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THE HUNTERS OF THE
HILLS

Joseph Altsheler

The Hunters of the Hills

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Joseph A. Altsheler

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FOREWORD

"The Hunters of the Hills" is the first volume of a series dealing with the great struggle of France and England and their colonies for dominion in North America, culminating with the fall of Quebec. It is also concerned to a large extent with the Iroquois, the mighty league known in their own language as the Hodenosaunee, for the favor of which both French and English were high bidders. In his treatment of the theme the author has consulted many authorities, and he is not conscious of any historical error.

CHAPTER I

THE THREE FRIENDS

A canoe containing two boys and a man was moving slowly on one of the little lakes in the great northern wilderness of what is now the State of New York. The water, a brilliant blue under skies of the same intense sapphire tint, rippled away gently on either side of the prow, or rose in heaps of glittering bubbles, as the paddles were lifted for a new stroke.

Vast masses of dense foliage in the tender green of early spring crowned the high banks of the lake on every side. The eye found no break anywhere. Only the pink or delicate red of a wild flower just bursting into bloom varied the solid expanse of emerald walls; and save for the canoe and a bird of prey, darting in a streak of silver for a fish, the surface of the water was lone and silent.

The three who used the paddles were individual and unlike, none of them bearing any resemblance to the other two. The man sat in the stern. He was of middle years, built very powerfully and with muscles and sinews developed to an amazing degree. His face, in childhood quite fair, had been burned almost as brown as that of an Indian by long exposure. He was clothed wholly in tanned deerskin adorned with many little colored beads. A hatchet and knife were in the broad belt at his waist, and a long rifle lay at his feet.

His face was fine and open and he would have been noticed anywhere. But the eyes of the curious would surely have rested first upon the two youths with him.

One was back of the canoe's center on the right side and the other was forward on the left. The weight of the three occupants was balanced so nicely that their delicate craft floated on a perfectly even keel. The lad near the prow was an Indian of a nobler type than is often seen in these later days, when he has been deprived of the native surroundings that fit him like the setting of a gem.

The Indian, although several years short of full manhood, was tall, with limbs slender as was usual in his kind; but his shoulders were broad and his chest wide and deep. His color was a light copper, the tint verging toward red, and his face was illumined wonderfully by black eyes that often flashed with a lofty look of courage and pride.

The young warrior, Tayoga, a coming chief of the clan of the Bear, of the nation Onondaga, of the League of the Hodenosaunee, known to white men as the Iroquois, was in all the wild splendor of full forest attire. His headdress, *gustoweh*, was the product of long and careful labor. It was a splint arch, curving over the head, and crossed by another arch from side to side, the whole inclosed by a cap of fine network, fastened with a silver band. From the crest, like the plume of a Roman knight, a cluster of pure white feathers hung, and on the side of it a white feather of uncommon size projected upward and backward, the end of the feather set in a little tube which revolved with the wind, the whole imparting a further air of distinction to his strong and haughty countenance.

The upper part of his body was clothed in the garment called by the Hodenosaunee *gakaah*, a long tunic of deerskin tanned beautifully, descending to the knees, belted at the waist, and decorated elaborately with the quills of the porcupine, stained red, yellow and blue and varied with the natural white.

His leggings, called in his own language *giseha*, were fastened by bands above the knees, and met his moccasins. They too were of deerskin tanned with the same skill, and along the seams and around the bottom, were adorned with the quills of the porcupine and rows of small, colored beads. The moccasins, *ahtaquaoweh*, of deerskin, were also decorated with quills and beads, but the broad belt, *gagehta*, holding in his tunic at the waist, was of rich blue velvet, heavy with bead work. The knife at his belt had a silver hilt, and the rifle in the bottom of the canoe was silver-mounted. Nowhere in the world could one have found a young forest warrior more splendid in figure, manner and dress.

The white youth was the equal in age and height of his red comrade, but was built a little more heavily. His face, tanned red instead of brown, was of the blonde type and bore an aspect of refinement unusual in the woods. The blue eyes were thoughtful and the chin, curving rather delicately, indicated gentleness and a sense of humor, allied with firmness of purpose and great courage. His dress was similar in fashion to that of the older man, but was finer in quality. He was armed like the others.

"I suppose we're the only people on the lake," said the hunter and scout, David Willet, "and I'm glad of it, lads. It's not a time, just when the spring has come and the woods are so fine, to be shot at by Huron warriors and their like down from Canada."

"I don't want 'em to send their bullets at me in the spring or any other time," said the white lad, Robert Lennox. "Hurons are not good marksmen, but if they kept on firing they'd be likely to hit at last. I don't think, though, that we'll find any of 'em here. What do you say, Tayoga?"

The Indian youth flashed a swift look along the green wall of forest, and replied in pure Onondaga, which both Lennox and Willet understood:

"I think they do not come. Nothing stirs in the woods on the high banks. Yet Onontio (the Governor General of Canada) would send the Hurons and the other nations allied with the French against the people of Corlear (the Governor of the Province of New York). But they fear the Hodenosaunee."

"Well they may!" said Willet. "The Iroquois have stopped many a foray of the French. More than one little settlement has thriven in the shade of the Long House."

The young warrior smiled and lifted his head a little. Nobody had more pride of birth and race than an Onondaga or a Mohawk. The home of the Hodenosaunee was in New York, but their hunting grounds and real domain, over which they were lords, extended from the Hudson to the Ohio and from the St. Lawrence to the Cumberland and the Tennessee, where the land of the Cherokees began. No truer kings of the forest ever lived, and for generations their warlike spirit fed upon the fact.

"It is true," said Tayoga gravely, "but a shadow gathers in the north. The children of Corlear wish to plow the land and raise corn, but the sons of Onontio go into the forest and become hunters and warriors with the Hurons. It is easy for the man in the woods to shoot down the man in the field."

"You put it well, Tayoga," exclaimed Willet. "That's the kernel in the nut. The English settle upon the land, but the French take to the wild life and would rather be rovers. When it comes to fighting it puts our people at a great disadvantage. I know that some sort of a wicked broth is brewing at Quebec, but none of us can tell just when it will boil over."

"Have you ever been to Quebec, Dave?" asked Robert.

"Twice. It's a fortress on a rock high above the St. Lawrence, and it's the seat of the French power in North America. We English in this country rule our selves mostly, but the French in Canada don't have much to say. It's the officials sent out from France who govern as they please."

"And you believe they'll attack us, Dave?"

"When they're ready, yes, but they intend to choose time and place. I think they've been sending war belts to the tribes in the north, but I can't prove it."

"The French in France are a brave and gallant race, Dave, and they are brave and gallant here too, but I think they're often more cruel than we are."

It was in David Willet's mind to say it was because the French had adapted themselves more readily than the English to the ways of the Indian, but consideration for the feelings of Tayoga restrained him. The wilderness ranger had an innate delicacy and to him Tayoga was always a nobleman of the forest.

"You've often told me, Dave," said Lennox, "that I've French blood in me."

"There's evidence pointing that way," said Willet, "and when I was in Quebec I saw some of the men from Northern France. I suppose we mostly think of the French as short and dark, but these were tall and fair. Some of them had blue eyes and yellow hair, and they made me think a little of you, Robert."

Young Lennox sighed and became very thoughtful. The mystery of his lineage puzzled and saddened him at times. It was a loss never to have known a father or a mother, and for his kindest and best friends to be of a blood not his own. The moments of depression, however, were brief, as he had that greatest of all gifts from the gods, a cheerful and hopeful temperament.

The three began to paddle with renewed vigor. Gasna Gaowo, the canoe in which they sat, was a noble example of Onondaga art. It was about sixteen feet in length and was made of the bark of the red elm, the rim, however, being of white ash, stitched thoroughly to the bark. The ribs also were of white ash, strong and flexible, and fastened at each end under the rim. The prow, where the ends of the bark came together, was quite sharp, and the canoe, while very light and apparently frail, was exceedingly strong, able to carry a weight of more than a thousand pounds. The Indians surpassed all other people in an art so useful in a land of many lakes and rivers and they lavished willing labor upon their canoes, often decorating them with great beauty and taste.

"We're now within the land of the Mohawks, are we not, Tayoga?" asked Lennox.

"Ganeagaono, the Keepers of the Eastern Gate, rule here," replied the young warrior, "but the Hurons dispute their claim."

"I've heard that the Mohawks and the Hurons, who now fight one another, were once of the same blood."

"It is so. The old men have had it from those who were old men when they were boys. The Mohawks in a far, far time were a clan of the Wanedote, called in your language the Hurons, and lived where the French have built their capital of Quebec. Thence their power spread, and becoming a great nation themselves they separated from the Wanedote. But many enemies attacked them and they moved to the south, where they joined the Onondagas and Oneidas, and in time the League of the Hodenosaunee grew up. That, though, was far, far back, eight or ten of what the white men call generations."

"But it's interesting, tremendously so," said Robert, reflectively. "I find that the red races and the white don't differ much. The flux and movement have been going on always among them just as it has among us. Races disappear, and new ones appear."

"It is so, Lennox," said Tayoga gravely, "but the League of the Hodenosaunee is the chosen of Manitou. We, the Onundagaono, in your language Onondagas, Keepers of the Council, the Brand and the Wampum, know it. The power of the Long House cannot be broken. Onundagaono, Ganeogaono, Nundawaono (Senecas), Gweugwehono (Cayugas), Onayotekaono (Oneidas) and the new nation that we made our brethren, Dusgaowehono (Tuscaroras), will defend it forever."

Robert glanced at him. Tayoga's nostrils expanded as he spoke, the chin was thrown up again and his eyes flashed with a look of immeasurable pride. White youth understood red youth. The forest could be as truly a kingdom as cities and fields, and within the limits of his horizon Tayoga, a coming chief of the clan of the Bear, of the nation Onondaga, of the League of the Hodenosaunee, was as thoroughly of royal blood as any sovereign on his throne. He and his father and his father's father before him and others before them had heard the old men and the women chant the prowess and invincibility of the Hodenosaunee, and of that great league, the Onondagas, the Keepers of the Wampum, the Brand and the Council Fire, were in Tayoga's belief first, its heart and soul.

Robert had pride of race himself—it was a time when an ancient stock was thought to count for much—and he was sure that the blood in his veins was noble, but, white though he was, he did not feel any superiority to Tayoga. Instead he paid him respect where respect was due because, born to a great place in a great race, he was equal to it. He understood, too, why the Hodenosaunee seemed immutable and eternal to its people, as ancient Rome had once seemed unshakable and everlasting to the Romans, and, understanding, he kept his peace.

The lake, slender and long, now narrowed to a width of forty or fifty yards and curved sharply toward the east. They slowed down with habitual caution, until they could see what lay in front of them. Robert and Tayoga rested their paddles, and Willet sent the canoe around the curve. The fresh

reach of water was peaceful too, unruffled by the craft of any enemy, and on either side the same lofty banks of solid green stretched ahead. Above and beyond the cliffs rose the distant peaks and ridges of the high mountains. The whole was majestic and magnificent beyond comparison. Robert and Tayoga, their paddles still idle, breathed it in and felt that Manitou, who is the same as God, had lavished work upon this region, making it good to the eye of all men for all time.

"How far ahead is the cove, Tayoga?" asked Willet.

"About a mile," replied the Onondaga.

"Then we'd better put in there, and look for game. We've got mighty little venison."

"It is so," said Tayoga, using his favorite words of assent. Neither he nor Robert resumed the paddle, leaving the work for the rest of the way to the hunter, who was fully equal to the task. His powerful arms swept the broad blade through the water, and the canoe shot forward at a renewed pace. Long practice and training had made him so skillful at the task that his breath was not quickened by the exertion. It was a pleasure to Robert to watch the ease and power with which he did so much.

The lake widened as they advanced, and through a change in the color of the sky the water here seemed silver rather than blue. A flock of wild ducks swam near the edge and he saw two darting loons, but there was no other presence. Silence, beauty and majesty were everywhere, and he was content to go on, without speaking, infused with the spirit of the wilderness.

The cove showed after a while, at first a mere slit that only a wary eye could have seen, and then a narrow opening through which a small creek flowed into the lake. Willet, with swift and skillful strokes of the paddle, turned the canoe into the stream and advanced some distance up it, until he stopped at a point where it broadened into an expanse like a pool, covered partly with water lilies, and fringed with tall reeds. Behind the reeds were slanting banks clothed with dense, green foliage. It was an ideal covert, and there were thousands like it in the wonderful wilderness of the North Woods.

"You find this a good place, don't you, Tayoga?" said Willet, with a certain deference.

"It suits us well," replied the young Onondaga in his measured tones. "No man, Indian or white, has been here today. The lilies are undisturbed. Not a reed has been bent. Ducks that have not yet seen us are swimming quietly up the creek, and farther on a stag is drinking at its edge. I can hear him lapping the water."

"That was wonderful, Tayoga," said Willet with admiration. "I wouldn't have noticed it, but since you've spoken of it I can hear the stag too. Now he's gone away. Maybe he's heard us."

"Like as not," said Robert, "and he'd have been a good prize, but he's taken the alarm, and he's safe. We'll have to look for something else. Just there on the right you can see an opening among the leaves, Dave, and that's our place for landing."

Willet sent the canoe through the open water between the tall reeds, then slowed it down with his paddle, and the prow touched the bank gently.

The three stepped out and drew the canoe with great care upon the shore, in order that it might dry. The bank at that point was not steep and the presence of the deer at the water's edge farther up indicated a slope yet easier there.

"Appears to be a likely place for game," said Willet. "While the stag has scented us and gone, there must be more deer in the woods. Maybe they're full of 'em, since this is doubtful ground and warriors and white men too are scarce."

"But red scouts from the north may be abroad," said Robert, "and it would be unwise to use our rifles. We don't want a brush with Hurons or Tionontati."

"The Tionontati went into the west some years ago," said Tayoga, "and but few of their warriors are left with their kinsmen, the Hurons."

"But those few would be too many, should they chance to be near. We must not use our rifles. Instead we must resort to your bow and arrows, Tayoga."

"Perhaps *waano* (the bow) will serve us," said the young chief, with his confident smile.

"That being the case, then," said Willet, "I'll stay here and mind the canoe, while the pair of you boys go and find the deer. You're younger than I am, an' I'm willing for you to do the work."

The white teeth of Tayoga flashed into a deeper smile.

"Does our friend, the Great Bear, who calls himself Willet, grow old?" he asked.

"Not by a long sight, Tayoga," replied Willet with energy. "I'm no braggart, I hope, but you Iroquois don't call me Great Bear for nothing. My muscles are as hard as ever, and my wind's as good. I can lift more and carry more upon my shoulders than any other man in all this wilderness."

"I but jested with the Great Bear," said Tayoga, smiling. "Did I not see last winter how quick he could be when I was about to be cut to pieces under the sharp hoofs of the wounded and enraged moose, and he darted in and slew the animal with his long knife?"

"Don't speak of it, Tayoga. That was just a little matter between friends. You'd do as much for me if the chance came."

"But you've done it already, Great Bear."

Willet said something more in deprecation, and picking up the canoe, put it in a better place. Its weight was nothing to him, and Robert noticed with admiration the play of the great arms and shoulders. Seen now upon the land and standing at his full height Willet was a giant, proportioned perfectly, a titanic figure fitted by nature to cope with the hardships and dangers of the wilderness.

"I'm thinking stronger than ever that this is good deer country," he said. "It has all the looks of it, since they can find here the food they like, and it hasn't been ranged over for a long time by white man or red. Tayoga, you and Robert oughtn't to be long in finding the game we want."

"I think like the Great Bear that we'll not have to look far for deer," said the Onondaga, "and I leave my rifle with you while I take my bow and arrows."

"I'll keep your rifle for you, Tayoga, and if I didn't have anything else to do I'd go along with you two lads and see you use the bow. I know that you're a regular king with it."

Tayoga said nothing, although he was secretly pleased with the compliment, and took from the canoe a long slender package, wrapped carefully in white, tanned deerskin, which he unrolled, disclosing the bow, *waano*.

The young Onondaga's bow, like everything he wore or used, was of the finest make, four feet in length, and of such powerful wood that only one of great strength and equal skill could bend it. He brought it to the proper curve with a sudden, swift effort, and strung it. There he tested the string with a quick sweeping motion of his hand, making it give back a sound like that of a violin, and seemed satisfied.

He also took from the canoe the quiver, *gadasha*, which was made of carefully dressed deerskin, elaborately decorated with the stained quills of the porcupine. It was two feet in length and contained twenty-five arrows, *gano*.

The arrows were three feet long, pointed with deer's horn, each carrying two feathers twisted about the shaft. They, like the bow and quiver, were fine specimens of workmanship and would have compared favorably with those used by the great English archers of the Middle Ages.

Tayoga examined the sharp tips of the arrows, and, poising the quiver over his left shoulder, fastened it on his back, securing the lower end at his waist with the sinews of the deer, and the upper with the same kind of cord, which he carried around the neck and then under his left arm. The ends of the arrows were thus convenient to his right hand, and with one sweeping circular motion he could draw them from the quiver and fit them to the bowstring.

The Iroquois had long since learned the use of the rifle and musket, but on occasion they still relied upon the bow, with which they had won their kingdom, the finest expanse of mountain and forest, lake and river, ever ruled over by man. Tayoga, as he strung his bow and hung his quiver, felt a great emotion, the spirit of his ancestors he would have called it, descending upon him. *Waano* and he fitted together and for the time he cherished it more than his rifle, the weapon that the white man

had brought from another world. The feel of the wood in his hand made him see visions of a vast green wilderness in which the Indian alone roamed and knew no equal.

"What are you dreaming about, Tayoga?" asked Robert, who also dreamed dreams.

The Onondaga shook himself and laughed a little.

"Of nothing," he replied. "No, that was wrong. I was dreaming of the deer that we'll soon find. Come, Lennox, we'll go seek him."

"And while you're finding him," said Willet, "I'll be building the fire on which we'll cook the best parts of him."

Tayoga and Robert went together into the forest, the white youth taking with him his rifle, which, however, he did not expect to use. It was merely a precaution, as the Hurons, Abenakis, Caughnawagas and other tribes in the north were beginning to stir and mutter under the French influence. And for that reason, and because they did not wish to alarm possible game, the two went on silent foot.

No other human beings were present there, but the forest was filled with inhabitants, and hundreds of eyes regarded the red youth with the bow, and the white youth with the rifle, as they passed among the trees. Rabbits looked at them from small red eyes. A muskrat, at a brook's edge, gazed a moment and then dived from sight. A chipmunk cocked up his ears, listened and scuttled away.

But most of the population of the forest was in the trees. Squirrels chattering with anger at the invaders, or with curiosity about them, ran along the boughs, their bushy tails curving over their backs. A huge wildcat crouched in a fork, swelled with anger, his eyes reddening and his sharp claws thrusting forth as he looked at the two beings whom he instinctively hated much and feared more. The leaves swarmed with birds, robins and wrens and catbirds and all the feathered tribe keeping up an incessant quivering and trilling, while a distant woodpecker drummed portentously on the trunk of an old oak. They too saw the passing youths, but since no hand was raised to hurt them they sang, in their way, as they worked and played.

The wilderness spell was strong upon Tayoga, whose ancestors had lived unknown ages in the forest. The wind from the north as it rustled the leaves filled his strong lungs and made the great pulses leap. The bow in his hand fitted into the palm like a knife in its sheath. He heard the animals and the birds, and the sounds were those to which his ancestors had listened a thousand years and more. Once again he was proud of his heritage. He was Tayoga, a coming chief of the Clan of the Bear, of the nation Onondaga, of the League of the Hodenosaunee, and he would not exchange places with any man of whom he had heard in all the world.

The forest was the friend of Tayoga and he knew it. He could name the trees, the elm and the maple, and the spruce and the cedar and all the others. He knew the qualities of their wood and bark and the uses for which every one was best fitted. He noticed particularly the great maples, so precious to the Iroquois, from which they took sap and made sugar, and which gave an occasion and name to one of their most sacred festivals and dances. He also observed the trees from which the best bows and arrows were made, and the red elms and butternut hickories, the bark of which served the Iroquois for canoes.

When Tayoga passed through a forest it was not merely a journey, it was also an inspection. He had been trained from his baby frame, *gaoseha*, always to observe everything that met the human eye, and now he not only examined the trees, but also the brooks and the little ravines and the swell of the hills and the summits of the mountains that towered high, many miles away. If ever he came back there he would know the ground and all its marks.

His questing eye alighted presently upon the delicate traces of hoofs, and, calling Robert's attention, the two examined them with the full care demanded by their purpose.

"New," said Tayoga; "scarce an hour old."

"Less than that," said Robert. "The deer can't be far away."

"He is near, because there has been nothing to make him run. Here go the traces in almost a half circle. He is feeding and taking his time."

"It's a good chase to follow. The wind is blowing toward us, and he can take no alarm, unless he sees or hears us."

"It would be shame to an Onondaga if a deer heard him coming."

"You don't stand in any danger of being made ashamed, Tayoga. As you're to be the hunter, lead and I'll follow."

The Onondaga slipped through the undergrowth, and Robert, a skillful young woodsman also, came after with such care and lightness of foot that neither made a twig or leaf rustle. Tayoga always followed the traces. The deer had nibbled tender young shoots, but he had not remained long in one place. The forest was such an abundant garden to him that, fastidious as an epicure, he required the most delicate food to please his palate.

Tayoga stopped suddenly in a few minutes and raised his hand. Robert, following his gaze, saw a stag about a hundred yards away, a splendid fellow with head upraised, not in alarm, but to nuzzle some tender young leaves.

"I will go to the right," whispered the young warrior, "and will you, my friend, remain here?"

Robert nodded, and Tayoga slid silently among the bushes to secure a nearer and better position for aim. The Indian admired the stag which, like himself, fitted into the forest. He would not have hunted him for sport, nor at any other time would he have shot him, but food was needed and Manitou had sent the deer for that purpose. He was not one to oppose the will of Manitou.

The greatest Bowman in the Northern wilderness crouched in the thicket, and reaching his right hand over his left shoulder, withdrew an arrow, which he promptly fitted to the string. It was a perfect arrow, made by the young chief himself, and the two feathers were curved in the right manner to secure the utmost degree of speed and accuracy. He fitted it to the string and drew the bow far back, almost to the head of the shaft. Now he was the hunter only and the spirit of hunting ancestors for many generations was poured into him. His eye followed the line of coming flight and he chose the exact spot on the sleek body beneath which the great heart lay.

The stag, with his head upraised, still pulled at the tender top of a bush, and the deceitful wind, which blew from him toward Tayoga, brought no warning. Nor did the squirrel chattering in the tree or the bird singing on the bough just over his head tell him that the hunter was near. Tayoga looked again down the arrow at the chosen place on the gleaming body of the deer, and with a sudden and powerful contraction of the muscles, bending the bow a little further, loosed the shaft.

The arrow flew singing through the air as swift and deadly as a steel dart and was buried in the heart of the stag, which, leaping upward, fell, writhed convulsively a moment or two, and died. The young Onondaga regarded his work a moment with satisfaction, and then walked forward, followed by his white comrade.

"One arrow was enough, Tayoga," said Robert, "and I knew before you shot that another would not be needed."

"The distance was not great," said Tayoga modestly. "I should have been a poor marksman had I missed."

He pulled his arrow with a great effort from the body of the deer, wiped it carefully upon the grass, and returned it to *gadasha*, the quiver. Arrows required time and labor for the making, but unlike the powder and bullet in a rifle, they could be used often, and hence at times the bow had its advantage.

Then the two worked rapidly and skillfully with their great hunting knives, skinning and removing all the choicer portions of the deer, and before they finished they heard the pattering of light feet in the woods, accompanied now and then by an evil whine.

"The wolves come early," said Tayoga.

"And they're over hungry," said Robert, "or they wouldn't let us know so soon that they're in the thickets."

"It is told sometimes, among my people, that the soul of a wicked man has gone into the wolf," said Tayoga, not ceasing in his work, his shining blade flashing back and forth. "Then the wolf can understand what we say, although he may not speak himself."

"And suppose we kill such a wolf, Tayoga, what becomes of the wicked soul?"

"It goes at once into the body of another wolf, and passes on from wolf to wolf, being condemned to live in that foul home forever. Such a punishment is only for the most vile, and they are few. It is but the hundredth among the wicked who suffers thus."

"The other ninety-nine go after death to *Hanegoategeh*, the land of perpetual darkness, where they suffer in proportion to the crimes they committed on earth, but *Hawenneyu*, the Divine Being, takes pity on them and gives them another chance. When they have suffered long enough in *Hanegoategeh* to be purified he calls them before him and looks into their souls. Nothing can be hidden from him. He sees the evil thought, Lennox, as you or I would see a leaf upon the water, and then he judges. And he is merciful. He does not condemn and send to everlasting torture, because evil may yet be left in the soul, but if the good outweighs the bad the good shall prevail and the suffering soul is sent to *Hawenneyugeh*, the home of the just, where it suffers no more. But if the bad still outweighs the good then its chance is lost and it is sent to *Hanishaonogeh*, the home of the wicked, where it is condemned to torture forever."

"A reasonable religion, Tayoga. Your *Hanegoategeh* is like the purgatory, in which the Catholic church believes. Your God like ours is merciful, and the more I learn about your religion the more similar it seems to ours."

"I think your God and our Manitou are the same, Lennox, we only see him through different glasses, but our religion is old, old, very old, perhaps older than yours."

Although Tayoga did not raise his voice or change the inflection Robert knew that he spoke with great pride. The young Onondaga did not believe his religion resembled the white man's but that the white man's resembled his. Robert respected him though, and knowing the reasons for his pride, said nothing in contradiction.

"The whining wolf is hungry," said Tayoga, "and since the soul of a warrior may dwell in his body I will feed him."

He took a discarded piece of the deer and threw it far into the bushes.

A fearful growling, and the noise of struggling ensued at once.

"The wolf with the wicked soul in him may be there," said Robert, "but even so he has to fight with the other wolves for the meat you flung."

"It is a part of his fate," said Tayoga gravely. "Seeing and thinking as a man, he must yet bite and claw with beasts for his food. Now I think we have all of the deer we wish."

As they could not take it with them for tanning, they cut the skin in half, and each wrapped in his piece a goodly portion of the body to be carried to the canoe. Both were fastidious, wishing to get no stain upon their clothing, and, their task completed, they carefully washed their hands and knives at the edge of a brook. Then as they lifted up their burdens the whining and growling in the bushes increased rapidly.

"They see that we are going," said Tayoga. "The wolf even without the soul of a warrior in it knows much. It is the wisest of all the animals, unless the fox be its equal. The foolish bear and the mad panther fight alone, but the wolf, who is too small to face either, bands with his brothers into a league, even as the Hodenosaunee, and together they pull down the deer and the moose, and in the lands of the Ohio they dare to attack and slay the mighty bull buffalo."

"They know the strength of union, Tayoga, and they know, too, just now that they're safe from our weapons. I can see their noses poking already in their eagerness through the bushes. They're so hungry and so confident that they'll hardly wait until we get away."

As they passed with their burdens into the bushes on the far side of the little opening they heard a rush of light feet, and angry snarling. Looking back, Robert saw that the carcass of the stag was already covered with hungry wolves, every one fighting for a portion, and he knew it was the way of the forest.

CHAPTER II

ST. LUC

Willet hailed them joyfully when they returned.

"I'll wager that only one arrow was shot," he said, smiling.

"Just one," said Robert. "It struck the stag in the heart and he did not move ten feet from where he stood."

"And the Great Bear has the fire ready," said Tayoga. "I breathe the smoke."

"I knew you would notice it," said Willet, "although it's only a little fire yet and I've built it in a hollow."

Dry sticks were burning in a sunken place surrounded by great trees, and they increased the fire, veiling the smoke as much as possible. Then they broiled luscious steaks of the deer and ate abundantly, though without the appearance of eagerness. Robert had been educated carefully at Fort Orange, which men were now calling Albany, and Tayoga and the hunter were equally fastidious.

"The deer is the friend of both the red man and the white," said Willet, appreciatively. "In the woods he feeds us and clothes us, and then his horn tips the arrow with which you kill him, Tayoga."

"It was so ordered by Manitou," said the young Onondaga, earnestly.

"The deer was given to us that we might live."

"And that being the case," said Willet, "we'll cook all you and Robert have brought and take it with us in the canoe. Since we keep on going north the time will come when we won't have any chance for hunting."

The fire had now formed a great bed of coals and the task was not hard. It was all cooked by and by and they stowed it away wrapped in the two pieces of skin. Then Willet and Tayoga decided to examine the country together, leaving Robert on guard beside the canoe.

Robert had no objection to remaining behind. Although circumstances had made him a lad of action he was also contemplative by nature. Some people think with effort, in others thoughts flow in a stream, and now as he sat with his back to a tree, much that he had thought and heard passed before him like a moving panorama and in this shifting belt of color Indians, Frenchmen, Colonials and Englishmen appeared.

He knew that he stood upon the edge of great events. Deeply sensitive to impressions, he felt that a crisis in North America was at hand. England and France were not yet at war, and so the British colonies and the French colonies remained at peace too, but every breeze that blew from one to the other was heavy with menace. The signs were unmistakable, but one did not have to see. One breathed it in at every breath. He knew, too, that intrigue was already going on all about him, and that the Iroquois were the great pawn in the game. British and French were already playing for the favor of the powerful Hodenosaunee, and Robert understood even better than many of those in authority that as the Hodenosaunee went so might go the war. It was certain that the Indians of the St. Lawrence and the North would be with the French, but he was confident that the Indians of the Long House would not swerve from their ancient alliance with the British colonies.

Two hours passed and Willet and Tayoga did not return, but he had not expected them. He knew that when they decided to go on a scout they would do the work thoroughly, and he waited with patience, sitting beside the canoe, his rifle on his knees. Before him the creek flowed with a pleasant, rippling noise and through the trees he caught a glimpse of the lake, unruffled by any wind.

The rest was so soothing, and his muscles and nerves relaxed so much that he felt like closing his eyes and going to sleep, but he was roused by the sound of a footstep. It was so distant that only an ear trained to the forest would have heard it, but he knew that it was made by a human being approaching, and that the man was neither Willet nor Tayoga.

He put his ear to the earth and heard three men instead of one, and then he rose, cocking his rifle. In the great wilderness in those surcharged days a stranger was an enemy until he was proved to be otherwise, and the lad was alert in every faculty. He saw them presently, three figures walking in Indian file, and his heart leaped because the leader was so obviously a Frenchman.

His uniform was of the battalion Royal Roussillon, white faced with blue, and his hat was black and three-cornered, but face and manner were so unmistakably French that Robert did not think of his uniform, which was neat and trim to a degree not to be expected in the forest. He bore himself in the carelessly defiant manner peculiar to the French cadets and younger sons of noble families in North America at the time, an accentuation of the French at home, and to some extent a survival of the spirit which Richelieu partially checked. Even in the forest he wore a slender rapier at his belt, and his hand rested now upon its golden hilt.

He was about thirty years old, tall, slender, and with the light hair and blue eyes seen so often in Northern France, telling, perhaps, of Norman blood. His glance was apparently light, but Robert felt when it rested upon him that it was sharp, penetrating and hard to endure. Nevertheless he met it without lowering his own gaze. The man behind the leader was swart, short, heavy and of middle years, a Canadian dressed in deerskin and armed with rifle, hatchet and knife. The third man was an Indian, one of the most extraordinary figures that Robert had ever seen. He was of great stature and heavy build, his shoulders and chest immense and covered with knotted muscles, disclosed to the eye, as he was bare to the waist. All the upper part of his body was painted in strange and hideous designs which Robert did not recognize, although he knew the fashions of all the tribes in the New York and St. Lawrence regions. His cheek bones were unusually high even for an Indian and his gaze was heavy, keen and full of challenge. Robert judged that he belonged to some western tribe, that he was a Pottawatomie, an Ojibway or a Chippewa or that perhaps he came from the distant Sioux race.

He was conscious that all three represented strength, each in a different way, and he felt the gaze of three pairs of eyes resting upon him in a manner that contained either secret or open hostility. But he faced them boldly, a gallant and defiant young figure himself, instinct with courage and an intellectual quality that is superior to courage itself. The Frenchman who confronted him recognized at once the thinker.

"I bid you good day," said Robert politely. "I did not expect to meet travelers in these woods."
The Frenchman smiled.

"We are all travelers," he said, "but it is you who are our guest, since these rivers and mountains and lakes and forests acknowledge the suzerainty of my royal master, King Louis of France."

His tone was light and bantering and Robert, seeing the advantage of it, chose to speak in the same vein.

"The wilderness itself is king," he said, "and it acknowledges no master, save perhaps the Hodenosaunee. But I had thought that the law of England ran here, at least where white men are concerned."

He saw the eyes of the great savage flash when he mentioned the Hodenosaunee, and he inferred at once that he was a bitter enemy of the Iroquois. Some of the tribes had a hereditary hatred toward one another more ferocious than that which they felt against the whites.

The Frenchman smiled again, and swept his hand in a graceful curve toward the green expanse.

"It is true," he said, "that the forest is yet lord over these lands, but in the future I think the lilies of France will wave here. You perhaps have an equal faith that the shadow of the British flag will be over the wilderness, but it would be most unfitting for you and me to quarrel about it now. I infer from the canoe and the three paddles that you did not come here alone."

"Two friends are with me. They have gone into the forest on a brief expedition. They should return soon. We have food in abundance, a deer that we killed a few hours ago. Will you share it?"

"Gladly. Courtesy, I see, is not lost in the woods. Permit me to introduce ourselves. The chief is Tandakora of the Ojibways, from the region about the great western lake that you call Superior.

He is a mighty warrior, and his fame is great, justly earned in many a battle. My friend in deerskin is Armand Dubois, born a Canadian of good French stock, and a most valiant and trustworthy man. As for me, I am Raymond Louis de St. Luc, Chevalier of France and soldier of fortune in the New World. And now you know the list of us. It's not so long as Homer's catalogue of the ships, nor so interesting, but it's complete."

His manner had remained light, almost jesting, and Robert judged that it was habitual with him like a cloak in winter, and, like the cloak, it would be laid away when it was not needed. The man's blue eyes, even when he used the easy manner of the high-bred Frenchman, were questing and resolute. But the youth still found it easier than he had thought to meet him in like fashion. Now he replied to frankness with frankness.

"Ours isn't and shouldn't be a hostile meeting in the forest, Chevalier de St. Luc," he said. "To you and your good friends I offer my greetings. As for myself, I am Robert Lennox, with two homes, one in Albany, and the other in the wilderness, wherever I choose to make it."

He paused a moment, because he felt the gaze of St. Luc upon him, very intent and penetrating, but in an instant he resumed:

"I came here with two friends whom you shall see if you stay with me long enough. One is David Willet, a hunter and scout, well known from the Hudson to the Great Lakes, a man to whom I owe much, one who has stood to me almost in the place of a father. The other I can truly call a brother. He is Tayoga, a young warrior of the clan of the Bear, of the nation Onondaga, of the League of the Hodenosaunee. My catalogue, sir, is just the same length as yours, and it also is complete."

The Chevalier Raymond Louis de St. Luc laughed, and the laugh was genuine.

"A youth of spirit, I see," he said. "Well, I am glad. It's a pleasure to meet with wit and perception in the wilderness. One prefers to talk with gentlemen. 'Tis said that the English are heavy, but I do not always find them so. Perhaps it's merely a slur that one nation wishes to cast upon another."

"It's scarcely correct to call me English," said Robert, "since I am a native of this country, and the term American applies more properly."

The eyes of St. Luc glistened.

"I note the spirit," he said. "The British colonies left to themselves grow strong and proud, while ours, drawing their strength from the King and the government, would resent being called anything but Frenchmen. Now, I'll wager you a louis against any odds that you'll claim the American to be as good as the Englishman anywhere and at any time."

"Certainly!" said Robert, with emphasis.

St. Luc laughed again and with real pleasure, his blue eyes dancing and his white teeth flashing.

"And some day that independence will cause trouble for the good British mother," he said, "but we'll pass from the future to the present. Sit down, Tandakora, and you too, Dubois. Monsieur Lennox is, for the present, our host, and that too in the woods we claim to be our own. But we are none the less grateful for his hospitality."

Robert unwrapped the venison and cut off large slices as he surmised that all three were hungry. St. Luc ate delicately but the other two did not conceal their pleasure in food. Robert now and then glanced a little anxiously at the woods, hoping his comrades would return. He did not know exactly how to deal with the strangers and he would find comfort in numbers. He was conscious, too, that St. Luc was watching him all the time intently, reading his expression and looking into his thoughts.

"How are the good Dutch burghers at Albany?" asked the chevalier. "I don't seek to penetrate any of your secrets. I merely make conversation."

"I reveal nothing," replied Robert, "when I say they still barter with success and enjoy the pleasant ways of commerce. I am not one to underrate the merchant. More than the soldier they build up a nation."

"It's a large spirit that can put the trade of another before one's own, because I am a soldier, and you, I judge, will become one if you are not such now. Peace, Tandakora, it is doubtless the friends of Monsieur Lennox who come!"

The gigantic Indian had risen suddenly and had thrust forward the good French musket that he carried. Robert had never beheld a more sinister figure. The lips were drawn back a little from his long white teeth and his eyes were those of a hunter who sought to kill for the sake of killing. But at the chiding words of St. Luc the tense muscles relaxed and he lowered the weapon. Robert was compelled to notice anew the great influence the French had acquired over the Indians, and he recognized it with dread, knowing what it might portend.

The footsteps which the savage had heard first were now audible to him, and he stood up, knowing that Tayoga and Willet were returning, and he was glad of it.

"My friends are here," he said.

The Chevalier de St. Luc, with his customary politeness, rose to his feet and Dubois rose with him. The Ojibway remained sitting, a huge piece of deer meat in his hand. Tayoga and Willet appeared through the bushes, and whatever surprise they may have felt they concealed it well. The faces of both were a blank.

"Guests have come since your departure," said Robert, with the formal politeness of the time. "These gentlemen are the Chevalier Raymond Louis de St. Luc, from Quebec, Monsieur Armand Dubois, from the same place, I presume, and Tandakora, a mighty Ojibway chief, who, it seems, has wandered far from his own country, on what errand I know not. Chevalier my friends of whom I spoke, Mr. David Willet, the great hunter, and Tayoga of the clan of the Bear, of the nation Onondaga, of the League of the Hodenosaunee, my brother of the forest and a great chief."

He spoke purposely with sonority, and also with a tinge of satire, particularly when he alluded to the presence of Tandakora at such a great distance from his tribe. But St. Luc, of course, though noticing it, ignored it in manner. He extended his hand promptly to the great hunter who grasped it in his mighty palm and shook it.

"I have heard of you, Mr. Willet," he said. "Our brave Canadians are expert in the forest and the chase, and the good Dubois here is one of the best, but I know that none of them can excel you."

Robert, watching him, could not say that he spoke without sincerity, and Willet took the words as they were uttered.

"I've had a long time for learning," he said modestly, "and I suppose experience teaches the dullest of us."

Robert saw that the Ojibway had now risen and that he and the Onondaga were regarding each other with a gaze so intent and fierce, so compact of hatred that he was startled and his great pulses began to beat hard. But it was only for an instant or two that the two warriors looked thus into hostile eyes. Then both sat down and their faces became blank and expressionless.

The gaze of St. Luc roved to the Onondaga and rested longest upon him. Robert saw the blue eyes sparkle, and he knew that the mind of the chevalier was arrested by some important thought. He could almost surmise what it was, but for the present he preferred to keep silent and watch, because his curiosity was great and natural, and he wondered what St. Luc would say next.

The Onondaga and the hunter sat down on a fallen tree trunk and inspected the others with a quiet but observant gaze. Each in his own way had the best of manners. Tayoga, as became a forest chief, was dignified, saying little, while Willet cut more slices from the deer meat and offered them to the guests. But it was the Onondaga and not St. Luc who now spoke first.

"The son of Onontio wanders far," he said. "It is a march of many days from here to Quebec."

"It is, Tayoga," replied St. Luc gravely, "but the dominions of the King of France, whom Onontio serves, also extend far."

It was a significant speech, and Robert glanced at Tayoga, but the eyes of the young chief were veiled. If he resented the French claim to the lands over which the Hodenosaunee hunted it was in silence. St. Luc paused, as if for an answer, but none coming he continued:

"Shadows gather over the great nations beyond the seas. The French king and the English king begin to look upon each other with hostile eyes."

Tayoga was silent.

"But Onontio, who stands in the French king's place at Quebec, is the friend of the Hodenosaunee. The French and the great Six Nations are friends."

"There was Frontenac," said Tayoga quietly.

"It was long ago."

"He came among us when the Six Nations were the Five, burned our houses and slew our warriors! Our old men have told how they heard it from their fathers. We did not have guns then, and our bows and arrows were not a match for the muskets of the French. But we have muskets and rifles now, plenty of them, the best that are made."

Tayoga's eyes were still veiled, and his face was without expression, but his words were full of meaning. Robert glanced at St. Luc, who could not fail to understand. The chevalier was still smooth and smiling.

"Frontenac was a great man," he said, "but he has been gathered long since to his fathers. Great men themselves make mistakes. There was bad blood between Onontio and the Hodenosaunee, but if the blood is bad must it remain bad forever? The evil was gone before you and I were born, Tayoga, and now the blood flows pure and clean in the veins of both the French and the Hodenosaunee."

"The Hodenosaunee and Corlear have no quarrel."

"Nor have the Hodenosaunee and Onontio. Behold how the English spread over the land, cut down the forests and drive away all the game! But the children of Onontio hunt with the Indians, marry with their women, leave the forests untouched, and the great hunting grounds swarm with game as before. While Onontio abides at Quebec the lands of the Hodenosaunee are safe."

"There was Frontenac," repeated Tayoga.

St. Luc frowned at the insistence of the Onondaga upon an old wound, but the cloud passed swiftly. In an instant the blue eyes were smiling once more.

"The memory of Frontenac shall not come between us," he said. "The heart of Onontio beats for the Hodenosaunee, and he has sent me to say so to the valiant League. I bring you a belt, a great belt of peace."

Dubois handed him a large knapsack and he took from it a beautiful belt of pure white wampum, uncommon in size, a full five feet in length, five inches wide, and covered with many thousands of beads, woven in symbolic figures. He held it up and the eyes of the Onondaga glistened.

"It is a great belt, a belt of peace," continued St. Luc. "There is none nobler, and Onontio would send no other kind. I give it to you, Tayoga."

The young warrior drew back and his hands remained at his sides.

"I am Tayoga, of the clan of the Bear, of the nation Onondaga, of the great League of the Hodenosaunee," he said, "but I am not yet a chief. My years are too few. It is a great matter of which you speak, St. Luc, and it must be laid before the fifty sachems of the allied tribes in the Long House. The belt may be offered to them. I cannot take it."

The flitting cloud passed again over the face of St. Luc, but he did not allow any change to show in his manner. He returned the splendid belt to Dubois, who folded it carefully and put it back in the great knapsack.

"Doubtless you are right, Tayoga," he said. "I shall go to the Long House with the belt, but meantime we thank you for the courtesy of yourself and your friends. You have given us food when we were hungry, and a Frenchman does not forget."

"The Onondagas keep the council fire in their valley, and the sachems will gather there," said Tayoga.

"Where they will receive the belt of peace that I shall offer them," said St. Luc.

The Onondaga was silent. St. Luc, who had centered his attention upon Tayoga, now turned it to Robert.

"Mr. Lennox," he said, "we dwell in a world of alarms, and I am French and you are English, or rather American, but I wish that you and I could remain friends."

The frankness and obvious sincerity of his tone surprised Robert. He knew now that he liked the man. He felt that there was steel in his composition, and that upon occasion, and in the service to which he belonged, he could be hard and merciless, but the spirit seemed bright and gallant.

"I know nothing that will keep us from being friends," replied the lad, although he knew well what the Frenchman meant.

"Nor do I," said St. Luc. "It was merely a casual reference to the changes that affect us all. I shall come to Albany some day, Mr. Lennox. It is an interesting town, though perhaps somewhat staid and sober."

"If you come," said Robert sincerely, "I hope I shall be there, and it would please me to have you as a guest."

St. Luc gave him a sharp, examining look.

"I believe you mean it," he said. "It's possible that you and I are going to see much of each other. One can never tell what meetings time will bring about. And now having accepted your hospitality and thanking you for it, we must go."

He rose. Dubois, who had not spoken at all, threw over his shoulder the heavy knapsack, and the Ojibway also stood up, gigantic and sinister.

"We go to the Vale of Onondaga," said St. Luc, turning his attention back to Tayoga, "and as you advised I shall lay the peace belt before the fifty sachems of the Hodenosaunee, assembled in council in the Long House."

"Go to the southwest," said Tayoga, "and you will find the great trail that leads from the Hudson to the mighty lakes of the west. The warriors of the Hodenosaunee have trod it for generations, and it is open to the son of Onontio."

The young Indian's face was a mask, but his words and their tone alike were polite and dignified. St. Luc bowed, and then bowed to the others in turn.

"At Albany some day," he said to young Lennox, and his smile was very winning.

"At Albany some day," repeated Robert, and he hoped the prophecy would come true.

Then St. Luc turned away, followed by the Canadian, with the Indian in the rear. None of the three looked back and the last Robert saw of them was a fugitive gleam of the chevalier's white uniform through the green leaves of the forest. Then the mighty wilderness swallowed them up, as a pebble is lost in a lake. Robert looked awhile in the direction in which they had gone, still seeing them in fancy.

"How much does their presence here signify?" he asked thoughtfully.

"They would have the Hodenosaunee to forget Frontenac," replied Tayoga.

"And will the Six Nations forget him?"

"The fifty sachems in council alone can tell."

Robert saw that the young Onondaga would not commit himself, even to him, and he did not ask anything more, but the hunter spoke plainly.

"We must wake up those fat Indian commissioners at Albany," he said. "Those Dutchmen think more of cheating the tribes than they do of the good of either white man or red man, but I can tell you, Robert, and you too, Tayoga, that I'm worried about that Frenchman coming down here among the Six Nations. He's as sharp as a razor, and as quick as lightning. I could see that, and there's mischief brewing. He's not going to the Onondaga Valley for nothing."

"Tandakora, the Ojibway, goes with a heavy foot," said the Onondaga.

"What do you mean, Tayoga?" asked Willet.

"He comes of a savage tribe, which is hostile to the Hodenosaunee and all white men. He has seen three scalps which still grow on the heads of their owners."

"Which means that he might not keep on following St. Luc. Well, we'll be on our guard and now I don't see any reason why we should stay here longer."

"Nor I," said Robert, and, Tayoga agreeing with them, they returned the canoe to the stream, paddling back into the lake, and continuing their course until they came to its end. There they carried the canoe across a portage and launched it on a second lake as beautiful as the first. None of the three spoke much now, their minds being filled with thoughts of St. Luc and his companions.

They were yet on the water when the day began to wane. The green forest on the high western shore was touched with flame from the setting sun. Then the surface of the lake blazed with red light, and in the east the gray of twilight came.

"It will be night in half an hour," said Robert, "and I think we'd better make a landing, and camp."

"Here's a cove on the right," said Willet. "We'll take the canoe up among the trees, and wrap ourselves in our blankets. It's a good thing we have them, as the darkness is going to bring a chill with it."

They found good shelter among the trees and bushes, a small hollow protected by great trees and undergrowth, into which they carried the canoe.

"Since it's not raining this is as good as a house for us," said Willet.

"I think it's better," said Robert. "The odor of spruce and hemlock is so wonderful I wouldn't like to have it shut away from me by walls."

The Onondaga drew in deep inhalations of the pure, healing air, and as his black eyes gleamed he walked to the edge of the little hollow and looked out in the dusk over the vast tangled wilderness of mountain and lake, forest and river. The twilight was still infused with the red from the setting sun, and in the glow the whole world was luminous and glorified. Now the eyes of Tayoga, which had flashed but lately, gave back the glow in a steady flame.

"Hawenneyu, the Divine Being whom all the red people worship, made many great lands," he said, "but he spent his work and love upon that which lies between the Hudson and the vast lakes of the west. Then he rested and looking upon what he had done he was satisfied because he knew it to be the best in all the world, created by him."

"How do you know it to be the best, Tayoga?" asked Willet. "You haven't seen all the countries. You haven't been across the sea."

"Because none other can be so good," replied the Iroquois with simple faith. "When Hawenneyu, in your language the Great Spirit, found the land that he had made so good he did not know then to whom to give it, but in the greatness of his wisdom he left it to those who were most fitted to come and take it. And in time came the tribes which Tododaho, helped by Hayowentha, often called by the English Hiawatha, formed into the great League of the Hodenosaunee, and because they were brave and far-seeing and abided by the laws of Tododaho and Hayowentha, they took the land which they have kept ever since, and which they will keep forever."

"I like your good, strong beliefs, Tayoga," said the hunter heartily. "The country does belong to the Iroquois, and if it was left to me to decide about it they'd keep it till the crack of doom. Now you boys roll in your blankets. I'll take the first watch, and when it's over I'll call one of you."

But Tayoga waited a little until the last glow of the sun died in the west, looking intently where the great orb had shone. Into his religion a reverence for the sun, Giver of Light and Warmth, entered, and not until the last faint radiance from it was gone did he turn away.

Then he took from the canoe and unfolded *eyose*, his blanket, which was made of fine blue broadcloth, thick and warm but light, six feet long and four feet wide. It was embroidered around

the edges with another cloth in darker blue, and the body of it bore many warlike or hunting designs worked skillfully in thread. If the weather were cold Tayoga would drape the blanket about his body much like a Roman toga, and if he lay in the forest at night he would sleep in it. Now he raked dead leaves together, spread the blanket on them, lay on one half of it and used the other half as a cover.

Robert imitated him, but his blanket was not so fine as Tayoga's, although he found it soft and warm enough. Willet sat on a log higher up, his rifle across his knees and gazed humorously at them.

"You two lads look pretty snug down there," he said, "and after all you're only lads. Tayoga may have a head plumb full of the wisdom of the wilderness, and Robert may have a head stuffed with different kinds of knowledge, but you're young, mighty young, anyhow. An' now, as I'm watching over you, I'll give a prize to the one that goes to sleep first."

In three minutes deep regular breathing showed that both had gone to the land of slumber, and Willet could not decide which had led the way. The darkness increased so much that their figures looked dim in the hollow, but he glanced at them occasionally. The big man had many friends, but young Lennox and Tayoga were almost like sons to him, and he was glad to be with them now. He felt that danger lurked in the northern wilderness, and three were better than two.

CHAPTER III

THE TOMAHAWK

Willet awakened Robert about two o'clock in the morning—it was characteristic of him to take more than his share of the work—and the youth stood up, with his rifle in the hollow of his arm, ready at once.

"Tayoga did more yesterday than either of us," said the hunter, "and so we'll let him sleep."

But the Onondago had awakened, though he did not move. Forest discipline was perfect among them, and, knowing that it was Robert's time to watch, he wasted no time in vain talk about it. His eyes closed again and he returned to sleep as the white lad walked up the bank, while the hunter was soon in the dreams that Tarenyawagon, who makes them, sent to him.

Robert on the bank, although he expected no danger, was alert. He had plenty of wilderness skill and his senses, naturally acute, had been trained so highly that he could discern a hostile approach in the darkness. The same lore of the forest told him to keep himself concealed, and he sat on a fallen tree trunk between two bushes that hid him completely, although his own good eyes, looking through the leaves, could see a long distance, despite the night.

It was inevitable as he sat there in the silence and darkness with his sleeping comrades below that his thoughts should turn to St. Luc. He had recognized in the first moment of their meeting that the young Frenchman was a personality. He was a personality in the sense that Tayoga was, one who radiated a spirit or light that others were compelled to notice. He knew that there was no such thing as looking into the future, but he felt with conviction that this man was going to impinge sharply upon his life, whether as a friend or an enemy not even Tarenyawagon, who sent the dreams, would tell, but he could not be insensible to the personal charm of the Chevalier Raymond Louis de St. Luc.

What reception would the fifty sachems give to the belt that the chevalier would bring? Would they be proof against his lightness, his ease, his fluency and his ability to paint a glowing picture of French might and French gratitude? Robert knew far better than most of his own race the immensity of the stake. He who roamed the forest with Tayoga and the Great Bear understood to the full the power of the Hodenosaunee. It was true, too, that the Indian commissioners at Albany had not done their duty and had given the Indians just cause of complaint, at the very moment when the great League should be propitiated. Yet the friendship between the Iroquois and the English had been ancient and strong, and he would not have feared so much had it been any other than St. Luc who was going to meet the sachems in council.

Robert shook his head as if the physical motion would dismiss his apprehensions, and walked farther up the hill to a point where he could see the lake. A light wind was blowing, and little waves of crumbling silver pursued one another across its surface. On the far side the bank, crowned with dense forest showing black in the dusk, rose to a great height, but the lad's eyes came back to the water, his heart missing a beat as he thought he saw a shadow on its surface, but so near the opposite shore that it almost merged with a fringe of bushes there.

Then he rebuked himself for easy alarm. It was merely the reflection from a bough above in the water below. Yet it played tricks with him. The shadow reappeared again and again, always close to the far bank, but there were many boughs also to reproduce themselves in the mirror of the lake. He convinced himself that his eyes and his mind were having sport with him, and turning away, he made a little circle in the woods about their camp. All was well. He heard a swish overhead, but he knew that it was a night bird, a rustling came, and an ungainly form lumbered through a thicket, but it was a small black bear, and coming back to the hollow, he looked down at his comrades.

Tayoga and Willet slept well. Neither had stirred, and wrapped in their blankets lying on the soft leaves, they were true pictures of forest comfort. They were fine and loyal comrades, as good as

anybody ever had, and he was glad they were so near, because he began to have a feeling now that something unusual was going to occur. The shadows on the lake troubled him again, and he went back for another look. He did not see them now, and that, too, troubled him. It proved that they had been made by some moving object, and not by the boughs and bushes still there.

Robert examined the lake, his eyes following the line where the far bank met the water, but he saw no trace of anything moving, and his attention came back to the woods in which he stood. Presently, he crouched in dense bush, and concentrated all his powers of hearing, knowing that he must rely upon ear rather than eye. He could not say that he had really seen or heard, but he had felt that something was moving in the forest, something that threatened him.

His first impulse was to go back to the little hollow and awaken his comrades, but his second told him to stay where he was until the danger came or should pass, and he crouched lower in the undergrowth with his hand on the hammer and trigger of his rifle. He did not stir or make any noise for a long time. The forest, too, was silent. The wind that had ruffled the surface of the lake ceased, and the leaves over his head were still.

But he understood too well the ways of the wilderness to move yet. He did not believe that his faculties, attuned to the slightest alarm, had deceived him, and he had learned the patience of the Indian from the Iroquois themselves. His eyes continually pierced the thickets for a hostile object moving there, and his ears were ready to notice the sound of a leaf should it fall.

He heard, or thought he heard after a while, a slight sliding motion, like that which a great serpent would make as it drew its glistening coils through leaves or grass. But it was impossible for him to tell how near it was to him or from what point it came, and his blood became chill in his veins. He was not afraid of a danger seen, but when it came intangible and invisible the boldest might shudder.

The noise, real or imaginary, ceased, and as he waited he became convinced that it was only his strained fancy. A man might mistake the blood pounding in his ears or the beat of his own pulse for a sound without, and after another five minutes, taking the rifle from the hollow of his arm, he stood upright. Certainly nothing was moving in the forest. The leaves hung lifeless. His fancies had been foolish.

He stepped boldly from the undergrowth in which he had knelt, and a glimpse of a flitting shadow made him kneel again. It was instinct that caused him to drop down so quickly, but he knew that it had saved his life. Something glittering whistled where his head had been, and then struck with a sound like a sigh against the trunk of a tree.

Robert sank from his knees, until he lay almost flat, and brought his rifle forward for instant use. But, for a minute or two, he would not have been steady enough to aim at anything. His tongue was dry in his mouth, and his hair lifted a little at his marvelous escape.

He looked for the shadow, his eyes searching every thicket; but he did not find it, and now he believed that the one who had sped the blow had gone, biding his time for a second chance. Another wait to make sure, and hurrying to the hollow he awoke Tayoga and the hunter, who returned at once with him to the place where the ambush had miscarried.

"Ah!" said the Onondaga, as they looked about. "*Osquesont!* Behold!"

The blade of an Indian tomahawk, *osquesont*, was buried deep in the trunk of a tree, and Robert knew that the same deadly weapon had whistled where his head had been but a second before. He shuddered. Had it not been for his glimpse of the flitting shadow his head would have been cloven to the chin. Tayoga, with a mighty wrench, pulled out the tomahawk and examined it. It was somewhat heavier than the usual weapon of the type and he pronounced it of French make.

"Did it come from Quebec, Tayoga?" asked Willet.

"Perhaps," replied the young warrior, "but I saw it yesterday."

"You did! Where?"

"In the belt of Tandakora, the Ojibway."

"I thought so," said Robert.

"And he threw it with all the strength of a mighty arm," said the Onondaga. "There is none near us in the forest except Tandakora who could bury it so deep in the tree. It was all I could do to pull it out again."

"And seeing his throw miss he slipped away as fast as he could!" said Willet.

"Yes, Great Bear, the Ojibway is cunning. After hurling the tomahawk he would not stay to risk a shot from Lennox. He was willing even to abandon a weapon which he must have prized. Ah, here is his trail! It leads through the forest toward the lake!"

They were able to follow it a little distance but it was lost on the hard ground, although it led toward the water. Robert told of the shadow he had seen near the farther bank, and both Willet and Tayoga were quite sure it had been a small canoe, and that its occupant was Tandakora.

"It's not possible that St. Luc sent the Ojibway back to murder us!" exclaimed Robert, his mind rebelling at the thought.

"I don't think it likely," said Willet, but the Onondaga was much more emphatic.

"The Ojibway came of his own wish," he said. "While the sons of Onontio slept he slipped away, and it was the lure of scalps that drew him. He comes of a savage tribe far in the west. An Iroquois would have scorned such treachery."

Robert felt an immense relief. He had become almost as jealous of the Frenchman's honor as of his own, and knowing that Tayoga understood his race, he accepted his words as final. It was hideous to have the thought in his mind, even for a moment, that a man who had appeared so gallant and friendly as St. Luc had sent a savage back to murder them.

"The French do not control the western tribes," continued Tayoga, "though if war comes they will be on the side of Onontio, but as equals they will come hither and go thither as they please."

"Which means, I take it," said the hunter, "that if St. Luc discovers what Tandakora has been trying to do here tonight he'll be afraid to find much fault with it, because the Ojibway and all the other Ojibways would go straight home?"

"It is so," said the Onondaga.

"Well, we're thankful that his foul blow went wrong. You've had a mighty narrow escape, Robert, my lad, but we've gained one good tomahawk which, you boys willing, I mean to take."

Tayoga handed it to him, and with an air of satisfaction he put the weapon in his belt.

"I may have good use for it some day," he said. "The chance may come for me to throw it back to the savage who left it here. And now, as our sleep is broken up for the night, I think we'd better scout the woods a bit, and then come back here for breakfast."

They found nothing hostile in the forest, and when they returned to the hollow the thin gray edge of dawn showed on the far side of the lake. Having no fear of further attack, they lighted a small fire and warmed their food. As they ate day came in all its splendor and Robert saw the birds flashing back and forth in the thick leaves over his head.

"Where did the Ojibway get his canoe?" he asked.

"The Frenchmen like as not used it when they came down from Canada," replied the hunter, "and left it hid to be used again when they went back. It won't be worth our while to look for it. Besides, we've got to be moving soon."

After breakfast they carried their own canoe to the lake and paddled northward to its end. Then they took their craft a long portage across a range of hills and launched it anew on a swift stream flowing northward, on the current of which they traveled until nightfall, seeing throughout that time no sign of a human being. It was the primeval wilderness, and since it lay between the British colonies on the south and the French on the north it had been abandoned almost wholly in the last year or two, letting the game, abundant at any time, increase greatly. They saw deer in the thickets, they heard the splash of a beaver, and a black bear, sitting on a tiny island in the river, watched them as they passed.

On the second day after Robert's escape from the tomahawk they left the river, made a long portage and entered another river, also flowing northward, having in mind a double purpose, to throw

off the trail anyone who might be following them and to obtain a more direct course toward their journey's end. Knowing the dangers of the wilderness, they also increased their caution, traveling sometimes at night and lying in camp by day.

But they lived well. All three knew the importance of preserving their strength, and to do so an abundance of food was the first requisite. Tayoga shot another deer with the bow and arrow, and with the use of fishing tackle which they had brought in the canoe they made the river pay ample tribute. They lighted the cooking fires, however, in the most sheltered places they could find, and invariably extinguished them as soon as possible.

"You can't be too careful in the woods," said Willet, "especially in times like these. While the English and French are not yet fighting there's always danger from the savages."

"The warriors from the wild tribes in Canada and the west will take a scalp wherever there's a chance," said the young Onondaga.

Robert often noticed the manner in which Tayoga spoke of the tribes outside the great League. To him those that did not belong to the Hodenosaunee, while they might be of the same red race, were nevertheless inferior. He looked upon them as an ancient Greek looked upon those who were not Greeks.

"The French are a brave people," said the hunter, "but the most warlike among them if they knew our errand would be willing for some of their painted allies to drop us in the wilderness, and no questions would be asked. You can do things on the border that you can't in the towns. We might be tomahawked in here and nobody would ever know what became of us."

"I think," said Tayoga, "that our danger increases. Tandakora after leaving the son of Onontio, St. Luc, might not go back to him. He might fear the anger of the Frenchman, and, too, he would still crave a scalp. A warrior has followed an enemy for weeks to obtain such a trophy."

"You believe then," said Robert, "that the Ojibway is still on our trail?"

Tayoga nodded. After a moment's silence he added:

"We come, too, to a region in which the St. Regis, the Caughnawaga, the Ottawa and the Micmac, all allies of Onontio, hunt. The Ojibway may meet a band and tell the warriors we are in the woods."

His look was full of significance and Robert understood thoroughly.

"I shall be glad," he said, "when we reach the St. Lawrence. We'll then be in real Canada, and, while the French are undoubtedly our enemies, we'll not be exposed to treacherous attack."

They were in the canoe as they talked and Tayoga was paddling, the swiftness of the current now making the efforts of only one man necessary. A few minutes later he turned the canoe to the shore and the three got out upon the bank. Robert did not know why, but he was quite sure the reason was good.

"Falls below," said Tayoga, as they drew the canoe upon the land. "All the river drops over a cliff. Much white water."

They carried the canoe without difficulty through the woods, and when they came to the falls they stopped a little while to look at the descent, and listen to the roar of the tumbling water.

"I was here once before, three years ago," said Willet.

"Others have been here much later," said the Onondaga.

"What do you mean, Tayoga?"

"My white brother is not looking. Let him turn his eyes to the left. He will see two wild flowers broken off at the stem, a feather which has not fallen from the plumage of a bird, because the quill is painted, and two traces of footsteps in the earth."

"As surely as the sun shines, you're right, Tayoga! Warriors have passed here, though we can't tell how many! But the traces are not more'n a half day old."

He picked up the feather and examined it carefully.

"That fell from a warrior's scalplock," he said, "but we don't know to what tribe the warrior belonged."

"But it's likely to be a hostile trail," said Robert.

Tayoga nodded, and then the three considered. It was only a fragment of a trail they had seen, but it told them danger was near. Where they were traveling strangers were enemies until they were proved to be friends, and the proof had to be of the first class, also. They agreed finally to turn aside into the woods with the canoe, and stop until night. Then under cover of the friendly darkness they would resume their journey on the river.

They chose the heavily wooded crest of a low hill for the place in which to wait, because they could see some distance from it and remain unseen. They put the canoe down there and Robert and Tayoga sat beside it, while Willet went into the woods to see if any further signs of a passing band could be discovered, returning in an hour with the information that he had discovered more footprints.

"All led to the north," he said, "and they're well ahead of us. There's no reason why we can't follow. We're three, used to the wilderness, armed well and able to take care of ourselves. And I take it the night will be dark, which ought to help us."

The Onondaga looked up at the skies, which were of a salmon color, and shook his head a little.

"What's the matter?" asked Robert.

"The night will bring much darkness," he replied, "but it will bring something else with it—wind, rain."

"You may be right, Tayoga, but we must be moving, just the same," said Willet.

At dusk they were again afloat on the river and, all three using the paddles, they sent the canoe forward with great speed. But it soon became apparent that Tayoga's prediction would be justified. Clouds trailed up from the southwest and obscured all the heavens. A wind arose and it was heavy and damp upon their faces. The water seemed black as ink. Low thunder far away began to mutter. The wilderness became uncanny and lonely. All save forest rovers would have been appalled, and of these three one at least felt that the night was black and sinister. Robert looked intently at the forest on either shore, rising now like solid black walls, but his eyes, unable to penetrate them, found nothing there. Then the lightning flamed in the west, and for a moment the surface of the river was in a blaze.

"What do you think of it, Tayoga?" asked Willet, anxiety showing in his tone, "Ought we to make a landing now?"

"Not yet," replied the Onondaga. "The storm merely growls and threatens at present. It will not strike for perhaps an hour."

"But when it does strike it's going to hit a mighty blow unless all signs fail. I've seen 'em gather before, and this is going to be a king of storms! Hear that thunder now! It doesn't growl any more, but goes off like the cracking of big cannon."

"But it's still far in the west," persisted Tayoga, as the three bent over their paddles.

The forest, however, was groaning with the wind, and little waves rose on the river. Now the lightning flared again and again, so fierce and bright that Robert, despite his control of himself, instinctively recoiled from it as from the stroke of a saber.

"Do you recall any shelter farther on, Tayoga?" asked the hunter.

"The overhanging bank and the big hollow in the stone," replied the Onondaga. "On the left! Don't you remember?"

"Now I do, Tayoga, but I didn't know it was near. Do you think we can make it before that sky over our heads splits wide open?"

"It will be a race," replied the young Iroquois, "but we three are strong, and we are skilled in the use of the paddle."

"Then we'll bend to it," said Willet. And they did. The canoe shot forward at amazing speed over the surface of the river, inky save when the lightning flashed upon it. Robert paddled as he had never paddled before, his muscles straining and the perspiration standing out on his face. He was

thoroughly inured to forest life, but he knew that even the scouts and Indians fled for shelter from the great wilderness hurricanes.

There was every evidence that the storm would be of uncommon violence. The moan of the wind rose to a shriek and they heard the crash of breaking boughs and falling trees in the forest. The river, whipped continually by the gusts, was broken with waves upon which the canoe rocked with such force that the three, expert though they were, were compelled to use all their skill, every moment, to keep it from being overturned. If it had not been for the rapid and vivid strokes of lightning under which the waters turned blood red their vessel would have crashed more than once upon the rocks, leaving them to swim for life.

"That incessant flare makes me shiver," said Robert. "It seems every time that I'm going to be struck by it, but I'm glad it comes, because without it we'd never see our way on the river."

"Manitou sends the good and evil together," said Tayoga gravely.

"Anyhow," said Willet, "I hope we'll get to our shelter before the rain comes. Look out for that rock on the right, Robert!"

Young Lennox, with a swift and powerful motion of the paddle, shot the canoe back toward the center of the river, and then the three tried to hold it there as they sped on.

"Three or four hundred yards more," said Tayoga, "and we can draw into the smooth water we wish."

"And not a minute too soon," said Willet. "It seems to me I can hear the rain coming now in a deluge, and the waves on the river make me think of some I've seen on one of the big lakes. Listen to that, will you!"

A huge tree, blown down, fell directly across the stream, not more than twenty yards behind them. But the fierce and swollen waters tearing at it in torrents would soon bear it away on the current.

"Manitou was watching over us then," said Tayoga with the same gravity.

"As sure as the Hudson runs into the sea, he was," said Willet in a tone of reverence. "If that tree had hit us we and the canoe would all have been smashed together and a week later maybe the French would have fished our pieces out of the St. Lawrence."

Robert, who was farthest forward in the canoe, noticed that the cliff ahead, hollowed out at the base by the perpetual eating of the waters, seemed to project over the stream, and he concluded that it was the place in Tayoga's mind.

"Our shelter, isn't it?" he asked, pointing a finger by the lightning's flare.

Tayoga nodded, and the three, putting their last ounce of strength into the sweep of the paddles, sent the canoe racing over the swift current toward the haven now needed so badly. As they approached, Robert saw that the hollow went far back into the stone, having in truth almost the aspects of a cave. Beneath the mighty projection he saw also that the water was smooth, unlashd by the wind and outside the sweep of the current, and he felt immense relief when the canoe shot into its still depths and he was able to lay the paddle beside him.

"Back a little farther," said Tayoga, and he saw then, still by the flare of lightning, that the water ended against a low shelf at least six feet broad, upon which they stepped, lifting the canoe after them.

"It's all that you claimed for it, and more, Tayoga," said the hunter. "I fancy a ship in a storm would be glad enough to find a refuge as good for it as this is for us."

Tayoga smiled, and Robert knew that he felt deep satisfaction because he had brought them so well to port. Looking about after they had lifted up the canoe, he saw that in truth nature had made a good harbor here for those who traveled on the river, its waters so far never having been parted by anything but a canoe. The hollow went back thirty or forty feet with a sloping roof of stone, and from the ledge, whenever the lightning flashed, they saw the river flowing before them in a rushing torrent, but inside the hollow the waters were a still pool.

"Now the rain comes," said Tayoga.

Then they heard its sweep and roar and it arrived in such mighty volume that the surface of the river was beaten almost flat. But in their snug and well-roofed harbor not a drop touched them. Robert on the ledge with his back to the wall had a pervading sense of comfort. The lightning and the thunder were both dying now, but the rain came in a steady and mighty sweep. As the lightning ceased entirely it was so dark that they saw the water in front of them but dimly, and they had to be very careful in their movements on the ledge, lest they roll off and slip into its depths.

"Robert," said Willet in a whimsical tone, "one of the first things I tried to teach you when you were a little boy was always to be calm, and under no circumstances to let your calm be broken up when there was nothing to break it up. Now, we've every reason to be calm. We've got a good home here, and the storm can't touch us."

"I was already calm, Dave," replied Robert lightly. "I took your first lesson to heart, learned it, and I've never forgotten it. I'm so calm that I've unfolded my blanket and put it under me to soften the stone."

"To think of your blanket is proof enough that you're not excited. I'll do the same. Tayoga, in whose country is this new home of ours?"

"It is the land of no man, because it lies between the tribes from the north and the tribes from the south. Yet the Iroquois dare to come here when they choose. It's the fourth time I have been on this ledge, but before I was always with my brethren of the clan of the Bear of the nation Onondaga."

"Well, Tayoga," said Willet, in his humorous tone, "the company has grown no worse."

"No," said Tayoga, and his smile was invisible to them in the darkness. "The time is coming when the sachems of the Onondagas will be glad they adopted Lennox and the Great Bear into our nation."

Willet's laugh came at once, not loud, but with an inflection of intense enjoyment.

"You Onondagas are a bit proud, Tayoga," he said.

"Not without cause, Great Bear."

"Oh, I admit it! I admit it! I suppose we're all proud of our race—it's one of nature's happy ways of keeping us satisfied—and I'm free to say, Tayoga, that I've no quarrel at having been born white, because I'm so used to being white that I'd hardly know how to be anything else. But if I wasn't white—a thing that I had nothing to do with—and your Manitou who is my God was to say to me, 'Choose what else you'll be,' I'd say, and I'd say it with all the respect and reverence I could bring into the words, 'O Lord, All Wise and All Powerful, make me a strong young warrior of the clan of the Bear, of the nation Onondaga, of the League of the Hodenosaunee, hunting for my clan and fighting to protect its women and children, and keeping my word with everybody and trying to be just to the red races and tribes that are not as good as mine, and even to be the same to the poor white men around the towns that get drunk, and steal, and rob one another,' and maybe your Manitou who is my God would give to me my wish."

"The Great Bear has a silver tongue, and the words drop from his lips like honey," said Tayoga. But Robert knew that the young Onondaga was intensely gratified and he knew, too, that Willet meant every word he said.

"You'd better make yourself comfortable on the blanket, as we're doing, Tayoga," the youth said.

But the Onondaga did not intend to rest just yet. The wildness of the place and the spirit of the storm stirred him. He stood upon the shelf and the others dimly saw his tall and erect young figure. Slowly he began to chant in his own tongue, and his song ran thus in English:

"The lightning cleaves the sky,
The Brave Soul fears not;
The thunder rolls and threatens,
Manitou alone speeds the bolt;

The waters are deep and swift,
They carry the just man unhurt."

"O Spirit of Good, hear me,
Watch now over our path,
Lead us in the way of the right,
And, our great labors finished,
Bring us back, safe and well,
To the happy vale of Onondaga."

"A good hymn, Tayoga, for such I take it to be," said Willet. "I haven't heard my people sing any better. And now, since you've done more'n your share of the work you'd better take Robert's advice and lie down on your blanket."

Tayoga obeyed, and the three in silence listened to the rushing of the storm.

CHAPTER IV

THE INTELLIGENT CANOE

Lennox, Willet and Tayoga fell asleep, one by one, and the Onondaga was the last to close his eyes. Then the three, wrapped in their blankets, lay in complete darkness on the stone shelf, with the canoe beside them. They were no more than the point of a pin in the vast wilderness that stretched unknown thousands of miles from the Hudson to the Pacific, apparently as lost to the world as the sleepers in a cave ages earlier, when the whole earth was dark with forest and desert.

Although the storm could not reach them it beat heavily for long hours while they slept. The sweep of the rain maintained a continuous driving sound. Boughs cracked and broke beneath it. The waters of the river, swollen by the floods of tributary creeks and brooks, rose fast, bearing upon their angry surface the wreckage of trees, but they did not reach the stone shelf upon which the travelers lay.

Tayoga awoke before the morning, while it was yet so dark that his trained eyes could see but dimly the figures of his comrades. He sat up and listened, knowing that he must depend for warning upon his hearing, which had been trained to extreme acuteness by the needs of forest life. All three of them were great wilderness trailers and scouts, but Tayoga was the first of the three. Back of him lay untold generations that had been compelled to depend upon the physical senses and the intuition that comes from their uttermost development and co-ordination. Now, Tayoga, the product of all those who had gone before, was also their finest flower.

He had listened at first, resting on his elbow, but after a minute or two he sat up. He heard the rushing of the rain, the crack of splintering boughs, the flowing of the rising river, and the gurgling of its waters as they lapped against the stone shelf. They would not enter it he knew, as he had observed that the highest marks of the floods lay below them.

The sounds made by the rain and the river were steady and unchanged. But the intuition that came from the harmonious working of senses, developed to a marvelous degree, sounded a warning note. A danger threatened. He did not know what the danger was nor whence it would come, but the soul of the Onondaga was alive and every nerve and muscle in his body was attuned for any task that might lie before him. He looked at his sleeping comrades. They did not stir, and their long, regular breathing told him that no sinister threat was coming to them.

But Tayoga never doubted. The silent and invisible warning, like a modern wireless current, reached him again. Now, he knelt at the very edge of the shelf, and drew his long hunting knife. He tried to pierce the darkness with his eyes, and always he looked up the stream in the direction in which they had come. He strained his ears too to the utmost, concentrating the full powers of his hearing upon the river, but the only sounds that reached him were the flowing of the current, the bubbling of the water at the edges, and its lapping against a tree or bush torn up by the storm and floating on the surface of the stream.

The Onondaga stepped from the shelf, finding a place for his feet in crevices below, the water rising almost to his knees, and leaned farther forward to listen. One hand held firmly to a projection of stone above and the other clasped the knife.

Tayoga maintained the intense concentration of his faculties, as if he had drawn them together in an actual physical way, until they bore upon one point, and he poured so much strength and vitality into them that he made the darkness thin away before his eyes and he heard noises of the water that had not come to him before.

A broken bough, a bush and a sapling washed past. Then came a tree, and deflecting somewhat from the current it floated toward the shelf. Leaning far over and extending the hand that held the knife, Tayoga struck. When the blade came back it was red and the young Onondaga uttered a tremendous war whoop that rang and echoed in the confines of the stony hollow.

Lennox and Willet sprang to their feet, all sleep driven away at once, and instinctively grasped their rifles.

"What is it, Tayoga?" exclaimed the startled Willet.

"The attack of the savage warriors," replied the Onondaga. "One came floating on a tree. He thought to slay us as we slept and take away our scalps, but the river that brought him living has borne him away dead."

"And so they know we're here," said the hunter, "and your watchfulness has saved us. Well, Tayoga, it's one more deed for which we have to thank you, but I think you'd better get back on the shelf. They can fire from the other side, farther up, and although it would be at random, a bullet or two might strike here."

The Onondaga swung himself back and all three flattened themselves against the rock. After Tayoga's triumphant shout there was no sound save those of the river and the rain. But Robert expected it. He knew the horde would be quiet for a while, hoping for a surprise the second time after the first one had failed.

"It was bold," he said, "for a single warrior to come floating down the stream in search of us."

"But it would have succeeded if Tayoga hadn't been awake," said the hunter. "One warrior could have knifed us all at his leisure."

"Where do you think they are now?"

"They must be crouched in the shelter of rocks. If they had nothing over them the storm would take the fighting spirit for the time out of savages, even wild for scalps. I'm mighty glad we have the canoe. It holds the food we need for a siege, and if the chance for escape comes it will bear us away. I think, Tayoga, I can see a figure stirring among the boulders on the other side farther up."

"I see two," said the Onondaga, "and doubtless there are others whom we cannot see. Keep close, my friends, I think they are going to fire."

A dozen rifles were discharged from a point about a hundred yards away, the exploding powder making red dots in the darkness, the bullets rattling on the stone cliff or sending up little spurts of water from the river. The volley was followed by a shrill, fierce war whoop, and then nothing was heard but the flowing of the river and the rushing of the rain.

"You are not touched?" said Tayoga, and Robert and Willet quickly answered in the negative.

"They don't know just which way to aim their guns," said Willet, "and so long as we keep quiet now they won't learn. That shout of yours, Tayoga, was not enough to tell them."

"But they must remember about where the hollow is, although they can't pull trigger directly upon it, owing to the darkness and storm," said Robert.

"That about sums it up, my boy," said the hunter. "If they do a lot of random firing the chances are about a hundred to one they won't hit us, and the Indians don't have enough ammunition to waste that way."

"I don't suppose we can launch the canoe and slip away in it?"

"No, it would be swamped by the rain and the flood. It's likely, too, that they're on watch for us farther down the stream."

"Then this is our home and fortress for an indefinite time, and, that being the case, I'm going to make myself as easy as I can."

He drew the blanket under his body again and lay on his elbow, but he held his rifle before him, ready for battle at an instant's notice. His feeling of comfort returned and with it the sense of safety. The bullets of the savages had gone so wild and the darkness was so deep that their shelter appeared to him truly as a fortress which no numbers of besiegers could storm.

"Do you think they'll try floating down the stream on trees or logs again, Tayoga?" he asked.

"No, the danger is too great," replied the Onondaga. "They know now that we're watching."

An hour passed without any further sign from the foe. The rain decreased somewhat in violence, but, as the wind rose, its rush and sweep made as much sound as ever. Then the waiting was broken by

scattering shots, accompanied by detached war whoops, as if different bands were near. From their shelter they watched the red dots that marked the discharges from the rifles, but only one bullet came near them, and after chipping a piece of stone over their heads it dropped harmlessly to the floor.

"That was the one chance out of a hundred," said Willet, "and now we're safe from the next ninety-nine bullets."

"I trust the rule will work," said Robert.

"I wish you'd hold my left hand in a firm grip," said Willet.

"I will, but why?" returned the youth.

"If I get a chance I'm going to drag up some of that dead and floating wood and lay it along the edge of the shelf. In the dark the savages can't pick us off, but we'll need a barrier in the morning."

"You're right, Dave, of course. I'm sorry I didn't think of it myself."

"One of us thought of it, and that's enough. Hold my hand hard, Robert.

Don't let your grip slip."

By patient waiting and help from the others Willet was able to draw up two logs of fair size, and some smaller pieces which they placed carefully on the edge of the stone shelf. Lying flat behind them, they would be almost hidden, and now they could await the coming of daylight with more serenity.

A long time passed. The three ate strips of the deer meat, and Robert even slept for a short while. He awoke to find a further decrease in the rain, although the river was still rising, and Tayoga and Willet were of the opinion that it would stop soon, a belief that was justified in an hour. Robert soon afterward saw the clouds move away, and disclose a strip of dark blue sky, into which the stars began to come one by one.

"The night will grow light soon," said Tayoga, "then it will darken again for a little time before the coming of the day."

"And we've built our breastwork none too soon," said Willet. "There'll be so many stars by and by that those fellows can pick out our place and send their bullets to it. What do you think, Tayoga? Is it just a band taking the chance to get some scalps, or are they sent out by the Governor General of Canada to do wicked work in the forest and then be disowned if need be?"

"I cannot tell," replied the Onondaga. "Much goes on in the land of Onontio at Stadacona (Quebec). He talks long in whispers with the northern chiefs, and often he does not let his left ear know what the right ear hears. Onontio moves in the night, while Corlear sleeps."

"That may be so, Tayoga, but whether it's so or not I like our straightforward English and American way best. We may blunder along for a while and lose at first, but to be open and honest is to be strong."

"I did not say the ways of Corlear would prevail. It is not the talk of Corlear that will keep the Hodenosaunee faithful to the English side, but it is the knowledge of the fifty sachems that when Onontio is speaking in a voice of honey he is to be trusted the least."

Willet laughed.

"I understand, Tayoga," he said. "You're for us not because you have so much faith in Corlear, but because you have less in Onontio. Well, it's a good enough reason, I suppose. But all Frenchmen are not tricksters. Most of 'em are brave, and when they're friends they're good and true. About all I've got to say against 'em is that they're willing to shut their eyes to the terrible things their allies do in their name. But I've had a lot to do with 'em on the border, and you can get to like 'em. Now, that St. Luc we met was a fine upstanding man."

"But if an enemy, an enemy to be dreaded," said Tayoga with his usual gravity.

"I wouldn't mind that if it came to war. In such cases the best men make the best enemies, I suppose. He had a sharp eye. I could see how he measured us, and reckoned us up, but he looked most at Robert here."

"His sharp eye recognized that I was the most important of the three," said Robert lightly.

"Every fellow is mighty important to himself," said Willet, "and he can't get away from it. Tayoga, do you think you see figures moving on the other bank there, up the stream?"

"Two certainly, others perhaps, Great Bear," replied the Onondaga. "I might reach one with my rifle."

"Don't try it, Tayoga. We're on the defense, and we'll let 'em make all the beginnings. The sooner they shoot away their ammunition the better it will be for us. I think they'll open fire pretty soon now, because the night is growing uncommon bright. The stars are so big and shining, and there are so many of them they all look as if they had come to a party. Flatten yourselves down, boys! I can see a figure kneeling by a boulder and that means one shot, if not more."

They lay close and Robert was very thankful now for the logs they had dragged up from the water, as they afforded almost complete shelter. The crouching warrior farther up the stream fired, and his bullet struck the hollow above their heads.

"A better aim than they often show," said Willet.

More shots were fired, and one buried itself in the log in front of Robert. He heard the thud made by the bullet as it entered, and once more he was thankful for their rude breastwork. But it was the only one that struck so close and presently the savages ceased their fire, although the besieged three were still able to see them in the brilliant moonlight among the boulders.

"They're getting a bit too insolent," said the hunter. "Maybe they think it's a shorter distance from them to us than it is from us to them, and that our bullets would drop before they got to 'em. I think, Tayoga, I'll prove that it's not so."

"Choose the man at the edge of the water," said Tayoga. "He has fired three shots at us, and we should give him at least one in return."

"I'll pay the debt, Tayoga."

Robert saw the warrior, his head and shoulders and painted chest appearing above the stone. The distance was great for accuracy, but the light was brilliant, and the rifle of the hunter rose to his shoulder. The muzzle bore directly upon the naked chest, and when Willet pulled the trigger a stream of fire spurted from the weapon.

The savage uttered a cry, shot forward and fell into the stream. His lifeless body tossed like dead wood on the swift current, reappeared and floated by the little fortress of the three. Robert shuddered as he saw the savage face again, and then he saw it no more.

The savages uttered a shout of grief and rage over the loss of the warrior, but the besieged were silent. Willet, as he reloaded his rifle, gave it an affectionate little pat or two.

"It's a good weapon," he said, "and with a fair light I was sure I wouldn't miss. We've given 'em fair warning that they've got a nest of panthers here to deal with, and that when they attack they're taking risks. Can you see any of 'em now, Tayoga?"

"All have taken to cover. There is not one among them who is willing to face again the rifle of the Great Bear."

Willet smiled with satisfaction at the compliment. He was proud of his sharp-shooting, and justly so, but he said modestly:

"I had a fair target, and it will do for a warning. I think we can look for another long rest now."

The dark period that precedes the dawn came, and then the morning flashed over the woods. Robert, from the hollow, looking across the far shore, saw lofty, wooded hills and back of them blue mountains. Beads of rain stood on the leaves, and the wilderness seemed to emerge, fresh and dripping, from a glorious bath. Pleasant odors of the wild came to him, and now he felt the sting of imprisonment there among the rocks. He wished they could go at once on their errand. It was a most unfortunate chance to have been found there by the Indians and to be held indefinitely in siege. The flooded river would have borne them swiftly in their canoe toward the St. Lawrence.

"Mourning, Robert?" said Willet who noticed his face.

"For the moment, yes," admitted young Lennox, "but it has passed. I wanted to be going on this lively river and through the green wood, but since I have to wait I can do it."

"I feel the same way about it, and we're lucky to have such a fort as the one we are in. I think the savages will hang on here for a long while. Indians always have plenty of time. That's why they're more patient than white men. Like as not we won't get a peep out of them all the morning."

"Lennox feels the beauty of the day," said Tayoga, "and that's why he wants to leave the hollow and go into the woods. But if Lennox will only think he'll know that other days as fine will come."

The eye of the young Onondaga twinkled as he delivered his jesting advice.

"I'll be as patient as I can," replied Robert in the same tone, "but tomorrow is never as good as today. I wait like you and Dave only because I have to do so."

"In the woods you must do as the people who live there do," said the hunter philosophically. "They learn how to wait when they're young. We don't know how long we'll be here. A little more of the deer, Tayoga. It's close to the middle of the day now and we must keep our strength. I wish we had better water than that of a flooded and muddy river to drink, but it's water, anyhow."

They ate, drank and refreshed themselves and another long period of inaction followed. The warriors—at intervals—fired a few shots but they did no damage. Only one entered the hollow, and it buried itself harmlessly in their wooden barrier. They suffered from nothing except the soreness and stiffness that came from lying almost flat and so long in one position. The afternoon, cloudless and brilliant, waned, and the air in the recess grew warm and heavy. Had it not been for the necessity of keeping guard Robert could have gone to sleep again. The flood in the river passed its zenith and was now sinking visibly. No more trees or bushes came floating on the water. Willet showed disappointment over the failure of the besiegers to make any decided movement.

"I was telling you, Robert, a while ago," he said, "that Indians mostly have a lot of time, but I'm afraid the band that's cornered us here has got too much. They may send out a warrior or two to hunt, and the others may sit at a distance and wait a week for us to come out. At least it looks that way to a 'possum up a tree. What do you think of it, Tayoga?"

"The Great Bear is right," replied the Onondaga. "He is always right when he is not wrong."

"Come now, Tayoga, are you making game of me?"

"Not so, my brother, because the Great Bear is nearly always right and very seldom wrong. It is given only to Manitou never to be wrong."

"That's better, Tayoga. If I can keep up a high average of accuracy I'm satisfied."

Tayoga's English was always precise and a trifle bookish, like that of a man speaking a language he has learned in a school, which in truth was the case with the Onondaga. Like the celebrated Thayendanega, the Mohawk, otherwise known as Joseph Brant, he had been sent to a white school and he had learned the English of the grammarian. Willet too spoke in a manner much superior to that of the usual scout and hunter.

"If the Indians post lines out of range and merely maintain a watch what will we do?" asked Robert. "I, for one, don't want to stay here indefinitely."

"Nor do any of us," replied Willet. "We ought to be moving. A long delay here won't help us. We've got to think of something."

The two, actuated by the same impulse, looked at Tayoga. He was very thoughtful and presently glanced up at the heavens.

"What does the Great Bear think of the sky?" he asked.

"I think it's a fine sky, Tayoga," Willet replied with a humorous inflection. "But I've always admired it, whether it's blue or gray or just black, spangled with stars."

Tayoga smiled.

"What does the Great Bear think of the sky?" he repeated. "Do the signs say to him that the coming night will be dark like the one that has just gone before?"

"They say it will be dark, Tayoga, but I don't believe we'll have the rain again."

"We do not want the rain, but we do want the dark. Tonight when the moon and stars fail to come we must leave the hollow."

"By what way, Tayoga?"

The Onondaga pointed to the river.

"We have the canoe," he said.

"But if they should hear or see us we'd make a fine target in it," said Robert.

"We won't be in it," said the Onondaga, "although our weapons and clothes will."

"Ah, I understand! We're to launch the canoe, put in it everything including our clothes, except ourselves, and swim by the side of it. Three good swimmers are we, Tayoga, and I believe we can do it."

The Onondaga looked at Willet, who nodded his approval.

"The chances will favor us, and we'd better try it," he said, "that is, if the night is dark, as I think it will be."

"Then it is agreed," said Robert.

"It is so," said Tayoga.

No more words were needed, and they strengthened their hearts for the daring attempt, waiting patiently for the afternoon to wane and die into the night, which, arrived moonless and starless and heavy with dark, as they had hoped and predicted. Just before, a little spasmodic firing came from the besiegers, but they did not deign to answer. Instead they waited patiently until the night was far advanced and then they prepared quickly for running the gauntlet, a task that would require the greatest skill, courage and presence of mind. Robert's heart beat hard. Like the others he was weary of the friendly hollow that had served them so well, and the murmuring of the river, as it flowed, invited them to come on and use it as the road of escape.

The three took off all their clothing and disposed everything carefully in the canoe, laying the rifles on top where they could be reached with a single swift movement of the arm. Then they stared up and down the stream, and listened with all their powers of hearing. No savage was to be seen nor did anyone make a sound that reached the three, although Robert knew they lay behind the rocks not so very far away.

"They're not stirring, Tayoga," whispered the hunter. "Perhaps they think we don't dare try the river, and in this case as in most others the boldest way is the best. Take the other end of the canoe, and we'll lift it down gently."

He and the Onondaga lowered the canoe so slowly that it made no splash when it took the water, and then the three lowered themselves in turn, sinking into the stream to their throats.

"Keep close to the bank," whispered the hunter, "and whatever you do don't make any splash as you swim."

The three were on the side of the craft next to the cliff and their heads did not appear above its side. Then the canoe moved down the stream at just about the speed of the current, and no human hands appeared, nor was any human agency visible. It was just a wandering little boat, set adrift upon the wilderness waters, a light shell, but with an explorer's soul. It moved casually along, keeping nearest to the cliff, the safest place for so frail a structure, hesitating two or three times at points of rocks, but always making up its mind to go on once more, and see where this fine but strange river led.

Luckily it was very dark by the cliff. The shadows fell there like black blankets, and no eye yet rested upon the questing canoe which kept its way, idly exploring the reaches of the river. Gasna Gaowo, this bark canoe of red elm, was not large, but it was a noble specimen of its kind, a forest product of Onondaga patience and skill. On either side near the prow was painted in scarlet a great eagle's eye, and now the two large red eyes of the canoe gazed ahead into the darkness, seeking to pierce the unknown.

The canoe went on with a gentle, rocking motion made by the current, strayed now and then a little way from the cliff, but always came back to it. The pair of great red eyes stared at the cliff so

close and at the other cliff farther away and at the middle of the stream, which was now tranquil and unruffled by the wreckage of the forest blown into the water by the storm. The canoe also looked into one or two little coves, and seeing nothing there but the river edge bubbling against the stone, went on, came to a curve, rounded it in an easy, sauntering but skillful fashion, and entered a straight reach of the stream.

So far the canoe was having a lone and untroubled journey. The river widening now and flowing between descending banks was wholly its own, but clinging to the habit it had formed when it started it still hung to the western bank. The night grew more and more favorable to the undiscovered voyage it wished to make. Masses of clouds gathered and hovered over that particular river, as if they had some especial object in doing so, and they made the night so dark that the red eyes of the canoe, great in size though they were, could see but a little way down the stream. Yet it kept on boldly and there was a purpose in its course. Often it seemed to be on the point of recklessly running against the rocky shore, but always it sheered off in time, and though its advance was apparently casual it was moving down the stream at a great rate.

The canoe had gone fully four hundred yards when an Abenaki warrior on the far side of the river caught a glimpse of a shadow moving in the shadow of the bank, and a sustained gaze soon showed to him that it was a canoe, and, in his opinion, a derelict, washed by the flood from some camp a long distance up the stream. He watched it for a little while, and was then confirmed in his opinion by its motion as it floated lazily with the current.

The darkness was not too great to keep the Abenaki from seeing that it was a good canoe, a fine shell of Iroquois make, and canoes were valuable. He had not been able to secure any scalp, which was a sad disappointment, and now Manitou had sent this stray craft to him as a consolation prize. He was not one to decline the gifts of the gods, and he ran along the edge of the cliff until he came to a low point well ahead of the canoe. Then he put his rifle on the ground, dropped lightly into the stream, and swam with swift sure strokes for the derelict.

As the warrior approached he saw that his opinion of the canoe was more than justified. It had been made with uncommon skill and he admired its strong, graceful lines. It was not often that such a valuable prize came to a man and asked to be taken. He reached it and put one hand upon the side. Then a heavy fist stretched entirely over the canoe and struck him such a mighty blow upon the jaw that he sank senseless, and when he revived two minutes later on a low bank where the current had cast him, he did not know what had happened to him.

Meanwhile the uncaptured canoe sailed on in lonely majesty down the stream.

"That was a shrewd blow of yours, Dave," said Robert. "You struck fairly upon his jaw bone."

"It's not often that I fight an Indian with my fists, and the chance having come I made the most of it," said the hunter. "He may have been a sentinel set to watch for just such an attempt as we are making, but it's likely they thought if we made a dash for it we'd be in the canoe."

"It was great wisdom for us to swim," said Tayoga. "Another sentinel seeing the canoe may also think it was washed away somewhere and is merely floating on the waters. I can see a heap of underbrush that has gathered against a projecting point, and the current would naturally bring the canoe into it. Suppose we let it rest there until it seems to work free by the action of the water, and then go on down the river."

"It's a good idea, Tayoga, but it's a pretty severe test to remain under fire, so to speak, in order to deceive your enemy, when the road is open for you to run away."

"But we can do it, all three of us," said Tayoga, confidently.

A spit of high ground projected into the river and in the course of time enough driftwood brought by the stream and lodged there had made a raft of considerable width and depth, against which the canoe in its wandering course lodged. But it was evident that its stay in such a port would be but temporary, as the current continually pushed and sucked at it, and the light craft quivered and swayed continually under the action of the current.

The three behind the canoe thrust themselves back into the mass of vegetation, reckless of scratches, and were hidden completely for the time. Since he was no longer kept warm by the act of swimming Robert felt the chill of the water entering his bones. His physical desire to shiver he controlled by a powerful effort of the will, and, standing on the bottom with his head among the boughs, he remained quiet.

None of the three spoke and in a few minutes a warrior on the other side of the stream, watching in the bushes, saw the dim outline of the canoe in the darkness. He came to the edge of the water and looked at it attentively. It was apparent to him, as it had been to the other savage, that it was a stray canoe, and valuable, a fine prize for the taking. But he was less impulsive than the first man had been and at that point the river spread out to a much greater width. He did not know that his comrade was lying on the bank farther up in a half stunned condition, but he was naturally cautious and he stared at the canoe a long time. He saw that the action of the current would eventually work it loose from the raft, but he believed it would yet hang there for at least ten minutes. So he would have time to go back to his nearest comrade and return with him. Then one could enter the water and salvage the canoe, while the other stayed on the bank and watched. Having reached this wise conclusion he disappeared in the woods, seeking the second Indian, but before the two could come together the canoe had worked loose and was gone.

The three hidden in the bushes had watched the Indian as well as the dusk would permit and they read his mind. They knew that when he turned away he had gone for help and they knew equally well that it was time for the full power of the current to take effect.

"Shove it off, Tayoga," whispered Willet, "and I think we'd better help along with some strokes of our own."

"It is so," said Tayoga.

Now the wandering canoe was suddenly endowed with more life and purpose, or else the current grew much swifter. After an uneasy stay with the boughs, it left them quickly, sailed out toward the middle of the stream, and floated at great speed between banks that were growing high again. The friendly dark was also an increasing protection to the three who were steering it. The heavy but rainless clouds continued to gather over them, and the canoe sped on at accelerated speed in an opaque atmosphere. A mile farther and Willet suggested that they get into the canoe and paddle with all their might. The embarkation, a matter of delicacy and difficulty, was made with success, and then they used the paddles furiously.

The canoe, suddenly becoming a live thing, leaped forward in the water, and sped down the stream, as if it were the leader in a race. Far behind them rose a sudden war cry, and the three laughed.

"I suppose they've discovered in some way that we've fled," said Robert.

"That is so," said Tayoga.

"And they'll come down the river as fast as they can," said Willet, "but they'll do no more business with us. I don't want to brag, but you can't find three better paddlers in the wilderness than we are, and with a mile start we ought soon to leave behind any number of warriors who have to run through the woods and follow the windings of the stream."

"They cannot catch us now," said Tayoga, "and I will tell them so."

He uttered a war whoop so piercing and fierce that Robert was startled. It cut the air like the slash of a sword, but it was a long cry, full of varied meaning. It expressed satisfaction, triumph, a taunt for the foe, and then it died away in a sinister note like a threat for any who tried to follow. Willet laughed under his breath.

"That'll stir 'em, Tayoga," he said. "You put a little dart squarely in their hearts, and they don't like it. But they can squirm as much as they please, we're out of their reach now. Hark, they're answering!"

They heard a cry from the savage who had besieged them, but it was followed by a long silence. The three paddled with their utmost strength, the great muscles on their arms rising and falling with their exertions, and beads of perspiration standing out on their foreheads.

Hours passed. Mile after mile fell behind them. The darkness began to thin, and then the air was shot with golden beams from the rising sun. Willet, heaving an immense sigh of relief, laid his paddle across the canoe.

"The danger has passed," he said. "Now we'll land, put on our clothes and become respectable."

CHAPTER V

THE MOHAWK CHIEF

The canoe was passing between low shores, and they landed on the left bank, lifting out of the water the little vessel that had served them so well, and carrying it to a point some distance in the bushes. There they sat down beside it a while and drew long, deep and panting breaths.

"I don't want to repeat that experience soon," said Robert. "I think every muscle and bone in me is aching."

"So do mine," said Willet, "but they ache in a good cause, and what's of more importance just now a successful one too. Having left no trail the Indians won't be able to follow us, and we can rest here a long time, which compels me to tell you again to put on your clothes and become respectable."

They were quite dry now, and they dressed. They also saw that their arms and ammunition were in order, and after Willet had scouted the country a bit, seeing that no human-being was near, they ate breakfast of the deer meat and felt thankful.

"The aches are leaving me," said Willet, "and in another half-hour I'll be the man I was yesterday. Not I'll be a better man. I've been in danger lots of times and always there's a wonderful feeling of happiness when I get out of it."

"That is, risk goes before real rest," said Robert.

"That's about the way to put it, and escaping as we've just done from a siege, this dawn is about the finest I've ever seen. Isn't that a big and glorious sun over there? I suppose it's the same sun I've been looking at for years, but it seems to me that it has a new and uncommonly splendid coat of gilding this morning."

"I think it was put on to celebrate our successful flight," said Robert. "It's not only a splendid sun, Dave, but it's an uncommonly friendly one too. I can look it squarely in the eye for just a second and it fairly beams on me."

"My brothers are right," said Tayoga gravely. "If it had not been the will of Manitou for us to escape from the trap that had been set for us the sun rising newly behind the mountains would not smile upon us."

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