

fusion; she listened to the hum within the hive. Not one offered her harm; she was not stung.

"A marvellous wonderful gal," uttered the widow to herself, as she surveyed the scene from the door. "Pity 'tis she's Brown Moll's child."

Margaret had an errand at the place, to get some honey for a bee-hunt Chilion had proposed for the next day, and stated her desire to the widow. There was an old feud between the two families, not affecting intercourse and acquaintance, so much as matters of interest. The widow received the message rather coldly, and beginning in unwillingness, ended with invective.

"He's a lazy, good for nothin feller, Chil is. He's no better than a peaking mud-sucker. He lives on us all here like house-leek. He's no more use than yer priggid up creepers. He is worse than the witches, vervain nor dill won't keep him away. I tell ye, Chil shan't have no honey."

Margaret was abashed, silenced. She could understand that her brother would feel disappointed; that he was not so bad. Beyond this she did not discriminate

"Chilion is good," she stammered out at last.

"Good! what's he good for?" rejoined the woman. "Does he get any money? Can he find yarbs? He don't know the difference between snake-root and lavender."

"He's good to me," said Margaret. This was an appeal that struck the woman with some force. She seemed to soften.

"Ye are a good child; ye help Obed."

"Yes," said Margaret, as if watching her cue, "I will help Obed. I'll mind the beds when the birds are about. I'll go into the woods and get plants. I'll keep Bull off from him."

"Bein ye'll help Obed, I'll give ye the honey. But don't come agin."

Margaret, taking the article in question on some green leaves, went merrily home.

We cannot dismiss this chapter without remarking that the Widow Wright revered the memory of her husband. It was certainly of some use for her to do so, as his reputation had been considerable in the line of his practice. The representation of the deceased, which she herself bore, she designed by degrees to transfer to her son. The silver buttons, which shone on Obed, as well as other articles of dress he occasionally wore, belonged to his late father. With all

her thrift and care, the lady liked our Margaret very well. "She was so feat and spry, and knowing, and good-natered," she said, "she *could* be made of some use to somebody."

CHAPTER V.

THE BEE-HUNT.—MARGARET GOES FARTHER INTO NATURE.—SHE SINS AND REPENTS.—THE MASTER.

THE next morning, Chilion and Margaret, joined by Obed, started on a bee-hunt. Obed was to remain with them till they should have been successful in this enterprise, then Margaret agreed to help him gather such plants and roots, growing wild in the woods, as could be of use to his mother. They took with them the honey, an axe, leather-mittens for the hands, and screens for the face, some brimstone and a tinder-box, a basket, spade, &c., for their several purposes. They entered the woods lying to the south of the Pond, an unlimited range, extending in some directions many miles. The honey was placed on a stump, and several bees, springing up as it were from vacuity, lading themselves with it, darted off. Our hunters pursued, watching the course of their flight, and were conducted by the unconscious guides to their own abode. This was a chesnut tree, hollow at the root and partially decayed in the top. Not many strokes were requisite to bring it crashing to the ground. It was a more difficult job to possess themselves of the honey. The angry bees seemed to spurt out from their nest like fire; their simultaneous start, their mixed and deepened buzz, their thousand wings beating as for life, made a noise not unlike a distant waterfall, or the hidden roar of an abyss. Their persecutors speedily covered their faces and hands and waited for the alarm to subside. Margaret said she thought they would not hurt her, as those at the widow's did not. It is said there are some persons whom bees never sting. She kindled the brimstone each side of the tree. The bees within, called out by a rap on the trunk, and those without, flying and crawling about their nest, fell dead in the smoke. Chilion cut about the cavity where the comb was deposited. Margaret, looking in, and seeing

the beautiful well-constructed house of the bees, seemed struck with remorse. She had eaten honey and honey-comb. She had seen bees, but she never had associated the two together in such a touching, domestic and artistical sense. She saw the bees lying dead in heaps. She had killed them. She had seen them aroused by a relentless hand from the repose and security of their house, and sink in the blue flame. Some were not quite dead, some lay on their backs, their feet convulsed and arms quivering. Others were endeavoring to stretch their wings. She could give back no life; she could set not a muscle in motion; she could re-form not a filament of a wing. They would visit her flowers no more; their hum would blend never again with the sounds she loved to hear. Whether the reflections of the child were just of this sort, order and proportion, we are not told. The bees were dead and she was sad. She had seen dead squirrels, raccoons, partridges, pigeons. But they were *brought in* dead; she had not killed them. What is the child's first sense of death? She would have given all her little heart was worth, could she render back that life she had so thoughtlessly taken, could she see them again busy, blithe, happy about their house. Tears ran down her cheeks, the unconscious expiation of Nature to the Infinite Life. Chilion and Obed were apparently too much occupied to notice her agitation, nor would she have dared to speak to them of what she felt.

The tall, gawky form of Obed went before through the woods. The lad's skilts, through which were thrust his lean dry shanks, gave him a semblance to a peasant of Gascony on stilts. His shovel hat dodged to and fro, bobbed up and down among the branches. It was, as we might say, a new scene to Margaret. She had never gone so far into the forest before. She was susceptible in her feelings, and fresh as susceptible. The impression of the bees somewhat abated, though its remembrance could never be stifled. The woods,—where Adam and Eve enjoyed their pastime and sought their repose; where the Amorites and Assyrians learned to pray, and the Israelites to rebel; where all ancient nations found materials for sacrifice and offering; where Hertha, the Goddess of the Angles, had her lovely residence; where the Druids "thought everything sent from heaven that grew on the oak;" the religion and worship of the old Germans, Italians, and Gauls; where Pan piped, the Satyrs danced, the Fauns browsed, Sylvanus loved, Diana hunted, and Feronia watched; whence Greek and Saracen, Pagan and Christian derived architecture, order, grace, capi-

tals, groins, arches; whence came enchantment and power to Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Scott, Cooper, Bryant, Titian, Rosa, Poussin, Claude, Meyer, Allston; where "the stately castle of the feudal lord reared its head, the lonely anchorite sang his evening hymn, and the sound of the convent bell was heard," and the fox and stag-hunter pursued their game; where Robin Hood and his merry men did their exploits, and king Rufus was slain; the enlivenment and decoration of the Feast of Tabernacles, May-day, Whitsuntide, Christmas; the ward of dryads, the scene of fairy revels, and Puck's pranks, the haunt of bul-beggars, witches, spirits, urchins, elves, hags, dwarfs, giants, the spook, the puckle, the man in the oak, will-o'-the-wisp; the opera-house of birds, the shelter of beasts, the retreat of mosquitoes and flies; where sugar was made, and coal burnt; where the report of the rifle was heard, and the stroke of the axe resounded; the home, manor, church, country, kingdom, hunting-ground and burial place of the Indian; the woods, green, sweet-smelling, imparadisaical, inspiring, suggestive, wild, musical, sombre, superstitious, devotional, mystic, tranquillizing;—these were about the child and over her.

That we must know in order to know, that we must feel in order to feel, was a truth Margaret but little realized. She was *beginning* to know and to feel. Could the Immortal Spirit of the Woods have spoken to her? but she was not prepared for it; she was too young; she only felt an exhilarating sensation of variety, beauty, grandeur, awe. She leaped over roots, she caught at branches above her head, she hid herself in thickets, she chased the birds. Yet with all that was new about her, and fitted to engross her vision, and supplant her recent sorrowful impressions, there seemed a new sense aroused, or active within her, an unconscious instinct, a hidden prompting of duty; she trod with more care than usual; a fly, or beetle, or snail, she turned aside for, or stepped protectingly over; she would not jostle or tear a spider's web—the wood-spider that strings his lines across from bush to bush.

"It won't hurt ye," said Obed. "It brings good weather."
"I know that," replied Margaret, "but I don't want to kill it."

Obed was homely and clever, as we have said, simple and trusting. He never argued a point with Margaret; he was glad to have her help him, and glad to help her. He held back the low wiry branches of the hemlocks where she passed,

he assisted her over the round slippery trunk of a fallen tree, he lifted her across the narrow deep stream of Mill Brook, running in green spongy banks. He brandished his spade, and said he would keep off the snakes; Margaret replied that she was not afraid of them. They came to a sunny glade in the woods, tufted with black and white moss, shaded by huckleberry shrubs, and sown with checker-berries, whose fruit hung in round crimson drops, and little waxen flowers bloomed under the dark shining leaves. Margaret sat down and ate the sweet berries and their spicy leaves. The shadows of the forest vibrated and flickered on the yellow leaf-strewn earth and through the green underwood; the trunks of the trees shot up, in straight, rough, tapering stems clear through the branches into the sky.

The particular patch of woods where Margaret now sat was of great age, and the trees were very large, and the effect on her mind was like that of a child going into St. Peter's church at Rome. But there were no bronze saints here to look down on her; a red squirrel, as she came in sight, raised a loud shrill chattering, a singular mixture of contempt, welcome and alarm. She made some familiar demonstrations towards the little fellow, and he, like a jilt, dropped a nut into her face. She saw a brown cat-headed owl asleep, muffled in his dark feathers and darker dreams, and called Obed's attention to it.

"That's an owl," cried the startled lad; "it's a bad sign; Marm says it will hurt ye."

"No," replied Margaret; "I've seen them on the Butternut a good many times." Knowing that as Obed never reasoned so he could never be persuaded, Margaret joined him in leaving the ominous yicinage.

"That's saxifax," said her companion, striking his spade into the roots of a well-known shrub. "It's good teu chaw; the Settlers eats it—take it down, and they'll give ye ribbons and beads for it." Wisping the top together, and bending it over, he bade Margaret hold on, while he proceeded with the digging. The light black mould was removed, and the reddish damp roots disclosed. "Taste on 't," he said, "it's as good as nutcakes." He gave her a fibre—fleshy it was, moist, soft and of agreeable flavor, and rubbing the earth from the mass, cut it into short bits and laid it in his basket. Margaret loitered, wandered, attracted by the flowers she stopped to pick. "Marm won't let us," said Obed, "them ant yarbs, they won't doctor, the Settlers won't give anything for them." Margaret, whether convinced

or not, yielded, and ran on before, apparently the most anxious to discover the plants desired.

"That's um!" cried Obed.

Margaret was bounding through a wet bog, springing from one tussock of sedge to another. She, too, had espied it, and in sight of its beauty and novelty forgot everything else. It was a wake-robin, commonly known as dragon-root, devil's ear, or Indian turnip. Margaret broke off the flower, which she would have carried to her nose.

"Don't ye taste on't!" exclaimed Obed, "it's orful burnin; put it in the basket." So the plant, flower and all, was deposited with the rest of their collection.

It was time to go home. They had reached the edge of the woods whence they started.

"That's him!" cried Margaret.

"It's the Master!" echoed Obed, evidently a little flustered.

There appeared before them a man, the shadow of whom they had seen moving among the leaves, about fifty or sixty years of age, and dressed in the full style of the times, or we should say of his own time, which dated perhaps a little earlier than that of Margaret. He wore a three-cornered hat, with a very broad brim tied with a black ribbon over the top. His coat, of drab kerseymere, descended in long, broad, square skirts, quite to the calves of his legs. It had no buttons in front, but in lieu thereof, slashes, like long button holes, and laced with silk embroidery. He had on nankeen small-clothes, white ribbed silk stockings, paste knee and shoe buckles, and white silk knee-bands. His waistcoat, or vest, was of yellow embossed silk, with long skirts or lappels, rounded and open at the bottom, and bordered with white silk fringe. The sleeves and skirts of his coat were garnished with rows of silver buttons. He wore ruffle cuffs that turned back over his wrists and reached almost to his elbows; on his neck was a snow-white linen plaited stock, fastened behind with a large paste buckle, that glistened above the low collar of his coat. Under his hat appeared his grey wig, falling in rolls over his shoulders, and gathered behind with a black ribbon. From his side depended a large gold watch-seal and key, on a long gold chain. He had on a pair of tortoise-shell bridge spectacles. A golden-headed cane was thrust under his arm. This was Mr. Bartholomew Elliman, the Schoolmaster, or the Master, as he was called. He was tall in person, had an aquiline nose, and a thin face.

"Ha, my Hamadryad!" said he, addressing Margaret, salu-

tem et pacem, in other words, how do you do, my girl of the woods?"

"Pretty well, thankee," replied Margaret.

"I thank you, Sir," said he, amending her style of expression.

"I forgot," she added, "pretty well, I thank you, Sir."

He nodded to Obed, who stood aloof in awkward firmness; besides there were signs of uneasiness or displeasure on the faces of both.

"How came the Pond Lily in the woods?" said he.

"I came out after herbs," replied Margaret, "and I have some flowers too," added she, taking off her hat.

"Flowers, have you? You are a noble specimen of foliaceous amfractuosity—A hortus siccus of your hat! Would I could send you and your flowers across the waters to my friend, Mr. Knight, the great botanist, nox semperlucens."

"He shan't hurt Molly," interrupted Obed. "He'll drown her, he'll pull her teu pieces. Marm says he spiles everything. He wants to pitch Molly into the Pond."

"Don't be alarmed, my glandulous champion, no harm shall come to this fair flower."

"He'll git um all, Molly; don't ye let him have any."

"I tell you," responded the Master, "Margaret is a flower; she is my flower."

"No, she an't a flower," rejoined Obed, "she's Pluck's Molly."

Obed became quite excited, and spake with more than his customary freedom. It needs perhaps to be explained, that Master Elliman and the Widow Wright were somewhat at odds. He was in pursuit of science, she of gain. They took a common track, herbs and flowers; their ends essentially diverged. They frequently encountered, but they could never agree. Margaret herself became another point of issue between them, and the Widow was jealous of the child's attachment to the Master. The impression that Obed derived on the whole was, that he was an evil disposed person, and one whose presence boded no good to Margaret.

The Master proceeded in the examination of the flowers Margaret gave him.

"I have another one," said she, and thrusting her hand into Obed's basket, drew out the wake-robin.

"An Arum!" said the Master, "the very thing I have been written to upon."

"Tan't yourn, Molly; it's Marm's," said Obed, seizing the flower and replacing it in the basket.

Here was, indeed, a mistake. Margaret had unreflectingly given the flower to Obed to carry, at the same time thinking it was her own property. She did not know the value attached to it by Obed, whose mother had enjoined him to get one if possible, for some particular purpose of her own. At last she said,

"I can get more, I know where they grow."

"Can you, can you?" said the Master, "their habitat is sphagnous places, what you call swamps. It is impossible for me to reach them—stultiloquent yarb-monger!" he broke out, speaking of or to Obed; "son of an helminthic android! you ought to be castrated."

"That's hocuspocus, Molly," said the lad; "Marm says 'tis. He'll hurt ye, he'll hurt ye."

"I will get some for both of you," said Margaret; "I will go to-morrow."

"You don't know the way," rejoined Obed, "snakes'll bite ye; there's painters in the woods, and wild-cats, and owls."

"I'll take Bull with me," answered Margaret.

This allusion to the dog gave Obed more trouble. He feared his mother, who he thought would not wish the Master should have the flower; he dreaded the dog, he disliked the Master, he loved Margaret; he *was* in a quandary. He stammered, he tried to laugh, he put his hand on Margaret's head, he yerked up his trowsers, he looked into his basket. He leaned against a tree, and dropped his face upon his arm. Margaret ran to him, she took hold of his hand. "Don't cry Obed," she said; "poor Obed, don't cry."

The Master, seeing the extremity of affairs, told Margaret not to care, that he presumed she would be able to get the flower for him, and took her hand to lead her away. She clung to Obed, or he to her, wholly enveloping her little hand, wrist and all, in his great knuckles. Thus linked, sidling, skewing, filing as they could through the trees and brush, they soon emerged in the road. The Master went on with them to the house, and Obed continued his course homeward. Master Elliman was evidently not a stranger to the family. His visit seemed welcome. Even the hard, ragged, muddy features of Hash brightened with a smile as he entered. The dry, pursed mouth of the mother opened with a pleasant salutation. Chilion offered him the best chair. Pluck was always merry. Margaret alone for the moment, contrary to her general manner, appeared sorrowful.