

ply him with the game necessary for his existence in the woods.

An incident, apparently trifling in itself, occurred to afford him the very opportunity he was wishing for. As he was watching the Indians, he was startled by the noise of a report in the neighborhood; it was more like the report of a cannon than a gun, evidently from the direction of the water. The Indians, the moment they heard it, ran towards the shore without giving the captive a thought, and the women hastened to the top of a hill, where they stood looking at the bay. Such a golden opportunity was not to be lost. It was perhaps the only chance that fortune would throw in his way. Osborne thrust his knife into his belt and seized one of the guns lying by the log; he had fortunately a pouch of bullets and flask of powder hanging up in the wigwam, the property of one of the Indians then absent. But his difficulties were not all over. To get into the woods he had to pass in sight of the squaws and children on the hill side. But Osborne felt that there was no time for hesitation, and managed by a skilful manœuvring around the wigwams and bushes to keep out of the view of the Indians until he had passed them. As he reached the edge of the clearing, however, they saw him for an instant, but he dashed into the forest, resolved to make a bold push for freedom. Fortune had been propitious to him so far.

It was not long before he heard shots in the rear, and knowing the fleetness of the Indians he used every effort to push through the forest. His experience in the woods during the previous three weeks now served him to make considerable headway. He soon reached a small river, considerably swollen by the rains of the earlier part of the week, which he knew flowed into the bay, about three-quarters of a mile from the village, and as it served him as a guide for future operations, he determined to keep it within sight for the whole of that day. As he passed through the woods the shouts of his pursuers became fainter and fainter, until at last he heard nothing whatever of them, and concluded that they had stopped to consider or had gone off on the wrong track. Still he knew Indian cunning too well to give up his efforts. They were sure,

sooner or later, to get on his track. So he struggled with courageous heart through briars and thickets, over fallen trees, over rocks piled in inextricable confusion, over the countless obstacles of a primeval forest.

At length, thoroughly worn out by his exertions, he snatched a few moments' rest beneath the shade of a little grove of young spruce, which perfectly enshrouded him. As he sat down, weary enough to fall into a profound sleep, but knowing too well the necessity of wakefulness, his mind reflected on the hazards of the adventure in which he was now embarked. Would he succeed in ever reaching the fort? or would he lose himself and perish miserably in the fastnesses of those wild regions? Perhaps, after all, it would have been less hazardous in the end, had he remained at the village and awaited the arrival of Padenuque, who might be induced by promises of a heavy ransom, to send him to one of the English forts, or to one of the French posts at all events. But then, Padenuque was known as an inveterate enemy to the English, and his arrival would probably be the signal to put him to the torture. No; better brave the perils of the forest than rely on the caprice of the vindictive Indian. Then he started up, more resolved than ever to make a determined push for his liberty; but he had not proceeded for half an hour, when some incidents occurred to show him, more forcibly than ever, the perilous character of his enterprise.

He had now come to a part of the country where there were no signs of trails whatever,—the scene was wild in the extreme. As he pushed his way through the bewildering mazes of the woods, always keeping the river to his left, he was brought to a standstill by the noise of a movement through the forest. Had he come upon the Indian hunters? He retreated into the deepest part of the thicket and awaited the result in trembling expectation. As the sound drew closer it seemed as if the trees were being crushed by the weight of some heavy body. Osborne's practised ear soon recognized the noise as that of a moose running "down wind." The Indians must have started the brute—perhaps they had wounded him; if so, he would be an ugly foe to meet with. On bounded the noble animal, directly