

It was not without considerable difficulty that they pursued their course, for the night was settling in the forest, and the underwood grew thick and in many places impervious, rendering the passage tedious and painful in the imperfect light.

As they approached the morass where the canoe had been secreted, they were alarmed at a faint sound of lamentation that appeared to arise from that quarter, and making a detour, as a proper precaution, in case of some unforeseen danger awaiting them, the fugitives arrived at an elevated spot that overlooked the scene of the previous contest, where, with feelings of the deepest mortification, was beheld a sight which caused an immediate destruction of their fondest hopes.

Some distance on their left, and in the very spot where the deadly fray with the Milicete had occurred, was gathered a group of phrenzied savages, evincing by their gestures and vociferations, every token of sorrow and impotent rage.

They had discovered the bleeding bodies of their dead brethren, and had dragged them from their watery grave and laid the disfigured corpses upon the verge of the morass, where a crowd was collected to lament over their mysterious fate. The dull flame of a new-lighted fire threw a ghastly glare over the whole scene, and played, like blue lightning, over the stagnant pools of the swamp; now shrouded in a thick unwholesome vapour, and only revealed as the unsteady flicker of the flame flashed across their surface. The unearthly appearance of the assemblage was also heightened by the more vivid light of numerous torches which were tossing, in wild confusion on every side, and among the adjacent trees, as the bearers threw their limbs about, and leaped into the air, with extravagant grief—or rushed, now here, now there, in search of something upon which to wreak their excited fury, for they seemed frantic with excess of passion; and with the yell of baffled vengeance, was mingled the howl of distracted men, and the low wail, or shrill, piercing accents of woman's grief, as they bent over the dead, with streaming hair and distorted faces, visible only by the red and searching torchlight.

Clarence clung with terror to her lover's side, when she beheld the dreadful vision, and turned tremblingly away, as some more violent shriek would burst from the maddened Indians, who, brandishing their weapons, were now scattering themselves through the adjoining woods, in search of the unknown foe.

Cut off from their intended retreat, hemmed in on every side but one, by infuriated enemies there was but one course left to the fugitives—and that, after a moment's parleyance, they quickly availed themselves of.

Preparing for immediate action, the guides loosed the knives in their sheaths, and grasped their carbines with stern determination, as they struck into the wood upon their right, while Waswetchul led them by the most secure route, being familiar with the ground over which they were constrained to proceed. Edward again lifted the helpless Clarence in his arms, and closely followed by Dennis, dashed onward with desperate speed through the thickets of cedar and spruce, which grew plentifully thereabouts.

As they skirted the deep ravine on their left through which a gleam of water was observed they were quickly informed of the manner in which the discovery had been made—for, on the further side of the hollow, at some distance below, were noted the fires of a large encampment, that seemed, from the confused noise heard in that direction, to be in great commotion, as it was most probably apprised by this time, of the extraordinary incident that had taken place. The wigwams were clustered among clumps of cedar, and along the edge of precipitous rocks, at the base of which an ample stream that seemed to expand beyond into an extensive flood, reflected brightly the beams of the numerous camp-fires. When it is remembered that into this dull blood-stained rivulet from the swamp tracked its way, it can easily be imagined how the fugitives had been enabled to trace to its origin the suspicious colour of the stream that ran past their very wigwams.

It was fortunate for the fugitives that there was one among them who was acquainted with the localities, for the sagacious Pansawavowed himself, here, completely at fault. As the village in their vicinity had been established since his former visit, and having no definite knowledge of the path they were pursuing it was a difficult matter to determine whether or not it might lead them into more serious difficulties than those from which they had yet escaped. In this dilemma the Milicetege was alone capable of acting with any degree of certainty, and she instantly settled the matter by conducting them toward the thickly wooded heights upon their right. Gradually ascending, they toiled onward over huge fragments of rocks and through dense thickets for some time, when, as Edward was on the point