

squirrel hopped merrily from bough to bough among the gigantic trees of the forest, as two hunters followed a winding path which led to a ferry across the Muskingum river.

One was a powerful, athletic young man, with a countenance strikingly handsome, and embrowned by exercise and exposure; his dress was a hunting shirt, and leggings of deer-skin; his curling brown locks escaped from under a cap of wolf-skin; and his mocassins, firmly secured round the ankle, were made from the tough hide of a bear; he carried in his hand a short rifle of heavy calibre and an ornamented *soutenu-de-chasse* hung at his belt. His companion lower in stature, but broad, sinewy, and weather-beaten, seemed to be some fifteen or twenty years the elder; his dress was of the same material, but more soiled and worn; his rifle was longer and heavier; and his whole appearance that of a man to whom all inclemencies of season were indifferent, all the dangers and hardships of a western hunter's life familiar; but the most remarkable part of his equipment was an enormous axe, the handle studded with nails, and the head firmly riveted with iron hoops.

"Well Master Reginald" said the latter; "we must hope to find old Michael and his ferry-boat at the Passage des Rochers, for the river is much swollen, and we might not easily swim it with dry powder."

"What reason have you to doubt old Michael's being found at his post?" said Reginald; "we have often crossed there, and have seldom found him absent."

"True, master; but he has of late become very lazy; and he prefers sitting by his fire, and exchanging a bottle of fire-water with a strolling Indian for half a dozen good skins, to tugging a great flat-bottomed boat across the Muskingum during the March floods."

"Baptiste," said the young man, "it grieves me to see the reckless avidity with which spirits are sought by the Indians; and the violence, outrage, and misery which are the general consequence of their dram-drinking."

"Why you see, there is something very good in a cup of West Ingy rum;" here Baptiste's hard features were twisted into a grin irresistibly comic, and he proceeded, "it warms the stomach and the heart; and the savages, when they once taste it, suck at a bottle by instinct, as natural as a six-weeks cub at his dam: I often wonder, Master Reginald, why you spoil that fine *eau de vie* which little Perrot puts into your hunting flask, by mixing with it a quantity of water! In my last trip to the mountains, where I was first guide and turpentine, they gave me a taste now and then, and I never found it do me harm; but the nature of an Indian is different, you know."

"Well, Baptiste," said Reginald, smiling at his follower's defence of his favourite beverage; "I will say, that I never knew you to take more than you could carry; but your head is as strong as your back, and you sometimes prove the strength of both."

The conversation was suddenly interrupted by the report of Reginald's rifle, and a grey squirrel fell from the top of a hickory, where he

was feasting in fancied security. Baptiste took up the little animal, and having examined it attentively, shook his head gravely, saying, "Master Reginald, there is not a quicker eye, nor a truer hand in the Territory, but—"

As he hesitated to finish the sentence, Reginald added laughing, "but—but—I am an obstinate fellow, because I will not exchange my favorite German rifle, with its heavy bullet, for a long Virginia barrel, with a ball like a pea; is it not so, Baptiste?"

The guide's natural good-humour struggled with prejudices which, on this subject, had been more than once wounded by his young companion, as he replied, "Why, Master Reginald, the deer, whose saddle is on my shoulder, found my pea hard enough to swallow, and look here, at this poor little vermin you have just killed,—there is a hole in his neck big enough to let the life out of a grizzly bear; you have hit him nearly an inch farther back than I taught you to aim before you went across the great water, and learnt all kinds of British and German notions!"

Reginald smiled at the hunter's characteristic reproof, and replied in a tone of kindness, "Well, Baptiste, all that I do know of tracking a deer, or lining a bee, or of bringing down one of these little vermin, I learned first from you; and if I am a promising pupil, the credit is due to Baptiste, the best hunter in forest or prairie!"

A glow of pleasure passed over the guide's sunburnt countenance; and grasping in his hard and horny fingers his young master's hand, he said, "Thank'ee, Master Reginald; and as for me, though I'm only a poor 'Coureur des bois,' I ain't feared to back my pupil against any man that walks, from Dan Boone, of Kentucky, to Bloody-hand, the great war-chief of the Cayugas."

As he spoke, they came in sight of the river, and the blue smoke curling up among the trees, showed our travellers that they had not missed their path to Michael's log-house and ferry. "What have we here!" exclaimed Baptiste, catching his companion by the arm; "tis even as I told you: the old rogue is smoking his pipe over a glass of brandy in his kitchen corner; and there is a wild-looking Indian pulling himself across with three horses in that crazy bateau, almost as old and useless as its owner!"

"He will scarcely reach the opposite bank," said Reginald; "the river is muddy and swollen with melted snow, and his horses seem disposed to be unquiet passengers."

They had now approached near enough to enable them to distinguish the features of the Indian in the boat; the guide scanned them with evident surprise and interest, the result of which was, a noise that broke from him, something between a grunt and a whistle, as he muttered, "What can have brought him here?"

"Do you know that fine-looking fellow, then?" inquired Reginald.

"Know him, Master Reginald!—does 'Wolf' know Miss Lucy!—does a bear know a bee-tee!—I should know him among a thousand Red-skins, though he were twice as well disguised. Tête-bleu, master, look at those wild brutes how they struggle; he and they will taste Muskingum water before long."

\* "*Anglic*" "Interpreter."

\* "*Coureur des bois*," an appellation often given to the Canadian and half-breed woodsmen.

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