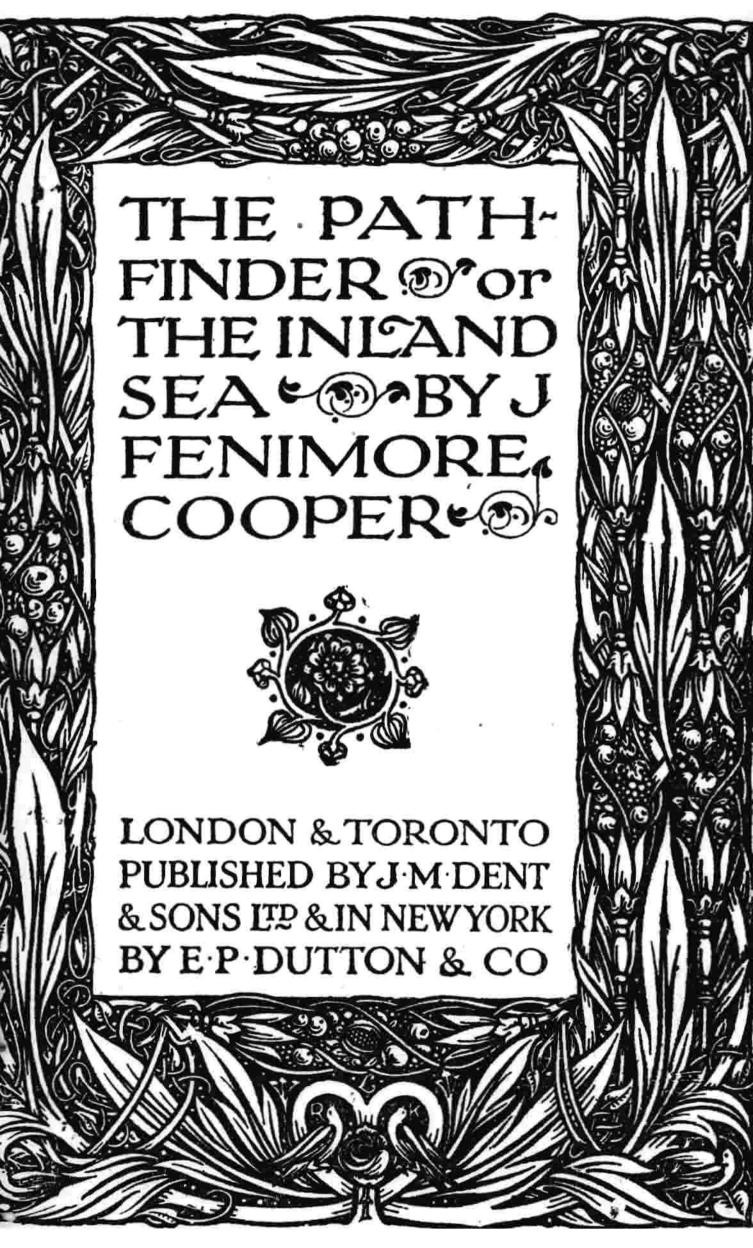
The Pathfinder



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FICTION

THE PATHFINDER

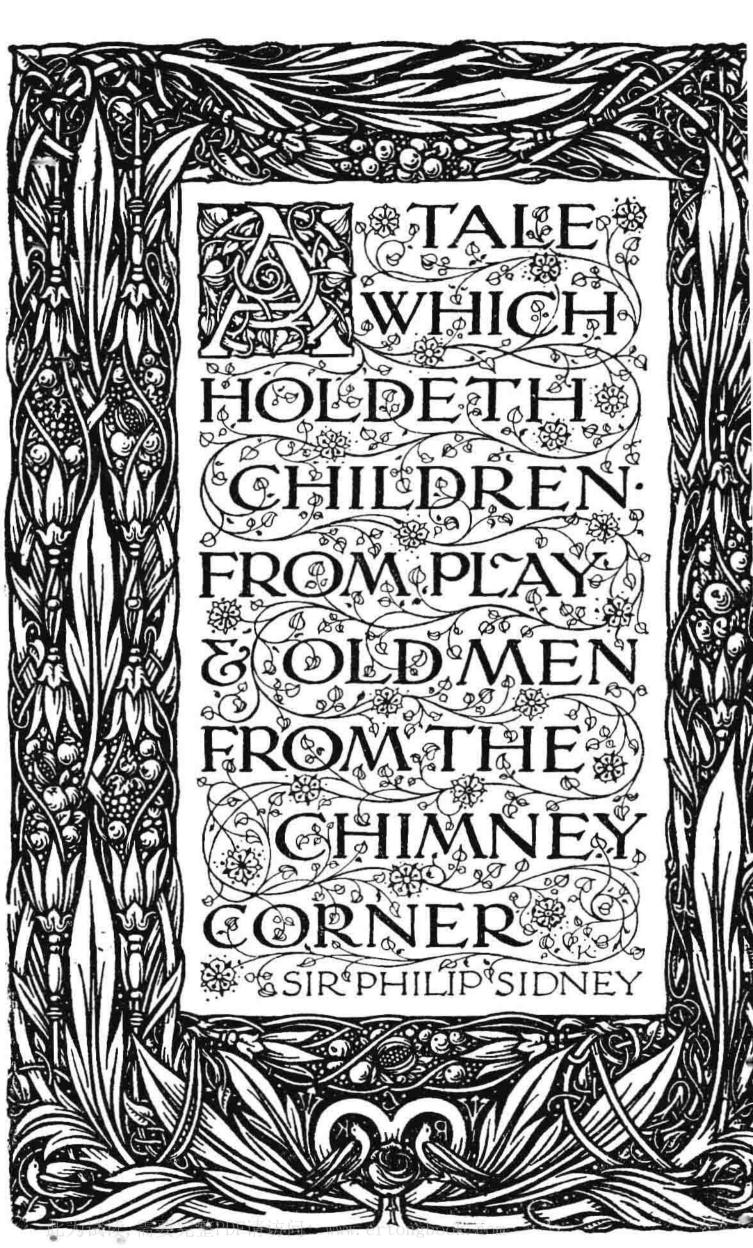
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EDITOR'S NOTE

FENIMORE COOPER was born in Burlington, New Jersey, 15th September, 1789; and while still an infant was transported to the wilds of the Susquehanna river, in New York State. There his father, having acquired a large tract of land (where Cooperstown presently arose), established a homestead; and there,with the forest and the wild shores of Otsego Lake and frequent opportunities of watching and talking to the Indians who came to trade with or spy on the white settlers, to colour his days,—the boy grew up. In due course he went to Yale College, where his love of nature and a wild life helped to make him a rebel. third year, he was expelled; but his father thought him not wholly to blame, and decided that the sea was the best outlet for his exuberance. In preparation for the navy, he was shipped at seventeen as a sailor before the mast, and sailed in a trading vessel, the "Sterling," to England. In 1808 he was duly qualified as a midshipman in the American navy; had many varied. experiences on the great lakes and at sea; and then, having married, was persuaded by his wife to give up the sea. settled first near Cooperstown, took to farming, managing an estate, and house-building. It was some years later when he wrote his first novel, "Precaution," which was published in 1820. His second book, "The Spy," was an immense advance on this, and written from personal knowledge and love of the scenes-in Westchester county-where its story takes place. years more and his fame was finally secured on both sides of the Atlantic by "The Last of the Mohicans"-one of the five "Leatherstocking Tales." The present book, "The Pathfinder," first appeared in 1840. Cooper died at Cooperstown, 14th September, 1851. The following is a list of his works as first published:

Precaution, 1820; The Spy, 1821; The Pioneers, 1823; The Pilot. 1823; Lionel Lincoln, or the Leaguer of Boston, 1825; The Last of the Mohicans, 1826; The Prairie, 1827; The Red Rover, 1828; Notions of the Americans, 1828; The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish, 1829; The Water-witch, 1830; The Bravo, 1831; The Heidenmauer, or the Benedictines, 1832; The Headsman, 1833; A Letter to his Countrymen, 1834; The Monikins, 1835; Sketches of Switzerland, 1836; Gleanings in Europe: 1837; (England) 1837; (Italy) 1838; The American Democrat, 1838; Homeward Bound, 1838; The Chronicles of Cooperstown, 1838; Home as Found (Eve Effingham), 1839; History of the U.S. Navy, 1839; The Pathfinder, or the Inland Sea, 1840; Mercedes of Castile, 1841; The Deerslayer, or the First Warpath, 1841; The Two Admirals, 1842; The Wing-and-Wing (Jack o' Lantern), 1842; The Battle of Lake Erie, or Answers to Messrs. Burges, Duer and Mackenzie, 1843; The French Governess; or, The Embroidered Handkerchief, 1843; Richard Dale, 1843; Wyandotte, 1843; Ned Myers, or Life before the Mast, 1843; Afloat and Ashore (Miles Wallingford, Lucy Hardinge), two series, 1844; Proceedings of the Naval Court-Martial in the Case of Alexander Slidell Mackenzie, etc., 1844; Satanstoe, 1845; The Chainbearer, 1846; Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers, 1846; The Red Skins, 1846; The Crater (Mark's Reef), 1847; Captain Spike; or the Islets of the Gulf, 1848; Jack Tier, or the Florida Reefs, 1848: The Oak Openings, or the Bee-Hunter, 1848; The Sea Lions, 1849; The Ways of the Hour, 1850.

PREFACE.

THE plan of this tale suggested itself to the writer many years since, though the details are altogether of recent invention. The idea of associating seamen and savages, in incidents that might be supposed characteristic of the Great Lakes, having been mentioned to a Publisher, the latter obtained something like a pledge from the Author to carry out the design at some future day, which pledge is now tardily and imperfectly redeemed.

The reader may recognise an old friend, under new circumstances, in the principal character of this legend. If the exhibition made of this old acquaintance, in the novel circumstances in which he now appears, should be found not to lessen his favour with the Public, it will be a source of extreme gratification to the writer, since he has an interest in the individual in question that falls little short of reality. It is not an easy task, however, to introduce the same character in four separate works, and to maintain the peculiarities that are indispensable to identity, without incurring a risk of fatiguing the reader with sameness; and the present experiment has been so long delayed, quite as much from doubts of its success as from any other cause. In this, as in every other undertaking, it must be the "end" that will "crown the work."

The Indian character has so little variety, that it has been my object to avoid dwelling on it too much on the present occasion; its association with the sailor, too, it is feared, will be found to have more novelty than interest.

It may strike the novice as an anachronism, to place vessels on. Ontario in the middle of the eighteenth century; but, in this particular, facts will fully bear out all the licence of the fiction. Although the precise vessels mentioned in these pages may never have existed on that water or any where else, others so nearly resembling them are known to have navigated that inland sea, even at a period much earlier than the one

just mentioned, as to form a sufficient authority for their introduction into a work of fiction. It is a fact not generally remembered, however well known it may be, that there are isolated spots, along the line of the great lakes, that date, as settlements, as far back as many of the older American towns, and which were the seats of a species of civilisation, long before the greater portion of even the older states was rescued from the wilderness.

Ontario, in our own times, has been the scene of important naval evolutions. Fleets have manœuvred on those waters, which, half a century ago, were as deserted as waters well can be; and the day is not distant, when the whole of that vast range of lakes will become the seat of empire, and fraught with all the interests of human society. A passing glimpse, even though it be in a work of fiction, of what that vast region so lately was, may help to make up the sum of knowledge by which alone a just appreciation can be formed of the wonderful means by which Providence is clearing the way for the advancement of civilisation across the whole American continent.

December, 1839.

THE PATHFINDER.

CHAPTER I.

The turf shall be my fragrant shrine;
My temple, Lord! that arch of thine;
My censer's breath the mountain airs,
And silent thoughts my only prayers.

Moore.

THE sublimity connected with vastness is familiar to every eye. The most abstruse, the most far-reaching, perhaps the most chastened of the poet's thoughts, crowd on the imagination as he gazes into the depths of the illimitable void. The expanse of the ocean is seldom seen by the novice with indifference; and the mind, even in the obscurity of night, finds a parallel to that grandeur, which seems inseparable from images that the senses cannot compass. With feelings akin to this admiration and awe-the offspring of sublimity-were the different characters with which the action of this tale must open, gazing on the scene before them. Four persons in all—two of each sex—they had managed to ascend a pile of trees, that had been uptorn by a tempest, to catch a view of the objects that surrounded them. It is still the practice of the country to call these spots wind-rows. By letting in the light of heaven upon the dark and damp recesses of the wood, they form a sort of oases in the solemn obscurity of the virgin forests of The particular wind-row of which we are writing lay on the brow of a gentle acclivity; though small, it had opened the way for an extensive view to those who might occupy its upper margin, a rare occurrence to the traveller in the woods. Philosophy has not yet determined the nature of the power that so often lays desolate spots of this description; some ascribing it to the whirlwinds which produce water-spouts on the ocean; while others again impute it to sudden and violent passages of streams of the electric fluid; but the effects in the woods are familiar to all. On the upper

margin of the opening, the viewless influence had piled tree on tree, in such a manner as had not only enabled the two males of the party to ascend to an elevation of some thirty feet above the level of the earth, but, with a little care and encouragement, to induce their more timid companions to accompany them. The vast trunks which had been broken and driven by the force of the gust lay blended like jack-straws; while their branches, still exhaling the fragrance of withering leaves, were interlaced in a manner to afford sufficient support to the hands. One tree had been completely uprooted, and its lower end, filled with earth, had been cast uppermost, in a way to supply a sort of staging for the four adventurers, when they had gained the desired distance from the ground.

The reader is to anticipate none of the appliances of people of condition in the description of the personal appearances of the group in question. They were all wayfarers in the wilderness; and had they not been, neither their previous habits, nor their actual social positions, would have accustomed them to many of the luxuries of rank. Two of the party, indeed, a male and female, belonged to the native owners of the soil, being Indians of the well-known tribe of the Tuscaroras; while their companions were—a man, who bore about him the peculiarities of one who had passed his days on the ocean, and was too in a station little, if any, above that of a common mariner; and his female associate, who was a maiden of a class in no great degree superior to his own; though her youth, sweetness of countenance, and a modest, but spirited mien, lent that character intellect and refinement which adds so much to the charm of beauty in the sex. On the present occasion, her full blue eye reflected the feeling of sublimity that the scene excited, and her pleasant face was beaming with the pensive expression with which all deep emotions, even though they bring the most grateful pleasure, shadow the countenances of the ingenuous and thoughtful.

And truly the scene was of a nature deeply to impress the imagination of the beholder. Towards the west, in which direction the faces of the party were turned, the eye ranged over an ocean of leaves, glorious and rich in the varied and lively verdure of a generous vegetation,

and shaded by the luxuriant tints which belong to the forty-second degree of latitude. The elm with its graceful and weeping top, the rich varieties of the maple, most of the noble oaks of the American forest, with the broadleafed linden known in the parlance of the country as the bass-wood, mingled their uppermost branches, forming one broad, and seemingly interminable carpet of foliage, which stretched away towards the setting sun, until it bounded the horizon, by blending with the clouds, as the waves and the sky meet at the base of the vault of heaven. Here and there, by some accident of the tempests, or by a caprice of nature, a trifling opening among these giant members of the forest permitted an inferior tree to struggle upward toward the light, and to lift its modest head nearly to a level with the surrounding surface of verdure. Of this class were the birch, a tree of some account in regions less favoured, the quivering aspen, various generous nut-woods, and divers others which resembled the ignoble and vulgar, thrown by circumstances into the presence of the stately and great. and there too, the tall straight trunk of the pine pierced the vast field, rising high above it, like some grand monument reared by art on a plain of leaves.

It was the vastness of the view, the nearly unbroken surface of verdure, that contained the principle of

grandeur. The beauty was to be traced in the delicate tints, relieved by gradations of light and shade; while the solemn repose induced the feeling allied to awe.

"Uncle," said the wondering, but pleased girl, addressing her male companion, whose arm she rather touched than leaned on, to steady her own light but firm footing, "this is like a view of the ocean you so much love!"

"So much for ignorance, and a girl's fancy, Magnet," a term of affection the sailor often used in allusion to his niece's personal attractions; "no one but a child would think of likening this handful of leaves to a look at the real Atlantic. You might seize all these tree-tops to Neptune's jacket, and they would make no more than a nosegay for his bosom."

"More fanciful than true, I think, uncle. Look thither; it must be miles on miles, and yet we see nothing but leaves! what more could one behold, if looking at the ocean?"

"More!" returned the uncle, giving an impatient gesture with the elbow the other touched, for his arms were crossed, and the hands were thrust into the bosom of a vest of red cloth, a fashion of the times,—" More Magnet? say, rather, what less? Where are your combing seas, your blue water, your rollers, your breakers, your whales, or your water-spouts, and your endless motion, in this bit of a forest, child?"

"And where are your tree-tops, your solemn silence, your fragrant leaves, and your beautiful green, uncle,

on the ocean?"

"Tut! Magnet; if you understood the thing, you would know that green water is a sailor's bane. He scarcely relishes a greenhorn less."

"But green trees are a different thing.—Hist! that

sound is the air breathing among the leaves!"

"You should hear a nor-wester breathe, girl, if you fancy wind aloft. Now, where are your gales, and hurricanes, and trades, and levanters, and such like incidents, in this bit of a forest? and what fishes have you swimming beneath yonder tame surface?"

"That there have been tempests here, these signs around us plainly show; and beasts, if not fishes, are

beneath those leaves."

"I do not know that," returned the uncle, with a sailor's dogmatism. "They told us many stories at Albany, of the wild animals we should fall in with, and yet we have seen nothing to frighten a seal. I doubt if any of your inland animals will compare with a low latitude shark."

"See!" exclaimed the niece, who was more occupied with the sublimity and beauty of the "boundless wood," than with her uncle's arguments, "yonder is a smoke curling over the tops of the trees—can it come from a house?"

"Ay, ay; there is a look of humanity in that smoke," returned the old seaman, "which is worth a thousand trees. I must show it to Arrowhead, who may be running past a port without knowing it. It is probable there is a caboose, where there is a smoke."

As he concluded, the uncle drew a hand from his bosom, touched the male Indian, who was standing near him, lightly on the shoulder, and pointed out a thin line of

vapour which was stealing slowly out of the wilderness of leaves, at a distance of about a mile, and was diffusing itself in almost imperceptible threads of humidity in the quivering atmosphere. The Tuscarora was one of those noble-looking warriors oftener met with among the aborigines of this continent a century since, than to-day; and, while he had mingled sufficiently with the colonists to be familiar with their habits and even with their language, he had lost little, if any, of the wild grandeur and simple dignity of a chief. Between him and the old seaman the intercourse had been friendly, but distant; for the Indian had been too much accustomed to mingle with the officers of the different military posts he had frequented, not to understand that his present companion was only a subordinate. So imposing, indeed, had been the quiet superiority of the Tuscarora's reserve, that Charles Cap, for so was the seaman named, in his most dogmatical or facetious moments, had not ventured on familiarity, in an intercourse which had now lasted more than a week. The sight of the curling smoke, however, had struck the latter like the sudden appearance of a sail at sea; and, for the first time since they met, he ventured to touch the warrior, as has been related.

The quick eye of the Tuscarora instantly caught a sight of the smoke; and for full a minute, he stood, slightly raised on tiptoe, with distended nostrils, like the buck that scents a taint in the air, and a gaze as riveted as that of the trained pointer while he waits his master's aim. Then falling back on his feet, a low exclamation, in the soft tones that form so singular a contrast to its harsher cries, in the Indian warrior's voice, was barely audible; otherwise he was undisturbed. His countenance was calm, and his quick, dark, eagle eye moved over the leafy panorama, as if to take in at a glance every circumstance that might enlighten his mind. That the long journey they had attempted to make through a broad belt of wilderness was necessarily attended with danger, both uncle and niece well knew; though neither could at once determine whether the sign that others were in their vicinity was the harbinger of good or evil.

were in their vicinity was the harbinger of good or evil.

"There must be Oneidas, or Tuscaroras, near us, Arrowhead," said Cap, addressing his Indian companion by his conventional English name; "will it not be well

to join company with them, and get a comfortable berth for the night in their wigwam?"
"No wigwam there," Arrowhead answered, in his

unmoved manner-" too much tree."

"But Indians must be there; perhaps some old messmates of your own, Master Arrowhead."

"No Tuscarora—no Oneida—no Mohawk—pale-face

fire."

"The devil it is! Well, Magnet, this surpasses a seaman's philosophy: we old sea-dogs can tell a lubber's nest from a mate's hammock; but I do not think the oldest admiral in his Majesty's fleet can tell a king's smoke from a collier's."

The idea that human beings were in their vicinity, in that ocean of wilderness, had deepened the flush on the blooming cheek and brightened the eye of the fair creature at his side; but she soon turned with a look of surprise to her relative, and said, hesitatingly, for both had often admired the Tuscarora's knowledge, or, we might almost say, instinct-

"A pale-face's fire! Surely, uncle, he cannot know that?"

"Ten days since, child, I would have sworn to it; but now I hardly know what to believe. May I take the liberty of asking, Arrowhead, why you fancy that smoke, now, a pale-face's smoke, and not a red-skin's?"

"Wet wood," returned the warrior, with the calmness with which the pedagogue might point out an arithmetical demonstration to his puzzled pupil.

wet-much smoke; much water-black smoke."

"But, begging your pardon, Master Arrowhead, the smoke is not black, nor is there much of it. To my eye, now, it is as light and fanciful a smoke as ever rose from a captain's tea-kettle, when nothing was left to make the fire but a few chips from the dunnage."

"Too much water," returned Arrowhead, with a slight nod of the head: "Tuscarora too cunning to make fire with water! pale-face too much book, and burn any

thing; much book, little know."

"Well, that's reasonable, I allow," said Cap, who was no devotee of learning: "he means that as a hit at your reading, Magnet; for the chief has sensible notions of things in his own way. How far, now, Arrowhead, do

you make us, by your calculation, from the bit of a pond that you call the Great Lake, and towards which we have been so many days shaping our course?"

The Tuscarora looked at the seaman with quiet superiority, as he answered. Ontario, like heaven; one sun,

and the great traveller will know it."

"Well, I have been a great traveller, I cannot deny; but of all my v'y'ges this has been the longest, the least profitable, and the farthest inland. If this body of fresh water is so nigh, Arrowhead, and so large, one might think a pair of good eyes would find it out; for, apparently, every thing within thirty miles is to be seen from this look-out."

"Look," said Arrowhead, stretching an arm before him

with quiet grace; "Ontario!"

"Uncle, you are accustomed to cry 'Land ho!' but not 'Water ho!' and you do not see it," cried the niece, laughing, as girls will laugh at their own idle conceits.

"How now, Magnet, do'st suppose that I shouldn't

know my native element, if it were in sight?"

"But, Ontario is not your native element, dear uncle; for you come from the salt water, while this is fresh."

"That might make some difference to your young I should know water, mariner, but none to the old one. child, were I to see it in China."

"Ontario," repeated Arrowhead, with emphasis, again

stretching his hand towards the north-west

Cap looked at the Tuscarora, for the first time since their acquaintance, with something like an air of contempt, though he did not fail to follow the direction of the chief's eye and arm, both of which were directed toward a vacant point in the heavens, a short distance

above the plain of leaves.

"Ay, ay; this is much as I expected, when I left the coast in search of a fresh-water pond," resumed Cap, shrugging his shoulders like one whose mind was made up, and who thought no more need be said. "Ontario may be there, or, for that matter, it may be in my pocket. Well, I suppose there will be room enough, when we reach it, to work our canoe. But, Arrowhead, if there be pale-faces in our neighbourhood, I confess I should like to get within hail of them."

The Tuscarora now gave a quiet inclination of his head, and the whole party descended from the roots of the uptorn tree in silence. When they had reached the ground, Arrowhead intimated his intention to go towards the fire, and ascertain who had lighted it; while he advised his wife and the two others to return to a canoe, which they had left in the adjacent stream, and await his return.

"Why, chief, this might do on soundings, and in an offing where one knew the channel," returned old Cap; but in an unknown region like this, I think it unsafe to trust the pilot alone too far from the ship: so, with your leave, we will not part company."

"What my brother want?" asked the Indian, gravely, though without taking offence at a distrust that was

sufficiently plain.

"Your company, Master Arrowhead, and no more.

will go with you and speak these strangers."

The Tuscarora assented without difficulty, and again he directed his patient and submissive little wife, who seldom turned her full rich black eye on him, but to express equally her respect, her dread, and her love, to proceed to the boat. But, here Magnet raised a difficulty. Although spirited, and of unusual energy under circumstances of trial, she was but woman; and the idea of being entirely deserted by her two male protectors, in the midst of a wilderness, that her senses had just told her was seemingly illimitable, became so keenly painful, that she expressed a wish to accompany her uncle.

"The exercise will be a relief, dear sir, after sitting so long in the canoe," she added, as the rich blood slowly returned to a cheek that had paled, in spite of her efforts to be calm; "and there may be females with the strangers."

"Come, then, child; it is but a cable's length, and we

shall return an hour before the sun sets."

With this permission, the girl, whose real name was Mabel Dunham, prepared to be of the party; while the Dew-of-June, as the wife of Arrowhead was called, passively went her way towards the canoe, too much accustomed to obedience, solitude, and the gloom of the forest, to feel apprehension.