

The Ladies' Garland.

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BY JOHN S. GALLAHER,
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THE NOVELIST.

REVIEW.

FROM THE NEW YORK COMMERCIAL ADVERTISER.

The "LAST OF THE MOHICANS" is a narrative work. The scene is laid in the neighborhood of Lake George and its vicinity—a region unrivalled for romantic beauty, wildness, and sublimity. It commences at that critical conjuncture of the old French war, after Braddock's defeat at the southwest, when Montcalm was approaching Fort William Henry, at the head of Lake George, by the way of Lake Champlain and Ticonderoga. The garrison, at this time, was commanded by the brave, though unfortunate, Col. Munro, with a small garrison, while Gen. Webb, with a large force of provincial and regular troops, occupied the neighboring fortress of Fort Edward, near the head waters of the Hudson. The action commences at an early hour, of a beautiful morning in the Summer of 1757, by the movement of a detachment of troops to reinforce the garrison of William Henry.—Two young ladies, it seems, Cora and Alice, daughters of Col. Munro, are to make the same journey on horseback, attended by a young, gallant and accomplished officer, named Heyward. In order to avoid the delay and inconvenience of following an army, however, the party purpose to perform the journey by a private and more secluded route, under the guidance of an Indian, whose subtle and treacherous looks are not very well liked by the ladies, although their attendant has no suspicions. His name is Magua, a Huron, whose tribe was in the service of Montcalm, but whom he had left in consequence of some ill-treatment, and joined the English.—They had scarcely entered the forest, before they were pursued and joined by a grotesque looking personage mounted upon a Rosinante, who proves to be a good-natured singing master from New-England—a Dominic Sampson in figure, and an Ichabod Crane in manners. His presence is unwelcome to Heyward, but from the oddity of his person, and the singularity of his conversation, Alice insists on his being permitted to travel in their party—and the word of Alice is law to the young officer. At this moment, Heyward "paused and turned his head quickly towards a thicket, and then bent his eyes suspiciously on their guide, who continued his steady pace in undisturbed gravity. The young man smiled contemptuously to himself, as he believed he had mistaken some shining

berry of the woods for the glistening eye-balls of a prowling savage,"—but

"The cavalcade had not long passed, before the branches of the bushes that formed the thicket, were cautiously moved asunder, and a human visage, as fiercely wild as savage art and unbridled passions could make it, peered out on the retiring footsteps of the travellers. A gleam of exultation shot across the darkly painted lineaments of the inhabitant of the forest, as he traced the route of his intended victims, who rode unconsciously onward; the light and graceful forms of the females waving among the trees, in the curvatures of their path, followed at each bend by the manly figure of Heyward, until, finally, the shapeless person of the singing master was concealed behind the numberless trunks of trees, that rose in dark lines in the intermediate space."—[28p.

Leaving the adventurous travellers, the scene shifts to the brink of the Hudson, near a cataract, where we are introduced to our old friend Leather Stocking, of the Pioneers, (now called Hawk-eye,) in the pride and vigor of his life, in company and conversation with Chingachgook, a veteran Delaware chief, of the "Turtle" order—both in the character of Scouts. Chingachgook is eloquently holding forth upon Indian wrongs, until he mentions the "Salt Lake, where the waters flow up stream in the rivers," which gives Hawk-eye the hint for an amusing philosophical dissertation upon the tides and their cause—but which is cut short by the arrival of Heyward and his party. The plot already begins to thicken, without compelling the reader to wade through half a volume of prosing matter, by way of "clearing away the underbrush" of the subject. The guide had lost his way, and strong suspicions of jealousy begin to be excited, which, after a private conversation with the Scouts, are fully confirmed. A plan is laid to seize the faithless Huron, but he is too crafty for the whole—not only eluding the grasp of Heyward, but the unerring shot of Natty Bumppo's rifle.

The situation of the whole party is now considered very critical, as no doubt is entertained by Hawk-eye, Chingachgook, and his son Uncas, who had joined them, that the Mingoese* were near them, and that to glut the revenge of the Huron, who, it subsequently appears, had been punished for some offence by Col. Munro, they were to have been betrayed by their guide. It is now too late for them to retrace their steps to Fort Edward, and how to provide for their safety is the next object. For this purpose, in the twilight the horses are led into the river, and secreted behind some cragged rocks, while the ladies with Heyward and David Ganut, are taken into a canoe, and transported to a rocky cavern, amidst the tumbling waters of the roaring cataract. This cavern is none other than that so well known in the island of rock against which to this day the waters of the Hudson foam and dash, as they pass from the irregular falls of Glenn. The succeeding chapter contains a highly wrought night-scene in the cavern, and an excellent description of this irregular, singular, and picturesque cataract, where the island above mentioned—now degraded by a bridge and toll-house—has evidently been worn by the

* The hostile Indians are called Hurons, Mingoese, Maquas and Iroquois, indifferently, as occasion requires.

rushing of the waters upon the limestone of unequal texture. Torches are lighted which gleam wildly and fitfully around the gloom and among the fissures of the rock—some venison is broiled for supper, and David is devoutly closing the proceedings of the evening by singing a divine song from Strenhold and Hopkins, in which he is joined by the ladies—when they are interrupted by an appalling noise from without, believed by Hawk-eye and the Indians to be supernatural. The strange noise is repeated, and sounds thro' the inmost recesses of the cavern. Hawk-eye still did not understand it, and to the inquiry of Cora, who was resolute and unappalled, he says:—

"Lady," returned the scout, solemnly, "I have listened to all the sounds of the woods for thirty years, as a man will listen, whose life and death depends so often on the quickness of his ears. There is no whine of the panther; no whistle of the cat-bird; nor any invention of the devilish Mingoese, that can cheat me! I have heard the forests moan like mortal men in their affliction; often, and again, have I listened to the wind playing its music in the branches of the girdled trees; and I have heard the lightning cracking in the air, like the snapping of blazing brush, as it spitted forth sparks and forked flames; but never have I thought that I heard more than the pleasure of Him, who sported with the things of his hand. But neither the Mohicans, nor I, who am a white man without a cross, can explain the cry just heard. We, therefore, believe it a sign given for our good."—[p. 87.

Heyward, Hawk-eye, and the Indians, leave the cavern to reconnoitre—the noise is repeated, at which all are alarmed, save the former, who remarks:—"Tis the horrid shriek that a horse will give in his agony; oftener drawn from him in pain, though sometimes in his terror. My charger is either a prey to the beasts of the forest, or he sees his danger without the power to avoid it." After this discovery the ladies retire to rest upon a bed of leaves and sassafras, in an inner cavern, and the men mount guard among the rocks. At the first glimpse of day Hawk-eye admonishes the party to prepare for instant departure for Fort Edward; but before they are well awake, the woods resound with the demoniac yell of the Maquas, by whom it is but too evident they are now surrounded. A shower of bullets succeeds, by one of which the man of psalmody is slightly wounded. The scout brings one of the foe down, and they retreat but to gather fresh strength and renew the attack. The watchful eye of the scout perceives that five of them have attempted to reach the upper part of the island, or the narrow rock which still connected it with the cataract, by swimming to it. One of them missed his point, and was tumbled headlong amidst the rocks and whirlpools below. The four others succeed in effecting their landing—the scout and Uncas bring down two with their rifles, and with the other two the former and Heyward are compelled to grapple in the fearful strife. After an obstinate and terrific conflict, one of the foe is killed, outright, and the other hurled into the abyss below. The battle is taken up at this point in the chapter which we published last week.—Finally, after exhausting their ammunition, and at the earnest entreaties of Cora, Hawk-eye and the Mohicans make their escape by dropping into the stream, and floating silently away for