

Such an innovation on the silence and retirement of the forest could not fail to enlist the ears of those who journeyed at so short a distance in advance. The Indian muttered a few words in broken English to Heyward, who, in his turn, spoke to the stranger; at once interrupting, and, for the time, closing his musical efforts.

"Though we are not in danger, common prudence would teach us to journey through this wilderness in as quiet a manner as is convenient. You will, then, pardon me, Alice, should I diminish your enjoyments for a time, by requesting this gentleman to postpone his chant until a safer opportunity."

"You will diminish them, indeed," returned the arch maiden, "for never did I hear a more unworthy conjunction of execution and language than that to which I have been listening; and I was far gone in a learned inquiry into the causes of such an unfitness between sound and sense, when you broke the charm of my musings by that bass of yours, Duncan!"

"I know not what you call my bass," said Heyward, evidently piqued at her remark, "but I know that your safety, and that of Cora, is far dearer to me than could be any orchestra of Handel's music." He paused, and turned his head quickly towards a thicket, and then bent his eyes suspiciously on their guide, who continued his steady pace in undisturbed gravity. The young man smiled contemptuously to himself, as he believed he had mistaken some shining berry of the woods for the glistening eyeballs of a prowling savage; and he rode forward, continuing the conversation which had been thus interrupted by the passing thought.

Major Heyward was mistaken only in suffering his youthful and generous pride to suppress for a single moment his active watchfulness. The cavalcade had not long passed, before the branches of the bushes that formed the thicket were cautiously moved asunder, and a human visage, as fiercely wild as savage art and unbridled passions could make it, peered out on the retiring footsteps of the travellers. A gleam of exultation shot across the darkly painted lineaments of the inhabitant of the forest, as he traced the route of his intended victims, who rode unconsciously onward; the light and graceful forms of the females, waving among the trees in the curvatures of their path, followed at each