

"We came to Agiocochook. The storm was loud as you now hear. In this very cave my father and I passed the night. We heard the voice of Abamocho. In the morning we saw him seated on a rock. He waved his arm for us to depart. I saw it and trembled; but my father would not go. He sought all the secret places; but the bones of our fathers had perished.

"We returned to our tribe; but the evil spirit sent a curse upon us. Sickness destroyed our young men. The Mohawks scalped our old men and children. My father fell by their arrows—I avenged his death; but I could not prevent the destruction of our nation. Three times I journeyed to Agiocochook, with the powows, to appease Abamocho. We prayed to the Ketan when at home. It availed not."

Again he paused: and Robert, who had listened with intense interest to his story, enquired where the remnant of his tribe dwelt now.

"Young man," said Mendowit, rising with a melancholy but majestic air, while the lightning showed his tall form, and the gray locks that waved in thick masses over his venerable forehead; "young man, I once led a host more numerous than the trees of yonder forest. I was chief of a mighty nation—now Mendowit dwells alone. I am the last of my tribe." As he ended he sank down, and covered his face with his hands.

Robert's life had been a laborious, but a very happy one. He was naturally of a cheerful temperament, and had seldom, even in imagination, dwelt on the dark shades of human life. He had felt, as youth and health are prone to feel, as if earth were made purposely for the happiness of man, and existence would never have an end. A few hours had taught him solemn lessons of the vanity and change of all created things. Without and around him was the destroying tempest, dashing to atoms the works of nature; within, was Mendowit, an image of moral desolation.

Robert sat down; and while the picture of human vicissitudes was presented thus vividly mournful to his mind, mingled with the thought of his own heart-sickening disappointment, he wept like an infant. The tears he shed were not merely those of selfish regret. He wept the miseries to which man is exposed, till his mind was insensibly drawn to ponder on the sins that must have made such miseries a necessary punishment. And never had he breathed so contrite a prayer as now came from his soul, humbled before that Almighty Power who only can say to the mourner, "peace!"—to the tempest, "be still!"

A sweet calm at length fell on Robert's tossed mind: the calm of child-like confidence in the goodness and wisdom of God. He felt that all would finally be found to have been ordained in mercy, that all his trials were for the best, and he sunk into a profound sleep, from which he did not awake till aroused by Mendowit.

It was late in the morning; the storm had ceased; and they sallied forth to examine the appearances without. An exhalation, like smoke, arose from the dripping woods and wet grounds beneath and around them, concealing most of the devastations the storm had wrought. The clouds were moving slowly up the sides of the mountain, still entirely shrouding its tall peaks; but they did not wear the threatening hue of the preceding evening. They had discharged their contents, and their lightened folds were now gradually melting and ready to disperse before the rising sun, though his beams had not yet penetrated their dark masses.

The wind was entirely hushed, and not a sound, except the solemn, monotonous roar of a distant waterfall, broke on the stillness. While Robert was contrasting the almost breathless tranquility he now gazed upon, with the wild uproar of the preceding night, Mendowit touched his shoulder; looking around he beheld the features of the Indian distorted, while he gazed and pointed upward towards a huge mountain that rose at some distance before them. Above its tall peak reposed a black cloud, and it was the appearance of this cloud which had so terrified Mendowit.

"It is the Abamocho," said he, in a suppressed, hollow tone. And certainly by the aid of a little imagination, it might be likened to a human form of gigantic proportions. The dark face, drawn against a cloud of a lighter hue, was seen in profile; a projection of a cloud from the body, that might pass for an arm stretched forward a vast distance; and then a shapeless mass of vapour, that an Indian might call a robe, fell down and covered the surrounding precipice.

"Your evil genius," said Robert, half laughing, as he glanced alternately at his guide and the cloud, "has, to my thinking, a most monstrous and evil-looking nose."

"Hugh!" said Mendowit, interrupting him. That part of the cloud which formed the arm of the spirit was beginning slowly to move towards the body, and it incorporated with it in such a manner that the Indian might well be pardoned for thinking Abamocho had folded his arm on his breast.

Mendowit had held his breath suspended during the movement of the cloud, and his deep aspiration, as he emphatically said,—

"Abamocho is pleased; we may now go in safety!" sounded like the breathing of a drowning man, when he rises to the surface of the water. After hastily refreshing themselves, they descended from their retreat, and began their progress through the defile.

The storm had obliterated all traces of the Mohawks, but there were no diverging paths; those who once entered the pass must proceed onward. It was now that Robert became fully sensible of the devastations of the storm. Their way was obstructed by fallen trees, fragments of rocks, deep gullies, and roaring waterfalls, pouring from the sides of the mountains, and swelling the Saco, till its stream nearly flooded the whole valley. They proceeded silently and cautiously for more than an hour, when Mendowit suddenly paused, and whispering to Robert, "I scent the smoke of a fire," sunk on his hands and knees, crept forward softly as a cat circumventing his prey. A few rods distant lay a huge tree, uprooted by the late storm; sheltered behind this, Mendowit half rose, and through the interstices of the roots, examined the prospect before them.

He soon signed for Robert to advance, who, imitating the posture of his guide, instantly crept forward, and at a little distance before them, beheld—Mary. She, with the two Mohawks, was seated beneath a sheltering rock, whose projection had been their only shelter from the storm. The height of the rock did not allow them to stand upright; but the Indians had kindled a fire at one corner, and were now partaking their rude meal. Their backs were towards Robert, their faces fronting their prisoner, who, wrapped in a covering of skins, reclined against a projection of the precipice.

Just as Robert gained his station, one of the Mohawks was offering some food to Mary; she uncovered her face, and by a gentle motion refused the morsel. Her cheek was so pale, and her whole countenance looked so sunken, and wo-be-gone, that Robert thought her expiring. His heart and brain seemed on fire, as his eyes flashed around to discover if any advantage might be taken ere he rushed on the foe. At that moment the Mohawks, uttering a horrible yell, sprang upon their feet, and ran towards the Saco. He raised his gun; but Mendowit, seizing his arm, drew him backwards, at the same time exclaiming,—"The mountain! the mountain!"

Robert looked upward. Awful precipices, to the height of more than two thousand feet, rose above him. Near the highest pinnacle, and the very one over which Abamocho had been seated, the earth had been loosened by the violent rains. Some slight cause, perhaps the sudden bursting forth of a mountain spring, had given motion to the mass; it was now moving forward, gathering fresh strength from its progress, uprooting the old trees, unbedding the ancient rocks, and all rolling onwards with a force and velocity which no human barrier could oppose, no created might resist.

One glance told Robert that Mary must perish; that he could not save her.

"But I will die with her!" he exclaimed; and shaking

off the grasp of Mendowit as though it had been a feather, he rushed towards her, shouting, "Mary! Mary!" in a tone of agony. She uncovered her head, made an effort to rise, and articulated, "Robert, dear Robert!" as he caught her in his arms, and clasped her to his bosom as a mother would her babe.

"Oh, Mary! must we die? must we die now? were his agonizing expressions.

"We must, we must," she cried, as she gazed, for the first time, upward, on the rolling mountain. "Why, why did you come?"

He replied not, but leaning against the rock pressed her closer to his heart, as though he would screen her from the devouring storm; while she, clinging around his neck, burst into a passion of tears, and laying her head on his bosom, sobbed like an infant. He bowed his face upon her cold, wet cheek, and breathed one cry of mercy; yet even then there was in the hearts of both lovers, a feeling of happiness, ay, joy in the thought that they should not be separated, that they might die together.

The mass came down, tearing and crumbling, and sweeping all before it. The whole mountain trembled, and the ground shook as though an earthquake were passing. The sun was darkened by the storm of water, stones, and branches of trees, which, crushed and shivered to atoms, filled the atmosphere, while the blast swept by like a whirlwind, and the crash and roar of the convulsion were far more appalling than the loudest thunder.

It might have been one minute or twenty—for neither of the lovers took note of time—when in the hush as of death-like stillness which succeeded the uproar, Robert looked around, and saw that the consuming storm had passed by. It had passed, covering the valley farther than the eye could reach, with ruin. Masses of granite, and shivered trees, and mountains of earth were heaped high around, filling the bed of the Saco, and exhibiting an awful picture of the desolating track of the Avalanche.

Only one little spot had escaped the general wreck, and there, safe as though sheltered in the hollow of His hand, who notices the fall of a sparrow, and locked in each others' arms, were Robert and Mary! Beside them stood Mendowit, his gun firmly clenched in his hand, and his quick dark eye rolling around him like a maniac. He had followed Robert though he did not intend it—probably impelled by that feeling which makes us loath to see danger alone, and thus had escaped. The two Mohawks were doubtless crushed and destroyed, for they appeared not again.

Should any traveller to the White Mountains hereafter be anxious to ascertain the spot where the lovers are supposed to have stood during this convulsion of nature, he will find it near the small house which escaped destruction in an avalanche, which occurred in these mountains a few years since, very similar to the one we have attempted to portray.

The feelings of the three individuals, so miraculously preserved, cannot be described. Robert and Mary both wept for a long time; and though Mendowit did not shed tears, he preserved that deep silence which speaks the awe that the exhibition of Almighty power always impresses on the heart of the child of nature.

What a change the mountain exhibited! Where the tall pine had waved, perhaps for thousands of years, was now a naked rock, down which a furious torrent dashed and foamed. As Robert gazed upon it in wonder, the summit suddenly broke through the clouds, and shone on the spray of the waterfall, blending the rock with all the colors of the rainbow. Mendowit saw it, and a smile passed over his rigid features. "Our homeward path will be prosperous," said he; and so it proved. They made a litter for Mary, and bore her on it by day, and her husband sheltered her in his arms by night, till they reached Dover.

Robert and Mary lived long and happily in their dwelling on the banks of the Cochecho. In all the subsequent attacks of the Indians on Dover, they were unmolested, and their devoted affection, which continued unabated even to extreme old age, was often ascribed to the dangers they had suffered and escaped together.