

divine music, and of such sweetness and beauty that they were satisfied it was made by the angels.

The fact is now known to most well-informed people, that holes cut through the ice will be kept open for days by the natural warmth of the water in the coldest of weather; and that electrical storms will produce sounds in the air that may aptly be termed "Heavenly music."

But to resume: the two facts of open water and aerial music—under the above circumstances—was seized upon by the preacher effectively to stimulate still further the religious fervour of the people; and the result was what is known in local religious history as the "Great Awakening."

THE EAGLE'S NEST;

OR,

THE MARVEL OF SEBASTIAN GEE.

A Canadian Story.

PART FIRST.—THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARK WILFORD.

CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

I EXPRESS no opinion as to the general truth of the proposition that distance lends enchantment to the view. But I am prepared to maintain against all comers that the two females who then stood before us were by no means pleasing objects to contemplate at close range.

They were old. They were ugly. Like the Fatal Three who stopped the Scottish Thane and his comrade upon the blasted heath, they were withered and wild in their attire, and looked not like inhabitants of the earth. The Pig-faced Lady would have seemed a comely gentlewoman by the side of either; but one of them was so surpassingly hideous to behold, that, for the moment, I had no eyes for her companion. Never in my life have I encountered anything, human or inhuman, that I would be so unjust as to compare with that frightful old harriard. Charlotte Cushman as Meg Merrilies was a Juliet in comparison. She was bent nearly double with age, but was evidently free from the physical infirmities incidental to declining years, for she bore a large heavily-laden basket strapped to her back, and notwithstanding her burden she seemed as lithe and active as a tiger-cat. A solitary tuft of foul and matted grey hair protruded from beneath the leathern strap which passed round her head and supported the basket. Her dirty parchment visage was wrinkled and distorted out of all semblance to humanity, and her eyes were two flaming red balls of fire, which flashed as she swiftly advanced upon us with an expression of deadly hate.

We kept close together, hand in hand, and edged to the extreme verge of our side of the road, intending to pass by without any salutation. The hag frustrated our design by placing herself directly in front of us. For a single instant she peered furtively round, as though to ascertain whether any one was in sight. Finding that her proceedings were unobserved by any one except her companion and ourselves, she held up her hand menacingly, by way of injunction to us to stand still. Her companion here addressed her in the native jargon of her tribe, which was of course unfamiliar to us; but we perceived from their tones and gestures that the less ill-favoured of the two was remonstrating with the other against interfering with us. They kept up a chattering for a minute or so, and then the hag, unable to restrain herself any longer, sprang upon and seized me roughly by the arm.

I shrank back, and vainly endeavoured to free myself from her grasp. The devilish malice which shot forth from her glittering old eyes terrified me beyond measure, and I screamed aloud at the top of my voice. She held me as though in a vice, and in another second wrenched my hand from my brother's, and drew from some place of concealment about her person a murderous-looking gully. At this, Norman's screams were added to mine, and the valiant little fellow made frantic but ineffectual efforts to seize the hag by the wrist. She glanced quickly from one of us

to the other with an (if possible) intensified expression of demoniacal fury, and then—raised the knife high in air.

Whether or not she entertained any design more diabolical than to frighten us within an inch of our lives can never be known with certainty. The presumption is that she did not, for she had an abundance of time to put an end to the earthly career of both of us had she so willed. But while she stood there with her arm poised in mid-air, as though selecting the most vulnerable point of attack, an unlooked-for interruption occurred. Hurried footsteps were heard approaching, and in another moment our ears were stunned by a roar like that of a wounded lion. My assailant instantaneously relinquished her grasp upon my arm, and almost before she had time to let her hand drop to her side, the Bald Eagle vaulted over the opposite fence into the roadway.

Except that his features were somewhat lighted up with angry excitement, and that he had on a pair of moccasins that were almost new, his appearance and garb were precisely the same as we remembered them to have been on that chill November afternoon six months before when we had first beheld him at the door of "The Shooting Star." Hatless and bootless, with flashing eyes and protruding teeth, he presented, in the abstract, anything but an inviting spectacle. But we had no time, even if we had had the inclination, to criticise his aspect. In such emergencies one can hardly be expected to look a gift horse in the mouth. We at once knew that he was there to defend us, and that with such a champion to fight our battles there was no longer any cause for fear.

To seize the beldame by her scraggy throat, wrench the gully from her grasp, and hurl it over the fence and down the bank from whence he had emerged, were the work of a moment. Terrified as I was, I heard the blade strike upon a stone and rebound away down the bank and out of sight. Then, wheeling her round with the rapidity of lightning, he bestowed upon her a kick which I thought must inevitably shatter her old frame to atoms. Had his feet been encased in the heavy cow-hide boots which were in common use in those parts, her existence would possibly have terminated then and there; but his soft buckskin moccasin rendered the propulsion somewhat less formidable as to its results. As it was, however, she shot, as though impelled by a catapult, into the ditch at the opposite side of the road, ten yards distant. Her basket took to itself wings, and flew over her head into the middle of the road, dispersing its contents in every direction. A gallon-jug of whiskey, coming in contact with a stone, was shivered into a hundred fragments, and a large cheese shared the same melancholy fate. The owner of these creature comforts, however, arose almost immediately, shook herself together, gave a sickly smile as though suffering from toothache, and seemed very little the worse for the ungentle treatment she had undergone. The pair would have made off without more ado, but our protector placed himself before them, and launched out into a loud-mouthed tirade, of which, being delivered in the Mohawk tongue, I could not understand a word; but that it was of formidable import the cowed and frightened demeanour of the uncanny pair bore ample testimony. They attempted to speak, as if to mollify him; but every time they opened their mouths he hurled his anathemas with redoubled vigour. After berating them as surely no two scarecrows were ever berated either before or since, he authoritatively pointed down the road, and (apparently) bade them begone. They hurriedly slunk off, without stopping to pick up such of the former contents of the basket as remained uninjured, and were evidently only too glad to escape from the presence of so redoubtable a foe.

Then he turned upon us, and in no very gentle tones demanded:

"What you do here alone—eh?"

My brother acted as spokesman, and narrated how we had started from home for a walk across the fields, and had at length found ourselves in the road, where we had been assaulted by the two squaws without any provocation on our part.

"You two little fools to go from home by yourselves. What you think you would have happened if I hadn't come along? That old witch"—he did not say "witch," but used a word that rhymes thereto—"hates white childer wuss as the debil, and would have slit your gizzards, like as not. Don't you never do so no more. You come along with me; I will take you to your father."