

enemies, or to perish at the mouth of the cavern, where the ashes of the good Ottawa had reposed.

## CHAPTER LVII.

"— never till to-night, never till now,  
Did I go through a tempest-dropping fire."

JULIUS CÆSAR.

WHILE the warriors were animated by the address and example of their chief, and occupied with the execution of the commands which he issued for the defence of their position and the general safety, less notice had been taken of those material influences, which never failed to exercise so great dominion over their sensitive and superstitious minds. But the malignant spirits, that conjoin their power with the elements which sweep before them the frail works of men's hands, were not subdued; and some stronger gusts of wind from the mountains, at once recalled all the fears, that the earlier observations of the warriors had excited; and the general exultation which had followed the address of Ahtomah, was now succeeded by some moments of inactive and breathless expectation.

As the red people, who were now stationed along the whole line of defences, stood astounded by the change that they now perceived, the face of heaven, which had been studded with its myriad lights, became obscured; and the first dread sign of the assured predominance of the power of the evil spirit over that of the angel of good, was followed by yet ruder and more constant blasts from the mountains, which as they passed over the grove, seemed now about to rend and tear up every tree from its roots, and sweep away every defence that the red men had raised.

It was now the part of the son of Ottawa, to use all his influence to counteract the effects of the supposed wrath of the powers which the warriors believed ascendant, by exciting the hopes of his people that their cause was not abandoned by the more powerful agents of good: and for this purpose, he passed from one angle of the defences to another, and in the presence of his people, every where fervently implored the protection and aid of the Great and Good Spirit, till he inspired all the warriors with his own heroic determination, and left an impression upon their minds; that his invocations were not in vain.

But the tempest was soon confirmed; and as the red men watched the course of

its effects, the very leafless birches bowed their heads before the violence of the elements in motion, and many were now rooted up, and confounded and swept away with the weak defences which the children of the departed Ottawa had constructed, until all seemed about to be involved in one general confusion and ruin.

The storm still increased; and loud peals of thunder now shook the very rocks around, while quick flashes of forked lightning illumined the entire grove; and, as strange and unnatural sounds, that were more terrible than the thunder of heaven, at intervals filled the air, the warriors seemed to see spirits passing to and fro across the dark shades of the spruce trees, as if all the malignant powers had combined their efforts, and awaited but their time, to fall upon and exterminate the red race.

The devoted band were now once more gathered in the presence of their chief. The most practised of the warriors in the battle of the tomahawk, or of the bow or the spear, trembled and seemed ready to fall to the ground, before the powers to which they now believed themselves opposed. Yet when the flashes of light at intervals showed them the unmoved countenance of Ahtomah, their courage as often appeared to revive, and they seemed as if they looked only for a sign from their lawful chief, which they might with their accustomed enthusiasm obey.

But for some time, no commands were issued, no signal given. But while Ahtomah, by his dignified silence, signified at once his freedom from fear, and his resignation and hope, the real character of the dangers that menaced them appeared. The spirits that they had seemed to see, were their mortal foes. The Miennes were in the midst of the grove; and aided by the patrons of evil, appeared about to fall upon the unhappy remnant of the devoted race.

The warriors now gathered yet more closely around their chief, and by raising their tomahawks in their right hands, signified their unabated confidence, and their determination, at his command, to act as one man.

Ahtomah now raised his voice above the deafening sounds of the tempest. The chief called aloud upon his people, and bade them follow him. He was bent upon one great effort—it was that of despair—against the enemies of his race.

The warriors prepared to follow their chief to the unequal encounter—handful of red men, to oppose a host of Mic-