

DEAN'S
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THE
NARROW ESCAPE.



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THE NARROW ESCAPE.



In one of our New England's most

beautiful valleys, about three miles from D——, is a deep gorge in the mountains, known far and near as the Glen. The valley is bounded on all sides, save the narrow opening where you found ingress, by huge flint boulders of adamantine hardness, that seem to have been severed from the mountain side only by the force of some falling thunderbolt, that has marked its course by a sear of more livid whiteness. Not a living thing is to be seen. The rocks beneath your feet are ribbed as if the back bone of poor old earth was laid bare to desolating anatomy. In the centre of this gloomy cavern stands a huge square stone, bearing some faint mystic characters, and according to the popular tradition, stained with a crimson dye that the storm and sunshine of years vainly sought to efface—the blood of human victims that often bathed this high altar of savage superstition. In years before our fathers came, it was a favourite haunt of the Indian priests, and it is said that even after the “white man” ruled in the land, some of the

tribe would return yearly to dance around this consecrated stone under the light of the midnight stars.



One day in the year 18—, the hunter “Wild Tom,” as the neighbours termed him, had been wandering far away among

the mountains, seeking deer. A furious storm arose, and much against his will (he owns) he was forced to seek shelter in this wild glen. Lit by the lightning flashes, he had just succeeded in securing himself and rifle from the pelting storm under a shelving rock, when the air was rent by a horrid shout. But he could see nothing. So he lay perfectly still, thinking it might have been the weird voice of the wind as it rushed through the mountain passes. Ere long the rain ceased, and he could scarcely believe his eyes, as the gorge was lit by the flickering glare of pine torches, revealing the forms of seven or eight Indian priests, busy in some, to him, unknown preparations, while on the ground, bound with thongs, lay a young squaw. She seemed to rest in the stillness of death, till one, approaching her as if to unloose the bands, she gave one piercing shriek. This was more than "Wild Tom's" humanity could endure, and regardless of personal safety, he fired his unerring rifle. The savage fell lifeless at the maiden's feet. The

others stopped one instant, looked at the prostrate form of their companion, and doubtless thinking they had heard the angry voice and witnessed the vengeance of the "Great spirit," fled from the spot.



Our hunter descended from his fastness and bore to the settlement the intended victim. There she was kindly cared for, and health soon returned to her little form; but the mind had been shattered beyond repair, and deep sadness, so foreign to buoyant youth, seemed to settle like a cloud about her. She preferred to dwell

alone in a little cabin on the outskirts of the village, where none were so welcome as the children, for whom she wove bright coloured dinner baskets, or taught the boys to bend the bow and trim their arrows. The simple truths of Christianity, as taught in the log church by the earnest pastor of this flock in the wilderness, sank deep into her heart; and the brain, enfeebled though it was, seemed lit by light divine to comprehend the glorious gospel plan of salvation. At her own request she was called by a Christian name, and the memory of old "Aunt Alice" is still enshrined in the heart-chronicles of more than one aged inhabitant in this valley. One text of Scripture was her especial delight: "The sacrifice of a broken spirit and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." There is, indeed, a touching appropriateness in these words of the Holy Writ, to this child of the forest. Saved by a kind Providence from a cruel death upon a heathen altar, she humbly and gratefully would lay low at the foot of the cross, the

sacrifice best pleasing in His sight, even “a broken spirit and a contrite heart.” And we doubt not that this anthem of faith from the dying lips of “Old Alice” was a sweet incense to our God. Truly by the blood of Christ are all the nations made one in Him. These words, first tuned to melody by Israel’s sweet singer, found an echo in the “contrite heart” of one of America’s copper-coloured daughters. Not by offering up of bulls or goats was she saved, “but by a sacrifice of nobler name,” even Jesus our righteousness.”

