



A Villain's Cremation

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North American

Advanced
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Bramley's Mountain, near the present village of Bloomfield, New York, on the edge of the Catskill group, was the home of a young couple that had married with rejoicing and had taken up the duties and pleasures of housekeeping with enthusiasm. To be sure, in those days housekeeping was not a thing to be much afraid of, and the servant question had not come up for discussion. The housewives did the work themselves, and the husband had no valets.

The domicile of this particular pair was merely a tent of skins stretched around a frame of poles, and their furniture consisted principally of furs strewn over the earth floor; but they loved each other truly. The girl was thankful to be taken from her home to live, because, up to the time of her marriage, she had been persecuted by a morose and ill-looking fellow of her tribe, who laid siege to her affection with such vehemence that the more he pleaded the greater was her dislike; and now she hoped that she had seen the last of him. But that was not to be.

He lurked about the wigwam of the pair, torturing himself with the sight of their felicity, and awaiting his chance to prove his hate. This chance came when the husband had gone to Lake Delaware to fish, for he rowed after and gave battle in the middle of the pond. Taken by surprise, and being insufficiently armed, the husband was killed and his body flung into the water. Then, casting an affectionate leer at the wife who had watched this act of treachery and malice with speechless horror from the mountain-side, he drove his canoe ashore and set off in pursuit of her. She retreated so slowly as to allow him to keep her in sight, and when she entered a

cave he pressed forward eagerly, believing that now her escape was impossible; but she had purposely trapped him there, for she had already explored a tortuous passage that led to the upper air, and by this she had left the cavern in safety while he was groping and calling in the dark.

Returning to the entrance, she loosened, by a jar, a ledge that overhung it, so that the door was almost blocked; then, gathering light wood from the dry trees around her, she made a fire and hurled the burning sticks into the prison where the wretch was howling, until he was dead in smoke and flame. When his yells and curses had been silenced, she told a friend what she had done, then going back to the lake, she sang her death-song and cast herself into the water, hoping thus to rejoin her husband.

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