



The Retreat from Mahopac

Charles Skinner

North American

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After the English had secured the city of New Amsterdam and had begun to extend their settlements along the Hudson, the Indians congregated in large numbers about Lake Mahopac, and rejected all overtures for the purchase of that region. In their resolution they were sustained by their young chief Omoyao, who refused to abandon on any terms the country where his fathers had solong hunted, fished, and built their lodges. A half-breed, one Joliper, a member of this tribe, was secretly in the pay of the English, but the allurements and insinuations that he put forth on their behalf were as futile as the breathing of wind in the leaves. At last the white men grew angry. Have the land they would, by evil course if good ways were refused, and commissioning Joliper to act for them in a decisive manner, they guaranteed to supply him with forces if his negotiations fell through. This man never thought it needful to negotiate. He knew the temper of his tribe and he was too jealous of his chief to go to him for favors, because he loved Maya, the chosen one of Omoyao.

At the door of Maya's tent he entreated her to go with him to the white settlements, and on her refusal he broke into angry threats, declaring, in the self-forgetfulness of passion, that he would kill her lover and lead the English against the tribe. Unknown to both Omoyao had overheard this interview, and he immediately sent runners to tell all warriors of his people to meet him at once on the island in the lake. Though the runners were cautioned to keep their errand secret, it is probable that Joliper suspected that the alarm had gone forth, and he resolved to strike at once; so he summoned his renegades, stole into camp next evening and made toward

Maya's wigwam, intending to take her to a place of safety. Seeing the chief at the door, he shot an arrow at him, but the shaft went wide and slew the girl's father. Realizing, upon this assault, that he was outwitted and that his people were outnumbered, the chief called to Maya to meet him at the island, and plunged into the brush, after seeing that she had taken flight in an opposite direction. The vengeful Joliper was close behind him with his renegades, and the chief was captured; then, that he might not communicate with his people or delay the operations against them, it was resolved to put him to death.

He was tied to a tree, the surrounding wood was set on fire, and he was abandoned to his fate, his enemies leaving him to destruction in their haste to reach the place of the council and slay or capture all who were there. Hardly were they out of hearing ere the splash of a paddle sounded through the roar of flame and Maya sprang upon the bank, cut her lover's bonds, and with him made toward the island, which they reached by a protected way before the assailants had arrived. They told the story of Joliper's cruelty and treason, and when his boats were seen coming in to shore they had eyes and hands only for Joliper. He was the first to land. Hardly had he touched the strand before he was surrounded by a frenzied crowd and had fallen bleeding from a hundred gashes.

The Indians were overpowered after a brief and bloody resistance. They took safety in flight. Omoyao and Maya, climbing upon the rock above their "council chamber," found that while most of their people had escaped their own retreat was cut off, and that it would be impossible to reach any of the canoes. They preferred death to torture and captivity, so, hand in hand, they leaped together down the cliff, and the English claimed the land next day.

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