

to me,' he said slowly, after scrutinizing my features for a moment: 'but if you will go down with me to the foot of this rock, in the shade there,' and he pointed to a group of leaning oaks, that hung over the declivity, 'I will tell you a strange and sad story of my own experience.'

It may be supposed that I readily assented to this proposal. Bestowing one more blow on the rattlesnake, as if to be certain of its death, the old man descended the rocks with a rapidity that would have endangered the neck of a less practised hunter. After reaching the place that he had pointed out, the rattlesnake hunter commenced his story in a manner which confirmed what I had previously heard of his education and intellectual strength.

'I was among the earliest settlers in this part of the country. I had just finished my education at the university of Harvard, when I was induced, by the flattering representations of some of the earlier pioneers into the wild lands beyond the Connecticut, to seek my fortune in the new settlements. My wife—the old man's eye glistened an instant, and then a tear crossed his brown cheek—'my wife accompanied me, young and delicate and beautiful as she was, to this wild and rude country. I never shall forgive myself for bringing her hither—never. Young man,' he continued, 'you look like one who could pity me. You shall see the image of the girl who followed me to the new country.' And he unbound, as he spoke, ribband from his neck, with a small miniature attached to it.

It was that of a beautiful female. She might have been twenty years of age; but there was an almost childish expression in her countenance—a softness, a delicacy, a sweetness of smile—which I have seldom seen in the features of those who have tasted, even slightly of the bitter waters of existence. The old man watched my countenance intently, as I surveyed the image of his early love. 'She must have been very beautiful,' I said, as I returned the picture.

'Beautiful!' he repeated; you may well say

so. But this avails nothing. I have a fearful story to tell: would to God I had not attempted it! But I will go on. My heart has been stretched too often on the rack of memory to suffer any new pang.

'We had resided in the new country nearly a year. Our settlements had increased rapidly, and the comforts and delicacies of life were beginning to be felt, after the weary privations and severe trials to which we had been subjected. The red men were few, and did not molest us. The beasts of the forests and mountains were ferocious, but we suffered little from them. The only immediate danger to which we were exposed resulted from the rattlesnakes, which infested our neighbourhood. Three or four of the settlers were bitten by them, and died in terrible agonies. The Indians often told us frightful stories of this snake and its powers of fascination, and although they were generally believed, yet, for myself, I confess I was rather amused than convinced by their legends.

'In one of my hunting excursions abroad on a fine morning—it was just at this time of the year—I was accompanied by my wife. 'Twas a beautiful morning. The sunshine was warm, but the atmosphere was perfectly clear and a fine breeze from the northwest shook the bright green leaves which clothed to profusion the wreathing branches above us. I had left my companion for a short time in pursuit of game; and in climbing a rugged ledge of rocks interspersed with shrubs and dwarfish trees, I was startled by a quick, grating rattle. I looked forward. On the edge of a loosened rock lay a large rattlesnake, coiling himself, as if for the deadly spring. He was within a few feet of me, and I passed for an instant to survey him. I know not why, but I stood still, and looked at the deadly serpent with a strange feeling of curiosity. Suddenly he uncoiled his coil, as relenting from his purpose of hostility, and raising his head, he fixed his bright, fiery eye directly on mine. A chilling and indescribable sensation, totally different from any thing I had ever before ex-