

forest far and wide, sending a long lurid streak athwart the dark bosom of the river, and adding an unearthly hideousness to the grim visages of the savages, as they moved within the light of the rapidly ascending flames. Chegouenne and two or three of the older men, whilst these preparations were in progress, came up every few moments and looking mockingly into his face would taunt him in that low, malicious tone which the savage can so well assume when his passions are aroused. Osborne looked on the trying scene with a mind torn by conflicting emotions; by the determination to show his tormentors that he was not to be intimidated by their threats or violence, by the desire that was so strong in him for life, by the agonizing reflection that his friends would never even know how he had died. Suddenly he noticed, leaning against a tree, a little to his right, the strange Indian with whose appearance he had been struck before; he was now, however, dressed somewhat differently—more like an ordinary white hunter.

At last the Indians assembled in a circle close to the fire, which was now sending out long forked tongues of brilliant flame, and the principal men of the tribe made harangues, each whirling his hatchet and pointing frequently to the prisoner. To the latter these harangues were, of course, perfectly unintelligible, but he had no doubt that they referred to the wrongs of the Micmacs, and were intended to excite the young men, who more than once arose and whirled their knives or hatchets menacingly towards the unfortunate prisoner.

In this part of the proceedings, however, the stranger took no part till towards the close, when he drew near to the circle of assembled Indians, and spoke to them in a low, conciliatory tone, which had only the effect of irritating the savages, so that they shook their hatchets menacingly at the speaker himself. Whatever he might have urged, the Indians appeared resolved not to listen to him, so he turned away and leaned against the tree once more. Then, when the Indians had finished their harangues, and were now wildly leaping towards the prisoner, the stranger approached the latter, and motioning the Indians aside, addressed him in French:—

“The English officer must face death like a brave man, for the Indians will have him afford sport to their young men, who are about to go on the war-path.”

As the speaker looked intently into Osborne’s face to see the effect of his words, through the mind of the latter, like a flash of lightning through a black cloud, darted the recollection of the time and place where he had seen that dark face before. Once more he was looking at that scene on the Halifax parade,—once more he saw the gallows-trée, the stocks, the crowd, and the strange, suspected Acadian. The spy was before him!

“Ah! I see you remember,” said the spy after a few moments’ pause. “Your friends made me the laughing-stock of the town; but your whip never touched my back. If the Acadian forgets his enemies let your friend who took me to the Halifax prison come and tell. You may look for him; but he lies lifeless beneath the trees nigh to the Shubenacadie. Your Commandant and his officers (he added with an exulting laugh) never found the papers which they lost—the spy was too cunning for them. Know that I would have saved your life—taken you to the French prisons; but now the Indians are maddened by your attempt to escape, and are resolved on your death before they go on the war-path.”

Here the spy was interrupted by Chegouenne, who was standing impatiently by with the other Indians, and at last addressed the prisoner, stopping now and then that the spy might interpret what he said:—

“Chegouenne tells the English brave that the time has come when he must go to the resting-place of his fathers in the setting sun. He may think he is brave; but his heart will fail him when he feels the knife of the red man whirling around his head. Chegouenne will hang his scalp where the squaws may see it and tell their children that it once belonged to a young chief of a great nation, who are so greedy that they will not let the poor Indian hunt in peace; but must come and take away all his land from him. The Englishman has fine clothes and great lodges in his own country; but still he would have all that the red man has beside. Chegouenne’s parents lived happy in their wigwam by the