



Pokepsie

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North American

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The name of this town has forty-two spellings in old records, and with singular pertinacity in ill-doing, the inhabitants have fastened on it the longest and clumsiest of all. It comes from the Mohegan words Apo-keep-sink, meaning a safe, pleasant harbor. Harbor it might be for canoes, but for nothing bigger, for it was only the little cove that was so called between Call Rock and Adder Cliff,—the former indicating where settlers awaiting passage hailed the masters of vessels from its top, and the latter taking its name from the snakes that abounded there.

Hither came a band of Delawares with Pequot captives, among them a young chief to whom had been offered not only life but leadership if he would renounce his tribe, receive the mark of the turtle on his breast, and become a Delaware. On his refusal, he was bound to a tree, and was about to undergo the torture, when a girl among the listeners sprang to his side. She, too, was a Pequot, but the turtle totem was on her bosom, and when she begged his life, because they had been betrothed, the captors paused to talk of it. She had chosen well the time to interfere, for a band of Hurons was approaching, and even as the talk went on their yell was heard in the wood. Instant measures for defence were taken, and in the fight that followed both chief and maiden were forgotten; but though she cut the cords that bound him, they were separated in the confusion, he disappearing, she falling captive to the Hurons, who, sated with blood, retired from the field. In the fantastic disguise of a wizard the young Pequot entered their camp soon after, and on being asked to try his enchantments for the cure of a young woman, he entered her tent, showing no surprise at finding her to be the maiden of his choice, who was suffering from nothing worse than nerves, due to the excitement of the battle.

Left alone with his patient, he disclosed his identity, and planned a way of escape that proved effective on that very night, for, though pursued by the angry Hurons, the couple reached “safe harbor,” thence making a way to their own country in the east, where they were married.

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