
The Maid of the Forest

pawing the snow in an effort to discover feet. Over in the east, but some distance off, a rifle cracked ominously in the silence. My head fell back against the bank, and I was sound asleep.

It was two days later when we toiled up a long hill, and came out upon the summit. I no longer needed to lead the horse, and was plodding along wearily behind. Much of the snow had melted, leaving the soil soft, and the trees appeared bare, phantom-like, against the sky. René rode silently, wrapped in her blanket, for the air was chill and damp, her head bent, her eyes straight ahead. I have no remembrance that we had spoken for an hour. Beyond the hill summit there was an escarpment of rock, giving an open view ahead. As I gazed off, over the trees below, my heart gave a great bound — there, scarce a mile away, flowing between leagues of forest, was the broad Ohio, its waters silvery in the sun. I turned to her and pointed.

“At last, René,” I cried, forgetting. “We are safe now; see! There is the river.”

She lifted her eyes and looked.

“Yes, Monsieur.”

“Why do you ever speak to me in that tone? You answer me always as if you were my servant.”

“Your servant!” she was looking at me now. “Am I not, Monsieur?”