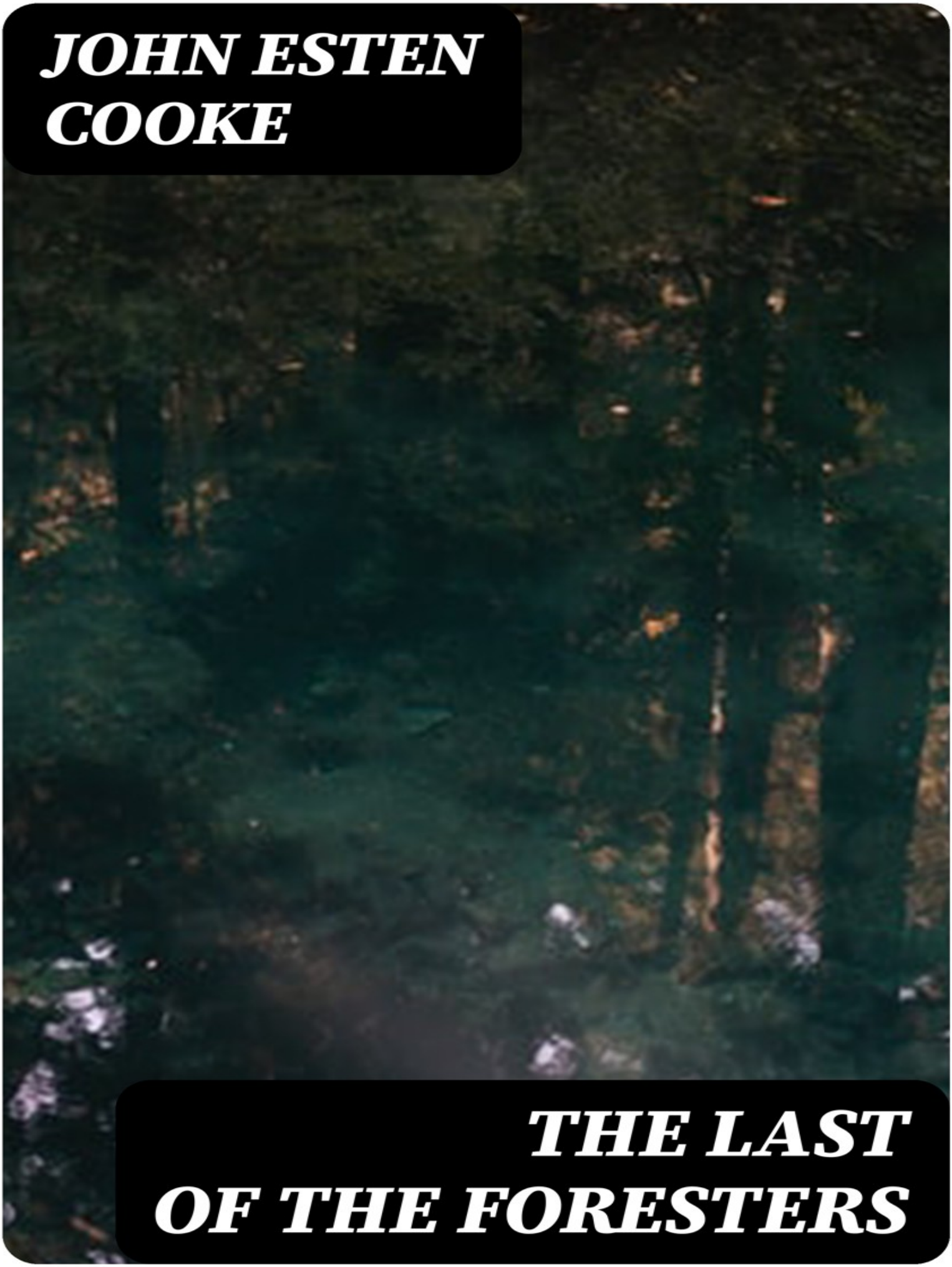
JOHN ESTEN COOKE



THE LAST OF THE FORESTERS

John Esten Cooke

The Last of the Foresters

Or, Humors on the Border; A story of the Old Virginia Frontier

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PREFACE

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Perhaps this story scarcely needs a Preface, but the child of the writer's invention comes to possess a place in his affections, and he is reluctant to send it forth into the wide world, without something in the nature of a letter of introduction, asking for it a kindly and charitable reception. It would be unjust to apply to this volume the tests which are brought to bear upon an elaborate romance. In his narrative of the adventures of Verty and Redbud, the writer has not endeavored to mount into the regions of tragedy, or chronicle the details of bloodshed on the part of heroes—but rather, to find in a picturesque land and period such traits of life and manners as are calculated to afford innocent entertainment. Written under the beautiful autumn skies of our beloved Virginia, the author would ask for the work only a mind in unison with the mood of the narrative—asking the reader to laugh, if he can, and, above all, to carry with him, if possible, the beautiful autumn sunshine, and the glories of the mountains.

Of the fine old border town, in which many of the scenes of the story are laid, much might be said, if it were here necessary, that Thomas Lord Fairfax, Baron of Cameron, and formerly half-owner of Virginia, sleeps there—that Morgan, the Ney of the Revolution, after all his battles, lies there,

too, as though to show how nobles and commoners, lords and frontiersmen, monarchists and republicans, are equal in death—and that the last stones of old Fort Loudoun, built by Lieutenant, afterwards General, Washington, crumble into dust there, disappearing like a thousand other memorials of that noble period, and the giants who illustrated it:—this, and much more, might be said of Winchester, the old heart of the border, which felt every blow, and poured out her blood freely in behalf of the frontier. But of the land in which this old sentinel stands it is impossible to speak in terms of adequate justice. No words can describe the loveliness of its fair fields, and vainly has the present writer tried to catch the spirit of those splendid pictures, which the valley unrolls in autumn days. The morning splendors and magnificent sunsets—the noble river and blue battlements, forever escape him. It is in the midst of these scenes that he has endeavored to place a young hunter—a child of the woods—and to show how his wild nature was impressed by the new life and advancing civilization around him. The process of his mental development is the chief aim of the book.

Of the other personages of the story it is not necessary here to speak—they will relieve the author of that trouble; yet he cannot refrain from asking in advance a friendly consideration for Miss Redbud. He trusts that her simplicity and innocence will gain for her the hearts of all who admire those qualities; and that in consideration of her liking for her friend Verty, that these friends of her own will bestow a portion of their approbation upon the young woodman: pity him when he incurs the displeasure of Mr., Jinks: sympathise with him when he is overwhelmed by the reproaches of Mr.

Roundjacket, and rejoice with him when, in accordance with the strictest rules of poetic justice, he is rewarded for his kindness and honesty by the possession of the two things which he coveted the most in the world.

RICHMOND, *June*, 1856.

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"*If we shadows have offended,*
Think but this, (and all is mended,)
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear;
And this weak and idle theme
No more yielding than a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend."

MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

THE LAST OF THE FORESTERS,

CHAPTER I.

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AT APPLE ORCHARD.

On a bright October morning, when the last century was rapidly going down hill, and all old things began to give way to the new, the sun was shining in upon the breakfast room at Apple Orchard with a joyous splendor, which, perhaps, he had never before displayed in tarrying at that domain, or any other.

But, about Apple Orchard, which we have introduced to the reader in a manner somewhat abrupt and unceremonious. It was one of those old wooden houses, which dot our valleys in Virginia almost at every turn—contented with their absence from the gay flashing world of cities, and raising proudly their moss-covered roofs between the branches of wide spreading oaks, and haughty pines, and locusts, burdening the air with perfume. Apple Orchard had about it an indefinable air of moral happiness and domestic comfort. It seemed full of memories, too; and you would have said that innumerable weddings and christenings had taken place there, time out of mind, leaving their influence on the old homestead, on its very dormer-windows, and porch trellis-work, and clambering

vines, and even on the flags before the door, worn by the feet of children and slow grandfathers.

Within, everything was quite as old-fashioned; over the mantel-piece a portrait, ruffled and powdered, hung; in the corner a huge clock ticked; by the window stood a japanned cabinet; and more than one china ornament, in deplorably grotesque taste, spoke of the olden time.

This is all we can say of the abode of Mr. Adam Summers, better known as Squire Summers, except that we may add, that Apple Orchard was situated not very far from Winchester, and thus looked upon the beauty of that lovely valley which poor Virginia exiles sigh for, often, far away from it in other lands.

The sun shines for some time upon the well-ordered room, wherein the breakfast-table is set forth, and in whose wide country fire-place a handful of twigs dispel with the flame which wraps them the cool bracing air of morning; then the door opens, and a lady of some thirty autumns, with long raven curls and severe aspect, enters, sailing in awful state, and heralded by music, from the rattling keys which agitate themselves in the basket on her arm, drowning the rustle of her dress. This is Miss Lavinia, the Squire's cousin, who has continued to live with him since the death of his wife, some years since.

The severe lady is superintending the movements of the brisk negro boy who attends to breakfast, when the Squire himself, a fat, rosy, good-humored old gentleman, in short breeches and ruffles, makes his appearance, rubbing his hands and laughing.

Then, behind him, rosier than her father, dewy like the morning, and angelic generally, behold our little heroine—Miss Redbud Summers.

Redbud—she received this pretty name when she was a baby, and as usually befalls Virginia maidens, never has been able to get rid of it. Redbud is a lovely little creature, whom it is a delight to look upon. She has a profusion of light, curling hair, a fine fresh, tender complexion, deep, mild eyes, and a mouth of that innocent and artless expression which characterizes childhood. She is about sixteen, and has just emerged from short dresses, by particular request and gracious permission from Miss Lavinia, who is major-domo and manager in general. Redbud is, therefore, clad in the morning-dress of young ladies of the period. Her sleeves are ornamented with fluttering ribbons, and her hair is brushed back in the fashion now styled *Pompadour*, but quite unpowdered. Her ears, for even heroines are possessed of them, are weighed down by heavy golden ear-rings, and a cloud of plain lace runs round her neck, and gently rubs her throat. Pensiveness and laughter chase each other over her fresh little face, like floating clouds;—she is a true child of the South.

The Squire sits down in the large chair, in the corner of the fire-place, and takes Miss Redbud on his knee. Then commences a prattle on the part of the young lady, interrupted by much laughter from the old gentleman; then the Squire swears profanely at indolent Caesar, his spaniel, who, lying on the rug before the fire, stretches his hind feet sleepily, and so makes an assault upon his master's stockings; then breakfast is ready, and grace being devoutly

said, they all sit down, and do that justice to the meal which Virginians never omit. Redbud is the soul of the room, however, and even insists upon a romp with the old gentleman, as he goes forth to mount his horse.

The Squire thus disappears toward the barn. Miss Lavinia superintends the household operation of "washing up the tea things," and Redbud puts on her sun-bonnet, and goes to take a stroll.

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VERTY AND HIS COMPANIONS.

Redbud is sauntering over the sward, and listening to the wind in the beautiful fallwoods, when, from those woods which stretch toward the West, emerges a figure, which immediately rivets her attention. It is a young man of about eighteen, mounted on a small, shaggy-coated horse, and clad in a wild forest costume, which defines clearly the outline of a person, slender, vigorous, and graceful. Over his brown forehead and smiling face, droops a wide hat, of soft white fur, below which, a mass of dark chestnut hair nearly covers his shoulders with its exuberant and tangled curls. Verty—for this is Verty the son, or adopted son of the old Indian woman, living in the pine hills to the west—Verty carries in one hand a strange weapon, nothing less than a long cedar bow, and a sheaf of arrows; in the other, which also holds his rein, the antlers of a stag, huge and branching in all directions; around him circle two noble deer-hounds. Verty strongly resembles an amiable wild cat; and when he sees Redbud, smiles more than ever.

The girl runs toward him, laughing gaily—

"Oh, Verty!" she says, "indeed I am very glad to see you. Where have you been?"

With which, she gives him her hand.

"At home," says Verty, with his bright, but dreamy smile; "I've got the antlers for the Squire, at last."

And Verty throws the rein on the neck of his little horse, who stands perfectly still, and leaps lightly to the ground. He stands for a moment gazing at Redbud with his dreamy and smiling eyes, silent in the sunshine like a shadow, then he pushes back his tangled chestnut curls, and laughs.

"I had a long chase," he says.

"For the deer?"

"Yes," says Verty, "and there are his horns. Oh, how bright you look."

Redbud returns his smile.

"I think I didn't live before I knew you; but that was long years ago," says Verty, "a very long time ago."

And leaning for a moment on his bow, the forest boy gazes with his singular dreamy look on Redbud, who smiles.

"Papa has gone out riding," she says, "but come, let's go in, and put up the antlers."

Verty assents readily to this, and speaking to his horse in some outlandish tongue, leaves him standing there, and accompanies Redbud toward the house.

"What was that you said?" she asked; "I didn't understand."

"Because you don't know Delaware," said Verty, smiling.

"Was it Indian?"

"Yes, indeed. I said to Cloud—that's his name you know—I told him to *crouch*; that means, in hunter language, *keep still*."

"How strange!"

"Is it? But I like the English better, because you don't speak
Delaware, my own tongue; you speak English."

"Oh, yes!" Redbud says.

"I don't complain of your not speaking Delaware," says Verty, "for how could you, unless *ma mere* had taught you? She is the only Indian about here."

"You say *ma mere*—that means, 'my mother,' don't it?"

"Yes; oh, she knows French, too. You know the Indian and the French—I wonder who the French are!—used to live and fight together."

"Did they?"

Verty nods, and replies—"In the old days, a long, long time ago."

Redbud looks down for a moment, as they walk on toward the house, perusing the pebbles. Then she raises her head and says—

"How did you ever come to be the old Indian woman's son, Verty?"

Verty's dreamy eyes fall from the sky, where a circling hawk had attracted his attention, to Redbud's face.

"Anan?" he says.

Redbud greets this exhibition of inattention with a little pout, which is far from unbecoming, and too frank to conceal anything, says, smiling—

"You are not listening to me. Indeed, I think I am worth more attention than that hawk."

"Oh yes, indeed you are!" cries Verty; "but how can you keep a poor Indian boy from his hunting? How that fellow

darts now! Look what bright claws he has! Hey, come a little nearer, and you are mine!"

Verty laughs, and takes an arrow.

Redbud lays her hand upon his arm. Verty looks at the hand, then at her bright face, laughing.

"What's the matter?" he says.

"Don't kill the poor hawk."

"Poor hawk? poor chickens!" says Verty, smiling. "Who could find fault with me for killing him? Nothing to my deer! You ought to have seen the chase, Redbud; how I ran him; how he doubled and turned; and when I had him at bay, with his eyes glaring, his head drooping, how I plunged my knife into his throat, and made the blood spout out gurgling!"

Verty smiled cheerfully at this recollection of past enjoyment, and added, with his dreamy look—

"But I know what I like better even than hunting. I like to come and see you, and learn my lessons, and listen to your talking and singing, Redbud."

By this time they had reached the house, and they saw Miss Lavinia sitting at the window. Verty took off his white fur hat, and made the lady a low bow, and said—

"How do you do, Miss Lavinia?"

"Thank you, Verty," said that lady, solemnly, "very well. What have you there?"

"Some deer horns, ma'am."

"What for?"

"Oh, the Squire said he wanted them," Verty replied.

"Hum," said Miss Lavinia, going on with her occupation of sewing.

Verty made no reply to this latter observation, but busied himself fixing up the antlers in the passage. Having arranged them to his satisfaction, he stated to Redbud that he thought the Squire would like them; and then preferred a request that she would get her Bible, and read some to him. To this, Redbud, with a pleasant look in her kind eyes, gave a delighted assent, and, running up stairs, soon returned, and both having seated themselves, began reading aloud to the boy.

Miss Lavinia watched this proceeding with an elderly smile; but

Verty's presence in some way did not seem agreeable to her,

Redbud closed the book, and said:—

"That is beautiful, isn't it, Verty?"

"Yes," replied the boy, "and I would rather hear it than any other book. I'm coming down every day to make you read for me."

"Why, you can read,"

"So I can, but I like to *hear* it," said Verty; "so I am coming."

Redbud shook her head with a sorrowful expression.

"I don't think I can," she said. "I'm so sorry!"

"Don't think you can!"

"No."

"Not read the Bible to me?" Verty said, smiling.

"I'm going away."

Verty started.

"Going away!—you going away? Oh no! Redbud, you mus'nt; for you know

I can't possibly get along without you, because I like you so much."

"Hum!" said Miss Lavinia, who seemed to be growing more and more dissatisfied with the interview.

"I must go, though," Redbud said, sorrowfully, "I can't stay."

"Go where?" asked the boy. "I'll follow you. Where are you going?"

"Stop, Verty!" here interposed Miss Lavinia, with dignity. "It is not a matter of importance where Redbud is going—and you must not follow her, as you promise. You must not ask her where she is going."

Verty gazed at Miss Lavinia with profound astonishment, and was about to reply, when a voice was heard at the door, and all turned round.

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INTRODUCES A LEGAL PORCUPINE.

This was the voice of the Squire. It came just in time to create a diversion.

"Why, there are my antlers!" cried the good-humored Squire. "Look,
Rushton! did you ever see finer!"

"Often," growled a voice in reply; and the Squire and his companion entered.

Mr. Rushton was a rough-looking gentleman of fifty or fifty-five, with a grim expression about the compressed lips, and heavy grey eyebrows, from beneath which rolled two dark piercing eyes. His hair was slowly retreating, and thought or care had furrowed his broad brow from temple to temple. He was clad with the utmost rudeness, and resembled nothing so much as a half-civilized bear.

He nodded curtly to Miss Lavinia, and took no notice whatever of either Redbud or Verty.

"Why, thank for the antlers, Verty!" said the good-humored Squire. "I saw Cloud, and knew you were here, but I had no idea that you had brought me the horns."

And the Squire extended his hand to Verty, who took it with his old dreamy smile.

"I could have brought a common pair any day," he said, "but I promised the best, and there they are. Oh, Squire!" said Verty, smiling, "what a chase I had! and what a fight with him! He nearly had me under him once, and the antlers you see there came near ploughing up my breast and letting out my heart's blood! They just grazed—he tried to bite me—but I had him by the horn with my left hand, and before a swallow could flap his wings, my knife was in his throat!"

As Verty spoke, his eyes became brighter, his lips more smiling, and pushing his tangled curls back from his face, he bestowed his amiable glances even upon Miss Lavinia.

Mr. Rushton scowled.

"What do you mean by saying this barbarous fight was pleasant?" he asked.

Verty smiled again:—he seemed to know Mr. Rushton well.

"It is my nature to love it," he said, "just as white people love books and papers."

"What do you mean by white people?" growled Mr. Rushton, "you know very well that you are white."

"I?" said Verty.

"Yes, sir; no affectation: look in that mirror."

Verty looked.

"What do you see!"

"An Indian!" said Verty, laughing, and raising his shaggy head.

"You see nothing of the sort," said Mr. Rushton, with asperity; "you see simply a white boy tanned—an Anglo-Saxon turned into mahogany by wind and sun. There, sir! there," added Mr. Rushton, seeing Verty was about to reply,

"don't argue the question with me. I am sick of arguing, and won't indulge you. Take this fine little lady here, and go and make love to her—the Squire and myself have business."

Then Mr. Rushton scowled upon the company generally, and pushed them out of the room, so to speak, with his eyes; even Miss Lavinia was forced to obey, and disappeared.

Five minutes afterwards, Verty might have been seen taking his way back sadly, on his little animal, toward the hills, while Redbud was undergoing that most disagreeable of all ceremonies, a "lecture," which lecture was delivered by Miss Lavinia, in her own private apartment, with a solemnity, which caused Redbud to class herself with the greatest criminals which the world had ever produced. Miss Lavinia proved, conclusively, that all persons of the male sex were uninterruptedly engaged in endeavoring to espouse all persons of the female sex, and that the world, generally, was a vale of tears, of scheming and deception. Having elevated and cheered Redbud's spirits, by this profound philosophy, and further enlivened her by declaring that she must leave Apple Orchard on the morrow, Miss Lavinia descended.

She entered the dining-room where the Squire and Mr. Rushton were talking, and took her seat near the window. Mr. Rushton immediately became dumb.

Miss Lavinia said it was a fine day.

Mr. Rushton growled.

Miss Lavinia made one or two additional attempts to direct the conversation on general topics; but the surly guest strangled her incipient attempts with pitiless

indifference. Finally, Miss Lavinia sailed out of the room with stately dignity, and disappeared.

Mr. Rushton looked after her, smiling grimly.

"The fact is, Squire," he said, "that your cousin, Miss Lavinia, is a true woman. Hang it, can't a man come and talk a little business with a neighbor without being intruded upon? Outrageous!"

The Squire seemed to regard his guest's surliness with as little attention as Verty had displayed.

"A true woman in other ways is she, Rushton," he said, smiling—"I grant you she is a little severe and prim, and fond of taking her dignified portion of every conversation; but she's a faithful and high-toned woman. You have seen too much character in your Courts to judge of the kernel from the husk."

"The devil take the Courts! I'm sick of 'em," said Mr. Rushton, with great fervor, "and as to *character*, there is no character anywhere, or in anybody." Having enunciated which proposition, Mr. Rushton rose to go.

The Squire rose too, holding him by the button.

"I'd like to argue that point with you," he said, laughing. "Come now, tell me how—"

"I won't—I refuse—I will not argue."

"Stay to dinner, then, and I promise not to wrangle."

"No—I never stay to dinner! A pretty figure my docket would cut, if I staid to your dinners and discussions! You've got the deeds I came to see you about; my business is done; I'm going back."

"To that beautiful town of Winchester!" laughed the Squire, following his grim guest out.

"Abominable place!" growled Rushton; "and that Roundjacket is positively growing insupportable. I believe that fellow has a mania on the subject of marrying, and he runs me nearly crazy. Then, there's his confounded poem, which he persists in reading to himself nearly aloud."

"His poem?" asked the Squire.

"Yes, sir! his abominable, trashy, revolting poem, called —'The Rise and Progress of the Certiorari.' The consequence of all which, is—here's my horse; find the martingale, you black cub!—the consequence is, that my office work is not done as it should be, and I shall be compelled to get another clerk in addition to that villain, Roundjacket."

"Why not exchange with some one?"

"How?"

"Roundjacket going elsewhere—to Hall's, say."

Mr. Rushton scowled.

"Because he is no common clerk; would not live elsewhere, and because I can't get along without him," he said. "Hang him, he's the greatest pest in Christendom!"

"I have heard of a young gentleman called Jinks," the Squire said, with a sly laugh, "what say you to him for number two?"

"Burn Jinks!" cried Mr. Rushton, "he's a jack-a-napes, and if he comes within the reach of my cane, I'll break it over his rascally shoulders! I'd rather have this Indian cub who has just left us."

"That's all very well; but you can't get him."

"Can't get him?" asked Rushton, grimly, as he got into the saddle.

"He would never consent to coop himself up in Winchester. True, my little Redbud, who is a great friend of his, has taught him to read, and even to write in a measure, but he's a true Indian, whether such by descent or not. He would die of the confinement. Remember what I said about *character* just now, and acknowledge the blunder you committed when you took the position that there was no such thing."

Rushton growled, and bent his brows on the laughing Squire.

"I said," he replied, grimly, "that there was no character to be found anywhere; and you may take it as you choose, you'll try and extract an argument out of it either way. I don't mean to take part in it. As to this cub of the woods, you say I couldn't make anything of him—see if I don't! You have provoked me into the thing—defied me—and I accept the challenge."

"What! you will capture Verty, that roving bird?"

"Yes; and make of this roving swallow another bird called a secretary. I suppose you've read some natural history, and know there's such a feathered thing."

"Yes."

"Very well," said Mr. Rushton, kicking his horse, and cramming his cocked hat down on his forehead. "I'll show you how little you know of human nature and character. I'll take this wild Indian boy, brought up in the woods, and as free and careless as a deer, and in six months I'll change him into a canting, crop-eared, whining pen-machine, with quills behind his ears, and a back always bending humbly. I'll take this honest barbarian and make a civilized and

enlightened individual out of him—that is to say, I'll change him into a rascal and a hypocrite."

With which misanthropic words Mr. Rushton nodded in a surly way to the smiling Squire, and took his way down the road toward Winchester.

"Well, well," said the old gentleman, looking after him, "Rushton seems to be growing rougher than ever;—what a pity that so noble a heart should have such a husk. His was a hard trial, however—we should not be surprised. Rough-headed fellow! he thinks he can do everything with that resolute will of his;—but the idea of chaining to a writing-desk that wild boy, Verty!"

And the old gentleman re-entered the house smiling cheerfully, as was his wont.

CHAPTER IV.

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HOW VERTY THOUGHT, AND PLAYED, AND DREAMED.

Verty took his weary way westward through the splendid autumn woods, gazing with his dreamy Indian expression on the variegated leaves, listening to the far cries of birds, and speaking at times to Longears and Wolf, his two deer hounds.

Then his head would droop—a dim smile would glimmer upon his lips, and his long, curling hair would fall in disordered masses around his burnt face, almost hiding it from view. At such moments Verty dreamed—the real world had disappeared—perforce of that imagination given him by heaven, he entered calm and happy into the boundless universe of reverie and fancy.

For a time he would go along thus, his arms hanging down, his head bent upon his breast, his body swinging from side to side with every movement of his shaggy little horse. Then he would rouse himself, and perhaps fit an arrow to his bow, and aim at some bird, or some wild turkey disappearing in the glades. Happy birds! the arrow never left the string. Verty's hand would fall—the bow would drop

at his side—he would fix his eyes upon the autumn woods, and smile.

He went on thus through the glades of the forest, over the hills, and along the banks of little streams towards the west. The autumn reigned in golden splendor—and not alone in gold: in purple, and azure and crimson, with a wealth of slowly falling leaves which soon would pass away, the poor perished glories of the fair golden year. The wild geese flying South sent their faint carol from the clouds—the swamp sparrow twittered, and the still copse was stirred by the silent croak of some wandering wild turkey, or the far forest made most musical with that sound which the master of Wharncliffe Lodge delighted in, the "belling of the hart."

Verty drank in these forest sounds, and the full glories of the Autumn, rapturously—while he looked and listened, all his sadness passed away, and his wild Indian nature made him happy there, in the heart of the woods. Ever and anon, however, the events of the morning would occur to him, sweeping over his upraised brow like the shadow of a cloud, and dimming the brightness of his dreamy smiles.

"How red the maples grow!" he said, "they are burning away—and the dogwood! Poor oaks! I'm sorry for you; you are going, and I think you look like kings—going? That was what Redbud said! She was going away—going away!"

And a sigh issued from Verty's lips, which betrayed the importance he attached to Redbud's departure. Then his head drooped; and he murmured—"going away!"

Poor Verty! It does not require any very profound acuteness to divine your condition. You are one more added

to the list which Leander heads in the old Grecian fable. Your speech betrays you.

"Wild geese! They are early this year. Ho, there! good companions that you are, come down and let me shoot at you. 'Crake! crake!' that is all you say—away up there in the white clouds, laughing at me, I suppose, and making fun of my bow. Listen! they are answering me from the clouds! I wish I could fly up in the clouds! Travelling, as I live, away off to the south!—leaving us to go and join their fellows. They are wild birds; I've shot many of em'. Hark, Longears! see up there! There they go—'crake! crake! crake!' I can see their long necks stretched out toward the South—they are almost gone—going away from me—like Redbud!"

And Verty sighed piteously.

"I wonder what makes my breast feel as if there was a weight upon it," he said, "I'll ask *ma mere*."

And putting spurs to Cloud, Verty scoured through the pine hills, and in an hour drew near his home.

It was one of those mountain huts which are frequently met with to this day in our Virginian uplands. Embowered in pines, it rather resembled, seen from a distance, the eyrie of some huge eagle, than the abode of human beings, though eagles' eyries are not generally roofed in, with poles and clapboards.

The hut was very small, but not as low pitched as usual, and the place had about it an air of wild comfort, which made it a pleasant object in the otherwise unbroken landscape of pines, and huge rocks, and browling streams which stretched around it. The door was approached by a

path which wound up the hill; and a small shed behind a clump of firs was visible—apparently the residence of Cloud.

Verty carefully attended to his horse, and then ascended the hill toward the hut, from whose chimney a delicate smoke ascended.

He was met at the door by an old Indian woman, who seemed to have reached the age of three-score at least. She was clad in the ordinary linsey of the period; and the long hair falling upon her shoulders was scarcely touched with grey. She wore beads and other simple trinkets, and the expression of her countenance was very calm and collected.

Verty approached her with a bright smile, and taking her hand in his own, placed it upon his head; then saying something in the Delaware tongue, he entered the hut.

Within, the mountain dwelling was as wild as without. From the brown beams overhead were suspended strings of onions, tin vessels, bridles, dried venison, and a thousand other things, mingled in inextricable confusion. In the wide fire-place, which was supplied with stones for and-irons, a portion of the lately slaughtered deer was broiling on an impromptu and primitive species of gridiron, which would have disgusted Soyer and astonished Vatel. This had caused the smoke; and as Verty entered, the old woman had been turning the slices. Longears and Wolf were already stretched before the fire, their eyes fixed upon the venison with admiring attention and profound seriousness.

In ten minutes the venison was done, and Verty and his mother ate in silence—Verty not forgetting his dogs, who growled and contended for the pieces, and then slept upon the rude pine floor.

The boy then went to some shelves in the corner, just by the narrow flight of steps which led to the old woman's room above, and taking down a long Indian pipe, filled it with tobacco, and lit it. This having been accomplished, he took his seat on a sort of wicker-work bench, just outside of the door, and began to smoke with all the gravity and seriousness of a Sachem of the Delawares.

In a moment he felt the hand of the old woman on his shoulder.

"Verty has been asleep and dreamed something," she said, calmly, in the Delaware tongue.

"No, *ma mere*, Verty has been wide awake," said the boy, in the same language.

"Then the winds have been talking to him."

"Hum," said Verty.

"Something is on my son's mind, and he has tied his heart up—*mal*!"

"No, no," said Verty, "I assure you, *ma mere*, I'm quite happy."

And having made this declaration, Verty stopped smoking and sighed.

The old woman heard this sigh, slight as it was, with the quick ear of the Indian, and was evidently troubled by it.

"Has Verty seen the dove?" she said.

The young man nodded with a smile.

"Did they laugh?"

"They laughed."

"Did he come away singing?"

Verty hesitated, then said, with an overshadowed brow—

"No, no, *ma mere*—I really believe he did not."