

The Revenge of Shandaken

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On the rock platform where the Catskill Mountain House now stands, commanding one of the fairest views in the world, old chief Shandaken set his wigwam,—for it is a mistake to suppose that barbarians are indifferent to beauty,—and there his daughter, Lotowana, was sought in marriage by his braves. She, however, kept faith to an early vow exchanged with a young chief of the Mohawks. A suitor who was particularly troublesome was Norsereddin, proud, morose, dark-featured, a stranger to the red man, a descendant, so he claimed, from Egyptian kings, and who lived by himself on Kaaterskill Creek, appearing among white settlements but rarely.

On one of his visits to Catskill, a tavern-lounging Dutchman wagered him a thousand golden crowns that he could not win Lotowana, and, stung by avarice as well as inflamed by passion, Norsereddin laid new siege to her heart. Still the girl refused to listen, and Shandaken counselled him to be content with the smiles of others, thereby so angering the Egyptian that he assailed the chief and was driven from the camp with blows; but on the day of Lotowana's wedding with the Mohawk he returned, and in a honeyed speech asked leave to give a jewel to the bride to show that he had stifled jealousy and ill will. The girl took the handsome box he gave her and drew the cover, when a spring flew forward, driving into her hand the poisoned tooth of a snake that had been affixed to it. The venom was strong, and in a few minutes Lotowana lay dead at her husband's feet.

Though the Egyptian had disappeared into the forest directly on the acceptance of his treacherous gift, twenty braves set off in pursuit, and overtaking him on the Kalkberg, they dragged him back to the rock where father and husband were bewailing the maid's untimely fate. A pile of fagots was heaped within a few feet of the

precipice edge, and tying their captive on them, they applied the torch, dancing about with cries of exultation as the shrieks of the wretch echoed from the cliffs. The dead girl was buried by the mourning tribe, while the ashes of Norserreddin were left to be blown abroad. On the day of his revenge Shandaken left his ancient dwelling-place, and his camp-fires never glimmered afterward on the front of Ontiora.

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