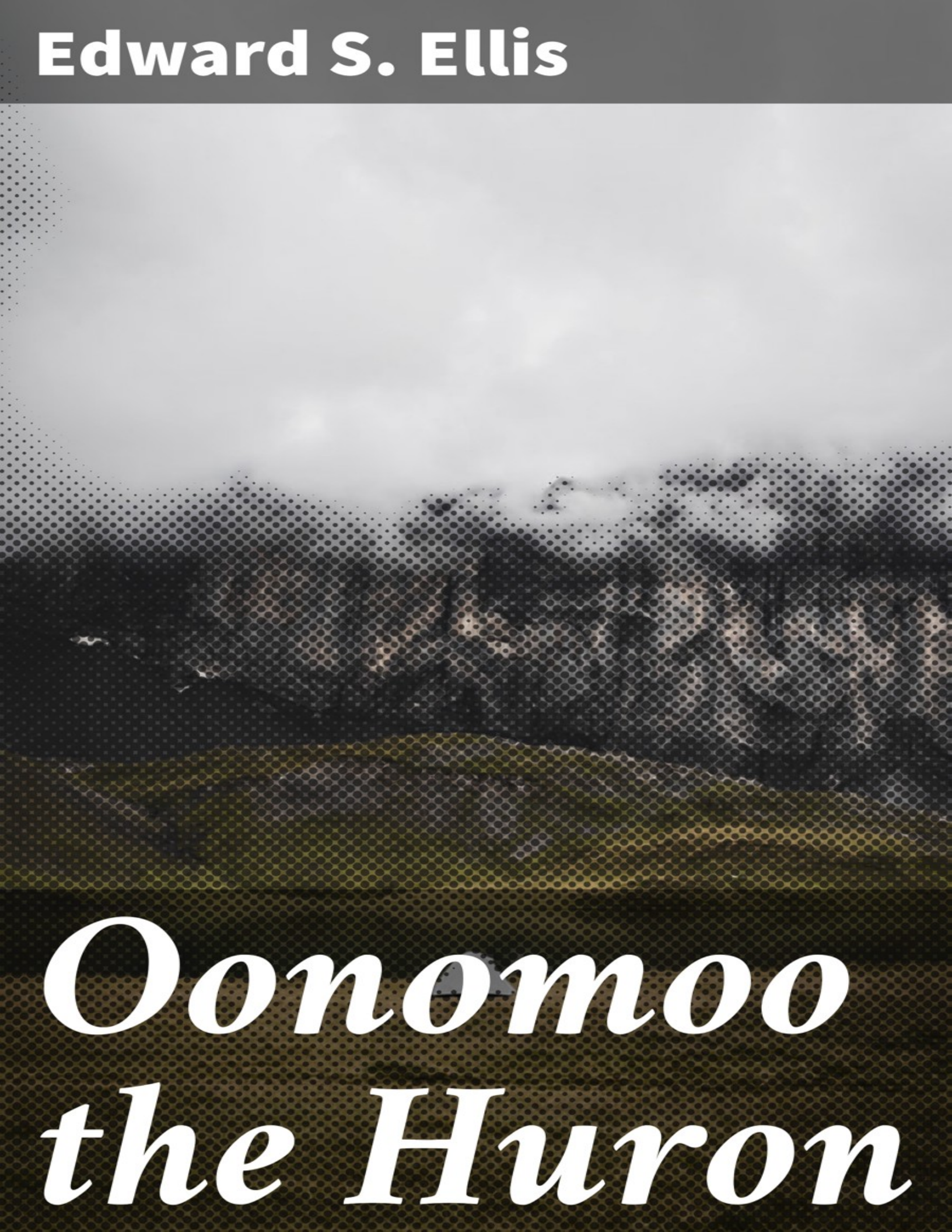


Edward S. Ellis



*Oonomoo
the Huron*

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Chapter I: Hans Vanderbum

Chapter I

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Hans Vanderbum

The mountain's sides
Are flecked with gleams of light and spots of shade;
Here, golden sunshine spreads in mellow rays, and there,
Stretching across its hoary breast, deep shadows lurk.
A stream, with many a turn, now lost to sight,
And then, again revealed, winds through the vale,
Shimmering in the early morning sun.
A few white clouds float in the blue expanse,
Their forms revealed in the clear lake beneath,
Which bears upon its breast a bark canoe,
Cautiously guided by a sinewy arm.
High in the heavens, three eagles proudly poise,
Keeping their mountain eyrie still in view,
Although their flight has borne them far away.
Upon the cliff which beetles o'er the pool,
Two Indians, peering from the brink, appear,
Clad in the gaudy dress their nature craves—
Robes of bright blue and scarlet, but which blend
In happy union with the landscape round.
Near by a wigwam stands—a fire within
Sends out a ruddy glow—and from its roof,
Cone-shaped, a spiral wreath of smoke ascends.
Not far away, though deeper in the woods,
Another hut, with red-men grouped about,
Attracts the eye, and wakens saddened thoughts
Of that brave race who once were masters here,
But now, like autumn leaves, are dying out.—BARRY GRAY.

"Shtop dat noise! shtop dat noise!" vociferated Hans

Vanderbum, growing red in the face with fury, because his repeated commands had received so little attention.

The scene was deep in the forests of Ohio, a short distance from the Miami river. An Indian town of twenty-five or thirty lodges here stood, resembling a giant apiary, with its inhabitants flitting in and out, darting hither and thither, like so many bees. The time was early in the morning of a radiant spring, when the atmosphere was still and charming; the dew lingered upon the grass and undergrowth; birds were singing in every tree; the sky glowed with the pure blue of Italy; and the whole wilderness in its bloom looked like a sea of emerald. Everything was life and exhilaration, one personage alone excepted—Hans Vanderbum was unhappy!

The Indian lodges differed very little from each other, being of a rough, substantial character, built with an eye to comfort rather than beauty. One at the extreme northern edge of the village is that with which our story deals. A brief description of it will serve as a general daguerreotype of all those wild abodes.

The wigwam was composed of skins and bark, the latter greatly predominating. The shape was that of a cone. The framework was of poles, the lower ends of which were placed in a sort of circle, while the tops were intersected, leaving a small opening, through which the smoke reached the clear air above. Unsightly and repulsive as this might seem from the outside view, the dwelling, nevertheless, was water-proof and comfortable, and abundantly answered the end for which it was built.

A thin vapor was ascending in a bluish spiral at the top of the lodge indicated. A Shawnee squaw was occupied in preparing the morning meal, while her liege lord still reclined in one corner, in the vain effort to secure a few minutes more of slumber. This latter personage was Hans Vanderbum—our friend Hans—a huge, plethoric, stolid, lazy Dutchman, who had "married" an Indian widow several years before. At the time of her marriage this squaw had a boy some three or four years of age, while a second one, the son of the Dutchman, was now just large enough to be as mischievous as a kitten. They were a couple of greasy, copper-hued little rascals, with eyes as black as midnight, and long, wiry hair, like that of a horse's mane. Brimful of animal spirits, they were just the reverse of Hans Vanderbum, whose laziness and stupidity were only excelled by his indifference to the dignity and rights of human nature.

Hans Vanderbum lay flat upon his back, for the atmosphere of the wigwam was too warm for covering, his ponderous belly rising and falling like a wave of the sea, and his throat giving forth that peculiar rattling of the glottis, which might be mistaken for suffocation. The boys certainly would have been outside, basking in the genial sunshine, had not their mother, Keewaygooshturkumkankangewock, positively denied them that coveted privilege. The commands of the father might be trampled upon with impunity, but the young half-breeds knew better than to disobey their mother.

"Shtop dat noise! shtop dat noise!" repeated Hans, raising his head without stirring his body or limbs.

His broad face seemed all ablaze from its fiery red color, and the threatening fury throned upon his lowering forehead would almost have annihilated him who encountered it for the first time. As it was, the two boys suddenly straightened their faces, and assumed an air of meek penitence, as if suffering the most harrowing remorse for what they had done; and the father, after glaring at them a moment, as if to drive in and clinch the impression he had made, let his head drop back with a dull thump upon the ground, and again closed his eyes.

The black, snaky orbs of the boys twinkled like stars through their overhanging hair. Glancing first at their mother, who did not deign to notice them, the eldest picked up his younger brother, who was grinning from ear to ear with delight, and, summoning all his strength, he poised him over the prostrate form of his father for a moment, and then dropped him! The prolonged snore which was steadily issuing from the throat of the sleeping parent, terminated in a sharp, explosive grunt. As his eyes opened, the boys scrambled away like frogs to the opposite side of the lodge, under the protecting care of their mother.

"Dunder and blixen! You dunderin' Dutch Indians, dishturbin' your poor old dad dat is wearing his life out for you! I'll pound both of you till you're dead!"

Hans Vanderbum's system had suffered too great a shock for further slumber. He rose to the sitting position, and, digging both hands into his head, glared at his offspring a moment, and then began his regular lecture.

"Quanonshet, you little Dutchman, and Madokawandock, you little bigger Dutchman, vot does you t'ink of yourselves?"

Vot does you t'ink will become of you, disgracing your parents in this manner? You oughter be pounded to death to treat your poor old fader in this manner, who is working of himself away to bring you up in the way you ought for to go. Eh? vot do you t'ink of yourself, eh? Vot do you t'ink of yourself?" demanded Hans, furiously shaking his head toward the boys at each word.

Quanonshet and Madokawandock were too confounded for reply.

"Shposing your poor old fader should go crazy!! Here he is working himself to skin and bone—Keewaygooshturkumkankangewock, ain't you got dat cooked?"

"No!" screamed the wife. "You big, lazy man, get up and stir yourself! You don't do anything but sleep and smoke, while *I'm* working all the flesh off *my* bones for you!"

These forcible remarks were made in the pure Shawnee tongue, and were accompanied by gesticulation too pointed and significant for Hans to mistake the spirit in which they were given. Although it is the invariable custom among the North American Indians for the husband to rule the wife, and impose all burdens upon her, except those of the hunt, and fight, such, by no means, was the case with the present couple. Hans Vanderbum's body was too unwieldy for him to accompany the young men (or even the old men) upon their hunting expeditions; in short, he contributed nothing toward the support of his interesting family. The first husband of Keewaygooshturkumkankangewock had been an Indian, with all the characteristics of his race—indolent, selfish and savage; and her life with him had been that of the usual

servitude and drudgery. Accordingly, when she ventured a second time upon the sea of matrimony, she naturally fell into the same routine of labor, planting and cultivating what little corn, beans and vegetables were raised for the family, and doing all the really hard work. Hans Vanderbum sometimes gathered firewood, and frequently, when the weather was pleasant, spent hours in fishing. He was an inveterate smoker and sleeper; and, beyond doubt, was perfectly content in his situation. Having been taken a prisoner some years before, and adopted into this branch of the Shawnee tribe, he was offered the hand of Keewaygooshturkumkankangewock in marriage, and accepted it at once, totally forgetful of his first love, which had been the beautiful inmate of the Hunter's Cabin.

Hans Vanderbum sat and gazed at his wife with an admiring eye, as she busied herself with the preparations of the morning meal. Hoping to mollify her, he commenced flattering her, speaking in a low tone as if it were not his wish that she should hear him, but taking good care, at the same time, that nothing should escape her ears.

"Shplendid figger, Keewaygooshturkumkankangewock has got. No wonder all te braves of te Shawnee tribe should love her, and dat Hans Vanderbum gots her at last. Jis' look at *dat* foot! long and flat like a board, and she's de same shape all de way down from her head to her heels. Ishn't dat breakfast ready, my dear wife?"

The wife gave a spiteful nod, and Hans Vanderbum shambled up beside her, where the food, consisting of meat and a few simple vegetables, was spread upon a rude table which had no legs. Quanonshet and Madokawandock were

not behindhand in their movements, and the whole four fell to with such voracity, that, in a very short time, their hunger was satisfied.

"Now, you two fellers come out doors and learn your lessons," said the father, lighting his pipe, and putting on a very stern and dignified look.

The boys tumbled over each other in their eagerness to get into the open air. Hans followed them, while Keewaygooshturkumkankangewock busied herself about her household duties. Quanonshet and Madokawandock rollicked and frisked awhile before they were "called to order." After repeated commands, they approached their father, and standing side by side, awaited his instructions.

Hans Vanderbum had provided himself with a long pole, and stood by a sandy portion of ground, upon which he had no difficulty in tracing what letters and characters he wished. With due preparation and importance he marked out the first letter of the German alphabet, and then, straightening himself up, demanded in a thundering tone "vot dat was." His two sons looked mute and dumbfounded. They had not the remotest idea in the world of its name and significance. For over three months the patient father had instructed them daily in regard to this character, and the two together must have repeated it several thousand times. But, it mattered not; neither had any conception now of it, and their looks showed such unmistakably to their instructor.

"Dunder and blixen, vot Dutch Indians!" he exclaimed, impatiently. Repeating its name, he again demanded "vot

dat was." This time they answered readily, and his eyes sparkled with pleasure.

"Shmart boys," said he, approvingly. "You learns well, now. One dese days—"

Hans Vanderbum's words were cut short by the sudden sharp explosion of his pipe, the bowl being shattered in a hundred pieces, while nothing but the stem remained in his mouth.

"Where's mine pipe?" he asked, looking around in the vain hope of descrying it somewhere upon the ground. Quanonshet and Madokawandock indulged in one short scream of laughter, then instantly straightened their faces and looked as meek and innocent as lambs. Gradually the truth began to work its way into the head of Hans. Looking sternly at the two, he asked, in a threatening voice:

"Which of you put dat powder in mine meerscham, eh? which of you done dat, eh?"

Neither answered, except by hanging their heads and looking at their bare feet.

"I axes you once more, and dis is de last time."

Each now protested that it was not himself but the other, so that if there really were but one culprit, Hans had no means of determining. Under the circumstances, he concluded the safest plan was to believe both guilty. Accordingly he made a sudden dash and commenced whacking them soundly with the stick he held in his hand. They yelled, kicked, and screamed; and squirming themselves loose, scampered quickly away from their irate instructor.

"Dat meerscham can't be fixed," he soliloquized, taking the bare stem out of his mouth and looking sorrowfully at it. "'Cause dere isn't anything to fix it mit. It ish wonderful what mischief gets into dem boys; dere ain't no time when dey ain't doin' notting what dey hadn't not ought to—all de times just de same way, while I toils myself to death to educate dem and bring 'em up in de way apout which dey ought to go."

Keewaygooshturkumkankangewock being in the habit of frequently indulging in the use of tobacco, her husband was not deprived entirely of his solace. Going into the wigwam, he unbosomed his griefs to her, and she kindly loaned him her own pipe.

"I hopes dere ain't no powder in dat," he remarked, glancing uneasily into the bowl.

"Nothing but tobac," replied his spouse, in her native tongue, "unless you've put the powder in yourself."

"Dunderation, I don't does dat, and blow mine eyes out my head. Dem little Dutchmen is up to all kinds of such tricks, and some dese days dey will blow deir poor fader's brains out of his head, and den what *will* become of dem?" feelingly inquired Hans Vanderbum.

"What will become of them?" repeated Keewaygooshturkumkankangewock, her voice rising higher and higher at each word. "Who is it that supports them now and takes care of them? Who is it that does that? Who is it —"

"It's you—it's you," replied her husband, seeing the mistake he had made. "I doesn't do nottings—I doesn't do nottings; it's my wife, my good

Keewaygooshturkumkankangewock, dat does it all. She's a very nice squaw, de same shape all de way down."

These concessions and compliments greatly soothed the feelings of the incensed spouse. She scolded her husband no more.

"What *you* going to do, my dear frau?" he asked, in a voice as cooing and winning as a dove's.

"Going to work, to plant the corn, to get food for you and Quanonshet and Madokawandock when the snow falls."

"Very kind, clever woman; good frau is mine Keewaygooshturkumkankangewock."

"What are *you* going to do?" asked the wife, as the two passed out the wigwam.

"Going to shmoke and *meditate*—meditate *hard*," replied Hans Vanderbum, impressively.

"Can't you think as well while you're *fishing*?"

"I shpose I can; if my Keewaygooshturkumkankangewock t'inks so, I can."

"Well, she thinks so."

The fact that his wife "thought so" was equivalent to a command with Hans. He manifested no unwillingness or reluctance in obeying. Accordingly, he furnished himself with a hook, line and bait, and set out for the river.

It was now getting well along in the forenoon, the sun being above the tree-tops. The Shawnee Indians had left their wigwams to engage in their daily avocations. The women were mostly toiling in the field, their papposes hanging from the trees or leaning against their trunks. The older children were frolicking through the woods, or fishing or hunting. A few warriors and old men still lounged about

the wigwams, but the majority either were engaged in the hunt, or were upon the war-trail.

Stolid and indifferent as was the nature of Hans, it struck him that there was something unusual in the appearance and actions of the Indians. It seemed as though some startling event had occurred from which they had not fully recovered. They were uneasy and restless in their movements, constantly passing to and from the river. Upon reaching the banks of the latter, the Dutchman found a considerable number already there. They were not engaged in fishing, but lay close to the edge of the water, as if they expected the appearance of something upon its surface. Had he been a little more observant, there was something else which would have attracted his attention, on his passage through the woods. Fully a dozen times a peculiar sound, like the whistle of a bird, reached his ears, and he supposed it to be nothing more, although it did seem odd to him that the bird should follow him almost to the river bank. Besides this, he caught a flitting glimpse of an Indian now and then, some distance in the woods, that appeared to be watching him; but Hans did not care, even if such were the case, and he paid no further heed to him.

Reaching the river, he made his preparations with great care and elaboration. He had several hooks pendent from his line, upon each of which he shoved the wriggling worms, spitting upon them during the operation, as if to make them more tractable. To the line also was fastened a pebble, to make it sink. Swinging this several times around his head, he let go, when it spun far out in the river, and he commenced cautiously following it by means of a projecting

tree-trunk. This latter extended a dozen feet out over the surface of the water, and had been used as a seat a great many times by him. Passing out to the extremity, he was afforded a comfortable resting-place where he could sit hour after hour smoking his pipe and engage in fishing. Had he noticed the large branch of the tree upon which he seated himself, he would have hesitated before trusting the weight of his body upon it, but his nature was too unsuspicious to be attracted by anything trivial in its appearance, and he made his way out upon it, as he had done scores of times before.

Ensconcing himself in his seat, he gave his whole attention to his line and his pipe, not noticing the interested glances which the Shawnees along the bank bestowed upon his operations. After the space of a few minutes, he felt something pull at his line, and doing the same, he hauled a fine plump fish out of the water, casting it upon the land.

"Dat is purty goot," he mused, "and I will soon got a lot more, and my Keewaygooshturkumkankangewock will feel goot too, when I takes 'em home. She won't—Dunder and Blixen!"

The limb upon which he was seated suddenly broke short off, and Hans dropped into the river out of sight. But such a ponderous body as his could not sink, and upon coming to the surface, he paddled hurriedly to the shore.

"Dem little Dutchmen, Quanonshet and Madokawandock, will be de death of deir old fader afore long. Dat is deir work. I knows it, I knows it, and I will pound 'em all up when I gits home."