, if she 'd only think so."

"Lowiny don't think any sich thing; and isn't likely to think any sich thing," answered the girl, in a quick, irritated manner.

"Wa-a-I, I do s'pose, a'ter all, Chainbearer," Thousandacres resumed, "we 'll get no weddin' out of *you*. Threescore and ten is somewhat late for takin' a first wife; though I 've known widowers marry ag'in when hard on upon ninety. When a man has taken one wife in 'arly life, he has a kind o' right to another in old age."

"Yes yes or a hundred either," put in Prudence, with spirit. "Give 'em a chance only, and they 'll find wives as long as they can find breath to ask women to have 'em! Gals, you may make up your minds to *that* no man will mourn long for any on you, a'ter you 're once dead and buried."

I should think this little sally must have been somewhat common, as neither the "b'ys" nor the "gals" appeared to give it much attention. These matrimonial insinuations occur frequently in the world, and Prudence was not the first woman, by a million, who had ventured to make them.

"I will own I was not so much thinkin' of providin' a wife for you, Chainbearer, as I was thinkin' of providin' one for a son of mine," continued Thousandacres. "Here 's Zephaniah, now, is as active and hard-workin', upright, honest and obedient a young man as can be found in this country. He 's of suitable age, and begins to think of a wife. I tell him to marry, by all means, for it 's the blessedest condition of life, is the married state, that man ever entered into. You wouldn't think it, perhaps, on lookin' at old Prudence, there, and beholdin' what she now is; but I speak from exper'ence in recommendin' matrimony; and I wouldn't, on no account, say what I didn't really think in the matter. A little matrimony might settle all our difficulties, Chainbearer."

"You surely do not expect me to marry your son Zepaniah, I must s'pose, T'ousantacres!" answered Andries, innocently.

The laugh, this time, was neither as loud nor as general as before, intense expectation rendering the auditors grave.

"No, no; "I 'll excuse you from that, of a sartainty, old Andries; though you may have Lowiny, if you can only prevail on the gal. But, speakin' of Zephaniah, I can r'ally ricommend the young man; a thing I 'd never do if he didn't deserve it, though he is my son. No one can say that I 'm in the habit of ever ricommendin' my own things, even to the boards. The lumber of Thousandacres is as well known in all the markets below, they tell me, as the flour of any miller in the highest credit. It 's just so with the b'ys, better lads is not to be met with; and I can ricommend Zephaniah with just as much confidence as I could ricommend any lot of boards I ever rafted."

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"And what haf I to do wit' all t'is?" asked Chainbearer, gravely.

"Why, the matter is here, Chainbearer, if you 'll only look a little into it. There 's difficulty atween us, and pretty serious difficulty, too. In me the accommodatin' spirit is up, as I 've said afore, and am willin' to say ag'in. Now, I 've my son Zeph, here, as I 've said, and he 's lookin' about for a wife; and you 've a niece here Dus Malbone, I s'pose is her name and they'd just suit each other. It seems they 're acquainted somewhat, and have kept company some time already, and that 'll make things smooth. Now, what I offer is just this, and no more; not a bit of it. I offer to send off for a magistrate, and I 'll do 't at my own expense; it shan't cost you a farthin'; and, as soon as the magistrate comes, we 'll have the young folks married on the spot, and that will make eternal peace for ever, as you must suppose, atween you and me. Wa—a—l, peace made atween *us*, 'twill leave but little to accommodate with the writin' owners of the sile, seein' that you 're on tarms with 'em all, that a body may set you down all as one as bein' of the same family, like. If gin'ral Littlepage makes a p'int of any thing of the sort, I 'll engage no one of my family, in all futur' time, shall ever squat on any lands he may happen to lay claim to, whether he owns 'em or not."

I saw quite plainly that, at first, Chainbearer did not fully comprehend the nature of the squatter's proposal. Neither did Dus, herself; though somewhat prepared for such a thing by her knowledge of Zephaniah's extravagant wishes on the subject. But, when Thousandacres spoke plainly of sending for a magistrate, and of having the "young folks married on the spot," it was not easy to mistake his meaning, and astonishment was soon succeeded by offended pride, in the breast of old Andries, and that to a degree and in a manner I had never before witnessed in him. Perhaps I ought, in justice to my excellent friend, to add, that his high principles and keen sense of right, were quite as much wounded by the strange proposal as his personal feelings. It was some time before he could or would speak; when he did, it was with a dignity and severity of manner which I really had no idea he could assume. The thought of Ursula Malbone's being sacrificed to such a being as Zephaniah, and such a family as the squatter's, shocked all his sensibilities, and appeared, for a moment, to overcome him. On the other hand, nothing was plainer than that the breed of Thousandacres saw no such violation of the proprieties in their scheme. The vulgar, almost invariably, in this country, reduce the standard of distinction to mere money; and, in this respect they saw, or fancied they saw, that Dus was not much better off than they were themselves. All those points which depended on taste, refinement, education, habits and principles, were Hebrew to them; and, quite as a matter of course, they took no account of qualities they could neither see nor comprehend. It is not surprising, therefore, that they could imagine the young squatter might make a suitable husband to one who was known to have carried chain in the forest.

"I pelieve I do pegin to unterstant you, T'ousantacres," said the Chainbearer, rising from his chair, and moving to the side of his niece, as if instinctively to protect her; "t'ough it ist not a fery easy t'ing to comrehent such a proposal. You wish Ursula Malpone to pecome t'e wife of Zephaniah T'ousantacres, ant t'ereupon you wish to patch up a peace wit' General Littlepage and Colonel Follock, ant optain an intemnity for all t'e wrong ant roppery you haf done 'em "

"Harkee, old Chainbearer; you 'd best be kearful of your language "

"Hear what t'at language ist to pe, pefore you interrupt me, T'ousantacres. A wise man listens pefore he answers. Alt'ough I haf nefer peen marriety, myself, I know what ist tacent in behaviour, ant, t'erefore, I wilt t'ank you for t'e wish of pein' connectet wit' t'e Coejemans ant t'e Malpones. T'at tuty tone, I wish to say t'at my niece wilt not haf your poy "

"You haven't given the gal a chance to speak for herself," cried Thousandacres, at the top of his voice, for he began to be agitated now with a fury that found a little vent in that manner. "You haven't given the gal a chance to answer for herself, old Andries. Zeph is a lad that she may go farther and fare worse, afore she 'll meet his equal, I can tell you, though perhaps, bein' the b'y's own father, I shouldn't say it but, in the way of accommodatin', I 'm willin' to overlook a great deal."

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"Zephaniah 's an excellent son," put in Prudence, in the pride and feeling of a mother, nature having its triumph in *her* breast as well as in that of the most cultivated woman of the land. "Of all my sons, Zephaniah is the best; and I account him fit to marry with any who don't live in the open country, and with many that do."

"Praise your goots, ant extol your poy, if you see fit," answered Chainbearer, with a calmness that I knew bespoke some desperate resolution. "Praise your goots, ant extol your poy; I 'll not teny your right to do as much of t'at as you wish; put t'is gal wast left me py an only sister on her tyin' pet, ant may Got forget me, when I forget the tuty I owe to *her*. She shalt nefer marry a son of T'ousantacres she shalt nefer marry a squatter she shalt nefer marry any man t'at ist not of a class, ant feelin's, ant hapits, ant opinions, fit to pe t'e huspant of a latty!"

A shout of derision, in which was blended the fierce resentment of mortified pride, arose among that rude crew, but the thundering voice of Thousandacres made itself audible, even amid the hellish din.

"Beware, Chainbearer; beware how you aggravate us; natur' cant and won't bear every thing."

"I want nut'in' of you, or yours, T'ousantacres," calmly returned the old man, passing his arm around the waist of Dus, who clung to him, with a cheek that was flushed to fire, but an eye that was not accustomed to quail, and who seemed, at that fearful moment, every way ready and able to second her uncle's efforts. "You 're nut'in' to me, ant I 'll leaf you here, in your misteets ant wicket t'oughts. Stant asite, I orter you. Do not tare to stop t'e brot'er who is apout to safe his sister's da'ghter from pecomin' a squatter's wife. Stant asite, for I 'll stay wit' you no longer. An hour or two hence, miseraple Aaron, you 'll see t'e folly of all t'is, ant wish you hat livet an honest man."

By this time the clamour of voices became so loud and confused, as to render it impossible to distinguish what was said. Thousandacres actually roared like a maddened bull, and he was soon hoarse with uttering his menaces and maledictions. Tobit said less, but was probably more dangerous. All the young men seemed violently agitated, and bent on closing the door on the exit of the Chainbearer; who, with his arm around Dus, still slowly advanced, waving the crowd aside, and commanding them to make way for him, with a steadiness and dignity that I began to think would really prevail. In the midst of this scene of confusion, a rifle suddenly flashed; the report was simultaneous, and old Andries Coejemans fell.

CHAPTER XI.

"Ye midnight shades, o'er nature spread!

Dumb silence of the dreary hour!

In honour of th' approaching dead,

Around your awful terrors pour.

Yes, pour around,

On this pale ground,

Through all this deep surrounding gloom,

The sober thought,

The tear untaught,

Those meetest mourners at a tomb."

Mallet.

It is a law of human nature, that the excesses of passion bring their own rebukes. The violence of man feeds itself, until some enormity committed under its influence suddenly rises before the transgressor, as the evidence of his blindness and the restorer of his senses. Guilt performs the office of reason, staying the hand, stilling the pulses,

and arousing the conscience.

Thus it seemed to be with the squatters of Mooseridge. A stillness so profound succeeded the crack of that rifle, that I heard the stifled breathing of Dus, as she stood over the body of her uncle, astounded, and almost converted into a statue by the suddenness of the blow. No one spoke; no one attempted to quit the place; in fact, no one moved. It was never known who fired that shot. At first I ascribed it to the hand of Tobit; but it was owing more to what I knew of his temper and character, than to what I knew of his acts at that particular time. Afterwards, I inclined to the opinion that my friend had fallen by the hand of Thousandacres himself; though there were no means of bringing it home to him by legal proof. If any knew who was the criminal, besides the wretch who executed the deed, the fact was never revealed. That family was faithful to itself, and seemed determined to stand or fall together. In the eye of the law, all who were present, aiding and abetting in the unlawful detention of Dus and her uncle, were equally guilty; but the hand on which the stain of blood rested in particular, was never dragged to light.

My first impulse, as soon as I could recollect myself, was to pass an arm around the waist of Dus and force her through the crowd, with a view to escape. Had this attempt been persevered in, I think it would have succeeded, so profound was the sensation made, even upon those rude and lawless men, by the deed of violence that had just been done. But Dus was not one to think of self at such a moment. For a single instant her head fell on my shoulders, and I held her to my bosom, while I whispered my wish for her to fly. Then raising her head, she gently extricated her person from my arms, and knelt by the side of her uncle.

"He breathes!" she said huskily, but hastily. "God be praised, Mordaunt, he still breathes. The blow may not be as heavy as we at first supposed; let us do what we can to aid him."

Here were the characteristic decision and thoughtfulness of Ursula Malbone! Rising quickly, she turned to the group of silent but observant squatters, and appealed to any remains of humanity that might still be found in their bosoms, to lend their assistance. Thousandacres stood foremost in the dark cluster at the door, looking grimly at the motionless body, over which Dus stood, pale and heart-stricken, but still calm and collected.

"The hardest-hearted man among you will not deny a daughter's right to administer to a parent's wants!" she said, with a pathos in her voice, and a dignity in her manner, that filled me with love and admiration, and which had a visible effect on all who heard her. "Help me to raise my uncle and to place him on a bed, while Major Littlepage examines his hurt. You 'll not deny me this little comfort, Thousandacres, for you cannot know how soon you may want succour yourself!"

Zephaniah, who certainly had no hand in the murder of Chainbearer, now advanced; and he, myself, Lowiny and Dus, raised the still motionless body, and placed it on the bed of Prudence, which stood in the principal room. There was a consultation among the squatters, while we were thus employed, and one by one the family dropped off, until no one was left in the house but Thousandacres, and his wife, and Lowiny; the latter remaining with Dus, as a useful and even an affectionate assistant. The father sate, in moody silence, on one side of the fire, while Prudence placed herself on the other. I did not like the aspect of the squatter's countenance, but he said and did nothing. It struck me that he was brooding over the facts, nursing his resentments by calling up fancied wrongs to his mind, and plotting for the future. If such was the case, he manifested great nerve, inasmuch as neither alarm nor hurry was, in the slightest degree, apparent in his mien. Prudence was dreadfully agitated. She said nothing, but her body worked to and fro with nervous excitement; and occasionally a heavy, but suppressed groan struggled through her efforts to resist it. Otherwise, she was as if not present.

I had been accustomed to seeing gun-shot wounds, and possessed such a general knowledge of their effects as to be a tolerable judge of what would, and what would not, be likely to prove fatal. The first look I took at the hurt of Chainbearer convinced me there could be no hope for his life. The ball had passed between two of the ribs, and seemed to me to take a direction downwards; but it was impossible to miss the vitals with a wound commencing

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at that point on the human body. The first shock of the injury had produced insensibility; but we had hardly got the sufferer on the bed, and applied a little water to his lips, ere he revived; soon regaining his consciousness, as well as the power to speak. Death was on him, however; and it was very obvious to me that his hours were numbered. He might live days, but it was not possible for him to survive.

"Got pless you, Mortaunt," my old friend murmured, after my efforts had thus partially succeeded. "Got for ever pless ant preserf you, poy, ant repay you for all your kintness to me ant mine. T'em squatters haf killet me, lat; put I forgif t'em. T'ey are an ignorant, ant selfish, and prutal preed; ant I may haf triet 'em too sorely. Put Dus can never become t'e wife of any of t'e family."

As Zephaniah was in the room, though not near the bed at the moment, I was anxious to change the current of the wounded man's thoughts; and I questioned him as to the nature of his hurt, well knowing that Chainbearer had seen so many soldiers in situations similar to his own unhappy condition, as to be a tolerable judge of his actual state.

"I 'm killet, Mortaunt," old Andries answered, in a tone even firmer than that in which he had just spoken. "Apout t'at, t'ere can pe no mistake. T'ey haf shot t'rough my ribs, ant t'rough my vitals; ant life is impossible. But t'at does not matter much to me, for I am an olt man now, hafin' lifet my t'ree-score years ant ten no, t'at is no great matter, t'ough some olt people cling to life wit' a tighter grip t'an t'e young. Such ist not my case, howsefer; ant I am reaty to march when t'e great wort of commant comet'. I am fery sorry, Mortaunt, t'at t'is accitent shoul happen before t'e patent hast been fully surfeyet; put I am not pait for t'e work t'at is finisht, ant it ist a great comfort to me to know I shall not tie in tebt. I owe you, ant I owe my goot frient t'e general, a great teal for kintnesses, I must confess; put, in t'e way of money, t'ere wilt be no loss by t'is accitent."

"Mention nothing of this sort, I do entreat of you, Chainbearer; I know my father would gladly give the best farm he owns to see you standing, erect and well, as you were twenty minutes since."

"Well, I tares to say, t'at may be true, for I haf always fount t'e general to pe friently and consiterate. I wilt tell you a secret, Mortaunt, t'at I haf nefer before revealet to mortal man, put which t'ere ist no great use in keepin' any longer, ant which I shoul have been willing to haf tolt long ago, hat not t'e general himself mate it a p'int t'at I shoul not speak of it "

"Perhaps it might be better, my good friend, were you to tell me this secret another time. Talking may weary and excite you; whereas, sleep and rest may possibly do you service."

"No, no, poy t'e hope of t'at ist all itleness ant vanity. I shalt nefer sleep ag'in, tilt I sleep t'e last long sleep of teat'; I felt sartain my wount ist mortal, and t'at my time must soon come. Nefert'eless, it doesn't gif me pain to talk; and, Mortaunt, my tear lat, fri'nts t'at pe apout to part for so long a time, ought not to part wit'out sayin' a wort to one anot'er before separation. I shoul pe glat, in partic'lar, to telt to a son all t'e kintness and fri'ntship I have receivet from his fat'er. You know fery well, yourself, Mortaunt, t'at I am not great at figures; and why it shoul pe so, ist a wonter ant a surprise to me, for my grantfat'er Van Syce was a wonterful man at arit'metic, and t'e first Cojemans in t'is country, t'ey say, kept all t'e tominie's accounts for him! Put, let t'at pe ast it wast, I nefer coult do any t'ing wit' figures; ant, it ist a secret not to pe concealet now, Mortaunt, t'at I nefer coult haf helt my commission of captain six weeks, put for your own fat'er's kintness to me. Fintin' out how impossible it wast for me to get along wit' arit'metic, he offeret to do all t'at sort of tuty for me, ant t'e whole time we wast toget'er, seven long years ant more, Colonel Littlepage mate out t'e reports of Cojeman's company. Capital goot reports was t'ey, too, and t'e atmiration of all t'at see t'em; and I often felt ashamet like, when I he'rt t'em praiset, and people wonterin' how an olt Tutchman ever l'arnet to do his tuty so well! I shalt nefer see t'e general ag'in, ant I wish you to tell him t'at Andries tit not forget his gootness to him, to t'e latest preat t'at he trew."

"I will do all you ask of me, Chainbearer surely it must give you pain to talk so much?"

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"Not at all, poy; not at all. It is goot to t'e poty to lighten t'e soul of its opligations. Ast I see, howsefer, t'at Dus ist trouplet, I wilt shut my eyes, ant look into my own t'oughts a little, for I may not tie for some hours yet."

It sounded fearful to me to hear one I loved so well speak so calmly, and with so much certainty of his approaching end. I could see that Ursula almost writhed under the agony these words produced in her; yet that noble-minded creature wore an air of calmness, that might have deceived one who knew her less well than she was known to me. She signed for me to quit the side of the bed, in the vain hope that her uncle might fall asleep, and placed herself silently on a chair, at hand, in readiness to attend to his wants. As for me, I took the occasion to examine the state of things without, and to reflect on what course I ought to take, in the novel and desperate circumstances in which we were so unexpectedly placed: the time for something decisive having certainly arrived.

It was now near an hour after the deed had been done and there sat Thousandacres and his wife, one on each side of the fire, in silent thought. As I turned to look at the squatters, and the father of squatters, I saw that his countenance was set in that species of sullen moodiness, which might well be taken as ominous in a man of his looseness of principle and fierceness of temperament. Nor had the nervous twitchings of Prudence ceased. In a word, both of these strange beings appeared at the end of that hour just as they had appeared at its commencement. It struck me, as I passed them in moving towards the door, that there was even a sublimity in their steadiness in guilt. I ought, however, in some slight degree to except the woman, whose agitation was some proof that she repented of what had been done. At the door, itself, I found no one; but, two or three of the young men were talking in a low tone to each other at no great distance. Apparently they had an eye to what was going on within the building. Still no one of them spoke to me, and I began to think that the crime already committed had produced such a shock, that no further wrong to any of us was contemplated, and that I might consider myself at liberty to do and act as I saw fit. A twitch at my sleeve, however, drew my look aside, and I saw Lowiny cowering within the shadows of the house, seemingly eager to attract my attention. She had been absent some little time, and had probably been listening to the discourse of those without.

"Don't think of venturing far from the house," the girl whispered. "The evil spirit has got possession of Tobit; and he has just sworn the same grave shall hold you, and Chainbearer, and Dus. `Graves don't turn State's evidence,' he says. I never know'd him to be so awful as he is to night; though he 's dreadful in temper when anything goes amiss."

The girl glided past me as she ceased her hurried communication, and the next instant she was standing quietly at the side of Dus, in readiness to offer her assistance in any necessary office for the sick. I saw that she had escaped notice, and then reconnoitred my own position with some little care.

By this time the night had got to be quite dark; and it was impossible to recognise persons at the distance of twenty feet. It is true, one could tell a man from a stump at twice that number of yards, or even further; but the objects of the rude clearing began to be confounded together in a way to deprive the vision of much of its customary power. That group of young men, as I suppose, contained the formidable Tobit; but I could be by no means certain of the fact without approaching quite near to it. This I did not like to do, as there was nothing that I desired particularly to say to any of the family at that moment. Could they have known my heart, the squatters would have felt no uneasiness on the subject of my escaping; for were Dus quite out of the question, as she neither was nor could be, it would be morally impossible for me to desert the Chainbearer in his dying moments. Nevertheless, Tobit and his brethren did not know this; and it might be dangerous for me to presume too far on the contrary supposition.

The darkness was intensest near the house, as a matter of course; and I glided along close to the walls of logs until I reached an angle of the building, thinking the movement might be unseen. But I got an assurance that I was watched that would admit of no question, by a call from one of the young men, directing me not to turn the corner or to go out of sight in any direction, at the peril of my life. This was plain speaking; and it induced a short dialogue between us; in which I avowed my determination not to desert my friends for the Chainbearer would

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probably not outlive the night and that I felt no apprehension for myself. I was heated and excited, and had merely left the house for air; if they offered no impediment I would walk to and fro near them for a few minutes, solely with a view to refresh my feverish pulses; pledging my word to make no attempt at escape. This explanation, with the accompanying assurance, seemed to satisfy my guard; and I was quietly permitted to do as I had proposed.

The walk I selected was between the group of squatters and the house, and at each turn it necessarily brought me close to the young men. At such moments I profited by my position to look in through the door of the dwelling at the motionless form of Dus, who sat at the bedside of her uncle in the patient, silent, tender, and attentive manner of woman, and whom I could plainly see in thus passing. Notwithstanding the fidelity of my homage to my mistress at these instants, I could perceive that the young men uniformly suspended the low dialogue they were holding together, as I approached them, and as uniformly renewed it as I moved away. This induced me gradually to extend my walk, lengthening it a little on each end, until I may have gone as far as a hundred feet on each side of the group, which I took for the centre. To have gone farther would have been imprudent, as it might seem preparatory to an attempt at escape, and to a consequent violation of my word.

In this manner, then, I may have made eight or ten turns in as many minutes, when I heard a low, hissing sound near me, while at the extremity of one of my short promenades. A stump stood there, and the sound came from the root of this stump. At first I fancied I had encroached on the domain of some serpent; though animals of that species, which would be likely to give forth such a menace, were even then very rare among us. But my uncertainty was soon relieved.

"Why you no stop at stump?" said Susquesus, in a voice so low as not to be heard at the distance of ten feet, while it was perfectly distinct and not in a whisper. "Got sut'in' tell glad to hear."

"Wait until I can make one or two more turns; I will come back in a moment," was my guarded answer.

Then I continued my march, placing myself against a stump that stood at the other end of my walk, remaining leaning there for an entire minute or two, when I returned, passing the young men as before. This I did three several times, stopping at each turn, as if to rest or to reflect; and making each succeeding halt longer than the one that had preceded it. At length I took my stand against the very stump that concealed the Indian.

"How came you here, Susquesus?" I asked; "and are you armed?"

"Yes; got good rifle. Chainbearer's gun. He no want him any longer, eh?"

"You know then what has happened? Chainbearer is mortally wounded."

"Dat bad must take scalp to pay for *dat!* Ole fri'nd good fri'nd. Always kill murderer."

"I beg nothing of the sort will be attempted; but how came you here? and how came you armed?"

"Jaap do him come and break open door. Nigger strong do what he like to. Bring rifle say take him. Wish he come sooner den Chainbearer no get kill. We see!"

I thought it prudent to move on by the time this was said; and I made a turn or two ere I was disposed to come to another halt. The truth, however, was now apparent to me. Jaap had come in from the forest, forced the fastenings of the Onondago's prison, given him arms, and they were both out in the darkness, prowling round the buildings, watching for the moment to strike a blow, or an opportunity to communicate with me. How they had ascertained the fact of Chainbearer's being shot, I was left to conjecture; though Susquesus must have heard the report of the rifle; and an Indian, on such a night as that, left to pursue his own course, would soon ascertain all the leading

points of any circumstance in which he felt an interest.

My brain was in a whirl as all these details presented themselves to my mind, and I was greatly at a loss to decide on my course. In order to gain time for reflection, I stopped a moment at the stump, and whispered to the Onondago a request, that he would remain where he was until I could give him his orders. An expressive "good" was the answer I received; and I observed that the Indian crouched lower in his lair, like some fierce animal of the woods, that restrained his impatience, in order to make his leap, when it did come, more certain and fatal.

I had now a little leisure for reflection. There lay poor Chainbearer, stretched on his death-pallet, as motionless as if the breath had already left his body. Dus maintained her post, nearly as immovable as her uncle; while Lowiny stood at hand, manifesting the sympathy of her sex in the mourning scene before her. I caught glimpses, too, in passing, of Thousandacres and Prudence. It appeared to me as if the first had not stirred, from the moment when he had taken his seat on the hearth. His countenance was as set, his air as moody, and his attitude as stubborn, as each had been in the first five minutes after the chainbearer fell. Prudence, too, was as unchanged as her husband. Her body continued to rock, in nervous excitement, but not once had I seen her raise her eyes from the stone of the rude hearth, that covered nearly one-half of the room. The fire had nearly burned down, and no one replenishing the brush which fed it, a flickering flame alone remained to cast its wavering light over the forms of these two consciencestricken creatures, rendering them still more mysterious and forbidding. Lowiny had indeed lighted a thin, miserable candle of tallow, such as one usually sees in the lowest habitations; but it was placed aside, in order to be removed from before the sight of the supposed slumberer, and added but little to the light of the room. Notwithstanding, I could and did see all I have described, stopping for some little time at a point that commanded a view of the interior of the house.

Of Dus, I could ascertain but little. She was nearly immovable at the bed-side of her uncle, but her countenance was veiled from my view. Suddenly, and it was at one of those moments when I had stopped in front of the building, she dropped on her knees, buried her face in the coverlet, and became lost in prayer. Prudence started, as she saw this act; then she arose, after the fashion of those who imagine they have contributed to the simplicity, and consequently to the beauty of worship, by avoiding the ceremony of kneeling to Almighty God, and stood erect, moving to and fro, as before, her tall, gaunt figure, resembling some half-decayed hemlock of the adjacent forest, that has lost the greater portion of its verdure, rocked by a tempest. I was touched, notwithstanding, at this silent evidence that the woman retained some of the respect and feeling for the services of the Deity, which, though strangely blended with fanaticism and a pertinacious self-righteousness, no doubt had a large influence in bringing those who belonged to her race across the Atlantic, some five or six generations previously to her own.

It was just at this instant that I recognised the voice of Tobit, as he advanced towards the group composed of his brethren; and speaking to his wife, who accompanied him as far as his father's habitation, and there left him, apparently to return to her own. I did not distinguish what was said, but the squatter spoke sullenly, and in the tone of one whose humour was menacing. Believing that I might meet with some rudeness of a provoking character from this man, should he see me walking about in the manner I had now been doing for near a quarter of an hour, ere he had the matter explained, I thought it wisest to enter the building, and effect an object I had in view, by holding a brief conversation with Thousandacres.

This determination was no sooner formed than I put it in execution; trusting that the patience of the Indian, and Jaap's habits of obedience, would prevent anything like an outbreak from them, without orders. As I re-entered the room, Dus was still on her knees, and Prudence continued erect, oscillating as before, with her eyes riveted on the hearth. Lowiny stood near the bed, and I thought, like her mother, she was in some measure mingling in spirit, with the prayer.

"Thousandacres," I commenced in a low voice, drawing quite near to the squatter, and succeeding in causing him to look at me, by my address "Thousandacres, this has been a most melancholy business, but everything should be done that can be done, to repair the evil. Will you not send a messenger through to the 'Nest, to obtain the aid

of the physician?"

"Doctors can do but little good to a wound made by a rifle that was fired so cluss, young man. I want no doctors here, to betray me and mine to the law."

"Nay, your messenger can keep your secret; and I will give him gold to induce the physician to come, and come at once. He can be told that I am accidentally hurt, and might still reach us to be of service in alleviating pain; I confess there is no hope for anything else."

"Men must take their chances," coldly returned that obdurate being. "Them that live in the woods, take woodsmen's luck; and them that live in the open country, the open country luck. My family and lumber must be presarved at all risks; and no doctor shall come here."

What was to be done what *could* be done, with such a being? All principle, all sense of right, was concentrated in self in his moral system. It was as impossible to make him see the side of any question that was opposed to his interests, fancied or real, as it was to give sight to the physically blind. I had hoped contrition was at work upon him, and that some advantage might be obtained through the agency of so powerful a mediator; but no sooner was his dull nature aroused into anything like action, than it took the direction of selfishness, as the needle points to the pole.

Disgusted at this exhibition of the most confirmed trait of the squatter's character, I was in the act of moving from him, when a loud shout arose around the building, and the flashes and reports of three or four rifles were heard. Rushing to the door, I was in time to hear the tramp of men, who seemed to me to be pushing forward in all directions; and the crack of the rifle was occasionally heard, apparently retiring towards the woods. Men called to each other, in the excitement of a chase and conflict; but I could gain no information, the body of darkness which had settled on the place having completely hidden everything from view, at any distance.

In this state of most painful doubt I continued for five or six minutes, the noise of the chase receding the whole time, when a man came rushing up to the door of the hut where I stood, and, seizing my hand, I found it was Frank Malbone. The succour, then, had arrived, and I was no longer a captive.

"God be praised! you at least are safe," cried Malbone. "But my dear sister?"

"Is there unharmed, watching by the side of her uncle's dying bed. Is any one hurt without?"

"That is more than I can tell you. Your black acted as guide, and brought us down on the place so skilfully, that it was not my intention to resort to arms at all, since we might have captured all the squatters without firing a shot, had my orders been observed. But a rifle *was* discharged from behind a stump, and this drew a volley from the enemy. Some of our side returned the discharge, and the squatters then took to flight. The firing you have just heard is scattered discharges that have come from both sides, and can be only sound, as any aim is impossible in this obscurity. My own piece has not even been cocked, and I regret a rifle has been fired."

"Perhaps all is then well, and we have driven off our enemies without doing them any harm. Are you strong enough to keep them at a distance?"

"Perfectly so; we are a posse of near thirty men, led by an under-sheriff and a magistrate. All we wanted was a direction to this spot, to have arrived some hours earlier."

I groaned in spirit at hearing this, since those few hours might have saved the life of poor Chainbearer. As it was, however, this rescue was the subject of grateful rejoicing, and one of the happiest moments of my life was that in which I saw Dus fall on her brother's bosom, and burst into tears. I was at their side, in the door-way of the hut,

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when this meeting took place; and Dus held out a hand affectionately to me, as she withdrew herself from her brother's arms. Frank Malbone looked a little surprised at this act; but, anxious to see and speak to Chainbearer, he passed into the building, and approached the bed. Dus and I followed; for the shouts and firing had reached the ears of the wounded man, and Andries was anxious to learn their meaning. The sight of Malbone let him into a general knowledge of the state of the facts; but a strong anxiety was depicted in his failing countenance, as he looked towards me for information.

"What is it, Mortaunt?" he asked, with considerable strength of voice, his interest in the answer probably stimulating his physical powers. "What is it, poy? I hope t'ere hast peen no useless fightin' on account of a poor olt man like me, who hast seen his t'ree-score years ant ten, ant who owest to his Maker t'e life t'at wast grantet to him seventy long years ago. I hope no one hast peen injuret in so poor a cause."

"We know of no one besides yourself, Chainbearer, who has been hurt to-night. The firing you have heard, comes from the party of Frank Malbone, which has just arrived, and which has driven off the squatters by noise more than by any harm that has been done them."

"Got pe praiset! Got pe praiset! I am glat to see Frank pefore I tie, first to take leaf of him, as an olt frient, ant secntly to place his sister, Dus, in his care. T'ey haf wantet to gif Dus one of t'ese squatters for a huspant, by way of making peace between t'ieves ant honest people. T'at woult nefer do, Frank, as you well know Dus ist t'e ta'ghter of a gentleman, ant t'e ta'ghter of a laty; ant she ist a gentlewoman herself, ant ist not to pe marriet to a coarse, rute, illiterate, vulgar squatter. Wast I young, ant wast I not t'e gal's uncle, I shoult not venture to s'pose I coult make her a fit companion myself, peing too little edicated ant instructet, to pe the huspant of one like Dus Malpone."

"There is no fear now, that any such calamity can befall my sister, my dear Chainbearer, answered Frank Malbone. "Nor do I think any threats or dangers could so far intimidate Dus, as to cause her to plight her faith to any man she did not love or respect. They would have found my sister difficult to coerce."

"It ist pest ast it ist, Frank yes, it ist pest ast it ist. T'ese squatters are fery sat rascals, ant woult not pe apt to stop at trifles. Ant, now we are on t'is subject, I wilt say a wort more consarnin' your sister. I see she hast gone out of t'e hut to weep, ant she wilt not hear what I haf to say. Here ist Mortaunt Littlepage, who says he lofes Dus more ast man efer lovet woman pefore " Frank started, and I fancied that his countenance grew dark "ant what ist nat'ral enough, when a man dost truly lofe a woman in t'at tegree, he wishes fery, fery much to marry her" Frank's countenance brightened immediately, and seeing my hand extended towards him, he grasped it and gave it a most cordial pressure. "Now, Mortaunt woult pe an excellent match for Dus a most capital match, for he ist young ant goot lookin', ant prave, ant honouraple, ant sensiple, ant rich, all of which pe fery goot t'ings in matrimony; put, on t'e ot'er hant, he hast a fat'er, ant a mot'er, ant sisters, ant it ist nat'ral, too, t'at t'ey shoult not like, overmuch, to haf a son ant a prot'er marry a gal t'at hasn't any t'ing put a set of chains, a new compass, ant a few fielt articles t'at wilt fall to her share a'ter my teat'. No, no; we must t'ink of t'e honour of t'e Coejemans ant t'e Malpones, ant not let our peloved gal go into a family t'at may not want her."

I could see that Frank Malbone smiled, though sadly, as he listened to this warning; for, on him, it made little or no impression, since he was generous enough to judge me by himself, and did not believe any such mercenary considerations would influence my course. I felt differently, however. Obstinacy in opinion, was one of the weak points in Chainbearer's character, and I saw the danger of his leaving these sentiments as a legacy to Dus. She, indeed, had been the first to entertain them, and to communicate them to her uncle, and they might revive in her when she came to reflect on the true condition of things, and become confirmed by the dying requests of her uncle. It is true, that in our own interview, when I obtained from the dear girl the precious confession of her love, no such obstacle seemed to exist, but both of us appeared to look forward with confidence to our future union as to a thing certain; but at that moment, Dus was excited by my declarations of the most ardent and unutterable attachment, and led away by the strength of her own feelings. We were in the delirium of delight produced by

mutual confidence, and the full assurance of mutual love, when Thousandacres came upon us, to carry us to the scenes of woe by which we had been, and were still, in a degree, surrounded. Under such circumstances, one might well fall under the influence of feelings and emotions that would prove to be more controllable in cooler moments. It was all-important, then, for me to set Chainbearer right in the matter, and to have a care he did not quit us, leaving the two persons he most loved on earth, very unnecessarily miserable, and that solely on account of the strength of his own prejudices. Nevertheless, the moment was not favourable to pursue such a purpose, and I was reflecting bitterly on the future, when we were all startled by a heavy groan that seemed to come out of the very depths of the chest of the squatter.

Frank and I turned instinctively towards the chimney, on hearing this unlooked-for interruption. The chair of Prudence was vacant, the woman having rushed from the hut at the first sound of the recent alarm; most probably, in quest of her younger children. But Thousandacres remained in the very seat he had now occupied nearly, if not quite, two hours. I observed, however, that his form was not as erect as when previously seen. It had sunk lower in the chair, while his chin hung down upon his breast. Advancing nearer, a small pool of blood was seen on the stones beneath him, and a short examination told Malbone and myself, that a rifle-bullet had passed directly through his body, in a straight line, and that only three inches above the hips!

CHAPTER XII.

"With woful measures, wan despair
Low, sullen sounds his grief beguil'd,
A solemn, strange, and mingled air;
'Twas sad by fits, by starts 'twas wild."

Collins.

Thousandacres had been shot in his chair, by one of the rifles first discharged that night. As it turned out, he was the only one that we could ascertain was hurt; though there was a report, to which many persons gave credence, that Tobit had a leg broken, also, and that he remained a cripple for life. I am inclined to believe this report may have been true; for Jaap told me, after all was over, that he let fly on a man who had just fired on himself, and who certainly fell, and was borne off limping, by two of his companions. It is quite probable that this hurt of Tobit's, and the fate of his father, was the reason we received no more annoyance that night from the squatters, who had all vanished from the clearing so effectually, including most of the females and all the children, that no traces of their place of retreat were to be found next morning. Lowiny, however, did not accompany the family, but remained near Dus, rendering herself highly useful as an attendant in the melancholy scene that followed. I may as well add, here, that no evidence was ever obtained concerning the manner in which Thousandacres received his death-wound. He was shot through the open door, beyond all question, as he sat in his chair; and necessarily in the early part of the fray, for then only was a rifle discharged very near the house, or from a point that admitted of the ball's hitting its victim. For myself, I believed from the first that Susquesus sacrificed the squatter to the manes of his friend, Chainbearer; dealing out Indian justice, without hesitation or compunction. Still, I could not be certain of the fact; and the Onondago had either sufficient prudence or sufficient philosophy to keep his own secret. It is true that a remark or two did escape him, soon after the affair occurred, that tended to sustain my suspicions; but, on the whole, he was remarkably reserved on the subject less from any apprehension of consequences, than from self-respect and pride of character. There was little to be apprehended, indeed; the previous murder of Chainbearer, and the unlawful nature of all the proceedings of the squatters, justifying a direct and sudden attack on the part of the posse.

Just as Malbone and myself discovered the condition of Thousandacres, this posse, with 'squire Newcome at its head, began to collect around the house, which might now be termed our hospital. As the party was large, and

necessarily a little tumultuous, I desired Frank to lead them off to some of the other buildings, as soon as a bed had been prepared for the squatter, who was placed in the same room with Chainbearer, to die. No one, in the least acquainted with injuries of that nature, could entertain any hope for either; though a messenger was sent to the settlements for the individual who was called "doctor," and who was really fast acquiring many useful notions about his profession, by practising on the human system. They say that "an ounce of experience is worth a pound of theory," and this disciple of Esculapius seemed to have set up in his art on this principle; having little or none of the last, while he was really obtaining a very respectable amount of the first, as he practised right and left, as the pugilist is most apt to hit in his rallies. Occasionally, however, he gave a knock-down blow.

As soon as the necessary arrangements were made in our hospital, I told Dus that we would leave her and Lowiny in attendance on the wounded, both of whom manifested weariness and a disposition to doze, while all the rest of the party would draw off, and take up their quarters for the night in the adjacent buildings. Malbone was to remain, as a sentinel, a little distance from the door, and I promised to join him in the course of an hour.

"Lowiny can attend to the wants of her father, while you will have the tenderest care of your uncle, I well know. A little drink occasionally is all that can alleviate their sufferings "

"Let me come in," interrupted a hoarse female voice at the door, as a woman forced her way through the opposing arms of several of the posse. "I am Aaron's wife, and they tell me he is hurt. God himself has ordered that a woman should cleave unto her husband, and Thousandacres is mine; and he is the father of my children, if he *has* murdered, and been murdered in his turn."

There was something so commanding in the natural emotions of this woman, that the guard at the door gave way immediately, when Prudence entered the room. The first glance of the squatter's wife was at the bed of Chainbearer; but nothing there held her gaze riveted. That gaze only became fixed as her eyes fell on the large form of Thousandacres, as he lay extended on his death-bed. It is probable that this experienced matron, who had seen so many accidents in the course of a long life, and had sat by so many a bedside, understood the desperate nature of her husband's situation as soon as her eyes fell on the fallen countenance; for, turning to those near her, the first impulse was to revenge the wrong which she conceived had been done to her and hers. I will acknowledge that I felt awed, and that a thrill passed through my frame as this rude and unnurtured female, roused by her impulses, demanded authoritatively

"Who has done this? Who has taken the breath from my man before the time set by the Lord! Who has dared to make my children fatherless, and me a widow, ag'in' law and right? I left my man seated on that hearth, heart-stricken and troubled at what had happened to another; and they tell me he has been murdered in his chair. The Lord will be on our side at last, and then we 'll see whom the law will favour, and whom the law will condemn !"

A movement and a groan, on the part of Thousandacres, would seem first to have apprized Prudence that her husband was not actually dead. Starting at this discovery, this tiger's mate and tiger's dam, if not tigress herself, ceased everything like appeal and complaint, and set herself about those duties which naturally suggested themselves to one of her experience, with the energy of a frontier woman a woodsman's wife, and the mother of a large brood of woodsman's sons and daughters. She wiped the face of Thousandacres, wet his lips, shifted his pillow, such as it was, placed his limbs in postures she thought the easiest, and otherwise manifested a sort of desperate energy in her care. The whole time she was doing this, her tongue was muttering prayers and menaces, strangely blended together, and quite as strangely mixed up with epithets of endearment that were thrown away on her still insensible and least unconscious husband. She called him Aaron, and that, too, in a tone that sounded as if Thousandacres had a strong hold on her affections, and might at least have been kind and true to *her*.

I felt convinced that Dus had nothing to fear from Prudence, and I left the place as soon as the two nurses had everything arranged for their respective patients, and the house was quite free from the danger of intrusion. On

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quitting her who now occupied most of my thoughts, I ventured to whisper a request she would not forget the pledges given me in the forest, and asked her to summon me to the bedside of Chainbearer, should he rouse himself from the slumber that had come over him, and manifest a desire to converse. I feared he might renew the subject to which his mind had already once adverted since receiving his wound, and imbue his niece with some of his own set notions on that subject. Ursula was kindness itself. Her affliction had even softened her feelings towards me more than ever; and, so far as she was concerned, I certainly had no ground for uneasiness. In passing Frank, who stood on post some twenty yards from the door of the house, he said `God bless you, Littlepage, fear nothing. I am too much in your own situation, not to be warmly your friend.' I returned his good wishes, and went my way, in one sense rejoicing.

The posse, as has been stated, were in possession of the different deserted habitations of the family of Thousandacres. The night being cool, fires were blazing on all the hearths, and the place wore an air of cheerfulness that it had probably never before known. Most of the men had crowded into two of the dwellings, leaving a third for the convenience of the magistrate, Frank Malbone, and myself, whenever we might choose to repair to it. By the time I appeared, the posse had supped, using the milk and bread, and other eatables of the squatters, *ad libitum*, and were disposing of themselves on the beds and on the floors, to take a little rest, after their long and rapid march. But in my own quarters I found 'squire Newcome, alone, unless the silent and motionless Onondago, who occupied a chair in a corner of the fire-place, could be called a companion. Jaap, too, in expectation of my arrival, was lounging near the door; and when I entered the house, he followed me in for orders.

It was easy for me, who knew of Newcome's relations with the squatters, to discover the signs of confusion in his countenance, as his eye first met mine. One who was not acquainted with the circumstances, most probably would have detected nothing out of the common way. It will be remembered that the `squire' had no positive knowledge that I was acquainted with his previous visit to the mill; and it will be easy to see that he must have felt an itching and uneasy desire to ascertain that fact. A great deal depended on that circumstance; nor was it long before I had a specimen of his art in sounding round the truth, with a view to relieve his mind.

"Who 'd 'a thought of findin' major Littlepage in the hands of the Philistines, in sich an out o' the way place as this!" exclaimed Mr. Newcome, as soon as our salutations had been exchanged. "I 've heern say there was squatters down hereabouts; but sich things are so common, that I never bethought me of givin' him a hint on the matter when I last saw the major."

Nothing could surpass the deferential manner of this person when he had an object to gain, it being quite common with him to use the third person, in this way, when addressing a superior; a practice that has almost become obsolete in the English language, and which is seldom if ever used in America, except by this particular class of men, who defer before your face, and endeavour to undermine when the back is turned. My humour was not to trifle with this fellow, though I did not know that it was exactly prudent, just then, to let him know that I had both seen and heard him in his former visit, and was fully aware of all his practices. It was not easy, however, to resist the opportunity given by his own remarks, to put him a little way on the tenter-hooks of conscience that quality of the human mind being one of the keenest allies an assailant can possess, in cases of this sort.

"I had supposed, Mr. Newcome, that you were generally charged with the care of the Mooseridge lands, as one of the conditions annexed to the Ravensnest agency?" I somewhat drily remarked.

"Sartain, sir; the colonel or gin'ral, as he ought to be called now, I do s'pose gave me the superintendence of both at the same time. But the major knows, I presume, that Mooseridge was not on sale?"

"No, sir; it would seem to have been only on *plunder*. One would think that an agent, entrusted with the care of an estate, and who heard of squatters being in possession, and stripping the land of its trees, would feel it to be his duty at least to apprise the owners of the circumstance, that they might look to the case, if he did not."

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"The major hasn't rightly understood me," put in the 'squire, in a manner that was particularly deprecatory; "I don't mean to say that I *know'd*, with anything like positiveness, that there was squatters hereabouts; but that rumours was stirrin' of some sich things. But squatters is sich common objects in new countries, that a body scarce turns aside to look at them!"

"So it would seem, in your case at least, Mr. Newcome. This Thousandacres, however, they tell me, is a well-known character, and has done little since his youth but lumber on the property of other people. I should suppose you must have met him, in the course of five-and-twenty years' residence in this part of the world?"

"Lord bless the major! met Thousandacres? Why, I 've met him a hundred times! We all know the old man well enough; and many and many is the time I 've met him at raisin's, and trainin's, and town meetin's, and political meetin's, too. I 've even seen him in court, though Thousandacres don't set much store by law, not half as much as he and every other man ought to do; for law is excellent, and society would be no better than a collection of wild beasts, as I often tell Miss Newcome, if it hadn't law to straighten it out, and to teach the misguided and evil-disposed what 's right. I s'pose the major will coincide with that idee?"

"I have no particular objection to the sentiment, sir, but wish it was more general. As you have seen this person Thousandacres so often, perhaps you can tell me something of his character. My opportunities of knowing the man have been none of the best; for, most of the time I was his prisoner, he had me shut up in an out-building in which I believe he has usually kept his salt, and grain, and spare provisions."

"Not the old store'-us'!" exclaimed the magistrate, looking a little aghast, for the reader will doubtless recollect that the confidential dialogue between him and the squatter, on the subject of the lumber, had occurred so near that building as to be overheard by me. "How long has the major been in this clearin', I wonder?"

"Not a very great while in fact, though long enough to make it appear a week. I was put into the store-house soon after my seizure, and have passed at least half my time there since."

"I want to know! Perhaps the major got in that hole as 'arly as yesterday morn'?"

"Perhaps I did, sir. But, Mr. Newcome, on looking round at the quantity of lumber these men have made, and recollecting the distance they are from Albany, I am at a loss to imagine how they could hope to get their ill-gotten gains to market without discovery. It would seem to me that their movements must be known, and that the active and honest agents of this part of the country would seize their rafts in the water-courses; thus making the very objects of the squatters' roguery the means of their punishment. Is it not extraordinary that theft, in a moral sense at least, can be systematically carried on, and that on so large a scale, with such entire impunity?"

"Wa-a-I I s'pose the major knows how things turn, in this world. Nobody likes to meddle."

"How, sir not meddle! This is contrary to all my experience of the habits of the country, and all I have heard of it! Meddling, I have been given to understand, is the great vice of our immigrant population, in particular, who never think they have their just rights, unless they are privileged to talk about, and sit in judgment on the affairs of all within twenty miles of them; making two-thirds of their facts as they do so, in order to reconcile their theories with the wished-for results."

"Ah! I don't mean meddlin' in that sense, of which there is enough, as all must allow. But folks don't like to meddle with things that don't belong to them in such serious matters as this."

"I understand you the man who will pass days in discussing his neighbour's private affairs, about which he absolutely knows nothing but what has been obtained from the least responsible and most vulgar sources, will stand by and see that neighbour robbed and say nothing, under the influence of a sentiment so delicate, that it

forbids his meddling with what don't belong to him!"

Lest the reader should think I was unduly severe upon 'squire Newcome, let me appeal to his own experience, and inquire if he never knew, not only individuals, but whole neighbourhoods, which were sorely addicted to prying into every man's affairs, and to inventing when facts did not exactly sustain theories; in a word, convulsing themselves with that with which they have no real concern, draw themselves up in dignified reserve, as the witnesses of wrongs of all sorts, that every honest man is bound to oppose? I will go further, and ask if a man does happen to step forth to vindicate the right, to assert truth, to defend the weak and to punish the wrong-doer, if that man be not usually the one who meddles least in the more ordinary and minor transactions of life the man who troubles his neighbours least, and has the least to say about their private affairs? Does it not happen that the very individual who will stand by and see his neighbour wronged, on account of his indisposition to meddle with that which does not belong to him, will occupy a large portion of his own time in discussing, throwing out hints, and otherwise commenting on the private affairs of that very neighbour?

Mr. Newcome was shrewd, and he understood me well enough, though he probably found it a relief to his apprehensions to see the conversation inclining towards these generalities, instead of sticking to the store-house. Nevertheless, 'boards' must have been uppermost in his conscience; and, after a pause, he made an invasion into the career of Thousandacres, by way of diverting me from pushing matters too directly.

"This old squatter was a desperate man, major Littlepage," he answered, "and it may be fortunate for the country that he is done with. I hear the old fellow is killed, and that all the rest of the family has absconded."

"It is not quite so bad as that. Thousandacres is hurt mortally, perhaps and all his sons have disappeared; but his wife and one of his daughters are still here, in attendance on the husband and father."

"Prudence is here, then!" exclaimed Mr. Newcome, a little indiscreetly as I thought.

"She is but you seem to know the family well for a magistrate, 'squire, seeing their ordinary occupation so well, as to call the woman by her name."

"Prudence, I think Thousandacres used to call his woman. Yes, the major is very right; we magistrates *do* get to know the neighbourhood pretty gin'rally; what between summonses, and warrants, and bailings-out. But the major hasn't yet said when he first fell into the hands of these folks?"

"I first entered this clearing yesterday morning, not a long time after the sun rose, since which time, sir, I have been detained here, either by force or by circumstances."

A long pause succeeded this announcement. The 'squire fidgeted, and seemed uncertain how to act; for, while my announcement must have given rise, in his mind, to the strong probability of my knowing of his connection with the squatters, it did not absolutely say as much. I could see that he was debating with himself on the expediency of coming out with some tale invented for the occasion, and I turned towards the Indian and the negro, both of whom I knew to be thoroughly honest after the Indian and the negro fashions in order to say a friendly word to each in turn.

Susquesus was in one of his quiescent moods, and had lighted a pipe, which he was calmly smoking. No one, to look at him, would suppose that he had so lately been engaged in a scene like that through which he had actually gone; but, rather, that he was some thoughtful philosopher, who habitually passed his time in reflection and study.

As this was one of the occasions on which the Onondago came nearest to admitting his own agency in procuring the death of the squatter, I shall relate the little that passed between us.

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"Good evening, Sureflint," I commenced, extending a hand, which the other courteously took in compliance with our customs. "I am glad to see you at large, and no longer a prisoner in that store-house."

"Store-'us' poor gaol. Jaap snap off bolt like pipe-stem. Won'er T'ousandacres didn't t'ink of d'at."

"Thousandacres has had too much to think of this evening, to remember such a trifle. He has now to think of his end."

The Onondago was clearing the bowl of his pipe of its superfluous ashes as I said this, and he deliberately effected his purpose ere he answered

"Sartain s'pose he kill *dis* time."

"I fear his hurt is mortal, and greatly regret that it has happened. The blood of our tried friend, Chainbearer, was enough to be shed in so miserable an affair as this."

"Yes, 'fair pretty mis'erable; t'ink so, too. If squatter shoot surveyor, must t'ink surveyor's fri'nd will shoot squatter."

"That may be Indian law, Sureflint, but it is not the law of the Pale Face, in the time of peace and quiet."

Susquesus continued to smoke, making no answer.

"It was a very wicked thing to murder Chainbearer, and Thousandacres should have been handed over to the magistrates, for punishment, if he had a hand in it; not shot, like a dog."

The Onondago drew his pipe from his mouth, looked round towards the 'squire, who had gone to the door in order to breathe the fresh air then, turning his eyes most significantly on me, he answered

"Who magistrate go to, eh? What use good law wit' poor magistrate? Better have red-skin law, and warrior be he own magistrate own gallows, too."

The pipe was replaced, and Sureflint appeared to be satisfied with what had passed; for he turned away, and seemed to be lost, again, in his own reflections.

After all, the strong native intellect of this barbarian had let him into one of the greatest secrets connected with our social ills. Good laws, badly administered, are no better than an absence of all law, since they only encourage evildoers by the protection they afford through the power conferred on improper agents. Those who have studied the defects of the American system, with a view to ascertain truth, say that the want of a great moving power to set justice in motion lies at the root of its feebleness. According to theory, the public virtue is to constitute this power; but public virtue is never one-half as active as private vice. Crime is only to be put down by the strong hand, and that hand must belong to the public in truth, not in name only; whereas, the individual wronged is fast getting to be the only moving power, and in very many cases local parties are formed, and the rogue goes to the bar sustained by an authority that has quite as much practical control as the law itself. Juries and grand juries are no longer to be relied on, and the bench is slowly, but steadily, losing its influence. When the day shall come as come it must, if present tendencies continue that verdicts are rendered directly in the teeth of law and evidence, and jurors fancy themselves legislators, then may the just man fancy himself approaching truly evil times, and the patriot begin to despair. It will be the commencement of the rogue's paradise! Nothing is easier, I am willing to admit, than to over-govern men; but it ought not to be forgotten, that the political vice that comes next in the scale of facility, is to govern them too little.

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Jaap, or Jaaf, had been humbly waiting for his turn to be noticed. There existed perfect confidence, as between him and myself, but there were also bounds, in the way of respect, that the slave never presumed to pass, without direct encouragement from the master. Had I not seen fit to speak to the black that night, he would not have commenced a conversation, which, begun by me, he entered into with the utmost frankness and freedom from restraint.

"You seem to have managed your part of this affair, Jaap," I said, "with discretion and spirit. I have every reason to be satisfied with you; more especially for liberating the Indian, and for the manner in which you guided the posse down into the clearing, from the woods."

"Yes, sah; s'pose you would t'ink *dat* was pretty well. As for Sus, t'ought it best to let him out, for he be won'erful sartain wid he rifle. We should do much better, masser Mordy, but 'e 'squire so werry backward about lettin 'e men shoot 'em 'ere squatter! Gosh! masser Mordy, if he only say `fire' when I want him, I don't t'ink so much as half a one get off."

"It is best as it is, Jaap. We are at peace, and in the bosom of our country; and bloodshed is to be avoided."

"Yes, sah; but Chainbearer! If 'ey don't like bloodshed, why 'ey shoot *him*, sah?"

"There is a feeling of justice in what you say, Jaap, but the community cannot get on in anything like safety unless we let the law rule. Our business was to take those squatters, and to hand them over to the law."

"Werry true, sah. Nobody can't deny *dat*, masser Mordy, but he nodder seize nor shot, now! Sartain, it best to do one or t'odder with sich rascal. Well, I t'ink *dat* Tobit, as dey calls him, will remember Jaap Satanstoe long as he live. *Dat* a good t'ing, any way!"

"Good!" exclaimed the Onondago, with energy.

I saw it was useless, then, to discuss abstract principles with men so purely practical as my two companions, and I left the house to reconnoitre, ere I returned to our hospital for the night. The negro followed me, and I questioned him as to the manner of the attack, and the direction of the retreat of the squatters, in order to ascertain what danger there might be during the hours of darkness. Jaap gave me to understand that the men of Thousandacres' family had retired by the way of the stream, profiting by the declivity to place themselves under cover as soon as possible. As respects the women and children, they must have got into the woods at some other point, and it was probable the whole had sought some place of retreat that would naturally have been previously appointed by those who knew that they lived in the constant danger of requiring one. Jaap was very certain we should see no more of the men, and in that he was perfectly right. No more was ever seen of any one of them all in that part of the country, though rumours reached us, in the course of time, from some of the more western counties, that Tobit had been seen there, a cripple, as I have already stated, but maintaining his old character for lawlessness and disregard of the rights of others.

I next returned to Frank Malbone, who still stood on post at no great distance from the door, through which we could both see the form and features of his beautiful and beloved sister. Dus sat by her uncle's bed-side, while Prudence had stationed herself by that of her husband. Frank and I advanced near the door, and looked in upon the solemn and singular sight that room afforded. It was indeed a strange and sad spectacle, to see those two aged men, each with his thin locks whitened by seventy years, drawing near their ends, the victims of lawless violence; for, while the death of Thousandacres was enveloped in a certain mystery, and might by some eyes be viewed as merited and legal, there could be no doubt that it was a direct consequence of the previous murder of Chainbearer. It is in this way that wrong extends and sometimes perpetuates its influence, proving the necessity of taking time by the forelock, and resorting to prevention in the earliest stages of the evil, instead of cure.

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There lay the two victims of the false principles that the physical condition of the country, connected with its passive endurance of encroachments on the right, had gradually permitted to grow up among us. Squatting was a consequence of the thinness of the population and of the abundance of land, the two very circumstances that rendered it the less justifiable in a moral point of view; but which, by rendering the one side careless of its rights, and the other proportionably encroaching, had gradually led, not only to this violation of law, but to the adoption of notions that are adverse to the supremacy of law in any case. It is this gradual undermining of just opinions that forms the imminent danger of our social system; a spurious philanthropy on the subject of punishments, false notions on that of personal rights, and the substitution of numbers for principles, bidding fair to produce much the most important revolution that has ever yet taken place on the American continent. The lover of real liberty, under such circumstances, should never forget that the road to despotism lies along the borders of the slough of licentiousness, even when it escapes wallowing in its depths.

When Malbone and myself drew back from gazing on the scene within the house, he related to me in detail all that was connected with his own proceedings. The reader knows that it was by means of a meeting in the forest, between the Indian and the negro, that my friends first became acquainted with my arrest, and the probable danger in which I was placed. Chainbearer, Dus, and Jaap instantly repaired to the clearing of Thousandacres; while Malbone hastened on to Ravensnest, in pursuit of legal aid, and of a force to render my rescue certain. Meditating on all the facts of the case, and entertaining most probably an exaggerated notion of the malignant character of Thousandacres, by the time he reached the Nest, my new friend was in a most feverish state of excitement. His first act was, to write a brief statement of the facts to my father, and to despatch his letter by a special messenger, with orders to him to push on for Fishkill, all the family being there at the time, on a visit to the Kettletases; proceeding by land or by water, as the wind might favour. I was startled at this information, foreseeing at once that it would bring not only the general himself, but my dear mother and Kate, with Tom Bayard quite likely in her train, post haste to Ravensnest. It might even cause my excellent old grandmother to venture so far from home; for my last letters had apprised me that they were all on the point of visiting my sister Anneke, which was the way Frank had learned where the family was to be found.

As Malbone's messenger had left the Nest early the preceding night, and the wind had been all day fresh at north, it came quite within the bounds of possibility that he might be at Fishkill at the very moment I was listening to the history of his message. The distance was about a hundred and forty miles, and nearly one hundred of it could be made by water. Such a messenger would care but little for the accommodations of his craft; and, on the supposition that he reached Albany that morning, and found a sloop ready to profit by the breeze, as would be likely to occur, it would be quite in rule to reach the landing at Fishkill in the course of the evening aided by the little gale that had been blowing. I knew General Littlepage too well, to doubt either his affection or his promptitude. Albany could be reached in a day by land, and Ravensnest in another. I made my account, therefore, to see a part if not all of the family at the Nest, as soon as I should reach it myself; an event not likely to occur, however, for some little time, on account of the condition of Chainbearer.

I shall not deny that this new state of things, with the expectations connected with it, gave me sufficient food for reflection. I could not and did not blame Frank Malbone for what he had done, since it was natural and proper. Notwithstanding, it would precipitate matters as regarded my relations to Dus a little faster than I could have wished. I desired time to sound my family on the important subject of my marriage to let the three or four letters I had already written, and in which she had been mentioned in a marked manner, produce their effect; and I counted largely on the support I was to receive through the friendship and representations of Miss Bayard. I felt certain that deep disappointment on the subject of Pris. would be felt by the whole family; and it was my wish not to introduce Ursula to their acquaintance until time had a little lessened its feeling. But things must now take their course; and my determination was settled to deal as sincerely and simply as possible with my parents on the subject. I knew their deep affection for me, and relied strongly on that natural support.

I had half an hour's conversation with Dus while walking in front of the hospital that night, Frank taking his sister's place by the side of Chainbearer's bed. Then it was that I again spoke of my hopes, and explained the

probabilities of our seeing all of my immediate family so shortly at Ravensnest. My arm was round the waist of the dear girl as I communicated these facts; and I felt her tremble, as if she dreaded the trial she was to undergo.

"This is very sudden and unexpected, Mordaunt," Dus remarked, after she had had a little time to recover her recollection; "and I have so much reason to fear the judgment of your respectable parents of your charming sister, of whom I have heard so often through Priscilla Bayard and indeed of all who have lived, as *they* have done, amid the elegancies of a refined state of society; I, Dus Malbone a chainbearer's niece, and a chainbearer myself!"

"You have never borne any chain, love, that is as lasting or as strong as that which you have entwined around my heart, and which will for ever bind me to you, let the rest of the world regard us both as it may. But you can have nothing to fear from any, and least of all from my friends. My father is not worldly-minded; and as for my dear, dear mother, Anneke Mordaunt, as the general even now often affectionately calls her, as if the name itself reminded him of the days of her maiden loveliness and pride as for that beloved mother, Ursula, I do firmly believe that, when she comes to know you, she will even prefer you to her son."

"That is a picture of your blinded partiality, Mordaunt," answered the gratified girl, for gratified I could see she was, "and must not be too fondly relied on. But this is no time to talk of our own future happiness, when the eternal happiness or misery of those two aged men is suspended, as it might be, by a thread. I have read prayers once already with my dear uncle; and that strange woman, in whom there is so much of her sex mingled with a species of ferocity like that of a she-bear, has muttered a hope that her own `dying man,' as she calls him, is not to be forgotten. I have promised he should not be, and it is time to attend to that duty next."

What a scene followed! Dus placed the light on a chest near the bed of Thousandacres, and, with the prayer-book in her hand, she knelt beside it. Prudence stationed herself in such a posture that her head was buried in one of her own garments, that was suspended from a peg; and there she stood, while the melodious voice of Ursula Malbone poured out the petitions contained in the offices for the dying, in humble but fervent piety. I say stood, for neither Prudence nor Lowiny knelt. The captious temper of self-righteousness which had led their ancestors to reject kneeling at prayers as the act of formalists, had descended to them; and there they stood, praying doubtless in their hearts, but ungracious formalists themselves in their zeal against forms. Frank and I knelt in the door-way; and I can truly affirm that never did prayers sound so sweetly in my ears, as those which then issued from the lips of Ursula Malbone.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Thence cum we to the horrou and the hel,
The large great kyngdomes, and the dreadful raygne
Of Pluto in his trone where he dyd dwell,
The wyde waste places, and the hugye playne:
The waylings, shrykes, and sundry sortes of payne,
The syghes, and sobbes, the diep and deadly groane,
Earth, ayer, and all resounding playnt and moane.

Sackville.

In this manner did that memorable night wear away. The two wounded men slumbered much of the time; nor did their wants extend beyond occasional draughts of water, to cool their feverish mouths, or the wetting of lips. I prevailed on Dus to lie down on the bed of Lowiny, and try to get a little rest; and I had the pleasure to hear her say that she had slept sweetly for two or three hours, after the turn of the night. Frank and I caught naps, also,

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after the fashion of soldiers, and Lowiny slept in her chair, or leaning on her father's bed. As for Prudence, I do not think her watchfulness was lessened for a single instant. There she sat the live—long night; silent, tearless, moody, and heart—stricken by the great and sudden calamity that had befallen her race, but vigilant and attentive to the least movement in the huge frame of her wounded partner. No complaint escaped her; scarcely once did she turn to look at what was going on around her, nor in any manner did she heed aught but her husband. To him she seemed to be unerringly true; and whatever she may, and must have thought of his natural sternness, and occasional fits of severity towards herself, all now seemed to be forgotten.

At length light returned, after hours of darkness that seemed to me to be protracted to an unusual length. Then it was, when Jaap and the Indian were ready to take our places on the watch, that Frank and I went to one of the huts and lay down for two or three hours; and that was the time when Dus got her sweetest and most refreshing sleep. Lowiny prepared our morning's meal for us; which we three, that is, Dus, Frank and myself, took together in the best way we could, in the dwelling of Tobit. As for squire Newcome, he left the clearing in the course of the night, or very early in the morning, doubtless exceedingly uneasy in his conscience, but still uncertain whether his connection with the squatters was, or was not known to me: the excuse for this movement being the probable necessity of summoning a jury; Mr. Jason Newcome filling in his own person, or by deputy, the several offices and functions of justice of the peace, one of the coroners of the county, supervisor of the township of Ravensnest, merchant, shopkeeper, miller, lumber—dealer, husbandman and innkeeper; to say nothing of the fact that he wrote all the wills of the neighbourhood; was a standing arbitrator when disputes were `left out to men;' was a leading politician, a patriot by trade, and a remarkable and steady advocate of the rights of the people, even to minutiae. Those who know mankind will not be surprised, after this enumeration of his pursuits and professions, to hear it added that he was a remarkable rogue in the bargain.

There are two things I have lived long enough to receive as truths established by my own experience, and they are these: I never knew a man who made large professions of a love for the people, and of his wish to serve them on all occasions, whose aim was not to deceive them to his own advantage; and the other is, that I never knew a man who was compelled to come much in contact with the people, and who at the same time was personally popular, who had anything in him, at the bottom. But it is time to quit Jason Newcome and his defects of character, in order to attend to the interesting scene that awaited us in the dwelling of Thousandacres, and to which we were now summoned by Jaap.

As the day advanced, both the chainbearer and the squatter became aroused from the languor that had succeeded the receiving of their respective hurts, and more or less alive to what was passing around them. Life was ebbing fast in both, yet each seemed, just at that moment, to turn his thoughts backward on the world, in order, as it might be, to take a last look at those scenes in which he had now been an actor for the long period of three—score and ten years.

"Uncle Chainbearer is much revived, just now," said Dus, meeting Frank and myself at the door, "and he has asked for you both; more especially for Mordaunt, whose name he has mentioned three several times within the last five minutes. `Send for Mordaunt, my child,' he has said to me, `for I wish to speak with him before I quit you.' I am fearful he has inward admonitions of his approaching end."

"That is possible, dearest Ursula; for men can hardly lose their hold of life without being aware of the approaches of death. I will go at once to his bedside, that he may know I am here. It is best to let his own feelings decide whether he is able or not to converse."

The sound of Chainbearer's voice, speaking in a low but distinct tone, caught our ears as we approached him, and we all stopped to listen.

"I say, T'ousantacres," repeated Andries, on a key a little louder than before, "if you hear me, olt man, ant can answer, I wish you to let me know it. You ant I pe apout to start on a fery long journey, ant it ist unreasonable, as

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well as wicket, to set out wit' pad feelin's at t'e heart. If you hat hat a niece, now, like Dus t'ere, to tell you t'ese matters, olt Aaron, it might pe petter for your soul in t'e worlt into which we are poth apout to enter."

"He knows it I'm sure he knows it, and feels it, too," muttered Prudence, rocking her body as before. "He has had pious forefathers, and cannot have fallen so far away from grace, as to forget death and etarnity."

"Look you, Prutence, Aaron nefer coult fall away from what he nefer wast fastenet to. As for pious forefat'ers, t'ey may do to talk apout in Fourt' of July orations, put t'ey are of no great account in cleansin' a man from his sins. I s'pose t'em pious forefat'ers of which you speak wast t'e people t'at first steppet on t'e Rock town at Plymout'; put, let me telt you, Prutence, hat t'ere peen twice as many of t'em, and hat t'ey all peen twice as goot as you poast of t'eir hafin' peen, it wilt do no goot to your man, untless he wilt repent, and pe sorry for all t'e unlawful ant wicket t'ings he hast tone in t'is worlt, ant his treatment of pountaries in jin'ral, ant of ot'ers men's lants in partic'lar. Pious ancestors may pe pleasant to haf, put goot pehaviour ist far petter as t'e last hour approaches."

"Answer him, Aaron," the wife rejoined "answer him, my man, in order that we may all on us know the frame of mind in which you take your departure. Chainbearer is a kind-hearted man at the bottom, and has never wilfully done us any harm."

For the first time since Andries received his wound, I now heard the voice of Thousandacres. Previously to that moment, the squatter, whether hurt or not, had sat in moody silence, and I had supposed after he was wounded that he was unable to use his tongue. To my surprise, however, he now spoke with a depth and strength of voice that at first misled me, by inducing me to think that the injury he had received could not be fatal.

"If there wasn't no chainbearers," growled Thousandacres, "there wouldn't be no lines, or metes, and bounds, as they call 'em; and where there 's no metes and bounds, there can be no right but possession. If 't wasn't for your writin' titles, I shouldn't be lyin' here, breathin' my last."

"Forgive it all, my man; forgive it all, as behooves a good christian," Prudence returned to this characteristic glance at the past, in which the squatter had so clearly overlooked all his own delinquencies, and was anxious to impute consequences altogether to others. "it is the law of God to forgive your enemies, Aaron, and I want you to forgive Chainbearer, and not go to the world of spirits with gall in your heart."

"'T woult pe much petter, Prutence, if T'ousantacres woult pray to Got to forgif himself," put in Chainbearer. "I am fery willin', ant happy to haf t'e forgifness of efery man, ant it ist not unlikely t'at I may haf tone somet'ing, or sait somet'ing t'at hast peen hart to t'e feelin's of your huspant; for we are rough, and plain-speakin', and plainactin' enough, in t'e woots; so I'm willin' to haf even T'ousantacres' forgifness, I say, and wilt accept it wit' pleasure if he wilt offer it, ant take mine in exchange."

A deep groan struggled out of the broad, cavern-like chest of the squatter. I took it as an admission that he was the murderer of Andries.

"Yes," resumed Chainbearer, "Dus hast mate me see "

"Uncle!" exclaimed Ursula, who was intently listening, and who now spoke because unable to restrain the impulse.

"Yes, yes, gal, it hast peen all your own toin's. Pefore ast you come pack from school, ast we come into t'e woots, all alone like, you haf nefer forgotten to teach an olt, forgetful man his tuty "

"Oh! uncle Chainbearer, it is not I, but God in his mercy who has enlightened your understanding and touched your heart."

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"Yes, tarlin'; yes, Dus, my tear, I comprehend t'at too; but Got in his mercy sent an angel to pe his minister on 'art' wit' a poor ignorant Tutchman, who hast not t'e l'arnin' ant t'e grace he might ant ought to have had, wit'out your ait, and so hast t'e happy change come apout. No no T'ousantacres, I wilt not trespise even your forgifness, little as you may haf to forgif; for it lightens a man's heart of heafy loats, when his time is short, to know he leafs no enemies behint him. T'ey say it ist pest to haf t'e goot wishes of a tog, ant how much petter ist it to haf t'e goot wishes of one who hast a soul t'at only wants purifyin', to twell in t'e Almighty's presence t'roughout eternity!"

"I hope and believe," again growled Thousandacres, "that in the world we 're goin' to, there 'll be no law, and no attorneys."

"In t'at, t'en, Aaron, you pe greatly mistaken. T'at lant is all law, ant justice, ant right; t'ough, Got forgif me if I do any man an injury; put to pe frank wit' you, as pecomes two mortals so near t'eir ents, I do not pelieve, myself, t'at t'ere wilt pe a great many attorneys to trouple t'em t'at are receivet into t'e courts of t'e Almighty, himself. T'eir practices on 'arth does not suit t'em for practice in heafen."

"If you 'd always held them rational notions, Chainbearer, no harm might have come to you, and my life and your'n been spared. But this is a state of being in which short-sightedness prevails ag'in the best calkerlations. I never felt more sure of gittin' lumber to market than I felt, three days ago, of gittin' this that 's in the creek, safe to Albany; and, now, you see how it is! the b'ys are disparsed, and may never see this spot ag'in; the gals are in the woods, runnin' with the deer of the forest; the lumber has fallen into the hands of the law; and that, too, by the aid of a man that was bound in honesty to protect me, and I 'm dyin' here!"

"Think no more of the lumber, my man, think no more of the lumber," said Prudence, earnestly; "time is desp'rate short at the best, and yours is shorter than common, even for a man of seventy, while etarnity has no eend. Forgit the boards, and forgit the b'ys, and forgit the gals, forgit 'arth and all it holds! "

"You wouldn't have me forgit you, Prudence," interrupted Thousandacres, "that 's been my wife, now, forty long years, and whom I tuck when she was young and comely, and that 's borne me so many children, and has always been a faithful and hard-working woman you wouldn't have me forget *you!*"

This singular appeal, coming as it did from such a being, and almost in his agony, sounded strangely and solemnly, amid the wild and semi-savage appliances of a scene I can never forget. The effect on Ursula was still more apparent; she left the bed-side of her uncle, and with strong womanly sympathy manifested in her countenance, approached that of this aged couple, now about to be separated for a short time, at least, where she stood gazing wistfully at the very man who was probably that uncle's murderer, as if she could gladly administer to his moral ailings. Even Chainbearer attempted to raise his head, and looked with interest towards the other group. No one spoke, however, for all felt that the solemn recollections and forebodings of a pair so situated, were too sacred for interruption. The discourse went on, without any hiatus, between them.

"Not I, not I, Aaron, my man," answered Prudence, with strong emotion struggling in her voice; "there can be no law, or call for *that*. We are one flesh, and what God has j'ined, God will not keep asunder long. I cannot tarry long behind you, my man, and when we meet together ag'in, I hope 'twill be where no boards, or trees, or acres, can ever make more trouble for us!"

"I 've been hardly treated about that lumber, a'ter all," muttered the squatter, who was now apparently more aroused to consciousness than he had been, and who could not but keep harping on what had been the one great business of his life, even as that life was crumbling beneath his feet "hardly dealt by, do I consider myself, about that lumber, Prudence. Make the most of the Littlepage rights, it was only trees that they could any way claim, in reason; while the b'ys and I, as you well know, have convarted them trees into as pretty and noble a lot of han'some boards and planks, as man ever rafted to market!"

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"It 's convarson of another natur' that you want now, Aaron, my man; another sort of convarson is the thing needful. We must all be converted once in our lives; at least all such as be the children of Puritan parents and a godly ancestry; and it must be owned, takin' into account our years, and the importance of example in sich a family as our'n, that you and I have put it off long enough. Come it must, or suthin' worse; and time and etarnity in your case, Aaron, is pretty much the same thing."

"I should die easier in mind, Prudence, if Chainbearer would only admit that the man who chops, and hauls, and saws, and rafts a tree, doos get some sort of a right, nat'ral or legal, to the lumber."

"I 'm sorry, T'ousantacres," put in Andries, "t'at you feel any such atmission from me necessary to you at t'is awful moment, since I nefer can make it ast an honest man. You hat petter listen to your wife, ant get confarted if you can, ant as soon ast you can. You ant I haf put a few hours to lif; I am an olt soltier, T'ousantacres, ant haf seen more t'an t'ree t'ousant men shot town in my own ranks, to say nut'in' of t'e ranks of t'e enemy; ant wit' so much exper'ence a man comes to know a little apout wounts ant t'eir tarminations. I gif it ast my chugement, t'erefore, t'at neit'er of us can haf t'e smallest hope to lif t'rough t'e next night. So get t'at confarsion as hastily ant ast well ast you can, for t'ere ist little time to lose, ant you a squatter! T'is ist t'e moment of all ot'ers, T'ousantacres, to prooffe t'e true falue of professions, ant trates, ant callin's, as well ast of t'e manner in which t'eir tuties haf been fulfillet. It may pe more honouraple ant more profitaple to pe a calculating surfeyor, ant to unterstant arit'metic, ant to pe talket of in t'e worlt for work tone on a large scale; put efen His Excellency himself, when he comes to t'e last moment, may pe glat t'at t'e temptations of such l'arnin', ant his pein' so t'oroughly an honest man, toes not make him enfy t'e state of a poor chainpearer; who, if he titn't know much, ant coult'n't do much, at least measuret t'e lant wit' fitelity, ant tid his work ast well ast he knew how. Yes, yes, olt Aaron; get confartet, I tell you; ant shoult Prutence not know enough of religion ant her piple, ant of prayin' to Got to haf marcy on your soul, t'ere ist Dus Malpone, my niece, who unterstants, ant what ist far petter, who *feels* t'ese matters, quite as well ast most tominies, ant petter t'an some lazy ant selfish ones t'at I know, who treat t'eir flocks as if t'e Lort meant t'ey wast to pe shearet only, ant who wast too lazy to do much more t'an to keep cryin' out not in t'e worts of t'e inspiret writer, 'watchman, what of t'e night?' 'watchman, what of t'e night?' put, 'my pelovet, ant most christian, ant gotly-mintet people, pay, pay, pay!' Yes, t'ere ist too much of such afarice ant selfishness in t'e worlt, ant it toes harm to t'e cause of t'e Safiour; put trut' is so clear ant peautiful an opject, my poor Aaron, t'at efen lies, ant fice, ant all manner of wicketnesses cannot long sully it. Take my atvice, ant talk to Dus; ant t'ough you wilt touptless continue to grow worse in poty, you wilt grow petter in spirit."

Thousandacres turned his grim visage round, and gazed intently and wistfully towards Ursula. I saw the struggle that was going on within, through the clear mirror of the sweet, ingenuous face of my beloved, and I saw the propriety of retiring. Frank Malbone understood my look, and we left the house together, closing the door behind us.

Two, to me, long and anxious hours succeeded, during most of which time my companion and myself walked about the clearing, questioning the men who composed the posse, and hearing their reports. These men were in earnest in what they were doing; for a respect for law is a distinguishing trait in the American character, and perhaps more so in New England, whence most of these people came, than in any other part of the country; the rascality of 'Squire Newcome to the contrary, notwithstanding. Some observers pretend that this respect for law is gradually decreasing among us, and that in its place is sensibly growing up a disposition to substitute the opinions, wishes, and interests of local majorities, making the country subject to *men* instead of *principles*. The last are eternal and immutable; and, coming of God, men, however unanimous in sentiment, have no more right to attempt to change them, than to blaspheme His holy name. All that the most exalted and largest political liberty can ever beneficially effect is, to apply these principles to the good of the human race, in the management of their daily affairs; but, when they attempt to substitute for these pure and just rules of right, laws conceived in selfishness and executed by the power of numbers, they merely exhibit tyranny in its popular form, instead of in its old aspect of kingly or aristocratic abuses. It is a fatal mistake to fancy, that freedom is gained by the mere achievement of a right in the people to govern, unless the *manner* in which that right is to be both understood and

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practised, is closely incorporated with all the popular notions of what has been obtained. That right to govern means no more, than the right of the people to avail themselves of the power thus acquired, to apply the great principles of justice to their own benefit, and from the possession of which they had hitherto been excluded. It confers no power to do that which is inherently wrong, under any pretence whatever; nor would anything have been gained, had America, as soon as she relieved herself from a sway that diverted so many of her energies to the increase of the wealth and influence of a distant people, gone to work to frame a new polity which should inflict similar wrongs within her own bosom.

My old acquaintance, the hearty Rhode Islander, was one of the posse; and I had a short conversation with him, while thus kept out of the house, which may serve to let the reader somewhat into the secret of the state of things at the clearing. We met near the mill, when my acquaintance, whose name was Hosmer, commenced as follows:

"A good day to you, major, and a hearty welcome to the open air!" cried the sturdy yeoman, frankly but respectfully, offering his hand. "You fell into a pit here, or into a den among thieves; and it 's downright providential you ever saw and breathed the clear air ag'in! Wa—a—I, I've been trailin' a little this mornin', along with the Injin; and no hound has a more sartain scent than he has. We went into the hollow along the creek; and a desp'rate sight of boards them varmints have got into the water, I can tell you! If the lot 's worth forty pounds York, it must be worth every shilling of five hundred. They 'd a made their fortin's, every blackguard among 'em. I don't know but I 'd fit myself to save so many boards, and sich beautiful boards, whether wrongfully or rightfully lumbered!"

Here the hearty old fellow stopped to laugh, which he did exactly in the full-mouthed, contented way in which he spoke and did everything else. I profited by the occasion to put in a word in reply.

"You are too honest a man, major, to think of ever making your boards out of another man's trees," I answered. "This people have lived by dishonest practices all their lives, and any one can see what it has come to."

"Yes, I hope I am, 'squire Littlepage I do hope I am. Hard work and I an't no how afeard of each other; and so long as a man *can* work, and *will* work, Satan don't get a full grip on him. But, as I was sayin', the Trackless struck the trail down the creek, though it was along a somewhat beaten path; but that Injin would make no more of findin' it in a highway, than you and I would of findin' our places in the Bible on Sabba'day, where we had left off the Sabba'day that was gone. I always mark mine with a string the old woman braided for me on purpose, and a right down good method it is; for, while you 're s'archin' for your specs with one hand, nothin' is easier than to open the Bible with t'other. Them 's handy things to have, major; and, when you marry some great lady down at York, sich a one as your own mother was, for I know'd her and honoured her, as we all did hereaway but, when you get married, ask your wife to braid a string for you, to find the place in the Bible with, and all will go right, take an old man's word for it."

"I thank you, friend, and will remember the advice, even though I might happen to marry a lady in this part of the world, and not down in York."

"This part of the world? No, we 've got nobody our way, that 's good enough for you. Let me see; Newcome has a da'ghter that 's *old* enough, but she 's desp'rate humbly (Anglise, homely the people of New England reserve 'ugly' for moral qualities) and wouldn't suit, no how. I don't think the Littlepages would overmuch like being warp and fillin' with the Newcomes."

"No! My father was an old friend or, an old acquaintance at least, of Mr. Newcome's, and must know and appreciate his merits."

"Yes yes I 'll warrant ye the gin'ral knows him. Wa—a—I! Human natur' is human natur'; and I do s'pose, if truth must be spoken, none on us be half as good as we ought to be. We read about faithful stewards in the good

book, and about onfaithful ones too, squire" here, the old yeoman stopped to indulge in one of his hearty laughs, rendering it manifest he felt the full application of his words. "Wa—a—l, all must allow the bible's a good book. I never open it, without l'arnin' suthin', and what I l'arn, I strive not to forgit. But there 's a messenger for you, major, from Thousandacres' hut, and I fancy 't will turn out that he or Chainbearer is drawing near his eend."

Lowiny was coming to summon us to the house, sure enough, and I took my leave of my brother major for the moment. It was plain to me that this honest-minded yeoman, a good specimen of his class, saw through Newcome and his tricks, and was not unwilling to advert to them. Nevertheless, this man had a fault, and one very characteristic of his "*order*." He could not speak *directly*, but would *hint* round a subject, instead of coming out at once, and telling what he had to say; beating the bush to start his game, when he might have put it up at once, by going in at it directly. Before we parted, he gave me to understand that Susquesus and my fellow, Jaap, had gone on in pursuit of the retreating squatters, intending to follow their trail several miles, in order to make sure that Tobit and his gang were not hanging around the clearing to watch their property, ready to strike a blow when it might be least expected.

Dus met me at the door of the cabin, tearful and sad, but with such a holy calm reigning in her generally brilliant countenance, as denoted the nature of the solemn business in which she had just been engaged. She extended both hands to meet mine, and whispered, "Uncle Chainbearer is anxious to speak to us on the subject of our engagement, I think it is." A tremour passed through the frame of Ursula; but she made an effort, smiled sadly, and continued: "Hear him patiently, dear Mordaunt, and remember that he is my father, in one sense, and as fully entitled to my obedience and respect as if I were really his daughter."

As I entered the room, I could see that Dus had been at prayer. Prudence looked comforted, but Thousandacres, himself, had a wild and uncertain expression of countenance, as if doubts had begun to beset him, at the very moment when they must have been the most tormenting. I observed that his anxious eye followed the form of Dus, and that he gazed on her as one would be apt to regard the being who had just been the instrument of awakening within him the consciousness of his critical state. But my attention was soon drawn to the other bed.

"Come near me, Mortaunt, lat; ant come hit'er, Dus, my tearest ta'ghter ant niece. I haf a few worts of importance to say to you, pefore I go, ant if t'ey pe not sait now, t'ey nefer may pe sait at all. It 's always pest to `take time py t'e forelock,' t'ey say; ant surely I cannot pe callet in haste to speak, when not only one foot, put pot' feet and half my poty, in t'e pargain, may well pe sait to pe in t'e grafe. Now listen to an olt man's atfice, ant do not stop my worts until all haf peen spoken, for I grow weak fast, ant haf not strength enough to t'row away any of it in argument.

"Mortaunt hast sait ast much, in my hearin', ast to atmit t'at he lofes ant atmires my gal, ant t'at he wishes, ant hopes, ant expects to make her his wife. On t'e ot'er hant, Ursula, or Dus, my niece, confesses ant acknowletges t'at she lofes, ant esteems, ant hast a strong regart for Mortaunt, ant ist willing to pecome his wife. All t'is ist nat'ral, ant t'ere wast a time when it woult haf mate me ast happy ast t'e tay ist long to hear as much sait by t'e one or t'e ot'er of t'e parties. You know, my chiltren, t'at my affection for you ist equal, ant t'at I consiter you, in all respects put t'at of worldly contition, to pe as well suitet to pecome man ant wife ast any young couple in America. Put tuty is tuty, ant it must pe tischarget. General Littlepage wast my olt colonel; ant, an honest ant an honouraple man himself, he hast efery right to expect t'at efery one of his former captains, in partic'lar, woult do unto him as t'ey woult haf him do unto t'em. Now, t'ough heafen ist heafen, t'is worlt must pe regartet as t'is worlt, ant t'e rules for its goferment are to pe respectet in t'eir place. T'e Malpones pe a respectaple family, I know; ant t'ough Dus' own fat'er wast a little wilt, ant t'oughtless, ant extrafagant "

"Uncle Chainbearer!"

"True, gal, true; he wast your fat'er, ant t'e chilt shoult respect its parent. I atmit t'at, ant wilt say no more t'an ist apsolutely necessary; pesites, if Malpone hat his pat qualities, he hat his goot. A hantsomer man coult not pe

fount, far ant near, ast my poor sister felt, I dares to say; ant he wast prave as a pull-dog, ant generous, ant gootnaturet, ant many persons was quite captivatet by all t'ese showy atfantages, ant t'ought him petter ast he really wast. Yes, yes, Dus, my chilt, he hat his goot qualities, as well ast his pat. Put, t'e Malpones pe gentlemen, as ist seen py Frank, Dus' prother, ant py ot'er members of t'e family. T'en my mot'er's family, py which I am relatet to Dus, wast very goot even petter t'an t'e Coejemans and t'e gal is a gentlewoman py pirt'. No one can deny t'at; put ploom won't do efery t'ing. Chiltren must pe fet, and clot'et; ant money ist necessary, a'ter all, for t'e harmony ant comfort of families. I know Matam Littlepage, in partic'lar. She ist a da'ter of olt Harman Mortaunt, who wast a grant gentleman in t'e lant, ant t'e owner of Ravensnest, ast well ast of ot'er estates, ant who kept t'e highest company in t'e profince. Now Matam Littlepage, who hast been t'us born, ant etucatet, ant associatet, may not like t'e itee of hafin' Dus Malpone, a chainpearer's niece, ant a gal t'at hast been chainpearer herself, for which I honour ant lofe her so much t'e more, Mortaunt, lat; put for which an ill-chutgin' worlt wilt despise her "

"My mother my noble-hearted, right-judging and right-feeling mother never!" I exclaimed, in a burst of feeling I found it impossible to control.

My words, manner and earnestness produced a profound impression on my auditors. A gleam of pained delight shot into and out of the countenance of Ursula, like the passage of the electric spark. Chainbearer gazed on me intently, and it was easy to trace, in the expression of his face, the deep interest he felt in my words, and the importance he attached to them. As for Frank Malbone, he fairly turned away to conceal the tears that forced themselves from his eyes.

"If I coult t'ink ast much if I coult *hope* ast much, Mortaunt," resumed Chainbearer, "it woult pe a plesset relief to my partin' spirit, for I know general Littlepage well enough to pe sartain t'at he ist a just ant a right-mintet man, ant t'at, in t'e long run, he woult see matters ast he ought to see t'em. Wit' Matam Littlepage I fearet it wast tifferent; for I haf always hearet t'at t'e Mortaunts was tifferent people, ant felt ast toppin' people commonly do feel. T'is makes some change in my itees, ant some change in my plans. Howesefer, my young friends, I haf now to ask of you each a promise a solemn promise mate to a tyin' man ant it ist t'is "

"First hear me, Chainbearer," I interposed eagerly, "before you involve Ursula heedlessly, and I had almost said cruelly, in any incautious promise, that may make both our lives miserable hereafter. You, yourself, first invited, tempted, courted me to love her; and now, when I know and confess her worth, you throw ice on my flame, and command me to do that of which it is too late to think."

"I own it, I own it, lat, ant hope t'e Lort, in his great marcy, wilt forgif ant parton t'e great mistake I mate. We haf talket of t'is pefore, Mortaunt, ant you may rememper I tolt you it was Dus, herself, who first mate me see t'e trut' in t'e matter, ant how much petter ant more pecomin' it wast in me to holt you pack, t'an to encourage ant leat you on. How comes it, my tear gal, t'at you haf forgot all t'is, ant now seem to wish me to do t'e fery t'ing you atviset me not to do?"

Ursula's face became pale as death; then it flushed to the brightness of a summer sunset, and she sank on her knees, concealing her countenance in the coarse quilt of the bed, as her truthful and ingenuous nature poured out her answer.

"Uncle Chainbearer," she said, "when we first talked on this subject I had never seen Mordaunt."

I knelt at the side of Ursula, folded her to my bosom, and endeavoured to express the profound sentiment of gratitude that I felt at hearing this ingenuous explanation, by such caresses as nature and feeling dictated. Dus, however, gently extricated herself from my arms, and rising, we both stood waiting the effect of what had just been seen and heard on Chainbearer.

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"I see t'at natur' is stronger t'an reason, ant opinion, ant custom," the old man resumed, after a long, meditative pause "I haf put little time to spent in t'is matter, housefer, my chiltren, ant must pring it to a close. Promise me, pot' of you, t'at you will nefer marry wit'out t'e free consent of General Littlepage, ant t'at of olt Matam Littlepage, ant young Matam Littlepage, each or all pein' lifin'."

"I do promise you, uncle Chainbearer," said Dus, with a promptitude that I could hardly pardon "I do promise you, and will keep my promise, as I love you and fear and honour my Maker. 'T would be misery, to me, to enter a family that was not willing to receive me "

"Ursula! Dearest dearest Ursula do you reflect! Am I, then, nothing in your eyes?"

"It would also be misery to live without you, Mordaunt but in one case I should be supported by a sense of having discharged my duty; while in the other, all that went wrong would appear a punishment for my own errors."

I would not promise; for, to own the truth, while I never distrusted my father or mother for a single instant, I did distrust my dear and venerable grandmother. I knew that she had not only set her heart on my marrying Priscilla Bayard; but that she had a passion for making matches in her own family; and I feared that she might have some of the tenacity of old age in maintaining her opinions. Dus endeavoured to prevail on me to promise; but I evaded the pledge; and all solicitations were abandoned in consequence, of a remark that was soon after made by Chainbearer.

"Nefer mint nefer mint, darlint; *your* promise is enough. So long as you pe true, what matters it w'et'er Mortaunt is heatstrong or not? Ant now, children, ast I wish to talk no more of t'e matters of t'is wort, put to gif all my metitations ant language to t'e t'ings of Got, I wilt utter my partin' worts to you. W'et'er you marry or not, I pray Almighty Got to gif you his pest plessin's in t'is life, ant in t'at which ist to come. Lif in sich a way, my tear chiltren, as to pe aple to meet t'is awful moment, in which you see me placed, wit' hope ant joy, so t'at we may all meet hereafter in t'e courts of Heafen. Amen."

A short, solemn pause succeeded this benediction, when it was interrupted by a fearful groan, that struggled out of the broad chest of Thousandacres. All eyes were turned on the other bed, which presented a most impressive contrast to the calm scene that surrounded the parting soul of him about whom we had been gathered. I alone advanced to the assistance of Prudence, who, woman-like, clung to her husband to the last; 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.' I must own, however, that horror paralyzed my limbs; and that when I got as far as the foot of the squatter's bed, I stood riveted to the place like a rooted tree.

Thousandacres had been raised, by means of quilts, until half his body lay almost in a sitting position; a change he had ordered during the previous scene. His eyes were open; ghastly, wandering, hopeless. As the lips contracted with the convulsive twitchings of death, they gave to his grim visage a species of sardonic grin that rendered it doubly terrific. At this moment a sullen calm came over the countenance, and all was still. I knew that the last breath remained to be drawn, and waited for it as the charmed bird gazes at the basilisk-eye of the snake. It came, drawing aside the lips so as to show every tooth, and not one was missing in that iron frame; when, finding the sight too frightful for even my nerves, I veiled my eyes. When my hand was removed, I caught one glimpse of that dark tenement in which the spirit of the murderer and squatter had so long dwelt, Prudence being in the act of closing the glary, but still fiery eyes. I never before had looked upon so revolting a corpse; and never wish to see its equal again.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Mild as a babe reclines himself to rest,
And smiling sleeps upon the mother's breast
Tranquil, and with a patriarch's hope, he gave
His soul to heaven, his body to the grave.

Harte.

I saw that neither Chainbearer nor Dus looked at the revolting object presented in the corpse of Thousandacres, after that selfish and self-willed being ceased to live. I had another hut prepared immediately for its reception, and the body was removed to it without delay. Thither Prudence accompanied the senseless body; and there she passed the remainder of the day, and the whole of the succeeding night, attended by Lowiny with occasional offers of food and assistance from the men of the posse. Two or three of the latter, carpenters by trade, made a coffin of pine, and the body was placed in it in the customary manner. Others dug a grave in the centre of one of those rough fields that the squatter had appropriated to his own uses, thus making everything ready for the interment, as soon as the coroner, who had been sent for, should have had his sitting over the body.

The removal of the remains of Thousandacres left a sort of holy calm in the cabin of Chainbearer. My old friend was fast sinking; and he said but little. His consciousness continued to the last, and Dus was often at prayer with him in the course of that day. Frank and I aided in doing the duty of nurses; and we prevailed on Ursula to retire to the loft, and catch some rest, after her unwearied watchfulness. It was near sunset that old Andries again addressed himself particularly to me, who was sitting at his side, Dus being then asleep.

"I shalt lif till mornin', I now fint, Mortaunt," he said; "put, let deat' come when it wilt, it ist sent py my Lort ant Maker, ant it ist welcome. Deat' hast no fears for me."

"He never had, captain Coejemans, as the history of your whole career in the army shows."

"Yes, lat, t'ere wast a time when I shoul't haf been glat to haf been shot on t'e fielt, and to haf diet wit' Montgomery, ant Laurens, ant Wooster, ant Warren, and sich like gallant heroes; put t'at ist all gone, now. I 'm like a man t'at hast been walkin' over a wite plain, ant who hast come to its tarmination, where he sees pefore him an entless apyss into which he must next step. At sich a sight, lat, all t'e trouples, ant lapours, ant tifficulties of t'e plain seem so triflin', t'at t'ey pe forgotten. Mint, I do not wish to say t'at eternity is an apyss to me in fears, ant pains, ant tespair; for t'e gootness of Got hast enlightenet my mint on t'at subject, ant hope, ant love, ant longin' for t'e presence of my Maker, stant in t'eir places. Mortaunt, my lat, pefore I quit you, I coult wish to say a couple of worts to you on t'is sacret subject, if 't will gif no offence?"

"Say all, and what you please, dear Chainbearer. We are friends of the camp and the field, and the advice of no one could be more welcome to me than yours, given at a moment as solemn and truthful as this."

"T'ank ye, Mortaunt; t'ank ye wit' all my heart. You know how it hast been wit' me, since poyhoot; for often ant often you ant I haf talket over t'ese t'ings in camp. I wast t'rown young upon t'e worlt, ant wast left wit'out fat'er, or mot'er, to pring myself up. An only chilt of my own fat'er, for Dus comes from a half-sister you know, t'ere wast no one to care for me in partic'lar, and I growet up in great ignorance of t'e Lort of Hosts, ant my tuties to him, ant to his plesset son, more ast anyt'ing else. Well, Mortaunt, you know how it ist in t'e woots, ant in t'e army. A man neet not pe fery pat, to pe far from pein' as goot as ist expectet of him by t'e Almighty, who gafe him his soul, ant who reteemet him from his sins, ant who holts out taily t'e means of grace. When I come here, wit' Dus, a chilt knewest almost as much of t'e real natur' of religion ast I knewest. Put, t'at precious gal, t'rough Divine grace, hast been t'e means of pringin' an olt ant ignorant man to a sense of his true contition, ant to petter hapits, t'an t'ose you knowet in him. Once I lovet a frolick, Mortaunt, and punch ant ot'er savoury liquors wast fery pleasant to me; ay, ant even a'ter years might ant shoul't haf teachet me t'e folly of sich ways. Put you haf not seen t'e glass at my lips t'is summer, lat, at unseemly moments, or in unseemly numpers of times, ant t'at ist owin'

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to t'e confersations I haf hat wit' Dus on t'e subject. It woul't haf tone your heart goot, Mortaunt, to haf seen t'e tear gal seated on my knee, combin' my olt grey hairs wit' her telicate white fingers, ant playin' wit my hart, ret cheeks, ast t'e infant plays wit' t'e cheeks of t'e mot'er, whilst she talket to me of t'e history of Christ, ant his sufferin's for us all ant tolt me t'e way to learn to know my safiour in trut' ant sincerity! You t'ink Dus hantsome; ant pleasant to look upon; ant pleasant to talk wit' put you can nefer know t'e gal in her colours of golt, Mortaunt, till she pegins to con verse wit' you, unreservetly, apout Got ant retemption!"

"I can believe anything in favour of Ursula Malbone, my dear Chainbearer; and no music could be sweeter, to my ears, than thus to hear you pronouncing her praise."

The death of Chainbearer occurred, as he had himself prognosticated, about the time of the return of light on the succeeding morning. A more tranquil end I never witnessed. He ceased to suffer pain hours before he drew his last breath; but he had whispered to me, in the course of that day, that he endured agony at moments. He wished me to conceal the fact from Dus, however, lest it should increase her grief. "So long ast t'e tear gal ist in ignorance of my sufferin's," the excellent old man added in his whisper, "she cannot feel so much for me; since she must have confitence in t'e value of her own goot work, ant s'pose me to pe only trawin' nearer to happiness. Put, you ant I know, Mortaunt, t'at men are not often shot t'rough t'e poty wit'out feelin' much pain; ant I haf hat my share yes, I haf hat my share!" Nevertheless, it would have been difficult for one who was not in the secret to detect the smallest sign that the sufferer endured a tithe of the agony he actually underwent. Ursula *was* deceived; and to this hour she is ignorant how much her uncle endured. But, as I have said, this pain ceased altogether about nine o'clock, and Andries even slumbered for many minutes at a time. Not long before the light returned, however, he became aroused, and never slumbered again until he fell into the long, last sleep of death. His niece prayed with him about five; after which he seemed to consider himself as ready for the final march.

It might have been owing to the age of the patient; but, in this instance, death announced his near approach by a rapid loss of the senses. At first came a difficulty of hearing; and then the quick decay of the sense of sight. The first was made known to us by a repetition of questions that had already been more than once answered; while the painful fact that sight, if not absolutely gone, was going, was brought home to us by the circumstance that, while Dus was actually hovering over him like a guardian angel, he inquired anxiously where she was.

"I am here, uncle Chainbearer," answered the dear girl, in tremulous tones "here, before you, and am about to wet your lips."

"I want t'e gal t'at ist I wish her to pe near when t'e spirit mounts to Heafen. Haf her callet, Frank or Mortaunt."

"Dear *dearest* uncle, I *am* here, now here before you closest to you of all almost in your arms," answered Dus, speaking loud enough to make herself heard, by an effort that cost her a great deal. "Do not think I can ever desert you, until I know that your spirit has gone to the mercy-seat of God!"

"I knowet it," said Chainbearer, endeavouring to raise his arms to feel for his niece, who met the effort by receiving his feeble and clammy hand in both her own. "Remember my wishes apout Mortaunt, gal yet, shoul't t'e family agree, marry him wit' my plessin' yes, my pest plessin'. Kiss me, Duss. Wast t'em your lips? t'ey felt colt; ant you are nefer colt of hant or heart. Mortaunt kiss me, too, lat t'at wast warmer, ant hat more feelin' in it. Frank, gif me your hant I owe you money t'ere ist a stockin' half full of tollars. Your sister wilt pay my tebts. Ant General Littlepage owes me money put most he owest me goot will. I pray Got to pless him ant to pless Matam Littlepage ant olt Matam Littlepage, t'at I nefer did see ant t'e major, or colonel, ast he is now callet ant all our rijiment ant *your* rijiment, too, Frank, which wast a fery goot rijiment. Farewell, Frank Dus sister precious Christ-Jesus, receive my "

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These words came with difficulty, and were whispered, rather than uttered aloud. They came at intervals, too, especially towards the last, in a way to announce the near approach of the state of which they were the more immediate precursors. The last syllable I have recorded was no sooner uttered, than the breath temporarily ceased. I removed Dus by gentle force, placing her in the arms of her brother, and turned to note the final respiration. That final breath, in which the spirit appears to be exhaled, was calm, placid, and as easy as comports with the separation of soul and body; leaving the hard, aged, wrinkled, but benevolent countenance of the deceased, with an expression of happy repose on it, such as the friends of the dead love to look upon. Of all the deaths I had then witnessed, this was the most tranquil, and the best calculated to renew the hopes of the Christian. As for myself, it added a profound respect for the character and moral qualities of Ursula Malbone, to the love and admiration I bore her already, the fruits of her beauty, wit, heart, and other attractions.

The two expected deaths had now taken place, and it only remained to dispose of the legal questions connected with the events which had caused them, inter the bodies, and return to the Nest. I saw that one of the cabins was prepared for the reception of Ursula and Lowiny, the latter still clinging to us, while the body of Chainbearer was laid out in a coffin that had been made by the same hands, and at the same time, as that of Thousandacres. About noon, the coroner arrived, not 'Squire Newcome, but another, for whom he had himself sent; and a jury was immediately collected from among the members of the posse. The proceedings were of no great length. I told my story, or as much of it as was necessary, from beginning to end, and others gave their testimony as to the proceedings at different periods in the events. The finding was, in the case of Chainbearer, "murder by the hand of some person unknown;" and in that of Thousandacres, "accidental death." The first was right, unquestionably; as to the last, I conceive, there was as little of "accident" as ever occurred, when a man was shot through the body by a steady hand, and an unerring eye. But such was the verdict, and I had nothing but conjectures for my opinion as to the agency of the Indian in killing the squatter.

That evening, and a cool autumnal night it was, we buried Thousandacres, in the centre of the field I have mentioned. Of all his numerous family, Prudence and Lowiny alone were present. The service was short, and the man of violence descended to mingle with the clods of the earth, without a common prayer, a verse from Holy Writ, or any religious rite whatever. The men who had borne the body, and the few spectators present, filled the grave, rounded it handsomely, and covered it with sods, and were turning away in silence, to retrace their steps to the dwellings, when the profound stillness which had reigned throughout the whole of the brief ceremony, was suddenly broken by the clear, full voice of Prudence, who spoke in a tone and manner that arrested every step.

"Men and brethren," said this extraordinary woman, who had so many of the vices of her condition, relieved by so many of the virtues of her sex and origin. "Men and brethren," she said, "for I cannot call ye neighbours, and *will* not call you foes, I thank ye for this act of decent regard to the wants of both the departed and the living, and that ye have thus come to assist in burying my dead out of my sight."

Some such address, even a portion of these very words, were customary; but as no one had expected anything of the sort at that moment, they startled as much as they surprised us. As the rest of the party recovered from its wonder, however, it proceeded towards the huts, leaving me alone with Prudence, who stood, swinging her body as usual, by the side of the grave.

"The night threatens to be cool," I said, "and you had better return with me to the dwellings."

"What's the houses to me, now! Aaron is gone, the b'ys be fled, and their wives and children, and *my* children, be fled, leaving none in this clearin' but Lowiny, who belongs more to your'n in feelin', than to me and mine, and the body that lies beneath the clods! There 's property in the housen, that I do s'pose even the law would give us, and maybe some one may want it. Give me that, Major Littlepage, to help to clothe and feed my young, and I 'll never trouble this place ag'in. They 'll not call Aaron a squatter for takin' up that small piece of 'arth; and one day, perhaps, you 'll not grudge to me as much more by its side. It 's little more squattin' that I can do, and the next pitch I make, will be the last."

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"There is no wish on my part, good woman, to injure you. Your effects can be taken away from this place whenever you please, and I will even help you to do it," I answered, "in such a way as to put it in the power of your sons to receive the goods without risk to themselves. I remember to have seen a batteau of some size in the stream below the mill; can you tell me whether it remains there, or not?"

"Why shouldn't it? The b'ys built it two years ago, to transport things in, and it 's not likely to go off of itself."

"Well, then, I will use that boat to get your effects off with safety to yourself. To-morrow, everything of any value that can be found about this place, and to which you can have any right, shall be put in that batteau, and I will send the boat, when loaded, down the stream, by means of my own black and the Indian, who shall abandon it a mile or two below, where those you may send to look for it, can take possession and carry the effects to any place you may choose."

The woman seemed surprised, and even affected by this proposal, though she a little distrusted my motives.

"Can I depend on this, Major Littlepage?" she asked, doubtingly. "Tobit and his brethren would be desp'rate, if any scheme to take 'em should be set on foot under sich a disguise."

"Tobit and his brethren have nothing to fear from treachery of mine. Has the word of a gentleman no value in your eyes?"

"I know that gentlemen gin'rally do as they promise; and so I 've often told Aaron, as a reason for not bein' hard on their property, but he never would hear to it. Waal, Major Littlepage, I 'll put faith in you, and will look for the batteau at the place you 've mentioned. God bless you for this, and may be prosper you in that which is nearest your heart! We shall never see each other ag'in farewell."

You surely will return to the house, and pass the night comfortably under a roof!"

"No; I 'll quit you here. The housen have little in 'em now that I love, and I shall be happier in the woods."

"But the night is cool, and, ere it be morning it will become even chilling and cold."

"It's colder in that grave," answered the woman, pointing mournfully with her long, skinny finger to the mound which covered the remains of her husband. "I 'm used to the forest, and go to look for my children. The mother that looks for her children is not to be kept back by winds and frost. Farewell ag'in, Major Littlepage. May God remember what you have done, and will do, for me and mine!"

"But you forget your daughter. What is to become of your daughter?"

"Lowiny has taken desp'rately to Dus Malbone, and wishes to stay with her while Dus wishes to have her stay. If they get tired of each other, my da'ghter can easily find us. No gal of mine will be long put out in sich a s'arch."

As all this sounded probable and well enough, I had no further objections to urge. Prudence waved her hand in adieu, and away she went across the dreary-looking fields with the strides of a man, burying her tall, gaunt figure in the shadow of the wood, with as little hesitation as another would have entered the well-known avenues of some town. I never saw her afterwards; though one or two messages from her did reach me through Lowiny.

As I was returning from the grave, Jaap and the Trackless came in from their scout. The report they made was perfectly satisfactory. By the trail, which they followed for miles, the squatters had actually absconded, pushing for some distant point, and nothing more was to be feared from them in that part of the country. I now gave my orders as respected the goods and chattels of the family, which were neither very numerous nor very valuable; and

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it may as well be said here as later, that everything was done next day, strictly according to promise. The first of the messages that I received from Prudence came within a month, acknowledging the receipt of her effects, even to the gear of the mill, and expressing her deep gratitude for the favour. I have reason to think, too, that nearly half the lumber fell into the hands of these squatters, quite that portion of it being in the stream at the time we removed from the spot, and floating off with the rains that soon set in. What was found at a later day was sold, and the proceeds were appropriated to meet the expenses of, and to make presents to the posse, as an encouragement to such persons to see the majesty of the laws maintained.

Early next morning we made our preparations to quit the deserted mill. Ten of the posse arranged themselves into a party to see the body of Chainbearer transported to the Nest. This was done by making a rude bier, that was carried by two horses, one preceding the other, and having the corpse suspended between them. I remained with the body; but Dus, attended by Lowiny, and protected by her brother, preceded us, halting at Chainbearer's huts for our arrival. At this point we passed the first night of our journey, Dus and Frank again preceding us, always on foot, to the Nest. At this place, the final halt of poor Andries, the brother and sister arrived at an hour before dinner, while we did not get in with the body until the sun was just setting.

As our little procession drew near the house, I saw a number of wagons and horses in the orchard that spread around it, which, at first, I mistook for a collection of the tenants, met to do honour to the manes of Chainbearer. A second look, however, let me into the true secret of the case. As we drew slowly near, the whole procession on foot, I discovered the persons of my own dear parents, that of colonel Follock, those of Kate, Pris. Bayard, Tom Bayard, and even of my sister Kettletas, in the group. Last of all, I saw, pressing forward to meet me, yet a little repelled by the appearance of the coffin, my dear and venerable old grandmother, herself!

Here, then, were assembled nearly all of the house of Littlepage, with two or three near friends, who did not belong to it! Frank Malbone was among them, and doubtless had told his story, so that our visitors could not be surprised at our appearance. On the other hand, I was at no loss to understand how all this had been brought about. Frank's express had found the party at Fishkill, had communicated his intelligence, set everybody in motion on the wings of anxiety and love, and here they were. The journey had not been particularly rapid either, plenty of time having elapsed between the time when my seizure by the squatters was first made known to my friends, and the present moment, to have got a message to Lilacsbrush, and to have received its answer.

Kate afterwards told me we made an imposing and solemn appearance, as we came up to the gate of Ravensnest, bearing the body of Chainbearer. In advance marched Susquesus and Jaap, each armed, and the latter carrying an axe, acting, as occasion required, in the character of a pioneer. The bearers and attendants came next, two and two, armed as part of the posse, and carrying packs; next succeeded the horses with the bier, each led by a keeper; I was the principal mourner, though armed like the rest, while Chainbearer's poor slaves, now the property of Dus, brought up the rear, carrying his compass, chains, and the other emblems of his calling.

We made no halt, but passing the crowd collected on the lawn, we went through the gate-way, and only came to a stand when we had reached the centre of the court. As all the arrangements had been previously made, the next step was to inter the body. I knew that general Littlepage had often officiated on such occasions, and a request to that effect was made to him, through Tom Bayard. As for myself, I said not a word to any of my own family, begging them to excuse me until I had seen the last offices performed to the remains of my friend. In half an hour all was ready, and again the solemn procession was resumed. As before, Susquesus and Jaap led the way, the latter now carrying a shovel, and acting in the capacity of a sexton. The Indian bore a flaming torch of pine, the darkness having so far advanced as to render artificial light necessary. Others of the party had these natural flambeaux, also, which added greatly to the solemnity and impressiveness of the scene. General Littlepage preceded the corpse, carrying a prayer-book. Then followed the bearers, with the coffin, the horses being now dismissed. Dus, veiled in black from head to foot, and, leaning on Frank, appeared as chief mourner. Though this was not strictly in conformity with real New York habits, yet no one thought the occasion one on which to manifest the customary reserve of the sex. Everybody in or near the Nest, females as well as males, appeared to

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do honour to the memory of Chainbearer, and Dus came forth as the chief mourner. Priscilla Bayard, leaning on the arm of her brother Tom, edged herself in next to her friend, though they had not as yet exchanged a syllable together; and, after all was over, Pris. told me it was the first funeral she had ever attended, or the first time she had ever been at a grave. The same was true of my grandmother, my mother, and both my sisters. I mention this lest some antiquarian, a thousand years hence, might light on this manuscript, and mistake our customs. Of late years, the New Englanders are introducing an innovation on the old usage of the colony; but, among the upper real New York families, women do not even now attend funerals. In this respect, I apprehend, we follow the habits of England, where females of the humbler classes, as I have heard, do, while their superiors do not appear on such occasions. The reason of the difference between the two is very easily appreciated, though I limit my statements to what I conceive to be the facts, without affecting to philosophize on them.

But, all our ladies attended the funeral of Chainbearer. I came next to Tom and Priscilla, Kate pressing up to my side, and placing her arm in mine, without speaking. As she did this, however, the dear girl laid her little hand on mine, and gave the latter a warm pressure, as much as to say how greatly she was rejoiced at finding me safe, and out of the hands of the Philistines. The rest of the party fell in behind, and, as soon as the Indian saw that everybody was placed, he moved slowly forward, holding his flaming torch so high as to light the footsteps of those near him.

Directions had been sent to the 'Nest to dig a grave for Andries, in the orchard, and at no great distance from the verge of the rocks. As I afterwards ascertained, it was at the very spot where one of the most remarkable events in the life of the general had occurred; an event in which both Susquesus and Jaap had been conspicuous actors. Thither, then, we proceeded, in funereal order, and with funereal tread, the torches throwing their wild and appropriate light over the nearer accessories of the scene. Never did the service sound more solemnly to me, there being a pathos and richness in my father's voice that were admirably adapted to the occasion. Then he felt what he was reading, which does not always happen even when clergymen officiate; for not only was general Littlepage a close friend of the deceased, but he was a devout christian. I felt a throb at the heart, as I heard the fall of the first clods on the coffin of Chainbearer; but reflection brought its calm, and from that moment Dus became, as it might be, doubly dear to me. It appeared to me as if all her uncle's love and care had been transferred to myself, and that, henceforth, I was to be his representative with his much-beloved niece. I did not hear a sob from Ursula during the whole ceremony. I knew that she wept, and wept bitterly: but her self-command was so great as to prevent any undue obtrusion of her griefs on others. We all remained at the grave until Jaap had rounded it with his utmost skill, and had replaced the last sod. Then the procession formed anew, and we accompanied Frank and Dus to the door of the house, when she entered and left us without. Priscilla Bayard, however, glided in after her friend, and I saw them locked in each other's arms, through the window of the parlour, by the light of the fire within. At the next moment, they retired together to the little room that Dus had appropriated to her own particular use.

Now it was that I embraced and was embraced by my friends. My mother held me long in her arms, called me her "dear, dear boy," and left tears on my face. Kate did pretty much the same, though she said nothing. As for Anneke, my dear sister Kettletas, her embrace was like herself, gentle, sincere, and warm-hearted. Nor must my dear old grandmother be forgotten; for though she came last of the females, she held me longest in her arms, and, after "thanking God" devoutly for my late escape, she protested that "I grew every hour more and more like the Littlepages." Aunt Mary kissed me with her customary affection.

A portion of these embraces, however, occurred after we had entered the parlour, which Frank, imitating Dus, had delicately, as well as considerately, left to ourselves. Colonel Follock, nevertheless, gave me his salutations and congratulations before we left the court; and they were as cordial and hearty as if he had been a second father.

"How admirably the general reats, Mortaunt," our old friend added, becoming very Dutch as he got to be excited. "I haf always sayet t'at Corny Littlepage woult make as goot a tominie as any rector t'ey ever hat in olt Trinity. Put he mate as goot a soltier, too. Corny ist an extraordinary man, Mortaunt, ant one tay he wilt pe gofemor."

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This was a favourite theory of colonel Van Valkenburgh's. For himself, he was totally without ambition, whereas he thought nothing good enough for his friend, Corny Littlepage. Scarce a year passed that he did not allude to the propriety of elevating `t'e general' to some high office or other; nor am I certain that his allusions of this nature may not have had their effect; since my father *was* elected to Congress as soon as the new constitution was formed, and continued to sit as long as his health and comfort would permit.

Supper was prepared for both parties of travellers, of course, and in due time we all took our seats at table. I say all; but that was not literally exact, inasmuch as neither Frank, Dus, nor Priscilla Bayard, appeared among us again that evening. I presume each had something to eat, though all took the meal apart from the rest of the family.

After supper I was requested to relate, *seriatim*, all the recent events connected with my visit to the 'Nest, my arrest and liberation. This I did, of course, seated at my grandmother's side, the old lady holding one of my hands the whole time I was speaking. The most profound attention was lent by all the party; and a thoughtful silence succeeded my narration, which ended only with the history of our departure from the mills.

"Ay," exclaimed colonel Follock, who was first to speak after I had terminated my own account. "So much for Yankee religion! I 'll warrant you now, Corny, t'at t'e fellow, T'ousantacres, coult preach ant pray just like all t'e rest of our Pilgrim Fat'ers."

"There are rogues of New York birth and extraction, Colonel Follock, as well as of New England," answered my father, drily; "and the practice of squatting is incidental to the condition of the country; as men are certain to make free with the property that is least protected and watched. Squatters are made by circumstances, and not by any peculiar disposition of a particular portion of the population to appropriate the land of others to their own uses. It would be the same with our hogs and our horses, were they equally exposed to the depredations of lawless men, let the latter come from Connecticut or Long Island."

"Let me catch one of t'ese gentry among my horses!" answered the colonel, with a menacing shake of his head, for, Dutchman-like, he had a wonderful love for the species "I woult crop him wit' my own hants, wit'out chudge or chury."

"That might lead to evils *almost* as great as those produced by squatting, Dirck," returned my father.

"By the way, sir," I put in, knowing that Colonel Follock sometimes uttered extravagances on such subjects, though as honest and well-meaning a man as ever breathed "I have forgotten to mention a circumstance that may have some interest, as 'squire Newcome is an old acquaintance of yours." I then recounted all the facts connected with the first visit of Mr. Jason Newcome to the clearing of Thousandacres, and the substance of the conversation I had overheard between the squatter and that upright magistrate. General Littlepage listened with profound attention; and as for colonel Follock, he raised his eye-brows, grunted, laughed as well as a man could with his lips compressing a pipe, and uttered in the best way he was able, under the circumstances, and with sufficient sententiousness, the single word `Danpury!'"

"No no Dirck," answered my father, "we must not put all these crimes and vices on our neighbours, for many of them grow, from the seedling to the tree bearing fruit, in our own soil: I know this man, Jason Newcome, reasonably well; and, while I have confided in him more than I ought, perhaps, I have never supposed he was a person in the least influenced by our conventional notions of honour and integrity. What is called "Law Honest," I *have* believed him to be; but it would seem, in that I have been mistaken. Still, I am not prepared to admit that the place of his birth, or his education, is the sole cause of his backslidings."

"Own t'e trut', Corny, like a man ast you pe, ant confess it ist all our pilgrim fat'ers' ant Tanpury itees. What use ist t'ere in misleetin' your own son, who wilt come, sooner or later, to see t'e whole trut'?"

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"I should be sorry, Dirck, to teach my son any narrow prejudices. The last war has thrown me much among officers from New England, and the intercourse has taught me to esteem that portion of our fellow-citizens more than was our custom previously to the Revolution."

"Tush for `intercourse,' ant `esteem,' ant `teachin', Corny! T'e whole t'ing of squattin' hast crosset t'e Byram rifer, ant unless we look to it, t'e Yankees wilt get all our lants away from us!"

"Jason Newcome, when I knew him best, and I may say first," continued my father, without appearing to pay much attention to the observations of his friend, the colonel, "was an exceedingly unfledged, narrow-minded provincial, with a most overweening notion, certainly, of the high excellencies of the particular state of society from which he had not long before emerged. He had just as great a contempt for New York, and New York wit, and New York usages, and especially for New York religion and morals, as Dirck here seems to have for all those excellencies as they are exhibited in New England. In a word, the Yankee despised the Dutchman, and the Dutchman abominated the Yankee. In all this, there is nothing new, and I fancy the supercilious feeling of the New England-man can very easily be traced to his origin in the mother country. But, differences *do* exist, I admit, and I consider the feeling with which every New Englander comes among us, to be, by habit, adverse to our state of society in many particulars some good and some bad and this merely because he is not accustomed to them. Among other things, as a whole, the population of these states do not relish the tenures by which our large estates are held. There are plenty of men, from that quarter of the country, who are too well taught, and whose honesty is too much of proof, not to wish to oppose anything that is wrong in connection with this subject; still, the prejudices of nearly all who come from the east are opposed to the relation of landlord and tenant, and this because they do not wish to see large landlords among them, not being large landlords themselves. I never found any gentleman, or man of education from New England, who saw any harm in a man's leasing a single farm to a single tenant, or half-a-dozen farms to half-a-dozen tenants; proof that it is not the tenure itself with which they quarrel, but with a class of men who are, or seem to be, their superiors."

"I have heard the argument used against the leasehold system, that it retards the growth and lessens the wealth of any district in which it may prevail."

"That it does not retard the growth, is proved by the fact that farms can be leased *always*, when it often requires years to sell them. This estate is half filled now, and will be entirely occupied, long ere Mooseridge will be a third sold. That the latter may be the richest and the best tilled district, in the end, is quite probable; and this for the simple reasons that richer men buy than rent, to begin with, and the owner usually takes better care of his farm than the mere tenant. Some of the richest, best cultivated, and most civilized regions on earth, however, are those in which the tenures of the actual occupants are, and ever have been, merely leasehold. It is easy to talk, and to feel, in these matters, but not quite so easy to come to just conclusions as some imagine. There are portions of England, for instance Norfolk in particular where the improvements are almost entirely owing to the resources and enterprise of the large proprietors. As a question of political economy, Mordaunt, depend on it, this is one that has two sides to it; as a question of mere stomach, each man will be apt to view it as his gorge is up or down."

Shortly after this was said, the ladies complained of fatigue, a feeling in which we all participated; and the party broke up for the night. It seems the General had sent back word by the express, of the accommodations he should require; which enabled the good people of the Nest to make such arrangements as rendered everybody reasonably comfortable.

CHAPTER XV.

"*Lid.*

The victory is yours, sir."

"*King.*

It is a glorious one, and well sets off Our scene of mercy; to the dead we tender Our sorrow; to the living, ample wishes Of future happiness."

Beaumont and Fletcher.

Fatigue kept me in bed next morning until it was late. On quitting the house I passed through the gateway, then always left open defence being no longer thought of and walked musingly towards the grave of Chainbearer. Previously to doing this, I went as far as each corner of the building, however, to cast an eye over the fields. On one side of the house I saw my father and mother, arm in arm, gazing around them; while on the other, Aunt Mary stood by herself, looking wistfully in the direction of a wooded ravine, which had been the scene of some important event in the early history of the country. When she turned to re enter the building, I found her face bathed in tears. This respectable woman, who was now well turned of forty, had lost her betrothed in battle, on that very spot, a quarter of a century before, and was now gazing on the sad scene for the first time since the occurrence of the event.

Something almost as interesting, though not of so sad a nature, also drew my parents to the other side of the house. When I joined them, an expression of grateful happiness, a little saddened perhaps by incidental recollections, was on the countenance of each. My dear mother kissed me affectionately as I drew near, and the general cordially gave me his hand while wishing me good-morning.

"We were talking of you," observed the last, "at the very moment you appeared. Ravensnest is now becoming a valuable property; and its income, added to the products of this large, and very excellent farm that you have in your own hands, should keep a country-house, not only in abundance, but with something more. You will naturally think of marrying ere long, and your mother and I were just saying that you ought to build a good, substantial stone dwelling on this very spot, and settle down on your own property. Nothing contributes so much to the civilization of a country as to dot it with a gentry, and you will both give and receive advantages by adopting such a course. It is impossible for those who have never been witnesses of the result, to appreciate the effect produced by one gentleman's family in a neighbourhood, in the way of manners, tastes, general intelligence, and civilization at large."

"I am very willing to do my duty, sir, in this, as in other particulars; but a good stone country-house, such as a landlord ought to build on his property, will cost money, and I have no sum in hand to use for such a purpose."

"The house will cost far less than you suppose. Materials are cheap, and so is labour just now. Your mother and myself will manage to let you have a few extra thousands, for our town property is beginning to tell again, and fear nothing on that score. Make your selection of a spot, and lay the foundation of the house this autumn; order the lumber sawed, the lime burned, and other preparations made and arrange matters so that you can eat your Christmas dinner, in the year 1785, in the new residence of Ravensnest. By that time you will be ready to get married, and we may all come up to the house-warming."

"Has anything occurred in particular, sir, to induce you to imagine I am in any haste to marry? You seem to couple matrimony and the new house together, in a way to make me think there has."

I caught the general there, and, while my mother turned her head aside and smiled, I saw that my father coloured a little, though he made out to laugh. After a moment of embarrassment, however, he answered with spirit my good, old grandmother coming up and linking her arm at his vacant side as he did so.

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"Why, Mord, my boy, you can have very little of the sensibility of the Littlepages in you," he said, "if you can be a daily spectator of such female loveliness as is now near you, and not lose your heart."

Grandmother fidgeted, and so did my mother; for I could see that both thought the general had made too bold a demonstration. With the tact of their sex, they would have been more on their guard. I reflected a moment, and then determined to be frank; the present being as good a time as any other, to reveal my secret.

"I do not intend to be insincere with you, my dear sir," I answered, "for I know how much better it is to be open on matters that are of a common interest in a family, than to affect mysteriousness. I am a true Littlepage on the score of sensibility to the charms of the sex, and have not lived in daily familiar intercourse with female loveliness, without experiencing so much of its influence as to be a warm advocate for matrimony. It is my wish to marry, and that, too, before this new abode of Ravensnest can be completed."

The common exclamation of delight that followed this declaration, sounded in my ears like a knell, for I knew it must be succeeded by a disappointment exactly proportioned to the present hopes. But I had gone too far to retreat, and felt bound to explain myself.

"I 'm afraid, my dear parents, and my beloved grandmother," I continued, as soon as I could speak, conscious of the necessity of being as prompt as possible, "that you have misunderstood me."

"Not at all, my dear boy not at all," interrupted my father. "You admire Priscilla Bayard, but have not yet so far presumed on your reception as to offer. But what of that? Your modesty is in your favour; though I will acknowledge that, in my judgment, a gentleman is bound to let his mistress know, as soon as his own mind is made up, that he is a suitor for her hand, and that it is ungenerous and unmanly to wait until certain of success. Remember that, Mordaunt, my boy; modesty may be carried to a fault in a matter of this sort."

"You still misunderstand me, sir. I have nothing to reproach myself with on the score of manliness, though I may have gone too far in another way without consulting my friends. Beyond sincere good-will and friendship, Priscilla Bayard is nothing to me, and I am nothing to Priscilla Bayard."

"Mordaunt!" exclaimed a voice, that I never heard without its exciting filial tenderness.

"I have said but truth, dearest mother, and truth that ought to have been sooner said. Miss Bayard would refuse me to-morrow, were I to offer."

"You don't know that, Mordaunt You *can't* know it until you try," interrupted my grandmother, somewhat eagerly. "The minds of young women are not to be judged by the same rules as those of young men. Such an offer will not come every day, I can tell her; and she 's much too discreet and right-judging to do anything so silly. To be sure, I have no authority to say how Priscilla feels towards you; but, if her heart is her own, and Mordy Littlepage be not the youth that has stolen it, I am no judge of my own sex."

"But, you forget, dearest grandmother, that were your flattering opinions in my behalf all true as I have good reason to believe they are not but were they true, I could only regret it should be so; for I love another."

This time the sensation was so profound as to produce a common silence. Just at that moment an interruption occurred, of a nature both so sweet and singular, as greatly to relieve me at least, and to preclude the necessity of my giving any immediate account of my meaning. I will explain how it occurred.

The reader may remember that there were, originally, loops in the exterior walls of the house at Ravensnest, placed there for the purposes of defence, and which were used as small windows in these peaceable times. We were standing beneath one of those loops, not near enough, however, to be seen or heard by one at the loop,

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unless we raised our voices above the tone in which we were actually conversing. Out of this loop, at that precise instant, issued the low, sweet strains of one of Dus' exquisite Indian hymns, I might almost call them, set, as was usual with her, to a plaintive Scotch melody. On looking towards the grave of Chainbearer, I saw Susquesus standing over it, and I at once understood the impulse which led Ursula to sing this song. The words had been explained to me, and I knew that they alluded to a warrior's grave.

The raised finger, the delighted expression of the eye, the attitude of intense listening which my beloved mother assumed, each and all denoted the pleasure and emotion she experienced. When, however, the singer suddenly changed the language to English, after the last guttural words of the Onondago had died on our ears, and commenced to the same strain a solemn English hymn, that was short in itself, but full of piety and hope, the tears started out of my mother's and grandmother's eyes, and even General Littlepage sought an occasion to blow his nose in a very suspicious manner. Presently, the sounds died away, and that exquisite melody ceased.

"In the name of wonder, Mordaunt, who can this nightingale be?" demanded my father, for neither of the ladies could speak.

"*That* is the person, sir, who has my plighted faith the woman I must marry, or remain single."

"This, then, must be the Dus Malbone, or Ursula Malbone, of whom I have heard so much from Priscilla Bayard, within the last day or two," said my mother, in the tone and with the manner of one who is suddenly enlightened on any subject that has much interest with him, or her; "I ought to have expected something of the sort, if half the praises of Priscilla be true."

No one had a better mother than myself. Thoroughly a lady in all that pertains to the character, she was also an humble and pious Christian. Nevertheless, humility and piety are, in some respects, particularly the first, matters of convention. The fitness of things had great merit in the eyes of both my parents, and I cannot say that it is entirely without it in mine. In nothing is this fitness of things more appropriate than in equalizing marriages; and few things are less likely to be overlooked by a discreet parent, than to have all proper care that the child connects itself prudently; and that, too, as much in reference to station, habits, opinions, breeding in particular, and the general way of thinking, as to fortune. Principles are inferred among people of principle, as a matter of course; but subordinate to these, worldly position is ever of great importance in the eyes of parents. My parents could not be very different from those of other people, and I could see that both now thought that Ursula Malbone, the Chainbearer's niece, one who had actually carried chain herself, for I had lightly mentioned that circumstance in one of my letters, was scarcely a suitable match for the only son of General Littlepage. Neither said much, however; though my father did put one or two questions that were somewhat to the point, ere we separated.

"Am I to understand, Mordaunt," he asked, with a little of the gravity a parent might be expected to exhibit on hearing so unpleasant an announcement "Am I to understand, Mordaunt, that you are actually engaged to this young eh—eh—eh this young person?"

"Do not hesitate, my dear sir, to call Ursula Malbone a lady. She is a lady by both birth and education. The last, most certainly, or she never could have stood in the relation she does to your family."

"And what relation is that, sir?"

"It is just this, my dear father. I have offered to Ursula indiscreetly, hastily, if you will, as I ought to have waited to consult you and my mother but we do not always follow the dictates of propriety in a matter of so much feeling. I dare say, sir, you did better" here I saw a slight smile on the pretty mouth of my mother, and I began to suspect that the general had been no more dutiful than myself in this particular "but I hope my forgetfulness will be excused, on account of the influence of a passion which we all find so hard to resist."

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"But, what is the relation this young lady bears to my family, Mordaunt? You are not already married?"

"Far from it, sir; I should not so far have failed in respect to you three or even to Anneke and Katrinke. I have *offered*, and have been conditionally accepted."

"Which condition is "

"The consent of you three; the perfect approbation of my whole near connection. I believe that Dus, *dear* Dus; does love me, and that she would cheerfully give me her hand, were she certain of its being agreeable to you, but that no persuasion of mine will ever induce her so to do, under other circumstances."

"This is something, for it shows the girl has principle," answered my father. "Why, who goes there?"

"Who went there?" sure enough. There went Frank Malbone and Priscilla Bayard, arm and arm, and so engrossed in conversation that they did not see who were observing them. I dare say they fancied they were in the woods, quite sheltered from curious eyes, and at liberty to saunter about, as much occupied with each other as they pleased; or, what is more probable, that they thought of nothing, just then, but of themselves. They came out of the court, and walked off swiftly into the orchard, appearing to tread on air, and seemingly as happy as the birds that were carolling on the surrounding trees.

"There, sir," I said, significantly "There, my dear mother, is the proof that Miss Priscilla Bayard will not break her heart on my account."

"This is very extraordinary, indeed!" exclaimed my much disappointed grandmother "Is not that the young man who we were told acted as Chainbearer's surveyor, Corny?"

"It is, my good mother, and a very proper and agreeable youth he is, as I know by a conversation held with him last night. It is very plain we have all been mistaken" added the general; "though I do not know that we ought to say that we have any of us been deceived."

"Here comes Kate, with a face which announces that she is fully mistress of the secret," I put in, perceiving my sister coming round our angle of the building, with a countenance which I knew betokened that her mind and heart were full. She joined us, took my arm without speaking, and followed my father who led his wife and mother to a rude bench that had been placed at the foot of a tree, where we all took seats, each waiting for some other to speak. My grandmother broke the silence.

"Do you see Pris. Bayard yonder, walking with that Mr. Frank Chainbearer, or Surveyor, or whatever his name is, Katrinke dear?" asked the good *old* lady.

"I do, grandmamma," answered the good *young* lady, in a voice so pitched as to be hardly audible.

"And can you explain what it means, darling?"

"I believe I can, ma'am if if Mordaunt wishes to hear."

"Don't mind me, Kate," returned I, smiling "My heart will never be broken by Miss Priscilla Bayard."

The look of sisterly solicitude that I received from that honest-hearted girl, ought to have made me feel very grateful; and it did make me feel grateful, for a sister's affection is a sweet thing. I believe the calmness of my countenance and its smiling expression encouraged the dear creature, for she now began to tell her story as fast as was at all in rule.

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"The meaning, then, is this," said Kate. "That gentleman is Mr. Francis Malbone, and he is the engaged suitor of Priscilla. I have had all the facts from her own mouth."

"Will you, then, let us hear as many of them as it is proper we should know?" said the general, gravely.

"There is no wish on the part of Priscilla to conceal anything. She has known Mr. Malbone several years, and they have been attached all that time. Nothing impeded the affair but his poverty. Old Mr. Bayard objected to that, of course you know, as fathers will, and Priscilla would not engage herself. But do you not remember to have heard of the death of an old Mrs. Hazleton, at Bath in England, this summer, mamma? The Bayards are in half-mourning for her, now."

"Certainly, my dear Mrs. Hazleton was Mr. Bayard's aunt; I knew her well once, before she became a refugee her husband was a half-pay Colonel Hazleton of the royal artillery; and they were Tories of course. The aunt was named Priscilla, and was godmother to our Pris."

"Just so Well, this lady has left Pris, ten thousand pounds in the English funds, and the Bayards now consent to her marrying Mr. Malbone. They say, too, but I don't think *that* can have had any influence, for Mr. Bayard and his wife are particularly disinterested people, as indeed are all the family" added Kate, hesitatingly and looking down: "but they *say* that the death of some young man will probably leave Mr. Malbone the heir of an aged cousin of his late father's."

"And now, my dear father and mother, you will perceive that Miss Bayard will not break her heart because I happen to love Dus Malbone. I see by your look, Katrinke, that you have had some hint of this backsliding also."

"I have; and what is more, I have seen the young lady, and can hardly wonder at it. Anneke and I have been passing two hours with her this morning; and, since you cannot get Pris., I know no other, Mordaunt who will so thoroughly supply her place. Anneke is in love with her also!"

Dear, good, sober-minded, judicious Anneke; she had penetrated into the true character of Dus, in a single interview; a circumstance that I ascribed to the impression left by the recent death of Chainbearer. Ordinarily, that spirited young woman would not have permitted a sufficiently near approach in a first interview, to permit a discovery of so many of her sterling qualities; but now her heart was softened, and her spirit so much subdued, one of Anneke's habitual gentleness would be very apt to win on her sympathies, and draw the two close to each other. The reader is not to suppose that Dus had opened her mind like a vulgar school-girl, and made my sister a confidant of the relation in which she and I stood to one another. She had not said, or hinted, a syllable on the subject. The information Kate possessed had come from Priscilla Bayard, who obtained it from Frank, as a matter of course; and my sister subsequently admitted to me that her friend's happiness was augmented by the knowledge that I should not be a sufferer by her earlier preference for Malbone, and that she was likely to have me for a brother-in-law. All this I gleaned from Kate, in our subsequent conferences.

"This is extraordinary!" exclaimed the general "very extraordinary; and to me quite unexpected."

"We can have no right to control Miss Bayard's choice," observed my discreet and high-principled mother. "She is her own mistress, so far as *we* are concerned; and if her own parents approve of her choice, the less we say about it the better. As respects this connection of Mordaunt's, I hope he, himself, will admit of our right to have opinions."

"Perfectly so, my dearest mother. All I ask of you is to express no opinion, however, until you have seen Ursula have become acquainted with her, and are qualified to judge of her fitness to be not only mine, but any man's wife. I ask but this of your justice."

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"It is just; and I shall act on the suggestion," observed my father. "You *have* a right to demand this of us, Mordaunt, and I can promise for your mother, as well as myself."

"After all, Anneke," put in grandmother, "I am not sure we have no right to complain of Miss Bayard's conduct towards us. Had she dropped the remotest hint of her being engaged to this Malbrook, I would never have endeavoured to lead my grandson to think of her seriously for one moment."

"Your grandson never *has* thought of her seriously for one moment, or for half a moment, dearest grandmother," I cried; "so give your mind no concern on that subject. Nothing of the sort could make me happier than to know that Priscilla Bayard is to marry Frank Malbone; unless it were to be certain I am myself to marry the latter's half-sister."

"How can this be? How could such a thing possibly come to pass, my child! I do not remember ever to have *heard* of this person much less to have spoken to you on the subject of such a connection."

"Oh! dearest grandmother, we truant children sometimes get conceits of this nature into our heads and hearts, without stopping to consult our relatives as we ought to do."

But it is useless to repeat all that was said in the long and desultory conversation that followed. I had no reason to be dissatisfied with my parents, who ever manifested towards me not only great discretion, but great indulgence. I confess, when a domestic came to say that Miss Dus was at the breakfast-table, waiting for us alone, I trembled a little for the effect that might be produced on her appearance by the scenes she had lately gone through. She had wept a great deal in the course of the last week; and when I last saw her, which was the glimpse caught at the funeral, she was pale and dejected in aspect. A lover is so jealous of even the impression that his mistress will make on those he wishes to admire her, that I felt particularly uncomfortable as we entered first the court, then the house, and last the eating-room.

A spacious and ample board had been spread for the accommodation of our large party. Anneke, Priscilla, Frank Malbone, Aunt Mary, and Ursula, were already seated when we entered, Dus occupying the head of the table. No one had commenced the meal, nor had the young mistress of the board even begun to pour out the tea and coffee (for my presence had brought abundance into the house), but there she sat, respectfully waiting for those to approach who might be properly considered the principal guests. I thought Dus had never appeared more lovely. Her dress was a neatly arranged and tasteful half-mourning; with which her golden hair, rosy cheeks, and bright eyes, contrasted admirably. The cheeks of Dus, too, had recovered their colour, and her eyes their brightness. The fact was, that the news of her brother's improved fortunes had even been better than we were just told. Frank found letters for him at the 'Nest, announcing the death of his kinsman, with a pressing invitation to join the bereaved parent, then an aged and bedridden invalid, as his adopted son. He was urged to bring Dus with him; and he received a handsome remittance to enable him so to do without inconvenience to himself. This alone would have brought happiness back to the countenance of the poor and dependent. Dus mourned her uncle in sincerity, and she long continued to mourn for him; but her mourning was that of the Christian who hoped. Chainbearer's hurt had occurred several days before; and the first feeling of sorrow had become lessened by time and reflection. His end had been happy; and he was now believed to be enjoying the fruition of his penitence through the sacrifice of the Son of God.

It was easy to detect the surprise that appeared in the countenances of all my parents, as Miss Malbone rose, like one who was now confident of her position and claims to give and to receive the salutations that were proper for the occasion. Never did any young woman acquit herself better than Dus, who curtsied gracefully as a queen; while she returned the compliments she received with the selfpossession of one bred in courts. To this she was largely indebted to nature; though her schooling had been good. Many of the first young women of the colony had been her companions for years; and in that day, manner was far more attended to than it is getting to be amongst us now. My mother was delighted; for, as she afterwards assured me, her mind was already made up to receive

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Ursula as a daughter; since she thought it due to honour to redeem my plighted faith. General Littlepage might not have been so very scrupulous; though even he admitted the right of the obligations I had incurred; but Dus fairly carried him by storm. The tempered sadness of her mien gave an exquisite finish to her beauty, rendering all she said, did, and looked, that morning, perfect. In a word, everybody was wondering; but everybody was pleased. An hour or two later, and after the ladies had been alone together, my excellent grandmother came to me and desired to have a little conversation with me apart. We found a seat in the arbour of the court; and my venerable parent commenced as follows:

"Well, Mordaunt, my dear, it *is* time that you should think of marrying and of settling in life. As Miss Bayard is happily engaged, I do not see that you can do better than to offer to Miss Malbone. Never have I seen so beautiful a creature; and the generous-minded Pris. tells me she is as good, and virtuous, and wise, as she is lovely. She is well born and well educated; and may have a good fortune in the bargain, if that old Mr. Malbone is as rich as they tell me is, and has conscience enough to make a just will. Take my advice, my dear son, and marry Ursula Malbone."

Dear grandmother! I did take her advice; and I am persuaded that, to her dying day, she was all the more happy under the impression that she had materially aided in bringing about the connection.

As General Littlepage and Colonel Follock had come so far, they chose to remain a month or two, in order to look after their lands, and to revisit some scenes in that part of the world in which both felt a deep interest. My mother, and Aunt Mary, too, seemed content to remain; for they remembered events which the adjacent country recalled to their minds with a melancholy pleasure. In the meanwhile Frank went to meet his cousin, and had time to return, ere our party was disposed to break up. During his absence everything was arranged for my marriage with his sister. This event took place just two months, to a day, from that of the funeral of Chainbearer. A clergyman was obtained from Albany to perform the ceremony, as neither party belonged to the Congregational order; and, an hour after we were united, everybody left us alone at the 'Nest, on their return south. I say everybody, though Jaap and Susquesus were exceptions. These two remained, and remain to this hour; though the negro did return to Lilacs-bush and Satanstoe to assemble his family, and to pay occasional visits.

There was much profound feeling, but little parade at the wedding. My mother had got to love Ursula as if she were her own child; and I had not only the pleasure, but the triumph of seeing the manner in which my betrothed rendered herself from day to day, and this without any other means than the most artless and natural, more and more acceptable to my friends.

"This is perfect happiness," said Dus to me, one lovely afternoon that we were strolling in company along the cliff near the Nest and a few minutes after she had left my mother's arms, who had embraced and blessed her, as a pious parent does both to a well-beloved child "This is perfect happiness, Mordaunt, to be the chosen of you, and the accepted of your parents! I never knew, until now, what it is to have a parent. Uncle Chainbearer did all he could for me, and I shall cherish his memory to my latest breath but uncle Chainbearer could never supply the place of a mother. How blessed, how undeservedly blessed does my lot promise to become! You will give me not only parents, and parents I can love as well as if they were those granted by nature, but you will give me also two such sisters as few others possess!"

"And I give you all, dearest Dus, encumbered with such a husband that I am almost afraid you will fancy the other gifts too dearly purchased, when you come to know him better."

The ingenuous, grateful look, the conscious blush, and the thoughtful, pensive smile, each and all said that my pleased and partial listener had no concern on that score. Had I then understood the sex as well as I now do, I might have foreseen that a wife's affection augments, instead of diminishing; that the love the pure and devoted matron bears her husband increases with time, and gets to be a part and parcel of her moral existence. I am no advocate of what are called, strictly, "marriages of reason" I think the solemn and enduring knot should be tied

by the hands of warm-hearted, impulsive affection, increased and strengthened by knowledge and confidential minglings of thought and feeling; but, I have lived long enough to understand that, lively as are the passions of youth, they produce no delights like those which spring from the tried and deep affections of a happy married life.

And we were married! The ceremony took place before breakfast, in order to enable our friends to reach the great highway ere night should overtake them. The meal that succeeded was silent and thoughtful. Then my dear, dear mother took Dus in her arms, and kissed and blessed her again and again. My honoured father did the same, bidding my weeping, but happy bride remember that she was now his daughter. "Mordaunt is a good fellow, at the bottom, dear, and will love and cherish you, as he has promised," added the general, blowing his nose to conceal his emotion; "but, should he ever forget any part of his vows, come to me, and I will visit him with a father's displeasure."

"No fear of Mordaunt no fear of Mordaunt," put in my worthy grandmother, who succeeded in the temporary leave-taking "he is a Littlepage, and all the Littlepages make excellent husbands. The boy is as like what his grandfather was, at his time of life, as one pea is like another. God bless you, daughter You will visit me at Satanstoe this fall, when I shall have great pleasure in showing you *my* general's picture."

Anneke, and Kate, and Pris. Bayard hugged Dus in such a way that I was afraid they would eat her up, while Frank took his leave of his sister with the manly tenderness he always showed her. The fellow was too happy himself, however, to be shedding many tears, though Dus actually sobbed on *his* bosom. The dear creature was doubtless running over the past, in her mind, and putting it in contrast with the blessed present.

At the end of the honey-moon, I loved Dus twice as much as I had loved her the hour we were married. Had any one told me this was possible, I should have derided the thought; but thus it was, and, I may truly add, thus has it ever continued to be. At the end of that month, we left Ravensnest for Lilacsbrush, when I had the pleasure of seeing my bride duly introduced to that portion of what is called the world, to which she properly belonged. Previously to quitting the Patent, however, all my plans were made, and contracts were signed, preparatory to the construction of the house that my father had mentioned. The foundation was laid that same season, and we did keep our Christmas holidays in it, the following year, by which time Dus had made me the father of a noble boy.

It is scarcely necessary to say that Frank and Pris. were married, as were Tom and Kate, at no great distance of time after ourselves. Both of those matches have turned out to be perfectly happy. Old Mr. Malbone did not survive the winter, and he left the whole of a very sufficient estate to his kinsman. Frank was desirous of making his sister a sharer in his good fortune, but I would not hear of it. Dus was treasure enough of herself, and wanted not money to enhance her value in my eyes. I thought so in 1785, and I think so to-day. We got some plate and presents, that were well enough, but never would accept any portion of the property. The rapid growth of New York brought our vacant lots in that thriving town into the market, and we soon became richer than was necessary to happiness. I hope the gifts of Providence have never been abused. Of one thing I am certain; Dus has ever been far more prized by me than any other of my possessions.

I ought to say a word of Jaap and the Indian. Both are still living, and both dwell at the Nest. For the Indian I caused a habitation to be erected in a certain ravine at no great distance from the house, and which had been the scene of one of his early exploits in that part of the country. Here he lives, and has lived for the last twenty years, and here he hopes to die. He gets his food, blankets, and whatever else is necessary to supply his few wants, at the Nest, coming and going at will. He is now drawing fast on old age, but retains his elastic step, upright movement, and vigour. I do not see but he may live to be a hundred. The same is true of Jaap. The old fellow holds on, and enjoys life like a true descendant of the Africans. He and Sus are inseparable, and often stray off into the forest on long hunts, even in the winter, returning with loads of venison, wild turkeys, and other game. The negro dwells at the Nest, but half his time he sleeps in the wigwam, as we call the dwelling of Sus. The two old fellows dispute frequently, and occasionally they quarrel; but, as neither drinks, the quarrels are never very long or very serious. They generally grow out of differences of opinion on moral philosophy, as connected with their respective views

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of the past and the future.

Lowiny remained with us as a maid until she made a very suitable marriage with one of my own tenants. For a little while after my marriage I thought she was melancholy, probably through regret for her absent and dispersed family; but this feeling soon disappeared, and she became contented and happy. Her good looks improved under the influence of civilization, and I have the satisfaction of adding that she never has had any reason to regret having attached herself to us. To this moment she is an out-door dependant and humble friend of my wife, and we find her particularly useful in cases of illness among our children.

What shall I say of 'squire Newcome? He lived to a good old age, dying quite recently; and, with many who knew, or, rather, who did *not* know him, he passed for a portion of the salt of the earth. I never proceeded against him on account of his connection with the squatters, and he lived his time in a sort of lingering uncertainty as to my knowledge of his tricks. That man became a sort of a deacon in his church, was more than once a member of the Assembly, and continued to be a favourite recipient of public favours down to his last moment; and this simply because his habits brought him near to the mass, and because he took the most elaborate care never to tell them a truth that was unpleasant. He once had the temerity to run against me for Congress, but that experiment proved to be a failure. Had it been attempted forty years later, it might have succeeded better. Jason died poor and in debt, after all his knavery and schemes. Avidity for gold had overreached itself in his case, as it does in those of so many others. His descendants, notwithstanding, remain with us; and, while they have succeeded to very little in the way of property, they are the legitimate heritors of their ancestor's vulgarity of mind and manners of his tricks, his dissimulations, and his frauds. This is the way in which Providence "visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generations."

Little more remains to be said. The owners of Mooseridge have succeeded in selling all the lots they wished to put into the market, and large sums stand secured on them, in the way of bonds and mortgages. Anneke and Kate have received fair portions of this property, including much that belonged to Colonel Follock, who now lives altogether with my parents. Aunt Mary, I regret to say, died a few years since, a victim to small-pox. She never married, of course, and left her handsome property between my sisters and a certain lady of the name of Ten Eyck, who needed it, and whose principal claim consisted in her being a third cousin of her former lover, I believe. My mother mourned the death of her friend sincerely, as did we all; but we had the consolation of believing her happy with the angels.

I caused to be erected, in the extensive grounds that were laid out around the new dwelling at the Nest, a suitable monument over the grave of Chainbearer. It bore a simple inscription, and one that my children now often read and comment on with pleasure. We all speak of him as "Uncle Chainbearer" to this hour, and his grave is never mentioned in other terms than those of "Uncle Chainbearer's grave." Excellent old man! That he was not superior to the failings of human nature, need not be said; but, so long as he lived, he lived a proof of how much more respectable and estimable is the man who takes simplicity, and honesty, and principle, and truth for his guide, than he who endeavours to struggle through the world by the aid of falsehood, chicanery, and trick.

THE END OF CHAINBEARER.