

"I will," he replied; "and if you will meet me the third night from this, at that old shanty on the other side of the river, I will have a horse there, and take you away to a place of safety."

Abigail assented, and, with a more hopeful heart than she had ever before carried into it, she returned to her lodge.

The next day, in going to the river for water, she chanced to meet a white man, one of the captives, alone. They had just time, before being observed, to talk over the Frenchman's proposal. He advised her to make the effort, telling her that he would leave a canoe for her that night at a certain place, and directing her, when she had crossed the river, to throw the paddle into the water, and to set the canoe afloat, so that the Indians might have no clue as to where she had crossed the river, or what direction she had taken.

CHAPTER V.

THE APPOINTED NIGHT—THE WAKEFUL SQUAW—FLIGHT—DISAPPOINTMENT—THE FRENCHMAN AGAIN—FLIGHT DISCOVERED—PURSUIT—A NARROW ESCAPE—CONCEALED IN A THICKET—KINDNESS OF THE FRENCHMAN AND HIS WIFE—REACHES DETROIT—MARRIAGE—SETTLEMENT IN CANADA—DEATH—HER DESCENDANTS.

Now that her arrangements were completed, the intrepid girl, who had endured years of servile bondage with remarkable equanimity, became nervous and excited. If the eye of her Indian mother rested upon her for a moment, she imagined that she detected suspicion in the glance. If an Indian strolling through the encampment, paused for an instant at the door of the lodge, to her fears he seemed to come to declare the discovery of the plot. In her state of intensified apprehension, the days seemed interminable. But old Time, who neither accelerates his progress to abbreviate our sufferings, nor retards it to prolong our enjoyments, dragged the weary days along at his usual pace, and brought the ardently longed-for night, pregnant with the maiden's fate.

It was dark and gloomy, well suited to the concealment necessary to her success. Having accomplished her daily tasks to the satisfaction of her dusky taskmistress, she lay down upon her primitive couch, devoutly hoping that it was for the last time. She did not go to sleep, but affected its semblance, while watching for the moment when her Indian mother should succumb to its power. The old squaw seemed wakeful, and continued up much later than usual, or so it appeared to the fancy of the excited girl; but, at length, she lay down, and soon gave unquestionable indications of profound sleep.

The critical moment had arrived. With a silent prayer to Heaven for protection and success, Abigail stealthily arose, and, picking up her scanty wardrobe, glided out of the lodge, performing her brief toilet as she groped her way in the darkness to the river.

The canoe was found in the designated spot. Her Indian training now served a good purpose, it having taught her how to noiselessly guide the slight bark across the stream. Having gained the opposite bank in safety, she set her canoe and paddle adrift, as she had been advised, and proceeded through the solitudes of the forest, in the blackness of midnight, to make her way towards the appointed rendezvous. Arrived there, she searched for the man and horse she had expected to find awaiting her, but to no purpose. She went up to the door of the dismal old shanty, and called as loudly as she dared, fearing that the sound of her voice might reach other ears than those for which it was intended, but she received no answer. She wandered about the old encampment searching in vain for the promised deliverer, but finding no evidence of the presence in the dreary solitude of any other living creature but herself alone. Could it be that the Frenchman had failed her? Appalled at the thought, she looked at the difficulties and danger of the position into which her trust in him had brought her. To return to her lodge before her flight was known, was now out of the question, she having sent the canoe down the river, and